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The Giant Mountains – as beautiful as the Alps. The origins of the aesthetic discovery of mountains in the Central European context

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the aesthetic motivation behind the inception of tourism in the mountains. Aesthetic motives played a key role in the development of tourism in the Alps, which in the eighteenth century became a new, ideal type of landscape and a popular destination for artists and scientists, and later for tourists too. What form did this phenomenon take in a different geographical and cultural context? What were its dynamics and specific features? The article traces these motives by analysing texts on the Giant Mountains (Riesengebirge, Krkonoše, Karkonosze), which became a favourite destination for tourists from the German states and the Austrian Empire. At the time these mountains were compared with the Alps, and this article aims to analyse the parallels and differences between the aesthetic appreciation of the Alps and of the Giant Mountains. Together with scientific interest, aesthetic concerns also played an important role in the inception of tourism here. We can see a reflection of contemporary theories of the Sublime and the Picturesque, as well as the ascent of romanticism. The article works with sources from the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, supplementing them with a summary of subsequent developments in the twentieth century.

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Introduction

Current research studies focusing on transformations in tourists' and travellers' attitudes toward mountains continue to bring up new issues to discuss and explore. The development of mountain tourism is a major cultural and historical phenomenon, and it has had a significant impact on many areas in Europe as well as the rest of the world. Investigating the 'discovery' of mountains within Euro-Atlantic culture has generated an extensive body of scholarly literature. For instance, Alfred Biese's works, in which mountains play an important role, appeared as early as the end of the nineteenth century.¹ And in 1959, Marjorie Hope Nicolson published *Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory. The*

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Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite,² a seminal work that has inspired a series of further in-depth studies on this topic. In her work, Nicolson emphasised the relatively sharp break, or dichotomy, between the ‘older,’ negative attitudes and the ‘new,’ highly positive attitudes toward mountains – a break that, in her opinion, took place in the course of the eighteenth century. Nicolson built on John Ruskin’s insights regarding the fundamental shift in attitudes toward mountains, even borrowing the titles of two chapters in Ruskin’s work for her own book title. Nevertheless, Nicolson also drew on an earlier stream of thought about transformations in aesthetic tastes and views of nature in general, a stream that first appeared at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries in the works of authors such as Friedrich Schiller, Alexander von Humboldt, or William Wordsworth.³ While these authors mentioned the fundamental shift in attitudes toward nature, unlike Alfred Biese, they did not yet deal with it in detail. It was Biese who devoted considerable attention to the topic of mountains and of the transformation in attitudes toward mountains. Christopher Hussey also observed this transformation in his pioneering work on the concept of the Picturesque.⁴ Additionally, this transformation, which happened somewhat quickly, was later investigated by many other authors,⁵ and it even became the subject of popularising books and films.⁶

Recently, scholarly sources have questioned just how sharp this transformation really was.⁷ However, it is clear that a certain shift did take place, even if probably not to such a diametrically opposite pole as Nicolson had suggested. In fact, the earlier work of Alfred Biese did not describe the shift as a sharp one, even though, like Nicolson, he built his argumentation primarily on evidence drawn from literary sources. And, for example, Woźniakowski, whose later work drew on material from visual arts, did not see a sharp opposition, either.⁸ Methodologically, with regard to this shift and the speed

¹Alfred Biese, *Die Entwicklung des Naturgefühls bei den Griechen und Römern* (Kiel: Lipsius, 1882); *Die Entwicklung des Naturgefühls im Mittelalter und in der Neuzeit* (Leipzig: Veit, 1888, 1892); *Das Naturgefühl im Wandel der Zeiten* (Leipzig: Quelle und Moyer, 1926).

²Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (New York: Cornell University, 1959).

³See Alexander von Humboldt, *Kosmos: Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung*, 2nd vol. (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1847), 5–6.

⁴Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London – New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1927).

⁵See Jacek Woźniakowski, *Góry niewzruszone: O różnych wyobrażeniach przyrody w dziejach nowożytnej kultury europejskiej* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1974); *Die Wildnis: Zur Deutungsgeschichte des Berges in der europäischen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1987); Philippe Joutard, *L’invention du mont Blanc* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986); Ruth Groh and Dieter Groh, ‘Von den schrecklichen zu den erhabenen Bergen. Zur Entstehung ästhetischer Naturerfahrung’, in *Vom Wandel des neuzeitlichen Naturbegriffs*, ed. Heinz Dieter Webe (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1996), 53–96; Noah Heringman, *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology* (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 2004); Jon Mathieu, *Die dritte Dimension: Eine vergleichende Geschichte der Berge in der Neuzeit* (Basel: Schwabe, 2011); Étienne Bourdon, *Le voyage et la découverte des Alpes: Histoire de la construction d’un savoir, 1492–1713* (Paris: PUPS, 2011); Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann, eds., *Heights of Reflection. Mountains in the German Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-first Century* (Rochester – New York: Camden House, 2012).

⁶For example, Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: Adventures in Reaching the Summit* (New York: Vintage, 2003). William Dafoe reads passages from Macfarlane’s observations in Jennifer Peedom’s documentary *Mountain* (2017).

⁷E.g., Jon Mathieu, ‘Alpenwahrnehmung: Probleme der historischen Periodisierung’, in *Die Alpen! Les Alpes! Zur europäischen Wahrnehmungsgeschichte seit der Renaissance*, ed. Jon Mathieu and Leoni Boscani (Bern: Lang, 2005), 53–72; Janice Hewlett Koelb, ‘“This Most Beautiful and Adorn’d World”: Nicolson’s “Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory” Reconsidered’, *ISLE* 16, no. 3 (2009), 443–68; Dawn L. Hollis, ‘Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Genealogy of an Idea’, *ISLE* 26, no. 4 (2019), 1038–1061; However, even though we may agree with Hollis in general, we cannot overlook the total lack of reasons for the absence of the sharp break in the historical sources before the eighteenth century as well as later on. Moreover, Hollis completely misunderstands the historical context – for instance, she calls Wordsworth, one of the main figures of the analysis, ‘the grandfather of Romanticism’ when in fact he was a typical representative of High Romanticism.

with which it transpired and when, it would be useful to distinguish between at least two types of sources and contexts of the interest expressed in high mountains, especially the Alps. According to Mathieu,⁹ on the one hand, there was art history and philosophy, where the shift in attitudes took place in the eighteenth century; and on the other hand, there was geography and the natural sciences, where the first interest in and appreciation of mountains can be found as early as the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, Mathieu rightly observes that, particularly for art history and philosophy, it is not a black-and-white scheme, but rather a grey-and-white one.¹⁰ However, it remains an open question whether such a binary-colour metaphor should still be followed today, and whether Nicolson's critics may not themselves be unfairly attributing this black-and-white, binary character to her propositions. Clearly, as Nicolson saw it, the shift included a move from lack of interest – even if it may have been combined with distaste – toward celebration and admiration. In other words, she described the shift as more of a move from lack of colour to the colour white. After all, what is so stunning about the historical material is not so much a kind of repulsion toward mountains as more of a surprising lack of interest in them. (In this, Nicolson is in an agreement with Biese who had pointed this aspect out in relation to his research on Medieval journeys across the Alps.)¹¹

Discussions on the issues pertaining to this shift in attitudes toward mountains are still topical today, and they are aligned with current efforts to critically revise the foundational works establishing the concepts and methodologies of the individual fields. In this respect, this article attempts to offer material for a potential revision of Nicolson's basic approach, doing so by tracing the transformation in the *aesthetic* perception or appreciation of mountains in one particular locality – that is, using clearly defined sources and a more focused perspective. That is why this article is focused on the first type of Mathieu's sources, that of art history (and philosophy). The aim of the article is to analyse the issue and answer the question of whether this transformation actually occurred at all, and if it did, to what extent and with what degree of sharpness.

Even though there is usually some connection between accounts made by tourists and those made by visual artists or literary authors, this connection is not inevitable and neither is it natural. Herri met de Bles specialised in painting mountains back in the sixteenth century, at a time when the first scientists were setting out into the mountains, too. But this does not mean that people who travelled to the mountains then felt anything akin to aesthetic appreciation or that they reported about it. There is also no indication that they encouraged mountain shepherds to remodel their huts into chalets for visitors, as was to be done on a massive scale in the nineteenth century. Of course, every artist adopts an aesthetic attitude, and if a poet compares mountains to warts on the face of the earth – to use an often-cited example from Nicolson's work¹² – it surely says something about contemporary tastes. But despite this, we should be very careful when using evidence from the field of art. Mere artistic depiction of an object does not necessarily

⁸Woźniakowski, *Góry niewzruszone*, 1974. Woźniakowski cites Nicolson primarily as a source of various texts, and he does not disagree with her in terms of the hypotheses or the methodology.

⁹Mathieu, 'Alpenwahrnehmung', 53–72 or Mathieu, *Die Dritte Dimension*, 163.

¹⁰Mathieu, 'Alpenwahrnehmung', 66–9.

¹¹Biese, *Die Entwicklung des Naturgefühls*, 1892, 95.

¹²Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom*, 67.

mean actual appreciation of this object in real life. This paradox, that objects may inspire joy when portrayed in art but not in real life, was pointed out already by Aristotle in his *Poetics*.¹³ For example, Rembrandt's *Slaughtered Ox* and other paintings in the 'scenes of butchering' sub-genre in the seventeenth century do not imply aesthetic appreciation of butchering by the general public at the time.

That is why we try in this article to rely as much as possible on sources from travellers' written accounts rather than on artistic sources, even though we are aware that in travellers' accounts, too, there is certainly some degree of stylisation in reporting on the perception and assessment of the landscape, as well as some influence of contemporary literary models and narratives. Whenever possible, we complement the travellers' accounts with other sources, such as scientific papers, maps, and models, as well as with writings from the field of aesthetics and with secondary sources on (aesthetic) perception of mountains and the changes in this perception. To better illustrate the broader context, we include references tracing additional facets of the transformation in people's attitudes toward mountains.

We assume that, to a certain extent, it really is possible to trace the development of people's aesthetic interest when it is seen as an aspect of a broader cultural appreciation and perception. This aesthetic interest does undergo change over time, both in terms of focusing on different objects and in terms of emphasising different aspects with varying intensity. In this respect, for instance, Malcolm Andrews's *The Search for Picturesque* (1989) provides an overview of the gradual development of aesthetic appreciation and perception of the British landscape as it changed decade by decade (!)¹⁴ Andrews's overview reveals the complexity and, at the same time, the classifiability of the significant and somewhat rapid transformation in tastes which took place in the course of the eighteenth century, from appreciating the pastoral landscape to appreciating 'wild' mountain terrains. Many authors have grouped this aesthetic, or general cultural and artistic, aspect under the term 'Romanticisation' and 'the Romantic approach'.¹⁵ But in fact, this aestheticisation of mountains was not primarily the 'invention' of Romanticism, a movement that did not arise in full strength until the end of the eighteenth century. Rather, the aesthetic appreciation of 'free', 'wild' nature in general (and not only mountains) emerged step by step during the whole of this century. On the conceptual, philosophical, and aesthetic levels, this appreciation drew from the Enlightenment, and on the artistic level, it was inspired by Classicist and Baroque tendencies. From a British perspective, we can even identify a specific, definable phase, a kind of 'interregnum,' between Classicism and Romanticism – the period of the Picturesque.¹⁶

It would be interesting to consider to what degree a rise and diversification in aesthetic appreciation of nature could be detected at least as early as the fifteenth – seventeenth centuries, and in the case of mountains, perhaps a bit later (meaning really high mountains with an Alpine zone, not hills and highlands). Because this shift – the examination of which is one of the aims of this article – took place in the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, we will pay attention to this earlier time as well, not only the

¹³Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. 2nd ed. Samuel H. Butcher (London: Macmillan, 1902), 15 (1. IV.3).

¹⁴Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque. Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

¹⁵Compare with Heringman, *Romantic Rocks*, 2004.

¹⁶Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 4.

perception of mountains in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Overall, then, our main goal is to find examples that would either confirm or contradict the hypothesis of a radical and 'black-and-white' break that has been attributed to Nicolson.

At any rate, whether this transformation in tastes could be described using a sharp binary opposition of black and white, or a more gradual change from grey to white, or from colourless to white, numerous scholarly sources have shown that the transformation pertained mainly to attitudes toward the Alps, with a special emphasis on the Swiss region. The model that emerged in this context was then transferred to other mountain regions in Europe, as well as the rest of the world. What happened was a kind of 'Alpinisation' of mountain tourism.¹⁷ In effect, this model became applied globally¹⁸ – while it, too, continued to undergo development and modification. Nevertheless, the tendency toward such globalisation cannot be characterised simply as a one-way, straightforward, national direction (for example, by claiming that this model was spread by the British). The globalisation in this respect was truly a transnational process¹⁹ in which various nations with diverse traditions participated.

In this article, we will analyse the Giant Mountains which, for centuries, have been a border zone between various linguistic areas as well as countries. We will use this mountain range as a concrete and fitting case study to demonstrate how such Alpinisation worked regarding the selected 'cultural' or 'aesthetic' point of view. The Giant Mountains present a suitable case study in relation to the Alps because there are many natural and cultural parallels between the two mountain ranges and because these parallels were reported on by travellers and later by tourists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moreover, when it comes to the impact of tourism on the landscape and the local inhabitants (and on people's perception of these mountains), it can be said that, in comparison, the Giant Mountains have been even more strongly influenced by tourism than the Alps.

At the same time, the Giant Mountains offer a model example of a transnational multicultural environment, which had contributed to their cultural discovery. In the past, this mountain range was on the border of two historic lands, and it was inhabited and 'discovered' by German-speaking people. There were also two different religious, political, and cultural spheres which were later joined by two Slavic-speaking nations, the Czechs and the Poles. In the early Modern-Age Bohemia, there was also a strong Italian community in these mountains due to work-related migration (the Italians were experts in the mining).

To summarise our main points of departure, the following issues are of particular importance. In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the transformation in the cultural attitudes toward the Alps inspired a parallel transformation in attitudes to other mountain ranges in Europe and beyond. In this context, we will explore these questions: What form did 'Alpinisation' take in various geographical and cultural contexts? What were the dynamics and the characteristic features of Alpinisation? What specific transformations took place in the field of aesthetic appreciation of mountains in the Central European context? In what ways did the focus, aesthetic preferences, and the

¹⁷See e.g., Laurent Tissot, 'From Alpine Tourism to the "Alpinization" of Tourism', in *Touring Beyond the Nation: A Transnational Approach to European Tourism History*, ed. Eric G. E. Zuelow (London - New York: Routledge, 2016), 59–78.

¹⁸Eric G. E. Zuelow, 'The Necessity of Touring Beyond the Nation: An Introduction', in *Ibid.*, 16; Mathieu, *Die Dritte Dimension*, 13–64.

¹⁹See the whole book Zuelow, *Touring Beyond the Nation*.

significance of this attitude further change in the broader context of tourism? Is it possible to describe these changes using binary terms as Nicolson and Ruskin are supposed to have attempted to do? And did this changing attitude toward mountains play a part in the subsequent development of tourism in Central Europe?

Riesengebirge: a cultural history of the Giant Mountains

Possible answers to the above questions can be explored using a case study of the Giant Mountains (called *Krkonoše* in Czech, *Riesengebirge* in German, *Karkonosze* in Polish, and *Asciburgi montes* in Latin), a small but geographically and culturally prominent mountain range, historically on the border of the central Habsburg Monarchy and adjacent areas of Germany (Saxony, Silesia, and Prussia).

Today these mountains²⁰ lie on the Czech Republic's border with Poland, but, less than a century ago, this region was known as Sudetenland and was inhabited chiefly by German speakers and considered ethnically German. For the German-speaking population in the broader vicinity, these were the most prominent mountains north of the Alps and essentially in North-East Europe as a whole. Guidebooks from the first half of the nineteenth century routinely stated that the Giant Mountains were the highest mountains in Bohemia and all of Northern Germany.²¹

For now, this study will leave to one side the region's more recent history (however interesting it may be) to focus instead on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the Giant Mountains started becoming a popular destination for German tourists (from Prussia, Saxony, and Austria), and later for Czechs and Poles too. During this time, journeys to the mountains did not lose their practical aspect, as travellers still came for reasons of work, trade, or religious beliefs, or in search of cures. However, to these motivations was added 'aimless' wandering simply for the pleasure of the journey and the landscape, which has essentially remained the case to this day.

While the Alps had relatively well-frequented roads and the lower altitudes suitable for pasture had been settled since earlier times, the Giant Mountains long remained largely uninhabited; this was quite deliberate. In the Middle Ages, the forests here served as a buffer zone between countries. More intensive settlement began in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when German colonists started moving to the Giant Mountains. Mineral extraction in Silesia also began at this time. Colonisation on the Bohemian side did not gather pace until the fourteenth century, when Silesia and Bohemia were united under the Luxembourg dynasty and therefore there was no longer a reason to retain the thick forests as a defence barrier.²²

The origins of people's interest in the Giant Mountains correlate with a rising wave of interest in the Alps, which Mathieu and other authorities on the topic observed.²³ These

²⁰The landscape of the Giant Mountains was shaped by the glaciers present here in the Quaternary Period, resulting in the terrain's characteristically long, rounded ridges with glacial cirques; two glacial lakes still remain. The tree line ends at 1,200–1,300 metres, and at this elevation, the mountains are home to arctic and alpine tundra with alpine-type flora and fauna. These mountains are nowhere near as high or extensive as the Alps: the highest mountain, Sněžka (Schneekoppe, see the picture No. 1), measures just 1,603 metres and the ridge is only 35 kilometres long. The River Elbe has its source in the Giant Mountains, from where it flows through Bohemia and then Germany.

²¹See Johann Christian Gottlieb Berndt, *Wegweiser durch das Sudeten-Gebirge* (Breslau: J. D. Gröson, 1828), 547 or Jakob Elias Troschel, *Reise Von Berlin Über Breslau Nach Dem Schlesischen Gebirge Im Sommer 1783*, 2.

²²See Theodor Lokvenc, *Toulky krkonošskou minulostí* (Hradec Králové: Kruh, 1978), 19.

²³E. g. Mathieu, 'Alpenwahrnehmung'.

origins date back to the Renaissance, and are characterised by the economic and scientific perspectives of this period. From the fifteenth and especially the sixteenth century onward, Italian prospectors, mostly from Venice, were drawn to the Giant Mountains by reports of their mineral deposits and precious stones. In written reports known as *Walenberichte* or *Walenbücher*, they documented rich findings of gemstones and gold, as well as the fantastical creatures that lived in the mountains, one of the best known of which was a sometimes benign, sometimes malevolent mountain spirit called Krakonoš or Rýbrcoul (from his German name, Rübzahl), described variously as a giant, a dwarf, a child and a bearded older man. Records of encounters with mysterious mountain creatures stimulated the contemporary imagination and formed the basis of the legends in which the Giant Mountains became steeped.²⁴ The legends were subsequently collected and published; for example, the fairy tales recorded by Johann Karl August Musäus became very popular in the latter half of the eighteenth century.²⁵

Medieval and early modern people could hold the mountains in higher regard on account of their utility as stores of minerals and precious metals,²⁶ firewood, and water. Medicinal plants could also be found here; and in an acclaimed work from the mid-sixteenth century the Italian Renaissance botanist and physician Pietro Andrea Mattioli documented the plants he collected in the Giant Mountains.²⁷ Also from the sixteenth century there are accounts of the first expeditions, undertaken for a combination of religious and scientific reasons. For instance at the end of the summer holidays in 1564, 1565 and 1566, Christoph Schilling, the rector of a Latin school in Hirschberg (now Jelenia Góra) in Silesia, took his pupils to the highest peak in the Giant Mountains, Sněžka (Schneekoppe), and he even attempted to measure its height – however, he reached a number that is hard to believe today, 5,550 metres!²⁸ Further, contemporary sources document that in 1577 Simon Hüttel, a painter and chronicler from Trautenau (now Trutnov), led a party of townspeople to the mountains – but the entry in the chronicle does not mention the motivations behind this journey.²⁹

During the sixteenth century, mining and smelting intensified on the Bohemian side of the mountains. So, did logging: wood was required by the local mines and smelting works, and the Giant Mountains' forests also supplied wood to the silver mines in Kutná Hora (Kuttenberg), a hundred kilometres distant, which was one of the largest silver deposits in Europe. Woodcutters, mostly from the Tyrol, were invited to come and work in the Giant Mountains, and they brought their families and customs with them. They built houses in the Tyrol style and introduced a specific type of smallholder farming (originally *Almwirtschaft* but known here as *Baudenwirtschaft*) that was

²⁴These myths were related to pre-Christian beliefs and perceptions of the mountains (see Lokvenc, *Toulky krkonošskou minulostí*, 19–21). Ceremonies of pre-Christian origin survived in the Giant Mountains well into the Modern Age; for instance, the custom of sacrificing black chickens in lakes and ponds was still widespread here in 1845. See Václav Krolmus, *Staročeské pověsti, zpěvy, hry, obyčeje, slavnosti a nápěvy ohledem na bájesloví Česko-slovenské*, vol. I (Praha: Vetterl, 1845), 428.

²⁵Johann Karl August Musäus, *Volksmärchen der Deutschen, 1782–1786: Sammlung von Märchen, Legenden und Sagen in fünf Bänden, Vol 2: Legenden von Rübzahl, Die Nymphe des Brunnens* (Gotha: Ettinger, 1782–1787).

²⁶E.g., Bohuslav Balbin, *Rozmanitost z historie království českého* (Praha: Academia, 2017), 67–70.

²⁷Mattioli's *Discourses* were first published in Italian in Prague in 1544, and then in Latin in Venice in 1554. The book was a great success and it was soon translated into other languages, including Czech (in 1562) and German (in 1563).

²⁸Gruhn, H., 'Die Erschließung des Riesengebirges bis zum Jahre 1700', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte Schlesiens*, 62 (1928), 116–46.

²⁹Simon Hüttel, *Chronik der Stadt Trautenau (1484–1601)*, ed. L. Schlesinger (Prag: Haase, 1881), 225.

previously unknown here. This farming led to grazing at higher altitudes (mainly with Swiss cattle breeds)³⁰ and haymaking,³¹ which would have added to the 'Alpine' impression of the Giant Mountains. Their descendants then lived here until they were expelled in the twentieth century.

Unfortunately, Tyrolean forestry methods, with clearcutting and the introduction of grazing, prevented the natural regeneration of the forests. Within four decades, by the start of the seventeenth century, they had brought about an environmental catastrophe: almost all of the central and eastern Bohemian part of the Giant Mountains had been deforested. Several years of famine followed. A commission sent from Kutná Hora in 1609 could only report that further logging was practically impossible. The situation gradually improved, but conflicts (often armed) among the local nobility over the boundaries of their manors continued until the early eighteenth century and resulted in less use being made of the meadows and forests at higher altitudes. The seventeenth century also marked the beginning of the symbolic 'religious' occupation of the highest locations: in 1665–1681, a chapel was built on Sněžka,³² and in 1684, the source of the Elbe was consecrated. The mountains were thus co-opted by Christianity, even though, according to contemporary reports, both of these enterprises were obstructed by the local mountain spirits.³³

To call this religious co-optation *sacralisation*, as Mathieu and other researchers³⁴ have done in the case of the Alps, would probably be imprecise here – in this case, it is more likely another piece of evidence documenting the *christianisation* of the Giant Mountains. Mountains had long been seen as sacred and, at least here in the Giant Mountains, as thoroughly imbued with all kinds of spirits. For instance, we can find evidence of sacrificing domestic animals to various springs as late as the nineteenth century.³⁵ Christian symbols and rituals organically blended with the cult of the local spirits – certainly, the mountains did not just suddenly obtain a religious dimension. Thus, while people's respect for Krakonoš and Krakonoš's presence in the mountains were being recorded in historical sources, the mountains also served as a destination for Marian pilgrimages and the Stations of the Cross and pilgrim chapels were being built. The Giant Mountains have been a centre of various alternatives to official religion for a long time – deep into the eighteenth century, even in officially Catholic parts of the region, secret Protestant services were held and, despite heavy persecution, Protestantism survived, in an 'underground' form, for two whole centuries. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in the foothills, spiritism flourished. And even now, visitors to the mountains still encounter chapels with depictions of not only Christian saints but also, and sometimes exclusively, of Krakonoš.

³⁰Lokvenc, *Toulky krkonošskou minulostí*, 84. These settlers also introduced e. g. Alpine dock (*Rumex alpinus*) in the Giant Mountains, which has become an invasive plant there.

³¹Lokvenc, *Toulky krkonošskou minulostí*, 49–90, or Jiří Woitsch, 'Střebro a lesy: Odlesnění východních Krkonoš v 16. století', *Lesnická práce* 96, no. 3 (2017), 38–9.

³²In 1824–1850, the chapel was converted into a chalet which provided shelter for travellers until the Silesian Chalet was built.

³³Lokvenc, *Toulky krkonošskou minulostí*, 46–7, 169.

³⁴Mathieu, *Die dritte Dimension*, 169–71; Martin Scharfe, *Berg-Sucht. Eine Kulturgeschichte des frühen Alpinismus* (Wien: Böhlau, 2007).

³⁵Lokvenc, *Toulky krkonošskou minulostí*, 46.

In the seventeenth century, the noted Jesuit polymath Bohuslav Balbín (in Latin, Balbinus), the ‘Czech Pliny,’ systematically travelled the Czech Lands, including the Giant Mountains. His *Miscellanea historica regni Bohemiae* ([*Historical Miscellany of the Kingdom of Bohemia*], 1679–1688), written in Latin and very flattering to the country’s population, is one of the key contemporary accounts of the Bohemian landscape, and it is full of all manner of factual information on culture and the natural world, but also numerous subjective descriptions of various locations and his aesthetic appreciation of them. Balbín praises the attractiveness of Bohemia’s mountains, in which he takes pride, and the ‘wild beauty’ of its valleys, rocks and forests.³⁶ Clearly, Balbín’s *Miscellanea* is an early example of aesthetic appreciation of mountains in general. However, it is clear from the long passages about the Giant Mountains that this beauty is mostly viewed in utilitarian terms: the author values the mountains for their ability to forecast the weather, and for the rare plants and precious stones found there, as well as for ‘the remarkable apparition – Rýbrcouľ,’ the spirit of the mountains who had ‘strangled many men’. Moreover, when Balbín does mention the Giant Mountains’ aesthetic qualities, he is referring to its meadows and valleys, not to the mountain tops or the higher elevations.³⁷

As this excursion into the history of travel in the Giant Mountain shows, mountain expeditions in the pre-modern age, whether in the Alps or the Giant Mountains, almost always had utilitarian or scientific motivations. If such a journey was undertaken and some kind of written record kept, with a few exceptions, it unfortunately reveals little about how the mountain landscapes and vistas affected the traveller.³⁸

Experiencing the Giant Mountains as if they were the Alps: the parallels and divergences in the early days of ‘Alpinisation’

Actual tourists³⁹ interested in mountains first started arriving in the Giant Mountains at the end of the seventeenth century. At that time, travellers could spend the night only at Hampel’s chalet (in German called Hampel Baude, and today, in Polish, Strzecha Akademicka, see the picture No. 2) which is not very far from Sněžka.⁴⁰ These early mountain journeys were mostly sporadic and quite difficult. The challenge they presented back then was documented by a report from 1710 describing how a group of five guests staying at the spa in Bad Warmbrunn (today’s *Cieplice Śląskie-Zdrój*) hired nine guides armed with rifles as load bearers and guards.⁴¹ The number and character of visitors to Hampel’s chalet during this period was recorded in the Book of Visitors which started to be kept in 1696 and which was later, in 1736, published as *Vergnügte oder unvergnügte Reise auf das weltberühmte Riesengebirge* [*The Amusing and Also Dismal Journey to the World-Famous Giant Mountains*]. In addition to the entries made by visitors to various locations, it contained several stories about Krakonoš. While most of these visitors came from Silesia, there are also entries made by tourists visiting from various parts

³⁶Balbín, *Rozmanitosti*, 73, 75.

³⁷Ibid., 61–3, 71.

³⁸Grun, ‘Die Erschließung des Riesengebirges’, 116–46.

³⁹For more information about tourism in the Giant Mountains, see Lokvenc, *Toulky krkonošskou minulostí*, 169–98.

⁴⁰The first such facility dates from the late seventeenth century, when this chalet, originally a shepherd’s hut on the route to the top of Sněžka, was adapted for tourists. J. W. Goethe stayed in this chalet in 1790.

⁴¹Lokvenc, *Toulky krkonošskou minulostí*, 169. They carried rifles for a reason – the last bear was hunted down in the Giant Mountains in 1802.

of Germany and, occasionally, also from Poland, the Czech Lands, or France. The entries, written mainly in German and Latin, are dated between 1696 and 1736. This book became quite popular and, in the next ten years, was reprinted three times. The subtitle suggests some of the contemporary motivations for visiting the mountains, such as ‘watching the wonders of nature,’ ‘pleasure for the soul’ (*Gemütsvergnügung*), and ‘physical exercise’ (*Leibesbewegung*). In the foreword, the only reference to the beauty of the Giant Mountains is made by the editor, the Silesian doctor and poet Kaspar Gottlieb Lindner. For him, the beauty of the mountain range, including lush meadows and pastures as well as frightening chasms and huge rocks, is mainly God’s miracle. On a fair-weather day, the mountains are like Paradise on earth.⁴² Nevertheless, in the travellers’ entries, which are often in the form of poems, none of these motivations is much elaborated on. For the most part, they express ‘amazement at God’s Creation,’⁴³ ‘curiosity,’⁴⁴ and also interest in the personality of Krakonoš. On two occasions, there appears a comparison with the Alps: the Giant Mountains are quite a bit lower, but still interesting.⁴⁵

The first poem of some length ever devoted to the Giant Mountains reflects this view. In this poem, the Alps play an important role. Published in 1750 by Balthasar Ludwig Tralles and titled *Versuch eines Gedichtes über das schlesische Riesengebirge* [*An Attempt at a Poem about the Silesian Giant Mountains*],⁴⁶ the poem is explicitly dedicated to Albrecht Haller, with whose *Die Alpen* it has much in common. Tralles followed Haller’s example, noting interesting natural and cultural features on the Silesian part of the Giant Mountains, and his poem is furnished with numerous learned footnotes in German and Latin. Like Haller, Tralles sought to celebrate the perfection of God’s creation as demonstrated in this mountain landscape. The application of the Alpine model to the Bohemian-Silesian mountain range was considered a great merit of the poem, which was cited in other works on the Giant Mountains, especially in travel literature.⁴⁷

Tralles’s poem is often mentioned in what may be the first travelogue written about the Giant Mountains, *Reisen nach dem Riesengebirge* [*Journeys into the Giant Mountains*] written in 1777 by an Evangelical clergyman from Breslau, Johann Tobias Volkmar.⁴⁸ In his travelogue, Volkmar focuses on themes dealing with nature and the natural sciences as he encounters them during his journey into the mountains. The purpose of his journey is to admire God’s Creation and the Creator’s wisdom; aesthetic appreciation of particular locations is rarely expressed, but it does appear. For instance, Volkmar exclaims: ‘There cannot be anything more beautiful than the view of water running from above.’⁴⁹ Comparisons between the Giant Mountains and the Alps do not abound, but there are various references to Switzerland, such as naming a particular structure in

⁴²Kaspar Gottlieb Lindner, ed., *Vergnügte und Unvergnügte Reisen auf das weltberuffene Schlesische Riesen-Gebirge, welche von 1696 biß 1737 ...* (Hirschberg: Krahn, 1736), 2–3.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁴To the very early use of this term compare Lien Foubert, ‘Men and women tourists’ desire to see the world: ‘curiosity’ and ‘a longing to learn’ as (self-) fashioning motifs (first–fifth centuries C.E.), *Journal of Tourism History* 10, no. 1 (2018), 5–20.

⁴⁵Lindner, *Vergnügte und Unvergnügte Reisen*, 93, 348.

⁴⁶Balthasar Ludwig Tralles, *Versuch eines Gedichtes über das schlesische Riesengebirge* (Breslau - Leipzig: Huberts, 1750).

⁴⁷For instance, in an 1804 guidebook by Joseph Carl Eduard Hoser, *Anleitung, das Riesengebirge auf die zweckmäßigste Art zu bereisen* (Wien: Joseph Geistinger, 1804), 26. Regarding the Alps as a starting point for describing the Giant Mountains in the eighteenth century, compare Jan Pacholski ‘... by jak najdoskonalej oddać tę scenę, przytoczę teraz myśli pana von Hallera’, in Ewa Grzędą, ed., *Od Kaukazu po Sudety* (Wrocław: Universitas, 2020), 83–105.

⁴⁸Johann Tobias Volkmar, *Reisen an dem Riesengebirge* (Bunclau: Weisenhauses, 1777).

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 35.

Swiss German, mentioning Swiss glaciers, or repeatedly citing the work of the Swiss natural scientist Scheuzer.⁵⁰

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, this literary interest in the Giant Mountains was joined by scientific interest, again prompted by the example of the Alps. Just as the Haller and Gessner of the Giant Mountains had been sought in literary circles, so was the local equivalent of Horace de Saussure. Some saw him in Adolf Traugott von Gersdorff,⁵¹ who conducted a variety of experiments with atmospheric electricity in the Giant Mountains. In 1786 he made a journey to the Swiss Alps, where he met Saussure in person, and he brought back an extensive mineralogical collection. In his account of the journey (*Bemerkungen auf einer Reise durch die Schweiz in Gesellschaft meiner Frau ... im Jahre 1786* [*Remarks on a journey through Switzerland in the company of my wife*]), we find a variety of measurements recorded, as well as von Gersdorff's sketches of glaciers and Alpine scenery. At von Gersdorff's chateau in Meffersdorf, in Silesia, travellers to the Giant Mountains would be shown a large model of Mont Blanc with Saussure's route on it marked in red.⁵²

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, other geologists, cartographers, and meteorologists headed for Giant Mountains, and they published their findings in what were often highly specialised volumes.⁵³ This scientific research on the mountain range reached a high point in 1791 with Johann Jirasek, Thaddäus Haenke, Franz Gerstner, and Tobias Gruber's extensive *Beobachtungen auf Reisen nach dem Riesengebirge* [*Observations on a Journey to the Giant Mountains*]. This was essentially a report on a scientific expedition organised by the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences which, in 1786, had decided to carry out research in the Giant Mountains. However, the *Observations* did not confine themselves to scientific notes and data on plant species and geology, for there were also passages describing views of majestic ridges, the delight the visitors took in the mountains and their admiration for the sublimity of nature, all quite in keeping with contemporary ideas about aesthetics.⁵⁴ Here the Alps were both model and a measure – lakes, vegetation, and sudden storms, much like those in the Swiss mountains, could apparently be found in the Giant Mountains as well.⁵⁵

In the early 1790s, geological studies also brought two icons of German culture to the Giant Mountains: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt. Goethe climbed the mountains' highest peak, Sněžka, where he admired a beautiful sunset and the colours of the rocks.

Two contemporary travel books also referred to the mountains' aesthetic qualities, systematically and in great detail. The authors, neither particularly well known, each undertook an original and relatively long journey through the Giant Mountains, and

⁵⁰Ibid., 48, 51, 94–6 etc., the work by Scheuzer that is being cited here is probably *Beschreibung der Natur-Geschichten des Schweizerlands*, 1706–1708.

⁵¹Hoser, *Anleitung*, 273.

⁵²*Reise in das Riesengebirge und in die umliegenden Gegenden Böhmens und Schlesiens Im Jahre 1796* (Gotha: J. Perthes 1799), 57.

⁵³E.g., *Versuch die Höhe des Riesengebirges durch barometrische Abmessung zu bestimmen*, 1772, by Adolf Traugott von Gersdorff, or *Versuch einer Topographischen Beschreibung des Riesengebirges, mit physikalischen Anmerkungen* by Franz Fuß; see the bibliography in Hoser, *Anleitung*, 242–66, for other works published before 1804.

⁵⁴Jan Jirasek and others, *Beobachtungen auf Reisen nach dem Riesengebirge* (Dresden: Waltherischen, 1791), 54.

⁵⁵Ibid., 97, 156, 232, etc. The Giant Mountains remained a destination for scientists in subsequent decades. Also noteworthy is the work of Josephine Kablick (1787–1863), a botanist living on the Bohemian side of the Giant Mountains who was the only woman to be admitted to the Botanical Society in Vienna.

the second author later repeated his journey several times. There are certain indications that these travellers walked some of the routes together. The first book was published anonymously in 1799 under the title *Reise in das Riesengebirge und in die umliegenden Gegenden Böhmens und Schlesiens Im Jahre 1796* [*Journey to the Giant Mountains and the Surrounding Areas of Bohemia and Silesia in 1796*]. The author introduced himself as a senior government official from Prague who had left the capital city partly due to the Napoleonic Wars and partly perhaps on a secret mission that may have involved industrial espionage in Silesia. His book is a many-layered and rich account of the mountain flora and fauna, the local settlements, the gradual development of industry, and the daily lives of the mountain people. Crucially for the theme of this article, he was greatly enthused by the aesthetic dimension of the mountains. He repeatedly uses words such as beautiful, sublime, picturesque, and romantic, and he notes the visual and emotional quality of the scenery and individual details, most often when he is observing particular atmospheric phenomena such as sunrises, sunsets, and storms, or when he reaches the highest point of a certain place. Again, and again, he does not hesitate to record his emotions on beholding the landscape. His account is also full of references to authorities on the Alps such as Rousseau and Saussure.⁵⁶

The second of these authors, Joseph Carl Eduard Hoser, was a physician, scientist, and art collector from Prague. He wrote several books about the Giant Mountains, the best known of which was a two-volume work. The first volume's title, *Das Riesengebirge in einer statistisch-topografischen und pittoresken Übersicht*, 1803–1805 [*The Giant Mountains in a Statistical-Topographical and Picturesque Overview*], makes a direct reference to Hoser's two main motivations for visiting the Giant Mountains: science, and what we could describe as aesthetic, artistic, and recreational reasons.⁵⁷ This is even more pronounced in the second volume, *Anleitung, das Riesengebirge auf die zweckmäßigste Art zu bereisen* [*Instructions on How to Travel the Giant Mountains in the Most Appropriate Way*], a highly detailed and literary guidebook. Right at the start, there is the obligatory comparison with the Alps, where the author says that while the Giant Mountains may lack 'the great character of Alpine nature,' they offer 'innumerable charms and beauties.'⁵⁸ It is typical that Hoser stresses the beauty of the landscape, and the pages that follow only underline his argument. Hoser offers the reader, a potential visitor to the Giant Mountains, various accounts of the different types of landscape that can be seen here, and he emphasises the contrasts between wild nature and cultivated areas.⁵⁹ He considers sunrises to be the supreme aesthetic and emotional experience, together with views from the highest elevations.

It is worth noting Hoser's emphasis on the visual qualities of the landscape, tying it to the aesthetics of the Sublime and the Picturesque (Hoser explicitly uses both of these terms). Descriptions of visually appealing scenery outweigh romantically motivated emotional responses – these remain somewhat in the background. The attribute 'romantic' is either applied to historical sites (a romantic castle) or used as a synonym for sublime (a romantic valley, or romantic rock formations).⁶⁰ In his descriptions of the

⁵⁶Like Saussure, he takes with him a measuring instrument and collects botanical and geological samples.

⁵⁷The foreword also mentions a medical reason, as mineral springs and spas could be found in the Giant Mountains, see Hoser, *Anleitung*, 5.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 1, 10.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 31, 55.

Giant Mountains, Hoser is evidently very much guided by his visual experience – that is, he writes what he sees rather than what he feels.

Another interesting travelogue, published in 1799, was written by the well-known pedagogue and co-founder of mass physical exercises, Johann Christian GutsMuths. At the time, GutsMuths was travelling across the Giant Mountains on his way from Thuringia to Prague and then on to the Ore Mountains (Erzgebirge). He went up to the top of Sněžka and the source of the Elbe. His travelogue, *Meine Reise in deutschen Vaterlande* [*My Journey to the German Fatherland*], offers a colourful mosaic depicting natural locations, towns, and villages, as well as the local people. For GutsMuths, nature is fearsome in the high mountains. At the pinnacles, which are sublime natural places, he is astonished by the ‘deathly silence,’ the unbelievable chaos, and the forces that can both create and destroy at the same time.⁶¹ He finds aesthetic delight almost exclusively in human settlements: ‘There is nothing more pleasant than walking for hours in the alleys between houses.’⁶² Even though GutsMuths’s journey does not focus on science, he cites the Latin names of the local plants, mentions Gersdorff’s attempt to measure the height of the mountains, and other scientific trivia. GutsMuths does not compare the Giant Mountains with the Alps, but rather to Robinson Crusoe’s desolate island.⁶³ However, he does include a comparison with his native Harz and with the Thuringian Forest.⁶⁴ In this travelogue, we also see the motif of travelling as a way of getting to know one’s native country (or *Vaterland*), a motif stated explicitly in the title. During his journey to the Kingdom of Bohemia, GutsMuths provides a rather detailed comparison of the Czech and the German inhabitants,⁶⁵ but his comparison consists of various bits of information and observation, it is not a nationalistic assessment of the two ethnic groups.

The earliest works of visual art depicting the Giant Mountains from *within* (and not just as a panorama in the far distance) date from Hoser’s time. The first to portray the mountains, in a large cycle of prints from 1792–3, was Antonín Karel Balzer, an artist from Prague who had studied in Vienna. He depicted places of interest on either side of the ridge in almost romantic configurations, highlighting the ‘picturesque’ quality of the irregular and rocky terrain and the dramatic atmospheric effects (see the pictures No. 3 and 4). In 1808, a year after Hoser had published his second volume, a celebrated cycle of prints was released by Christoph Nathe under the title *Malerische Wanderungen durch das Riesengebirge in Schlesien in XVI grossen Aquantita-Blättern* [*Picturesque Wanderings in the Giant Mountains in Silesia*]. This cycle presented several locations at various times of day and in various weather conditions, as described by Hoser and the anonymous author of the 1799 travel book. In the early nineteenth century, a number of artists came to paint in the mountains. They were graduates of the academies in Dresden (founded in 1764) and Prague (1799),⁶⁶ and they included the Prague Academy’s professor of landscape painting Karel Postl (who visited the mountains around

⁶⁰Ibid., 105, 126, 131.

⁶¹Johann Christian GutsMuths, *Meine Reise in deutschen Vaterlande* (Breslau: Korn, 1799), 143.

⁶²Ibid., 122.

⁶³Ibid., 163.

⁶⁴Ibid., 143.

⁶⁵Ibid., 204–9.

⁶⁶See e.g., Hans Pichler, *Das Riesengebirge in der Graphik des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Marktberdorf: Heimatkreis Hohe- nelbe, 1993).

1810). Interest in painting the Giant Mountains resulted in visits in 1810 and 1820 by the most important German romantic painter, Caspar David Friedrich (and also e. g. Carl Gustav Carus, Ludwig Richter). Friedrich's paintings inspired by his travels in the mountains such as *Morning in the Giant Mountains* and *Giant Mountains Landscape with Rising Mist Fog* (see the pictures No. 5 and 6) emphasised the romantic depiction of the mountains: from evocations of the landscape they had become symbolic expressions of emotion, time and the transcendental aspect of nature.

Just how important literature and art was at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the contemporary perception of mountains, and specifically the Giant Mountains, can be demonstrated by literature written in Czech, something that in the first three decades of the nineteenth century could not yet be taken entirely for granted (this was the time of the linguistic and cultural emancipation of smaller European nations, influenced by romantic thinkers such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schlegel).⁶⁷ In 1824 the first more comprehensive Czech book on the Giant Mountains was published, Josef Myslimír Ludvík's *Myslimír, po horách krkonošských putující* [*Myslimír's Wanderings in the Giant Mountains*]. It describes the travels of two friends on the Silesian and Bohemian sides of the Giant Mountains, including an entire day spent on the highest mountain, Sněžka. It copies the itinerary of Hoser's guidebook and to some extent his style too: Ludvík's account of his journey describes natural beauties, sites of cultural interest and the author's emotions. He is most interested in the contrast between the wild rocky wilderness and the cultural mountain landscape that is grazed and farmed; together they satisfy his ideal of 'a true Swiss landscape' with attributes such as massive crags towering into the starry sky, a sweet silence, or a delightful path winding through moonlit meadows to shepherds' huts.⁶⁸ Ludvík appreciates and experiences on a deep emotional level mainly sunrises and sunsets – these are, in his view, the most beautiful aspect that the Giant Mountains have to offer. For example, he narrates: 'It was just starting to get light in the east, the moon was turning pale, the stars were disappearing in the sky; thin mist was pouring from the valley over the hills, and Sněžka, shrouded in the mist, seemed to us much bigger and taller. [...] and so I hurried from rock to rock, all the way to the top. Oh, what a stream of fine feelings filled my yearning soul!'⁶⁹

One aspect of Ludvík's account distinguishes it from earlier German-language literature, namely, the strong nationalisation of the mountain space. The Giant Mountains do not merely offer the same aesthetic experience as the distant Alps, for another factor has come into play: to whom this 'ideal' location belongs. Ludvík makes much of the Czech inscriptions he finds in the cemetery in Hostinné, seeing them as proof that this landscape was originally settled by Czechs.⁷⁰ He records evidence of the area's Czech past (listing castles, churches, and chateau libraries with books written in Czech),⁷¹ and,

⁶⁷The Czech inhabitants of the Kingdom of Bohemia were the first to start emancipating themselves and aligning themselves with a somewhat problematically construed Czech and Slavic identity. The German minority in the Sudetenland was initially rather lukewarm and only became more radical later, see e. g. Jan Křen, *Konfliktní společenství: Češi a Němci 1780–1918* (Praha: Academia, 1990), 55–6.

⁶⁸Josef Myslimír Ludvík, *Myslimír, po horách krkonošských putující* (Liberec: Bor, 2016), 10–1.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 12 and 13.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 32.

⁷¹Czechs saw the Giant Mountains as a historical part of the former Kingdom of Bohemia (*Corona regni Bohemiae*), and accordingly, they laid claim to them.

overall, he considers the Giant Mountains the furthest outpost or frontier of the Czech homeland. This appropriating of the Giant Mountains escalated in the 1830s. For the greatest Czech romantic, Karel Hynek Mácha, who in 1833 walked from Prague to Sněžka following Hoser's guidebook,⁷² and wrote a fictionalised account of this journey in *Poutí krkonošská* [A Pilgrimage to the Giant Mountains], the peaks form 'the dark skyline of the Czech land' and are 'a bulwark dividing Bohemia from its Silesian sister,'⁷³ i.e. Slavic Bohemia from Poland; there is no room for Germans here. However, Mácha's depiction of Sněžka is certainly not filled with positive aesthetic enjoyment. It is rather an example of Romantic *Nachtseiten* of nature – Sněžka is depicted in dark, night-time colours, and at the top, the traveller discovers the ruins of a Gothic monastery occupied by (non)dead monks. After talking with the monks, the traveller becomes an old man and dies.

Similar strategies for appropriating and laying claim to what was ethnically a fairly fluid space can be documented in later Polish texts on the Giant Mountains.⁷⁴ In 1838, Karol Antoniewicz's *Wspomnienia z wędrowki przez Góry Olbrzymie* [Memories of a Journey Through the Giant Mountains] were published, in Polish and in a Czech translation. The author, still a young student, sets out through the Silesian Giant Mountains which he ostentatiously names in Polish, Góry Olbrzymie, a literal translation of Riesengebirge. He takes in the obligatory itinerary of views and the summit of Sněžka, but he also visits the bizarre rock formations of Adršpach (Germ. Adersbach), which he invariably refers to by the Slavic toponym Zámorsk. He experiences 'a bewitchingly beautiful landscape' where 'the poetry of nature, art, and the heart' are united, perceiving it strictly as a Pole, as though this place had been Polish since time immemorial, as suggested by the legends told by the people living here about the mountains' fabled spirit and guardian Krakonoš, or the brave Neslav, a Polish Robin Hood, and 'other famous Czech and Silesian bandits.'⁷⁵

The latter half of the nineteenth century: Tourism, sport, and nationalism

This Czech, and later also Polish, nationalisation of the Giant Mountains' space did not of course mean that authors writing in German had ceased to claim this region as their own. Such linking of ethnicity with a particular landscape or features of a landscape was nothing out of the ordinary in Central European culture in the nineteenth century,⁷⁶ and it applied to many places,⁷⁷ some of which were the same for the Czechs and for the Germans living in Bohemia, while others perhaps may only have had certain geological parallels, much as each ethnicity would often have different Christian pilgrimage sites. Thus, while Germans and Czechs competed for the 'ownership' of the Giant Mountains, each nation had its own 'mythical' mountain. For Czech Germans it was the highest mountain of the Central Bohemian Uplands (České Středohoří, Böhmisches

⁷²From Mácha's diaries we know that he had read Hoser's book before setting out, and took many notes.

⁷³Karel Hynek Mácha, *Romány a povídky* (Praha: Laichter, 1906), 6, 4.

⁷⁴See Jacek Kolbuszewski, *Krajobraz i kultura: Sudety w literaturze i kulturze polskiej* (Katowice: Śląsk, 1985).

⁷⁵Karel Antoniewicz, 'Zpomínky na cestu přes Krkonoše', *Květy* 5, no. 8 (1838), 63–4.

⁷⁶Vladimír Macura, *Znamení zrodu: České obrození jako kulturní typ* (Praha: H&H, 1992), 139–52.

⁷⁷These places were mostly unrelated to traditional pilgrimage sites. Bohemia had been a Catholic country since the sixteenth century, and although there were exclusively Protestant enclaves, the dividing of Bohemia's population into Czechs and Germans in the nineteenth century did not have any denominational motivation.

Mittelgebirge) Donnersberg (Milešovka), formerly perhaps home to the German thunder god, Donar. The Czechs had Říp Mountain, according to legend the mountain to which the forefather of the Czech nation, Čech, had led his people (while Čech's brother Lech was the forefather of the Poles).

From the mid- nineteenth century onward, these aesthetic, scientific, and nationalistic motivations coexisted and reinforced one another, all of them providing convincing arguments for walking in the mountains and admiring their Czech, Polish, or German beauty. For these and other reasons, visits to the Giant Mountains became very popular. A network of mountain hotels, cottages, restaurants, and shelters was built for tourists, hiking paths were marked,⁷⁸ and professional mountain guides and load bearers began operating. Travelogues, guidebooks, and specialised magazines were printed,⁷⁹ and postcards and photographs of the most beautiful locations were sold.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, in addition to scientific, artistic, cultural, and ideological motivations, recreation became another reason for visiting the Giant Mountains, and by the end of the century, it had become the principal reason. A visit to the mountains was also seen as having a curative effect,⁸⁰ or as an appropriate way of spending one's free time, and leisure and sporting activities were developed accordingly: walking, mountaineering, tobogganing, skiing, and so on. Rather tellingly, their introduction and expansion were promoted by nationalistic physical exercise organisations (the Czech Sokol movement and the German Turnverein association); these organisations could thereby attract new members and become stronger.⁸¹

The network of tourist facilities, and of sports and entertainment attractions, continued to grow denser, drawing larger and larger crowds of tourists to the Giant Mountains. Starting at the end of the nineteenth century, a train would comfortably bring tourists all the way into the foothills.⁸² And together with the number of visitors to the mountains, their social diversity grew as well: apart from professional travellers, and intellectuals, the mountains became a place to go also for families of townspeople or groups of students.

As more and more visitors came to the mountains, the reasons that motivated them were changing: nature admirers were being replaced by tourists looking mainly for comfort and rest. These tourists expected that there would be 'good restaurants' available, and 'lots of fun.'⁸³ Reflecting the interests of these new clients, the travelogues and mountain guides from that time recommended easy routes and described local entertainment options.⁸⁴ The beauty of the Giant Mountains was no longer seen as the work of God's miracle, and neither was it considered an aesthetically perfect whole, stimulating the travellers' emotional experience. The mountains' beauty had largely become a tourist attraction, a profit-making commodity. Such mass tourism and the commercialisation of

⁷⁸The first path was built between Labská bouda and Sněžné Kotly in 1879.

⁷⁹Such as *Der Wanderer im Riesengebirge: Organ des Riesengebirgs-Vereins, 1881–1943* and *Riesengebirge im Wort und Bild, 1881–1898*.

⁸⁰This aspect, combined with recreation, of course had a longer tradition: there was, for instance, the Silesian spa Bad Warmbrunn (now Cieplice Śląskie-Zdrój) from where, as early as the seventeenth century.

⁸¹See Claire E. Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation* (Houndsmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

⁸²Martin Bartoš, *Historie krkonošských bud (Vrchlabí: KRNP)*, 36.

⁸³See Karel Václav Rais, *Ze vzpomínek 1* (Praha: Česká grafická unie, 1927), 70.

⁸⁴See especially Jan Buchar, *Bucharovy výlety do Krkonoš* (Jilemnice: Faste, 1911).

nature irritated many travellers, especially those who were also poets. As they saw it, the mountains were losing their 'rural' and 'wild' character.

The end of peaceful contemplation of nature's beauty in the Giant Mountains was attested to with indignation by Vítězslav Hálek, a Czech poet who became known especially for his lyrical nature poems. In his *Krkonošské črty* [*Sketches from the Giant Mountains*] (1874), Hálek, feeling thoroughly depressed, describes the crowds at the waterfall called Wodospad Kamińczyka (Zackelfall). Reportedly, on a Sunday in summer, several hundreds of vehicles brought in people interested in seeing the beauty of the waterfall, or more likely, in enjoying the famous local restaurant. Many of the tourists who came there behaved very rudely: 'they shout as if drunk,' 'slap the tables with their hands and walking sticks,' and overindulge in grog and wine.⁸⁵ In Hálek's view, the place had become almost a den of all possible vices, including prostitution. As he puts it, there are many willing girls who, for a payment, will take male visitors not only to the waterfall, but also deeper into the woods, from where they return with 'hiked-up skirts.'⁸⁶ His desire to experience 'the quiet majesty of nature' is spoiled by 'parades' of noisy tourists whose destination is the pub at the waterfall in which someone is playing the barrel organ. Exasperated, Hálek cries out: 'Waterfall and the barrel organ! Could nature be ever disgraced any worse than this?'⁸⁷

Characteristically for Hálek, the misbehaving tourists are, explicitly, only the Germans, the Prussians. In this way, he situates the destruction of the expected experience of beautiful natural scenery into the context of Central European realities, that is, the situation in the Habsburg Monarchy, within which various ethnic-based types of nationalism were fighting among themselves with increasing intensity.⁸⁸

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, such nationalistic perspective coloured basically any Czech description of the Giant Mountains in which the aesthetic qualities of the landscape were now less important. The travellers' rhetoric was loaded with many cultural stereotypes in relation to the German ethnic group. The nationalisation of the mountain space is also why the model of comparing the Giant Mountains to the Alps was abandoned at this time. Both the Czech and the German inhabitants now wanted to claim the Giant Mountains as 'their own,' stressing the originality and authenticity of the local landscape and the local people – they were not interested in looking for models abroad. Moreover, the highest 'Slavic' mountains that somewhat resemble the Alps were available in the Tatras which lay then as well as they do today, on the border between a territory inhabited by the Slovaks and the Poles.

Essentially, the Giant Mountains and the literature devoted to them present a model example of the nationalisation of the multi-ethnic society of the Habsburg Monarchy in Central Europe. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was still possible for both Czech and German travellers to read about and plan their journeys through the Giant Mountains using one shared, highly popular travelogue, *Wanderungen durch das Riesengebirge*

⁸⁵Vítězslav Hálek, *Obrázky z cest* (Praha: SNKLHU, 1958), 308–9.

⁸⁶Ibid., 310.

⁸⁷Ibid., 312.

⁸⁸See the above-cited Křen, *Konfliktní společenství*. For more information on this topic, see Pieter M. Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Marsha Rozenblit and Pieter M. Judson, eds., *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2004); Bernard Linek and Kai Struve, eds., *Nationalismus und nationale Identität in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Marburg – Opole: Herder-Institut u. Instytut Śląski, 2000) etc.

und die Grafschaft Glatz [*Wanderings in the Giant Mountains and the County of Kladsko*] (1841), written by the Prague author Carl Herlosßohn. And in the 1870s, it was still possible for Sigfried Kapper, a German author living in Prague, and Julius Mařák, a Czech painter, to jointly put together and publish a richly illustrated travel guide for the Giant Mountains, titled *Illustrierter Führer in das Riesengebirge* [*An Illustrated Guide to the Giant Mountains*].⁸⁹ But by the end of the century, the German regional newspapers and magazines were filled with invective against Czech tourists. Peter Haslinger documented on numerous examples how at this time, local German press practically daily warned against ‘dangerous Czech sportsmen, tourists, and travellers’ who are taking up summer accommodation in the Giant Mountains and who ‘would like to settle in our German mountains, just like they do in other regions.’⁹⁰ Therefore, during this period, travelogues and other written sources, in both German and Czech culture, focus on presenting national identity at the expense of regional identity. However, absent from this nationalistic competition for the Giant Mountains were the Polish – their numbers in the region, both as inhabitants and as tourists, were rather small.⁹¹

After 1918, when independent Czechoslovakia was established, and especially in the late 1930s, when the pro-Hitler Sudeten German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei) gained in power, the local German inhabitants quickly became strongly nationalised. German (Nazi) newspapers commonly published statements rejecting the government that was in Czech hands and purposefully usurping the originally German territory. Promoting mass tourism was supposed to play an important role in this usurpation effort, and local Germans were being asked to prevent Czechs from buying German-owned real estate.⁹² The aesthetic value of the Giant Mountains was still significant, of course, but mainly in the context of asserting nationalistic claims over the local landscape – the mountains were no longer beautiful or majestic because they were mountains, but because they were beautiful Czech/German mountains.

The consequences for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

The First and Second World Wars and their violent impact on the mountain population’s ethnic structure⁹³ brought a temporary decline in tourism. The countries in which the Giant Mountains were located had been significantly re-shaped – on the Silesian side, the whole state of Poland expanded westward. Thus, starting in 1945, the Giant Mountains lay on the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia, two countries in the Socialist bloc. The German ethnic population was deported to Germany, and the mountains were subsequently re-settled (often under coercion) by Czechs, Poles, and Slovaks. Even though the region was, especially economically

⁸⁹Siegfried Kapper and others, *Illustrierter Führer in das Riesengebirge* (Wien: Waldheim, 1878).

⁹⁰Peter Haslinger, *Regionale und nationale Identitäten: Wechselwirkungen und Spannungsfelder im Zeitalter moderner Staatlichkeit* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2000), 118.

⁹¹Similarly, also in Mateusz J. Hartwich, *Das schlesische Riesengebirge: Die Polonisierung einer Landschaft nach 1945* (Köln: Böllau, 2012).

⁹²Gustav Walter, ‘Die Volksgrenze in den Sudetenländern’, *Volk und Reich. Politische Monatshefte* 12 (1936), Heft 2, 358.

⁹³Besides the deportation of the German population in 1945, after Hitler seized the Sudetenland in 1939, the local Czech population moved inland to what had remained of Czechoslovakia. The situation was similar on the Silesian side, which became part of Poland; many Poles fled there from the eastern part of their former country following Soviet occupation.

and culturally, severely damaged by the deportation of the Germans, the Czechs were able to relatively smoothly re-establish the connection they had developed with the region over the preceding centuries. For the Polish, however, the Giant Mountains were ‘a foreign territory,’ ‘they did not feel at home here.’⁹⁴ The Polish government reacted to this by emphatically promoting Polonisation of the area. According to Hartwich, tourism again played a central role in this process – the image of the Giant Mountains as a Polish recreational and sports centre was being purposefully promoted and gradually made into reality.⁹⁵

This economic, social, and cultural adoption led to a displacement of the previously ‘German character’ of the landscape. Nevertheless, a parallel phenomenon, ‘the loss of place memory,’ took place also in the Czech context, even though recently, with the help of various projects, people’s awareness of German historical settlement of the Sudetenland has been successfully revived. Today the violent expulsion of the original German inhabitants is considered a serious ethical problem, albeit with the paradoxically positive consequence of reducing the impact of human activity on the mountains. Over time, forests and pine trees covered the old mountain pastures and rocky fields, and the Giant Mountains lost their traditional industrial significance. Many settlements were abandoned and traditional herding and agriculture disappeared. After being a region of diverse economic activities, the mountains soon became shaped by summer and winter tourism and relatively strict conservation regulations in the form of national parks on both the Czech and Polish sides.

This entailed a prolonged suspension of contact with the German-speaking world, which had always been important for this region. Because they now lay on the border between two socialist countries, the Giant Mountains were not hermetically sealed or monitored by the military, as was the case in another Czech mountain range. The mountain tops were open to Czechs, Slovaks, Poles and other tourists from the Eastern Bloc (dissidents from both countries also regularly met here, including Václav Havel). The attractiveness of the region was enhanced when it was declared a National Park in Poland in 1959, and on the Czech side in 1963. With this, the Giant Mountains officially became a centre for tourism and conservation. Unfortunately, socialist ‘aesthetics,’ especially in the construction sector, were far from appreciating any kind of ‘Classicist’ rural idyl as well as from valuing ‘(pre)Romantic’ wilderness.

For present-day tourists, aesthetics remain an important reason to visit the mountains, although the emphasis is more on recreation and nature. The downplaying of the aesthetic function in the official presentation of areas of scientific interest would require a separate study.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the aesthetic dimension is taken into account in conservation activities, as conservation also extends to the specific character of a landscape which has an aesthetic component, and certain aesthetic preferences

⁹⁴Hartwich, *Das schlesische Riesengebirge*, 187.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 187 etc.

⁹⁶It is interesting that this aspect of landscape was downplayed in the twentieth century, even though it was often included in legislation as one of the features of conservation areas, together with the landscape’s character whose roots date from Alexander von Humboldt. However, at the time, in Central Europe there was no network of conservation areas analogous to the United Kingdom’s Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Scenic Areas which were influenced by the tradition of landscape painting and aesthetics.

can also be seen in certain legislative decisions concerning perhaps a particular type of forest or landscape management, even if the stated reasons are to protect biodiversity, etc.

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have brought a number of changes in aesthetic preferences, but it seems that mountains remain popular as one of the supreme aesthetic experiences available to us. Modern transport means that the mountains' remoteness is far from what it once was, but they are still among the main regions that attract visitors to a natural setting, even if it is supplemented by other activities or in some places by cultural experiences, too. Although tastes may have changed quite substantially since the mountains' discovery, as has the constellation of motivations for coming to experience them, aesthetic appreciation today still shares much with the ideas formulated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On the aesthetic level, the Giant Mountains are still presented to tourists as a 'Romantic' place with wild, 'pristine' nature which can serve as a lovely backdrop for their recreational and sporting activities. Sometimes this 'authentic' nature is combined with a technologically somewhat advanced structure designed for tourism such as a lift or modern mountain chalets. Almost completely absent from the offering is the image of an idealised rural region similar to the Swiss Alps in which happy cows graze in flowery meadows with the mountains in the background, local mountain people harvest hay, and so on – these kinds of scenes simply no longer exist here or are only marginally being re-introduced. At the same time, also almost completely missing from the offering are high-adrenaline activities such as rock-climbing, heliskiing, freeriding, BMX – there simply are no places suitable for engaging in them.

Conclusion

The goal of the article was to examine issues related to the transformation in aesthetic appreciation of mountains. This case study is the historical development of the perception of the Giant Mountains, the highest mountains in what was (at one time) a northern German-speaking area. In line with the literature available to date on this subject,⁹⁷ we agree that people's attitudes toward mountains have changed greatly in the Modern Age, and that this change took place in parallel with a somewhat radical transformation in aesthetic appreciation. In general, though, this transformation did not occur so quickly or radically as to be easily described in simple, binary terms. Early, growing interest in mountains can be found roughly at the start of the seventeenth century, especially among the first natural scientists and within certain economic sectors, such as prospecting, mining, or logging. Also starting in the seventeenth century, there was a rising tendency toward christianisation of mountains. We see this in the construction of chapels and crosses, and in efforts to consecrate the source of the Elbe. Incipient interest in mountain travel appeared during the eighteenth century. Interest then sharply increased in the early nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Giant Mountains had become exclusively a tourist centre. From the late eighteenth century onward, journeys to

⁹⁷See note 1.

the mountains were more and more strongly driven by scientific research and, especially, the landscape's aesthetic dimension. This dimension was portrayed in contemporary art, especially in literature, particularly in the travelogue genre. However, travelogues then gradually receded, replaced by guide books in which the landscape was no longer a place for adventure and exploring unknown territory but a place for recreation. In the second half of the nineteenth century, added to the aesthetic dimension was the emerging concept of the Giant Mountains as a tourist attraction. At this same time, the mountain range was increasingly viewed through a nationalistic lens.

Using the Giant Mountains as a case study to examine 'Marjorie Hope Nicolson's' hypothesis about a sharp change in the perception of mountains, we can see that older works devoted to the mountains do not support the idea that people were unequivocally repelled by mountains in earlier periods and then quickly changed this attitude during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to admiration and appreciation. Rather, interest in the value and virtues of mountains arose more gradually, and we see some evidence of aesthetic appreciation of mountains as early as the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, starting at the end of the eighteenth century, this evidence does grow in quantity as well as in depth of meaning. It would be difficult, though, to clearly define divided decade-by-decade stages (as was attempted, for instance, by Andrews whom we mentioned in the introduction).

Moreover, in the seventeenth century, aesthetic appreciation of mountains usually was for valley landscapes, not the high mountains, and nature's beauty was seen through a pious eye confirming the miracle of Creation and the grandness of its Author. It is not until Hoser's guide to the Giant Mountains, published in the early nineteenth century, that we encounter the author's focus on the purely aesthetic, unconditional beauty of mountain scenes. Hoser emphasises visual qualities: colours, changes in light and shadow, and the arrangement of the natural elements in their variability and diversity. This view of the landscape is strongly based on painting. The descriptions of the landscape employ aesthetic and philosophical terms: the Sublime, the Picturesque, the Beautiful. With the emergence of Romanticism, emotional interaction with the landscape intensified and the wildness of nature inspired even greater appreciation. However, scientific interest and spiritual/religious attitudes still played a role, and, together with aesthetic perspectives, continued to influence how mountain landscapes were depicted. All of these tendencies were often interwoven, whether within a particular text or during a particular decade.

The emphasis on the aesthetic dimension of mountains was undoubtedly sustained during the nineteenth century, developing in literature and also in the visual arts (painting and, later, photography). Nevertheless, this emphasis was gradually overshadowed by a focus on recreational and sporting activities – and by intensifying nationalist views of the Giant Mountains. The nationalistic motivations peaked in the period between the closing decades of nineteenth and the first decades of twentieth centuries, and then, logically, after the deportation of the German inhabitants, these motivations decreased.

Today, aesthetic motivations are still relevant, and, as a consequence of establishing National Parks on both sides of the border, these motivations continue to gain new meanings. The territories of the National Parks may be seen as beautiful because

they are biologically and geologically valuable, or because they are home to native species and ecosystems. As the old ways of working the landscape – pasturing, hay making, logging, and other industrial activities – have now disappeared, the visual appearance of the region has changed considerably. The appreciation of nature follows, primarily, in the footsteps of Romanticism, valuing ‘wild’ or close-to-nature landscapes, even though in reality, in many cases people once lived in and then abandoned (or were expelled from) those places. While in the Alps traditional husbandry has continued and still plays an important role in the lives of the local people as well as in landscape management, in the Giant Mountains this element has disappeared completely.

The Giant Mountains illustrate the ‘Alpinisation’ of mountain spaces in Europe. The first activities – based on natural science exploration and general economic and resource exploitation (such as mining and logging) – probably cannot be simply linked with the influence of the Alpine space. However, we argue that in the eighteenth century, experience of the Alps, both first-hand and indirect, which was occurring on the aesthetic/artistic and the natural science levels, became a strong motivation for journeys to the Giant Mountains. At this time, travellers in the Giant Mountains wanted to see something similar to what the Alps had to offer. They directly compared the aesthetic qualities of the landscapes, pointing out the resemblances between the two mountainous regions. Additionally, references to the Alps appeared in the travellers’ observations of the local people’s lives and ways of living in the Giant Mountains. Pastures in the higher elevations, introduced Alpine livestock, and the appearance of the local architecture all reminded travellers of Alpine examples. However, over the course of the nineteenth century, due to nationalist trends in thinking about mountains, the comparisons between the Giant Mountains and the Alps gradually disappeared. In contrast, the emphasis shifted to local and autochthonous ‘national’ values.

The Giant Mountains also serve as a definite example of the globalisation of ideas and attitudes. Though inhabited by locals, these mountains were also ‘discovered’ by numerous Italian prospectors and natural scientists. On the one hand, various ways of relating to mountains on the aesthetic and artistic levels were being imported there, and on the other hand, the Giant Mountains, as a region relatively close to the centres of German Romanticism, also influenced transformations in attitudes toward mountains and nature in general. Moreover, the region is at the intersection of cultures: two countries, two religions, and two linguistic groups – first German and Czech, and now Czech and Polish. Intense nationalism had a serious impact on how the Giant Mountains were viewed in the nineteenth century, resulting in the tragic displacement of most of the original German-speaking inhabitants. Let us hope that the shadows of this approach never return and the whole area will continue to offer opportunities for the coexistence (however problematic it may be at times) of recreation and nature conservation, with the beauty of the Giant Mountains remaining among the strongest motivations for visiting.

Translated by Adrian Dean

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Carl Mattis: Schneekoppe – the highest mountain of the Giant Mountains/Riesengebirge/
 Krkonošské muzeum Správy KRNAP Vrchlabí



Ludwig Richter: Hampelbaude, 1838/Krkonošské muzeum Správy KRNAP Vrchlabí.



Anton Balzer: Waterfall of Aupa/Upa/Krkonošské muzeum Správy KRNAP Vrchlabí
 and remove: /Upa



Anton Balzer: The Black Pond /Der Schwarze Teich/Krkonošské muzeum Správy
KRNAP Vrchlabí



Caspar David Friedrich: Giant Mountains Landscape with Rising Fog, 1818–20



Caspar David Friedrich: Morning in the Giant Mountains/The cross on top of the
rocks, 1810–11

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