The period 1750–1850 has been described by the great German historian Reinhart Koselleck as the *Sattelzeit*: a watershed between two historical paradigms, in which social, cultural and conceptual changes co-occurred and mutually reinforced each other.\(^1\) Notions of society, time, culture, and the position of the individual in all of these, underwent fundamental alterations. Although Koselleck worked mostly in social and conceptual history, the concept of the *Sattelzeit* is also useful in literary history, to clarify the simultaneous rise of Romanticism, of historicism (also in the writing of history and of literary history) and of the modern philologies.

As I have argued elsewhere, the *Sattelzeit* witnesses the emergence of what we call ‘national literatures’ in Europe.\(^2\) Whereas the concept of literature in Classicism and the early Enlightenment was predicated on a universalist, transhistorical hypercanon (with Homer, Virgil, Horace, Tacitus, Cicero, Dante (Fig. 11.1), Camões, Cervantes and Shakespeare all simultaneously present), a ‘philological turn’ occurs after 1760. Literature (until then almost a *singulare tantum*, like ‘milk’ or ‘guilt’, referring to ‘the condition of being literate’) turned into a countable plural of *literatures*, distinguished either as to their period of production (to begin with, ‘ancient’ or ‘modern’) or, crucially, as to the language of their expression. While, in the words of Jorge Luis Borges, the classicist concept, with its undifferentiated notion of literature, had regarded the plurality of peoples and periods as mere incidentals, the new paradigm turned diversity of period and language into its central taxonomic criterion.\(^3\)

At the same time, we see, in the philologies, the rise of the ‘modern philologies’ alongside the older classical studies. Exemplary transitional figures are Karl Lachmann (1793–1851) and Angelo Mai (1782–1854). Lachmann used his formidable textual scholarship, method, and reputation, acquired in the

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1 Koselleck: ‘Über die Theoriebedürftigkeit der Geschichtswissenschaft’.
2 Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*.
3 “Para el concépto clásico, la pluralidad de los tiempos y de los hombres es acesoria. La literatura es siempre una sola.” Quoted in my ‘Literary Historicism’.
hard work of classical philology (editions of Lucretius, Propertius, Catullus, the New Testament), to edit and canonize texts which became the ‘classics’ of vernacular German literature, such as the poetry of Wolfram von Eschenbach and the *Nibelungenlied*. Angelo Mai discovered or rendered legible many

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4 Timpanaro, *La genesi del metodo del Lachmann*. 