New Seeds, New Harvests: Thirty Years of Tilling the Mystic Field
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This paper will review significant trends and monuments in the study of medieval mysticism over the past thirty years. In the mid-twentieth century, the small field of mystical theology was still largely an insider discourse, dominated by professed religious. Today it is a much larger field characterized by a great diversity of approaches. I will consider the dawn of “Christian spirituality” as an academic field; the material turn, with its various emphases on gender and embodiment, emotions and eroticism, art and material objects; and the complementary linguistic turn, focusing on mystical rhetoric, apophatic theology, and vernacularity. The paper ends with a retrospective on my own work on the feminine Divine, imaginative theology, the nature of visionary experience, and the importance of boundary-crossing.