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Chronological and Geographical Divides in the World History of Literature

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This article examines the narrative strategies employed in the representation of world literature history, departing from the chronological and geographical divisions used in the recently published four-volume work, *Literature: A World History*. The separation of the narrative paths by continents may appear overly mechanical, but the work demonstrates remarkable flexibility in this regard. The example of classical literature is particularly illustrative. Despite the chapters belonging to the 'Europe' category, the work discusses literature produced in all three continents around the Mediterranean together and without any mechanical separation. Although divisions in a narrative of such a vast scope are unavoidable, it is essential to apply them in a flexible manner.

History is not everything that happened in the past, but rather a story someone tells about past events. The term goes back to Herodotus, whose work was later given the title *Histories*, because the first sentence, which functioned as a sort of title, or at least a description of the work's content, contained this word: 'This is the presentation of the inquiry [*historia*] of Herodotus'. But in the same sentence, when Herodotus explains why he wants to present the results of his inquiries, he implies something of narrative character, something like history in the later sense of the word, the sense which it soon acquired, namely that the deeds of the Greeks and the barbarians should not be forgotten, and especially the causes of the wars they fought against each other. He wanted the great deeds of men to be remembered, but also wanted to explain the reasons for past events. History presents causal connections in the past. There are, of course, several historiographical genres that only register data of the

past, such as chronologies, chronicles, or annals, but history presents a story. Literary history also seeks to present literature as something that has a history, a development in which causality can be detected.

An impressive work in four volumes appeared recently that ambitiously aims to present the entire history of literature. The title, *Literature: A World History* (Damrosch and Lindberg-Wada 2022), implies that it is not the history of world literature in the more or less Goethean meaning of the latter, namely literatures connected to each other in the increasingly globalized systems of market, communication, and cultural exchange. Although the topic is literature, the 45 contributors, whose expertise can cover huge areas of knowledge, sought to present a world history.

The expression 'world history' might have two different meanings. One of them is rather comprehensive, namely the presentation of all events that ever happened on the globe, while the second is a selection of the most important events that change the state of the world. For the first notion, every location and every period with its own development is equally important. Such a world history is democratic and politically fair. However, it has its own difficulties, since different cultures produce different amount of evidence, including written records. In addition, the chances of survival or transmission for the produced evidence is variable, and the availability of the evidence also depends on many factors. Even if we regard every event ever to have happened anywhere as equally important, we will necessarily speak more about those cultures that produced more evidence of durable material that was not neglected or intentionally destroyed by some subsequent culture.

The same is true for literature: the literary cultures that have produced more texts and recorded them on durable materials will be much more discussed than others. And even this might not suffice, luck is also needed. Let me refer to the example of Maya literature. *Popol Vuh* is a highly original narrative collection of Maya mythology, usually mentioned and anthologized in the context of world literature, which might obfuscate the fact that only a small fraction of that once fervid Maya literacy survived the Spanish colonization of Central America. To quote Patricia A. McAnany and Tomás Gallareta Negrón:

> The earliest known Maya hieroglyphs were painted and inscribed during the Preclassic period, around 300 b.c.e., and Maya literacy continued through the sixteenth-century Spanish incursions, at which point conquistadors and missionaries report on the confiscation and burning of countless Maya fan-fold codex-style books. Currently only four codices are known to exist. The bulk of known hieroglyphic texts – carved in stone and painted on pottery – date to a 250-year period from 600 to 850 c.e., otherwise known to archaeologists as the Late Classic period. (McAnany and Gallareta Negrón 2009: 144)

Popol Vuh is contained in none of those codices, and does not even show any stylistic similarity to those terse historical records (Christenson 2007: 35). Scholars tend to suppose that the text is a compilation of orally transmitted narratives written down

sometime between 1554 and 1558 (Christenson 2007: 37–38), not in traditional hieroglyphs but in a phonetic transcription of Quiché (a Mayan dialect) text with the Latin alphabet. The authors or scribes must have been Quiché people trained to read and write with the Latin alphabet by Christian missionaries (Christenson 2007: 37–38). The manuscript they created does not seem to have survived, but the text as we have it goes back to a work created by Francisco Ximénez, who might have been the first to copy it, around 1702. He compiled a tripartite treatise for evangelical purposes (Quiroa 2002: 281–284) in which he included a bilingual edition of *Popol Vuh*, the transcription of a Quiché original and its Spanish translation.

The early missionaries did everything they could to destroy the pagan texts of the people they strove to convert to Christianity; or, from another viewpoint, the Spaniards culturally uprooted the subjects they were colonizing. Yet one missionary, about 150 years later, found it useful to copy Maya stories, maybe due to genuine interest in their culture, but certainly to facilitate conversion. This singular piece of Mayan world literature does not belong to the once great tradition of Mayan literacy, and became known to the world rather accidentally in the mid-nineteenth century, when its print publication came out in Europe – first in Ximénez's Spanish translation (1856) then in the Quiché original (1861). However, the hieroglyphic Mayan texts focus only on the deeds of the Mayan elite, and it might have been the Spanish missionaries teaching their Bible who unintentionally gave some Quiché people the idea to write down their long religious narratives that were only orally transmitted so far.

The second meaning of 'world history' implies a selection of important events; an event, however, can obviously be important for somebody from a special viewpoint. Importance or meaningfulness of an event depends on a *narratio*, to use Frank Ankersmit's term (Ankersmit 1981), a story created by a historian to tell something about the past in which some logic, arrangement or a meaningful pattern is detectable. In this sense, world history is one of the many historical traditions, others of which come in contact with world history at some junctures. For example, the Greek–Persian wars have a world historical importance only from the Greek viewpoint, while for Persia they were just some unsuccessful campaigns on the far peripheries. Europeans, however, look at those events from the Greek viewpoint since they regard themselves as cultural descendants of the ancient Greeks. It is worth emphasizing that this kind of importance does not necessarily depend on who wins, despite the truism that history is written by the victors. The Assyrian conquest of Israel has world historical importance from Israel's viewpoint, while from the Assyrian perspective it is one minor conquest among many. This concept of world history as a meaningful process or narrative must also be historically and culturally situated (Tatár 1993: 120–121). In this way, we can only tell *our* world history, which differs from the world histories of others.

Literature: A World History apparently resists the temptation of telling a *narratio* from a single viewpoint. The chapters are structured according to the different continents, which shows the intention of unbiased comprehensiveness; but it is the temporal divisions of the four volumes that highlight a non-Eurocentric approach.

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This periodization slightly differs from the usual periodization of western civilization with Antiquity–Middle Ages–Renaissance (Early Modernity)–Late Modernity. Although the first volume ends in 200 CE, while antiquity as a historical period is usually set to end in 476, it is not uncommon to regard Apuleius as the last Classical writer, with whom the history of ancient literature ends in the second century CE. Volume II discusses the world history of literature until 1500, which is the usual date for the end of the European Middle Ages.

It is also close to 1492, which can function as a synecdoche for great geographical discoveries, which ushered in developments that changed the life of a global majority (not necessarily in a positive way); therefore, the years around 1500 mark a change in global history, while they do not mean much for the history of European literature. The chronological division refers more to global history than to any particular literary development. The year 1800, with which Volume III ends, is again close to a date that is usually pointed at as the beginning of Late Modernity, an event of European history, namely the 1789 outbreak of the French Revolution. The year 1800 did not mean anything particular for European history, when it was in the middle of political and military turmoil, and ideological and social reorganization; even less for European literature, which was in the middle of the first phase of romanticism. From a global perspective, it can mark the beginning of global industrial capitalism, albeit not very precisely. Round numbers instead of years of European events prove the correct intention of a universal perspective, and there are valid arguments to see global differences between the conditions before and after 1500 and 1800, respectively.

For the discussion of Latin literature, setting 200 as an epochal boundary has some negative consequences. Doing so means that what happened after 200 already belongs to the Middle Ages, therefore the literary production of the late Roman Empire appears only from the perspective of preparing for medieval literature. From the 1990s on, several scholars have studied the fourth to sixth centuries as an autonomous period of Latin literature with its own aesthetic standards. This period is marked by about a century before and after without any literary work that was certainly written at that time. The third century silence is, however, not total since some Christian works go back to that time. But the revival of literature in the fourth century proves that the education system survived the previous century of military anarchy, and the rhetorical standards, the aesthetic ideals, and basically all features of literary communication show continuity with the second century. It might suffice to refer to Manfred Fuhrmann's seminal work *Rom in der Spätantike: Porträt einer Epoche* (Fuhrmann 1998).

Treating this epoch as very early Middle Ages instead of late antiquity has the consequence that only such authors who seem to have paved the way to medieval literature can be discussed; and even their oeuvres are not discussed in their complexity but only from those aspects that point towards the Middle Ages. Authors passed over unmentioned include Claudius Claudianus, Ausonius, Corippus, Paulinus of Nola, or Ammianus Marcellinus. These authors might not be very

widely known, but students of the period tend to regard them as important or at least interesting. What is presented in *Literature: A World History* is one of the possible *narratio*s, which sets the end of classical literature in the second century CE, and assigns world literature importance only to those authors of the subsequent centuries who initiated medieval views: Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Prudentius. Jerome is only discussed as the translator of the Bible, and not as a continuator of the old rhetorical and philological traditions, or even the ancient novel, namely in his hagiographic works. Of Prudentius' writings, only *Psychomachia*, a fully allegorical poem, is mentioned, although he composed a huge corpus of hexametric and lyric poetry. In an alternative *narratio*, the aforementioned authors practising traditional forms of literature and the neglected works of the Christian writers could appear as characteristic of the period in continuing the ancient tradition.

In this way, the *narratio* that determines periodization contributes to the selection of works to be included in the world history of literature. The concept of canon automatically arises in this context. To put it simply, the literary canon is a set of authors and works regarded as great. In the unreflective old times before theory became so important for literary studies, critics thought that literary greatness depends on some intrinsic merits of a literary work. However, canonization is a process performed by systems and institutions (among which criticism and education are the most decisive) that tend to be strongly tied to the dominant cultural power. Although canons are constantly challenged and renegotiated, the usual conservatism of the canonizing institutions means that reinterpreting a canonical text is always more probable than replacing it with another. Marginalized and oppressed groups tend to regard canons with suspicion and might develop their counter-canons because they feel excluded from the official ones. It might be true that canonical works have already proven their enduring aesthetic value or readability, but the criteria of aesthetic value and the recommended reading strategies tend to be developed by authoritative institutions.

The inclusion of a literary work in a four-volume world history of literature is a strong canonizing gesture. The large number of contributors suggests that most literary cultures and epochs are presented by an expert of the topic. If an expert tells the story of a national literature, a more or less consensual current national canon will in all probability be displayed. There are many such subchapters. When comparatists summarize several traditions, they might have to rely on what Franco Moretti called a 'distant reading' (Moretti 2013), namely on earlier summaries accessible in major languages, preferably written by native scholars of the given traditions. The selection is this case might be less reliable and depend on accidental gathering of information and on the interests of the story they want to tell. On pages 1437–1439 of *Literature: A World History*, Theo D'haen relates the nineteenth-century history of the historical novel in Europe – with the restriction that these passages belong to a chapter on Romantic prose, therefore historical novels by writers categorized as realists are dispersed in the chapter 'The Realist Novel' (pp. 1446–1453). Most of this story focuses on Walter Scott, but it ends with a list of

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several historical novels from various literatures (such as Spanish, Dutch, French, Polish, Hungarian, and Bulgarian), many of which are only described in single sentences.

The Hungarian example is this: 'József Eötvös (1813–1871) wrote a novel about a Hungarian peasant revolt, *Magyarország 1514*-ben (1847; *Hungary in 1514*)' (p. 1439). That is an undeniably interesting novel, but it neither the first, nor the best, not the most canonical, nor the currently most influential historical novel in Hungary. The first was *Abafi* (1836; the name of the eponymous hero) by Miklós Jósika; the most canonical, at least according to school curricula is *Egri csillagok* (1900; *The Eclipse of the Crescent Moon*) by Géza Gárdonyi; literary historians would probably say the best is *A rajongók* (1858–1859; *Fanatics*) by Zsigmond Kemény, who might have been a too realist writer to figure in the chapter on Romanticism; the one that seems to function as the main reference point for the contemporary postmodern historical novelists is *Erdély aranykora* (1851; *The Golden Age of Transylvania*) by Mór Jókai (Török 2001). The choice of Eötvös's novel might be arbitrary, or justified by the topic. However, the inclusion of this work and no other one of the several dozens of nineteenth-century Hungarian historical novels seems to imply that this was the best. Canonical narratives of literary history influence the inclusion, and inclusion is an act of canonization, maybe unintentionally.

While the volumes are chronologically divided, the chapters inside each volume are – with few exceptions – organized geographically by continent. This principle seems objective, but it is not unproblematic. When the topic is a cultural phenomenon, such as literature, the Himalayas or the Sahara Desert function as more severe geographical divides than some bodies of water separating continents. This is not, of course, something the authors do not know. First of all, Asia does not function as a single geographical unit in the volumes but is divided into three cultural spheres: East Asia; South Asia and Southeast Asia; West and Central Asia. And when literary phenomena are attributed to a continent, the geographical aspect is handled with some flexibility.

It is not completely self-evident what makes literatures of a territory belong together, or what makes an author or a piece of literature belong to a geographical location. Answering the second question might be easy in most cases, since most authors spend most of their life and publish their writings in the same country, writing for the local audience. However, this is not always the case. Exile might be a particular situation that confuses strict rules (Neubauer and Török 2009). Milan Kundera probably did not stop being a Central-European novelist when he went into exile in France, but he probably became a West-European writer when he started to write in French. And Josef Škvorecký (1924–2012) probably continued producing Central-European literature when he was living in exile in Canada and his novels were published by Czech émigré publishers in Czech, even if they represented émigré life in North America, as in *Příběh inženýra lidských duší* (1977; *The Engineer of Human Souls*). The cohesion of a national literature mostly depends on the language shared by authors and readers, although there are phenomena challenging this

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simple rule. And it is very probable that literary cultures developing in the same area develop strong ties to each other, either in the way that many of them gravitate towards the same centre or through mutual interrelationships. Physical proximity must have such an effect.

On a thematic level, literary cultures also relate to similar environment and historical experience. Still, there can be exceptions. The nineteenth-century literature of the USA seems more closely connected to England's literature across the Atlantic than to that of neighbouring Mexico. This follows from the common language and cultural heritage. Religion can be a barrier preventing literary exchange too; for example, the Christian Armenians were little influenced by the literature of the surrounding Muslim people, which may be why Armenian literature is not discussed in the volumes of *Literature: A World History*. A chapter on West-Asian literature even mentions the literature of the Kurds living in the Soviet republic of Armenia (p. 1287), but not Armenian literature itself. The literature of the Kurds belongs to the area populated mostly by Muslim people, while Armenian literature might belong somewhere else, a geographically different space.

The West and Central Asian chapter of Volume 4 contains a subchapter 'Turkish Literature in Anatolia' (pp. 1289–1309). The geographical delimitation seems legitimate at first sight, since this volume takes up the world history from 1800 when the Ottoman Empire extended to three continents, occupying almost the entire Balkan Peninsula and North Africa. It is fair to say that the topic of Turkish literature is that in Anatolia, where the Ottoman Turks lived and which remained the centre of the shrinking empire and the later republic. However, the most important cultural and literary centre of the Turks during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was Istanbul, mostly situated outside Anatolia, in the Balkan Peninsula, that is, in Europe. Most parts of current Turkey belong to Asia, and several new districts of the megacity Istanbul lie on the Asian shore of the Bosporus, but the cultural institutions tend to be situated in the older, European parts. It would be strange to divide Turkish literature between West-Asian and European chapters according to the place of birth or the location of activity of authors, or even the address of publishing houses or theatres. So Turkish literature is discussed as Asian, even though it could also be European. Not only because some 3% of the country's territory lies in Europe and 15% of the population lives there, but also for cultural-historical reasons. It is not insignificant that Turkish athletes attend European competitions (including UEFA Champions League or UEFA EURO) instead of Asian ones, and Turkish musicians compete in Eurovision.

The European part of Istanbul is continuous with the ancient Greek city Byzantium and the capital of the Roman Empire, Constantinople. Although we call the empire that continued to exist after the fall of the western half Byzantine, they called themselves Romans, as did all the people of the eastern Mediterranean. That empire contained both European and Asian territories (for some time even African ones), and the strength through which it could resist the pressure of the migrating tribes, which resulted in collapse in the West, was mostly based on the riches and the economic power of the Asian parts. However, the capital's cultural continuity with

the Roman Empire remained evident, and the Ottoman conquest did not break that. The name of Istanbul comes from Greek (meaning 'into the city'), and it was the most important cultural and religious centre of the Greeks until the early twentieth century. Istanbul, already the capital of the Ottoman Empire, played an important role in the European Renaissance and Humanism as the location where knowledge of ancient Greek language and literature could be found (or from where people with that knowledge moved to Italy). The Greek population drastically diminished after the First World War, when the 1923 population exchange forced 1.5 million Greeks to leave Turkey. Due to subsequent discriminative legislation and pogroms, only a few thousand Greeks live in Turkey now. Geographically speaking, the European side of Istanbul is a highly important place for European cultural and literary history.

Yet modern Turkish literature can also be easily categorized as European, and not only because the western shore of the Bosporus is such an important centre of the Turkish culture. Kemal Atatürk's reforms in the 1920s established Turkey as a modern state in the European meaning of the word. The 1924 abolition of the Caliphate was more than symbolic for this modernization, but what might have been more important for literature was the 1928 reform that introduced a Latin-script alphabet to replace the Arabic script. This development, however, was based on long decades of modernization movements both in social-political and literary spheres since the mid-nineteenth century. In literature it meant the import of many literary genres and institutions (cf. for example, Altıntaş and Karadağ 2022). Saying this does not imply denying the national particularities or even the West-Asian characteristics of Turkish literature, but in the whole subchapter on Turkish literature the references to European influences and literary genres abound, while it is not easy to find any to Asian literature. Maybe the authors thought those go without saying, maybe they thought the western parallels and influences have higher explanatory value for a global audience, or maybe modern Turkish literature seems rather similar to European ones.

The finale of the subchapter is the description Orhan Pamuk's oeuvre (pp. 1307–1308). Pamuk was born and raised on European soil, he attended universities in the European continent, he wrote and published his works in Europe, in the western part of Istanbul. Yet he is still discussed as an Anatolian writer in a chapter on West Asia. It might have been absurd to split Turkish literature into European and Asian parts, and too mechanical to make the categorization on the basis of where Pamuk was born or where the universities he attended and the publishers he worked with are located. This decision, which made Pamuk Anatolian, does not prevent Theo D'haen from concluding his chapter on Europe in the same volume with a 'Coda', mentioning Rushdie and Pamuk, 'authors whose belonging to "European" literature remains debated', and whose books 'turn "Europeanness" into an open-ended question' (p. 1515). Rushdie is mentioned both as a South-Asian and European writer, but not as American, although he has lived there since 2000.

The movement of authors between continents in the modern age might make such decisions difficult, but this is not what causes the problem for Pamuk. The reason is rather that in the Mediterranean cultural sphere, literary history can seldom be

categorized according to the geographical divides of the continents. This is especially true for ancient times when the Mediterranean Sea connected rather than separated the various cultures on the shores of Europe, Asia, and Africa. This was already true in the Bronze Age, but even more so for the times of the Roman Empire. The geographical division can have strange consequences. Nobody can deny that there are reasons to discuss the two parts of the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments, separately, even if many people on the globe regard them as one book. Such a separation, however, which discusses the Old Testament as part of West Asian literature, but the New Testament as European, although most of the texts in the latter were written in Asia and it exerted a huge influence in the Asian part of the Mediterranean too, seems to go too far. Moreover, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the *Septuagint*, is also mentioned only in the chapter on Europe, although it was with all probability made in Africa.

These are minor problems caused by using the geographical viewpoint as an organizing principle, which can be solved by a flexible approach. As is done. Anders Pettersson repeatedly emphasizes that the story of ancient European literature he tells does not concern the entire European continent (most of which did not produce literature in antiquity), while it subsumes several texts, authors, and phenomena from Asia and Africa, geographically speaking.

It seems more meaningful to tell the story of ancient Greek literature as a unified tradition in the framework of chapters on Europe, even if in the Hellenistic period the two most important centres of Greek culture, Alexandria and Pergamon, were in Africa and Asia, respectively. The Alexandrian literature and philology can better be discussed as part of the Greek, i.e., European, tradition than as a continuation of the Egyptian, i.e., African tradition.

The situation is more delicate with the period of late antiquity, from which only a handful of authors are mentioned. From the three Church Fathers mentioned in the chapter on European literature, Ambrose was born and active in Europe. Jerome was born in Europe, but he performed most of his celebrated activity as translator of the Bible in Asia. Augustine was born and active (apart from some young years spent in Italy) in Africa.

Augustine is discussed longest among them in the chapter on Europe (pp. 613–614), but he was actually the subject of a longer discussion in the chapter on Africa (pp. 569–570), which also discussed Tertullian, who is not mentioned in the European context. While the first volume's African chapter disregards Graeco-Roman antiquity, leaving it to the European chapter, the second volume calls a subchapter, practically on Maghreb literary history, 'North African Literature in Latin and Arabic', starting with Tertullian. The Latin part disappears very soon, but after a while there is some geographical extension detectable: a significant part of what is presented as North African literature in Arabic was actually produced in Europe, namely in the Iberian Peninsula. Augustine is to receive one more, much shorter discussion in the chapter 'Christian and Islamic mysticism' (pp. 671–672), one of the non-geographically arranged, comparative chapters; every volume contains one or two of that kind.

The Church Fathers who wrote in Greek had little chance to appear in the chapters on the continent they belong to. In the volume discussing the years 200–1500, the European chapter contains a subchapter on Byzantine literature. The Byzantine Empire, which in its more than one-thousand-year history extended to two or three continents, is discussed as European, and if it must belong to one continent only, Europe is the obvious choice, while the West-Asian chapter discusses Syriac, Arabic, Persian and Turkic literature. However, the Fathers who were active before the split of the Roman Empire are not mentioned in the European chapter either. Then we suddenly read this in the African chapter, when it discusses Coptic literature:

> At the same time, more traditional or orthodox Christian communities were responsible for the translation of a large number of Greek homilies, mainly the production of the Cappadocian Fathers – Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa – and of John Chrysostom. (p. 547)

Origen is discussed in some detail in the chapter 'Christian and Islamic mysticism,' where we also read: 'Other important writers and monastics in the early tradition of Greek exegesis and mysticism are Gregory of Nyssa (335–395), Macarius the Great (d.c. 390), and Evagrius Ponticus (345–399)' (p. 671). Authors who are mentioned retrospectively as important for literary traditions in the Mediterranean because of their formative impact do not deserve a mention in their own time. Since the formative impact is exactly the aspect that affords a literary achievement a place in world literary history, we must blame the geographical divide for the omission of some figures whose contribution is obfuscated by such a lens.

However, the geographical focus, especially when flexibly applied, might be very helpful in revealing the connectedness of different literary traditions. This is why it is surprising that Greek and Roman literary history of the imperial age is discussed separately inside the chapter on Europe. The subchapter 'Literature in Greek, 300 BCE–200 CE' legitimizes this strategy through a statement about the autonomous development of Greek, which in this context already means Eastern-Mediterranean, culture: 'When the whole region came to be governed directly or indirectly by Rome from around the beginning of the Common Era, that did not in itself change the cultural situation in any fundamental way' (p. 174). After this subchapter ends, in which the latest author mentioned is Plutarch, who died around 120 CE, a series of subchapters starts telling the history of literature in Latin from the beginnings to Apuleius, who died around 170 CE. And this ending emphasizes the interconnectedness of the Mediterranean cultural space:

> Ending the discussion of ancient Greek and Roman literature with Apuleius is not without a point: in his person and his life, Apuleius illustrates how the Greek and the Roman, and the north and south of the Mediterranean, were closely interwoven not only politically but also when you look at the Greco-Roman literary world. (p. 205)

An African author, who wrote both in Greek and Latin, is undeniably a good illustration for this, but such an author can also be found at the very end of the fourth

century CE, in the person of Claudius Claudianus, who was born *c.* 370 in Alexandria, became one of the wandering poets (cf. Cameron 1965) in the Eastern Mediterranean producing poetry in Greek, then moved to the western imperial court in Milan, wrote an impressive body of poetry in Latin, and died in or after 404, probably in Rome. There are reasons to think that the Greek culture was not fundamentally influenced by the basically Hellenized Roman culture, although it obviously was by the imperial context, and that Greek literature can be discussed without Roman, but not vice versa. However, these arguments were mostly coined in the romantic climate of the nineteenth century when originality was overappreciated, and Roman literature was devalued as adaptive in contrast to the original Greeks. And the truism that Greek and Roman literatures can be narrated separately does not mean that they necessarily should be. An alternative way of presentation was offered by Albrecht Dihle, who wrote the history of literature in the Roman Empire discussing both equally and giving special attention to their interconnectedness (Dihle 1989).

Although I have mentioned several authors omitted in the narrative of classical literature offered by *Literature: A World History*, my purpose was not to criticize this *narratio*, either for being too canonical in sticking too tightly to a traditional canon of antiquity, or for not being canonical enough in disregarding several 'important' authors. I have rather mentioned them to emphasize the possibility of other narratives, organized by different chronological or geographical principles. However, I would like to mention one more classical author, who is missing from these volumes, and who might have been omitted because he lived on the chronological border of two volumes, since he died after 180 CE, and because he came from the periphery of the classical world. I mean Lucian of Samosata, who was born in 120 CE at the east end of the Roman Empire, in Commagene, a province established in 72 CE. Its capital, today Samsat in eastern Turkey, was situated practically on the border of the Parthian Empire. He must have been an impressive orator in Greek (although his mother tongue seems to have been Aramaic), who managed to make a living from touring and perorating in the Greek cities of Asia, i.e., the eastern coast of the Aegean Sea, but also in Italy and Gaul. Later he settled down in Athens and wrote witty treatises and dialogues. He was born probably the most to the east of all classical authors, but his life connects Asia and Europe, to use the volumes' geographical divide. He could be an important figure of a literary history that focuses on peripheral figures not only geographically, but also from the viewpoint of canonical genres. No history of Menippean satire, mime, or satiric writing in general could be written without discussing his significant oeuvre. But that would be another world history of literature.

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