

PAOLO BORSA
CHRISTIAN HØGEL
LARS BOJE MORTENSEN
ELIZABETH TYLER

What is Medieval European Literature?

Abstract

The editors of *Interfaces* explain the scope and purpose of the new journal by mapping out the significance and possible meanings of the three key terms of the subtitle: 'literature', 'medieval', 'Europe'. The specific theme of Issue 1 is introduced: "Histories of European Literatures: New Patterns of Representation and Explanation." With respect to this theme, theoretical problems concerning teleology and the present possibilities for literary historical narratives are raised. Finally the editors state the journal's commitment to a scholarly forum which is non-profit and open-access. The bibliography refers to key critical reading which shapes the journal's approach to medieval European literatures.

It is a great pleasure for us to publish the first issue of *Interfaces. A Journal of Medieval European Literatures*, offering free availability for all. We believe that open access supports the scope of our journal which is international, multilingual and committed to global knowledge dissemination in order to engage in debates about broad comparisons, connections and long-term history.

Interfaces responds to the conviction that the reframing of the rich literature surviving from the Middle Ages within a Europe, whose boundaries are permeable and contested in the Middle Ages as now, will open up a new resource: for historical understandings of the period with emphases on books, voices, discourses and languages; for modern aesthetic and intellectual education concerned with long-term human experience and its verbal expression; and for much more nuanced dialogues between pre-modern subjectivities and twenty-first-century interests in the deep past and its preservation for the future – all across emerging technical, institutional, and linguistic platforms.

Such tenets and approaches are increasingly and productively being cultivated in specialized philological, literary and historical schol-

arship. *Interfaces* aims to become a channel for this new thinking by establishing a forum for wider scholarly conversations across European languages and beyond national canons. In equal measure, we also want to make an imprint on future scholarship by setting up signposts legitimizing research practices which play a less specialized game: rigorous, peer-reviewed textual, historical and cultural scholarship, but of an outward-looking and wide-ranging nature which fosters discussion across specialisms; research which seeks comparisons and connections, and is driven by questions that cross traditional geographical, chronological or disciplinary boundaries. In this way we hope that *Interfaces* can contribute to reshaping the study of medieval European literatures by disclosing patterns, connections and themes which have remained uncharted or unseen in existing frameworks and we thus encourage readers to engage across the full range of each published issue. The modern study of the immense medieval textual record oscillates between the extension of the impressive edifices of the canonical few and the more basic ground-level work on lesser known pieces, with much exciting material still neglected due to anonymity, marginal language, or rigid categories of genre. *Interfaces* will display, promote and put in dialogue the entire range of medieval texts in order to contribute to a wider move away from overspecialization in academic research. Such a move, we believe, will enable both fresh and larger research questions to be seen and addressed and more meaningful participation in public debate about the cultural legacy of Europe.

The subtitle of *Interfaces* points to the journal's key categories of time, space and subject. All three concepts are modern, if not in origin, certainly in their predominant usage and meaning. This modern vantage point is underlined by our cover illustrations: the field is necessarily and fruitfully being fed by present-day concerns and modern historical imagination. Like Fontana's *Concetto spaziale*, our sphere of interest is multiple, contained within a permeable boundary and committed to crossing distances between disciplines, languages and research practices and ideologies.

Literature

One of the limitations which bears heavily on literary scholarship is the term 'literature' itself. Like 'Europe' and 'medieval,' 'literature' is a powerful and evocative modern category; it both promotes some

medieval texts and, at the same time, conceals the complexity of medieval textual practices. Modern expectations of fiction or poetry (with a known author) only account for a minor part of medieval literature (even though sophisticated medieval discussions of fictionality, poetics and authorship abound; cf. Minnis and Johnson; Copeland and Sluiter; Mehtonen). The established setup of the disciplines engaged with medieval written texts (history, literature, liturgy, philosophy, philology, law, theology and more) still structures the distribution of material too rigidly when it comes to the mass of texts written, translated and copied in this period. The boundaries between edifying, critical, devotional, entertaining, practical, institutional, private, original, and derivative texts were highly fluid in the Middle Ages, although modern compartmentalizations and sensibilities still work to keep them apart. The continuum and full extent of the written texts of a given period, area or social network within medieval Europe are in need of further promotion as a fitting subject for both literary and historical scrutiny. One of the productive aspects of studying medieval literature (see also below on 'medieval') is precisely that such a long time-span with relatively few texts (but only when compared to print culture!) invites scholars to look across a wider range of discourses.

The literary study of medieval texts is itself influenced by narrower modern senses of literature as the locus of individual viewpoints and the mode of expressing ambiguity and emotions; this expectation has partly been responsible for the narrow, vernacular, poetic and fictional medieval canon. But with the growing importance of the linguistic turn and, more recently, of cultural memory studies (in which subjective and partial experience is allowed to be more constitutive of real history) literature in the very broad sense acquires new relevance. All medieval texts which have come down to us can be viewed as (written) speech acts with a purpose of persuasion, short- or long-term, and all were vying for a place in a textual and linguistic hierarchy of individual and institutional positions, poetic as well as administrative (see Karla Malette on Petrarch and Benoît Grévin on imperial rhetoric).

We obviously think and speak in modern categories, but we leave too much out of sight if we do not apply them generously or mistake our modern disciplines for more than necessary taxonomies. Consider an example, among very many: the small important treatise known as *Liber de causis* (*The Book of Causes*, c. 30 modern pages). Broadly regarded in the thirteenth century as the pinnacle of Aristo-

tle's metaphysics, it deals with profound problems of unity, diversity and the divine intellect. In the words of Alain de Libera (198), no text illustrates better "la réalité et [...] la complexité de la *translatio studiorum*" (a subject taken up in this issue by Enrico Fenzi). It is now believed to have been composed in ninth-century Baghdad (probably in the circle of al-Kindī) by an anonymous scholar drawing mainly on Neoplatonic material (Proklos). It was studied in al-Andalus in the twelfth century by Jewish and Muslim scholars and translated from Arabic into Latin by Gerhard of Cremona (d. 1187) in Toledo, went on to Paris and was used by the theologian and poet Alan of Lille (d. 1202). In the thirteenth century it became a university text, promoted by Roger Bacon (d. 1294), discussed in depth by Albert the Great (d. 1280) and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) (who discovered its dependence on Proklos rather than Aristotle), summarized by Dante's contemporary, the political philosopher Giles of Rome (d. 1316) and frequently quoted by the learned mystic, Meister Eckhart (d. 1328), in his vernacular sermons.

In short, we are here faced with a difficult anonymous text in Latin belonging to no modern nation and to no one medieval confessional position, but one that was at many points in time during the Middle Ages at the core of learning and the quest for wisdom. Philosophical erudition, translations, commentaries, mystic texts, etc. provide more than mere background to medieval literature. For Alain of Lille and Meister Eckhart they were very much in the foreground. In the present issue the historian of philosophy, Thomas Ricklin, further explores this border zone between literature and philosophy.

Chronicles constitute another rich and distinctive group of European texts that sit uneasily between modern disciplines; until recently mostly classified as sources, chronicles are now more frequently and productively allowed literary value or relevance. This disciplinary distinction does not altogether disappear, but by suspending it, our vision includes more texts and our understanding of medieval historical narratives meets fewer obstacles (Mortensen, "Nordic"). One brief example, in which the value of cross- or non-nationalizing approaches is obvious, may be mentioned. Towards the end of the reign of Philip Augustus, around 1220, a major piece of French historical writing (c. 800 pages) of immense impact was composed in or around Paris. It is usually ignored in modern literary history, although it covers crusading history very competently and is a rich document of royal and aristocratic attitudes and narrative self-understanding. Attesting to its importance are fifty-one extant

pre-1500 manuscripts, plus further adaptations in Catalan, Galician-Portuguese and Castilian, the last of which (from the end of thirteenth century) mixes in prose versions from the French crusading epic cycle (Dominguez, "Circulation" 42-43). We speak here of the text known as the *Éracles*, an adaptation (sometimes with updates) of William of Tyre's masterful Latin chronicle of the Crusades and the kingdom of Jerusalem (composed from c. 1170 up to its abrupt end in 1184). Through the French adaptation, William of Tyre's chronicle became the main vehicle of the early crusading story world for the rest of the Middle Ages throughout Latin Europe. The *Éracles*, however, has failed to attract broader attention, no doubt because of its secondary status as literature and as a historical source, its anonymity, and its lack of modern national affiliation (it still only exists in an unsatisfactory nineteenth-century edition by Paris, cf. Issa; Handyside). However, it remains a high quality work of great contemporary significance which is most productively understood in the intersection between history, philologies, and literature.

Despite its literary inventiveness, the Middle Ages retained to a very large extent ancient taxonomies when discussing literature, even though new labels did arise. Poetics and literary theory often lag behind actual use and production, and some types of texts, e.g. liturgical texts and much of hagiography, have only recently been considered as part of literary and historical accounts. The story of *Barlaam and Ioasaph/Josafat* is still widely unknown, despite the obvious interest it offers the modern reader. Originally a life of Buddha from India, the story succeeded, through a sequence of translations both to the west and east of its place of origin, in becoming one the best known stories throughout Europe as a Christian saint's life (Cordoni; Uhlig and Foehr-Janssens). Its status as translation (into Greek, Latin, Church Slavonic, Hebrew, Arabic, Georgian, French, German, Old Norse, English and many other languages of both East and West) has barred it from being included seriously in literary studies, just as its Muslim and Christian draperies for centuries concealed its basically Buddhist teaching. It is the aim of *Interfaces* further to introduce such medieval texts into discussions that are not hindered by conceptual boundaries of the past, be they medieval or more modern, and likewise to take a critical stance towards our contemporary frames of reference, and their preoccupations.

Medieval

Even more obviously than ‘literature’ or ‘Europe,’ the terms ‘medieval’ and ‘Middle Ages’ are necessarily post-medieval formulations. There are many reasons for scholarly unease with the category ‘medieval:’ theoretical debates about periodization and about the increasing application of ‘medieval’ to non-European cultures, and specific anxieties both about the meaningfulness of the medieval period and about the popular image of the Middle Ages stand out. Without putting those concerns aside, indeed on the contrary, while inviting contributions which interrogate the category ‘medieval,’ *Interfaces* sets out to include within its remit a wide chronological range, from c. 500 to c. 1500. At one end, such a range deliberately blurs the line between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, which is in any case unproductive for Byzantine Studies. At the other end, the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance can be easily crossed in the West, and the early centuries of the Ottomans included in the East.

It is when looking at the material culture of writing that the Middle Ages takes on a coherence as the age of the manuscript codex, already introduced before the fourth century and then gaining in importance until the Gutenberg parenthesis (Pettitt), the period from c. 1450 to c. 2000 when the fixity of print was the supreme privileged carrier of texts. If so our field, the European, remains medieval a bit longer than areas further east in Asia, where print was introduced centuries earlier (but without the same dynamic effects of volume and distribution that moveable type technology had almost immediately in Europe).

If the introduction of print in Europe, with Latin script soon followed by that of Greek, and later also by Hebrew and Arabic, marks the end of our period, it is important to note that it had already been prepared for, or even forced into being, by an increase in writing in the centuries before. The exponential rise in the production of books within this period is a fundamental development across Europe during the high and late Middle Ages. As Eltjo Buringh has shown in compiling tentative statistics for survival rates of manuscripts with Latin script, the crucial dynamics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries bear clear witness to the growing importance of written communication, and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries display an extraordinary output, facilitated also by paper codices (especially in the fifteenth century). These last two centuries of the Western Middle Ages produced, according to the estimate, a staggering eight mil-

lion copied books, that is about four fifths of the entire accumulated output from c. 500 to c. 1500. In this regard, it is instructive to compare the figures generated for the eighth century (44,000 volumes) with those of the thirteenth (nearly 1,800,000). Although these are rough and difficult estimates, and in this case only based on Latin script books, there is little doubt that output followed the same dynamic patterns from the twelfth century on in Greek, Hebrew, and Slavonic literatures; the very steep rise constitutes a most profound change that cuts medieval literary history in basically two periods with a dividing line somewhere between c. 1100 and 1300. That the place of the written word played such a radically different role (amidst many other changes) in the early and late Middle Ages underscores the profound diversity over time across the medieval period (see Müller in this issue). Fundamental to our conceptualisations of the medieval codex copied by hand is the still very recent move of our late modernity from millions of printed books to innumerable fluid web pages. Media revolutions, now centrally including the written word, make a fuller understanding of the late medieval revolution the more crucial and enable us to see it from new angles.

From an heuristic point of view, the Middle Ages have a distinct advantage on which *Interfaces* intends to capitalize. Although we have specialisms within the period c. 500 – c. 1500, medievalists are trained to situate their work within this wide chronological span and to engage critically with debates and texts across it. Indeed, the habits of the national philologies mean that chronological breadth is more common among literary scholars than geographical breadth. The intellectual discipline of chronological range positions medievalists to make a strong contribution in moving away from overspecialization and towards collaboration and long-term history.

Europe

Since Antiquity, Northwest Eurasia has been known as ‘Europe.’ This concept was widely available in the Middle Ages, most obviously in Orosius’s *Historiae Adversum Paganos*. Drawing on classical models, the fifth-century historiographer, a Roman from what is now Spain, writing at the behest of Augustine of Hippo, a Roman from what is now Algeria, described the contours of Asia, Africa and Europe in extensive detail.

Orosius's geographical view of Europe was capacious. The Atlantic Ocean defined a clear boundary in the West, while in the East, where Europe meets Asia, boundaries were more ambiguous. Orosius invoked the mythic Rhiphaean mountains as he sketched a Europe bounded by the River Don, extending from the Arctic Sea to the Black Sea. He situates Asia Minor between Europe and Asia, certainly not part of Europe, but not quite fully part of Asia either. In the South, the islands of the Mediterranean are ascribed neither to Europe nor Africa but to the space between.

Alongside its scope, the later circulation and translation of Orosius's text make the *Historiae* an example of and figure for the wide range of people who had a stake in Europe in the Middle Ages. The *Historiae* was the most widely circulated text of ancient history in the West throughout the Middle Ages. It was translated into languages as representative of the diversity of Europe as Old English, Arabic and Italian. The *Old English Orosius* may have been produced in the multilingual court of Alfred the Great (d. 899), with its scholars from Wales, Frankia, Saxony and Ireland, while the *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh* was translated from a copy of the Latin text given to the Caliph of Cordoba, 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 961) by the Byzantine Emperor Romanos II (d. 963). In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it was adapted and translated into French (in the aristocratic environment of the *Histoire ancienne*), Italian, and Aragonese. The Italian version was made in a civic context in Dante's Florence by Bono Giamboni (on Orosius in the Middle Ages see Mortensen, "Diffusion"; Christys; and Sahner).

Orosius's *Historiae* show us the movement of a text across time, space, beliefs, languages and social contexts, the shared Greco-Roman inheritance of Christians and Muslims, and the social networks that created these interconnections not only within Europe but between Europe and her neighbours and their neighbours. Yet, despite the availability of the idea of Europe, it was only rarely deployed in political and cultural terms in the Middle Ages. In Byzantium 'Europe' (and 'Asia') was commonly used to indicate direction when crossing the Bosphorus/Dardanelles, but only acquired any cultural reference late, as witnessed to some extent in the fifteenth-century historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles, who uses it to denote the powers west of Byzantium. When and if the term was deployed in the West, it generally denoted Latin Christendom, centred on what is now France, Germany and Northern Italy (the old Carolingian Em-

pire) and understood in exclusive, hegemonic or normative terms (Reuter; Bartlett).

These dichotomies between the capacious Europe we see by following Orosius's *Historiae*, the exclusive Europe of Latin Christendom, and the situation of Byzantium as the meeting point of Europe, Asia and – in some centuries – Africa, not only remain with us today but have become politically pressing and sensitive, particularly in the context of the expansion of the EU and migration. The accession of Greece and of countries formerly in the Soviet Bloc, the exclusion of Turkey, conflict with Russia, the issue of internal (re)colonization (from Greece to Ireland), the status of minorities and migrants, and resistance to centralization in the UK and Scandinavia all mean that Europe is a strong but deeply contested idea in contemporary discourse. Modern politics *do* inevitably inform the accounts we give of the Middle Ages and their literary and linguistic heritage; for that meeting of modern and medieval to be constructive, Europe must be negotiated with self-awareness. Thus, while *Interfaces* takes a broad view of European literary cultures and their wider connections in the Middle Ages as its object of study, it does not take Europe – whether an antique geographical term, a medieval discourse of exclusion, or a modern polity – as a self-evident frame of reference. Rather, *Interfaces* aims to explore not only the literary cultures of medieval Europe and their place in a wider world, but also the value of Europe as a framework for the study of medieval literature.

European paradigms for medieval literature open up many new vantage points. Most obviously, they offer alternatives to the potential narrowness and exceptionalism of nationalizing literary history. Recent work on multilingualism (see Kragl in this issue; Tyler), on French as a European rather than national language (see Gaunt in this issue), on Alexander the Great (Gaullier-Bougassas), the use of Slavonic in both the Catholic and Orthodox rites (Verkholantsev), the interaction of Latin, Syriac and Georgian models with Byzantine hagiography (Efthymiadis), and the itineraries of late medieval literary cultures (Wallace) attest to the productiveness of Europe. A European level of analysis can also enable medieval studies to contribute more fully to wider work on the place of pre-modern cultures in the developing field of global literature. Here examples include the opening up of the shared Greco-Roman heritage of the Latin West, Byzantium and Islam, the place of Arabic and Hebrew as languages of Europe, and the role of the Silk Route in the exchange of stories and learning in the continuous Afro-Eurasian space. In the specific

modern context of global English and the potential risk that the most canonical of medieval English texts and authors – *Beowulf* and Chaucer, most obviously – will stand in for medieval literature, the need to have richer European narratives to tell about medieval literature becomes all the more urgent.

Interfaces aims to foster methodological and theoretical innovations and reflections which build on and work between the frameworks of the national philologies. World literature is an obvious disciplinary inspiration, even if we proceed from a regional frame, drawing on both literary and historical practices. Comparative literature has been incisive in exposing shared dimensions of national literary canons while at the same time making what is distinctive apparent. Recent theorizing of entangled history, with its emphasis on interconnections, can situate comparativism within a more social framework and offer greater possibility for explanation of commonality and divergence. Critically, interconnections neither presuppose integration nor diversity within Europe, nor are they rooted in a paradigm of rigid notions of ‘otherness’ when looking across Europe, Asia and North Africa. European frameworks too invite work that steps out of overspecialised notions of expertise and work which is collaborative. Furthermore, European frameworks demand multinational and multilingual contributors and collaborators, from within and beyond Europe. Where national philologies project the modern nation into the past, *Interfaces* sees a challenge for European literary study in avoiding the simple replacement of methodological nationalism with methodological Europeanism, as is so often the case, especially and most explicitly when it is institutionalised by EU funded research. It should be made explicit that for *Interfaces* our concern with Europe does not presuppose a focus on European identity, but simply that a topic cannot be contained within the parameters of the national philologies. This might include work on a region that is either within Europe or includes part of Europe, e.g. the Baltic or the Mediterranean, or theme, such as ‘Love,’ ‘Empire’ and ‘Classical Reception,’ the subjects of future issues of this journal.

In the final analysis, it is essential that national and European approaches work together. Most medieval literary scholars are trained in and teach in institutional structures invested in the national philologies. These structures show little sign of changing. If anything, as the teaching of foreign languages (other than English) retreats and the medieval stages of literature and language receive reduced attention in general studies programmes, being shaped within a single phi-

lology is becoming more entrenched. The challenge becomes to teach the medieval literary past of a single language, often known only in translation, as participating in wider cultures, be that Europe, the Mediterranean or the Silk Route, for example. As our own world becomes quickly more global, *Interfaces* sets out to encourage dialogue between national, European, western and non-western readings of medieval literature. Addressing the European enables the study of medieval literature to contribute to the understanding of the complex layering of local, national, regional and global identities experienced in the contemporary world.

New Patterns of Representation and Explanation

Interfaces opens with a thematic issue called *Histories of Medieval European Literatures: New Patterns of Representation and Explanation*. Through this focus – and our contributors’ quite different responses to the challenge – we have set out to stimulate reflections on the basic dynamic between research object and research agenda. Standard literary history, even when it does not use the terms ‘representation’ and ‘explanation,’ operates by displaying and describing a long series of objects (representation) and establishing links or breaks between them (explanation).

An important premise for such a discussion is that by ‘Histories of Literatures’ we are not primarily thinking of all the existing single or multivolume works at hand, but rather of the practices they reflect and support: in teaching, in anthologies, in translations, in library and bookshop taxonomies etc. We embrace the recent (chastened) return to literary history which is able to recognize the epistemological, heuristic and communicative value of narratives of the past. Much has definitely been learned from the intellectual rejection of literary history (e.g. Conrady; Perkins; Gumbrecht, “Histories”) and our emphasis on histories (plural) is important; it is simultaneously open to contingency, conscious of teleology (cf. below), but ultimately constructive rather than deconstructive in its approach to the past (cf. Grabes and Sichert; excellent analysis of the epistemology of historical writing with a different terminology by Munslow, *Narrative; History*). To dismiss the relevance or feasibility of literary history is a luxury scholars already steeped in literary history can perhaps afford (at least theoretically), but this move prevents commu-

nication beyond specialists circles, whether to other scholars and students, or outwards to a wider public.

Admitting the relevance of literary history in this sense, we are still faced with the connection between setting up a selection of works for scrutiny on the one hand, and asking research questions to make wider sense of them on the other. In the nationalizing philological practices of medieval literary history the selection remains defined by language (sometimes with openings to other languages, especially Latin in Western and Greek in Eastern Europe) and with an observant eye to the boundaries of the given modern state. Now that alternative, non-nationalizing points of departures are considered, the research agenda suddenly becomes very urgent: when the selection of works for representation is no longer given, the *explanandum* becomes both more open and more powerful. This is exactly what is at the heart of the deep structural problems in Czech, French, and Byzantine literary histories as diagnosed by Pavlína Rychterová, Simon Gaunt, and Panagiotis Agapitos and discussed by David Wallace in his *Afterword*: once a wider or different selection of texts appears on the horizon (in other languages, outside the modern nation, in other registers), the formulation of new structures and narratives – new explanations – has the potential to lead to innovative insights. From a different position, that of modern comparative literature, Sven Erik Larsen offers an analysis of the same dynamic, namely of the move from quite rigid national canons and the kind of comparative reasoning they foster to much more diverse interdisciplinary and multi-methodological approaches in which the horizons of texts have become global.

Another version of this dynamic is explored by Ryan Szpiech, Karla Mallette, Stephan Müller and Florian Kragl, who all attempt to dispel certain modern categorizations, genealogies or metaphors which have overemphasized the emerging new (visible in hindsight) and marginalized the contemporary medieval perspective of what the authors or works in question were trying to accomplish.

This brings us to a final key problem of any concept of literary history, whether national, cross-national, European or other: teleology. Teleology is easy to denounce in some forms (for instance nationalizing and Europeanizing in a deterministic version). But following Arthur Danto's insights (with an adjustment of his terminology in *Narration and Knowledge*), teleological narratives are not only unavoidable, they are necessary for any kind of historical understanding. Although we are always operating with multiple possible

developments seen from a certain time and place, we can only write and understand retrospectively. Sentences like ‘this was the first time love had been analysed in lyrical form,’ or ‘this would become the standard novella structure in the fourteenth century,’ or ‘this work found few readers and was forgotten until the Renaissance,’ are normal narrative sentences written with hindsight, and they are the ones that make the longer lines – in *our* direction – of literary history identifiable and understandable. Important new attitudes, features, and modes of writing may have been completely surprising, unsuspected and unexplainable when they happened (like many other historical phenomena), but *to us* – whatever our place and position in the present – they changed forever the significance of what went before them.

Historical narratives, including literary history, are teleological and they must be; they can, however, still be written without any assumption of necessary development. A distinction could be drawn between epistemological and ideological teleology, of which the latter is now usually strongly condemned (as in Hutcheon), but the two sides are obviously also connected, with an ideological position always being involved (*cf.* Habermas; Fokkema and Ibsch). Teleology should not be avoided, but it is of course crucial to reflect on the subjects and substance of change in any new narrative. It can no longer be only national characteristics tied to the national languages, nor can it be idealized literary genres (*cf.* Gumbrecht “A Sad and Weary Story” on the failure of both principles in the *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen*). It is in the choice of regions, materials, languages, periods, types of contexts and historical questioning (and more) that new ideas and practices of European literary history must strike a balance between epistemological and ideological teleology, obviously including reflections on the position from which we now select, categorize, evaluate, represent and explain medieval works. We are delighted to offer our readers a range of such positions from the start in our first collection of articles and are looking forward to receiving contributions which pursue the theme of literary history directly and indirectly in subsequent issues. Literary history, however conceived and practiced, is an act of teleology which insists that the past remains integral to the present, just as the present is integral to the past.

Policies and Platforms

Interfaces is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal. It does not charge either submission or publication fees nor article-processing expenses and it provides immediate access to its content, on the principles that publicly funded research should be free and widely disseminated and that making research freely available supports a greater global exchange of knowledge and fosters advance in learning. Furthermore, in order to promote the continued linguistic diversity of medieval literary study, we publish across five European scholarly languages: French, German, Italian, and Spanish as well as English. The individual volumes of *Interfaces* can be downloaded in full to encourage reading across the range of each issue.

Interfaces was initiated by the [Centre for Medieval Literature](#) (University of Southern Denmark and University of York) with a grant from the [Danish National Research Foundation](#) and is published by the University of Milan through its [digital platform for open-access journals](#). The Milan platform is based on Open Journal System (OJS), an open-source software designed and created by the [Public Knowledge Project](#) and licensed under a GNU General Public License. OJS complies with the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH), a protocol developed by the [Open Archives Initiative](#) and used to harvest the metadata descriptions of the records in an archive. Providing standards and interoperability, the technical infrastructure of *Interfaces* fosters dissemination and searchability of the research results, as recommended by the European Commission Communication “[A Digital Agenda for Europe](#).” Moreover, the mechanisms, infrastructure, and software solutions of the University of Milan enable long-term preservation of research results in digital form, as required by the “[Commission Recommendation of 17.7.2012 on access to and preservation of scientific information](#).”

Acknowledgements

In publishing Issue 1 of *Interfaces. A Journal of Medieval European Literatures* we would like to thank a number of people and institutions who have helped us in designing, developing, and bringing the project to fruition:

– Venetia Bridges and Réka Forrai, the splendid editorial staff of *Interfaces*

– The members of the Editorial Board of *Interfaces*: Panagiotis Agapitos (University of Cyprus), Enrico Artifoni (University of Turin), Paolo Chiesa (University of Milan), Michael Cooperson (University of California, Los Angeles), Jane Gilbert (University College London), Mayke de Jong (Utrecht University), Karla Mallette (University of Michigan), Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (University of Cambridge), Stephan Müller (University of Vienna), Guðrún Nordal (University of Iceland, Reykjavik - Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies), Susana Torres Prieto (IE University, Madrid), Michael Rand (University of Cambridge), Michael Roberts (Wesleyan University), Pavlína Rychterová (University of Vienna), David Wacks (University of Oregon), and David Wallace (University of Pennsylvania)

– The authors and the anonymous reviewers of the first issue

– Paola Galimberti and Anna Marini of the Ufficio Pianificazione Organizzativa e Valutazione of the University of Milan, for their technical and legal support

– Marco Cavicchioli and Ilaria Corvina of Shiroi Studio, Milan, who designed the *Interfaces* website

– Carl Zakrisson of Polytype, Copenhagen, who designed the *Interfaces* page layout

– The Dipartimento di Studi letterari, filologici e linguistici of the University of Milan and its former and present heads, Fabrizio Conca and Alfonso D'Agostino

– The Danish National Research Foundation

– The Fondazione Lucio Fontana, Milan, for giving *Interfaces* the permission to use Lucio Fontana's *Concetto Spaziale* (1968: water-based paint on canvas, 73 x 92 cm; cat. gen. 68 B 16) as cover illustration for Issue 1.

Bibliography

Akbari, Suzanne Conklin and Karla Mallette, eds. *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013.

Ankersmit, Frank. *Historical Representation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

Bartlett, Robert. *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change: 950–1350*. London: Allan Lane, 1993.

Bonfil, Robert. "La lecture dans les communautés juives de l'Europe occidentale au Moyen Ages." *Histoire de la lecture dans le*

- and Elisabetta Bartoli, eds. *Medieval Letters between Fiction and Document*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "Rethinking the National Model." *Rethinking Literary History. A Dialogue on Theory*. Eds. Linda Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdés. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. 3–49.
- Issa, Mireille: *La version latine et l'adaptation française de L'Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum de Guillaume de Tyr*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010.
- Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh (Traducción árabe de las Historiae adversus paganos de Orosio)*. Ed. Mayte Penelas. Fuentes Árabe-Hispanas 26. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2001.
- Liber de causis*. Hrsg. und übers. Andreas Schönfeld und Rolf Schönberger. Hamburg: Meiner, 2003.
- Mallette, Karla. *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.
- The Medieval Globe*. [On-line Journal]
- Mehtonen, Päivi. *Old Concepts and New Poetics*. "Historia," "Argumentum" and "Fabula" in Twelfth- and Early Thirteenth-Century Latin Poetics of Fiction. Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1996.
- Minnis, Alastair and Ian Johnson eds. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume 2: The Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Mortensen, Lars Boje. "The Diffusion of Roman Histories in the Middle Ages: A List of Orosius, Eutropius, Paulus Diaconus, and Landolfus Sagax Manuscripts." *Filologia mediolatina* 6–7 (2000): 101–200.
- . "Nordic Medieval Texts: Beyond 'Literature' and 'Sources'. Reflections on Expanding Interdisciplinary Border Zones." *Saga-Book. Viking Society for Northern Research* (2014): 95–112.
- Munslow, Alun. *Narrative and History*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- Munslow, Alun. *A History of History*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Old English Orosius, ed. Janet Bately. Early English Texts Society, s.s. 6. London: Oxford University Press, 1980. And for a modern English translation: *The Old English History of the World by Orosius*, ed. Malcolm Godden, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, forthcoming 2016.
- Orosius. *Historiarum adversus paganos libri VII*. Ed. Karl Zangemeister. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 5. Wien: Teubner, 1882.
- . *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*. Ed. and trans. Andrew T. Fear. Translated Texts for Historians 54. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010.
- . *Delle storie contra i pagani di Paolo Orosio libri VII, volgarizzamento di Bono Giamboni*. Pubblicato e illustrato con note dal dott. Francesco Tassi. Firenze: per T. Baracchi, 1849.
- Perkins, David. *Is Literary History Possible?* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Pettitt, Thomas. "Media Dynamics and the Lessons of History: The 'Gutenberg Parenthesis' as Restoration Topos." *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*. Eds. Jean Burgess, John Hartley and Axel Bruns. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 53–72.
- Raffensberger, Christian. *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Reuter, Timothy. "Medieval Ideas of Europe and their Modern Historians." *History Workshop Journal* 33 (1992): 176–80.
- Rigney, Ann. "Transforming Memory and the European Project." *New Literary History* 43:4 (2012): 607–28.
- Sahner, Christian C. "From Augustine to Islam: Translation and History in the Arabic Orosius." *Speculum* 88 (2013): 905–31.
- Strootman Rolf and Michele Campopiano, eds. *De klassieke oudheid in de islamitische wereld*. Special issue of *Lampas: Tijdschrift voor classicis*, 46 (2013).
- Tyler, Elizabeth M., ed. *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in England, c. 800–c. 1250*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011.
- Uhlig, Marion et Yasmina Foehr-Janssens, eds. *D'Orient en Occident. Les recueils de fables enchâssées avant les Mille et une Nuits de Galland* (Barlaam et Josaphat, Calila et Dimna, Disciplina clericalis, Roman des Sept Sages). Turnhout: Brepols 2014.
- Verkholtantsev, Julia. *The Slavic Letters of St. Jerome. The History of the Legend and its Legacy, or, How the Translator of the Vulgate Became an Apostle of the Slavs*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014.
- Wallace, David, ed. *Europe: A Literary History, 1348–1418*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2015.

Whitfield, Susan. *Life along the Silk Road*. 2nd ed. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2015.

William of Tyre. *Chronicon*. Ed. R. B. C. Huygens. *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 63–63A. Turnhout: Brepols, 1986.

William of Tyre. *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*. 2 Vols. Transl. Emily Atwater Babcock and August C. Krey. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn et al., eds. *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c. 1100 – c. 1500*. Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009.