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Journal of Contemporary History 2013 48: 486

DOI: 10.1177/0022009413481829

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‘European Literature’ in the Nazi New Order: The Cultural Politics of the European Writers’ Union, 1941–3

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Abstract

This article examines the European Writers’ Union, founded by Nazi Germany with representatives of 15 nations in October 1941, in the context of the history of the idea of European literature. It argues that this institution was a serious effort to re-order the international literary field into a European form, designed to help legitimate Nazi Germany’s New Order Europe and to establish the cultural hegemony which German elites believed they alone deserved. Aware that what Pierre Bourdieu calls the ‘literary field’ had its own rules, the Nazis sought at Weimar to legitimate their bid to reorder European literary life by highlighting Germany’s literary capital and by playing on the tensions within the interwar understanding of the concept of European literature. In this way, the European Writers’ Union marked a historically significant intervention into the contested and high-stakes issue of what ‘European literature’ was. Drawing on work by scholars of comparative literature and cultural sociology, this article sets the Writers’ Union in the transnational history of the literary field in twentieth-century Europe in order to interpret the rhetorical, ideological and practical strategies of what could be called the ‘soft power’ of Nazi Empire.

Keywords

cultural politics, European literature, idea of Europe, Nazi New Order, Second World War, writers and intellectuals

Beginning on 24 October 1941, 37 writers from 15 European countries took part as guests in the annual German Writers’ Meeting (*Deutscher Dichtertreffen*) at Weimar. Invited to the legendary city of Goethe by the National Socialist Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, this group of writers included

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representatives from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Their stay in Weimar culminated with their enthusiastic agreement to found a new European Writer's Union. Officially constituted at a smaller meeting in March the following year, this new pan-European cultural institution held another conference, including 47 non-German writers, in Weimar in October 1942. At all three gatherings, the Germans' guests were invited to interact with their hosts and their fellow European writers, 'in order to lay a basis for the coming common work' in the new Europe that was to emerge from Nazi Germany's military victory.¹ They were also treated to a sophisticated spectacle – including theatrical performances, concerts, tours of historic sites, receptions, and dinners – calculated to legitimate Germany's claim to lead the creation of a renewed European literature.

As texts and images from the conferences were spread around allied and occupied Europe, it was clear that these gatherings served in part as a kind of high-cultural propaganda, designed to demonstrate Germany's selfless support of literary life and to give cultural content to the idea of the 'New European Order'.² At the same time, the interpretive category of propaganda seems insufficient to grasp the nature and significance of the Writers' Union, its meetings and its publications. This article examines the meetings of the European Writers' Union (*Europäische Schriftsteller-Vereinigung*, or ESV) as a serious effort to re-order the literary field into a European form, in such a way as to give the Germans hegemonic control over it. This effort was designed to strengthen and legitimate German rule in Europe and to establish the leadership in European cultural life which German elites believed they alone deserved. At the same time, the formation of the European Writers' Union marked a historically significant intervention into the contested and high-stakes issue of what 'European literature' was.

Of course, the Nazis' ability to make commanding claims about the future of European literature in 1941 and 1942 rested above all on their crushing military dominance. But officials of the Propaganda Ministry seem to have appreciated that what Pierre Bourdieu has called the 'literary field' had its own rules, which could not

1 W. Haegert, 'Zum Dichtertreffen 1941', in *Die Dichtung im kommenden Europa. Weimarer Reden 1941* (Hamburg 1942), 6.

2 Propaganda is the focus of the discussions of these events in R.E. Herzstein, *When Nazi Dreams Come True: The Third Reich's Internal Struggle over the Future of Europe after a German Victory: A Look at the Nazi Mentality, 1939–45* (London 1982), Ch. 6; J.-P. Barbian, *Literaturpolitik im "Dritten Reich". Institutionen, Kompetenzen, Betätigungsfelder* (Munich 1995), 436–50; W. Schmale, *Geschichte Europas* (Vienna 2000), 115–28. Frank-Rutger Hausmann, in by far the most important work on the subject, reconstructs the Union's international network and takes seriously the non-German writers' motivations for participating in it. But by interpreting the organization strictly within the temporal and thematic context of the Nazis' conduct of the Second World War, he sees the Union as a propagandistic trick, 'owed only to the consequences of a multifront war that could not be waged successfully'. F.-R. Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter, tage nicht! Die Europäische Schriftsteller-Vereinigung in Weimar 1941–1948* (Frankfurt 2004), 356. For press coverage of these events see the thick file of newspaper clippings regarding the 1942 Writers' Conference at Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (BA) NS 5 VI/19160, as well as the journal *Europäische Literatur* (1941–43). On propaganda for the institution in France, see F. Dufay, trans. T. Scheffel, *Die Herbstreise. Französische Schriftsteller im Oktober 1941 in Deutschland. Ein Bericht*, (Berlin 2001), 123–7.

simply be overwhelmed by force.³ Thus the Nazis sought at Weimar to legitimate their bid to reorder the field of European literature by calling their guests' attention to Germany's substantial literary capital and by playing on the divisions and tensions within the concept of European literature as this had been understood in the interwar period. The activities of the Writers' Conference should, accordingly, be analyzed in the light of the history of that concept. That in turn means situating the Writers' Union in the transnational history of the literary field in twentieth-century Europe, with its special forms of power and its complex struggles for hegemony.⁴

Drawing on work by scholars of comparative literature and cultural sociology, this article sets the Weimar events in a longer-term literary-political context in order to offer a new interpretation of the Germans' rhetorical, ideological and practical strategies at these meetings. Understanding these approaches in their international literary-political context illuminates the significance of the Nazis' model of European literature, and accounts for its appeal to the values and interests of many non-German writers. The article aims, in this way, to contribute to our understanding of what could be called the 'soft power' of Nazi Empire.⁵ For although Hitler's own contempt for all forms of Europeanism is well documented, much evidence demonstrates that this did not stop Goebbels and his staff from pursuing an international soft power campaign. Building on networks and institutions developed in the 1930s, this campaign deployed an idea of 'European culture' not simply by invoking Europeanist phrases but by giving that heady concept concrete institutional form. Involving occupied and allied nations' intellectuals in high-profile events implicitly made a basic promise about the Nazi 'New Order': that the European nations invited to send writers to the Weimar conferences would not be obliterated. This promise was one that Hitler notoriously refused to make with regard to the continent's political future. For this reason, Hitler rejected all political initiatives related to the idea of European unity.⁶

3 P. Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford, CA 1996).

4 On this topic I am indebted to F. Moretti, 'Modern European Literature: A Geographical Sketch', *New Left Review*, 206 (1994), 86–109; D. Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans. From 1800 to the Present* (London 2006); and P. Casanova, trans. M.B. DeBevoise, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, MA 2004).

5 J.S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, NY 2004).

6 As Foreign Ministry State Secretary von Weizsäcker wrote in his diary on 2 May 1943, 'The Führer is saying confidentially that the reason we must not enter into discussions about the "new order" in Europe is that the neighboring countries are all our enemies. We must get all we can out of them, but can and should promise them nothing.' Quoted in M. Salewski, 'National Socialist Ideas on Europe', in W. Lipgens (ed.), *Documents on the History of European Integration* (Berlin and New York 1985), 50, n. 80. The best-known case is the draft 'Declaration on Europe', prepared in March 1943 by German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, but suppressed by Hitler (*Ibid.*, 53). Hitler's own lack of interest in such matters has led leading historians of the Nazi new order to leave international cultural matters out of their works almost entirely, as for example in M. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London 2008) and R.J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York 2009). Nor are international cultural politics addressed in any depth in the important literature on the Nazi idea of Europe, for example: P. Kluge, 'Nationalsozialistische Europäideologie', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 3 (1955), 240–85; J. Elvert, "'Germanen' und "Imperialisten". Zwei Europakonzepte aus nationalsozialistischer Zeit', *Historische Mitteilungen der Ranke-Gesellschaft*, 5 (1992), 161–84; Salewski, 'National Socialist Ideas on Europe', 37–54; B. Kletz, *Europa aus Rasse und Raum: Die nationalsozialistische*

But the cultural realm served as an arena in which Goebbels and his collaborators could outline a Europeanist vision of the New Order in the most reassuring manner. Even when, in November 1942, Hitler forbade 'the planning, preparation and execution of demonstrations of a European or international kind,' the decree specifically exempted Goebbels's ability to hold such events in Germany.⁷

That Hitler's Germany, of all regimes, should lead such a campaign was not as surprising as it may appear. Since the mid-1930s, the Nazis had made a self-styled Europeanism a centerpiece of their international cultural politics. Insisting that National Socialism held the key to a broader European renewal, the regime cultivated non-German scholars, writers, composers, and artists through friendship clubs, regional cultural associations and bi-national exchanges. Germany's bond with fascist Italy, what *The Times* of London in 1937 called 'the Cultural Axis,' was a particularly rich source of declarations of 'Germany and Italy's European Mission'.⁸ In 1940 this Europeanism became a central theme of a range of the Nazis' international cultural initiatives, from the German Institutes founded in various European cities to the pages of new publications like *Das Reich* and *Signal*.⁹ Beginning in 1941, it took on a newly concrete form, as various Nazi leaders, with Goebbels in the lead, launched a web of new, German-dominated,

Idee der neuen Ordnung (Münster 2000); V. Conze, *Das Europa der Deutschen: Ideen von Europa in Deutschland zwischen Reichstradition und Westorientierung (1920–1970)* (Munich 2005).

7 Hitler's decree of 4 November 1942 is published as Document 25 in Lipgens (ed.), *Documents on the History of European Integration*, 108–9. In January 1942, Goebbels, supported by Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, managed to continue holding international conferences in Germany even over the objections of the Wehrmacht High Command, which had expressed concern that such events might facilitate espionage. In defending the practice to Hitler's Reich Chancellery, the Propaganda Ministry cited 'reasons of prestige'. See Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, Amt Ausland/Abwehr, to Reichsverkehrsminister, Amt Eisenbahnen (3 December 1941), a copy of which was forwarded to the Reich Chancellery on 15 December 1941. These, and the Propaganda Ministry's response (2 January 1942), are in BA R R43 II/1418 a.

8 'Italian Pictures in Berlin', *The Times* (London) (2 November 1937); U. von Hassell, *Deutschland und Italiens europäische Sendung. Vortrag gehalten am 19. Januar 1937 in der Universität Köln* (Cologne 1937). On the German–Italian cultural relationship see A. Hoffend, *Zwischen Kultur-Achse und Kulturkampf: die Beziehungen zwischen "Drittem Reich" und Faschistischem Italien in den Bereichen Medien, Kunst, Wissenschaft und Rassenfragen* (Frankfurt and New York 1998) and R. Ben-Ghiat, 'Italian Fascists and National Socialists: The Dynamics of an Uneasy Relationship', in R.A. Etlin (ed.), *Art, Culture, and Media Under the Third Reich* (Chicago 2002), 257–84. Nazi Germany's pre-Second World War cultural outreach to other nations is documented in J.-P. Barbian, '"Kulturwerte Im Zeitkampf". Die Kulturabkommen des "Dritten Reiches" als Instrumente nationalsozialistischer Außenpolitik', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 74 (1992), 415–59; F.-R. Hausmann, 'Auch im Krieg schweigen die Musen nicht', *Die Deutschen Wissenschaftlichen Institute im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen 2001); M. Janué i Miret, 'Imperialismus durch auswärtige Kulturpolitik: die Deutsch-Spanische Gesellschaft als "Zwischenstaatlicher Verband" unter dem Nationalsozialismus', *German Studies Review*, 31 (2008), 109–32; K.A. Fiss, *Grand Illusion: The Third Reich, the Paris Exposition, and the Cultural Seduction of France* (Chicago 2009).

9 See Hausmann, *Auch im Krieg*, and R. Rutz, *Signal: eine deutsche Auslandsillustrierte als Propagandainstrument im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Essen 2007). Intellectuals surrounding Himmler and the SS also promoted a pan-Germanic rhetoric of European racial unity: see Elvert, '"Germanen" und "Imperialisten"', and M.H. Kater, *Das 'Ahnenerbe' der SS 1935–1945. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches* (Munich 2006). As Michael Salewski has shown, however, SS visions of a racially understood Germanic Reich bore little connection to the idea of Europe deployed by Goebbels and Ribbentrop. See Salewski, 'National Socialist Ideas on Europe', 40–1.

trans-European institutions of cultural and intellectual exchange. These included the Union of National Journalists' Associations, the International Film Chamber, the International Law Chamber, the European Youth Federation, the European Women's Federation, and a European Chess Federation.¹⁰ As a kind of high point of this Europeanist cultural campaign, the conferences at Weimar exemplify that campaign's goals and strategies; they are also among its best-documented cases.¹¹

Like those other examples, the Writers' Union sought to extend to the rest of Europe the kind of machinery for mobilization and control of the cultural sphere that Goebbels believed he had perfected within Germany. The decision to create a writers' organization grew out of a breathtakingly ambitious proposal for an 'International Chamber of Culture,' echoing the name and structures of the Reich Chamber of Culture of which Goebbels was President.¹² That plan was scaled back, but the goal remained: forging durable institutional structures that would cement German hegemony over key aspects of European cultural life in a postwar New Order, and also rallying support for the German war effort while the war was still going on. The Nazis' pursuit of this goal in the field of literature was a sophisticated and complex operation, in that it sought to balance an appeal to traditional elements of the literary field with the pursuit of a radical reordering of that same field, on the basis of antisemitic nationalism, a totalitarian model of the state, and a racist notion of German supremacy. In what follows, the article offers an overview of the literary-political context against which the Nazis were working, before turning to the concrete mechanisms through which they pursued this goal.

Applying a Nazi model of cultural organization to the field of European literature required a massive reordering of the networks, practices, ideas and power structures on which the existing European literary field had hitherto been based.

10 Herzstein, *When Nazi Dreams Come True*, remains one of the few overall treatments of what he calls the 'congress and convention mania' of 1941–2 (159). Few of these institutions have enjoyed much scholarly attention except for the International Film Chamber, on which see: V. de Grazia, 'Mass Culture and Sovereignty: the American Challenge to European Cinemas, 1920–1960', *Journal of Modern History*, 61 (1989), 53–87; E. Offermanns, *Internationalität und europäischer Hegemonialanspruch des Spielfilms der NS-Zeit* (Hamburg 2001) and B.G. Martin, "'European Cinema for Europe!'" The International Film Chamber, 1935–42', in R. Vande Winkel and D. Welch (eds), *Cinema and the Swastika: The International Expansion of Third Reich Cinema* (Basingstoke and New York 2007), 25–41.

11 This is thanks above all to the extraordinary collection of materials in Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, which does much to compensate for the poor German archival record related to the European Writers' Union. See also discussions of the ESV in Barbican, *Literaturpolitik*, 436–50, and W. Mittenzwei, *Der Untergang einer Akademie oder die Mentalität des ewigen Deutschen: der Einfluss der Nationalkonservativen Dichter an der Preussischen Akademie der Künste 1918 bis 1947* (Berlin 1992), 446–57.

12 The archival record on this plan is very thin: see letter from Propaganda Ministry *Staatssekretär* Leopold Gutterer, 21 May 1941, to the Reich Chamber of Culture (*Reichskulturkammer*), in BA R 55/20162. Evidence of similar international planning in the field of classical music is in BA R 55/1465. In June 1941 the Reich Chamber of Literature's managing director (*Geschäftsführer*) Wilhelm Ihde and its former president Hans Friedrich Blunck exchanged letters about possible models for organizing foreign writers in response to the inquiry on the prospects for a literary section of an International Chamber of Culture. See Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 29–30.

For example, virtually all existing international writers' organizations were avowedly liberal, socialist, or communist.¹³ Indeed, the very institutional model Goebbels planned to use – the standing international cultural organization whose members gather periodically for large-scale conferences – was itself strongly identified with the liberal and cosmopolitan values of 'cultural internationalism'.¹⁴ Creating a Nazi answer to these organizations, one that would be multinational while still consonant with radical nationalism and *völkisch* racism, would require an inversion of the politics of international cultural exchange.

Above all, to establish control over European literature Germany needed to wrest the leadership of this field away from France. For in the interwar period it was Paris that stood at the center of European literary life. Based on that city's status as source of the continent's best-loved and most widely translated authors, birthplace of literary modernity, refuge of political and literary exiles from across the continent and home of the world's most influential critical establishment, literary Paris wielded the power to assign literary capital on an international level. This meant that the new and important efforts to define 'European literature' that took place in the 1920s – the twentieth century's greatest decade of literary Europeanism – stood under the hegemony of the Parisian critics, journals, prize committees, and publishers who determined which works from Europe's various national literatures would be considered 'European literature,' or indeed 'literature' at all.¹⁵ Under their leadership, 'European literature' came in the 1920s to mean

13 This included the most prominent bodies, like the PEN Club, the Soviet-sponsored International Union of Revolutionary Writers, or the 1935 and 1937 meetings of the International Congress of Writers in Defense of Culture. See M. Denning, 'The Novelists' International', in F. Moretti (ed.) *The Novel: History, Geography, and Culture* (Princeton, NJ 2006), 703–25; also in M. Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London 2004), 51–72. See also: R.A. Wilford, 'The PEN Club, 1930–1950', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14 (1979), 99–116; R. Shattuck, 'Having Congress: The Shame of the Thirties', *Partisan Review*, 51 (1984), 393–416; S. Teroni and W. Klein (eds), *Pour la défense de la culture. Les textes du Congrès international des écrivains, Paris, juin 1935* (Dijon 2005).

14 The institutional conference and institution were core tools of what have been called the 'machinery' or 'mechanics' of pre-First World War internationalism. See F.S.L. Lyons, *Internationalism in Europe, 1815–1914* (Leiden 1963), 366; A. Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore, MD 1997); and M. Geyer and J. Paulmann (eds), *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford 2001).

15 On the nature and implications of 'French literary hegemony' in Europe, see Moretti, 'Modern European Literature', 93–5, 100; and Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 155. On the dominance of French and English novels in Europe until the late nineteenth century, see Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans*, 161–74, 630–57. But Sassoon challenges the claim that early-twentieth-century Paris was 'the centre of the cultural world', noting that after 1900 Hungarian intellectuals were 'finding out about Dostoevsky, Gorky, Ibsen and others from countries other than France.' Ibid., 642. On interwar literary Europeanism, see P.M. Lützeler, *Die Schriftsteller und Europa. Von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich 1992), 190ff.; G.M. Vajda, 'Gibt es eine europäische Literatur neben den Nationalliteraturen/Einzelliteraturen Europas?', in J.T. Leerssen (ed.), *Europa Provincia Mundi: Essays in Comparative Literature and European Studies Offered to Hugo Dyserinck on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA 1992), 97–104; and D. Pernot, 'Consciences critiques de la littérature européenne (1919–1945)', in B. Didier (ed.), *Précis de littérature européenne* (Paris 1998), 391–400. The history of the idea of European literature in the twentieth century awaits book-length treatment: for now see Moretti, 'Modern European Literature', 86–109, and A. Marino, 'Histoire de l'idée de "littérature européenne" et des études européennes', in Didier (ed.), *Précis de littérature européenne*, 13–17.

quite specific things, all of which reinforced the dominant position of Paris. 'European' meant up to date with new trends (set in Paris), especially with literary modernism (born in Paris). Writers were judged to be European if they achieved success beyond their borders (an issue decided upon, often, in Paris). Thus, 'the European writer,' declared prominent French critic and translator Valéry Larbaud in 1925:

is one who is read by the elite of his country and by the elites of other countries. Thomas Hardy, Marcel Proust, Pirandello, etc., are European writers. Authors whose works are popular in their native countries but which are not read by the elites of their countries are... let us say, national writers.¹⁶

According to this model, a work of literature was 'European,' then, not because it expressed some particular voice or reality of one of the nations of Europe but, on the contrary, in so far as it was *not* merely national. Under French leadership, 'European literature' also acquired a sharply political character, marked by allegiance to a specific package of values: liberal, internationalist and linked to Enlightenment-humanist ideals of reason, freedom of conscience, and the demand for limitations on the power of society or the state to curb the creative freedom of the individual.¹⁷

Ultimately, this was a model of European literature based on what can be called the French model of literature as such: a universalist understanding of literary taste and value, based on the celebration of timeless 'classical' models, rooted in the cosmopolitanism of the 'Republic of Letters' and the rationalism of the Enlightenment.¹⁸ Linking the idea of Europe to this well-established set of literary and political values offered a powerful model for the interwar period. This model seemed to restore the sense of continental cultural unity destroyed during the First World War, while it also responded to the need for new transnational standards of taste in the confusing interwar literary market.¹⁹

But there was also a great deal not to like about this model, especially for cultural and political conservatives and nationalists, in particular those from Europe's smaller and more peripheral literary communities. For by reserving the label 'European' for the kind of supra-national modernism that challenged nationalist cultural values, and that rejected as out-of-date the realist style of the great

16 V. Larbaud, *Ce vice impuni, la lecture...: Domaine anglais* (Paris 1925), 407–8. Quoted in Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 110.

17 Casanova, following Bourdieu, cites Zola's intervention in the Dreyfus affair as the foundational event for the development of a 'de-nationalized politicization of literature'. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 363, n. 82. See also Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 129–31; Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans*, 658–75.

18 On the 'French model' of literature see: Moretti, 'Modern European Literature', 93–5; Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 67–73, 87; and R.M. Dainotto, *Europe (in Theory)* (Durham and London 2007), 87–101.

19 On the relationship in early twentieth-century Europe between new social divisions and the emergence of the split between mass genres and 'high' literary modernism, see Moretti, 'Modern European Literature', 103–4.

nineteenth-century novels, this Parisian-led model effectively excluded much of the literature of Europe from the sphere of European literature. The political and cultural values of nationalism were, after all, fundamental to the literary production of many of Europe's peoples, especially those that had only recently acquired national states. Writers struggling to forge a national literature, for which they wanted European recognition, had a profound investment in realist literary styles, and felt an almost structurally determined hostility to modernist efforts to break with realism.²⁰

Conservative and nationalist objections to the Parisian-led model of European literature highlighted the degree to which the literary values of this model, although presented as European (or indeed universal), were in fact rooted in a highly specific French historical legacy: the emergence of an autonomous literary field in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus it was France that saw the birth of 'that unprecedented social personage... the modern writer or artist,' who insists upon his absolute freedom to determine standards of taste in opposition to the state, the church or the market, and who competes for a kind of prestige ('literary capital') that is internal to the field and inversely related to state sanction, popular acclaim or commercial success.²¹ The key features of the interwar model of European literature were rooted in the belief that this kind of autonomy, and the specific type of literary prestige it conferred, were of the highest value.

But this kind of autonomy was not something writers in most of Europe enjoyed. This lack of autonomy affected their range of options, conditioned their literary values and limited their access to 'Europe'. For to achieve the status of European writer according to these conditions, authors had to match the stylistic requirements set in Paris, and that came at a price. As Pascale Casanova explains, writers from countries with 'small' or 'dominated' literatures:

have to make an unavoidably painful choice: either to affirm their difference and so condemn themselves to the difficult and uncertain fate of national writers... writing in 'small' literary languages that are hardly, or not at all, recognized in the international literary world; or to betray their heritage and, denying their difference, assimilate the values of one of the great literary centers.²²

The ability of Parisian writers to be both national and European, 'at once nationally secure and effortlessly universal', was not shared by their counterparts in the rest of Europe, who found that their efforts to participate in international trends alienated them from their domestic readership and called forth harsh accusations of betrayal.²³

20 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 110.

21 Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 76.

22 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 180.

23 T. Judt, *A Grand Illusion? An Essay on Europe* (New York, NY 1996), 73. A similar point is made in Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 191; Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans*, 642; and M. Kundera, trans. L. Asher, *The Curtain: An Essay in Seven Parts* (New York, NY 2007), 38–9.

The domestic pressure on writers to reject autonomy only increased as the Parisian model of European literature entered into crisis in the nationalist and ideologically charged atmosphere of the 1930s. Writers and intellectuals, including many in France, questioned the value of the writer's autonomy, feared the consequences of literature's exposure to market forces and expressed dissatisfaction with the anomie of modernism. While left-wing writers placed their pens at the service of revolution, intellectuals on the right sought resolution and renewal (and, sometimes, a steady paycheck) through the kind of 'sacrifice and self-surrender to the totality, the state, the race, the immanent' called for by Gottfried Benn in 1933.²⁴ Broader political and intellectual trends also sorely challenged French claims to hegemony: the declining prestige of the crisis-racked Third Republic, the weakness of liberalism, the failures of internationalism, and the alarming cultural influence of Americanism and materialism in Europe, by which France itself seemed increasingly polluted.²⁵ In a Europe marked by widespread cultural nationalism and a growing fear of its non-European rivals, the 'European' nature of the international literary world led from Paris was seriously in doubt, even before France's calamitous defeat by German forces in the spring of 1940 marked what one German journalist called 'The End of the French Claim to Culture'.²⁶

According to Goebbels, Hitler's military victory over France meant that Germany would seize the cultural power and position that France had held for the last 150 years. Berlin would take the place of Paris, which would assume 'the role and significance of a provincial town'.²⁷ In the field of literature, to demote Paris to the level of 'provincial town' would be to decapitate the entire system of international modern literary life, smashing its cosmopolitan and universalist vision of literature. In its place, Goebbels's staff began to create a German-led literary space marked as European.²⁸ Claiming the contested symbolic terrain of 'Europe' also distinguished the Nazis' international writers' organization from its liberal or communist rivals. While those institutions were self-consciously global (at least in theory), the Nazis' Writers' Union was explicitly and narrowly European – indeed, it was perhaps the first such 'European' body ever founded.

24 Benn, 'Der neue Staat und die Intellektuellen', (April 1933), quoted in R. Robertson, 'From Naturalism to National Socialism (1890–1945)', in H. Watanabe-O'Kelly (ed.), *The Cambridge History of German Literature* (Cambridge 1997), 387.

25 On interwar Europeans' fears 'that Western civilization would be thoroughly tainted by the materialism peculiar to American society', see V. de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA 2005), 21. Anti-materialism is presented as a leitmotiv of interwar Europeanism in C. Curcio, *Europa. Storia di un'idea* (Florence 1958), 825–34.

26 K.-H. Rüdiger, 'Das Ende des französischen Kulturanspruches', *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, 11 (1940), 505–7.

27 W.A. Boelcke (ed.), "Wollt Ihr den totalen Krieg?" *Die geheimen Goebbels-Konferenzen 1939–1943* (Stuttgart 1967), 74.

28 As documented by Hausmann and Barbian, work on these conferences was led by the Literature Division (*Schriftumsabteilung*) of the Propaganda Ministry. Contact with local officials in Weimar was managed by the *Werbe- und Beratungsamt für das deutsche Schrifttum beim RMVP*; see for example letter from this office to Weimar *Oberbürgermeister* Koch, 31 May 1941, in Stadtarchiv Weimar, 16 108-02/12 3.

Many resources could support Germany's claim to be an alternative leader of European literature: the vast number of readers of German, the country's wealth, the scale of its publishing industry and book market (including for translations), its massive international book distribution network based in Leipzig, its technological superiority in printing and publishing, and the fame of the German national literary legacy, embodied above all in the unquestionably European figure of Goethe. Nazi leaders seem also to have understood, moreover, that one of their greatest resources was Germany's ability to claim to be the true spiritual home of the one real rival to the French-universalist model of literature. This was the national-romantic or 'German' model of literature. Based on German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder's 'identification of language with nation and of poetry with "the genius of the people"', this model found the value of a literary work in its 'authentic' representation of a particular nation, rather than in its success at achieving a universal and timeless standard.²⁹ The rapid spread in the nineteenth century of Herder's ideas throughout Europe, as well as to Russia and the Americas, offered writers in languages with less autonomy (and thus less literary capital) the basis for a 'new form of literary legitimacy that... stood in contrast to that of the French universalist model'.³⁰ By 1941, this Herderian model had served national writers in this way for over a century. But it had never been given international institutional form. Or rather, never successfully: a group of pro-Nazi authors including the expressionist Gottfried Benn in fact created a Union of National Writers in 1934, only to see it quickly run aground on intra-German literary-political conflict. Benn, who at the Union's one and only banquet in March 1934, had celebrated as guest of honor the Italian futurist F.T. Marinetti, was soon hounded into internal exile as the Nazi regime turned decisively against literary modernism.³¹ This institution's rapid demise illustrated some of the many conflicts among supporters of literary nationalism, which undermined efforts to define a coherent 'national' model of literature in opposition to the French-universalist one.³² In 1941, however, with literary debate in Germany quashed, the prestige of the French model in ruins, and the future of Europe in Germany's hands, Goebbels and his staff took a nazified, racist version of this German-national understanding of literature as such, and made it into the basis of a counter-model of *European* literature.

As trains carrying writers from around Europe rolled into Weimar on Thursday, October 24 1941, the Nazis' articulation of an alternative model of European

29 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 104–5.

30 Ibid., 75.

31 See Robertson, 'From Naturalism to National Socialism', 387. The Union's one official statement was H. Johst and G. Benn, 'An die Schriftsteller aller Länder', *Völkischer Beobachter* (1 March 1934), published in J. Wulf (ed.), *Literatur und Dichtung im Dritten Reich* (Gütersloh 1963), 86–7. On Benn's fate, see G.R. Cuomo, 'Purging an "Art-Bolshevist": The Persecution of Gottfried Benn in the Years 1933–1938', *German Studies Review*, 9 (1986), 85–105. Benn's banquet address (29 March 1934) is published as 'Rede auf Marinetti' in G. Benn, *Essays, Reden, Vorträge. Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 1 (Wiesbaden 1959), 478–81.

32 An overview of the interwar debate between supporters of cosmopolitan and chauvinist visions of German national literature is in Mittenzwey, *Der Untergang einer Akademie*, 95–130.

literature began with, or rather through, these writers themselves.³³ In political terms, the group the Germans assembled in Weimar reflected the map of conquered and Nazi-allied Europe. Predictably, it included some invitees distinguished solely by their Nazi-fascist political commitments. In literary-political terms, however, it represented regions and trends that the French model of European literature had generally excluded from the upper echelons of international literary exchange. Substantial contingents represented the literatures of Europe's northern and southeastern periphery, from Norway and Finland to Croatia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. Of course, individual writers from some of these countries had achieved success in Paris. But the writers the Nazis called 'European' were generally 'national writers' – both in the sense that their readership was largely confined to their nation and in the sense that they placed their talents at the service of the political-cultural project of the nation, rejecting the autonomous status of the 'international writer'.³⁴ In their national contexts, several were important figures. Veikko Antero Koskenniemi was Finland's 'unofficial national poet,' author in 1940 of new lyrics for the hymn in Sibelius's *Finlandia*; historical novelist Fani Popova-Mutafova was a leading intellectual of interwar Bulgaria; Slovakian novelist Jozef Cíger Hronský led the influential nationalist cultural association Matica Slovenská.³⁵

The focus on national writers accounts for the heavy representation of authors of naturalistic novels set in the rural village or farm – not so much out of ideological linkages to Nazi 'blood and soil' ideology, but because this was the central literary genre for many of Europe's predominantly agricultural societies. Writers in this vein included prominent figures like internationally successful Belgian children's author (and Flemish nationalist) Felix Timmermans, and Europe's greatest novelist of 'the soil', Norwegian Nobel laureate Knut Hamsun, who

33 The foreign guests at the 1941 meeting included: Finland: Arvi Kivimaa, V.A. Koskenniemi, Magda Berquist von Mirbach; Sweden: Dr. Einar Malm; Norway: Kaare Bjoergen [Kåre Björger], Lars Hansen; Denmark: Svend Fleuron, Einar Hovald, Anders Thuborg; Holland: R.P. Sybesma, Henri Bruning, Emile Buysse, Jan H. Eekhout; Belgium: F. Vercnocke, Ernest Claes, Filip de Pillecijn, Felix Timmermans; France: Jacques Chardonne, Ramon Fernandez, Marcel Jouhandeau, Abel Bonnard, Robert Brasillach, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, André Fraigneau; Spain: Ernesto Giménez Caballero, E. Filipe Vivanco; Italy: Alfredo Acito, Arturo Farinelli; Croatia: Dr. Antun Bonifačić; Romania: I.N. Herescu, Ion Sân-Giorgiu; Bulgaria: Fanny (Fani) Popova-Mutafova; Slovakia: Jozef Cíger Hronský, Milo Urban; Switzerland: John Knittel; Hungary: Josef Nyirő, Lőrinc Szabó. This list combines information from three sources: a list of participants sent from RMVP to Reichsschrifttumskammer, 28 January 1942, BA R 56 I/102 (fiche 1); the list offered in Haegert, 'Zum Dichtertreffen 1941', 6–7; and a list located by Hausmann in the Staatsarchiv Weimar, cited in Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 53, n. 73. Hausmann is no doubt right to conclude that a definitive listing is impossible.

34 On the distinction between "'national" writers (who embody a national or popular definition of literature) and "international" writers (who uphold an autonomous conception of literature)' see Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 108.

35 On Koskenniemi, see www.kirjasto.sci.fi/koskenni.htm (accessed 20 April 2013), and Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 292. On Popova-Mutafova, see Krassimira Daskalova, 'Fani Popova-Mutafova', *Gender and History*, 14 (2002), 321–39. On Hronský, see G. von Wilpert, *Lexikon der Weltliteratur* (Stuttgart 1988), 690, and Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 308.

communicated his support for the Writers' Union by telegram.³⁶ Moreover, a significant group among these 'national' writers could also be classified as 'regional'. Works by writers like the Transylvanian-Hungarian Josef Nyirö, Dutch writer and Frisian nationalist Pieter Sybesma, or Norwegian Lars Hansen, whose *ishavslitteratur* – travel literature set amid the icy landscapes of the North Pole – sold well in Germany, all expressed unique forms of life seen to have emerged from the intensely local relationship between people and their regions or landscapes.³⁷ But the predilection for rural themes did not mean the writers were themselves all provincials. The group included many sophisticated, multi-lingual, urban intellectuals, often responsible for translations into their national languages of major works from more established literary languages, above all French and German – but not for this reason any less nationalist.³⁸ Right-wing Finnish nationalist Koskenniemi, for example, had translated Goethe and Balzac into Finnish. Croatian Antun Bonifačić, cultural director of the Ustasha regime's foreign office, had studied at the Sorbonne and published a study on Paul Valéry.³⁹

As these writers mixed and mingled with one another, while being told repeatedly that they were 'the intellectual select [*geistige Auslese*] of all European nations,' they were offered a definition of European writer that built on a nazified, antisemitic updating of the traditional German-Herderian model of literature: European literature was composed of national literatures, and only those writers who most authentically expressed their nations' spirits deserved the title 'European'.⁴⁰ This was a European literature with no place for cosmopolitan exiles, modernists who appealed to Parisian trends while ignoring the local public, or, needless to say, Jews; nor for those European nationalities now slated for repression, like the Poles, Czechs or Russians, among many others. But with regard to those nationalities it included, this model called on the broad currency of the German model of literature, which after all had stimulated the emergence of some of these national literatures to begin with.⁴¹ Moreover, by including and celebrating regional and rural writers, this vision of European literature capitalized on the international 1930s trend for literary regionalism. Partaking of what Roberto Dainotto calls the 'metaphysics of place,' writers and critics across Europe saw in realist texts about specific rural regions a comforting

36 On Timmermans, see M. Seymour-Smith and A.C. Kimmens, *World Authors, 1900-1950* (New York, Dublin 1996), 2652, and Wilpert, *Lexikon der Weltliteratur*, 1512. Hamsun's telegram is documented in Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 259.

37 On Nyirö, Sybesma and Hansen, see Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 316–20, 243, 284–5. Nyirö, Hausmann writes, 'seems, like many non-German homeland and soil writers (*Heimat- und Bodendichter*), to have believed the German siren song of recognition and respect for autochthonous cultures in a politically unified Europe' (319).

38 On the cosmopolitanism of a certain type of nationalist writer, who sought to bring the national literature up to the 'European' level by importing from abroad, see Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans*, 645–8.

39 Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 310.

40 W. Haegert, 'Zum Dichtertreffen 1941', 6.

41 On the role of the 'Herder effect' in south-eastern Europe, see Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 78.

vision of uncorrupted traditions – cast against the cultural rootlessness and superficiality of urban modernity – as a basis for literary (and political) renewal and regeneration.⁴² In Germany this kind of thinking had received its most sophisticated exposition by Martin Heidegger, and had been fully systematized in multi-volume works of *völkisch* and racist literary theory.⁴³ Thus the writers gathered at Weimar cannot simply be dismissed as ‘applauding pieces of scenery, comparable to the participants in any number of State and Party events’.⁴⁴ On the contrary, this assemblage reflected a careful strategy on the Germans’ part: presenting this particular group of authors to the world, to one another, and to themselves as European deliberately labeled national and indeed regional writers as the *most* European. It turned Larbaud’s definition of the European writer, whereby the ‘European’ was the supra-national, precisely on its head.

What place could France occupy in the Nazis’ new literary Europe? The answer was embodied by the French delegation, the conference’s largest: France was to be downgraded from universal capital of de-nationalized *littérature* to one European nation among others. Assembled through networks cultivated by the German Institute in occupied Paris, the group included fascist intellectuals committed to antisemitic nationalist renewal, like Pierre Drieu La Rochelle and Robert Brasillach; novelists who reflected the nation’s rural and regional particularity, like Jacques Chardonne and Marcel Jouhandeau; and critics and essayists who themselves had been members of the French literary elite as they moved toward pro-Nazi positions during the 1930s, like French Academy member Abel Bonnard, and Ramon Fernandez, a former editor at Editions Gallimard.⁴⁵ This delegation capitalized on French prestige while re-nationalizing it, thus blunting the claim to universality that had always been the French tradition’s greatest strength.

Weimar was an ideal stage on which to present these writers with Germany’s claim to lead a vision of rooted European literary community. Its iconic status as the heart of the ‘classical’ period of German letters – the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth-century golden age associated with Goethe, Schiller and Herder, among others – gave Weimar a powerful claim to be the spiritual capital of German literature, as well as a site of unquestionably European cultural significance. By 1941, the city was also a highly polished tool for the presentation of a

42 R.M. Dainotto, *Place in Literature: Regions, Cultures, Communities* (Ithaca, NY 2000), 10–1.

43 Above all J. Nadler, *Literaturgeschichte des deutschen Volkes: Dichtung und Schrifttum der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften*, 4 Vols (Berlin 1938–41) and A. Bartels, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 2 vols (Leipzig 1900–1) of which revised editions appeared into 1943. See K.-H. Schoeps, *Literature and Film in the Third Reich* (Rochester, NY 2004), 46–56. Dainotto analyzes Heidegger’s interpretation of the ‘metaphysics of place’ in Dainotto, *Place in Literature*, 163–73.

44 Barbican, *Literaturpolitik*, 450.

45 Information on individual authors from J.-P. de Beaumarchais (ed.), *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française* (Montrouge 1987); and M. Winock and J. Julliard (eds), *Dictionnaire des intellectuels français: les personnes, les lieux, les moments* (Paris 1996). For contextualization and analysis of the French delegation members’ motives, see Dufay, *Die Herbstreise*, and Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 143–86. On French intellectuals’ attraction to Nazi Europeanism see also B. Bruneteau, ‘L’Europe nouvelle de Hitler’. *Une illusion des intellectuels de la France de Vichy* (Monaco 2003).

nazified vision of German cultural greatness. With eager help from local officials and conservative intellectuals, Goebbels had manipulated the city's cultural cachet throughout the 1930s, making Weimar the symbolic heart of his literary politics. Shunning Germany's actual centers of publishing and literary life (urban milieux linked to modernism, socialism and Jews), the Reich Chamber of Literature chose Weimar to host the annual 'Week of the German Book,' and, from 1938, the Greater German Poets' Meeting.⁴⁶ The decision to assemble foreign writers in Weimar during these events allowed the Nazis to build on this legacy, demonstrating to foreigners the regime's support for (and control over) German literary life, overwhelming them with a contingent of nearly 250 German writers, and mobilizing the emotional resonance that the city had for many non-Germans, as well.

But while it was a site of great cultivation and rich traditions, Weimar was, of course, a modest, provincial German town, with none of the heady energy of Berlin or the cosmopolitan glitter of Paris. For this very reason it embodied the distinctive model of culture, or *Kultur*, that Germans had developed since the late eighteenth century. This contrasted a deep, spiritual and yet nationally rooted *Kultur* with a sophisticated but shallow, rootlessly cosmopolitan and materialist *Zivilisation*. Goebbels himself laid out this argument in the speech with which he officially opened the Week of the German Book on Sunday, October 26 1941. 'Once again,' he declared, 'the oldest and most valuable culture-nations [*Kulturvölker*] of the European continent have stepped forward to defend that which they have built up over two millennia. Once again the bodies of our soldiers stand protecting an ancient cultural legacy [*Kulturerbe*] which, illuminated by the light of humanity, must be eternally maintained. What, in contrast, does the vacuous and insipid prattle of uncultivated [*ungebildeter*] writers mean, who defend a sterile *Zivilisation*, which is not worth living, much less dying for?'⁴⁷

By using the terms *Kultur* and *Bildung* to distinguish the European legacy, defended by Germany and Italy, from the *Zivilisation* of the continent's enemies, Goebbels made use of a central rhetorical tool of the Nazis' wartime cultural campaign: what could be called the Europeanization of the concept of *Kultur*. The classic, vexed dichotomy between culture and civilization had earlier been used to distinguish Germany's true cultural depth from the superficiality of 'the

46 On the Week of the German Book, in Weimar from 1935, see Barbian, *Literaturpolitik*, 626–40. On the Nazi manipulation of Weimar and the legacy of *deutsche Klassik* more generally, see B. Zeller et al., *Klassiker in finsternen Zeiten, 1933–1945. Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Literaturarchivs im Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach am Neckar* (Marbach 1983); P. Merseburger, *Mythos Weimar. Zwischen Geist und Macht* (Stuttgart 1998), 342–59; L. Ehrlich et al., *Das Dritte Weimar: Klassik und Kultur im Nationalsozialismus* (Köln 1999); and V. Mauersberger, *Hitler in Weimar: Der Fall einer deutschen Kulturstadt* (Berlin 1999). On the support of local intellectuals, see for example E. Bahr, 'Julius Petersen und die Goethe-Gesellschaft in Weimar zwischen 1926 und 1938', in J. Golz and J.H. Ulbricht (eds), *Goethe in Gesellschaft: zur Geschichte einer literarischen Vereinigung vom Kaiserreich bis zum geteilten Deutschland* (Cologne 2005), 137–50. That some Nazis viewed the entire period of *deutsche Klassik* skeptically is documented in E. Osterkamp, 'Klassik-Konzepte: Kontinuität und Diskontinuität bei Walter Rehm und Hans Pyritz', in W. Barner and C. König (eds), *Zeitenwechsel: Germanistische Literaturwissenschaft vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt 1996), 150–70.

47 J. Goebbels, 'Buch und Schwert. Rede zur Eröffnung der Woche des deutschen Buches', in J. Goebbels, *Das Eherne Herz. Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1941/42* (Munich 1943), 64–5.

West,' especially France.⁴⁸ This kind of use reached a peak (or rather nadir) during the 'war of the intellectuals' that accompanied the First World War. In the 1930s, the Nazis continued to use the language of *Kultur* and Civilization, albeit with significant racist and anti-individualist modifications, as a means of distinguishing Germany from its 'Western' enemies.⁴⁹ By the summer of 1941, German military successes made the intra-European application of these terms irrelevant. With continental Western Europe unified under German control, and Germany and her allies at war against the USSR, the gatherings of the European Writers' Union now presented the profound, anti-materialist values of *Kultur* not as uniquely German, but as characteristic of Europe as a whole, while projecting the concept of *Zivilisation* outside Europe. Foreign writers at Weimar were invited to see their own national traditions as linked to an idealist cultural legacy that was superior to, but needed defense from, its non-European enemies, Americanism, Bolshevism and 'world Jewry' (with the Jews understood as racially 'non-European'), which were culturally crass but technologically powerful. In so far as this Europeanized ideal of *Kultur* embraced the nationally rooted specificity of each *Volk*, it lined up well with a notion of European literature based on the national-German, rather than the international-French, model of literature. Thus while Weimar might seem like an unlikely place from which to mount a pan-European movement in opposition to Paris, in fact it was a perfect counter-point to Paris for just these reasons.

Meeting in Weimar also allowed the Propaganda Ministry to mobilize the literary capital associated with Goethe. This symbolic appropriation reached its culmination on Sunday at the tomb of Goethe and Schiller. Danish nature writer Sven Fleuron later reported:

We stood in the chapel in a half circle around the tombs, Reichsminister Dr. Goebbels in our midst. Not a word was spoken. Two enormous laurel wreaths were lowered onto the sarcophagi. The national salute followed, a minute-long silence – and the simple but gripping ceremony was over.⁵⁰

The day concluded with a performance of Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* in Weimar's *Nationaltheater*. Laying claim to Goethe in this way was a standard trope of the Nazi appropriation of the German classics, presented as expressions of the racial greatness of the German *Volk*.⁵¹ At the international level, however, it represented a bold effort to reverse Goethe's symbolic valence as a 'European'

48 On the *Kultur*-Civilization dichotomy see M. Pflaum, 'Die Kultur-Zivilisations-Antithese im Deutschen', in J. Knobloch (ed.), *Europäische Schlüsselwörter, Band III. Kultur und Zivilisation*, (Munich 1967), 288–427; J. Fisch, 'Zivilisation, Kultur', in O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Vol. 3 (Stuttgart 1992), 679–774; G. Bollenbeck, *Bildung und Kultur: Glanz und Elend eines deutschen Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt 1994); and N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA 1994), 1–28.

49 Bollenbeck, *Bildung und Kultur*, 297–301.

50 S. Fleuron, 'Ich sah Deutschland', *Europäische Literatur*, 1, 1 (May 1942), 4.

51 Several examples of Nazi-era interpretations of Goethe are in K.R. Mandelkow (ed.), *Goethe im Urteil seiner Kritiker: Dokumente zur Wirkungsgeschichte Goethes in Deutschland. T. 4, 1918–1982* (Munich 1984). Overall, however, Mandelkow argues that the Nazis appropriated Goethe less often

figure. The 1932 centenary of Goethe's death had called forth scores of essays in which the continent's most prominent liberal intellectuals celebrated the poet as a supra-national icon 'of a spiritual vision, European and/or global, of universal literature,' highlighting Goethe's status as a central symbol for liberal-democratic and humanistic visions of European civilization.⁵² With this in mind, Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry had warned its newspaper service in 1939 that the phrase '*Goethe, der Europäer*' was to be avoided.⁵³ Now, as part of the effort to reconfigure the meaning of European literature, the Nazis were ready to present the poet as a symbol of this alternative, illiberal Europe of nations: the writers were told, for example, that Goethe, no liberal individualist, knew that the individual achieved 'personality' only through 'service to his *Volk*'.⁵⁴ On the whole, however, the Germans at Weimar celebrated Goethe less through words than deeds, maintaining this poet-symbol's power precisely by leaving its content vague.

The Propaganda Ministry complemented its presentation of the ideal of *Kultur* by mobilizing another element of Germany's literary capital: its claim to be home to the Herderian-national conception of literature at odds with the French model of universal aesthetic standards. Addressing the foreign writers on Friday, 24 October, North German dialect poet Moritz Jahn invoked this Herderian legacy to justify Germany's right to reshape Europe. Ever since Herder first broke with the universalist aesthetics of the French Enlightenment, the Germans had judged as great any literary work that expressed 'the most unique and inner law' of the people in whose language it was written.⁵⁵ Given this background, it was not surprising, Jahn declared, that 'none of the great culture-nations of our continent have devoted themselves to the same degree to the knowledge of European literature as has the German'.⁵⁶ Indeed, as bearer of this tradition, 'the German is in a real sense a *Philolog*, a friend of language... it has never been in his nature and will never be in his nature to put down or suppress a foreign language'.⁵⁷ This was why Nazi Germany protected the expressions of the 'motherly soil and its natural powers of growth' offered by Germany's regional dialects: because 'the destruction

than other German writers. Karl Robert Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland: Rezeptionsgeschichte eines Klassikers* (Munich 1989), 72–7.

52 Pernot, 'Consciences Critiques', 395. On Goethe in 1932 see also Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 72–7, and P.M. Lützeler, 'Europäischer Kosmopolitismus und Weltliteratur: Goethe und Europa—Europa und Goethe', in P.M. Lützeler, *Kontinentalisierung. Das Europa der Schriftsteller* (Bielefeld 2007), 101–2. Lützeler here cites Europeanist Goethe essays by Gottfried Benn, André Gide, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, José Ortega y Gasset, Jules Romains, Benedetto Croce, Romain Rolland, Ernst Robert Curtius, André Suarès, Paul Valéry and Stefan Zweig.

53 Lützeler, 'Europäischer Kosmopolitismus und Weltliteratur', 102.

54 R. Erckmann, 'Die Aufgabe des Deutschen Dichtertreffens 1941', in *Die Dichtung im kommenden Europa*, 17.

55 M. Jahn, 'Zukunftsaufgaben der europäischen Literaturen', in *Die Dichtung im kommenden Europa*, 53.

56 Ibid., 55. That the belief in Germany's special European literary vocation was widespread is evidenced by Thomas Mann's similar declaration, in a 1927 letter, that Germany had always been the country in Europe 'most receptive to foreign goods and values, [and] most willing to assimilate and disseminate them.' Quoted in Mittenzwei, *Der Untergang einer Akademie*, 101.

57 Jahn, 'Zukunftsaufgaben der europäischen Literaturen', 56–7.

of the dialects would mean a new, fateful victory for civilization over nature'.⁵⁸ The German vision of European *Kultur* would instead *defend* Europe's 'nature' from the depredations of a universalizing *Zivilisation* that sought to make everything the same.

On the basis of the Germans' unique appreciation of the continent's cultural diversity, Jahn reassured the writers about their place in Hitler's new Europe. 'We know,' he told them, 'that your work must be and is based on particular national (*völkisch*) and individual bases'. But 'Europe as a continent with isolated states will never again be capable of life'.⁵⁹ There was, however, no contradiction between the loss of national political autonomy and the defense of national traditions. On the contrary, only German-led European unity would allow for the rebirth of national cultures in the transcendent spirit of *Kultur*, by blocking the Soviet onslaught and by defeating the true enemy of Europe's distinctive cultural diversity: plutocratic capitalism, led by 'the determining, direction-giving role of Jewry... in all countries'.⁶⁰ In this sense, Jahn summed up the conference's effort to counter the universalist French model of European literature with what could be called an 'inter-Nationalist' model, envisioning a Europe composed only of pure (that is, *judenfrei*) nations, each of which would be rooted in its rural and regional traditions, and carefully protected by Hitler's Germany. How fitting, in this sense, to choose Moritz Jahn, a provincial figure who wrote in a regional dialect, to articulate Germany's claim to lead European literature!

Even as the Nazi model of European literature celebrated the regional and provincial, the receptions, drinks and dinners to which the writers were treated offered a taste of decidedly bourgeois sophistication and European good living. The foreign writers stayed at the city's luxurious Hotel Erbprinz, whose list of guests boasted Schiller, Liszt, and Napoleon, or at the storied Hotel Elephant, which had been lavishly renovated on Hitler's orders. Tea at the Tiefurt Castle, to which the writers were specially ferried by bus, was followed by a chamber music concert in the Wittumspalais; lunches and dinners were served in the Hotel Elephant's elegant banquet hall, and the writers spent the conference's final evening at a reception hosted by Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel in Weimar's City Palace.⁶¹

The food, drink, entertainments and accommodations represented more than the 'seduction' of the foreign writers.⁶² Rather, these features were at the core of the very point of the event – gathering writers from across Europe into one place in Germany, where they could experience their fellow guests, and themselves, as 'European' writers. In this sense, the foreign writers were the audience for the Nazis' spectacle, but also a crucial part of the spectacle itself. Each time European elites were given opportunities to interact with each other on a

58 Ibid., 57.

59 Ibid., 49–50.

60 Ibid., 60.

61 On the Hotel Elephant, see Merseburger, *Mythos Weimar*, 347. Events are listed in the 1941 conference program, in Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 130–1.

62 'Seduction' is an interpretative keyword in Dufay, *Die Herbstreise*.

German-sponsored 'European' basis, this strengthened the idea of a harmony of interests among European elites, gave positive content to the idea of Europe so frequently bandied about during the war, and thus suggested to participants that there really was a New Order that was European (and not just German) in conception. The conference thus illustrated a classic way in which international institutions build hegemony: it promoted linkages among subordinate powers so as to strengthen the structure overseen and guaranteed by the dominant power.⁶³

Moreover, these receptions and dinners offered an experience of cultivated Germany and Europe that was calibrated to appeal to the *habitus* of the European bourgeois intellectual. This helped give the conference as a whole a refined tone that flattered these writers' sense of their own significance, while implying respect for their social status as bourgeois intellectuals. In this way, the events in Weimar suggested that writers could partake of the rootedness and connection to the *Volk* typical of the 'national' writer while also enjoying the prestige and free-floating multi-national interactions of the European, 'international' writer. Balancing those two attributes may well have been structurally impossible, but treating the authors in this way suggested that these writers could relinquish claims to autonomy, but still enjoy its benefits.

A concern with the appearance of literary autonomy also marked each step of the creation of the European Writers' Union itself. The formation of a new, 'European' institution had been behind the decision to invite foreigners to the German Writers' Meeting in the first place. But Nazi officials struggled to make the institution, its funding and its leadership appear to come from *within* the literary field. While not hiding the broader role of the Propaganda Ministry, Goebbels's staff seemed to appreciate the degree to which literary prestige was tied to the appearance of relative autonomy from direct political control. Ministry officials used careful stagecraft to make it appear that the Writers' Union was the spontaneous suggestion of the foreign writers.⁶⁴ Similarly, the Union's financing, which came entirely from the Propaganda Ministry, was to be made to appear to come from donations from German writers.⁶⁵ This bogus autonomy was embodied above all in the German writer whom the Nazi authorities selected as president of the European Writers' Union: novelist and poet Hans Carossa. A 63-year-old widower who lived quietly in rural Bavaria and maintained a small practice as a family doctor, Carossa was well known and respected outside Germany for works that shunned modernist stylistic vagaries for a measured Goethean classicism, and for his distance from Nazi authorities.⁶⁶ The suggestion

63 R.W. Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', in S. Gill (ed.), *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge 1993), 61.

64 Barbian, *Literaturpolitik*, 442.

65 Ibid., 445. P. Hövel, Referent für Auslandsfragen in the RMVP's Literature Division noted on 15 October 1942 the 'pressing propagandistic interest... not to allow the Ministry to be in evidence in this important federation', since 'doubtless a backlash could be expected if it were to come out that the Ministry financed the whole project.' Quoted in Ibid., 445, n. 127.

66 In 1933 Carossa turned down his admission to the nazified Prussian Writers' Academy and he had never joined the Nazi party. Wilpert, *Lexikon der Weltliteratur*, 263; Barbian, *Literaturpolitik*, 442–3.

that Carossa serve as the body's president, apparently the spontaneous outcome of the meeting, had also been managed beforehand. While the French delegation warmly encouraged him to accept the position, Carossa sought to avoid it, as Barbian reports, by suggesting writers who were party members. Only later did he understand that 'I, as an unpolitical man, was precisely the most suitable for the political goal that they had in mind'.⁶⁷

With Carossa installed as the new institution's figurehead, the Propaganda Ministry now invited each participating country to send one representative to a smaller meeting in March 1942, at which the European Writers' Union was officially founded.⁶⁸ At this point, the Germans' claim to literary leadership took on a strong institutional character, as the Writers' Union was structured in a manner that itself reinforced the Nazis' German-centered, nationally articulated model of European literature. The organization was composed of a series of national bodies (*Landesgruppen*), each of which was linked to it through a bi-national agreement with the Germans. The *Landesgruppen*, in consultation with the Union's German leadership, would determine which writers should represent their nations in the literary Europe that would gather each year at Weimar.⁶⁹ In this way, the Writers' Union removed the crucial decision about which writers and trends qualified as 'European' away from the control of the de-nationalized, autonomous literary elite based in Paris, and placed it firmly in the hands of the national literary and political elites represented in the *Landesgruppen*. In a concrete, institutional fashion, this would promote the dream of a European literature in which all writers would be rooted in a particular nation. By the same token, it would bar the prototypical modernist writer – the multi-national exile – and eliminate the kind of modernist literature for which, as Franco Moretti writes of Joyce's *Ulysses*, 'national boundaries have lost all explanatory power'.⁷⁰

This vision of a European literature of nations as the basis for an improved form of pan-European literary exchange was further elaborated in the pages of the journal created to accompany and publicize the Writers' Union: *Europäische Literatur*.

For a critical assessment of the role of Carossa, 'a man to whom no closeness to the National Socialist movement could be attributed, but who nonetheless carried out its politics', see Mittenzwei, *Der Untergang einer Akademie*, 449–51; here, 449.

67 Quoted in Barbian, *Literaturpolitik*, 443, n. 118. Carossa reported the French writers' encouragement in a letter of 22 December 1941, in H. Carossa, E. Kampmann-Carossa (ed.) *Briefe, 1937–1956*, (Frankfurt 1981), Vol. 3, 167.

68 The text of the founding charter (*Gründungsurkunde der Europäischen Schriftstellervereinigung*, 27 March 1942), promising, 'in a time when the culture of Europe is threatened . . . to make possible contact and the unmediated exchange of ideas among European writers; to cultivate constant indirect contact through book and journal; [and] to support the external life-conditions [of writers] through international agreements', is printed in Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 68. A photograph of the signed original charter was published in *Europäische Literatur*, 1, 2 (June 1942), 12.

69 Hausman, *Dichte, Dichter*, 293, n. 311, 310–2. The Propaganda Ministry also used the Writers' Union to control access to the European literary market. Participating writers were given opportunities to publish in German journals and, in some cases, saw their works appear in German translation. Works by writers who refused to join the Union were, by the same token, to be blocked from German market entirely. The mechanisms of this system are outlined in Barbian, *Literaturpolitik*, 445–6, and Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 73–80.

70 Moretti, 'Modern European Literature', 106.

Founded in May 1942 as the successor to the long-standing bourgeois review *Die Literatur*, this monthly literary journal, edited by a Propaganda Ministry staffer, included ample photo-spreads which showed the sophisticated, pan-European sociability of the Writers' Conferences in action, and highlighted the German hosts' high-minded generosity.⁷¹ No mere propaganda sheet, however, the journal addressed the central concerns of the emerging field of comparative literature studies, including:

studies on one or several national literatures... comparative views... investigations on international influence and effects... research on translation... general and comparative literature as well as theory... essays on intermediality and comparisons between the arts... genre history... motif studies... travel literature... and reports on particular events... along with reflections on how literature can function as a 'bridge' between nations.⁷²

All this was packaged in a self-consciously modern style, featuring internationally readable Latin fonts, a large folio format, much empty space on the pages and tasteful illustrations. Where the densely packed pages of *fraktur* in *Die Literatur* looked much the way German-language literary journals had looked since the eighteenth century, *Europäische Literatur* was a decidedly twentieth-century publication, marked by the latest trends in magazine publishing.

In its very layout, the journal also reaffirmed a vision of relatively egalitarian collaboration among European nations, brought together on the basis of what the journal's mission statement called 'the old German tradition of being, on the basis of its own creative powers, a connector among European neighbors'.⁷³ Each month's issue included an 'Overview in Europe,' in which short reports on literary or publishing events were laid out in such a way – each nation having its own space, more or less equal to the others, with Germany first and Italy second – so as to suggest Germany's recognition of the distinct status of Europe's national languages and cultures, led but not crushed by the Axis powers. This list of nations had obvious and chilling exceptions, however: not only were the English and Russian literatures absent, but also Polish, Czech, Serbian and Greek, to say nothing of Yiddish.

The journal was thus solidly established by the time of the European Writers' Union's conference of 7–11 October 1942. This meeting, now a well-oiled machine, offered a five-day spectacle of German-led European *Kultur*, culminating again with Goebbels's wreath-laying at the tomb of Goethe and Schiller. Details differed – 1942 featured a visit to the Wartburg Castle, a performance of Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, and a concert of Mozart, Schumann and Beethoven led by conductor

71 See for example the photos of participants in the March 1942 meeting in *Europäische Literatur*, 1, 1 (May 1942), 10–11, and 1, 2 (June 1942), 21.

72 O. Lubrich, 'Comparative Literature – in, from and beyond Germany', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 3 (2006), 53.

73 *Europäische Literatur*, 1, 1 (May 1942), 3.

Karl Böhm – but the message was substantially the same.⁷⁴ As in 1941, a series of Nazi writers gave shrill speeches highlighting Germany's multi-national vision of European culture, for example by promising, as Gerhard Schumann did, to 'save the historical leading culture of Europe – and Europe means Hellas and Rome, Potsdam and Weimar, it means Paris and Madrid and Helsinki – from the rage of the Asiatic hordes of the steppes'.⁷⁵ This European vision was again contrasted to the cultural emptiness of the Axis's non-European enemies, now laying greater emphasis on the similarities between the USA and the USSR: Wilhelm Haegert insisted it was the German people's task 'to defend European cultural values against Americanism and Bolshevism', while Edwin Erich Dwinger warned that the Bolshevik concept "'Kulturija'" means fundamentally the same thing as Americanism, with its superficiality, shallowness, and bustle'.⁷⁶ In contrast to the horrors of either Russian or American conquest, the conference sought to present an attractive vision of a literary Europe of nations, under the sign of a Europeanized notion of *Kultur*, led by a regime committed to the European heritage, representing a Germany whose legitimacy shone forth from every concert and castle.

What did the non-German writers make of all this? Even a cursory look suggests that many took it quite seriously and greeted the opportunities they saw it as offering. French novelist Jacques Chardonne, a participant in both the 1941 and 1942 conferences, was so impressed by his German hosts – by 'that Germanic spirit, feudal and religious, which nothing purely material can satisfy' – that in 1943 he personally urged Marshal Pétain to enter the war on the side of the Germans.⁷⁷ Koskenniemi committed himself to delivering the keynote address at the planned 1943 conference, while prominent Romanian novelist Liviu Rebreanu, who had attended the meetings of March and October 1942, worked closely with the Germans to create a Romanian national group of the ESV.⁷⁸

Goebbels judged the 1941 event to be a success: after the conference he noted in his diary that the atmosphere of the gathering was warm and festive (something other reports, as well as photographs, tend to confirm) and was excited about the project's possibilities: 'Every great writer in Europe has a great circle of followers, and one must win them over through the writer'. Moreover, he believed in October

74 'Dr. Goebbels empfängt die europäischen Dichter. Kranzniederlegung in der Fürstengruft in Weimar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* (13 October 1942). The activities of the October 1942 meeting are recorded in Hans Friedrich Blunck's diary, sections of which are published in Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 45–8. Some of these are listed also in the invitation-program book for German guests, in Stadtarchiv Weimar, 16 108-02/12 4.

75 G. Schumann, 'Krieg—Bericht und Dichtung', in R. Erckmann (ed.), *Dichter und Krieger. Weimarer Reden 1942* (Hamburg 1943), 70. Quoted in E. Loewy, *Literatur unterm Hakenkreuz. Das Dritte Reich und seine Dichtung* (Frankfurt 1966), 249–50.

76 Both quoted in W. Horn, 'Appell der geistigen Kräfte Europas. Das Deutsche Dichtertreffen 1942 in Weimar', *N.S. Landpost* (10 October 1942).

77 J. Chardonne, 'The Heaven of Niefelheim', in O. Lubrich (ed.), *Travels in the Reich, 1933–1945: Foreign Authors Report from Germany* (Chicago 2010), 266, 265.

78 Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 332–6.

1941 that 'just now the mood [for such action] is extraordinarily open; the point then is: strike the iron while it's hot!'⁷⁹ By the Writers' Conference of October 1942, the iron seems to have cooled somewhat. Italian Mario Sertoli, a literary writer and fascist functionary, reported to Rome that the conference was characterized 'by an apathetic and sleepy atmosphere,' as 'the audience napped or yawned' during the Germans' fiery speeches.⁸⁰ The Nazis' effort to impress their guests with central European *Gemütlichkeit* had likewise begun to collapse amid wartime shortages. At one meal the delegates were offered only soup, 'strained potatoes, diluted in plain water with traces of margarine'.⁸¹

More importantly, the vision of European literature assembled in Weimar elicited the Italians' mockery and contempt. The Italians aside, Sertoli complained, the conference:

had the look of a folkloristic or ethnographic gathering, between Balkan and Scandinavian; a little world of the literary village, of country poets and provincial writers, a fair for the benefit of obscure men, or a festival of the 'unknown writer'.⁸²

Italian essayist and translator Giaime Pintor bluntly echoed these views in a letter to his parents: 'the European writers gathered in Weimar constituted the most numerous assemblage of idiots [*cretini*] that I have ever seen together, but the trip and the stay in Germany were equally interesting'. His fellow conference participants 'were at a very low level, mostly Scandinavians and people from the Balkans, with whom it was impossible to talk about literature'.⁸³ Thus representatives of Germany's closest ally scornfully rejected the literary 'Europe' the Germans had assembled, specifically rejecting the Nazis' effort to rebrand as European provincial or country writers from the continent's periphery. Had they talked candidly with some of the German writers, Pintor and Sertoli might have discovered that their assessment was shared. In a letter to Hans Carossa, poet Börries Frieherr von Münchhausen wondered what connection existed between Goethe and 'the Croatian and Slovakian poets, on whom the previous issue of *Europäische Literatur* reports so lovingly,' and took this complaint a crucial step further: 'I believe in a European literature as little as I do in a European hair color.

79 Diary entry 26.10.1941 in E. Frölich (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Sämtliche Fragmente. T. 2, Diktate 1941–1945, Bd 2, Oktober-Dezember 1941* (Munich 1996), 186. Historian Michael Salewski agrees with this assessment: 'if there was ever a genuine chance of integrating Europe during the Nazi period, it was certainly during the months between July and November 1941'. Salewski, 'National Socialist Ideas on Europe', 49.

80 M. Sertoli, 'Relazione sul convegno della Unione Europea degli Scrittori in Weimar dal 7 al 15 ottobre corrente', 30 October 1942, published in M. Serri, *Il breve viaggio. Giaime Pintor nella Weimar nazista* (Venice 2002), 239–46, here 244. On the Italians at Weimar see also R. Mariani, 'I convegni di Weimar', *Storia Contemporanea*, VII (1976), 255–64; and Ben-Ghiat, 'Italian Fascists and National Socialists', 274–5.

81 Sertoli, 'Relazione sul convegno', 244.

82 Ibid., 240.

83 G. Pintor, letter of 16 October 1942, in G. Pintor, M. Serri (ed.) *Doppio Diario, 1936–1943*, (Turin 1978), 173–4.

Literature is after all language and can therefore never be supra-state, [or] international'. Carossa, who had avoided the 1942 conference, replied: 'I subscribe to what you say about the concept of "European literature" word for word'.⁸⁴

These doubts did nothing to impede the preparation of another conference, planned for September 1943, at which Carossa and Koskenniemi would give keynote addresses, to be accompanied by a tour of Goethe's house or of the Goethe-Schiller Archive and by musical performances, 'probably Beethoven's violin concerto and Brahms' first symphony'.⁸⁵ But even before the Soviet advance rendered this meeting impossible, the European Writers' Union had already revealed that it was unable to deliver on its essential goal: forging a European literature under Nazi control that would still enjoy the legitimacy of the traditional literary field. Nonetheless, the project had real power, because it touched on deeply rooted problems in European cultural life. The vision of a Europeanized anti-materialist *Kultur*, linked to the goal of displacing French hegemony, while defending Europe's national and regional literatures from the threats of modernity, spoke to fears and concerns that were shared by writers across the continent. For this reason, the writers' conferences at Weimar, and the broader Nazi-Europeanist project of which they were part, must be understood in light of, and integrated into, a critical history of the processes through which various forms of culture in Europe did or did not become 'European culture'.

Acknowledgements

Research for this article was supported by the German Chancellor Fellowship of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, the Vice President's Award at San Francisco State University, and the Conference Group for Central European History. Thanks also to Chris Chekuri, Katherine Gordy, Magnus Rodell, Bernt Skovdahl, participants in the 2011 Zuckerman Conference at the Mellon Biennial, Columbia University, and the anonymous readers for the JCH for comments on earlier versions of this article.

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84 Börries Freiherr von Munchhausen to Carossa, 18 May 1943; Carossa to Börries von Münchhausen, 24 May 1943. Both quoted in Hausmann, *Dichte, Dichter*, 43 and 55, n. 78.

85 R. Erckmann, 'Grossdeutsches Dichtertreffen und Tagung der Europäischen Schriftsteller-Vereinigung Weimar 1943' (29 July 1943), in Stadtarchiv Weimar, 16 108-02/12 4. This file contains additional detailed plans for the 1943 conference, abandoned only in August 1943.