

EUROPEAN  
LITERATURE  
AND



THE LATIN  
MIDDLE AGES

**Ernst Robert Curtius**

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY COLIN BURROW

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BOLLINGEN SERIES XXXVI





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Ernst Robert Curtius

EUROPEAN LITERATURE  
AND THE  
LATIN MIDDLE AGES

*Translated from the German*  
by WILLARD R. TRASK

*With a new introduction by* COLIN BURROW



BOLLINGEN SERIES XXXVI

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE 2013 EDITION

COLIN BURROW

In my first year as an undergraduate one of my lungs collapsed. This limited my future career options. Becoming a trumpeter or a professional footballer was clearly no longer on the cards—not that I was much good at kicking a ball or blowing a trumpet anyway. It had the more immediate consequence that I had to spend a week in Papworth Hospital in Cambridgeshire, where they had recently performed the first successful heart-lung transplant. In order to avoid meeting the eye of surgical staff on the lookout for further opportunities for medical innovation, I decided to bury my head in a big fat book. So I took with me the fattest book on my shelves: E. R. Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*.

Very soon I was lost. I was also, perhaps, slightly high, since I was breathing oxygen in case the lung collapsed again. But as I worked through this amazing book, with its gloriously rich descriptions of rhetorical figures and topoi, its learned miscellany of excursuses, and its unifying passion for an idea of Western literature that ran on at least up until Goethe, I realized that there were better things to do with life than kick balls or blow trumpets. What Curtius presents is not just a piece of literary criticism, or a literary history, or a survey of medieval literature. He enables his readers to see how Western literature is held together by a series of interconnections across time—roughly from Virgil to Diderot—and across Europe, from Naples in the South to Stratford-upon-Avon in the North, and from the Iberian peninsula in the West to the Rhine, and possibly even as far as the Elbe, in the East. Curtius shows how the Latin writing of

antiquity and late antiquity spread through Western Europe, flickered through the vernacular romances of France, shaped the work of what he saw as its greatest figures, Dante and Goethe, and even extended to the benighted northern climate of England. His defiance of national boundaries issues in some splendidly counterintuitive claims ("Paris is the literary capital of England," p. 35; "A community of great authors throughout the centuries must be maintained if a kingdom of the mind is to exist at all," p. 397). His principal thesis is that the classical tradition spread and sustained itself through the study of rhetoric, and that the chief way in which that continuity was manifested was through the recurrence of "topoi," or rhetorical commonplaces. These included notions that could be digested into a single phrase, such as the *puer senex*, the prematurely aged youth (a topos that particularly appealed to me as I lay on my hospital bed), or which could be treated variously and at length, such as the notion that the whole world was a book.

This particular book certainly is a world. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* belongs with Frank Kermode's *Sense of an Ending* and Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* as one of the three most inspiring works of literary criticism written in the twentieth century. All three of these works demonstrate a kind of literary criticism that involves looking for the large patterns and histories behind a wide range of texts, and which requires the critic to work across large swathes of time and national boundaries. All three books also combine that breadth of vision with the philologist's microscopic concern for detail. Like Auerbach, Curtius was trained in German traditions of romance philology in the very early twentieth century. Because Auerbach (1892–1957) was Jewish, he was forced to leave his university post at Marburg in 1935, and composed *Mimesis* in exile in Istanbul.<sup>1</sup> His rapid-fire study of the history of European realism, through a series of vividly analyzed instances from books that happened to be available in Istanbul, is very different from the long slow burn of Curtius's survey of topoi, which diffuse from Statius, through Alan of Lille and the Archpoet, into Shakespeare and Calderón. But *Mimesis* and *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* share one key attribute: they both show why literary study matters, and why it is intellectually, and perhaps also politically, important for the critic not to be bound to a single place or time.

Why politically? Both of these German scholars were attempting to take stock of the Western literary canon after the large-scale de-

<sup>1</sup> See Jan N. Bremmer, "Erich Auerbach and His *Mimesis*," *Poetics Today* (1999), 3–10.

struction of central Europe in World War II. This gives to both their books an urgency that very few critics have achieved since. It also means that both works are attempts by literary critics to think beyond their times. This in turn means that to understand *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* in a way that does justice both to its limitations and to its great strengths, it helps to know a little about the life of its author and the context in which it was written.<sup>2</sup>

Ernst Robert Curtius (1886–1956) was the grandson of Ernst Curtius, the great classical scholar and archaeologist who excavated Olympia. His great-uncle was also a celebrated classical philologist. Curtius was brought up in Alsace, where he was born in 1886, only sixteen years after the region had been ceded to Germany at the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War. His father was president of the Church of the Augsburg Confession in Strasbourg from 1903 to 1914. Curtius consequently grew up in an environment that mingled German Lutherans and largely Catholic French speakers. His background was both classical and polyglot, and was about as middle-European as it's possible to be. His experience of religious and linguistic diversity in Strasbourg is one of the foundations of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*.

Curtius was trained in classical philology at the University of Strasbourg by the highly systematic Romance philologist Gustav Gröber (1844–1911), to whom he dedicated three of his books, including this one.<sup>3</sup> His academic career began with an edition of an Old French text (*Li quatre livres des Reis*, 1911). Three years later he published a book about the recently deceased French critic Ferdinand Brunetière (1849–1906). He galloped on to write about Balzac (1923), following that study with a book about modern French literature in a style that won him popular acclaim. It also (no hard task) succeeded in putting up the backs of the German professoriat, and established him as one of the foremost critics of French literature in the Weimar Republic.<sup>4</sup> He wrote about Proust and André Gide (with whom he had a lengthy correspondence),<sup>5</sup> and completed an overview of *The*

<sup>2</sup> The fullest biography in English is Arthur R. Evans, "Ernst Robert Curtius," in *On Four Modern Humanists: Hofmannsthal, Gundolf, Curtius, Kantorowicz*, ed. Arthur R. Evans (Princeton, 1970), pp. 85–145; for bibliography up to 1983, see Earl Jeffrey Richards, *Modernism, Medievalism, and Humanism: A Research Bibliography on the Reception of the Works of Ernst Robert Curtius* (Tübingen, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> See Peter Dronke, "Curtius as Medievalist and Modernist," *Times Literary Supplement* (1980), 1103–6.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Spender, "Rhineland Journal," *Horizon* (1945), pp. 394–412, esp. p. 397.

<sup>5</sup> Herbert Dieckmann and Jane M. Dieckmann, *Deutsch-französische Gespräche 1920–1950: la correspondance de Ernst Robert Curtius avec André Gide, Charles Du Bos et Valéry Larbaud* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980).

*Civilization of France* (1930). He was one of very few early-twentieth-century critics in the German-speaking world to value T. S. Eliot and James Joyce.<sup>6</sup> As professor at Marburg (1920–24), then Heidelberg (1924–29), and finally Bonn, Curtius was in the early decades of the twentieth century a modernist, and not just in the academic sense that he was a critic of modern literature. He was a modernist in a similar mold to T. S. Eliot, whose chief interest in the 1920s lay in reviving “a Europe of the mind.”<sup>7</sup> Sensing a kindred spirit, Eliot persuaded Curtius to write for *The Criterion* in 1922, and was later to describe him (perhaps with the invisible curl of the lip that is one hallmark of Eliot’s prose style) as “one of the best Germans.”<sup>8</sup> Curtius and Eliot continued to correspond through the 1920s, and Curtius translated *The Waste Land* into German (for which edition he wrote an extremely perceptive introduction) in 1927.

This may sound like an odd intellectual background for the author of a book on *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Curtius himself, in an essay originally intended as an introduction to this book, presented his movement away from the study of recent French writing into the Middle Ages as a personal journey along the “road to Rome . . . in other words in a sense that transcended history, the holy city.”<sup>9</sup> It’s likely that his literary interests moved back in time for more mundane reasons. Hitler’s struggles to oust Hindenburg in 1932 prompted Curtius to write *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr* (“The German Spirit in Crisis”), which “pleaded for Germany to recover and build upon the ideals of Goethean humanism,”<sup>10</sup> and appealed to the “illustrious founders of our Western civilization from Augustine to Dante.”<sup>11</sup> The work, published the year before Hitler became chancellor, aligned mass mobilization and mass education with Nazi barbarism. It was, for obvious political reasons, the last monograph Curtius published before *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* sixteen years later. Many of the subjects of Curtius’s earlier work—Proust, a homosexual Jew; and Gide, a homosexual communist—were not exactly central to the Nazi literary curriculum.

<sup>6</sup> William Calin, *The Twentieth-Century Humanist Critics: from Spitzer to Frye* (Toronto and London, 2007), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius, *Essays on European Literature* (Princeton, 1973), p. 170.

<sup>8</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, 2 vols., ed. Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (London, 2009), 1.705. See also Dronke, “Curtius as Medievalist and Modernist.”

<sup>9</sup> Curtius, *Essays on European Literature*, p. 498.

<sup>10</sup> Evans, “Ernst Robert Curtius,” p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> Curtius, *Essays on European Literature*, p. 500.

Curtius kept his head down during the war, although he and a colleague helped to shelter a Jewish university administrator.<sup>12</sup> Stephen Spender sought him out in 1945, and in his "Rhineland Journal" describes "Professor C—" living in a flat that had been requisitioned by the American army, which contained little furniture and few books. Curtius was trying to sell the books that remained in order to feed himself and his wife. Spender, ever the *ingénu*, records asking "Professor C—" why the German people did not actively resist Hitler. Curtius replied "The trouble with the Germans is that they have no experience of political freedom."<sup>13</sup> He complained of the isolation of Germany from any contact with ideas from outside the country through the years of the war: "I have felt an increasing and indescribable disgust for this people. I have no faith in them at all."<sup>14</sup>

This was the immediate context of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Perhaps symbolically, the book was first published not in Germany but in Bern in Switzerland, by the same press that had issued Auerbach's *Mimesis* two years before.<sup>15</sup> Some early reviewers regarded it as a betrayal of Curtius's earlier critical interests. Leo Spitzer (who was, like Auerbach, a Jewish scholar who had been forced to leave his post at Cologne in 1933) assessed the book from the relative comfort of a chair in Johns Hopkins, and described it as "an abandonment of all aesthetic, philosophic and modernistic tendencies."<sup>16</sup> Spitzer went on: "Before the forces of barbarism that encircle us, Curtius has found an escape by immersing himself in the necropolis of a past that was alive as late as the eighteenth century."<sup>17</sup> Spender had prefixed his account of his meeting with "Professor C—" with a description of the wreckage of Cologne, whose inhabitants he depicted as "a tribe of wanderers who have discovered a ruined city in a desert and are camping there, living in the cellars and hunting amongst the ruins for the booty, relics of a dead civilization. . . . The destruction is *serious* in more senses than one. It is the climax of deliberate effort, an achievement of our civilization,

<sup>12</sup> Hans Reiss, "Ernst Robert Curtius (1886–1956): Some Reflections on the Occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of His Death," *Modern Language Review* (1996), pp. 647–54, esp. p. 650.

<sup>13</sup> Spender, "Rhineland Journal," 400.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>15</sup> The Francke press published a wide range of literary works in French, Italian, and English. See A. Francke A.G. Bern, *125 Jahre Francke Verlag Bern* (Bern, 1957).

<sup>16</sup> Leo Spitzer, "Review of *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* by Ernst Robert Curtius," *American Journal of Philology* (1949), pp. 425–31, esp. p. 426. For Spitzer's life, see René Wellek, "Leo Spitzer (1887–1960)," *Comparative Literature* (1960), pp. 310–34.

<sup>17</sup> Spitzer, "Review of *ELLMA*," p. 428.



the most striking result of co-operation between nations in the twentieth century."<sup>18</sup> Spitzer cruelly turned that vision of retreat into literal cellars into a cultural retreat into the catacombs of the literary tradition.

It was perhaps inevitable that a Jewish émigré such as Spitzer would have had equivocal attitudes toward Curtius, a non-Jewish scholar who remained in Germany and in his university post throughout the war—although Auerbach (whose career followed very similar lines to Spitzer's) greeted Curtius's book with qualified enthusiasm.<sup>19</sup> Spitzer got the book wrong. The main purpose of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* was not to retreat from present horrors into the poetry of late antiquity and the Latin Middle Ages. Its principal aim was to insist that the geographical center of the Western literary tradition lay west of the Rhine, and that European cultural unity was a possibility, even if it lay in the past. Throughout the volume literary developments in France are contrasted with their relatively poor equivalents in Germany, "which remained as good as cut off from the great intellectual movements of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (p. 57). That observation is strikingly similar to Curtius's comments to Spender in 1945 about the intellectual isolation of Germany in the twentieth century. It reflected a long-standing belief: even in the 1920s Curtius had complained to Eliot about the difficulty of obtaining British books in Germany. Curtius's largely negative remarks on the *Nibelungenleid*, on *Parzival*, and on Hitler's favorite Wagner (p. 242) show that the author of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* was not simply cowering in the catacombs of history. He was indeed harking back to the traditions of German Romance philology before World War I—and perhaps before the publication of Germanophile literary histories such as Josef Nadler's *Literary History of the German Tribes and Regions* (1912–18). But he was primarily trying to show why a literary historian should value Latinate and Romance works over Germanic literary texts, and he was doing so in order to affirm the possibility of European cultural reconstruction after the war. Rome (where Curtius was to die during a visit in 1956) became for him the ultimate historical origin of Western literature.

*European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* still often figures on reading lists for students of medieval literature. It's more of-

<sup>18</sup> Spender, "Rhineland Journal," p. 396.

<sup>19</sup> Erich Auerbach, "Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter. By Ernst Robert Curtius," *Modern Language Notes* (1950), pp. 348–51, described it as a "monument of powerful, passionate and obstinate energy."

ten mined as a reference work than read through. This is a shame, since it aspires to be a totality. Professional medievalists tend to give rather guarded replies when asked what they think of it. The chief objections to it are that its focus on *topoi* diminishes the role of individuality in medieval Latin poetry;<sup>20</sup> that it concentrates on elite and university culture at the expense of oral and popular culture; that it is insufficiently concerned about the mechanisms by which learning was disseminated and transformed; that its conception of a “*topos*” lacks theoretical rigor; and that its canon (and its account of the genesis of the literary canon, and of the idea of a literary canon, p. 259) is distorted by its focus on Latin materials. It is sometimes also criticized for being unduly Eurocentric, and for not extending its gaze eastward into the Slavonic world or beyond.

None of these criticisms is entirely fair, although it's easy to see why most of them have arisen. Curtius's word “*topos*” encompasses a much wider array of phenomena than the “common places” of the rhetorical tradition, and the boundaries of the concept are sometimes as a result unclear. Sometimes the *topoi* are presented as rhetorical building blocks of composition, but from time to time they are presented as atemporal truths, or even connected to Carl Jung's archetypes. Curtius was interested in comparative history, particularly the work of A. J. Toynbee, whose survey of recurrent patterns of rise and decline in transnational civilizations provides much of the historiographical superstructure of his early chapters. He also read works of anthropology and comparative religion. Eliot indeed offered to send him a copy of Frazer's *Golden Bough* in the 1920s (he scrupulously protested that he could only afford to send the abbreviated one-volume edition).<sup>21</sup> Curtius's idea of “European literature” is consequently held together by several conceptually distinct forces. The first is the idea that the mind of Europe through the Middle Ages was united by an educational elite, who preserved and disseminated a rhetorical and classical heritage through a range of different *topoi* and rhetorical conventions. The second is the very different notion that European literature might be held together by quasi-archetypal concerns, which recur because they are archetypal rather than because they are directly transmitted from one generation to the next. The presence of this second line of argument is partly why critics of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* have sometimes objected to the narrowness of its geographical scope: if

<sup>20</sup> Peter Dronke, *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages: New Departures in Poetry, 1000–1150* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 1–22.

<sup>21</sup> Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 2, p. 603.

the goddess *Natura* is, as Curtius suggests (p. 122), a manifestation of the Jungian *anima*, then what is the justification for not exploring further examples of this apparently transhistorical topos in Polish or Indian or even in Chinese literature? This is, though, not a serious objection. The words “Latin” and “European” in the title of this book should give most reasonable readers grounds to expect that India and China will be marginal to its concerns. The neglect of the eastern perimeter of European Latin culture is a limitation, however. It can only be explained by Curtius’s desire in the aftermath of the war to look principally westward and southward.

*European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* is energized by several internal contradictions, which are largely the product of the circumstances in which it was written. It is driven by a belief in the unity of European literary traditions, which culminate in and are most fully articulated by Dante, to whom Curtius devotes his final chapter. This unified vision is articulated, however, in an increasingly fragmentary form. As the excursions on different topoi and particular literary relationships multiply at the end of the volume—and they make up almost a third of its overall length—Curtius seems to fall victim to his own ambition to understand everything. To see Europe as a whole means accumulating large numbers of fragments, and those fragments do not always cohere. This again has parallels with the careers of other modernists born in the 1880s. As Ezra Pound famously declared toward the end of *The Cantos*, in which he tried to reconfigure the epic tradition, to explore the relationship between East and West in new ways, to account for the rise of usury, and to tie all of this back in to Occitan poetry, “I am not a demi-god / I cannot make it cohere.”<sup>22</sup> Curtius’s intellectual trajectory had more in common with Eliot’s than with Pound’s (although by the 1940s there were substantial differences between the two men, particularly in their attitudes to the church).<sup>23</sup> Like Eliot, Curtius can substitute an idea of “tradition” for history, and he is also prone to assume that there is an inverse relationship between the value of literary culture and the number of people who possess it. He can even give the impression that culture is a static treasure to be protected and handed down through the generations like an imperial crown: “The bases of Western thought are classical antiquity and Christianity. The function of the Middle Ages was to receive that deposit, to transmit

<sup>22</sup> Ezra Pound, *The Cantos* (London, 1975), p. 796.

<sup>23</sup> Curtius in 1949 described Eliot’s Anglo-Catholicism as “illogical to Continental thinking” and said that the “open-minded Europeanism of 1920 remained an unfulfilled promise.” Curtius, *Essays on European Literature*, pp. 383 and 397.

it, and to adapt it" (p. 593). It is not surprising that the preservation of these treasures sometimes seems to matter more to Curtius than their adaptation or their transformation. He had seen Cologne burning on the horizon, and he had lived through the hyperinflation of the Weimar period. This inclined him to see literary culture as a kind of gold standard ("that deposit"), which the Middle Ages preserved and later ages squandered.

This gives rise to the most tantalizing aspect of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, and to the most significant of the criticisms that can be leveled against it by those who live in more fortunate times. Its surveys of literary topoi do offer enormous riches. Anyone interested in the idea of literary immortality, in the notion of inexpressibility, the invocation of the muses, the rhetorical methods for arousing passion, or in any of a dozen more recurrent literary themes will find the best starting point for further research in these pages. But Curtius shows relatively little interest in the process by which these topoi were disseminated, or how they were absorbed and transformed by later readers. His pan-Europeanism also means that he is reluctant to dwell on the changes that can result from transmitting particular topoi from one environment to another, be that a different nation or a different institution. The content and character of what is known, like the social composition of those who know it, do not seem so far as he is concerned to alter a great deal between the fourth and fourteenth centuries, or from the Tiber to the Rhine. The topoi recur and live on. The "deposit" of learning is preserved rather than diversified.

Curtius had clearly reflected on these questions, but his overall desire to describe and praise acts of cultural preservation finally triumphed over his interest in transmission and transformation. The short excursus on "The Ape as Metaphor" (pp. 538–40) from John of Salisbury to Shakespeare is one of a number of oblique recognitions that cultural transmission without change might become simple repetition or mimicry, since this excursus is about writers who "ape" other writers, and simply reproduce either nature or their reading without transforming it. His concluding discussion of how ideas of literary imitation are transmuted into notions of inspiration in Longinus (pp. 398–401) also acknowledges that the Latin culture of the Middle Ages needed to be actively reinvigorated in order to remain alive, and that simply treasuring it in the bank vault of the mind was not enough. But readers are left without a clear formulation of *how* one writer changes or transforms what he or she reads. The topoi do sometimes seem to be a super-personal repository of universal wisdom.

So what then can be taken from this book? What makes it more than a historical curiosity? The first answer to these questions is that the historical position of its author actually makes *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* more rather than less interesting. It is not just a great book about the Middle Ages. It is also a book that reveals a huge amount about twentieth-century literature. It shows a former Weimar modernist attempting to construct a vision of European literature after the war. It is emphatically a book about European literature *and* the Latin Middle Ages, rather than just European literature *in* the Latin Middle Ages, since it indirectly addresses Curtius's present as much as the past. As well as providing a mass of leads for thinking about how Dante grew from Virgil, or about the significance of Alan of Lille or Bernardus Silvestris, this book still shows a great critic rethinking literary history in response to a cultural catastrophe. Its emphasis on the continuity of *classical* and rhetorical learning through the Middle Ages also makes it permanently valuable. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* stands as a monumental refutation of the Renaissance humanists' mythology that Latin literary culture was heroically recovered in the fifteenth century after centuries of darkness. The Middle Ages described here are not at all dark. They are effectively a long series of renaissances and enlightenments that run on until the eighteenth century, after which the real dark ages begin.

But the main quality that makes *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* a great book is its breadth of vision. Critics are today prone to bury their noses in one corner of time and space. Few readers are willing to take a wide view across centuries or across national and linguistic boundaries. There is for Curtius no excuse for not knowing or not reading any work; there is no excuse for not trying to see how every literary text fits into a larger European picture. Even if finally he found that the larger picture he wanted to create fragmented into a series of brilliantly detailed excursions—something that history may well show to be a recurrent tendency within all aspirations to pan-European unity—he would never have seen many of those details if he had not had the ambition to see European literature as a whole.

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Though I set out with the intention of avoiding the ubiquitous "translator's footnote," additional notes proved, in a few instances, to be a necessary evil. They are distinguished by being excluded from the numbering and enclosed in square brackets.

Partly because, in the case of many of the passages cited in the text, previous translations either did not exist or were unsatisfactory, at least for the purposes of this book; partly for the sake of homogeneity; but chiefly because I have always regarded the rendering of poetry as the translator's greatest challenge and his greatest reward, I have, wherever my linguistic equipment permitted, made my own translations throughout. The few exceptions (preponderantly citations from Greek) are indicated, and the renderings credited, where they occur.

I welcome this opportunity to express my gratitude to my friend Dr. Alexander Code v. Asch, who has unreservedly put his time and his vast philological erudition at my disposal for the discussion of crucial problems.

I am also indebted to the Edward MacDowell Association for granting me residence at the MacDowell Colony during two periods when I was working on this translation.

W. K. T.

September, 1952

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## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

### TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

For the English edition of this book a few words of explanation will perhaps be welcomed.

My central field of study is the Romance languages and literatures. After the war of 1914-18 I saw it as my task to make modern Romance understood in Germany through studies of Rostand, Gide, Claudel, Péguy (*Die literarischen Wegereiter des neuen Frankreichs* 1919); of Barres (1922) and Balzac (1923), of Zola, Valéry, Sachard (*Französischer Geist im neuen Europa* 1925). This cycle was closed with a study of French culture (*Einführung in die französische Kultur* 1930). By then too I had already begun studying English and American authors. An essay on T. S. Eliot (with a translation of *The Waste Land*) appeared in 1927, a study of James Joyce in 1929. Studies published during the last twenty-five years are collected in my *Kritische Essays zur europäischen Literatur* (1950).<sup>\*</sup> This contains essays on Virgil, Goethe, Friedrich Schlegel, Emerson, Stefan George, Holmuth, Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, Rilke, Tómbor.

Virgil and Dante have long had a place in the innermost circle of my admiration. What were the roads that led from the one to the other? This question increasingly preoccupied me. The answer could not but be found in the Latin continuity of the Middle Ages. And that in turn was a portion of the European tradition, which has Homer at its beginning and at its end, as we see today, Goethe.

This tradition of thought and art was severely shaken by the war of 1914-18 and its aftermath, especially in Germany. In 1927 I published my polemical pamphlet *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr*. It attacked the isolationism of education and the nationalistic frenzy which were the innermen of the Nazi regime. In it I pleaded for a new

<sup>\*</sup> Translated by Michael Kowel as *Essays on European Literature* (Princeton University Press, 1971).



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