

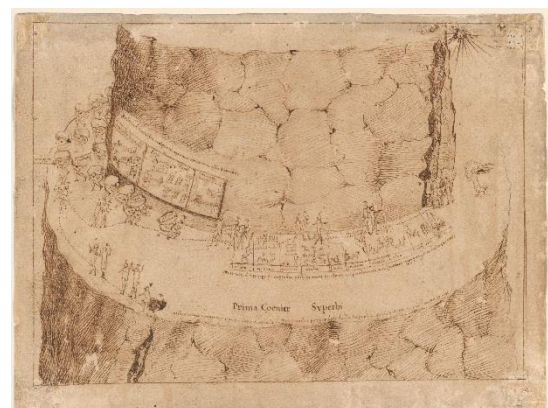
“Mountainous Terrain: Visualizing Dante in Sixteenth-Century Italy”

A set of twenty pen and ink drawings in the collection of the Morgan Library & Museum illustrating scenes from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* has recently been attributed to the literary scholar Alessandro Vellutello (b. 1473) and associated with the preparation for his *La comedia di Dante Aligieri con la nova esposizione di Alessandro Vellutello*, published in Venice in 1544.¹ The sheets show all the wear and tear of active use and may have been created early on during the author’s research, accompanying his studies for a decade or more. They were then likely used as a starting point for the series of woodcuts, possibly carved by the Titian-associate Giovanni Britto, that illustrated Vellutello’s Dante edition.

The drawings show scenes from the realms of Hell and Purgatory but none from Paradise, suggesting that part of the series has been lost. Like Vellutello’s text and the woodcut illustrations, they are most unusual in their topographical emphasis. The first three images (see example below), of a barren, uninhabited and hilly terrain with active fumaroles, provide the bleak setting for Dante and Virgil’s progression towards the entrance of Hell. Later, having passed through the gate of Purgatory, Virgil and Dante gradually ascend a steep, artificially terraced mountain with ledges. In one episode, they encounter three images, exemplars of humility, carved into the rock (see below), before finally reaching Paradise.

The paper will investigate early modern attitudes towards mountainous landscapes through these drawings and prints in the context of sixteenth-century Dante scholarship and image-making.

Dr. Rhoda Eitel-Porter, *Print Quarterly*



¹ R. Eitel-Porter, *Print Quarterly*, March 2019, pp. 3-16.