Chapter 16

Literary History

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Before the Enlightenment, the term "literature"—which did not originally refer to *belles-lettres* or works of fiction—was used in a fairly general way, in Latin or in the west European vernaculars, to denote intellectual authorities, corpora of sources, or traditions of learning or interpretation; a sense which is preserved in the meaning of "scholarly literature" or bibliography (Williams 1977). As such, it was understood as a body of material transcending geography, even if there was an implicit understanding of a transfer of learning from an origin point, perceived as the Eastern Mediterranean, to the northwest of Europe (the so-called *translatio studiorum*). Literary history, then, was equivalent to the general history of knowledge. And despite radical transformations of the concept over time, most attempts to write comparative literary history have remained—whether by accident or willful occlusion—remarkably indifferent to coherent geographical systematizations.

This is not to say that all older attempts to consider "the state of learning in Europe" were bound to a universalistic interpretation of the classical and Biblical heritage as the building blocks of literary knowledge in modern Europe. For example, British scholar and editor of manuscripts Samuel Purchas, who sketched "A Briefe and Generall Consideration of Europe" in 1625, had recourse to a division of the continent based on the different languages spoken in it (Purchas [1625] 2013). But his divisions rested primarily on identification of languages and language families, and he did not seek to delve further into the literary traditions they perpetuated, either by nation or region.

From Exchange to Division:
The Republic of Letters and the Legacy of De Staël

It was in the course of the eighteenth century that the concept of literature is generally agreed to have undergone its most important transformations.

On the one hand, there was a change in the nature of literary communications—press freedom; free association across religious, political, class, and gender boundaries; and the development of learned networks. On the other, new criteria emerged for the valorization of literary taste which privileged new modes (such as fiction over history and lyric over epic) and placed an emphasis on sensibility and aesthetics. Literature, then, took on new functions both in terms of public communication and as a field mediating between the private and the public sphere (Marino 1974; Goodman 1998).

To others, it was not necessarily the existence of different publishing centers, but of a literary process of exchange, that permitted the articulation of a concept of Europe. Writing from Riga—by eighteenth-century standards a somewhat marginal point on the European map—Johann Gottfried Herder ([1795] 2013, 86–87) saw, in remarkably modern fashion, that Europe was in one sense "merely a figment of the mind," and that if anything resembling a European public space existed, it could only be said to consist of "the general principles and opinions of the keenest-sighted, most reasonable men," who "truly form an invisible church, even when they have not even heard of one another" (see also Norton 1991; Hoock-Demarle 2008). Nearly two hundred years before Benedict Anderson, Herder intuited the extent to which the practiced elaboration of a critical discourse valorizing a common literary heritage could conjure a spatially-designated community into being, even if its members would never meet in person (Anderson 1983). But what of Europe's regional divisions? Perhaps the most influential attempt at furnishing a more clear-cut, middle-level division of European culture according to literary-historical principles, was that made by the Swiss-French critic Germaine de Staël. In 1800 de Staël published a pioneering work of literary sociology, *De la littérature dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*, which continued the debate initiated by Montesquieu and Rousseau on the complex relations of climate, education, and sociability to the potential perfectibility of societies (De Staël 1800; for good contextualizations see Fanger 1962 and Macherey 1998).

In *De la littérature,* de Staël's interest in the cultural geography of literature is relatively muted. For the subject matter of this chapter, her more important and ground-breaking work was her 1813 *De l'Allemagne,* a critical survey of modern German literature for an international audience, written in the context of the opposition to Napoleon and the German Wars of Liberation. In the preface to this volume, de Staël set out her conception of European literary divisions, with a view to persuading French critics to "penser à l'européenne" (to think European), as she put it. She traced "the origin of the principal nations of Europe" to "three large and distinct races": the Latin, the Germanic and the Slavonic. She went on to classify the literary culture of each of these groups according to (fairly haphazard) historical criteria.

For instance, she considered that "the nations whose intellectual culture is of Latin origin have been civilized for longer than the others; they have inherited much of the Romans' sagacious dexterity in handling the affairs of this world" (de Staël 1813: 96–97). The Germanic nations, on the other hand, "have almost always managed to resist the Roman yoke; they were civilized later, and only through Christianization; they went straight from a form of barbarism to a Christian society: the epoch of chivalry, the spirit of the Middle Ages, are among their liveliest memories" (de Staël 1813: 96–97). Slavic literature was placed in a subordinate position, because "the civilization of the Slavs, having developed more recently and more rapidly than those of the other peoples, shows at present more signs of imitation than originality." Asiatic civilization, meanwhile, was dismissed as "too underdeveloped for their writers to be able at present to display their true, natural character" (de Staël 1813: 96–97).

De Staël's influence was such that this tripartite model of literary Europe persisted in much nineteenth-century scholarship in French and in other languages. It rested on a cultural-historical interpretation of a linguistic division at the same time as philologists were establishing the concept of Indo-European languages, with the Germanic, Latin, and Slavic being its principal groupings (but also taking into account manifestations such as Celtic, Baltic, Greek, and Albanian at its margins).[1] It was also part of a general trend of eliminating or minimizing references to extra-European influences on European literature: for instance, both the contribution of Egyptian culture to that of Ancient Greek philosophy and that of Arabic to medieval Romance vernacular poetry were gradually occluded in this period and effectively replaced by the above schema. As it was organizing its internal literary divisions, Europe was also patrolling its external cultural boundaries (see Bernal 1987; Dainotto 2006a and 2006b).

Broadly speaking, this relatively schematic division of European literature spread itself across Europe and became fairly generalized by the mid-nineteenth century. De Staël's influence was evident in Britain, where Lord Byron attributed his interest in Greece to her (Goldsworthy [1998] 2013), and Thomas Carlyle his decision to take up the study of German (Kaplan 1983, 56). It was also important in Italian culture: not only had de Staël rendered Italy significant through her novel *Corinne, ou L'Italie,* but an important 1829 essay on the idea of a European literature by the young Giuseppe Mazzini ([1829] 2013) shows the influence of her topological schema quite clearly. So do both the iteration rehearsed by Finnish philosopher Johan Vilhelm Snellman in 1841 (Jalava and Stråth 2016) and the famous considerations of Russian novelist and critic Ivan Turgenev ([1860] 1965) on Shakespeare and Cervantes, in which the former is adjudged to be representative of the

Northern spirit, and the latter of that of the South. Well into the twentieth century a "de Staëlian" model was being referred to, for instance in the work of Galician naturalist author Emilia Pardo Bazán (du Pont 2003).

National, Universal and European Conceptions of Comparative Literary History: Goethe, Arnold, Taine, and Brunetière

"Nowadays," said Johann Wolfgang Goethe to his friend Johann Peter Eckermann in the course of a conversation in the first days of 1827, "national literature doesn't mean much. The age of world literature is beginning, and everybody should contribute to hasten its advent" (in Moretti 2000). This statement is often cited as a protomanifesto for comparative literary studies in the twenty-first century and as an indicator that the study of literature had a liberal cosmopolitan agenda whose lineage could be traced back to one of its polymath founding father figures (Pizer 2000 and 2012; Behdad and Thomas 2011). The positing of such a genealogy should be met with caution, however (Bernheimer 1998; Pizer 2000). A regionalizing outlook was much more in evidence in the "scientific" disciplines of linguistics and philology, and scholars in those fields were not always interested in establishing equivalent status or interchangeability among different languages, but rather in creating genealogies and hierarchies, which tended by their nature to reinforce conceptions of "European" languages as being more developed and articulate, as against the "primitive" source-linguistic material furnished in particular by Asian (and to some extent Celtic) languages. The greater energy was directed toward building literatures on a national paradigm. Concepts of "Celtic literature" were developed somewhat more strongly than those of, say, "Balkan," "Baltic," or "Iberian" literature, but again this was a discussion focused more on linguistics and folklore-culture studies than on literary history *per se*: moreover, it was conducted in the languages of the metropolis (English, French, German) rather than in the vernaculars (Leerssen 1998). This is not the place, nor would there be the space, to review developments in all national literary historiographies in Europe during this key period (Hohendahl 1989; Spiering 1999; Cooper 2010; and Ivanovic 2013). But the point may at least be established through a brief look at some of the major figures who devised paradigms for the uses and importance of the study of literature in the nineteenth century. Perhaps the most influential models were those developed in England and France, particularly through the work of Matthew Arnold and his near contemporary Hippolyte Taine.

Matthew Arnold, one of the giants of Victorian literature and intellectual life, is today best known in criticism for his work *Culture and Anarchy* (1869),

which sought to make the case for the study of works of literature for their own sake. Although an apology for the study of (high) culture, this work bore the subtitle *An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* and became a key reference point for the study of literature as developed and institutionalized in Britain and the United States in the course of the twentieth century. Arnold's essay continued to cite continental European culture as an example to his compatriots, even including calls to a Voltairean "war on the absurd" (Collini 2004). At the same time, it made little attempt to "geographize" European literature according to climatic, characterological, or other principles. His cultural program has been deemed to be at once transnational and anational, with something of an oscillation between a belief in a divergent (and hierarchical) understanding of historical literary cultures and a dependence on a cosmopolitan—if largely Eurocentric—notion of literature as the product of transfers, interfaces, and general cultural synthesis (Leerssen 2015). To the extent to which it was geographical, his model, especially in *Culture and Anarchy,* posited the "streaming" of modern cultural values from the twin ancient sources of "Hebraism" and "Hellenism" into "our" world (Arnold 1869), which is understood to be an English one fueled by ongoing contact with West European culture, as well as with investigation to some extent of its more-recently discovered ethnocultural roots, as evinced in his work on Celticism (Leerssen 1996; Stone 1998).

Taine approached literary history in a much more historical way, if not always evincing the lucidity which his English counterpart considered so characteristic of the French. His works, beginning with the important *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1863), were almost as influential on the European literary scene as Arnold's were on the Anglo-American. In the preface to this work Taine made a case for the study of literature not just for aesthetic or moral improvement but as a source for the history of manners and human particularities. Subscribing to notions of human diversity, he sought to explain them by invoking three fundamental factors: "*la race, le milieu et le moment*"—in other words, hereditary, environmental, and temporal-conjunctural factors. He then applied these to an empirical study of the English case, and subsequently to a full-blown study of French history, *Les origines de la France contemporaine* (1876–94), so that his influence extended well beyond the confines of literary history *stricto sensu*.

A towering figure in late-nineteenth-century European cultural criticism, Taine's legacy was taken up by the nationalist right in France and other countries, and for that reason suffered a general eclipse in the twentieth century (Spitzer 1948). For the purposes of this article, however, it should be stressed that his concept of *milieu* did not really develop into a theory of literary spaces or regions; it was designed, rather, to provide an attractive, if somewhat for-

mulaic, support to general conceptions of national character that had already been aired to a considerable extent in existing works of cultural history, from Guizot (to whom *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* was dedicated) and also in the work of English historical sociologist Thomas Henry Buckle (Pozzi 1993).

Most comparative literary historians working in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries followed to some extent the concepts of "currents" and "interrelations" between different national literatures in a broad paradigm which attempted to draw on the scientific or quasiscientific models of Darwin and Hegel, emphasizing both the importance of "spirit" as a historical motor as well as a source of cultural value, and the "evolutionary" character of the enterprise. In Denmark, Georg Brandes (1872) produced an influential multivolume work, the *Main Currents in Nineteenth-Century Literature,* which was translated into German, French, and English (the literatures upon which it largely concentrated). In France, Fernand Brunetière to some extent attempted to move the focus of literary history away from "great men" and the general history of culture onto the more specific development of literary modes and genres: his *Evolution of Genres in the History of Literature* (1890) drew on Darwinian models and treated literary genres almost as biological species in formation. In 1900, in a keynote lecture to the Association of Comparative Literature, Brunetière offered his thoughts on the concept of "La littérature européenne" (European literature).

Unlike Goethe, who had envisaged literature as tending to move from the national to the global, Brunetière (1900) saw national literatures as being the product of an earlier pan-European literature which had subdivided into separate "species," and the task of the literary historian, he said, was "to know what happened to the strictly European as it became Spanish, I suppose, or French." However, in his conception, not all national literatures in Europe could be considered to be "European" merely by dint of having arisen *within* the geographical confines of the continent. Works from the periphery, whether Basque, Breton, Norwegian, or Russian, would not be considered European unless they "enriched the European spirit with some element which had remained until then "national" or "ethnic."" Leaving aside the tautological (or circular) reasoning behind this definition of Europeanness (Dainotto 2012), important again here is that it is conceived either in essentialist or diachronic terms, being the product of an evolutionary current or process, rather than as a product of (or representation of) space.

The View from the "Periphery"

In contemporary discussion of the notion of world literature, the Eurocentrism of the nineteenth-century tradition has by now become a familiar object

of critique (Bernheimer 1998; Prendergast 2004). What such criticism largely overlooks is that calling such Eurocentric mainstream discourse "European" itself offers only a very partial representation of wider European literary history. If one looks at literary history not in France, Britain, and Germany, but in, say, Spain, Russia, and the Balkans, one finds that attitudes toward this model were often ambiguous and sometimes contestatory. In Spain, for example, it was acknowledged by some of the first literary historians, the brothers Rafael and Pedro Rodríguez Mohedano, that the need to develop a literary history (*historia literaria*) was something that would be stimulated by the example of "other nations," almost certainly including France (Ríos-Font 2004, 17). However, this did not necessarily entail producing a "European" literary history: indeed, they saw the literature of the rest of Europe (or even that of Portugal, which they also excluded) as being much less relevant to their enterprise than that of the (Spanish) Americas, of which they wrote that "we include it in the plan of our literary history . . . despite its distance, we cannot regard it as foreign" (Ibid.).

From Eastern Europe, the concept of a comparative Slavic literary culture based on the notion of "literary reciprocity" was advanced by Ján Kollár ([1837] 2008) in his work *On the Literary Reciprocity between the Various Branches and Dialects of the Slavic Nation*. Part of the process, Kollár argued, was aimed at encouraging Slavs to understand the interrelations between their literary cultures and perhaps to conceive of their various branches (*Stämme*) as forming one nation (*Nation*). At the same time, he insisted, he intended "to become not just a one-sided Slav, but to achieve wherever possible a European perspective" (Kollár [1837] 2008, 74).

However, while Kollár argued that the Slavs have a right "to join the great European family" and should answer "the call to seize the course of the age and of European life," he placed their literary reciprocity in contrast with that of Western Europe (Ibid., 101). Where Western European nations had achieved linguistic uniformity, the Slavic nation would remain individuated (Ibid., 78). Although they were "the largest nation in Europe," allegedly occupying "half of Europe, a third of Asia, and a significant section of America," they retained more affinity with the ancients than with their Western European neighbors (Ibid., 78, 102, 108). If some successful scholars had succeeded in presenting Slavic literary history "in a systematic order" it was to show something "to Europe," "as if in a great mirror" rather than as if participating in a common culture (Ibid., 83). The Slavs were also differentiated by their lack of a public sphere (Ibid., 116). In other words, Kollár promoted literary reciprocity among the Slavs, yet not necessarily stronger relations with Europe as a whole. His concept of reciprocity, while not strongly political, was therefore more of intranational articulations—including with the

non–Slavic nations of Eastern Europe—than one contributing to an overall conception of literary regions in Europe.

A second major attempt to present Slavic literary history to a Western audience was made by the poet Adam Mickiewicz, in a course of lectures delivered at the Collège de France in Paris from 1842 to 1844. Building to some extent on the ideas of Kollár, Mickiewicz bemoaned the fact that Slavic literature was so little known to (West) European audiences. Also like Kollár, he compounded the division between West and East European literary history by positing some differential characteristics of the latter. The Slavs as a people were positioned as "the last to arrive and play a part on the European stage," and their literature was adjudged "entirely modern, a contemporary creation." The body of Slavic literature was presented as a relatively undifferentiated mass: "what distinguishes it above all from your Western literatures, is a lack of specialization. In Europe, everything fissures and separates off; among the Slavs, by contrast, everything is summed up and tends toward a concentrated conclusion" (Mickiewicz [1914] 2013, 127).

Indistinctness, then, was the Slavs' paradoxical distinguishing feature, in literature as in political geography. And yet Mickiewicz ([1914] 2013) also assigned a special role to Poland—"the France of the North"—as a country capable of mediating Western ideas to the Slavic peoples as a whole. In this sense Mickiewicz to some extent perpetuated a myth of a differentiated, advanced "Europe" (albeit represented only by a few literatures) and an undifferentiated, insufficiently known "North," where nevertheless one nation could act as guide and messiah of the new spirit of literature.

The development in Russia was somewhat different. There were attempts to cultivate a "Slavic" literary history, such as in the Moscow professor Osip Bodiansky's 1837 study *On the Folk Poetry of the Slavic Tribes,* published in the same year's as Kollár's more famous tract, but limited to the Slavs of the Russian empire rather than an attempt to establish a transnational "Slavic region" (Mickiewicz [1914] 2013). Yet Russian Slavists tended to limit their conception of Slavic literature and culture to the confines of their empire, and to some extent Austrian Slavists did the same, although both paid some attention to the cultures of the Slavs still under Ottoman rule.

As is well known, the question of Slavic identity or Slavophilism developed into a major philosophical debate in Russia about the country's geocultural, and to some extent political, destiny. The debate cannot be resumed in full here, as it goes well beyond the confines of literary history (Bracewell 2008). Suffice it to note that some Russian historians and philosophers of culture advocated a "European" direction for the country's culture, while others—the so-called Slavophiles—saw Russian history as taking a path distinct from that of the rest of Europe. These kinds of arguments over tradition versus moder-

nity, or over "European" versus "autochthonous" cultural roots, also played themselves out in many cultures of Central and Eastern Europe, in a way that partially anticipated the debates in postcolonial literatures.

Among many variations on this theme elaborated in Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, one of the most significant was that propounded by Russian cultural critic and theorist Nikolai Trubetskoi, in a critical essay on "Europe and humanity" first published in Sofia in 1920, but influenced by earlier debates over "Eurasianism" in Russia. In this essay Trubetskoi ([1920] 2013: 178–81) argued perhaps more clearly than any of his predecessors that the apparently "cosmopolitan" discourse elaborated by philosophers and cultural historians was in fact a chauvinist, Western European (in his terms, "Romano-Germanic") one. To such historians, he said, "'civilisation' implies the culture that was developed by Europe's Roman and Germanic peoples … the culture pioneered by cosmopolites as globally superior, set to replace all other cultures, is the same manifestation of culture as the ethno-anthropological concept propagated by the chauvinists. There is no fundamental difference between the two" (Ibid., 179). It is paradoxically an indication of the force of Trubetskoi's argument that his viewpoint was itself effectively peripheralized, being rarely cited in general discussions of the geography of culture, despite its early date and its affinity with later, more famous critiques of West European regionalism.

Interwar Developments

The twentieth century, which, according to nineteenth-century philosophies of progress, should have been the apotheosis of the civilization of Europe as exemplified by literary endeavor, became in the wake of World War I almost a site of mourning for it, as intellectuals from nearly all west European countries sought to diagnose the disaster of war through a critique of the continent's cultural wellbeing (Hewitson and d'Auria 2013). Perhaps on account of a perceived need to rebut and shore up this spirit of pessimism, but also on account of the slow rhythm of paradigm change in academic circles, the feeling of "crisis" did not immediately strike the field of comparative literary history. Indeed, despite the intense questioning of the value of Europe's literary heritage, symbolic importance continued to attach to European culture, and the prestige of literature as an object of study continued to grow, with the establishment of chairs and university research departments dedicated to individual or comparative literatures, even as an exercise in "shoring fragments" against Europe's ruins, as T. S. Eliot had it (Eliot [1922] 2014: 46). General works of comparative literature, of which the m ost prestigious was perhaps the Franco-Belgian scholar Paul van Tieghem's *Précis de l'histoire lit-*

téraire de l'Europe (1925), exercised a wide influence and became standard reference works across the continent.

Another influential project which had its roots in interwar scholarship and disciplinary institutionalization was that of René Wellek. Educated in Prague and teaching Slavic literature in London in the 1930s, Wellek was to become an *eminence grise* in US comparative literature circles after World War II, and went on to produce a *History of Modern Criticism* in eight volumes (1955–92), enshrining the main currents of European criticism from 1750 until modern times in a coherent interpretive narrative. Of the two giants Van Tieghem and Wellek, it was Van Tieghem who attempted to be more comprehensive in terms of the geographical spaces literary history was supposed to cover. But both broadly subscribed to the notion of literary history as being comprised of a series of parallel currents, in which the development of ideas on a temporal axis took precedence over understanding cultural context, and particularly regional divisions, as a significant architectural principle on which a historical discourse could be built.

At the same time, certain literary groupings attempted to establish a series of interactions between writers in different parts of Europe, and to promote a conception of European literature beyond the nation-state. Efforts in this direction are often associated with liberals, with both Romain Rolland and Thomas Mann in a firm anti-Nazi position (Mann 1943; Roth [1939] 2003); but were also adopted by more conservative advocates of a European cultural space. Indeed, the idea of a "European" literature was even taken up by Nazi cultural policymakers. In this vision, as Benjamin George Martin (2013, 490) has recently shown, a clear concept of European literature was elaborated that involved "extend[ing] to the rest of Europe the kind of machinery and mobilization of the cultural sphere that Goebbels had believed he had perfected for Germany" (see also Lubrich 2006, 52–53). While this did not lead to any explicit subdivision of Europe's literary history into regions, it implied and reinforced a division between a (German, occasionally German-Italian) center and a periphery in need of subordination. In this and other conceptualizations of Europe's literary-historical regionalization, the center-periphery model was to the fore, much more so than any more systematic geographical or mesoregional thinking about Europe's written heritage.

The Postwar Setting and Debates

This period saw in part a reiteration of the *Kulturkrise* that had taken place after World War I—an admission of a collapse in European values, and at the same time a severe critique from several quarters of the traditional "civilizing value" of mainstream European Enlightenment thought (e.g., Adorno

and Horkheimer [1947] 2002). At the same time, literary history continued to produce new castings of Europe's literary heritage. Immediately after the war, two masterpieces of European literary historiography were published in quick succession by the same Swiss publisher (Francke Verlag of Bern). The first, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* ([1946] 1953), is one of the great classics of historicist literary criticism, using the contextual analysis of primary works to establish realist description as a constant and constitutive element of Western culture. The second, Ernst Robert Curtius's *The European Literature of the Latin Middle Ages* ([1948] 1953), returned to the Latin medieval tradition in the search of cultural roots such as would provide a common European narrative after the ruinous effects of nationalist thought had been so discredited by the actions of the two World Wars (Jacquemard 1998; Konuk 2010). However, both *magna opera* appeared in widely-read English editions in 1953 (prepared by the same translator, Willard Trask) and thereafter in over twenty European languages, becoming important reference points in the search for a common European literary heritage. Through their anchoring in Greco-Roman antiquity, but also through their relatively circumscribed West European selections of texts, these two works continued to advance the implied identification of "European" literature with Western Europe, which coincided, intentionally or not, with the political institutionalization of "Europe" in the western bloc (Auerbach 1950, 237).

Briefer, but possibly even more influential, were the pronouncements of Anglo-American literary and cultural critic T. S. Eliot in the immediate postwar period. Elaborating his ideas first in literary magazines, then in a lecture on "The Unity of European Culture," published in German in Berlin in 1946, which was included as the final chapter of his 1948 book *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture,* Eliot's account effectively constituted a defense of the heritage of "Greece, Rome and Israel." The question of Eliot's attitude to Jewish culture, colored as it was by his own Christian beliefs—and, it has to be admitted, his casual anti-Semitism—has been controversial. Interesting in the postwar context is his cultural conservatism, effectively a reprise in a new conjuncture of the Arnoldian principles of "Hebraism" and "Hellenism" (Eliot 1946). Eliot initially sought to limit the relevance of Israel but changed his views after the end of the war (see Eliot 1942, 26–27; Eliot 1944; Julius 1995, 197–99). Another British cultural historian and political theorist, Ernest Barker, likewise reverted to nineteenth-century principles in the conclusion to his three-volume *The European Inheritance,* where he revived the Tainean concepts of *race, milieu,* and *moment* as "stock, space, and time" (Barker 1954).

There were significant mutations to the idea of a common European literary heritage in the 1950s and 1960s, notably through the promotion, espe-

cially in the United States, of the concept of "Western civilization" (as opposed to strictly European), which put forward an implied symbolic geography uniting American and Western European heritage in a common civilizational area (Allardyce 1979). As Franco Moretti (1994) has observed, what these accounts have in common is not just a negation of the nation-state, but an insistence that the only alternative to it is a concept of Europe (or "the West") as "unity." The ideas of continuity and antiquity were also paramount in all these accounts: they underwrote the idea of Western Europe as the heir to the Greco-Roman heritage, and in Eliot's account especially, the religious tradition was also stressed.

Eurocentrism and Nationalism Critiqued

After the 1970s, literary and cultural history in the United States turned quite firmly away from Europe, and the centrality of the European heritage to literary studies was challenged by official bodies (Bernheimer 1995). This was partly inspired by the postcolonial critique of "the narrow self-serving parochialism of Europe," as Chinua Achebe (1974) called it (see also Césaire [1950] 2013; Fanon 1961). The critique of Eurocentrism was most clearly encapsulated in Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*, which among many other things foregrounded the relationship between literature and geography, or, as its subtitle clearly states, on *Western Representations of the Orient*. Said claimed his own intellectual heritage from different sources in the various traditions presented hitherto—from Césaire, Foucault, Gramsci, and other writers critical of colonialism and Eurocentrism, but also from Auerbach and other upholders of a conception of "European humanism." Controversially, Said omitted the study of German, Russian, and other European attitudes to the Orient, effectively confining his critique of the "West" to the Anglo–French tradition.

Here is not the place to revisit the extensive debates that that work generated (Macfie 2000; Apter 2011). More important for our purposes is the ambiguous legacy Said's work might have held for theories of European literary and cultural regions. On the one hand, his critique gave prominence to the macrogeographical dimension of literary production and representation and is obviously one of the most important contributions to the "geographization" of literary history. On the other hand, by framing the argument exclusively around a dividing line between "Europe" and "the Orient," he ignored potential divisions within European culture, including regional ones. Paradoxically, Said's concept of Orientalism re-essentialized Europe, and to some extent marginalized the discussion about its regions and internal differences (Bracewell and Drace-Francis 1999).

However, it successfully inspired study of geographical imaginaries within Europe, where literary historians found images of the Balkans, the Celtic regions, or the North to be culturally constructed on relatively, if not absolutely, similar lines (Brown 1996; Sørensen and Stråth 1997; Todorova 1997; Goldsworthy [1998] 2013). This was again cast in most cases as the product of a vision of the literary center toward the peripheries, through the "image of the other," rather than through structural commonalities within regions across national literatures. Studies investigating the latter phenomenon were generally limited to the study of motifs, or *Stoffgeschichte* (Muthu 2002).

Within Europe itself, however, there were important developments in comparative literary studies which favored a differentiated approach to literary history. Perhaps the most important of these was the rise of a critical approach to national character, through the study of stereotypes in literary works. With notable precedent in the interwar period, the branch of comparative literature called "Imagology" achieved institutional recognition at the University of Aachen in the 1970s (Dyserinck 1988). In Amsterdam, a book series dedicated to "imagological studies" was inaugurated in 1992; and in 2007, scholars Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (2007) published a comprehensive reference handbook theorizing and codifying the imagological method, with entries dedicated to the representation and history of national stereotypes in most nations and some regions of Europe. In their introductions, however, Beller and Leerssen disassociated their methodology from any sociological approach to the conceptual history of *real* regions: their task, they stressed, was to provide a history of imaginings, not to form the basis of any conceptualization of Europe's geographical division, either on national or regional lines.

Other scholars addressed the problem of regional and structural inequalities in the production and consumption of literatures through a more sociological approach. In his *Atlas of the European Novel,* Franco Moretti ([1997] 1998) uses data concerning translation and dissemination of the European novel in nineteenth-century Europe to draw attention to the problems of unequal canon formation in different parts of the continent, but it does not evince a systematic approach to geographical regions (Bradbury 1996). At roughly the same time, Pascale Casanova ([1999] 2004) combined insights from postcolonial models such as Orientalism with Bourdieu's sociology of art to produce an account of center-periphery relations in world literature. Her key work, *The World Republic of Letters,* is of significance in analyzing the historical sociology and geography of literature, and particularly the unequal relations between periphery and center. However, besides being on the borderline between literary history *per se* and sociology, both Moretti's and Casanova's approaches tended to reinforce the dominant center-

periphery paradigm even as they critiqued it (Orsini 2002; Prendergrast 2004).

European Regional Literary History: A New Paradigm?

A third route to conceptualizing European regions through literary history emerged through the work of another intellectual project, the Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages. This project, launched in 1967 and based in Antwerp, is funded by a number of national academies across Europe and has published twenty-five volumes of comparative European literary history since 1973.[2] The great majority of these volumes are dedicated either to particular genres (e.g., Romantic drama, poetry, or prose), movements (expressionism, symbolism, modernism) or periods (the Renaissance, the Enlightenment). But a few in particular use regions as their structural principle and object of interpretation. The *History of Literature in the Caribbean* and the two volumes on *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa* treat extra-European literature composed in European languages, and therefore speak to debates about the external boundaries of Europe.

Only recently has the series presented volumes dedicated to medium-sized regions of Europe. These include the four-volume *The History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe,* edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (2006–10; hereafter *HLCECE*), and the two volumes on *The Comparative History of Literatures in the Iberian Peninsula,* edited by Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza, Anxo Abuín Gonzalez, and César Domínguez (2010). It is significant that this regularizing direction, in many respects an important step for reconsidering the regional dimensions of literary history, begins with "peripheral" regions and does not propose to "regionalize" the center. They provide stimulating, and not dissimilar, conceptualizations of their respective regions, while remaining sensitive to local context.

In the introduction to the set of volumes on East Central Europe, one of the editors, Cornis-Pope, rejects the idea of the continent being divided into different cultural areas. This is particularly problematic, wrote Cornis-Pope, for East Central Europe, which has "often been held hostage to conflicting mappings" in the political sphere, or to notions of cultural hierarchy. He criticizes equally the political science approach of Huntington's "clash of civilizations" model, and what he saw as the cultural essentialism and hierarchism of Milan Kundera's 1983 essay "L'Occident kidnappé," probably the best-known attempt to define Central Europe from a literary-cultural perspective (Kundera 2011, vol. 2, 739–44, 974–76; and François Ricard's notes, ibid., 1275). As an alternative, Cornis-Pope presents East Central Europe as a zone of literary interfaces. Through multilingualism, translation, "nodal cities,"

and liminal spaces, East Central Europe becomes a zone of convergences and disseminations rather than one of rigid boundaries. In this, optimistic reading, Cornis-Pope and Neubauer perhaps fashion their conception of the region rather in the light of the old Republic of Letters; closer examination would perhaps reveal the same kinds of inequalities and omissions that the latter has been charged with. At the same time, their literary history was admirable in the way that conventional teleological, influence-driven narratives were avoided, and the multivolume work is broken up into sections on topographies, key moments, and examination of urban and rural culture. Moreover, while it attended in detail to many, if not all, national myths and heroes, and also gave room to the problem of the region's representation from outside, it provided a significant challenge both to national narratives and to the classic center-periphery construal of Europe's literary relations.

Cornis-Pope and Neubauer's relative optimism about their regionalizing concept was not always accepted by writers themselves. Romanian author Mircea Cărtărescu, for example, wrote in 2004 that he found the concept of being an "Eastern" or "really Southeast European author"—as designated by a German publisher—to be demeaning, as it diminished his sense of belonging to the European heritage: "In *no way* am I an eastern European writer. . . . my content and its themes belong to the great European tradition, which encompasses both Euripides and Joyce" (Cărtărescu 2004, 63–64; Todorova 2005, 59–60). One does not exactly sense that the change from "Eastern" to "East Central European" would have assuaged Cărtărescu's indignation at the sense of marginality that such a label ascribes to writers from the region.

As regards the *Comparative History of Literatures in the Iberian Peninsula* (*HLCECE*), this includes extensive conceptual discussion of the problem of Iberia as a region (already initiated by one of the editors in a programmatic article from 2003; see Cabo Aseguinolaza 2003; Cabo Aseguinolaza, Abuín Gonzalez, and Domínguez 2010).[3] The program of the editors bears similarities to that of *HLCECE,* and they think along the same lines in several areas. Literary "Iberia" is understood as something partially conjured by the view from the outside, rather than a naturally internally-generated identity region; and a tension is identified between intraregional comparative study and a tendency to compare one literature of the region with one from the perceived center. At the same time, the editors make a fair case that a spatially-ordered literary history may also contribute successfully to a rethinking of the traditional teleological mode of historiography. As one of the editors, César Domínguez (2013, 101), stated in a related publication, the concept of Iberia "can function as a meta-geographical object whereby one may select and emplot literary material in a different way to the selection and emplotment provided by national literary objects such as Spanish and Portuguese literature."

Conclusion

Writing forty years ago about "the shape of European history," William Mc-Neill (1974, 4) argued that, despite the obvious impact of twentieth-century political and cultural crises on the key concepts underpinning our ideas of Europe, certain structures remained in use, "like an echoing nautilus shell washed up on the beach after its living inhabitant has disappeared." McNeill spoke especially about the historiographical frames which survived the crisis of the idea of liberty after World War I, but his metaphor may also be applied to the crises attending European literary history after World War II, and perhaps even to hidden assumptions in the otherwise laudable and highly ingenious research directions which have attempted to restructure thinking about Europe's literary heritage in the late twentieth and early twentieth centuries.

Attempts to theorize mesoregions in European literary history have not been very frequent, even though "European literature" can itself be considered to be a clandestine regional concept. The dominant paradigms have been either "national" or "center-periphery" based or both, and in some sense the critiques thereof—whether from the perspective of postcolonial studies, cultural sociology, or imagology—in different ways tend to replicate these divisions at the same time as they deconstruct them. The tendencies of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century models of writing literary history have, like McNeill's "nautilus shell," provided a structure that seems to have survived the extensive attacks on its ostensible inhabited content. The appearance of genuinely innovative regional literary histories, particularly of Iberia and East Central Europe, as well as of critical approaches to the imaginative geography of the Balkans, Scandinavia, the Celtic legacy, and the South, is a relatively recent and salutary development. Scholars working simultaneously on different areas have produced valuable alternative models for rethinking Europe's literary-historical legacy, not only for the regions they focus on but also in terms of the role of the perceived center in fashioning more or less valid regional concepts.

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Notes

1. The linguistic division of Europe is the subject of chapter 15 by Uwe Hinrichs in this volume. I have reckoned as "literary-historical" and not "linguistic" any theory resting on interpretations of literary artefacts rather than of languages or linguistic phenomena. On the establishment of the concept of "Indo-European" languages (called "Indo-German" in German scholarship), see especially Olender 1992. Another subject that this paper is *not* about is the representation of space and place in literary works (for an introduction see, e.g., Dainotto 1999).
2. Full list at the University of Antwerp's CHLEL web page: http://www.ua.ac.be/main.aspx?c=.CHLEL&n=64469.
3. The second volume of this title (Domínguez, Abuín González and Sapega 2016) appeared when this chapter was in press; the analysis offered here is based only on volume 1.

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