

Of Mountains and Men: Vision and Memory in Wordsworth and Petrarch

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Ever since Moses saw the back of God on Mount Sinai¹ or Greek poets began invoking the Muses of Mount Helicon, mountains have been associated with oracular inspiration. Scaling the heavens, and providing visionary views of the earth below, they have long carried a heavy metaphorical and metaphysical load. Renaissance and romantic poets were particularly eager to ascend both real and imaginary mountains. Spenser, for example, has Redcrosse, the hero of Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, take in the view from "the highest Mount; / Such one, as that same mighty man of God, / . . . Dwelt fortie dayes vpon; . . . / Or like that pleasant Mount, that is for ay / Through famous Poets verse each were [i.e., everywhere] renownd" (FQ 1.10.53-54).² Milton, knowing his Spenser better than most, but disagreeing with the earlier poet's easy juxtaposition of sacred and secular, was not to be outdone. Not intending to soar in "middle flight . . . / Above th' Aonian mount," he instead sought exclusive inspiration from the "Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top / Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire / That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed" (PL 1.6-15).³ While the two poets may disagree about the status of the Greek muses, both without hesitation conflate prophetic and poetic inspiration, their epics being conceived on metaphorical mountains not unlike Mount Sinai.⁴

And if Spenser and Milton were interested in high peaks, that was even more true for the romantic poets, who had a fixation on mountains greater than almost any other generation. Their more or less self-projected heroes—whether a Byronic Manfred, a Shelleyan Prometheus, or Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime" self—all seemed to seek the solitude and vista offered by mountain ranges, from which to invoke or defy the gods.

In this paper, however, I shall limit myself to two poets, separated by some 450 years, who both took as their literary starting point real, as against fictitious, mountain climbing: Wordsworth's celebrated trek up Mount Snowdon in Wales, and Petrarch's equally famous ascent of Mont Ventoux in the French Alps. And thanks to the Augustinian connection (explicit in Petrarch, implicit in Wordsworth) I shall also have occasion to comment on what the Church Father, who I doubt ever voluntarily climbed any mountain, had to say about such an undertaking.

I

Wordsworth's ascent comes as the climax of the 1850 *Prelude*, dominating the concluding 14th Book. Desiring "to see the sun / Rise from the top of Snowdon" (14.5-6),⁵ the poet, accompanied by a friend and a "trusty" shepherd, starts the climb in the dead of a "close, warm, breezeless summer night" (14.11). A "dripping fog" clouds their vision during the ascent, until suddenly breaking through the mist, the poet sees a moonlit landscape spreading out below:

... at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
 And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
 Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,
 For instantly a light upon the turf
 Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,
 The Moon hung naked in a firmament
 Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
 Rested a silent sea of hoary mist. (14.35-42)

Seemingly forgetting his companions, Wordsworth takes in the scene below with its "hundred hills" heaving their "dusky backs" above the mist, which forms a silent ocean whose splendor usurps the majesty of the Atlantic, seen in the distance. Even more impressive is "the ethereal vault," dominated by "the full-orbed Moon, / Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed / Upon the billowy ocean" (13.43-55). Silence reigns, except for the "roar of waters" through an abysmal rift nearby, a sound "Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour, / For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens" (14.61-62).

In a characteristic move, Wordsworth goes on to invest the physical landscape with metaphorical meaning, making it "the emblem of a mind / That feeds upon infinity" (14.70-71). This move takes place not during the actual vision, but in later recollection, when "That vision . . . in calm thought / Reflected . . . appeared to me the type / Of a majestic intellect" (14.64-67). Two aspects of the natural scene, involving the senses of sight and hearing respectively, impress the poet: the *vision* of a moon that itself both gazes down at and casts its radiance upon the scene below, and the *sound* of the roaring waters heard or felt by both the starry heavens and the poet. The main comparison is between the mind of the poet and the moon: both look down at the landscape from an elevated position, and both exert "mutual domination . . . upon the face of outward things" (14.81-82)—the moon through the power of its silvery light, the poet through the power of his imagination, "that glorious faculty / That higher minds bear with them as their own" (14.89-90). As the moon in the process of looking down transforms the scene, so the "higher minds"

. . . from their native selves can send abroad
 Kindred mutations; for themselves create
 A like existence. (14.93-95)

This passage is a textbook example of what M. H. Abrams, in his influential study *The Mirror and the Lamp*, described as the "prevailing romantic conception of the poetic mind."⁶ Abrams is talking about the metaphor of the Lamp, "a radiant projector which makes contribution to the objects it perceives" as against the classical or neo-classical metaphor of the Mirror, merely "a reflector of external objects." Yet is Wordsworth, as also Keats charges in his letters,⁷ simply spreading the solipsistic radiance of his sublime ego? If we look carefully at the passage, we shall see that Wordsworth is mixing Abrams' basic metaphors more than the neat distinction between projector and reflector would seem to allow. First, while the poet's vision is of the moon, what he had originally climbed the mountain to see was the early rising of the sun. Clearly, we are meant to consider the age-old comparison of the two heavenly objects: the sun, being its own source of light, is the real lamp, while the moon only reflects the radiance of its solar neighbor.

Therefore the moon is not the emblem of a self-contained and solipsistic mind, but, as Wordsworth expresses it in lines 70-71, a "mind / That feeds upon infinity."

This is where the references to hearing come in. As the starry heavens in lines 59-62 seemed to feel "the roar of waters," so the poetic mind broods

Over the dark abyss, intent to *hear*
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream. (14.71-74; emphasis added)

Admittedly, the meaning of these lines is not self-evident, but there is a clear reference to Scripture via *Paradise Lost*. The Holy Spirit in Genesis 1 likewise brooded over the waters, presumably listening to God's creative word: "Let there be light"; and there was light." A poetic mind that feeds on eternity is in some sense reflecting the "silent light" of the Creator. But Wordsworth also echoes Milton's invocation of the Heavenly Muse in *Paradise Lost*, a work often alluded to in *The Prelude*:

Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumine, (PL 1.19-23)

While Wordsworth's own invocation in Book 1 of *The Prelude* is vague enough in its reference to the "sweet breath of heaven" (1.33), here at the end of his epic he intimates that the inspirational wind may indeed be Milton's Heavenly Muse, the pneuma that according to John 3.8 "bloweth where it listeth."

Wordsworth reinforces the sense of hearing right after the passage about the seemingly self-reflective powers of the "higher minds":

They from their native selves can send abroad
Kindred mutations; for themselves create
A like existence; . . .
Like angels stopped upon the wing by *sound*
Of Harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres. (14.93-99; emphasis added)

In what way is the creative mind like an angel? Both are guided by the sound of heavenly harmony, answers Wordsworth, rounding off this part of the poem with a paean to the divinity of poetry (or rather of the poet):

Such minds are truly from the Deity,
 For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
 That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
 Of Whom [note, not “Who,” but “Of Whom”] they are, habitually infused
 Through every image and through every thought,
 And all affections by communion raised
 From earth to heaven, from human to divine. (14.112-18)

My point, again, is simply that for Wordsworth, the poet is like the moon, spreading a transforming light on the surroundings, yet a light that is itself a reflection of the glorious light of day. It is not simply a lamp, but a lamp situated within a mirror. Abrams rightly emphasizes the centrality of the self in romantic poetics, making Wordsworth’s celebrated declaration from the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* the touchstone for his very learned study: “poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” Yet he strangely neglects the equally famous continuation: “it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.”⁸ My guess is that the reason for this silence is that the various literary and philosophical texts that form the basis for Abrams’ study have precious little to say on the topic. To get a fuller picture of Wordsworth’s poetics, we need to look in a different direction, and a good way of doing so is to join another mountain expedition, this time led by Petrarch.

II

Petrarch, like Wordsworth after him, was eager to climb a mountain, in his case Mont Ventoux situated near his long-time residence in the foothills of the French Alps. He relates the adventure in a letter to his good friend and spiritual mentor, the Augustinian monk Francesco Dionigi, supposedly written in 1336 but not published until the 1350s:

"Today," he writes Dionigi, "I ascended the highest mountain in this region, which, not without cause, they call the Windy Peak. Nothing but the desire to see its conspicuous height was the reason for this undertaking" (Ventoux 36).⁹ Accompanied by his brother Gerardo and two servants, Petrarch had started the expedition in the morning hours, not during the night like Wordsworth. Also unlike the later poet, who as an experienced outdoorsman climbed Snowdon without effort, Petrarch has a hard time getting to the top. While his brother goes straight for it, the poet loses his way among the foothills and valleys. Despite these differences in detail, however, what strikes a latter-day reader of the two accounts is their parallel structure: both poets are self-centred metaphor-mongers, who translate the outward landscape into pictures of their internal mindscape. Sitting down exhausted during his ascent, Petrarch for his part turns on himself: "What you have so often experienced today while climbing this mountain happens to you, you must know, and to many others who are making their way towards the blessed life. . . . Having strayed far in error, you must either ascend to the summit of the blessed life under the heavy burden of hard striving, ill deferred, or lie prostrate in your slothfulness in the valleys of your sins" ("Ventoux" 39-40). This sounds more like *Pilgrim's Progress* than a travel guide. The climb becomes an allegory of the spiritual life, with Petrarch playing the role of the prodigal son.

After a strenuous climb, Petrarch eventually does reach the top with its breathtaking view: "One could see most distinctly the mountains of the province of Lyons to the right and, to the left, the sea near Marseilles. . . . The Rhone River was directly under our eyes" ("Ventoux" 43-44). But again, internal promptings take over, this time in the form of a quotation from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine:

I admired every detail, now relishing earthly enjoyment, now lifting up my mind to higher spheres after the example of my body [a beautiful example of the metaphorical power of the mountain], and I thought it fit to look into the volume of Augustine's *Confessions* Where I fixed my eyes first, it was written: "And men go to admire the high mountains, the vast floods of the sea, the huge streams of the river, the circumference of the ocean, and the revolutions of the stars—and desert themselves." I was stunned, I confess. . . . I was completely satisfied with what I had seen of the mountain and turned my inner eye toward myself.

What is important to realise here is that Petrarch not only dips into Augustine's autobiography, which he carried with him everywhere, but he emulates the Father's own example. At a critical point in *his* life, Augustine had opened a book at random—in his case, St Paul's letter to the Romans; and that reading had led to his famous garden conversion, recorded in Book 8 of the *Confessions*. Several scholars argue that Petrarch fashions his own autobiography after this Augustinian pattern, to the point of doctoring the whole story of his "conversion" at the top of Mont Ventoux.¹⁰ Even the year of the supposed climb, when Petrarch would have been 32 years old, was chosen perhaps to correspond to Augustine's age at the time of *his* conversion. As in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, the details of Petrarch's life story were later recollected and rearranged to fit a preconceived pattern.

What is clear is that Augustine's introspective and retrospective explorations provided a pattern for later emulation, a pattern that both Petrarch and Wordsworth followed in their different ways. We saw that Petrarch, as a result of reading the *Confessions*, turned his inner eye toward himself. Yet, like many a scholar, he actually misrepresents his text through partial quotation, transforming it into a pious warning against excessive interest in the natural world. If we read the continuation of Augustine's text, however, we find that the Father is less judgmental than Petrarch makes him out to be. More importantly, the section in which the quotation occurs, Book 10 of the *Confessions*, provides the blueprint for all later explorations of the self. Let us look at the fuller Augustinian context: "Yet men go out and gaze in astonishment at high mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the broad reaches of rivers, the ocean that encircles the world, or the stars in their courses. But they pay no attention to themselves." This is where Petrarch put down his book, but the passage continues:

They do not marvel at the thought that while I have been mentioning these things, I have not been looking at them with my eyes, and that I could not even speak of mountains or waves, rivers or stars, which are things that I have seen, or of the ocean, which I know only on the evidence of others, unless I could see them in my mind's eye, in my memory, and with the same vast spaces between them that would be there if I were looking at them in the world outside myself. When I saw them with the sight of my eyes, I did not draw

them bodily into myself. They are not inside me themselves, but only their images. And I know which of my senses imprinted each image on my mind. (*Confessions* 10.8)¹¹

The section comes at the beginning of Augustine's prolonged exploration of the memory, an exploration which provides the theoretical foundation for the preceding nine autobiographical books of the *Confessions*. And to Augustine, as to Petrarch and Wordsworth, the faculty of memory is intimately connected with the imagination. As Albert Russell Ascoli explains, "The imagination is the faculty by which the sense perceptions are converted into mental records; while memory is the faculty in which such records are conserved over the passage of time. In short, they are responsible for re-presenting the contents of space and time by removing them, in the form of images and words, from subjection to particular places and times and storing them in the mind."¹²

Autobiography, for Augustine, is to "gather together" or "to collect" the otherwise "scattered" and unconnected facts of our lives into a coherent narrative of conversion. This process first takes place in our memory: abstract thinking, he writes a few chapters further on,

is simply a process of thought by which we gather together [*colligere*] things which, although they are muddled and confused, are already contained in the memory. . . . In other words, once [the thoughts] have been dispersed, I have to collect [*colligenda*] them again, and this is the derivation of the word *cogitare*, which means *to think* or *to collect one's thoughts*. For in Latin the word *cogo*, meaning *I assemble* or *I collect*, is related to *cogito*, which means *I think*. (*Confessions* 10.11)

This process is fundamentally logocentric (*logos* being the Greek word for both reason and language), not only in trying to create order out of the scattered fragments of the past, but because the process is based on the co-operation and grace of the divine Logos, the Word of God. Augustine explains: "But in all the regions where I thread my way, seeking your guidance, only in you [i.e., the divine Truth] do I find a safe haven for my mind, a gathering-place for my scattered parts [*quo colligantur sparsa mea*]" (*Confessions* 10.40). In the first nine books of the *Confessions*, Augustine had collected the significant moments of his personal history of salvation. In the *City of God* he does the same for

world history: in both cases the scattered and seemingly unconnected facts of history, whether personal or universal, gain coherence and meaning.

Despite Petrarch's misquotation of the *Confessions*, he elsewhere shows that he has absorbed its pattern. At the end of the *Secretum*, a long imaginary dialogue between the poet and the Church Father, Petrarch uses Augustine's exact vocabulary: "I will collect the scattered fragments of my soul [*et sparsa anime fragmenta recolligam*]." ¹³ And he goes on to call his famed collection of introspective poems the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, "Fragments of vernacular poetry," also known from a line in the first sonnet as the *Rime sparse*, the "scattered rimes." Clearly, Petrarch felt that he was engaged in a project similar to that of the great Church Father, trying to collect the scattered pieces of his life and love into a coherent and harmonious whole. But, as many critics have noted, he ran into problems. For one thing, neither images nor language were always reliable, partaking as they did in the Fall. In particular, his cherished mental image of Laura, as he himself was fully aware, was liable to turn into a seductive phantasm, a false image that pulled him away from God. "Augustinus," Petrarch's fictive interlocutor in the *Secretum*, undercuts the poet's claim that Laura, "the image of virtue," has had a beneficial effect on him: "She has detached your mind from the love of heavenly things and has inclined your heart to love the creature more than the Creator."¹⁴ The reason for this is that the "plague of too many impressions tears apart and wounds the thinking faculty of the soul, and with its fatal, distracting complexity bars the way of clear meditation, whereby it would mount up to the threshold of the One Chief Good."¹⁵ The construction of a narrative of conversion is seemingly fraught with difficulty.¹⁶

The same can be said for the "Ascent of Mont Ventoux." The writing strategy is clearly Augustinian: "At each step along the way," writes Ascoli, "the Petrarchan narrator calls our attention to the way that the relation between physical and intellectual experience is mediated both by the internal faculties of imagination and memory and by the externalized record of the contents of those faculties, namely, writing itself."¹⁷ Yet despite Augustine's example, Petrarch in fact does not experience any conversion on the mountain top, but descends the same

man as before. This has led Jill Robbins to claim that Petrarch “wants a perversion narrative, whose principles of construction are the rigorous inversion of conversion narrative,” this in order for the narrative to “claim a closure and self-reflexivity, which amounts to an absolute autonomy.” “But,” as Robbins continues, “such an aesthetic strategy (perversion narrative) is based on the same presuppositions as conversion narrative. The text claims to constitute itself by an aesthetic recuperation of conversion and its negation. Instead of Christ the Word redeeming words, we have words redeeming themselves. The text’s unity is now aesthetic rather than theological.”¹⁸ Analogous readings have been put forward by many others, often in connection with a discussion of the formation of modern individuality and/or the situating of the “Ascent” at the turning point between the Middle Ages and the “modern” world. Robert Durling, for example, argues for an “ironic” rather than “allegorical” strategy,¹⁹ while Walter Haug suggests that Petrarch created a “sprachlich-geschichtliche Zwischensphäre,” in which language, “im Mittelalter nur Spiegel der Korrelation von Geist und Welt, wird nun zur Dimension der Erfahrung von Geschichte und Individualität.”²⁰ Abrams’ chronological dividing line between the mirror and the lamp, it appears, becomes extended from the Romantic to the Early Modern period.

III

The line becomes even more blurred when we move forward again to Wordsworth. Ever since Petrarch made the *Confessions* “the paradigm for all representations of the self in a retrospective literary structure,” John Freccero explains, “every narrative of the self is the story of a conversion.”²¹ This certainly is true for *The Prelude*. If Petrarch knew his Augustine but was not able to live up to his supposed example, the opposite can be said about Wordsworth. Even though Duncan Wu records no references to Augustine in his two books on Wordsworth’s reading,²² few poets have hewed closer to the Church Father in their writing strategies. Who since Petrarch has made introspection such a virtue as did Wordsworth, the creator of an epic on his own inner life?

His celebrated "spots of time" gather together the significant moments of his life into a coherent salvific narrative:

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen. (12.208-18)

And the Imagination, for Wordsworth far more than simply the faculty of storing images in the memory, is what moulds and orders the "spots of time" into a narrative of "spiritual love":

This spiritual love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood. (14.188-92)

Like the *Confessions*, *The Prelude* is Wordsworth's story of conversion, with the salvific climax coinciding with the ascent of Mount Snowdon in Book 14. If anything, Wordsworth has greater faith in the narrative of conversion than either Augustine or Petrarch, tied down as they both were by their hard-earned knowledge of human imperfection and sin. The combination of city life and the French revolution gone sour provided Wordsworth with the needed peripeteia (after all, one has to be saved from something), but the final restoration of his mental well-being is never in doubt.

At the very centre of Wordsworth's poetics we find a strong Augustinian presence. What happens in "I wandered lonely as a cloud," when the poet "dances with the daffodils," or for that matter when "in calm thought / Reflected" the narrator of *The Prelude* makes a mountain vista an emblem of the poet's mind? Wordsworth's own word for it,

of course, was "recollection," the exact English equivalent of the Latin term used by Augustine and Petrarch both, the verb form of which means "To call or bring back (something) to one's mind; to recall the knowledge of (a thing, person, etc.); to remember" or "to concentrate or absorb (the mind, oneself, etc.) in contemplation" (*OED*). Is it pure coincidence that the continuation of the passages in both the *Confessions* and the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* describe an inner joy?

Only in you do I find a safe haven for my mind, a gathering-place for my scattered parts, where no portion of me can depart from you. And sometimes you allow me to experience a feeling quite unlike my normal state, an inward sense of delight. (*Confessions* 10.40)

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity. . . . But the emotion . . . is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will upon the whole be in a state of enjoyment. (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*)²³

Admittedly, the differences between these two passages are as important as the similarities. Wordsworth clearly is not Augustine. A fuller study of Wordsworth's poetics would have to combine the textual ancestry of "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," so thoroughly investigated by Abrams, with the Augustinian matrix for the continuation of the quotation. Yet the joy of the mystical union with God, which Augustine's text encouraged in later ages, may not be that different from Wordsworth's poetic rapture. He may be closer to Spenser's vision of the harmonious coexistence of Mount Horeb with Mount Helicon than to Milton's separation of the two. At the very least we have to admit that Wordsworth on Snowdon, as much as Petrarch on Mont Ventoux, took to heart Augustine's set of priorities about external nature and human nature (I am quoting from the very last lines of *The Prelude*):

Prophets of Nature, we [poets will] . . .
 Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
 A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
 On which he dwells. . . .

NOTES

¹See Exod. 33:18-23.

²Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. and C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

³John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *The Student's Milton*, ed. Frank Allen Patterson (1930; New York; Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1933).

⁴Or the Mount of Olives, the arena for the teaching of Christ, which both poets also refer to in the same passages (a detail which strengthens the case for Milton's conscious discussion with Spenser).

⁵William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: A Parallel Text*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971). All further references to the 1850 *Prelude* will be given in the text by book and line numbers.

⁶M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: OUP, 1953) viii.

⁷Distancing himself from "the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime," Keats in a letter to Richard Woodhouse on 27 October 1818 argues that "the poetical character" should have no self (*Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. Duncan Wu [Oxford: Blackwell, 1994] 1019). See also Keats's letters from the same year to John Hamilton Reynolds (1016-18).

⁸William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1802 ed., *Romanticism: An Anthology* 263.

⁹Petrarch, "The Ascent of Mont Ventoux," trans. Hans Nachod, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer et al. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1948). All further references to the work will be given in the text by page number.

¹⁰Hans Baron, for example, argues: "The chronology of [Petrarch's] spiritual life—not only in his fictional letters but also in the autobiographical sections of his other works—has been modeled on Augustine's development" (*Petrarch's "Secretum"* [Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1985] 197).

¹¹Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961). All further references to the work will be given in the text by book and chapter.

¹²Albert Russell Ascoli, "Petrarch's Middle Age: Memory, Imagination, History, and the 'Ascent of Mount Ventoux,'" *Stanford Italian Review* 10 (1991): 17.

¹³As translated (and explicated) in Victoria Kahn, "The Figure of the Reader in Petrarch's *Secretum*," *PMLA* 100 (1985): 163.

¹⁴*Petrarch's Secret: Or the Soul's Conflict with Passion: Three Dialogues between Himself and S. Augustine*, tr. William H. Draper (1911; rpt. Westport: Hyperion Press, 1987) 111 and 124.

¹⁵*Petrarch's Secret* 43.

¹⁶But therefore not impossible: a wider discussion of these issues goes beyond the scope of this short paper, but will be addressed in a longer study on Augustine and the Renaissance that is nearing completion.

¹⁷Ascoli 20.

¹⁸Jill Robbins, "Petrarch Reading Augustine: 'The Ascent Of Mont Ventoux,'" *PQ* 64 (1985): 546. Lyell Asher goes even further: "Self-reference in 'The Ascent' performs a specific kind of work, a negotiation, if you like, the necessity of which can be tied

to a period in the Christian West when it became possible to conceive an order of salvation existing elsewhere than in the City of God—existing in the city of humanity, in the *studia humanitatis*“ (“Petrarch at the Peak of Fame,” *PMLA* 108 [1993]: 1059). Ascoli, however, proposes another explanation: “Petrarch’s use of Augustine may . . . be seen as a critique of the saint’s confident memorial account of his own spiritual death and rebirth. As I have begun to suggest, however, it might be that Book 10 [of the *Confessions*] itself actually constitutes the Saint’s own refusal to claim fully for mortal man that ‘perspective of the end,’ which only properly belongs to Christ in Judgement and thereby qualifies the preceding narrative’s claims for a definitive and irreversible conversion” (37, note 65). Both Augustine and Petrarch, in the final analysis, may depend more on divine Grace for their own salvation than their own narratives, however well written (see Ascoli 38).

¹⁹Robert M. Durling, “The Ascent of Mt. Ventoux and the Crisis of Allegory,” *Italian Quarterly* 18.69 (1974): 7-28. Yet see Michael O’Connell, “Authority and Truth of Experience in Petrarch’s ‘Ascent of Mount Ventoux,’” *PQ* 62 (1983): 509n5.

²⁰Walter Haug, “Francesco Petrarca—Nicolaus Cusanus—Thüring von Ringoltingen: Drei Probestücke zu einer Geschichte der Individualität im 14./15. Jahrhundert,” *Individualität*, ed. Manfred Frank and Anselm Haverkamp (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1988) 303.

²¹John Freccero, “Autobiography and Narrative,” *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller et al. (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986) 17.

²²Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth’s Reading 1770-1799* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), and *Wordsworth’s Reading 1800-1815* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995). That Wordsworth, through years of solid education, should have missed out completely on Augustine seems highly unlikely; however.

²³Wordsworth, Preface 263.