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*“Mountain of Destiny”: Nanga Parbat and Its Path into
the German Imagination* by Harold Höbusch (review)

Samuel J. Kessler

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pathies. Both before and after World War II he advocated for controversial issues, such as his opposition to the Schmutz- und Schundgesetze in 1928 and his strong support in the 1930s and beyond of the right of individuals to end their life. Yet, precisely the unpredictable nature of his life and work makes this biography all the more compelling as a contribution to Austrian cultural historiography.

Joseph McVeigh
Smith College

Harold Höbusch, *"Mountain of Destiny": Nanga Parbat and Its Path into the German Imagination*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture. Rochester: Camden House, 2016. 282 pp.

Harold Höbusch's *"Mountain of Destiny": Nanga Parbat and Its Path into the German Imagination* is three books in one: a history of the German exploration of the Himalayan mountain known as Nanga Parbat; an analysis of the relationship between the ethos of mountaineering and the ideology of National Socialism; and a critical discussion about why mountains became such a common referent in German popular culture in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Though the title suggests the book's common thread will be Nanga Parbat, in fact Höbusch has given us something far more wide-ranging. *"Mountain of Destiny"* is a deeply sourced account of the co-development of mountaineering culture and Germany's modern self-identity, hinged around the rhetoric and trauma of National Socialism.

Höbusch opens by laying out a theory of the interrelation of mountains and cultural identity, tracing how the ethos and ideology of mountaineering was increasingly depicted and valorized in German popular culture between the 1920s and 1950s. "The various representations of these [Himalayan] expeditions to the German public in print, film, and audio—[are] in my opinion *the* crucial segments of Nanga Parbat's path into the German imagination," he writes (13). This widespread use of mountaineering as a means of depicting communal values he calls, somewhat awkwardly, "the cultural phenomenon Nanga Parbat."

This theoretical lens ("the cultural phenomenon Nanga Parbat") overshadows, however, Höbusch's most incisive and compelling findings. It is not that Nanga Parbat the mountain plays such a role in German cultural

identity. Instead, it is the spirit of expedition, of brotherhood on the icy slope, and of attaining a prize (reaching the summit)—these qualities permeate German mass culture. Höbusch, it often seems, is writing two equally compelling though at some level quite different books. Either this is a history of Nanga Parbat (the ninth-highest mountain in the world) and the German men who climbed it, or it is a study of mountaineering as a social and ideological phenomenon, an analysis of the way that climbing as an ethos became a cipher for German angst, self-glorification, and moral education before, during, and after National Socialism.

It is the latter book, buried inside the former, that has the most consequence for historians of twentieth-century Germany. For reasons not entirely clear, Höbusch avoids placing *Mountain of Destiny* into conversation with others works that discuss the cultural preludes and propagandist exploits of National Socialism. Yet some of the most fascinating and disturbing moments in *Mountain of Destiny* describe the way mountaineers and their texts were easily (and often happily) appropriated by the Nazi state. Analyzing the language of mountaineers from the 1920s Höbusch repeatedly points to the aspects of the sport that allowed its cooptation by the Nazis: the idea of the mountain as spiritual alternative to modernity; the valorization of struggle as the central character of the endeavor; and the description of the forging of non-egocentric bonds in the midst of extraordinary circumstances in order to achieve success. *Mountain of Destiny* is an excellent account of how NS ideology infiltrated (or perhaps merely accentuated) one more aspect of prewar German life. Höbusch describes how willingly German climbers were to adapt their seemingly apolitical culture to fit Nazi ideology.

Why, then, does Höbusch not situate the book as part of the history of National Socialism? The answer lies, perhaps, with Höbusch's other, primary research area: the history of sports. By describing this book as a history of sports and its effect on national popular culture—rather than on the way political ideology coopted or manipulated the language of mountaineering—Höbusch allows himself the space to give a richer, fuller account of mid-twentieth-century German mountaineering and the men who defined it. It also allows him to show that, though the tenets of climbing (national strength, masculine character, endurance, unselfish responsibility to one's fellow climbers) are ready-made for National Socialism, they are likewise older and more deeply rooted. What, his subjects ask, is German mountaineering to do after Nazism's defeat? Must it develop a new language? These are ques-

tions that Höbusch can more easily ask from the perspective of a historian of sports rather than as one of National Socialism.

Though *Mountain of Destiny* is a number of different books that are not always seamlessly wedded together, Höbusch has quite clearly made a contribution to a handful of fields in German history. Students looking for introductory analyses of key primary sources in the history of mountaineering will find large parts of each chapter richly helpful. Certainly, by the book's end one is more aware of—and deeply convinced that—mountaineering became part of the German folk identity in the 1920s; was deeply complicit in Nazi propagandist rhetoric in the 1930s and 1940s; and struggled to free itself from the Fascist shadow in the fifties. What is less convincing is the centrality to that story of Nanga Parbat as such. Mountaineering is Höbusch's true topic here. To this reader, reading through Höbusch's sources, the Himalayan expeditions themselves seemed to be what captured the public's imagination—tales of adventure on the mountain—and not so much the mountain itself. That Nanga Parbat briefly gained pop-cultural resonance seems far less significant than that the imagery and social cachet of German mountaineering was imbued with the language of masculine nationhood, self-sacrifice, and battlefield-like endurance—key values, Höbusch writes, not just in Nazi ideology but in German inter-war culture as well.

Samuel J. Kessler

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Klaus Amann, Fabjan Hafner, and Doris Moser, eds., *Drehe die Herzspindel weiter für mich: Christine Lavant zum 100*. Sonderband literature/a: Eine Publikation des Robert-Musil-Instituts der Universität Klagenfurt. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015. 183 pp.

Ten poems by Christine Lavant, accompanied by original poems, monologues, dialogues, and essays by twenty-seven contemporary authors comprise this anthology, forming an excellent companion to the four-volume edition of Lavant's works that Wallstein Verlag is publishing. The first two volumes have already appeared (volume one, *Zu Lebzeiten veröffentlichte Gedichte*, edited by Fabjan Hafner and Doris Moser, appeared in 2014; volume two, *Zu Lebzeiten veröffentlichte Erzählungen*, edited by Klaus Amann and Brigitte Strasser, appeared in 2015). Volume three, *Gedichte aus dem Nachlass*, appeared in 2017

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