

*Medieval Eco-Narrative and Self-Expression in the Œuvre of Felix Fabri (1437/8–1502):  
Transformed Landscape and Transformative Self-Writing*

Chen Cui

At the Rachel Carson Center (RCC), I will investigate the writing of landscape in the *œuvre* of Felix Fabri (1437/8–1502), a Swiss Dominican monk who traveled to the Holy Land twice and composed four distinct travelogues in medieval Latin and Middle High German, all of which features detailed descriptions of natural landscapes overseas.<sup>1</sup> The focus of the RCC project is on the verbally and textually embodied *interlacement* between Fabri's *self-transformation* and the natural landscape narrated in the travelogues. By comparative close reading of the multilingual travelogues and manuscript studies (intended to trace text–image interplay, readerly response on marginalia, and compilation context), I tentatively argue that Fabri's self-transformation is deeply entangled with, as well as reflected from, the processes of his writing and rewriting of the natural landscapes. And his self-transformation, which pertains chiefly to his increasingly tempered attitude towards the socio-religious movement of Observant Reform (circa 1370–1500) and his inner spiritual growth (Beebe, *Pilgrim & Preacher*, 10), is properly crystallized in the writing and rewriting processes, where the natural landscape in the outside world and Fabri's interiority are mutually responsive to each other.

Firstly, the biblical sites that Fabri physically encounters during his pilgrimages (like the desert, rivers, and forests) are narrated in the *Evagatorium* as highly *evocative* of his religious sentiments, where the natural landscape *intersubjectively* arouses and inspires Fabri's self-awareness and self-expression, apart from being *fashioned* under narratorial manipulation. Secondly, Fabri's numerous rewritings of the natural and biblical landscapes in *Die Sionpilger*—a text intended to divert its female religious readers to enact allegorical journeys to the Holy Land via devotional reading—also unfurl a process of self-transformation. The manuscript tradition reveals that the physical landscape is here intellectually recollected by Fabri via *ars memoriae* during the rewriting, internalized into his spiritual formation of wisdom, and subjectively *performed* via language to convey his personal stance on late-medieval piety and spirituality in the broader context of the Church Reform across the German lands. At the RCC, I will further delve into how the *nonhuman* landscape is verbally and cognitively transformed into Fabri's (and potentially also his religious readers') interiority, as well as how the intersubjective process of (re-)writing stimulates the emergence, expression, and refinement of the late-medieval *self*.

## References

- Beebe, Kathryn. *Pilgrim & Preacher: The Audiences and Observant Spirituality of Friar Felix Fabri (1437/8–1502)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Bolens, Guillemette. "Embodied Cognition, Kinaesthetic Knowledge, and Kinesic Imagination in Visual Arts and Literature." *Frontiers in Communication* 7 (2022): 1–15. [doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2022.926232](https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2022.926232).

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<sup>1</sup> The four travelogs under study are *Gereimtes Pilgerbüchlein* (a rhymed vernacular poem), the *Pilgerbuch* (dedicated to his noble patron, Apollinaris von Stein), *Evagatorium* (an elaborate *opus magnum* recounting the history of the Holy Land, Egypt, and Sinai), and *Die Sionpilger* (intended to divert virtual, spiritual journeys for its readers to reach the Holy Land via devotional reading).