carefully researched, and closely argued. In the end, a conciliatory vision of the German encounters with the East emerges from *Orienting the Self.* Against contemporaries who tended to demonize the Oriental other, Wolfram von Eschenbach depicts courteous Saracens whose only flaw is that they are not (yet) Christians. As a Cypriot, the protagonist of *Fortunatus* is just as foreign in Europe as he is in the Middle East; thus the author seems less interested in perpetuating Orientalist stereotypes than in portraying "the subject's encounter with difference" and his "experience of being alien" in both East and West (106). Heinrich von Ofterdingen indulges in a brief desire to join the crusaders in the conquest of the Holy Lands, but soon yields to sympathy for one of their victims. Hans Castorp snatches a brief glimpse of harmony between East and West before being plunged into the chaos of war, while Effi Briest pays the penalty for her Orientalist fantasies of erotic adventure with social ostracism and premature death. Prager's sensitivity toward the plight of these characters and her sympathy for the redemptive potential of their encounters with the East make her work a valuable contribution to the study of a central theme across several centuries of German literature.

University of California, San Diego —*Todd Kontje*

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German Culture and the Modern Environmental Imagination: Narrating and Depicting Nature.
By Sabine Wilke. Leiden: Brill, 2015. 236 pages + 9 color illustrations. €59,00.

Despite Germany's green image and its rich history of poets and thinkers contemplating nature, North American scholarship in the environmental humanities that specifically considers German texts and contexts has been slow in coming. We can only speculate about possible reasons for this lacuna: perhaps Europe's more densely populated countryside forestalled discourses on wilderness and nature writing in comparison to North America? Perhaps the Nazi ideology of *Blut und Boden* taints a celebration of German nature to this day? Whatever the answers are to these questions, German ecocritical scholarship is rapidly growing, with Sabine Wilke's volume being a milestone in the formation of a new canon.

With *German Culture and the Modern Environmental Imagination*, Wilke manages to offer an introduction and brief history of German environmental thought; consider disciplines as diverse as aesthetics, art, film, and literature; address discourses from the tropics to the poles; and pull together an impressive array of scholarship. Thus her volume is bound to become a handy standard to introduce the environmental views of German thinkers, researchers, and artists from Immanuel Kant to Alexander von Humboldt, Georg Forster, and Werner Herzog, and to familiarize oneself and one's students more generally with German environmental contexts. In a broad analytic arch, Wilke credits first Georg Forster and in his wake Humboldt with an influential framing of nature that made possible the modern idea of landscape taking hold in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and finding artistic expression in Caspar David Friedrich, Albert Bierstadt, Leni Riefenstahl, and Werner Herzog. With such emphasis on the cultural imagining of nature, a focus on agency and interaction in light of material ecocriticism comes second, though it finds some articulation in Wilke's text.

After presenting an outline of her general arguments and summaries of current ecocritical theories in the German context, Wilke turns to philosophy in order to raise questions about the conceptualization of nature from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. She takes as a point of departure a close reading of Kant's analytic of the sublime in order to explore traditions responding to Kant, such as Herbert Marcuse's ideas of culture and nature, Theodor Adorno's theory of nature, and Hartmut and Gernot Böhme's contemporary critique of rationality drawing on these concepts. Moreover, Wilke elucidates links to German nature philosophy as articulated by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling that meant to complement Kant's critique of reason and Arthur Schopenhauer's conception of the natural world, both of which informed Martin Heidegger's critique of technology. Her focused and informed overview is especially useful for readers not familiar with these specific philosophical treatises.

The third chapter looks at Humboldt's scientific, essayistic, and artistic discourses, thus illustrating his struggles in finding an appropriate representational form of conveying the totality of nature as experienced during his South and Central American travels (1799–1804). Wilke suggests that Humboldt carefully frames the experience of tropical nature for his European audience by presenting narrative models made to emulate the experience of a tropical spectacle. The next chapter follows up on the philosophical foundation of the sublime and Humboldt's nature aesthetics to analyze landscape paintings by Caspar Wolf, Friedrich, Bierstadt, and Thomas Moran. This chapter, with its wide interdisciplinary reach and close analysis, traces the evolution from Friedrich's *Rückenfiguren* to Bierstadt's visual excess, a particularly valuable addition to the field of German ecocriticism.

Wilke continues the focus on painting in her chapter on mountains by analyzing paintings by Paul Cézanne before turning her attention to the German mountain film of the 1920s and 1930s. Developing from nineteenth-century landscape art, Wilke argues, the mountain film as well as more recent reenactments by Werner Herzog and others add dramatic amplifications negotiating the relationship between humans and mountains, while continuing to wrestle with the poetic framing of such a relationship. From mountains, Wilke turns to polar regions in Chapter Six, beginning with Johann Reinhold Forster's and Georg Forster's travel reports and considering more of Friedrich's paintings, Arnold Fanck's *SOS Eisberg*, and stories by Christoph Ransmayr and Judith Hermann. Indeed, this chapter scrunches a lot of texts, which keeps the analysis and discussion brief. If the polar regions, for many European travelers, function as a screen for fantasies of masculinity, the tropics, pitted as fertile, bountiful, and exotic, become encoded as female. In her final chapter, Wilke returns to Humboldt to read his descriptions of rivers and waterfalls, especially the Orinoco River, as foundational tropes of tropicality. A short analysis of what Wilke calls cinematic moments of excess in Herzog's *Aguirre* and *Fitzcarraldo* and Riefenstahl's *Impressionen unter Wasser* concludes the volume.

Wilke's ability to synthesize and bring into conversation a vast amount of texts is truly impressive. With such a timely and ambitious study some drawbacks are perhaps inevitable: many influential authors and artists are mentioned only in passing (for instance, the naturalists Ernst Haeckel and Luis Agassiz, the authors Johann Wolfgang Goethe and W.G. Sebald, the filmmaker Hans Ertl). Some connections remain unexplored (to Edmund Burke's sublime, to British Alpinism, to Rousseau), there are some repetitions, and some lines of interpretation and argumentation appear

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jaunty. Overall, though, these are minor flaws that do little to diminish the overall importance of this pioneering volume that bridges German cultural studies and the environmental humanities.

Emory University —*Caroline Schaumann*

Mysticism and Reform, 1400–1750.
Edited by Sara S. Poor and Nigel Smith. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015. 424 pages. $45.00.

This volume contains twelve essays on early modern mysticism in Northern Europe. The collection transcends its humble origins as conference proceedings to serve as an incitement to new research on the intersections among mysticism, politics, religious practice, and literature during this period. The various essays model different methodological approaches from formal criticism to archival history, while each in its own path pursues the elusive figure of "the mystical" in the centuries following the Reformation.

In the introduction, the editors delimit the field of inquiry by defining mysticism as the pursuit of union with the Godhead through annihilation of the self. The contributions furthermore focus exclusively on areas of Northern Europe where Protestantism exercised a strong influence or became dominant, i.e., England, the Netherlands, and the northern German states. Poor and Smith assert that, far from failing or evaporating, this form of mysticism and its literary and cultural expressions not only survived the Reformation but retained an unsettling role in both ecclesial and secular politics even as these realms shifted. Indeed, although mysticism often sat less easily with Protestant hierarchies than it had with the medieval Church, it had always been and remained politically linked with reform.

Two essays with broader diachronic scope and theoretical import frame the volume, addressing the relationship of mysticism to orthodox theology and the development of contemplative prayer as a mystical practice, i.e., the place of mysticism in speculative and in practical theology, respectively. In the first essay, Euan Cameron describes European theological history in terms of debates over the relative authority of sources of religious knowledge. Martin Luther transformed the toothless late medieval contest between human reason and exegetical tradition by claiming Scripture as the sole source of religious knowledge and (rather literally) demonizing those who claimed recourse to inspiration. Pietism, which revived the possibility of inspired knowledge, reacted against a Lutheran theology that had become wooden in its insistence on dogma.

The final essay similarly follows a single phenomenon from the fifth to the eighteenth century, namely what Niklaus Largier calls "a phenomenology of rhetorical effects." He argues that mystics throughout Christian history have exploited the aesthetic effects of language in order to induce certain forms of experience. "Prayer is to be understood," he writes, "in terms of a spiritual exercise that arouses the affects" (358). Although she does not use Largier's vocabulary, Alison Shell offers an excellent example of this process at work in her essay on John Austin's "original psalms," in which she not only analyzes the poetry's rhetorical force but also considers the conditions of performance as a factor in achieving the desired religious experience.

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