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Landscape and Experience in Late Antique Gaul

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by

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The Dissertation of Richard Ray Rush is approved:

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Landscape and Experience in Late Antique Gaul

by

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Landscape descriptions are textual products of subjective experiences in a landscape. In this dissertation I make use of both literary landscape descriptions for the purpose of understanding both what people in late antique Gaul thought about their landscapes and how they experienced and interacted with their landscapes. I propose that the landscape within which an author lived and wrote shapes the author's experiences by imposing natural limits on the author's actions and thus the author's written works. There are three elements in this proposal: 1) landscape; 2) a person, i.e., the author; 3) the written works produced by the author.

The physical properties of the landscape define the range of possible human action. The physical properties also impose limitations. Therefore, landscape shapes and constrains the human activity within it. Historical landscapes are accessible to modern historians through the study of modern topography, archeology, and, to a lesser extent, paleoclimate data. This body of archeological and scientific knowledge provides insight

into the physical world inhabited by late antique authors, which allows a partial reconstruction of historic landscapes that shaped the lives of late antique authors.

In this dissertation, one author and his relationship to his landscape is analyzed in each chapter, including Palladius, Sidonius Apollinaris, Avitus of Vienne, and the anonymous hagiographer of the *Life of the Jura Fathers*. By identifying the natural limits set by a local landscape on each author and how the author responded to those limits, it is possible to determine how each author mentally organized his landscape. Therefore, for each author analyzed I answer two questions: First, how did an author's landscape impact the author's literary works through the author's experience in it? Second, how did each author mentally organize and interpret his landscape? The answers to these questions tell us how an author thought about and interpreted the landscape in which he lived. Even though the direct objects of my study are literary sources and historical landscapes, the primary subjects of my study are people, late antique authors whose literary works have survived.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
I. Landscape: The History of a Definition .....	7
II. Mediterranean Environmental History.....	17
III. Experience.....	20
IV. Recent Scholarship on Late Antique Landscapes.....	23
V. A Method for Analyzing Late Antique Landscapes .....	28
VI. Outline of the Dissertation.....	30
<b>Chapter 1 – Palladius and the Villa Experience</b> .....	46
1.1. The Historical and Social Context of Palladius .....	51
1.1.1. <i>Dating and Placing Palladius</i> .....	51
1.1.2. <i>Palladius’ Audience</i> .....	57
1.1.3. <i>Villas, Farming, and Otium</i> .....	62
1.2. The Experience of Palladius .....	65
1.2.1. <i>Confirming and Contradicting Columella</i> .....	65
1.2.2. <i>The General Place and the Experienced Place</i> .....	72
1.2.3. <i>Application: What can a farmer do?</i> .....	76
1.3. Palladius’ Remedies.....	81
1.4. Conclusion .....	91
<b>Chapter 2 – Landscape in Eucherius’ <i>De laude eremi</i></b> .....	94
2.1. Eucherius’ Vocabulary of the Desert.....	102
2.2. Eucherius Imagines the Desert.....	110

2.3. Lérins: An unlikely Desert.....	124
2.4. Rendering Lérins a Desert .....	131
2.5. Conclusion .....	136
<b>Chapter 3 – Fifth-Century Lyon through the Eyes of Sidonius Apollinaris .....</b>	<b>140</b>
3.1. Sidonius Apollinaris: From Senator to Bishop .....	142
3.2. Fifth-Century Lyon: An Overview .....	148
3.3. Cathedral at the Junction of Road and River .....	154
3.4. Between the Tombs of St. Justus and Syagrius .....	164
3.5. Creating a Religious Landscape.....	172
3.6. The Rest of Lyon .....	185
3.7. Conclusion .....	191
<b>Chapter 4 – Gifts of Fish and Food in the Letters of Avitus of Vienne .....</b>	<b>195</b>
4.1. Patterns of Gallo-Roman Feasting.....	199
4.2. Gifts of Good in Late Antique Gaul .....	212
4.3. Fasting in Late Antique Gaul.....	218
4.4. Gifts of Fish and Food in the Letters of Avitus of Vienne .....	224
4.4.1. <i>Letter 72: Avitus to Apollinaris</i> .....	226
4.4.2. <i>Letter 83: Avitus to Ceretius</i> .....	234
4.4.3. <i>Letters 66 and 74: Avitus to Maximus</i> .....	239
4.4.4. <i>Letter 86: Leonianus to Sapaudus</i> .....	245
4.5. Conclusion: The Intersection of Place and Food in Avitus’ Letters .....	251
<b>Chapter 5 – Landscape in the <i>Life of the Jura Fathers</i> .....</b>	<b>255</b>

5.1. Landscapes and Monastic Rules .....	260
5.2. Forests – Creating Romanus’ <i>eremus</i> .....	267
5.3. The Hoe and the Axe: Cultivation and the Creation of a Community....	277
5.4. Climate and Clothing .....	291
5.5. Conclusion .....	297
<b>Conclusion – A Multiplicity of Landscapes .....</b>	<b>303</b>
I. Aristocratic Landscapes.....	304
II. Christian and Aristocratic Landscapes .....	307
II.1. Control and Ownership of the Landscape .....	309
III. The Desert: A new kind of Christian Landscape .....	311
III.1. The Desert: Creating a Christian Landscape .....	313
III.2. The Desert: A fifth-century Definition Change .....	316
IV. Responding to the Limits of the Landscape .....	321
V. A Final Reflection.....	324

## **List of Figures and Tables**

### **Introduction**

Figure I.1: Map of Rivers and Places included in this dissertation .....35

### **Chapter 1**

Table 1.1: Palladius' Explicit Claims to Personal Experience .....68

Table 1.2: Palladius' Implicit Claims to Personal Experience .....69

### **Chapter 3**

Figure 3.1: Topographic Map of Lyon .....149

Figure 3.2: Melted Perfume Bottle .....177

Figure 3.3: Epitaph of Gaudentius .....179

### **Chapter 4**

Table 4.1: Fish and Seafood Remains from the 'Sanctuary of the Cybele' ...202

Table 4.2: Species of Fish Discovered at the Parc-Saint-Georges.....207

### **Chapter 5**

Figure 5.1: Topographic Map of Saint-Claude and Saint-Lupicin. ....283

## List of Abbreviations

<i>Atlas Lugdunum</i>	.....	<i>Atlas Topographique de Lugdunum</i>
<i>CAG</i>	.....	<i>Carte archéologique de la Gaule</i>
<i>CS</i>	.....	<i>Cistercian Studies</i>
<i>DMLBS</i>	.....	<i>Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources</i>
<i>LCL</i>	.....	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>MGH</i>	.....	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>AA</i>	.....	<i>Auctores Antiquissimi</i>
<i>SS rer. Merov.</i>	.....	<i>Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum</i>
<i>PCBE</i>	.....	<i>Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire</i>
<i>PLRE</i>	.....	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i>
<i>PL</i>	.....	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>SC</i>	.....	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>
<i>VPJ</i>	.....	<i>Vita patrum jurensium</i>

## *Introduction*

I begin this thesis with a debate regarding the historicity of a journey. The crux of that debate, I argue, is the nature of the relationship between a place as it existed in the past and a literary description of that place that survives to the present. In this dissertation I present a method of answering this question. This thesis thus builds on my understanding of the importance of place in late antique sources by analyzing a series of late Roman authors from fifth-century southern Gaul and Italy. Each of the authors' use of landscape in their writing is considered alongside what can be pieced together about these late antique landscapes through topography and archeology. By comparing landscapes with written sources, I argue that landscapes as they existed in late antiquity can be connected to the late antique written accounts of those landscapes by the authors' experiences in them. That connection is not one of simple representation, but rather represents the creative engagement of each author with his landscape, and with its literary and religious significances. In essence, I argue, literary landscape descriptions are "hybrids of nature and culture".<sup>1</sup> We can see the importance of landscape and the debates about how to analyze it if we consider first the scholarly interpretations of Ausonius's journey in his famous poem, *Mosella*.

In the opening lines of the *Mosella*, Ausonius, the fourth-century Gallic rhetor, poet, and consul, describes his journey from the Rhine frontier of the Roman Empire to the Moselle River in north-western Gaul. Ausonius first crossed the river Nava near a

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<sup>1</sup> Richard C. Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). 8.

battlefield (lines 1-4), then he entered a pathless forest where there was no one to be seen (lines 5-6). He passed dry Dummissus, then well-watered Tabernea (lines 7-8).

*praetereo arentem sitientibus undique terris  
Dummissum riguasque perenni fonte Tabernas*<sup>2</sup>

I passed Dummissus, sweltering amid its parched fields, and Tabernae, watered by its unfailing spring<sup>3</sup>

Next, Ausonius encountered Sarmatian settlers before passing by the previous camp of Constantine (lines 9-11), which balance out the uninhabited regions and battlefield.

Finally, with a *tour de force* of descriptive rhetoric, Ausonius describes his exit from the forest with the Moselle River bursting into radiant view as the subject of the remainder of the poem (lines 12-22).

The lines emphasized above have attracted significant attention from scholars of late antiquity. In his 1991 commentary on the works of Ausonius, R. P. H. Green argues that Ausonius' journey "should not be treated as a historical event."<sup>4</sup> Green's skepticism of the reality of the journey that Ausonius describes is based on the highly literary nature of the passage.<sup>5</sup> Green observes that Ausonius describes a journey from barbarism to civilization.<sup>6</sup> Ausonius begins in a place with no human habitation, then encounters Sarmatians farming, before finally arriving at the Moselle lined with civilized cities.

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<sup>2</sup> Ausonius, *Mosella*, (in *The Works of Ausonius*, ed. Green, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Ausonius, *Mosella*, (in *Ausonius*, trans. White, LCL 96, 1919), 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> R. P. H. Green, *The Works of Ausonius*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 456.

<sup>5</sup> Green, *The Works of Ausonius*, 463.

<sup>6</sup> Green, *The Works of Ausonius*, 463.

Similarly, Ausonius constructed the opening lines of his poem from carefully balanced opposites.<sup>7</sup> Ausonius chose to include and describe Dumnissus and its fields as *arentem* (dry) and *sitientibus* (thirsting) to mirror Taberna, which was *rigua* (watered).

More recent scholars have not felt the same reticence as Green in treating Ausonius' journey as a historical occurrence. Danuta Shanzer assumed the historicity of Ausonius' journey in a 1998 article on the dating of Ausonius' poem.<sup>8</sup> In 2013 Michael McCormick made his own argument for the dating of the *Mosella* based on a literary analysis that he links to dendrochronological data.<sup>9</sup> McCormick interprets Ausonius' description of Dumnissus as *arentem*, or dry, as meaning that Dumnissus was suffering a drought.<sup>10</sup> McCormick then identifies a drought in the year 371 using dendrochronological data, which he argues is the same drought that he identified in Ausonius' poem.<sup>11</sup> McCormick's argument is novel because it incorporates both literary analysis and climate data derived from tree rings to make a historical argument. McCormick calls the coincidence of the dendrochronological data and Ausonius' poem pointing to a drought in the year 371 "consilience," that is, when unrelated evidence from

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<sup>7</sup> Green, *The Works of Ausonius*, 463.

<sup>8</sup> Danuta Shanzer, "The Date and Literary Context of Ausonius's "mosella": Valentinian I's Alamannic Campaigns and an Unnamed Office-Holder," *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 47, no. 2 (1998): 228-230.

<sup>9</sup> Michael McCormick, "What Climate Science, Ausonius, Nile Floods, Rye, and Thatch Tell us about the Environmental History of the Roman Empire," in *The Ancient Mediterranean Environment between Science and History*, ed. W. V. Harris (Leiden: Brill. 2013), 63-69.

<sup>10</sup> McCormick, "What Climate Science, Ausonius, Nile Floods, Rye, and Thatch Tell us about the Environmental History of the Roman Empire," 63.

<sup>11</sup> McCormick, "What Climate Science, Ausonius, Nile Floods, Rye, and Thatch Tell us about the Environmental History of the Roman Empire," 68-69.

different sources “jumps together.”<sup>12</sup> Consilience is a nineteenth-century term used by Edward O. Wilson to describe the unity of all knowledge, from the humanities across the sciences.

Kristina Sessa, however, is not convinced by McCormick’s argument. In 2019, Sessa accused McCormick of a “positivistic” reading of Ausonius’ text, stating that he ignores the literary nature of the poem, and subordinates historical inquiry to scientifically derived data.<sup>13</sup> Sessa is further critical of many scholars whom she views as falling into the trap of environmental determinism by bringing together environmental and historical data to explain the end of the Roman Empire.<sup>14</sup> Sessa, as a self-proclaimed adherent of the ‘material turn,’ proposes instead that: “The key to understanding the relationship between human and non-human agency and the role of physical events in the development of human experience is to interrogate that messier middle ground, which lies somewhere between environmental determinism and social construction.”<sup>15</sup> To apply Sessa’s proposition to the scholarly debate regarding Ausonius’ poem about a journey through Dummissus and Tabernae, would involve avoiding both Green’s skepticism about the reality of Ausonius’ journey and what she calls McCormick’s positivistic reading of the poem. At the heart of the debate regarding Ausonius’ poem is the question of the

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<sup>12</sup> Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999. First published by Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 8-9.

<sup>13</sup> Kristina Sessa, “The New Environmental Fall of Rome: A Methodological Consideration,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 12, no.1 (Spring 2019): 224 and 239.

<sup>14</sup> Sessa, “The New Environmental Fall of Rome,” 219-20.

<sup>15</sup> Sessa, “The New Environmental Fall of Rome,” 217 and 244.

nature of the relationship between a place as it existed in the past and a literary description of that place that survives to the present.

This very question is at the core of a larger movement in the scholarship of late antiquity, of which the scholarly debate just outlined regarding Ausonius' poem is a microcosm. The recent influx of climatic, environmental, and archeological data that has become available to historians through recent scientific advances and rescue archeology has produced a boom in the scholarship of late antiquity. A 2018 bibliographic study identified eighty-five articles, not counting books or book chapters, that were on climate change and the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the majority of which were published after 2010.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the highest profile example of scholarship on late antiquity that makes use of climatic, environmental, and archeological data is Kyle Harper's 2017 monograph, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire*.<sup>17</sup> Kyle Harper argues that a combination of climate change and disease were central to the stagnation and eventual state failure of the Roman Empire. While Harper's work has been popularly acclaimed, its academic reception has been somewhat cooler. Haldon, Elton, Hueber, Izdebski, Mordechai, and Newfield co-authored a three-part review of Harper's *The Fate of Rome*, in which they scrutinized Harper's treatment of ancient disease events

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<sup>16</sup> Werner Marx, Robin Haunschild, and Lutz Bornmann, "Climate and the Decline and Fall of the Western Roman Empire: A Bibliometric View on an Interdisciplinary Approach to answer a Most Classic Historical Question," *Climate* 6, no. 4: 90 (2018): <https://doi.org/10.3390/cli6040090>. For a small selection of particularly relevant edited volumes of scholarship on late antiquity using environmental and climate data, see: W. V. Harris, ed., *The Ancient Mediterranean Environment between Science and History* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Walter Scheidel, ed., *The Science of Roman History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Adam Izdebski and Michael Mulryan, eds., *Environment and Society in the Long Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

and reconstruction of ancient climate.<sup>18</sup> One of the primary critiques that Haldon and his coauthors made of Harper was of his use of literary sources. Haldon and his coauthors, commenting on Harper's use of literary sources, state that: "Genre and context recede into the background or are ignored, and selection for effect takes priority – the most dramatic accounts are taken as illustrations, without discussion of their rhetorical context and form and with no discussion of their potentially high ideological inflection."<sup>19</sup> Again, the underlying question that Harper as well as Haldon and his coauthors are grappling with is the relationship between a text and the world in which that text was written.

In this dissertation I offer an approach to answering this question by focusing on a set of late antique landscape descriptions. The descriptions of landscape found in the works of Palladius, Eucherius, Sidonius, Avitus, and the anonymous author of the *Life of the Jura Fathers* all correspond to places experienced by the authors, many of which can be identified. These landscape descriptions offer a unique opportunity to compare what is known about the landscapes as they existed in late antiquity and how the authors described those landscapes. I use these comparisons to answer two questions. First, in

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<sup>18</sup> J. Haldon, H. Elton, S.R. Huebner, A. Izdebski, L. Mordechai, and T.P. Newfield, "Plagues, climate change, and the end of an empire: A response to Kyle Harper's *The Fate of Rome* (1): Climate," *History Compass* 16, no. 12 (2018): e12508. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12508>; J. Haldon, H. Elton, S.R. Huebner, A. Izdebski, L. Mordechai, and T.P. Newfield, "Plagues, climate change, and the end of an empire: A response to Kyle Harper's *The Fate of Rome* (2): Plagues and a crisis of empire," *History Compass* 16, no. 12 (2018): e12506. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12506>; J. Haldon, H. Elton, S.R. Huebner, A. Izdebski, L. Mordechai, and T.P. Newfield, "Plagues, climate change, and the end of an empire: A response to Kyle Harper's *The Fate of Rome* (3): Disease, agency, and collapse," *History Compass* 16, no. 12 (2018): e12507. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12507>. For Harper's response to this three-part review, see: Kyle Harper, "Integrating the natural sciences and Roman history: Challenges and prospects," *History Compass* 16, no. 12 (2018): e12520. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12520>.

<sup>19</sup> J. Haldon, H. Elton, S.R. Huebner, A. Izdebski, L. Mordechai, and T.P. Newfield, "Plagues, climate change, and the end of an empire: A response to Kyle Harper's *The Fate of Rome* (1): Climate," 4.

what ways does the author respond to and use the physical landscape? Second, what is the author's view of his landscape? Answering these two questions reveals how the physical landscape influences the textual description of it, as well as the author's assumptions and attitudes towards his landscape. My approach to these authors and their landscapes draws heavily from the multi-disciplinary fields of landscape studies and Mediterranean environmental history. Each field has developed its own ways of addressing the relationship between people and their environment. Scholars in the field of landscape studies have offered various definitions for the term "landscape," all of which tend to prioritize a human first approach to human activity in the physical landscape. Scholars in the field of Mediterranean environmental history, on the other hand, have emphasized how the physical landscape impacts human action and culture. The complimentary perspectives from both landscape studies and environmental history are needed when analyzing late antique landscape descriptions.

### I. Landscape: The History of a Definition

The definition of landscape has encompassed the junction of land, man-made alterations to land, and depictions of land from its inception. In early thirteenth-century Dutch, "*lantscep*," from which "landscape" is derived, originally referred to a field "*lant*" that had been reclaimed or created "*scep*," for a specific community.<sup>20</sup> The German "*landschaft*" originally carried a similar meaning. The term landscape was introduced

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<sup>20</sup> Marc Antrop, "A Brief History of Landscape Research," in *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies*, edited by Howard, Thompson, Waterton (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 12.

into the English language in the context of seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painting as meaning “scenery.”<sup>21</sup> Thus by the seventeenth century, landscape meant a region of land, land shaped for a community, and the scenery of landscape painting.

The nineteenth century saw landscape emerge as an area of scientific research. In Germany, the polymath Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) is credited with giving landscape the definition, “*Landschaft ist der Totalcharakter einer Erdgegend,*” – “Landscape is the total character of a region of land.”<sup>22</sup> The geographer Alwin Opel introduced the term, “*Landschaftskunde,*” or “landscape science” in 1884.<sup>23</sup> In France, Paul Vidal de la Blanche (1845-1918) developed an approach to landscape that paid greater attention to the importance of local society in the creation of landscape.<sup>24</sup> The nineteenth century also saw the establishment of the Royal Geographic Society in 1830 in the UK and the National Geographic Society in 1888 in the USA both of which promoted the systematic study of geography and landscape.<sup>25</sup>

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the introduction of a romantic element to the study of landscape and history in England. In 1913 the energetic and romantically inclined G. M. Trevelyan published a collection of essays than began with “Clio, A

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<sup>21</sup> Antrop, “A Brief History of Landscape Research,” 12.

<sup>22</sup> Isaak S. Zonnevel, *Land Ecology: An Introduction to Landscape Ecology as a Base for Land Evaluation, Land Management and Conservation* (Amsterdam: SPB Academic Publishing, 1995), 12.

<sup>23</sup> Antrop, “A Brief History of Landscape Research,” 14. (Translation by the author.)

<sup>24</sup> Antrop, “A Brief History of Landscape Research,” 14.

<sup>25</sup> Antrop, “A Brief History of Landscape Research,” 15.

Muse” and “Walking.”<sup>26</sup> In the first, Trevelyan argued against a “scientific” approach to history, and for one that included emotional interpretations of the past. In the second, he extolled the virtues of walking in rugged landscapes through romantic descriptions of how the mind, body, soul, and earth form a ‘mystic union’ during long walks in nature.<sup>27</sup> Taken together, these essays demonstrate that Trevelyan thought that history and landscape was linked and needed to be explored together.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the geographer Carl Sauer introduced landscape studies to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century and added a cultural component to German definitions of landscape, thus creating cultural geography.<sup>28</sup> Sauer argued in his 1925 article “The Morphology of Landscape” that, “It [landscape] may be defined, therefore, as an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural.”<sup>29</sup> Sauer had taken a professorship in the Geography Department at the University of California, Berkley, where he helped develop a particular approach to cultural geography. Sauer not only furthered landscape studies’ interest in culture, but also promoted the importance of field work, a trait he shared with Trevelyan.

By the mid-twentieth century, scholarship on landscapes took a greater concern in humanity’s long history of shaping the physical world. In 1955 Sauer co-chaired the

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<sup>26</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *Clio, A Muse, and Other Essays Literary and Pedestrian*, (London: Longmans and Green Co., 1913).

<sup>27</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, “Walking,” in *Clio, A Muse, and Other Essays Literary and Pedestrian* (London: Longmans and Green Co., 1913), 61.

<sup>28</sup> Antrop, “A Brief History of Landscape Research,” 14.

<sup>29</sup> Carl O. Sauer, “The Morphology of Landscape,” *University of California Publications in Geography* 2, no. 2 (1925): 19-53.

symposium *Man's Role in the Changing Face of the Earth*, which resulted in a publication of the same name.<sup>30</sup> In the same year, the historian W. G. Hoskins published his *The Making of the English Landscape*.<sup>31</sup> The introduction of aerial photography during the first half of the twentieth century revolutionized the study of landscape by making visible previously unknown archeological and historical features.<sup>32</sup> It was in the wake of studies using this new technology that Hoskins published *The Making of the English Landscape*. In this work Hoskins was concerned with “the ways in which men have cleared the natural woodlands; reclaimed marshland, fen, and moor; created fields out of a wilderness...in short, with everything that has altered the natural landscape.”<sup>33</sup> For Hoskins, a landscape history of England was a history of man's alterations to the physical ground of England. That Hoskins published this book at the same time as Carl Sauer co-chaired the symposium *Man's Role in the Changing Face of the Earth* indicates the overall concern for humanity's impact on the physical environment that had developed in the mid-twentieth century. Hoskins' approach opened new avenues for the development of landscape research, most notably landscape biography and landscape archeology.

Concern for the human impact on the land is readily apparent in the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre's 1974 work *The Production of Space*, in which Lefebvre

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<sup>30</sup> William L. Thomas, Jr., ed., with the collaboration of Carl O. Sauer, Marston Bates, and Lewis Mumford, *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

<sup>31</sup> W. G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1955).

<sup>32</sup> Antrop, “A Brief History of Landscape Research,” 15.

<sup>33</sup> W. G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1955), 13.

proposed a threefold division of space: physical, mental, and social.<sup>34</sup> Lefebvre aimed primarily to demonstrate that social space is a social product.<sup>35</sup> He saw domination and appropriation of natural space as a part of the production of social space. Lefebvre's definition of a dominated space is "*un espace naturel transformé (médiatisé) par une technique et un pratique,*" – "a space transformed – and mediated – by technology, by practice."<sup>36</sup> While Lefebvre used modern examples such as autoroutes and slabs of concrete, ancient building and farming also fall under Lefebvre's definition, according to which any natural space (or for our purposes a landscape) transformed by human action is a dominated space and thus appropriated into social space.<sup>37</sup>

Lefebvre's focus on social process and on how people shape and transform their natural space into social space is apparent in the 1979 collection of essays edited by D.W. Meinig, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*.<sup>38</sup> This publication is perhaps the single work that best encapsulates the development of landscape studies during the cultural turn of the late twentieth century. It contains essays by J.B. Jackson, who started the journal *Landscape*, and the humanist geographer Yi-Fu

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<sup>34</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974), 19. For a translation, see: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace*, 35. For translation, see: Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace*, 191. For translation, see: Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 164.

<sup>37</sup> H. Lefebvre considered natural space to be irreversibly disappearing, an anxiety that was likely on account of the rapid development and industrialization post-WWII. "*l'espace-naturel (physique) s'éloigne. Irréversiblement,*" – "... (physical) natural space is disappearing." (Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace*, 39. For translation, see: Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 30.)

<sup>38</sup> D. W. Meinig and J. B. Jackson, eds., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Tuan, among others. Pierce Lewis' opening chapter of this publication laid out seven axioms for landscape research.<sup>39</sup> These axioms begin with an emphasis on the built environment as a man-made landscape that reflects the culture of those who built it before then moving on to acknowledge the importance of the pre-existing physical environment and geography to interpreting the man-made landscape. This represents a decided turn toward an interpretation of landscape in which human agency and interpretation takes precedence over the physical environment. This human-first approach to landscapes is evident in Yi-Fu Tuan's definition of landscape in the same volume. According to Tuan, "Landscape appears to us through an effort of the imagination exercised over a highly selected array of sense data. It is the achievement of the mature mind."<sup>40</sup> Thus, according to Tuan, a landscape is a mental image of a place that a person creates to organize and make sense of an experience in a place. The result is that Tuan argues for a distinction between environment, that is a given piece of reality in the physical world, from landscape, a mental construct derived from experience in an environment.<sup>41</sup>

The distinction between physical environment and landscape is central to John Barrell's 1980 monograph, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*. In this work Barrell analyzes

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<sup>39</sup> Pierce Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, eds. Meinig and J. B. Jackson (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 11-32.

<sup>40</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, "Thought and Landscape: The Eye and the Mind's Eye" in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, eds. D. W. Meinig and J. B. Jackson (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 90.

<sup>41</sup> Tuan, "Thought and Landscape: The Eye and the Mind's Eye," 100.

the discrepancies between English landscape painting and the historical realities of change in English land ownership during the enclosure period between 1730 and 1840.<sup>42</sup> Barrell's central observation is that while this period witnessed the significant contraction of common land as it was fenced off, negatively impacting the rural poor who relied on the availability of common land, the landscape painting of the period never reflects the social upheaval.<sup>43</sup> Rather, landscape paintings of enclosure period England portrayed the English countryside as unified, stable, and even egalitarian.<sup>44</sup> Thus, according to Barrell, English landscape painting, "...attempts to pass itself off as an image of the actual unity of an English countryside innocent of division."<sup>45</sup> Thus for Barrell, landscapes are not just mental constructs, they can also be manipulated for ideological purposes.

Tuan's definition of landscape as the product of the human mind remained influential through the twentieth century as is evident in the art historian Simon Schama's approach to landscape. In his 1995 work *Landscape and Memory*, Shama argues that: "Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock."<sup>46</sup> Like Tuan, Shama here privileges the mental process of a person viewing and experiencing the landscape, who then imposes his own cultural interpretation on the physical characteristics of the landscape. Thus, Shama's

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<sup>42</sup> John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>43</sup> Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 61.

understanding of landscape privileges the agency of the person experiencing a physical place over that of the physical place itself. Shama's primary contribution to the study of landscapes is that the cultural meaning applied to a landscape can linger in a specific place. Shama writes: "But it should be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, according to Shama, the cultural meaning attached to a landscape persists across time and becomes a part of the landscape itself.

Shama's concern with the lingering cultural memories attached to places and their landscapes reflects the growing concern in Europe at the end of the twentieth century for the preservation of landscapes as cultural heritage. Landscape became a political issue with the increasing integration of European countries. The Dobris Assessment of Europe's Environment, published in 1995, listed landscapes as a distinct aspect of the environment in need of protection alongside air, water, and soil.<sup>48</sup> The Dobris Assessment claimed, "Ultimately the regional diversity and uniqueness of landscapes form collectively a common European heritage."<sup>49</sup> This acknowledgement of landscapes as a part of cultural heritage was followed five years later by the European Landscape

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<sup>47</sup> Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 61.

<sup>48</sup> State of the environment report No 1/1995. Europe's Environment – The Dobris Assessment. (Archived by the European Environment Agency. ISBN: 92-826-5409-5. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/92-826-5409-5>.)

<sup>49</sup> State of the environment report No 1/1995. Europe's Environment – The Dobris Assessment, Chapter 8.1.3, "Landscape as a European Concern."

Convention in 2000. This convention was a part of the series of treaties forming the European Union, and provided a single definition of landscape, "...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."<sup>50</sup> The expressed purpose of the European Landscape Convention is the protection of landscapes.<sup>51</sup> The two biggest impacts of the European Union's policy-oriented intervention in landscape studies were the proposition of a single definition of landscape and promoting a turn in landscape studies back towards landscape as a part of the physical world, not just a mental construct.

Meanwhile, the anthropologist Tim Ingold, also writing in 2000, critiqued Tuan's distinction between environment and landscape as reproducing the dichotomy between man and nature.<sup>52</sup> Instead, Ingold focuses on the form of the landscape and argues that the landscape is an embodied 'taskscape.'<sup>53</sup> According to Ingold, a taskscape is "the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking."<sup>54</sup> There must be many related tasks located in a landscape to have a taskscape. Ingold goes on to conclude that, "the landscape as a whole must likewise be understood as the taskscape in its embodied form," by which Ingold means that the landscape is a realm of human activity and that

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<sup>50</sup> Council of Europe, European Treaty Series 176, Council of Europe Landscape Convention. (Florence: 20.X.2000. As amended by the 2016 Protocol. Archived by the Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680080621>.), Chapter 1.1.a.

<sup>51</sup> Council of Europe, European Treaty Series 176, Council of Europe Landscape Convention, Chapter 1.3.

<sup>52</sup> Tim Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill* (New York & London: Routledge, 2000), 193.

<sup>53</sup> Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," 193, 195, and 198.

<sup>54</sup> Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," 195.

human actions shape the landscape.<sup>55</sup> Thus, Ingold emphasizes the physical form of the landscape and human activity within the landscape.

The history of the scholarship of the term landscape, outlined here, is like a pendulum that began during the nineteenth century with an emphasis on the physical characteristics of the landscape. The pendulum then swung toward an emphasis on the cultural, social, and mental aspects of landscape during the 1970s and 80s, before swinging back to an emphasis on the physical aspects of landscape in the 2000s. Yet, this body of scholarship is united in its emphasis on humanity's ability to manipulate and change its landscape. In 1955 Hoskins assumed that people's past activity in the landscape presented layers of changes that could be read, and Sauer led the symposium *Man's Role in the Changing Face of the Earth*. In the 1970s Lefebvre was concerned with the irreversible domination of natural space by social space, and the humanist geographer Tuan argued that landscape is a mental product. In 1980 Barrel followed Tuan in interpreting landscape paintings as independent from physical landscapes, which could be manipulated for ideological purposes. Shama's 1995 argument that landscape begins as imagination that is applied to a physical environment again focuses on man's ability to manipulate the landscape. In 2000 the EU's landscape definition and policy developed out of a perceived need to protect landscape from harmful human activity, and Ingold conceptualized the landscape as the embodiment of human tasks. For all their differences, these thinkers acknowledge that landscape consists of some combination of physical elements in the world, such as rocks, trees, rivers, and buildings, and cultural

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<sup>55</sup> Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," 198. (emphasis removed)

elements originating in human activity, including building, farming, experiencing, imagining, painting, and so on. While they prioritize the cultural aspect of the interaction between physical landscape and culture, the physical landscape impacts culture, as well.

## II. Mediterranean Environmental History

Mediterranean and medieval environmental history are fields that have demonstrated the impact of climate, environment, and landscape on human culture. Fernand Braudel published *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* in 1949. Braudel started this seminal work with a focus on the diplomacy of Phillip II of Spain, but then found over the course of his investigation that his historical subjects were not so much the actors as they were being acted upon.<sup>56</sup> This led Braudel to a history of the Mediterranean itself, which he divided into three scales. The first scale is the geographic, that is the slow-moving history of the relationship between man and his environment that proceeds across the nearly endless cycles of the seasons.<sup>57</sup> Next is social history, the history of societies and civilizations.<sup>58</sup> Last is the history of singular events and individual actors.<sup>59</sup> According to Braudel, the Mediterranean is not a sea, but a complex of seas unified under a singular climate.<sup>60</sup> The result of the unifying climate is

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<sup>56</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (London and New York: Fontana/Collins, 1975), 19.

<sup>57</sup> Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 20-21.

<sup>59</sup> Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 21.

<sup>60</sup> Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 23 and 231-38.

that the agricultural conditions favoring wheat, olives, and vines were everywhere the same, which, in the words of Braudel, “prepared the ground for the establishment of identical rural economies.”<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the land and climate of the Mediterranean molded all the societies that developed alongside it.

The primary revision to Braudel’s work was not completed until 2000 when Horden and Purcell published *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*.<sup>62</sup> Horden and Purcell retained Braudel’s thesis that environment and landscape impacts the kind of societies that develop within them but argue against the inherent unity of the Mediterranean. Instead, Horden and Purcell suggest an approach using ‘microecologies,’ which they define as “a locality (a definite place) with a distinctive identity derived from the set of available productive opportunities and the particular interplay of human responses to them found in a given period.”<sup>63</sup> Each microecology is distinct and offers a unique set of opportunities and challenges to which the residents of that definite place respond. Although Horden and Purcell argue for a smaller scale of analysis than Braudel, both envision people responding to a given set of environmental conditions. As such, environments do not actively shape human societies, but they do set the limits on human action.

Another environmental historian of the Middle Ages, Richard Hoffman, offers a model for understanding and studying the dynamic relationship between people and their

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<sup>61</sup> Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 236.

<sup>62</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 80.

environment in his 2014 work *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe*.<sup>64</sup> Hoffman notes a long-term historiographical trend that treats nature as a distinct sphere of study from culture.<sup>65</sup> Hoffman proposes a model that retains the distinction between nature and culture, but acknowledges that nature and culture overlap because people engage with the world both materially and culturally. Hoffman's model, as he puts it, "... establishes human society, human artefacts, indeed even human bodies, as *hybrids* of the symbolic and the material, for human organisms and material cultures necessarily exist simultaneously in both the cultural and the natural spheres."<sup>66</sup> Building on this statement, Hoffman proposes a model for understanding humanity's place at the intersection of nature and culture. According to Hoffman, a cultural construct or program originates purely from culture and is translated into work, which is when people put a cultural program or idea into action in the physical world. The result is that people both change and experience the physical world. That experience is understood through cultural representations, which then affect culture and the new ideas that emerge from it. Through this interactive cycle, "culture and nature co-adapt; they engage in co-evolution."<sup>67</sup> A benefit of Hoffman's model is that it presents a way of organizing historical evidence that neither privileges environmental nor cultural determinism.<sup>68</sup> Textual descriptions of

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<sup>64</sup> Richard C. Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe*, 6-7.

<sup>66</sup> Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe*, 8. (emphasis original)

<sup>67</sup> Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe*, 10.

landscapes, the historical source that I am primarily concerned with in this dissertation, exist at the junction of nature and culture.<sup>69</sup> Landscape descriptions reflect concerns and attitudes derived from culture, as well as the experiences of people in the physical world.

### III. Experience

An author's experience of landscape is central to understanding the relationship between a landscape and a literary description of that landscape. While experience is a concept that has been much theorized, I limit myself to three observations that are helpful in understanding experience within landscapes. First, as C.S. Lewis, the Oxford medievalist and author argues, an experience of a phenomenon is distinct from an outsider's observation of the same phenomenon.<sup>70</sup> An example that Lewis uses is that a lover would describe the experience of being in love differently than an outside observer's description of being in love. Although Lewis does not use the words, he distinguishes between an 'emic' (or inside) and 'etic' (or outside) description of phenomena. An author's description of a landscape that he has experienced is an emic description, while a modern historian's or archeologist's observations and measurements of the same landscape is an etic description. Both descriptions provide equally valid information about the landscape, but they will be different.

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<sup>69</sup> Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe*, 14.

<sup>70</sup> C.S. Lewis, "Meditation in a Toolshed," in *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 212-215.

Second, Yi-Fu Tuan, the aforementioned humanist geographer, argues, “To experience is to learn; it means acting on the given and creating out the given. The given cannot be known in itself. What can be known is a reality that is a construct of experience, a creation of feeling and thought.”<sup>71</sup> Here Tuan builds on Lewis’ distinction between experience and a given reality with the central observation that people learn about the world through subjective experience. Tuan goes on to argue that personal knowledge of a place is created through subjective experiences in a place. While Tuan draws too sharp a distinction between a given reality and what can be known about it, his observation that people learn about the world through subjective experience is crucial to my analysis.<sup>72</sup> Landscape descriptions are an emic description of a person’s experience in the landscape, but that subjective experience is the author’s primary way of learning about his landscape.

Third, experience in a landscape is embodied. For Hoffman, experience is the step in which people bring physical knowledge of their surroundings into the realm of culture.<sup>73</sup> That landscape experience is embodied means that while two people may experience the same landscape differently because experience is subjective, they are exposed to the same physical elements of the landscape, which means that they can sympathize with each other in the literal sense of “feeling with.” This is the logic that

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<sup>71</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 9.

<sup>72</sup> See Ingold’s critique discussed on page 15.

<sup>73</sup> Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe*, 10.

underlies David Gange's 2019 book, *The Frayed Atlantic Edge*.<sup>74</sup> Gange, a historian of the British Isles, recognized that the histories and cultures of coastal communities were oriented toward the sea and not toward major population centers. Therefore, to better understand the histories of those coastal communities, Gange personally kayaked the Atlantic coasts of the British Isles from Shetland to Cornwall.<sup>75</sup> Thus, by physically experiencing the landscapes of the British Isles from a small watercraft in the Atlantic, Gange was better able to understand the experiences of the people in the communities he was writing about.

When these three observations are considered together, it is evident that experiences in a landscape are rooted in a defined set of physical phenomena yet are unique to each individual. An individual learns about his landscape through his own subjective experience, which he describes using language informed by his culture. Thus, when an author writes a description of a landscape, he uses cultural symbols to describe a subjective experience in a physical place. We cannot expect landscape descriptions to be the same because of the subjectivity of experience and we should expect authors to draw from their culture to describe the physical properties of their landscapes. Therefore, when an author draws on a literary topos in a landscape description, it does not necessarily mean that the landscape description is simply drawing on literary precedent. Rather, the

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<sup>74</sup> David Gange, *The Frayed Atlantic Edge: A Historian's Journey from Shetland to the Channel* (London: William Collins, 2019).

<sup>75</sup> Gange, *The Frayed Atlantic Edge*, 5-7.

author is using the common language of his culture to describe a subjective experience in a real place.

#### IV. Recent Scholarship on Late Antique Landscapes

The study of landscapes in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages has expanded significantly in recent years. The scholarship can be divided into three categories depending on their treatment of archeological evidence, literary evidence, and the role of experience in interpreting that evidence.

The first direction is landscape archeology, in which large surveys of archeological data are used to assess change in settlement patterns and rural life over time. Two particularly noteworthy projects, one French and one British, have aggregated huge amounts of archeological data on the Roman countryside of Gaul and Britain. *New Visions of the Countryside in Roman Britain*, published in three volumes between 2016 and 2018, focuses specifically on rural Roman Britain.<sup>76</sup> *Gallia Rustica* is the two-volume product of Michel Reddé's Rural Landscape in North-East Gaul project, published in 2017 and 2018.<sup>77</sup> While the French and British projects each employed

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<sup>76</sup> A. Smith, M. Allen, T. Brindle, and M. Fulford, *The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain (New Visions of the Countryside of Roman Britain 1)*, Britannia Monograph Series 29 (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 2016); A. Smith, M. Allen, L. Lodwick, T. Brindle, and M. Fulford, with contributions by J. Allen, P. Bidwell, S. Rippon, and J. Timby, *The Rural Economy of Roman Britain (New Visions of the Countryside of Roman Britain 2)*, Britannia Monograph Series 30 (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 2017); A. Smith, M. Allen, T. Brindle, M. Fulford, L. Lodwick, and A. Rohnbogner, *Life and Death in the Countryside of Roman Britain (New Visions of the Countryside of Roman Britain 3)*, Britannia Monograph Series 31 (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 2018).

<sup>77</sup> Michel Reddé, ed., *Gallia Rustica 1: les campagnes du nord-est de la Gaule, de la fin de l'âge du Fer à l'Antiquité tardive*, Ausonius Éditions Mémoires 49 (Bordeaux: 2017); Michel Reddé ed., *Gallia Rustica 2: les campagnes du nord-est de la Gaule, de la fin de l'âge du Fer à l'Antiquité tardive*, Ausonius Éditions Mémoires 50 (Bordeaux: 2018).

slightly different methodologies to address a different range of questions, each compiled a vast range of archeological data in order to study rural life from the Iron Age through Late Antiquity in their respective regions.<sup>78</sup>

Pilar Diarte-Blasco has produced more focused studies on Spain using landscape archeology. Diarte-Blasco assessed the transformation of settlements in Hispania from the fourth to the seventh centuries in his 2018 monograph, *Late Antique and Early Medieval Hispania: Landscapes without Strategy?*<sup>79</sup> Diarte-Blasco also edited, along with Niel Christie, a 2018 collection of essays *Interpreting Transformations of People and Landscapes in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Archeological Approaches and Issues*.<sup>80</sup> The essays in this collection address a wide geographic range, from Wales to southern Italy, but are united in a common focus use of landscape archeology to answer questions about large scale transitions and the effects of those transitions on individual people.<sup>81</sup> All these studies using landscape archeology treat landscape as a physical place, which people changed by living it. As such, human history can be read through an analysis of landscapes.

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<sup>78</sup> For a more in-depth comparison of *New Visions of the Countryside of Roman Britain and Gallia Rustica*, see: Michael Fulford, "The Countryside of Roman Britain: A Gallic Perspective," *Britannia* 51 (Nov. 2020): 295-306.

<sup>79</sup> Pilar Diarte-Blasco, *Late Antique and Early Medieval Hispania: Landscapes without Strategy?* (Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2018).

<sup>80</sup> Pilar Diarte-Blasco and Neil Christie, eds. *Interpreting Transformations of People and Landscapes in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Archeological Approaches and Issues* (Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2018).

<sup>81</sup> Neil Christie, "Changing Data and Changing Interpretations in the Study of Transformations of Late Antique Space and Society," in *Interpreting Transformations of People and Landscapes in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Archeological Approaches and Issues*, eds. Pilar Diarte-Blasco and Neil Christie. xi-xviii (Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2018).

Another body of scholarship focuses on landscape descriptions in late antique sources. In 2016, Cillian O’Hogan demonstrated that Prudentius’ descriptions of landscapes are literarily dependent on biblical and classical texts and concludes that physical reality has little place in Prudentius’ literary works. O’Hogan writes that Prudentius, “...consistently shies away from engagement with reality, and retreats into precedents that owe more to biblical and classical precedents than they do to lived experience.”<sup>82</sup> For O’Hogan there is little overlap between the landscapes that Prudentius experienced and the descriptions of landscape that appear in his literary output. Marisa Squillante has made similar arguments regarding the fifth-century Gallic author Sidonius Apollinaris.<sup>83</sup> In the 2017 monograph *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes*, Heide Estes applied an eco-critical approach to literary descriptions of landscapes in Anglo-Saxon texts to assess the Anglo-Saxon understanding of their relationship with their landscape.<sup>84</sup> Estes did not identify a single Anglo-Saxon view of the landscape, but rather a diversity of views depending on the text. In 2020 Bronwen Neil and Kosta Simic edited a volume of collected essays, entitled *Memories of Utopia: The Revision of Histories and Landscapes in Late Antiquity*.<sup>85</sup> In this volume the authors use the term landscape in a variety of ways, ranging from the usual meaning of a topographical place to the abstract

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<sup>82</sup> Cillian O’Hogan, *Prudentius and the Landscapes of Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

<sup>83</sup> Marisa Squillante, “La biblioteca di Sidonio Apollinare.” *Voces* 20 (2009): 139-59.

<sup>84</sup> Heide Estes, *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes* (Amsterdam University Press, 2017).

<sup>85</sup> Bronwen Neil and Kosta Simic, eds. *Memories of Utopia: The Revision of Histories and Landscapes in Late Antiquity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).

space of memory. As contributor Rajiv Bhola puts it, "...collective and cultural memory becomes a landscape in itself as an aspect of space that one can visualise, navigate, and manipulate."<sup>86</sup> For the authors of this volume, landscape is as much a mental product as memory is. Comparisons between late antique landscape descriptions and the archeological record are rare and generally serve to demonstrate incongruencies and that the author has manipulated the landscape description.<sup>87</sup> The aforementioned studies of the literary uses of landscapes in late antiquity are generally concerned with the author's intentions, motives, and views of landscape.

A third approach to the study of landscapes in late antiquity combines literary and archeological sources to analyze how people interacted with the world around them and how they thought about the world around them. Jamie Kreiner's 2020 monograph, *Legions of Pigs in the Early Medieval West*, makes use of a wide array of literary and archeological evidence. Kreiner analyzes the complex place of pigs in the culture, environment, and economy of the early medieval West to argue that people developed an "ecological" approach to their world.<sup>88</sup> In making this argument, Kreiner highlights not only how people raised and managed pigs, but also how pigs were "...a constant

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<sup>86</sup> Rajiv K. Bhola, epilogue to *Memories of Utopia: The Revision of Histories and Landscapes in Late Antiquity*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Kosta Simic (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 269.

<sup>87</sup> See especially: Chris Bishop, "Ausonius, Fortunatus, and the ruins of the Moselle," in *Memories of Utopia: The Revision of Histories and Landscapes in Late Antiquity*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Kosta Simic (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 189-203; and Leonela Fundic, "Transformation of Mediterranean ritual spaces up to the early Arab conquests," in *Memories of Utopia: The Revision of Histories and Landscapes in Late Antiquity*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Kosta Simic (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 251-266.

<sup>88</sup> Jamie Kreiner, *Legions of Pigs in the Early Medieval West* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020), 6.

reminder of that humans *had* to adapt to their animals and landscapes: total control or assimilation was unthinkable.”<sup>89</sup> Kreiner’s formulation of people managing pigs, adapting to pigs, and using pigs to think about their place in the world is similar to Hoffman’s placement of people at the junction of nature and culture.

Another recent author who has combined literary and archeological sources is Jason König, who argues that mountains were both divine and human places in his 2022 book, *The Folds of Olympus: Mountains in Ancient Greek and Roman Culture*.<sup>90</sup> König makes his argument by pointing out that mountain tops were sites of divine worship where people built sanctuaries and held festivals and that mountain tops serve as a point between divine and human contact in ancient literature. König points out that mountain tops were places of bodily engagement.<sup>91</sup> That is, people in antiquity physically went to mountain tops to engage in cult activities and experienced the landscape of mountain tops in particular ways. Here, König turns to Ingold’s term “taskscape” to envision mountains as places where people engaged in an array of interlocking activities.<sup>92</sup> König suggests that it is possible to reconstruct ancient experiences mountain tops by going to archeological sites on mountain tops ourselves and by reading “...the textual evidence with more alertness to the theme of embodied experience.”<sup>93</sup> König thus advocates for a

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<sup>89</sup> Kreiner, *Legions of Pigs*, x. (emphasis original)

<sup>90</sup> Jason König, *The Folds of Olympus: Mountains in Ancient Greek and Roman Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 4.

<sup>91</sup> König, *The Folds of Olympus*, 8.

<sup>92</sup> König, *The Folds of Olympus*, 8.

<sup>93</sup> König, *The Folds of Olympus*, 9.

sympathetic reading of ancient descriptions of landscapes in the literal sense of “feeling with.”

#### V. My Proposed Method for Analyzing Late Antique Landscape Descriptions

My own approach to analyzing late antique landscapes stands between the second and third ways of studying landscapes outlined above. I am concerned first and foremost with literary descriptions of landscapes and I organize my study according to individual literary sources. However, my approach departs from other literary studies of late antique landscapes, such as that by O’Hogan, which argue that late antique authors distanced themselves from lived experience in their literary works. Instead, the questions that I ask of my sources and my treatment of experience in landscape more closely resembles that of Kreiner and König. I make use of both archeological and literary sources for the purpose of understanding both what people in late antiquity thought about their landscapes and how they experienced and interacted with their landscapes. I focus on how an individual author experienced, interacted with, and wrote about his landscape.

Landscape descriptions are textual products of subjective experiences in a landscape. As such, landscape descriptions by late antique authors differ from modern scholars’ reconstructions of late antique landscapes. Yet, remembering Hoffman’s observation that textual sources are hybrid creations of the natural environment and culture, late antique landscape descriptions remain rooted in the physical landscapes that their authors experienced. I propose that the landscape within which an author lived and wrote shapes the author’s experiences by imposing natural limits on the author’s actions

and thus the author's written works. There are three elements in this approach: 1) landscape; 2) a person, i.e., the author; 3) the written works produced by the author.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I use the European Landscape Convention's definition of landscape, "...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."<sup>94</sup> This definition widely used by other scholars and encompasses natural and man-made physical features of the land. This definition has the further advantage of including the importance of experience and interpretation of landscape.

Historical landscapes are accessible to modern historians through the study of modern topography, archeology, and, to a lesser extent, paleoclimate data. This body of archeological and scientific knowledge provides insight into the physical world inhabited by late antique authors, which allows a partial reconstruction of historic landscapes. I do not view landscapes as active agents, which, to me, attributes conscious decision making to the landscape. Rather, the physical properties of the landscape define the range of possible human action. The physical properties also impose limitations. A mountain may be difficult or impossible to climb. A river may be flooded. These aspects of landscape cannot be ignored by people living in their proximity. Therefore, landscape shapes and constrains the human activity within it.

In this dissertation, one author and his relationship to his landscape is analyzed in each chapter. By identifying the natural limits set by a local landscape on each author and

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<sup>94</sup> Council of Europe, European Treaty Series 176, Council of Europe Landscape Convention, Chapter 1.1.a.

how the author responded to those limits, it is possible to determine how each author mentally organized his landscape. Therefore, for each author analyzed I answer two questions: First, how did an author's landscape impact the author's literary works through the author's experience in it? Second, how did each author mentally organized and interpret his landscape?

These two questions and their answers focus on the author's cognitive processes. They tell us how an author thought about and interpreted the landscape in which he lived. Even though the direct objects of my study are literary sources and historical landscapes, the primary subjects of my study are people, late antique authors whose literary works have survived.

## VI. Outline of the Dissertation

In this dissertation, I offer an in-depth study of landscapes as they appear in a selection of fifth and early sixth-century authors mostly from south-eastern Gaul. The authors are the agricultural author Palladius, Eucherius of Lyon, Sidonius Apollinaris, Avitus of Vienne, and the anonymous author of the *Life of the Jura Fathers*. With the possible exception of the anonymous hagiographer, about whom little is known, the authors in this study come from the highest echelons of Roman and Gallo-Roman society. Michele Salzman has termed the highest class of late Roman society "senatorial aristocrats," by which she means the people who, at a minimum, acquired the lowest

senatorial rank of *clarissimus*.<sup>95</sup> This was a complex group of people with multiple sub-groups, multiple ways of achieving the rank of *clarissimus*, that extended across the late Roman Empire.<sup>96</sup> According to Salzman, membership in the senatorial aristocracy generally required, “noble birth, distinction in public service, a high moral character, intellectual culture, and sufficient wealth.”<sup>97</sup> After the reign of Constantine, sons of senators could inherit the rank of *clarissimus*, although, only those senators who also attained office enjoyed the full benefits of their birth as aristocrats.<sup>98</sup> The only authors in my study that unambiguously fit into this category are Palladius and Sidonius Apollinaris. They both served as Urban Prefect of Rome, owned villas, and were from noble families.<sup>99</sup> However, religious and political change in Gaul during the fifth century changed the senatorial aristocracy there by offering alternative career paths to political office.

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<sup>95</sup> Michele Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 21.

<sup>96</sup> Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 21-24.

<sup>97</sup> Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 20-21.

<sup>98</sup> Michele Salzman, *The Falls of Rome: Crises, Resilience, and Resurgence in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 22-23 and 52-54.

<sup>99</sup> Sidonius Apollinaris’ life and career is well documented and studied. See *PCBE* 4: 1759-1800 (Sidonius 1); *PLRE* II: 115-18 (Gaius Sollius (Modestus?) Apollinaris Sidonius 6); Joop van Waarden, “Sidonius’ Biography in Photo Negative,” in *Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*, Gavin Kelly and Joop van Waarden (eds), 13-28 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020); Jill Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). Palladius’ life and career are much more obscure than Sidonius’. However, Palladius mentions that he owned villas on Sardinia and near Rome. (Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.16, 4.10.24, and 12.15.3.) The earliest manuscripts of Palladius’ work name him “Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus” and give him the title *vir inlustris*. (John Fitch, *Palladius: The Work of Farming* (Devon: Prospect Books, 2013), 11; Marco Johannes Bartoldus, *Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus: Welt und Wert spätrömischer Landwirtschaft* (Augsburg: Wißner-Verlag, 2014), 11-12.) Palladius’ four names suggests that he came from a family of high standing and his title suggests that he held a high imperial post. I argue that Palladius was the Urban Prefect of Rome in 458. See pages 53-54.

The introduction of ascetic monasticism to Gaul drew some of the senatorial aristocracy away from secular careers, including Eucherius of Lyon who joined the monastery at Lérins between 412 and 420.<sup>100</sup> Little of Eucherius' background is known and he does not explain his reasons for undertaking the monastic life. Ralph Mathisen has speculated that Eucherius' motivations might have been as varied as pious devotion, escaping political turmoil, or personal legal problems.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, what little can be pieced together about Eucherius' background point to him being a member of the aristocracy. First, Eucherius had the traditional education of the senatorial aristocrat, which he displayed most fully in his work *De contemptu mundi* by combining references to classical authors, such as Cicero, and biblical citations.<sup>102</sup> Second, Eucherius was related to Priscus Valerianus, to whom he addressed the work *De contemptu mundi*. Priscus Valerianus was himself related to the emperor Eparchius Avitus (r. 455-56).<sup>103</sup> This means that Eucherius was a member of one of the leading families of Gaul. Finally, Eucherius' contemporaries highly esteemed him. Hilary of Arles called Eucherius "splendid in the world."<sup>104</sup> While Eucherius did not pursue the traditional career of the senatorial aristocrat in the imperial service or in the senatorial career path, he still became

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<sup>100</sup> *PCBE* 4: 653-658. (Eucherius 2). For further discussion see chapter 2, note 2.

<sup>101</sup> Ralph Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 81-83.

<sup>102</sup> Salvatore Pricoco, *Eucherio: Il rifiuto del mondo* (Bologna: Centro editoriale hehoniano, EDB, 1990). For an analysis of Eucherius' rhetoric see: John M. Pepino, "St. Eucherius of Lyons: Rhetorical Adaptation of Message to Intended Audience in Fifth Century Provence," (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 2009. UMI Microform 3348463), 100-141.

<sup>103</sup> *PLRE* II: 1142-43 (Priscus Valerianus 8); *PCBE* 4: 1905 (Valerianus 2).

<sup>104</sup> Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Honorati*, 22,2 (SC 235: 130.): "*splendidus mundo*"

a leading public figure in Gaul by becoming the bishop of Lyon between 434 and 439.<sup>105</sup> By becoming a bishop and engaging in literary pursuits, Eucherius was able to find an expression for some of the traditional values of the senatorial aristocracy that were suitable to his embrace of an ascetic form of Christianity.

The gradual collapse of Roman political power in Gaul during the fifth century further complicates the identification of other senatorial aristocrats as holders of high office, a problem that was acknowledged by Sidonius himself. Following the collapse of Roman imperial authority in Gaul, Sidonius wrote, "...for now that the old degrees of official rank are swept away, those degrees by which the highest in the land used to be distinguished from the lowest, the only token of nobility will henceforth be a knowledge of letters."<sup>106</sup> While an education in literature remained an important marker of status in post-Roman Gaul, Sidonius did not mention that many senatorial aristocrats in Gaul, such as Eucherius and himself, took up ecclesiastical positions as a way of maintaining their distinction as civic leaders. The fifth-century movement of aristocrats into ecclesiastical careers was a distinct phenomenon in south-eastern Gaul, which is where most of the authors in this dissertation are from.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *PCBE* 4: 655 (Eucherius 2).

<sup>106</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 8.2.2 (LCL 420: 404-405; trans. Anderson): "*nam iam remotis gradibus dignitatum, per quas solebat ultimo a quoque summus quisque discerni, solum erit posthac nobilitatis indicium litteras nosse.*"

<sup>107</sup> The movement of Gallo-Roman aristocrats into the church was once assumed to be a widespread phenomenon. See: Martin Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien : Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. Bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Soziale, prosopographische und bildungsgeschichtliche Aspekte* (Munich: Artimis Verlag, 1976), 237-246; Ralph Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 93-95. However, more recent studies have shown that the entrance of Roman aristocrats into church office during the fifth and sixth centuries was less widespread than previously thought and restricted to distinct areas of Gaul,

Avitus of Vienne was from the same family network as Sidonius, and therefore had the noble birth of a traditional senatorial aristocrat. Avitus also put his traditional education on display in his literary output, which include a letter collection, homilies, and a multi-book versification of the events recorded in the Pentateuch.<sup>108</sup> However, Avitus came of age after the demise of Roman control of Gaul, which meant an imperial career in Gaul or in Italy was not an option. Instead, Avitus succeeded his father to become the bishop of Vienne.<sup>109</sup> Unlike Eucherius, however, Avitus was not an ascetic monk. Avitus neither sought the desert, nor renounced the world in the way that Eucherius did. Therefore, Avitus retained a connection to his aristocratic background. Although Avitus' career did not resemble those of earlier generations of senatorial aristocrats, he nonetheless retained many of his traditional aristocratic values and carried them into a post-Roman world.

Apart from Palladius, who described villas in Sardinia and Italy, the authors of this study described landscapes in south-eastern Gaul. South-eastern Gaul is united by the Rhône River (pictured in Figure I.1 in dark blue), which flows from its Alpine sources to Lake Geneva, to Lyon, then south to Arles and the Mediterranean. As the only major

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including south-eastern Gaul. See: Stefan Esders, *Römische Rechtstradition und merowingisches Königtum: Zum Rechtscharakter politischer Herrschaft in Burgund im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 185; Richard Bartlett, "Aristocracy and Asceticism: The Letters of Ennodius and the Gallic and Italian Churches," in *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul*, eds. Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 212-215; Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2012), 494–95; Salzman, *The Falls of Rome*, 195-196.

<sup>108</sup> *PCBE* 4: 242-63 (Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus 2). Peiper published an edition of Avitus' collected literary works in 1883, see *MGH AA* 6.2.

<sup>109</sup> *PCBE* 4: 243 (Avitus 2).

river in Gaul to connect to the Mediterranean Sea, the Rhône was and is a major transportation corridor. The Rhône corridor defined many of the experiences of the authors in this study. Eucherius was a monk on an island off the coast of southern Gaul before moving up the Rhône to become bishop of Lyon. Lyon was Sidonius' home. Avitus was bishop of Vienne, a city along the Rhône just south Lyon. Romanus, whose life is recorded in the *Life of the Jura Fathers*, received his monastic training in Lyon before moving to the Jura Mountains just north of the Rhône River. The Rhône connected people and facilitated the maintenance of a common cultural area.



Figure I.1: Map of Rivers and Places included in this Dissertation. Created in Google Earth Pro<sup>®</sup> by the author.

The Rhône traverses many different landscapes. The Rhône flows from the Alps and past the Jura Mountains. It proceeds through the temperate valleys of central Gaul south to the sunny Mediterranean. The landscapes described by the authors in this dissertation are just as diverse. Palladius describes how he grew citrons on villas in Sardinia and Italy. Eucherius describes his monastic retreat on the Mediterranean islands of Lérins, just off the coast of modern Cannes. Sidonius describes his home in Lyon. Avitus describes rivers and lakes of central Gaul. The *Life of the Jura Fathers* includes descriptions of the forested Jura mountains covered in winter snow.

While the authors in this study came from the same social class and were all (but one) in Gaul in the fifth century, they do not present one view of Gaul. Rather, each author experienced, interpreted, and reported on their landscape in ways that expressed different views of Gaul. In each of the following five chapters I focus on a single author's experience and description of a single landscape. Each chapter has the dual goal of demonstrating the impact of the landscape on the text and the author's view of the landscape.

In Chapter 1 I analyze Palladius' agricultural treatise, the *Opus agriculturae*. In this treatise, Palladius calendrically organizes agricultural advice that he derived from a combination of earlier Roman agricultural authors, such as Columella, and his personal experience. Recent scholarship on Palladius has emphasized the importance of Palladius' personal experience to the *Opus agriculturae* and has recognized the practicality of much of Palladius' advice for Mediterranean pre-industrial agriculture.<sup>110</sup> I build on this

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<sup>110</sup> Fitch, *Palladius*, 12-13; Bartoldus, *Palladius*, 279.

scholarship by showing that Palladius used his personal experience to critique other Roman agricultural authors. Palladius' experience farming was shaped by the landscape of the villas that he managed in Sardinia and Italy. For example, although Palladius' villas in Sardinia and Italy were in the same climatic zone by modern measurements, Palladius categorized the climate of his villa in Italy as "cold" and that of his Sardinian villa as "hot" and offered different agricultural advice for each place.<sup>111</sup> Palladius' sensitivity to climate is only one example of Palladius acknowledging how the nature of a place's climate and land places constraints on agriculture that farmers must respond to. Yet, within the natural limitations of a place, Palladius also firmly believed in the human capacity to change the landscape for the purpose of improving agricultural productivity.

Palladius is unique among the authors included for study in this dissertation in that he was probably not from Gaul.<sup>112</sup> Nonetheless, his *Opus agriculturae* offers a traditional understanding of the landscape as experienced by a senatorial aristocrat with traditional elite values. The proper management of one's household and villas were intimately bound with being a senatorial aristocrat of good standing.<sup>113</sup> The view of the landscape expressed by Palladius is that of an aristocratic head of household with the responsibility of managing his villas and his dependents that lived and worked on them. This responsibility would have been familiar to the other senatorial aristocrats included in this study, but it is an aristocratic value that they do not express as clearly in their extant

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<sup>111</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.25.20, 3.25.28, and 4.10.16. See discussion on pages 74-76.

<sup>112</sup> See pages 55-56.

<sup>113</sup> Kristina Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antique Italy: Roman Bishops and the Domestic Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4-14.

writings as Palladius. Instead, the landscapes that Eucherius, Sidonius, Avitus, and the *Life of the Jura Fathers* each reveal their preoccupation with diverse religious aspects and interpretations of their landscapes. Thus, Palladius' perspective as a villa owner on the productive potential of the villa landscape offers an important comparison to the other authors in this study, by offering an alternative view of the landscape that other Gallic authors could have expressed but chose not to.

In the second chapter I turn to Eucherius of Lyon's theological treatise *De laude eremi*. In the *De laude eremi* Eucherius praises the desert as a special place, drawing on examples from the Bible and monastic history, where one could be alone and find God. Eucherius ends this treatise praising the islands of Lérins, where he lived as a monk, as the desert. Eucherius' reception and treatment of the "desert" as monastic concept in the *De laude eremi* has attracted considerable scholarly attention.<sup>114</sup> I take the scholarship in a new direction by arguing that Eucherius not only engages directly with Lérins' physical

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<sup>114</sup> Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Reprint 1997), 160-162; Conrad Leyser, *Asceticism and Authority* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 33-61; James Goehring, "The Dark Side of the Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian Myth of the Desert," in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, eds. Martin and Miller (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 145-146; Mireille Labrousse, "La spiritualité des premiers moines de Lérins," in *Histoire de L'Abbaye de Lérins*, eds. Mireille Labrousse, Eliana Magnani, Yann Codou, Jean-Marie Le Gall, Régis Bertrand, Dom Vladimir Gaudrat (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine – ARCCIS, 2005), 101-104; Conrad Leyser, "Uses of the Desert in the Sixth Century West," in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, special issue of *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. 1, (2006): 119 and 121; Claudia Rapp, "Desert, City, and Countryside in the Early Christian Imagination," in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, special issue of *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. 1, (2006): 104-109; Manté Lenkaitytė, "Eucher interprète de la Bible dans l' «Éloge du desert»,," in *In Lérins, Une île sainte de l'antiquité au Moyen Âge*, (eds.) Codou and Lauwers (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 83-104; Rosa Maria Dessì and Michel Lauwers, "Désert, église, île sainte: Lérins et la sanctification des îles monastiques de l'antiquité au Moyen Âge," in *Lérins, Une île sainte de l'antiquité au Moyen Âge*, (eds.) Yann Codou and Michel Lauwers, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 231-79; Christopher Kelly, "The Myth of the Desert in Western Monasticism: Eucherius of Lyon's *In Praise of the Desert*," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (2011): 136.

landscape, but also that Lérins' physical landscape informed Eucherius' definition and interpretation of the monastic desert. Eucherius was committed to Lérins as a monastic desert equal to the deserts described in the Bible and Egyptian monastic literature. The image of the desert that Eucherius received from the Bible and Egyptian monastic literature was inspired by dry sterile places in Egypt and the Near East. Lérins, on the other hand, is a forested Mediterranean archipelago whose archeology points to long history of habitation just off the coast from modern Cannes. Lérins did not resemble the deserts described in the Bible and both Eucherius and Eucherius' audience of other monks on Lérins knew it. Eucherius resolved this apparent contradiction by embracing Lérins' landscape. First, Eucherius emphasized the importance of isolation to his definition of desert to match the fact that Lérins as an archipelago is isolated from the mainland. Second, Eucherius described the virtues of the Egyptian monks as metaphorical plants that filled the Egyptian desert. Eucherius then described the plant life at Lérins as the physical manifestation of the virtues of the Lérinian monks. Therefore, Eucherius' experience of Lérins' landscape shaped his conception of the desert and his writing.

Lyon's urban landscape as described in the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris features in Chapter 3. Sidonius is a well-studied author, whose letters and poems have recently attracted much attention. Sidonius self-consciously modeled his letter collection on that of Pliny the Younger and references to a multitude of other classical authors abound.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Sidonius names Pliny the Younger as the inspiration for publishing nine books of letters, the same number that Pliny did. (Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 9.1.1.) For a recent scholarly summary of Sidonius' intertextuality, see Isabella Gualandri, "Sidonius' Intertextuality," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*,

The highly literary nature of Sidonius' description of his villa, churches, and other places has led some scholars to focus their attention on specifically on Sidonius' literary craftsmanship.<sup>116</sup> Other scholars have focused on Sidonius' use of space in a poem that Sidonius wrote for use in a specific church.<sup>117</sup> I build on this scholarship by bringing our attention to the intimate relationship between Sidonius' literary descriptions of specific places in Lyon, including two churches and two tombs, and Sidonius' understanding of Lyon's urban landscape more generally. I do this in two steps. First, I situate Sidonius' description of each place in Lyon in its archeological context demonstrating that Sidonius was drawing on his personal experiences of these places in his literary descriptions. Second, by collating the places in Lyon that Sidonius described in his letters, it is possible to determine how Sidonius mentally organized all of Lyon. Sidonius' focus on churches and tombs for their spiritual significance, as meeting places, and as places where Sidonius was able to contribute to the built environment of Lyon indicates that Sidonius mentally organized Lyon according to its religious landscape. As such, Sidonius' highly literary letters are connected to Lyon as Sidonius experienced the city in the fifth century.

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(eds.) Kelly and van Waarden, 279-316 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). For a good overview of recent work on Sidonius, see the essays in this volume.

<sup>116</sup> For a short list of recent examples, see: Rainer Henke, "Der Brief 3,12 des Sidonius Apollinaris an Secundus: Eine Novelle in einer Epistel?" *Hermes* 140, no. 1 (2012): 121-125. Jelle Visser, "Sidonius Apollinaris, Ep. II.2: The Man and his Villa," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 8 (2014): 26-45.

<sup>117</sup> J. Hernández Lobato, "La écfraisis de la Catedral de Lyon como híbrido intersistémico: Sidonio Apolinar y el *Gesamtkunstwerk* tardoantiguo," *AnTard* 18 (2010): 297-308. Gaëlle Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard, "Les Descriptions et Évocations d'Édifices Religieux Chrétiens dans l'Oeuvre de Sidoine Apollinaire," in *Présence de Sidoine Apollinaire*, (eds.) Poignault and Stoehr-Monjou, 379-406. (Clermont-Ferrand: Centre de Recherches A. Piganiol – Présence de l'Antiquité, 2014).

In Chapter 4, I use Avitus of Vienne's treatment of gifts of fish in his letter collection to assess Avitus' understanding of the rivers and water ways of Gaul. Danuta Shanzer has used Avitus' letters regarding fish to discuss different aspects of late antique Gaul's social history, ranging from humor to fasting practices.<sup>118</sup> I expand on Shanzer's work in three ways. First, I introduce the archeological evidence for fish consumption in central Gaul. The archeological evidence complements Avitus' letters by supporting the importance of both fresh and saltwater fish to Roman style banqueting in Gaul. Second, I situate gifts of fish in late antique Gaul at the junction of aristocratic custom of sending food gifts and the development of Christian fasting practices. By sending gifts of fish, Gallic aristocrats were able to build and maintain their social networks. And because fish was also an acceptable food to each during Christian fasts, they blurred the boundary between feasting and fasting in late antique Gaul.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, whenever Avitus describes gifts of fish he frequently also names the river or other aquatic environment from which the fish was sourced. Therefore, the landscape and its fish enabled and shaped how Avitus engaged in his religious and social dialog with other bishops and aristocrats.

In the fifth and final chapter I turn to the use of landscape in the *Life of the Jura Fathers* or *Vita patrum jurensium* (*VPJ*) an early sixth-century hagiography of three abbots who lived in the Haut-Jura region of the Jura Mountains. The *VPJ* has attracted

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<sup>118</sup> Danuta Shanzer, "Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul," in *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources*, eds. Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer. 217-36 (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>119</sup> See my discussion on pages 221-223.

scholarly attention both for its place in the development of European monasticism and monastic rules<sup>120</sup> and for the anonymous hagiographer's use of the monastic "desert."<sup>121</sup> The *VPJ* had two purposes. First, as is typical of hagiography, the *VPJ* extolls the virtues and holiness of its subjects, the three abbots Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus. Second, the *VPJ* was sent to another monastery at Agaune, modern St. Maurice, Switzerland, to offer guidance to the monastic foundation there.<sup>122</sup> I argue that the anonymous hagiographer, himself a monk in the Jura mountains, used the landscape of the Jura mountains to help achieve both purposes. To describe the abbots as monks in the same tradition as the first Egyptian monks, the hagiographer highlights select elements of the landscape of the Jura mountains that correspond to landscape features in the desert

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<sup>120</sup> François Masai, "La "Vita partum iurensium" et les débuts du monachisme à Saint-Maurice d'Agaune," in *Festschrift Bernard Bischoff zu seinem 65 Geburtstag*, (eds.) Autenrieth and Bruhnhölzl, 43-69. (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1971); François Masai, "Une source insoupçonnée de la Regula Benedicti: la Vita Patrum Iurensium," in *Hommages André Boutemy*, ed. G. Cambier, Collection Latomus 145 (Brussels, 1976): 252-263; Ian Wood, "A prelude to Columbanus the monastic achievement in the Burgundian territories," in *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, (eds.) H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan, 3-32. BAR International Series 113. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Marylin Dunn, *Emergence of Monasticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 85-90; Klaus Zelzer, "Der Anonymus von Condat und die Regula Orientalis : eine offene frage?" *Regulae Benedicti Studia* 29 (2000): 165-66); Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité, vol. VIII* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2003); Jerzy Szafranowski, "The Life of the Jura Fathers and the Monastic Clergy," *Augustinianum* LIX.1 (2019): 143-59.

<sup>121</sup> Conrad Leyser, "Angels, Monks, and Demons in the Early Medieval West," in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages*, (eds.) Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9-22; Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité, vol. VIII* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2003); James Goering, "The Dark Side of the Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian Myth of the Desert," in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, (eds.) Martin and Miller, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 136-49; Conrad Leyser, "Uses of the Desert in the Sixth Century West." In *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, special issue of *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. 1, (2006): 113-134; Laura Feldt, "Letters from the Wilderness – Marginality, Literarity, and Religious Authority Changes in Late Antique Gaul," in *Marginality, Media and Mutations of Religious Authority in the History of Christianity*, (eds.) Feldt, L. and J.N. Bremmer, (Leuven: Peeters, 2019): 69-95.

<sup>122</sup> Whether the *VPJ* was accompanied by a written rule or was intended to function as a monastic rule itself is a matter of scholarly debate. See my discussion on pages 261-262.

described in Egyptian monastic literature. This allows the hagiographer to claim that the Jura is the desert. The hagiographer also brings the reader's attention to the harsh winter weather of the Jura mountains to emphasize the ascetic prowess of the abbots. Furthermore, the hagiographer describes how the monks of the Jura adapted their lifestyles, farming techniques, and monastic practice to their landscape. The hagiographer's detail in this regard allowed him to help establish the monastic practice at Agaune, which was also in the mountains. The monks' adaptations to life in the Jura mountains and the hagiographer's creative literary use of the landscape of the Jura mountains show how the landscape of the Jura mountains shaped the *VPJ*.

The authors and literary works included in this dissertation are very diverse. Palladius wrote an agricultural treatise. Eucherius wrote a theological treatise. Sidonius and Avitus both wrote letters, but the letters of Sidonius that I include pertain to the city of Lyon and Avitus' letters to gifts of fish. The *VPJ* is a hagiography by an anonymous mountain monk. Nonetheless, some of the same themes run through each of these authors.

All the authors included in this study, with the possible exception of the anonymous hagiographer, were from the senatorial aristocracy. I demonstrate how their aristocratic values are evident in their treatment of their landscapes. In his agricultural treatise, Palladius expresses an attitude toward his landscape that emphasizes the human capacity to improve the agricultural productivity of the land. Although Eucherius was a monk seeking the desert, his treatment of the desert as a superior option to aristocratic *otium* indicates that the values of the senatorial aristocracy still influenced the way that he viewed the landscape of Lérins. Important reasons that churches and tombs feature so

prominently in Sidonius' letters set in Lyon is because they were places that Sidonius performed or displayed his poetry to his aristocratic peers. Avitus most frequently expressed interest in the water ways of Gaul when he was participating in the aristocratic custom of sending and receiving gifts of fish.

Christian interpretations of landscape are also a constant concern for at least four of these authors. Eucherius and the hagiographer of the *VPJ* both interpreted their landscapes in as monastic deserts and drew on Egyptian hagiography and the Bible for the language they used to describe landscapes. The views expressed by Sidonius and Avitus, on the other hand, situated their aristocratic concerns within a Christian urban context. Sidonius may have wanted to impress his peers with his poetry, but he did so in uniquely Christian spaces. Avitus, exchanged gifts of fish with his aristocratic peers during Christian periods of fasting and feasting.

Palladius is the exception here. Palladius' religion is unknown, and he expresses neither a specifically Christian nor a specifically pagan view of the landscape. This is noteworthy because the genre of Roman agricultural treatises includes religious instructions for various rites associated with agriculture. Yet, what Palladius demonstrates is that a religious interpretation of landscape was a choice that authors made. Most of the authors in this study chose to interpret their landscape in Christian ways.

Finally, the landscapes that these authors experienced shaped their literary output. Although Palladius believed in the human capacity to improve the agricultural production of the land, he was also aware of the limitations landscape and climate imposed on

farmers and adjusted his instructions accordingly. Eucherius embraced Lérins' landscape as the desert and adjusted his definition of desert to accommodate Lérins. Sidonius included more than the basic elements of Lyon's topography in his letters. He also included the sounds he heard and the feelings he had when he described what he did at the churches and tombs of Lyon. The fish that Avitus sent and received as gifts were the fish that Gaul's waterways made available to him. The hagiographer of the *VPJ* tailored his vision of the monastic desert to the landscape of the Jura mountains. The *VPJ* also records the ways that the monks of the Jura adapted to their landscape, which informed the monastic practice that they passed on to the monks at Agaune. All the authors in this study were attentive to their landscape, responded to their landscape, and incorporated elements of their landscape into their literary works.

*Chapter 1*  
*Palladius and the Villa Experience*

About three miles to the west of the Rhône River and about eight miles north of Arles there is an unremarkable archeological site. The remains of a Roman villa occupy approximately half an acre in the far corner of the vineyard Mas des Tourelles. This villa was occupied from about the first century BC through the third century AD and was a production center for ceramics as is evident from the large furnaces and piles of broken pottery still in place. We know practically nothing about the people who lived at this villa. But the jars, amphorae, and *dolia* (large storage jars that could be over six feet tall at their largest) they produced were essential to the production and transportation of wine and olive oil, staples in the Roman world. This villa is unremarkable because the remains of hundreds of Roman villas are scattered across modern France, many of which were larger or more ornate, or are better preserved than the one at Mas des Tourelles.

What is remarkable about this villa today is that Mas des Tourelles continues to produce not just wine, but wine according to the methods and recipes described by Roman agricultural writers. While most of the vineyard is planted in long rows wide enough to accommodate a tractor, Mas des Tourelles maintains about a half-acre of vines planted in a grid, in pergolas, or in trees, according to the instructions of Columella.<sup>1</sup> In 1995, Mas des Tourelles built a winery using the instructions of Cato the Elder.<sup>2</sup> Using the grape juice extracted from the Cato-inspired facilities, Mas des Tourelles now

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<sup>1</sup> Columella, *De agricultura* 5.5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Cato, *De agricultura* 12-19.

produces wines according to recipes preserved in the works of Columella, Pliny the Elder, and Palladius.<sup>3</sup> Despite differences in grape varieties and bottling, the same methods are being used to produce the same wine on the same land nearly 2000 years after wine production first started at Mas des Tourelles. The fact that Mas des Tourelles has been able to reconstruct major elements of a Roman villa, largely relying on written sources, speaks to the close connection between ancient agricultural authors and the villas they managed.

In this chapter I use the *Opus agriculturae*, a fifth-century agricultural text, to assess how the author, a Roman aristocrat and villa owner, Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus, thought about the landscape of his villa. Through his experience as a villa owner, Palladius had a clear understanding of the limitations of human intervention in his landscape, but nonetheless strongly believed in the human capacity to improve upon nature. While Palladius is known for his reliance on earlier Roman agricultural authors, he also drew extensively on his personal experience as a villa owner to compose his *Opus agriculturae*. Based on his own writings, I argue that Palladius had enough experience in both agriculture and animal husbandry to confirm, critique, and clarify his literary sources on villa management.

Palladius is unique among the authors included for study in this dissertation in that he was probably not from Gaul.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, his *Opus agriculturae* provides an important balance for understanding late antique perspectives on landscapes. In the *Opus*

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<sup>3</sup> Columella, *De agricultura* 12.37; Pliny the Elder, *HN*. 14.6 and 22.53; Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 11.14.2.

<sup>4</sup> See pages 55-56.

*agriculturae* Palladius writes about villas and their management from the perspective of an aristocratic villa owner. With the one exception of the anonymous author of the *Life of the Jura Fathers*, about whom little is known, the authors studied in this dissertation, Eucherius of Lyon, Sidonius Apollinaris, and Avitus of Vienne, were from the same aristocratic class as Palladius and were familiar with villa life. However, the landscapes of Eucherius, Sidonius, Avitus, and the *Life of the Jura Fathers* that I analyze in the following chapters do not reflect their common experience as aristocratic participants in villa life. My analysis of the aforementioned authors reveals their preoccupation with diverse religious aspects and interpretations of their landscapes. Palladius' perspective on the productive potential of the villa landscape offers an important comparison to the other authors in this study, by offering an alternative view of the landscape that other Gallic authors could have expressed but chose not to.

I use Palladius because this alternative view of the landscape is not otherwise attested in extant fifth-century Gallic sources, although it probably did exist in Gaul. Sidonius Apollinaris offers several points of evidence indicating that fifth-century Gallic senators participated in the same tradition of agricultural literature that Palladius contributed to. First, Sidonius was familiar with the agricultural author Columella and assumed that his friend Namatius was, too.<sup>5</sup> Second, Sidonius was well acquainted with villa life, spent time on his peers' villas, and assumed that his peers spent their time on

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<sup>5</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.6.10.

villas engaged in agricultural pursuits.<sup>6</sup> Third, Gallic and Italian senators maintained cultural connections through the fifth century, as testified by Sidonius' two known journeys to Rome and Sidonius' communication with the Italian aristocrat Candidianus.<sup>7</sup> Finally, based on an allusion to an unnamed "vilicus" in one of Sidonius' poems, it is possible that Sidonius knew Palladius and Palladius' *Opus agriculturae*.<sup>8</sup> That Sidonius and his correspondents were familiar with agricultural authors, participated in villa culture, maintained connections with Italian senators, and were possibly familiar with Palladius' work indicates that Gallic senators participated in the same villa culture outlined by agricultural treatises as their Italian counterparts.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I situate Palladius in his historical and social context. Palladius provides very little biographical information about himself, but I maintain that he composed his *Opus agriculturae* in the mid-fifth century and was urban prefect of Rome in 458.<sup>9</sup> I move on to consider Palladius' audience, other Roman aristocrats, and the place of villa management in the aristocratic lifestyle. To be an authority on agriculture in the fifth century required being familiar with a host of earlier Greek and Roman agricultural writers and also drawing on personal experience. The combination of literary and agricultural pursuits on a villa to write agricultural

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<sup>6</sup> For Sidonius spending time on his own and his peers' villas, see: Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 22; Sid. Apoll. *Epp.* 2.2, 2.9, and 2.12. For Sidonius commenting on how long his peers stayed on their villas, see: Sid. Apoll. *Epp.* 1.6 and 7.15.

<sup>7</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 1.8.

<sup>8</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 9.309-310. See pages 53-54.

<sup>9</sup> See pages 53-54.

treatises was a traditional part of Roman aristocratic *otium* stretching back at least to Cato the Elder's *De agricultura* in the second century BC.

In the second section I consider how Palladius used his personal experience of villa management in conjunction with his literary sources to write a general agricultural treatise. Palladius regularly drew on his own experience to confirm and to critique information that he found in his literary sources. Palladius relies upon the authority of his own experience when he disagrees with other agricultural authors, such as Columella. Thus, Palladius' experience as a villa manager shaped the advice that Palladius provides in the *Opus agriculturae*. Palladius' practical experience managing a villa also informed his understanding of the relationship between farming and nature. Palladius did not see farming in opposition to nature. Rather, he envisioned agriculture as complimenting and guiding nature to be more agriculturally productive, which points to Palladius' strong belief in the human ability to improve nature for a villa owner's purposes.

In the third and final section I turn to Palladius' "remedies," cures for various pests, diseases, and foul weather that might strike a villa. Although Palladius' remedies for pests and bad weather may seem like superstitions, such as using a mirror to avert a storm cloud, a close reading of Palladius' remedies indicate that Palladius did not think so.<sup>10</sup> When compared with other ancient agricultural authors, Palladius studiously avoids any mention of divine or spiritual forces at work. Rather when does explain why his remedies worked, it becomes apparent that Palladius believed that his remedies

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<sup>10</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.15.

mechanically manipulated natural phenomena. Therefore, Palladius' remedies are a clear example of his belief in human ability to manipulate and improve nature for a villa owner's purposes.

## 1.1. The Historical and Social Context of Palladius

### *1.1.1. Dating and Placing Palladius*

The dates of the life of Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus *vir inlustris*, when he might have written his *Opus agriculturae*, and whether he can be identified with any other known figure in late antiquity has proven to be a Gordian Knot. The undisputed facts are that Palladius had estates on Sardinia at Neapolis and near Rome and that he held an imperial post high enough to earn the distinction of *vir inlustris*.<sup>11</sup> Valentinian I officially introduced the title of *vir inlustris* in 372, which provides a *terminus post quem* for Palladius. Cassiodorus referenced Palladius' *Opus agriculturae* in his *Institutiones*, which provides a definite *terminus ante quem* in the 580s. It has been suggested that Palladius' title, *vir inlustris*, indicates that he must have been active before the end of the Western Roman Empire, but this is unconvincing as the title *vir inlustris* is attested into the sixth century.<sup>12</sup> Many commentators on Palladius have been satisfied to note that he

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<sup>11</sup> For Palladius in Sardinia: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.16, 12.15.3.

For Palladius in Italy: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.24.

For Palladius near Rome: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.25.20.

The earliest manuscripts all name Palladius as a *vir inlustris*. (John G. Fitch, *Palladius: The Work of Farming* (Devon: Prospect Books, 2013), 11).

<sup>12</sup> René Martin, *Palladius: Traité d'agriculture*, tom. I (Paris: Société d'édition «Les Belles Lettres», 1976), viii. For an example of a *vir inlustris* in Gaul in the sixth century, see *PCBE* 4: 456 (Ceretius 2).

was active sometime in the late fourth through the fifth century without being more specific.<sup>13</sup>

It is tempting to identify Palladius with one named in Rutilius Namatianus' *De redivo suo*. Rutilius Namatianus stated that a young relative of his named Palladius was studying law in Rome.<sup>14</sup> Not only does the shared name of "Rutilius" points to a possible relationship between the agricultural writer and Rutilius Namatianus, but the language that Rutilius Namatianus used to describe his relative is similar to that which Cassiodorus used to describe Palladius the agricultural writer. Cassiodorus described Palladius the agricultural writer as a "*facundissimus explanator*" – "a most eloquent explainer," which appears to echo the expression that Rutilius Namatianus used to describe his younger relative, "*facundus iuvenis*" – "an eloquent youth."<sup>15</sup>

However, the connection between Palladius the agricultural writer and Palladius the young relative of Rutilius Namatianus is tenuous. The term "*facundus*" is a general term of praise for the quality of one's rhetoric, poetry, or prose. It is therefore not specific enough to serve as an identifier for a person across sources. Furthermore, on the basis of

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<sup>13</sup> *PLRE* I: 23 (Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus 7); R. H. Rogers, *An Introduction to Palladius*, Bulletin Supplement: University of London. Institute of Classical Studies, no. 35 (London, 1975), 9, n. 38; Fitch, *Palladius*, 11; Cassiodorus, *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* 1.28.6.

<sup>14</sup> Rutilius Namatianus, *De redivo suo*, line 208; Martin, *Palladius: Traité d'agriculture*, x-xii; Edmond Frézouls, "La vie rurale au Bas-Empire d'après l'oeuvre de Palladius," *Ktème* no. 5 (1980): 193-94; Pasquale Rosafio, "Slaves and *Coloni* in the Villa System," in *Landuse in the Roman Empire*, eds. Jesper Carlsen et al. 145-58. *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici*, Supplementum 22 (Rome: "l'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1994), 153; Marco Johannes Bartoldus, *Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus: Welt und Wert spätrömischer Landwirtschaft* (Augsburg: Wißner-Verlag, 2014), 17-20. It has also been suggested that Palladius the agricultural writer should be identified with a correspondent of Symmachus, see Symmachus, *Epp.* 1.15; 1.94; 3.50; 9.1. *CTh*, 6.12.8 and 10.24.2. (Martin, *Palladius: Traité d'agriculture*, viii-ix.)

<sup>15</sup> Pasquale Rosafio, "Slaves and *Coloni* in the Villa System," 153.

late antique naming conventions, Alan Cameron argues that Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus would have been known to his contemporaries by his cognomen, Aemilianus.<sup>16</sup> Cameron's argument is supported by Cassiodorus, who, when he mentioned Palladius, actually called him Aemilianus.<sup>17</sup> If Cameron is correct, then our author Palladius and Rutilius Namatianus' Palladius are not the same person.

Cameron's argument that our author Palladius was known to his contemporaries as Aemilianus strengthens the identification of Palladius with the urban prefect of Rome in 458, Aemilianus.<sup>18</sup> This identification not only places our author Palladius in Rome, but also identifies the imperial office through which Palladius earned the title of *vir inlustris*. If our author Palladius is the same person as Aemilianus, urban prefect of Rome in 458, then Palladius could be the subject of an allusion to an unnamed author in a poem by Sidonius Apollinaris that dates to around 460. In a section of this poem Sidonius recounts a list of contemporary authors including, "that steward (*vilicum*) whom the Senate rightly prefers to the poets of the towns."<sup>19</sup> Sidonius' use of "*vilicus*" – "farm overseer,"<sup>20</sup> which he contrasts with the poets of the towns points to an agricultural

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<sup>16</sup> Alan Cameron, "Polyonymy in the Late Roman Aristocracy: The Case of Petronius Probus," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985): 173-4.

<sup>17</sup> Cassiodorus, *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* 1.28.6.

<sup>18</sup> Cameron, "Polyonymy in the Late Roman Aristocracy: The Case of Petronius Probus," 173-4; Rosafio, "Slaves and *Coloni* in the Villa System," 153; *PLRE* II: 15 (Aemilianus 3).

<sup>19</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 9.309-310 (LCL 296: 194-95; trans. Anderson): "*vel quem municipalibus poetis / praeponit bene vilicum senatus*"

<sup>20</sup> Lewis and Short, "*vilicus*."

writer, and could indicate Palladius.<sup>21</sup> While the “*vilicus*” of a villa was generally a slave, Juvenal also used the term “*vilicus*” to refer to an urban prefect. In his description of the urban prefect Plotinus Pegasus, Juvenal writes, “Pegasus, the man recently appointed as *vilicus* over an astonished city of Rome.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the “*vilicus*” in Sidonius’ poem probably refers to an agricultural writer who was urban prefect of Rome shortly before 460. The identification of our agricultural writer, Palladius, with Aemilianus, the urban prefect of Rome, meets the criteria to be identified with Sidonius’ “*vilicus*.”

The identification of Sidonius’ “*vilicus*” with Palladius points to a composition date for the *Opus agriculturae* at some point before 460. Sidonius’ poem contrasts the “*vilicus*” with the “*poetis municipalibus*” – “town poets,” which, along with the agricultural associations of the word “*vilicum*” would suggest that Palladius had already written the *Opus agriculturae* by 460. A date prior to 460 is in line with other arguments that date the composition of the *Opus agriculturae* to before 455 based on the fact that Palladius does not mention the Vandal takeover of Sardinia, where Palladius owned a villa.<sup>23</sup> Yet, this is an argument from silence. Palladius does not mention any political developments in the *Opus agriculturae*. It is thus possible that Palladius wrote the *Opus agriculturae* after the Vandal invasion and based on his former experience in Sardinia.

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<sup>21</sup> André Loyen, *Sidoine Apollinaire : Tome I, Poèmes* (Paris: Société d’édition «Les Belles Lettres», 1960), 187. Martin, *Palladius: Traité d’agriculture*, xiii-xiv; Frézouls, “La vie rurale au Bas-Empire d’après l’oeuvre de Palladius,” 193-94.

<sup>22</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.* 4.77 (LCL 91: 202-203): “*Pegasus, attonitae positus modo vilicus Vrbi*”

<sup>23</sup> Andy Merrills and Richard Miles, *The Vandals* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 118.

It has also been argued that the *Opus agriculturae* must date to after 470 because Sidonius does not list Palladius alongside Columella and Vitruvius in one of his letters.<sup>24</sup> But this argument is not convincing. In this letter, Sidonius asks his correspondent whether he is constructing buildings or farming, the respective fields of expertise represented by Vitruvius and Columella, who were established authorities on the topics. Sidonius was not attempting a comprehensive catalog of agricultural writers in this letter and Palladius was still a contemporary author in 470. This means that he would not have been in the same category as Vitruvius and Columella who lived in the first centuries BC and AD respectively.

Palladius had villa management experience in Sardinia and Italy. Palladius testifies to his own experience of farming on villas outside of Rome and near the ancient city of Neapolis on the southwest coast of Sardinia.<sup>25</sup> It has been suggested that late antique villa remains discovered near the modern town of Guspini, Sardinia, at the foot of *Monte Urralidi* may have been Palladius' villa.<sup>26</sup> It has also long been assumed that Palladius had a connection to Gaul based on the identification of Palladius the agricultural author and Palladius, the young relative of Rutilius Namatianus.<sup>27</sup> However,

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<sup>24</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 8.6.10; Frézouls, "La vie rurale au Bas-Empire d'après l'oeuvre de Palladius," 194; Domenico Vera, "I Silenzi di Palladio e L'Italia: Osservazioni Sull'Ultimo Agronomo Romano," *AnTard* 7 (1999): 284 n. 1.

<sup>25</sup>For Palladius in Sardinia: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.16, 12.15.3.  
For Palladius in Italy: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.24.  
For Palladius near Rome: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.25.20.

<sup>26</sup> Bartoldus, *Palladius*, 13-14.

<sup>27</sup> Kai Brodersen, *Palladius: Das Bauernjahr* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016), 10-11.

Alan Cameron’s disassociation of our author Palladius with Rutilius Namatianus’ relative also called Palladius undermines the connection between our author and Gaul, although it does not preclude it. Palladius claims to have agricultural experience in “*frigidissimis*” – “very cold” regions and describes a harvesting machine that was used in Gaul as well as a “Gallic auger”.<sup>28</sup> “Very cold,” though, is a relative term. Palladius describes how to grow citrons in “very cold” places, which suggests that it rarely freezes in places that Palladius calls “very cold” and knowledge of a harvesting machine in Gaul does not require that Palladius lived in Gaul. Palladius’ brief cameo in Sidonius’ poem as a “*vilicus*” might also suggest a connection to Gaul because Sidonius was from Gaul and was familiar with a Paladii family there. Sidonius was also in Rome from 455 to 456 and could have made the acquaintance of Palladius then. For now, Palladius’ connection to Gaul must remain an open question.

Where does this leave our understanding of the time and place Palladius wrote the *Opus agriculturae*? First, Palladius was a member of the wealthy landowning late Roman aristocracy and owned estates across the Mediterranean. He certainly had estates near Rome and near Neapolis, Sardinia, which points to him being active before 455, when the Vandals seized control of the island. In 458 Palladius became the urban prefect of Rome. He likely wrote the *Opus agriculturae* by at least 460 based on Sidonius’ reference to the “*vilicus*” identified as a Palladius in a poem from that date. An earlier date of production is possible, but unprovable. Also unprovable is Palladius’ connection to Gaul.

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<sup>28</sup> For the “Gallic auger,” see Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 11.8.3. For “very cold” regions, see Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.15.

### 1.1.2. Palladius' Audience

Palladius begins his *Opus agriculturae* by explaining that he will use simple language so that country folk can understand his work:

Common sense requires that you first assess the kind of person you intend to advise. If you want to make someone into a farmer, you should not emulate the skills and eloquence of a rhetorician, as most instructors have done. By speaking in a sophisticated way to country folk (*rusticis*), they have achieved the result that their instruction cannot be understood even by the most sophisticated.<sup>29</sup>

Palladius here suggests that his intended audience are *rustici*, uneducated country folk, who need to be addressed in simple language. Indeed, Palladius is true to his word and sticks to simple, straight to the point language.<sup>30</sup> However, Palladius did not expect uneducated country folk to read his work. Rather, Palladius seems to have envisioned agriculture as an unpretentious occupation that should be written about in unpretentious prose. Palladius' prose stands in stark contrast to his more verbose sources, such as Columella and Martialis. Palladius' reference to "most instructors" as being un-understandable might be a dig at Columella's verbose writing style.<sup>31</sup>

In a later poem, Palladius reveals that his imagined "*rustici*" are actually his aristocratic peers. After writing the *Opus agriculturae*, Palladius wrote a poem on grafting (the process of grafting the branch of a donor plant onto another plant), which he

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<sup>29</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.1.1 (Rodgers 1975: 2; trans. Fitch 2013: 35): "*pars est prima prudentiae ipsam cui praecepturus es aestimare personam. neque enim formator agricolae debet artibus et eloquentiae rhetoris aemulari, quod a plerisque factum est, qui dum diserte locuntur rusticis adsecuti sunt ut eorum doctrina nec a disertissimis possit intellegi.*"

<sup>30</sup> Fitch, *Palladius*, 15-16.

<sup>31</sup> Fitch, *Palladius*, 15 n. 8. Cassiodorus noted Palladius was "an eloquent commentator," who wrote "twelve clear and explanatory books" on agricultural matters. On the other hand, Cassiodorus wrote that Columella's writings were "more suitable for the learned than for the untaught." Cassiodorus, *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* 1.28.6 (Trans. Halporn 2004: 161).

dedicated to an otherwise unknown friend named Pasiphilus.<sup>32</sup> Palladius' poem on grafting does provide agricultural advice. For example, he recommends grafting peach branches onto plum and almond trees.<sup>33</sup> But Palladius provides the same advice in prose in the *Opus agriculturae*.<sup>34</sup> As such, the poem on grafting does not provide any additional information to the *Opus agriculturae*.<sup>35</sup> The poem's true value lies in the elegiac couplets in which it was written. Palladius was very conscious of the style that he wrote in, and he wrote the poem on grafting to demonstrate to his aristocratic peers that he could write sophisticated poetry as well as straightforward prose.<sup>36</sup> At the beginning of the poem, Palladius acknowledges the rustic prose of the *Opus agriculturae*:

Those fourteen little books, the *Work of Farming*  
 Penned by this hand with footed metre dumb –  
 Unshaped by rhythm, untouched by Apollo's flow,  
 Just rough-and-ready in pure rusticity<sup>37</sup>

Palladius follows this characterization of the *Opus agriculturae* with an explanation that the purpose of this poem is not only to provide instruction in grafting, but also to combine a rustic topic with an elegant format.

My Muse's not unpardonable aim

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<sup>32</sup> It has been suggested that Pasiphilus could be identified with one of two fourth-century men with that name. (Martin, *Palladius: Traité d'agriculture*, ix-x.) This is highly unlikely if we date Palladius to the mid-fifth century.

<sup>33</sup> Palladius, *Liber de insitione* 95-98.

<sup>34</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 2.15.20.

<sup>35</sup> Fitch, *Palladius*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Fitch, *Palladius*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Palladius, *Liber de insitione* 3-6 (Rodgers 1975: 294; trans. Fitch 2013: 262): *Bis septem parous, opus agriculturae, libellos / Quos manus haec scripsit parte silente pedum, / Nec strictos numeris nec Apollinis amne fluentes / Sed pura tantum rusticitate rudes*

Is to pen an urbane work of rustic ways;  
To couple trees in a kind of fruitful marriage,  
So a beauty blended from each grows in their young<sup>38</sup>

Here Palladius sets the act of writing this poem in direct comparison with the grafting of trees. Just like grafting two trees together results in fruit that blends the qualities of each tree, Palladius blends genres by writing an “urbane work of rustic ways” – “*urbanum ... rusticitatis opus.*” The term “urbanus” is an adjective meaning “of or belonging to the city” and by extension “refined, polished, elegant.”<sup>39</sup> “*Rusticitas,*” on the other hand, is a noun derived from “*rusticus,*” which means the opposite. For something to be “*rusticus*” means for it come from the country and, by extension, to be simple, plain, rough, and course.<sup>40</sup> Thus, “an urbane work of rustic ways” is an oxymoron in Latin, which Palladius uses to liken his task of writing a poem on an agricultural topic to bringing two unrelated trees together into a single tree. Palladius hoped his educated aristocratic peers would appreciate his word play.

Late antique aristocrats considered farm management a suitable occupation alongside politics.<sup>41</sup> The fifth-century Gallic aristocrat Sidonius Apollinaris thought that a farming background was an appropriate precursor to a political career. In Sidonius’

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<sup>38</sup> Palladius, *Liber de insitione* 11-14 (Rodgers 1975: 294; trans. Fitch 2013: 262): “*Est nostrae studium non condemnabile Musae / Urbanum fari rusticitatis opus: / Sub thalami specie felices iungere siluas, / Ut suboli mixtus crescat utrimque décor*”

<sup>39</sup> Lewis and Short “*urbanus.*”

<sup>40</sup> Lewis and Short “*rusticitas*” and “*rusticus.*”

<sup>41</sup> For aristocratic interest in the management of villas, see Cam Grey, *Constructing Communities in the Late Roman Countryside* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), 139; Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 268-72.

panegyric to his father-in-law, the emperor, Avitus (r. 455-456), he claimed Avitus was summoned to military office while hoeing his fields, a direct comparison to the Roman hero Cincinnatus.<sup>42</sup> When Sidonius composed an epitaph for his grandfather, he called him a “most mindful and profitable cultivator of the field, the army, and the forum.”<sup>43</sup> A background as a good farm manager was often an important part of a late antique Roman aristocratic pedigree.

Sidonius also thought that some of his aristocratic peers spent too much time on their villa farms engaged in agricultural pursuits. Sidonius encouraged his peer Eutropius to leave his farm to pursue a political career in Rome. Eutropius came from a senatorial family and eventually became the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul under the emperor Anthimus.<sup>44</sup> Later in Sidonius’ life, after he had become a bishop, he attempted to recruit a certain Salonius and his brother to ecclesiastic office and lamented the amount of time that they spent on their farm.<sup>45</sup> Senators needing to be prodded to leave their villas for political office was a trope of late antique literature; senators did not want to seem too ambitious for political office.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, the fact that this trope located senators on

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<sup>42</sup> Sid. *Carm.* 7.378-387.

<sup>43</sup> Sid. *Ep.* 3.23.5 (LCL 420: 44 and 46; trans. by the author): “*consultissimus utilissimusque / ruris militiae forique cultor*”

<sup>44</sup> Sid. *Epp.* 1.6, 3.6; *PLRE* II: 444-445 (Eutropius 3).

<sup>45</sup> Salonius was from Vienne and is otherwise unknown. Sid. *Ep.* 7.15.

<sup>46</sup> Michele Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 110-11.

their villas instead of pursuing political office in Rome or elsewhere indicates that many aristocrats spent considerable time there.

Finally, these aristocrat farmers were active readers. Sidonius describes a library at a friend's villa that contained the "grandeur of Latin eloquence" and included authors ranging from Augustine to Varro.<sup>47</sup> Among the works known to be written by Varro is a treatise entitled *On Agriculture*. In another letter, Sidonius asks whether Namatius, who owned estates on Oléron and was a naval commander for the Visigothic king Euric, was a devotee of Columella or of Vitruvius.<sup>48</sup> The gist of Sidonius' question is whether Namatius was designing and constructing buildings or managing crops, vineyards, and orchards. But, by invoking Columella and Vitruvius by name, Sidonius appears to assume that Namatius had these authors at hand for consultation.

Palladius wrote the *Opus agriculturae* for people like Sidonius Apollinaris and his peers who owned and, occasionally, managed the farming operations on villas, or at least oversaw villa managers.<sup>49</sup> These people were the elite of the late Roman empire who aspired to, and, occasionally, reached high political and military positions. One way that these people displayed their elite status was through literary pursuits, including the writing of poetry. Palladius' audience was far from being "*rustici*," simple country

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<sup>47</sup> Sid. *Ep.* 2.9.5-6.

<sup>48</sup> Sid. *Ep.* 8.6.10; *PLRE* II: 771 (Namatius 1).

<sup>49</sup> For the role of villa managers see: Vera Domenico, "*Conductores domus nostrae, conductores privatorum*: Concentrazione fondiaria e redistribuzione della ricchezza nell'Africa tardoantica," in *Institutions, société et vie politique dans l'Empire romain au IVe siècle ap. J.-C. Actes de la table ronde autour de l'œuvre d'André Chastagnol* (Paris, 20-21 janvier 1989). (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1992), 466-90.

bumpkins. They were well educated, wealthy, landowning aristocrats. This raises the question of why educated aristocrats with political ambitions would be interested in farming and agricultural treatises. While today literary pursuits and farm management are not generally related, in the Roman mind they were both acceptable ways to spend one's *otium*.

### 1.1.3. Villas, Farming, and Otium

The simplest definition of *otium* is leisure. But leisure exists on a scale that ranges from the negative sense of “idleness” to the positive sense of “honest retirement.”<sup>50</sup> *Otium* stands in contrast to *negotium*, which is the absence of leisure. *Negotium* is business, politics, and all the public facing career-oriented activities that occupy one's time. *Otium* and *negotium*, though, as Judith Hindermann argues, are not opposites.<sup>51</sup> Rather, “*Otium* occupies a middle position between activity and passivity, between private and public. It is a free space that offers the opportunity for peaceful contemplation and intensive reflection.”<sup>52</sup> This free space for contemplation and reflection was the perfect opportunity for literary pursuits. For Hindermann, “the individuals who experience leisure, a free mental space opens up into which they can immerse themselves and thus block out the real space around them.”<sup>53</sup> Here, Hindermann cites Pliny the

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<sup>50</sup> Judith Hindermann, “At Leisure with Pliny the Younger: Sidonius's Second Book of the *Epistulae* as the Book of *Otium*,” *JLA* 13.1 (Spring 2020): 94.

<sup>51</sup> Hindermann, “At Leisure with Pliny the Younger,” 94.

<sup>52</sup> Hindermann, “At Leisure with Pliny the Younger,” 94.

<sup>53</sup> Hindermann, “At Leisure with Pliny the Younger,” 95.

Younger to support her position. “At my villa (*ad villam*) I delight partly in studies and partly in sloth, both of which are born from leisure (*otio*).”<sup>54</sup> Pliny certainly thought that *otium* provided the space for laziness and literary pursuits, but he locates where he enjoys *otium* in real space, “*ad villam*” – “at my villa.”

According to Columella, the Roman villa was divided into three parts: the *pars urbana*, the *pars rustica*, and the *pars fructuana*.<sup>55</sup> The *pars urbana* was the owner’s living quarters and consisted of all the amenities needed to maintain the villa owner’s lifestyle. Bedrooms, dining room, libraries, and baths are all attested features of the *pars urbana*. Pliny the Younger indulged his penchant for studies and sloth in the *pars urbana* of his villa. The *pars rustica*, on the other hand, was the portion of the villa dedicated to the agricultural activities that supported the villa economically. The *pars rustica* was the unglamorous side of the villa where slaves resided, animals were stalled, wine and oil pressed, and grain threshed. The *pars fructuana* was dedicated to the storage of agricultural goods. Even though the *pars rustica* did not attract Pliny’s attention when he wrote of his *otium* on his villa, the farming activities that occurred there were a real and necessary part of any villa. The *pars rustica* long attracted the attention of other Roman aristocrats.

The agricultural life of villas found its way into Latin literature in the form of agricultural manuals, which became its own genre of Latin literature. The oldest

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<sup>54</sup> Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 2.2.2 (LCL 55: 84): “*Ipse ad villam partim studiis, partim desidia fruor, quorum utrumque ex otio nascitur.*”

<sup>55</sup> Columella, *De agricultura* 1.6.1. For further discussion, see Mantha Zarmakoupi, “Private Villas: Italy and the Provinces,” in *A Companion to Roman Architecture*, eds. Roger B. Ulrich and Caroline K. Quenemoen (Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 366.

surviving work of Latin prose is Cato the Elder's *De agricultura* dating to the second century BC. Varro, writing in the first century BC, wrote the *Res rustica* as a dialog dedicated to agricultural matters. As further evidence of agricultural treatises being an acceptable way for a Roman aristocrat to spend his *otium*, Varro claims at the beginning of the *Res rustica* that if he had the *otium*, he would have written even more fully than he did.<sup>56</sup> Virgil, a contemporary of Varro, eulogized the country life in the *Eclogues* and offered his own agricultural advice in the *Georgics*, both of which are in verse. Virgil's *Georgics* were well known among the Roman aristocracy of the first century AD as testified to by Seneca the Younger, who criticized Virgil for writing to please readers instead of instructing farmers, before going on to provide his own advice on the cultivation of olive trees.<sup>57</sup> Seneca would probably have approved of his contemporary Columella, whose *De re rustica* and *De arboribus* made him the most comprehensive agricultural author in Latin. But Columella also did not neglect *belles lettres*, as he wrote book ten of the *De re rustica* in dactylic hexameters. This short list of Latin agricultural authors, while not comprehensive, demonstrates that agricultural literature had deep roots in Roman culture and was a traditional way for Roman aristocrats to spend their *otium*.

When Palladius wrote his *Opus agriculturae* in the fifth century, he was drawing on and contributing to this tradition of Roman agricultural writing. Palladius cites the following authors by name: Apuleius, Aristotle, Bolos of Mendes, Cornelius Celsus,

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<sup>56</sup> Varro, *Res rustica*, 1.1.

<sup>57</sup> Seneca the Younger, *Ep.* 86.15. (LCL 76:318-21)

Columella, Democritus, Gargilius Martialis, Mago the Carthaginian, and Virgil.<sup>58</sup>

However, Palladius only had indirect access to most of these writers.<sup>59</sup> Palladius had direct access to Columella, Gargilius Martialis, and Virgil.<sup>60</sup> Palladius' citations of other authors come from Columella and Gargilius Martialis.<sup>61</sup> Palladius' citations of these authors not only signaled to his readers that he was widely read (or wanted to be), but also signaled that Palladius was an active contributor to Latin literary culture. Yes, Palladius knew his stuff on farming, but he was also a properly cultured Roman aristocrat who spent his *otium* engaged in productive literary pursuits.

## 1.2. The Experience of Palladius

### *1.2.1. Confirming and Contradicting Columella*

While nineteenth-century scholarship considered Palladius an abridger of Columella,<sup>62</sup> modern scholarship has come to appreciate Palladius' originality and value

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<sup>58</sup> Bartoldus, *Palladius*, 53-54; Apuleius (Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.9), Aristotle (8.4.4), Bolos of Mendes (14.32.6), Cornelius Celsus (14.5.7, 14.12.8, 14.32.3), Columella (1.19.3 et al.), Democritus (1.35.7 and 14.32.6), Gargilius Martialis (2.15.10 et al.), Mago the Carthaginian (3.10.3 and 6.7.1), Vergil (3.25.6 and 14.30.9).

<sup>59</sup> Bartoldus, *Palladius*, 54; Apuleius citation has a common source with *Geoponika* 13.4.1; Aristotle citation comes from Columella 7.3.12; Bolos of Mendes citation comes from Columella 7.5.17; Cornelius Celsus citations come from Columella 6.5.5, 6.12.5, 7.5.15; Democritus citations have a common source with *Geoponika* 5.50 and also come from Columella 7.5.17; Mago citations come from Columella 5.5.4 and 6.26.1; Vergil citations can be traced to Gargilius Martialis and Columella 7.5.10. Palladius also knew the works of Vergil personally. (Bartoldus, *Palladius*, 54, n. 285 and 55, n. 291.)

<sup>60</sup> Bartoldus, *Palladius*, 54.

<sup>61</sup> For more on Palladius' sources, see Bartoldus, *Palladius*, 53-58.

<sup>62</sup> Harry Thursten Peck, *Harper's Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1896) 383.

as an agricultural source for late antiquity. The reliability of Palladius as a source for understanding the organization of agricultural labor in late antiquity has attracted the most attention.<sup>63</sup> More recently, scholars have begun to turn their attention to the practicality of the agricultural advice that Palladius gives. John Fitch has pointed out that Palladius' personal experience was an important source of information for his writings.<sup>64</sup> Bartoldus argues at length for the practicality of Palladius' farming advice, even claiming that some of the advice that Palladius gave was relevant up until the industrialization of agriculture in the nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> Bartoldus' work demonstrates that much of Palladius' advice is practical and rooted in pre-modern Mediterranean agricultural systems, which points to Palladius' own experience and familiarity with the practical challenges of Mediterranean agriculture. I build on Fitch and Bartoldus by considering how Palladius wove his personal experiences and literary sources together in his *Opus agriculturae*. Palladius used his own experience to critique, clarify, and confirm his literary sources, thus demonstrating that he was a critical reader of his sources. Thus, Palladius' experience in his landscape had a direct impact on his writings.

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<sup>63</sup> Edmond Frézouls, "La vie rurale au Bas-Empire d'après l'oeuvre de Palladius," 193-94; Wilhelm Kaltenstadler, "Arbeits- und Führungskräfte im Opus Agriculturae von Palladius," *Klio* no. 66.1 (1984): 223-229; Frank Morgenstern, "Die Auswertung des opus agriculturae des Palladius zu einigen Fragen der spätantiken Wirtschaftsgeschichte," *Klio* 71 (1989): 180.; Rosafio, "Slaves and *Coloni* in the Villa System," 153; Vera, "I Silenzi di Palladio e L'Italia: Osservazioni Sull'Ultimo Agronomo Romano," 283-297; Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 268-72; Cam Grey, "Revisiting the 'problem' of agri deserti in the Late Roman Empire," *JRA* 97 (2007): 364; Cam Grey, *Constructing Communities in the Late Roman Countryside*, 28, 31, 42, 43, 78, 99, 139.

<sup>64</sup> Fitch, *Palladius*, 12-13.

<sup>65</sup> Bartoldus, *Palladius*, 279.

Palladius explicitly invokes his own experience nineteen times and implies his own experience a further seven times.<sup>66</sup> (See Tables 1.1 and 1.2.) In eight of these instances Palladius contradicts or otherwise departs from what Columella and his other authorities claim.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Explicit claims of experience according to Fitch, *Palladius*, 11 n. 2: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 2.13.8, 2.15.1, 3.18.6, 3.25.20, 3.25.22, 3.25.27, 3.25.31, 3.26.5, 4.10.15, 4.10.16, 4.10.24, 8.3.1, 8.3.2, 11.12.5, 12.7.1, 12.7.8, 12.7.12, 12.7.22, 12.15.3.

Implicit claims of experience according to Fitch, *Palladius*, 11 n. 2: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.28.5, 2.9.1, 3.10.4, 3.24.8, 6.2.1, 11.8.2, 14.27.1.

Morgenstern counts a total of 32 passages that speak to Palladius' experience. (Morgenstern, "Die Auswertung des opus agriculturae des Palladius zu einigen Fragen der spätantiken Wirtschaftsgeschichte," 182.) Morgenstern's count partly overlaps with Fitch's count but adds an additional 14 passages to the list of passages in which Palladius' experience is evident: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.39.5, 2.10.1, 2.12, 3.25.4, 3.25.7, 3.25.26, 4.10.27-32, 6.4.1, 6.7.4, 7.2.2-4, 7.7.1, 10.12, 11.12.8, 11.16. It is not always clear what Morgenstern's criteria for experience was, whereas Fitch's more conservative list is limited to instances in which Palladius uses the first person singular. I follow Fitch's list.

<sup>67</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.28.5, 2.9.1, 3.10.4, 3.18.6, 3.24.8, 3.25.20, 3.26.5, 11.8.2.

Table 1.1. Palladius' Explicit Claims to Personal Experience

<b>Palladius' Explicit Claims to Personal Experience</b>			
<b>Passage</b>	<b>Explicit claim to personal experience</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Interaction with other authors</b>
2.13.8	"I have learnt by repeated tests..."	Planting vines	
2.15.1	"I have seen many trees..."	Sowing service trees	
3.18.6	"One meticulous farmer stated to me..."	Grafting trees	Critiques Columella
3.25.20	"But I discovered from experience..."	Planting quince trees	Clarifying where other authors disagree
3.25.22	"...as I have found..."	Fertilizing quince trees	
3.25.27	"...as I have found by experience..."	Planting carob	
3.25.31	"...in my experience..."	Planting filberts	
3.26.5	"...in my experience..."	Raising piglets	Critiques Columella
4.10.15	"I myself have..."	Planting citron trees	
4.10.16	"I learnt this by experience..."	Cultivating citron trees	Confirms Martialis
4.10.24	"I myself have..."	Planting fig trees	
8.3.1	"...in my experience."	Grafting pear and apple trees	
8.3.2	"I recall that I planted..."	Planting citron trees	
11.12.5	"From my experience...I can affirm that...for me..."	Planting and grafting cherry trees	Critiques Martialis
12.7.1	"But I have often kept them..."	Planting peach stones	
12.7.8	"I have often seen..."	Preserving peaches	
12.7.12	"...in my experience..."	Pruning pine trees	
12.7.22	"I have confirmed by my own experience..."	Grafting chestnuts	
12.15.3	"I learned in Sardinia..."	Cutting timber	

Table 1.2. Palladius' Implicit Claims to Personal Experience

Palladius' Implicit Claims to Personal Experience			
Passage	Implicit claim to experience	Subject	Interaction with other authors
1.28.5	"...but I think that..."	Raising peafowl	Critiques Columella
2.9.1	"My opinion is that..."	Hoeing crops	Critiques "most people"
3.10.4	"My view is that..."	Sourcing trees for a treed vineyard	Critiques Columella
3.24.8	"Actually I think..."	Starting asparagus <sup>68</sup>	
6.2.1	"I say..."	Pruning vines	
11.8.2	"I prefer that..."	Cultivating olive trees	Critiques Columella
14.27.1	"I have not been able to verify..."	Curing narcissism in mares	Follows Columella

Palladius departs from Columella's advice in both animal husbandry and the planting of trees. For example, Palladius writes, "According to Columella, [a sow] should not rear more than eight [piglets]. But it is more practical in my experience, that a properly fed sow should rear six at most."<sup>69</sup> Palladius also found Columella's method of preparing trees for a vineyard too time consuming. For making a "treed vineyard," or a vineyard in which the vines are supported by trees, Columella advised raising the trees for the vineyard in a nursery.<sup>70</sup> Palladius, though, pointed out that trees frequently used for treed vineyards (elm, poplar, and ash) are native to many places already. Therefore, Palladius

<sup>68</sup> Rodgers, *An Introduction to Palladius*, 108. Rodgers notes that there is a textual problem with this passage regarding the adjectives "*uile ... ac diligens*" – "cheap and economical." Other editors accept "*utile...ac diligens*" – "useful and economical."

<sup>69</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae*, 3.26.4-5 (Rodgers 1975: 105-6; trans. Fitch 2013: 116): "*plus uero quam octo, sicut Columella dicit, nutrire non debet. Mihi uero utilius probatur experto porcam cui pabula subpetunt ut plurimum sex nutrire debere.*" Cf. Columella, *De agricultura*, 7.9.13.

<sup>70</sup> Columella, *De re agricultura* 5.6.5.

suggested transplanting wild saplings to the vineyard, which would be cheaper and faster than raising them in a nursery.<sup>71</sup> In his advice on how to start an olive orchard, Palladius again opted for wild stock over Columella's nursery raised trees. Columella suggested taking the branches of domesticated olive trees and planting them in nursery beds. After five years, the young olive trees would be ready to transplant to the orchard.<sup>72</sup> Yet, Palladius writes, "I know most people do something easier and more practical: they find the olive trees that grow widely in woodlands or uninhabited places, cut their roots into cubit lengths, set them out either in a nursery or in an olive orchard and assist them by mixing in manure."<sup>73</sup> The wild olive roots would then sprout several branches onto which domesticated olives could then be grafted.<sup>74</sup>

Palladius also relied on his own experience when his sources disagreed on the proper time of year to plant quince. Palladius wrote,

Different dates for starting quinces are mentioned by many authors. But I discovered from experience that in Italy around the city, in February or the beginning of March, rooted quince plants took so successfully in trenched soil that they often gloried in fruit the following year...In hot dry places they [quinces] should be planted in October or the beginning of November.<sup>75</sup>

Palladius does not name his sources here, but, as Palladius observed, surviving agricultural treatises are not consistent regarding the ideal time for quince planting. Cato

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<sup>71</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.10.4.

<sup>72</sup> Columella, *De re agricultura* 5.9.3.

<sup>73</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.18.6.

<sup>74</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.18.6; 5.2.1-2.

<sup>75</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.25.20.

gives instructions for planting quince but does not provide a time of year.<sup>76</sup> Varro only addresses the preservation of quinces.<sup>77</sup> Columella suggests that quinces should be planted after the middle of winter and before February 13, the same time as service-fruit,<sup>78</sup> apricots, and peaches.<sup>79</sup> The *Geoponika*, a tenth-century byzantine agricultural text that shares lost sources with Palladius, states that quinces should be planted at the same time as cherries.<sup>80</sup> But when one turns to the section on cherries, the *Geoponika* states that cherries should be planted in the same manner as apples and pears, and, in the apple section of the *Geoponika*, we learn that in hot climates, apples should be planted in either the spring or autumn.<sup>81</sup> In the face of such conflicting information on the planting of quinces, Palladius relied on his own expertise, derived from his experience growing quinces in Italy near Rome.

In two instances, Palladius confirms and expands on his literary sources, drawing from his own experience.<sup>82</sup> In the first instance, Palladius follows Columella's recommendations regarding how deeply land should be dug in preparation for the planting of a vineyard.<sup>83</sup> Palladius then follows this up, writing, "I have learnt by

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<sup>76</sup> Cato, *De agricultura* 51 and 133.

<sup>77</sup> Varro, *Res rustica*, 1.59.

<sup>78</sup> *Sorbus domestica*, a fruit native to Europe that is similar to an apple.

<sup>79</sup> Columella, *De re agricultura* 5.10.19.

<sup>80</sup> *Geoponika* 10.26.

<sup>81</sup> *Geoponika* 10.18 and 10.61.

<sup>82</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 2.13.7-8; 4.10.16.

<sup>83</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 2.13.7; Columella, *De re agricultura* 3.13.6-8; Fitch, *Palladius*, 77 n. 15.

repeated tests (*experimentis asiduis*) that vines grow better if they are planted in ground that has just been dug, or not long before...<sup>84</sup> In this passage Palladius expands upon Columella's advice by emphasizing the need to plant the vines soon after the soil has been prepared. In the second instance, Palladius confirms Martialis' information on the citron, writing, "Martialis states that in Assyria this tree [the citron] never stops fruiting. I learnt this by experience in the Neapolitan territory in Sardinia on my farms, which have a warm soil and climate and abundant moisture."<sup>85</sup> Here Palladius confirms Maritalis' potentially unbelievable statement about citron's perpetual fruiting for readers not familiar with the citron. Crucially, Palladius is sure to state where he had citron trees and the quality of the land and climate. Palladius knew that the citron did not grow everywhere, and that the citron's perpetual fruiting was due in large part to the agreeable climate. Palladius' instructions regarding the cultivation of the citron point to the importance of place in shaping Palladius' experiences and agricultural knowledge, which I turn to next.

### 1.2.2. *The General Place and the Experienced Place*

When Columella begins expounding on all the areas of knowledge required for farming, he begins by stating that to be a good farmer one must be "most wise in the

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<sup>84</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 2.13.8 (Rodgers 1975: 57; trans. Fitch 2013: 77): "*illud experimentis asiduis comprehendi, uites melius prouenire, si uel statim fossae terrae uel non longe ante pangantur*"

<sup>85</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.16 (Rodgers 1975: 126; trans. Fitch 2013: 131): "*adserit Martialis apud Assyrios pomis hanc arborem non career. quod ego in Sardinia territorio Neapolitano in fundis meis conperi, quibus solum et caelum tepidum est, umor exundans.*"

things of nature.”<sup>86</sup> Columella then immediately launches into the importance of knowledge of latitude, region, astronomy, seasons, weather, soils, and so on. Palladius agreed with Columella but put it more succinctly, distinguishing between the natural limitations of a place and the role of human effort:

First, then, the fundamentals of choosing land and cultivating it well consist of four things: air, water, earth, and application (*industria*). Three of these depend on nature (*naturalia*), one on capacity and will. You should examine first the factors belonging to nature: in places you intend to cultivate, the air should be healthy and mild, the water wholesome and easily obtained..., and the earth fertile and favorably situated.<sup>87</sup>

Palladius then proceeds to systematically address the qualities of different kinds of air, water, and land. It might appear obvious that a prospective villa owner would be interested in choosing a good location for a villa, but, crucially for our purposes, Palladius distinguishes between things that are within or outside of a farmer’s control. The qualities of the air, water, and land of a place, that is the landscape, dictate the range of possible actions within that place. Since one cannot change the air, water, or land of a place, one should choose the location of a farm carefully.

In this passage Palladius points to the importance of place to farming. Yet, his advice is general. To find wholesome air, Palladius suggests staying away from valley bottoms and areas prone to nighttime mists.<sup>88</sup> Water should not be drawn from pools,

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<sup>86</sup> Columella, *De re agricultura* 1 Pref. 22 (LCL 361: 18; trans. by the author): “*rerum naturae sagacissimus*”

<sup>87</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.2 (Rodgers 1975: 3; trans. Fitch 2013: 35): “*Primo igitur eligendi et bene colendi agri ratio quattuor rebus constat: aere, aqua, terra, industria; ex his tria naturalia, unum facultatis et uoluntatis [est]. naturae est quod in primis spectare oportet, ut eis locis quae colere desitnabis aer sit salutaris et clemens, aqua salubris et facilis, uel ibi nascens uel adducta uel imbre collecta, terra uero fecunda et situ commoda.*”

<sup>88</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.3.

marshes, or mines and should not have any untoward colors or flavors.<sup>89</sup> Good soil is a crumbly glebe, without too much sand, rock, or clay and naturally supports healthy vegetation.<sup>90</sup> This advice largely comes from Columella, can be applied anywhere, and is generally applicable today (with the minor exception of Palladius' reservations about nighttime mists).<sup>91</sup> The reason that Palladius' advice is so general is that his audience was the villa owning aristocracy of the Roman empire. Therefore, it was impossible for him to give site specific advice. In the case of determining how many workers one needed for a villa, Palladius refused to give any advice at all. "The calculation of how many workers are required cannot be uniform, since lands are so diverse."<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, as in the case of citron cultivation, Palladius' personal experiences of a place are still evident in the text.

Palladius owned villas in Sardinia and near Rome and, as such, was sensitive to the different needs of different places.<sup>93</sup> Palladius regularly provides different instructions for farming based on whether one lived in a "hot" place or a "cold" place. Unfortunately, Palladius never specifies how he determines if a place was "hot" or "cold." Nonetheless, he had experience growing citrons in both "very cold" and "hot" places, which suggests

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<sup>89</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.4.1.

<sup>90</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.5.1-2.

<sup>91</sup> For Palladius' sources on assessing air, water, and land, see Rogers, *Palladius*, 3-6.

<sup>92</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.6.3 (Rodgers 1975: 7; trans. Fitch 2013: 38): "*Operarum ratio unum modum tenere non potest in tanta diuersitate terrarum.*"

<sup>93</sup> For Palladius owning villas in Sardinia: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.16, 12.15.3. For Palladius owning villas in Italy: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae*, 4.10.24. For Palladius near Rome: Palladius, *Opus agriculturae*, 3.25.20.

that for Palladius a “cold” place rarely froze.<sup>94</sup> To return to quince trees as an example, Palladius writes, “[Quince trees] should be dug around in October or November in hot places, but in February or March in cold ones.”<sup>95</sup>

While Columella also prescribes different timings for planting based on whether a place was “hot” or “cold,” from which Palladius drew, Palladius also claims to have experience farming in different climates. About planting black mulberries, Palladius writes, “We shall start them from the middle of February on and throughout March, but in hotter places at the last of October or the beginning of November.”<sup>96</sup> While Palladius does not state it outright here, it is possible that his experience growing black mulberries in a relatively “colder” climate comes from Rome. In the previously cited passage, Palladius also recommends February and March for planting quince near Rome, but he recommends quinces be planted in October and November in hotter places.<sup>97</sup> Palladius’ experience in “hot” climates probably comes from his villa in Sardinia, where he grew citrons that never stopped producing fruit in a “warm” climate.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> The citron is highly sensitive to frost. Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.15-16.

<sup>95</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.25.22 (Rodgers 1975: 101; trans. Fitch 2013: 112): “*circumfodienda locis calidis Octobri mense et Nouembri, frigidis Februario uel Martio.*”

<sup>96</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.25.28 (Rodgers 1975: 103; trans. Fitch 2013: 113): “*seremus a medio Februario et toto Martio, locis uero calidioibus Octobri postremo uel Nouembris initio.*”

<sup>97</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.25.20.

<sup>98</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.10.16 (Rodgers 1975: 126): “*caelum tepidum est*”

While southern Sardinia does not get as cold as Rome on average,<sup>99</sup> they both fit the same Köppen-Geigern climate classification Csa, that is warm temperate with hot dry summers, the standard definition of a Mediterranean climate.<sup>100</sup> While Palladius would not have used this terminology to describe the climates of Rome and Sardinia, he implicitly acknowledges their similarity by assuming that both regions can support the same crops and the same trees. But Palladius was sensitive to small differences. His experience in each place pointed to the climates being different enough that they needed different agricultural calendars. These climates were a part of the nature of each place and could not be changed. Therefore, Palladius had to adapt what he did to meet the needs of each place. The way that Palladius understood the relationship between the nature of a place and the action of the farmer is the topic of the next section.

### *1.2.3. Application: What can a farmer do?*

Once Palladius finished outlining how to assess a good place for a villa, he moves on to application, that is, what people can do. Palladius writes, “After evaluating these factors, which are natural and cannot be amended by human means, you need to deal with

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<sup>99</sup> “Climate in Rome (Lazio), Italy,” World Weather & Climate Information, accessed September 9, 2022, <https://weather-and-climate.com/average-monthly-Rainfall-Temperature-Sunshine-fahrenheit.Rome.Italy>; “Climate in Cagliari (Sardinia), Sardinia,” World Weather & Climate Information, accessed September 9, 2022, <https://weather-and-climate.com/average-monthly-Rainfall-Temperature-Sunshine-fahrenheit.Cagliari.Sardinia>.

<sup>100</sup> Markus Kottek et al. “World Map of the Köppen-Geiger climate classification updated,” *Meteorologische Zeitschrift* 15, no. 3 (June 2006): 261.

the remaining area, that of application (*industriæ*).”<sup>101</sup> The word that Fitch translates as “application” is “*industria*,” which indicates diligent and purposeful activity.<sup>102</sup> Whereas the quality of air, water, and land were set by nature and are outside human control, *industria* is human activity. The practical purpose of the *Opus agriculturae* is to provide the knowledge needed for a farmer to successfully apply his *industria*.

Palladius brings our attention to the relationship between *industria* and nature in the description of a situation in which nature takes an unusually active role in the production of flavored wines. “It is said that spiced wine flavoured with wormwood or rose or violet, comes spontaneously from vines – with nature (*natura*) undertaking what is usually achieved by human work (*industria*).”<sup>103</sup> Palladius follows this statement up with instructions to let vine cuttings sit in potions before they are planted. The resulting grapes are supposed to have taken on the flavor of the potion. The inversion of the roles of *natura* and *industria* in this passage helps clarify exactly what Palladius means by the terms. *Natura* encompasses the pre-existing biological and physical conditions and processes that occur without human intervention. In a previously cited passage, Palladius stated that the qualities of air, earth, and water depended upon *natura*.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, the

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<sup>101</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.6.1 (Rodgers 1975: 6; trans. Fitch 2013: 38): “*Sed ubi haec quae naturalia sunt neque humana ope curari possunt diligentius aestimaris, exequi te conuenit partem quae restat industriae.*”

<sup>102</sup> Lewis and Short “*industria*.”

<sup>103</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.32 (Rodgers 1975: 109; trans. Fitch 2013: 118): “*Conditum uel absentium uel rosatum uel uiolacium procedure sponte fertur ex uitibus, ut natura suscipiat quod procurare sueuit industria.*”

<sup>104</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.2.

entire landscape of a place depends upon *natura*. But the passage about flavored grapes indicates that nature also refers to the biological processes of individual organisms.

Ordinarily a vine would produce grapes with a flavor according to its own *natura*. The vintner could then modify the flavor through his *industria* after the grapes were picked and juiced. But in this case, the *natura* of the modified vines produces flavored grapes without the *industria* of the vintner. Thus, *industria* and *natura* are not opposites in the way that industry and nature might be understood today. *Natura*, the land, water, air, plants, animals, etc., exists on the villa, but in a state enhanced by *industria*.

Palladius sums up his understanding of the relationship between *natura* and *industria* in an excursus on how to produce seedless grapes, “According to the Greek authorities it is done in this way, with nature being improved through human skill” – “*fit autem Graecis auctoribus hac ratione per artem succedente natura.*”<sup>105</sup> Fitch’s translation of nature being improved through human skill informed by Greek authors captures Palladius’ primary meaning here. But Fitch’s “in this way” misses the calculating undertone of *ratione*, from *ratio*, which in this case indicates a procedure carefully reasoned out by Greek authors. Additionally, *succedente*’s primary meaning is “to follow,” from *succedo*.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, *succedente* is active in the ablative absolute with *natura*. Thus, a more literal (and admittedly more stilted) translation of this passage is, “According to the Greek authorities it is done according to this procedure by means of

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<sup>105</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae*, 3.29.1 (Rodgers 1975: 107; trans. Fitch 2013: 117): “*fit autem Graecis auctoribus hac ratione per artem succedente natura.*”

<sup>106</sup> Lewis and Short, “*succedo.*”

human skill with nature following.” In this passage Palladius imagines *natura* following the lead of human innovation. As such, human skill, *ars*, informed by a procedure, *ratio*, learned from Greek authorities, leads *natura* to a more desirable state, in this case seedless grapes. Palladius follows this statement up with a lengthy and detailed explanation of splitting shoots, removing pith, applying Cyrenaic juice, and binding shoots back together to achieve seedless grapes. The actual carrying out of these instructions is *industria*.

Palladius’ discourse on how to grow vines that produce seedless grapes illustrates the relationship between farm labor, knowledge, and nature. Palladius provides the required knowledge with the proper procedures (*ratio*) for the farmer to skillfully apply (*ars* and *industria*) to nature (*natura*) to achieve a desired result. In Palladius’ view, this process does not destroy *natura*. Rather, *natura* is open to human influence and guided towards a more productive state. For Palladius, this is not necessarily a more profitable state. Palladius envisions farmers cultivating the land “for the sake of pleasure and production.”<sup>107</sup> We can contrast Palladius’ outlook with that of Columella, who thought that farming was a good way of “enlarging and passing on an inheritance.”<sup>108</sup> Where Columella thought of profit, Palladius thought of productivity.<sup>109</sup> The purpose of

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<sup>107</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.1.2 (Rodgers 1975: 3; trans. Fitch 2013: 35): “*ratione uoluptatis et fructus*”

<sup>108</sup> Columella, *De re agricultura* 1 Pref. 7 (LCL 361: 6-7; trans. Ash): “*amplificandi relinquendique patrimonii*”

<sup>109</sup> For further discussion, see Fitch, *Palladius*, 17.

Palladius' active application of knowledge to *natura* was to bring pleasure to the villa owner and to bring *natura* into its most productive state.

Palladius ends the discussion with other possible applications of the process of creating seedless grapes, writing, "The Greeks maintain that this can also be done with pomegranates and with cherries: this needs to be tested."<sup>110</sup> Palladius, once again, brings our attention to the importance of practical experience in the application of *industria* to *natura*. While Palladius relies on textual authorities for his knowledge he was also careful to test what he read. When Palladius passes on a grafting technique he learned from a Spanish farmer that results in pit-less peaches, he assured his readers that the Spanish farmer has already tested the technique.<sup>111</sup> The Greek authorities and Spanish testimonies are of no use without being tested.

The attitude that Palladius takes towards the production of seedless grapes is found throughout the entire *Opus agriculturae*. Whether it is propagating pear trees, preparing a field to receive a crop, or attempting to avert a hailstorm (to which I turn next), Palladius maintains that the natural productivity of the local landscape can be improved through human intervention. When Palladius began the *Opus agriculturae* with the importance of assessing the natural qualities of a farm before purchasing it, Palladius assumed that a farmer would respond to the natural conditions of the farm's landscape. Place mattered to Palladius because the *natura* of a place determined what instructions

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<sup>110</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.29.3 (Rodgers 1975: 107; trans. Fitch 2013: 117): "et in granatis malis fieri hoc posse firmatur a Graecis et in cerasiis. opus est experire."

<sup>111</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 3.17.8.

the farmer would follow in the application of his *industria*. Since the *natura* of each place is different, personal experience and the testing of literary authorities' advice is crucial.

### 1.3. Palladius' Remedies

Palladius' belief in human action to enhance productivity is evident in his list of "remedies" in Book 1 of the *Opus agriculturae*. Palladius begins this list with instructions on how to protect crops against mists and rust, "Against mists and the rust (*rubiginem*) you will burn piles of straw and rubbish set out at many spots around the garden, all at once, when you see a threat of mist."<sup>112</sup> Rust is a kind of grain mold that thrives in moist conditions. Palladius clearly knew that moist conditions could result in an outbreak of rust. Palladius does not explain why he thought that burning straw and other refuse around a garden would protect it from mists and rusts. What is clear that he did not include in his advice the recommendation to participate in the *Robigalia*, a traditional Roman festival, the express purpose of which was to protect against rust.<sup>113</sup> In a clear reference to the *Robigalia*, Columella claims that Rubigo, the goddess who brings rust, can be appeased through the sacrifice of a suckling puppy.<sup>114</sup> Neither did Palladius

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<sup>112</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.1 (Rodgers 1975: 35; trans. Fitch 2013: 61): "*Contra nebulas et rubiginem paleas et purgamenta pluribus locis per hortum disposita simul omnia, cum nebulas uideris instare, conbures.*"

<sup>113</sup> H. H. Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 108-10. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.901-942.

<sup>114</sup> Columella, *De re agricultura* 10.343. The *Robigalia* is further attested in Pliny, *NH* 18.284-5; Varro, *De agricultura* 1.6; and Varro, *De lingua latina* 6.16. Augustine mocks the *Robigalia*. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei* 4.21.

prescribe any prayers to accompany the burning of the straw and rubbish, which suggests that Palladius envisioned his remedy operating in purely mechanical terms. It is possible that he thought, that the fires, which in ancient thought combined the qualities of heat and dryness, would counteract or push out the cold and moist properties of fogs.<sup>115</sup> The late fourth-century Christian author Prudentius thought that rust arose from natural properties in the air, claiming that “Sometimes wasting rust consumes the crop, arising from a taint and malignity in the air.”<sup>116</sup> The statement by Prudentius suggests that the idea that rust was a natural occurrence and not caused by divine power was in circulation at the end of the fourth century. In his remedy for rust, Palladius appears to assume that rust is the result of natural causes and that the farmer could protect his crops from rust if he took the proper practical actions.

Palladius’ instructions to counter mists and rust with smoke may have had a common Greek source which is also found in the tenth-century Greek *Geoponika*, a byzantine farming treatise. To protect against rust, the *Geoponika* recommends burning the right horn of an ox with cow-dung to dispel the infected air.<sup>117</sup> Citing Apuleius, the *Geoponika* also states that burning combinations of crabs and cow-dung or straw and goat-dung is also effective at dispelling rust.<sup>118</sup> Palladius’ and the *Geoponika*’s solution

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<sup>115</sup> This is the logic provided for a similar remedy for mists and rust in *Geoponika* 5.33.1.

<sup>116</sup> Prudentius, *Libri contra Symmachum* 2.975-6. (LCL 398: 84-85; trans. Thomson): “*nunc consumit edax segetem rubigo maligni aeris ex vitio.*”

<sup>117</sup> *Geoponika* 5.33.1. (Trans. Dalby 2011: 140)

<sup>118</sup> *Geoponika* 5.33.1.

to rust stands in stark contrast to Columella's instructions. Columella claims that storms sent by Jupiter, which can harm crops through hail or by bringing rust, can be averted by "Tuscan rites."<sup>119</sup> But Palladius also included Columella's instructions for protecting crops from storms. According to Columella, storms in general are driven off by the skull of an Arcadian ass placed at the edge of a field, by planting white bryony around the field, or by hanging a night flying bird on a cross and prohibiting funeral cries from rooftops.<sup>120</sup> Against hail, Palladius prescribes hanging an owl with its wings outstretched and planting white bryony.<sup>121</sup> Palladius returns to Greek sources for further prescriptions against hail: placing the skin of a crocodile, hyena, or seal at the entrance of a farm yard, covering one vine in the middle of a vineyard with a seal skin, placing a marsh turtle upside down on its back, and holding out a mirror to catch the reflection of the approaching cloud.<sup>122</sup> Palladius did not include all the remedies his sources recommended against hail. For example, Palladius omitted a remedy against hail attributed to Apuleius found in the *Geoponika* in which Apuleius recommends painting a grape on a tablet and then consecrating the tablet in a vineyard when the star Lyra sets.<sup>123</sup> Apuleius' remedy

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<sup>119</sup> Columella, *De re agricultura* 10.341 (LCL 408: 36-37; trans. Forster and Heffner): "*Tuscis ... sacris*,"

<sup>120</sup> Columella, *De re agricultura* 10.345-50.

<sup>121</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.1.

<sup>122</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.1-2 and 14-15; *Geoponika* 1.14.

<sup>123</sup> *Geoponika* 1.14. Palladius was drawing on Greek sources that the *Geoponika* was based on, such as Anatolius of Beirut, not the *Geoponika* itself, which is a tenth-century Byzantine compilation. Therefore, if there is a remedy in the *Geoponika* that Palladius does not include, it does not mean that Palladius deliberately omitted the remedy because that remedy may have been added to the *Geoponika* after Palladius was writing. However, since this particular remedy is attributed to the Roman author Apuleius, who predates Palladius, it is distinctly likely that Palladius was aware of this remedy.

appears to be a variation of curse tablets, in which a curse was inscribed on a lead tablet, which was then rolled up, pierced with a nail, and deposited in a place of ritual importance.<sup>124</sup>

Palladius' selective use of Columella and Greek sources preserved in the *Geoponika* for protecting crops from bad weather follows a pattern. In the *Opus agriculturae* Palladius omitted any rituals that involved sacrificing, invoking specific deities, or requiring arcane knowledge. There are several possible reasons why Palladius omitted this material from his sources. First, Palladius may have been a Christian, or, if he were not, he was at least writing for an audience that included many Christians. Second, in the mid-fifth century there was an intellectual trend of removing references to traditional Roman religion from some written sources. For example, when Polemius Silvius composed a calendar in his *Laterculus*, he removed many pagan holidays to make it more acceptable for Christian usage.<sup>125</sup> Third, by the time Palladius was writing in Italy in the mid-fifth century, the demand for sacrificial animals for public rituals had declined. The decline in demand for sacrificial animals rendered ritual knowledge about what constituted sacrificially fit animals, when they needed to be ready by, and other arcane ritual knowledge unnecessary and inappropriate to practice. Each of these reasons touches on Palladius' place in the religious changes of the fifth century, which is beyond the scope of the present project. Whatever Palladius' reason for excluding traditional

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<sup>124</sup> Stuart McKie, *Living and Cursing in the Roman West: Curse Tablets and Society* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 29-30.

<sup>125</sup> Polemius Silvius, *Laterculus* 1-3; Michele Salzman, *On Roman Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 235-46; David Paniagua, *Polemii Silvii Laterculus* (Roma: Nella sede dell'istituto palazzo Borromini, piazza dell'orologio, 2018), 19-22.

Roman religious knowledge from the *Opus agriculturae*, it is evident that he carefully chose the remedies that he did include.

Palladius only included remedies that he thought were effective unto themselves and did not require the manipulation of deities or other spiritual forces. That Palladius thought that the remedies he prescribed operated under their own power, as opposed to external or supernatural power, is evident from a caveat that Palladius places on the use of smearing iron tools with bear grease and olive oil. “But this remedy must be kept secret, so no pruner understands it. Its power (*uis*) is said to be such that it cannot be harmed by frost or mist or any animal. It is important to note that if divulged the procedure has no force (*non ualeat*).”<sup>126</sup> Palladius does not explain why the knowledge of the pruner changes the effectiveness of tools smeared with bear grease and olive oil. Palladius assumes that secretly applying bear grease and olive oil to tools has its own strength or *uis*. If any part of the remedy were to be compromised, in this case the secret application of the grease and oil mixture, the remedy would lose its own strength and becomes ineffective.

Palladius’ instructions regarding the use of bear grease and olive oil on iron tools demonstrates that Palladius located the effectiveness of the remedy within itself, but they do not explain the mechanisms that Palladius thought were at work behind the remedy. While Palladius rarely explains how his remedies work, his explanation for why mirrors could avert storm clouds is an exception. “...either [the cloud] is upset at being set

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<sup>126</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.2 (Rodgers 1975: 36; trans. Fitch 2013: 61): “*sed hoc in occulto debet esse remedium, ut nullus putator intellegat. cuius tanta uis esse perhibetur, ut neque gelu neque nebula neque aliquo animali possit noceri. interest, ut res profanta non ualeat.*”

against itself, or it makes way for the other cloud as its double.”<sup>127</sup> Palladius himself was not sure why mirrors could avert clouds. Nonetheless, Palladius’ anthropomorphizing explanations assume that the clouds have a natural behavior, in which they avoid other clouds. When Palladius prescribed a mirror to avert a cloud, he thought that this remedy was manipulating natural phenomena.

Palladius’ assumption that a farmer could manipulate natural phenomena to prevent storms, hail, mists, and rust if only he took the proper action underlies all the remedies that Palladius prescribes. Are fleas or slugs a problem? Apply fresh *amurca*<sup>128</sup> or soot from ceilings.<sup>129</sup> Gnats? Use an infusion of galbanum or sulfur.<sup>130</sup> Caterpillars? Possible solutions range from soaking garden seeds in houseleek juice or caterpillar blood to having a menstruating woman walk around the garden barefoot, hair loose, and with no fastenings on her clothes.<sup>131</sup>

Palladius’ general view of the landscape, namely that nature can be made more agriculturally productive through human action, drives his treatment of farm remedies. Palladius believed that his remedies had innate properties that interacted with the natural

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<sup>127</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.15 (Rodgers 1975: 40; trans. Fitch 2013: 64): “...*seu ut sibi obiecta displiceat seu ut tamquam geminate alteri cedat...*”

<sup>128</sup> The watery byproduct of olive oil production. (Fitch, *Palladius*, 29.)

<sup>129</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.1.

<sup>130</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.8.

<sup>131</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.35.3. While Palladius’ instructions regarding the protective qualities of a menstruating woman against caterpillars may have their roots in earlier rituals, any ritual context had been long lost. Palladius’ information comes directly from Columella, who in turn got it from Democritus. (Columella, *De re agricultura* 10.355-68 and 11.3.64.)

world in specific ways. When farmers were equipped with the proper knowledge of the properties of different substances and how they interacted with animals, plants, and the weather, they were then able to use this knowledge to manipulate the land to kill pests and ward off storms. While we should not attribute a modern scientific outlook to Palladius, his approach to pest prevention and protection from storms resembles a scientific worldview in that he envisioned a natural cause and effect relationship between the remedy and the desired outcome, whether it was clear weather or dead slugs.

Palladius' understanding of the role of human action in improving nature to increase agricultural production is also evident in his omission of references to the divine in his remedies. Sacrifice and invoking deities for the protection of livestock and crops were central to Roman agricultural calendars and were found in agricultural treatises, but they have no place in Palladius' remedies. Even when Palladius was drawing heavily on Columella and other Greek sources for his remedies, he opted not to include remedies that required seeking the intervention of divine power.

Palladius' remedies, while avoiding the invocation of any spiritual force, pagan or otherwise, appear to verge on the magical, which is how Kai Brodersen characterizes them.<sup>132</sup> In addition to the aforementioned remedies, Palladius also describes three spells and one curse.<sup>133</sup> Yet, even in these instances, Palladius follows the pattern of his other remedies by refraining from mentioning any deity and suggesting that his incantations operate under their own power. In the case of the curse, Palladius only writes, "They [rue

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<sup>132</sup> Brodersen, *Palladius*, 24-25.

<sup>133</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.9.14, 14.17, 14.65.

sprouts] are even cut off with curses (*maledictis*) and some people especially plant them in soil of loose brick-clay, which is absolutely certain to help them.”<sup>134</sup> Here, Palladius neither prescribes nor describes the curses. He only states that rue sprouts can be cut with undefined “*maledictis*” – “curses” or more neutrally “bad words.” Palladius then quickly moves on to the best kind of soil for rue. Palladius’ comment that “curses” were sometimes used in the cutting of rue appears to be an observation of a general practice of rue cutting, one that he did not endorse, even if he felt obliged to include it.

Palladius provides more detail regarding the spells, all three of which are in book 14 of the *Opus agriculturae*, which deals with veterinary medicine. In describing a remedy for the removal of worms from the sores of livestock, Palladius notes that some animals are too wild to catch to apply the standard remedies.<sup>135</sup> In such cases, Palladius recommends going outside before dawn prior to having relieved oneself, squatting down with feet spread wide, and, taking a handful of dust or manure in the left hand, throw it between one’s legs while saying, “As I cast this, so may the worms be cast forth from so-and-so’s horse,” adding the color of the horse.<sup>136</sup> Palladius instructs his readers to repeat this action with the right hand and then the left again. Palladius follows these instructions with a second, alternative spell for getting rid of worms. Again, Palladius advises the

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<sup>134</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 4.9.14 (Rodgers 1975: 120-21; trans. Fitch 2013: 127, adapted by the author): “*prosecuntur etiam maledictis et maxime in terra soluti lateris ponunt, quod prodesse certissimum est.*”

<sup>135</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 14.17.1.

<sup>136</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 14.17.2 (Rodgers 1975: 261; trans. Fitch 2013: 236): “*quomodo istud iacto, sic iactentur uermes de caballo illius albo aut nigro aut cuius fuerit coloris.*”

reader to get up before dawn, but then to cut a bramble while saying, “As I have cut this, so may the worms be cut from so-and-so’s horse or ox,” adding the color of the animal.<sup>137</sup>

The final spell that Palladius provides is intended to heal diarrhea in livestock. “For diarrhea in any animal or in horse: you write on a papyrus sheet the name †*honore per nasci*† and fasten it to the top of the tail next to the excretory ring.”<sup>138</sup> The manuscripts disagree on what Palladius says should be written on the piece of papyrus, but Rodgers, the editor of Palladius’ Latin text, suggests that the manuscripts diverge because each scribe was trying to make sense of a non-sensical magical name.<sup>139</sup>

Whether or not Palladius and his contemporaries would have considered treating worms through rituals and spells as magic is not my present concern. Nonetheless, the fact that Palladius included these rituals and spells in the *Opus agriculturae* suggests that they were licit actions as presented in the text. With the possible exception of the papyrus and spell for curing diarrhea in livestock, the text of which is garbled, Palladius does not name any divinity in his other spells. The absence of a divine figure in Roman curses and spells is unusual, but not without precedent. Stuart McKie argues that, in the case of Roman curse tablets without a named divinity, the individual making the curse tablet assumed that the curse would work by “the brute force of the utterances alone.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 14.17.3 (Rodgers 1975: 261; trans. Fitch 2013: 236): “*quomodo istum incidi, sic incidantur uermes a caballo uel boue illius uario uel albo uel cuiuslibet coloris.*”

<sup>138</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 14.65 (Rodgers 1975: 291; trans. Fitch 2013: 258, adapted by the author): “*Ad uentris fluxum cuilibet animali uel iumento: scribis in carta hoc nomen: †honore per nasci†, et ligas in summitate caudae iuxta intestini circulum.*”

<sup>139</sup> Rodgers, *An Introduction to Palladius*, 149.

<sup>140</sup> McKie, *Living and Cursing in the Roman West: Curse Tablets and Society*, 45.

Palladius appears to have assumed the same thing about his spells. The assumption that the words of a spell had their own power to cure worms or diarrhea is the same assumption that Palladius made regarding his other remedies: that they operated under their own power.

In addition, Palladius only prescribes these three spells as a final resort. Prior to describing the spells for removing worms from sores on livestock, Palladius proposes either pouring cold water on the worms or treating the sore with a mixture of hoarhound, leek, and salt.<sup>141</sup> Palladius only suggests using spells to treat worms if the animal is too wild and cannot be caught. Therefore, Palladius' instructions for using spells to treat worms is an attempt to control an aspect of agricultural life that is otherwise outside of human control. The same goes for Palladius' treatment of diarrhea. Palladius provides many treatments for diarrhea in livestock in two other passages of the *Opus agriculturae*.<sup>142</sup> These treatments range from drawing blood from the veins of the head of the animal to feeding the animal ground up pomegranate rinds.<sup>143</sup> Palladius' instructions to tie a piece of papyrus with a spell to an animal's hindquarters is the final passage in the entire *Opus agriculturae*, which suggests that Palladius envisioned a farmer using papyrus and a spell to treat diarrhea only if the other remedies had not worked. The use of papyrus and a spell is, once again, an attempt to control an aspect of an animal's health that the farmer had been unable to control by other means.

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<sup>141</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 14.16.3.

<sup>142</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 14.7.3-5, 14.53.

<sup>143</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 14.53.

Palladius' remedies and spells further reveal his belief in the human capacity to alter nature. Palladius believed that farmers could use his agricultural remedies to protect crops and improve the productivity of their land. Similarly, Palladius believed that farmers could positively affect their livestock's health with his spells. The protection of crops and spells are both subjects in which we might expect to find appeals to divine aid. Yet, Palladius includes references to neither traditional Roman divinities nor Christian alternatives. Instead Palladius assumes that the remedies and spells he prescribes had their own strength, and that people were able to use them to control aspects of their natural world, ranging from the weather to animal diseases.

#### 1.4. Conclusion

When Palladius gave general advice for choosing a suitable site for a villa, his primary concern was that a prospective villa owner choose a suitable place to farm. When Palladius gave specific advice on the planting and cultivation of crops, vineyards, and orchards he was sure to take the characteristics of a place into account. Fruit trees needed to be planted at different times depending on whether they were being planted in "hot" or "cold" places. While Palladius drew heavily on earlier agricultural authors to inform his own work, his experiences as a villa owner and manager near Rome and on Sardinia informed his writing. Palladius wove his experiences into the *Opus agriculturae* to confirm, clarify, and critique his literary sources. Palladius was also concerned with what one could do to improve the productivity of a place. According to Palladius, *natura*, the natural conditions of a place, could be made more productive through *industria*, human activity.

Palladius' firm belief in the effectiveness of human effort to alter the natural world is also evident in the remedies for protecting crops. Traditional Roman religion offered ways, most notably sacrifice, of supplicating various deities for the protection of crops. Palladius, however, studiously avoids providing instructions for the invocation of any deity. Instead, Palladius picked various remedies from his sources for pests and bad weather that did not require sacrifice or the supplication of the divine. Palladius thought that his remedies operated in a natural way under their own power. Even when he provided spells for curing worms and diarrhea in livestock, Palladius assumed that the power of the spells lay in the rituals and words themselves, not in supernatural action. Thus, Palladius' remedies and spells fall under the category of *industria*.

Palladius' understanding of the relationship between *natura* and *industria* and his advice on the use of "remedies" to ward off storms and pests both point to Palladius' view of the landscape. When Palladius looked across the land of his villa, he saw the potential productivity of *natura*. With the right knowledge, gathered primarily from literary sources and personal experience, Palladius thought that he would be able to unlock the latent potential of the land's *natura* to make it more productive through his *industria*. The *natura* of the landscape may have set the parameters of what could be done, but the act of farming the landscape lay thoroughly in human control. The placation or invocation of deities was not necessary.

Palladius' view of the land and the landscape was not the only one available to fifth-century Roman aristocrats. In the next chapter, I turn to Eucharius of Lyon, another fifth-century Roman aristocrat living on the Mediterranean coast. But where the view of

the landscape that Palladius presents in the *Opus agriculturae* strips the place of its divine associations, Eucharius reads the spiritual associations of the Old Testament desert into his landscape, the Mediterranean island of Sainte-Marguerite.

## Chapter 2

### *Turning Lérins into the Desert: Landscape in Eucherius of Lyon's De laude eremi*

In the previous chapter, Palladius, a fifth-century senatorial aristocrat, believed in the human capacity to alter the landscape for the purpose of improving its agricultural production. Palladius' practical experience as a villa owner and manager taught him the importance of responding to his landscape. Palladius' experience shaped the agricultural advice he gave and allowed him to critique earlier agricultural authors. Palladius' agriculturally oriented view of his landscape was not the only way for fifth-century aristocrats to conceptualize their landscape. Eucherius of Lyon, yet another fifth-century Gallo-Roman senatorial aristocrat, sought the opposite of agricultural abundance. Eucherius sought the "desert." But Eucherius sought the "desert" in an unlikely place, the Mediterranean archipelago off the coast of Cannes: Lérins.

Eucherius of Lyon was a Gallo-Roman aristocrat born in the last quarter of the fourth century, who seems to have had a reasonably successful secular career.<sup>1</sup> Between 412 and 420 Eucherius moved to Lérins to join Honoratus' nascent monastic community, taking his family with him.<sup>2</sup> Eucherius settled on the larger of the two islands of Lérins,

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<sup>1</sup> *PCBE* 4: 653-658. (Eucherius 2); Hilary of Arles called Eucherius, "*splendidus mundo*" (Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Honorati*, 22,2; SC 235: 130.)

<sup>2</sup> Eucherius' wife was named Galla (*PCBE* 4: 841-842 (Galla 3)), with whom he had two sons, Salonius (*PCBE* 4: 1684-1688 (Salonius 1)) and Veranus (*PCBE* 4: 1926-1929 (Veranus 1)). The *PLRE* also lists two daughters, Consortia and Tullia, but states that the source testifying to their existence is late and untrustworthy. (*PLRE* II: 405 (Eucherius 3)) The *PCBE* omits the daughters altogether. The dates for Eucherius' movement to Lérins depend on Eucherius' son being nine years old when he moved to Lérins. (Eucherius, *Instructiones* I.Preface. (SC 618: 262): "*uixdum decem natus annos heremum ingressus*." This statement has led most scholars to assume that Salonius was around ten years old when Eucherius moved his family to Lérins. (*PCBE* 4: 1684-1688 (Salonius 1)) However, the Roman practice of inclusive counting would make Salonius nine years old. For a brief description of Lérins' earliest monastic community, see: Mireille Labrousse, "La fondation du monastère et les premiers moines de Lérins," in *Histoire de L'Abbaye*

modern Îsle Sainte-Marguerite, instead of staying with Honoratus' monastic community on the smaller island of Îsle Saint-Honorat.<sup>3</sup> Eucherius considered himself a part of Honoratus' monastic community and remained in contact with Honoratus through letters.<sup>4</sup> Eucherius' decision to live apart from the rest of his monastic community may have been inspired by Egyptian anchorites who also lived apart from their monastic communities.

Eucherius' views of the appropriate place to practice the best monastic life changed while at Lérins. Early in Eucherius' time at Lérins, he was enamored with Egyptian monasticism and desired to travel to Egypt.<sup>5</sup> For a Gallic aristocrat with monastic inclinations to travel to Egypt or Palestine to visit holy places and monks was not unusual during the fourth and early fifth centuries.<sup>6</sup> However, Eucherius was dissuaded from traveling to Egypt by John Cassian, who wrote to him from Marseille

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*de Lérins*, eds. Mireille Labrousse, Eliana Magnani, Yann Codou, Jean-Marie Le Gall, Régis Bertrand, Dom Vladimir Gaudrat (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine – ARCCIS, 2005), 23-48.

<sup>3</sup> Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 51.2.

<sup>4</sup> Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Honorati*, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Cassian, *Conf.*, Preface to the Second Part.1 (SC 54:99; trans. Ramsey, ACW 57:399).

<sup>6</sup> For examples, see: an anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux made an itinerary of his or her pilgrimage to the Levant in 333 (Jaś Elsner, "The Itinerarium Burdigalense: Politics and Salvation in the Geography of Constantine's Empire," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 181); Egeria, likely a middle-class woman from the Rhône valley, who made a pilgrimage to the Levant in the 380s (Hagith Sivan, "Who Was Egeria? Piety and Pilgrimage in the Age of Gratian," *The Harvard Theological Review* 81, no. 1 (1988): 66); Justus, bishop of Lyon, resigned his episcopacy and traveled to Egypt in 381 where he died as a hermit (André Pelletier, *Quand Lyon s'Appelait Lugdunum* (Lyon: Editions Lyonnaises D'art Et D'histoire, 2016), 146-7); Honoratus, his brother Venantius, and their spiritual mentor Caprasius were Gallic natives who began a pilgrimage to the East in either the last decade of the fourth or the first decade of the fifth century (Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Honorati*, 10-12. (SC 235: 94-102; trans. Hoare, *The Western Fathers* (Sheed and Ward, 1954), 256-58).

sometime before 427.<sup>7</sup> Eucherius remained at Lérins in study, which is where he was when Cassian dedicated a portion of the *Conferences* to him.<sup>8</sup> Shortly afterwards, at the end of 427, the abbot of Lérins, Honoratus, left Lérins to become bishop of Arles.<sup>9</sup> As argued by Conrad Leyser, the loss of Lérins' charismatic leader precipitated a crisis of identity in the monastery; should the monks follow Honoratus to Arles or remain loyal to their monastery in Lérins?<sup>10</sup> Eucherius stayed, demonstrating his commitment to Lérins as a holy place.<sup>11</sup> However, another monk and relative of Honoratus, Hilary, followed Honoratus to Arles.<sup>12</sup> But Hilary did not stay in Arles long. In his own words, Hilary writes that he left Arles "at the beginning of his episcopate and returned to the island out of a love for solitude."<sup>13</sup> Eucherius then wrote a letter to Hilary, known to us as *De laude*

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<sup>7</sup> In the preface to the second half of the *Conferences*, John Cassian states that Eucherius desired to travel to Egypt. (Cassian, *Conf.*, Preface to the Second Part.1 (SC 54:99; trans. Ramsey, ACW 57:399). Since Cassian addressed the second half of the *Conferences* to both Honoratus and Eucherius, it must have been written before 427 when Honoratus became bishop of Arles. (PCBE 4: 1021 (Honoratus 1)) On Eucherius' desire to travel to Egypt, see: Christopher Kelly, "The Myth of the Desert in Western Monasticism: Eucherius of Lyon's *In Praise of the Desert*," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (2011): 129-141).

<sup>8</sup> For Eucherius studying at Lérins, see: Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 51.1 (CSEL 29: 424; trans. Walsh, ACW 36: 293): "*ac studia exercentes*"; Cassian dedicated the second part of the *Conferences* to Eucherius and Honoratus. Cassian, *Conf.*, Preface to the Second Part.1 (SC 54:99; trans. Ramsey, ACW 57:399).

<sup>9</sup> PCBE 4: 1021-1022 (Honoratus 1).

<sup>10</sup> Conrad Leyser, "This Sainted Isle: Panegyric, Nostalgia, and the Invention of Lerinian Monasticism," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in honor of R.A. Markus*, eds. William E. Klingshirn and Mark Vessey (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 195-197; John M. Pepino, "St. Eucherius of Lyons: Rhetorical Adaptation of Message to Intended Audience in Fifth Century Provence," (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 2009. UMI Microform 3348463), 200-205.

<sup>11</sup> For Eucherius' commitment to the sacredness of a specific place, see: R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (1990; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 160-162.

<sup>12</sup> Hilary of Arles (PCBE 4: 998-1007 (Hilarius 3))

<sup>13</sup> Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Honorati*, 36.2 (SC 235:168; trans. Hoare 1954: 277): "...*ab insula, cui me derelictis episcopatus sui principiis secreti amore reddideram...*"

*eremi* or *In Praise of the Desert*,<sup>14</sup> celebrating Hilary’s return to Lérins and arguing for the superiority of the monastic life at Lérins over life in Arles.<sup>15</sup> In this letter, Eucherius states that he owes reverence to all the deserts inhabited by monks, but goes on to write, “I, however, embrace my Lérins with special honor.”<sup>16</sup> Eucherius poses the following question and answer to the monks of Lérins: “Do they desire to acquire the desert life? In

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<sup>14</sup> Note on editions and translations of the *De laude eremi*: Karl Wotke published the first modern edition of the *De laude eremi* in 1894 (Karl Wotke, *De laude heremi ad Hilarium Lirinensem Presbyterum Epistula* (CSEL 31; Prague: F. Tempsky, 1984. 177-194)). Pricoco published an edition in 1965 (Salvatore Pricoco, *Eucherii De laude eremi* (Catania, 1965)). Pricoco published an updated edition of the Latin text in 2014 along with an Italian translation. (Salvatore Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell’Eremo* (Bologna: Centro editorial hehoniano, EDB, 2014)). I use Pricoco’s 2014 Latin text and numbering system for the *De laude eremi*. Charles Cummings published the first English translation of the *De laude eremi* in 1976, using Wotke’s text. (Charles Cummings, “In Praise of the Desert,” *Cistercian Studies* 11 (1976): 60-72.) In 1999, Jeffrey Burton Russell published a revised version of Cummings’ translation of the *De laude eremi* using Pricoco’s 1965 Latin text. (Charles Cummings and Jeffrey Burton Russell, “Eucherius of Lyon: In Praise of the Desert: A Letter to Bishop Hilary of Lérins,” in *The Life of the Jura Fathers*, eds. and trans. Tim Vivian, Kim Vivian, and Jeffrey Burton Russell (Cistercian Studies Series 178, Kalamazoo, MI & Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1999), 197-215.) (Henceforth, Cummings and Russell 1999) I generally follow Cummings and Russell’s translation. However, in instances when a translation more literal than the one offered by Cummings and Russell is necessary, I provide my own translation.

<sup>15</sup> Hilary had left Lérins, following Honoratus to Arles in 427, but returned to Lérins in the early days of Honoratus’ episcopacy (Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Honorati*, 36), which was certainly the occasion on which Eucherius wrote the *De laude eremi* (Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 1; *PCBE* 4: 999). We do not know the exact date that Hilary returned to Arles, but he was certainly in Arles just before Honoratus’ death in 430. (Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Honorati*, 31.) Joop van Waarden argues that the *De laude eremi* was written in 428. (Joop van Waarden, “Eucherius of Lyon,” in *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online*, eds. David G. Hunter, Paul J.J. van Geest, and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (accessed August 2, 2022. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-7993\\_EECO\\_SIM\\_00001136](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-7993_EECO_SIM_00001136).) Cummings’ translation of the *De laude eremi* suggests that Honoratus was dead at the time Eucherius wrote it based on Eucherius’ use of the subjunctive and perfect tenses when Eucherius describes what Honoratus might say about Hilary’s return to Lérins. (Cummings and Russell 1999: 198) However, the Latin does not require us to assume that Honoratus was dead and Hilary’s own testimony in the *Sermo de vita Honorati* clearly states that he returned to Lérins at the beginning Honoratus’ episcopate when Honoratus was still very much alive. (Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Honorati*, 36.2). For Eucherius’ purpose in arguing for the superiority of Lérins over life at Arles, see: Pepino, “St. Eucherius of Lyon: Rhetorical Adaption,” 10-11; Leysner, “This Sainted Isle,” 188–206.)

<sup>16</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 42 (Pricoco 2014: 180; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 215): “*praecipuo tamen Lirinum meam honore complector.*”

their heart they do.”<sup>17</sup> In the space of a few years, Eucherius had gone from desiring to leave Lérins for the Egyptian desert to esteeming Lérins above all other deserts and interpreting the “desert life” as a way of life that could be practiced anywhere.

For Eucherius, the desert life was a life seeking God in one’s heart while in solitude.<sup>18</sup> By defining the desert life as an action of the heart, Eucherius turned the desert into a way of life that could be practiced anywhere, regardless of landscape. Cassian’s role in shaping Eucherius’ thought, especially regarding his interpretation of the desert life as a way of life and the primacy of coenobitic monasticism, has been widely remarked upon.<sup>19</sup> What has not received scholarly attention is that Eucherius’ experience of life in Lérins’ landscape impacted his re-imagination of the “desert.” While Eucherius remained committed to Lérins being the most honored monastic desert, Eucherius was not ready to give up on the idea of a physical desert as the ideal place to practice

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<sup>17</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 43.4 (Pricoco 2014: 184; trans. by the author): “*uitam eremi adipisci gestiunt? Corde adipiscuntur.*”

<sup>18</sup> de Vogüé arrives at a similar definition of Eucherius’ *eremus*: “*la retraite du monde pour être tour à Dieu.*” (Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l’antiquité, Première Partie; le monachisme latin*, vol. 7: *L’essor de la littérature lérinienne et les écrits contemporains (410-500)* (Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 2003), 103.

<sup>19</sup> Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 160-162; Conrad Leyser, *Asceticism and Authority* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 33-61; James Goehring, “The Dark Side of the Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian Myth of the Desert,” in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, eds. Martin and Miller (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 145-146; Mireille Labrousse, “La spiritualité des premiers moines de Lérins,” in *Histoire de L’Abbaye de Lérins*, eds. Mireille Labrousse, Eliana Magnani, Yann Codou, Jean-Marie Le Gall, Régis Bertrand, Dom Vladimir Gaudrat (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine – ARCCIS, 2005), 101-104; Conrad Leyser, “Uses of the Desert in the Sixth Century West,” in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, special issue of *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. 1, (2006): 119 and 121; Claudia Rapp, “Desert, City, and Countryside in the Early Christian Imagination,” in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, special issue of *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. 1, (2006): 104-109; Christopher Kelly, “The Myth of the Desert in Western Monasticism: Eucherius of Lyon’s *In Praise of the Desert*,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (2011): 136.

monasticism when he wrote the *De laude eremi*.<sup>20</sup> Since Lérins does not resemble the desert of Egypt as described in the Bible and monastic literature, Eucherius' commitments to Lérins as a monastic desert and the importance of a physical desert to the perfect monastic life were in tension.

This tension is particularly evident in Eucherius' paradoxical treatment of the desert as agriculturally fertile and Lérins as a desert, which has led at least one commentator to suggest that the *De laude eremi* is disconnected from reality.<sup>21</sup> I argue that Eucherius reconciled this tension in the *De laude eremi* by redefining the "desert" as an action of the heart and by engaging directly with his landscape in two ways. First, Eucherius' definition of the desert as a solitary place where one could seek God, capitalizes on the one commonality between the desert as described in the Bible and monastic literature and Lérins' physical landscape, relative isolation. Second, Eucherius offers a spiritual interpretation of the physical characteristics of Lérins to support his redefinition of the desert.

The view of the desert that Eucherius expresses in the *De laude eremi*, and with which I am presently concerned, represents Eucherius' views during 427 or 428 immediately following the departure of Honoratus for Arles.<sup>22</sup> However, Eucherius' *De*

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<sup>20</sup> Kelly, "The Myth of the Desert," 136.

<sup>21</sup> de Vogüé charges the *De laude eremi* with being exaggerated and a work of fiction and points out the work's discrepancies in its treatment of landscape and monastic practice. (de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 103.)

<sup>22</sup> Here I depart from de Vogüé, who argues that the *De laude eremi* is relatively independent from Eucherius' circumstances on account of the impersonal nature of most of the work. (de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 80.) For the composition of the *De laude eremi* at the end of 427 or beginning of 428, see: Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell'Eremo*, 47-48.

*laude eremi* was merely the first in a long series of works that he produced over his career. In 432, in the letter entitled *De contemptu mundi*, Eucherius attempted to recruit Valerianus, a relative and high-ranking Gallic official, to the monastic life.<sup>23</sup> Eucherius also wrote his best known works, the *Formulae Spiritualis intelligentiae* and the *Duo libri instructionum*, between 430 and 434.<sup>24</sup> Eucherius left Lérins to become bishop of Lyon between 434 and 439, where he established a monastery of his own.<sup>25</sup> While bishop of Lyon, Eucherius wrote the *Passio Acaunensium martyrum*, the oldest account of the Theban martyrs, and the *De situ hierosolimae*, which points towards Eucherius' continued interest in the holy landscapes of the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>26</sup> Eucherius may also be responsible for some of the sermons in the *Eusebius Gallicanus* collection, but this is contested.<sup>27</sup> While Eucherius participated in the Council of Orange in 441, we have no evidence that he ever returned to Lérins. Eucherius' long career and varied writing interests show that his views regarding the desert and the best place to live out the monastic life were not static. Therefore, this discussion will limit itself to Eucherius' views regarding the desert when he wrote the *De laude eremi* in 427 or 428.

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<sup>23</sup> The *PCBE* dates the *De contemptu mundi* to 432 based on Eucherius' statement of writing 1185 years after the founding of Rome. Salvatore Pricoco, *Eucherio: Il rifiuto del mondo* (Bologna: Centro editorial hehoniano, EDB, 1990), 94.

<sup>24</sup> Martine Dulaey, *Eucher de Lyon: Oeuvres Exégétiques*, (Source Chrétienne 618, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2021), 12-18; Martine Dulaey, "Eucher de Lyon, lecteur d'Augustin : le témoignage des Instructions," *Revue d'études augustiniennes et patristiques* 66 (2020): 139.

<sup>25</sup> *PCBE* 4: 655. For Eucherius' founding a monastery in Lyon, see: Pepino, "St. Eucherius of Lyon: Rhetorical Adaption," 87-89.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas O'Loughlin has argued for the *De situ hierosolimae* as a genuine work by Eucherius. (Thomas O' Loughlin, *Adomán and the Holy Places* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 214-222.)

<sup>27</sup> Lisa Bailey, *Christianity's Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collections and the Power of the Church in Late Antique Gaul* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 31, 33, and 36.

While the *De laude eremi* did not have a large readership beyond Eucherius' initial audience, that is Hilary and the monastic circle of Lérins, Eucherius' treatment of the term *eremus* had far reaching implications for Western monasticism (some of which I explore in Chapter 6).<sup>28</sup> The *De laude eremi* also tells us about Eucherius' relationship with the landscape of Lérins. First, it tells us that Eucherius was not ambivalent about his landscape. Rather, Eucherius engaged directly with Lérins' landscape. Eucherius' direct engagement with his landscape prompted him to alter the definition of *eremus*. Second, the *De laude eremi* tells us that Eucherius interpreted his landscape in terms of its spiritual importance for a monastic project.

In the following analysis, I will proceed in the following order. First, I examine the vocabulary that Eucherius used to describe the "desert." The most important aspects of the "desert" to Eucherius were solitude and isolation. For Eucherius, solitude and isolation were central to ascetic practice and seeking God. Second, Eucherius originally conceived of the "desert" as a dry place unable to support agriculture and human habitation. Eucherius' views are representative of late Roman conceptions of the fertility of land and the land's suitability for habitation. Eucherius also invokes the biblical Garden of Eden and classical motif of the *locus amoenus* as counterpoints to the monastic desert in order to further emphasize the harshness of his imaged desert landscape. Third, I provide a brief description and history of the islands of Lérins. Prior to the fifth century Lérins was a well-connected and populated port and, therefore, an unlikely site for a

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<sup>28</sup> For the *De laude eremi*'s limited audience, see: Pepino, "St. Eucherius of Lyon: Rhetorical Adaption," 299-300. For the reception of the *De laude eremi* by the monks of Lérins, see: Mireille Labrousse, "La fondation du monastère et les premiers moines de Lérins," 101-104; Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell'Eremo*, 98-107.

monastic project that emphasized physical isolation. However, a natural disaster at the end of the fourth century depopulated Lérins, making it available for a monastic foundation at the beginning of the fifth century. Eucherius embraced the isolation of Lérins but ignored its history of habitation. Finally, I turn to the way in which Eucherius reconciled his vision of the desolate monastic desert inspired by the Bible and Egyptian hagiography with Lérins' physical characteristics. Eucherius does this by describing the virtues of the monks in the "desert" as spiritual plants. Eucherius builds on the metaphor of virtues as plants by using language of agricultural fertility in order to describe the spiritual blessings of the "desert." Eucherius then equates the spiritual plants with Lérins' actual plants. The result is that Eucherius describes Lérins as a classical *locus amoenus*, Paradise on Earth, and as a "desert" simultaneously. Eucherius thus transforms the meaning of the "desert" through direct engagement with Lérins' physical landscape.

### 2.1. Eucherius' Vocabulary of the Desert

Eucherius never visited the desert in Egypt, but he imagined it. To understand the way that Eucherius imagined the desert, it is crucial to understand the vocabulary he used to describe it. Four words command our attention: *eremus* (used 52 times in the *De laude eremi*), *desertum* (40 times), *solitudo* (20 times), and *secretum* (10 times).<sup>29</sup> A brief consideration of these words indicates that the most important characteristic of the "desert" for Eucherius was that it was a place where one could be alone and find God.

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<sup>29</sup> Clemens Kasper, *Theologie und Askese* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1991), 201.

*Eremus* is a latinized form of the Greek ἐρημος, which means desolate, lonely, or solitary.<sup>30</sup> When John the Baptist was preaching, he was in the ἐρημος.<sup>31</sup> Jesus was tempted in and prayed in the ἐρημος.<sup>32</sup> The monk Antony sought out the ἐρημος.<sup>33</sup> The primary Latin word used to translate ἐρημος in the New Testament was neuter singular *desertum*.<sup>34</sup> *Desertum*, the root of the modern English word ‘desert’, comes from the Latin verb *desero*, primarily meaning to leave, forsake, or abandon.<sup>35</sup> In classical Latin, when the masculine singular *desertus* was used to describe a place, it indicated in its strictest sense that the place was devoid of inhabitants. It did not indicate anything about the landscape of a place.<sup>36</sup> The neuter plural *deserta* has classical usage as a noun meaning ‘deserted places.’<sup>37</sup> When the latinized form of ἐρημος, *eremus*, entered the Latin lexicon it was used as a synonym for the neuter singular *desertum*. For example, when Jerome wrote the *Life of Paul the Hermit* in Latin, he used *eremus* and neuter forms *desertum* and *deserta*.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> LSJ “ἐρημος”

<sup>31</sup> Mark 1:3-4.

<sup>32</sup> Mark 1:12; Mark 1:35.

<sup>33</sup> Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 3.2. (SC 400: 136.)

<sup>34</sup> For example, in the Latin Vulgate, John the Baptist is described as preaching “*in deserto*.” Luke 3:2.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis and Short, “*desero*.”

<sup>36</sup> However, as I discuss on pages 109-112, the word *desertus* did carry implications for the relative agricultural fertility of a place.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see: Vergil, *Eclogues* 6.81.

<sup>38</sup> For Jerome’s use of *eremus*, *desertum*, and *deserta* in the *Life of Paul the Hermit*, see: Jerome, *Life of Paul the Hermit*, 1.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1, 13.1, and 16.2. (SC 508: 144, 152, 154, 156, 160, 162, 172, and 176.)

Like Jerome, Eucherius also thought of *desertum* and *eremus* as synonyms.<sup>39</sup> In his *Duo libri instructionum* Eucherius provides a short glossary for frequently used Greek words, including the word *eremus*, for which he gives the one-word definition of *desertum*.<sup>40</sup> While Eucherius preferred the word *eremus* to describe the monastic desert, he easily switched between the two depending on the source he was using. For example, when Eucherius invokes New Testament texts, he prefers the word *desertum*, probably because *desertum* was used to translate ἐρημος in those New Testament passages.<sup>41</sup> However, as Clemens Kasper has argued, the term *eremus* acquired an implied ascetic understanding from its use in Greek hagiography that *desertum* did not.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, while Eucherius treated the words *desertum* and *eremus* as technical synonyms, the different associations of each word allowed Eucherius to subtly differentiate between the words and give *eremus* a new definition.

Eucherius begins his redefinition of the word *eremus* in the first section of the *De laude eremi*. Eucherius attributes Hilary's return to Lérins to his love of the *eremus*.

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For Jerome's use of *eremus* in the *Life of Paul the Hermit*, see: Jerome, *Life of Paul the Hermit* 1.1; 6.2; 7.1; 8.3; 9.1; 16.2. (SC 508: 144; 154; 156; 160; 162; 176.)

<sup>39</sup> Eucherius' use of the neuter singular *desertum* follows ecclesiastic usage, indicating a commitment to an ideological ideal of "the desert," not just any "deserted place."

<sup>40</sup> Eucherius, *Instructionum*, II.15.22 (SC 618: 554): "*Heremus : desertum.*"

<sup>41</sup> de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 86.

<sup>42</sup> Kasper, *Theologie und Askese*, 202.

“What shall I call the love of the desert, if not the love of God in you?”<sup>43</sup> Eucherius

explains this statement further:

I would say that the desert (*eremum*) deserves to be called an unbounded temple of our God. Since it is clear that God dwells in silence (*in silentio*), we must believe that he rejoices in a cutoff place (*secreto*).<sup>44</sup>

Here Eucherius makes clear that he believes that God dwells in the *eremus*.<sup>45</sup> Hence, Eucherius’ equivalence between the love of God and love of the *eremus*. According to Eucherius, God’s dwelling place has three attributes. First, it is unbounded. This suggests that God’s dwelling place does not have man made borders. This statement may have been tongue-in-cheek. Hilary had just returned from Arles, where Honoratus was recently made bishop. By claiming that the *eremus* is God’s unbounded temple, Eucherius is also claiming that God’s temple is not in Arles, an area with defined borders, but rather Lérins.

According to Eucherius, God’s choice of the *eremus* as his preferred dwelling place made the *eremus* the easiest place to find him.<sup>46</sup> Eucherius does not explain why God should prefer the *eremus* above other places. In fact, Eucherius is sure to note that God is everywhere.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, Eucherius notes that God revealed himself to Moses

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<sup>43</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 1.5, (Pricoco 2014: 136; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 198): “*qui quidem eremi amor, quid in te nisi dei amor appellandus est?*”

<sup>44</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 3.3, (Pricoco 2014: 138; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 199; modified by the author): “*Eremum ergo recte incircumscriptum dei nostri templum dixerim. Etenim quem certum est habitare in silentio, credendum est gaudere secreto.*”

<sup>45</sup> de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 81.

<sup>46</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 3.5, (Pricoco 2014: 138): “*...neque uspiam desit...*”

and Elijah in the *eremus*. Therefore, Eucherius reasons, wherever God is most easily encountered, that is where God prefers to dwell. If God's dwelling place is a temple, then the *eremus* can be described as an unbounded temple of God.<sup>48</sup>

The other qualities that Eucherius attributes to the *eremus* bring us to another of Eucherius' preferred words to describe the *eremus*: *secretum*. Eucherius used the word *secretum*, from the verb *secerno* meaning to separate, pull apart, or sever, to indicate a place that was cut off from or unattached to the rest of the world.<sup>49</sup> The natural consequence for a place being cut off from the world is that it is detached from the world's hustle, bustle, and noise, making it quiet. Eucherius' statement regarding the silence of God's dwelling place may be inspired by God's appearance to Elijah in a quiet whisper.<sup>50</sup> Again, Eucherius invokes a contrast between Arles and Lérins. Since Lérins is an archipelago, it is cut off from the mainland and from the city of Arles.

Eucherius completes his initial definition of the "desert" as God's dwelling place with an anecdote about when someone once asked a man where he could be sure to find God. The man told his questioner to follow him and "coming to the broad cut off places of the open desert (*late patentis eremi secreta*) and showing him the withdrawn nature of the desolate solitary place (*vastae solitudinis recessum*), he said, 'Behold, where God

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<sup>48</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 3.3, (Pricoco 2014: 138): "...*incircumscriptum dei nostri templum*..."

<sup>49</sup> Lewis and Short, "*secerno*."

<sup>50</sup> 1 Kings 19:11-12. de Vogüé also suggests that this might be a reference to 1 Kings 6:7 where we are told that the stones for the temple in Jerusalem were fitted at the quarry so that the sound of hammers and chisels might not be heard in Jerusalem itself. (de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 82.)

is.”<sup>51</sup> Eucherius’ language here is exaggerated to an extreme for the purpose of emphasizing that the *eremus* is solitary, *solitudo*. Once again, Eucherius describes the *eremus* as *secretus*, that is cut off from the rest of the world, but here the cut off places are broad (*late*) and the *eremus* itself lies open (*patens*). The image that Eucherius conjures up with these words is a place that is remote, large, and open. One can imagine standing on a flat plain with a 360-degree view of the horizon. What fills up this open space? Nothing. Eucherius uses the word *recessum* to emphasize the remoteness of the *eremus* once again. But this time Eucherius describes the *eremus* as an “desolate solitary place” (*vasta solitudo*). The primary meaning of *solitudo* is solitude or a place to be alone.<sup>52</sup> But the adjective *vasta* carries a particularly monastic meaning here. *Vasta*, sharing a root with the noun *vastitas*, which Eucherius also uses, is frequently used by biblical prophets to indicate desolation and ruin brought by God’s anger.<sup>53</sup> But in monastic literature it became an attribute of the desert, indicating “desolation,” a landscape characterized by a broad expanse.<sup>54</sup> Pricoco has traced Eucherius’ use of *vastitas* to Jerome and Cassian, both of whom used *vastitas* in this way.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, Eucherius’ use of *vasta* here and *vastitas* elsewhere invokes the desolate places in Egypt

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<sup>51</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 4.1, (Pricoco 2014: 140; trans. by author): “*ad late patentis eremi secreta venisse et ostendens vastae solitudinis recessum : «en,» inquit, «ubi deus est.»*” Note that Eucherius tends to use the plural when he uses the word “*solitudo*.”

<sup>52</sup> Lewis and Short, “*solitudo*.”

<sup>53</sup> Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell’Eremo*, 218.

<sup>54</sup> Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell’Eremo*, 218.

<sup>55</sup> Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell’Eremo*, 219.

described by Jerome and Cassian. Eucherius' combination of *vasta* and *solitudo* strengthens the image of the *eremus* as being large, remote, and utterly empty.

So far as Eucherius was concerned, the essential qualities of the *eremus* were that it was cut off from the world (*secretus*), a solitary place (*solitudo*), and without human habitation (*desertum*). Such a place is also quiet. Eucherius states that, "God dwells in silence (*in silentio*)."<sup>56</sup> A quiet place is also conducive to searching for God through study. The importance of study becomes apparent when Eucherius turns to the activities of the monks in the desert. Eucherius describes how Roman aristocrats (*clari...viri*) used to betake themselves to the study of philosophy after a secular career, something that the aristocratic monks at Lérins were familiar with. But Eucherius argues that it is better to devote oneself to the "study of the clearest wisdom," that is scripture, and to withdraw "to the freedom of solitude and the secluded areas of deserted places."<sup>57</sup> Eucherius' appeal to aristocratic language and lifestyle was not lost on Hilary or the other monks of Lérins, many of whom, like Eucherius, had aristocratic backgrounds. Eucherius uses this to describe the life of the *eremus* as one of solitude and the study of scripture, which is superior to previous generations' study of philosophy.

Lest we think that Eucherius only envisioned the life of the *eremus* as merely a Christian version of aristocratic philosophical leisure, Eucherius also makes clear that the

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<sup>56</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 3.3, (Pricoco 2014: 138; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 199; modified by the author): "*Etenim quem certum est habitare in silentio...*"

<sup>57</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 32.2, (Pricoco 2014: 166; trans. by the author): "*Quanto pulchrius ad haec manifestissimae sapientiae studia divertunt magnificentiusqne ad solitudinum libertatem et desertorum secreta secedunt...*"

life of the *eremus* was an ascetic life.<sup>58</sup> Eucherius claims that special powers of fasting are found in the *eremus*.<sup>59</sup> Inhabitants of the *eremus* throw away wealth and strive in manual labor and vigils.<sup>60</sup> These ascetic practices were all in the pursuit of God, and Eucherius states that the heart is nowhere freer to find and keep God than in “those cut off places.”<sup>61</sup> For Eucherius, the *eremus* was a place of asceticism.<sup>62</sup>

To Eucherius, the *eremus* was where one sought God both through study and ascetic practice in isolation. Yet, this definition of the *eremus* does not communicate anything about its landscape. Distance, oceans, mountains, or rivers could all cut a place off, rendering it remote. Places can be uninhabited and solitary because they are too dry, too wet, too hot, or too cold. Thus, under Eucherius’ definition, the term *eremus* could refer to a wide variety of places with diverse physical features. The geographic flexibility that Eucherius gave to the word *eremus* had far reaching consequences for Western monasticism, allowing landscapes as diverse as islands off the coast of Ireland and mountains in France to be described as the *eremus*.<sup>63</sup> Despite the geographic flexibility of

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<sup>58</sup> de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 83 and 90. For a view of monasticism at Lérins being more scholarly than ascetic, see: Salvatore Pricoco, *L’Isola dei Santi* (Rome: edizioni dell’ateneo & bizzari, 1978), 161-164; Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 82-84; Samuel Rubenson, “Monasticism and the Philosophical Heritage,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 492-93.

<sup>59</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 32.4-5.

<sup>60</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 34.3.

<sup>61</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 33.2, (Pricoco 2014: 168; trans. by the author): “*Ubi liberior cordis, ut deo inhaerere certet, intentio, quam illis utique secretis, in quibus deum non solum invenire promptum est, veram etiam custodire?*”

<sup>62</sup> Kasper, *Theologie und Askese*, 202-203.

<sup>63</sup> See note 19 in this chapter.

Eucherius' definition of the *eremus*, he still envisioned a particular landscape when he used the word *eremus*. In fact, when Eucherius used the word *eremus* he envisioned, and assumed that his readers envisioned, the deserts of the Bible and Egyptian hagiography.

## 2.2. Eucherius Imagines the Desert

Eucherius thought that the world was divided into two kinds of places, infertile and fertile. This is evident when Eucherius describes the *eremus* as an “infertile dwelling,” which God subsequently provides with the “fertility of holy men.”<sup>64</sup> Eucherius' reliance on the vocabulary of agricultural fertility to describe the *eremus* indicates that, to Eucherius, the *eremus* is a place characterized by an absence of people. The *eremus* is uninhabited because it is infertile. The nature of the *eremus*' land and climate is not conducive to agricultural production and thus human habitation. On the other hand, inhabited places support a population because they are agriculturally fertile.

Eucherius' dichotomy between inhabited fertile places and uninhabited infertile places is representative of Roman attitudes in categorizing places. For example, Orosius, at the very beginning of his *Historiarum adversos Paganos* gives an extended geography of the known world, ranging from India to the British Isles. When Orosius described the islands to the north of Britain he wrote, “[Britain] has the Orkney Islands, twenty of which are deserted, thirteen are cultivated.”<sup>65</sup> Orosius was probably not writing from

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<sup>64</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 5.1-2, (Pricoco 2014: 140; trans. by the author): “*hanc sanctorum ...fecundam*” and “*habitationem sterilem*.”

<sup>65</sup> Orosius, *Historiarum adversos Paganos*, 1.2.78, (CSEL 5: 29; trans. by the author): “[*Britannia*] *Orcadas insulas habet, quarum XX desertae sunt, XIII coluntur*.”

personal experience in this case. Rather he was picking up on earlier Roman geographic descriptions of the Orkney Islands.<sup>66</sup> The most important feature about the Orkneys to Orosius was whether they were inhabited. Orosius contrasts islands that are “deserted” - *desertae*, devoid of people, with islands that are “cultivated” - *coluntur*. By contrasting “deserted” and “cultivated,” Orosius puts a place’s arability at the center of determining whether a place is inhabited or not. If a place is under cultivation, the place has inhabitants to do the cultivating and the land is productive enough to support a population.

Ausonius is another late antique Roman author who also connected cultivation and population in his writing. At the beginning of his poem *Mosella*, Ausonius describes a short journey across northern Gaul between the Rhine and the Moselle, the main subject of the poem.

Thence, beginning the journey alone through pathless woods and seeing no trace of human cultivation (*cultus*), I passed by dry Dumnissum among thirsting lands and Tabernas watered by a perennial spring and an arable field recently measured out for Sauromatian colonists.<sup>67</sup>

In this passage Ausonius describes two pairs of places and each pair is a carefully balanced opposite. Dumnissum is dry, but Tabernas is well watered. The woods are pathless and Ausonius could see “no trace of human cultivation,” – “*nulla humani spectans vestigia cultus.*” Ausonius emphasizes the absence of people in the woods by

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<sup>66</sup> For other Latin authors who mention the Orkney islands, see: Tacitus, *Agricola*, 10.4; Pomponius Mela, *De chorographia*, 3.54; Eutropius, *Breuiarium ab urbe condita*, 7.13.3.

<sup>67</sup> Ausonius, *Mosella*, 5-9. (Green, *The Works of Ausonius* (1991): 224; trans. by the author): “*unde iter ingrediens nemorosa per avia solum / et nulla humani spectans vestigia cultus / praetereo arentem sitientibus undique terris / Dumnissum riguasque perenni fonte Tabernas / arvaque Sauromatum nuper metata colonis.*”

pointing out that he could not see any evidence of *cultus*, the meaning of which ranges from “cultivation” to “culture.”<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, Ausonius passed through an arable field, an *arva*, that had recently been surveyed for use by Sauromatian colonists, *colonis*. The word Ausonius uses to describe the Sauromatians has its root in the verb *colo*, meaning to cultivate, till, or tend a field or garden.<sup>69</sup> In this case the land is called *arva*, that is ploughed ground, which is appropriate for people described as cultivating the ground.<sup>70</sup> The words used to describe the place inhabited by the Sauromatians indicate that the ground was actively farmed. The settled and actively farmed area contrasts with the pathless woods in which there was no trace of agricultural activity, which is indicative of the woods’ lack of inhabitants.

These examples from Orosius and Ausonius indicate that the connection between human habitation and agricultural activity, or lack thereof, was a way in which Roman authors thought about and categorized landscapes. Eucherius, therefore, was drawing on a common Roman understanding of the relationship between people and the land. The dichotomy of fertile land being inhabited, and infertile land being uninhabited does not do justice to the complex realities of human habitation in a variety of environments. First, agricultural fertility exists along a scale, a nuance that the Roman dichotomy between fertile and infertile does not allow for. Second, places blessed with fertile soil and abundant rainfall could be rendered desolate by war or plague, while people have

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<sup>68</sup> Lewis and Short “*cultus*.”

<sup>69</sup> Lewis and Short, “*colo*.”

<sup>70</sup> Lewis and Short, “*arvus*.”

demonstrated great ingenuity in developing settlements under conditions ill-suited to agriculture. Such landscapes that could be inhabited, but are not, are “underutilized landscapes,” to borrow a term from Darlene Brooks Hedstrom, an archeologist of monastic Egypt.<sup>71</sup> Such landscapes, as discussed below, were central to establishing monastic foundations.<sup>72</sup>

Eucherius modifies the geographic understanding exemplified by Orosius and Ausonius. Where Orosius and Ausonius assume that if a place is not agriculturally productive it is not inhabited, Eucherius believed that when God made the world, He designated each place for its future use.<sup>73</sup> As such, God left the *eremus* neither as a place without purpose (*inutilem*) nor without honor (*inhonoratam*).<sup>74</sup> Instead, God prepared the *eremus* for the holy men, its future inhabitants.<sup>75</sup> Here, according to the logic used by Ausonius and Orosius, we reach a contradiction. The most important aspect of the *eremus*, as defined earlier, is that it is a place without inhabitants, not even holy ones. This does not seem to bother Eucherius, as he continues to use the language of fertility and infertility. If the *eremus* is inhabited, or at least prepared for habitation by God, then it must be fertile in some way.

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<sup>71</sup> Darlene Brooks Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt: An Archeological Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 284-289.

<sup>72</sup> See pages 128-130.

<sup>73</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 5.1.

<sup>74</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 5.1.

<sup>75</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 5.1.

In fact, Eucherius' language regarding the *eremus* is filled with imagery indicating agricultural fertility. Eucherius uses language of agricultural fertility drawn from the Psalms to describe the *eremus*:

As I believe, He desired to give them that place abounding in fruits and this fertility of holy men instead of a place of a more indulgent nature, with the result that the ends of the desert grew fat, and since He watered the hills from His own higher places, closed in valleys also abounded in multiplying fruit and He made good the deficiencies of the places, since he enriched the fruitless dwelling with an inhabitant.<sup>76</sup>

Up until this point in the *De laude eremi*, Eucherius had only described the *eremus* as a place where one could experience solitude and find God. The examples that Eucherius gives are Moses and Elijah. The fifth-century reader of this poem was probably making the same assumptions that Orosius and Ausonius made about uninhabited places, namely that they are not farmed and do not support a human population. Therefore, this passage would have caught a fifth-century reader by surprise as an *eremus* was typically thought of as a place neither *locupletem in fructibus* "abounding in fruits" nor *fecundam* "fertile." But it is a particular kind of fertility, a *sanctorum fecundam* "a fertility of holy men." While Eucherius signals that other places are of a milder nature than the *eremus*, he continues with imagery of agricultural fertility. The *eremus* grows fat, the hills are watered, and the valleys are filled with fruit.<sup>77</sup> This passage also includes a reference to

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<sup>76</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 5.2, (Pricoco 2014: 140; trans. by the author): "*Credo, his illam locupletem in fructibus voluit et pro indulgentioris naturae vice hanc sanctorum dare fecundam, ut sic pinguescerent fines deserti, et cum rigaret «de superioribus suis montes», abundarent quoque multiplicata fruge convalles locorumque damna suppleret, cum habitationem sterilem habitatore ditaret.*"

<sup>77</sup> The presence of mountains and valleys in the monastic 'desert' appears to be inspired solely from the quoted Psalm as this is the only time that Eucherius includes mountains and valleys in his description of the monastic 'desert,' except for the Transfiguration of Christ and Moses and the Theophany at Sinai. (Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell'Eremo*, 211.)

Psalms 104.<sup>78</sup> Eucherius' phrase "*cum rigaret de superioribus suis montes*" is almost word for word taken from Psalm 104:13, "*rigens montes de superioribus suis, de fructu operum tuorum satiabitur terra*" that is, "watering the mountains from his own high places, the land will be satisfied from the fruit of your works."<sup>79</sup> The Psalmist continues:

Producing fodder for cattle  
and plants for the service of men  
that you may bring forth bread from the earth.  
And wine lightens the heart of man  
So that he gladdens his face in oil  
and strengthens the heart of man with bread.<sup>80</sup>

Eucherius' choice to reference a psalm about the Lord making the land fertile and abundant for both man and beast while describing the *eremus* would have been surprising for his fifth-century readers. This section foreshadows a later portion of the poem in which Eucherius does describe the fertility of the *eremus*. But first Eucherius contrasts the *eremus* with paradise.

The Roman dichotomy between fertile inhabited land and sterile uninhabited land maps well onto Eucherius' concern for holiness and sinfulness.

That possessor of paradise and transgressor of the law, when he was living in a place of delight (*locum voluptatis*), was not able to serve the law established by God for himself. For by however much that place was more pleasant in delightfulnesses (*iocundior ille amoentatibus locus*), by so much was this place more prone to error; whence death not only brought this man under its laws, death also extended its sting all the way against us. Therefore, he who desires life

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<sup>78</sup> Psalm 103 in the Vulgate

<sup>79</sup> Psalmi iuxta LXX 103:13. (trans. by the author)

<sup>80</sup> Psalmi iuxta LXX 103:14-15. (trans. by the author): "*Producens faenum iumentis / Et herbam servituti hominum / Ut educas panem de terra / Et vinum laetificat cor hominis / Ut exhilaret faciem in oleo / Et panis cor hominis confirmat.*"

cultivates the *eremus*, because the cultivator of a delightful place (*amoeni incola*) has prepared death.<sup>81</sup>

In this passage Eucherius compares the *eremus* to the Garden of Eden, the paradise in which Adam lived and committed the first sin as described in Genesis. According to Eucherius the more delightful a place is, the easier it is to fall into sin. The *eremus*, as described earlier, was a place where one could find God. Following Eucherius' logic, the *eremus* must be the opposite of paradise, which Eucherius styles a *locus amoenus*.<sup>82</sup>

Eucherius equates paradise with a *locus amoenus*, a "pleasant place" that had a long history in Greco-Roman literature.<sup>83</sup> The minimum requirements for a *locus amoenus* according to Curtius, who first identified the *locus amoenus* as a classical motif, are a beautiful, shaded natural setting with trees, a meadow, and flowing water, such as a stream or brook.<sup>84</sup> Bird song and flowers may also be present. In Greek literature a *locus amoenus* could be the setting for a romantic encounter, such as Calypso's cave in the *Odyssey*, a philosophical discussion, as in Plato's *Phaedrus*, or for bucolic poetry in Theocritus' seventh *Idyll*. In Latin literature Virgil relies on the *locus amoenus* in his

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<sup>81</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 6.1-2, (Pricoco 2014: 140 and 142; trans. by the author): "Possessor ille paradisi et transgressor praecepti, cum locum voluptatis habitaret, fixam sibi a deo legem servare non potuit. Quanto enim iocundior ille amoenitatibus locus, tanto hic in lapsum pronior fuit. Unde non solum hunc legibus suis subdidit, sed etiam in nos usque suum illum stimulum mors tetendit. Proinde eremum colat qui vitam cupit, quia amoeni incola mortem paravit."

<sup>82</sup> For further commentary on Eucherius' invocation of the *locus amoenus*, see: Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell'Eremo*, 212.

<sup>83</sup> Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. William Trask (London: Routledge and Kagan Paul, 1953), 183-202; G. Schönbeck, *Der locus amoenus von Homer bis Horaz* (Helpt and Mecklenburg: Gerhard Shöbeck, 1962).

<sup>84</sup> Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 195; G. Schönbeck, *Der locus amoenus von Homer bis Horaz*, 15-17. For a critique of Curtius' method of defining a *locus amoenus*, see: Petra Haß, *Der locus amoenus in der antiken Literatur: Zu Theorie und Geschichte eines literarischen Motivs* (Bamberg: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1998).

fourth *Eclogue* as a setting for past Golden Age and Horace describes his farm in a letter as a *locus amoenus*.<sup>85</sup> During late antiquity the motif of the *locus amoenus* was adapted by Christian authors to describe paradise, the Garden of Eden, heaven, and salvation.<sup>86</sup> By invoking the *locus amoenus*, Eucherius taps into both classical rhetoric and Christian discourse on paradise. Eucherius, though, associates the *locus amoenus* with the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.<sup>87</sup>

Eucherius' contrast between the *eremus* and *locus amoenus* provides a picture of what Eucherius thought the *eremus* was not. Eucherius' invocation of the motif of the *locus amoenus* tells us that he envisioned paradise as a place with meadows of soft grass, trees for shade, babbling brooks, and likely the scent of flowers and song of birds. It was physically pleasant and comfortable. But Eucherius associates the physical comfort of paradise with the fall of man and the entry of sin and death into the world. As such, the *locus amoenus* becomes a place of death. The *eremus*, as the opposite of the *locus amoenus*, is a place of life and physical discomfort, conducive to ascetic practice.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Horace, *Ep.* 1.16.

<sup>86</sup> Simone Bregni, "Paradisus, Locus Amoenus: Immagini del Paradiso nei primi cinque secoli dell'Era Christiana," in *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, eds. Giorgio Cracco *et al.* (Firenze, 2005: 297-328.); Tadeusz Gacia, "Topos Locus Amoenus: W Łacińskiej Poezji Chrześcijańskiego Antyku," *Vox Patrum* 52, no. 1 (2008): 187-198; Thomas Tsartsidis, "Vergil as Christian Exegete in the Paradisiac Landscape of Prudentius' *Cathemerinon* 5," *Vergilius* 66 (2020): 111-134.

<sup>87</sup> Eucherius was not the first to use the *locus amoenus* negatively. Ovid and Statius both use the traditional elements of the *locus amoenus* to set the scene for an unexpected tragic event. (Carol Newlands, "Statius and Ovid: Transforming the Landscape," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-2014) 134, no. 1 (Spring, 2004): 136.)

<sup>88</sup> de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 83.

The image of the *eremus* as a place of discomfort, where human needs cannot be met by natural means drives Eucherius' tour of the Biblical *eremus* beginning with Moses. First, Moses saw the burning bush and spoke with God in the *eremus*.<sup>89</sup> Then Moses led the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt into the *eremus*. "Therefore, with Moses leading, [the Israelites] were proceeding into the terrifying desert with its immense desolation."<sup>90</sup> Eucherius casts the *eremus* here as a terrifying landscape in which the Israelites are vulnerable and unable to care for themselves.<sup>91</sup> Eucherius then describes the miracles by which God took care of the Israelites. Water was provided from a rock, bitter water was made sweet, and God rained manna down from heaven for the Israelites.<sup>92</sup> Eucherius is sure to point out that the Israelites were not able to procure the necessities of survival from the land. "Thus, heaven was formerly providing for those people having been settled in the *eremus*, because [the *eremus*] was not able to present food from the earth."<sup>93</sup> Once again, Eucherius emphasizes the sterility and harshness of the *eremus*. The lack of food and water in the *eremus* required miraculous intervention from God to ensure the survival of the Israelites.

For Eucherius, the various miracles effected by God for the survival of the Israelites in the *eremus* also had spiritual significance beyond the physical care the

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<sup>89</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 7.1.

<sup>90</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 8.2, (Pricoco 2014: 144; trans. by the author): "*Tendebat igitur ad desertum longa vastitate terribilem Moyse duce.*"

<sup>91</sup> Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell'Eremo*, 218.

<sup>92</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 11-12.

<sup>93</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 12.4, (Pricoco 2014: 148; trans. by the author): "*Sic quondam in eremo constitutis, quia praestare victum terrena non poterant, caelum ministrabat.*"

Israelites received. The Israelites ate “*escam spiritalem*” – “spiritual food” and drank “*potum spiritalem*” – “spiritual drink.”<sup>94</sup> These spiritual refreshments anticipate the incorruptible bodies and clothing in eternal life.<sup>95</sup> When Eucherius describes the monks of his day as inhabitants of the *eremus*, he compares their sustenance to that of the Israelites.<sup>96</sup> Eucherius’ connection thus allows the current sustenance that monks receive in the *eremus* to anticipate perfection in eternal life.

Eucherius ends his commentary on the Israelites’ time in the *eremus* by reflecting on the fact that it is not actually the end point of the Israelites’ journey. Instead, the *eremus* was a necessary stopover on the way to the Promised Land.

What, could the children of Israel have arrived at that desirable land if not by inhabiting the desert? And that the same nation afterwards possessed that land “flowing with milk and honey,” they first possessed this dry and unfarmed land? The entire journey to the true fatherland extends through the houses of the desert. Let him, who desires “to see the good things of the Lord in the region of the living,” inhabit the uninhabitable land. Let him, who desires to be a citizen of that land (of the living), be a guest of this (uninhabitable) land.<sup>97</sup>

Once again, in this passage, Eucherius emphasizes the contrast between the desert and another more welcoming place, in this case the Promised Land. As the Promised Land could only be reached by the Israelites by traveling through the desert, so a monk can only achieve the “region of the living,” that is salvation, by first inhabiting the desert.

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<sup>94</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 15.1, (Pricoco 2014: 150).

<sup>95</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 15.1.

<sup>96</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 29.

<sup>97</sup> Eucherius, *De Laude eremi*, 16.1-3, (Pricoco 2014: 152; trans. by the author): “*Quid, quod filii Israhel ad illam desiderabilem terram non nisi habitatione eremi pervenerunt? Et ut gens eadem postea possideret illam «lacte et melle manantem», prius hanc aridam incultamque possedit? Totum semper ad veram patriam eremi mansionibus iter panditur. Habitet inhabitabilem terram qui vult «videre bona domini in regione vivorum», sit hospes huius, qui civis esse contendit illius.*”

However, Eucherius' comparison between a desirable place and the desert has shifted in this passage. Previously, Eucherius called paradise a *locus amoenus*, a place whose luxuries and ease of life readily led to sin and man's downfall. Therefore, a pleasant place with water and vegetation was to be shunned. Yet, when Eucherius discusses the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey following its description in Deuteronomy and Joshua, it is now a "desirable land."<sup>98</sup>

For Eucherius, the desert is to be sought out not as an end unto itself, but because it is a necessary stop on the way to the Promised Land. The desert is not an especially desirable place. In the words of de Vogüé, Eucherius' *eremus* is both the antechamber and the opposite of the Promised Land.<sup>99</sup> In this passage, the desert is *arida incultaque* – "dry and unfarmable," it is *inhabitabilis terra* – "an uninhabitable land." While this passage strengthens the connection between the habitability of a place and the land's relative agricultural fertility, it also strengthens the connection between Eucherius' monastic desert and the biblical wilderness since they are both uninhabitable because they are dry.

While the desert's dryness is a prerequisite for Moses' miracles of providing water for the Israelites, this passage is the first time that Eucherius specifically invokes the desert's dry climate. For Eucherius, the desert is a place where a *monchus*, a person who lives alone, can live is because the land is uninhabited.<sup>100</sup> The desert is uninhabited

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<sup>98</sup> Deuteronomy 6:3; 26:9; 27:3; Joshua 5:6

<sup>99</sup> de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 85.

<sup>100</sup> Eucherius, *Instructionum*, II.15.21 (SC 618: 554; trans. by the author): "*Monchus : solitarius*." For an alternate spelling, see: "*Monachus, solitarius*." (PL 50: 822A)

because it is sterile, and its agricultural potential cannot support a human population. The desert's sterility is due to its dry climate. The desert's sterility and dryness become regular themes for Eucherius' description of the desert.

When Eucherius finished his description of the Israelites' journey through the desert, he turned to David as an example of someone whose thirst for water in the desert mirrored his thirst for the Lord.<sup>101</sup> Eucherius then turns to Elijah, who closed the sky so that it would not rain.<sup>102</sup> Eucherius continues his summary of Old Testament desert dwellers with Elisha and other prophets before he comes to John the Baptist and, finally, Christ.<sup>103</sup> In the life of Christ, Eucherius emphasizes Jesus' baptism by John in the desert, Jesus' resistance to temptation in the desert (which offers an opportunity to contrast Adam's capitulation to temptation in Paradise), Jesus' feeding of the five thousand, and the transfiguration.<sup>104</sup> The final episode in the life of Christ that Eucherius addresses is Jesus' propensity to go into the desert to pray.<sup>105</sup> Eucherius uses the desert as a place of prayer for Jesus to transition to the desert as a place of prayer for monks, ranging from the fourth-century monks John and Macarius<sup>106</sup> to Eucherius' own time.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 17.

<sup>102</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 18.

<sup>103</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 19-21.

<sup>104</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 22-25.

<sup>105</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 26.

<sup>106</sup> de Vogüé suggests the Eucherius meant John of Lycopolis and Macarius of Alexandria, both of whom appear in Rufinus' *Historia monachorum* and the works of Cassian. (de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 88.)

<sup>107</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 28 *passim*.

Eucherius' monastic desert is a place where biblical miracles are repeated regularly. When monks receive gifts of food, it is just as if they received manna from heaven.<sup>108</sup> When a monk's worn-out habit is replaced, Eucherius does not say by whom it is replaced, it is just as if it never wore out in the first place like the Israelites' clothing in the desert.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, when monks "dig down through the rocky ground, and water finally begins to flow from the stones as a divine gift, what is this but water flowing from the rock as if it had been struck by a blow of Moses' staff?"<sup>110</sup> The continuity of these miracles indicates the continuity of the desert. The biblical desert is the same as the monastic desert occupied by Eucherius and his contemporaries.

Eucherius continues by describing the various virtues that monks exercise in the desert, but for the sake of focusing on Eucherius' vision of the monastic desert's landscape, I will only examine one further example. Eucherius included a discussion of Jesus' parable of a house built on the sand and a house built on a rock in order to explain that the desert life is like the house built on the rock, not on the sand.<sup>111</sup> Eucherius takes this opportunity to indulge his penchant of paradoxical opposites, and begins this section by writing,

And although frequently fine dust of the ground appears in the desert, nonetheless the foundations of that house of the gospel are more firmly constructed there. In

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<sup>108</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 29.

<sup>109</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 29.

<sup>110</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 29.3, (Pricoco 2014: 164; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 208): "*Et cum silicibus perfossis tandem divino munere respondentem e saxis aquae profluunt, quid aliud quam uelut Moysi virgae ictu percussa rupe emerguntur?*"

<sup>111</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 34.

these other sands it is permitted to build that which he wanted. However, he by no means builds his house upon the sands...<sup>112</sup>

The paradox that Eucherius presents is that although the ground in the desert is sandy, it is actually the proper place to build one's spiritual house. Eucherius' interpretive purpose aside, this passage indicates that when Eucherius thinks about the monastic desert, he imagines a place covered in sand.

By the time that Eucherius completes his praise of the *eremus* as it appears in biblical and hagiographic texts, it is clear that when he mentions the *eremus*, he imagines a particular landscape. Eucherius' *eremus* is separated from the rest of the world. It is vast and a person can experience solitude there with the purpose of finding God. The land is not cultivated and does not support agriculture. The climate is too dry to support crops and wells are only procured by miraculous intervention. The ground is rocky and covered in sand. The only people who live in the desert are the *monachi*, those who live alone. Eucherius' *eremus* is the idealized desert of early Christian monastic thought. Idealized places are not real, although this vision of the ideal desert was inspired by the Sinai, Negev, and Egyptian deserts as described in the Bible and monastic literature. Nonetheless, this is the vision of the *eremus* that Eucherius was committed to, and he was determined to present Lérins as an *eremus*.

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<sup>112</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 34.1, (Pricoco 2014: 168; trans. by the author): “*Et quamvis saepe in eremo tenuis soli pulvis occurrat, nusquam tamen firmitus euangelicae illius domus fundamenta iaciuntur. in illis licet aliquis consistere harenis uelit, nequaquam tamen super harenas domum construit...*”

### 2.3. Lérins: An unlikely Desert

The islands of Lérins are an unlikely candidate for a monastic desert. They consist of a small group of islands just off the Cap de la Croisette on the southern coast of France. They form the eastern edge of the Bay of Cannes and are most readily accessible by ferry from Cannes. The largest of the islands, Île Sainte-Marguerite, is just under a mile from the Cap de la Croisette and is approximately two miles in length and half a mile in breadth. A channel about half a mile wide separates Île Sainte-Marguerite from Île Saint-Honorat, a significantly smaller island, less than a mile long and only a quarter mile at its widest. These islands are located just off the Côte d'Azur, the same stretch of Mediterranean Coast that includes Saint Tropez, Nice, and Monaco.

Lérins is covered with plant life. Pine forests shade Île Sainte-Marguerite. Although Île Sainte-Marguerite has no source of freshwater, it has traditionally received enough precipitation to support a permanent population through the collection of rainwater. Île Saint-Honorat, despite being further from the mainland than Île Sainte-Marguerite, has one freshwater well that supports a Cistercian monastery that cultivates approximately twenty-three acres of vineyards on the island. Where land on Île Sainte-Marguerite and Île Saint-Honorat is not actively farmed and maintained, it is thickly overgrown with local vegetation.

The islands of Lérins have a long history of being inhabited and were a site of regional importance both as a harbor and as the site of a herön. Coins found on Île Sainte-Marguerite point to the presence of an active sanctuary in the sixth century BC.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> CAG 06, §029.28. (p. 270).

An ivory votive offering found on Île Sainte-Marguerite has an inscription with a dedication to the gods Lero and Lerina.<sup>114</sup> Strabo's names for Île Sainte-Marguerite and Île Saint-Honorat were Planasia and Lero.<sup>115</sup> Strabo claimed that both had colonial settlements and that Lero had a heröon dedicated to a local deity called Lero. Pliny the Elder testifies to two islands called Lerina and Lero, on the former of which there was a town called Berconum.<sup>116</sup> Lerina is also found in Ptolemy's *Geography*.<sup>117</sup> This literary evidence points to Lérins being inhabited and a point of commerce through the first century AD.

The archeological evidence supports the interpretation of the islands of Lérins as busy places during the Roman period. On Île Sainte-Marguerite a group of buildings inhabited from the third century BC to the first century AD have been discovered along with facilities for the production of *garum*, a fermented fish sauce.<sup>118</sup> The Augustan period saw monumental building on Île Sainte-Marguerite including a portico, a cryptoportico, bath complexes decorated with frescos and mosaics (not to mention the necessary cisterns and water works), and further artisanal zones.<sup>119</sup> The presence of a coin of Valentinian in a potter's kiln indicates that Île Sainte-Marguerite was a site of

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<sup>114</sup> *CAG 06*, §029.28. (p. 270). Inscription reads: “Ἀθήναιος Διονυσίου Νεωπολίτης Λήρωνι καὶ Ληρίνη”

<sup>115</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, 4.1.10.

<sup>116</sup> Pliny the Elder, *HN*, 3.5.77.

<sup>117</sup> Ptolemy, *Geographia*, 2.10, (Ptolemy, *Ptolemy's Geography: An Annotated Translation of the Theoretical Chapters*, trans. J. Lennart Berggren and Alexander Jones (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 107.

<sup>118</sup> *CAG 06*, §029.28. (p. 272).

<sup>119</sup> *CAG 06*, §029.28-41. (p. 272-279).

production through the fourth century.<sup>120</sup> The archeological evidence for Îsle Saint-Honorat being a religious site is strong as well. In addition to the votive ivory mentioned above, statuettes of Priapus and Hermes have also been found on the island.<sup>121</sup> Several Roman era inscriptions from between the first and third centuries have been preserved in the cloister on Îsle Saint-Honorat, one of which is dedicated to Neptune.<sup>122</sup> Another of these inscriptions reads “*Collegio / utric(u)lar(iorum) / C(aius) Iulius / Catullinus / don(o) pos(uit)*” – “For the college of *utriculaires*, Caius Julius Catullinus set up (this monument) as a gift.”<sup>123</sup> *Utriculaires* were the masters of rafts for ferriage, which used inflatable bladders to provide buoyancy.<sup>124</sup> The fact that there was a *collegium*, or an organized association, of raftsmen, points to lively trade on the Lérinian archipelago supported by a small scale, but organized, system of ferry builders and operators. Îsle Saint-Honorat retained monumental patronage into the fourth century as demonstrated by one inscription dedicated to Constantine and another dedicated to Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian.<sup>125</sup>

The literary and archeological evidence together demonstrate that Îsle Sainte-Marguerite and Îsle Saint-Honorat were inhabited through at least the last quarter of the fourth century. They provided a locally important port along the coast of Provence, which

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<sup>120</sup> *CAG 06*, §029.33. (p. 275).

<sup>121</sup> *CAG 06*, §029.42. (p. 279).

<sup>122</sup> *CAG 06*, §029.42. (p. 279-281).

<sup>123</sup> *CAG 06*, §029.42. (p. 280).

<sup>124</sup> Lewis and Short “*utricularius*.”

<sup>125</sup> *CAG 06*, §029.42. (p. 281).

would have seen substantial traffic as a stop for ships coming from or going to Marseille. Île Sainte-Marguerite hosted a permanent population who produced garum and ceramics and had access to bath facilities that had painted fresco walls and mosaics. Île Saint-Honorat remained a locally important religious site as evidence has been found there for the imperial cult, the cult of two local Gallic deities, Lero and Lerina, as well as more widely worshiped gods: Neptune, Hermes, and Priapus. The evidence pointing to Lérins as a populated area connected to the rest of the Mediterranean through trade through the fourth century appears very incongruent with Eucherius' description of Lérins as a desert where one could be alone at the beginning of the fifth century. There are two explanations that we must take together that explain this apparent incongruency. First, the landscape changed. Second, Eucherius leaves several aspects of life on Lérins out of his description in the *De laude eremi*.

The islands of Île Sainte-Marguerite and Île Saint-Honorat have shrunk since antiquity. Underwater excavations on the northern side of Île Sainte-Marguerite have revealed the foundations of submerged Roman period foundations.<sup>126</sup> This has largely been the result of a combination of a rise in sea level of approximately two meters over the last two thousand years and some of the ground sinking up to a meter since the buildings were constructed.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, between Île Sainte-Marguerite and the Cap de la Croisette, there are shallows. These shallows would have been exposed with the ancient lower water level. The result is that the peninsula of the Cap de la Croisette

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<sup>126</sup> Maurice Sechter, "Aspects Archéologiques sous-marins et terrestres au Nort-Ouest de l'île Sainte-Marguerite (Cannes)," *Cahiers d'Archéologie Subaquatic* 1 (1972): 101-106.

<sup>127</sup> Sechter, "Aspects Archéologiques sous-marins et terrestres," 105-6.

would have extended at least half-way to Îsle Sainte-Marguerite, from its present location.<sup>128</sup> The ancient presence of this extended peninsula may explain the paving stones found just off the current coast of the Cap de la Croisette.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, in antiquity, Îsle Sainte-Marguerite was substantially closer to the mainland making communication easier.<sup>130</sup> Of course, the processes of rising seas and sinking land are gradual, as is testified by the stratigraphy of the sunken sites at Îsle Sainte-Marguerite.<sup>131</sup> Nonetheless, this may have begun to impact the viability of maintaining regular communication between Îsle Sainte-Marguerite and the mainland by the fifth century.

But rising sea levels were not the only danger to Îsle Sainte-Marguerite and Îsle Saint-Honorat. The Côte d'Azur is a geologically active region prone to earthquakes. Furthermore, the bay of Cannes and the islands of Lérins are particularly susceptible to tsunamis due to wave reflection along the coastline.<sup>132</sup> In the latter half of the fourth century there is evidence that an earthquake hit Lérins, followed by flooding.<sup>133</sup> An earthquake damaged the portico on Îsle Sainte-Marguerite during the fourth century.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Sechter, "Aspects Archéologiques sous-marins et terrestres," 101.

<sup>129</sup> Sechter, "Aspects Archéologiques sous-marins et terrestres," 101.

<sup>130</sup> One historical marker on Îsle Sainte-Marguerite even claims that the island was connected to the mainland in the Roman period, but I have been unable to identify any supporting archeological evidence.

<sup>131</sup> Sechter, "Aspects Archéologiques sous-marins et terrestres," 105-6.

<sup>132</sup> Fatemeh Nemati et al., "High-resolution coastal hazard assessment along the French Riviera from coseismic tsunamis generated in the Ligurian fault system," *Natural Hazards* 96 (2019): 568-569.

<sup>133</sup> Trotureau, Janine (text) and Bertrand Machet (photographs), *Les dernières Iles de Rêve: Les Iles de la Méditerranée*, (Genève, Suisse: Éditions Minerva, 1997.) An earthquake is also mentioned on a historical marker sign on Îsle Sainte-Marguerite.

<sup>134</sup> *CAG 06*, §029.28. (p. 273).

At the end of the fourth century, a quarry on Île Sainte-Marguerite near *Etang du Batéguier*, a lagoon on the island, filled with water.<sup>135</sup> If the quarry was flooded by a tsunami caused by the earthquake, this would point to a natural disaster that could have resulted in the depopulation of Île Sainte-Marguerite and Île Saint-Honorat at the end of the fourth century. Therefore, when Honoratus sought a deserted island just off the coast of Provence to establish a monastery at the beginning of the fifth century (between 400 and 410) the islands of the Lérinian archipelago may have recently been depopulated by a natural disaster.

Another early fifth-century account of Lérins may record a memory of a traumatic event that resulted in the depopulation of Lérins. When Hilary of Arles, to whom Eucherius addressed the *De laude eremi*, described when Honoratus first came to Lérins, he wrote that the local inhabitants begged Honoratus not to go to Lérins because of the abundance of venomous snakes that plagued the islands.<sup>136</sup> Apparently, the snakes were particularly active during storms. Honoratus, of course, went to Lérins anyway and overcame the serpents so that they were never a problem again. Hilary's account appears to record some memory of trauma that the local inhabitants associated with the depopulation of Lérins, which may correspond to the earthquake that damaged buildings and possibly flooded low lying areas.

However it happened, the depopulation of Lérins meant that at the beginning of the fifth century the islands were an “underutilized landscape,” a term coined by Darlene

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<sup>135</sup> CAG 06, §029.41. (p. 278).

<sup>136</sup> Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Honorati*, 15.

Brooks Hedstrom, an archeologist of monastic Egypt.<sup>137</sup> Hedstrom uses this term to describe places in Egypt that had fallen out of use, such as areas with pharaonic monuments or tombs, which monks then adapted to the needs of their new communities. Similarly, Lérins was a place that had fallen out of use but that had the potential to support a community. As such, Lérins was an underutilized landscape at the beginning of the fifth century that met the basic requirements of being an *eremus*. As islands, Lérins was *secretum*, cut off from the world, and as Lérins was recently depopulated, it was *desertum*.

But being free from other inhabitants was not the only requirement for an island monastery. Such a monastery needed to be accessible for other monks to join and for the monks to be supplied through donations. After Honoratus established himself on his island, word spread about his monastic project drawing others to join him, including Eucherius. Honoratus departed Île Saint-Honorat to persuade his relative Hilary to join him and then left again to become bishop in Arles. Hilary followed Honoratus to Arles, returned to Lérins, then went back to Arles where he became bishop. Eucherius, who had taken up residence on Île Sainte-Marguerite, exchanged letters with Honoratus while he was on Île Saint-Honorat. He also sent letters to Valerianus, Hilary, John Cassian, and others. These letters had to be carried by someone. Even in his *De laude eremi*, Eucherius alludes to regular contact with the mainland when he mentions donations of food and

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<sup>137</sup> Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt*, 284-289.

clothing to the monks.<sup>138</sup> All these supplies, letters, and even the monks themselves, had to be transported by someone.

Eucherius does not say who was responsible for the movement of supplies, letters, and people between the islands of Lérins and the mainland. Eucherius' commitment to Lérins as the *eremus* (and probably his aristocratic status) rendered these people invisible in his literary works. However, the *utriculaires*, raft masters whose ancestors dedicated an altar to Neptune on Île Saint-Honorat, were still there. In earlier centuries the *utriculaires* had supported settlements on Lérins by moving people, garum, and ceramics along the coast and between islands. Beginning in the fifth century, *utriculaires* supported monastic settlements on Lérins by moving monks, letters, and donations of food and clothing.

#### 2.4. Rendering Lérins a Desert

While Eucherius did not include the *utriculaires* in his writing, he included other aspects of Lérins' landscape. In fact, he was keen to highlight some of Lérins' physical features, including the vegetation and a spring. It is useful here to remember that Eucherius' audience was the monastic community of Lérins and, especially, Hilary of Arles, whom Eucherius hoped to convince to remain at Lérins. The landscape of Lérins stood in stark contrast to Eucherius' vision of the desert as a dry empty place and this was obvious to his audience. Since Eucherius argues that Lérins was the epitome of the

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<sup>138</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 29.

monastic desert, he needed to address the obvious difference in landscapes. Eucherius does this in two steps. First, he claims that the desert is fertile in spiritual blessings, which sprout and grow like plants. Second, Eucherius equates these spiritual blessings with the physical plants of Lérins.

In the first step, Eucherius shifts his discussion of the *eremus* by using agricultural metaphors to describe the spiritual virtues in the *eremus*. This move is jolting to the reader because earlier in the *De laude eremi*, Eucherius described the *eremus* as “dry and unfarmed.”<sup>139</sup> But now, Eucherius inverts his previous language of agricultural fertility:

The soil of the desert is not sterile and unfruitful, as is commonly held; its dry, stony ground is not unproductive. A sower has hidden countless tender shoots and hundreds of fruit trees there.<sup>140</sup>

Eucherius follows this statement up by claiming that in the *eremus*, the seeds of Jesus’ parable about the Sower do not fall among weeds, on the path, or the rocky ground, but rather on good soil.<sup>141</sup> In the *eremus*, the harvest is so abundant that Ezekiel’s dry bones are covered with flesh.<sup>142</sup> In the *eremus*, the living bread of heaven is present.<sup>143</sup> The rocks of the *eremus* gush forth living water that saves souls as well as refreshes the body.<sup>144</sup> Eucherius has transformed the *eremus* into a paradise for the soul:

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<sup>139</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 16.3, (Pricoco 2014: 152; trans. by the author): “*aridam incultamque*”

<sup>140</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 39.1-2, (Pricoco 2014: 179; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 212): “*Non est infructuosum, ut creditur, non est istud sterile eremi solum nec infecunda arentis saxa deserti. Illic multiplex germen et centenos accola fructus recondit.*”

<sup>141</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 39; Matthew 13:3-9.

<sup>142</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 39; Ezekiel 37.

<sup>143</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 39; John 6:51

<sup>144</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 39; John 7:38; John 4:14

Here the desert is a pleasure and a meadow of the interior man. Here the desert is untilled. There it is delightful with a wonderful pleasantness. And at the same time, the *eremus* of the body is a paradise of the soul.<sup>145</sup>

Whereas in other passages Eucherius is keen to emphasize that the *eremus* is the physical opposite of the *locus amoenus*, in this section Eucherius imagines the *eremus* as a spiritual *locus amoenus*, thus turning his idealized version of the desert upside-down.

Using the dichotomy that he developed in his discussion of the Garden of Eden as a *locus amoenus*, of a physical paradise as being harmful to the soul, in this passage Eucherius casts the desert as beneficial to the soul by using the language of agricultural abundance. In doing so, Eucherius characterizes a single place as both the *eremus* and paradise.<sup>146</sup>

Pricoco points out that Eucherius' connection of the *eremus* of the body with the paradise of the soul has precedent in Jerome's letters, in which Jerome calls the monastic cells in the desert paradise.<sup>147</sup> But both Jerome's and Eucherius' use of paradise is metaphorical. Eucherius still insists that physically there are "infertile stones of the dry desert" in the *eremus*, which is "untilled."<sup>148</sup> Anything green and growing in the *eremus* is to be understood as a spiritual allegory for the virtues cultivated by monks.

Eucherius builds on his interpretation of virtues as spiritual plants further when he compares the *eremus* to various agricultural landscapes. Eucherius argues, "No field

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<sup>145</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 39.5, (Pricoco 2014: 176 and 178; trans. by the author): "*Hic interioris hominis pratum et voluptas, hic incultum desertum, illic mira amoenitate iocundum est, eademque corporis est eremus, animae paradus.*"

<sup>146</sup> de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 94.

<sup>147</sup> Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell'Eremo*, 310; Hieron., *Epp.* 14.10.3; 24.3.1; 125.7.3.

<sup>148</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 39.1 and 39.5 (Pricoco 2014: 176 and 178; trans. by the author): "*infecunda arentis saxa deserti*" and "*hic incultum desertum*"

however fertile can compare with the ground of the *eremus*.”<sup>149</sup> Eucherius then compares the agricultural abundance of grain fields, vineyards, pastures, and meadows filled with flowers to the *eremus*.<sup>150</sup> In each case, Eucherius finds a biblical passage to describe the *eremus*’ spiritual abundance as superior to physical agricultural abundance. For example, when Eucherius asks, “Is some country known for its fine grain?” he answers, “In the desert thrives the wheat that satisfies the hungry with its richness,” citing Psalm 147:14.<sup>151</sup> The result is that “The desert compares favorably with every other land and surpasses them all in its diverse advantages.”<sup>152</sup> Pepino argues that the unnamed country that Eucherius refers to is Arles and that this is another passage in which Eucherius advocates for the superiority of the monastic life on Lérins over loyalty to Honoratus in Arles.<sup>153</sup> If so, Eucherius’ claim that the *eremus*, that is Lérins, is richer and more fertile than Arles, the leading city of Gaul, is striking. But the agricultural richness that Eucherius ascribes to the *eremus* is still strictly allegorical. Eucherius insists that the *eremus* is fruitful in respect to virtues, and sterile in vices.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 40.1, (Pricoco 2014: 178; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 212; revised by the author): “Nulla iam quamvis fertilis tellus terrae eremi se comparatione iactaverit.”

<sup>150</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 40.1-5.

<sup>151</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 40.1, (Pricoco 2014: 178; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 212-213): “Est terra aliqua frugibus ditis? In hac maxime nascitur frumentum illud, quod esurientes adipe suo satiat.” Cf. Psalm 147:14b (Vulgate) “et adipe frumenti satiat te.”

<sup>152</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 40.5, (Pricoco 2014: 178; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 212-213): “Ita terra haece singulis terris maior ad singula omnes longe praecedat bonis omnibus.”

<sup>153</sup> Pepino, “St. Eucherius of Lyon: Rhetorical Adaption,” 214-215.

<sup>154</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 41.2.

Eucherius' agricultural interpretation of the spiritual virtues practiced by monks in the *eremus* has two functions. First, by focusing on the spiritual benefits of the *eremus*, Eucherius moves the reader's attention away from the physical characteristics of the *eremus*. This is the necessary first step for Eucherius to spiritualize the desert life and thus decouple the *eremus* from any physical landscape as other scholars have noted.<sup>155</sup> Second, Eucherius' use of agricultural language, even if only metaphorically, associates the *eremus* with abundant and fertile landscapes.

The association between the *eremus* and a landscape of agricultural abundance is necessary for Eucherius to take his second step, in which Eucherius allows the *eremus'* metaphorical plants of virtue to blend with the physical plants of Lérins:

[Lérins'] bubbling fountains, green grass, beautiful flowers, and all the delights of sight and scent show those possessing this paradise what they shall possess in the heavenly paradise.<sup>156</sup>

Here Eucherius turns the plants, fountains, flowers, and all the physical aspects of Lérins that make it a pleasant place into physical manifestations of the *eremus'* virtues. Shade, meadows, flowing water, and flowers are also all elements of the classical *locus amoenus*.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, according to Eucherius, Lérins is a representation of the heavenly Paradise on Earth, a *locus amoenus*, while also still being an *eremus*. It is only at this

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<sup>155</sup> See note 19 in this chapter.

<sup>156</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 42.2, (Pricoco 2014: 180; trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 213-214): “*Aquis scatens, herbis virens, floribus renitens, visibus odoribusque iocunda, paradisum possidentibus se exhibet quem possidebunt.*”

<sup>157</sup> Pricoco notes the contrast between the description of Lérins in this passage and in other places that describe Lérins as a ‘desert’ and that this description matches real aspects of Lérins’ landscape but does not comment further. (Pricoco, *Eucherio: Elogio Dell’Eremo*, 314.)

point that Eucherius finally and fully frees the idea of the *eremus* from its connection to a dry sandy place in Egypt so that it can apply to Lérins.<sup>158</sup>

## 2.5. Conclusion

Eucherius' description of Lérins as the *eremus* allowed him to conclude the *De laude eremi* with a final comparison between Lérins' landscape and the biblical *eremus*. Eucherius calls Hilary the "true Israel," who "has just been freed from the dark Egypt of this world, who has crossed the saving waters in which the enemy drowned, who follows the burning light of faith in the desert."<sup>159</sup> Eucherius' final statement expresses his certainty that because Hilary has kept the company of Israel in the desert, he will enter the Promised Land with Jesus. While Eucherius relies entirely on imagery from Exodus, he has a much closer landscape in mind. Hilary had just left Arles, crossed the straits to Lérins, and had arrived in Lérins.<sup>160</sup> Eucherius' description of Hilary's journey using language from Exodus suggests that in Eucherius' view Arles was "the dark Egypt of this world," the straits between Lérins and the mainland were "the saving waters," and Lérins is the desert. The entire rhetorical exercise that Eucherius undertakes in the *De*

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<sup>158</sup> In de Vogüé's commentary on this passage he merely notes that Eucherius pushes the paradox of a place as both an *eremus* and paradise to an extreme. (de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 97.)

<sup>159</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 44.3, (Pricoco 2014: 184, trans. Cummings and Russell 1999: 215): "*Tu nunc verior Israhel, qui corde deum conspicaris, ab Aegyptiis saeculari tenebris dudum expeditus, salutiferas aquas submerse hoste transgressus, in deserto accensum fidei ignem secutus.*"

<sup>160</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of this passage, see: Pepino, "St. Eucherius of Lyon: Rhetorical Adaption," 212-214.

*laude eremi* is for this crescendo: Hilary's return to Lérins is a crucial and necessary step on the path to salvation because Lérins is the true *eremus*.

Eucherius was committed to the monastic desert ideal as exemplified in monastic literature from Egypt and to Lérins as the ideal place to practice the monastic life. However, Eucherius understood the word *eremus* to represent the physical characteristics of the desert as described in monastic literature and the Bible. That is, he conceptualized the *eremus* as a dry place that neither supported agriculture nor a population. This vision of the *eremus* was at odds with Lérins, a small Mediterranean archipelago off the modern coast of Cannes. To reconcile the physical differences between Lérins and the *eremus* as described in the Bible and in monastic literature, Eucherius engages Lérins' landscape directly. He does this by interpreting the physical characteristics of Lérins spiritually and by defining the word *eremus* to mean a solitary place where one could seek God.<sup>161</sup> Eucherius' redefinition of the *eremus* and spiritual interpretation of Lérins' landscape were necessary because he could not escape the physical realities of Lérins' landscape. As such, Lérins' landscape not only managed to shoulder its way into the *De laude eremi*, but it also required Eucherius to change the way that he conceptualized the desert.

Eucherius' redefinition of the *eremus* and spiritual interpretation of Lérins' landscape to make it commensurate with the monastic desert separate the monastic desert's physical aspects from the spiritual virtues that monks were supposed to cultivate there. The result is that the monastic desert could be anywhere a monk could cultivate

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<sup>161</sup> However, the "solitariness" in Eucherius' desert appears to have had room for a coenobitic monasticism. Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 37; de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du mouvement monastique*, vol. 7, 92, 99, and 103.

spiritual virtues apart from the rest of the world. As Goehring has noted, this allowed the idea of the desert to become a cipher for separation from the world, unbound by landscape.<sup>162</sup> This flexibility of the idea of the “desert” had far reaching consequences for the history of Western monasticism. When I turn to the *Life of the Jura Fathers* in Chapter 6, I examine the way in which the landscape of the Jura Mountains is used to create another monastic desert. Yet, the description of the Jura Mountains as a monastic desert in the *Life of the Jura Fathers* was not possible until the idea of the monastic desert was severed from the Egyptian desert in which the idea was born. Eucherius carried out the necessary operation.

While the *De laude eremi* reveals how Eucherius reconciled his idea of the Egyptian *eremus* with Lérins’ landscape, it also tells us how Eucherius interpreted the landscape that he lived in and experienced. Lérins is lush and filled with plant life. As such, Lérins is a physically pleasant place to be, and Eucherius unexpectedly uses this fact to support his description of Lérins as the *eremus* in three ways. First, the plants represent the spiritual virtues that the monks of Lérins cultivated. Secondly, since the plants are physical manifestations of spiritual virtues, they form the background to Lérins as a foretaste of heavenly paradise. Finally, Eucherius builds on the idea of heavenly paradise being a garden that is pleasant to be in to create a *locus amoenus* in the classical tradition. A *locus amoenus* is the proper place for philosophers to converse. In the same way, Lérins as a *locus amoenus* is the proper place to study, seek, and worship God, which is the proper activity of monks in the *eremus*.

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<sup>162</sup> Goehring, “The Dark Side of the Landscape,” 145.

As Salvatore Pricoco has pointed out, even though Eucherius' closing description of Lérins is rooted in a real landscape that Eucherius experienced, it is still an idealized landscape description.<sup>163</sup> Eucherius was quick to point out the elements of Lérins that conformed to his idea of Lérins as both an *eremus* and a *locus amoenus*. Other aspects of Lérins did not make it into the *De laude eremi*. For example, as we have seen, Lérins supported a population into the mid-fourth century before it was depopulated, possibly by a natural disaster. The depopulation of Lérins meant that Lérins was an underutilized landscape, one that could support a population again. But the only population on Lérins that Eucherius experienced was Honoratus' monastic community. Prior to that, as far as Eucherius was concerned, Lérins was *desertum*. Lérins' previous history of population had left a legacy of small-scale shipping and ferrying among the islands of Lérins and the mainland, connecting them all together. These ferrymen would have borne Eucherius to Île Sainte-Marguerite and carried Eucherius' letters to Honoratus on Île Saint-Honorat. These same ferrymen would have carried donated supplies of food and clothing to Eucherius and the other monks. The ferrymen prove that Lérins was not entirely *secreta*, cut off from the world. But, once the ferrymen had left Eucherius with a letter and perhaps some rations, Eucherius was cut off. Île Sainte-Marguerite is in sight of the mainland and Île Saint-Honorat, but both are inaccessible without a boat. When the ferrymen left, Eucherius was left alone, and the feeling of isolation would have been profound. That feeling of isolation was a real part of Eucherius' experience of Lérins.

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<sup>163</sup> Salvatore Pricoco, *L'Isola dei Santi*, 164.

*Chapter 3*  
*Fifth-Century Lyon through the Eyes of Sidonius Apollinaris*

In this chapter, the historical landscape is fifth-century Lyon, the author is Sidonius Apollinaris, fifth-century aristocrat from Lyon and later bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, and the literary sources are Sidonius Apollinaris' letters. I argue that Sidonius Apollinaris organized his conception of the space of Lyon according to the city's religious landscape, which includes churches and funerary monuments. Lyon's amphitheaters, forums, and aqueducts do not feature in Sidonius' letters. Instead, churches built on saints' tombs and the burial places of prominent politicians and family members are Sidonius' most important landmarks and meeting places in Lyon. At the same time, Lyon's natural landscape and topography shaped Sidonius' life in Lyon, which in turn shaped Sidonius' letters.

Sidonius' interest in burial sites fits into a long tradition of setting up monumental tombs and inscribed epitaphs for the deceased that, in Lyon at least, began with the Roman conquest of Gaul.<sup>1</sup> By the end of the third century Lyon had hundreds of funerary monuments ranging from the monumental Tomb of Turpio<sup>2</sup> and the ornate sarcophagus of the triumph of Bacchus<sup>3</sup> to the modest stele dedicated to one Primilla.<sup>4</sup> Nicholas

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épitaphes de Lyonnaise* (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2021), 7 and 330 ff. However, Laubry admits that his study does not address the topography of the placement of tombs or epitaphs. (Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épitaphes de Lyonnaise*, 7 and 329.)

<sup>2</sup> Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épitaphes de Lyonnaise*, 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épitaphes de Lyonnaise*, 135-137.

<sup>4</sup> Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épitaphes de Lyonnaise*, 117-118. (CIL XIII, 2242. *Musee Lugdunum*, inventory no. AD362)

Laubry has demonstrated through a study of funerary monuments of the province of *Gallia Lugdunensis*, of which Lyon was the capital, from the first through the third centuries that funeral landscapes were social spaces linked to urban reality and the ideology of the Roman *ciuitas*.<sup>5</sup> When Sidonius spent time at or set up funerary monuments, he was participating in and acting out his commitment to Lyon as a Roman *ciuitas*. But according to Roman law, a burial site was also a “religious place.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, for Sidonius, Lyon’s religious landscape included burial sites in addition to churches and basilicas.

That churches and basilicas feature more prominently in Sidonius’ descriptions of Lyon than other public architecture also reflects a change in the urban fabric of Lyon driven both by religion and local geography.<sup>7</sup> The fifth and sixth centuries witnessed a boom in church building, not only in Lyon, but across the Mediterranean.<sup>8</sup> This change was driven, in part, by the traditional patrons deciding to construct churches instead of secular public buildings as well as the increased influence of the bishop on town

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<sup>5</sup> “Esquissé par touches, le paysage funéraire de la Gaule lyonnaise, peuplé de tombeaux et d’épithames, fut, comme ailleurs dans l’empire, avant tout un espace social étroitement lié à la réalité urbaine de l’idéologie de la *ciuitas*.” (Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épithames de Lyonnaise*, 333.)

<sup>6</sup> Justinian’s Digest, 1.8.6.4. “*locus religiosus*.” For further laws regarding burial and funeral practices, see: Justinian’s Digest, 11.7.

<sup>7</sup> Gaëlle Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard also observes that religious buildings are the most frequent kind of building that Sidonius mentions in his letters. (Gaëlle Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard, “Les Descriptions et Évocations d’Édifices Religieux Chrétiens dans l’Oeuvre de Sidoine Apollinaire,” (in Poignault and Stoehr-Monjou (eds.) *Présence de Sidoine Apollinaire*. Clermont-Ferrand: Centre de Recherches A. Piganiol – Présence de l’Antiquité, 2014. 379-406.) 379.

<sup>8</sup> Béatrice Caseau, “Sacred Landscapes,” (in G. W. Bowerstock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (eds) *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. 21-59.) 39.

councils.<sup>9</sup> In Lyon this change was especially pronounced since the inhabited part of the city shifted from the Fourvière Hill, the traditional city center from the first century BC to the third century AD and home to the majority of Lyon's monumental public architecture, to the banks of the Saône at the base of the Fourvière Hill beginning in the third century.<sup>10</sup> This shift meant that the late antique phase of Lyon's urban history, unlike that of Rome or Arles for example, did not incorporate the temples, theaters, and forums from the first and second centuries into its urban fabric. Therefore, Sidonius' mental organization of Lyon's space according to its religious landscape not only reflects Sidonius' personal outlook, but also the constraints that Lyon's landscape placed on Sidonius' actions.

### 3.1. Sidonius Apollinaris: From Senator to Bishop

Sidonius was born to a high-ranking aristocratic family between 429 and 432 in Lyon.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the early part of his life overlapped with Eucharius' episcopate of the city from 430 to 450. Sidonius married Papianilla sometime between 452 and 455.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Caseau, "Sacred Landscapes," 23 and 39.

<sup>10</sup> The exact reasons for the shift in Lyon's settlement from the Fourvière Hill to the banks of the Saône is not entirely clear. However, the abandonment of the Fourvière Hill does appear to coincide with when Lyon's aqueducts ceased to function.

<sup>11</sup> Joop van Waarden, "Sidonius' Biography in Photo Negative," (in Gavin Kelly and Joop van Waarden (eds), *Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 13-28), 27. However, the *PCBE* opts for the slightly wider date of 429-434 for Sidonius' birth, with 430/431 being the most likely. (*PCBE* 4: 1759 (Sidonius 1)).

<sup>12</sup> van Waarden, "Sidonius' Biography in Photo Negative," 27.

Papianilla was the daughter of Eparchius Avitus and was from the Auvergne.<sup>13</sup> Together they had four known children: one son, also named Apollinaris, and three daughters, Severiana, Alcima, and Roscia.<sup>14</sup> Sidonius' political career began in 455 when he accompanied his father-in-law, Eparchius Avitus, to Rome. In Rome Eparchius Avitus was proclaimed *Augustus* with the support of the Visigothic king Theoderic II.<sup>15</sup> Following Avitus' short reign of a single year, Sidonius returned to Lyon where he interceded on behalf of the city before the new emperor, Majorian. Sidonius' next major political move was to represent Arvernian interests before yet another emperor, Anthemius, in Rome in 467.<sup>16</sup> As a reward for Sidonius' panegyric in praise of Anthemius, the emperor made Sidonius the urban prefect of Rome in 468. Sidonius' term ended in scandal when his friend, Arvandus, was on trial in Rome for treason. It was Sidonius' responsibility as urban prefect to preside over Arvandus' trial. Instead, Sidonius departed Rome before the trial could take place. We next hear from Sidonius in 470 as the bishop of modern Clermont-Ferrand.<sup>17</sup> Sidonius' episcopate is defined by Sidonius' organization of Clermont-Ferrand's resistance to the incursions of the Visigothic king Euric. However, Clermont-Ferrand was ceded to Euric by a treaty in 475

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<sup>13</sup> *PCBE* 4: 1413-1414 (Papianilla 1)

<sup>14</sup> *PCBE* 4: 163-166 (Apollinaris 4); *PCBE* 4: 104 (Alchima); *PCBE* 4: 1739-1740 (Severiana); *PCBE* 4: 1630 (Roscia)

<sup>15</sup> *PCBE* 4: 1761-1763 (Sidonius 1).

<sup>16</sup> *PCBE* 4: 1768-1771 (Sidonius 1).

<sup>17</sup> *PCBE* 4: 1774-1775 (Sidonius 1). van Waarden suggests the slightly broader 469/71 for Sidonius' consecration as bishop. (Joop van Waarden, "Sidonius' Biography in Photo Negative," (in Gavin Kelly and Joop van Waarden (eds), *Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*, 13-28), 28.

and Sidonius went into exile at Livia, near Carcassonne.<sup>18</sup> At either the end of 476 or the beginning of 477 Sidonius was allowed to return to his episcopate.<sup>19</sup> The remaining years of Sidonius' episcopate are marked by managing disputes among his clergy and preparing his letter collection for circulation. Sidonius died on August 21 sometime between 479 and 486.<sup>20</sup>

The general arc of Sidonius' career shares some similarities with the career of Eucharius of Lyon, the subject of the previous chapter. Like Eucharius, Sidonius was from a Gallic aristocratic family, pursued a secular career, and then entered the church, becoming a bishop. Like Eucharius, Sidonius was highly educated and well regarded by his peers for his education. The similarities between Eucharius and Sidonius remind us that much of the same care taken when reading Eucharius' work should also be applied to Sidonius, since both are representatives of aristocratic Gallic literary culture. Sidonius drew heavily from classical Latin authors, especially Pliny the Younger, Martial, and Vergil. When analyzing Sidonius' description of landscapes, special attention needs to be given to his use of language targeting Gaul's social elite and his use of literary precedent. However, there are many differences between Sidonius and Eucharius as well.

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<sup>18</sup> *PCBE* 4: 1787-1788 (Sidonius 1).

<sup>19</sup> *PCBE* 4: 1790-1794 (Sidonius 1).

<sup>20</sup> For Sidonius epitaph, see: Luciana Furbetta, "L'epitaffio di Sidonio Apollinare in un nuovo testimone manoscritto," (in *Euphrosyne* 43 (2015): 243-254). For Sidonius' death being in 486, see: van Waarden, "Sidonius' Biography in Photo Negative," 28. For Sidonius' death being in 479, see: Gavin Kelly, "Dating the Works of Sidonius," (in Gavin Kelly and Joop van Waarden (eds), *Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*, 166-94) 189. The *PCBE* advocates for Sidonius' death being in 483 or later. (*PCBE* 4: 1800 (Sidonius 1))

Unlike Eucharius, Sidonius was not an ascetic and neither joined a monastery nor adopted monastic behavior. Whereas Eucharius joined a monastery and was later promoted to the rank of bishop, Sidonius' rise to the episcopate was quite sudden, coming within a year of being urban prefect of Rome. This has led some scholars to suggest that Sidonius became a bishop under duress, and that he fleeing a dangerous political situation following his implication in the scandal of the Arvandus affair.<sup>21</sup> Eucharius' episcopate lasted about twenty years and appears to have been stable. Sidonius' episcopate was full of political turmoil as Sidonius attempted to guide his city through the collapse of Roman hegemony in Gaul and the rise of the Visigothic and Burgundian kingdoms.

I highlight the differences between Eucharius' and Sidonius' careers in order to demonstrate the unique circumstances that each found himself in and their unique responses. Even within the relatively small group of fifth-century Gallic aristocrats who shared an elite culture, there was diverse outlooks on life and landscape. Sidonius provides an alternative way for the fifth-century Christian aristocrat to interpret and interact with his landscape. The ascetic Eucharius sought the "desert" and literarily turned Lérins into a better version of the Egyptian desert without any particular focus on a specific sacred spot in Lérins. Sidonius' letters, on the other hand, indicate an especial interest in the particularities of his native Lyon's sacred landscape.

Sidonius' literary output includes many descriptions of individual places and their settings in landscapes. Three letters in particular describe specific locations in and near Lyon (*Epp.* 2.10; 3.12; 5.17). He also describes the villa, Avitacum, near Clermont-

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<sup>21</sup> Jill Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 172-173.

Ferrand, which was a part of his wife's dowry, in detail (*Ep.* 2.2). A description of neighboring villas owned by Sidonius' friends Ferreolus and Apollinaris forms the background to another letter (*Ep.* 2.9). The mountain 'castle' of Pontius Leontius is the subject of a whole poem (*Carm.* 22). However, I leave the villa and 'castle' descriptions aside for two reasons. First, the specific locations of these villas have not been identified. Second, all the villas described are in different places and so they cannot be used together to demonstrate how Sidonius mentally organized a single place. Instead, the three letters about Lyon reveal what was most important to Sidonius about Lyon. Sidonius also includes descriptions of Lyon's climate in three letters (*Epp.* 1.8; 2.2; 2.12). While these letters are useful for further developing Sidonius' experience of Lyon, they do not contribute to an understanding of Sidonius' spatial understanding of Lyon.

I focus in this chapter on the three letters in which Sidonius describes places in Lyon, which concern a basilica constructed by the bishop Patiens (*Ep.* 2.10), the events of the feast day of St. Justus (*Ep.* 5.17), and the rededication of Sidonius' grandfather's burial place (*Ep.* 3.12).<sup>22</sup> These letters were either written prior to Sidonius' consecration as bishop of Clermont-Ferrand in 470 or concern events that took place prior to his consecration. However, Sidonius selected them for inclusion in his circulated letter collection in 477 or 478.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Sidonius' organization of space according to Lyon's religious landscape represents a lay aristocratic outlook as Sidonius the bishop wanted to present it.

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<sup>22</sup> Sidonius does offer descriptions of Lyon's climate in three other letters, *Epp.* 1.5; 2.2; 2.12.

<sup>23</sup> Joop van Waarden, "Sidonius' Biography in Photo Negative," 28.

That Sidonius' recorded experiences in Lyon revolve around churches and tombs does not mean that other public areas in Lyon were not important to his experience of the city. When Sidonius went to Arles to pay court to the Emperor Majorian, Sidonius recounts interactions that he had in Arles' forum.<sup>24</sup> This alerts us to the presence of other important public places in Lyon, which Sidonius did not include in his letters, such as the baths situated near the cathedral of *Saint Jean*.<sup>25</sup> He likely assumed that his readers, mostly friends and acquaintances from Gaul's aristocracy, were already familiar with the landscape and buildings of Lyon. That the few events in Lyon that Sidonius records in his letters center on churches and tombs is due partly due to Sidonius' reasons for including these letters in his collection.

Sidonius used all three of these letters as vehicles to include examples of his verse in his letter collection. Sidonius' poetry is the focal point of each letter. The letter regarding Patiens' basilica is a response to a friend who had requested a copy of the dedicatory poem that Sidonius wrote for the basilica. The letter regarding the events of the feast day of St. Justus is set up to convey the situation in which Sidonius composed a bit of supposedly humorous and clever verse. The letter regarding the rededication of Sidonius' grandfather's burial place includes the funerary inscription that Sidonius wrote for his grandfather's burial marker.

That the poems in two out of three of these letters were intended to be inscriptions indicates that the places in fifth-century Lyon that a high-class aristocrat, like Sidonius,

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<sup>24</sup> Sid. Apol. Ep. 1.11.7.

<sup>25</sup> For the baths excavated in the *place Aldophe Max* near the cathedral of *Saint Jean*, see: CAG 69/2, §385, (pp. 453-56).

could leave his mark were a part of the city's religious landscape. This means that monumental construction in fifth-century Lyon was primary religious in nature. It also means that Sidonius was contributing to the religious landscape of Lyon. He was not a passive observer of Lyon's religious landscape. He was actively adding onto it in a place of community importance, Patiens' new basilica, and in a place of personal importance, his grandfather's grave.

Taken together, these letters indicate that Lyon's religious landscape, its tombs and churches, were central to Sidonius' experience of Lyon. They provided sacred places for family, peers, and community to gather. These were dynamic places which provided an avenue for Sidonius and other aristocrats to participate in the city's religious life. As such, Lyon's religious landscape was central to Sidonius' conceptualization of the city as an urban space.

### 3.2 Fifth-Century Lyon: An Overview

By the second half of the fifth-century, Lyon, or *Lugdunum*, had already undergone significant changes since its founding. Lyon is situated at the confluence of the Saône and Rhône Rivers. To the west of the Saône is the steep Fourvière Hill, on the top of which the center of the Roman city was located. The Fourvière Hill is the northernmost part of a plateau that extends to the south defining the western bank of the Saône and then the Rhône. South of Fourvière Hill is the *Vallon de Trion*, a small valley that distinguishes the Fourvière Hill proper from the rest of the plateau on which the modern town of Sainte-Foy-les-Lyon is situated. Between the Saône and the Rhône, right

before they join, is a peninsula known today as the Presque'Île. To the north of the Presque'Île is a plateau called the Croix-Rousse. (See Figure 3.1.)

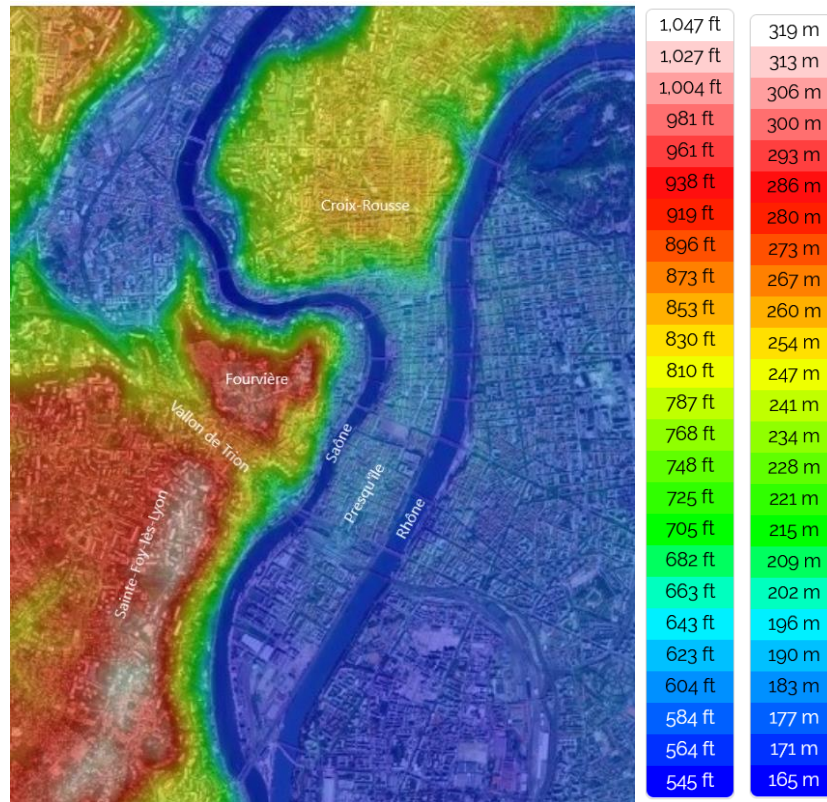


Figure 3.1: Topographic Map of Lyon. Generated in <https://en-us.topographic-map.com/>. Annotated by the Author

This complex site of hills, rivers, and peninsulas was an important site prior to its Roman conquest. This is supported by the discovery of a *muris gallicus*, or a gallic wall, in the *place Abbé Larue*, which pre-dates Caesar.<sup>26</sup> After Caesar's conquest of Gaul, according to Dio Cassius, the senate ordered L. Munatius Plancus, governor of *Gallia*

<sup>26</sup> Michèle Monin, "L'Oppidum de Lyon," (in M. Lenoble, dir. *Atlas topographique de Lugdunum. 1. Lyon Fourvière*, Revue archéologique de l'Est, supplement 47, Dijon, 2019. 433-434.)

*Comata*, and M. Aemilius Lepidus, at the time governor of *Gallia Narbonnensis*, to establish a colony at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône, which came to be called *Lugdunum*.<sup>27</sup> Lyon flourished under imperial patronage through the first and into the second centuries. Lyon boasted the “Sanctuary of the Gauls,” on the Croix-Rousse, the two theaters on the Fourvière Hill, the larger of the two theaters could hold 10,000 people, and a circus. At its greatest extent, the urbanized space of Roman *Lugdunum* included the entire Fourvière Hill, the Presque Île, the slopes of the Croix-Rousse, and had an estimated population of 25,000 to 40,000 people.<sup>28</sup> The water needs of this population were served by four aqueducts. However, Lyon’s fortunes changed drastically at the beginning of the third century.

Septimius Severus defeated his rival Clodius Albinus in the Battle of Lyon in 197. While Septimius Severus’ victory cemented his control over the Roman Empire, the battle also resulted in the sacking of Lyon on account of the city’s support of Clodius.<sup>29</sup> The direct effect of this battle on Lyon’s history is difficult to ascertain.<sup>30</sup> Septimius Severus closed Lyon’s mint, but the city retained its *colonia* status.<sup>31</sup> By the late third-

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<sup>27</sup> Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, XLVI.50.

<sup>28</sup> M. Lenoble, dir. *Atlas topographique de Lugdunum. I. Lyon Fourvière*, (Revue archéologique de l’Est, supplément 47, Dijon, 2019), fig. 1. (Henceforth: *Atlas Lugdunum I*); Patrice Faure, “Lyon lointain, Lyon romain, des origines au v<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C.” (in *Nouvelle Histoire de Lyon et de la Métropole*, Toulouse: Privat Histoire, 2019. 53-135.), 105.

<sup>29</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 113-114.

<sup>30</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 114. Harries is representative of the view that Septimius Severus punished Lyon. (Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 37.)

<sup>31</sup> For the closure of Lyon’s mint, see *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 115. For Lyon’s *colonia* status under Septimius Severus, see CIL XIII, 1754.

century Vienne had surpassed Lyon in its administrative importance as it, unlike Lyon, was given “metropolitan” status under Diocletian’s re-organization of the provinces.<sup>32</sup> By the end of the third century, Lyon was much reduced with a population probably between 5000 and 10,000 people.<sup>33</sup> The settlement on the top of the Fourvière Hill, along with its theaters, temples, aqueducts, and circus was slowly abandoned, and the population center moved to the west bank of the Saône.

Nonetheless, Lyon remained a city of regional importance. In 274 Aurelian reopened Lyon’s mint, which operated into the beginning of the fifth century, if only sporadically.<sup>34</sup> While the baths on top of the Fourvière Hill were abandoned new baths were constructed on the bank of Saône at the beginning of the fourth century.<sup>35</sup> Several *Augusti* met their deaths in or near Lyon. The usurper Magnentius committed suicide in Lyon in 353.<sup>36</sup> Gratian was assassinated in Lyon in 383.<sup>37</sup> Valentinian II was killed in

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<sup>32</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 115.

<sup>33</sup> *CAG 69/2*, p. 253.

<sup>34</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 115; Patrice Faure, “Lyon lointain, Lyon romain...” 117; Lyon’s mint closed definitively in 413. (Armand Desbat, “Artisan et commerce à Lugdunum,” (in *CAG 69/2*, pp. 214-230), p. 229.)

<sup>35</sup> The date the baths on the Fourvière Hill were abandoned is difficult to establish, but the presence of a late-antique necropolis in the palestra suggests that the baths had been turned into an oratory or mausoleum by the fifth or sixth century. (*Atlas Lugdunum I*, 460). The water for the baths was provided by either the Yzeron or Monts d’Or aqueducts (*Atlas Lugdunum I*, 460), but the end of the use of these aqueducts is also difficult to establish. Burdy suggests that the service of both these aqueducts ended during the third or fourth century when the settlement on the Fourvière Hill was abandoned and the aqueducts lost their *raison d’être*. (M. Jean Burdy, *L’Aqueduc Romain du Mont D’Or*, (Département du Rhône, Préinventaire des monuments et Richesses Artistiques, 1987), 17; M. Jean Burdy, *L’Aqueduc Romain de L’Yzeron*, (Département du Rhône, Préinventaire des monuments et Richesses Artistiques, 1991), 125). Whatever the exact date may be, whenever the aqueducts ceased to function the baths also ceased to function. For the baths excavated in the *place Aldophe Max*, see: *CAG 69/2*, §385, (pp. 453-56).

<sup>36</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 115.

<sup>37</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 115.

either Lyon or Vienne, possibly on the orders of the Frankish general Arbogast.<sup>38</sup> While still in Gaul, Arbogast helped raise Eugenius to the purple.<sup>39</sup> While Lyon seems like an unfortunate place for emperors to have been during the late fourth century, the fact that they were in Lyon at all, even if they died there, indicates that Lyon remained an important regional center with ties to imperial power. Lyon's local aristocracy also remained politically relevant in the fourth century. That the politician Syagrius, Proconsul of Africa in 379, Urban Prefect of Rome in 381, and Consul and Praetorian Prefect of Italy in 382, was buried in Lyon suggests that Syagrius made his home in Lyon and that the local aristocracy retained empire-wide connections throughout the fourth century.<sup>40</sup>

Lyon's landscape changed between the first and fifth centuries as well. At the beginning of the first century AD, the Saône flowed much more closely to the base of the Fourvière Hill than it does today, reaching as far inland as the modern Rue Tramassac. It briefly split into two channels prior to meeting the Rhône. This split in the Saône created an island of "Saint-Jean" as archeologists call it, during the period of earlier Roman occupation.<sup>41</sup> However, by the third century, the branch of the Saône that separated the island of "Saint-Jean" disappeared, as the channel of the Saône moved slightly to the

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<sup>38</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 115.

<sup>39</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 115.

<sup>40</sup> *PLRE I*: 862 (Flavius Afranius Syagrius 2). For further discussion of Syagrius, see note 116 in this chapter. For Lyon maintaining connections to imperial power in the fifth century, see: Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 38.

<sup>41</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 98, 543, and 550.

east.<sup>42</sup> This resulted in the island of “Saint-Jean” being connected to the west bank of the Saône around the time that the Fourvière Hill was being abandoned and the center of Roman settlement moved to the banks of the Saône. The joining of the island of “Saint-Jean” to the west bank of the Saône provided the space needed to construct large public buildings, such as the episcopal complex and the baths found in the *place Adolphe Max*.<sup>43</sup>

Even though Sidonius’ fifth-century Lyon was in the shadows of monuments and structures built in the first and second century, Sidonius’ letters give no indication that he thought that he lived in a diminished city. Indeed, Sidonius was justified in thinking that Lyon was the home of the politically influential. Both his father and grandfather were in the imperial service.<sup>44</sup> Sidonius himself was the son-in-law to the emperor Avitus. But much had changed. Avitus’ political power was underpinned by the Visigothic army of King Theoderic II, whose court Sidonius personally spent time in. New public buildings were being constructed, but they were churches, not theaters. Frequently the building materials for these buildings were *spolia* from first and second century buildings.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 100.

<sup>43</sup> For further discussion on historical courses of Rhône and Saône, see: Desbat Armand and Lascoux Jean-Paul, “Le Rhône et la Saône à Lyon à l’époque romaine. Bilan archéologique,” (*Gallia*, 56 (1999): 45-69). Reynaud’s discussion on the first bridge across the Saone has implications for the course of the river: Reynaud, *À la Recherche d’un Lyon Disparu*, (Lyon: ALPARA – MOM Éditions, 2021.), 29-31.

<sup>44</sup> For Sidonius’ grandfather’s epitaph, see: Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12; For Sidonius’ father in the imperial court, see: Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.9.2 and *Ep.* 8.6.5.

<sup>45</sup> For example, the foundations of the church of Saint Jean alongside the bank of the Saône (*Le contremur oriental*) contain stone blocks and inscriptions from previous structures and was built either at the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century. (Jean-François Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, (D.A.F. 69. Paris: MSH, 1998.) 56-57.)

Sidonius' Lyon was not the Lyon of the first century. Its population was smaller and its building projects more modest, which suggests that there were fewer financial resources available.<sup>46</sup> The center of the city shifted from the Fourvière Hill to the banks of the Saône. Its political situation was less stable, passing into, out of, and back into Burgundian control between 457 and the late 460's.<sup>47</sup> The religion had changed. By the late fifth century, Lyon was thoroughly, if not completely, Christianized. But Lyon was still strategically situated and continued to serve as a link between legions on the Rhine frontier and political centers in Italy. Lyon's strategic location contributed to a sporadic imperial presence and a well-connected local elite. One of the ways that Lyon's elite maintained their connections and cultivated their self-identity was through a commitment to Latin language and literature. The demand for a classical education by the local elite kept teachers employed.<sup>48</sup> Sidonius' Lyon was dynamic, and its grandees were just as self-important as ever.

### 3.3. Cathedral at the Junction of Road and River

The area of modern Vieux Lyon on the west bank of the Saône was the physical center of fifth-century *Lugdunum*, and its spiritual center as understood by Sidonius. Patiens, bishop of Lyon from c. 449/450 to between 475 and 480, had expanded the

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<sup>46</sup> For Lyon's reduced population, see: *CAG* 69/2, p. 253.

<sup>47</sup> Patrice Faure, "Lyon lointain, Lyon romain, des origines au v<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C." (*Nouvelle Histoire de Lyon et de la Métropole*, eds. Paul Chopelin & Pierre-Jean Souric, Privat Histoire: Toulouse, 2019, 53-127), 123.

<sup>48</sup> For one example of a teacher who was a friend of, see: Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.12.1. For Lyon as an intellectual hub in the mid-fifth century, see: Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, 39.

basilica of the episcopal complex in Lyon and Sidonius wrote a poem in commemoration of the event, which Sidonius related in a letter to his friend Hesperius.<sup>49</sup> Sidonius began his letter by commenting on Hesperius' love of literature, "What I love about in you is that you are a lover of letters," indicating that literary pursuits are the central theme of the letter.<sup>50</sup> Hesperius had requested a copy of a poem that Sidonius had composed in honor of Patiens' church, which is on the site of the modern *Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Lyon*.<sup>51</sup>

The modern *Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Lyon* is on the west bank of the Saône river and at the base of the Fourvière hill. It forms the southern end of an episcopal complex that included three churches in the Middle Ages: Saint-Croix to the north, Saint-Étienne in the middle, and Saint-Jean to the south. The original church was on the site of Saint-Jean and dates to either the fourth or early fifth century by which time a bishop was certainly installed there.<sup>52</sup> A baptistry in Saint-Étienne dates to the fourth century.<sup>53</sup> Reynaud, an archeologist and historian of late antique Lyon, argues that there is not enough evidence to support the existence of Saint-Croix before the Carolingian period.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the early fifth-century church and episcopal complex that Sidonius was familiar

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<sup>49</sup> *PCBE* 4: 1432-1435 (Patiens); *PCBE* 4: 984 (Hesperius 1).

<sup>50</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.10.1 "Amo in te quod litteras amas"

<sup>51</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 44.

<sup>52</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 83.

<sup>53</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 67.

<sup>54</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 83.

with included a basilica on the site of *Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste* and an episcopal complex attached to the north of the basilica, within which was the baptistry. This construction represents the third stage in the site's development at the end of the fourth century.<sup>55</sup>

Patiens' renovations to the church are the fourth stage in the episcopal complex's history. But the dating of these renovations is dependent on Sidonius' letter regarding Patiens' renovations.<sup>56</sup> Loyen, who translated Sidonius' works into French, dates Sidonius' letter regarding Patiens' renovations to 469, a date that Reynaud, archeologist of late antique Lyon, follows.<sup>57</sup> Gavin Kelly questions Loyen's habit of dating Sidonius' letters to 469 based on Sidonius' use of Christian expressions.<sup>58</sup> I also do not see any reason to rule out the period between 461 and 467 as a possible date of composition, as this was still before Sidonius was consecrated as a bishop and he was still in Lyon prior to going to Rome in 467. This means that Patiens' renovations could have been completed at some point in the 460s, a date range that Kelly also suggests.<sup>59</sup> Regardless

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<sup>55</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 66-69.

<sup>56</sup> Sigrid Mratschek assumes that Sidonius' poem is in praise of the Basilica of St. Justus. (Sigrid Mratschek, "Sidonius' Social World," in the *Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*, 219, n. 40.) However, this surely cannot be the case. As I demonstrate in the discussion below, the landscape the Sidonius describes matches the location of the episcopal complex next to the river. The basilica of St. Justus is on top of the Fourvière Hill. See also Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 87-135 (esp. 89-91).

<sup>57</sup> Loyen's dating is dependent on Sidonius' statement that he was familiar with hendecasyllables in this letter (2.10.3) and that Sidonius gave up poetry as a part of his "conversion," when he became bishop (Ep. 9.16.3.55). (Sidoine Apollinaire, *Lettres*, Tome II (Livres I-V), trans. and ed. André Loyen. (Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres": Paris, 1970), 247.)

<sup>58</sup> Gavin Kelly, "Dating the Works of Sidonius," (in *The Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*) 180.

<sup>59</sup> Gavin Kelly, "Dating the Works of Sidonius," (in *The Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*) 178.

of exactly when Patiens carried out his renovations and Sidonius wrote his poem, it was before Sidonius was consecrated as bishop of Clermont-Ferrand. All that remains of Patiens' work that Sidonius praised are some large foundation stones underneath Merovingian and Carolingian renovations.<sup>60</sup> If later renovations followed Patiens' foundations, then Patiens' renovations, the fourth stage in the building's evolution, expanded the basilica and slightly reoriented it to face more directly east.

To celebrate his extensive renovation, Patiens requested poems from three men, Constantius, Secundus, and Sidonius. Patiens then had the poems inscribed on the church.<sup>61</sup> While Sidonius does not state outright that this poem was inscribed inside Patiens' basilica, the opening two lines of the poem, "All you who here admire the work of Patiens, our bishop and father," indicate that this poem was intended to be read in situ in the basilica.<sup>62</sup> Sidonius' poem goes on to praise the building of the church, its solid construction, gilded ceiling, multi-colored marbles, and columns.<sup>63</sup> At the end of the poem, Sidonius describes the location of the church in the city of Lyon at the intersection of road and river.

On the one side is the noisy high-road (*agger*), on the other the echoing Arar (Saône) on the first the traveler on foot or on horse and the drivers of creaking carriages (*essedorum*) turn round; on the other, the company of bargemen (*helciariorum*), their backs bent to their work, raise a boatmen's shout to Christ, and the banks echo their alleluia. Sing, traveler, thus; sing, boatman, thus; for

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<sup>60</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 78, see figure 47.

<sup>61</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.10.3.

<sup>62</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.10.4. "*Quisquis pontificis patrisque nostril / Conlaudat Patientis hic laborem*"

<sup>63</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.10.4.1-21. For commentary, see: Marco Onorato, *Il castone e la gemma: Sulla tecnica poetica di Sidonio Apollinare*, (Collanda di Studi Latini, n.s. 89, Napoli: Paolo Loffredo, 2016), 302-304.

towards this place all should make their way, since through it runs the road which leads to salvation.<sup>64</sup>

In this passage, Sidonius literarily intertwines *variatio* and repetition to make Patiens' basilica the focus of the poem.<sup>65</sup> Sidonius' literary presentation mirrors the geographic reality of Patiens' basilica as a central point in fifth-century Lyon where river and land traffic converged. Other details that Sidonius includes about the landscape surrounding the church, such as the sounds he describes, indicate some of the specifics of Sidonius' experience of Patiens' basilica and the surrounding area.<sup>66</sup>

Sidonius uses the word *agger* to indicate a road that passes the church. Stefania Santelia notes that Sidonius uses the word *agger* here synonymously with the word *via*.<sup>67</sup> But *agger* means, in its most literal sense, a mound or pile but was also used to refer to a military or public road with a graded embankment.<sup>68</sup> The road that passed the church

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<sup>64</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 2.10.5. (LCL 296: 466; trans. Anderson, LCL 269: 467):  
*Hinc agger sonat, hinc Arar resultat,*  
*Hinc sese pedes atque eques reflectit*  
*Stridentum et moderator essedorum,*  
*Curvorum hinc chorus helicariorum*  
*Responsantibus allelulia ripis*  
*Ad Christum levat amnicum celeuma.*  
*Sic, sic psallite, nauta vel viator;*  
*Namque iste est locus omnibus petendus,*  
*Omnes quo via ducit ad salutem.*

<sup>65</sup> Onorato, *Il castone e la gemma*, 176 n. 22.

<sup>66</sup> Here I depart from Onorato, who states that Sidonius' descriptions of the sounds were generic. (Onorato, *Il castone e la gemma*, 176, n. 22.)

<sup>67</sup> Stefania Santelia, "Sidonio Apollinare autore di una epigrafe per l'*ecclesia* di Lione: *epist.* 2,10,4 (=Le Blant ICG 54)," (in *Vetera Christianorum* 44 (2007): 305-321.), 312.

<sup>68</sup> Lewis and Short, "agger." For all of Sidonius' uses of the word "agger," see: David Amherdt, *Sidoine Apollinaire Le Quatri me Livre de la Correspondance: Introduction Et Commentaire*, 491. (Note: I have not actually seen Amherdt's book.)

seems to have been elevated in some way, perhaps on the edge of the Fourvière hill, where the modern Rue Tramassac currently runs. Archeological excavations between 1984 and 1986 revealed that the area around the Rue Tramassac was inhabited without interruption from the fourth through the fifth centuries, directly after the abandonment of the Fourvière Hill.<sup>69</sup> There was also a road that serviced the inhabited area that ran north and south approximately where the Rue Tramassac currently is.<sup>70</sup> This road probably had its beginnings at the end of the third century when it was constructed by laying slabs of granite and adding soil.<sup>71</sup> At the beginning of the fifth century, the road was reworked by adding limestone boulders, pebbles, and by laying an embankment.<sup>72</sup> Further embankments of bricks, tiles, mortar, and rammed earth contained ceramics which date to the second half of the fifth-century.<sup>73</sup> The fifth-century rammed earth suggests that the embankments were, at the very least, being maintained when Patiens built his church and Sidonius wrote his poem.

Sidonius' *agger* was a noisy place. "*Hinc agger sonat,*" – "Here the highroad resounds." The late antique road that corresponds to the modern Rue Tramassac was a busy place in Sidonius' time. The discovery of a large number of animal bones, particularly cattle, suggests that there was a butchery present.<sup>74</sup> The butchery was

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<sup>69</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §390, (p. 458).

<sup>70</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §390, (p. 458).

<sup>71</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §390, (p. 458).

<sup>72</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §390, (p. 458).

<sup>73</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §390, (pp. 458-59).

<sup>74</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §390, (p. 459)

accompanied by the sounds of animals and commerce. Furthermore, The Rue Tramassac ends at the bottom of the Montée du Gourguillon, which corresponds with another late antique road. The late antique road corresponding with the modern Montée du Gourguillon climbs the Fourvière Hill before ending at the Place des Minimes, near the area of St. Just. This road was the primary road connecting the settlement around the episcopal complex to the Fourvière Hill, the churches of St. Just and St. Irénée, and the roads to Aquitaine and Narbonne.<sup>75</sup> This means that the late antique roads that correspond to the modern Montée du Gourguillon and Rue Tramassac were busy with traffic coming up and down the Fourvière Hill. Sidonius captures this activity by including foot traffic, travel by horseback, and by carriages.

Sidonius calls the chariots *essedorum*, which is what Julius Caesar called the two-wheeled Gallic war chariots he encountered during his conquest of Gaul.<sup>76</sup> Later, the word was used to indicate general transportation carts.<sup>77</sup> This is not Sidonius' only use of *essedorum*. In another poem rich in mythological imagery, Sidonius describes a fanciful scene in which tigers are yoked to a chariot for Bacchus.<sup>78</sup> Sidonius calls the chariot an *essedata* and describes how the chariot is attached to a double yoke (*duplicem...arcum*).

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<sup>75</sup> The other ancient route down the Fourvière Hill is Montée Saint-Barthélémy, the bottom of which is near modern St. Paul's, and would have gone to a bridge across the Saone at the Quai St. Vincent to reach the Amphitheater of the Three Gauls on the Croix-Rousse. The other modern road down the Fourvière Hill is Montée Chemin Neuf, which was constructed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. (*Atlas Lugdunum I*, 327.)

<sup>76</sup> Caes. *Gall.* 4.32.5; 4.33.1; *et al.*

<sup>77</sup> Lewis and Short, "essedum"; *TLL* 5,2: 861; Santelia, "Sidonio Apollinare autore di una epigrafe per l'ecclesia di Lione: *epist.* 2,10,4 (=Le Blant ICG 54)," 312.

<sup>78</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 22.22-24.

Sidonius was probably imagining a chariot similar to the one on the “Sarcophagus of the Triumph of Bacchus,” which depicts two tigers yoked to a chariot.<sup>79</sup> This suggests that the chariots that Sidonius saw driving along the Rue Tramassac were likely drawn by two animals at a time.<sup>80</sup>

The term *helciariorum* also provides a glimpse into the busy scene that Sidonius describes.<sup>81</sup> A *helciariorum* was someone who pulled a small vessel upstream.<sup>82</sup> The bargemen in Sidonius’ poem were not actually in the ships. Rather they were on land next to the Saône River pulling the ships upstream. This points to trade moving upstream and the presence of a road or path next to the river for the *helciariorum*, which indicates that river traffic was closely connected to the entire bank of the river, not just to docking areas. In fact, *helciariorum* pulling ships up the Saône were within mere meters of Patiens’ church.

The foundations of Saint-Jean at the time of Patiens’ renovations were no more than ten meters from a set of double walls constructed at the beginning of the fourth century.<sup>83</sup> Reynaud argues that the wall closest to the Saône was intended to protect the inner wall from the river.<sup>84</sup> If this is the case, then the Saône was much closer to Saint-

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<sup>79</sup> Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épitaphes de Lyonnaise*, 135-136. (*Musee Lugdunum* inventory no. 2001.0.305)

<sup>80</sup> It is tempting to assume that the chariots were drawn by horses, but there is no reason why there should not have also been yokes of oxen for hauling loads.

<sup>81</sup> Sidonius appears to be drawing on Martial’s *Epigrams* in this poem and especially in his invocation of *helciariorum* (Mart. *Epigrams*, 4.64.22). (É Wolff, “Sidoine Apollinaire lecteur de Martial,” (in Poignault and Stoehr-Monjou (eds.) *Présence de Sidoine Apollinaire*. Clermont-Ferrand: Centre de Recherches A. Piganiol – Présence de l’Antiquité, 2014. 295-303.), 297.)

<sup>82</sup> Lewis and Short, “helciariorum”; *TLL* 6,3: 2592.

<sup>83</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 56-57.

<sup>84</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 57.

Jean than it is today. Any river traffic passed not just in sight of Saint-Jean, but nearly in arm's reach of it. That Saint-Jean continued to be connected closely to the Saône and its river traffic throughout the Middle Ages is demonstrated by the 1550 *Plan scénographique de Lyon*, which shows ships docked at Saint-Jean.

Even Sidonius' detail of the *helcarii* with their backs bent (*curvorum...helcariorum*) is substantiated by other evidence. A bas-relief was found in Cabrières-d'Aigues that depicts *helcarii* pulling a ship laden with barrels up a river probably the Durance.<sup>85</sup> The *helcarii* are inclined forward, bent over as they pull the ship with ropes over their shoulders. In his translation, Anderson inserts the helpful explanatory phrase "to their work" to explain why the backs of the *helcarii* are bent. However, Anderson's focus on work does not capture the theological undertone that Sidonius intended the detail of the curved backed *helcarii* to have. The *helcarii*, with their backs bent to Christ are already in a supplicatory position as they approach the church.<sup>86</sup> *Helcarii*, bent under their load must have been a familiar scene to Sidonius as Lyon remained an important commercial center through the fifth century. Sidonius took that detail of the activity around Patiens' church and filled it with theological meaning in his poem.

The noisy road on an embankment on the side of the Fourvière Hill, the foot, horse, and chariot traffic, and the Saône with *helcarii*, backs bent, pulling ships upstream were all a part of Sidonius' experience of the location of Patiens' church and thus part of

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<sup>85</sup> CAG 84/2, §24.28. (pp. 211-212).

<sup>86</sup> Santelia, "Sidonio Apollinare autore di una epigrafe per l'*ecclesia* di Lione: *epist.* 2,10,4 (=Le Blant ICG 54)," 315.

the daily reality of fifth-century Lyon. Sidonius brings all these elements together at the end of the poem. Patiens' church is where road and river converge. *Helcarii* and charioteers meet at the church. This is the case in a very literal sense. The church is located at a narrow point on the west bank of the Saône at the foot of the Fourvière Hill, which means that local geography causes *helcarii* and people traveling by road to meet where the church was constructed. Sidonius uses this fact of the local landscape to his advantage by calling attention to the location itself in the last three lines of the poem.

*Sic, sic psallite, nauta vel viator;  
Namque iste est locus omnibus petendus,  
Omnes quo via ducit ad salutem.*<sup>87</sup>

Here Sidonius commands the sailor (*nauta*), which must include the *helcarii* ashore, and the one traveling by road (*viator*) to sing psalms (*psallite*)<sup>88</sup>, since the very location of the church (*iste ... locus*) needs to be sought out (*est ... petendus*) by everyone (*omnibus*). Sidonius' use of the demonstrative pronoun and gerund serve to emphasize the importance of the physical location of the church, because, according to Sidonius, the road through this place (*quo via*) leads everyone (*omnes...ducit*), that is both the sailor and wayfarer, to salvation (*ad salutem*).<sup>89</sup> Sidonius uses the local landscape and economic activity around the church to emphasize the importance of the church's location. By

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<sup>87</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.10.4. (LCL 296: 466)

<sup>88</sup> However, *psallere* is widely attested in Christian texts to simply mean *cantare*. (Santelia, "Sidonio Apollinare autore di una epigrafe per l'*ecclesia* di Lione: *epist.* 2,10,4 (=Le Blant ICG 54)," 313.)

<sup>89</sup> Sidonius' language regarding a church as a road to heaven echoes language used by Paulinus of Nola (Paul. Nol. *Epist.* 32.12.24-26) and in some inscriptions in Gaul regarding churches (*CE* 1310.5 and *CE* 2042.1). (Santelia, "Sidonio Apollinare autore di una epigrafe per l'*ecclesia* di Lione: *epist.* 2,10,4 (=Le Blant ICG 54)," 313.)

doing so, Sidonius oriented Lyon's spiritual life and commercial activity around the church. This suggests that, in Sidonius' eyes, Patiens' church was Lyon's center and was thus the primary point around which Sidonius organized his understanding of Lyon as an urban space.

If this poem were the only evidence for Sidonius' interpretation of Lyon's religious landscape, we would be excused for questioning how important Sidonius really thought the location of Patiens' church was to life in fifth-century Lyon. Certainly, Sidonius' poem was commissioned by Patiens himself. However, Sidonius' description of the events of the feast day of St. Justus suggests that Sidonius' emphasis on the importance of sacred places in this poem extends to other areas of Lyon as well.

#### 3.4. Between the Tombs of St. Justus and Syagrius

Sidonius' description of his activities during the feast day of St. Justus is, once again, included in a letter, which is a response to a request for a bit of poetry that Sidonius had previously composed. Eriphius had requested that Sidonius send him some verses that Sidonius had written about Eriphius' father-in-law Philomatius.<sup>90</sup> But Eriphius did not just want the verses, he also wanted to know "both the location and occasion" (*et locum et causam*), in which Sidonius composed the verses.<sup>91</sup> I now turn to the two *loci* that Sidonius describes, the tomb of St. Justus and the tomb of Syagrius.

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<sup>90</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.1-2.

<sup>91</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.2. (LCL 420: 226)

Sidonius sets the scene by describing his and his friends' movements between the contrasting tombs. Sidonius begins by explaining that he and his companions, along with a great crowd, had convened at the tomb of St. Justus (*ad sancti iusti sepulchrum*) for an early morning vigil.<sup>92</sup> The tomb of St. Justus was in a church near the top of the Fourvière Hill. In the following passage Sidonius describes the church as crowded and hot:

Owing to the cramped space, the pressure of the crowd, and the numerous lights which had been brought in, we were absolutely gasping for breath; moreover, imprisoned as we were under the roof, we were broiled by the heat of what was still almost a summer night, although just beginning to be touched with the coolness of an autumn dawn.<sup>93</sup>

The tomb of St. Justus is inside a church building, which Sidonius earlier described as a “most capacious basilica” (*capacissima basilica*) with “covered porticos” (*cryptoporticibus*).<sup>94</sup> However, Sidonius appears to have been stifling due to the warmth of a late summer night, the candles that had been brought in for the pre-dawn service, and

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<sup>92</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.17.3. (LCL 420: 226)

<sup>93</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.17.4. (LCL 420: 228; trans. Anderson, LCL 420: 229): “*de loci sane turbarumque compressu deque numerosis luminibus inlatis nimis anhelii; simul et aestati nox adhuc proxima tecto clausos vapore torruerat, etsi iam primo frigore tamen autumnalis Aurorae detepescebat.*”

<sup>94</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.17.3. *Cryptoporticus* generally means an underground portico, which was frequently apart of the forum. *Cryptoporticos* are widely attested in Gaul, with examples being found from Arles to Reims. However, Sidonius' invocation of *cryptoporticibus* at St. Just has posed problems of interpretation since the archeology of St. Just has not been able to confirm the existence of anything that resembles other known *cryptoporticos*. However, Reynaud hypothesizes that Sidonius' *cryptoporticos* could have referred to either the underground crypts of the church or simple porticos. (Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 91, 119, and 135.) Sidonius also used the word *cryptoporticus*, to describe what is certainly a covered, but aboveground portico at his villa Avitacum. (*TLL* 4: 1261; Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.2.10) Here, Sidonius appears to be following a Plinian usage of the term *cryptoporticus*. (Plin. *Ep.* 2.17.16-17.) Therefore, I follow Anderson's translation of *cryptoporticibus* as “covered portico,” which is commensurate with Reynaud's comments.

the “enormous crowd of both sexes” (*populus ingens sexu ex utroque*).<sup>95</sup> Clerics and monks presided over the congregation and celebrated the liturgy by singing psalms.<sup>96</sup> The tomb of St. Justus was the focal point of the celebrations and served as a location where the entire community, men and women, upper class and lower class, laymen and clergy could unite for a common spiritual purpose appropriate for a church dedicated to a former bishop.<sup>97</sup> This conception of the church of St. Justus as a gathering place is similar to Sidonius’ understanding of the ideal function of Patiens’ church, which served as a meeting point, spiritual and physical, for anyone, regardless of occupation. The tomb of Syagrius, on the other hand, was a space reserved for the elite members of Lyon’s community.

During a break in the liturgy, the “leading citizens resolved to go in a body to the tomb of Syagrius.”<sup>98</sup> By “leading citizens,” Sidonius, of course, means himself and his friends. Importantly, Sidonius and his companions wanted to be at hand for the celebration of Mass later, and the tomb of Syagrius was “not quite a full bowshot away” from the church of St. Justus.<sup>99</sup> While the tomb of Syagrius is not extant, it could have

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<sup>95</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.3.

<sup>96</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.3.

<sup>97</sup> St. Justus was an aristocratic bishop of Lyon from 374 to c. 381. After involvement in a scandal in Lyon, Justus left to become a hermit in Egypt, where he died. His remains were returned to Lyon for burial. (PCBE 4: 1089 (Iustus 2)).

<sup>98</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.4. (LCL 420: 228): “*placuit ad conditorium Syagrii consulis civium primis una coire*”

<sup>99</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.4. (LCL 420: 228): “*quod nec impleto iacto sagittae separabatur*”

been a part of the necropolis a few hundred yards to the south of St. Justus on the north side of the St. Irénée Hill.

In this necropolis 187 tombs were discovered in excavations in 1980.<sup>100</sup> These tombs primarily date from the fourth to the fifth centuries and many sepulchers were built from repurposed funerary monuments from the first and second centuries.<sup>101</sup> As Syagrius lived during the late fourth century this necropolis was an active burial ground when Syagrius died.<sup>102</sup> The foundations of four mausoleums were also excavated between 1972 and 1980.<sup>103</sup> The presence of the mausoleums suggests that this particular necropolis also hosted monumental funerary architecture that could have served as a recognizable meeting point for Sidonius and his peers. One mausoleum in particular is a good candidate for Syagrius' mausoleum, since it contains one large sarcophagus and dates to the end of the fourth century.<sup>104</sup> Finally, the necropolis is located slightly uphill from the church of St. Justus. This location provided a good vantage point for Sidonius and his peers to watch for the bishop to return to the church of St. Justus to celebrate mass. While it is impossible to identify any particular tomb with Syagrius, the necropolis to the south of the church of St. Justus is the site that most closely matches Sidonius' description of where he and his peers passed the feast day of St. Justus.

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<sup>100</sup> *CAG 69/2* §587.39, (p. 656).

<sup>101</sup> *CAG 69/2* §587.39, (p. 656).

<sup>102</sup> *PLRE I*: 862 (Flavius Afranius Syagrius 2)

<sup>103</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 106.

<sup>104</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 106-107. See "mausolée I" and figs. 72 and 73 on page 105.

Sidonius' description of the tomb of Syagrius contrasts sharply with that of the tomb of St. Justus.

Here some of us sat down under the shadow of a full-grown vine whose overarching foliage made a shady canopy formed by tall stems that drooped over in an interlaced pattern; others of us sat down on the green turf, which was also fragrant with flowers.<sup>105</sup>

At the tomb of St. Justus, Sidonius was in a stifling church with cryptoporticos and the entire community at hand. At the tomb of Syagrius it was cool, shaded, outdoors, and only Sidonius', high class friends were present. Sidonius' description of plant life suggests that Syagrius' tomb was in a garden.<sup>106</sup> This was a place where Sidonius and his friends could speak easily with each other and jest. There is no mention of female company present. Sidonius reports that this was an especially happy occasion since there was no mention of officials or taxes and no informer to betray them even if they did.<sup>107</sup> Most of all, this is a *locus amoenus*, a pleasant place. The scene that Sidonius describes is comfortable. While it was sweltering in the church of St. Justus, it was cool at the tomb of Syagrius. By going to Syagrius' tomb, Sidonius and his companions exchanged a crowd of sweating people for fragrant flowers with space to lay down on the grass.

Perhaps most importantly, Sidonius and his peers could speak easily. "The conversation

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<sup>105</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.4. (LCL 420: 228; trans. Anderson, LCL 420: 229): "*hic pars sub umbra palmitis adulti, quam stipitibus altatis cancellatimque pendentibus pampinus superducta texuerat, pars caespite in viridi sed floribus odoro consedaramus.*"

<sup>106</sup> Sidonius' description of Syagrius' tomb as resembling a garden could be compared with a funerary epitaph from Saintes, which explicitly claims that it was set up in a garden. (CIL XIII, 1072) For a discussion of this epitaph and the specific sense of place expressed in it, see: Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épitaphes de Lyonnaise*, 240-241.

<sup>107</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.5.

was sweet, joking, and bantering; moreover, and this is something most blessed, there was no mention of magistracies or of taxes.”<sup>108</sup> Syagrius’ tomb was just the place to compose and share trivial bits of poetry, which Sidonius does, eventually, include in his letter.<sup>109</sup>

It is not my purpose to delve into Sidonius’ use of the *locus amoenus* to create the perfect literary setting for the composition of verse in the company of good friends.<sup>110</sup> What I would like to bring to our attention is that Sidonius’ *locus amoenus* is located at the tomb of a local hero, Syagrius. This place was likely marked by some sort of monument. Sidonius calls Syagrius’ tomb a *conditorium*, or a structure to contain a body, coffin, or ashes, which matches the sarcophagi found within mausoleum foundations in the necropolis.<sup>111</sup> These mausoleums contained on one or two tombs, were square or rectangular in shape, and were 5 – 6 meters long.<sup>112</sup> Two of the mausoleums had annexes, which could have supported porticos.<sup>113</sup> This also accords with Sidonius’ description of

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<sup>108</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.5. (LCL 420: 230; trans. by the author): “*verba erant dulcia iocosa fatigatoria; praeterae, quod beatissimum, nulla mention de potestatibus aut de tributis*”

<sup>109</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.10.

<sup>110</sup> Fernández López identifies four letters of Sidonius (1.11; 5.17; 8.11; 9.13) that describe the circumstances in which poetic composition creates a space for a friendly game among cultured friends. (Fernández López, “Sidonio Apolinar, Humanista de la Antigüedad Tardía: Su Correspondencia,” (In *Antigüedad y Cristianismo: Monografías históricas sobre la Antigüedad tardía XI*. Madrid, 1994. 11-291.), 53-57.)

<sup>111</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 232; Lewis and Short, “*conditorium*”

<sup>112</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 232.

<sup>113</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 232.

vines forming a canopy, which must have been supported by porticos and trellises.<sup>114</sup> As a piece of funerary architecture, Syagrius' tomb was a part of Lyon's religious landscape, but not in the same way as the tomb of St. Justus.

The primary difference between the two tombs is that Syagrius was not a saint, and his tomb, therefore, not a place of Christian devotion. It also likely lacked the spiritual significance for Sidonius that the saint's tomb held.<sup>115</sup> However, the tomb of Syagrius did hold another kind of personal significance to Sidonius and his friends. Syagrius was the Proconsul of Africa in 379, Urban Prefect of Rome in 381, Praetorian Prefect of Italy and then Consul in 382.<sup>116</sup> The decision of Sidonius and his companions to spend their free time at Syagrius' tomb, and that Sidonius was sure to draw his readers' attention to this fact, indicates that Syagrius symbolized the successful secular career in the imperial service that Sidonius and his companions were striving after. Syagrius' tomb was a physical landmark that Sidonius and his friends could gather around to emphasize their commitment to a set of shared values, which set them apart as the "leading citizens" of Lyon.

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<sup>114</sup>It is tempting to take the Tomb of Turpio as a model for what Syagrius' tomb may have looked like. However, the Tomb of Turpio is a pagan tomb built in the first century and cannot be taken as representative of late fourth-century mausoleums. The Tomb of Turpio was discovered to the north of the Place de Trion on April 24, 1885, during the construction of the railway *Saint-Just-Vaugneray*. It has been reconstructed in the *place de Choulans*, where it is today. *CAG* 69/2 §545.8, (p. 607). See also, Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épitaphes de Lyonnaise*, 23-24.

<sup>115</sup> Philip Rousseau notes that Sidonius had a "trusting reverence for the tombs of saints and martyrs." (Philip Rousseau, "In Search of Sidonius the Bishop," (*Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 25, no. 3 (1976): 356-377), 371.

<sup>116</sup> *PLRE* I: 862 (Flavius Afranius Syagrius 2). Flavius Afranius Syagrius 2 is not to be confused with Flavius Syagrius 3 (*PLRE* I: 862-3), who was a correspondent of Symmachus and consul in 381. For a fuller discussion, see: Michele Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 169-70.

Finally, why did Sidonius and his peers decide to spend the morning at the tomb of Syagrius instead of going home between the early morning vigil and mass? The answer is simple. Sidonius and his friends likely lived at the bottom of the Fourvière Hill and the church of St. Justus is near the top of the hill. They had already climbed the hill early in the morning for the vigil (Sidonius' "*processio fuerat antelucana*" suggests that we should imagine a candlelight procession<sup>117</sup>) and did not want to climb it any more than they had to because it is steep! It was far easier to spend the morning at Syagrius' nearby tomb.

The tomb of St. Justus and the tomb of Syagrius demonstrate the importance of Lyon's religious landscape to Sidonius' activities. When Sidonius convened with the entire community it was at a saint's tomb, but when Sidonius convened with a group of friends, it was at the tomb of a man who exemplified the career that Sidonius and his friends were striving after. The reasons for gathering at these places are different; the groups of people who gathered at these places are different. But they were both a part of Lyon's built religious landscape. Sidonius' understanding of Lyon's religious landscape also included unbuilt aspects, such as his grandfather's burial place.

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<sup>117</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.17.3.

### 3.5. Creating a Religious Landscape

In *Ep.* 3.12, Sidonius reports the unusual circumstances in which he composed an epitaph for his grandfather, Apollinaris.<sup>118</sup> Sidonius had just crested a hill as he was leaving Lyon for Clermont-Ferrand in 469. From the top of the hill, Sidonius saw some gravediggers on the next hill digging in the very spot that Apollinaris was buried. Apparently, Apollinaris' grave was unmarked and grown over with grass. Sidonius raced his horse over and apprehended the gravediggers, whom he promptly had flogged. Sidonius realized that his action was rash, not in that the punishment was too harsh, but rather that he did not consult the bishop of Lyon, Patiens, before meting out punishment. To rectify this temporary usurpation of authority, Sidonius, continuing his journey, immediately sent word to Patiens about what had happened. Patiens agreed that Sidonius had acted appropriately. That night, Sidonius composed an epitaph for his grandfather so that a monument could be raised on the unmarked grave. He gave the money for the marble and labor expenses to his friend Gaudentius.<sup>119</sup> The next morning he sent the text of the epitaph along with instructions for creating the monument to his nephew Secundus, before setting off on the second day of his journey.<sup>120</sup> It is in his letter to Secundus that

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<sup>118</sup> *PLRE* II: 113 (Apollinaris 1); *PCBE* 4: 161 (Apollinaris 1).

<sup>119</sup> *PLRE* II: 495 (Gaudentius 8); *PCBE* 4: 856 (Gaudentius 1).

<sup>120</sup> The exact relationship between Sidonius and Secundus is not entirely clear. Loyen (vol. 2, page 224, note 33), the *PLRE* (*PLRE* II: 116), and the *PCBE* (*PCBE* 4: 1725 (Secundus)) take a literal reading of the passage "*tuo patruo remoto*" as meaning that Sidonius is Secundus' uncle. However, Anderson (vol. 2, page 44, note 2) follows Mommsen's suggestion (*MGH AA* 8: xlvii and xlix) that Sidonius was really a great uncle to Secundus. That Sidonius states that Apollinaris is his grandfather and Secundus' great-grandfather shows that Secundus and Sidonius were only one generation apart. (Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12.1). Therefore, I follow Loyen, the *PLRE*, and the *PCBE* in taking Secundus as Sidonius' nephew. For another example of Sidonius sending a letter while beginning a journey, see: Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 4.8.

Sidonius provides the account of these events.<sup>121</sup> Sidonius's account of the location of Apollinaris' burial place is vague, but three things about Sidonius' landscape are very clear: 1) The burial place of Apollinaris was an important and personal part of Lyon's religious landscape to Sidonius. 2) This event provided an opportunity for Sidonius to personally contribute to Lyon's built religious landscape by commissioning a marble epitaph. 3) Lyon's natural landscape shaped the events that Sidonius describes.

The ekphrastic nature of Sidonius' description of the landscape and cemetery and the pious nature of Sidonius' actions suggests to Rainer Henke that this letter functions as a vehicle for a highly artistic novella in Sidonius' letter collection.<sup>122</sup> But, as I will demonstrate, Sidonius' descriptions of the landscape and cemetery also correspond to the landscape just on the outskirts of fifth-century Lyon. Sidonius' letter is certainly a highly crafted piece of literature that, at least in its present form, was intended to be read by a wide literary circle and not just the letter's addressee, Secundus.<sup>123</sup> However, that does not mean that Sidonius' account is fictional. It seems to me that Sidonius describes an actual experience of his in this letter and the immediate landscape was an important part of that experience. The landscape on the edge of Lyon shaped Sidonius' experience, and in turn, Sidonius' artful recounting of that experience.

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<sup>121</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12.1-6.

<sup>122</sup> Rainer Henke, "Der Brief 3,12 des Sidonius Apollinaris an Secundus: Eine Novelle in einer Epistel?" (*Hermes* 140, no. 1 (2012): 121-125), 125.

<sup>123</sup> For a brief analysis of Sidonius' elaborate narrative structure in this passage, see: Rodie Risselada, "Applying Text Linguistics to the Letters of Sidonius," (in van Waarden and Kelly (eds). *New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris*. LAHR 7. Leuven; Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2013. 273-303.), 300 and 302.

While Sidonius' account of the landscape in this letter is vague, it is possible to reconstruct where some of these events took place. To begin with, Sidonius was travelling on horseback from Lyon to Clermont-Ferrand.<sup>124</sup> The most direct route from Lyon to Clermont-Ferrand is the Via Agrippa, which is the route that Sidonius almost certainly took.<sup>125</sup> Its exact path all the way to Clermont-Ferrand is not entirely clear, but archeologist Odile Faure-Brac argues for a route that goes through the town of Feurs (*la route de Feurs*).<sup>126</sup> This route has the Via Agrippa begin from the *place de Trion* before turning west to pass through Étoile d'Alai.<sup>127</sup> In order to reach the Via Agrippa, Sidonius, who was likely living on the banks of the Saône (more on this shortly), first had to climb the Fourvière Hill. As described previously, the most likely path from the Fourvière Hill to the fifth-century settlement on the banks of the Saône corresponds, more or less, to the modern Montée du Gourguillon. The top of the Montée du Gourguillon meets the rue des Farges, which meets the rue de Trion at Place Abbé Larue. The Place Abbé Larue was likely the site of a Roman gate between the fortified area at the top of the Fourvière Hill and a road following the modern rue de Trion, at the bottom of the Vallon de Trion, that connected to the Via Agrippa.<sup>128</sup> Anything outside this gate in the Vallon de Trion and on

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<sup>124</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 5.17.1. (LCL 420: 42): "... cum forte pergens urbem ad Arvernam publicum scelus e supercilio vicini collis aspexi meque equo effuso tam per aequata quam per abrupta proripiens et morae exiguae sic quoque impatiens..."

<sup>125</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 124.

<sup>126</sup> *CAG 69/I*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>127</sup> *CAG 69/I*, p. 79.

<sup>128</sup> Pavement from this road is extant. (*Atlas Lugdunum I*, 446 and 458)

the neighboring hill was *extra muros*, outside the walls, which is where the Roman cemeteries are located. It was in one of these cemeteries that Apollinaris was buried.

The exact location of Apollinaris' grave is unknown, as the funeral epitaph commissioned by Sidonius is not extant and there are several Roman cemeteries in Vallon de Trion, including the necropolis where Syagrius was buried. Anderson and Loyen, translators of Sidonius' works, have suggested that it might have been near the church of St. Justus, discussed earlier.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, Alph de Boissiev, a nineteenth-century epigrapher, thought that the tomb of Sidonius' grandfather was in the Cemetery of Foyasse.<sup>130</sup> However, based on the topography and archeology of the quarter of modern Saint-Just, I argue that the grave was in a Roman cemetery excavated near the modern church of Saint-Irénée.

Sidonius' description of the place where his grandfather was buried indicates that it was a cemetery that had been in use for a long time, "The field of burial itself had for a long time been so filled up both with ashes from the pyres and with bodies that there was no more room for digging".<sup>131</sup> That there were also cremations in this cemetery indicates that it was used for pre-Christian roman burials. Christians expecting their eventual resurrection opted for inhumation and not cremation. However, Sidonius is clear that that

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<sup>129</sup> Anderson, *Sidonius, Poems and Letters*, vol. 2. (Loeb Classical Library, 1965), 40, note 1. Sidoine Apollinaire, *Lettres*, Tome II (Livres I-V), trans. and ed. André Loyen. (Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres": Paris, 1970), 224, note 34.

<sup>130</sup> Alph de Boissiev, *Inscriptiones Antiques de Lyon*, (Lyon: Lovis Perrim, 1844-1854), 563.

<sup>131</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12.1. (LCL 420: 40; trans. Anderson, LCL 420: 41): "*campus autem ipse dudum refertus tam bustualibus favillis quam cadaveribus nullam iam diu scrobem recipiebat.*"

his grandfather was the first of his family to convert to Christianity.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, the cemetery that Sidonius' grandfather was buried in was not segregated by religion and used for Christian and non-Christian burials alike. It was in use at the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century and was still in use in 469. Multiple necropolises, to which I will now turn, match this description.

For example, a necropolis at the corner of the modern Rue des Fossés de Trion and Rue Benoist Mary contains inhumations as well as two cremations.<sup>133</sup> At least one cremation dates from the second half of the first century AD. Coins found in the burials of children date to the reigns of Magnentius or Decentius (reigned 350-353) indicating a burial between 353 and 360. The forms of the other burials are not homogenous and suggests that the site may have been in use until the tenth century.<sup>134</sup> However, Sidonius' description indicates a necropolis that is very full to the point of having no more room. The necropolis at Rue Benoist Mary is not particularly large and its long period of use suggests that it was not filled up in the fifth century.

The necropolises of St. Just and Saint-Irénée, on the other hand, are much larger. Both contain inhumations and cremations.<sup>135</sup> 127 funerary epitaphs, both pagan and Christian, have been found in the Rue des Macchabées leading up to Saint-Irénée, on the

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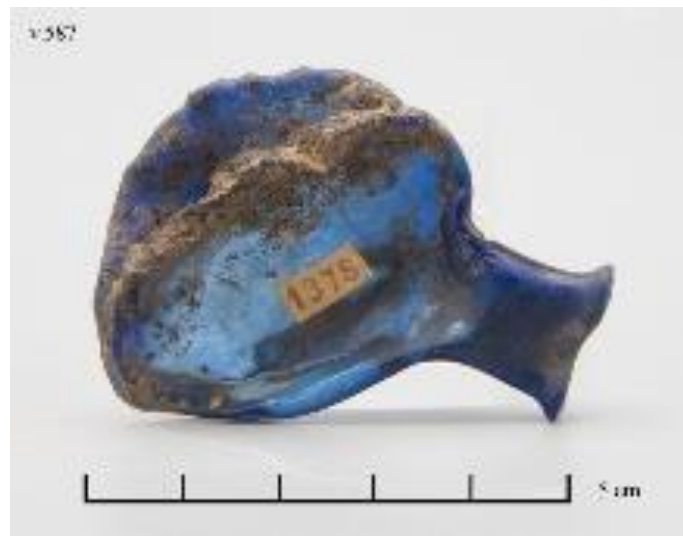
<sup>132</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12.5.

<sup>133</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §569, (pp. 632-33).

<sup>134</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §569, (pp. 632-33).

<sup>135</sup> For an examination comparison of inhumation and cremation in Lyon from the first through the fourth centuries, see: Frédérique Blaizot, "Rites et Pratiques Funéraires à Lugdunum du I<sup>er</sup> au IV<sup>e</sup> Siècle," (in Christian Goudineau (dir.) *Rites Funéraires à Lugdunum*. Paris: Éditions Errance, 2009. 155-185.)

grounds of St Irénée, or in the immediate vicinity of Saint-Irénée.<sup>136</sup> Another 62 funerary epitaphs, both pagan and Christian, have been found at St. Just, in its immediate vicinity, or in an associated necropolis just south of Place Eugene Wernert.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, six melted perfume bottles have also been discovered at Saint-Irénée.<sup>138</sup> (See Figure 2.) These bottles were a part of the funeral ceremonies and were placed on funeral pyres with the deceased when they were cremated. The presence of these melted funerary perfume bottles and the large number of funerary epitaphs at Saint-Irénée corresponds to Sidonius' description of an overcrowded cemetery of great age that accommodated inhumations and cremations.



*Figure 3.2: Melted Perfume Bottle - 1st century AD – Musée Lugdunum collection number: 2006.0.189*

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<sup>136</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §597-608, (pp. 661-78).

<sup>137</sup> *CAG 69/2*, §587-591, (pp. 652-59).

<sup>138</sup> *Musée Lugdunum* collection numbers: V.581; 2006.0.149; 2006.0.150; 2006.0.189; 2006.0.193; 2006.0.196

One late antique epitaph in particular may further connect Sidonius' grandfather to the necropolis at Saint-Irénée, or at least the Saint-Irénée side of a single large necropolis. The epitaph of one "Gaudentius" who died when he was 45 years old has been found at Saint-Irénée.<sup>139</sup> (See Figure 3.) While it is impossible to know for certain if the Gaudentius of the epitaph is the same Gaudentius as Sidonius' friend, to whom he entrusted the money for Apollinaris' epitaph, it is likely that the Gaudentius of the epitaph was of the same family as Sidonius' friend since Gaudentius was not from Gaul.<sup>140</sup> While he does not seem to have come from a noble family, Sidonius' friend Gaudentius was appointed *vicarius septem provinciarum*, i.e. vicar of Gaul.<sup>141</sup> This appointment is what led to Gaudentius moving to Lyon and resulted in a family in Lyon raising funerary monuments with the name Gaudentius on them. That a family of similar social status as Sidonius was using the cemetery near modern Saint-Irénée suggests that it is possible that Sidonius' family was also using the cemetery, and that this was the burial locale of Sidonius' grandfather.

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<sup>139</sup> *Musée Lugdunum* collection number: 2008.0.652.

<sup>140</sup> Sidonius states that Gaudentius received the office of *vicarius* of Gaul and climbed over "*nostrorum civium*," implying that Gaudentius was not from Gaul, or at least, not from Lyon. Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 1.3.2; *PLRE* II: 495 (Gaudentius 8).

<sup>141</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 1.3 and 1.4.



Figure 3.3: Epitaph of Gaudentius - 4th to 8th centuries AD – Musée Lugdunum collection number: 2008.0.652

One final piece of evidence, the topography, points to Sidonius' grandfather being buried near Saint-Irénée. Sidonius states that he saw the desecration of his grandfather's grave "from the brow of a neighboring hill."<sup>142</sup> Then he galloped his horse "over level and steep ground alike."<sup>143</sup> When Sidonius reached the modern Abbé Larue, he would have been at the "brow" of one hill and able to look across the Vallon de Chalon at St. Just and up the neighboring hill at Saint-Irénée, where the necropolis near Saint-Irénée would have been in full view. The hill that Saint-Irénée is on is steep, especially between Place Eugene Wernert and Saint-Irénée along the Rue des Macchabées. Saint-Irénée is about 200 feet higher than St. Just. For Sidonius to have crossed level and steep ground from Place Abbé Larue, he would have had to have passed St. Just and proceeded up the

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<sup>142</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 3.12.2. (LCL 420: 42): "...e supercilio vicini collis..."

<sup>143</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 3.12.2. (LCL 420: 42): "...tam per aequata quam per abrupta..."

hill to Saint-Irénée. In fact, Reynaud suggests a road that follows exactly this route. (See Figure 4.)

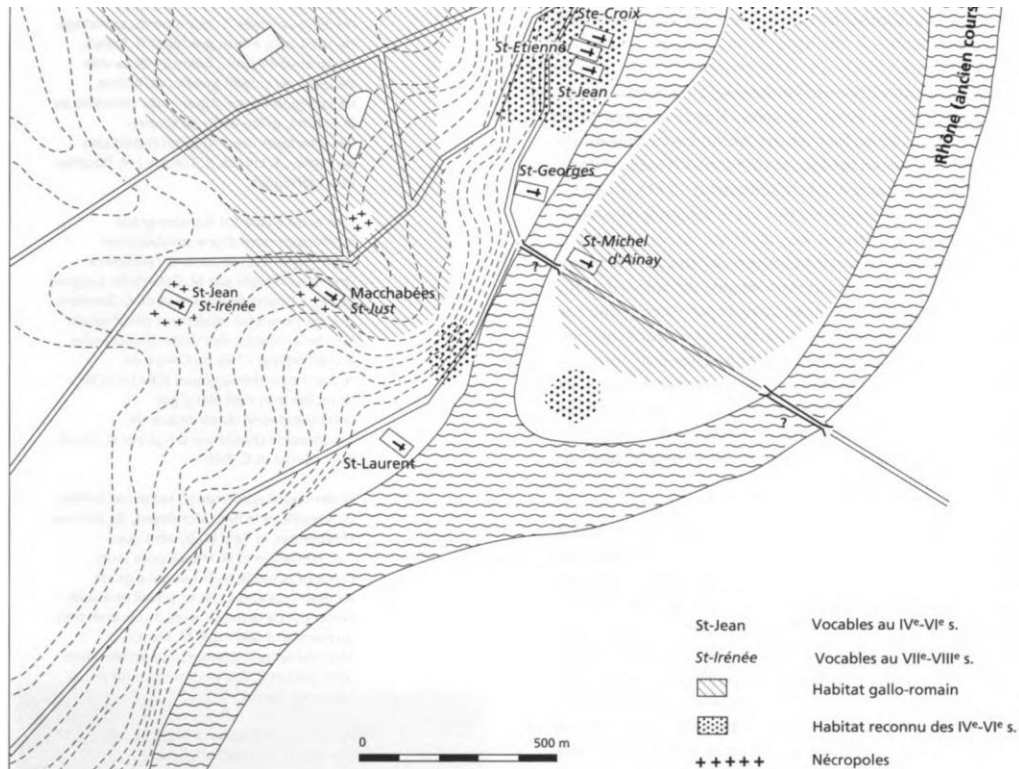


Figure 4.4: Map of Lyon during the High Middle Ages (Reynaud J.-F., *Lugdunum Christianum. Lyon du IV<sup>e</sup> au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle : topographie, nécropoles et édifices religieux*, (MSH: Paris, 1998), 14.)

Having established that Sidonius' grandfather was buried in the vicinity of Saint-Irénée and the general characteristics of Sidonius' route, what did Apollinaris' grave mean to Sidonius? When the gravediggers set to work, they were committing, in Sidonius' view, a sacrilege. The prevention of this sacrilege was important to Sidonius on both a legal and personal spiritual level.

Sidonius describes the act of digging up the grave as a *nefas*, something contrary to divine law.<sup>144</sup> While Sidonius does not explain the legal framework behind his language, two aspects of Roman law help clarify why Sidonius called the digging up of his grandfather's grave a *nefas*. First, Roman legal tradition, from Cicero to the *Justinian Code*, considered a burial place a "*locus religiosus*," that is a place bound by the obligations of *religio*.<sup>145</sup> Second, Roman legal tradition forbid disturbing the remains of someone lawfully buried.<sup>146</sup> Thus, the desecration of Apollinaris' grave was a religious crime needing to be punished.<sup>147</sup> However, the legal authority for punishing a *nefas* in fifth-century Lyon lay with the bishop, in this case Patiens.

(I confess my error), I was not able to put off the supplications of the captured men, but I tortured the robbers over the very coffin of our ancestor enough that it was sufficient for the concern of the living and for the security of the dead. But I did not reserve anything for our priest [i.e., Patiens] ... to whom I, nonetheless, handed over a complete account of the incident, while on my journey, as one making amends...<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12.1.

<sup>145</sup> Cicero, *De leg.* 2.22 (LCL 213: 438-439): "*Iam tanta religio est sepulchrorum...*" *Dig.* 1.8.6.4. "*locus religiosus*." For further laws regarding burial and funeral practices, see: *Dig.* 11.7-8. For understanding *religio* as a set of obligations, see: Allison Emmerson, "Re-examining Roman Death Pollution," (in *JRS* 110 (2020): 5-27), 20; Jörg Rüpke, *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion*, (trans. David Richardson. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 180-181. For the transfer of the concept of *religio* from a pagan to a Christian idea, see: Jörg Rüpke, *From Jupiter to Christ*, (trans. David Richardson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 190-193.

<sup>146</sup> Cicero, *De leg.* 2.26. *Dig.* 11.7.39.

<sup>147</sup> For further discussion on the history and application of Roman burial law in Gaul, see: Laubry, *Tombeaux et Épitaphes de Lyonnaise*, chpt. 7.

<sup>148</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12.2-3. (LCL 420: 42; trans. by the author): "... (*confiteor errorem*) *supplicia captorum differre non potui, sed supra senis nostri ipsum opertorium torsi latrones, quantum sufficere posset superstitem curae, mortuorum securitati. ceterum nostro quod sacerdoti nil reservavi...cui tamen totum ordinem rei ut satisfaciens ex itinere mandassem...*"

Although Sidonius provides an excuse for himself, Sidonius admits that the authority to punish the gravediggers was not his. This indicates that, in a strict legal sense, the protection of graves as religious places lay with the bishop in fifth-century Lyon, not with the families whose ancestors were buried.<sup>149</sup> Yet, as we will see, the desecration of Apollinaris' grave had deeply personal ramifications for Sidonius, who clearly thought it better to ask forgiveness than permission in punishing the gravediggers.

Sidonius highlights the importance of the proper treatment of Apollinaris' grave when he says that he punished the gravediggers "over the very coffin of our ancestor."<sup>150</sup> It was important for Sidonius that the punishment for desecrating his grandfather's grave be enacted at the grave. It is almost as if Sidonius was demonstrating his *pietas*, duty to gods and ancestors, directly to his deceased grandfather.<sup>151</sup> This is important because unfulfilled obligations to one's ancestors could have spiritual consequences.

The importance of fulfilling obligations to a deceased relative is well documented among the late antique Gallo-Roman aristocracy. For example, Apollinaris, the sixth-century bishop of Valence, reportedly had a vision chastising him for not properly commemorating his sister's death.<sup>152</sup> Ennodius, the sixth-century bishop of Pavia, also reports a vision in which he was visited and rebuked by Cynegia, a deceased relative, for

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<sup>149</sup> The role of the bishop in enforcing laws regarding burials is not stated in Roman law. However, based on this letter of Sidonius, the legal protection of burial sites appears to have come under episcopal control just as many other civic functions did in Late Antique Gaul.

<sup>150</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12.2. (LCL 420: 42; trans. by the author): "...*supra senis nostril ipsum opertorium*..."

<sup>151</sup> Lewis and Short, "pietas"; For pietas as a relationship between oneself and a superior being, divine or human, see: Jörg Rüpke, *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion*, 180-181.

<sup>152</sup> Avitus of Vienne, *Epp.* 13 and 14.

not writing a verse epitaph for her sepulcher.<sup>153</sup> The examples of Apollinaris and Ennodius having visions in which they are chastised for failing to properly honor the dead demonstrates the deep spiritual need that existed to commemorate ancestors, particularly in verse.<sup>154</sup> Sidonius' protection of Apollinaris' grave and his subsequent sponsorship of a grave maker with an epitaph that he wrote came from the same spiritual need that undergird Apollinaris' and Ennodius' visions and subsequent commemorations. This means that the proper treatment of Sidonius' grandfather's grave had deep spiritual significance for Sidonius.

A web of personal spiritual beliefs and legal requirements governed Sidonius' relationship with the place where his grandfather Apollinaris was buried. As a legal burial site, and therefore a "*locus religiosus*" the protection of Apollinaris' grave lay under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Lyon, who had the authority to punish anyone who desecrated the burial site. But for Sidonius, the treatment of Apollinaris' burial place had spiritual consequences for himself. And Apollinaris' grave was not even marked!

That Apollinaris' grave was unmarked indicates that in Sidonius' eyes Lyon's religious landscape included unbuilt aspects. A place did not need a building or even a physical marker to be important. However, this also means that places that were important to Sidonius' personal religious landscape were not necessarily important to

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<sup>153</sup> Ennodius of Pavia, *Epp.* 7.28 and 7.29 (or 361 and 362 by Vogel's numbering in the *MGH AA 7*)

<sup>154</sup> Propertius provides an Augustan era example of a ghost of a lover visiting a man in a dream to chide him for not properly fulfilling his funeral duties to her and to instruct him to set up a verse epitaph for her on her grave. (Propertius, *Elegies*, 4.7.79-86.) A discussion on the continuation of this belief from pagan to Christian authors is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

other residents of Lyon. For example, the gravediggers did not know there was already a grave where they were digging.

Apollinaris' unmarked grave also provided Sidonius with an opportunity to leave his own mark on Lyon's religious landscape. To ensure that Apollinaris' grave would not be desecrated in the future, Sidonius left money with his friend Gaudentius to pay for the materials and labor for an epitaph to be erected. He also sent a copy of a verse inscription for the epitaph to his nephew, along with instructions to make sure that the carver did not make any mistakes. (The backwards "S" in Gaudentius' name in the inscription above indicates that Sidonius had reason to worry about mistakes!)

While Sidonius' epitaph for his grandfather is at the heart of this letter and is likely why Sidonius chose to include this letter in his letter collection, Sidonius' landscape drives the action. Sidonius was able to see the initial desecration of Apollinaris' grave from the top of one hill, likely from Place Abbé Larue, and had to ride through the Vallon de Trion to reach Apollinaris' grave near Saint-Irénée. Apollinaris' grave, however, was a complicated spot. As a lawful burial, it was a *locus religiosus* under the legal protection of the local bishop. The gravediggers' excavation of the site was, therefore, a religious crime, a *nefas*. Sidonius, in a display of *pietas*, punished the gravediggers over the grave itself and then commissioned a stonecutter,<sup>155</sup> writing Apollinaris' epitaph himself.<sup>156</sup> Sidonius' actions not only averted any spiritual consequences that might have accompanied a failure to perform his *pietas*, but also

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<sup>155</sup> Sidonius uses the words "*lapidicida*" and "*quadratario*" interchangeably to indicate a stonecutter. Sid. Apoll. Ep. 3.12.5. (LCL 420: 44); Lewis and Short, "*quadratarius*."

changed Lyon's religious landscape by adding a new funerary monument. Sidonius' interactions with his landscape thus contributed to his *pietas*.

### 3.6. The Rest of Lyon

Sidonius' letters regarding Patiens' church, the shrine of St. Justus, and the burial of his grandfather do not represent the entirety of Sidonius' experience in Lyon. There are many places that would have been important to Sidonius in Lyon that are not mentioned in his letters. A brief overview of a few places that Sidonius does not spend time describing but are otherwise attested highlights the importance of Lyon's religious landscape to Sidonius. I will briefly cover where Sidonius lived, Lyons' baths, Lyon's government infrastructure, the monumental architecture of the Fourvière Hill, and Lyon's walls.

First of all, where did Sidonius live? Sidonius had at least three residences: his wife's villa named Avitacum, near Clermont-Ferrant, a house in Lyon, and a *villula* outside of Lyon. Sidonius' description of Avitacum is well known.<sup>157</sup> But Sidonius did not provide his other residences with a similar literary homage.<sup>158</sup> Sidonius only mentions a domestic scene in Lyon once, but only as he was about to leave his home. When Sidonius' daughter, Severiana, fell ill, she wanted to leave Lyon for the country.<sup>159</sup> As

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<sup>157</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.2.

<sup>158</sup> It was normal for late antique Roman aristocrats to have multiple houses, but lavish special attention on only one of them. (Julia Hillner, "Domus, Family, and Inheritance: The Senatorial Family House in Late Antique Rome," in *JRS* 93 (2003): 129-145), 135-137.

<sup>159</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.12.

they were preparing to leave, Sidonius' brother-in-law, Agricola, invited Sidonius on a fishing expedition and even sent a boat equipped with rowers to pick him up.<sup>160</sup> Sidonius declined the invitation into order to be with his sick daughter:

...[Severiana] is anxious to move to our home outside the town (*suburbanum*); in fact, at the very moment that I took your letter in my hand we were making preparations to move to our little country house (*villulam*). Accordingly, whether you come here or stay away, support my prayers by your own petitions that as she pines for the country air (*ruris auram*) even the motion of the journey may turn out for the good of her health.<sup>161</sup>

Sidonius does not give directions to the *villulam* and clearly expects that his brother-in-law Agricola knows where it is. The *villulam* is different from Avitacum as Sidonius calls Avitacum a *praedium*, a farm or estate.<sup>162</sup> Sidonius' country residence, on the other hand, was only a *villulam*, a "little villa". Sidonius also states that the *villulam* was in the *suburbanum*, which suggests that the *villulam* was outside Lyon, but not far. This accords with the fact that they are moving Sidonius' sick daughter there. The journey could not be too arduous. Finally, the *villulam* was far enough away from Lyon that Sidonius considered it to be in the country.<sup>163</sup> rural.

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<sup>160</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 2.12.1; PCBE 4: 85 (Agricola 2).

<sup>161</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 2.12.2. (LCL 296: 470-472; trans. Anderson, LCL 296: 471-473): "...propter quod optat exire in suburbanum; litteras tuas denique cum sumeremus, egredi ad villulam iam parabamus. quocirca tu seu venias seu moreris, preces nostras orationibus iuva ut ruris auram desideranti salubriter cedat ipsa vegetatio."

<sup>162</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 2.2.3.

<sup>163</sup> Sidonius calls the air at the *villulam* "country air" – "*ruris auram*." Sid. Apoll. Ep. 2.12.2. (LCL 296: 470-472; trans. Anderson, LCL 296: 471-473).

The only clue as to the whereabouts of Sidonius' house in Lyon is that Agricola was able to send a boat to pick Sidonius up. This suggests that Sidonius' lyonnaise house was next to a river. This matches what we know about fifth-century patterns of urbanism in Lyon. As mentioned earlier, by the end of the third century, the Fourvière Hill was abandoned, and Lyon's population had largely moved to the banks of the Saône and the Presqu'Île.<sup>164</sup> Reynaud suggests that it is possible to think of late antique Lyon as a polynuclear city with two principal sites of habitation at Saint-Jean and on the left side of the Saône at the base of the Croix-Rousse as well as several suburban houses, workshops, and necropolises.<sup>165</sup> The importance that Sidonius attributes to Saint-Just, Saint-Jean, a residence somewhere along the Saône, and a suburban *villulam* supports a polynuclear interpretation of fifth-century Lyon.

My next example is Lyon's baths. Sidonius was an ardent lover of traditional Roman baths. He describes the baths at his wife's villa Avitacum and at his friend Pontius Leonius' castle, he composed poems in honor of the baths and swimming pool at Avitacum<sup>166</sup>, he and his friends Ferreolus and Apollinaris even improvised a hot bath when theirs was under construction.<sup>167</sup> However, Sidonius never mentions that Lyon had two bath houses in the fifth century. One bath was near Saint-Jean in the modern *place Adolphe Max*. The other was at *Z.A.C. Saint-Vincent, rue de la Vieille*. The bath at *Z.A.C.*

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<sup>164</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 556.

<sup>165</sup> Jean-François Reynaud, "Antiquité tardive et haut Moyen Age," (in *CAG 69/2*, 243-253), 248-249.

<sup>166</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 18 and 19.

<sup>167</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.9.8.

*Saint-Vincent, rue de la Vieille* was abandoned at the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, and so may not have been functional during Sidonius's life.<sup>168</sup>

However, the bath at *place Adolphe Max* functioned until the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, and so was certainly operational during Sidonius' life.<sup>169</sup>

Sidonius never mentions this bath. Did he go? It would be strange if he did not.<sup>170</sup>

Other places curiously absent from Sidonius' descriptions of Lyon are the city's government infrastructure. During Sidonius' lifetime, Lyon fell under the influence of the Burgundian *federates*, and eventually became a capitol of the Burgundian kingdom. A king with a chancery and a contingent of soldiers would have required space. Where were the Burgundians in Lyon? Sidonius does not say. Sidonius does describe the Frankish prince Sigismer's entry into Lyon along with Sigismer's entourage dressed in their finest clothes and weaponry.<sup>171</sup> Sidonius mentions a *praetorium* but does not explain where it was.<sup>172</sup> Sidonius' *praetorium* may correspond to a *regia*, where the Burgundian king

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<sup>168</sup> CAG 69/2, §93, (pp. 314-15).

<sup>169</sup> CAG 69/2, §385, (pp. 453-56).

<sup>170</sup> It might be objected that an aristocratic senator like Sidonius would not use public baths used by common people in order to maintain his social distinction. However, Pliny the Younger writes that if the baths at his Laurentine villa were cold, he would use one of the public baths in a nearby village. (Plin. *Ep.* 2.17.26.) This suggests that while the use of private baths was the first choice for Roman aristocrats, they would also use public baths if they were more convenient.

<sup>171</sup> Sid. *Apoll. Ep.* 4.20.1.

<sup>172</sup> Sid. *Apoll. Ep.* 4.20.1.

Gundebald said to have held court in 499.<sup>173</sup> The archeology has also been unable to positively identify where a fifth-century *praetorium* might have been.<sup>174</sup>

What about the monumental architecture of first and second century Lyon that still stands today? The theater, Odeon, amphitheater, circus, aqueducts, and others? If Sidonius' writings were our only evidence of ancient Lyon, then we would not know about them at all. Of course, Sidonius has good reason for not mentioning any of these structures. The Fourvière Hill and Croix-Rousse were abandoned by the end of the third century, which means that these structures had fallen out of use over 150 years before Sidonius was writing. Just as a modern writer concerned with current events would not feel compelled to dwell on structures abandoned in the nineteenth century, Sidonius did not feel compelled to include specific mentions of these structures. That does not mean that they were not present though, and it is evident that these structures played an important role in fifth-century Lyon.

The abandoned buildings on the Fourvière and Croix-Rousse provided important sources of building material in the fifth century in the form of *spolia*. There are many examples of this in Lyon. For just a few examples, a sarcophagus made of a single block of limestone excavated from the necropolis at Saint-Just and dates to the fifth century.

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<sup>173</sup> *Collatio Episcoporum Praesertim Aviti Viennensis Episcopi Coram Rege Gundebaldo Adversus Arrianos* (MGH AA 6.2, 163.) However, Julien Havet argues that the *Collatio Episcoporum...* is a forgery. (Julien Havet, "Questions mérovingiennes. II. Les découvertes de Jérôme Vignier," (*Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes Année* 46 (1885): 205-271), 234.) This text is further complicated by the fact that while the bishops were supposed to have to Lyon for the festival of St. Justus, "...ad festivitatem S. Iusti..." (MGH AA 6.2: 161.6-7), the bishops went to an otherwise unknown *Sarbiniacum* to meet the king. "...ad Sarbiniacum, ubi rex erat,..." (MGH AA 6.2: 161.11)

<sup>174</sup> CAG 69/2, p. 246.

However, the sarcophagus contains a deep hole approximately 6 inches across, which indicates that the block of limestone had a previous life as a support for the *uelum* (the canvas awning) at the theater. At least three monolithic sarcophagus found at St. Justus was carved out of reused stones.<sup>175</sup> The wall constructed during the fourth century on the bank of the Saône to protect the episcopal complex from the river contains similar limestone blocks of a gallo-roman provenance, some of which were inscribed.<sup>176</sup> When Sidonius described Patiens' renovated church he mentioned multicolored marbles that adorned the apse, floor and windows of the church.<sup>177</sup> While Patiens imported some columns from Aquitaine,<sup>178</sup> it is distinctly possible that some of the marble that Patiens used in his church and that Sidonius praised was *spolia* from the theater or another abandoned building on the Fourvière Hill.<sup>179</sup> To Sidonius, the monumental architecture of first and second century Lyon was a valuable source of building material.

That Lyon had city walls is not doubted, but the course of Lyon's walls has been a source of debate.<sup>180</sup> The abandonment of the Fourvière Hill, where evidence of walls has been found, leaves the question of Lyon's fifth-century fortifications open. While a wall protecting the episcopal complex from the Saône has been found (see the discussion of

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<sup>175</sup> St-Justus, tombs T.53, T.36, and T.69. Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 212, fig. 169.

<sup>176</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 57.

<sup>177</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.12.4.11-15.

<sup>178</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.12.4.17.

<sup>179</sup> For the marbles used in the theater and Odeon, see: *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 136.

<sup>180</sup> *Atlas Lugdunum I*, 529; Reynaud, *À la Recherche d'un Lyon Disparu*, 25-29.

Patiens' church above), the archeological evidence has not been able to confirm how far north or south these walls may have extended.<sup>181</sup> Nonetheless, when Sidonius left Lyon for Italy in 467, he begins the description of his journey by saying that he “left the walls (*moenibus*) of our Rhodanusia (*Rhodanusiae nostrae*).”<sup>182</sup> This along with the fact that Sidonius' *villula* was located *suburbium*, that is outside the walls, indicates that Lyon's borders, whatever those might have been, were a part of Sidonius' conception of Lyon's urban space. That he does not make any further mention of Lyon's walls indicates that Lyon's walls were not Lyon's defining feature in Sidonius' eyes. For example, when Sidonius was leaving Lyon for Clermont-Ferrand and he happened to find the gravediggers desecrating his grandfather's burial place, Sidonius would have passed outside of Lyon's walls at some point just prior to spying the gravediggers. However, Sidonius chooses not to mention Lyon's walls, gates, or borders. Rather he defines his location in terms of the local topography and his grandfather's unmarked burial place.

### 3.7. Conclusion

This dissertation rests on two propositions: 1) It is possible to learn how an author mentally organizes his landscape. 2) Landscape can shape literary works through an author's experience in the landscape. In the case of Sidonius Apollinaris, Sidonius mentally organized Lyon's urban and suburban space predominately around Lyon's

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<sup>181</sup> Reynaud, *Lugdunum Christianum*, 191.

<sup>182</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 1.5.2. (LCL 296: 352; trans. Anderson, LCL 296: 353). For Sidonius' play on the etymology of “*Rhodanusiae*” and other words, see: López, “Sidonio Apolinar, Humanista de la Antigüedad Tardía: Su Correspondencia,” 262.

religious landscape. At the same time, Lyon's natural landscape and topography shaped Sidonius' life in Lyon, which in turn shaped Sidonius' letters.

For Sidonius, churches, saint's shrines, tombs, and unmarked graves were all a part of Lyon's religious landscape, even if they all served different purposes. These places can be categorized according to how exclusive each place was. Churches and saints' shrines were the most inclusive places and served as locations where the entire community of Lyon could gather in Christian devotion. Sidonius' belief in the power of the liturgy at an ecclesiastical space to unite a community is demonstrated in his adoption of the Rogations when he was bishop of Clermont-Ferrand.<sup>183</sup> The importance of uniting a community would have been particularly apparent to Sidonius as he and the "leading citizens" of Lyon separated themselves from the rest of the community during a break in the liturgy. The way that they chose to distinguish themselves from the rest of Lyon's people was to gather at another point in Lyon's religious landscape, the tomb of Syagrius. The tomb of Syagrius was a place for Sidonius and his male peers to gather and reaffirm their identity as the "leading citizens" of Lyon. Other parts of Lyon's religious landscape were intensely personal. Apollinaris' grave carried special importance to Sidonius and presumably to Sidonius' nephew Secundus, but not necessarily to other people in Lyon.

Lyon's religious landscape also seems to have provided the most opportunities for Sidonius to contribute to Lyon's built environment. Sidonius was able to have a grave marker for Apollinaris constructed, bearing his verses. His verses were also inscribed in Patiens' church. Outside of his own home, it was Lyon's churches and funerary

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<sup>183</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.14.

monuments that provided Sidonius the greatest opportunity to have his poetry inscribed in stone. In doing so, Sidonius was behaving as an elite senator by participating in Lyon's literary culture and as a patron funding the embellishment of public places.<sup>184</sup> One of the most important ways that Sidonius experienced the city of Lyon and interpreted Lyon as an urban space in which he could act was through Lyon's religious landscape.

Lefebvre's propositions that "Social space is a social product," and that, social space is in part created by the domination or appropriation of natural space are both apparent in Sidonius' letters.<sup>185</sup> The three categories of places outlined above, (space for community, space for peers, space for family) are the products of social interactions that Sidonius was a part of. Furthermore, that these places were frequently, if not always, built on or marked by memorials supports the proposition that social space dominates or appropriates natural space. But that is not the whole story.

Lyon's landscape, its topography and climate, are detectable throughout all three of Sidonius' letters addressed in this paper. The location of Patiens' basilica squeezed between the base of the Fourvière Hill and the Saône forced road and river traffic together. Sidonius used this fact of geography to his advantage to depict Patiens' basilica as the commercial and spiritual heart of Lyon. When Sidonius celebrated the feast of St. Justus before dawn on an early September morning, the lingering summer heat, numerous candles, and crowd of people in the funerary basilica of St. Just drove him and his peers

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<sup>184</sup> Santelia, "Sidonio Apollinare autore di una epigrafe per l'*ecclesia* di Lione: *epist.* 2,10,4 (=Le Blant ICG 54)," 321.

<sup>185</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974), 191. For a translation, see: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 164.

to find a cool place to relax. They could not go too far, mass was later in the morning, so going down from St. Justus to the banks of the Saône was out of the question. So, they found a meaningful, pleasant, and cool place, Syagrius' tomb, to spend the morning. Sidonius did not mention that you can see Mont Blanc on a clear day from St. Justus and how the Alps formed a beautiful background for his *locus amoenus*. He did not need to. His friends already knew. When Sidonius prevented the desecration of his grandfather's tomb, he described the event in terms of the local landscape. The snow, rain, and grass had obscured where Sidonius' grandfather was buried. Sidonius was only able to see the gravediggers when he had crested the Fourvière Hill. He then had to run his horse up the hill leading to Saint-Irénée to reach the gravediggers. In each letter the realities of fifth-century Lyon's landscape shaped Sidonius' behavior and, consequently, the content of his letters.

*Chapter 4*  
*Gifts of Fish and Food in the Letters of Avitus of Vienne*

Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus, more commonly known as Avitus of Vienne, was born sometime before 473/4 to one of the highest-ranking families of late Roman Gaul.<sup>1</sup> He was from the same network of families that included the emperor Eparchius Avitus (r. 455-456) and Sidonius Apollinaris.<sup>2</sup> However, unlike Sidonius who first pursued a career in the imperial service before becoming bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, Avitus never pursued a career in imperial politics. The collapse of Roman rule in Gaul in 474 and the deposition of the last Western Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, in 476 eliminated the possibility of a career in the imperial service for an aristocrat in Gaul. Therefore, Avitus was in the first generation of Gallo-roman aristocrats to not have a career in the imperial service as an option. Instead, Avitus succeeded his father, Hesychius, to the episcopacy of Vienne around 494, which was ruled by the Burgundian Arian king Gundobad (r. 473-516).<sup>3</sup>

Avitus relied on a network of fellow bishops, family members, and aristocratic peers as he navigated the complex political and religious situations of post-Roman Gaul. An important way that Avitus maintained his relationships with bishops, family members, and other aristocratic contacts in both the Burgundian and Visigothic kingdoms was with letters and gifts of fish and other foods. Avitus also used gifts of fish and food

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<sup>1</sup> *PCBE* 4: 242 (Avitus 2); *PLRE* II: 195 (Avitus 3); Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 7-10.

<sup>2</sup> *PCBE* 4: 242-243 (Avitus 2).

<sup>3</sup> *PCBE* 4: 243 (Avitus 2).

to engage in dialog regarding the proper practice of feasting and fasting in sixth-century Gaul. When Avitus wrote about the gifts of food he sent and received, most of which were fish, he described the gifts of food in terms of where the gifts were sourced from. Sometimes he named the rivers the fish were caught in. Sometimes he describes the environments from which the gifts of food came. That Avitus chose to describe the gifts of food in terms of where the food came from indicates that rivers, marshes, and other watery areas were important to Avitus as sources of food, with which he used to engage in religious dialog and build social capital. This chapter brings together several different subjects, feasting patterns, gifts, letters, and late antique dialog regarding fasting, in order to analyze Avitus of Vienne's understanding of the importance of the water features of his landscape.

The five letters in which Avitus describes gifts of food blend traditional gallic aristocratic friendship letters accompanied by a gift and "festal letters." It was common practice for late antique Gallic aristocrats to send each other letters in order to affirm their friendship and to invite each other to their villas for meals. Sometimes these letters were accompanied by gifts of food. "Festal letters," on the other hand, are a genre of late antique letter originating in Alexandria.<sup>4</sup> They were also frequently accompanied by gifts. "Festal letters" were issued on the occasion of a great feast, especially Easter. These letters could also function as homilies and were read aloud to congregations on major

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<sup>4</sup> Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Greek and Latin Letters in Late Antiquity: The Christianisation of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 85.

feast days.<sup>5</sup> Avitus included twenty-seven letters that he wrote or received on the occasion of various church festivals.<sup>6</sup> All five of the letters that Avitus wrote concerning gifts of food fit within his “festal letters.” However, unlike the Alexandrian “festal letters,” none of Avitus’ “festal letters” functioned as homilies. Most of Avitus’ “festal letters” are short and address invitations to celebrate a festival with himself or someone else. In this way, Avitus’ “festal letters” more closely resemble the friendship letters of Gallic aristocrats.

Danuta Shanzer has used Avitus’ letters about food to contribute to the social history of late antique Gaul.<sup>7</sup> Avitus’ letters about food not only share similar themes of eating and fasting with the letters of his contemporaries Sidonius Apollinaris and Ruricus of Limoges, but also draw on a long classical tradition of the satirical use of food in literature.<sup>8</sup> These late antique letters about food also shed light on Lenten fasting practices by the Gallic aristocratic bishops and on Roman stereotypes about barbarians.<sup>9</sup> I build on Shanzer’s work in two ways. First, since Shanzer’s 2001 survey of these letters and Shanzer and Wood’s 2002 translation of Avitus’ letters, ichthyo-archaeology in Lyon

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<sup>5</sup> Krastu Banev, *Theophilus of Alexandria and the First Origenist Controversy: Rhetoric and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 150.

<sup>6</sup> Brenden McCarthy, “The Letter Collection of Avitus of Vienne,” in *Late Antique Letter Collections: A Critical Introduction and Reference Guide*, eds. Cristiana Sogno, Bradley K. Storin, and Edward J. Watts. 357-68 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 360-1.

<sup>7</sup> Danuta Shanzer, “Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul,” in *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources*, eds. Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer. 217-36 (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Shanzer, “Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul,” 220-29 and 232-35.

<sup>9</sup> Shanzer, “Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul,” 229-32.

has provided the physical remains of fish consumption in Roman *Lugdunum* dating from the first through the third century AD.<sup>10</sup> These remains come from the remains of large feasts and the refuse from a dock area. This evidence compliments Shanzer's work by providing evidence for the importance of fish within Roman style banquets and provide physical evidence for the inhabitants of late antique Gaul using a combination of freshwater fish sourced from Gaul and fish products sourced from the Mediterranean in their feasting. Second, by focusing on where the fish that Avitus describes were sourced, I expand on Avitus' use of fish and other foods to maintain his relationships with his peers and to engage in religious dialog regarding the proper limits of feasting and fasting.

Avitus of Vienne cared about where his fish came from. The archeological evidence for fish consumption in Lyon demonstrates that fish consumed in the Rhône valley were sourced from a wide array of places and environments. Avitus' letters regarding gifts of fish demonstrate sensitivity to the regions and ecologies from which his food gifts were sourced. Did they come from freshwater or saltwater? Which river system did they come from? Were they from rivers or marshes? When Avitus thought about his fish, he also thought about where they came from. The reverse also holds true: when Avitus thought about rivers, or other watery habitats, he also thought about the fish and other foods that came from them.

This investigation into Avitus and gifts of food and fish in late antique Gaul is divided into four sections. In the first section, I assess Gallo-Roman patterns of feasting

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<sup>10</sup> For further discussion of resources available to historians for the study of Mediterranean fisheries, see: Konstantinos Stergiou, "Mediterranean Ecosystems, Shifting Baselines and Databases," in *When Humanities Meet Ecology*, eds. Gertwagen R. et al. 95-102 (Rome: ISPRA Serie Atti, 2010).

with a combination of ichthyo-archeology and literary works. The combination of land and sea animals was essential to a Roman feast. In Gaul, the marine portion of the feast was adapted to include the fish available in Gaul's freshwater river systems, thus demonstrating the importance of river resources to Gallo-Roman feasting. In the second section, I turn to appearance of gifts of food in the letters of late antique Gallic aristocrats. It was common practice for late antique Gallic aristocrats to exchange letters and gifts of food in order to maintain social connections. Third, I briefly describe late antique dialog regarding appropriate fasting practices. Fish were considered an acceptable food to eat while fasting and were a part of Gallo-Roman feasting, thus making fish an acceptable food for feasting and fasting. In the fourth and final section I address Avitus' letters about food and fish. Avitus used gifts of food and fish to maintain relationships with his peers and to engage in religious dialog. Avitus' preferred method of describing the food in his letters is to describe where the food came from, which points to the importance of place to Avitus' conceptions about food.

#### 4.1. Patterns of Gallo-Roman feasting

The Roman conquest of Gaul substantially changed the diet there. Among other changes, including an increased importance of pork and wheat bread, and the introduction of new fruits and spices, fish and fish products from the Mediterranean became an important part of the Gallo-Roman diet.<sup>11</sup> Lyon and Vienne are home to a unique cluster

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<sup>11</sup> Desbat, Forest, Batigne-Vallet, "La Cuisine et l'Art de la Table en Gaule après la Conquête Romaine," in *Celtes et Gaulois, l'archéologie face à l'histoire, 5 : la romanisation et la question de l'héritage celtique*.

of mosaics that clearly illustrate the Roman influence on the Gallic diet, featuring Mediterranean fish and shellfish. A particularly well preserved example of this type of mosaic is the “Mosaic with Fishes” from Lyon.<sup>12</sup> This mosaic consists of a frieze with marine life surrounding a geometric design and craters with acanthus leaves. While mosaics with fish are common throughout the Mediterranean, the combination of marine life with a large geometric pattern appears to be a uniquely lyonnaise feature.<sup>13</sup> Among the fish, red mullet, a saltwater Mediterranean fish, is identifiable.<sup>14</sup> The shellfish depicted include mussels, oysters, scallops, and shrimp. The presence of these fish and shellfish on the mosaic in Lyon suggests that people in Lyon were interested in eating these foods. The oysters, scallops, shrimp, and red mullet are all saltwater animals. If mullet and shellfish were served in Lyon, they had to be imported.

Roman feasts combined foods sourced from both the land and the sea. Macrobius, a fourth-century author, describes a legendary feast hosted by Metullus Pius, *pontifex maximus* from 81-64 BC in Rome, in his *Saturnalia*. The feast included: sea-urchins, oysters, cockles, mussels, black acorn-mollusks, clams, jellyfish, thrush over asparagus, hen, fig-peckers, roe-deer, boar, fattened fowl wrapped in dough, fig-peckers, murex, purple-shell, baked fish, sows’ udders, ducks, boiled water-fowl, hares, fattened fowl,

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*Actes du colloque de Lausanne, 17-18 juin 2005*, ed. D. Aunier, (Glux-en-Glenne : Bibracte, Centre archéologique européen, 2006), 21.

<sup>12</sup> Musée Lugdunum, Lyon. Inventory no. 2000.0.1212 [<https://lugdunum.grandlyon.com/fr/Oeuvre/13933-Mosaïque-aux-Poissons>]

<sup>13</sup> Henri Stern, *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule* II.1 (Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1967), 83-85

<sup>14</sup> The Roman culinary text *Apicius* includes a wide range of recipes for mullet and sauces for mullet, see: *Apicius* 4.2.22; 4.2.31; 9.10.6; 9.10.7; 9.10.9; 10.1.11; 10.1.12.

gruel, and bread of Picenum.<sup>15</sup> Petronius, a first century AD author satirizes the similarly wide range and variety of foods served at a feast hosted by the rich freedman Trimalchio.<sup>16</sup> Needless to say, Macrobius, writing around five hundred years after Metullus Pius' feast, and Petronius, writing satire, are imperfect literary sources for understanding Roman feasting practices. Nonetheless, they are the most complete descriptions of Roman feasts available. However, first century AD feast remains discovered in Lyon match the profile of the feast described by Macrobius.

The archeological remains of the feast come from the so-called 'Sanctuary of the Cybele'<sup>17</sup> in Lyon and date to approximately 15 AD.<sup>18</sup> Armand Desbat has identified at least 143 drinking goblets and suggests that the dishes used at the feast were ritually broken, which suggests that the feast was very large.<sup>19</sup> The feast remains included a wide variety of bones from mammals in addition to an unusually high proportion of remains

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<sup>15</sup> Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 3.12 (LCL 511:92-95); For more on sows' udders as food fit for a feast, see: Gillian Riley, *Food in Art: From Prehistory to the Renaissance*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 73-74 and 80-81.

<sup>16</sup> Petronius, *Satyricon*, 31, 33, 35, 36, 38, 40, 49.

<sup>17</sup> The 'Sanctuary of the Cybele' is the name given to a large ceremonial Roman building on the Fourviere Hill in Lyon. It was originally thought to be a temple to the goddess Cybele, but that interpretation has been challenged. However, the name 'Sanctuary of the Cybele' has remained the standard modern designation for the building.

<sup>18</sup> Armand Desbat, "Les Banquets du Cybèle," in *Une Salade César? La cuisine romaine, de la taverne au banquet*, eds. Vallet and Desbat. 120-22 (Lyon: Libel 2020) 120-121.

<sup>19</sup> Armand Desbat, "Les Banquets du Cybèle," 121.

from and birds, fish, and shellfish.<sup>20</sup> Most of the fish and shellfish were sourced from saltwater environments. (See Table 4.1.)

Table 4.1: Fish and Seafood Remains from the ‘Sanctuary of the Cybele’

<b>Fish and Seafood remains from the ‘Sanctuary of the Cybele’<sup>21</sup></b>		
<b><i>Saltwater Fish</i></b>		
Common name	Environment from which the animal is sourced	Probable area from which the animal is sourced
mackerel (common and Spanish)	Sea coast	Atlantic or Mediterranean
plaice	Sea coast	Atlantic or Mediterranean
mullet	Sea coast	Atlantic or Mediterranean
<b><i>Migratory Fish</i></b>		
salmon	Rivers	Loire?
<b><i>Freshwater Fish</i></b>		
perch	Rivers	Rivers near Lyon?
<b><i>Saltwater Mollusks</i></b>		
oysters	Sea coast	Atlantic or Mediterranean
mussels	Sea coast	Atlantic or Mediterranean
cockles	Sea coast	Atlantic or Mediterranean
clams	Sea coast	Atlantic or Mediterranean
spiny dye murex <sup>22</sup>	Sea coast	Mediterranean
banded dye murex <sup>23</sup>	Sea coast	Mediterranean
<b><i>Other Mollusks</i></b>		
snail	Land	Lyon

<sup>20</sup> Mammal bones include pork, beef, mutton, hare, and venison. Bird remains include geese, duck, chicken, partridge, pigeon, and sparrow. (Vianney Forest, “La faune des banquets,” in *Lugdunum : naissance d’une capitale*, ed. Armand Desbat. 137-139 (Gollion: Infolio éditions, 2005), 138.)

<sup>21</sup> Table adapted from Vanney Forest, “La faune des Banquets,” 139.

<sup>22</sup> *Bolinus brandaris* – “murex droite-épine”

<sup>23</sup> *Hexaplex trunculus* – “murex fascié”

Most of the species of fish and mollusks recovered from the feast held at the ‘Sanctuary of the Cybele’ around AD 15 had to be imported to Lyon. The lone local fish was perch. The salmon were probably caught in a river in Gaul, that empties into the Atlantic Ocean, such as the Loire. Since the Rhône debouches into the Mediterranean, the Rhône does not have salmon. Therefore, salmon had to have been imported to Lyon from elsewhere in Gaul. Mackerel, plaice, and mullet were sourced from either the Atlantic or Mediterranean. Four kinds of mollusks from the ‘Sanctuary of the Cybele’ are saltwater and had been imported to Lyon as well. The two varieties of murex were sourced from the Mediterranean. The only type of mollusk sourced from Lyon was snail. If the remains from the feast described by Macrobius survived, they would resemble the feast held at the ‘Sanctuary of the Cybele’ with an unusually high proportion of poultry, shellfish, fish, and game.

That perch and salmon, the only fish sourced from freshwater at the feast at the ‘Sanctuary of the Cybele,’ were considered appropriate fish for a banquet is further supported by Ausonius, a fourth-century poet, rhetor, and consul from Bordeaux. Ausonius considered perch and salmon to be especially suited to feasting. In his poem *The Moselle*, Ausonius wrote the following about perch: “Neither shalt thou, O Perch, the dainty of our tables, be unsung—thou amongst fishes river-born worthy to be ranked with the sea-bred, who alone canst vie on equal terms with the rosy mullet.”<sup>24</sup> Red mullet is a Mediterranean fish that was highly esteemed by aristocrats and emperors and appears in

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<sup>24</sup> Ausonius, *Mosella*, 115-117. (LCL 96: 232-233; trans. White)

descriptions of elaborate banquets.<sup>25</sup> Ausonius' comparison of perch to red mullet thus places perch not only at the top of the hierarchy for fish in the Moselle, but among both fresh and saltwater fish. Ausonius also envisioned salmon as being present at a feast, writing that salmon was "destined for a course at some 'doubtful dinner.'"<sup>26</sup> Ausonius' "doubtful dinner" – "*dubiae...cenae*" – is a reference to the Latin comic playwright, Terence, who uses the phrase "*dubia cena*" to describe a meal that is so extravagant that the diner does not know what to eat first.<sup>27</sup> Ausonius' use of Terence in this passage indicates that Ausonius thought that salmon was an appropriate fish to eat at banquets.

While perch and salmon were considered feast worthy foods by Ausonius and the feasters at the 'Sanctuary of the Cybele,' perch and salmon remains were outnumbered by the remains of saltwater fish and mollusks at the 'Sanctuary of the Cybele.' That the feast remains from the 'Sanctuary of the Cybele' included a large number of fish and shellfish from the Mediterranean and only one species local to Lyon indicates that the people hosting the feast at the 'Sanctuary of the Cybele' purposefully chose Mediterranean fare over food resources available locally in Lyon. Therefore, where the fish and shellfish were sourced from appears to have been one of the factors that determined the feast's hosts' choices. The hosts cared about where their fish came from, and they preferred fish from the Mediterranean. But preferences change over time.

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<sup>25</sup> Seneca the Younger, *Ep.* 95.42; Seneca the Younger, *On Natural Questions*, 3.18; Juvenal, *Satires*, 5.92-93; Martial, *Epigrams*, 8.79; Pliny the Elder, *HN*, 9.30; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 3.9.

<sup>26</sup> Ausonius, *Mosella*, 102. (LCL 96: 96-97; trans. White)

<sup>27</sup> Terence, *Phormio*, II.342-344. (LCL 23: 48-51; trans. Barsbey)

The remains of the second feast were discovered in a hypocaust near the *clos de l'Antiquaille* in Lyon and date to either the late second or early third century.<sup>28</sup> Like the feast remains from the 'Sanctuary of the Cybele,' poultry bones are particularly well represented, and the remains of pork, beef, and mutton are also present.<sup>29</sup> There are fish, but there are only the remains of freshwater fish.<sup>30</sup> Oysters are present, but no other shellfish.<sup>31</sup>

The difference in the fish served at these two feasts is striking. The early first-century feast remains from the 'Sanctuary of the Cybele' skewed heavily towards imported saltwater fish from the Mediterranean and featured four different kinds of shellfish. On the other hand, the late second or early third-century feast remains from the *clos de l'Antiquaille* include only freshwater fish and oysters. The difference in the kinds of fish served is probably due to a combination of a change of preference and availability. Both feasts match the general profile of Roman feasts found in literary sources, such as Macrobius, in that they include a mix of foods sourced from the land and water, with a high proportion of poultry, waterfowl, and fish. However, the high proportion of freshwater fish from the feast remains at the *clos de l'Antiquaille* demonstrates that

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<sup>28</sup> Thierry Argant and Clémence Mège, "Le Banquet du Clos de l'Antiquaille à *Lugdunum*," in *Une Salade César? La cuisine romaine, de la taverne au banquet*, eds. Vallet and Desbat. 123-125, (Lyon: Libel 2020), 123.

<sup>29</sup> Thierry Argant and Clémence Mège, "Le Banquet du Clos de l'Antiquaille à *Lugdunum*," 124.

<sup>30</sup> Thierry Argant and Clémence Mège, "Le Banquet du Clos de l'Antiquaille à *Lugdunum*," 124.

<sup>31</sup> Thierry Argant and Clémence Mège, "Le Banquet du Clos de l'Antiquaille à *Lugdunum*," 124.

feasters in the late second or early third century opted for fish that were locally available over imported fish from the Mediterranean.

That is not to say that the import of Mediterranean food products to Lyon stopped during the second and third centuries. The oysters from the feast remains at the *clos de l'Antiquaille*, for instance, were imported. Furthermore, fish remains uncovered from a third-century port in Lyon at the Parc-Saint-Georges testify to lively trade in fish and fish products in third-century Lyon (see Table 3).<sup>32</sup> These fish remains represent both domestic refuse and the waste of activities at the port.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the archeological data from the Parc-Saint-Georges better represents general consumption patterns of fish in the Rhône valley in the third century than the remains of individual feasts. Of the remains at Parc-Saint-Georges, saltwater fish are slightly more represented than freshwater fish at fifty-eight and forty-two percent respectively.<sup>34</sup> On a surface reading of this data, it might be concluded that equal quantities of freshwater and imported saltwater fish were being consumed in Lyon during the third century. However, when the species of fish are examined, a different picture emerges.

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<sup>32</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, "L'approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle: les données de la fouille du Parc Saint-Georges (Lyon, France)," in *Archéologie du poisson. 30 ans d'archéo-ichtyologie au CNRS*. 255-68 (Antibes, 2008), 260, see figure 4.

<sup>33</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, "L'approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle," 257.

<sup>34</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, "L'approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle," 260.

Table 4.2: Species of Fish Discovered at the Parc-Saint-Georges

Species of Fish Discovered at the Parc-Saint-George <sup>35</sup>	
<b><i>Saltwater Fish – 58% of remains</i></b>	
<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	European anchovy
<i>Mugilidae</i>	mulletts
<i>Mullus sp.</i>	red mullet
<i>Sardina pilchardus</i>	European pilchard (sardine)
<i>Sardinella aurita</i>	round sardinella
<i>Scomber japonicus</i>	Spanish mackerel
<i>Scomber scombrus</i>	Atlantic mackerel
<i>Scomber sp.</i>	mackerel
<i>Sparidae</i>	common pandora
<i>Solea</i>	sole
<b><i>Freshwater and Migratory Fish – 42% of remains</i></b>	
<i>Acipenseridae</i>	sturgeon
<i>Alosa</i>	shad
<i>Anguilla Anguilla</i>	European eel
<i>Chodrostoma cf. toxostoma</i>	southwest European nase
<i>Leuciscus cephalus</i>	European chub
<i>Tinca tinca</i>	tench
<i>Cyprinidae</i>	carp and minnows
<i>Lota lota</i>	burbot
<i>Perca fluviatilis</i>	European perch
<i>Salmo trutta</i>	brown trout

The majority of the saltwater fish were sourced from waters near North Africa or the Iberian Peninsula. They were imported to Lyon either in the form of *salsamenta* (salted fish) or fermented fish sauces, either *garum* or *liquamen*.<sup>36</sup> Therefore the majority of the Mediterranean fish discovered at Parc-Saint-Georges were not consumed fresh. For

<sup>35</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 260, see figure 4.

<sup>36</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 266.

example, Spanish mackerel is the best represented species of fish discovered at Parc-Saint-Georges and Spanish mackerel was primarily used for sauces or *salsamenta*.<sup>37</sup> Other common saltwater fish include sardines and anchovies, both of which were also used in sauces or *salsamenta*. DNA analysis of organic remains in two third-century amphorae of African origin show that sardines were transported in one amphora and anchovies in the other.<sup>38</sup> Piquès and his colleagues hypothesize that fish sauces and preserves were shipped in amphorae along the Rhône to Lyon, where they were re-packaged into smaller containers for local and regional distribution.<sup>39</sup> The remains from Parc-Saint-Georges, then, provide a glimpse into the late Roman trade of salted and fermented fish products, a trade that was so efficient that it made these fish products widely available far from the Mediterranean.<sup>40</sup>

However, not all the saltwater fish excavated at Parc-Saint-Georges were part of preserves or sauces. Piquès and his colleagues suggest that some of the mullet remains were large enough to indicate that the mullet may have been consumed fresh, or at least whole, and not as *salsamenta* or *garum*.<sup>41</sup> The presence of red mullet on the “Mosaic with

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<sup>37</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 264; 266-7.

<sup>38</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 259, see figure 3.

<sup>39</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 266.

<sup>40</sup> Wim Van Neer and Anton Ervynck, “Remains of traded fish in archaeological sites: indicators of status, or bulk food?” in *Behavior Behind Bones: The zooarcheology of ritual, religion, status and identity*, eds. Sharyn Jones O’Day, Wim Van Neer and Anton Ervynck. 201-14 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2004), 207-8; Wim Van Neer, Anton Ervynck and Patrick Monsieur, “Fish bones and amphorae: Evidence for the production and consumption of salted fish products outside the Mediterranean region,” *JRA* 23, no. 1 (Jan. 2010): 161-195.

<sup>41</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 264.

fishes” in Lyon also suggests that people in Lyon were interested in consuming mullet in the third century. A kind of grey mullet, *Liza ramada*, has been known to swim as far up the Rhône as Avignon, which would make fresh mullet more accessible in Lyon.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, the transportation of fresh Mediterranean fish as far inland as Lyon remains a bit of a mystery. Piquès and his colleagues suggest that horse relays along the *cursus publicus* could have transported fish from the Mediterranean coast to Lyon in two or three days.<sup>43</sup> Another suggestion is that the large Mediterranean fish were preserved whole in order to be shipped up the Rhône River. The Roman culinary text *Apicius* includes two recipes for “salted mullet” (*mugile salso*) and one recipe for “preserved grey mullet” (*mulo tarico*), which indicates that preserved whole fish were acceptable ingredients in cooking.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast to the saltwater fish at the Parc-Saint-Georges, which were all, or almost all, preserved in some way, the size of many of the freshwater fish suggests that they were eaten fresh. The smaller the fish, the more difficult it is to fillet and serve fresh. Piquès and his colleagues suggest that the perch, trout, shad, burbot, eel, and sturgeon were large enough to be consumed fresh.<sup>45</sup> The cyprinids, tench,<sup>46</sup> nase, and chub, on the

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<sup>42</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 264.

<sup>43</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 264.

<sup>44</sup> *Apicius* 9.10.6-7; 9.

<sup>45</sup> The perch and trout were between 25 and 35 centimeters long, the shad was greater than 35 centimeters, the burbot was around 40 centimeters, the eel was between 26 and 65 centimeters long, and at least one sturgeon was around 130 centimeters long. (G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 261.)

<sup>46</sup> One exceptional tench was larger at around 35cm long, and probably consumed fresh. (G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 261.)

other hand, were small enough that they would have been difficult to prepare fresh.<sup>47</sup> Given that fish sauces and *salsamenta* were generally made from smaller fish and the most common freshwater fish were the small cyprinids, we cannot rule out the possibility that the some of the freshwater fish were used to make fish sauces. Evidence for the production of fish sauces from freshwater fish has been found in Egypt and Israel.<sup>48</sup> Second-century deposits of fish bones in Belgium and Switzerland may also be the remains of fish sauce production from freshwater fish.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, two points about the habitats of the freshwater fish discovered at Parc-Saint-Georges are worth mentioning. First, not all the freshwater fish species discovered at Parc-Saint-Georges were local to Lyon. The natural habitats of the freshwater fish at Parc-Saint-Georges include live, well oxygenated water, and calm water.<sup>50</sup> This means that many of the freshwater fish discovered at Parc-Saint-Georges were imported from different environments, which points to a trade in freshwater fish in Gaul in the third century. Second, some of the freshwater fish being traded in third-century Lyon are not found in Italy. The burbot is native to many rivers in Europe, including the Rhône, but is absent from Italy, except for the Po River.<sup>51</sup> European perch is found throughout Europe,

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<sup>47</sup> The cyprinids, tench, nase, and chub were smaller than 20 centimeters, which means that they were more difficult to prepare fresh. (G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 260-61.)

<sup>48</sup> Van Neer and Ervynck, “Remains of traded fish in archeological sites,” 209.

<sup>49</sup> Van Neer and Ervynck, “Remains of traded fish in archeological sites,” 209.

<sup>50</sup> G. Piquès, C. Hänni, and T. Silvino, “L’approvisionnement de *Lugdunum* en poisson au III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 261.

<sup>51</sup> D.M. Cohen, T. Inada, T. Iwamoto and N. Scialabba, *FAO species catalogue*. Vol. 10. *Gadiform fishes of the world (Order Gadiformes)*. An annotated and illustrated catalogue of cods, hakes, grenadiers and other

but is naturally absent from the Iberian Peninsula, central Italy, and the Adriatic basin.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, chub is also naturally found throughout the rivers of Europe, except Italy and the Adriatic basin.<sup>53</sup> That many of the fish species traded in third-century Lyon are not found in Italy demonstrates Roman merchants turned towards resources from local rivers and landscapes in order to supply the fish markets in Lyon.

When the Romans conquered Gaul, one of the many things that they brought with them was a kind of banqueting that incorporated a wide variety of food items from terrestrial and marine environments. The presence of this feasting style in Lyon is demonstrated by the early first-century feast remains from the ‘Sanctuary of the Cybele’ in which the remains of saltwater fish formed a significant and expensive portion of the feast. But, in the absence of fresh Mediterranean fish in Gaul, the available freshwater fish took their place. The late second or third-century feast remains from the *clos de l’Antiquaille*, which lack Mediterranean fish altogether but include freshwater fish, provides evidence of this shift. The excavations at Parc-Saint-Georges provide a more detailed look at the fish trade in Lyon during the third century. It is evident that Mediterranean fish were still being imported to Lyon, but primarily in the form of *salsamenta* and fermented fish sauces such as *garum* and *liquamen*. While some of the

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*gadiform fishes known to date*. FAO Fish. Synop. 125(10). (Rome: FAO, 1990), 442.  
[<https://www.fishbase.se/summary/SpeciesSummary.php?ID=310&AT=burbot>]

<sup>52</sup> M. Kottelat and J. Freyhof, *Handbook of European freshwater fishes* (Berlin: Publications Kottelat, Cornol and Freyhof, 2007).  
[<https://www.fishbase.se/summary/SpeciesSummary.php?ID=358&AT=European+Perch>]

<sup>53</sup> M. Kottelat and J. Freyhof, *Handbook of European freshwater fishes* (Berlin: Publications Kottelat, Cornol and Freyhof, 2007). [<https://www.fishbase.se/summary/SpeciesSummary.php?ID=4482&AT=chub>]

mullet present at Parc-Saint-Georges might have been fresh, the majority of the fresh fish were sourced from freshwater sources.

#### 4.2. Gifts of Food in Late Antique Gaul

Fish were important not only to Roman style banquets, but also as gifts exchanged by late antique aristocrats in Gaul. Avitus most frequently mentions fish and food in his letters when describing gifts that he exchanged with his peers. The ‘gift’ itself is a subject of inquiry that has been much developed within the field of anthropology. Marcell Mauss has pointed out that gifts, especially in pre-modern societies, create a link between the giver and the receiver by creating an expectation of future exchanges.<sup>54</sup> The social bond created by gifts make gifts distinct from commercial exchanges, because no lasting social bond is created after a commercial exchange is made.<sup>55</sup> Since a gift creates a lasting relationship between the giver and the receiver that is not measured by a commercial transaction, the meaning of the gift is negotiated between the two parties involved according to the unique circumstances in which the gift was given.<sup>56</sup> A gift, therefore, results in a negotiated relationship between the two involved parties that persists after the gift is given. For the Roman senatorial aristocracy, the reciprocal relationships created by

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<sup>54</sup> Marcell Mauss, *The Gift: Expanded Edition*, trans. Jane I. Guyer (Chicago: Hau Books, 2016), 58-59.

<sup>55</sup> Nicolas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 15.

<sup>56</sup> Gadi Algazi, “Doing Things with Gifts,” in *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figures of Exchange*, eds. Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner, and Bernhard Jussen. 9-27. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 10.

gift giving were particularly strong and long lasting.<sup>57</sup> The lasting bond between individuals makes gifts especially useful in cultivating and maintaining relationships, which is exactly what Avitus and other late antique Gallic aristocrats hoped to accomplish when they sent gifts to each other.

Although Mauss' thesis regarding the reciprocity of gifts has been shown to not always hold true, especially in ascetic religious contexts,<sup>58</sup> the study of gifts in antiquity has generally confirmed Mauss' observation that many kinds of gifts were reciprocal in Roman society.<sup>59</sup> Gift-exchange in late antiquity also had its own unique characteristics.

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<sup>57</sup> Egon Flaig, "Is Loyalty a Favor? or: Why Gifts cannot oblige an Emperor," in *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figures of Exchange*, eds. Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner, and Bernhard Jussen. 29-61. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 47-48. Even so, Roman reciprocal relationships established through gift giving had its limits. See: Koenraad Verboven, "'Like bait on a hook'. Ethics, Etics and Emics of Gift-Exchange in the Roman World," in *Gift Giving and the 'Embedded' Economy in the Ancient World*, eds. Filippo Carlà and Maja Gori. 135-53. (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014).

<sup>58</sup> For Hinduism, see: Jonathan Parry, "The Gift, the Indian Gift and the 'Indian Gift.'" *Man* 21, no. 3 (1986): 453-73; For Jainism, see: James Laidlaw, "A Free Gift Makes No Friends." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, no. 4 (2000): 617-34; For late antique Christianity, see: Daniel Caner, *The Rich and the Pure: Philanthropy and the Making of Christian Society in Early Byzantium* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), xv-xix.

<sup>59</sup> Sacrifices and votive offerings in Greek and Roman religion were based on the idea of reciprocal exchange with the gods. (Irene Berti, "Value for Money: Pleasing the Gods and Impressing Mortals in the Archaic and Early Classical Age," in *Gift Giving and the 'Embedded' Economy in the Ancient World*, eds. Filippo Carlà and Maja Gori, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014), 289-314. However, Jörg Rüpke has complicated this understanding of sacrifices and votive offerings in Roman religion by bringing our attention to sacrifice and sacrificial offerings as strategies for communicating with the divine, not merely as objects given to the divine. (Jörg Rüpke, "Gifts, Votives, and Sacred Things: Strategies, Not Entities," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 4, no. 2, (2018): 207-236.) During the Principate, senatorial aristocrats envisioned their relationship with the emperor in terms of gift-giving and mutual exchange. (Egon Flaig, "Is Loyalty a Favor?" 29-61.) Euergetism is a gift in which a member of a city's elite uses his or her private money to benefit a city or the city's citizens in exchange for honor. (Arjan Zeudenhoek, *The Politics of Munificence in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Sabien Colpaert, "Euergetism and the Gift," in *Gift Giving and the 'Embedded' Economy in the Ancient World*, eds. Filippo Carlà and Maja Gori, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014), 181-201.) Roman patronage was a mutual exchange relationship between two individuals of unequal status and resources. (John Nicols, *Civic Patronage in the Roman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Gifts in late Roman diplomacy were effective because they were reciprocal. (Ekaterina Nechaeva. *Embassies – Negotiations – Gifts: Systems of East Roman Diplomacy in Late Antiquity* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014). 163-205.)

With the collapse of the Roman currency in the mid-third century, gifts in the form of imperial largess played an important role in the late antique economy.<sup>60</sup> The late antique senatorial aristocracy provided enormous sums of money in the form of largess for consular games and other public festivals.<sup>61</sup> Roman aristocrats also gave each other elaborate gifts at personal events such as weddings or birthdays.<sup>62</sup> The spread of Christianity also changed people's relationship to their wealth as they gave to the poor and to ecclesiastical institutions.<sup>63</sup> Late antique aristocrats and bishops also sent each other gifts of food, a phenomenon that has attracted relatively little attention.

One of the ways that late antique Gallic aristocrats used gifts of food was to demonstrate their control over resources from their estates and the surrounding areas. For example, Ausonius, the fourth-century rhetor, poet, and consul from Bordeaux, sent his friend Hesperius a gift of thrushes and ducks caught on Ausonius' estate.<sup>64</sup> Dennis Trout has argued regarding Ausonius' gifts that, "Gifts of food represented the proprietary

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<sup>60</sup> Ramsay Mac Mullen, "The Emperor's Largesses," *Latomus* 21, no. 1 (1962): 159–66. Ida M. Johansen, "Gift-exchange in late antiquity: an examination of its economic, social, and political significance, c. AD 300-600," (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1994).

<sup>61</sup> Johansen, "Gift-exchange in late antiquity," 175-190. Brian Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: urban public building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300-850*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 92.

<sup>62</sup> Johansen, "Gift-exchange in late antiquity," 190-202. Jo Stoner, *The Cultural Lives of Domestic Objects in Late Antiquity* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2019), 27-45.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Damian Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Daniel Caner, *The Rich and the Pure* (Oakland: University of California, 2021).

<sup>64</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 18 (LCL 115: 160-163).

rights and social dominance of the landed elite.”<sup>65</sup> But Ausonius also received a gift of Barcelonan *garum*, a fermented fish sauce, from Paulinus of Nola and a gift of oysters and mussels from a man named Theon.<sup>66</sup> The gifts of *garum* and shellfish from Paulinus and Theon demonstrated to Ausonius that they commanded resources from coastal regions. Ausonius, Paulinus, and Theon reinforced their social position as landowning aristocrats by sending gifts of food sourced from their villas and from the coast, thus demonstrating their control over local resources.

Gifts of food also, following Maus, reinforced the connections between aristocrats. When one aristocrat sent a gift of food, a response and reciprocal gifts frequently followed. For example, Paulinus of Nola initiated contact with a man named Gestidius<sup>67</sup>, by sending him a gift of fig-peckers, a kind of bird, as an excuse to converse with Gestidius.<sup>68</sup> Later we learn that Gestidius reciprocated by sending Paulinus gifts of fish.<sup>69</sup> Paulinus then sent Gestidius another gift, this time of oysters.<sup>70</sup> The exchange between Paulinus and Gestidius provides an example of how the reciprocity of gifts of food created a connection between two men that continued beyond the initial gift.

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<sup>65</sup> Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 56-57.

<sup>66</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 25 (LCL 115: 86-93); Ausonius, *Epp.* 15 and 17 (LCL 115: 52-57 and 60-61).

<sup>67</sup> All that is known about Gestidius is that he was wealthy in urban and rural possessions. (Barry Baldwin, “Some Addenda to the Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire,” *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 25, no. 1 (1976): 118–21. 120.)

<sup>68</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 33, (LCL 115: 148-151).

<sup>69</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 34, (LCL 115: 150-153).

<sup>70</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 34, (LCL 115: 150-153).

The correspondence between Paulinus and Gestidius also suggests that gifts of fish and other seafood were the preferred gift of food exchanged by Gallic aristocrats. Paulinus writes to Gestidius that, “It is indeed an insult to present a householder abounding with delicacies from the sea something from the land or a field.”<sup>71</sup> In another passage Paulinus describes Gestidius’ gifts of fish as “*munera...ditia*” or “rich gifts.”<sup>72</sup> That fish and other seafood were the preferred gifts of Gallic aristocrats is further supported by the fact that gifts of fish and shellfish are the most common gifts of food exchanged by Gallic aristocrats. We have already seen that Ausonius sent and received gifts of shellfish,<sup>73</sup> *garum*,<sup>74</sup> ducks, and thrushes,<sup>75</sup> and that Paulinus of Nola exchanged gifts of fig-peckers, fish, and oysters with Gestidius.<sup>76</sup> Ruricius, the late fifth and early sixth-century bishop of Limoges, refers in his letters to gifts of “sea vegetables<sup>77</sup>,”

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<sup>71</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 33, (LCL 115: 148; trans. by the author): “*Iniuria quidem est patri familias maritimis deliciis abundantanti terrenum aliquid et agreste praeberere.*”

<sup>72</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 34, (LCL 115: 150).

<sup>73</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 15.

<sup>74</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 25.

<sup>75</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 18.

<sup>76</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 34, (LCL 115: 150-153); Ausonius, *Ep.* 33, (LCL 115: 148-151).

<sup>77</sup> Ruricius, *Ep.* 2.44. “*legumina marina*” Shanzer and Wood argue that this could be a reference to a sort of fish with a vegetable nickname, like ‘sea-cucumber’ in English. That Latin nomenclature for sea creatures followed a similar pattern is attested by Isidore (*Etym.* 12.6.4) and Polemius Silvius (MGH AA 5.1, p. 544.6). However, ‘*legumina marina*’ may also encompass shellfish. Cf. German *meersfructe*.

“*deliciae*” from the Dordogne River<sup>78</sup>, fish from the Vézère River,<sup>79</sup> and birds.<sup>80</sup> Sidonius

Apollinaris sent a gift of fish which was accompanied by the following epigram:

This night for the first time fixed four fishes on my hooks. Of these I have kept two; you also take two. Those I am sending are the largest; the arrangement is perfectly just, for you are the larger portion of my heart.<sup>81</sup>

Avitus of Vienne describes gifts of wine, fish, “abundances from the sea,” and “marsh trifles” that he exchanged with Apollinaris, his brother and bishop of Valence, Maximus of Geneva, and Ceretius.<sup>82</sup>

Gifts of fish, shellfish, and other foods sourced from the water are the most frequent gifts mentioned in the letter collections of Ausonius, Paulinus of Nola, Sidonius, Ruricius, and Avitus. Fish and shellfish were also important components of Roman style banqueting as seen in the discussion above. That fish and shellfish were important components of Roman style banqueting, and the preferred gifts of late antique aristocrats suggests that these food items were particularly important to late antique Gallic aristocrats. When Gallic aristocrats wanted to host banquets, fish and shellfish were essential components. When Gallic aristocrats wanted to establish and maintain social connections they sent gifts of food, most frequently fish and shellfish. Thus, by sending gifts of food that frequently appeared at banquets, gifts of food became a way to include

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<sup>78</sup> Ruricius, *Ep.* 2.45.

<sup>79</sup> Ruricius, *Ep.* 2.54.

<sup>80</sup> Ruricius, *Ep.* 2.43.

<sup>81</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 21, (LCL 296: 258-59; trans. Anderson revised by the author).

<sup>82</sup> Avitus, *Epp.* 66, 72, 74, 83, 86.

other aristocrats in a shared feast, even though the aristocrats were not physically together. Gifts of fish and other food were tools of inclusion.

Like other Gallic aristocrats, Avitus' gifts of fish and food were, in part, ways to include others in feasts that they were not able to attend. The need for Avitus, his fellow bishops, and Catholic laymen in the Burgundian Kingdom to affirm the solidity of their relationships was particularly acute because they were ruled by an Arian king. However, the feasts that Avitus and his peers were including each other in were feasts in celebration of church festivals, such as Easter. Easter is preceded by Lent, during which the clergy were fasting, not feasting. That Avitus sent and received gifts of food during festivals that required fasting means that his gifts of food did more than affirm relationships, they were also a way to engage in religious dialog about the proper limits of feasting and fasting.

#### 4.3. Fasting in Late Antique Gaul

In addition to maintaining his place in the senatorial aristocracy of Gaul, Avitus of Vienne also used gifts of food to creatively engage in dialog regarding the appropriate practice of feasting and fasting. Food was an important mode of religious discourse in late antiquity. The connection between fasting and sexual renunciation in late antique thought has attracted scholarly attention.<sup>83</sup> Recently, Dana Robinson has argued that food can function as metaphors for complex discussion of religious ideas, while also being a

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<sup>83</sup> Teresa Shaw, *Burden of the Flesh* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). Veronika E. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1996).

point of real, physical action.<sup>84</sup> Avitus and his contemporaries used physical gifts of food to engage in dialog about how to balance fasting requirements with their status as aristocrats.

The need of aristocratic bishops to negotiate the proper limits of feasting and fasting is the result of the unique set of historical circumstances that resulted in the movement of Gallic aristocrats into the clergy and the simultaneous development of the idea that the clergy should exercise some level of asceticism. As Roman political power collapsed in Gaul and the possibility of a career in the imperial service along with it, members of the senatorial aristocracy increasingly opted for ecclesiastic careers.<sup>85</sup> The Gallic senatorial aristocracy's entry into ecclesiastic offices also coincided with what R. A. Markus has called the "ascetic invasion" of Gaul.<sup>86</sup> Monasticism was introduced to Gaul at the end of the fourth century; Martin of Tours is the first example of an ascetic monk who became a bishop in 371. At the beginning of the fifth century some monastic

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<sup>84</sup> Dana Robinson, *Food, Virtue, and the Shaping of Early Christianity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>85</sup> Martin Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien : zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert : soziale, prosopographische und bildungsgeschichtliche Aspekte*, (München: Artemis, 1976). Ralph Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 89-104. However, more recent studies have shown that the entrance of Roman aristocrats into church office during the fifth and sixth centuries was less widespread than previously thought and restricted to distinct areas of Gaul, including south-eastern Gaul. See: Stefan Esders, *Römische Rechtstradition und merowingisches Königtum: Zum Rechtscharakter politischer Herrschaft in Burgund im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 185; Richard Bartlett, "Aristocracy and Asceticism: The Letters of Ennodius and the Gallic and Italian Churches," in *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul*, eds. Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 212-215; Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350– 550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2012), 494–95; Salzman, *The Falls of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 195-196.

<sup>86</sup> R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 199-211.

foundations, most notably that of Lérins, were attracting members of the senatorial aristocracy. Many of these aristocrats-turned-monks, such as Eucherius discussed in Chapter Two, then became bishops in Gaul.

The movement of aristocrats-turned-monks into the episcopate in Gaul paved the way for senatorial aristocrats to enter church office and established the precedent that bishops should adopt an ascetic lifestyle.<sup>87</sup> The aristocratic monks-turned-bishops thus exerted pressure on other bishops, who were not previously monks, to adopt more ascetic lifestyles.<sup>88</sup> For example, Germanus the fifth-century bishop of Auxerre, was an aristocrat with a secular career.<sup>89</sup> Yet, when Germanus became bishop, we are told that he adopted an ascetic lifestyle that, among other things, included grinding his own barley flour and tasting ashes before meals.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, Sidonius Apollinaris describes the abrupt transformation of Maximus, a former imperial official, who adopted an ascetic lifestyle when he was consecrated as a priest.<sup>91</sup> Sidonius notes that Maximus' table had more vegetables than meat in addition to other ascetic changes in Maximus' lifestyle.<sup>92</sup>

While not all fifth-century Gallic bishops fully adopted an ascetic lifestyle (Sidonius Apollinaris himself is a notable example) the need to integrate religious fasts

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<sup>87</sup> Richard Bartlett, "Aristocracy and Asceticism: The Letters of Ennodius and the Gallic and Italian Churches," 212-215.

<sup>88</sup> Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 201-202.

<sup>89</sup> Constantius of Lyon, *Vita germani*, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Constantius of Lyon, *Vita germani*, 3.

<sup>91</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 4.24.3-4 (LCL 420: 158-161)

<sup>92</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 4.24.3.

into an aristocratic lifestyle remained. This is illustrated by the praise that Sidonius gives to the fifth-century bishop of Lyon, Patiens. Sidonius, addressing Patiens directly, writes that the Burgundian king Chilperic, “unceasingly praises your feasts, and the queen your fasts.”<sup>93</sup> Patiens was apparently successful in integrating fasts with the expectation that an aristocratic bishop could host a generous feast worthy to be praised by a king. Sidonius’ praise also demonstrates that people were watching to see if bishops ate and fasted properly at the proper times.

The integration of religious fasts into aristocratic lifestyles was a process that required constant negotiation among the bishops of late antique Gaul because there was no established rule for Christian fasts in late antiquity. Observance varied depending on the place and the ascetic inclinations of the person fasting.<sup>94</sup> In general, by the fourth century in the Latin West, Fridays and Saturdays were fast days and the most important annual fast was the *quadragesima*, the forty days of fasting during Lent, leading up to the Easter feast.<sup>95</sup> However, at the beginning of the sixth century the Council of Orleans still had to clarify that forty, not fifty, days of fasting were to be observed before Easter.<sup>96</sup> The

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<sup>93</sup> Sid. Apoll. Ep. 6.12.3 (LCL 420: 278-279; trans. Anderson): “*ut constet indesinenter regem praesentem prandia tua, reginam laudare ieiunia.*”

<sup>94</sup> Shanzer, “Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul,” 230-231.

<sup>95</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 37. However, Sundays were considered feast days, which meant that under some observances, only thirty-six days of fasting were observed during Lent, which could then be made up by an additional four days of fasting after Easter. (Shanzer, “Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul,” 230-231.)

<sup>96</sup> *511 Council of Orleans*, can. 24. In J. N. Hillgarth, *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: The Conversion of Western Europe*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 99-103.

Rogations, also known as the Minor Litanies, were developed in Gaul during the latter half of the fifth century and required fasting for the three days leading up to Ascension Day.<sup>97</sup> The Rogations were prescribed for all of Gaul at the Council of Orleans in 511.<sup>98</sup> The bishops at the Council of Orleans specified that the same foods eaten during the *quadragesima* were to be eaten during the Rogations.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, the liturgical calendar and the accompanying feast and fast days were in flux in Gaul during Avitus' episcopate.

The line between observing a fast and enjoying a feast could be ambiguous depending on the kinds of foods being eaten or abstained from. Fasting, in its strictest sense, means completely abstaining from food. But, during late antiquity the idea of fasting came to mean abstaining from certain foods.<sup>100</sup> Christian fasts required that people abstain from “meat,” which was usually defined as the flesh of land-dwelling quadrupeds, such as cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs.<sup>101</sup> Fish, waterfowl, and other foods sourced from watery environments, therefore, did not count as “meat” and were acceptable sources of protein while observing a fast. Martin of Tours, for example, is said to have eaten fish “on the days of the Passion.”<sup>102</sup> However, fish, fowl, and mollusks

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<sup>97</sup> *511 Council of Orleans*, can. 27; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, 2.34.

<sup>98</sup> *511 Council of Orleans*, can. 27.

<sup>99</sup> *511 Council of Orleans*, can. 27, (MGH Conc. 1: 8): “*Quo triduo omnis absteneant et quadragesimalibus cibis utantur.*”

<sup>100</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 37.

<sup>101</sup> Julianus Pomerius mentions abstaining from four-footed animals as a definition of fasting at the beginning of the fifth century. (Julianus Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 2.23) The *Rule of Benedict* also prescribes abstinence from four-footed animals for all the monks of a community except for the very weak and sick monks. (*RB* 39)

<sup>102</sup> Sulp. Sev. *Dia.* 3.10. (SC 510: 324; trans. by the author): “*Pisces Paschae diebus edere consuetus...*”

were also important parts of Roman feasts, which means that foods sourced from the water spanned both the categories of acceptable foods to eat while fasting and of foods acceptable to serve at a banquet. That some of the same foods were acceptable to eat at a feast and to eat while fasting meant that it was possible to technically observe a fast, while feasting on fish, fowl, and other sea food.

Proponents of strict ascetic practice condemned the consumption of expensive food for banquets even if they were technically permitted to be consumed during a fast. Julianus Pomerius, a fifth-century priest in Gaul with African origins, wrote, "But if men abstain from quadrupeds, but enjoy fattened pheasant or other expensive birds or fish, they do not seem to me to be cutting back on the pleasures of their own body, but to change them."<sup>103</sup> For Julianus, a real fast required giving up corporeal pleasure, not just giving up the meat from four-footed animals. Jerome trumpeted his own ascetic superiority using similar logic because he ate fava beans during a fast, while others ate sturgeon.<sup>104</sup> Avitus and his peers, on the other hand, were not as ascetically inclined as Julianus and Jerome.

Avitus was a bishop and an aristocrat, and he needed to balance the eating requirements of both positions. As an aristocrat, Avitus needed to maintain his connections with his peers through letters and gifts of food associated with feasting and conviviality. As bishop, Avitus also needed to properly observe fasts. Fish, fowl, and

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<sup>103</sup> Julianus Pomerius, *De vita contemplative* 2.23, (PL 59.469A; trans. by the author): "*Caeterum si a quadrupedibus abstinentes, phasianis atlibus, vel aliis avibus pretiosis, aut piscibus perfruantur; non mihi videntur resecare delectationes sui corporis, sed mutare...*"

<sup>104</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 45.5 to Asella, (LCL 262: 184-85): "*de comeso accipensere gloriaris, ego faba ventrem impleo*"

foods from the sea were the perfect food for Avitus to use to negotiate the ascetic demands of fasting within an aristocratic lifestyle. When Avitus sent and received gifts of fish and other foodstuffs, which he wrote about in his letters, he was creatively engaging in dialog with his fellow bishops and aristocrats about the proper limits of feasting and fasting.

#### 4.4. Gifts of Food and Fish in the letters of Avitus

Four letters in Avitus' letter collection include references to fish and seafood. The first is to Apollinaris, bishop of Valence and Avitus' brother.<sup>105</sup> In that letter we learn that Apollinaris had sent "abundances from the sea" in order to 'punish' Avitus for not attending a religious festival in Valence. Avitus responded in kind by sending Apollinaris his own gifts of fish. The next letter was sent to an official named Ceretius at the Burgundian court at Chalon-sur-Saône.<sup>106</sup> In this letter, Avitus accuses Ceretius of indulging by eating "delicacies" from the Saône but Avitus then sends Ceretius a gift of fish from the Isere River, along with an invitation to a religious festival in Vienne. The third letter is a letter of thanks to Maximus, bishop of Geneva.<sup>107</sup> Here, Avitus thanks Maximus for a gift of fish and wine, but Avitus laments that he could not drink the wine because of a fast. The final letter is an overtly jesting letter, in which Avitus takes on the

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<sup>105</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 72.

<sup>106</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 83.

<sup>107</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 74.

pseudonym “Leonianus” and addresses the letter to a certain “Sapaudus,” whom Shanzer and Wood argue is a pseudonym for Maximus of Geneva.<sup>108</sup> In this letter Avitus explains that he was unable to attend a feast that “Sapaudus” attended. Avitus first describes the expansive feast, which he then contrasts with his own episcopal fast.

Avitus’ letters regarding gifts of food blend traditional gallic aristocratic friendship letters accompanied by a gift, as exemplified by Paulinus’ and Ausonius’ letters, and “festal letters.” “Festal letters” are a genre of late antique letter originating in Alexandria.<sup>109</sup> They were frequently accompanied by gifts. They were frequently issued on the occasion of a great feast, especially Easter. These letters could also function as homilies and were read aloud to congregations on major feast days.<sup>110</sup> Avitus included twenty-seven letters that he wrote or received on the occasion of various church festivals.<sup>111</sup> All the letters that Avitus wrote concerning gifts of food fit within his “festal letters.” However, unlike the Alexandrian “festal letters,” none of Avitus’ “festal letters” functioned as homilies. Most of Avitus’ “festal letters” are short and address invitations to celebrate a festival with himself or someone else. In this way, Avitus’ “festal letters” more closely resemble the friendship letters of other Gallic aristocrats, such as Ausonius and Sidonius. As Avitus’ letters share characteristics with both “festal letters” and

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<sup>108</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86; Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 279-80; See note 182 in this chapter.

<sup>109</sup> Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Greek and Latin Letters in Late Antiquity: The Christianisation of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) 85.

<sup>110</sup> Krastu Banev, *Theophilus of Alexandria and the First Origenist Controversy: Rhetoric and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 150.

<sup>111</sup> McCarthy, “The Letter Collection of Avitus of Vienne,” 360-1.

aristocratic “friendship letters,” they were an excellent medium for Avitus to engage in religious dialog about fasting and to maintain his social connections to his peers across Gaul.

#### 4.4.1. Letter 72: Avitus to Apollinaris

We begin with a letter from Avitus to his brother Apollinaris. The context for this letter appears to be that Avitus was unable to attend a feast at a festival hosted by Apollinaris in Valence.<sup>112</sup> Apollinaris seems to have written Avitus, telling him that he was “punishing” Avitus for his absence.<sup>113</sup> Avitus’ letter in reply begins as follows:

A constraint prevented me from going to the festival, but kindness brought it to me. So, you write that you have avenged my lack of respect with abundances from the sea (*marinis...copiis*). A fine torture this! May it cause no conflict with the desires of the stomach!<sup>114</sup>

The joke in this letter functions on two levels. First, is the mismatch between what Avitus did, namely missing a festival, and the reward, a gift of fish. The ironic result is that Avitus is punished with a reward. Second, the word “*copia*” means “abundance” as well as “troops.”<sup>115</sup> The modifier “*marinis*” tells us that the “troops” were from the sea, and, therefore, saltwater fish or shellfish. Avitus goes on to wish that he may continue to be

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<sup>112</sup> It is not entirely clear what festival this might have been, but it given that fish were a central dish, it might have been a Lenten festival.

<sup>113</sup> Shantzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 250.

<sup>114</sup> Avitus, *Ep. 72*, (MGH 6.2: 90; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 250, adapted by the author): “*Ne festivitati occurrerem, necessitas obstitit: ut mihi festivitas occurreret, humanitas procuravit. Scribitis ergo indevotionem meam marinis vos copiis ultum isse. Dignum scilicet genus supplicii, quod ne faciat cum desiderio gulae conflictum!*”

<sup>115</sup> Sidonius also used “*copia*” to describe “armies of lobsters” in describing the delicacies of a feast. (Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.12.7.)

“punished” by Apollinaris, since Apollinaris sends gifts of fish to those who incur his displeasure and to express his desire to join Apollinaris at his feast the following year.

Moreover, Avitus closes his letter with a reference to his own gift to Apollinaris:

I have sent your way eight assorted trifles from the marshes (*octo palustres quisquiliis*) and two pairs of soles (*duo paria solearum*) for you to sink your teeth into. Since I was somewhat touched, I have not altogether done you a bad turn in return for yours!<sup>116</sup>

Like Apollinaris, Avitus also used wordplay when referring to his gifts to Apollinaris.

“*Quisquiliae*” is, more literally, “trash” or “refuse,” which, by extension, can also mean something worthless.<sup>117</sup> Hence, Shanzer and Wood’s translation of “trifles.” “*Solearum*” usually refers to the soles of shoes.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, it is possible to translate this passage as Avitus sending Apollinaris trash and two pairs of shoes. Of course, that is not what happened. “*Quisquiliae*” has a historical usage of referring to fish in Apuleius and the context points to the “trifles” being some sort of food.<sup>119</sup> In addition to shoes, “*solearum*” also refer to sole, a kind of saltwater flatfish.<sup>120</sup>

Avitus provides several details regarding the environments from which his and Apollinaris’ gifts originated. Avitus calls the gift sent by Apollinaris “*marinis...copiis*” – “sea abundances” or “sea troops.” That Apollinaris sent a gift of food sourced from the

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<sup>116</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 72.

<sup>117</sup> “*Quisquiliae*” has a history of being mis-interpreted as meaning “quail.” For example, see: Henri Goelzer, *Le Latin de Saint Avit*, (Paris, 1909), 559. For further discussion, see: Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 250, n. 7.

<sup>118</sup> Lewis and Short, “*solea*”; Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 250-251.

<sup>119</sup> Apuleius, *Met.* 1.24; Apuleius, *Apologia* 34.

<sup>120</sup> Pliny the Elder, *NH*, 9.20, 24, 36.

sea points to Apollinaris importing sea fare, the Mediterranean was the most accessible to Apollinaris in Valence, and then sending it up the Rhône to his brother at Vienne. Avitus does not provide any further details to help identify Apollinaris' gift may have been. However, some suggestions can be made.

Apollinaris was probably not importing fresh fish from the Mediterranean. The comparison between the feast remains at the 'Sanctuary of the Cybele' and the *clos de l'Antiquaille* illustrated a shift in Roman banqueting away from imported Mediterranean fish to freshwater fish found in Gaul.<sup>121</sup> The third-century fish remains at Parc-Saint-Georges testify to a thriving trade in fish, but mostly freshwater fish, *salsamenta*, and fermented fish sauces.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, the inherent difficulties of transporting fresh fish, in which speed is key, would only have been more difficult in Gaul with the breakdown of unified Roman rule. Valence and Vienne were in the Burgundian Kingdom, while the Provençal coast was controlled by the Visigoths.

We cannot rule out the possibility that Apollinaris sent Avitus preserved fish or a fish sauce, which are much more amenable to transportation and continued to be imported in Gaul in the sixth century and beyond.<sup>123</sup> While *salsamenta* and *garum* were not necessarily luxury foods, it appears that different grades of fish sauces were developed.<sup>124</sup> Cheap fish sauces would have been made from readily available small

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<sup>121</sup> See pages 200-204.

<sup>122</sup> See pages 205-210.

<sup>123</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 4.43.

<sup>124</sup> Sally Grainger, *The Story of Garum: Fermented Fish Sauce and Salted Fish in the Ancient World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 2.

whole fish during the Roman period. Such a sauce was called *garos*, *garum*, or *liquamen*.<sup>125</sup> A more expensive sauce made only from the blood and/or viscera of certain fish, tuna in particular, commanded a much higher price. This higher priced sauce was variously called *garum*, *garum sociorum*, *melan*, or *himation*.<sup>126</sup> This more expensive fish sauce was an acceptable gift as is evidenced by Ausonius' thank you letter to Paulinus for a gift of fish sauce from Barcelona.<sup>127</sup>

Oysters or another shellfish might also qualify as "*marinis copiis*." Oyster shells appear in the feast remains at both the 'Sanctuary of the Cybele' and the *clos de l'Antiquaille*.<sup>128</sup> We have already seen oysters as gifts in the letters of Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola.<sup>129</sup> Ausonius even considered himself a connoisseur of oysters from different places (he preferred those from his hometown of Bordeaux).<sup>130</sup> Sidonius also had a taste for the seafood from Bordeaux and even used military language to describe the seafood there.<sup>131</sup> Sidonius described a battle between the seafood from different parts of Aquitaine, in which he described lobsters from Bayonne as "*copias...lucustarum*," the

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<sup>125</sup> Christopher Grocock and Sally Grainger, "Excursus on *Garum* and *Liquamen*," in *Apicius: A Critical Edition with an Introduction and English Translation*, rev. ed. 373-87. (2006, repr., London: Prospect Books, 2020), 373.

<sup>126</sup> Christopher Grocock and Sally Grainger, "Excursus on *Garum* and *Liquamen*," 373.

<sup>127</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 25, (LCL 115:86-93).

<sup>128</sup> See pages 200-210.

<sup>129</sup> See pages 213-214.

<sup>130</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 5, (LCL 115:12-17).

<sup>131</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.12.7.

exact same language that Avitus used to describe his brother's gift.<sup>132</sup> That oysters continued to be imported to Gaul through late antiquity, that Ausonius describes oysters as an acceptable elite gift, that Sidonius provides literary precedent for describing shellfish in military language, and that Avitus himself describes oysters and scallops at a feast points to oysters and other shellfish being possible contenders for Avitus' "*marinis copiis*."<sup>133</sup>

While on the topic of marine resources, Avitus' gift of two pairs of "sole" to Apollinaris deserves scrutiny. On the surface the presence of sole in this letter raises few problems. Sole is an identifiable modern species of saltwater flat fish, *solea solea*, found in the Mediterranean and on the Atlantic and Baltic coasts of Europe.<sup>134</sup> Sole has been identified in the third-century fish remains at Parc-Saint-Georges in Lyon (see Table 3). Sole is also well represented in late antique culinary texts ranging from Italy to Gaul.<sup>135</sup> However, sole is a saltwater fish and Vienne is further from the sea than Valence. For Avitus to send a gift of fresh fish from the Mediterranean to Apollinaris, he would have had to have brought the fish up the Rhône, passing Valence, to Vienne; then send the fish back down the Rhône to Valence. This presents a serious logistical challenge to Avitus'

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<sup>132</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.12.7.

<sup>133</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86.

<sup>134</sup> M. Desoutter, "Soleidae," in *Faune des poissons d'eaux douces et saumâtres d'Afrique de l'Ouest Tome 2. Faune Tropicale n° 28. Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale*, eds. C. Levêque, D. Paugy, and G.G. Teugels. 860-865. (Tervuren, Belgique and O.R.S.T.O.M., Paris, 1992). [<https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Solea-solea.html>]

<sup>135</sup> *Apicius*, 4.2.28; *Excerpta Apici* 19; Anthimus, *De observatione ciborum*, 42.

ability to send Apollinaris gifts of fresh *solea solea* and suggests a more critical reading of this passage.

One solution to the problem of transporting the sole is that the sole could have been preserved through salting or drying. Yet, preserved sole does not solve the logistical problem of moving fish past Valence to Vienne, then sending the fish back to Valence. Another solution is that Avitus did not send *solea solea*, but another flat fish that was available locally in Vienne. Varro includes sole in a list of fish named after things they resemble, in this case the soles of shoes.<sup>136</sup> This is of course the logic driving Avitus' pun. But this also means that the fish that Avitus called "*solearum*" simply refers to any flat fish that might resemble a shoe, not necessarily *solea solea*. In fact,

In sixth-century Gaul several different species of flatfish distinguished by modern taxonomy were not thought of as distinct species. Anthimus was a sixth-century physician, who wrote *On the Observance of Foods* for the Frankish king Theuderic, whose court was in Metz. Anthimus claims that sole (*soleae*) and plaice (*platenses*), another flatfish, are the same kind of fish.<sup>137</sup> Modern scientific taxonomy distinguish between Common sole (*solea solea*) and European plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*).<sup>138</sup> It appears that Anthimus was lumping all brown flatfish into a single category. If he was

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<sup>136</sup> Varro, *De lingua Latina*, 5.12, (LCL 333:74-75).

<sup>137</sup> Anthimus, *De observatione ciborum*, 42.

<sup>138</sup> K.A. Vinnikov, R.C. Thomson and T.A. Munroe, "Revised classification of the righteye flounders (*Teleostei: Pleuronectidae*) based on multilocus phylogeny with complete taxon sampling," in *Molecular phylogenetics and evolution* 125 (2018):147-162. [<https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Pleuronectes-platessa.html>]

doing so, we need to consider the possibility that Anthimus, and other late antique writers for that matter, included another species of flatfish in the sole and plaice category: European flounder.

European flounder (*Platichthys flesus*) has the same range as the common sole, but also migrates into freshwater environments.<sup>139</sup> European flounder is historically well attested in the Moselle and Loire Rivers, making flounder of Atlantic origin available in Northern Gaul at Theuderic's court.<sup>140</sup> But European flounder are also historically attested in the Rhône River basin as far north as the Doubs River.<sup>141</sup> This means that European flounder would have also been more readily available in both Metz and Vienne than sole or plaice. Given Anthimus' conflation of flatfish into a single category and the presence of European flounder in the Rhône basin, it is possible that the "two pairs of sole" that Avitus sent to his brother Apollinaris were, in fact, two pairs of European flounder.<sup>142</sup> If we identify Avitus' two pairs of sole with European flounder, then we do not have to assume that Avitus was importing fresh fish from the Mediterranean.<sup>143</sup> Rather, Avitus was relying on local aquatic resources to send gifts of food.

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<sup>139</sup> M. Kottelat and J. Freyhof, *Handbook of European freshwater fishes*. [https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Platichthys-flesus.html]

<sup>140</sup> J. Belliard, M. Merg, S. Beslagic, V. Demougin, G. Gorges, A. Guilpart, A. Zahm. *Historical occurrences of diadromous fishes in French rivers between 1750 and 1980*. Version 1.3. Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement (2020) Occurrence dataset: https://doi.org/10.15454/avhyvm. accessed via GBIF.org on 2022-04-13.

<sup>141</sup> J. Belliard, M. Merg, S. Beslagic, V. Demougin, G. Gorges, A. Guilpart, A. Zahm, *Historical occurrences of diadromous fishes in French rivers between 1750 and 1980*, data points 875 and 1288.

<sup>142</sup> Avitus. *Ep.* 72.

<sup>143</sup> It is possible that Avitus did send Apollinaris two pairs of shoes, when he would have been expected to send fish, hence the pun. However, so far as I am aware there is little precedent for sending gifts of shoes.

Having dealt with the “sea abundances” and the “two pairs of soles,” let us now turn to the “*octo palustres quisquilias*” - “eight assorted marsh trifles” that Avitus bequeathed his brother. Avitus’ modifier “*palustres*” – “of the marsh” – suggests that his “trifles” had their origin in freshwater marshes near Vienne. As before, other literary and archeological evidence gives us an idea what these specific food items may have been.

Avitus’ description of the “trifles” as coming from a marsh suggests that he was not referring to standard river fish. Waterfowl, however, are a strong candidate for Avitus’ “marsh trifles.” Ducks and cranes appear in the Gallo-Roman frescos and mosaics of Vienne and Lyon in the second and third centuries alongside fish and shellfish. Poultry and waterfowl also made-up substantial proportions of the feast remains at the ‘Sanctuary of the Cybele’ and at the *clos de l’Antiquaille* alongside fish.<sup>144</sup> Avitus’ pairing of soles and “marsh trifles” then mirrors the combination of fish and fowl that were essential to Roman banquets. The parallel between Avitus’ gift and the mosaics suggests that duck or crane might have been among the “eight assorted marsh trifles” sent by Avitus to Apollinaris.<sup>145</sup>

Yet again, Ausonius provides another example of a late antique Gallic aristocrat sending gifts of ducks. Ausonius sent Hesperius a gift of twenty thrushes that had been

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But jokes and gags do not always require precedents. Sometimes they require breaking precedents in clever ways.

<sup>144</sup> See pages 200 and 204.

<sup>145</sup> Varro provides another connection between ducks and “*palustres*.” Varro suggests that if someone wants to raise ducks, he should chose a “*palustrem*” or a “marsh” for his pens. Varro, *On Agriculture*, 3.11.1, (LCL 283:486-87).

caught in nets set near his vineyard, but he also included some ducks, “I then added mature ducks, which the plunder of a nearby lake provided.”<sup>146</sup> Ausonius’ invocation of the lake from which he sourced the duck demonstrates a similar interest in environment as Avitus’ comment that his gift of trifles came from a marsh.

In this letter Avitus and Apollinaris exchange gifts of food sourced from the sea, rivers, and a marsh to maintain their relationship and affirm each other’s food choices for a religious festival. Apollinaris’ gift of “sea abundances” effectively includes Avitus at his feast, even though Avitus was absent. Avitus reciprocates Apollinaris’ gift, thus maintaining their relationship by sending gifts of “soles” and “marsh trifles,” effectively including Apollinaris in Avitus’ own feast. By sending each other “sea abundances,” “sole,” and “marsh trifles,” for an unspecified ecclesiastical festival, Apollinaris and Avitus affirm each other’s diets as being acceptable for the festival.

#### 4.4.2. Letter 83: Avitus to Ceretius

In his letter to Apollinaris Avitus described the gift of food by the environments from which they were sourced. Apollinaris’ “abundances” came from the sea and Avitus’ “trifles” came from a marsh. Avitus also named the rivers from which he sourced his gifts of fish. Avitus’ attention to which river his gifts of fish came from is apparent in a letter to Ceretius, a *vir illustrissimus* at the Burgundian court in Chalon-sur-Saône.<sup>147</sup> It appears

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<sup>146</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 18 (LCL 115: 61-63; trans. by the author): “*tum, quas vicina suggestit praeda lacunae, / anites maritas iunximus*”

<sup>147</sup> *PCBE* 4: 456 (Ceretius 2).

that Avitus was attempting to persuade Ceretius to visit him in Vienne for a religious festival that required fasting, but he starts the request in a rather roundabout way:

Suggesting, nay rather begging, because you have been so obstinate, that you finally shrink [your] stomach, queasy with the many delights (“*multis...deliciis*”) from the Saône, with the more meagre fasts of our Isère.<sup>148</sup>

Avitus here contrasts the “*deliciis* from the Saône” with the “more meagre fasts of our Isere.”<sup>149</sup> Avitus is comparing the luxurious lifestyle at the Burgundian court in Chalon-sur-Saône with the frugal fare of the episcopal fast. Although Avitus does not specify what the “*deliciis*” are, the fact that they came from the Saône River suggests that the “*deliciis*” are fish. The contrast between episcopal fasts and royal feasts forms the background to another of Avitus’ letters, which I address below.<sup>150</sup> Avitus is, counterintuitively, inviting Ceretius to a fast instead of a feast. This and other ‘fastal letters,’ as Shanzer calls them, combine a traditional invitation to a feast with invitations

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<sup>148</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 83 (MGH AA 6.2: 94; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 333): “*suadens, immo, quia tantum obduruistis, supplicans, ut stomachos multis Sauconnae deliciis nauseantes tandem parcioribus Iaeriae vestrae ieiuniis atteratis.*”

<sup>149</sup> The reading of “meagre fasts of our Isere” depends on several emendations to the surviving text. Peiper’s text reads, “*parcioribus Iaeriae vestrae ieiuniis.*” (MGH AA 6.2, p.94) In creating this text, Peiper accepted manuscript L’s “*iaerię.*” However, this word is otherwise unattested and, in his notes, Peiper tentatively suggests reading “*Hieriae,*” which means Jericho and fails to make sense here. Sirmond, who was drawing on non-longer extant manuscripts but also freely editing his text (Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 28), suggested “*iteria,*” which translates as “healing,” coming from the Greek “*ἰατρεία.*” This does restore some sense to the passage since Avitus claims that Ceretius’ stomach was sick “*nauseantes*” with the delights of the Saone. However, if Sirmond is correct in this editing, this would make the word “*iteria*” a hapax legomena in Latin. (Gaffiot 2016). Shanzer and Wood, on the other hand, emend the otherwise unattested “*Iaeriae*” to “*Iseriae,*” indicating the Isere River. (Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 333 n. 7) This restores the most sense to the passage since Avitus was clearly interested in contrasting Vienne and Chalon-sur-Saone and the Isere River has a linguistic presence in Latin as the “*Isara*” (Lewis and Short). However, if we follow Shanzer and Wood in taking “*Iaeriae*” to mean the Isere River, then Peiper’s “*vestrae*” no longer makes sense, since it would mean that the Isere River belonged to Ceretius. Shanzer and Wood, therefore, follow manuscript L’s “*n[ost]ra*” for the first-person plural, but then emend the ending to *-ae* so that it agrees with “*Iseriae.*”

<sup>150</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86.

to religious festivals, in which fasting is central.<sup>151</sup> Avitus' invitation to fasts echoes Sidonius' letter to Aper, in which Sidonius invited Aper to celebrate the Rogations in Clermont-Ferrand.<sup>152</sup>

While this letter is useful for understanding Avitus' views on fasting and his engagement with other late antique Gallic authors, what is of interest here is that Avitus makes his comparison between royal and episcopal lifestyles in Chalon-sur-Saône and Vienne with gifts of food, which becomes apparent at the end of the letter.

...so that the present state of affairs be altered, let the citizen of Chalon obtain what is plentiful in Vienne. Here we do not have what ought to be sought out; let us send there what it may be your pleasure to reject. And because what I am talking about is already on its way, if you are still delayed on the spot, accept it. If you are already minded to depart, pass it by.<sup>153</sup>

In this elliptical passage Avitus explains that he sent something to Ceretius but does not explain what it was. However, this passage parallels the language that Avitus used when he opened the letter, in which he compared the “delicacies of the Saône” with the “more meagre fasts of our Isere,” which suggests that the “*deliciis*” on which Ceretius was feasting were fish. Here, at the end of the letter, Avitus implores Ceretius to acquire “what is plentiful in Vienne,” that is the “more meager fasts of our Isere.” Therefore, Avitus is sending a metaphorical fast to Ceretius. But as fasts are immaterial, Avitus sends a gift sourced from the Isere River, that is fish, to represent the fast. And since fish

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<sup>151</sup> Shanzer, “Bishops, Letters,” 229-31.

<sup>152</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.14.

<sup>153</sup> Avitus. *Ep.* 72, (MGH AA 6.2: 94; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 334): “*ut mutantur praesentiae vices, quod Vienna abundant, Cabillonus obtineat. Hic non habemus, quod debeat expeti: illuc mittamus, quod libeat declinari. Et quia, quod dico, in via est, iam, si adhuc in loco retardatis, excipite, si iam redire disponitis, praeterite.*”

was an acceptable food to consume during a fast, if Ceretius ate the fish that Avitus sent, he could still technically participate in Avitus' fast.

Avitus' gift of fish, therefore, operates on at least three levels. First, Avitus' gift and letter communicate to Ceretius that Avitus values his friendship with Ceretius and desires to maintain it. Second, Avitus wanted to include Ceretius in the religious community in Vienne, as demonstrated by Avitus' invitation to Ceretius to come to Vienne for a festival. But if Ceretius were unable to come to Vienne, Avitus' gift of fish provided a way for Ceretius to participate in Avitus' fast. Ceretius could thus remain an active participant of Avitus' religious community from a distance. Finally, Avitus' decision to send a gift of fish as a metaphor for a fast reinforces fish as an acceptable food to eat while otherwise fasting.

Avitus' letter to Ceretius also poses a geographical problem: the Isere River empties into the Rhône near Valence, not Vienne.<sup>154</sup> However, Avitus was inviting Ceretius to Vienne, not Valence, for a festival. A few solutions can be suggested. First, manuscript tradition of the passage regarding the Isere River is problematic.<sup>155</sup> It is possible that Avitus was referring to the Gère River, which does debouche into the Rhône at Vienne, but the Latin has since become garbled during transcription. However, the Gère River is a minor river, and it is likely that it was not well enough known to be a recognizable landmark in Avitus' letter. Second, it is possible that Avitus really was

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<sup>154</sup> Shanzer and Wood mistakenly note that the Isere meets the Rhône at Vienne. (Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 333 n. 7) Yet this seems to be a happy mistake because it appears to have been the inspiration for the emendation of "Iaeriae" to "Iseriae." See note 149 in this chapter. The Gère River meets the Rhône at Vienne.

<sup>155</sup> See note 149 in this chapter.

inviting Ceretius to Valence. We know from the above letter (*Epistula 72* to Apollinaris) that Apollinaris hosted religious festivals to which he invited other elites. But this solution seems unlikely since the passage naming Vienne does not suffer the same textual difficulties as the passage concerning the Isere River. Furthermore, this solution requires us to assume that Avitus was inviting Ceretius not to his festival, but rather to Apollinaris'. A third, and more likely, solution is that Avitus was indeed inviting Ceretius to Vienne. The reference to the Isere River, then, could be either that Apollinaris had sent gifts of fish to Vienne for the festival (see *Epistula 72* to Apollinaris) or that the Isere River was large enough to lend its name to the region that included both Vienne and Valence. Whatever the correct solution to this geographic problem is, Ceretius certainly had more information than we modern readers do and understood what Avitus meant. Nonetheless, Avitus was using comparisons of local rivers and the fish found in them to creatively make his invitation to Ceretius.

That Ceretius had more information than we do is also evident in the vague phrasing of the last few sentences. The gist of the passage appears to be that Ceretius, the "citizen of Chalon," should receive what is plentiful in Vienne, that is both fests and fish from the Isere. But, Avitus had already sent a gift of fish that was *en route* to Ceretius. Why then might it have been Ceretius' pleasure to reject the gift of fish? Shanzer has suggested that the fish would have begun to stink by the time they arrived at Chalon-sur-Saône.<sup>156</sup> Joe Williams argues that the fish were intended to be received by the court

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<sup>156</sup> Shanzer, "Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul," 219 n. 21; Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 334 n. 2.

kitchen at Chalon-sur-Saône and that Ceretius should not delay his travels to wait for the fish to be cooked and served.<sup>157</sup> It would be Ceretius' pleasure to reject the gift of fish because he would be able to celebrate the festival with Avitus in person, instead of accepting the supposedly inferior fish as a substitute. Given the urgency of Avitus' invitation, I am inclined to agree with Williams. However, Shanzer's suggestion that fish could go bad while being transported raises the serious question of how Avitus' gifts were being transported. Avitus' letter to Maximus, bishop of Geneva, helps answer that question.

#### 4.4.3. *Letters 66 and 74: Avitus to Maximus*

Maximus was probably appointed bishop of Geneva in 508.<sup>158</sup> Since Geneva was under the metropolitan authority of the bishop of Vienne, Avitus consecrated Maximus as bishop. As Avitus died in 518, Avitus' correspondence with Maximus as bishop was in the last decade of Avitus' life. While Avitus was Maximus' elder and episcopal superior, the two men appear to have been on very friendly terms, as evidenced by the three surviving letters that Avitus sent Maximus.<sup>159</sup> All three letters are a part of Avitus' "festal letters" and all three mention food. I address two of these letters, Letters 66 and 74, here, and the third letter, Letter 86, below.

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<sup>157</sup> Joe Williams, "Letter Writing, Materiality, and Gifts in Late Antiquity: Some Perspectives on Material Culture," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 357.

<sup>158</sup> *PCBE* 4: 1305 (Maximus 8).

<sup>159</sup> Avitus, *Epp.* 66, 74, and 86.

Both Letters 66 and 74 address gifts of food that Maximus sent to Avitus. Letter 66 does not specify what Maximus sent to Avitus, Avitus just calls the gift “delicacies” – “*deliciae*,” and says that they were to be admired for their “quantity, timeliness, and dignity” – “*copia, tempore, dignitate*.”<sup>160</sup> They were timely because Maximus had sent the “delicacies” for a “*festivitas*”, which Avitus claims was a success because of Maximus’ gift. At the festival, “food for the body was as much in evidence as food for the soul – contrary to habit – was lacking.”<sup>161</sup> Avitus ends his letter with a desire to return the favor in person.

While this letter does not name the festival or describe the “delicacies” in more detail, it fits a similar pattern as Avitus’ letters to Apollinaris and Ceretius. In the aforementioned two letters, gifts of food were sent as part of an invitation to a festival or as a gift to make up for not being at the festival. In this case Maximus likely sent his gift of “delicacies” to make up for his absence. Avitus’ next letter to Maximus, however, provides more details about the “delicacies”, the circumstances under which they were sent, and the logistics of sending gifts of food.

In Letter 74, Avitus writes that Maximus had sent him a gift of fish and wine by means of a personal courier named Leonianus.<sup>162</sup> Elsewhere, Leonianus is identified as an archdeacon of Geneva.<sup>163</sup> In this letter, Avitus relates that he was not in Vienne. Instead,

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<sup>160</sup> Avitus, *Ep* 66, (MGH AA 6.2: 88).

<sup>161</sup> Avitus, *Ep*. 66 (MGH AA 6.2: 88; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 276): “*cui quantum accessit corporalium, tantum a consuetudine spiritalium defuit epularum*.”

<sup>162</sup> Avitus, *Ep*. 74.

<sup>163</sup> Avitus, *Ep*. 86. (MGH AA 6.2:95): “*Leonianus archidiaconus*”

Avitus was visiting monasteries in Grigny, about half-way between Lyon and Vienne. Nonetheless, the courier Leonianus found Avitus and dutifully delivered the “*deliciae*” or “delicacies.” Avitus claims that Leonianus was greedy and desired to consume the “delicacies” but restrained himself. Avitus returns to Leonianus’ supposed greed at the end of this letter and in Letter 86.

Avitus’ Letter 74 to Maximus contains several details regarding the transportation of the gifts that Maximus sent Avitus. First, what were the gifts sent by Maximus? Avitus refers to the gifts generally as “*deliciae*,” “*eulogias*,” and “*benedictione*.” We have already seen Avitus refer to gifts of food as “*deliciae*,” but “*eulogias*” and “*benedictione*” are interesting. “*Eulogias*,” is a word of Greek origin meaning praise, good news, blessings, and by extension, gifts in later Latin.<sup>164</sup> It is essentially a Greek synonym for “*benedictione*.” Both primarily mean praise or blessing. Avitus’ use of these words shows that he attributed spiritual significance to the gifts that Maximus sent. But this does not help us to know what exactly those gifts were.

Avitus specifies two kinds of food in the gifts that he sent: wine and fish. The word for wine here is “*recentes*.” Goetzer translates “*recentes*” as “*rasades de vin à la glace*.”<sup>165</sup> Shanzer and Wood follow Goetzer with their translation of “chilled wine.” Although “*recentes*” more literally means “young wine,” Avitus contrasts “*recentes*” with a “burning gullet,” which points to Avitus thinking of “*recentes*” as cold.<sup>166</sup> Avitus

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<sup>164</sup> Avitus *Ep.* 74; *DMLBS* “*eulogia*.”

<sup>165</sup> Henri Goetzer, *Le Latin de Saint Avit* (Paris, 1909), 559.

<sup>166</sup> Avitus *Ep.* 74 (MGH AA 6.2: 91; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 279): “*ad multiplicandas recentes gulae calenti*” – “...in order to multiply glasses of chilled wine for a burning gullet...”

refers to “*recentes*” one other time, but it is also in a situation in which he could not drink it during a fast.<sup>167</sup> Whatever kind of wine “*recentes*” was, it was off limits during fasts.

The final word of Avitus’ letter to Maximus is “*piscibus*” and it is only here that we learn that fish were a part of the “*deliciae*” sent by Maximus. Avitus is not any more specific than that. But, in noting the difference in fish between Geneva and Vienne, it is possible to venture a guess. Geneva and Vienne are both on the Rhône River and so have largely the same fish varieties with one exception: trout (*salmo trutta*). Trout are not found in the Rhône drainage, except in the basin of Lake Geneva.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, Maximus had access to trout and Avitus did not, making trout a top candidate for the kind of fish that Maximus sent to Avitus.

The time of year that Leonianus, Maximus’ courier, was traveling may have assisted in keeping the gifts of fish and wine cool. Maximus might have sent his gift during Lent. This is not stated outright, rather, it is derived from a rather cryptic statement, “The more effectively to excite my justifiable displeasure at you, the one hungering sent what the one who lusted after it could not gobble down.”<sup>169</sup> Shanzer and Wood suggest that “the hungering one” is Maximus who is fasting during Lent and that Avitus was “the one who lusted,” but since Avitus was also fasting for Lent, he was not

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<sup>167</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86.

<sup>168</sup> A.N. Svetovidov, “Salmonidae,” in *Fishes of the north-eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean*, vol. 1, eds. P.J.P. Whitehead, M.-L. Bauchot, J.-C. Hureau, J. Nielsen and E. Tortonese. 373-385. (Paris: UNESCO, 1984). [<https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Salmo-trutta.html>]

<sup>169</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 74, (MGH AA 6.2: 91; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 278): “*Adeo ob insultationem meam in vos iustius excitandam misit esuriens, quod vorare non potuit concupiscens.*”

able to consume what Maximus sent.<sup>170</sup> Avitus indicates that he gave his portion of Maximus' gift of wine, the "*recentes*," to Leonianus, "As far as cold wine (*de recentibus*) is concerned, because you have asked me to, I both surrender my share and multiply his (Leonianus')." <sup>171</sup> Of course, this raises the unanswerable question of why Maximus sent Avitus a gift of food that he could not consume, but that Leonianus, an archdeacon, could. Nonetheless, this appears to be the case as both Maximus and Avitus were fasting from "*recentes*", but not Leonianus.

While Avitus rejected Maximus' gift of wine, Avitus concludes his letter by asking that limits on Leonianus' greed "be enforced for fish," which suggests that Avitus accepted the gifts of fish.<sup>172</sup> Maximus' gifts of wine and fish and Avitus' rejection of the wine and acceptance of the fish clearly marks out fish as acceptable and wine as unacceptable to consume during a fast. Therefore, even though Avitus' tone in this letter is light-hearted, he is engaging in serious religious dialog regarding proper limits of feasting and fasting.

The fact that Maximus and Avitus were fasting, as suggested by Shanzer, points to Maximus sending his gift during Lent.<sup>173</sup> Easter for the years 513-518, the possible

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<sup>170</sup> Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 277.

<sup>171</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 74, (MGH AA 6.2: 91; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 279): "*Nam curabo ego quoque, quod eum velle cognosco, quo, cum simile aliquid de vestra benedictione eruerem, ad multiplicandas recentes gulae calenti...*"

<sup>172</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 74, (MGH AA 6.2: 91; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 279): "...*si non excogitator modus in calicibus, ponatur in piscibus.*"

<sup>173</sup> Shanzer, "Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul," 229-30; Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 277.

dates for this letter, ranged from March 28 to April 21.<sup>174</sup> If Shanzer is correct, this means that Leonianus made his journey between the end of February and mid-April. The modern average high temperature in Geneva in February is 44 degrees Fahrenheit, in March 53 degrees Fahrenheit, and in April 60 degrees Fahrenheit.<sup>175</sup> Average temperatures at the beginning of the sixth-century were actually around 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit (3 degrees Celsius) cooler than the present.<sup>176</sup> These temperatures are cool enough that they could have helped keep the fish and wine relatively cool long enough to make the three to four day journey, especially if Leonianus had access to cold water from the Rhône during the first leg of his trip.

Avitus has left another clue about Maximus' gift that could help further unpack Leonianus' journey. Avitus writes, "when I will have excavated (*eruo*) something similar from your kind gift..."<sup>177</sup> The word that Shanzer and Wood have rendered "excavated" is *eruo*, which comes from the word *eruo*, whose primary meaning is "to cast forth" or "throw out," with a secondary meaning of "to dig, tear, or pluck out."<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> In 513 Easter was on April 9  
In 514 Easter was on April 1  
In 515 Easter was on April 21  
In 516 Easter was on April 5  
In 517 Easter was on March 28  
In 518 Easter was on April 17

<sup>175</sup> "Climate and Weather Averages in Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland," *Time and Date AS*.  
<https://www.timeanddate.com/weather/switzerland/geneva/climate>, Accessed Nov. 19, 2022.

<sup>176</sup> Ulf Büntgen, *et al.* "2500 Years of European Climate Variability and Human Susceptibility," *Science* 331, issue 6017, (Feb. 2011): 581, fig. 4.

<sup>177</sup> Avitus *Ep.* 74, (MGH AA 6.2: 91; Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 278-79): "*cum simile aliquid de vestra benedictione eruo*"

<sup>178</sup> Lewis and Short "*eruo*"

Avitus seems to be indicating that fish and wine are packaged in such a way that they would require digging through packaging. Shanzer and Wood suggest that the fish and wine would have been packed in sawdust and ice. It must be noted that average low temperatures in Geneva in February are 30 degrees Fahrenheit, below freezing. Maximus probably had access to ice, with which to package fish and wine, during at least the first few weeks of Lent.

In summary, Maximus sent gifts of “*deliciae*” on multiple occasions to Avitus that happened to coincide with festivals and fasts. By sending these gifts Maximus maintained his relationship to Avitus, who expressed his desire to reciprocate Maximus’ gifts of food in person, thus continuing the relationship. On at least one occasion, Maximus sent wine and fish. Although the kind of fish is not specified, trout makes a strong candidate. However, Avitus rejected the gift of wine as unsuitable for him to consume during his fast but accepted the fish. Avitus, therefore, clearly marked fish out as acceptable to eat during a Lenten fast, and wine as unacceptable. Given that Maximus was sending gifts of fish and chilled wine during Lent, it is distinctly likely that he had access to ice to keep them cold. Leonianus’ journey would have been just short enough to deliver the cold fish and wine.

#### 4.4.4. Letter 86: Leonianus to Sapaudus

The final letter in Avitus’ collection that addresses food is in a category all its own. Whereas the previous letters were either letters of gratitude for gifts of food or letters accompanying gifts of food, this letter describes a feast in a way that was intended

to be humorous on multiple levels. Nonetheless, this letter confirms that sixth-century Gallo-Roman bishops participated in feasts that followed earlier patterns of Roman feasting that combined cuisines sourced from the sea and land.

The humorous character of this letter is evident from the salutation. This letter is ostensibly from Leonianus, whom we have already met as the archdeacon from Geneva who was the messenger between Maximus and Avitus. The letter is addressed to an otherwise unattested Sapaudus.<sup>179</sup> However, there is little doubt that Avitus is the real author of the letter.<sup>180</sup> Not only is this letter embedded in Avitus' letter collection, but manuscript marginalia also indicate that Avitus is the real author.<sup>181</sup> The identification of Sapaudus is less certain, but Shanzer and Wood make a strong argument for identifying Sapaudus as a pseudonym for Maximus, bishop of Geneva.<sup>182</sup> Therefore, Avitus has taken on the persona of Leonianus, whom Avitus had accused of gluttony in another letter and gives Maximus the persona of a certain Sapaudus.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *PCBE* 4: 1705 (Sapaudus 2).

<sup>180</sup> Here I depart from the *PCBE*, which distinguishes between Leonianus the archdeacon and Leonianus the letter carrier because there is no positive evidence to suggest that they were the same person. (*PCBE* 4: 1130 (Leonianus 2); *PCBE* 4: 1131 (Leonianus 3)).

<sup>181</sup> Manuscript L includes the note "*dictate ab Avito episcopo*" (Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 279.)

<sup>182</sup> The identification of Sapaudus with Maximus depends on the similarity between the name Sapaudus and Sapaudia, the region in which Geneva is located, the fact that the recipient is expected to be able to write verse, that Maximus and Avitus have a history of sending jesting food letters, and the shared acquaintance with Leonianus. Shanzer previously argued that Sapaudus' supposed vanity for his long hair points to the recipient being a non-Roman. (Shanzer, "Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul," 232). More recently, however, Shanzer revises her view to argue that Sapaudus was Maximus, bishop of Vienne. (Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 279-80).

<sup>183</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 74.

The context for this letter is that a prince, likely Sigismund, whose court was in Geneva, had invited Avitus to a feast that Avitus was unable to attend, but that Maximus was able to attend. Maximus then sent Avitus a letter describing the royal feast that Avitus had missed out on. However, this feast appears to have been hosted during an extended ecclesiastic fast as Maximus abstained from certain foods at the feast and Avitus describes his own fasting. It is possible that the Burgundian's who practiced Arian Christianity, had already completed their Lenten fast and had already celebrated Easter, while Catholic clergy were still in their Lenten fast since they had not celebrated Easter yet.<sup>184</sup> The difference in the Arian and Catholic liturgical calendars could explain why the Burgundian royal court was feasting while the Catholic clergy were still fasting. That the Catholic clergy were invited to the royal feast, in which foods were served that the fasting Catholic clergy were not supposed to eat, placed proper eating practices at the center of debate regarding proper religious observance.

In order to respond to Maximus' description of the royal feast that he attended Avitus turned to humor, drawing on classical Roman comedy. Avitus complains that Maximus can safely describe the meal now that it is over and that he no longer must share. To add insult to injury, while Maximus was feasting, Avitus was enduring a fast. This letter derives humor from the feast versus fast dichotomy, which has parallels in the classical dichotomy of the rich feaster and poor rustic.<sup>185</sup> In other sections of this letter,

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<sup>184</sup> Shanzer, "Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul," 229-230.

<sup>185</sup> Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 281; Shanzer, "Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul," 228-29 and 232-35.

Avitus draws on language that Sidonius Apollinaris used to describe a gluttonous “parasite,” Gnatho.<sup>186</sup> Avitus uses the language of classical comedy to humorously contrast a royal feast with an episcopal fast, while engaging in religious dialog about what foods are acceptable to eat during a fast.

The royal feast that Maximus attended appears to have been a Roman style banquet that combined foods sourced from both the land and the sea. Avitus begins his letter by focusing the reader’s attention on the food served at the feast, which he claims was “shining with delicacies of the land and sea.”<sup>187</sup> Avitus only named two dishes in his second-hand description of the feast Maximus attended: peacock encased in mincemeat, and scallops. The combination of foods from land and sea mirrors the feast remains discovered at the ‘Sanctuary of the Cybele’ and at *clos de l’Antiquaille* and the feast described by Macrobius in the Saturnalia.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, the Roman culinary text *Apicius* describes a dish that combined peacock and mincemeat.<sup>189</sup>

The combination of different kinds of foods at the feast meant that Maximus, who was fasting, had to carefully pick which foods were licit to eat while fasting and which were illicit. The peacock wrapped in mincemeat posed a particular challenge to Maximus. Avitus wrote, “...a peacock wrapped in mincemeat, with its devourable shield, held off

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<sup>186</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.13; Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 280; Shanzer, “Bishops, Letters, Fast, Food, and Feast in Later Roman Gaul,” 228.

<sup>187</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86, (MGH AA 6.2: 95; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 282, adapted by the author): “*pompam convivi principalis marinis deliciis terrestribusque flugentem*”

<sup>188</sup> See pages 200 and 204.

<sup>189</sup> For peacock and mincemeat, see: *Apicius* 2.2.6. For mincemeat (*isicia*), see: *Apicius* 2.1-2 and Grocock and Grainger, *Apicius*, 347-48.

your appetite...”<sup>190</sup> It appears that the peacock was covered in a layer of mincemeat.

Maximus, on account of a fast, was technically not allowed to eat the mincemeat, which may have been made from beef, pork, or lamb. However, peacock was permitted during Maximus’ fast, because it is a bird and did not count as “meat.”<sup>191</sup> Therefore, Maximus had to wait for the mincemeat layer to be removed for the other guests to enjoy before he could eat the peacock.

Avitus lampoons Maximus’ restraint in waiting until the mincemeat had been removed to eat the peacock by describing how Maximus then ate without restraint. According to Avitus, once Maximus started eating, he ate so vigorously that he drank his food, chewed his cups, and generally stuffed himself.<sup>192</sup> In essence, Avitus points out that Maximus may have followed the letter of the law in fasting, but still indulged in a feast. Avitus makes a similar point when he describes Maximus’ consumption of scallops.

Avitus mentioned Maximus’ consumption of scallops at the royal feast to make a joke at Maximus’ expense. Avitus addressed Maximus, writing, “Paying no attention to your uncombed hair, you combed your gut, stuffed with an excess of sea-combs

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<sup>190</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86, (MGH AA 6.2: 95; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 282-83): “...*quod appetitum interioribus inhiantem devorabili tegmini paavus isicio conclusus excludit...*”

<sup>191</sup> See pages 221-222.

<sup>192</sup> Avitus *Ep.* 86, (MGH AA 6.2: 95-96; Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 283): “*Sicque factum est, ut bibendo cibos, pocula ruminando, primam prandii partem esuriens querelis, medietatem comedens rapinis, ultimam satur lacrimis \*\*\* occupatione nec tibi dixerim profuisse, quod defui.*” – “This is how it came about that by drinking food and by chewing cups, in thirsting after the first part of the meal and complaining, in swooping down and gobbling the middle part, and, finally stuffed, <in vomiting> with tears in the last part, <...> †by occupation† I would not say that my absence was of any advantage to you.” Not only is the Latin in the passage obscure, it is also fraught with textual difficulties. Nonetheless, Avitus’ general point is clear, Maximus ate a lot of food at the royal feast.

(*pectinibus*).<sup>193</sup> Avitus' word for scallop here, "*pectinibus*" from "*pecten*" is, literally, a comb, but has a long history of being used to indicate sea-scallops.<sup>194</sup> The ribbed shell of the scallop apparently resembled a comb in the Roman imagination. Avitus puns on the dual meaning of "*pecten*" to accuse Maximus of grooming his gut by eating scallops. Avitus' point is that Maximus ate plenty of scallops at the feast.

Avitus contrasts Maximus' consumption of scallops and other "delicacies" with his own meager meals. Avitus claims that he is filled with greens and turnips.<sup>195</sup> He goes on to write, "I have plenty of vegetables – those the earth produces, not the sea! In these [circumstances] I cannot even remember what certain oysters of blessed memory were like once upon a time!"<sup>196</sup> Unfortunately, it is not clear why Avitus had not had oysters for a long time. He may have simply not had access to them due to a slowdown in the trade of oysters. Avitus may have also included shellfish in his fast. If Avitus were indeed including shellfish in his fast, then Avitus was subtly critiquing Maximus' consumption of scallops at the royal feast.

Any critique that Avitus had of Maximus' behavior at the royal feast is cushioned by Avitus' use of humor and by the fact that Avitus also wanted to attend a feast. Avitus concludes the letter by writing, "I will eventually be able to forget my customary state of

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<sup>193</sup> Avitus *Ep.* 86, (MGH AA 6.2: 95; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 282): "*cum inpexum neglegens crinem alvum nimietate contretam pectinibus pexuisti.*"

<sup>194</sup> Lewis and Short "*pecten*"; Varro, *De lingua Latina*, 5.12 (77) (LCL 333:74-75); Apuleius, *Apol.* 34.6, (LCL 534: 92-93).

<sup>195</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86, (MGH AA 6.2: 96): "...impleor oleribus et inflor napis..."

<sup>196</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86, (MGH AA 6.2: 96; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 283-84): "*abundo leguminibus, sed quae tellus, non pontus emisit. Inter haec qualia fuerint bonae memoriae quondam ostrea, nec recordor.*"

domestic misery – provided our master order me to attend a feast at a time when you cannot!”<sup>197</sup> Avitus’ jesting tone and jealousy of Maximus’ opportunity to join a royal feast allowed Avitus to engage in religious dialog about the proper limits of feasting and fasting without damaging his relationship with Maximus. An important part of the religious dialog about what constituted proper and improper foods while feasting was where the foods came from.

#### 4.5. Conclusion: The intersection of place and food in Avitus’ Letters

The letters of Avitus feature fish, oysters, scallops, wine, and even a peacock wrapped in mincemeat. Most of these letters are light-hearted, and their writing coincided with various feasts or fasts. Avitus only specified a single kind of fish in a single instance, “sole.”<sup>198</sup> This is not a taxonomical identification of this fish with the species known today as *solea solea*. Rather, Avitus was more interested in making a pun with the word “*solea*,” which could refer to a brown flatfish or the sole of a shoe. Avitus’ also puns on a Latin word for scallops, “*pecten*,” which also means “comb.” Instead of specific names, Avitus more frequently identifies fish by where the fish were sourced. These descriptions range from generalizations about the environment from where the fish were sourced to the names of specific rivers.

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<sup>197</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86, (MGH AA 6.2: 96; trans. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 284): “...*tum familiaris miseriae oblivisci potero, si epulo suo dominus noster sic adesse me iubeat, ut adesse contingat.*”

<sup>198</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 72.

Avitus signals when foodstuffs were sourced from the sea. Apollinaris' gifts to Avitus were "*mariniis...copiis*" – "abundances from the sea."<sup>199</sup> Avitus indicated that the feast in Geneva that he missed out on included "*marinis deliciis terrestribusque*," – "delicacies from the land and the sea."<sup>200</sup> When Avitus was lamenting his strict diet, he claimed to have vegetables that the earth produced, not the sea (*pontus*).<sup>201</sup> Avitus was probably not receiving shipments of fresh fish from the Mediterranean. But he was certainly consuming imported oysters. Other mollusks, preserved fish, and high-quality garum cannot be ruled out either. The distance that these oysters and other products of the sea had to be imported added to their value, but also posed the problem of spoiling.<sup>202</sup> Anthimus, the sixth-century physician writing in Metz, relates that, "There is no need for another type of poison if one eats oysters that are smelling."<sup>203</sup>

Avitus also wrote about foods sourced from freshwater environments. In his letter to Apollinaris, Avitus describes a gift of "*octo palustres quisquiliis*" – "eight marsh trifles" and "sole." Avitus' invocation of marshes as a source of food echoes some traditional foods eaten in Vienne and Lyon. Today, the Dombes region, north-east of

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<sup>199</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 72.

<sup>200</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86.

<sup>201</sup> Avitus, *Ep.* 86.

<sup>202</sup> Jamie Kreiner, citing archeological evidence of seafood remains in Italy and North Africa, has noted how distance from the sea is correlated with the value of fish as a luxury commodity. (Jamie Kreiner, *Legions of Pigs*, 154-55.)

<sup>203</sup> Anthimus, *De observatione ciborum*, 49 (Valentinus Rose, *Anthimi de observatione ciborum epistula ad theudericum regem francorum* (Lipsae: Teubneri, 1877), 16; trans. Grant, *Anthimus: On the Observance of Foods*, 67): "*ostrea vero si olent et quis manducaverit, altero veneno opus non habet.*"

Lyon, between the Rhône and Saône Rivers, is known for its many lakes, general marshiness, and its contribution to lyonnaise cuisine ranging from eels to waterfowl.<sup>204</sup>

Avitus also named which bodies of water fish came from as seen by naming the Saône and Isere Rivers in his letter to Ceretius. Avitus' invocation of specific rivers is similar to other late antique Gallic aristocrats' way of describing fish. Ruricius of Limoges received gifts of fish from the Dordogne and Vézère Rivers.<sup>205</sup> Sidonius envisions a competition between the fish of the Adour and Garonne Rivers.<sup>206</sup> When Avitus compares the fish of the Saône with the fish of the Isere in his letter to Ceretius, the point is not that he was sending fish that Ceretius did not have access to. In fact, the Saône and the Isere are both part of the Rhône watershed and, as such, have very similar fish species. Instead, Avitus was inviting Ceretius to a religious festival. Avitus names the Saône and Isere to highlight the distance between himself and Ceretius both in respect to geographical distance and religious observance. Although Ceretius likely had access to the kind of fish that Avitus sent him, Avitus' gift of fish was still important. First, the gift of fish that Avitus sent to Ceretius affirmed the good standing of Avitus' and Ceretius' relationship. Second, the gift of fish allowed Ceretius to 'participate' in Avitus' religious festival from a distance. Third, Avitus' gift of fish as an invitation to a religious festival requiring fasting affirmed that fish were an appropriate food to eat during a religious fast.

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<sup>204</sup> Bill Buford, *Dirt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020), 242.

<sup>205</sup> Ruricius, *Epp.* 2.45 and 2.54.

<sup>206</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.12.7.

That Avitus identified fish and other foods by which body of water they came from also reveals a mental link between rivers and the fish in them. When Avitus thought of marshes, he also thought of “marsh trifles.” When Avitus thought of rivers, one of the things that he thought of was fish. When Avitus thought about the sea, he also thought of seafood. The importance of foods from marshes, rivers, and the sea to Avitus extended beyond their caloric content. Avitus both sent and received gifts of fish and other foodstuffs, in order to maintain his social ties as a late antique Gallic aristocrat and in order to creatively engage in dialog with his fellow bishops and aristocrats about the proper limits of feasting and fasting.

Chapter 5  
*Landscape in the Life of the Jura Fathers*

The *Vita Patrum Jurensium*, or the *Life of the Jura Fathers*, is a hagiography covering the lives of Romanus<sup>1</sup>, Lupicinus<sup>2</sup>, and Eugendus<sup>3</sup>, three of the first abbots of a cluster of monasteries in the Jura Mountains in and around modern St. Claude in the fifth century.<sup>4</sup> The author is an anonymous monk who lived under the rule of Eugendus at the monastery of Condadisco during the early sixth century.<sup>5</sup> This monk wrote the *Vita Patrum Jurensium* (henceforth, *VPJ*) between 512 and 515.<sup>6</sup> The *VPJ* is addressed

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<sup>1</sup> PCBE 4: 1620-1625 (Romanus 3)

<sup>2</sup> PCBE 4: 1194-1199 (Lupicinus 4)

<sup>3</sup> PCBE 4: 679-683 (Eugendus)

<sup>4</sup> Bruno Krusch argued in 1896 that the *VPJ* could not have been written before the beginning of the ninth century. (*MGH SS rer. Merov.* 3: 128) Krusch's objections to the *VPJ*'s authenticity have been met by Duchesne (Louis Duchesne, "La vie des Pères du Jura," in *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, tome 18, (1898): 3-16) and Martine (SC 142: 14-44) and the *VPJ* is currently accepted as authentic with a date of composition in the early sixth century. Romanus and Lupicinus were the first two abbots and Eugendus was the fourth. The third abbot, Minausius (Martine, SC 142: 75-76), is ignored by the hagiographer, who argues that Eugendus was divinely ordained to succeed Romanus and Lupicinus.

<sup>5</sup> Adalbert de Vogüé has suggested that the author could be Viventiolus, a leader of the monastery at Condadisco after the death of Eugendus and later bishop of Lyon. (Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité*, vol. VIII: *De la Vie des Pères du Jura aux oeuvres de Césaire d'Arles (500-542)* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2003), 123-6.) While Viventiolus does match the requirements for being the author the *VPJ*, he personally knew the abbot Eugendus, was at Condadisco in the years immediately following Eugendus' death and was in contact with monastic and ecclesiastic leaders in the region, the evidence is entirely circumstantial and does not rule out the possibility that another unnamed monk at Condadisco wrote it. Although Viventiolus is the best candidate for the author of the *VPJ*, in the absence of any definitive proof of authorship, the author of the *VPJ* must remain anonymous.

<sup>6</sup> Martine argued for a date of composition around 520. (Martine, SC 142: 57). Vivian follows Martine. (Vivian *et al.*, *The Lives of the Jura Fathers*, Cistercian Studies 178 (Kalamazoo, MI & Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1999), 51.) However, Adalbert de Vogüé, convincingly argues for a date between 512 and 515 based on the apparent absence of the *laus perennis* at the monastery of the Agaune, for which the *VPJ* was intended. (Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité*, vol. VIII, 126-7.) In this dating de Vogüé follows Ian Wood (Ian Wood, "A prelude to Columbanus: the monastic achievement in the Burgundian territories," in *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, eds. H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan, BAR International Series 113, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 3-32), 15.) and Masai (François Masai, "La "Vita partum iurensium" et les débuts du monachisme à Saint-Maurice d'Agaune," in *Festschrift Bernard Bischoff zu seinem 65 Geburtstag*, eds. Autenrieth and Bruhnholz (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1971), 56-57.) For an argument that the *VPJ* dates to the 530s, see Anne-Marie Helvétius, "Normes et pratiques de la vie monastique en Gaule avant 1050 : présentation des sources écrites," in *La vie quotidienne des moines en Orient et en Occident (IV<sup>e</sup>-X<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, vol. 1, *L'état des*

specifically to John and Armentarius, two monks at Agaune, modern St. Maurice, Switzerland.<sup>7</sup>

The author of the *VPJ* drew from a wide range of monastic literature. He mentions the Egyptian monks Antony and Paul the Hermit as explicit models for Romanus.<sup>8</sup> He was also clearly familiar with the *Life of Martin* and the *Dialogues* by Sulpicius Severus, and the *Historia Monachorum* and *Vitae Patrum* as translated by Rufinus.<sup>9</sup> The author of the *VPJ* also mentions the works of John Cassian and the monastic rules of Basil, Pachomius, and of Lérins.<sup>10</sup> In many ways the *VPJ* is typical of hagiography. It records the background of its holy subjects, reports their miracles, exalts them as moral examples, and most importantly demonstrates why they are particularly holy. The *VPJ* also has a second purpose. The hagiographer wrote the *VPJ*, at least in part, in order to inform a kind of monastic practice that was tailored to the local conditions of Condadisco and Agaune. One of the ways in which the author of the *VPJ*

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*sources*, eds. Olivier Delouis et Maria Mossakowska-Gaubert (Le Caire: Institute Français d'Archéologie Orientale & Athènes: École Française d'Athènes, 2015), 383.

<sup>7</sup> *VPJ* 1.

<sup>8</sup> *VPJ* 7 and 12.

<sup>9</sup> *VPJ* 145; Vivian, *The Life of the Jura Fathers*, 50-1; 67-8; 168 n. 39; Martine, SC 142: 52.

<sup>10</sup> *VPJ* 174. For the study of early monastic rules in Gaul, see Adalbert de Vogüé, *Les Règles Monastiques Anciennes (400-700)*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental, fasc. 46, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985); Adalbert de Vogüé, *Les Règles des Saints Pères*, vols. 1-2, Sources Chrétiennes 297-298, (Paris: Éditions de Cerf, 1982); Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'Antiquité*, vols. 1-12. (Paris: Éditions de Cerf, 1991-2008); Albrecht Diem, *Das Monastische Experiment: Die Rolle der Keuschheit bei der Entstehung des westlichen Klosterwesens*, Vita regularis, 24, (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2005), 131-272; Albrecht Diem, "Inventing the Holy Rule: Some Observations on the History of Monastic Normative Observance in the Early Medieval West," (in *Western Monasticism 'ante litteram'*, eds. Hendrik Dey and Elizabeth Fentress (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 53-84; Helvétius, "Normes et pratiques de la vie monastique en Gaule avant 1050 : présentation des sources écrites," 379-386; Albrecht Diem and Philip Rousseau, "Monastic Rules (Fourth to Ninth Century)," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, eds., Alison Beach and Isabelle Cochelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 162-194.

both promotes the sanctity of his subjects and justifies the need for their own particular monastic practice is through the use of the local landscape.

At the beginning of the *VPJ*, the anonymous author uses landscape descriptions to draw connections between Condadisco and the Egyptian desert. The hagiographer mentions the Egyptian monks Antony and Paul the Hermit by name and finds parallels between the Jura Mountains and the Egyptian desert. For example, Jerome describes Paul the Hermit finding a cave at the bottom a rocky mountain (*repperit saxeam montem ad cuius radices...spelunca*) in the Egyptian desert.<sup>11</sup> Paul the Hermit found a palm tree and spring in the cave, which he then chose to inhabit.<sup>12</sup> The hagiographer self-consciously models the founding moment of the monastery at Condadisco on *The Life of Paul the Hermit*. The *VPJ* describes Romanus finding a fir tree at the foot of a rocky mountain (*repperit ...sub radice saxosi montis...densissimam abietem*).<sup>13</sup> The *VPJ* makes the parallel between Paul the Hermit and Romanus explicit, stating: “Just as the palm tree once covered Paul, this tree [the fir tree] now covered Paul’s disciple.”<sup>14</sup> For the author of the *VPJ*, the Jura Mountains are just as much of a desert as Egypt. Thus, as James Goehring argues, in the *VPJ* the desert has simply become a “cipher” for separation from worldly affairs and that the ideological power of the desert has overcome the geographic differences between the Jura and Egypt.<sup>15</sup> The hagiographer’s description of the Jura

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<sup>11</sup> Jerome, *Life of Paul the Hermit* 5 (SC 508: 152).

<sup>12</sup> Jerome, *Life of Paul the Hermit* 5.

<sup>13</sup> *VPJ* 7 (SC 142: 246).

<sup>14</sup> *VPJ* 7 (SC 142: 246): “*uelut quondam palma Paulum, ita texit ista discipulum.*” For further instances of the *VPJ*’s literary reliance on other monastic literature, see Martine, SC 142: 247, n. 2; de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l’antiquité*, vol. VIII, 48.

<sup>15</sup> James Goehring, “The Dark Side of the Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian Myth of the Desert,” in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, ed. Martin and Miller (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 145.

Mountains as the desert then serves to legitimate the monastic practice of the Jura fathers Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus. But that is only part of the story of landscapes in the *VPJ*.

The *VPJ* is also rooted deeply in the experiences of the monks in the Jura Mountains. Condadisco is located in the Haut-Jura, a region in the southern Jura characterized by steep mountains, narrow valleys, and harsh winters. The monks of Condadisco needed to develop institutions in response to this rugged landscape and climate, just as monks elsewhere did.<sup>16</sup> I suspect that the author's personal experience with these conditions is what lies behind the "studious naturalism," or a focus on material conditions that Conrad Leyser observes in the *VPJ*.<sup>17</sup> The resulting monastic practice was better suited for monasteries in mountainous regions in the Jura Mountains and Alps as opposed to those in Mediterranean climates. Having a monastic practice suited to a mountain environment is important because the *VPJ* was sent by the anonymous author to a new monastic establishment at Agaune, site of the martyrdom of the Theban Legion, which corresponds to modern St. Maurice, Switzerland. The monastery of St. Maurice is also in the mountains. It is located approximately twenty-five kilometers southeast of Lake Geneva in the Alps along the banks of the Rhône. For the monastic establishment at Agaune to succeed, it needed a monastic practice that was widely accepted as legitimate and whose particularities were suited to a mountain landscape.

In the following analysis I highlight the ways in which aspects of the Jura Mountains' landscape shaped the *VPJ*. I begin with how the anonymous hagiographer crafted a literary desert for the monk Romanus out of a mountain landscape using

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<sup>16</sup> For monks in Egypt adapting to their environment, see Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt: An Archeological Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 280-284.

<sup>17</sup> Conrad Leyser, "Angels, Monks, and Demons in the Early Medieval West," in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 17.

language that mirrors descriptions of the Egyptian desert. Second, I consider how the monks worked in and altered their landscape to support a growing monastery. I do this by bringing our attention to the importance of the monks' tools, axes and hoes, to both the monastery and the narrative of the *VPJ*. I then address the monks' measures for handling cold winter weather and, finally, the roads that connected Condadisco to the surrounding communities. This analysis of the *VPJ* demonstrates how local landscapes shape literary works. In this case, the landscape of the Jura Mountains provided the conditions to which the author of the *VPJ* responded when he crafted a model of monastic practice for the monastery at Agaune.

Before I begin, a quick disclaimer is necessary: I am not particularly concerned with the *VPJ*'s conception of the space of the monastery at Condadisco. The study of monastic spaces has proven to be a rich field of study, finding especially fertile ground in studies of late antique Egyptian monasticism.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the monks at Condadisco certainly had a clear sense of what counted as “inside” or “outside” their monastery.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the archeological remains of the earliest stages of the monastic settlement at Condadisco do not survive, even though we know the general area that the monastery would have occupied.<sup>20</sup> This lack of archeological evidence specific to Condadisco's

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<sup>18</sup> For general studies of monastic space, see Hendrik Dey and Elizabeth Fentress, eds., *Western Monasticism 'ante litteram': The Spaces of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); Michel Lauwers and Matthew Mattingly, “Constructing Monastic Space in Early and Central Medieval West (Fifth to Twelfth Century),” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism*, ed. Alison Beach and Isabelle Cochelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 317-339. For a 2017 study of Egyptian monastic landscapes, see Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt: An Archeological Reconstruction*.

<sup>19</sup> *VPJ* 73, 126, and 153.

<sup>20</sup> The paucity of archeological evidence for the earliest western monasteries is a well-known problem in the field of western monasticism, see Kim Bowes, “Inventing Ascetic Space: Houses, Monasteries and the “Archeology of Monasticism,” in *Western Monasticism 'ante litteram'*, ed. Hendrik Dey and Elizabeth Fentress (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 315-351; Cécile Treffort, “Des mots aux choses : traces de la vie quotidienne des moines en Gaule avant l'an mil,” in *La vie quotidienne des moines en Orient et en Occident (IV<sup>e</sup>-X<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, vol. 1, L'état des sources, eds. Olivier Delouis and Maria Mossakowska-Gaubert

monastery in the fifth and sixth centuries makes the sort of spatial analysis that I carried out in Chapter 3 for Sidonius Apollinaris and Lyon impossible for Condadisco. Rather, in this chapter, I focus on the relationship between the monks and their general surrounding landscape and the climate of the Jura Mountains.

### 5.1. Landscapes and Monastic Rules

The anonymous hagiographer addresses the *VPJ* to two monks, John and Armentarius, at what appears to be the recently founded monastery of St. Maurice in Agaune.<sup>21</sup> It also appears that the hagiographer might have sent a monastic rule to John and Armentarius along with the *VPJ*. The possible existence of such a rule is a matter of scholarly dispute that depends on the interpretation of the conclusion of the *VPJ*, in which the hagiographer refers to some unnamed *instituta* in addition to the hagiography itself:

And if also rustic babbling will not be able to sate your souls, since philosophy has been spurned for a long-time, then the institutes (*instituta*), which I arranged from knowledge (*de informatione*) of your monastery, that is the coenobium of Agaune, at the urging of the holy priest Marinus, abbot of the island of Lérins, will splendidly fulfill your desires as much on account of the distinguished

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(Le Caire: Institute Français d'Archéologie Orientale & Athènes: École Française d'Athènes, 2015), 362-364; Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom and Hendrik Dey, "The Archaeology of the Earliest Monasteries," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, ed. Alison Beach and Isabelle Cochelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 85-94.

<sup>21</sup> *VPJ* 2.

The monastery at St. Maurice was endowed by the Burgundian King Sigisbert in 515. However, Sigibert appears to have augmented a previously established monastic community, as argued by de Vogüé (de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité*, vol. VIII, 43-44 and 126-127.) and Masai (François Masai, "La "Vita partum iurensium" et les débuts du monachisme à Saint-Maurice d'Agaune," 68-69.). John and Armentarius would have been a part of this earlier foundation.

institutes (*institutionis insignibus*) as on account of the authority of the one ordering it, with Christ helping.<sup>22</sup>

Adalbert de Vogüé and François Masai have argued that the unnamed *instituta* are a lost monastic rule that the hagiographer appended to the *VPJ* when he sent it to John and Armentarius.<sup>23</sup> Martine has argued that there is a lacuna in section 174 where the *instituta* had been, but were left out by later copyists.<sup>24</sup> Ian Wood and others have argued that it is better to understand the *VPJ* itself, especially the *Life of Eugendus*, to be a combination of a life and a rule, no lacunae or lost rules required.<sup>25</sup> I am inclined to believe that there was a separate rule attached to the *VPJ*. The “rustic babbling” in the opening portion of the sentence is typical *sermo humilis* for an author referring to his own work. Therefore, if the author’s own work (that is the *VPJ*) does not satisfy the readers, then something else will. In this case the something else are the unnamed *instituta*. Furthermore, the use of both hagiography and *instituta* as guidelines for founding a monastery is the model that the author of the *VPJ* attributes to Romanus’ founding of Condadisco. Romanus initially received his monastic training at a monastery in Lyon.<sup>26</sup> When Romanus left Lyon to establish his own hermitage in the Jura, he took with him “the book of the *Life of*

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<sup>22</sup> *VPJ* 179 (Martine, SC 142:432-434; trans. by the author): “*At si animos uestros, spreta dudum philosophia, rusticana quoque garrulitas exsatiare non quieverit, instituta quae de informatione monasterii uestri, id est Acaunensis coenobii, sancto Marino presbytero insulae Lirinensis abbate compellente, digessimus, desideria uestra, tam pro institutionis insignibus quam pro iubentis auctoritate, Christo opitulante, luculenter, explebunt.*”

<sup>23</sup> de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l’antiquité*, vol. VIII, 120-122; François Masai, “La “*Vita partum iurensium*” et les débuts du monachisme à Saint-Maurice d’Agaune,” 59-60.

<sup>24</sup> Martine, SC 142: 31-33. However, de Vogüé disagrees that there was a lacuna. (de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l’antiquité*, vol. VIII, 116.)

<sup>25</sup> Ian Wood, “A prelude to Columbanus: the monastic achievement in the Burgundian territories,” 4; Helvétius, “Normes et pratiques de la vie monastique en Gaule avant 1050 : présentation des sources écrites,” 383; Jerzy Szafranowski (Jerzy Szafranowski, “The *Life of the Jura Fathers* and the Monastic Clergy,” (Augustinianum LIX.1 (2019):143-59) 145.) and Vivian (Vivian, *The Life of the Jura Fathers*, 74-5) follow Ian Wood on this point. Although, Vivian is critical of Wood’s interpretation that the *VPJ* was primarily intended to function as a rule. (Vivian, *The Life of the Jura Fathers*, 75 n. 134)

<sup>26</sup> *VPJ* 11.

*the Holy Fathers (librum Vitae sanctorum Patrum)* and the admirable *Institutes of the Abbots (eximiasque Institutiones Abbatum)*.”<sup>27</sup> The titles of these books are too vague to match any extant work.<sup>28</sup> What matters here is that Condadisco’s founding story includes both hagiography and *instituta*, which mirrors the author of the *VPJ* provision of his own *Life of the Holy Fathers* and a recension of *instituta* to the monks of Agaune. However, the pairing of hagiography with *instituta* does not help identify the unnamed *instituta*.<sup>29</sup> While Adalbert de Vogüé’s argument that the unnamed *instituta* should be identified with the so-called “Eastern Rule” is the most probable suggestion, it is by no means certain and certainly not unanimously accepted.<sup>30</sup> Given the known monastic rules circulating in Gaul at the beginning of the sixth century and the fact that the *VPJ* was written partly at

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<sup>27</sup> *VPJ* 11.

<sup>28</sup> However, this has not stopped people from offering range of suggestions, including, but not limited to, the *Institutes* and *Conferences* of John Cassian, the *Life of Antony*, the *Life of Paul the Hermit*, the *Life of Pachomius*, the *Historia Monachorum*, the “Rule of Basil,” and the “Rule of the Four Fathers.” For further commentary, see Vivian, *The Life of the Jura Fathers*, 37-38; Martine, SC 142: 252-253; de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du Mouvement Monastique*, vol. VIII, 50-51.

<sup>29</sup> In fact, Friedrich Prinz argued that the author of the *VPJ* alludes here to a compilation of several different old Gallic monastic rules used along the Rhône Valley. (Friedrich Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 69-70.

<sup>30</sup> Adalbert de Vogüé argues that this unnamed monastic rule is the so called “Eastern Rule,” which is a part of a collection of ancient monastic rules collected by Benedict of Aniane around the year 800. The “Eastern Rule” is a combination of extracts from the Egyptian “Rule of Pachomius,” as translated by Jerome, and texts from the island monastery of Lérins. De Vogüé further argues that the “Eastern Rule” was compiled and edited by the author of the *VPJ* at the behest of the abbot of the monastery of Lérins, Marinus. (Adalbert de Vogüé, “Forward,” to Vivian, *The Life of the Jura Fathers*, page 14-15; Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l’antiquité*, vol. VIII, 15-40, 114, and 122.) However, Klaus Zelzer is critical of de Vogüé’s identification. (Klaus Zelzer, “Der Anonymous von Condat und die Regula Orientalis : eine offene frage?” (*Regulae Benedicti Studia* 29 (2000)). Masai has proposed that the unnamed *instituta* is the “Rule of the Master” based similar phraseology and a mutual insistence on the importance of manual labor to the “true monk.” (François Masai, “Une source insoupçonnée de la Regula Benedicti: la Vita Patrum Iurensium,” (in *Hommages André Boutemy*, ed. G. Cambier, Brussels 1976 (Collection Latomus 145): 252-263.) While Masai’s work places the *VPJ* and the “Rule of the Master” in the same cultural milieu, de Vogüé’s placement of the “Rule of the Master” in a Roman context rules out the possibility that the “Rule of the Master” is the unnamed *instituta* at Condadisco. (Vogüé, “The Master and St Benedict: A Reply to Marilyn Dunn,” (*The English Historical Review* 107, no. 422 (1992): 95–103).

the instigation of Marinus, the abbot of Lérins, it is probable that whatever this rule was, it had a Mediterranean origin.

Whatever the *institutata* referenced in the *VPJ* may have consisted of, a few points are clear in this passage. First, Marinus ordered the author of the *VPJ* to set in order *institutata* for the young coenobitic monastery at Agaune. Second, the author of the *VPJ* was drawing from some sort of knowledge (*de informatione*) about the Agaune monastery when he wrote the *VPJ*. What sort of knowledge might this have been? Condadisco is much closer to Agaune than Lérins is. In fact, Romanus made a pilgrimage to Agaune in the fifth century.<sup>31</sup> It seems likely that some level of communication was maintained between Condadisco and Agaune due to their proximity and spiritual associations.<sup>32</sup> It might have been the hagiographer's additional knowledge about the Agaune monastery that prompted Marinus to order the author of the *VPJ* to set out *institutata* for the monastery at Agaune instead of doing it himself. Furthermore, the geography and climate of Agaune more closely resembles that of Condadisco than that of Lérins.

In the early sixth century several different models of monastic practice were circulating in Gaul that had origins in Egypt, Syria, and Provence, places that bordered the Mediterranean and had warm climates.<sup>33</sup> The author of the *VPJ* was himself familiar with rules by Basil, who wrote in Asia Minor, Pachomius, who wrote in Egypt, Cassian, who wrote in Marseilles, and rules from Lérins.<sup>34</sup> But Agaune is in the Alps. Therefore,

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<sup>31</sup> *VPJ* 44.

<sup>32</sup> The association between the Jura monasteries and Agaune continued after the establishment of the "*laus perennis*" at the Agaune in 515. (Masai, "La "Vita partum iurensium" et les débuts du monachisme à Saint-Maurice d'Agaune," 67-69.)

<sup>33</sup> For a brief summary, see Dunn, *Emergence of Monasticism*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 85-90. For further studies, see note 10 in this chapter.

<sup>34</sup> *VPJ* 174.

some of the specific monastic practices that worked for warmer climates would not have been appropriate for monasteries in the mountains. John Cassian recognized that monastic rules in Gaul needed to accommodate for differences in climate between Gaul and Egypt.<sup>35</sup> It appears that at least one of the reasons that Marinus assigned the project of putting together a rule for Agaune to a monk from the Jura Mountains was because the Jura monks had already successfully adapted a monastic model to a mountainous region.

The *VPJ* provided examples for monastic life in the mountains and a defense for their specific monastic practice being passed to Agaune.<sup>36</sup> Near the end of the *VPJ*, the hagiographer describes the changes that the abbot Eugendus instituted at the monastery of Condadisco.<sup>37</sup> He acknowledges that Eugendus' monastic model deviates in some ways from other monastic authorities in the following statement:

In no way am I belittling, by a disdainful presumptuousness, the institutions of the holy and eminent Basil, bishop of the episcopal see of Cappadocia, or those of the holy fathers of Lérins and of Saint Pachomius, the ancient abbot of the Syrians<sup>38</sup>, or those that the venerable Cassian formulated more recently. But while we read these daily, we strive to follow those of Condadisco: they are more comfortable with our local conditions and with the demands that our work entails than are those of the East. Without a doubt the Gallic nature – or weakness – follows the former more easily and efficaciously.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, Preface.9; 4.10-11.

<sup>36</sup> For the *VPJ* functioning as a monastic rule itself, see Ian Wood, "A prelude to Columbanus"; Vivian, *The Life of the Jura Fathers*, 75; Szafranowski, "The Life of the Jura Fathers and the Monastic Clergy," 145-6.

<sup>37</sup> *VPJ* 169-174.

<sup>38</sup> The author of the *VPJ* is clearly mistaken here, since Pachomius was from Egypt. Vivian takes this as evidence of the hagiographer's poor understanding of the Pachomian tradition of monasticism. (Vivian, *The Life of the Jura Fathers*, 182, n. 80.) While that may be true, I suggest a more innocent mistake. The "Rule of Pachomius" was translated into Latin by Jerome. The author of the *VPJ* simply mistook the general area of Jerome's monastery for the location of Pachomius' monastery.

<sup>39</sup> *VPJ* 174. (SC 142: 426-428; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 182): "*sic namque quod non illa omnino quae quondam sanctus ac praecipuus Basilius Cappadociae Urbis antistes, uel ea quae sancti Lirinensium patres, sactus quoque Pachomius Syrorum priscus abba, siue ill aquae recentior uenerabilis edidit Cassianus fastidiosa praesumptione calcamus; sed ea cotidie lectitantes, ista pro qualitate loci et instantia*

The author of the *VPJ* walks the narrow line of acknowledging the authority of Basil, Pachomius, the Lérinian fathers, and Cassian while simultaneously explaining why the Jura monks do not actually follow their rules.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the author needs to argue for the legitimacy of Condadisco's monastic rule and explain why it is appropriate for the monks of Condadisco to adhere to their own monastic rule. The *VPJ* addresses both of topics through close engagement with Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, Jerome's *Life of Paul the Hermit*, and the landscape of the Jura Mountains.

Egyptian monasticism was regarded as the "most perfect" form of monastic practice in fifth-century Gaul and at the beginning of the *VPJ* the hagiographer describes the abbot Romanus as behaving like the Egyptian monastic fathers.<sup>41</sup> This is evident in the description of Romanus' withdrawal into the desert as it was overtly based on Athanasius' *Life of Antony* and Jerome's *Life of Paul the Hermit*. In doing so, the author of the *VPJ* confers authority, authenticity, and purity of ascetic practice on the monastic project in the Jura. In embracing Egyptian models of monastic practice, the author of the *VPJ* also embraced the language of the desert. As argued by the historian of Egyptian monasticism, James Goehring, the desert in the *VPJ* is not a place, so much as the separation from worldly affairs that the early hagiographers of Egyptian monks prized.<sup>42</sup>

The author's reliance on Athanasius and Jerome could be interpreted as a relying on previously established literary motifs instead of his own personal experience of

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*laboris inueta potius quam Orientalium perficere adfectamus, quia procul dubio efficacius haec faciliusque natura uel infirmitas exsequitur Gallicana."*

<sup>40</sup> Marilyn Dunn sees a critique of Lérinian style monasticism in this deviation from other monastic rules. (Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, 84-85.)

<sup>41</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Preface.8; *VPJ* 7.

<sup>42</sup> James Goehring, "The Dark Side of the Landscape," 145.

landscape in his writing.<sup>43</sup> However, this is not the case. The author of the *VPJ*'s most creative use of earlier hagiography is his adaptation of episodes from the *Life of Antony* and the *Life of Paul the Hermit* to his local landscape in the Jura Mountains. The hagiographer substitutes the palm trees in the *Life of Antony* and the *Life of Paul the Hermit* for fir trees. Where vast waterless expanses cut Antony and Paul the Hermit off from human contact, in the *VPJ* dense forests and steep, rocky mountains fulfil the same role.

While the hagiographer uses the trees, forests, and rocky mountain valleys to depict that Jura Mountains as a desert in the *VPJ*, the Jura Mountains also posed distinct challenges to a self-sufficient monastery there. The monks sustained themselves by farming, but steep mountain sides and forests made arable land scarce. The cold winters required even the most ascetic monks to wear shoes and warm their primitive sleeping bags by a fire. The hagiographer uses these specific aspects of life in the Jura to explain that the monastery has adapted to its unique landscape, which explains why it has a distinct monastic practice.

The author of the *VPJ* also uses landscape to differentiate between different stages of the monastery's development. At the beginning of the *VPJ* the forests surrounding the monastery of Condadisco cut it off from contact with others. But, as the hagiography progresses, it becomes clear that the monks regularly travel beyond their monastery and host pilgrims. The monks change their landscape by clearing forests, farming, and constructing mills and buildings. The real challenges of maintaining a monastery in an area of marginal productivity and the effort required to overcome them become apparent. Just the same, the landscape of the Haut-Jura was essential to the *VPJ*'s description of

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<sup>43</sup> Cillian O'Hogan makes a similar argument regarding Prudentius. Cillian O'Hogan, *Prudentius and the Landscapes of Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

Condadisco as the desert and the landscape and climate of the Haut-Jura required the monks of Condadisco adapt their monastic practice to it.

## 5.2. Forests – Creating Romanus’ *eremus*: The VPJ 1-9

The *VPJ* is most reliant on the *Life of Antony* and the *Life of Paul the Hermit* at the beginning of its description of the first abbot of the Jura monasteries, Romanus, for two primary reasons. First, the author was not present for the founding of the monastery and was therefore relying on information he received “from the tradition of the elders.”<sup>44</sup> The hagiographer chose to communicate the information he received from the elders in a *vita* modeled on *The Life of Antony* and the *Life of Paul the Hermit*. Second, by using these earlier hagiographies to write about his subject, Romanus, the hagiographer places Romanus in the same tradition as earlier holy monks, adding to the reader’s sense of Romanus’ holiness.

The first instance in which the author of the *VPJ* signals the connection between Romanus and Egyptian monks is his description of where Romanus was going to live as a monk:

He [Romanus] was almost thirty-five years of age when, attracted by the solitudes of the desert (*secretis heremi delectatus*), he left his mother, sister, and brother and entered the forests of the Jura near his estate (*uicinas uillae Iurensium siluas intrauit*).<sup>45</sup>

The use of the word *heremus* specifically invokes earlier monastic literature.<sup>46</sup> *Heremus* is a latinized form of the Greek ἐρημος, which means a desert or wilderness. When John

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<sup>44</sup> *VPJ* 4, (SC 142: 242; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 101): “*seniorum traditione*”

<sup>45</sup> *VPJ* 5 (SC 142: 244; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 102): “...*tricesimo et quinto ferme aetatis anno, secretis heremi delectatus, relicta quoque matre, sorore uel fratre, uicinas uillae Iurensium siluas intrauit.*”

<sup>46</sup> *Heremus* is a common spelling variant of *eremus*. The two words are synonymous.

the Baptist was preaching, he was in the ἐρημος.<sup>47</sup> Jesus was tempted in and prayed in the ἐρημος.<sup>48</sup> The monk Antony sought out the ἐρημος.<sup>49</sup> When Jerome wrote the *Life of Paul the Hermit* in Latin, he used both *desertus* and *eremus*.<sup>50</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, Eucharius of Lyon expanded meaning of the term *eremus* to take on the literal Latin meaning of *desertus*, “deserted” or “devoid of habitation.” This expanded definition of *eremus* allowed Eucharius to use the word *eremus* to describe the Egyptian desert and the islands of Lérins. Eucharius’ expansion of the meaning of *eremus* allowed the author of the *VPJ* to use *eremus* to indicate that Romanus was going to a lonely place without other people, while retaining the connection to Antony, John the Baptist, and Jesus. *Eremus* could describe any landscape.<sup>51</sup> In this case, the author of the *VPJ* uses the word *eremus* to describe the “*silvae*” or forests of the Jura Mountains.<sup>52</sup>

The importance of separation from other people is further emphasized by the word *secretis*, from the verb *secerno*, meaning to pull apart, sever, or cut off.<sup>53</sup> The author of the *VPJ* uses this word to indicate a place that is cut off or isolated from other places, and therefore lonely and solitary. Again, Eucharius of Lyon used this same

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<sup>47</sup> Mark 1:3-4.

<sup>48</sup> Mark 1:12; Mark 1:35.

<sup>49</sup> Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 3.2. (SC 400: 136.)

<sup>50</sup> For Jerome’s use of “*desertus*” in the *Life of Paul the Hermit*, see Jerome, *Life of Paul the Hermit*, 5.1 and 13.1 (SC 508: 152 and 172).

For Jerome’s use of *eremus* in the *Life of Paul the Hermit*, see Jerome, *Life of Paul the Hermit*, 1.1; 6.2; 7.1; 8.3; 9.1; 16.2. (SC 508: 144; 154; 156; 160; 162; 176.)

<sup>51</sup> Cf. James Goehring, “The Dark Side of the Landscape,” 145.

<sup>52</sup> In this way, the *VPJ* stands within a long tradition in European thought of conceptualizing the forest as wilderness. (Jacques le Goff, “The Wilderness in the Medieval West,” in Jacques le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, 47-59 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.)

<sup>53</sup> Lewis and Short, “*secerno*.”

construction to describe the islands of Lérins as a desert.<sup>54</sup> Lérins is cut off from other lands because it is an archipelago. In the *VPJ* forests cut off and isolate Romanus from the rest of the world.

Once the author of the *VPJ* introduces forests as the local landscape feature that creates an *eremus*, he proceeds to provide a more detailed description of the location where Romanus chose to establish his monastery:

Moving about here and there in these forests, so suitable and appropriate to his monastic intention, he at length discovered beyond them, among rockbound valleys, an open area that could be cultivated. There, on the other side of three mountainous ridges, the natural steepness lessened and settled into a small plain. Since two streams which by nature ran separately came together there, the people soon gave the place the name ‘Condadisco’ because the streams had already become one.<sup>55</sup>

The landscape described here corresponds to the landscape of the modern town of St. Claude, which grew out of Romanus’ original monastic settlement. The two streams are the Bienne and the Tacon. The three mountain ridges appear to correlate with the mountain ridges that separate the two streams until they come together. The valleys in which the Bienne and Tacon are nestled are very steep and not conducive to farming. However, the bottom of the valley levels out just enough at the confluence that it could have provided Romanus an area for cultivation. A little later the author of the *VPJ* explains that:

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<sup>54</sup> Eucharius, *De laude eremi*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> *VPJ* 6, (SC 142:244; trans. Vivian, CS 178:102-3): “*Quas huc illucque professioni congruas aptasque circumiens, repperit tandem ulterius inter saxosa conuallia culturae patulum locum, qui, altrinsecus triiugi montium paulum ardua secedente natura, in planitiem aliquantulum relaxatur. Illic namque bifida fluuiorum in solidum concurrente natura, mox etiam ab unitate elementi iam conditi Condadiscone loco uulgus indidit nomen.*”

[Condadisco] was many miles from any habitation because of the scarcity of dwelling places; the abundant cultivation in the distant plain had given no reason to cross a succession of forests in order to come live in the vicinity.<sup>56</sup>

Again, we see that it is the forests that cut off Condadisco from the outside world, turning it into an *eremus*. The “distant plain” probably refers to the territory to the west of the Jura Mountains, which turns into a plain between the Ain and Saône Rivers. The archeology of other monastic settlements has given us reason to be skeptical of monastic claims of isolation. For example, even though Jonas of Bobbio claims that the Irish monk Columbanus established the monastery of Luxeuil at an abandoned Roman fortification that was inhabited by wild animals,<sup>57</sup> the archeology of Luxeuil has demonstrated that Columbanus established this monastery at an active Gallo-Roman settlement.<sup>58</sup> However, the *VPJ*'s description of Condadisco as having a scarcity of dwelling places because there was abundant land in a nearby plain is borne out by the distribution of archeological finds from the Roman period in the modern administrative department of the Jura.

The majority of Roman sites in the department of the Jura are along the Ain River, which runs south along the western edge of the Jura Mountain range, and along two major Roman roads, which connected Lyon to Besançon and Chalon to Besançon.<sup>59</sup> In the Jura Mountains themselves, archeological finds are limited to widely scattered and isolated household goods.<sup>60</sup> This supports the *VPJ*'s claim that abundant agricultural land

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<sup>56</sup> *VPJ* 8, (SC 142: 246-248; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 104): “*Locus ipse...non paruis spatiis ob raritatem consistentium distabat ab incolis quia abundans procul in captestri cultura minime per successionem siluae illic permiserat quempiam uicinari.*”

<sup>57</sup> Jonas of Bobbio, *Life of Columbanus*, 1.10. (trans. Ian Wood, 2017, 115-118)

<sup>58</sup> Yavin Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3; S. Bully et al., ‘L’église Saint-Martin de Luxeuil-les-Bains (Haute-Saône): première campagne’, *Bulletin du centre d’études médiévales d’Auxerre* 13 (2009): 33-38.

<sup>59</sup> *CAG* 39, p. 121, fig. 31. For road descriptions, see *CAG* 39, p. 131.

<sup>60</sup> *CAG* 39, p. 121, fig. 31.

in the plain gave few people reason to cross the Jura mountains. Just the same, there is evidence that Condadisco was inhabited prior to Romanus' monastic settlement. First, there is a Roman era road through Condadisco that connected Geneva to Villards d'Héria, a major Gallo-Roman cult site about six and a half miles from Condadisco.<sup>61</sup> Second, the remains of a second-century AD dwelling have been discovered at Condadisco.<sup>62</sup> Third, a coin hoard was discovered in the vicinity of Condadisco dating to the reign of Valerian (r. 253-260).<sup>63</sup> Yet, this evidence is commensurate with the description of Condadisco as deserted when Romanus arrived in the fifth century. The coin hoard suggests that the earlier settlement was abandoned during the mid-third century, a time of significant political turmoil in Gaul. No other evidence of settlement can be discerned prior to Romanus' fifth-century monastic project, which suggests that Condadisco was not resettled between the mid third century and the fifth century. When Romanus arrived at Condadisco in the fifth century, Condadisco had the potential to support a settlement, but had been abandoned. To borrow a term from the archeologist Darlene Hedstrom, Condadisco was an underutilized landscape.<sup>64</sup>

The *VPJ* indicates that the abbot Eugendus came from the town of *Isarnodorum*, modern day Izernore, which is on the edge of a plain.<sup>65</sup> Although Izernore is only about nineteen miles southwest of St. Claude, its landscape is very different. St. Claude is nestled in a steep mountain valley with fir trees. Izernore, on the other hand is generally flat with rolling hills. It is suitable for both raising livestock and farming and the remains

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<sup>61</sup> *CAG* 39, §478.1 (p. 631).

<sup>62</sup> *CAG* 39, §478.6 (p. 632).

<sup>63</sup> *CAG* 39, §478.9 (p. 633).

<sup>64</sup> For the establishment of monasteries in "underutilized landscapes," see Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt*, 284-289.

<sup>65</sup> *VPJ* 120. For the archeology of Izernore, see *CAG* 01/2, §192, (pp. 236-248).

of several villas in the vicinity demonstrate that it was a center of agricultural production in antiquity.<sup>66</sup> The fact that Romanus and Lupicius came from a villa not far from the Jura Mountains' forests also suggests that they came from somewhere slightly to the west of the Jura mountains.<sup>67</sup>

In the previously cited passage, the author explains that no one had a reason to cross the forest because there was an abundance of arable land in the nearby plain. The hagiographer then launches into a vivid description of Condadisco's wild and rugged landscape:

Moreover, if someone decided, with audacious daring, to cut across this roadless wilderness (*solitudinem ipsam inuiam*) toward the territory of the *Equestres*, in addition to the dense forest and the heaps of fallen trees (*concretionem siluestrem siue coneries arborum caducarum*), he found high and lofty mountain ridges and steep valleys dividing the regions. There stags and broad-horned deer live. Even if the traveler were strong and lightly equipped, he would scarcely be able to cross in a day, even the longest day of the year. Given the distance and the difficulties of its natural inaccessibility (*ob longitudinem uel difficultatem inaccessibilis naturae*), no one could blaze a trail through this mountain range...<sup>68</sup>

In this passage the author of the *VPJ*'s purpose is to impress on his readers the absolute inaccessibility of the region. First, the solitudes are roadless (*solitudinem ipsam inuiam*), which is consistent with the description of Romanus wandering here and there before

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<sup>66</sup> Traces of five villas have been found at the villages of Voërle, Chalamont, Intriât, and Buisson. (*CAG 01/2*, §192.17-20, (p. 245). More substantial remains of two villas have been found at the villages of Bussy and Pérignat. A coin hoard dating to the end of the third century was found at the villa at Bussy. (*CAG 01/2*, §192.22 (p. 245). Painted frescos survive from the villa at Pérignat and coins from Vespasien to Constantius II have been found there, indicating that the villa was active from the first to at least the mid-fourth century. (*CAG 01/2*, §192.23 (p. 245-247)) See also: *Musée d'Isernore: Isarnodurum* (Bourge-en-Bress: l'Exprimeur, 2004), 34.

<sup>67</sup> *VPJ* 5.

<sup>68</sup> *VPJ* 9, (SC 142:248; trans. Vivian, CS 178:104): “*Ceterum, si quis solitudinem ipsam inuiam contra Aequestrîs territorii loca ausu temerario secare deliberet, praeter concretionem siluestrem siue congeries arborum caducarum, inter iuga quoque praecelsa ceruorum platocerumue praerupta conuallia, uix ualidus expeditusque poterit sub longa solstitii die transcendere...nullus omnino ob longitudinem uel difficultatem inaccessibilis naturae poterit penetrare.*”

chancing on Condadisco.<sup>69</sup> The forest is roadless for multiple reasons. The forest is not just dense, it is *concretionem*, a solidity. There are heaps of fallen trees that block any attempted crossing. To make matters worse, the region is divided by tall mountain ridges and deep valleys. The invocation of stags and broad-horned deer further adds to the sense of the remoteness, wildness, and inaccessibility of the region, which the author states outright at the end of the passage.

The hagiographer uses the detail that a well-prepared traveler could scarcely travel from Equestres, modern Nyon, Switzerland, to Condadisco, modern St. Claude, on the longest day of the year to contribute to the sense of Condadisco's isolation. The oddly specific detail is rooted in the real difficulties of travel across the Haut-Jura. The steep valleys of the Haut-Jura do make St. Claude difficult to access. Nyon, Switzerland, is only 17.5 miles due east of St. Claude. However, due to the mountainous terrain, the shortest road between St. Claude and Nyon is 30 miles and has an elevation gain of 3460 feet<sup>70</sup> It would take a fit, lightly equipped person between 11 hours 28 minutes and 16 hours 45 minutes to complete this distance, not accounting for any rest stops, detours, or other delays.<sup>71</sup> There was 15 hours and 48 minutes of daylight on the summer solstice in St. Claude in 2021.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, to cross between St. Claude and Nyon by foot is barely accomplishable for a strong and lightly equipped traveler on the longest day of the year, just as the author of the *VPJ* stated. Lest we think that Condadisco was only a long day's

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<sup>69</sup> *VPJ* 6.

<sup>70</sup> According to Google Maps directions for a person walking.

<sup>71</sup> The 11 hrs. 28 min. time was calculated using Naismith's Rule (19.5 minutes/mile + 30 minutes/1000 ft. of ascent), which assumes an easy trail and is usually regarded as the minimum time required to complete a hike. The 16 hrs. 45 min. time was calculated using Book Time (30 minutes/mile + 30 minutes/1000 ft. of ascent (rounded to the nearest 5 minutes)), which assumes mountainous terrain and is generally used by guidebooks to provide conservative estimates for the time required to hike a trail.

<sup>72</sup> "46°23'15.6"N, 5°51'55.5"E, France — Sunrise, Sunset, and Moon Times For Today," *Time and Date* AS. <https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/@46.38768,5.86544>. Accessed Nov. 19, 2022.

hike from Equestres, this estimate assumes the longest day of the year in the summer in clear weather. On shorter days of the year (there are only 8 hours 36 minutes of daylight on the winter solstice), this would certainly be a multi-day hike. In the snow, it would be unwise to attempt the journey without multiple known settlements to stop at for shelter. The detail of a strong, lightly equipped traveler requiring the longest day of the year to travel between Condadisco and Equestres is rooted in the difficulties of the journey. The hagiographer chose to use this detail to emphasize Condadisco's isolation in order to bolster his claim that Condadisco was in the desert.

The author of the *VPJ* uses both the entire forest and individual trees to create a sense of desert isolation. The hagiographer uses a specific fir tree to draw an explicit comparison between Romanus and Paul the Hermit as described by Jerome:

When [Romanus] was seeking an appropriate place to live, he found to the east, at the foot of a rocky mountain, a dense fir tree whose branches, spread out in a circle, were covered with an abundance of leaves. Just as the palm tree covered Paul, this tree now covered Paul's disciple.<sup>73</sup>

The author goes on to describe how the fir tree protected Romanus from the heat of the summer and the snows of winter. A nearby spring provided Romanus with water and bushes provided berries for his sustenance.<sup>74</sup> The *Life of Paul the Hermit* describes how Paul also went to the foot of a rocky mountain, where he found a hidden spring and an ancient date palm.<sup>75</sup> Paul then decided to live in that spot for the rest of his life.<sup>76</sup> Here the author of the *VPJ* makes explicit the connection between Romanus and early

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<sup>73</sup> *VPJ* 7, (SC 142: 246; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 103): “*Cumque oportunitatem domicilii nouus posceret hospes, repperit ab orientali parte sub radice saxosi montis, porrectis in orbitam ramis, denissimam abietem, quae patulis diffusa comis, uelut quondam palma Paulum, ita texit ista discipulum.*”

<sup>74</sup> *VPJ* 7-8.

<sup>75</sup> Jer. *Life of Paul the Hermit*, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Jerome leaves the reader assuming that Paul was sustained solely by the fruit of the date palm, but later he explains how ravens brought Paul half a loaf of bread every day. (Jer. *Life of Paul the Hermit*, 10) Cf. 1 Kings 17:2-6.

Egyptian monastics. The specific imagery that the author selects to link Romanus with Paul the Hermit is landscape imagery.

The hagiographer links the landscape descriptions of Egypt in the *Life of Paul the Hermit* with Romanus' landscape by highlighting the aspects of Condadisco' landscape that overlap with Jerome's description of Paul the Hermit's landscape. Both Paul the Hermit and Romanus entered their own deserts. They both came to the foot of a rocky mountain. They both lived under a tree next to a spring. These similarities provide enough points of comparison that the author of the *VPJ* was able to create the impression that Romanus was behaving in the same way as the supposed first monk, Paul the Hermit, thus legitimating Romanus' monastic project.

By the end of this section, the reader of the *VPJ* is left with the impression that the forest curtailed Romanus off from the rest of humanity. While others lived in the plain farming, Romanus sat praying under a tree in a valley, fed by wild berries. The contrast between the forested areas and the plains echoes the Roman understanding of habitation connected to cultivation explored in Chapter 2. Here we encounter the paradox of the monastic *eremus*: if the *eremus* is defined as a place without human habitation, where a monk can be alone and seek God, is it still an *eremus* once a community of monks has established a settlement? The author of the *VPJ* does not provide a straightforward answer to this question, but the language the author uses to describe Condadisco's landscape changes after the establishment of a monastic settlement.

After Romanus had established himself alone in the 'desert' of the Jura mountains, his brother, Lupicinus joined him.<sup>77</sup> The hagiographer describes Romanus and Lupicinus as two doves, whose nest was in the "cut-off desert" – "*secreto heremi*".<sup>78</sup> In

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<sup>77</sup> *VPJ* 12.

<sup>78</sup> *VPJ* 12, (SC 142: 252; trans. by the author).

the next passage two young clerics from Nyon, who had heard about Romanus' and Lupicinus' way of life, set out to join them.<sup>79</sup> How reports of Romanus and Lupicinus reached Nyon is not elaborated on. But it suggests that the brothers had more visitors than the hagiographer would have us believe. In any event, the clerics from Nyon wandered here and there in the *eremus* because they did not know exactly where Romanus and Lupicinus were.<sup>80</sup> This is the last use of the word *eremus* in the *VPJ*. After the young clerics join Romanus and Lupicinus, we are told that there was not enough room for the growing community under Romanus' tree.<sup>81</sup> Moving a short distance away, they took up residence on a hillside and constructed lodgings for themselves and for future monks. "Once the wood had been hewn and planed with utmost care, they constructed small dwellings for themselves and prepared others for those who would come in the future."<sup>82</sup> This mention of woodworking and construction is the first instance in the *VPJ* in which the monks changed their landscape. In previous passages, the forests, mountains, and rough terrain created an *eremus* cut off from other people. When Romanus first entered the *eremus* he did not change his landscape. He lived under a fir tree, ate wild berries, and drank from a nearby stream. From this point on, the focus shifts to how the monks changed their landscape. This does not mean that the monks exercised complete control over their landscape. An overriding concern of the hagiographer is how the growing monastery fed and sheltered itself. The landscape was still harsh and demanded the

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<sup>79</sup> *VPJ* 13.

<sup>80</sup> *VPJ* 13.

<sup>81</sup> *VPJ* 13. Notwithstanding the previous reference to Romanus' *tugurium* or "hut." (*VPJ* 12.) For what it meant for novices to join Romanus' monastery at Condadisco, see Hubertus Lutterbach, *Monachus factus est: Die Mönchwerdung im frühen Mittelalter*, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alten Mönchtums und des Benedictinertums, band 44 (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1995), 63-68.

<sup>82</sup> *VPJ* 13, (SC 142: 254; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 107): "*dedolatis leuigatisque diligentissime lignis, et sibi construxere habitacula et praeparauere uenturis.*"

attention of the monks living in it, but the hagiographer no longer describes it as the *eremus*.<sup>83</sup>

### 5.3. The Hoe and the Axe: Cultivation and the Creation of a Community

In this section, I focus on what monks do and their interactions with their landscape. Anthropologist Tim Ingold's concept of a *taskscape* is useful for doing analyzing actions within a landscape. According to Ingold, a taskscape is "the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking."<sup>84</sup> Many overlapping and related tasks in a landscape create a taskscape. Ingold goes on to conclude that, "the landscape as a whole must likewise be understood as the taskscape in its embodied form," by which Ingold means that the landscape is a realm of human activity and that human actions shape the landscape.<sup>85</sup> However, the relationship runs both ways. The landscape defines the tasks that are performed in it, and, therefore, influences human actions. When the author of the *VPJ* turns to how Romanus, and eventually a whole community of monks, supported themselves agriculturally, we observe both a taskscape as defined by Ingold and the landscape's effect on the actions of the monks.

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<sup>83</sup> Here I disagree with Conrad Leyser who claims that the "charmed life in the wilds of the Jura first led by Romanus" continues through Eugendus' leadership of the monastery. (Conrad Leyser, "Uses of the Desert in the Sixth Century West," in "The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West," special issue, *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. 1 (2006): 130.) However, the monastery at Condadisco maintained its position of marginality in relation to the secular power centers of fifth and sixth-century Gaul. (Laura Feldt, "Letters from the Wilderness – Marginality, Literarity, and Religious Authority Changes in Late Antique Gaul," in *Marginality, Media and Mutations of Religious Authority in the History of Christianity*, eds. L. Feldt, and J. N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 69-95.)

<sup>84</sup> Tim Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill* (New York & London: Routledge, 2000), 193.

<sup>85</sup> Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," 198. (Emphasis removed)

The first indication of agricultural activity in the *VPJ* is when the hagiographer relates that Romanus took a hoe and seeds with him when he started his monastic project:<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, having brought seeds and a hoe with him, the blessed one [Romanus] began, between the times required for frequent prayer and reading, to support a modest way of life there by means of the monastic institution of manual labor...As a hermit he prayed without ceasing, and as a true monk he worked in order to provide sustenance for himself.<sup>87</sup>

The importance of a small plain formed by the confluence of the Bienne and Tacon rivers is now evident. Romanus needed arable land on which to support himself. The hagiographer uses this detail to demonstrate that Romanus followed other monastic founders in his embrace of manual agricultural labor. In the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius describes how Antony took tools and seeds into the *eremus* to grow food for himself.<sup>88</sup> The early fifth-century monastic author John Cassian also emphasized the importance of manual labor to the monastic life.<sup>89</sup>

The *VPJ*'s focus on Romanus' manual labor and the prevalence of manual labor throughout the remainder of the work makes it stand out among early Gallic hagiography. For example, Sulpicius Severus claims that no art was practiced at Martin's monastic foundation outside of Tours, except for young monks who transcribed texts.<sup>90</sup> Older monks were devoted entirely to prayer. Marilyn Dunn sees the prevalence of manual

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<sup>86</sup> *VPJ* 10.

<sup>87</sup> *VPJ* 10, (SC 142: 248-250; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 104-105): "Igitur, adlatis seminibus uel sarculo, coepit illic uir beatissimus inter orandi legendique frequentiam necessitate uictus exigui institutione monachali labore manuum sustenare...ut hermita indesinenter orabat et ut uere monachus sustentandus alimento proprio laborabat."

<sup>88</sup> Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 50.

<sup>89</sup> John Cassian, *Institutes*, 10.5 et passim ; John Cassian, *Conferences*, 24.10-12.

<sup>90</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita martini*, 10.

labor in the *VPJ*, on the other hand, as a critique of monasticism as practiced at Lérins.<sup>91</sup> Like the monks at Martin's foundation, the monks on Lérins do not appear to have embraced manual agricultural labor as essential to monastic practice. In a description of monasticism at Lérins, Hilary of Arles recounts how Honoratus could find the right amount of work (*labor*) for each monk, but Hilary does not specify the nature of the work.<sup>92</sup> Elsewhere Hilary indicates that the monastery subsisted on donations.<sup>93</sup> Eucherius' mentions of donations to the monastery at Lérins supports the view that monasticism at Lérins was supported primarily by donations and not the manual labor of the monks.<sup>94</sup> Cassian, on the other hand, argued specifically against monks relying on the support of others in the *Conferences*.<sup>95</sup> While addressing the value of relatives supporting monks, Cassian attributes the following speech to the monk Antony:

And therefore, although our relatives' help would not be lacking to us either, nonetheless, we prefer this deprivation to all their resources, and we have chosen to provide for the daily needs of our body by our own efforts rather than to be supported by the assured assistance of our relatives.<sup>96</sup>

In this passage Cassian argues that monks should support themselves through their own labor, which is exactly what the *VPJ* presents Romanus as doing. It is Romanus' self-reliance that causes the hagiographer to call Romanus a "true monk."<sup>97</sup> If Romanus ever received donations, the *VPJ* does not mention them. Instead, the cultivation of crops and

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<sup>91</sup> Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, 84-85.

<sup>92</sup> Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita honorati*, 18, (SC 235: 120).

<sup>93</sup> Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita honorati*, 21.

<sup>94</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 29.

<sup>95</sup> John Cassian, *Conferences*, 24.10-12.

<sup>96</sup> John Cassian, *Conferences*, 24.12.1, (SC 64: 183; trans. Ramsey, ACW 57: 834): "*Et ideo cum etiam nobis parentum praesidia non deessent, tamen hanc cunctis opibus praetulimus nuditatem et cotidiana corporis alimenta nostris maluimus sudoribus praeparare quam secura parentum praebitione fulciri...*"

<sup>97</sup> *VPJ* 10. "uere monachus"

its challenges in the mountains becomes an important theme throughout the rest of the *VPJ* and manual labor remains highly visible throughout the text. As it turns out, the effort required to maintain a self-sufficient monastery in the Haut-Jura was a major preoccupation of the monks.

As soon as Romanus' hermitage began to expand, food security also became a problem. First, Romanus' brother Lupicinus joined him after being instructed to do so in a vision.<sup>98</sup> Soon thereafter, others desiring to lead a monastic life joined Romanus and Lupicinus and their monastery grew.<sup>99</sup> As the renown of Romanus' and Lupicinus' sanctity grew, and word of their miracles spread, the monastery also began to attract a steady flow of pilgrims.<sup>100</sup> The growing number of people strained the monastery's food supply: "...the site of the community of Condadisco, crowded with an astonishing number of monks, could now barely supply enough food – not only for the multitudes coming there, but even for the brothers themselves."<sup>101</sup> According to the author the *VPJ*, the limiting factor on the monastery's ability to produce food was the harshness of the landscape that allowed him to call Condadisco an *eremus* in the first place.

The author redescribes the landscape in which the monastery at Condadisco was situated, but this time with a view to explaining that the monastery was at risk of famine:

Suspended as the place was in hills and declivities, between overhanging cliffs and rocky ground, and disturbed by frequent flooding of the rugged landscape, the

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<sup>98</sup> *VPJ* 12.

<sup>99</sup> *VPJ* 13.

<sup>100</sup> *VPJ* 14-16.

<sup>101</sup> *VPJ* 22 (SC 142: 262; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 112): "...*Condatescensis coenobii locus, miro inauditoque numero monachorum refertus, non solum aduenientibus turbis, sed etiam fratribus paene iam difficulter alimenta praestabat.*"

cultivation of crops waned and decreased, not only because of the limited and difficult terrain, but also the mediocre harvests and uncertain yields.<sup>102</sup>

As before, the landscape is characterized by steep valleys between mountains and rocky terrain. The result of the rockiness and steepness is that harvests were not successful. Harvests were decreasing (*torpuerat*), literally growing sluggish. Not only was the number of people the monastery needed to support growing, but harvests were producing less. The problem seems to have been erosion connected to the cultivation of land poorly suited to agriculture.

...the irresistible (*intolerabiles*) rains carry away torrents not only the tilled and cultivated land, but often the uncultivated and stony earth, too – along with grass, trees, and shrubs. When the rocks are laid bare, the very clods of earth that remain are carried off from the monks and given over to the waters.<sup>103</sup>

Here the author describes heavy rain washing out the fields and the surrounding land. The ensuing erosion has left no soil in which to grow crops. The scenario described in this passage is not only plausible, but the probable outcome of attempting to farm in the bottom of the valley at Condadisco. The confluence of two streams at the bottom of a narrow valley is already prone to flooding. The monks exacerbated the problem by farming the small amounts of level land at the bottom of the valley, destabilizing the hillsides above it. When a heavy rain did come, and the loose cultivated soil was washed out, it caused the rocky uncultivated soil to collapse and wash into the river. While the author does not recognize it, he appears to be describing erosion exacerbated by human action. The monks had found and exceeded the natural limit of cultivation at Condadisco, thus imperiling the survival of the monastery.

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<sup>102</sup> VPJ 22, (SC 142: 262; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 112): “*Siquidem cultura loci ipsius pendula collibus uel adclinis inter eminentes scopulos uel aceruos, crebro salebrarum labefactata conluuio, non solum in spatiis parua ac difficilis, sed etiam in ipsis frugibus, reditu nutante, torpuerat.*”

<sup>103</sup> VPJ 23, (SC 142: 262-264; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 112): “*...aut intolerabiles imbres non solum euentilatam culturis asportant in torrentibus terram, sed ipsam etiam incultam ac rigidam saepe cum herbis et arboribus ac fructibus, cum gleba quoque ipsa, nudatis quibus insiderat saxis, aufertur monachis, aquis infertur.*”

The monks, determined to not to give up on their monastic endeavor, began to clear forest for farmland.

Wishing therefore to relieve this situation as much as possible, the holy fathers cut down and removed the fir trees in the neighboring forests, which were by no means lacking in level and fertile areas. They leveled the fields with the sickle, and the plains with the plow, so that these places, now fit for cultivation, would alleviate the needs of the monks of Condadisco.<sup>104</sup>

The author then abruptly mentions a second monastery at nearby Lauconnus where Lupicinus was the abbot.<sup>105</sup> Apparently, Romanus and Lupicinus had split the monastery and Lupicinus had taken some of the monks to a nearby region to establish a second monastery. That the VPJ introduces the second monastery at Lauconnus with the resolution of the food crisis, suggests that an important motivation for the foundation of the second monastery was to open up new areas for cultivation.<sup>106</sup> Lauconnus corresponds to the modern village of St. Lupicin, named for Lupicinus, and is indeed in a much leveler area that is more appropriate for agriculture. (See Figure 5.1.)

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<sup>104</sup> VPJ 24, (SC 142: 264; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 112): “*Hoc igitur sanctissimi patres aliquatenus uitare cupientes, in uicinis exinde siluis quae et planitie et fecunditate minime fallebantur, exsectis excisisque abietibus, aut falce in prata aut uomere in aequora conplanarunt, ut loca oportuna culturis Condatensium inopiam subleuarent.*”

<sup>105</sup> VPJ 24.

<sup>106</sup> It has also been suggested that the foundation of the monastery at Lauconnus, modern St. Lupicin, was part of a missionary project since the foundation is very near the remains a pagan temple complex at Villards d’Heria. (Vivian, *et al.*, *The Life of the Jura Fathers*, 88.) However, the last datable evidence of activity at the Villards d’Heria site is the presence of a coin and medallion minted during the reign of Constantine at the beginning of the fourth century, which suggests that the site was inactive during the mid-fifth century. (CAG 39, §561.80 (p. 752)) If the site at Villards d’Heria was inactive during the mid-fifth century, it was not the object of missionary activity by the Romanus and Lupicinus.

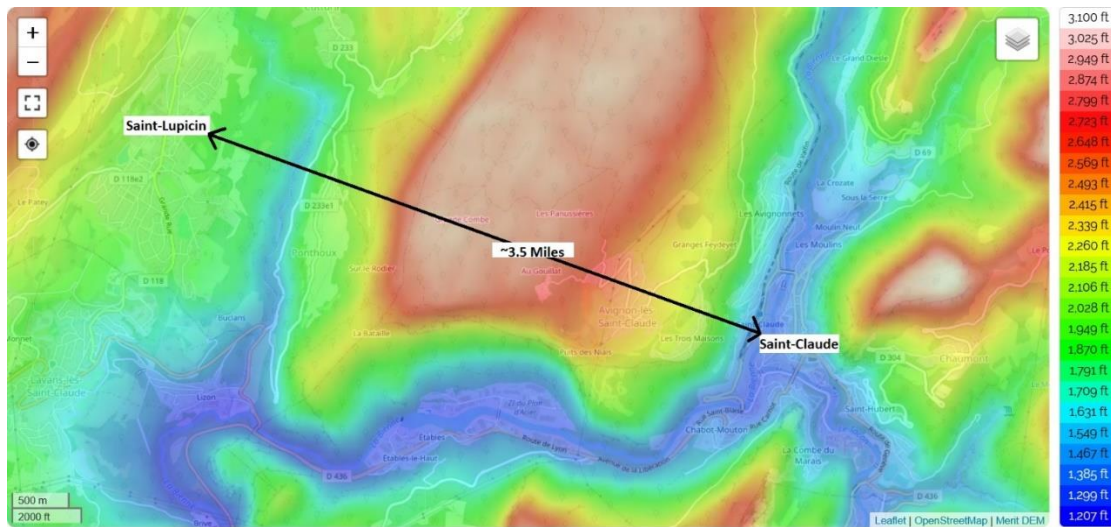


Figure 5.2: Topographic Map of Saint-Claude and Saint-Lupicin. Generated in <https://en-us.topographic-map.com/>. Annotated by the Author

While the clearing of forest marks the foundation of the monastery at Lauconnus and the relief of the monastery at Condadisco, it also marks a distinct change in the attitude of the author of the *VPJ* towards the immediate environment. Previously, the forests were a solid mass (*concretio siluestris*), pathless (*inuia*), and characterized by their natural inaccessibility (*inaccessibilis naturae*). The forest was something that could not be overcome by human ability. It provided the impenetrable barrier key to defining the region of Condadisco as an *eremus*. The rains that washed out the fields of Condadisco were *intolerabiles*, that is, unable to be borne by the monks. The landscape defined the monks' actions, and the monks did not attempt to change their landscape. But now, the focus has shifted to what the monks did in their immediate landscape and how they changed it. After this point in the *VPJ*, the forests almost entirely disappear from the work.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>107</sup> The forests are mentioned only one other time in the *Life of Eugendus*, but Eugendus was sitting under his favorite tree next to the road to Geneva. Even here, the forests do not cut the monastery off from the rest of the world. (*VPJ* 153-4.)

In place of imagery of rugged woodlands, the anonymous hagiographer turns to agricultural imagery and agricultural concerns. For example, it appears that the new fields were very fertile, as the monastery was blessed with an abundant harvest.<sup>108</sup> The new abundance revealed the vice of gluttony among the brothers. The hagiographer writes that some of the monks, “Made confident by that fertility and fecundity, and with disrespect and contempt for their abbot, some brothers strove to stuff into their throats and bellies not what would have sufficed according to the Rule or the norm, but what abundance allowed.”<sup>109</sup> Romanus was unable to control the gluttonous monks, so he called upon Lupicinus for assistance.<sup>110</sup> Lupicinus and Romanus were able to re-establish their control of the monastery by instituting an austere diet of gruel.<sup>111</sup> The gluttonous monks, unable to endure the new meal plan, departed after a few days.<sup>112</sup> The point of this episode is to explain how the abbots Romanus and Lupicinus drove the gluttonous monks from the monastery, demonstrating the abbots’ wisdom and strict ascetic practice. Yet, even in an episode dedicated to overcoming gluttony, agricultural abundance rooted in cultivation forms the background of the episode.

The work of farming appears to have taken up a significant amount of the monks’ time during the day as illustrated by some of Lupicinus’ miracles. Once, an elderly monk under Lupicinus’ care had so reduced himself by extreme fasting that he was at the point

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<sup>108</sup> *VPJ* 36-40.

<sup>109</sup> *VPJ* 36, (SC 142: 280; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 119-120): “*et quidam fratres fertili fecunditate fidentes, dispecto contemptoque abbate, non quod regulae uel canonum suppeteret, sed quod abundantia contulerat studerent uentri uel gutturi cultius infarcire*”

<sup>110</sup> *VPJ* 37.

<sup>111</sup> *VPJ* 39; Cf. Paulinus of Nola (*Ep.* 23.6-8) for gruel as part of an ascetic diet. Paulinus did not like it either.

<sup>112</sup> *VPJ* 40.

of death.<sup>113</sup> The author of the *VPJ* reports that Lupicinus brought the elderly monk out into the sun in the middle of the monastery to massage him, but only when the monastery was deserted after “the brothers had left for the fields.”<sup>114</sup> That the monastery was left practically empty, except for the abbot ministering to the elderly monk, suggests that it was normal for all, or the majority, of the monks to work regularly for the monastery’s sustenance.<sup>115</sup>

After the elderly monk began to recover his strength thanks to Lupicinus’ ministrations, Lupicinus immediately put him to work in the monastery’s garden:

At last, on the third day, when the brother was out walking, supported now not by others but solely by his own efforts, the elder [Lupicinus] provided him with a bent piece of wood like a light-weight hoe and showed him how to weed the vegetables, sometimes standing, sometimes lying down, either with a rake or with his fingers.<sup>116</sup>

Even if the elderly monk was still not strong enough to join the other monks in the fields, there were still vegetables needing weeded within the monastery’s grounds. The author of the *VPJ* was certainly consistent in his application of the idea that being a true monk required manual labor. He is also consistent in his description of the importance of tools to the monks’ work.

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<sup>113</sup> *VPJ* 71-72.

<sup>114</sup> *VPJ* 73, (SC 142: 318; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 137): “*Die igitur quadam, cum fratres ad agriculturam, nescio quid operaturi, exissent, atque omne monasterium secretum penitus haberetur...*”

<sup>115</sup> The labor regime of fifth and early sixth-century Gallic monasteries was more complex than the author of the *VPJ* presents here. The eighth canon from the Council of Epaone held in 517 reads, “*Mancipia vero monachis donata ab abbate non liceat manumitti. Inustum enim putamus, ut monachis cottidianum rurale opus facientibus servi eorum libertatis otio potiantur.*” – “It is not permitted for slaves given by the abbot to the monks to be manumitted. For we consider it unjust that the monks’ slaves obtain the leisure of freedom while the monks conduct their daily farm work.” (*Acta Concilii Epaonensis, MGH AA 6.2: 168-69*; trans. by the author.) While this canon does confirm the importance of manual labor in the monastic life, it also testifies to the presence of slave labor on some monasteries.

<sup>116</sup> *VPJ* 76, (SC 142: 322; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 138): “*Cumque et tertio demum die non iam alienis uiribus, sed propriis tantummodo nitens, sustentatus incederet, parat senior uncatum leui pro sarculo lignum et secum docet nunc stantem, nunc quoque iacentem aut rastro aut digitis holeribus arua laxare.*”

A monk's tools were important enough that whenever a monk attempted to flee from the monastery, he always took his tools with him. The monk Dativus fled Condadisco once, then returned, and a few years later attempted to flee again. The first time he fled, we are told that he bundled up his tools and utensils before he left, and when he considered leaving the second time, he again made a bundle of his tools and blanket.<sup>117</sup> At another time, two monks resolved to leave together. The author of the *VPJ* assumed that their secret conversation must have gone like this, "You take from here my hoe and ax, and I will carefully remove your cloak and your cowl from your bed."<sup>118</sup> Dativus' tools were probably also a hoe and an ax. Near the end of the *VPJ* the author writes that after a fire consumed the entire monastery the brothers were searching through the ashes looking for iron hoe and ax heads.<sup>119</sup> We are told that each brother had a hoe or an ax.<sup>120</sup> These were the tools by which the monastery was built and re-built.

Hoes and axes were key to the monastery's survival.<sup>121</sup> It was with the axes that the monks cleared new land to farm and procured the timber to construct the monastery. Prior to the fire, the monastery's two-story physical structure was composed entirely of wooden cells joined together.<sup>122</sup> It took a substantial amount of timber and a substantial

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<sup>117</sup> *VPJ* 88 and 90. The issue of monks taking tools complicates questions of ownership in the monastery. Cf. *VPJ* 172 and 173.

<sup>118</sup> *VPJ* 79, (SC 142:324-326; trans. Vivian, CS 178:139-140): "*Tu, inquit unus, exinde meum sarculum ac securem, at ego ex lectulo cautious sagellum tuum extraham uel cucullam...*"

<sup>119</sup> *VPJ* 162-3.

<sup>120</sup> *VPJ* 163.

<sup>121</sup> Where did the monks get their iron tools? Metal workshops from both the Roman and Early Medieval periods are in the area. There is evidence for a metal workshop at the Roman settlement and cult site Villards-d'Héria, just over six miles from St. Claude. (*CAG* 39, §561.58 (pp. 745-746)) Near the village of Pratz, at a place called Curtillet, which is near Saint-Romain-de-Roche, where Romanus and Lupicinus established a nunnery for their sister, Yole, a metal workshop dating to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century has been uncovered. (*CAG* 39, §440.6 (pp. 582-583))

<sup>122</sup> *VPJ* 162.

amount of time to cut down the trees to construct the monastery. Finally, the monks worked the land with the hoes to provide food. The monks exercised control over the forest by means of axes and hoes.

The forest was not the only natural element that the monks exercised control over. They also controlled the river. The monk Sabinianus appears to have been something of a hydraulic engineer as he oversaw the monastery's "mills and weirs."<sup>123</sup> The author of the *VPJ* includes Sabinianus in his narrative because the Devil attacked Sabinianus both in his cell and while working on the weirs.<sup>124</sup> Among descriptions of Sabinianus' spiritual warfare, the author included a description of some of the work that Sabinianus did. We are told that one day Sabinianus wanted:

...to carefully raise the channel of the river by which water was brought to the mill to activate the machinery of the wheel; they [the monks] fixed into place a double row of pilings and as is the custom, plaited sticks and filled the spaces between with a mixture of straw and rock.<sup>125</sup>

This passage describes the monks constructing a type of wattle and daub weir in the river in order to bring the water to the mill wheel, which was presumably used for grinding grain.<sup>126</sup> In this passage the water is controllable and can be made to do some of the work to support the monastery. In the previous passage describing the erosion of the soil around Condadisco, there was frequent flooding, the rains were irresistible, and the soil

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<sup>123</sup> *VPJ* 52, (SC 142: 296; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 127): "...*molinas piskasque...*"

<sup>124</sup> *VPJ* 52-58.

<sup>125</sup> *VPJ* 57, (SC 142: 300; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 129): "...*alueum torrentis ipsius quo molinaris aduehebatur aqua, geminato ordine defixis stilis eisdemque, ut mos est, implexis uiminibus, palearum quoque ac lapidum admixtione permixta, ad cursum rotalis machinae uellet diligentius inaltare...*"

<sup>126</sup> Although Ausonius describes mills used to drive stonecutting saws as well. (Ausonius, *Moselle*, 361-364.)

was carried away in torrents.<sup>127</sup> Sabinianus, in building weirs and mills, had subdued the water.

Even though the monks of the Jura Mountains were employed clearing forests with their axes, tilling fields and weeding gardens with their hoes, and harnessing the power of the river Bienne to turn their mills, they were still subject to the uncertainties of ancient agriculture. One of the miracles that Lupicinus is reported to have worked was the providing of additional grain during a famine. The author does not state the cause of the famine outright, but Lupicinus' later prayer for rain suggests that the region was undergoing a drought.<sup>128</sup> The author does indicate that the famine was widespread since "the enormous community of monks and the multitude of lay people who had come to the monastery seeking food were troubling the steward of the monastery."<sup>129</sup> Apparently, it was still three months until the harvest, but there was only enough grain left for fifteen days. This crisis opens an opportunity for the author of the *VPJ* to return to imagery of the desert, but it is a different kind of desert.

In order to solve the food shortage, Lupicinus instructed the monks, "Come, little children, into our granary here, where only a few handfuls of grain remain, and let us pray; we too, who have left our towns, follow the Savior into the desert (*deserto*) in order to listen to him."<sup>130</sup> Lupicinus here invokes Matthew 14:13-14, when Jesus withdrew into a deserted place (*desertum locum*), but was followed by the crowd. Shortly thereafter, Jesus miraculously fed the crowd of five thousand men plus women and children with

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<sup>127</sup> *VPJ* 22-23.

<sup>128</sup> *VPJ* 68-69.

<sup>129</sup> *VPJ* 68, (SC 142: 314; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 135): "*cum enormis congregatio atque expetentum saecularium multitudo, famis periculo conturbaret oeconomum...*"

<sup>130</sup> *VPJ* 68, (SC 142: 314; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 135-136, adapted by the author): "*Venite, inquit, filioli; spicarium hoc nostrum, in quo exiguitas manipulorum superest, intrantes, oremus: et nos enim, relictis urbibus, audituri in deserto sequimur Salvatorem.*"

five loaves and two fish. Lupicinus compares himself and his monks to the crowd in the Gospel who followed Jesus to a deserted place. If Jesus fed the crowd by multiplying the loaves and fish, then he could multiply the meager supply of grain left in the monastery's granary.

The desert invoked in this passage is a different kind of desert than the author described at the beginning of his work. Previously, the author had used the word *eremus* to indicate a continuity between Romanus and the Egyptian monks Antony and Paul the Hermit. But the use of the word *desertus* instead of *eremus*, although technically synonyms, shifts the meaning away from the Egyptian desert ideal where a monk wages solo spiritual warfare to a desert in which Jesus provides for the needs of his flock as a group. Lupicinus prays:

Just as it [the granary] is filled with the Word, in the same way revive it by filling it up with bread; until we obtain rains for a new harvest, do not allow our granary here to lack an abundance of wheat.<sup>131</sup>

Lupicinus' prayer as reported by our anonymous hagiographer, while requesting a miraculous multiplication of the granary's stores, assumes that God will provide for the monastery through the agricultural cycle. In fact, when the hagiographer reports an older monk's reflection on the completion of the miracle, he states the importance of the agricultural cycle outright:

...[the monks] would never have been able to manage all that wheat and get it threshed unless, by the same blessing, once the cycle of seasons came round (*quodam redintegrationis circulo*) with a new crop to add to what had already been accumulated, Lupicinus had not mixed the new with the old.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> VPJ 69, (SC 142: 316; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 136): "...sicut satietate verbi, ita saturitate refice panis, ac donec imbre fructuum potiamur nouorum, specarium hoc nostrum non patiaris triticea ubertae deficere."

<sup>132</sup> VPJ 70, (SC 142: 316; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 136): "...nunquam se alimoniam ipsam excutiendo uincere potuisse, nisi eadem, aceruis nouae segetis aduenientis quodam redintegrationis circulo insertis, noua ueteribus miscuisset."

Vivian's translation "cycle of seasons came around" is, more literally, closer to "by a certain cycle of restoration." Vivian identifies *circulo* as indicating seasons. But the seasons do not just come around again; there is a cycle of restoration. The famine inducing drought had broken the regular agricultural cycle, threatening not only the monastery, but the surrounding community as well. The key point of this passage is that the miraculous multiplication of grain stopped when the new harvest was brought in. Therefore, Lupicinus' miracle healed the broken agricultural cycle. The restoration of the agricultural cycle, on which the monastery depended, was just as important to Lupicinus' miracle as the multiplication of the grain.

The author of the *VPJ* assumes that the monks have significant agency within their immediate environment. The monks use tools to clear forests and till fields. They construct weirs in the river and mills along the riverbanks. During a famine, Lupicinus was able to provide miraculously for the monastery. All these tasks, from hoeing to miracle working, were aimed at supporting the monastic community and were carried out either in or in the immediate vicinity of Condadisco, forming the taskscape of the monks. When the monks of Condadisco looked at their landscape, they saw both work to be done and a landscape shaped by their efforts. But there was still a famine. The rains and erosion around Condadisco rendered agriculture in the valley unsustainable. When the monks searched for another place to farm, the forest required action, namely chopping trees down. Famine forced the monks to turn to prayer to change their circumstances. The landscape of the Jura, the mountains, valleys, and forests, constrained what the monks were able to do, in many ways determining their actions.

#### 5.4. Climate and Clothing

The climate of the Haut-Jura was central to the experience of the monks of the Jura Mountains. Modern Saint-Claude has mild damp summers with average high temperatures in July and August only around seventy-one degrees Fahrenheit and between five and six inches of rain each month.<sup>133</sup> Winters in Saint-Claude, on the other hand are cold and very snowy. The present average annual snowfall in Saint-Claude is over eleven feet, while the average low temperature in winter is below freezing.<sup>134</sup> Condadisco in the sixth century was on average cooler and damper than the present.<sup>135</sup> The author of the *VPJ* harnessed this most un-Egyptian climate to describe the monastic lifestyles of Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus.

When the hagiographer described Romanus' first foray into the "desert," when he took up residence beneath a fir tree in imitation of Paul the Hermit, he describes the miraculous way in which the fir tree sheltered Romanus from the elements. After describing the location of the tree at the base of Mt. Bayard and next to a spring, he goes on:

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<sup>133</sup> Saint-Claude's average high temperature for July and August is 21.8 degrees Celsius (~71 degrees Fahrenheit). ("Climate and monthly weather forecast: Saint-Claude, France," Weather Atlas, accessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.weather-atlas.com/en/france/saint-claude-climate#temperature>) Saint-Claude's average rainfall in July is 127 millimeters (5 inches) and 137 millimeters (5 and 25/64 inches) in August. ("Climate and monthly weather forecast: Saint-Claude, France," Weather Atlas, accessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.weather-atlas.com/en/france/saint-claude-climate#rainfall>)

<sup>134</sup> The total average annual snowfall for Saint-Claude is 3413 millimeters (11 feet 2 and 3/8 inches). "Climate and monthly weather forecast: Saint-Claude, France," Weather Atlas, accessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.weather-atlas.com/en/france/saint-claude-climate#snowfall>; "Climate and monthly weather forecast: Saint-Claude, France," Weather Atlas, accessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.weather-atlas.com/en/france/saint-claude-climate#temperature>.

<sup>135</sup> Ulf Büntigen et al., "2500 Years of European Climate Variability and Human Susceptibility," *Science* 331, no. 6017 (February 2011): 581, fig. 4. <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.1197175>.

Therefore, this aforementioned tree, as I have said, perpetually offered him [Romanus] a green roof against the heat of summer and the cold of the rains, truly just like springtime, on account of his merits.<sup>136</sup>

The hagiographer's primary purpose in this passage is to demonstrate that Romanus merited a mild climate beneath the fir tree. To construct this idealistic image, the author of the *VPJ* relied on imagery from the actual landscape and climate. The tree perpetually offered a green roof to Romanus, which is exactly what one would expect from an evergreen fir tree. The branches of the fir tree shaded him from heat and rain, the characteristic discomforts of summer and winter, so that it was as if the fir tree created the perfect microclimate for Romanus to inhabit. The hagiographer invokes the heat of summer (*feruore aestuum*) and the cold of the rains (*frigore imbrium*) to demonstrate that while the Jura is subject to extreme variations of climate, Romanus was so holy that he only experienced spring temperatures. However, in later passages, the harsh winter climate of the Haut-Jura was central to the descriptions of Lupicinus and Eugendus.

The heat, rains, and snow made farming difficult in and around Condadisco, causing the monks to clear forests for fields at Lauconnus. The climate also dictated what sorts of clothing the monks wore. The clothing that Lupicinus and Eugendus wore to ward off the cold and the wet are central to their descriptions.

The author of the *VPJ* began his description of Lupicinus by describing Lupicinus' wardrobe. Lupicinus wore a hideous tunic patched together from different animal skins "to protect himself against the frosts of the extremely cold land (*gelidissimi*

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<sup>136</sup> *VPJ* 8, (SC 142: 246; trans. by the author): "*Haec ergo ei supradicta, ut diximus, arbor a feruore aestuum uel frigore imbrium, tamquam uere meritorum gratia uernans, praebuit iugiter tecta uirentia.*" Vivian follows Martine in translating the springtime as being perpetual, taking the adverb *iugiter*, "perpetually" to modify *uernans*, "springtime." However, since *iugiter* follows the verb *praebuit*, "offered," and therefore lies outside of the subordinate clause started by *tamquam*, I take *iugiter* to modify *praebuit*.

*loci frigora*) and to wear down the wantonness of the body.”<sup>137</sup> Lupicinus’ ugly tunic was as much for protection from the cold as it was a part of his ascetic practice. Lupicinus’ cowl was little better. Not only was it equally as ugly as his tunic, but it also “protected him only from the rain and was of little use in warding off the bitter cold of that place.”<sup>138</sup> To complete his wardrobe, Lupicinus only wore shoes (*calciamentum*) when he left the monastery to go to court in order to intercede for someone. In the monastery itself, Lupicinus opted for wooden clogs called “*soccas*.”<sup>139</sup>

The hagiographer goes on to write that Lupicinus never used ordinary bedding. Instead, in mild weather (*commodiori namque temperie*) he meditated in the oratory. But, when “harsh and more powerful cold assailed him” (*Si uero uis frigoris sese ingessisset austerior*), he warmed a sleeping bag made from tree bark next to a fire and take the crude, but warm, sleeping bag into the oratory where he would sleep.<sup>140</sup>

While Eugendus gave up bark sleeping bags in favor of a bed of straw and animal skin, Eugendus’ clothing, as related by the hagiographer, followed a pattern similar to Lupicinus’.<sup>141</sup> Eugendus also only had one tunic and one cowl, which he never changed until they wore out.<sup>142</sup> A tunic and a cowl mirrors Lupicinus’ wardrobe, but Eugendus had one further piece of clothing, a hair cloak or scapular given to him by the Abbot

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<sup>137</sup> VPJ 63, (SC 142: 308-310; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 133): “*Igitur, ad arcenda gelidissimi loci frigora uel lasciuam corporis conterendam...*”

<sup>138</sup> VPJ 63, (SC 142: 310; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 134): “*Cuculla uero adaeque uilissima, quae tantum arceret imbrem, non tamen quae posset loci, ut diximus, frigora utiliter retundere.*”

<sup>139</sup> VPJ 64.

<sup>140</sup> VPJ 64.

<sup>141</sup> VPJ 127.

<sup>142</sup> VPJ 127.

Leunianus of Vienne.<sup>143</sup> Eugendus' footwear also resembled that of Lupicinus. We are told that Eugendus would wear "sturdy country shoes in the manner of the ancient fathers."<sup>144</sup> However, Eugendus also regularly wore the wooden Gallic *socci*, even throughout the winter.

For the offices of nocturnes and matins, he never put anything on his bare feet, either during freezing cold (*in frigidissimis pruinis*) or when there was a great deal of snow (*in magnis niuibus*), except wooden clogs worn in the Gallic manner; with great frequency he walked in the snow (*in niuibus*) a long way in

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<sup>143</sup> VPJ 127.

*Aestiuis namque temporibus carecalla uel scapulari cilicin utebatur uetusto...* (Martine, 1968) (SC 142: 376)

*Aestiuis namque temporibus carecalla vel scapulari cilicina utebatur vetusta...* (Krusch, 1896) (*MGH SS rer. Merov.* 3: 155)

This passage about the hair cloak is somewhat confusing due to typographical errors and what appears to be an early attempt at distinguishing the parts of a distinctly monastic habit. Martine's "*cilicin utebatur*" appears to be a typographical error on the publisher's part. The text should read "*cilicino utebatur*" so that "*cilicino*" agrees with "*uetusto*." This restores standard spelling of "*utebatur*." This is the first known use of the word "*scapularis*." (P. W. Hoogterp, "Les Vies des Pères du Jura: Étude sur la Langue," in *Bulletin du Cange: archivum latinitatis medii aevi* 9 (1934): 144.) The DMLBS further notes that *scapularis*, when used substantively, can be masculine, feminine, or neuter. Therefore, Martine's and Krush's divergent readings of the manuscript tradition regarding the gender of "*scapulari*" does not change the meaning of the text. Vivian translates this passage, "During the summer months he used a *caracalla* and an old scapular made of goats' hair..." (Vivian, CS 178: 161). Vivian's reading closely follows Martine's "Pendant l'été, il usait d'une caracalle et d'un vieux scapulaire en poil de chèvre..." (SC 142: 377) These readings require taking "*uel*" to mean "and" and assumes that the adjective "*cilicinus*" implies goat hair specifically. This reading also requires the understanding the Eugendus made use of two kinds of outer wear during the summer. This seems unlikely as the hagiographer made it clear above that Eugendus only had one tunic and cowl at a time. Additionally, piling on extra layers of clothing during the summer does not make sense. Rather, I suggest that a better translation is, "In the summertime he used a long cloak or an old hair scapular..." in which the cloak and scapula are in apposition and refer to the same garment. My reasoning is as follows: First, I see no good reason to use a secondary meaning of "*uel*." Instead, the primary meaning of "*uel*" – "or" can make sense here. Second, the definitions of "*caracalla*" and "*scapularis*" are not mutually exclusive. "*carecalla*" appears to be another spelling of "*caracalla*," which, as defined by Lewis and Short, is "a long tunic or great-coat, with a hood, worn by the Gauls, and made of different materials." (The emperor Antonius Caracalla (r. 211-17) is named after this garment.) "*scapulari*" is the dative of "*scapularis*," which, according to the DMLBS is "an item of clothing worn over one or both shoulders, light cloak" that became synonymous with the monastic scapular. Both words indicate a long overgarment that could be made of any material. In this case, the overgarment is made from goat's hair - "*cilicinus*." It appears that the hagiographer is making an early attempt to distinguish between ordinary outer garments and specifically monastic ones. Cf. *Rule of St. Benedict*, which also recommends the use of a scapular in addition to a tunic and a cowl, specifically for work, "*et scapulare propter opera*" (*Rule of St. Benedict*, 55; SC 182: 618).

<sup>144</sup> VPJ 129, (SC 142: 378; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 162): "*Habebat namque Eugendus beatissimus calciamenta fortia rusticaque in modum priscorum partum...*"

these shoes, in the early morning hours, to where the brothers are buried, in order to pray.<sup>145</sup>

In this passage the hagiographer dwells especially on the cold weather to impress on the readers the extreme discomfort that Eugenius put himself through. During the coldest parts of the day, early morning and late in the evening, Eugenius would only wear wooden clogs. The use of the superlative “*frigidissimis*” – “extremely cold” to modify “*pruinis*” – “hoar-frost”<sup>146</sup> emphasizes the feeling of frigid feet about to go numb in the uninsulated clogs as Eugendus kicked through deep snow on his way to pray in the monastery’s cemetery. While Eugendus’ rustic footwear was yet another sign of the abbot’s humility, Eugendus’ ability to tolerate the snow in winter stands out in this passage.<sup>147</sup>

From the descriptions of Lupicinus’ and Eugendus’ clothing it is evident that cold weather was the most serious climatic challenge faced by the monks at Condadisco. To survive these conditions, the monks turned to local customs. This reliance on local clothing is exemplified by the specifically Gallic type of wooden clog, that we are told were called *socci*, that Lupicinus and Eugendus used. While the inclusion of the detail that these shoes were of Gallic origin is almost certainly included to indicate Lupicinus’ and Eugendus’ humble nature, it also demonstrates the importance of local adaptations to monastic practice in the Jura.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> VPJ 129, (SC 142: 378; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 162): “*At uero nocturnis matutinisque conuenticulis nec in frigidissimis pruinis nec in magnis niuibus quicquam nuditati pedum praeter ligneas Gallicanasque caligas addidit unquam, atque in hunc quoque modum eminus saepissime matutinis horis ad fraternum cymiterium oraturus gradiebatur in niuibus.*”

<sup>146</sup> Lewis and Short, “*pruina*.”

<sup>147</sup> In yet another passage, we learn that the Jura’s cold wet winter weather gave all the monks of Condadisco the opportunity to exercise charity and humility through giving their own dry clothes to brothers who had gotten caught out in winter rains. (VPJ 113; Peter King, *Western Monasticism: A History of the Monastic Movement in the Latin Church*, Cistercian Studies 185 (Kalamazoo, MI & Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1999), 49-50.)

<sup>148</sup> For the lower status of gallic culture, see Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi*, 2.1.

The repeated invocations of the Jura's landscape and climate throughout the *VPJ* gives the reader a sense of place that is crucial to the hagiographer's final argument: the monastery at Condadisco follows its own monastic practice due to Condadisco's distinct local conditions.<sup>149</sup> Near the end of the description of Eugendus' life, the hagiographer explains that in offering a version of monastic practice unique to the Jura he does not want to disparage Basil, the fathers of Lérins, Pachomius, or Cassian, all of whom had offered their own monastic guidelines.<sup>150</sup> The hagiographer goes on:

But while we read these daily, we strive to follow those of Condadisco: they are more comfortable with our local conditions (*qualitate loci*) and with the demands that our work entails (*instantia laboris inuecta*) than are those of the East. Without a doubt the Gallic nature – or weakness – follows the former more easily and efficaciously.<sup>151</sup>

At this point in the *VPJ* it is clear that qualities of location – “*qualitas loci*” – and the demands that the monks' work entailed – “*instantia laboris inuecta*” – required a distinct rule. The monastery of Condadisco was located in a high mountain valley. The valley walls were steep, rocky, and forested. Winters were harsh and characterized by cold rains, frost, and deep snow. Summers were characterized by farming, gardening, maintaining weirs and mills, clearing land, and constructing buildings from the cleared timber for the growing monastery. The Jura is not the Côte d'Azur and Condadisco is not Lérins. Egyptian monastic models filtered through Lérins could not be applied to the Jura simply because the Jura was very different in respect to its geography and climate.

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<sup>149</sup> *VPJ* 174.

<sup>150</sup> *VPJ* 174.

<sup>151</sup> *VPJ* 174, (SC 142: 426-428; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 182): “*sed ea cotidie lectitantes, ista pro qualitate loci et instantia laboris inuecta potius quam Orientalium perficere adfectamus, quia procul dubio efficacius haec faciliusque natura uel infirmitas exsequitur Gallicana.*”

## 5.5. Conclusion

The founding moment of the monastery of Condadisco at the beginning of the *VPJ* is when Romanus took up residence under his fir tree. I conclude, then, with Eugendus also sitting under a tree.

Indeed, at some time before the burden of administration encumbered that man [Eugendus], he was resting on a summer day outside the monastery under his accustomed favorite tree (*sub arbore solito*) beside the path (*semitam*) that crosses all the way to Geneva.<sup>152</sup>

Eugendus then receives a vision of three men coming down the road. When Eugendus asked them who they were, they replied that they were the apostles Peter, Andrew, and Paul.<sup>153</sup> Eugendus, prostrating himself before the apostles, asked, “How is it, my lords, that I see you in these rural woodlands (*rura...siluestria*)– you whose bodies, we read, are buried in the great cities (*magnis urbibus*) of Rome and Patras after your holy martyrdoms?”<sup>154</sup> The apostles replied that they did dwell in those cities, but were also coming to dwell at Condadisco. Eugendus then awoke to see two monks returning to Condadisco along the road from Geneva who had been gone for two years on a pilgrimage. They were returning with relics of Peter, Andrew, and Paul.<sup>155</sup> The hagiographer’s purpose for including this vision is both to indicate the holiness of Eugendus, who was merited to receive visions and visitations from apostles, and to

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<sup>152</sup> *VPJ* 153, (SC 142: 402; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 171): “*Quodam namque tempore, antequam ipsi administrationis onus incumberet, diebus aestiuis ultra monasterium, iuxta semitam qua Genuam usque transcenditur, sub arbore solito quiescenti...*”

<sup>153</sup> *VPJ* 154, (SC 142: 404; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 172): “*Et quid est, inquit, domini, quo duos in haec rura cerno siluestria, quos in magnis urbibus Romae ac Patras post sanctum martyrium legimus corpore contineri?*”

<sup>154</sup> *VPJ* 154.

<sup>155</sup> *VPJ* 155.

record the story of how relics of Peter, Andrew, and Paul made their way to Condadisco. Once again, the hagiographer's use of landscape is noteworthy.

Even though both Romanus and Eugendus both rested under a tree, the hagiographer changes his description of the landscape. Romanus' forest was "*inuia*" – "without roads."<sup>156</sup> Eugendus' tree was next to a road that led to Geneva. Granted, this road was a "*semita*," more literally a small path.<sup>157</sup> Yet, for the first time in the *VPJ*, a direct connection to the outside world is mentioned, and this connection is at the center of the episode. Monks had departed from Condadisco on pilgrimage and were returning with relics. The returning monks are manifested in Eugendus' vision as the apostles traveling along the road to Condadisco. The author of the *VPJ* thus assumed that communication between Condadisco and other places occurred along established pathways. Another route to Condadisco is the River Bienne, which flows to the Ain and thus connects Condadisco to Iznore, Poncin, and the Rhône valley as a whole. The presence of the "*semita*" and the river means Condadisco was not "*secretus*" – "cut-off" as the hagiographer previously described Romanus' habitation.<sup>158</sup> The hagiographer also did not describe Condadisco as the *eremus* in this passage. Instead, the hagiographer described Condadisco as being in "rural woodlands."

The change in the *VPJ*'s characterization of the landscape of Condadisco points to a similar observation about Condadisco that Darlene Hedstrom made in her study on the landscape and archeology of late antique Egyptian monasticism. As Hedstrom puts it: "The desertscape was not a landscape of isolation, but a land that was not previously

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<sup>156</sup> *VPJ* 9.

<sup>157</sup> Lewis and Short, "*semita*." Marie-Pierre Rothé notes a potential Roman route proceeding south-east out of St. Claude to Geneva by the *col de la Faucille*, a mountain pass that connects St. Claude to the town of Gex. (*CAG* 39, p. 83, fig. 16)

<sup>158</sup> *VPJ* 12.

inhabited and now it was settled, even urbanized, by monastic constructions.”<sup>159</sup> At the beginning of the *VPJ*, the anonymous author used local features of the landscape to describe Condadisco as an isolated *eremus*, cut off from the rest of the world. However, Condadisco had the potential to support a settlement, as shown by the previous Roman dwelling in the area. When Romanus first founded his monastery, a more accurate description of Condadisco is that it was an underutilized place with, albeit marginal, agricultural potential. But that was enough for Romanus. By the end of the *VPJ*, the monks at Condadisco had taken the potential of Condadisco and transformed it into a monastic settlement capable of supporting housing and feeding a large community of monks and pilgrims. The monks at Condadisco also maintained connections to other monasteries, such as at Agaune and Vienne, and episcopal centers, such as Lyon, Geneva, and Besançon.

The *VPJ*'s inclusion of the Eugendus' vision of Peter, Andrew, and Paul also directs our attention to Condadisco's transformation into a pilgrimage site. Not long after Lupicinus joined Romanus under his fir tree, we learn that many sick and demon-possessed people came to the brothers for healing.<sup>160</sup> The sick continued to come when Eugendus was abbot.<sup>161</sup> After the death of Romanus, the *VPJ* records miracles at his tomb and calls Romanus' tomb a “venerable place.”<sup>162</sup> While the *VPJ* does not record any posthumous miracles for Lupicinus and Eugendus, it still treats their burial places as similarly blessed and worthy of veneration.<sup>163</sup> The transformation of Conadidsco into a

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<sup>159</sup> Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape of Late Antique Egypt*, 290.

<sup>160</sup> *VPJ* 14-15.

<sup>161</sup> *VPJ* 147-148.

<sup>162</sup> *VPJ* 42 and 61, (SC 142: 306; trans. by Vivian, CS 178: 131): “*Qui uenerabilis locus*”

<sup>163</sup> *VPJ* 117 and 178.

holy place worthy of pilgrimage following the deaths of Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus fits the general transformation of monasteries into pilgrimage sites observed across the Mediterranean during the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>164</sup> The additional presence of the relics of Peter, Andrew, and Paul enhanced Condadisco's perceived sanctity, making it a destination for pilgrims of all social classes seeking contact with holiness.<sup>165</sup> The presence of Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus lingered after their deaths. The resulting sense of holiness, augmented by the relics of the Apostles, transformed Condadisco, previously described as an inaccessible desert, into a pilgrimage site.

The author of the *VPJ* could choose to focus on or ignore different parts of Condadisco's landscape. At the beginning of the hagiography the author chose to focus on the forests, mountains, rocky valleys, and fallen trees that cut off Condadisco, turning it into an *eremus*. In doing so, he ignored the centuries-old connections through the Haut-Jura to surrounding regions. For example, a pagan cult site at Villards d'Heria received major Roman patronage in the first century AD and was a pilgrimage site centuries before Condadisco.<sup>166</sup> This cult site was only 6.5 miles from Condadisco. The hagiographer focused on the ruggedness of the landscape to connect Romanus and the Egyptian monks Antony and Paul the Hermit.

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<sup>164</sup> Brouria Bitton-Askelony, *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2005), 198-199.

<sup>165</sup> For an approach to the study of relics that emphasizes the pursuit of holiness over a pursuit of power, see Antón Pazos, introduction to *Relics, Shrines and Pilgrimages: Sanctity in Europe from Late Antiquity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 1-5. Bitton-Askelony, on the other hand, includes power relationships as a subject of analysis in the study of relics, writing: "Given that I do not view the network of holy places as intended simply to satisfy the pious desires of Christians and intensify their belief, I have been inclined to interpret the debate on pilgrimage in patristic and monastic literature not merely from the theological point of view, as might be expected, but also in terms of ecclesiastical power and personal relationships." (Bitton-Askelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, 204.)

<sup>166</sup> *CAG* 39, §561 (pp. 716-755).

While the author of the *VPJ* drew connections between Egyptian ascetics and Romanus to legitimate Romanus' ascetic practice, not all Egyptian monastic practice was suitable to mountain monasteries. Cassian, whose writings were familiar to the author of the *VPJ*, described Egyptian monks as only wearing a single layer of linen clothing and subsisting on boiled salted greens, practices that were not suited to the Haut-Jura.<sup>167</sup> And western ascetics did occasionally attempt literal imitations of eastern ascetics, as Gregory of Tours' description of an ascetic in sitting on a pillar like Simeon Stylites demonstrates.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, the author of the *VPJ* used Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus as models of an ascetic monastic life adapted to local conditions. The author of the *VPJ* focuses on how the monks adjusted their agricultural activities, way of life, and clothing habits in response to the difficulties of making an agricultural living in the Haut-Jura. This allowed the author of the *VPJ* to justify the unique monastic practice that was developing at Condadisco. Yet, to accomplish this goal, the author had to move away from characterizing Condadisco as *eremus*. The disappearance of the *eremus* from the *VPJ* is exemplified in Eugendus' vision of the Apostles while resting next to a road. In this case, the mountains do not cut Condadisco off from the rest of the world. In fact, the author of the *VPJ* does not even mention the presence of the mountains, just a path that goes to Geneva. But the mountains are still there.

Even though the author of the *VPJ* manipulated his landscape descriptions to create a 'desert' and to justify changing previously established rules, the reality of the landscape of the Jura is still present. The mountains, the rivers Bienne and Tacon, the fir and pine trees, the winter snow and summer rain all shaped the author's experience of Condadisco. These elements of the landscape shaped and directed life in Condadisco.

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<sup>167</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, 4.10-11.

<sup>168</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 8.15.

They made Condadisco difficult, but not impossible, to access. They rendered farming at Condadisco risky and necessitated the founding of a monastery at Saint-Lupicin, a location that was more amenable to agriculture. But first forests needed cleared. Even once more land was brought under cultivation, the monastery was still subject to the vagaries of climate, and drought forced not only the monks, but also the surrounding population, to rely on Lupicinus to provide a miracle to restore the agricultural cycle. The snow and cold weather forced even the ascetic Lupicinus to warm a crude sleeping bag by a fire before spending the night in the oratory. The landscape of the Jura Mountains, through the experiences of the author, shaped the *VPJ*.

*Conclusion*  
*A Multiplicity of Landscapes*

In my conclusion, I offer reflections on the ways in which the authors' experiences of their landscapes affected the ways they wrote as evidenced in their texts. Despite differences in genre, purpose, place, and chronology, certain themes consistently appear in the works of Palladius, Eucherius, Sidonius, Avitus, and the *Life of the Jura Fathers*. These themes include the values of the senatorial aristocracy, Christian beliefs, and the monastic desert. The result is a multiplicity of landscape interpretations that can be organized along a spectrum, with aristocratic values at one end and Christian beliefs on the other. Each author's position on the spectrum depends on how the author combined aristocratic values and Christian beliefs. At one end of the spectrum is Palladius, who exemplifies an aristocratic outlook on his landscape and did not express a particular religious affiliation. In the middle of the spectrum are Eucherius, Sidonius, and Avitus, all of whom combined aristocratic values and Christian beliefs to various degrees. At the other end of the spectrum is the *Life of the Jura Fathers (VPJ)*, an anonymous hagiography that responds to aristocratic values the least, while offering a distinctly monastic interpretation of the landscape.

In Part I of the conclusion, I focus on the ways that aristocratic concerns and values shaped the landscape views of all the authors in this dissertation. Palladius, Eucherius, Sidonius, and Avitus embraced various aristocratic values while the hagiographer of the *VPJ* demonstrated an awareness of aristocratic values by actively rejecting them. Yet, Eucherius, Sidonius, and Avitus were also Christians, each of whom

combined their faith and aristocratic values differently. So, in Part II, I discuss the complex landscape views that resulted from the combination of aristocratic values and Christian beliefs. This discussion suggests that late antique Gallic conceptions of control and ownership of the land had their origins in aristocratic values and not Christian theology. In Part III, I focus on the desert and its changing meaning in the works of Eucherius and the *VPJ*. Eucherius and the hagiographer of the *VPJ* both integrated the concept of the monastic desert into their interpretations of their landscapes. My analysis of the monastic desert in fifth and early sixth-century Gaul contributes to our understanding of the history of monasticism in Gaul and the development of Gaul's Christian, sacred landscape.

Landscapes also imposed constraints on the actions of the people who lived in them. This is particularly evident in the descriptions of farming offered by Palladius and the *VPJ*, which I compare in Part IV of the conclusion. While Palladius' *Opus agriculturae* and the *VPJ* are perhaps the most different texts included in this study, one is an agricultural treatise and the other is a hagiography, they both address how people adapted their farming practices to local conditions. Both Palladius and the author of the *VPJ* are keenly aware of the constraints that their landscapes placed on them.

### I. Aristocratic Landscapes

All the authors in this study were either members of or responders to the senatorial aristocracy and its values. Palladius wrote his *Opus agriculturae* specifically

for an aristocratic audience. He assumed that his audience wanted to increase the productivity of their villas and that villa management was an acceptable way for aristocrats to spend their time. Agricultural treatises also had a long tradition in Roman aristocratic culture, dating to at least Cato the Elder. Therefore, Palladius contributed to and participated in a longstanding aristocratic tradition by writing the *Opus agriculturae*.

While Eucherius' primary purpose in writing the *De laude eremi* was to praise the values associated with the desert and present Lérins as a desert, Eucherius also had aristocratic concerns. Eucherius and his primary addressee, Hilary of Arles, were both from aristocratic backgrounds. Eucherius wrote that the monastic life on Lérins was superior to aristocratic *otium*.<sup>1</sup> After describing how Roman aristocrats (*clari...viri*) used to study philosophy after a secular career, Eucherius claims that it is better to devote oneself to the "study of the clearest wisdom," that is scripture, and to withdraw "to the freedom of solitude and the secluded areas of deserted places."<sup>2</sup> In making this statement, Eucherius uses the desert to make a claim about the proper aristocratic life that stands in tension with the kind of aristocratic villa life that Palladius assumed of his audience.

For Sidonius, Lyon's religious landscape offered opportunities to display his aristocratic status through presentations of his poetry. Sidonius wrote a poem for the dedication of a basilica built by Patiens, which was then displayed inside the basilica

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<sup>1</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi* 32.

<sup>2</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 32.2, (Pricoco 2014: 166; trans. by the author): "*Quanto pulchrius ad haec manifestissimae sapientiae studia divertunt magnificentiusqne ad solitudinum libertatem et desertorum secreta secedunt...*"

itself.<sup>3</sup> Sidonius met and relaxed with his aristocratic peers at the tomb of Syagrius, where he composed impromptu verse.<sup>4</sup> Sidonius both paid for and composed the verse epitaph for his grandfather's memorial stone.<sup>5</sup> The places where Sidonius put his poetic skills on display to impress his aristocratic peers have a special prominence in Sidonius' letters.

For Avitus, the rivers of Gaul were the source of gifts of fish that he used to maintain his network of aristocratic peers. Fish and shellfish were an important component of Gallo-Roman feasting. Fish and other foods sourced from watery environments are also the gifts most visible not only in the letters of Avitus, but also in the letters of other Gallo-Roman aristocrats. Through gifts of fish, Avitus and his fellow bishops and aristocrats were able to include each other in feasts even if they were not able to physically attend. Gifts of fish, then, were tools of inclusion used to maintain social connections between aristocrats and bishops.

The *VPJ*, although not a specifically aristocratic text, used landscape to separate its holy subjects from their aristocratic backgrounds. The *VPJ* states that Romanus and Lupicinus were from a villa not far from the Jura mountains, which suggests that Romanus and Lupicinus were from a landowning background.<sup>6</sup> The *VPJ* also contrasts the ruggedness of the landscape of the Jura mountains with the nearby plains, which,

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<sup>3</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.10.

<sup>4</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.17.

<sup>5</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12.

<sup>6</sup> *VPJ* 5.

unlike the mountains, were suitable for agriculture.<sup>7</sup> The *VPJ* separates Romanus and Lupicinus from their landowning backgrounds by describing them leaving their villa in the plains for the monastic life in the Jura mountains.

## II. Christian and Aristocratic Landscapes

Religious and aristocratic concerns are not always distinct. The aristocratic concerns that Sidonius and Avitus had regarding their landscapes were entwined with their religious practice. Sidonius displays a special interest in Lyon's religious landscape, namely its churches and burial places. Avitus paid special attention in his letters to proper religious fasting.

While Lyon's religious landscape is particularly prominent in Sidonius' letters because it provided several opportunities for Sidonius to display his poetic skill and aristocratic status, it also demonstrates the diverse range of religious activities in which Sidonius engaged in Lyon. For example, Sidonius characterized Patiens' basilica as the religious and economic center of the city.<sup>8</sup> Sidonius also participated in an early morning vigil that took place at the church of St. Justus.<sup>9</sup> Sidonius was probably concerned about the treatment of his grandfather's grave in part because the mistreatment of an ancestor's remains could have spiritual consequences for the descendants.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *VPJ* 8.

<sup>8</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.10.

<sup>9</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.17.

<sup>10</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.12.

For Avitus, sending and receiving gifts of fish was more than participation in Gallo-Roman aristocratic culture, they were also a way to engage in religious dialog regarding the proper limits of feasting and fasting. In early sixth-century Gaul, bishops were still negotiating the proper norms for Christian fasting. For example, the Council of Orleans in 511 specified that Lenten fasting should last for forty days, not fifty, and that all churches should observe three days of fasting during the Rogations.<sup>11</sup> Avitus, as a bishop with an aristocratic background, needed to negotiate a balance between aristocratic norms of feasting and proper fasting with his fellow aristocrats and bishops. One of the ways that Avitus did this was by turning to the aristocratic custom of sending gifts of fish and other foods. By sending and receiving gifts of food, which Avitus then commented on in his letters, Avitus was able to communicate which foods were acceptable and unacceptable during fasts.

The landscape descriptions analyzed in the letters of Sidonius and Avitus are diverse and contain multivalent meanings. Patiens' basilica was located in Lyon at the base of the Fourvière Hill and next to the Soane River, while the church of St. Justus was near the top of the Fourvière Hill, and Apollinaris' grave was just outside the city. In each of these places, Sidonius' aristocratic posturing overlapped with his religious practice and beliefs. Avitus, on the other hand, named and described several different watery environments from which he sourced gifts of fish, including the Soane, the Isere, the Mediterranean, and marshes. Avitus sent and received gifts of fish to engage in religious

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<sup>11</sup> *511 Council of Orleans*, can. 24 and 27.

dialog regarding feasting and fasting and to maintain his social connections with fellow bishops and aristocrats.

### *II.1. Control and Ownership of the Landscape*

That there were multiple views of the landscape in late antique Gaul derived from various combinations of aristocratic values and Christian beliefs complicates our understanding of the way that people thought about their relationship to the world around them. One key issue that merits further research is how people in late antique Gaul conceptualized ownership and control of their landscape.

The different views expressed by the authors in this study reflect very different views about landscape, nature, and God. For example, Eucherius thought that God designated each part of the world for its proper use and that God had designated the desert for monks.<sup>12</sup> However, Eucherius did not expect monks to dominate their landscape. Rather, Eucherius expected the harsh landscape of the desert to force the monks to rely on God for provisions.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, Sidonius incorporated Lyon's landscape into his poem for Patiens' basilica to make a theological point, namely that the path to salvation lay through Patiens' basilica.<sup>14</sup> In other words, Sidonius uses the basilica's location at a crossroads and the edge of the Saone river to highlight how all

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<sup>12</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi* 5.

<sup>13</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi* 29.

<sup>14</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.10.

paths lead to the basilica, which was built and controlled by Patiens, the bishop of Lyon. Therefore, in Sidonius' poem, Lyon's landscape guides people to God through a place controlled by the bishop, thus emphasizing episcopal authority.

The landscape of the Jura Mountains is treated in multiple ways by the hagiographer of the *VPJ*. At the beginning of the *VPJ*, the landscape is interpreted as a desert, similar to Eucherius' interpretation. Yet, early in the *VPJ*, the monks are provided for by the landscape: a tree offers shelter, bushes provide berries for food, and a spring supplies water.<sup>15</sup> Later in the *VPJ*, the hagiographer describes the monks actively providing their own shelter and sustenance by farming and timber cutting, thus shaping their landscape. The hagiographer did not choose to present these actions as theologically motivated. Instead, he presented them as necessary actions in response to a growing monastic population and the challenges of farming on a forested mountain side.<sup>16</sup>

The author in this study who most overtly demonstrates a sense of ownership of the landscape is Palladius, who did not present a particularly religious outlook in his agricultural treatise. Palladius was an aristocratic villa owner who wanted to improve the agricultural production of his villas. The fact that he wrote an agricultural treatise shows that Palladius thought he had the knowledge to achieve his goals. While Palladius clearly expresses a sense of ownership of the land, he is not unique in this regard, as Sidonius and Avitus also expressed a sense of ownership over the land and its resources. When Sidonius set up a monument for his grandfather's grave, he expressed a clear sense of

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<sup>15</sup> *VPJ* 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> *VPJ* 22-24.

control over that space. Yet Sidonius compared his action of commemorating his grandfather to Alexander the Great's commemoration of Achilles and Julius Caesar's commemoration of Hector.<sup>17</sup> This demonstrates that Sidonius was consciously drawing on classical, not Christian, examples of pious devotion when he framed his assertion of control over his grandfather's grave. Avitus' giving and sending of gifts of fish included exerting ownership over riverine resources. But, as Dennis Trout argues, food gifts represented the control of the landed elite over local resources.<sup>18</sup> The ownership of riverine resources that Avitus expressed by sending gifts of fish had its roots in his aristocratic value system. When Avitus used gifts of fish to engage in religious dialog, he put a distinctly aristocratic practice to a distinctly Christian use. The treatment of the landscape by Palladius, Sidonius, and Avitus suggests that when people in late antique Gaul expressed a sense of ownership and control over their landscape, their reasoning came from the values of the senatorial aristocracy, not Christian theology. This is a thesis that would benefit from further research.

### III. The Desert: A new kind of Christian Landscape

At the other end of the spectrum of landscape views explored in this dissertation is the distinctly Christian view of the landscape as a monastic desert, a specific category of religious landscape. Two of the authors included in this dissertation, Eucherius and the

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<sup>17</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.13.6 (LCL 420: 46-47).

<sup>18</sup> Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 56-57.

hagiographer of the *VPJ*, engage substantially with the idea of the monastic desert.<sup>19</sup> Both Eucherius and the hagiographer draw on language from the Bible and monastic literature to describe Lérins and the Jura Mountains as remote, isolated, and as places where one could encounter God. When considered together, Eucherius and the *VPJ* have two implications for our understanding of the monastic desert in fifth and sixth-century Gaul. First, the introduction of the monastic desert to Gaul was an essential step in the creation of Gaul's sacred Christian landscape because it allowed monks to assign spiritual value to land that did not have previous Christian connections. Second, the definition of the monastic "desert" changed over the course of the fifth century. At the beginning of the fifth century, Eucherius treated two Latin words for desert, "*eremus*" and "*desertum*" as synonyms. In the early sixth century, the *VPJ* treated the term "*eremus*" as a specifically monastic term connected to the history of a place's habitation. While earlier scholarship has noted the evolution of the definition of the term "*eremus*," my work expands on how the changing definition of "*eremus*" impacted the ways that people interpreted their landscape.<sup>20</sup> Thus, this study builds on and adds to scholarship on the various ways in which Christians adapted the idea of the desert to a Christian landscape, as discussed below.

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<sup>19</sup> For a short bibliography of scholarship on the monastic desert in the late antique West, see Chapter 2, note 19.

<sup>20</sup> Clemens Kasper noted that Eucherius' fifth-century definition and Isidore of Seville's sixth-century definition for *eremus* were different. (Clemens Kasper, *Theologie und Askese* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1991), 202-203.)

### *III.1. The Desert: Creating a Christian Landscape*

The development of Christian sites of worship and the abandonment of pagan sites throughout late antiquity gave Gaul a new sacred landscape. While some Christian sites of worship were set up on previous pagan sites, for the most part Christian sites of worship did not have a distinctly pagan past.<sup>21</sup> Instead, the new Christian landscape of Gaul was largely original.<sup>22</sup> The role of funerary basilicas in creating a Christian landscape in Gaul has already been observed.<sup>23</sup> The monastic desert also played an important role in the development of Gaul's Christian landscape.

Scholars who have addressed the idea of building a monastic desert in Gaul have tended to focus on how monks have used the idea of the desert for various purposes. For example, Conrad Leyser and Laura Feldt have shown that monks and bishops used the monastic desert as a source of authority.<sup>24</sup> Mireille Labrousse has argued that Eucherius used the desert to anticipate paradise.<sup>25</sup> James Goehring and Christopher Kelly have

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<sup>21</sup> Bailey Young, "Sacred Topography: The Impact of the Funerary Basilica in Late Antique Gaul," in *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul*, (eds.) Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (Ashgate, 2001. Reprinted London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 175.

<sup>22</sup> Bailey Young, "Sacred Topography," 175.

<sup>23</sup> Bailey Young, "Sacred Topography," 175.

<sup>24</sup> Conrad Leyser, "Uses of the Desert in the Sixth Century West," in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, special issue of *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. 1, (2006): 119 and 121; Laura Feldt, "Letters from the Wilderness – Marginality, Literarity, and Religious Authority Changes in Late Antique Gaul," in *Marginality, Media and Mutations of Religious Authority in the History of Christianity*, ed. L. Feldt, and J. N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 69-95.

<sup>25</sup> Mireille Labrousse, "La spiritualité des premiers moines de Lérins," in *Histoire de L'Abbaye de Lérins*, eds. Mireille Labrousse, Eliana Magnani, Yann Codou, Jean-Marie Le Gall, Régis Bertrand, Dom Vladimir Gaudrat (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine – ARCCIS, 2005), 101-104.

argued that the desert was an ideological myth.<sup>26</sup> However, by focusing on how the idea of the desert was applied to physical landscapes, it becomes apparent that the idea of the monastic desert became entangled with definitive places. As Simon Schama writes in *Landscape and Memory*: “But it should be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.”<sup>27</sup> In this case, the idea of the desert became intimately connected with the landscape of Lérins and the Jura Mountains. This process of entanglement contributed to the creation of a new Christian sacred landscape in Gaul.

In Eucherius’ work and the *VPJ* the most essential aspect of the desert was relative isolation. Lérins was isolated because it was an island and the monastery at Condadisco was isolated because it was in a mountain valley. Monks moved to Lérins and Condadisco not because they were sacred places, but because they were places where the monks could experience isolation.

In seeking out isolated places for their monastic projects, the first generation of monks in Gaul acquired a reputation for holiness and began to attract pilgrims. The monks in the Jura mountains are a well attested example. The *VPJ* reports that pilgrims

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<sup>26</sup> James Goehring, “The Dark Side of the Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian Myth of the Desert,” in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, eds. Martin and Miller (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 145-146; Christopher Kelly, “The Myth of the Desert in Western Monasticism: Eucherius of Lyon’s *In Praise of the Desert*,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (2011): 136.

<sup>27</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 61.

came to Condadisco to see Romanus and Lupicinus while the abbots were still alive.<sup>28</sup>

The *VPJ*'s statement is corroborated by Sidonius Apollinaris. Sometime between 470 and 477, while Romanus and Lupicinus were probably still alive, Sidonius commented in a letter that his friend Domnulus had been visiting the monasteries in the Jura.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, people were going on pilgrimage to the monasteries in the Jura mountains approximately forty years before the *VPJ* was written.

Pilgrims continued to come to the Jura mountains after Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus had died. The *VPJ* reports that Romanus was buried at a nearby nunnery, which he had built for his sister, while Lupicinus was buried at Lauconnus, and Eugendus at Condadisco.<sup>30</sup> Regarding Romanus' burial place, the hagiographer writes: "This venerable place, witness to the merits of this man, blooms with a succession of signs and powerful acts. It is adorned more and more abundantly each day, at every moment, to the glory of Romanus' children."<sup>31</sup> The place where Romanus was buried had become a special place where the merits of Romanus continued to manifest themselves in the signs that occurred there. The *VPJ* reports that a possessed man was miraculously cured after

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<sup>28</sup> *VPJ* 14-16.

<sup>29</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 4.25.5 (LCL 420: 168-169). Sidonius was a bishop when he wrote this letter, which means that it must date after 470. Books 1-7 of Sidonius' letters, which includes this letter, were published around 477. (Gavin Kelley, "Dating the Works of Sidonius," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Sidonius Apollinaris*, (eds.) Kelly and van Waarden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 194.)

<sup>30</sup> *VPJ* 25, 61, 117, and 178.

<sup>31</sup> *VPJ* 61 (SC 142: 306; trans. Vivian, CS 178: 131): "*Qui uenerabilis locus, meritorum ipsius testimonio, signorum quoque uirtutumque florene successu, diebus momentisque singulis comptius pro filiorum gloria decoratur.*"

lying on Romanus' sepulcher.<sup>32</sup> Thus, according to the *VPJ*, Romanus' tomb had become a fixture in Gaul's Christian sacred landscape. Yet, it did not start out that way.

At the beginning of the fifth century, the Jura mountains did not have any specific Christian significance, but their relative isolation made them an attractive place for Romanus to establish a hermitage as he sought the desert. Only after the fame of Romanus and his fellow monks spread did pilgrims begin coming to the Jura mountains, thus creating an association between Romanus and the place he inhabited. After Romanus died, his tomb in the Jura mountains became a site of Christian veneration, further cementing the connection between the memory of Romanus and the Jura mountains. The monastic search for the desert in the fifth century was an essential step in the development of Gaul's sacred Christian landscape.

### *III.2. The Desert: A fifth-century Definition Change*

While the monastic desert is central to Eucherius' *De laude eremi* and the *VPJ*, Eucherius wrote the *De laude eremi* between 427 and 428 and the *VPJ* was written between 512 and 515, during which time the concept of the monastic desert had evolved. Eucherius was among the first Gallic authors to embrace the concept of the desert and insist that the desert could be anywhere, including Gaul. The *VPJ*, on the other hand,

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<sup>32</sup> *VPJ* 42.

assumes that the Jura mountains could be a monastic desert. Along the way, the definition of *eremus* changed.<sup>33</sup>

Eucherius' views of the desert as he expressed them in the *De laude eremi* were derived from classical and Christian sources. From classical sources, Eucherius inherited an understanding of the desert as an infertile place devoid of human habitation that should be avoided. From Christian sources, Eucherius received an understanding of the desert as the place where God revealed himself to the Israelites, where Jesus prayed, and where monks went to seek God. The classical understanding of the desert as an infertile place devoid of habitation maps well on biblical and monastic descriptions of the desert in Egypt and Palestine. In the Egyptian desert God miraculously provided manna and water to the Israelites.<sup>34</sup> In the Palestinian desert Jesus miraculously fed five thousand men.<sup>35</sup> The monks John and Macarius drew close to God in the Egyptian desert.<sup>36</sup> Eucherius' reliance on biblical and monastic imagery to describe the desert resulted in his assumption that deserts were dry, dusty, rocky, and infertile. However, Lérins, the site of Eucherius' own monastic experience, did not match that description.

Eucherius was able to describe Lérins as a desert first by changing the definition of desert to mean a solitary place where one could seek God and, second, by offering a spiritual interpretation of Lérins' plant life. Near the beginning of the *De laude eremi*

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<sup>33</sup> Clemens Kasper noted that Eucherius' fifth-century definition and Isidore of Seville's sixth-century definition for *eremus* were different. (Kasper, *Theologie und Askese*, 202-203.)

<sup>34</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi* 11 and 12. Exodus 16:1-36.

<sup>35</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi* 24. Matthew 14:13-21.

<sup>36</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi* 27.

Eucherius claimed that God was most easily found in the desert by drawing on biblical and monastic examples. When he described the desert's landscape, Eucherius highlighted remoteness, isolation, and solitariness. None of these qualities describe the physical characteristics of the desert, which allowed Eucherius to begin separating the desert from a specific type of landscape. Eucherius goes on to claim that the monks of Lérins lived the life of the desert in their hearts, thus interiorizing the desert. By making the desert life a condition of the heart, and not of a place, Eucherius allowed the desert life to be practiced anywhere that one could experience isolation, regardless of landscape. Eucherius could have stopped there and ignored Lérins' physical landscape, but he did not. Eucherius embraced Lérins' landscape and offered a new interpretation of Lérins' plant life. In describing the desert of Egypt, Eucherius claimed that the dry ground was full of spiritual plants that represented the virtues of the monks living there. The desert, according to Eucherius, is thus a paradise for the soul. When Eucherius described Lérins, he described Lérins' plants as the physical manifestation of heavenly paradise on Earth.<sup>37</sup>

While Eucherius embraced the physical characteristics of Lérins' landscape to offer special praise for Lérins, his separation of the monastic desert from any specific landscape had far reaching consequences for Western monasticism, which are evident in the early sixth-century author of the *VPJ* and In Isidore of Seville (discussed below). Indeed, the *VPJ* not only embraces the landscape of the Jura mountain, but its author also insists that the Jura mountains were also a desert.

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<sup>37</sup> Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 42.2.

The anonymous author of the *VPJ* opened his hagiography by describing the mountain monastery Condadisco as the *eremus*. He described Romanus, the first monk of the Jura Mountains, using parallels from Athanasius' *Life of Antony* and Jerome's *Life of Paul the Hermit*. The hagiographer describes Romanus as finding a tree and a stream near a rocky mountain to begin his monastic project, just like Paul the Hermit.<sup>38</sup> And, just like Antony, Romanus took a hoe and some seeds with him to farm and support himself.<sup>39</sup> In describing Romanus' hermitage, the first phase in the development of the monastery of Condadisco, the hagiographer regularly describes Condadisco's rugged landscape using the word *eremus*. Whereas Eucherius continued to call Lèrins an *eremus* after the establishment of a monastic settlement there, after other monks join Romanus, expanding the young monastery, the hagiographer in the *VPJ* stops using the word *eremus* altogether. That the hagiographer changed the way he described Condadisco's landscape following the growth of the monastery suggests that the hagiographer may have thought that the settlement of Condadisco changed it from an *eremus* into a different kind of place. Thus, the term *eremus* appears to have slightly different meanings for Eucherius and the author of the *VPJ*.

The change in the definition of *eremus* during the fifth and early sixth centuries is reflected in a comparison of the fifth-century Eucherius' definition of *eremus* and that of the sixth-century encyclopedist Isidore of Seville. Eucherius wrote that *eremus* and

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<sup>38</sup> *VPJ* 7.

<sup>39</sup> *VPJ* 10.

*desertum* were exact synonyms.<sup>40</sup> Isidore of Seville, on the other hand, distinguished between *eremus* and *desertum*, writing, “The *eremus* is solitariness in a way, a place that has never been inhabited. The *desertum* is a place that was inhabited at some time and has been abandoned.”<sup>41</sup> Isidore’s treatment of the words *eremus* and *desertum* assumes that both words refer to places defined by current and past states of habitation. If the author of the *VPJ* understood the words *eremus* and *desertum* to refer to the same kinds of places as his contemporary Isidore did, then once Condadisco was settled, it ceased to be either an *eremus* or a *desertum*.

The change in Condadisco’s status from *eremus* to a settled place did not mean that the life of the monastic desert disappeared from Condadisco. Eucherius had insisted that the monks of Lérins achieved the desert life in their hearts and defined the desert as anywhere one could seek God in relative isolation. The author of the *VPJ* claims that Eugendus never departed from the limits of the monastery as abbot.<sup>42</sup> As such, Eugendus remained cut off from the world. Eugendus exercised his ascetic practices, exorcised demons, and reorganized the monastery after a fire, all from within the bounds of the monastery.<sup>43</sup> Eugendus lived the desert life, even if Condadisco itself was no longer the desert.

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<sup>40</sup> Eucherius, *Instructionum*, II.15.22 (SC 618: 554): “*Heremus : desertum.*”

<sup>41</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Differentiarum libri duo* 201, (PL 83: 31A; trans. by the author): “*Inter Eremus et desertum. Eremus est in via solitudo, ubi nunquam habitatum est, desertum ubi aliquando habitatum et derelictum est.*”

<sup>42</sup> *VPJ* 126.

<sup>43</sup> For Eugendus’ ascetic practice, see *VPJ* 127, 129-31. For Eugendus healing and exorcising demons, see *VPJ* 141-146. For Eugendus reorganizing the monastery, see *VPJ* 169-170.

#### IV. Responding to the Limits of the Landscape

The limits that landscapes place on human activity is a central theme of this dissertation. The unifying experience of the limitations established by landscapes is exemplified by perhaps the two most dichotomous works in this study: Palladius's *Opus agriculturae* and the *VPJ*. The *Opus agriculturae* is a calendrically organized agricultural treatise written for aristocratic villa owners in the Mediterranean. The *VPJ*, on the other hand, is a hagiography about monks in the Jura mountains written for monks in the Alps. Despite their differing genres and audiences, they share a concern for the specifics of farming not found in the works of Eucherius, Sidonius, or Avitus. Their shared concern for farming reflects a shared experience of the realities of late antique agricultural production.

Palladius and the *VPJ* share a concern for the placement of farms because some landscapes are more suitable for farming than others. Palladius manifests this concern by giving advice about how to choose a proper place to farm. He gives advice for assessing the quality of the air, water, and soil of different regions.<sup>44</sup> He advises that farmers in hot regions face their villas towards the north, while farmers in cold regions should face their villas towards the east and south.<sup>45</sup> Palladius' advice is rooted in the knowledge that the moment of choosing the location of a farm is when a farmer has the greatest amount of control over determining the success of his farm. Once the farmer chooses a location, he

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<sup>44</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.2-5, 2.13, and 3.18.3-4.

<sup>45</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.7.3.

must respond to the particular challenges posed by the place he has chosen. The *VPJ* also describes how the monks chose locations for their monasteries based on the locations' suitability for agriculture. Romanus chose Condadisco partly because there was an area of level ground at the bottom of the valley where the two rivers met.<sup>46</sup> The monks then had to respond to the challenges of farming at Condadisco, namely the flooding and erosion that comes with farming at the bottom of a steep valley.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the monks chose to open Lauconnus up to agriculture specifically because Lauconnus was more level and fertile than Condadisco.<sup>48</sup>

Palladius and the *VPJ* were also attentive to the labor requirements of farming, albeit for different purposes. Labor is not Palladius' primary focus, and he generally refrains from describing how much labor some action would take due to different lands requiring different amounts of labor.<sup>49</sup> The few times that Palladius does address labor, his concern lies in ensuring the proper people are assigned to each job. For example, Palladius writes that "Seeds for sowing can only be selected well, if a well-selected person undertakes this duty." And "In farming, young men are best suited to carrying out tasks, older men to assigning them."<sup>50</sup> Palladius also notes that Greek authorities advise

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<sup>46</sup> *VPJ* 6.

<sup>47</sup> *VPJ* 22-24.

<sup>48</sup> *VPJ* 24.

<sup>49</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.6.3.

<sup>50</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.6.3 (Rodgers 1975: 7; trans. Fitch 2013: 38): "*Bene eligi serenda non possunt, nisi hoc officium prius electus adsumat.*" "*In rebus agrestibus maxime officia iuuenum congruent, imperia seniorum.*"

that olives “should be handled by pure boys and virgin girls; [the Greeks] are mindful, I suppose, that chastity is the presiding spirit of this tree.”<sup>51</sup> The *VPJ*, on the other hand, treats manual labor as essential to the monastic life. When the author of the *VPJ* draws a parallel between Romanus’ small-scale farming and Antony’s small-scale farming, he calls Romanus a “true monk.”<sup>52</sup> When Lupicinus healed the severe ascetic, a part of the healing process involved the ascetic weeding the monks’ vegetable garden.<sup>53</sup> In the *VPJ* the manual agricultural labor of the monks was necessary not only for the subsistence of the monastery, but also to true monastic practice. Yet, both Palladius and the hagiographer treat manual labor as a response to the agricultural needs of their respective landscapes.

Palladius and the *VPJ* also both respond to their landscapes’ limiting factors by emphasizing the human ability to alter the landscape to make it more agriculturally productive. Palladius describes how human action, which he terms *industria*, can lead *natura* to more productive outcomes. For example, Palladius includes instructions for turning brushy land into productive fields and a treatment for vines that causes them to produce flavored grapes.<sup>54</sup> While the *VPJ* does not include instructions for cultivating flavored grapes, it does describe how the monks of the Jura mountains altered their

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<sup>51</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.6.14 (Rodgers 1975: 11; trans. Fitch 2013: 42): “*Graeci iubent oliuam, cum plantatur et legitur, a mundis pueris atque uirginibus operandam, credo, recordati arbori huic esse praesulem castitatem.*”

<sup>52</sup> *VPJ* 10.

<sup>53</sup> *VPJ* 10.

<sup>54</sup> Palladius, *Opus agriculturae* 1.6.13 and 3.32.

landscape. The *VPJ* describes how soil erosion at Condadisco decreased agricultural production there.<sup>55</sup> The erosion described in the *VPJ* may have even been caused by the monks' own actions farming. In response to the erosion, the monks proceeded to clear nearby forest in more level and fertile area of Lauconnus.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the monks of Condadisco responded to the limitations imposed by their landscape by choosing a new place to farm and by clearing forest.

Palladius' and the *VPJ*'s shared interests in agricultural pursuits points to their shared experiences with late antique agriculture. They both understood the importance of choosing a place for farming that was conducive to agriculture. They both understood the large amount of labor demanded by agriculture. They both knew the human capacity to alter the landscape to improve agricultural production, but they also both understood the limits that the landscape placed on agriculture and human action.

## V. A Final Reflection

The exploration of the spectrum of aristocratic and Christian landscape interpretations would benefit from expanding the geographic and chronological bounds of the present study. A comparison between Christian landscape interpretations in Gaul and Northern Italy would be instructive as the senatorial aristocracy of Northern Italy

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<sup>55</sup> *VPJ* 22-23.

<sup>56</sup> *VPJ* 24.

embraced neither asceticism nor church office in as great numbers as in Gaul.<sup>57</sup> Such a comparison would allow for the assessment of how attitudes towards the landscape varied between a group of Gallic aristocrats who opted for an ecclesiastic career and a group of Christian aristocrats in Italy who did not embrace church office. Furthermore, expanding the chronological range to include fourth-century pagan authors would allow the development of a more comprehensive idea of the range of non-Christian attitudes toward landscape in antiquity. Expanding the chronological range in the other direction to the seventh century would allow for the inclusion of the introduction of Irish monasticism by Columbanus to Gaul and Northern Italy.

People and their landscapes are intimately bound up together. Landscapes shape and constrain human action and people bring their cultural values to landscapes when they interpret them. Both are manifested in landscape descriptions in literary works. To borrow terminology from the environmental historian Richard Hoffman, literary landscape descriptions are hybrids of nature and culture.<sup>58</sup> This dissertation has advocated for a method of analyzing landscapes as presented in literature with special attention to the correspondence between places in literary works and those places as they exist or existed. I have put this method into practice using sources from late antiquity, but this method could be applied to any literary source that engages landscape. Comparing literary descriptions of landscapes and those landscapes themselves allows us to analyze

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<sup>57</sup> Richard Bartlett, "Aristocracy and Asceticism: The Letters of Ennodius and the Gallic and Italian Churches," in *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul*, (eds.) Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (Ashgate, 2001. Reprinted London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 202.

<sup>58</sup> Richard C. Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). 8.

how the author viewed his landscape and what was important to the author's experience of that landscape. By inquiring into an author's views of a landscape and how his experiences in that landscape shaped the way he wrote about it, we focus on the relationship between a person and the physical environment in which that person lives.

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