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THEME

CLASSICS AND CANONICITY

Contents

Editorial Note

Published in December 2021, the previous issue of the *Journal of Latin Cosmopolitanism and European Literatures* was dedicated to the far-reaching influence of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) in creating a classical norm to study and value art in Western Europe. The papers collected in that issue reflected on the various ways in which Winckelmann's classicizing tendency has affected the interpretation of art over the centuries, with a special focus on those works that have been considered not to meet aesthetic categories developed by the German art critic.

The present issue (Spring 2022) turns to Winckelmann's influence in the field of literary studies, where the existence of a normative standard has led to equally selective interpretations of literary works, styles and genres that, although often appreciated within their time or context of origin, were said by later critics not to meet the standards of the new classical norm. Each of the articles critically questions the concept of literary normativity and thus indicates the prejudices and biases which authors, texts and even whole periods have faced up until the present day.

In the first article of this seventh issue, Irene Zwiep reconstructs the canonization process of Jewish literature in nineteenth-century Germany. She demonstrates that Jewish philologists conceived their undertaking to include Jewish texts in the European literary canon in relation to well-established critics, including Goethe, and their ideas about a literary norm. Zwiep provides an intriguing case study of the way in which dominant aesthetics could affect the valorisation of an entire literary tradition.

Taking his cue from the forthcoming publication of the *Cambridge History of Later Latin Literature*, Mark Vessey reconsiders in the second contribution of this issue the hermeneutical approaches used in the field of late antique Latin studies from the nineteenth century onwards. He inquires to what extent the powerful model of the *western classic*, developed in an early-twentieth-century Anglophone context, has impeded the inclusion of later Latin within literary studies. When observing that the western classic has lost most of its relevance, he makes a case for new research open to insights from global literary studies.

The third and last article of the current issue, written by Piet Gerbrandy, studies the influence of literary normativity on one specific and highly influential text, Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae*. By connecting Winckelmann's ideal of "edle Einfalt und stille Grösse" to the Aristotelian norm of coherent narrative structures, Gerbrandy observes that the scholarly appreciation of Boethius has over the centuries been guided, if not prejudiced, by a norm that he argues to have been irrelevant to the former's literary project. Gerbrandy seeks a better understanding of the inconclusiveness of the work's ending through a critical comparison with modernist poetics.

Danuta Shanzer closes this seventh issue with a thought-provoking response piece titled "Ins and Outs and Opened and Closed." She considers the ambiguous role global literary studies might play in the study of the classical tradition. She points out that, while literary globalism can have negative results for academia with as doomsday scenario "virtual tombstones for discontinued fields and chairs," comparative and global approaches can also lead to new insights formerly impeded by dominant critics such as Winckelmann.

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CURRENT CONTRIBUTION

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NOTE

This contribution is part of a larger dialogue of three articles and one responding piece that form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are "A Critical Juncture: 'Later' Latin Literature, the Newest Late Antiquity, and the Period of the Western Classic" by Mark Vessey (pp. 22–42) and "The Ordeal of a Sixth-Century Josef K: Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* as a Modernist Drama" by Piet Gerbrandy (pp. 44–64). The response piece is "Ins and Outs and Opened and Closed" by Danuta Shanzer (pp. 66–77).

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Writing in a World of Strangers: The Invention of Jewish Literature Revisited

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ABSTRACT

The Jewish struggle for admission into the European canon puts a spotlight on precisely those tensions within cosmopolitan literature that are debated in contemporary scholarship: the continuum between unity and multiplicity, the nature of intersectionality and the (im)possibility of cosmopolitan aesthetics, always against the background of persistent foundational notions (this is typically German/Jewish/...) and the dialectic of inclusion and exclusion that these notions trigger. This article demonstrates how in the shadow of Goethe's Weltliteratur the nineteenth-century Jewish philologists developed a parallel programme with, hardly surprising, "eine schöne Rolle" for Jewish literature. In this paper, I would like to briefly introduce that programme, specify the role played by Jewish literature, and draw out some lessons for the current attempt at creating an inclusive, egalitarian canon.

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1 Introduction: what the world needs now

In the global village, the stranger is a logical impossibility. Or should be, to say the least. But how to make our hyper-connected, post-diasporic planet an open, hospitable place? As I write, academia is putting its best foot forward to become a more welcoming environment. In an era of fading postcolonial binaries and renewed centripetal aspirations, scholars across the globe are advocating a new togetherness. Close to my own field, they do so by proposing to create "a more inclusive intellectual history that respects the diversity of intellectual traditions and broadens the parameters of thought beyond the narrow limits defined by the

traditions institutionalized in the Western or Eurocentric academy."[1] More inclusive, respectful, prepared to broaden old parameters—judging by its choice of words, the new intellectual history still seems comfortably self-assured and none too radical.

This exemplary global ambition, voiced in 2013 by Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, took me back to an old Hal David-Burt Bacharach song, written in the early 1960s against a décor of racial prejudice, Cold War rhetoric and carnage in Vietnam. "What the world needs now," the refrain went, "is love, sweet love, no not just for some, but for everyone."[2] Trust academia to take a simple flower-power truth and cast it into a convoluted sentence. A sentence, as the Moyn-Sartori quotation shows, that has as much trouble transcending its European origins as it has capturing global thought, a sense of a world untouched by capitalist vice and national benchmarks. Scholars who study global literature therefore tend to differ as to which term (transnational, transimperial, transcultural, cosmopolitan, planetary—anything but 'comparative') to use to denote their object.[3] They do, however, seem to agree on one thing: the need to loosen "the epistemic stranglehold of national historiographies"[4] and to highlight the permeability and dialogicity of cultures and literatures. In their work, global common ground takes precedence over the diasporic, the nomadic and the displaced. So far the universal, the autonomous essence of humankind as postulated by enlightened reason, has failed to make a comeback. Nevertheless, virtually all scholarship on 'world literature' is haunted by the Ghost of Universalism past: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose concept of *Weltliteratur*, though shaped by the geographies and temporalities of nineteenth-century Europe, serves as a premonition of current ecumenical aspirations.[5]

From enlightened universalism to global cosmopolitanism, the wish to combine the unity and multiplicity of the world into a single, productive system has been a constant in human thought. Building a system that does justice to correspondences as well as differences likewise has proven a persistent challenge. For good reasons, scholars have critiqued Enlightenment universalism, pointing at its male elite bias and fatal liaison with colonial imperialism.[6] Others have exposed the implicit Europeanness of our definitions and categories, the product of centuries of white privilege.[7] But how to overcome this hereditary asymmetry

[1]   Moyn and Sartori, "Approaches to Global Intellectual History," 7. I am indebted to Lucia Admiraal for the reference.

[2]   For an iconic interpretation by Dionne Warwick, see "What the World Needs Now" (1966), accessed February 10, 2022, `https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfHAs9cdTqg`.

[3]   For a careful positioning of the label 'transnational', see Wiegandt, "The Concept of the Transnational in Literary Studies," 1–20. For an introduction to transcultural studies as a corrective of post-colonial dichotomies, see Danigno, "Transcultural Literature and Contemporary World Literature(s)." On cosmopolitan literature as a dynamic, interacting multiverse, see Verbaal, "Reconstructing Literature."

[4]   Wiegandt, "The Concept of the Transnational," 9.

[5]   See Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* and the essays, from Goethe, via Tagore, Borges, and Mufti, to Zhang Longxi, collected in Damrosch, *World Literature in Theory*.

[6]   Famous milestones are Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* and Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*. See also Carey and Trakulhun, "Universalism, Diversity and the Postcolonial Enlightenment."

[7]   E.g. Verbaal, "Reconstructing Literature," 6, and the literature listed in n. 16–21.

and develop an objective system that accommodates both oneness and inequality?[8] The ease with which Goethe proposed that his own nation should play a positive role ("eine schöne Rolle") in the process, has become controversial to say the least.[9] By contrast, for our generation the central question is how to square the global circle *without* introducing new hegemonies and other simplifications.

More often than not that question is posed, and answered, from a privileged position. The (commendable) aim invariably is to replace Europe as the axis of the world, dismiss the nation state as the horizon of cultural belonging, and cancel the Western classic as the ultimate benchmark of literary quality. In an attempt to avoid this shared teleology, this article will start from the opposite end, in terms of both time, place, and perspective, and will follow an inverse route. Instead of mapping twenty-first-century planetary poetics, it will revisit the invention, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, of a small literary subspecies, *in casu* Jewish literature, against the backdrop of German cultural nationalism. Or, better phrased perhaps, as part of the 'cultivation of culture' that evolved within the European nation states-in-the-making.[10]

By looking at the historical construction of a single minority literature, this exploration may strike some readers as a methodological retreat, a journey into the heart of darkness. Paradoxically, however, it seems to me that the Jewish struggle for admission into the European canon puts a spotlight on precisely those tensions within cosmopolitan literature that are debated in scholarship today: (a) the continuum between unity and multiplicity, (b) the nature of intersectionality and (c) the (im)possibility of cosmopolitan aesthetics, always against the background of persistent foundational notions and the dialectic of inclusion and exclusion that these notions trigger.[11] To put these topics into historical perspective, we will trace (a) how the Jewish scholars defined the "Whole of General Literature" and explained its synthetic nature; (b) how they balanced the pros and cons of their diasporic minority status; and (c) how they formulated a multinational rather than transnational aesthetic that bypassed both monistic and pluralistic models. As we shall see, working in the shadow of Goethe's *Weltliteratur* the Jewish philologists developed a parallel programme with, hardly surprising, *eine schöne Rolle* for Jewish literature. In the remainder of this paper, I would like to briefly introduce that programme, specify the role played by Jewish literature, and draw out some lessons for the current attempt at creating an inclusive, egalitarian canon. What the world needs now...

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[8] Compare Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," 54–68, 55–56.

[9] "The German is capable and even ought to do most in this respect." Quoted from Verbaal, "Reconstructing Literature," 6, n. 8.

[10] For the differentiation, see Leerssen, "Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture."

[11] For an incisive reflection on foundational notions and how they interfere with academic research, see Corwin Berman, "Jewish History beyond the Jewish People."

2 After rabbinic obscurity: Zunz on Jewish literature

"What is Europe? It is the Bible and the Greeks."[12] This bold metonym was penned down by Emmanuel Levinas in 1988 but would have been equally at home in nineteenth-century German thought. The simple identification of European selfhood with these two sources of Western civilization of course raises numerous questions. Here I merely wish to highlight how it underscores the supposed irrelevance of a *post*-biblical Jewish cultural presence on a supposedly Christian continent.[13] In Christian Europe, Jews and Judaism had been defined in terms of religion, not ethnicity, habitus, or civilization. But even as a (superseded) religion Judaism was having a hard time in nineteenth-century Germany. Its collective legalism was framed as the antithesis of personal religiosity (*Glauben* and *Innerlichkeit*), its covenantal tribalism as incompatible with the principles of *Humanität*. And whereas Protestant theologians could muster a certain regard for the pristine *Hebraismus* of the biblical prophets, they had no sympathy whatsoever for 'degenerate' post-exilic *Judenthum*.[14] To mark the transfer of power from Judaism to Christianity, they suggestively placed a declining *Spätjudentum* alongside a vital and spirited *Frühchristentum*.[15] All subsequent manifestations of Jewish life and lore were lumped together under the label *Rabbinismus*, "a failed attempt at restoring [Old Testament] Hebraism" according to theologian Wilhelm de Wette,[16] a wretched state of backward praxis and mentality in the eyes of the broader public. With the lens thus pointed at Judaism's spiritual and civic defects, serious doubt was cast on the Jews' potential for integration into the social fabric of modern Europe. The Enlightenment project of *bürgerliche Verbesserung*, of political emancipation and economic stakeholdership, seemed to have met its nemesis in 'obstinate Rabbinism'.[17]

The answer to this stalemate was formulated neither by the rabbinate, nor by the lay leadership, but by academy-trained Jewish philologists and is known today as the Wissenschaft des Judentums or Science of Judaism. It originated in Berlin in the late 1810s, on the fringes of the newly established Humboldt university. Aimed at political emancipation, framed as a riposte to Christian theological polemics and modelled on contemporary *Altphilologie*, it advocated the study, by

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[12] Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations*, 133.
[13] Compare Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, 3–4: "Dennoch dürfen wir uns nicht verhehlen, dass auf dieser Literatur ein Missgeschick zu ruhen scheint. Man kennt sie wenig, man achtet sie nicht den übrigen gleich, ist ihr abhold, schliesst sie aus als eine überflüssige, unberechtigte." ("Nevertheless, we must not hide from ourselves that there seems to be a misfortune resting on this literature. One knows little of her, one does not think she is equal to the others, is averse to her, excludes her as superfluous, unjustified.")
[14] This influential distinction was formulated by Wilhelm de Wette (1780–1849) in his *Biblische Dogmatik des Alten und Neuen Testaments*. For a discussion, see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 77–94 (= the chapter on "W.M.L. de Wette: Judaism as Degenerated Hebraism").
[15] For the rise, spread and decline of the term *Spätjudentum*, see Schmid, "The Interpretation of Second Temple Judaism," 141–53.
[16] "[E]ine verunglückte Wiederherstellung des Hebraismus" De Wette, *Biblische Dogmatik*, 116–17.
[17] Gerhardt, "Frühneuzeitliches Judentum und 'Rabbinismus.'" On the highbrow anti-Judaism of German classicism, with little reference to Rabbinism, see Witte, *Moses und Homer. Griechen, Juden, Deutsche*, chapter 2 ("Juno Ludovisi und das Zeremonialgesetz. Der Eintritt des Judentums in die europäische Kultur der Aufklärung und der Anti-Judaismus der deutschen Klassik"), 53–96.

Jews and for Jews, of Judaism-as-culture with the help of historical methods.[18] The addition "by and for Jews" is by no means futile here. Viewed and reconstructed from within, historical Jewish culture was the perfect antidote to the Christian Rabbinism frame. It served to make Jews aware of their own Jewish *Geist*, it helped them recognize themselves as representing the 'Idea of Judaism' and, ultimately, would also compel that fundamental recognition in others. Thus armed with a healthy dose of Hegelian self-consciousness, or so the Wissenschaft believed, the Jewish polity would be well-equipped to enter modern European society.[19]

In its earliest publications Jewish culture, then a conceptual *novum*, was defined as a combination of *Literatur und Bürgerleben*, of cultural history and civic existence, joined in a close reciprocal relationship.[20] With typical nineteenth-century reductionism literature was presented as the key to the understanding of a nation's entire diachronic *Culturgang* and of its synchronic, current state, which was perceived as the result of that historical route.[21] This holistic approach demanded that the new Jewish Wissenschaft, or *jüdische Philologie* as founding father Leopold Zunz (1794–1886) called it, should employ a broad definition of Jewish literature, one that transcended the limited rabbinic corpus.[22] Zunz, however, decided to go one step further and proposed a fundamental revaluation of values. "Ehe der Talmud nicht gestürtzt ist," he wrote to his former teacher Samuel Meyer Ehrenberg, "ist nichts zu machen."[23] Modern Jewish self-consciousness, in other words, required the breakup of the normative rabbinic tradition. And Zunz, in his youthful optimism, was more than ready to grab a hammer and strike the blow: *rabbinische Finsternis* (*rabbinic darkness*) was to be smashed into *jüdische Literatur*.

His first and doubtlessly most famous shot at revolutionizing the Jewish canon was *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*, published in Berlin in 1818. The title was an ironic corrective of Christian as well as Jewish prejudice: Jewish literature, it suggested, was more than backward Rabbinism or rabbinic literature

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[18] The literature on the Wissenschaft des Judentums is vast. For its connection to nineteenth-century historicism, see esp. Schorsch, *From Text to Context* and the essays collected in *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness*.

[19] See further below, 8–11. For the Wissenschaft's obligation to Hegelian philosophy, see Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics in Germany*, chapter 3 ("Locating Themselves in History: Hegel in Key Texts of the Verein"), 90–145. For a helpful discussion of Hegel's conception of *Selbstbewußtsein* as expounded in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes,* chapter 4, see Jenkins, "Self-Consciousness in the Phenomenology."

[20] See e.g., Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*, 4: "Nicht um einen Knäuel zu entwirren, an der geschicktere Finger sich versuchen mögen, sind wir von der Litteratur eines Volkes in seine Existenz abgeschweift. Wir kehren vielmehr, nach dem wir *beider Wechselwirkung aufeinander* mit einem Paar zügen gezeichnet [...]" (italics mine) ("Our goal in digressing from the literature of a people to the existence of the people itself was not to untangle a knot at which more skilful fingers might try their hand. Rather, after having sketched the interaction of the two in a few features, we return [...]")

[21] "Wie die Litteratur einer Nation als den Eingang betrachtet zur Gesammtkenntnis ihres Culturganges durch alle Zeiten hindurch [...] – und wie endlich die Gegenwart, aller dagewesenen Erscheinungen als nothwendiges Resultat dasteht." Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*, 7.

[22] "[D]enn das All spiegelt sich in den jüdischen Werken wie in den nichtjüdischen ab," Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, 3.

[23] English version in Glatzer, *Leopold and Adelheid Zunz*, 13. For an intimate, detailed account of Zunz's life and work, see Schorsch, *Leopold Zunz*.

stricto sensu. In an attempt to show Jewish *Bildung* from a neutral perspective, Zunz situated its genres within a universal knowledge order. The totality of human endeavour, he explained, was divided into three subdomains: (1) the sphere where human activity connected with its divine inspiration; (2) the sphere where it interacted with God's creation, i.e., with nature and the material world; and (3) the sphere of human *Geist* and society where, with the help of language and text, "das universale Leben der Nation," i.e., its cultural course took shape. In the first category, Zunz grouped together Jewish theology, law, and ethics, once united under the anthropocentric label *halacha* (lit. "the walk"), besides adding liturgy, which until then had been known and performed as daily prayer. In the second category, he distinguished the theoretical study of nature, notably the sciences, from its practical use and exploitation, be it utilitarian as in industry, technology and commerce, or purely aesthetic, as in art. The third domain and intellectual home-base of his philology was the vast residual category of Jewish literature, a treasure scattered over countless archives, written in all the world's languages, soon to be recovered and subjected, by Zunz and Co, to academic scrutiny.[24] Under the regime of *Kritik und Interpretation* the rabbinic Ashkenazi school tradition, the triad of *chumash* (Pentateuch with commentary), Talmud and Zohar, was to be fragmented, reframed in European terms and embedded in the universal library of humankind.

3 Transnational or multinational? Zunz on inclusive totality

In his 1886 obituary of Zunz, philosopher and *Völkerpsychologe* Heymann Steinthal observed that Zunz's methodology, though shaped by the textual hermeneutics of Ast, Böckh and Grimm, had been quite philosophical ("durchaus philosophisch"). As a result, Steinthal wrote, the early Wissenschaft stood out in its effort to "philosophically grasp a totality in one inclusive view."[25] For our purpose the reference to "inclusive totality" deserves closer consideration. Steinthal had a point when suggesting that the philosophical substance of Zunz's philology had been considerable. We have just seen how Zunz, in his 1818 debut, tried to feed Jewish knowledge into one overarching, universal knowledge order. Later he would claim that unlocking Jewish literature was "nunmehr eine Aufgabe der Philosophie, der Geschichte und der Moral" ("now a task for philosophy, history, and morality").[26] The rehabilitation of the hitherto neglected Jewish corpus, in other words, was a complex task, fuelled by moral obligation and relying on the combined powers of diachronic research and metaphysical abstraction. According to later Jewish scholars, especially those of the Zionist persuasion, this deliberate integration of philosophy and history, of the universal and the particular, and thus in a sense of Europe and the Jewish cause, reeked of spineless assimilationism.[27] Others

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[24] Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*, 16–21.

[25] "[D]as philosophische Ergreifen eines Ganzen, im Zusammenschauenden Blick." Steinthal, "Leopold Zunz. Ein Nachruf." For Zunz's classical training, see Veltri, "Altertumswissenschaft und Wissenschaft des Judentums." For the political motivation of Zunz's work, see Schorsch, *Leopold Zunz*.

[26] Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, 3.

[27] See most famously Scholem, "Mi-tokh hirhurim 'al chokhmat yisrael."

preferred to read it as the source of the apologetic 'Jewish contribution' topos.[28] For Zunz, however, working in the margins of the 1820s German academy and society, it was the obvious—methodological as well as political—choice to make.

To begin with, Zunz's interpretation of philology owed much to contemporary German Romantic nationalism, even if it remained, at best, a partial and selective appropriation. According to Joep Leerssen, Romantic nationalism is best described as a dual, poetical-cum-political paradigm, built around (1) the cultivation of national languages and literatures; (2) the identification of collective, ideal-typical 'folk' properties (the famous *Volksgeist*); and (3) the alignment of state interest with those abstract national characteristics.[29] It is easy to see when it was opportune for a pre-emancipation Jewish scholar like Zunz to follow the Romantic paradigm, and when it was better to stick to more universalistic notions. His focus on the historical unity of Jewish culture as an expression of the Jewish psyche was run-of-the-mill Romantic nationalism and a useful tool for articulating Jewish selfhood. Less romantically inspired were his insistence on Jewish multilingualism and his conspicuous, almost tangible indifference towards Jewish national statehood. In its place, he postulated a polyglot, porous and synergetic Jewish literature, a spiritual Jewish presence that was geographically ubiquitous yet was always to be found at the heart of human intellectual activity.

This combination of eclectic method and transnational (or rather, multinational) politics is perhaps best exemplified by the following passage from Zunz's 1845 essay collection *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*:

> Eine solche von der Weltgeschichte anerkannte historische Besonderheit sind die Juden nach Volkstum und Bekenntnis ein Ganzes, dessen Richtungen von einheitlichen, mit ihren Wurzeln in das tiefste Alterthum hineinragenden, Gesetzen gelenkt werden, und dessen geistige Erzeugnisse, bereits über zwei Jahrtausende, eine Lebensfaser unzerreißbar durchzieht. Dies ist die Berechtigung zur Existenz, die Begründung der Eigenthümlichkeit einer jüdischen Literatur. Aber sie ist auch aufs Innigste mit der Cultur der Alten, dem Ursprung und Fortgang des Christentums, der wissenschaftlichen Tätigkeit des Mittelalters verflochten, und indem sie in die geistigen Richtungen von Vor- und Mitwelt eingreift, Kämpfe und Leiden teilend, wird sie zugleich eine Ergänzung der allgemeinen Literatur; aber mit eigenem Organismus, der nach allgemeinen Gesetzen erkannt, das Allgemeine wiederum erkennen hilft. Ist die Totalität der geistigen Betriebsamkeit ein Meer, so ist einer von den Strömen, welche jenem das Wasser zuführen, eben die jüdische Literatur.[30]

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[28] See the essays in Cohen, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization.*

[29] Leerssen, "Notes towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism."

[30] Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, 2. "Such a historical peculiarity, recognised by world history, are the Jews, a unity according to their ethnicity and confession, whose directions are guided by unified laws whose roots reach into the deepest antiquity, and through whose spiritual products, for over two millennia, an unbreakable fiber of life has run. This is the justification for the existence, the foundation of the uniqueness of Jewish literature. But it is also intimately entwined with the culture of the ancients, the origin and progress of Christendom, the scholarly endeavour of the Middle Ages, and by intervening in the spiritual directions of the vorwelt and the mitwelt, sharing struggles and sufferings, it becomes at the same time a supplement to general literature; but with its own organism, which, recognised in general laws, in turn helps to recognise the general. If the totality of spiritual activity is a sea, then one of the streams that feeds it is precisely Jewish literature."

At first sight this passage may look a trifle long-winded, but when slowly read it reveals that Zunz had carefully chosen his words. He started with an implicit polemic by speaking not of Judaism but of *the Jews* as a historically attested group (rather than theologically contested faith), bound by one religion and one cultural habitus, necessarily diverse but subject to an uninterrupted set of ancient, uniform laws. This singular continuity, he argued in good Romantic fashion, explained the existence of a *jüdische Literatur* and its distinctive properties—an important step towards Jewish *Selbstbewußtsein* and its gentile recognition, which in 1845 Berlin were still awaiting consummation, as we shall soon see.

Simultaneously, however, the organic body of Jewish literature was presented by Zunz as a *littérature croisée*, a corpus deeply entwined with the life and lore of other nations, regardless of time, place, creed, and language. Zunz's specification of this entangled dynamic was charged with political innuendo: yes, the literature of the Jews should be accepted as an authentic system in-its-own-right, but no, it should not be viewed in ghettoesque isolation, as had been the rule so far. Together with the world's other literatures, Jewish literature co-constituted *die allgemeine Literatur*, the 'genus' or entirety of all literatures. Accordingly, it should be understood in general terms and, by the same token, be recognized as indispensable for a proper understanding of that all-embracing, generic ensemble. The closing sea-and-rivers metaphor once more underlined the circular interdependence of the whole and its parts, intimating that there simply ("eben") was no Europe—be it cultural or political—without a Jewish component.

Zunz's programmatic statement, though unequivocal in its emancipatory zeal, has invited as many readings as there are modern scholars. In 2010 Andreas Kilcher wrote an astute intra-Jewish, normative interpretation, in which he exposed the Wissenschaft as a uniquely liberal episode on an otherwise insular Jewish timeline. In his reconstruction of the 'invention of Jewish literature,' the Wissenschaft represented an open, multilingual library flanked by the closed Hebrew bookshelves of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) on the one hand, and Zionism on the other.[31] Closely identifying the Wissenschaft's cosmopolitan *Kulturpolitik* with its multilingual *Sprachpolitik*, Kilcher (rightly) characterized the Wissenschaft's concept of Jewish literature as eminently transcultural, diasporic, and extra-territorial, i.e. as transcending the 'introverted' parameters of the pre-modern Jewish corporate nation and of modern Zionist Romanticism. The same equation of *Kulturpolitik* with *Sprachpolitik*, however, kept him from doing full justice to the nature of that diasporic transculturality as conceived by Zunz and his nineteenth-century colleagues.[32]

Analogous to the role of language in translation, Kilcher (wrongly, I would say this time) imagined Zunz's multilingual Jewish literature as *mediating between* languages and cultures,[33] occupying a middle space where it could freely merge alterity and similarity, the particular and the universal, into "one hybrid complexity."[34] In choosing this hybrid, polyglot course, he argued, the

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[31]   Kilcher, "Die Sprachen der Literatur."
[32]   For Kilcher's discussion of Zunz 1845, see ibid., 277–79.
[33]   "[I]hre Stellung *zwischen* Sprachen und Kulturen;" ibid., 279 (italics mine).
[34]   Ibid.

Wissenschaft started as a corrective of the Haskalah's normative Hebrew programme. By the end of the century, however, it had become the frayed transnational thesis to which Zionism could oppose its vital, Hebrew-national antithesis.[35] The Wissenschaft as an intellectual haven, a cosmopolitan beacon in a Jewish history riddled by particularism—Kilcher's paean to nineteenth-century Jewish *Sprachkosmopolitismus* yields an apt, relevant, and inspiring portrait of the political implications of our academic choices. It does, however, say little about Zunz's immediate political concerns or about the philosophical, Hegelian artillery he mobilized to tackle those concerns.

I have no doubt that Zunz would have been chuffed to be called a champion of diasporic universalism against Zionist territorialism (which, having died in 1886, he did not live to see). In 1845, however, he was fighting an altogether different battle: that for Jewish, but above all gentile recognition, *Anerkennung* in Hegel's idealist vocabulary, of the Jewish cultural and civic presence in Europe, past and present.[36] For this essentially philological project, the one form of recognition that really counted was of course academic recognition. Twice (in 1845 and in 1848), Zunz petitioned the Prussian ministry of education and religious affairs to establish a chair in Jewish *Geschichte und Literatur* at the Berlin university. And twice the ministry, in close consultation with the university's philosophy department, rejected the request, on the ironic grounds that an academic chair would confirm rather than temper Jewish difference and would undermine the process of Jewish assimilation.[37]

And so Zunz's task was to square the circle of Jewish difference and human resemblance. In the passage quoted above he did so (*pace* Kilcher) not by stressing the Jews' exceptional transnationalism, but by pointing at the one thing which Jewish literature ("einer von den Strömen", "one of the currents") had in common with all national literatures: its being a part of the transcendent "sea of literature." Its positive role within the totality of world literature was thus by no means unique but common routine. In close collaboration ("aufs Innigste [...] verflochten") with the ancient Greeks and Romans, with early and later Christianity, with medieval thinkers and translators, Jewish literature had contributed to general literature, shaping the system just as it had been shaped by it. In teaming up with these other branches it was not so much *trans*national as *multi*national, its capacity for self-effacing synergy ("Kämpfe und Leiden teilend", "sharing struggle and suffering") being facilitated by the Jews' multilingualism. "I am an American, Chicago-born" – how Zunz would have relished the famous opening line of Saul Bellow's *Adventures of Augie March*, published in 1953. In the title of his own reflections *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, the adjective Jewish likewise had been omitted. German, American, Citizen: for Zunz, writing towards the end of the German *Vormärz*, multi-nationalization was the true destination of the modern Jew.

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[35] Ibid., 279 and 286 respectively.

[36] For Hegel's ideology of Anerkennung (recognition), see Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* and the broader contextualization in Honneth, *Anerkennung*.

[37] See, e.g., Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse*, 82, and the literature listed there in n. 16.

In viewing Jewish literature as part of an all-absorbing whole, Zunz obviously (and effectively) capitalized on Hegel's concept of *Totalität*. Hegel had conceived of totality as a simple, undivided unity that represented absolute, unconditional Truth with a capital T. In one paradoxical movement, this supreme unity did not only obliterate its constituent parts, it also preserved them, though not in their original, independent form. We find this dialectical dynamic reflected in Zunz's above sketch of Jewish literature as a dependent as well as formative part of general literature ("der nach allgemeinen Gesetzen erkannt, das Allgemeine wiederum erkennen hilft", "which, recognised in general laws, in turn helps to recognise the general") and most explicitly in the concluding sea-and-rivers line. There we recognize the moment of *Aufhebung* or sublation, a decisive moment in Hegel's dialectical process, when the original thing or concept, having been met and negated by its opposite, is simultaneously cancelled *and* preserved (reflecting the dual meaning of the German *aufgehoben*) by being subsumed into a new, transformative synthesis.[38]

River (thesis) meets other rivers (antithesis) and dissolves into a sea which, for all its vastness, cannot subsist without them (synthesis). For Hegel, such totality was the abstract moment in which the individual found its true realization as part of a cohesive system that transcended the unity-multiplicity problem. For Zunz and his coevals it became a concrete paradigm for articulating Jewish relevance in an essentially gentile world. Integrated, interconnected and formative, that was how they envisaged the Jews' role in European society, both as a culture and as a polity. Or, as lawyer and fellow-*Wissenschaftler* Eduard Gans (1798–1839) had phrased it a few years earlier: "Aufgehen ist nicht untergehen, [...] noch kann das ganze Judenthum sich auflösen [...] es soll [...] fortleben, wie der Strom fort-lebt in dem Ocean."[39]

Seas and rivers, oceans and currents: in their joint preference for water-imagery over biological metaphor, Zunz and Gans seem to have been less interested in hybridity, mutuality, oppositionality and other buzzwords than in the easy flow of cultural exchange. Hailing diversity over difference,[40] they spurned the idea of a separate, liminal Third Space in favour of Hegel's inclusive totality. Relying on the latter's synthetic dialectic to neutralize historical hierarchies, they conjured up a transcultural dynamic in which no civilization remained untouched. Anticipating Fernando Ortiz's concept of transculturation they, too, expressed a belief in the transformative dialectic of cultures in contact.[41] Interestingly, in doing so they seem (*pace* Kilcher) to have continued rather than interrupted maskilic thoughts on the nature of Jewish-European interconnectedness.[42]

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[38] Hegel introduced "*Aufhebung*" in various contexts, e.g., *Phänomenologie* § 113 and *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* vol. 1 § 95.

[39] Quoted in Norbert Waszek, "Hegel, Mendelssohn, Spinoza," 196. "To merge is not to be submerged, [...] nor can the whole Judaism disappear [...] it must [...] continue to exist, just as the stream continues to exist in the ocean."

[40] Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences."

[41] For the importance of Ortiz's definition, see Danigno, "Transcultural Literature," 3–4.

[42] Likewise invoking Ortiz, Andrea Schatz has signalled similar notions (*viz.* the diasporic lack of interest in pure origins; the identification of Jewish tradition as partly authentic, partly adaptive; and the idea of cultural interaction as a non-linear process that affects all parties) in Isaac Euchel's *Iggerot Meshullam ben*

Should we dismiss Zunz's political strategy as irredeemably apologetic, nation state-based and Eurocentric? Or did nineteenth-century Jewish cosmopolitanism (perforce) amount to little more than taking the world as it was, warts and all, and bend it to the Jewish cause? Whatever our answer to these questions ("well, yes and no" I guess would do in either case), the invention of Jewish literature by the Wissenschaft des Judentums invites us to consider the quirks of world literature from a historical non-privileged minority perspective. In this section, we have reviewed how Leopold Zunz tried to wriggle Jewish literature into the European continuum by appealing to the dialectic of totality; how he put that dialectic at the service of a hitherto discounted culture; and how he hoped to solve the problem of political exclusion by stressing equality over similarity and by putting dialectical reciprocity above organic integrity. In the following section, we will briefly analyse how the early Wissenschaft reflected on the thorny issue of 'beauty and the Jews.' In the age of Romantic philology, with its veneration of national language and literature, how should the artistic quality of multinational, synergetic Jewish literature be measured?

4 Aesthetics in a world of strangers

Traditionally, Jews and Judaism have been credited with a die-hard aniconism that was believed to preclude all artistic expressions. Prohibiting figurative representations, the biblical Second Commandment (Exodus 20:3) seemed to predispose them towards the divine word, the law and, if we are to believe Kant, morality.[43] In line with the abiding Rabbinism cliché, this exclusionist bias was not limited to the visual arts. In nineteenth-century histories of literature, too, post-biblical Jewish literature was hardly noticed and, if mentioned, was qualified as imitative and therefore negligeable.[44] Richard Wagner's condemnation of Jewish musical mannerism as the result of an unfortunate limbo between Jewish (lost) and German (unattainable) nationality was extreme, but by no means unique.[45] In the wake of Herder, the divinely sourced poetry of the Old Testament Hebrews could count on a due measure of appreciation.[46] When speaking of Jewish diasporic literature, however, beauty and artistic pleasure did not come into the equation.

In *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*, young Zunz had failed to raise the topic, not to skirt a potential problem, but because (a) he was interested in integration, not competition; (b) it did not match his broad definition of culture as a combination of written texts and everyday life, and (c) its treatment belonged in

Uriah ha-Eshtemo'i, published in serial form in the Berlin periodical *Ha-Me'assef* in 1789–1790. Schatz, "Kleider auf Reisen."

[43] The classic study of Jewish aniconism is Bland, *The Artless Jew*. See esp. chapter one, "Modern Denials and Affirmations of Jewish Art: German Origins and Themes," 13–40.

[44] Gossens, "'Jüdische Literatur' in Weltliteraturgeschichten."

[45] In *Das Judentum in der Musik*. The first version was published under the pseudonym K. Freigedank in the 1850 September issue of the influential Leipziger *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. The second, separate edition of 1869 was published under Wagner's own name. For a contextualization of his argumentation, see Dempsey-Garratt, "Mendelssohn's 'Untergang'."

[46] Gossens, "Jüdische Literatur in Weltliteraturgeschichten," 488–90.

a different context anyway. For Zunz, as we have seen, a discussion of beauty would have fallen under the second heading of his knowledge order, the domain where humankind appropriated nature and attempted its beautification.[47] It was this definition of art as the *human* inclination to beautify matter ("die Verschönerung der Stoffe") that pushed aesthetics out of the reconstruction of *national* culture and explains the Wissenschaft's life-long neglect of 'Jewish art.'[48] For Zunz, art and beauty belonged to the world, not to the nation. But if, for the sake of the argument, we imagine Zunz trying to capture the aesthetic quality of Jewish literature vis-à-vis the Western tradition, how might he have gone about?

In a volume celebrating fifty years of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, the official organ of the American Society for Aesthetics, Richard Shusterman explored the possibility of an aesthetic internationalism that transcended national philosophical traditions. The society's nationality, he argued, was obviously peripheral to its aims: we were dealing here "not [with] a society for American aesthetics, but a society for aesthetics that happens to be American."[49] Still, its predominantly American membership and ties with various government agencies seemed to predispose it towards American schools of philosophy. And that, Shusterman concluded, was not in the interest of non-US artistic and aesthetic traditions.

In the course of his analysis, he reviewed three kinds of aesthetic internationalism, each with its—more and less subtle—pros and cons. First, he noted, there was the historically tested model of cultural imperialism, which rested on the dominance of one master-tradition grounded in one master-language. Obliterating all foreign competition, it aimed at a homogenization of artistic values, working towards a 'global' standard that was perceived as rational and superior. Against this aggressive monistic model, Shusterman pitted a dialogical, pluralistic alternative. Pursuing a strategy of benign collaboration and respectful accommodation of difference, this second, multicultural model strove to preserve the integrity of all traditions involved, regardless of their place in the global pecking order. For those to whom this synthetic effort sounded too much like a naïve compromise, there was always the third, more radical way, which dismissed the very idea of difference as irrelevant to philosophy as a discipline that was devoted to dispensing universal judgements. Following this line of thought, the aesthetic experience was part of human nature, therefore its philosophical interpretation automatically carried universal weight. Postponing his definitive verdict on models one and two, Shusterman instantly rejected this third variant, exposing the belief in an ahistorical human essence as a relic from Enlightenment essentialism and stressing that even innate reason nowadays was considered historically contingent.[50]

For Zunz, who expressed an absolute belief in the powers of philosophy, universalism still reigned supreme when he wrote *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*. Following Von Humboldt in *Über die innere und äussere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftliche Anstalten in Berlin* (1809/10), he subordinated both academic

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47 Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*, 20–21, and see above, 6.
48 See Zwiep, "The Wissenschaft des Judentums and the Visual."
49 Shusterman, "Aesthetics between Nationalism and Internationalism," 157.
50 Ibid., 160.

scholarship and state politics to the universal rule of reason.[51] In his later work, he seems to have relied on the dialectical combination of all three of Shusterman's scenarios (unification through collaboration under the aegis of philosophy), witness the passage from *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* quoted and discussed above. To be sure, in Zunz's version the Totality of Literature would ultimately sublate (i.e., crunch) even the most armoured Western classic. So no, that Western classic would not emerge unscathed from its respectful encounter with other, 'minor' literatures. And yet, in zooming in on the Jewish entanglement with European history, Zunz remained conspicuously loyal to the Eurocentric master narrative as developed in Hegel's *Geschichtsphilosophie*.[52]

He did, however, make one important proviso. Pagan Hellenism and imperialistic Christianity, he warned, though certainly *literary* catalysts of sorts, had also proven hostile, not to say harmful, to the *actual*, historical Jewish people and its traditions. This could not be said, he continued, of the medieval Arabs, whose open mindset and syncretistic policy had made them the ultimate brokers between Jewish and European civilization.[53] Here we find Zunz repeating a recent (and tremendously influential) Jewish topos, later dubbed 'the Sephardi mystique,' which held that the medieval Jews and Arabs had taken joint custody of the Greek legacy, together saving Western (read: universal) science and scholarship for Latin posterity.[54] It was in this meeting of oriental and occidental languages and literatures that we find the key to a Jewish 'multinational' aesthetics—but not, I should add, in the writings of Leopold Zunz. Throughout his work the master remained more interested in ridding Jewish philology of its own snobbish blind spots, first and foremost its neglect of Ashkenazi culture and traditional synagogue poetry. Others, however, were fascinated by the alleged Jewish-Muslim symbiosis, especially on Iberian soil, where it had spawned a brand of Jewish poetry that could compete with the cream of Western literature.

In 1837, yeshiva drop-out and travelling scholar Leopold Dukes (1810–1891) had started the construction work on a pantheon of post-biblical, 'New-Hebrew' poets. Embracing history's potential as "the headstone of the past," he set out to save from oblivion a tradition which "at times had been able to keep up with modern-language poetry."[55] His *Ehrensäulen und Denksteine* offered a first exploration of Jewish poetry and poetics from the closure of the Talmud to Solomon Levinsohn's recent *Melitzat Yeshurun* (The Poetics of Israel, 1816). The result was

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[51] "Und über alle diese Räume der Wissenschaft, über den ganzen Tümmelplatz menschlicher Thätigkeit herrscht mit ausschließender Majestät die Philosophie;" Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*, 42.

[52] See also Waszek, "Hegel, Mendelssohn, Spinoza," 196 and 212, n. 40.

[53] Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, 4–5; for a discussion, see Zwiep, "'Judenthum,' 'Griechenthum' and 'Christenthum'," 12–14.

[54] The term was coined by Schorsch in his classic "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy." Belated follow-ups are Efron, *German Jewry and the Allure of the Sephardic*, and Schapkow, *Role Model and Countermodel*. More recently the study of paradigmatic Arabic cultural brokerage was complemented by studies on the Jewish use of "civilized" Islam to de-orientalize Judaism; see esp. Hess, *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity*; Efron, "From *Mitteleuropa* to the Middle East"; Heschel, "German Jewish Scholarship on Islam as a Tool for De-Orientalizing Judaism."

[55] Dukes, *Ehrensäulen und Denksteine*, iii–iv. Schorsch, *Leopold Zunz*, 196–98, briefly mentions Dukes alongside rabbi Michael Sachs (1808–1864), whose *Die religiöse Poesie der Juden in Spanien* (1845) addressed a more general audience.

a typical mêlée of bio-bibliographical data, recapitulations of books and chapters, Hebrew originals, German translations and learned footnotes, never exhaustive but always enough to grasp the gist of the Jewish poetical tradition.[56] Two medieval authors were singled out for closer scrutiny: the Andalusian Neoplatonist poet Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021/2–1057/8) and, especially, poet and translator Judah al-Charizi (d. 1225). The latter had included a critical review of Hebrew poets and their work in his *Book of Tachkemoni* and may well have served as an indigenous precedent for Dukes's own work.

Ibn Gabirol and al-Charizi, each in his own way, embodied the confluence of Greek spirit, Arabic poetics, Hebrew language and Jewish genius that defined the chimeric beauty of medieval Sephardi poetry.[57] Dukes illustrated this composite aesthetic with a canonical scene (his words) from *Musre ha-Philosophim* (The Ethics of the Philosophers), al-Charizi's Hebrew translation of Hunayn ibn Ishâq's *Kitâb Âdâb al-Falâsifa*. In the passage, four wise men, representing four great but bygone civilizations, gather in the halls of an obscure gentile king to exchange poetic best practices. "Proportion and matching content," the Greek expert kicks off in response to the king's—deceptively simple—question as to "what constitutes poetics?" "To know when to stop and when to expand," his Persian colleague adds. "A clearly outlined topic with corresponding allegory," the Indian scholar puts forward. "Brevity," the Roman sage cautions, "for people abhor verbosity."[58]

If anything, this brief schematic anecdote suggests that Dukes, like Zunz and Gans in the previous section, was not interested in *métissage* and cultural hybridity, but in literature as a dialogical (but unanimous) project with a long global history. Its formal *Gestalt* was patently Apollonian, its *Stoff* tacitly agreed-upon by all, the conversation decidedly international and the raconteur, incidentally, a near-forgotten Iberian Jew, writing in pure biblical Hebrew with perhaps a hint of Arabic syntax. In celebrating sober proportionality, Dukes's reconstruction of medieval Jewish poetics owes much to Johann Winckelmann's dream of the "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" of ancient Greek sculpture.[59] Simultaneously, however, by relocating that dream to a thirteenth-century Hebrew translation of a nine-century Arabic text, Dukes managed to ease the absolute "tyranny of Greece" and, no less importantly, to prepare German classicism for the advent of Jewish literature.[60] Exit Rabbanism, enter Jewish humanism!

5 Final remarks

In terms of mobility and belonging, Leopold Zunz and Leopold Dukes represent two different models of nineteenth-century Jewish cosmopolitanism. Born in Detmold (as Yom Tov Lippmann) and educated in Wolfenbüttel, Zunz spend the

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[56] "[D]ie Idee zu gewinnen und den innersten Kern herbeyzuschaffen;" Dukes, *Ehrensäulen und Denksteine*, v–vi.

[57] For a revision of this cliché, drawing attention to the Iberian Christian and Eastern Mediterranean contexts, see Drory, "Literary Contacts and Where to Find Them."

[58] Dukes, *Ehrensäulen und Denksteine*, 51–52.

[59] Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung* and *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*.

[60] Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*.

rest of his life in Berlin, using his training as a classicist to plug the Jewish cultural heritage into the project of "merging the treasures of foreign and German art and science into a single, historical whole, to be stored, in the all-absorbing German language, in the heart of Europe."[61] Born in Bratislava and educated in the Tal-mudic academy of Moses 'Chatam' Sofer, the restless Dukes travelled the cities of Europe, rummaging in the libraries of Munich, Tübingen, Hanover, Hamburg, Paris, Leipzig, Oxford, London and Vienna in search of Jewish texts to add to that international treasure house.

More important than their geographical differences, however, was their shared position as political strangers and institutional outsiders to that 'global' endeavour. In this paper, we have watched them try to turn the tables and write Jewish culture into the grand project that was modern Europe. We have moni-tored their strategy and unravelled their rhetoric when they tried to dispel the image of Rabbinism and replace it by a mature habitus that would qualify the Jews for civic equality, for "Recht und Freiheit statt Rechte und Freiheiten" as Zunz wrote in 1832.[62] Theirs was a course of intellectual action, not reflection, and we know that, when making an omelette, you tend to break a lot more eggs than when you quietly sit savouring the result. The collateral damage of the Wissen-schaft's "translation act"[63] was indeed considerable. In trying to refute the bigotries of gentile scholarship, Zunz *cum suis* often reinforced those biases.[64] And in stress-ing the supplementary nature of Jewish culture, they did indeed sow the seeds for an apologetic contribution narrative. Also, in neglecting pure origins in favour of synergy and collaboration, they offered a weak definition of Judaism, thus inad-vertently turning the adjective 'Jewish' into a floating signifier until this very day.[65] And finally, although their insistence on Jewish multinationalism downplays the monopoly of the nation state, it simultaneously affirms the nation's centrality as a marker of cultural identity.

It is one thing to reflect on world literature from a privileged Western per-spective; it is quite another to try to hitch on to it from a non-privileged minority position. One lesson the Wissenschaft's example has taught me, is that there can be no such thing as inclusivity without dialectical give, take, loss, and gain. If we wish to adopt a truly global outlook, we must transcend the comfort of our own station in life and give up ourselves in terms of time, place, class and creed. In fact, if we want literature to be genuinely inclusive, we should perhaps relinquish

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[61] "[A]lle Schätze fremder Wissenschaft und Kunst mit seinen eignen zugleich in seiner Sprache gleichsam zu einem großen, geschichtlichen Ganzen zu vereinigen, das im Mittelpunkt und Herzen von Europa verwahrt werde." Schleiermacher, "Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens," 69.

[62] Zunz, *Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, 32.

[63] For this characterization, see Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 151–75 (the chapter on "Wissenschaft Val-ues").

[64] The superiority of Andalusian Hebrew poetry, for example, had already been signalled in Eichhorn's *Ge-schichte der Literatur*, 667; see Gossens, "Jüdische Literatur," 490.

[65] As Michael Meyer aptly observed in his scenic portrait of Leopold Zunz, the first, "nostalgic" generation of "modern Jews" still cherished concrete memories of their pre-modern Jewish childhood; in Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew*, 144–82. In the subsequent era of integration, assimilation and secularisation, this social memory made way for cultural memory. As a result, Jewish culture lost its unequivocal, em-bodied referent.

the idea of inclusivity altogether, with its implications of includer and included, its tacit criteria, easy reckonings, and new exclusions. The totality of literature, we learn from Leopold Zunz, is not the sum of its parts; it is an altogether different, autonomous yet contingent entity. A nameless sea that drinks the torrents, as Anacreon once wrote, only to give new, ultimate meaning to those that surrender to its sublative powers.

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CURRENT CONTRIBUTION

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NOTE

This contribution is part of a larger dialogue of three articles and one responding piece that form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are "Writing in a World of Strangers: The Invention of Jewish Literature Revisited," by Irene Zwiep (pp. 1–20) and "The Ordeal of a Sixth-Century Josef K: Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* as a Modernist Drama" by Piet Gerbrandy (pp. 44–64). The response piece is "Ins and Outs and Opened and Closed" by Danuta Shanzer (pp. 66–77).

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A Critical Juncture: 'Later' Latin Literature, the Newest Late Antiquity, and the Period of the Western Classic

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Abstract

With the appearance in 2020 of a long-awaited second 'late antique' instalment of the *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1989–) and a new, collaborative *Cambridge History of Later Latin Literature* now at an advanced stage of preparation, there is an opportunity to re-evaluate the possibilities of scholarship in this field. What relation does such 'literary' research bear to current, globalizing styles in late antique and first-millennial historical and cultural studies? This essay attempts a preliminary framing of the issues with reference to a largely discredited but still powerful model of the western literary classic, while arguing for hermeneutical continuity between the breakthrough work of Peter Brown's half-century-old *World of Late Antiquity* (1971) and the critical-historical vocation of contemporary 'later' Latin literary studies.

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If there was once a time when "the Latin literature of late antiquity" was a "no-man's land" for classicists, it has not been ours.[1] The past fifty years have been a boom-time for 'late' or 'later' Latin literary studies, understood in most cases as an extension of 'classical' Latin literary studies beyond the customary limit of the Antonine era. If one had to name the place and moment where previously separate interests in such an extended late-to-post-classical franchise of Latin coalesced into a visible movement of international research, it would be natural to think of the symposium convened by Manfred Fuhrmann at Vandœuvres, outside Geneva, in August 1976, proceedings of which were published in the volume of Entretiens

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[1] Fuhrmann, "Die lateinische Literatur der Spätantike," 65. The present essay is not a general survey of developments in this field; the best thing I know of that kind is Shanzer, "Literature, History, Periodization." See also McGill and Watts, *Companion to Late Antique Literature*.

de la Fondation Hardt entitled *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tar-dive en Occident.*[2] Within a few years of that event, two of the symposiasts, Rein-hart Herzog (then of the University of Bielefeld, later of the University of Kon-stanz) and Jacques Fontaine (of the University of Paris-Sorbonne), agreed to collaborate on the 'late antique' part of a multi-volume reference-work destined to replace the outdated *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* in the library-scale *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* published by the firm of C.H. Beck in Mu-nich.[3]

Volume 5 of the new *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike* (HLL), covering the period from the accession of the emperor Diocletian in 284 CE to the consecration of Ambrose as bishop of Milan in the year 374, came out in 1989, with a programmatic introduction by Reinhart Herzog that presented the Latin writing of late antiquity as *die erste* lateinische*, die erste nachrömische Literatur Europas* ("the first *Latin*, first post-Roman literature of Europe").[4] For Herzog, as for his teacher Fuhrmann, the era of the "Latin literature of late antiquity" began with the restoration of the Roman empire under Diocletian in the late third cen-tury and was characterized overall by the progressively determining influence of Christianity on forms of literary reception and production.[5] A convenient end-point for this "first post-Roman literature of Europe" was indicated, for the pur-poses of the new *Handbuch*, by the death of the Venerable Bede at Wearmouth-Jarrow in Northumbria, in the year 735.

The appearance thirty years ago of such a prospectus for a 'new' Latin litera-ture might have been a threshold event for classical *and* literary studies. The en-semble of Volumes 5 to 8 of HLL, by unfolding a recognizably *post-Roman* 'liter-ature' in Latin, could conceivably have undone one of the most robust constructions of early-to-mid-twentieth-century, European and Atlantic literary modernism. That construction we may perhaps call 'the western classic,' since it was a classic of *the West.*

1   The period of the western classic

The western classic was a work of many hands. In the Anglosphere, its most in-fluential exponent was T.S. Eliot, who in a famous essay of 1919 on "Tradition and the Individual Talent," notified a readership that had seen the flower of Eu-ropean male youth cut down in Flanders and other fields of mechanized destruc-tion, that "anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year" needed to develop "the historical sense" that would compel him to write "with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and, within it, the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and com-poses a simultaneous whole."[6] A quarter-century later, against the backdrop of a

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2   Fuhrmann, *Christianisme et formes littéraires.*

3   See Fontaine, "Postclassicisme, Antiquité tardive, Latin des chrétiens."

4   Herzog, *Restauration und Erneuerung: Die lateinische Literatur von 284 bis 374 n.Chr.* (= HLL 5), 1.

5   See n. 41 below and Vessey, "Literary History: A Fourth-Century Roman Invention?" 18–24 ("HLL: A Late Twentieth-Century Crisis of Literary History").

6   Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 14.

London sky still lit by fires from bombed-out homes and warehouses, the same poet-critic, addressing a newly founded Virgil Society, asked the question "What Is a Classic?" and answered for himself that *the* classic, "[o]ur classic, the classic of all Europe, is Virgil"—Virgil as supreme representative of Latin literature to and for "our several literatures," each of which had its particular greatness "not in isolation, but because of its place in a larger pattern, a pattern set in Rome"; Virgil, "the great ghost who guided Dante's pilgrimage" and who, "as it was his function to lead Dante towards a vision he could never himself enjoy, led Europe towards the Christian culture which he could never know."[7]

Eliot's historical-critical sense of Virgil had many sources, among them Theodor Haecker's 1931 manifesto *Virgil, Vater des Abendlandes*, the 1934 English translation of which was commissioned for a series edited by the Catholic historian Christopher Dawson, himself the author of a popular book on *The Making of Europe*: *An Introduction to the History of European Unity*, published in London in 1932 and quickly translated into French and German. On the dust-jacket of later editions, the period of Dawson's study was signalled as 400 to 1000 AD. At the core of Eliot's, Dawson's and kindred versions of the mid-twentieth-century, post-catastrophe, 'western' family romance was a providential genealogy in which medieval European Christianity assumed and, as it were, sublimed the inheritance of classical Graeco-Roman culture after the break-up of the Roman empire. (C.N. Cochrane's *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine*, published at Oxford by the Clarendon Press in 1940, was the outstanding Canadian contribution to the genre before Northrop Frye.) The groundwork for this master narrative had been laid by leaders of German and French romanticism, such as Novalis, Germaine de Staël and Chateaubriand. Further important contributions were made by other nineteenth-century enthusiasts for the poetry of Dante, including F.W.J. Schelling who, taking a hint from Hegel, gave the cue for most of the life's work of Erich Auerbach down to that scholar's last book, on *Literary Language and its Public in Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, written at Yale University in the 1950s.[8]

The role played by American romanticism, especially American Danteism and associated medievalisms, in the making of the western classic would be hard to overestimate. Ernst Robert Curtius put his finger on it in a lecture on "The Medieval Bases of Western Thought" that he delivered at the Goethe Bicentennial Convocation in Aspen, Colorado in 1949, the text of which is handily printed in an appendix to the English edition of his *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Curtius himself acknowledged a debt to Edward Kennard Rand, Harvard classicist, co-founder of the Medieval Academy of America, author of *Founders of*

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7   Eliot, "What is a Classic?" 130–31. For the intellectual milieu, see Ziolkowski, *Virgil and the Moderns*, 119–34; also 6–11 ("The Crisis of History"), esp. 11: "In sum, the postwar [i.e. post-1918] crisis of history, prepared by the increasing specialization of professional historians along with their rejection of the philosophy of history, and precipitated by the seemingly inexplicable sociopolitical events of the early twentieth century, produced in the public at large a longing for synthesizing accounts of history that would help them make sense of the world." See too the very pertinent remarks of Martindale, "Introduction: 'The Classic of all Europe,'" 1–18.

8   See esp. Auerbach, "Discovery of Dante by Romanticism."

the Middle Ages (1928) and sometime teacher of T.S. Eliot.[9] The essentials of Eliot's Virgilio-Dantesque providentialism in "What Is a Classic?" were also laid out in Rand's book, which had chapters on major Latin church fathers as well as on Boethius and other early Christian poets, and exemplified a new, early twentieth-century vogue for Augustine's *City of God* as a diagnostic, in the age of Freud, not only of (western) civilization's discontents but also of its contents.

The western classic was a doubly temporal dispensation, setting out a scheme of civilizational development over nearly three millennia while being itself much more narrowly timebound, the product of an historical period ushered in by the First World War, stretching through the middle decades of the twentieth century and a second era of post-war (by then also Cold War) reconstruction, and with a range of credible end-dates within living memory for those of us now with long memories. Among university literary critics, the cut-off date should probably be placed within a few years of the publication in 1975 of Frank Kermode's *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change*, a book based on lectures given in honour of T.S. Eliot and premised on the case of Virgil. By then, an avant-garde of continental European classicists, mainly French and German but with one or two Anglophone scholars in the offing, was re-imagining patterns of literary permanence and change in Latin texts from late antiquity.

Although HLL, the literary-historical reference-work launched in 1989 by Reinhart Herzog and his colleagues, was called a handbook, not a history, the inaugural Volume 5 led readers to expect that it would, as it advanced to Volume 8 and the death of Bede, continue to furnish methodological and substantive prolegomena for future narrative and critical histories of a newly conceived post-Roman, Latin literature. The period to be covered by Volume 6 ran from the year 374, when Ambrose became bishop of Milan, to the death of Augustine in 430. This was the epoch known to ecclesiastical tradition as the golden age of the Latin church fathers. It also embraced the careers of two freak, Greek-speaking masters of Latin literary forms and idioms, the Alexandrian poet Claudian and the (possibly) Antiochene historian Ammianus Marcellinus. The volume's editor, Jacques Fontaine, was the outstanding twentieth-century scholar of the combined—and, as he saw them, all but indissociable—Christian and non-Christian Latin literature(s) of late antiquity. One of his specializations was in the Latin literary culture of the period that he called *le siècle de Théodose*, meaning the long half-century from the early 370s to the late 420s.[10] Fontaine died at the age of 93 in 2015, active as a scholar to the last. Yet neither Volume 6 of the *Handbuch* nor either of the other two (Vols. 7–8) that were and still are slated to complete an historical

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9   Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, viii. Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot*, 70: "It would be interesting to know whether Eliot already heard Rand speak at Harvard on the continuity of the Roman tradition into the Middle Ages..." Eliot had special praise for Rand's chapter on "St. Augustine and Dante" in his review of *Founders* for the *Times Literary Supplement* of March 14, 1929. See also Crawford, *Young Eliot*, 120.

10   For this period-concept, less prejudicially classicizing than the widely favoured "Theodosian renaissance," see e.g. Fontaine, "Société et culture chrétiennes." Between the late 1960s and mid-'80s Fontaine directed a program of instruction at the Sorbonne under the heading "Langues et littératures de l'Antiquité tardive." For a concise placing of his work, see Vessey, "Literature, Patristics, Early Christian Writing," 51–55 ("The Literature[s] of Late Antiquity").

arc of Latin literature from 284 to 735 CE had by then appeared. Not until 2020 would there be a sequel to HLL 5.[11]

The scholarship reported and represented by the initial 'late antique' volume of the *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike* has been foundational for work done since 1989, as interest in that emergent sub-field of classics has continued to grow, not least but not only in North America, especially after the turn of the millennium, in the context of an increasingly global and globalizing concept and practice of late antique studies, and with more and more of the international conversation every year taking place in English. As one would expect, growth has brought with it both diversification of methods and new kinds of routinization. Over the past two decades, for example, a trend has been set for reading the more suitable 'later' Latin authors—as a rule, classicizing poets, historians and epistolographers—primarily if not exclusively for the *intertextual* relationships entertained by their works with those of their classical precursors and (more or less) classical or classicizing contemporaries, following a method popularized for Anglo-American Latin studies in the 1990s by an adroit adjustment of 1960s Parisian to 1970s Pisan literary-critical fashions—in the first place Julia Kristeva (after Mikhail Bakhtin), in the next Gian Biagio Conte (after Giorgio Pasquali)—and since then mainstreamed in studies of 'classical reception.'[12] The adjustment continues in Philip Hardie's eagle-eyed Sather Classical Lectures on *Classicism and Christianity in Late Antique Latin Poetry* (2019), a work that, from its title forward, has an oddly old-fashioned air about it, not only because 'classicism and Christianity' is such a time-worn formula, as hallowed as the western classic or the Sather Classical Lectures at the University of California, Berkeley (some of the earliest of which were given in 1919–20 by E.K. Rand), but also because Hardie's working sense of 'late antiquity,' like that of many another latergoing, classically trained literary Romanist and intertextualist, is only minimally responsive to the transformations of the wider field of late antique studies that have occurred since the 1970s.[13]

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[11] Berger, Fontaine and Schmidt, *Die Literatur im Zeitalter des Theodosius (374–430 n.Chr.)* (= HLL 6, in two parts). No account could be given of HLL 6 in the present essay, which was complete and in the hands of the editors in December 2019, six months ahead of the publication date announced for those volumes. For my review of HLL 5, see Vessey, "Patristics and Literary History." HLL 4, which by the lights of that project treats material falling *before* the main literary-historical period of late antiquity, appeared in 1997: Sallmann, *Die Literatur des Umbruchs: Von der römischen zur christlichen Literatur, 117 bis 284 n. Chr.*

[12] Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext* marks a tipping-point in Anglophone classicism. See also Fowler, "On the Shoulders of Giants," and, for important critical re-considerations in a late antique context, Kelly, *ianus Marcellinus*, ch. 4 ("Ammianus' Intertextuality"), and Pelttari, *Space that Remains*, esp. ch. 4 ("The Presence of the Reader: Allusion in Late Antiquity").

[13] In the process of treating what he calls "this very important episode in the reception of earlier Latin poetry" (1), Hardie follows Kelly (see previous note) in critiquing the postulate of a distinctively 'late antique' literary aesthetic, a line of thought that was launched almost single-handedly for the Anglophone academy—and with suitable precautions, not always since observed—by Michael Roberts, building on the work of Fontaine and Herzog, in his *Jeweled Style* (1989). Elements of a revised manifesto for that kind of analysis, emphasizing issues of intertextuality and metapoetics, can be found in Elsner and Lobato, *Poetics of Late Latin Literature*, which I review in *Exemplaria Classica* 23 (2019): 477–84. On the field more generally and that approach to it, see O'Hogan, "Thirty Years of the 'Jeweled Style.'"

2   Changing worlds of late antiquity

A recent study by Ben Hutchinson of *Lateness and Modern European Literature* shows how deeply European sensibilities have been and still can be imprinted by their subjects' sense of the belatedness of their own time in the long history-to-date of a civilization or tradition. The period covered by Hutchinson's book, from the aftermath of the French Revolution to the aftermath of the Second World War, is the one during which the cultural-historical concept of 'late antiquity' came to visibility. It is also the period of the gestation, birth and ascendancy of what I am calling the western classic, and of the emergence of the modern (European, western) idea of 'literature.' In literary-historical terms, the bridge of Hutchinson's modernity reaches from (late) romanticism to (late) modernism and has *fin-de-siècle* 'decadence' for its central span.

Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la décadence, Verlaine wrote in 1883. The influence of neo-classical and romantic models of the decline of empires and civilizations on representations of (later) ancient Greek and Roman artistic and literary culture has been well studied.[14] As Hutchinson notes, Winckelmann's positing of "a fourth, decadent phase" of artistic production in classical antiquity, associated with the Roman imperial period and given over to those he dubbed "the imitators," was one of the earliest expressions of German interest in "forms of lateness." Countervailingly, it was the Viennese art historian Aloïs Riegl who, in a 1901 monograph on *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, gave fresh currency to the idiom of 'late antiquity' as a relatively non-prejudicial way of designating the artistic spirit (*Kunstwollen*) of an age no longer 'classical' and none the worse for it.[15] Very quickly, German-speaking historians in other fields adopted Riegl's usage and overlaid a time-frame for *die Späntike* ('late antiquity') on the standard tripartition of Eurocentric world-time into Antiquity, Middle Age(s) and Modernity. Routinely used as a period-concept by such virtuoso romance philologists as Auerbach and Curtius, the idiom of 'late antiquity' was given a further twist by the French classicist, ancient historian and Augustinian specialist Henri-Irénée Marrou, who in 1949 used it tentatively as shorthand for an intellectual, literary, artistic, political and religious culture that would have been common to Christian and non-Christian subjects of the Roman empire in both East and West during the century

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[14]   Contributions relevant to later Latin literature in Formisano and Fuhrer, *Décadence*.

[15]   Hutchinson, *Lateness and Modern European Literature*, 7 (Winckelmann), 11 (Riegl). On Riegl and "late antiquity," see Fowden, *Before and after Muhammad*, 26–44, with extensive references; Elsner, "Alois Riegl." Accounts of the emergence and development of the modern field of 'late antiquity' are now legion. For orientation, see James, "Rise and Function"; Markus, "Between Marrou and Brown"; Rebenich, "Late Antiquity in Modern Eyes"; Clark, *Late Antiquity*; Inglebert, "Introduction: Late Antique Conceptions of Late Antiquity." For a selection of responses to a perceived crisis in the field, see the essays in Muehlberger, "Late Antiquity and the New Humanities: An Open Forum," and Lizzi Testa, *Late Antiquity in Contemporary Debate*. Wood, *Transformation of the Roman West* at once advances the debate surrounding the transition from Roman to post-Roman polities in the regions of the former western empire and returns it to the ground mapped out by past masters, including (see following note) Marrou and Brown. None of the above studies, it should be emphasized, is primarily concerned with issues in *literary* history.

or so between Constantine and the Vandal invasion of North Africa.[16] In his last book, published in 1977, Marrou extended the range of *l'antiquité tardive* to take in the period between the third and sixth centuries.[17] In the meantime, as continental Latinists like Fuhrmann, Fontaine and Herzog staked out a 'Latin literature of late antiquity,' the Anglo-Irish, Protestant-raised, Oxford-trained (medieval) historian Peter Brown, in a stylishly written, attractively illustrated trade book of 1971, had pushed the temporal limits of the "world of late antiquity" back to the second century and forward to the eighth, flung its geographical boundaries far beyond the crowded "frog-pond" of the Mediterranean, and set within this enlarged historiographical frame a cluster of finely spun narratives of social and cultural continuity and change that left no space for the old one of Decline and Fall.[18]

Brown's upbeat, expansive vision of late antiquity has been hugely influential. As he himself has made clear, the optimism of that vision and its expansiveness were correlated from the start. At Oxford in the late 1950s, against a background of anxiety about the onset of a "new barbarism" in Europe—the same anxiety that elicited the most eloquent and strident manifestos of the western classic—Brown had settled down to "a dogged *guerrilla* against the dominant, melodramatic notion of the decline and fall of the Roman empire." As that personal *guerrilla* was enabled by new work on social mobility and the formation of elites in all periods of the empire, so it drew heavily on studies of its "Greek-speaking and oriental provinces." By the mid-1960s, lecturing on "Byzantium and its Northern and Eastern Neighbours, 527–700 AD" and rethinking Pirenne in the light of Braudel and others, Brown had found a vantage-point from which to compose *The World of Late Antiquity* (originally subtitled: *From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammed*), a book that—in the words of its introduction—would "gravitate towards the eastern Mediterranean" and find its natural end-point "at the Baghdad of Harun al-Rashid" rather than "at the remote Aachen of his contemporary, Charlemagne."[19]

There was something else too. By 1967, when Brown's biography of Augustine came out, its author had by his own admission "lived in harness too long with the greatest mind in Latin Christendom" and "wanted out."[20] *The World of Late Antiquity* knowingly skimped on "the West" in order to modify something that Brown on the last page of the book called "the western imagination." At that point in his narrative, the ideal "student of Late Antiquity" came forth as one "who realize[d] how much European culture," understood in a broad sense and over the *longue durée*, "owe[d] to the fruitful exchange between the populations of the Fertile Crescent," and who therefore recognized at how great a cost to itself a "western Europe" of the early Middle Ages had been left—as Brown put it,

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[16] Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (reissued with a "Retractatio," 1949), 694–96; Vessey, "Demise of the Christian Writer"; Wood, *Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages*, 277–86.

[17] Marrou, *Décadence romaine*. See too his important earlier statement in "Civilisation de l'antiquité tardive."

[18] Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*. Brown's book was already decisive for the turn taken by Marrou's *Décadence romaine* (see previous note).

[19] Brown, "World of Late Antiquity Revisited," 13–16; *World of Late Antiquity*, 9.

[20] Brown, "World of Late Antiquity Revisited," 16.

shortly before the UK and Republic of Ireland joined the European Common Market—"to create an identity of its own."[21]

Appearing two years before Kermode's T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures on *The Classic* and seven years ahead of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Peter Brown's *World of Late Antiquity* ran discreetly yet decisively counter to the dominant and hegemonic discourse of mid-twentieth-century, western European, North Atlantic, collective cultural self-fashioning. While the western classic of literary modernism is not among Brown's habitual reference-points, there is no doubt that the mindset crystallized in that conceit was the very one against which he had launched his *guerrilla* in the 1950s. A certain narrative positioning of Augustine was no less integral to the discourse that he set out to undermine than the role of Dante in the modernist constructions of Eliot, Curtius and Auerbach. "In the war years and post-war years," Brown recalls, Augustinian studies were still focused on "the relation between Augustine and the classical past."

> We were still encouraged to sit in on that most solemn and elevating of all track events: the relay race of the formation of Western Christian civilization. In this relay race, Augustine is seen to have picked up the baton brought to him by Plotinus—all the way from Plato and the ancient sages of Greece—and to pass it on triumphantly to Boethius, and thence to Thomas Aquinas, to Saint Bonaventure, and now, who knows, to an Étienne Gilson.[22]

Brown has always paid handsome tribute to the part played by mid-twentieth-century French liberal Catholic scholarship—including the all-important work of Marrou—in creating the conditions for a new science of late antiquity. He has also regularly protested against specious (Roman) Catholic narratives of long-term civilizational continuity. Turning Augustine the relay-runner for "Western Christian civilization" into Augustine "the late antique man," we now see, was one of the main tasks of his *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Brown's readiness, by the mid-1960s, to get out from under the weight of Augustine and explore a wider world of late antiquity was a corollary of his initiative in seeking to unharness "the greatest mind in Latin Christendom" from the burden of his ideological posterity, and so to unshackle posterity in general—or as much of it as was ready to be helped—from a certain, over-determined narrative of 'the West.'

To begin to account now for the variable forms taken by imagined 'worlds' of late antiquity in scholarship since 1971 is to enter a debate about historiographical aims and methods that has been going on for at least half of the half-century in question. An obvious point can be made straightaway. With each of the geopolitical shocks to 'our' world that, since the early 1970s, have unsettled a majoritarian 'western imagination' such as might once have ventured on Brown's *World of Late Antiquity* or any other volume in the Thames & Hudson "Library of European Civilization," the soundness of Brown's intuitions in making his 'world' as culturally diverse, hospitable and rich in its futures as he did has been confirmed again. That is not to say that his approach has ever held universal sway. Far from

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[21]   Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*, 203.
[22]   Brown, "Introducing Robert Markus," 183.

it. Other scholars have objected to the expansiveness of the Brownian conception of late antiquity and to its upbeat and transformationist—as opposed to downbeat and catastrophist—take on the historical transition to post-classical, post-Roman polities and cultures in the West.[23] Yet if there is a clear tendency in recent program-setting work in the field it is in favour of the globalizing, multicultural, comparatist option that Brown's *World of Late Antiquity* already advertised nearly fifty years ago and that Brown himself has continued to advance both as teacher and as impresario of the monograph series published since the early 1980s by the University of California Press under the banner of "The Transformation of the Classical Heritage"—a phrase still ironically redolent of the western classic.[24] In the spring of 2017, the same publisher brought out the first issue of a new online journal, *Studies in Late Antiquity*, which takes its bearings expressly from Brown's 1971 book.[25] More radically, in his manifesto-like *Before and after Muhammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (2014), Garth Fowden drew inspiration from *The World of Antiquity* to relaunch a cultural-historical periodization wide enough to contain a "mature" Islam as one of the formative presences—alongside rabbinic Judaism and patristic Christianity—for the western modernity that we now inhabit. In doing so, as he signals by his chapter-titles, Fowden takes us in time "Beyond Late Antiquity" and makes "An Eastward Shift" in space. In support of his case, he cites several examples of other recent historical projects that have carved out for their purposes a more than 'late antique' space-time in the first millennium.[26]

Something like a counter-example to Fowden's eastward-looking, millennial paradigm will be constituted by the new *Cambridge History of Later Latin Literature*, now in an advanced stage of preparation under the editorship of Gavin Kelly and Aaron Pelttari, both of the School of History, Classics and Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh.[27] While its main focus will be on what may be thought of as the central chronological area of late antiquity, and its lower terminus of 700 CE will be slightly earlier than the one chosen for the incomplete HLL, *CHLLL* will begin its coverage unusually early for an account of 'late' or 'later' Latin literature, ca. 100 CE. The aim of that early start, as the editors have explained to contributors, is to take advantage of the quantity and quality of evidence for the state of Latin literary culture around 100, so as then to be able to observe how the culture changed over the following centuries. At a moment in scholarship when long-held assumptions about the novelty and distinctiveness of a distinctively 'late antique' aesthetic or poetics are under increasing challenge from a more sweepingly classicistic and transhistorical theory of deep-woven intertextuality,[28] *CHLLL* proposes to historicize literary phenomena every step of

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[23]   See Wood, *Modern Origins*, 305–29.

[24]   Eligible books in the series are published under The Joan Palevsky Imprint in Classical Literature, with a dedication "In honor of beloved Virgil" and a line from the *Inferno*: "O degli altri poeti onore e lume..."

[25]   See the editorial statement launching the new publication, "Why Does the World Need a New Journal on Late Antiquity?" and the first article in the same issue: Humphries, "Late Antiquity and World History."

[26]   Fowden, *Before and after Muhammad*, 87–90. For discussion of Fowden's book and a presentation by its author, see "The First Millennium Refocused: Eine Debatte," *Millennium* 13 (2016): 3–66.

[27]   I write as a contributor to CHLLL and thank its editors for their encouragement of the present essay.

[28]   See nn. 12–13 above.

the way from Pliny's panegyric for Trajan to the turn of the seventh into the eighth century in post-Roman, Latinophone realms, for the sake of discerning whatever narratives of continuity and change may now at length emerge or be found still to hold up to scrutiny.

Viewed against the background of today's globalizing, culturally comparatist, eastward-shifting late antique studies (and I have said nothing about the new ascendancy of Byzantinism), a project like *CHLLL* could look at first sight like a throw-back, and *not* because of its early date of historical departure. As a growing scholarly population opts, if not for the Rest ahead of the West then for a West more cognizant of the Rest, this new literary history would once again plot a course from the 'literature' of classical, Graeco-Roman antiquity to a place and time in history where the vernacular 'literatures' of the future modern western European nation-states can finally be discovered springing up. And how better, indeed, could a Cambridge history end such a journey than as *CHLLL* will, in 'The Post-Roman British Isles,' where—a little after its appointed cut-off date, ca. 700—Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* would give a Latin paraphrase of the opening lines of an Anglo-Saxon poem on Genesis thrown off in a fit of divine inspiration by a party-shy cowherd?[29] Forty years after the Latin volume of the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* embarrassedly wrapped up its coverage for the Later Principate with a chapter on Apuleius, *CHLLL* will have brought its story comfortably down into the western Middle Ages.

It is of course too soon to say what *CHLLL* will do, let alone how it will be received. I wish to suggest, however, that one fruitful way for us to see that work when it appears would be as a timely enhancement of our existing means for pursuing, in *literary critical* and historical mode, a project of cultural reflection and collective self-critique launched half a century ago by Peter Brown.

3 'Later' Latin literature and the imagination of the West

Brown tells us that he almost missed the commission for *The World of Late Antiquity* when the letter of invitation "was blown into the prickly undergrowth of a neighbour's olive-grove... after it had been placed in the hole in the dry-stone terracing that served as a mail-box" for the house where he was holidaying in the south of France.[30] The letter was from Thomas Neurath, managing director of Thames & Hudson, and was sent at the prompting of Geoffrey Barraclough, general editor of that publisher's "Library of European Civilization" series, and soon to become Chichele Professor of Modern History at All Souls College, Oxford, of which Brown was a fellow. The title proposed for the book was already "The World of Late Antiquity."[31] The term "late antiquity," Brown has recalled, was then "relatively new" to him.

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[29] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.24.
[30] Brown, "World of Late Antiquity Revisited," 17.
[31] Ward-Perkins, "Making of the *World of Late Antiquity*," 7 n. 6.

It may well be [he goes on to say] that Barraclough himself suggested the title: his knowledge of German historiography, in which *Spätantike* already played a significant role, makes this likely. I had usually been content with "late Roman". It was the new geographical spread of my interests that eroded the traditional, political definition of the field.[32]

Although this hint has been floating on the *mistral* of scholarly gossip for nearly a quarter of a century now, Geoffrey Barraclough's role as midwife of Anglo-American 'studies in late antiquity' appears so far to have gone uncelebrated. As soon as we look, however, we discover that he was already a sharp critic of forms of the western imagination cognate with what I have been calling the western classic. "Scarcely a day goes by," he wrote in 1947, the year after his study of *The Origins of Modern Germany* was published,

without our reading or hearing of "our inherited cultural tradition", the typical values of western civilisation", "the idea of European coherence"—or, more simply, "our western tradition", "our western values", "our western culture." No set of ideas has become more commonplace, none been more assiduously drummed into our ears, since the end of the war. In part, this new emphasis on the inherited traditions of our civilisation is a reflection of our awareness of crisis; it shows a tardy realization on our part that the dangers confronting the contemporary world... can only be averted if they are counterbalanced by a far more intensive knowledge than our generation seems yet to possess, of the enduring elements upon which the structure of civilisation rests. And that is all to the good. What is more dubious is the implication that the enduring values and traditions of civilisation are linked, in some unique way, with western Europe.[33]

Instrumental for Barraclough's critique of the contemporary construction of a 'western culture' was the period- and culture-concept of *die Spätantike* or 'late antiquity,' which he was the first Anglophone scholar, by a decade and a half, to use to any purpose. "[I]t seems to me," he wrote in another essay of around the same time,

that we live in an age of change, in a sense different from that in which every age may be described as an age of change, and that there is therefore likely to be particular gain for us in studying and endeavouring to comprehend the other great ages of change in the history of our civilisation, the turning-points and periods of spiritual turmoil when Europe passed through a major crisis. For this reason I have devoted particular attention to the "seminal ages", *the period of late Antiquity*, the crisis at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the problem of the age of the Reformation, and the impact of the French Revolution... [I]t has seemed to me imperative *at this critical juncture in the history of European civilisation*, to re-examine afresh such concepts as "the European inheritance", "the values of European civilization", "the idea of European coherence", or, more simply, the limits and divisions of European history.[34]

How seriously Barraclough meant those claims appears already from the first of the essays quoted above from a 1955 collection of his, designed for a general

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[32]   Brown, "World of Late Antiquity Revisited," 17.

[33]   Barraclough, *History in a Changing World* (ch. 2: "The Continuity of European Tradition"), 31. The timeliness of Barraclough's critical intervention is well seen by Federici, "God That Never Failed," 70-71.

[34]   Barraclough, *History in a Changing World*, 12, 14 (emphases added).

readership and entitled *History in a Changing World*. His aim was to call in question the regnant, post-war conviction of "the continuity of European tradition" by looking again at the history of late antiquity as one of several "seminal ages." His conclusion—that a historically mistaken view of the emergence and continuity of "a common western European civilization" posed an obstacle to political progress in the Cold War era—was reinforced by another aspect of his historianship that is worth underlining here: its urgently global perspective. Historical research, he affirmed, should always have some constructive bearing on the discourse of the present. The history that was needed in 1955 had to be, or aspire to be, "a history that looks beyond Europe and the west to humanity in all lands and ages."[35] Although not all Barraclough's positions remain tenable from a scholarly point-of-view, his critique of the "parochialism" of mid-century assertions of the long-term continuity of the "classical tradition" and the providential role of Christianity in safeguarding such a tradition from the break-up of the western Roman empire makes for astringent reading even now.

"By general consent," Barraclough wrote, "three great problems dominate the history of Europe"—and the first of those was "the problem of late antiquity." Among leading historians who could at the time be credited with creating a consensus around late antiquity was the "great Belgian historian, [Henri] Pirenne," who "argued forcefully, and not without justification, that the Dark Ages belong in reality not to mediaeval history but to the last phase of the Mediterranean civilisation of Antiquity." Barraclough lamented how deftly "the writings of Pirenne, and the new perspectives they opened up" had been assimilated by his fellow medieval historians, when what the latter should have done, according to him, was "to scrap the traditional framework and erect a new one better fitted to house the results which Pirenne and others of his contemporaries won."[36] There was the delayed-action trigger for *The World of Late Antiquity*, a book that—no less by its attention to the early expansion of Islam than by its own expansive coverage of the East—would outflank Barraclough's critique of mainstream, postwar Occidentalism, and inaugurate a new, conscientious Orientalism in British and wider Anglophone late ancient and first-millennial studies.

Pirenne was no promoter of the western classic. Indeed, his narrative of the "closing" of the Mediterranean under Islam should have had the power to shut down any and every mystically accessionist view of the providential, long-term, classical-Christian continuity of European civilization before it could assume mid-twentieth-century shape. As Barraclough pointed out, however, Pirenne's peers had been quicker to metabolize his thesis than to grant its full disruptive force. Nor was the interwar epoch of the delayed *Mahomet et Charlemagne* propitious for dismantling myths of European cultural coherence over the *longue durée*. Worse, in a sense, was to come. In his 1948 masterwork, Curtius turned 'Romania'—Pirenne's occasional term for the (former) geographical orbit of Rome's

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[35]   Barraclough, *History in a Changing World*, 19.
[36]   Barraclough, *History in a Changing World*, 159, 58, 62.

power—into the millennial dreamworld of a 'Latin' Middle Ages running all the way to Goethe.[37]

Having come back via *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* to the acme of the western classic, we may now observe that an alternative, updated version of Pirenne's postulate of a Dark Age belonging "not to mediaeval history but to the last phase of the Mediterranean civilisation of Antiquity" (Barraclough) is still called for in our present "critical juncture" to interpret the later-ness of the *Cambridge History of Later Latin Literature. CHLLL*, we have seen, will begin earlier than most modern worlds of late antiquity. But it is the work's sense of the (or an) ending of later Latin literature that will perhaps be most apt to raise questions. What sense—other than a merely pragmatic or prejudicially classicizing one—will it now make to arrest or even pause a history of Latin literature precisely where Pirenne set a term to what he called "the tradition of antiquity," a tradition represented by him as having been in steady decline for several centuries by then?[38] The *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*, by prospectively identifying a "Latin literature of *late* antiquity" as the "first post-Roman, *Latin* literature of Europe," left open the question of how that and other post-Roman literatures of Europe, in Latin or other languages, might be related to each other. By the same stroke, HLL reserved (until later!) discussion of how a first post-Roman, Latin literature might be placed on a global-historical map of literature(s). Thanks to the work of the original HLL generation, born between the 1920s and 1940s, today's scholarly (re)producers of a later Latin literature in *CHLLL* and elsewhere have been free to take the demise of the old western classic and its ideological congeners for granted. What critical narratives and scenarios will they set in place of it for the mid-twenty-first century?

Early (western) medievalists in less literary disciplines, catching up on the agenda set by Geoffrey Barraclough in the 1950s, have spent the last fifty years reframing Pirenne's problem of the historical genesis of a post-Roman world order in a west before 'the West' of early twentieth-century western imagination. Like Barraclough, they have been actuated to do so by their sense of responsibility as historians, in an ever-changing world, to make narrative, comparative and other kinds of present sense of historical data from all periods and regions. During the long abeyance of HLL, 'literary' late antique studies have struck out in new directions too, some of them—especially in the last few years—consistent with the globalizing trend of late antique studies at large. However *CHLLL* may style and present itself, any future use of it as a work of reference may be expected to take continuous account of such developments.

At this point, a recapitulation that is also, and that turns into, a projection:

Recapitulation. The European, romantic-era promotion of national, post-classical, vernacular literatures set a disciplinary-ideological bulwark between Greek and Latin philology on the one hand and modern and medieval philologies on the other. The division of faculties was made easier by the expedient—dictated by

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[37] Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 34: "Only from within Romania does one obtain a true picture of the course of modern literature." See now Imbert, *Romania*.

[38] Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, 118: "It is needless to insist on the increasing decadence of intellectual life and of the ancient culture after the 3rd century."

religion, good taste and Enlightenment secularism—of leaving a cordon sanitaire several centuries wide where the 'literatures' of apostolic, gnostic and patristic Christianity in Greek, Latin and other languages must have lain, along with those of rabbinic Judaism and the formative period of Islam, had their texts been thought to fall within the province of Literature as such. This academic carve-up of intricately entangled discursive realities entailed no risks for beneficiaries of the hegemonically Euro-Christian world order imagined by the Congress of Vienna, as long as that order was not itself existentially troubled. When trouble came, on an almost apocalyptic scale, a western literary classic, incubated in German and French romanticism, heavy with nostalgia for a European Christendom that pre-dated Reformation confessionalism and the rise of modern nation-states, rose to meet the emergency. So it came to pass that, for more than half a century, the insular-cosmopolitan, American-medieval pseudo-historicism of T.S. Eliot served in place of a rationale for higher English literary studies in Britain, the United States and other Anglophone academic jurisdictions,[39] and the only widely authorized guides to the literary-historical underworld between Statius and Dante were the twin prodigies, typological and topological, of Auerbach's *Mimesis* and Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (both published in English in 1953 under the auspices of a US foundation dedicated to popularizing the work of Carl Jung). Now and again an Anglophone comparatist—C.S. Lewis, Northrop Frye or D.W. Robertson, Jr.— might drop in on an unnamed world of late antiquity,[40] but their interventions could no more shape a corresponding domain of literary research than could, say, the expository raids on Augustine's *Confessions* made by readers of all stripes who rightly took it for a text of extraordinary literary-historical and literary-theoretical interest. The shaping of a disciplinary or subdisciplinary field of late antique (Latin) *literary* studies could only be the work of specialists, the majority of whom would in due course be latergoing classical Latinists. By the end of the 1980s, a draft manifesto for such a field was to be found in the closely written early pages of Volume 5 of HLL. Those pages already pointed a way out of the pseudo-historical short-circuit of the western classic.[41] But only specialists read HLL 5, and few of them, so far, have followed where Reinhart Herzog led in attempting to situate work on late antiquity within literary studies at large. The upshot of this continuing disciplinary or subdisciplinary weakness can be seen at a glance in a new study that tries to place what it calls "late classical Latin literature" in a global-historical perspective. The arguments of the "late classical" section of Walter Cohen's meticulously researched *History of*

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[39]   See now Collini, *Nostalgic Imagination*, ch. 1.
[40]   Sidelights on Frye's and Lewis's excursuses into that field in Vessey, "Boethius in the Genres of the Book." D. W. Robertson, Jr., an eminent Chaucer scholar, pioneered the modern study of Augustine's hermeneutical and semiological treatise, *De doctrina christiana*, by publishing an English translation of it in an American textbook series in 1958.
[41]   See esp. HLL 5, 18: "Indessen hat immer wieder das Ausmaß verblüfft, mit dem die antiken Gattungen scheinbar bruchlos von christlichen Schriftstellern fortgesetzt wurden. Es paßte nicht zu der Vorstellung eines direkten und dramatischen Epochenwandels von der Antike zum Mittelalter, geprägt durch eine *Auseinandersetzung von Antike und Christentum*, und es hat wesentlich die Kontinuitätsthese Curtius'... veranlaßt. Freilich konnte diese die Konturen einer auch literarisch unverwechselbaren Epoche nicht hervortreten lassen," etc.

European Literature: The West and the World from Antiquity to the Present, which is partly an overwriting of Curtius's (Christian) Latin Middle Ages, reveal an acquaintance with general historical treatments of late antiquity and the later Roman empire, including the work of Peter Brown, and with recent literary scholarship on... Apuleius and Augustine. Of literary-historical narrative or synthesis prior to Cohen's own there is scarcely a trace besides Auerbach.[42] But then what was there to be found, that Cohen missed? As far as most students of world literature are concerned, later Latin literature—the Latin literature of later antiquity, whether classically or otherwise defined—is still *terra incognita*, because specialists in that field have so far so largely kept it to themselves. *CHLLL* should change that.

Projection. One of the impulses for Cohen's book was given as far back as 1993 in an essay contributed by Franco Moretti to an Italian *History of Europe*. Entitled "Modern European Literature: A Geographical Sketch," the essay took issue with Curtius's vision of an enduringly Romanocentric, classical-Christian, European literary culture, seeking instead to explain "the greatness of European literature... by its relative distance from the classical inheritance."[43] One reference for Moretti was a statement by Geoffrey Barraclough in a 1963 lecture on *European Unity in Thought and Action*, where the British historian observed that "[t]he idea of Europe as a distinct unity [was] postclassical," "a result of the collapse of the universalism of the Roman empire," and more particularly of the collapse of the Carolingian empire, seen as the last attempt for several centuries to impose a Roman-style supranational order.[44] Barraclough's insistence on the historical *post-classicality* of an "idea of Europe" capable of bearing the symbolic weight laid upon it in the modern era is of a piece with his critique of mystificatory, post-war constructs of a long and unitary western culture—a critique that, as we have seen, lay somewhere behind the commission for Brown's *World of Late Antiquity*.[45] As cited by Moretti against Curtius, this line of argument not only drives another nail into the coffin of the modernist literary classic of western imagination but also serves to underline that when Herzog in HLL characterized the Latin literature of late antiquity as the first post-Roman, Latin literature of Europe, he too was trading in commodities that, on a hint from Fowden, we might think of as "visible futures."[46]

To discard the western classic is not, of course, to slip out of the historian's or literary critic's responsibility to make pasts meaningful in the present, and for others besides one's fellow specialists in a subdisciplinary field. Herzog, as a close reader of Gadamer, had perfect clarity on that point. But one need not be a paid-up Gadamerian in order to conform to the hermeneutical model of *Truth and*

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[42] Cohen, *History of European Literature*, 65–76. For Curtius, see 493–95.

[43] Moretti, "Modern European Literature," 37.

[44] Moretti, "Modern European Literature," 7 n. 8. Barraclough argued this thesis in detail in his *Crucible of Europe*.

[45] Above, at n. 34.

[46] Cf. Fowden, *Before and after Muhammad*, 3: "As with China and India, *an already visible future* in which Islam will be increasingly prominent has to be brought into play if historians are to formulate questions that elucidate our ongoing quandaries rather than reinforcing Eurocentric stereotypes about the past and present" (emphasis added).

Method, or something like it. Peter Brown, that (ostensibly) least philosophical of historians of the Roman empire and its after-states, again provides a telling instance. Having first played a leading role in recovering a lively, recognizably 'late antique' Augustine of Hippo from amid the encrusted 'Augustines' and Augustin(ian)isms of ecclesiastical tradition, and then in *The World of Late Antiquity* modelled an escape from the constraints of a Carolingian and post-Carolingian 'western imagination' of the history of civilization, Brown went on, after an interval for other projects, to devote some twenty years of nearly continuous scholarly labour to developing a revisionist account (in a book with that title, and two other books) of *The Rise of Western Christendom*.[47]

Ideally, critique of master narratives that are found wanting is prelude to a historiography that is rigorously of its own time and world, true to its own critical juncture. The 'non-literary' historiography of the newest late antiquity knows that. One of the opportunities presented by *CHLLL* is of belatedly deploying our study of the Latin literature of late antiquity—whatever we collectively or severally now take that literature to be—towards an account of the late-to-post-Roman (re)culturing of wests and of *the* West, 'literature' included.[48] Putting a period to the western classic will have been the first step in that direction.[49]

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[47] He gives his own account of this trajectory in "World of Late Antiquity Revisited," 23–24. See esp. his *Rise of Western Christendom*, 2nd edn. (2003), Introduction ("Western Europe in a Wider World," "The Making of Europe: 'A History of European Unity?'"...). See also Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle* and *Ransom of the Soul*.

[48] Cf. Derrida, *Demeure*, 21: "Does there exist, in the strict and literal meaning of the word, something like literature, like an institution of literature and a right to literature in a non-Latin-Roman-Christian culture, and, more generally, although things are indissociable in their history, non-European culture? Nothing is less certain." Derrida then critiques Curtius. See also Vessey, "Literature, Literary Histories, Latin Late Antiquity," with references there.

[49] My warm thanks to interlocutors at the "Winkelmann's Victims" symposium in Ghent in the fall of 2018, where this paper was originally read, to Andrew Faulkner and his colleagues and students at the University of Waterloo (Canada), where another version of it was aired a year later, and to David Ganz, Ian Wood and two superlative readers for JOLCEL (ahead of the present respondent, whom I also thank) for further improvements to the foregoing.

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CURRENT CONTRIBUTION

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NOTE

This contribution is part of a larger dialogue of three articles and one responding piece that form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are "Writing in a World of Strangers: The Invention of Jewish Literature Revisited" by Irene Zwiep (pp. 1–20) and "A Critical Juncture: 'Later' Latin Literature, the Newest Late Antiquity, and the Period of the Western Classic" by Mark Vessey (pp. 22–42). The response piece is "Ins and Outs and Opened and Closed" by Danuta Shanzer (pp. 66–77).

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The Ordeal of a Sixth-Century Josef K: Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* as a Modernist Drama

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Abstract

In recent scholarship, several views have been propounded on the argumentative inconsistencies in Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae* and the inconclusiveness of its ending. In this article, it is argued that modern scholars still, perhaps unconsciously, adhere to aristotelian concepts of unity, coherence, and closure, which may not be helpful in assessing what Boethius is really trying to say. When analysed from a perspective usually associated with modernist literature, it becomes clear that Boethius' swan song is neither a deconstruction of 'pagan' philosophy nor an implicit plea for Christian spirituality but an existential drama in which religion and philosophy do not provide any consolation.

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1 Introduction

Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae* has been a classic for at least thirteen centuries,[1] but do we really understand what it is about or how the author intended it to be interpreted? Until recently, the book's presumed title was taken at face value and most modern scholars still believe in its soothing potential. Others, however, pay attention to problems regarding the argumentative structure and to the prisoner's conspicuous taciturnity at the end of the work, suggesting that eventually the character, or the author, was not consoled at all. One scholar,

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[1] After two and a half centuries of obscurity, the work was introduced to Carolingian circles by Alcuin. From the end of the eighth century, it was an extremely popular book; it is transmitted in more than 400 manuscripts. On its reception, see e.g. Nauta, "The *Consolation*: the Latin commentary tradition, 800-1700," 255–78, and Wetherbee, "The *Consolation* and medieval literature," 279–302.

referring to its 'Menippean' ancestry,[2] even argued that *De consolatione Philosophiae* (henceforth *DcPh*) should be seen as a parody of philosophical discourse.

In this paper, I take my cue from the significant strand in recent scholarship concentrating on possible inconsistencies in *DcPh*'s plot and argumentation. Most prominent here are publications by Marenbon, Relihan, and Donato, to be discussed below. Notwithstanding the differences in their approaches, however, the scholars' interpretative strategies appear to coincide in a crucial point: their strong and possibly inevitable tendency to look for coherence and closure.[3] In this respect, they all prove to be heirs to the 'classical', say Aristotelian, tradition of western readership. Well-written books are supposed to be coherent in that they display unbroken threads of narrative or argumentation and end in satisfactory conclusions. If *DcPh* lacks these characteristics and we still wish to consider it a successful work, it must either be unfinished or a parody. Or does it?

Framing the book as a late-antique or early-medieval classic affiliated to familiar genres such as *consolatio*, philosophical dialogue, or Menippean satire does not seem to be entirely satisfying, as I hope to demonstrate. Equally unconvincing I find interpretations inferring *e silentio* that *DcPh* is a hidden plea for Christian spirituality, although it is clear that in real life the author was a Christian. Instead, I propose to approach *DcPh* from a different angle, informed by my reading of Kafka, Beckett, and Orwell. After having given a synopsis of the work, I will discuss a few important voices in modern criticism, which leads to the vexed question of what it means to be, or to be seen as, 'classical'. In my view, the urge to construe a harmony of form and content, deemed so typical of 'classical' works of arts, causes a misunderstanding of what happens in *DcPh*. Reading it from a perspective usually associated with modernist literature may yield a more satisfying, though heartbreaking, interpretation. That is what I intend to make plausible in this paper. To begin with, however, we must look at two famous characters in utter distress.

2   Josef K. and Oedipus

"Jemand mußte Josef K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet."[4] The opening sentence of Kafka's *Der Proceß* (1914) embodies the essence of the deeply pessimistic worldview we have

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[2]   Menippean satire, named after the Syrian philosopher Menippus of Gadara (third century BC), consists in a combination of prose and poetry; in the first quarter of twelfth century, the term *prosimetrum* was coined by Hugh of Bologna. Quintilian, *De institutione oratoria* 10.1.95, distinguishes the genre from regular *satura*, without using the term *menippea*. Unfortunately, it is difficult to prove that ancient readers had clear ideas about the genre's characteristics. See Freudenburg, "Introduction," 20, and, "Citation and authority in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*," 95. An important study of prosimetrical texts in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, associating their polyphony with Mikhail Bakhtin, is Dronke, *Verse with Prose*.

[3]   Smith, *Poetic Closure*, 2, defines closure as a "sense of stable conclusiveness, finality, or 'clinch' which we experience" at the ending of a literary work; "a structure appears 'closed' when it is experienced as integral: coherent, complete, and stable." Fowler, "Second Thoughts on Closure," 5, emphasizes that closure may not be an aspect of the work itself but is attributed by the reader's response.

[4]   "Somebody must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, assuming he had not done anything evil, he was arrested," Kafka, *Der Proceß*, 9. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

become accustomed to call kafkaesque, according to which human existence is situated within a fundamentally incomprehensible universe.[5] Cruel absurdity, the absence of justice, ruthless repression by anonymous and unaccountable powers characterize Kafka's fictional world, in which the protagonist's attempts to save himself fatally enhance his gruesome plight. In this respect, Kafka has become an icon of modernist literature: his works are believed to express the anxieties typical of post-Christian European culture in the twentieth century. It might be argued that Oedipus, in Sophocles' tragedy, finds himself in an ordeal similar to Josef K.'s, in that he also ruins his own life by trying to solve problems he did not bring about consciously, which nonetheless does not reduce his responsibility.[6] For Oedipus, the only way out is by procuring his own demise.

Differences between the tragedy and the novel, however, are more important than the similarities. Oedipus may be the tragic victim of the combined forces of fate and his outstanding personal qualities, but at the end of the play he completely understands what has happened and courageously accepts the consequences. Although the nature of fate and the gods remains mysterious, both playwright and audience assume divine order to be consistent. For Josef K., on the other hand, the world is utterly incomprehensible. In the end, he may accept the inevitability of his execution, but his passive compliance is not dictated by understanding: he does not even understand his own motives. Moreover, the author denies us any clues to explain what happens to Josef K. We never learn why he is arrested and which factors operate the system, if any, that destroys him.

The prisoner's situation in *DcPh* may be compared with what happens to Josef K. and Oedipus. Arrested and sentenced to death as an innocent man (at least that is what he makes us believe), he finds himself trapped in a system which reduces him to a pawn in an inscrutable game of both political and metaphysical chess. Like Oedipus, he has come to understand the inevitability of his helplessness, but unlike the tragic hero, he does not meekly accept it. Like Josef K., he stubbornly (albeit politely) persists in resistance until he has to reluctantly acknowledge the overriding power of Philosophy's arguments. He may resign, seeing that there is no way out, but he does not consent. The author leaves us in an uncomfortable situation of inconclusiveness.

3 Synopsis of *DcPh*

De consolatione Philosophiae, if that is its correct title,[7] was written by Boethius when he was imprisoned (in the fall of 523 CE) by the Ostrogothic king Theodoric

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[5]   A fine essay on Kafka is Bloom, "Kafka: Canonical Patience and 'Indestructibility'," in his *The Western Canon*, 416–30.

[6]   On Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, see Hall, *Greek Tragedy*, 302–5, with bibliography, 389–91.

[7]   In the medieval manuscripts, the title is given as *Philosophiae consolatio* or *De consolatione Philosophiae*; see *apparatus criticus* in Boethius, *De consolatione Philosophiae*, 3 (this is the edition I will refer to; in accordance with the scholarly tradition, prose passages will be indicated by *pr* and poems by *m* (= metrum)). Since the word *consolatio* or its cognates are not found in the text of the work itself, it is doubtful which title Boethius had in mind for it, if any. Since I do not believe the work to provide consolation, I hesitantly opt for *De consolatione Philosophiae*, meaning that the book may be *about* consolation, without the implication of being consolatory itself.

and may have realized he would be executed within the not too distant future (although he does not say so clearly).[8] Since the work, counting five *libri*, is not dedicated to a friend or patron, which is unusual for literary texts of this period, the author may have composed it to console himself in the first place, but its well-considered prosimetrical structure and elaborate style rule out the possibility that it is merely meant to give vent to the frustrations and distress of one particular individual. We do not know how long he had to wait for his execution, but he must have been dead by 526. Neither do we know anything concerning the physical or material conditions of his imprisonment. Was he allowed to see visitors or to read books? He does not tell us.[9]

In the first book, a nameless prisoner is visited by a supernatural lady who after a couple of pages turns out to be Philosophy herself.[10] He complains about the injustice he has suffered, she intends to cure him of his mental illness by showing the irrelevance of earthly goods and demonstrating the perfection of the divine world order. At first, the prisoner seems to be willing to follow her argument, but when, at the end of Book 3, Philosophy claims to have proven her points, the prisoner protests (3.pr12.30–35). He believes her reasoning to be circular, which she, to his bewilderment, is happy to confirm (3.pr12.36–38). Book 3 is concluded in a song about Orpheus, who by looking back loses both his wife and the opportunity to retrieve his bliss.

In the opening paragraph of Book 4, the prisoner politely interrupts Philosophy. He clearly does not want to talk about the otherworldly metaphysical constructs of Neoplatonism and more or less forces her to discuss justice and injustice in the sublunary domain. She then explains that human perception of justice is mistaken: being harassed by successful criminals may be experienced as unfair, but seen from a divine perspective everything is just OK. Although this does not seem very comforting to the prisoner, he grudgingly agrees, not being able to refute Philosophy's argumentation. He has, however, one more question: if it be true that God is the ruler of the universe, what freedom to think and to act do we have as individual agents?

This is the theme of the fifth and final book. Philosophy makes a distinction between human existence situated in time on the one hand, and eternal divine providence on the other. From the perspective of God, everything takes place at one timeless moment, which implies its inalterability. For human beings, life is chaotic and incomprehensible. They may certainly choose between good and evil, but God already knows the outcome. Now, the prisoner refrains from

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8   In *DcPh* 4.pr6.5 Philosophy hints to the fact that the prisoner's time is limited (*angusto limite temporis*). On the circumstances of Boethius' demise, detention, and execution, see Chadwick, *Boethius*, 56–68; Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 10–14; Moorhead, "Boethius' life and the world of late antiquity," 18–22; Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition Between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople*, 138–44, 163–84.

9   In 1.pr1.14 a *lectulus* (little bed) is mentioned; in the next poem Philosophy speaks about chains (*pressus grauibus colle catenis*, 1.m2.25), but these may be interpreted symbolically. In 1.pr4.3 the prisoner complains about the loss of his library, subsequently described as richly adorned in 1.pr5.6 (Philosphy speaking). Both Glei, "In carcere et vinculis?", 225–38, and Reiss, "The fall of Boethius and the fiction of the *Consolatio Philosophiae*," 37–47, suggest that many details in *DcPh* may be fictive and symbolic.

10   The prisoner's name is never mentioned, but his speech in 1.pr4 abounds in details contemporary readers must have recognized as referring to Boethius.

responding.[11] He appears to be trapped in two ways: captive in jail, he is also denied real agency from a metaphysical point of view. The work is concluded in Philosophy's exhortation to pray.

4 Modern scholarship

In the view of both medieval and modern scholarship, *DcPh* is not so much an egodocument as an accomplished literary work of great beauty and philosophical depth addressed to a general audience. From the Carolingian period till today, it is rightly considered a highlight of late antique or early medieval literature. Most readers took its consolatory aims and success as self-evident.

If so many readers felt comforted by the book, cannot we conclude that this must be what the author intended to achieve? But what if all those readers, deluded by the book's purported title and supposed biographical context, failed to notice hints pointing at a different, less optimistic interpretation? Over the past forty years, several scholars discussed serious gaps and changes of direction in *DcPh*'s narrative and argumentative structure, proposing divergent solutions to explain them. I can only mention the most influential of these interpretations.[12]

Ever since Seth Lerer published *Boethius and Dialogue* in 1985, scholars have been debating at least three problems. Firstly, why does the prisoner stop responding to Philosophy's argument in the final half of the fifth book? Secondly, should the change of subject at the beginning of Book 4, where the prisoner refuses to follow Philosophy on her lofty path of abstract speculation about the nature of God and compels her to address the apparent lack of justice in human society, not be seen as Philosophy's failure to lead the prisoner away from human affairs? In other words, how successful is her consolatory strategy? Thirdly, how do the thirty-nine poems,[13] or songs, function within the work's narrative and dialectical structure? Is it helpful to invoke the generic label 'Menippean satire'?[14]

John Marenbon (2003) and Joel Relihan (2007) discuss the indisputable fact that, while the first three books show a steady ascent from personal catastrophe to spiritual enlightenment, the final books return to the human level of ethics and individual agency, due to the prisoner's insistence on his horrible

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[11] The ending of the prisoner's speech in 5.pr3.36 seems to be his final utterance, unless we also attribute the ensuing song (5.m3) to the same speaker. Afterwards, there are only two instances (5.pr6.19 and 40) where a (rhetorical) question formulated by Philosophy is answered by the single word *minime* ("no, certainly not"). In the first instance, it might be argued that the prisoner is the speaker, although it is more probable that Philosophy responds to her own question; the second *minime* is certainly spoken by her. See Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 400, and a more detailed discussion in Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue*, 229–30, who suggests that the attribution may be deliberately ambiguous.

[12] An immense number of books and articles is devoted to *DcPh*, and the debate goes on. Overviews of scholarship can be found in Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 405–44; Marenbon, *Boethius*, 219–35, and Magee and Marenbon, "Bibliography," 311–39. The first in-depth study of *DcPh*'s sources and models is Courcelle, *La* Consolation de philosophie *dans la tradition littéraire*. See also Crabbe, "Literary Design in the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*," 237–74.

[13] Marenbon, *Boethius*, 146–47, mistakenly speaks of forty-two poems.

[14] Although *DcPh* may be compared to other prosimetrical texts from Antiquity, it is absolutely unique in the regularity with which prose and poetry alternate, and in the variety of metrical forms. See Donato, *Boethius'* Consolation of Philosophy *as a Product of Late Antiquity*, 104–6.

circumstances.[15] Instead of arguing that his questions are irrelevant from the perspective of Neoplatonist spirituality as explained in Book 3, Philosophy seriously but slightly inconsistently tries to respond to his anxieties without ever gaining his full assent. The dialogue does not end in a satisfactory conclusion and the prisoner is never represented as serenely consoled. Even worse, Book 5 is abruptly closed by Philosophy's surprising call to prayer (5.pr6.47) which appears to contradict her view of God's inaccessibility.[16]

Marenbon, as philosopher clearly taken aback by the argument's inconsistencies,[17] feels obliged to make plausible they are deliberate: in his view, Boethius intended to demonstrate the limits of philosophical discourse. Since *DcPh* "juxtaposes the Christian Boethius with a non-Christian Philosophy, any shortcomings in Philosophy's views can be read as pointing to the limitations of philosophy for Christians."[18] The prosimetrical form is of essence because Philosophy uses the poetry "as a way of adumbrating truths that she cannot capture through straightforward philosophical reasoning."[19]

To Relihan, a specialist in Roman satire, *DcPh* is a Menippean satire, an intertextually playful though essentially serious parody aimed at the deconstruction of classical philosophy, in order to implicitly show the superiority of Christian spirituality.[20] *DcPh* is to be seen "as a work that does not accomplish what it sets out to do" and "it does so intentionally, and [...] its larger goal is to demonstrate the limits of philosophy as understood, or misunderstood, by an author who refuses to accept its transcendent nature."[21] In Relihan's view, "the professed methods and intended goals of Philosophy are resisted by a prisoner who chooses the path to God of Christian prayer rather than of pagan transcendence."[22]

Antonio Donato (2013) may concur with Marenbon and Relihan in seeing Philosophy's threads of argumentation as inconsistent at first sight, but by adducing a host of different sources ranging from Plato to Proclus, he argues that Philosophy's therapeutical method is in agreement with Neoplatonist practices and late-antique rhetorical taste and education.[23] This statement, however, plausible though it may be, does not eliminate Philosophy's argumentative flaws, as is conceded by Donato himself.[24] Rightly stressing the compatibility of ancient

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[15] Marenbon, *Boethius*, 96–145, extensively analyses the argumentative structure. Relihan, *The Prisoner's Philosophy*, 15–33, offers his interpretation of the structure, referring to Marenbon.

[16] Some scholars have taken the unexpected ending as an indication for *DcPh*'s unfinished state. The problem is discussed by Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 403, and Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue*, 232–36.

[17] "Although Philosophy is presented as providing authoritative answers to the questions Boethius raises at the beginning of the work, the arguments she gives do not on scrutiny seem to fit together in supporting a single, coherent position." Marenbon, *Boethius*, 146.

[18] Marenbon, *Boethius*, 162.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "I claim that in reading *Consolation*, as in reading the other late classical Menippean satires, most scholars have simply missed the joke." Relihan, *The Prisoner's Philosophy*, 9. See also idem, "Late Arrivals," 109–22.

[21] Relihan, *The Prisoner's Philosophy*, 13.

[22] Ibid., 93.

[23] Donato, *Boethius' Consolation*, in particular 105–52.

[24] Ibid., 87–91.

philosophical culture with Christian views,[25] Donato, again in accordance with Marenbon and Relihan, assumes Boethius strove to demonstrate the limitations of philosophy: "He is a philosopher and his despair is, ultimately, caused by the realization that philosophy, which he considered, throughout his life, to be a reliable instrument for understanding the world, is actually unable to offer any answer;"[26] "I suggest that the *Consolation* reveals not *Philosophy*'s failures but her boundaries."[27] In order to be really consoled, the prisoner should not resort to ingenious dialectics but to the wisdom that can only be found in God.[28] It is this final step in Donato's argument I cannot agree with, as I will make clear below.

Stephen Blackwood (2015) is the first scholar to extensively analyse the thirty-nine poems as a musical, metrical, and spiritual sequence.[29] To him, there are no inconsistencies in *DcPh*, provided that one is willing to undergo the musical structure ritually, preferably more than once, almost subconsciously taking in its soothing qualities.[30] To Blackwood—and in this respect he is in agreement with Relihan and Donato—*DcPh* is a Christian project.

Different though these approaches may be, there is one aspect in which they all concur: they look for coherence, unity, and closure. They either construe the work in such a way as to prove its essential consistency (Lerer, Donato, Blackwood) or they interpret its perceived inconsistencies as the author's strategy to implicitly signal the ultimately disappointing contribution of pagan philosophy to happiness (Marenbon, Relihan). In both cases we read a book written by an expert philosopher exploring the limitations of his profession, suggesting, perhaps, that Christianity may offer the next step in spiritual satisfaction, although he does not say so explicitly.

5 Coherence and literary context

Perhaps it is only natural to expect a work of art to be more or less coherent. One of the factors leading to prehistoric art and oral literature must have been the urge to create surveyable scale models of (parts of) a world that in itself was experienced as overwhelmingly incomprehensible and dangerous.[31] Anyone telling a story constructs some kind of a plot, a chain of events having a beginning and an ending. And if the plot does not cohere in a transparent way, the audience will do their

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[25] Ibid., 166–72, shows "the extent to which Greco-Roman culture and Christianity were intrinsically integrated in Boethius' time and his cultural environment," 172.

[26] Ibid., 186.

[27] Ibid., 189.

[28] Ibid., 190–91.

[29] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius as Poetic Liturgy*. Before Blackwood, the only monograph focused on *DcPh*'s lyrics is O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius*. Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 18–24, was the first to examine the order of the poems as a more or less cyclical composition.

[30] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius as Poetic Liturgy*, 235: "crucial to the *Consolation*'s therapy is the spiritual exercise, for both the prisoner and the listener, of its intricate system of rhythmic repetition that, in its entirety, is itself a narrated repetition to be repeated, and into which the listener enters each time more deeply, and so is ever more deeply recollected and reformed."

[31] A brilliant and thought-provoking book on the evolutionary origins of art and literature is Dutton, *The Art Instinct*, 103–34, deals with the importance of storytelling and fiction as a strategy to cope with the unpredictability of reality.

best to fill in the gaps in order to reconstruct it, making use of contextual evidence, e.g. historical circumstances or narrative conventions.

One of our strategies to attribute unity and coherence to texts perceived as difficult is comparing them with similar ones we think we understand better.[32] Accordingly, scholars analysing ancient literature will search for generic affiliations and attempt to reconstruct contemporary poetics. However, choosing a particular frame, or set of frames, directs the focus to particular aspects of the text while obscuring others. After all, every piece of literature is unique; if not, it is worthless and superfluous. So, how to choose the correct frame that both establishes a helpful context and highlights the individual work's singular qualities?

When, for instance, reading a Biblical epic from the fifth century, it is self-evident that Vergil and the Bible partake of the poem's literary context.[33] But what if the work at hand does not resemble any other work closely, as is the case with Boethius' *DcPh*?[34] Being written in the first half of the sixth century, at the crossroads of classical and Christian culture, by an erudite expert at Aristotelian logic who certainly was a Christian himself, the *DcPh* invites the reader to apply both classical and Christian labels. What do these labels imply?

6 Winckelmann, Aristotle, and Horace

In the collective memory of western discourse on art history, J.J. Winckelmann's *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Wercke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst* (1755) is a seminal text.[35] It still seems to be impossible, even more than two and a half centuries after its first publication, to use the word 'classical' without recalling Winckelmann's evocation of Greek sculpture. When he coined the famous phrase "edle Einfalt und stille Grösse," complacently repeating it twice, he was thinking of the visual arts:

> Das allgemeine vorzügliche Kennzeichen der Griechischen Meisterstücke ist endlich eine edle Einfalt, und eine stille Grösse, so wohl in der Stellung als im Ausdruck. So wie die Tiefe des Meers allzeit ruhig bleibt, die Oberfläche mag noch so wüten, eben so zeiget der Ausdruck in den Figuren der Griechen bey allen Leidenschaften eine grosse und gesetzte Seele.[36]

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[32] According to Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 138, readers tend to "naturalize" texts they do not immediately understand by bringing them "into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some sense, natural and legible."

[33] Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity*.

[34] Of course, *DcPh* shares formal characteristics with Platonist (and Ciceronian) philosophical dialogue and prosimetrical works like Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, but its strictly regular structure and the combination of both models are unique.

[35] Winckelmann, *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Wercke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst*. See Potts, "Winckelmann," 984–87.

[36] "In sum, the most prominent characteristic of the Greek masterpieces in general is a noble simplicity and a quiet grandeur, as regards both posture and expression. Just like the depths of the sea remain calm despite the surface's turbulence, the Greek figures' expression shows a grand and stable soul, filled with strong emotions though it may be," Winckelmann, *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen*

True, he does suggest its applicability to a limited body of Greek texts but refrains from elaborating upon this.[37] I believe, however, that Winckelmann's requisites of noble simplicity and quiet greatness are in perfect accordance with statements in Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars poetica* – not coincidentally so, of course, seeing that Winckelmann refers to the *Ars* more than once.[38]

Aristotle, discussing tragedy, famously defines it as "*μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης*" ("an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude"),[39] subsequently dealing with the self-contained unity of the plot and the dignity of its characters. Horace, speaking about poetry in general, also propounds the requirements of unity and absence of intricate and superfluous details: "denique sit quoduis, simplex dumtaxat et unum" ("in sum, it may be whatever you like, as long as it is simple and one").[40] Aristotle and Horace suggest that this unity pertains to both form and content, which are supposed to cooperate in harmony: this is the principle of *decorum* prescribing *uerba* perfectly fitting the *res*.[41]

So, Winckelmann's definition may represent ideals really dating back to Classical Antiquity. Not surprisingly, however, they may also be found outside the context of European classics and Classicism: one thinks of Chinese poetry from the classical era, but of sonnets by Mallarmé and Rilke as well. Apparently, we like things to be perfect and self-contained.

Even so, finding literary works that completely meet Aristotle's and Winckelmann's standards proves to be problematic. Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* are highly appreciated by Aristotle, as are Homer's epics,[42] but he seems to be severely critical towards most other works. Horace even deliberately undermines his explicit programme by structuring the *Ars* itself as a puzzling labyrinth.[43] Indeed, strictly applying the ideals of classical greatness and noble coherence may well be unfair to virtually any works of art, music, and literature.

Wercke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst, 28–29; the combination "edle Einfalt" and "stille Grösse" is repeated on 30, 33.

[37] Ibid., 30: "Die edle Einfalt und stille Grösse der Griechischen Statuen ist zugleich das wahre Kennzeichen der Griechischen Schriften aus den besten Zeiten; die Schriften aus Socrates Schule." Winckelmann apparently refers to Plato and Xenophon.

[38] Ibid., 6 (title page): *AP* 268–69; 30: *AP* 240–42; 47: *AP* 316, 7, 421. Aristotle's *Poetics* is only referred to in the *Erläuterung der Gedanken von der Nachahmung* (the sequel to *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Wercke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst,* published in 1756), in *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Wercke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst*, 122 ("Erdichtung, die Seele der Poesie"): *Poetic*, 1450a38–39 "*ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας*" ("So the plot is the source and (as it were) the soul of tragedy," Aristotle, *Poetics*, 12).

[39] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 10.

[40] Horace, *AP* 23.

[41] The distinction between *res* and *uerba* is made by Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.3.1 and 3.5.1. *Decorum* or *aptum* is the principle that form should match content; see Quintilian 11.1. The essential unity of form and content is postulated in most western criticism of the twentieth century, from Russian Formalism and the New Critics to Structuralism: any formal element in a literary work is supposed to contribute to its meaning, while, conversely, any element of content should be discernible in the form. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 170–72; Bertens, *Literary Theory*, 22–23 (on close reading and coherence); Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem*, 65–88.

[42] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452a24–26, 33; 1453b7; 1454b7–8 (on *Oedipus*); 1454a7–8; 1455a18–20 (on *Iphigenia*); 1460a5–1460b4 (on Homer).

[43] See Russell, "Ars Poetica," 113–26.

In fact, Aristotle's—and, subsequently, Winckelmann's—tenets of unity, coherence, and closure appear not to be representative of ancient art theories and practice in general, as was convincingly argued by Malcolm Heath.[44] While Horace sardonically demolished his own principles by deliberately failing to comply with them, we find many 'classical' texts displaying a blissful negligence of simplicity, balance, clear coherence, and obvious closure. Pindar comes to mind, Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Petronius' *Satyricon*, and even Vergil's *Aeneid*, with its unsolved conflicts and eerie finale.[45] We still regard them as masterpieces.

That we are now able to see beauty and greatness in staggering polyphony, fragmentary narrative, and failure to transparently give expression to traumatic experiences may be the result of our familiarity with modernist literature from the twentieth century. Many modernist writers radically renounced unity, coherence, and closure, opting instead for the representation of human existence as an experience of inscrutable and horrific chaos; apart from Kafka, one could think of T.S. Eliot, Jackson Pollock, or American freejazz.[46] To be sure, some modernists did not object to formal unity at all—I mentioned Mallarmé already, and I could add composers like Anton Webern and sculptors like Constantin Brancusi.[47] What makes this second category of works equally modernist is their inhospitable autonomy: there seems to be no comfortable place for human beings inside these works and it is up to the eye of the beholder to attribute meaning to them. The 'natural' bond between form and content is broken. Samuel Beckett's late prose may be seen as the apogee of this movement, when he expresses the utter meaninglessness of human existence in musically composed sentences of a haunting beauty.[48] Would it be conceivable to presume the possibility of this kind of literature in 'classical' Antiquity?

Notwithstanding the eye-opening development of western literature and criticism in the twentieth century, many classicist scholars still cling to Aristotelian *casu quo* Winckelmannian ideals of unity and closure, especially when confronted with intriguing works that appear to give conflicting clues as to their meanings. This is what happens in the case of *DcPh*. The balanced formal structure is evident, but what about the therapeutic progress coming to a halt? As mentioned above, the apparent discrepancy between form and content is usually solved by postulating unity on a higher level of interpretation: assuming that our text is complete, we should take the inconclusiveness of the argument as an unspoken

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[44] Heath, *Unity in Greek Poetics*. Heath, 5, introduces the term "centrifugal" to characterize tendencies to escape from (possibly boring) unity, while pointing to the critical term ποικιλία ("variety and diversifying embellishment," 28) used by e.g. Plato and the Homeric scholiasts.

[45] On the ending of the *Aeneid*, see Hardie, "Closure in Latin Epic," and Putnam, *The Humanness of Heroes*.

[46] In the cases of Pollock and freejazz, of course, another factor was also crucial: the urge to liberate themselves from aesthetic norms experienced as oppressing.

[47] The Dutch scholar Guus Sötemann once made a helpful distinction between "pure" and "impure" modernists, the first category comprising artists aspiring to create beautiful autonomous, self-sufficient objects (Mallarmé, Rilke's sonnets, Webern), while the second group tried to incorporate all the world's noise and chaos into their works (Pound, Joyce, Eliot). Sötemann, "Twee modernistische tradities in de Europese poëzie." Connections between Aristotle and Modernism have been explored by Rosenthal, *Aristotle and Modernism*.

[48] One thinks particularly of stories such as *All Strange Away*, *Company*, *Worstward Ho*, and *Stirrings Still*, in Beckett, *The Grove Centenary Edition*.

statement on the powerlessness of pagan philosophy, consequently, according to some scholars, implying the superiority of Christian religiosity. I believe this approach to be mistaken.

7   Boethius' creed

Boethius was certainly a Christian, but apart from his theological treatises, the atmosphere of which is more Aristotelian than spiritual, his works appear not to exhibit any real interest in what is conventionally understood by religiosity.[49] Donato and numerous other scholars rightly state that in the eyes of most late-antique upper-class intellectuals it was quite normal to be a devout Christian and to simultaneously study Platonist philosophy and enjoy the poetry of Homer, Ovid, and Juvenal.[50] This does not rule out the possibility, of course, of somebody's concluding at the end of the day that in situations of agony and distress the Christian creed had more to offer in the way of solace and salvation than Ovid's laments or Proclus' esoteric jugglery with abstractions. Is that what happened to Boethius when he was writing *DcPh*?

One of the most interesting recent studies on *DcPh* is Stephen Blackwood's book on the poems, mentioned above. Blackwood meticulously analyses the metrical and thematic correspondences between them, revealing a magnificent, almost perfectly symmetrical musical structure that could be experienced subconsciously.[51] In his view, reading (aloud) the complete cycle of poems more than once would work like a ritual comparable to Christian liturgy as Boethius and his contemporaries knew it. In medieval monasteries this reading practice, conventionally termed *lectio divina*, was seen as a preparation to prayer.[52] Of course, nothing precludes this ritual application of *DcPh*'s poetry: any text, even a meaningless one,[53] may be used to induce religious concentration and contemplation. But does the text of *DcPh* voice these anagogic goals? I do not think so; and attributing Christian spirituality to a work that itself does not give any clear hints as to its devotional content or aims seems problematic to me.

This is the first reason to deny the *DcPh* a predominantly Christian nature. The author consequently employs the idioms of classical poetry, Ciceronian rhetoric, Stoic ascesis, Platonic dialogue, Neoplatonist theology, and Aristotelian dialectic to tell his story, without referring explicitly to Biblical lore, Jesus,

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[49]   Much has been written about Boethius' experience of Christian religiosity. See e.g. Chadwick, *Boethius*, 247–53; Marenbon, *Boethius*, 154–59; Donato, *Boethius' Consolation*, 163–96. Olmsted, "Philosophical Inquiry and Religious Transformation in Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* and Augustine's *Confessions*," 33–35, emphasizes Boethius' rational approach to God, lacking Augustine's emotional submission.

[50]   See for instance Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, 1–13, and Donato, *Boethius' Consolation*, 166–72.

[51]   The two appendices in Blackwood, *The Consolation of Boethius*, 254–314, extensively chart the rhythmical patterns pervading the poetry in *DcPh*.

[52]   Robertson, *Lectio Divina*.

[53]   Staal, *Rules without Meaning*, 182: "These [musical and ritual] structures do not mean anything apart from and beyond the structural complexities they display." In ch. 22, "Mantras and Language," 253–77, Staal argues that the phenomenon of the mantra precedes human language. It works without meaning anything.

redemption, or the Great Beyond.[54] When Relihan, Donato, and Blackwood have the *DcPh* put forward a Christian message, they do so by inference from its more or less open ending. If Boethius had intended his book to be a Christian manual to salvation, why did he not make this explicit?

Moreover, after the prisoner's desperate outcry regarding the pointlessness of praying to an abstract and indifferent Deity (5.pr3.33–36), Philosophy goes on to demonstrate the fundamental incongruity between divine and human perspectives, in effect confirming the prisoner's anxiety. Her unprepared summons to prayer at the end of Book 5 may even be read as a slap in the prisoner's face: pray, she says, it is the only thing left you can do. The previous discussion, however, implies that He will not respond, certainly not by altering the suppliant's circumstances.

In sum, *DcPh* may be written by a Christian author, but it is not a Christian book.

8 Cyclicity and circularity

In order to explain what makes *DcPh* such a discomforting and unsettling work, I will first point to formal aspects that superficially appear to suggest its "edle Einfalt und stille Grösse," making it a text of 'classical' balance and coherence. The book's beautiful cyclical composition clearly corresponds to both God's eternally perfect world order and the intentionally circular nature of Philosophy's reasoning in Book 3. I am not the first scholar to demonstrate the work's cyclical set-up, but I believe it to be even more ingenious than most scholars have seen.[55] The structure can be summarized in the following points:

1. The five books first increase in size, with the middle book as the longest, then to gradually become shorter.[56] Since Book 3 embodies the prisoner's intended ascent to *henosis*,[57] its dimensions correspond to its spiritual importance. Ethical questions dominate the discussion in Books 2 and 4. Both Books 1 and 5 deal with captivity and freedom: to Book 1 the prisoner's material circumstances are central, while the final book concentrates on the freedom of will and agency.

2. In the fourth prose passage of Book 1, the prisoner extensively dwells on his misfortunes (1.pr4). The only other passage which gives him the opportunity to take his time in expounding his views is 5.pr3, i.e. the fourth prose counted from the end.

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[54] De Vogel, "Boethiana I," "Boethiana II," and Mohrmann, "Some Remarks on the Language of Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae*" both point to Christian elements in Boethius' style. The only Biblical quotation having gained some scholarly consensus is part of a sentence in 3.pr12.22, possibly referring to *Sapientia* 8:1; some scholars add the final words of *DcPh*, see footnote 74. The Afterlife is only mentioned in passing, in 4pr.4.22–23.

[55] Apart from Gruber's and Blackwood's analyses of the cycle of poems, see in particular Magee, "The Good and Morality," 181–82. My analysis is based on my introduction to *Boëthius*, 28–30.

[56] In Moreschini's edition, the five books count 24, 29, 41, 35, and 26 pages respectively. The number of poems is 7, 8, 12, 7, and 5.

[57] *Henosis* (ἕνωσις) is the Neoplatonist term for becoming one with God or the One. See e.g. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, passim.

3. In the second prose passage of Book 2, Fortuna explains the mechanism of her wheel (2.pr2); in the penultimate prose of Book 4 (4.pr6.15), Philosophy propounds her theory of concentric circles rotating around the centre, which is the One (= God), in order to illustrate the difference between divine providence and fate.

4. This metaphysical position of the One is formally represented by the centre (counted in number of pages) of *DcPh*, where we find the hexametrical hymn to the One, which, like most hymns, can be demonstrated to be conceptually circular in itself.[58]

5. In the final prose passage of Book 3, the One is compared to the well-rounded sphere of compact Being described by Parmenides (3.pr12.37). Philosophy quotes both Parmenides and Plato to defend her method of circular reasoning, emphasizing that philosophical truths ought to be expressed in language imitating its content.

6. In thirteen poems, the perpetual cyclicity of cosmic processes like the seasons, the phases of the moon, the alternation of day and night, is praised;[59] the almost boring repetition of this motive may be seen as cyclic in itself.

To sum up, *DcPh*'s formal structure, corresponding to the structure of the universe and Philosophy's way of reasoning, may well be deemed an exemplar of "edle Einfalt und stille Größe": form and content seem to be one, while the theme is grand and lofty.

Understandably, however, the prisoner experiences this immovable coincidence of logic and metaphysics as a depressing labyrinth (3.pr12.30), i.e. a prison, and, like Icarus, he subsequently struggles to escape from Philosophy's steely conceptions.[60] Boethius' Roman audience must have remembered Daedalus' sculpted doors in the middle of Vergil's *Aeneid*: both Aeneas and the prisoner are desperately puzzled by enigmas they are not in a position to solve.[61] In addition, while Aeneas will descend into the Underworld in *Aeneid* 6, Boethius immediately inserts his poem on Orpheus' *katabasis*. Will the prisoner have an opportunity to escape? Unfortunately, in Books 4 and 5 the problematic nature of circular reasoning will not be made acceptable to him. And Orpheus, a poet like Boethius himself, will look back and forfeit his chance of salvation.[62]

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[58] Analysis in Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 275–76. Blackwood, *The Consolation of Boethius*, 147–48, rightly states that 3.m9 is not the middle poem, which should be the twentieth one; accordingly, in his view, 3.m5 (a cyclically structured poem) is the structural hub of the poetical cycle. Since the scope and content of this little *carmen* are far from impressive, I cannot believe Boethius meant it to be the centre of *DcPh*.

[59] 1.m2, 1.m3, 1.m5, 1.m6; 2.m3, 2.m8; 3.m1, 3.m2, 3.m6, 3.m9; 4.m1, 4.m5, 4.m6.

[60] While the labyrinth may symbolically represent the prisoner's captivity in his cell and in Philosophy's chains of logic, the cell itself may have a symbolic meaning as well, irrespective of Boethius' actual place of detention.

[61] The prisoner's formulation "inextricabilem labyrinthum" recalls Vergil's "inextricabilis error" (*Aeneid* 6.27, in Vergil, 228), modelled on Catullus' desciption of the labyrinth as "inobseruabilis error" (*Carmen* 64.115, in Catullus, 50).

[62] In 1.m1.2 the weeping prisoner sings sorrowful tunes ("flebilis heu maestos cogor inire modos"); Orpheus does the same in 3.m12.7 ("flebilibus modis").

9 Discrepancy between form and narrative

Let us confront the 'unclassical' elements of the book. The fact that *DcPh* explores a host of classical genres, ranging from elegy and forensic oratory to hymn and Aristotelian dialectic, makes it an encyclopedia of literary traditions,[63] a feature that could potentially undermine its unity. As said above, the multi-faceted nature of *DcPh* may not be exceptional in ancient literature and criticism,[64] but it does not help meet Aristotelian, Horatian, or Winckelmannian standards of classical simplicity.

The main reason, however, why Winckelmann's "edle Einfalt" does not apply is the flagrant discrepancy between formal perfection and lack of narrative closure. I know of no other work from Greek or Latin literature in which this clash between form and content is as striking as in *DcPh*. Time and again the prisoner drives Philosophy into directions she would not have chosen herself.[65] She goes out of her way to argue for the justice of God's system but does not succeed in convincing her interlocutor, although her dazzling logic appears to win the day. Eventually, the prisoner decides it is better not to respond at all than to bother someone who seems intent upon depriving him of any freedom to act and to think.[66] It may be impossible to refute her arguments, but making amends for what has happened to him would be something completely different.

In order to understand the impasse in which *DcPh* ends, it is important to look at its communicative structure.[67] We should distinguish four characters called Boethius:

B^1: the author
B^2: the first reader, i.e. Boethius as private audience of his own literary performance
B^3: the narrator speaking in the first person singular
B^4: the prisoner talking with, or listening to, Philosophy.

The structure could be schematized as follows, in which the outer brackets enclose the text of *DcPh*:

$$B^1 \rightarrow (B^3: (B^4 \leftrightarrow Ph)) \rightarrow B^2 + \text{wider audience}$$

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[63] On intertextual hints and references to different genres, see Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 14–46, and Shanzer, "Interpreting the *Consolation*."

[64] Heath, *Unity in Greek Poetics*, passim. Contemporary parallels are Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* and Ennodius, *Paraenesis didascalica*. The date of composition of *De nuptiis* is not certain, but Ennodius' work was published in 511 (Boethius and Ennodius knew each other quite well). See Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 17–18.

[65] Most notably in the opening paragraph of 4.pr1. See Relihan, *The Prisoner's Philosophy*, 15–33, following Marenbon.

[66] As noted above, the prisoner's final contribution to the dialogue is 5.pr3.

[67] Today, most scholars see the importance to distinguish between Boethius the author, and 'Boethius' the prisoner. Donato does not, which results in an interpretation which leaves little room for irony, self-mockery, or inner conflict. The academic debate fails to clearly distinguish between the prisoner and the narrator.

In my view, Boethius (B¹, the author) set out to console himself (B², the first reader) by making use of every literary and philosophical tool he could find, meticulously constructing a compendium of classical wisdom and poetical wealth that would also be a pleasure to read for a future audience. His construction involved a narrator modelled on the author himself (B³), who records a real or dreamt[68] dialogue between himself (B⁴) with Philosophy, situated in the near past, including at least ten poems improvised by either the prisoner (B⁴) or Philosophy. One song (1.m3) is explicitly inserted by the narrator (B³), some songs may be imagined to be sung by Philosophy, but the majority, like choral odes in a tragedy,[69] seems to be supplied by the author (B¹) resolved to complete his cyclical composition.

This well-balanced structure must have been Boethius' original design for the book. What happened next, in my reconstruction, is chilling. Up to the final prose section of Book 3, everything went well, Philosophy smoothly explaining away the toils of human existence as irrelevant seen from a divine perspective. But then (3.pr12.30) the author realized his philosophy's solution was a sham, since it did not remove the harm done to him. "Die Logik ist zwar unerschütterlich, aber einem Menschen der leben will, widersteht sie nicht," to quote once again Kafka's *Proceß*.[70] Ignoring his character Philosophy's proposal to intellectually become one with God, Boethius (B¹) first tried to understand the nature of justice (Book 4), which did not help either, seeing that he would have to die while a bunch of thugs held sway at Theodoric's court. His last resort was to prove that, notwithstanding God's just and total governance, he had still some freedom to think, to decide, and to act (Book 5). It brought him, and the prisoner (B⁴), to a terrible Catch-22. One either had to resign oneself to the human perspective which, to be sure, granted some freedom to think but did not save one from Fortune's capriciousness; or one should take God's position, which was not only impossible but would restrict one's freedom even further, given God's timeless immobility and absolute prescience. In other words, the only way out was by assuming the viewpoint of Big Brother himself, which, to human beings, is fundamentally impossible.

When Boethius reached this conclusion, he decided not to recoil, but in writing it down he expressed its horror by silencing his dear character, the prisoner. The book ends in a stalemate. "THIS IS NOT AN EXIT," to quote the final words of Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* (1991).[71] After Philosophy's last words, the

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[68] The entrance of Philosophy in 1.pr1 is described in terms reminding the reader of divine epiphanies, the ultimate model of which are Homeric characters visited by gods in their dreams. Chadwick, *Boethius*, 225; Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 62–63; Marenbon, *Boethius*, 153–54.

[69] Sung by the prisoner: 1.m1, 1.m5, 5.m3; by the narrator: 1.m3; by Philosophy: 1.m2, 1.m4, 3.m9, 3.m12, 4.m6, possibly 4.m7. All the other poems are conventionally attributed to Philosophy, but the text itself does not say so: their narratological status is ambiguous. Discussion of the different kinds of poems by Marenbon, *Boethius*, 146–53. As far as I know, the connections between *DcPh* and Attic tragedy have never been investigated seriously. Intertextual links with Seneca's choral odes are studied by O'Daly, *Poetry*, 76–79, 118–23, 128–31, 142–43, 193–99, 222–23, 226–34, and Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue*, passim, in particular 160–64, 191–93, 195–201, 221–25, 237–53 (overview of Senecan elements).

[70] "Logic may be unshakable, but it cannot withstand one who is determined to live," Kafka, *Proceß*, 214, the final page of the novel.

[71] Ellis, *American Psycho*, 399.

reader expects to hear one more song, maybe even a prayer, but all we hear is a telling, abysmal silence.[72]

My contention, then, would be that the blatant discrepancy between perfect formal beauty and staggering content as well as the horrific worldview by itself should remind us more of Kafka and Beckett than Sophocles and Thomas à Kempis. Its open ending is intentional. Contrary to current scholarship, I do not believe Boethius implicitly propagated Christianity by demonstrating ancient philosophy's failure. In fact, the opposite may be true. His work proves the sublime and austere superiority of Neoplatonist and Aristotelian metaphysics. The only problem is that this philosophy situates man, abandoned and vulnerable, in a desolate *selva oscura*.[73]

To show that my reference, above, to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not otiose, I point to the final words of *DcPh*: everything takes place under the eyes, Philosophy says, "iudicis cuncta cernentis" ("a judge who sees everything") – a magnificent, alliterating Ciceronian *clausula*.[74] Orwell's protagonist Winston Smith finally loves Big Brother:

> He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was allright, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.[75]

Boethius' prisoner, in contrast, does not appear to have learned to love his omniscient judge. Which does not prove, of course, that Boethius *the author* cannot have turned to God after having put down his pen (something I cannot believe). If so, he chose not to include that in his book. Accordingly, it is none of our business, since we are just readers of this actual text. In addition, we cannot rule out the possibility that the process of writing a beautiful, gripping book may have had a wholesome effect on the author. But again, that is only a matter of speculation.

[72] While Book 1 opens and ends with a poem and Books 2 through 4 open with dialogue and end with poems, Book 5 both opens and ends in dialogue. The symmetry of the work's composition makes us expect *DcPh* to be concluded by a poem.

[73] Chase, "Time and Eternity from Plotinus and Boethius to Einstein" compares Philosophy's lecture on time and timeless eternity with theories in twentieth-century physics. He even quotes a letter by Einstein, who refers to the non-existence of time in physical theory in order to console a friend at the occasion of the loss of a loved one. For Einstein, "ultimate reality is eternal, and time—a mere illusion," 71. Rovelli, *L'Ordine del tempo*, 100–101, is certainly right in placing Einstein's statement in its context of consolatory rhetoric, which may raise some doubt as to how sincerely the scientist believed his statements to be comforting to the bereaved.

[74] 5.pr6.48. The stylistic device makes the phrase a perfect ending to the work. On rhythmic patterns at the close of Latin sentences (*clausulae*), see Dräger, "Klausel," 1088–1104. For Cicero's *clausulae*, Berry, "The value of prose rhythm in questions of authenticity." Boethius' *clausula* consists in two cretics and a spondee. The phrase may be an allusion to the book of Esther (16:4: "Dei [...] cuncta cernentis"), see Relihan, *The Prisoner's Philosophy*, 42–43. In his view, Philosophy intends the allusion to be consolatory, as the scriptural passage is about God punishing evildoers. After the preceding discussion, however, this would be a very poor piece of comfort.

[75] Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 311.

10 Conclusion

Although literature from Classical Antiquity does not typically conform to Aristotelian standards of unity, coherence, and closure, the Stagirite's influence on western literary criticism has been profound. This tradition of critical thinking was ineradicably confirmed by Winckelmann's *Gedancken*. Twentieth-century Modernism may have shown different ways of representing human existence in art and literature, but Aristotelian views still appear to loom large in classical scholarship.

One of 'Winckelmann's victims' is Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae*, a cherished classic usually interpreted as a serious and more or less successful attempt to offer consolation to people in existential trouble. This paper aimed to demonstrate that an analysis of the work from an unclassical, modernist perspective may yield an interpretation more in line with the text's actual nature, hitherto either ignored or seen as problematic. Central to my new view is the heartrending discrepancy between the work's perfect formal structure on the one hand, and its faltering chains of argumentation (from the end of Book 3) and lack of narrative closure (in the second half of Book 5), on the other. I hope to have shown that my interpretation enhances the greatness of Boethius' swan song.[76]

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[76] *DcPh* has often been compared to Plato's *Phaedo*, in which Socrates serenely drinks the cup of hemlock to die as a martyr for his philosophical principles. In this dialogue, Socates refers to the legendary songs of swans realizing they are about to die. Plato, *Phaedo* 84e3–85b7.

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NOTE

This contribution is the response piece to a larger dialogue of three articles that
form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are "Writing in a
World of Strangers: The Invention of Jewish Literature Revisited" by Irene Zwiep
(pp. 1–20), "A Critical Juncture: 'Later' Latin Literature, the Newest Late An-
tiquity, and the Period of the Western Classic" by Mark Vessey (pp. 22–42), and
"The Ordeal of a Sixth-Century Josef K: Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* as
a Modernist Drama" by Piet Gerbrandy (pp. 44–64).

Ins and Outs and Opened and Closed

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The three papers in this fascicule of *JOLCEL* were delivered at "Winckelmann's Victims" held at the University of Gent in September 2018 for the 300th anniversary of Winckelmann's birth.[1] I was not present on that occasion to hear the papers in their original context, but am happy to have the chance to comment on such interesting work after the fact. Two of the contributions (Vessey and Zwiep) discuss the changing position of fields (Later Latin and Jewish Literature) in literary history, while the third (Gerbrandy) concerns itself with the interpretation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* alone, but spends more time on Winckelmann.[2]

Common ground for Vessey and Zwiep is embedding in literary history. What is to be covered? Will the key be major or minor? Will a sense of decadence, deformation, and decline predominate? Or teleological triumphalism? Or, as in a *Handbuch*, will all substances, to the extent that they exist, be considered good, so that authors and works are simply discussed? Or will handbook-entries be combined with essays? And, above all, how will languages and periodization be handled? And how does all of this look in a rapidly changing and expanding world? Gerbrandy's piece instead discusses the form, closure, and interpretation of one work. All three works concern territory and boundaries: the first two at the subject level (in or out?) and the third at the level of the textual artifact (open or closed?). All three can be connected to Winckelmann, for aesthetics invariably inform all doorkeepers' decisions.

Both Vessey and Zwiep address political questions of expansion and globalism, exclusion and inclusion. So, let us start with a narrative of how we got where we are.

There was once, so the story goes, a universal tongue that was undone by the sin of pride.[3] We ceased to understand one another. Study of literatures, thus, remains closely linked to languages, and those languages, in many cases, to modern nation-states. Classics, where Greek and Latin arguably constitute one

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[1] https://www.winckelmannsvictims.ugent.be.
[2] Zwiep mentions him once and Vessey twice.
[3] *Genesis* 11.1-9.

literature in two languages, but where the contact between the two has varied during different historical periods and been supported by different entities, both nations, and institutions such as the Church, is anomalous. Likewise Jewish Literature (or Studies or *Judaistik*).

In the past, one lived and worked somewhere, within a language and a culture, at a given place with the resources available, beggable, borrowable, or stealable. Think Middle Ages. One might encounter a traveler from an antique land, but reading was the primary window onto Others and other times and places. Eventually there came printing, easier travel, and increasingly accessible libraries. *Omne ignotum* could simply remain unknown, or held *pro magnifico*, or pragmatically labelled someone else's problem till some alarming foreign professor croaked, "He*f* you read Hesychius?" One concentrated on acquiring expertise in one's own field and in enriching oneself by exploration that might or might not result in expertise. There was time.

Travel and, above all, technology have now made such stances untenable. The Christian missions to the heathen were miraculously enabled by the simultaneous translation of Pentecost.[4] Automatic translation programs, such as DeepL, now enable many to get the gist or at least work out whether something requires attention or not. Excuses are hard to come by when contact is cheap: in a mere second one can connect to someone who *might know*. And the globe impinges and tempts.[5] This can be conducive to a sense of guilt for what used to be the virtue of intellectual monogamy.

Zwiep cites Zunz's image of the Jewish stream in the Hegelian literary sea (p. 10). Literary scholars now live in a world of utopian ambitions, where all literatures and cultures will be free and equal, where all will have access to the collective wisdoms thereof, and therefore drink from innumerable fountains which will all be seen as delicious, but all will be distinguishable. This is no Christian dream of one fountain of living water, nor a Symmachan longing for many paths to the one great secret.

Global literary history has arrived. We want to view the world from higher up, a *specula* from where we can see what joins us, rather than concentrating on what is distinctive and local. Zwiep's "planetary poetics" perhaps.[6] We want the God's eye view from the lofty watchtower.

This dream can be driven by curiosity, idealism, by a quest either to magnanimously transcend one's local sublunary aesthetic (even if it's Winckelmann's uplifting "edle Einfalt" and "stille Größe"),[7] or to open oneself up to the Other, to seek connections, find them, and bind them intellectually.

But fashion and guilt also have a role and may unfortunately play into the hands of the bodies that organize knowledge and seek to save money. Broader purviews are inclusive (a Good Thing), but faculty members straddling fields also save institutions salaries: hence perhaps "the global this-or-that." When one is

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[4] *Acts* 2.1-18.

[5] Zwiep's "sweet love"?

[6] Zwiep, p. 3. I used the image in Shanzer, "Literature, History, Periodization, and the Pleasures," 5 for the Roman empire.

[7] Winckelmann, *Gedanken ueber die Nachahmung*, 21: "ist endlich eine edle Einfalt, und eine stille Größe."

potentially responsible for any- or everything, where does that leave expertise? It can also look like a new literary historical colonialism, where what used to be your business is now mine too. Broad purviews can immediately give rise to identity politics and accusations of cultural appropriation.

Our two case-studies.

1 Wissenschaft des Judentums

Zwiep takes us back to the problems faced by Jewish literature in a European cultural scene dominated by "the Bible and the Greeks." What of the excluded post-Biblical Jewish literature? She concentrates on the development of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in early nineteenth-century Berlin and reminds us of the moral failings of Enlightenment universalism, Goethe's *Weltliteratur*. She concentrates on the way *in* to academic society during the early nineteenth century, by providing a case-study of Jewish literature and the European canon. She outlines for us the process whereby Leopold Zunz sought to find a place for Jewish culture, marginalized and excluded by reduction to Rabbinic culture[8] in high German thought in German literary academe. Jewish literature subsisted in a variety of ancient and modern languages[9] and writers were visibly multilingual. But a romantic eye could still discern a Jewish *Volksgeist* across the immense time-span. Zunz spoke of paganism and Christianity's hostility to Jews, believed in the (fusion) "Sephardi mystique," and fought in his own research for Ashkenazi synagogue poetry.

Zwiep articulates how a supposedly aniconic Jewish culture could be disadvantaged in the aesthetic pursuit of the beautiful, hence becoming perhaps one of 'Winckelmann's Victims.' In the process she introduces us to Leopold Dukes who aimed to rescue and document post-Talmudic Jewish poetry, including the medieval Sephardic poets Solomon ibn Gabirol and Judah Al-Charizi. The latter translated the (now lost) *Kitab Adab al-Falisifa*, including a dialogue-exemplum about the poetics of the *Melitzah* that channels Greek, Indian, Persian, and Roman wisdom.[10] Dukes can also look less aesthetic and prescriptive and Winckelmannian, more like wandering *Märchenforscher* with his research on proverbs and proverbial ways of speaking.[11] His immensely useful reference-works made it possible for those without Hebrew to gain access to non-Biblical Jewish Wisdom Literature.

2 Later Latin Literary History

Vessey tackles the position of Later Roman / Late Antique Latin Literature within: 1. The Anglophone high literary 'western Classic' (read 'Vergilian')

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[8] Post-exilic Judaism was not seen as competitive with *frühes Christentum*.
[9] Ibn Gabirol would have disapproved. See "prologue to the Book of Grammar," 11–16 in Cole, *Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol*, 49.
[10] Dukes, *Ehrensäulen und Denksteine*, 51–53.
[11] Dukes, *Rabbinische Blumenlese*.

tradition (early to mid-twentieth century) and 2. the continental literary historical *Handbuch* tradition (continuous across the nineteenth to the twenty-first century). The latter enjoyed a palpable injection of fuel in Germany and France in 1976-1977 from the redemptive alliance of Jacques Fontaine, Manfred Fuhrmann, Reinhart Herzog, and Peter Lebrecht Schmidt.

Questions of Periodization

Vessey points out that Herzog had spoken of the Latin literature of the period after 284 as "die erste nachrömische Literatur Europas."[12] This choice of term is confusing for English speakers and arguably confusing *per se*. I would have preferred 'Post-Classical.' 'Post-Roman' for me would first come into question later, e. g. after 410 CE in Britain. Or perhaps after, say, 550 for the whole geographical area? But Herzog drew on a famous article by his master Fuhrmann that had argued for a Great Divide and a reset after the end of the Severans. Apuleius was the last *Weltliteratur*. Legal writing bloomed, Christian literature in Latin was derived from Christian literature in Greek.[13] The ideas that inspired literature changed. Not the state, law, and politics[14] but faith. Production was now driven less by the emperor and more by the schools and the office-holding aristocracy, both Christian and pagan. It was Christian authors who created the pagan renaissance of the late fourth century.[15] This was Fuhrmann's analysis.

Now, although there is a clear evidential gap in surviving Latin secular writing, between Censorinus and Nemesianus, "das Fuhrmannsche Loch,"[16] it does not necessarily entail a break or discontinuity. Fuhrmann at various points seems eager to paint the small caesura between antiquity and late antiquity as an event more like the onset of a mini-Middle Ages.[17] He never used the term 'post-römisch,' but saw the *nationalrömische Substanz* as exhausted after 235 CE.[18] Robin Lane Fox, however, reminds us how sculptors learn from masters, how the *diadoche* passes from hand to hand.[19] Literature can function differently when an author learns from a found text alone. But even though there are evidential gaps in late

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[12] Herzog, *Restauration und Erneuerung*, 1: "Die Bände 5 bis 8 des vorliegenden Handbuchs stellen den Gang der lateinischen Literatur in der Spätantike vom Beginn der Tetrarchie 284 n. Chr. bis zum Tode Bedas 735 n. Chr. dar. Die Darstellung folgt mit dieser Begrenzung einer Periodisierung der Epoche, wie sie auch in der Geschichtsforschung vertreten wird. Sie folgt ihr, weil sie die Literatur dieser Zeit als die erste lateinische, die erste nachrömische Literatur Europas auffaßt und sie als Einheit begreift."

[13] I would draw attention to the clear Latin literary affiliations of Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian. All read classical texts and clearly had secular training.

[14] Fuhrmann, "Die lateinische Literatur der Spätantike," 62. This conclusion is belied by the number of works that continue to be driven by emperor and empire. See Vessey, "Ausonius at the Edge of Empire," 192, 196, 201-2.

[15] Fuhrmann, "Die lateinische Literatur der Spätantike," 62.

[16] Willy Schetter's ironic term. Kurt Smolak, who was present at Creation, is my authority here. Ibid. speaks of "ein nahezu gänzlich literaturloses Intervall von zwei Menschenaltern."

[17] See, for example, the rhetoric at ibid., 60, 63, and 74. on how connections to the period afterwards are "inniger" (citing Heuss); how it is more correctly attributed to the Middle Ages (citing Rand); describing Victorinus and Donatus as if they were medieval scholars.

[18] Ibid., 70. Also Fuhrmann, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, 509-11. At 511 he speaks of the literature of late antiquity as the first "Rezeptionsstufe der Literatur Alt-Roms."

[19] Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 573.

antiquity, I would be reluctant to argue for any loss of individual functionality. I find Nemesianus, Juvencus, Ausonius, and Prudentius improbable as autodidacts.

Geography

Shortly before the Franco-German team was established, the historian Peter Brown, who has fueled more enthusiasm for late antiquity than anyone else, burst providentially upon the Anglosphere. Vessey here draws attention to something (to me) new and interesting about the Eastern, the Western, and the global. He cites Geoffrey Barraclough's skepticism about western-centered European culture and values (1947) and especially his sense of the importance of late antiquity as a "seminal age" and the need for a global perspective. He connects this with Barraclough's subsequent commissioning of Peter Brown's *World of Late Antiquity* (1971).[20] Brown de-familiarized the late antique world, took away any aesthetic aura of white statues, anthropologized it, made it riotous, "vibrant" we would say now.[21] He drew on different sources, so his (historian's) late antiquity shifted to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Approaches

And then there are trends, such as the Franco-Italian-Anglophone intertextualist classical reception[22] that Vessey skewers with velvet paw. The practitioners of that art operate within their comfort zone, an unhistorical and also unhistoricized, largely *verse* universe, in which they contemplate "edle Einfalt und stille Größe" and their own uni-methodological industry.[23] They are a different tribe, from the aestheticians who shiver at the lateness of the hour, the decadence, the decline and deformation. They are classical carpet-baggers visiting Late Antiquity, not the last sigh of the 'western classic.'

What is to come?

So far Later Latin literary history, where in the meantime, there remains a gap of two volumes (7-8) in the German *Handbuch*[24] and the prospect of the (still in progress) *Cambridge History of Later Latin Literature*. In the interest of full disclosure let me confess that I have worked in some of the areas covered by Vessey[25] and that I am contributing two chapters to the *Cambridge History of Later Latin Literature*. The latter might look like a throwback, or the West striking back at the Rest. I see it as an eminently sensible choice.[26]

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[20]   Going beyond Wood, *The Modern Origins*, 308.

[21]   See McWhorter, "The Problem With Dropping Standards" for "vibrant" as code for "Black."

[22]   I firmly distinguish intertextuality used for dating and for interpretation. See, for example, Shanzer, "The Anonymous Carmen contra paganos"; Shanzer, "Once again Tiberianus"; Shanzer, "Avulsa a latere meo"; and polemically: Shanzer, "Augustine's Anonyma I."

[23]   Whose workings have been immensely simplified by digital databases such as the LLT, since one can now parachute in.

[24]   Herzog, *Restauration und Erneuerung* came out; then its prequels: Suerbaum, *Die archaische Literatur* and Sallmann, *Die Literatur des Umbruchs*. There was a long gap before Berger, Fontaine, and Schmidt, *Die Literatur im Zeitalter des Theodosius. Erste Teil,* and Berger, Fontaine, and Schmidt, *Die Literatur im Zeitalter des Theodosius 2. Teil.*

[25]   E.g. Shanzer, "Literature, History, Periodization, and the Pleasures," 1-38.

[26]   Albrecht Dihle chose otherwise. See Dihle, *Die griechische und lateinische Literatur.*

One need not discuss other quarters of the world in a language-based literary history *unless there was contact or the comparison is answering a question.* Systematic comparison of Greek hagiography, for example, is not essential for studying Western material. But Classicists and medievalists working on folktale or fables or apocrypha have to take account of and work with material written in languages other than Greek or Latin.[27] Handbooks are above all for reference, whereas a literary history might actually be read linearly, if not cover-to-cover. It can reasonably be expected to offer *psychagogia* and recruitment. Let us hope the *CHLLL* will combine Continental command of detail with Anglophone leavening.

3 Boethius

Gerbrandy, a Classicist and prize-winning literary translator into Dutch, discusses the interpretation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. This work written in classicizing Latin to a high standard of literary finish and (to most readers) granular order is usually read at face-value, as a serious work of consolatory philosophy, arising from its author's imprisonment and condemnation under Theoderic the Ostrogoth. The work's sought-after symmetry invites the adoring gaze of Winckelmannian eyes. They long for perfection, for rest. The expectations raised by Boethius' dialogue end up being far higher than those raised by Plato—presumably because of the artfully nested poems. Gerbrandy adds his own signs of perfection to the *summa* of wheels within wheels and sensibly re-vindicates 3 M. 9., the metrical *unicum*, as the center of the *Consolatio*.

In recent decades however some have concentrated on what they read as deliberate inconsistencies and tried to see in the work a failure of philosophy, a parody, or in this case a nihilist and unconsoling, nay, disconcerting intellectual nightmare.[28] Gerbrandy suggests that our modernist eyes should help us to see beauty and greatness in ancient works that do not match the rules of ancient *artes poeticae*. He discerns a lack of narrative closure and a "telling, abysmal silence" in which Boethius-Winston Smith faces the all-seeing (*cuncta cernentis*) Big Brother. He rejects readings that "default[ting] to Christianity"[29] and is skeptical of Blackwood's hypnotic liturgical therapy.[30] He aims for the "heartbreaking" and sees the prisoner of the *Consolatio* as an Ostrogothic Josef K. (Kafka, *Der Process* [1925]), an "innocent man."[31]

Philosophers can point to problems in Boethius' argument, but which of them (including medieval ones) can fix them?[32] This suggests to me that critics

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[27] Schmitt, *Le Saint lévrier*; Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* and Page, *Folktales in Homer's Odyssey*.

[28] For some criticism, see Shanzer, "Interpreting the Consolation," 235-36.

[29] As did Relihan, *The Prisoner's Philosophy*. For a different view of Boethius' religiosity (not mentioned by Gerbrandy), see Shanzer, "Haec quibus uteris verba," 57-78.

[30] Blackwood, *The Consolation of Boethius*.

[31] Boethius is defiant about his allegiance to Albinus in *1 Cons.* 4. See Shanzer, "Stilo ... memoriaeque mandavi." And, hot off the press, a suggestion that Boethius himself may have conspired to succeed Theoderic: O'Donnell, "Why Boethius had to die," 73-92!

[32] *Pace* Lowe, *The Classical Plot*, 96 on the possibility of anticipating dialectic moves just as one can anticipate plot elements.

are not *that* much smarter than Boethius, and that it is too much to demand that a text exhibit better argumentation than its author mustered or than we can ourselves.[33] Can one apply this standard to theological treatises?[34] The prisoner's stance may not be sufficiently despairing or consistently dismayed and contestatory, or, in the end, openly religious, nihilistic, or open-ended as one might expect of a philosopher who had given up on philosophy.[35]

But *immerhin . . .* closures are contestable. Take, for example, a few comments on the Chorus' *sententia* in the last line (1277) of Sophocles' *Trachiniae:* "χοὐδὲν τούτων ὅ τι μὴ Ζεύς?" Does one note the occurrence of the word "Zeus," implicitly related to Herakles' genealogy?[36] Or suggest with the Scholia a virtual supplement of "ἔπραξεν?"[37] "Not a philosophical speculation, but a poetical statement."[38] Sublime?[39] But why not detect a hollow clang or a dark totalitarian put-down? It is all part of the work's reception. And, if enough people salute, you can become a school. And then they study you. [40]

I find it a helpful hermeneutic exercise to ask, "How could the text have satisfied you that such-and-such was the case? What would unambiguous closure and agreement from the Prisoner have looked like? Would the Open-Enders have been satisfied with the closure offered by the end of Plato's *Parmenides* or *Sophist* or *Laws*?[41] Would a servile "Absolutely, *domina*," have constituted an effective sense of an ending?" But there is the *Zeitgeist*: "Given a simple choice of being open or being closed, it is difficult for a twentieth-century person to choose to be closed."[42] How to be fair to the texts we read? Are we all Winckelmann's victims when we demand impossibly high standards of perfection or consistency from the texts we dissect? In the end, the reader has the right to a response, and if it feels right in our parlous Matrix-like, disinformation-ridden times, why not concur that "the crack in the teacup opens / A lane to the land of the dead?"[43]

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[33]   See Shanzer, "Interpreting the Consolation," 235. Donato, "Boethius' Consolation of philosophy."

[34]   E. g. that authors who do not prove god's existence must have been aiming to show that he/she does not exist or that his/her existence cannot be proven.

[35]   Responses, air-time, and modality (exposition vs. dialogue) vary in *Cons.* 4-5. The Prisoner initiates or drives discussion in *4Cons.*4.26, squawks in *4Cons.* 5. 1-6; mentions *perturbant* in *4Cons.*6.1; *4Cons.*4.7 is an active dialogue; the Prisoner raises chance in *5Cons.*1.1 and free will in 5.21.; 5.3.1 starts with *confundor*. It represents the Prisoner's last intervention. It is organized, commanding, clear, agenda-setting, it culminates with the *commercium* of hope and prayer, but is never less than rhetorically balanced. Philosophy's (targeted) exposition picks up hope and prayer in *6Cons.*6.46.

[36]   Easterling, *Sophocles Trachiniae*, 233.

[37]   Davies, *Sophocles Trachiniae*, 266-67.

[38]   Ibid., 267.

[39]   "Its sublimity recalls the Homeric Διὸς δ᾽ ἐτελείετο βουλή."

[40]   Consider the different modern schools associated with Vergil's *Aeneid*, for which see Kallendorf, "Historicizing the "Harvard School"," 391-93. He does not discuss the negative Christian interpretations of late antiquity.

[41]   *Parmenides* 166C ἀληθέστατα "most true;" *Sophist* 268D παντάπασι μὲν οὖν "I entirely agree;" *Laws* 969D συλλήψομαι "I will help."

[42]   Fowler, "Second Thoughts on Closure," 5. Also ibid., 6.: "although no one wants to be 'closed,' the choice between a reading that stresses unresolved ambiguities and one that tries to mediate and subsume them within a higher resolution is not simply one between a good liberal openness and anal-retentive boorishness."

[43]   Auden, "As I Walked Out One Evening," vv. 43-44.

4 Whither?

Global is good, national is bad, we now hear. We may drill back when we want to belong, to feel grounded, to be proud, to have a heritage. One may sneer at Western culture or wish to see it taken down a peg, but to do so for works like Dante's *Commedia* is nonsense, and to deny the importance of its vertical connectedness to antiquity and to the Middle Ages would be silly, likewise its reach into later literatures. The literary comparatist Walter Cohen can tell a thrilling story from a great height and across a vast time period in his *A History of European Literature: the West and the World from Antiquity to the Present* and present the West initially as the taker and later as a source for global literature.[44] But Cohen also has wise words about the ogres (global literature) and the pygmies (scholarly ascetism that refuses to teach in translation).[45]

I have already expressed misgivings about possible institutional outcomes of literary globalism. In the sublunary world all scholars have limited time, different abilities, and varying access to materials. At the individual level comes a psychomachy between laziness, curiosity, avoidance, and delight. At the institutional level, space, funding, positions, teaching, and fuzzier goods, such as status or being cherished, all vary. At the national level come politics, support, and institutionalization versus neglect, hostility, or even persecution. At both the national and international level are those camped *ad portas* and those defending the citadel or opening the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Zunz saw the Talmud as a stumbling-block for his subject. Did parallel discussions within Classics result in the firewall that excluded the Bible and Christian texts from the Classics departments of the Anglosphere? When reading Zwiep's essay, I was struck by how the cancelled or outmoded 'western Classic' and, with it, Classics itself may soon find itself deinstitutionalized and knocking on the door of English, Comparative Literature, or World Literatures, just as Zunz (who had been trained as a Classicist) sought inclusion in Prussia. Perhaps the treadmill of reincarnation is ineluctable?

We could dramatize our situation by imagining intellectual genera and species and the threatened fate of dinosaur and dodo. We are talking about literary history and literary histories in this issue, so this is about texts, authors, languages, and the construction of subject areas. It should still matter whether we can produce sustained interpretations based on original texts.[46] I was recently asked to write a chapter on "Literature: Latin, Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian" for a reference work to be published by a major university press. Not wishing to become either a laughing-stock or a scab, I demurred.

Outside, the air it all breathes, are money, opportunity, demand, and *Zeitgeist*. At the risk of sounding like a frustrated *vagans*—learning has been commodified, universities have become businesses, and not all governments regard the

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[44] E.g. the introduction of Cohen, *A History of European Literature*, 1-13, esp. 4.
[45] Ibid., 10.
[46] Ibid. notes that even he generally avoids sustained interpretation when texts are read in translation.

humanities as cultural heritage and capital. The academic world of humanists no longer promises much security or stability.

How, if at all, do, or should, these changes affect the literary history of the period? I ask myself what the take-away is: what should we be doing? Have we specialists "kept it to ourselves" (Vessey, at 36) in that we have not translated the works concerned, not taught them, not published sufficiently? Or perhaps it is more a matter of telling it on the mountain, and writing a classic piece of psychagogy, a trade book, that sends every reader rushing to the *Patrologia Latina*?

I like to imagine texts as sending radio signals (constant or intermittent, feeble or strong) or as light from stars. I remind my students of the Gettysburg Electric Map (†RIP) and how such an item could be used for Latin literary history: who wrote Sapphics, where and when? Or for world literary history to find the global hotspots and *Supertexts* and κτήματα εἰς ἀεί of *Weltliteratur*.[47] Imagine all the helpful filters and settings! That is surely a happier thought than the imagined digital map that haunts my nightmares: one of the academic institutionalizations of philologies and literatures with virtual tombstones for discontinued fields and chairs![48]

> Igitur quisquis vera requirit
> Neutro est habitu; nam neque novit
> Nec penitus tamen omnia nescit,
> sed quam retinens meminit, summam
> Consulit alte visa retractans,
> Ut servatis queat oblitas
> Addere partes.[49]

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[47] Mérite un détour? Vaut le voyage?

[48] There was always the "ancient house" in Zamyatin, *We*, 25-30. Willum Westenholz has just kindly shared Weinersmith, *Liberal Education* with me. A rant on the modern commercial credentialling university vs. the former liberal arts university: "The first place makes you tired, while the second place would be so beloved that if it burned down you'd want to bury it and write its name on a stone."

[49] "Therefore, whoever seeks the truth, / is in neither state (sc. ignorance or knowledge), for neither does he truly know all / nor, however, is he entirely ignorant. / He reflects on the whole that he remembers, keeping it within himself, / going over what he had seen on high, / so as to be able to add forgotten components to those he has retained" Boethius, 5 *Cons.* M.3.25-31.

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