

Franziska Meier and David Wallace, "Questions concerning Europe: A Literary History 1348-1418", to be published in *Romanische Studien* 7 (2017)

Questions concerning *Europe: A Literary History 1348-1418*

Franziska Meier and David Wallace (Göttingen and Philadelphia)

David Wallace, *Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418*, 2 vols. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), xlii/747 p. and xlii/844 p.

Franziska Meier When and how did the idea of this *Literary History* come to your mind? Did it change and develop along the years and, if yes, how? Did you figure out from the start that it would take such a size and include such a vast range of articles?

David Wallace I began pondering this project in 2007 and submitted a proposal to Oxford University Press in January 2009. It might be seen to evolve from, and fuse, two earlier works—*The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, which I edited in 1999, and the book *Premodern Places* from 2004.

A crucial role in developing the project was played by an interactive and publicly-accessible website, with pushpins containing synopses of each site, written by contributors.¹

This enabled me to take the project on the road by giving some forty presentations across Europe, North America, and Australia. I would always ask audiences to give feedback, and once they realized that this was no mere rhetorical preliminary (I seriously needed help) they were more than willing. Thus itineraries were changed, some places were added, and some dropped.²

Meier This literary history covers a period running from 1348—the moment in which the Plague caused a demographic disaster on the European and Eurasian continent—to 1414/18—i.e. the inauguration of the Church Council in Constance that was supposed to end the Great Schism. The outcome, however, was ambivalent: The Council did end the Great Schism in 1418 by deposing the three rivaling popes and electing a new one, but failed to realize the longed-for reform of the Church and thereby involuntarily contributed to the decline of Catholic unity. Why do you think that the Council of Constance may be considered as a final point to this specific period?

Wallace The project was originally designed to extend from 1348 to 1400. But England's greatest poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, died in 1400, and it seemed absurd to suggest that medieval European literature died with him. Extending the project to 1418 was a major, revisionary step—but also a great opportunity. I noticed that scholarship had paid much attention to ecclesiological issues addressed by this Council, to say nothing of the burning of Jan Hus and Jerome of Prague, but relatively little about the fantastic concentrations and interactions of literary talent over four years. The Council also began by addressing the crucial question *what is a nation?* And having healed the western schism, it was moved to consider how the greater schism with eastern Christendom might be repaired. Greek writing, most often in Latin translation, was just then creeping into vogue. Some writers, stymied by adverse conditions of war between England and France, which sprawled into Brittany and Iberia, found Constance to be a stable platform for the copying and dissemination of

their work. And above all, the Council offers useful points of retrospect on all that has happened since 1348.

Meier You've mentioned that the Council addressed the question "what is a nation?" The answers will be quite different from the concept the 19th century brought about. Would be mind explaining the different options discussed at Constance?

Wallace yes, indeed, much debate was dedicated at Constance to "what is a nation" or, more particularly, "who or what can be one?" And of course. medieval understanding of *nationes* differed markedly from ours. The "English nation in Ireland" denoted, as the term *natus* ("to be born") suggests, those linked by familial (and aristocratic) ties. A group of merchants from a single country would live together in a foreign trading city as a *natio*. At the university of Paris, there were four nations of students—and so, the French leadership assumed, the Council of Constance should similarly be comprised of four nations of delegates. The French nation took its place ontologically: everyone *knew* what this nation was (although "French" territory was then torn between Burgundians and Armagnacs). The other nations were to be the Italians, the Germans, and the Spanish. But when the Spanish arrived in 1416, the French mischievously argued that the English (not really an independent *nation*) should now move in with the Germans. The English responded by saying that actually *eight* kingdoms make up the English nation (including four in Ireland), and that whereas the Gallic nation speaks in the main just one language, England or Britain (there is some slippage between terms here) is more authentically a nation *because* it includes one tongue understood by all (English), plus four others not understood by the rest (Welsh, Irish, Gascon, and Cornish). Some of the arguments adduced at Constance in favor of a particular group are implausible, and some fantastical, but the *process* of argumentation itself was of landmark importance in excogitating European understandings of nationhood. And some arguments are worth reviving: the suggestion just made, for example, that it is the speaking of a multiplicity of languages, and not just one, that is the surest sign of secure nationhood. Gábor Klaniczay, of the Central European University, Budapest, turns pointedly to St Stephen, founder of the Hungarian Christian state: "a country with a *single* language and a *single* custom," he has said, "is weak and vulnerable." Sanction for multi-lingualism is thus found to be of impeccable pedigree in Hungarian tradition, and thus constitutive of national identity. Given the current political situation in Hungary, and the assault on the CEU, such medievalist work is becoming ever more relevant.

Meier As you write in the Preface, the time from 1348 to 1414 may be read as regeneration – and this is the very word which served as the first title of your project. Is this understanding highly influenced by Boccaccio's *Decameron*, that stages a counter-program, a kind of recovery from the moral and physical devastations caused by the bubonic plague?

Wallace Yes: Boccaccio's *Decameron* is the most heroic and deliberate attempt to regenerate human society, and literary culture, after the pandemic. But there were others—by authors such as Machaut, by Arabic poets in Iberia and Al-Andalus, for example.

Meier Why did you change the title? Is the new title *Europe: A Literary History* due to the fact that the idea of Regeneration only matches with a few of the elected locales?

Wallace I changed the title on realizing that *Europe* is our true object of study. Pondering the geography and distinctive cultures of our north-west Eurasian space has become increasingly urgent for all of us, of course. I also came to think that the title *Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418* could open space for successor volumes, and indeed this is now happening: Warren Boutcher of Queen Mary, London, is now developing *Europe: A Literary History, 1559–1648*. Other volumes could be envisioned, although each new editor will have to think things out from first principles: the itinerary organization adopted for *1348–1418* may not suit all periods.

Also: a farmer who came to my presentation at Pennryn, Cornwall, in 2011 said that "Regeneration" made him think of a farming manual.

Meier If I understood it right, from the start you put the emphasis on the important role, the "key functions" as you call it, that writing cultures played in this recovery. First of all: how do you define writing cultures? And how do you define the difference between the term "writing cultures" and "literary culture" which ends up being the subtitle?

Wallace yes: I wanted to emphasize what, specifically, literary cultures can do, and how they work. The volumes thus make implicit claims for the continuing importance of philology, and in this specific sense they honor the tradition of Auerbach, Spitzer, Curtius. I felt this conviction anew when teaching, along with my Penn Slavicist colleague Julia Verkholtantsev, at the Central European University in Budapest in 2015. CEU is brilliant in its historical grounding, we thought; let's try to show what *philology* can bring to the party.

I define "writing culture" very broadly; I think we all do, following theoretical insights of the last generation. The distinction between "writing" and "literary" cultures is never hard and fast. Perhaps one might say that writing becomes literary when it catches itself peering into the pool of its own particular style and effects... Perhaps one might observe, for example, "literature" breaking out at certain moments of Henrike Lahnemann's fine chapter (36) on Lübeck. This is confined almost entirely to a city chronicle, from which one might expect a pragmatic, instrumental style of writing. But at certain moments, the chronicler catches a certain inspiration and adopts a style that might best be described as "literary."

Meier And second: why do you think writing cultures are so important? Is this understanding inspired by Boccaccio's *Decameron*? Though, in the *Decameron* the stress is rather on storytelling. Do you think that it is this very period (the second half of the 14th century) in which writing cultures started to develop key functions? Taking into account that in many countries the literacy was limited to the happy aristocratic few, this sounds like a challenging statement. In addition: I'm wondering if this celebration of writing cultures as an instrument to regenerate a deeply devastated world may also be taken as a reaction to our current sense of the waning importance of writing cultures?

Wallace I have to be careful here. The second half of the fourteenth century is an especially important period for the emergence of the English language as both medium of debate (in parliament) and literary language; this period may be taken as one of the three greatest, most innovate epochs in English literary history (along with, say, c. 1580-1610 and c. 1790-1820). But English, by continental European standards, is retarded: vernacular literary traditions are flourishing by the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, and in certain places (Iceland, Ireland) much earlier than that. And the "key functions" that Middle English might aspire to assume had in any event been performed by Old English centuries before. So no, I would not propose to generalize across Europe here.

Writing cultures continue to matter, even as they become ever more intricately involved with digital, video, and other technologies and less exclusively associated with the paper page.

Meier And, furthermore, after having concluded the two volumes do you still think that writing cultures (hundred of years before the invention of the printing press) did play such a determining role all over the places? Do you think that the historical window you go for is the beginning of an evolution or something specific to the second half of the 14th century? And is this true for all or most of the locales the project deals with?

Wallace It is impossible to generalize here. In some locales (Ireland, Iceland, Wales) it is the

collection of literary materials generated centuries earlier that represents the most significant development in our period. In others (Iberia) it is the mixing of discrete literary cultures (Arabic, Castilian, Hebrew). The development of the ascetic practices of *hesychasm* in our period has profound consequences for literary culture between Mount Athos and Muscovy (section VIII), and for Thessalonica and Constantinople. But how far west were such local resonances felt?

Meier Why did you want to focus on writing cultures exclusively? The only exception you make is for music and this is probably caused by the practice of French poets. Why did you exclude the visual arts? The masters who lived and worked in very different locales seem much more appropriate to demonstrate your concept of a Europe traversed by itineraries.

Wallace An itineraries-based history of the visual arts would be an excellent project, especially well suited to digital presentation. Indeed, excellent work along these lines has already been done: tracing, for example, the movement of a painter from one remote church in Cyprus to the next. But I do believe that *writing* plays especially important roles in the socially regenerative processes that follow the European pandemic of 1348-50. And that too broad an approach might come to resemble travelogue, rather than literary history.

Meier The title "Europe" conveys a commitment to European history, culture, and, what is more, to the idea of a European Identity which we in Europe seem to have lost. Did you happen to want to write a kind of guide or cultural blueprint to the fragile and heavily contested European Union? And if I may reword one of your sentences (page xl: "Europe (...) has fallen out of love with itself": do you want to teach us Europeans how to love our history and the unity in our manifold cultures? In other, more polemical words: Does this project enhance in an academic way what the leaving American president told us on his last official trip to Europe?

Wallace Europe has fallen out of love with itself, but this has happened before. Stefan Zweig, on witnessing the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire that, for him, was synonymous with civilization, penned *Die Welt von Gestern* and then, immediately afterwards, committed suicide while in Brazilian exile. This was on 22 February 1942, when Nazism seemed unstoppable; had he waited just a few months he, and his poor wife, might have lived and indeed then taken part in the post-war work of European regeneration. Personally, I see Brexit and the Trump "victory" as a double catastrophe—but there are already signs that twenty-seven members of the EU are already turning to the business of *being European*. So although it is now difficult to recapture the sunny optimism in which the General Introduction to our *Europe* was written in 2014, my despair is not terminal.

Meier The concept of Europe the two volumes promote is strongly opposed to the compartmentalization in which the history of literature in Europe has fallen apart. Your commitment to Europe therefore comes along with a strong desire to overcome the limitations that in the course of the Nineteenth Century the rising Nationalisms installed and which still affect our conception of literature and philology. However, the articles in the volumes are mostly written by representatives of a national philology. Is this a contradiction? Or is it simply due to the current state of art which should be overcome?

Wallace the latter. But many of our contributors already float beyond confines of "national philology." Consider the chapter by Karla Mallette on Palermo, for example, that leads off volume 2 and itinerary VI ("Palermo to Tunis"). State-sponsored philologists of the Mussolini era tried to suggest that a single axis of "Italian" culture extended from Lombardy in the north through Rome and to Naples in the south and on to Sicily and Malta. But in our scheme, Palermo (then part of the Crown of Aragon) initiates a sequence of locales that leads to Mallorca (also Crown of Aragon), through Iberia, along the Maghreb and al-Andalus, and ends in Tunis. The iconic image chosen by Karla for her chapter (each chapter has an accompanying image) is of the Arabo-Norman church of

San Giovanni degli Eremiti, Palermo. Arabic literary traditions flourished in Palermo until pushed aside by Sicilian poets in the thirteenth century; but the pioneering lyrics of these later poets survive chiefly as recorded by manuscripts of Tuscan provenance ... Sicilians in Sicily in our period contented themselves with translating Latin texts into local dialect, producing a fascinating literary micro-climate (namely, texts that nobody but themselves would care about, or trouble to read).

But yes, I take your wider point: scholars still seem bound by a sense of professional propriety that keeps them within the "straight and narrow" of disciplinary divisions that (again) were established in the nineteenth century. I long ago noticed while reading *Medieval Dutch Literature in Its European Context*, ed. Erik Kooper (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), for example, that contributors who spoke many languages tended to stick to just one in their analyses: the colleague in Dutch would not want to offend the colleague in French by straying onto their professional territory....

That said, innovative recent work is thinking beyond inherited "national" bounds. See for example Simon Gaunt's "French Literature Abroad: Towards an Alternative History of French Literature," published in the free online journal, *Interfaces*, dedicated to such issues (and that publishes in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish).³

Meier The political concept of Europe the two volumes promote is very challenging too. In my eyes, they stage a Europe which has for a long time struggled to engage with its—geographically non-existent or, more precisely, all too permeable—frontiers in the East. Whereas European citizens grow more and more concerned about the European Union's agenda to expand towards the East, the two volumes seem to make a strong case for a Europe which extends from the Atlantic to the Urals, if I may use this problematic German term. I draw this from the delight you take in the many countries from the North-African coast to Armenia and Russia that take part in the European-Song-Contest. Is this book on literary history between 1348 and 1418 also driven by a highly sophisticated agenda, both political and cultural, to make Europe aware of its vast and permeable geography?

Wallace "Europe" is indeed a complex, permeable, and uncertain term; in ancient Greece it indicated more of a *direction* than a specific, locatable territory. Europe is not a continent: as previously suggested, north-western Eurasia might be a more appropriate term. So yes, the folly and contradictoriness of the European-Song-Contest speaks or sings to this muddled (but creative) state of affairs quite eloquently.

Meier In the General Introduction you mention Ernst Robert Curtius' book on *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* from 1948, saying that it is "an attempt to rally European culture around tropes and *figurae* of western Christian *Latinitas*". (XXXV) If I understood it right, from your point of view Curtius' focus on the Latin heritage on which the countries of Western Europe heavily drew in the Middle Ages is too small, if not biased. While it served him to transcend the heavy nationalistic current in the Third Reich, it is not pertinent to give an appropriate idea of what Europe really is about. May I say so?

Wallace Curtius came to be associated (in his later work) with a cultural conservatism that departed from the emphases of his earlier writing. His "attempt to rally European culture around tropes and *figurae* of western Christian *Latinitas*" gained considerable traction in England and North America, especially because it aligned with the poetics and social views of T.S. Eliot. But it presents a highly selective presentation of what transpired on medieval European territory, paying scant attention to transnational languages other than Latin: Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Armenian ... It is for this reason that I propose Ossip Mandelstam as a supplementary, or alternative, muse of literary Europeanism.

Meier In my eyes, Curtius is much more in harmony with the need that the ancient Greeks felt to understand themselves as European and to assume the rather vague geographic term as a token of

their cultural identity. From their point of view the definition of Europe is mostly based on what Europe is not, that is, in order to understand their own exceptional position at the margins of the huge Persian Empire they established a rigid distinction. And this, I would say, is and should remain an inheritance or a typical feature of European self-understanding. In your approach, however, the idea of Europe is rather based on exchange and on inclusion or permeability. How would you connect these two concepts? Do you think that the two concepts alternate along the historical epochs?

Wallace yes, the impulse to define Europeanism through definition of what Europe is not has long pedigree, leading back to Greek denotations of *barbari*. But such defining is costly, often incubating hostility to those defined as *barbari* and yet living *in our midst*. Such defining has taken an especially negative turn in eastern Europe of late, connected with issues of migration– as helpfully discussed by the Bulgarian commentator Ivan Krastev in his *After Europe* (2017). But one of the saving graces of *Europe: A Literary History* is its embrace of geography, what I sometimes call "dumb geography": before imposing any argument about the cultural character or heritage of any particular piece of territory, let us simply ask who *actually* is living there (e.g. southern Spain, c. 1348), or moving in and out.

Of course, I readily accept that "geography," denoting practiced, trafficked, and cultivated space, is never really "dumb."

Meier When I followed up the itineraries in your book, I wondered if in the decades from 1348 to 1418 the idea of Europe starts to shift from the Ferdinand Braudel's concept of the Mediterranean basin to a Europe whose main political and cultural players would slowly move to countries north of the Alps. Do you think that the second half of the fourteenth century is a specific moment in this development? And should Europe today keep track of this heritage?

Wallace in the final chapter of *Europe* I show how "national" powers effectively begin crucial realignment at the Council of Constance (1414–18). This Council was convened to heal the papal schism that, since 1378, had set followers of the pope of Rome against followers of the pope of Avignon. But at Constance itself new realignment emerged: England, Germanic territories and the Emperor against French, Italians, and southern Europeans. So yes, it is possible to discern here a realignment that will run through the Reformation and on to the perceived north-south divide of modern times.

Meier As you may imagine, I'm asking this question because today the gap between the northern and the southern part of the Mediterranean Sea seem to be doomed to deepen and widen. So—do you think that Europe should keep track of this once blossoming Mediterranean space?

Wallace Yes, although the medieval sense of the Mediterranean as a shared space, a space in which individual fortunes might (magically) be repaired (as in *Decameron* 5.2) is receding from us. This is forcibly brought out by Isaac Julien's five-screen projection *Western Union: Small Boats*, currently playing as part of the Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy, London.⁴

Julien juxtaposes opulent Sicilian scenes and rich interiors associated with Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Il Gattopardo* (1958; Visconti's film version 1963) and the desperate plight of refugees floundering in the Mediterranean. Much of the film, made in 2007 but still acutely topical, was shot on the island of Lampedusa, close to Sicily. Images from Lampedusa by Isaac Julien feature as part of the Diaspora Pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale (13 May–26 November 2017).

Meier I know that it is very fashionable to evoke the huge impact which Arabic and Islamic culture had on Europe in the Middle Ages. However, in the course of the very period you tackle this impact,

I'd say, is already waning and will literally be removed by the incoming original Greek texts. Why, then, does it matter so much to follow the way up to Damascus? What does link these different cultures and countries? And what is so "European" about them?

Wallace The English monk-historian William of Malmesbury (c. 1090–c. 1142) tells of a young monk running off to Spain to learn astrology and other arts from the Saracens. Having obtained a secret Saracen book full of arcane knowledge, he enjoys a brilliant career as necromancer and, finally, pope (Sylvester II, 999–1003) before death and damnation. So yes, in the twelfth century the allure of Arab learning is at fever pitch; by 1400 Muslims have lost territory in Iberia, but the mysterious promise remains. The works of Chaucer, for example, are peppered with technical, mathematical, astrological, and alchemical terminology derived from Arabic sources. The *promise* of direct access to Greek is spread only at the very end of our period and, although arousing evident excitement, cannot yet be realized. Manuel Chrysoloras, having taught Greek to many leading Italian humanists, travelled to the Council of Constance, but died en route. So the moment of direct access to Greek was *not quite yet*; the reputation of Arabic learning remained high. In "The Triumph of Thomas Aquinas" painted by , for example, we find Averroes (Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn 'Aḥmad Ibn Rushd, 1126–1198) sitting at the feet of the Catholic saint, as if to say: *can't fit me in, can't leave me out*.

And why include locales such as Damascus? Two of the greatest literary men of our period, and two of its greatest travellers, made their way here along the Maghreb from the western Mediterranean and then north along the region known as the Levant. Ibn Baṭūṭah travels through Jerusalem to Damascus, and on to Mecca. Ibn Khaldūn, born in Tunis from an Andalusian family of Arab descent, was one of the great intellectuals of the age: the father, we might provocatively say, of European sociology. His genius was acknowledged at, or just outside, Damascus by Timur (Tamerlane), Mongol conqueror, during weeks of intensive intellectual debate. The work of Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-Jazarī, who was educated at Cairo and Damascus and died in Shiraz (Iran), found its way to a translator in Aragon. Christian pilgrims arriving in Jerusalem were sometimes inspired to continue their journey south along the Mediterranean to Cairo—thereby, they thought, following the path of the Holy Family. Mamluks ruled the sites of the Holy Land, ruled Damascus, and ruled Cairo: without some knowledge of their crucial literature-producing centers the experiences of westerners pushing east, if we are to adopt such a circumscribed view of "European" experience, cannot be made intelligible.

Meier There have been a lot of attempts to write a different type of literary history. I'd like to remind of Hans Robert Jauss who proposed a new form based on the perception of the actual reader. After World War II he was eager to get rid of what he called a literary history in which (quoting Rilke's "und dann und wann ein weißer Elefant") time and again a great author comes by. Later on, New Historicism promoted another way of engaging with literary history by bringing into play the historical contexts which left a mark on the making of literature. In *Europe: A Literary History* you plead for taking seriously the *spatial turn* by applying it to literary history. Apart from the specific interest you take in the period 1348/1418, do you think that this enterprise should work as a kind of midwife to deliver a new way of writing literary history?

Wallace I studied for a while with Jauss at Berkeley early in 1983, when his stock was high. I don't think that his efforts to suggest an *Erwartungshorizont* against which a great writer might break the horizon, define herself, have proved very fruitful; perhaps, like Franco Moretti, he would have had better luck in an age where it is easier to load and compute big data. New Historicism, as classically practised by scholars in Renaissance, was often not historical at all, but rather applied techniques from anthropology: thick description of one particular historical moment, then a quick switch to one sympathetic moment in a literary text. The pity of this was that although leading New Historicists could situate their work within a longer flow of historical time, a *longue durée*, their acolytes could not.

I do think that an appeal to *geography* (*dumb or otherwise: bloß Geographie?*) holds promise, for reasons adumbrated above. *Pick a place*, one might say, *any place*. But then, to make sense of that place, and all that gets written within, one will need to understand the places with which it connects, and the before and after.

Meier In his essay on "Weltliteratur der Philologie" Erich Auerbach forecasts the end of Goethe's notion of *Weltliteratur*—i.e. a fascinating interplay between different cultures—and the rise of a one-sided literature that will probably be written in one language. May your literary history of medieval Europe be considered as an attempt to counterbalance both the collateral effects of globalization and an inappropriate use of medieval history for nationalistic targets?

Wallace that is an astonishing essay, and if I have suggested (above) that we need to emphasize what *philology* can offer in common intellectual endeavors, then Auerbach's envisioning of what philology did achieve when allied with Goethean understanding of *Weltliteratur* is dazzling indeed. "Philology, in this role," say the essay's translators, by way of preface,

dominated all the historical disciplines because, unlike philosophy, which deals with eternal truths, philology treats contingent, historical truths at their basic level: it conceives of man dialectically, not statically.

The translators here of this 1952 essay are Maire and Edward Said (1969), and one sees here and elsewhere the importance of Auerbach, and his mediation of Goethe, for what Edward Said will later think through. "*Weltliteratur*," say the Suids, "is therefore a visionary concept, for it transcends national literatures without, at the same time, destroying their individualities" (1). That said, the tone of Auerbach's essay is elegiac as he foresees (in 1952) the attenuation of cultural multifariousness: "Standardization, in short, dominates everywhere" (2; 301) To which one might want to say, in 2017, *you have no idea*.

But yes, our provision of an interconnected, itinerant vision of Europe in *Europe* should help subject political claims for *national uniqueness*, grounded in medieval traditions, to broader scrutiny. Our 60,000 word index can help answer questions such as *who owned Alexander the Great?* Or laid claim to such lineage during medieval centuries.

One effect of Brexit, incidentally, will be to test the generous attitude taken by continental European scholars to English as *de facto* global *lingua franca*. But will this attitude persist, now that Brits must drop away from collaborative EU ventures? Is it not the case that PIs of EU research projects cannot be appointed from outside Europe? Can it be that Germans who formerly wrote in English (to appeal to a global audience) are now being encouraged to write in German?

Meier It goes without saying that the focus you put on writing cultures comes along with a valorization of philology. I certainly do agree with you, but do you really think that this appreciation will stand against the current denigration of our discipline? My department that still keeps the denomination: Seminar für Romanische Philologie, has been told that the term Philologie is not "cool" any more and would repel students.

Wallace Yes, *philology* has similarly been declared uncool in the USA. The American Philological Association, founded in 1869, quite recently rebranded itself as The Society for Classical Studies. Which is a pity: perhaps the beginning of wisdom could begin with the question *what is philology?* Clearly what *Philologie* now betokens has fallen a long way from what it (still) meant to Auerbach, Curtius, Spitzer, and that great post-war generation. Part of its fall, of course, has to do with the rise

of Linguistics as a discipline; institutional linguists, as hard scientists, tend to view philology as the softest of soft disciplinary activity.

Meier A more practical question: These two volumes are outstanding because they realize a gigantic networking. How did you work it out and how did you pick the contributors? And how did you guide their drafting the articles to make them match the overall intent of the project? For instance, those who write about Mediterranean Armenia or Damascus seem to feel at odds with the given span of time.

Wallace A project such as this could not have been conceived and expedited before the coming of the web, of e-mail, and of e-mail attachments. It is now possible to surf the web and blitz the world with queries in ways inconceivable to previous generations.

One weak point of Auerbach's essay (perhaps reflecting his geographical and social isolation) is that he cannot entertain the possibility of collaborative work. "The organized work of a group," he says, "is no answer, even if a group has high uses otherwise. The historical synthesis of which I am speaking ... is a product of personal intuition [den Instinkt des persönlichen Interesses] and hence can only be expected of an individual" (11; 307). Elsewhere (see above), Auerbach speaks of philology conceiving "of man dialectically, not statically," so it is strange that he should think of the work of philological synthesis proceeding in splendid (artistic) isolation. In our case I was indeed privileged to formulate the first shape of an itinerary, or of a chapter—but things would change before audiences, or when shared with a group of contributors. I wrote short accounts of what I thought each chapter *might* come out like, but these often varied remarkably from what was handed in. I wrote introductions to each of the nine sections, or itineraries, based (as I thought) on a synthetic understanding of what individual contributors had given me. But these were often subjected to critique by the expert, local contributors and again rewritten. The introduction to "From Mount Athos to Muscovy" was collectively taken apart and rewritten by our expert Slavists. I feel like the man who, on accepting an award for making one broom last for ten years, says "yes, and I only replaced the head of the broom twice and the handle five times."

So while we will never approach the individual expertise of that great, war-straddling generation of philologists, we now have the means to pool expertise and achieve things (dare one say it) beyond their imagining.

Meier Do you think that all the single contributions mirror the idea of a spatial literary history? Or is it more thanks to the overall frame of different itineraries that the idea is conveyed to the reader? Did you write an introduction to each itinerary because you wanted to make sure that the reader does not lose track of what connects these places?

Wallace Most contributors, I think, did willingly experiment with "spatial literary history," as you call it. The "Leicester" chapter by Helen Barr cried out for a street map, but many other places could have been given one. Some locales, of course, are messier than others—especially in Iberia, where (after much experiment) we resorted to "Castile" and "Crown of Aragon." In certain locales, as in Iberia, literary production cannot be told as the tale of one city; in others, such as Jerusalem or Damascus, the writing takes on city-inflected distinctiveness (while yet forming part of a greater Mamluk region).

Meier Which sort of reader do you have in mind: only an academic audience? How are these volumes to be read? Should we pick single articles? Or take a whole section, an itinerary? Or should we follow the cross-references or the index and thereby venture out finding new trajectories through the volumes?

Wallace I sincerely believe that any reader who sets out to read our two volumes from cover to cover is in for a treat, and will emerge with the best possible understanding of European literature, 1348-1418. I am especially pleased how our format serves German-speaking and Hebrew-speaking locales (which do not "territorialize" in a simple, nineteenth-century sense).

That said, readers can also make back entry into the volumes ... via the copious Index, which took the best part of a year to conceptualize and complete. Entire dissertations or conference papers (I have written several of the latter) may be planned by tracing single Index entries out through the pages of our volumes: try *translation (of relics and saints)* and *translation (of texts)*, for example, with its fifty-plus sub-entries.

Meier If you had the chance to redo the volume, what would you change?

Wallace As Premier Zhou Enlai said, in a different context, it is too soon to say.

Meier Is there anything—I guess a lot—that you would like to add?

Wallace thanks so much for your attentive reading, and for these wonderful questions! Oxford UP will likely paperback *Europe* one year from now, and the thinking that you have provoked me into here will help in writing the revised Preface.

If anyone would like to engage in points of conversation, or to suggest possible revisions, please write to me at dwallace@english.upenn.edu

And let's close with two more extracts from the 1952 Auerbach essay that you referenced, as translated by Maire and Edward Said. The first is a rallying cry and word of encouragement in difficult times:

We are already threatened with the impoverishment that results from an ahistorical system of education [geschichtslosen Bildung]; not only does that threat exist, but it also lays claim to dominating us. Whatever we are, we became in history, and only in history can we remain the way we are and develop therefrom [bleiben und entfalten]: it is the task of the philologist, whose province is the world of human history [die Aufgabe der Weltphilologen unserer Zeit], to demonstrate this so that it penetrates our lives unforgettably.

The second begins the last paragraph:

Jedenfalls aber ist unsere philologische Heimat die Erde; die Nation kann es nicht mehr sein.

In any event, our philological home is the earth: it can no longer be the nation.

While also inspiring, this points up the greater urgency of our current earth-wide or planetary dilemma. The situation is succinctly expressed by an addition to a French street sign, snapped in Paris on 18 June 2017, the day of the French parliamentary elections:

Aujourd'hui, il ne suffit plus de transformer le monde. Avant tout, il faut le préserver.

Auerbach, Erich. "Philologie der Weltliteratur." In Erich Auerbach, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Romanischen Philologie*, 301-10. Bern: Francke Verlag, 1967.

———. "Philology and *Weltliteratur*." Translated by Maire and Edward Said. *The Centennial Review* 13, no.1 (Winter 1969): 1-17.

1. <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~dwallace/europe/index.html>.↵
2. For an early prototype of the project, with discussion, see "Problematics of European Literary History, 1348—1400," in *The Construction of Textual Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. Indira Ghose and Denis Renevey, SPELL: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 22 (Tübingen: Narr, 2009), 129-55.↵
3. <http://riviste.unimi.it/interfaces/article/view/4938/5056>.↵
4. <http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/summer-exhibition-2017>.↵

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