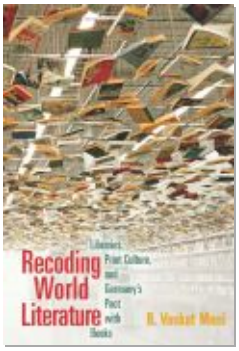
Introduction: World Literature as a Pact with Books



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Introduction: World Literature as a Pact with Books

The Universe (which others call a Library) is composed of an indefinite, perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries. . . . Like all the men of the Library, in my younger days I traveled; I have journeyed in quest of a book, perhaps the catalog of catalogs.

—JORGE LUIS BORGES, "The Library of Babel" (1949)[1]

My dazzled eyes could no longer distinguish the world that existed within the book from the book that existed within the world.

—ORHAN PAMUK, *The New Life* (1998)[2]

The universe arranged like a library, the world indistinguishable from the book. Two authors from two different parts of the world: Borges, the Argentine modernist, once director of the National Public Library in Buenos Aires; Pamuk, the Turkish Nobel Laureate, founder of the Museum of Innocence in Istanbul. The former wrote in Spanish, the latter writes in Turkish; their literary careers are separated by a few decades of the twentieth century. And yet, through their penchant for material collections, they cross paths in fictionalizing two important institutions of literary circulation: the book and the library. As these authors juxtapose the fictions of the universe and the world with those of the library and the book, they pose fundamental questions about literature's relationship to the book, the library, and the world.

In "The Library of Babel," Borges recounts the narrator's journey in the quest for a "catalog of catalogs."[3] The narrator travels in the hope that such a catalog is the key to understanding the classification of the contents; that it might somehow help to make some sense of the indefinite and infinite nature of the library. In *The New Life*, the protagonist Osman ends up in a much smaller, private, "finite" library, and creates an inventory of

its contents. The novel narrates the journeys of the protagonist Osman, who is in search of the author of an anonymously published book, also titled *The New Life*.[4] His quests lead him to the private library of a railroad engineer, which contains "translated works of Dante, Ib'n Arabi, and Rilke from the world classics series published by the Ministry of Education . . . translations of Jules Verne, Sherlock Holmes, Mark Twain" and many others.[5] If Borges's narrator travels in search of a single book that contains information on all books in an infinite library, Osman's journeys lead him to many books from many different parts of the world, whose translations are sponsored by the Turkish state.

I start with Borges and Pamuk not just because books and libraries are so central to their work, but also because they do not just belong to Argentina or Turkey. Through translations into many world languages, their works have traveled beyond their linguistic and cultural origins—as printed books, and more recently as e-books—and have made room for themselves on the physical bookshelves of public and private libraries and their increasingly common electronic versions around the world. Readers like me who are neither from Argentina nor Turkey might not have *inherited* Spanish or Turkish as our mother tongues. Yet we *inhabit* the worlds created by Borges and Pamuk through the act of reading, often in translation. We receive their works *recoded* in languages in which we read them; at a distance from their national locations, we assign new meanings to their works.

"The Library of Babel" and *The New Life* are much more than stories of their protagonists' journeys. They embody journeys of books, what I have come to call *bibliomigrancy*: the physical and virtual migration of literature as books from one part of the world to another. It is this migration of literature as books, this bibliomigrancy, as I want to show in this book, which contributes to the creation of a worldwide readership. Readers of translated works are not just recipients of bibliomigrancy. Along with translators, publishers, librarians, editors, booksellers, and a host of other actors, readers shape and inform bibliomigrancy. It is through bibliomigrancy that literary works that are identified—coded—as part of a national literature acquire new identities and are recoded as world literature. And this is the story of world literature that this book tries to tell: a story of coding and recoding, of transformed identities of literary works, alongside the term *world literature*.

Libraries play a special role in my story of bibliomigrancy. While scholars of world literature have begun to pay attention to material circulations of literature through booksellers and translators, there has been surpris-

ingly little attention to libraries in recent accounts. Libraries, like books themselves, are not mere storehouses of information. They are places where texts from many places around the world can be gathered, catalogued, and known, and as such they present themselves as images of the world. The term *library* has multiple significations: a house of books, a catalog of titles, a publication series, a collection of various kinds of artifacts, including but not limited to books, papers, photographs, music, and so on. Libraries are not *merely* synonyms of the universe, as Borges implies; much as books are not *simply* replicas of the world, as Pamuk imagines. However, there is a sense of accessibility (or inaccessibility) to the world, no matter how exaggerated, that books and libraries presume to contain. Books and libraries operate on the probability of imagining the world, as a whole or in parts. They offer the possibility of encoding the universe and the world—including divisions, fragmentations, differentiations—making the world and the universe legible, interpretable, decodable, and recodable. As much as literature itself encodes the world with aural and verbal signs and promotes the pursuance of mimesis and representation—aesthetic, epistemic, political—libraries present themselves as prolific, substantial, and expansive (if not entirely all-encompassing) *texts* that rely on the collective fiction of knowledge about the world.

Libraries are located, but books can be relocated. If for a moment the library is imagined as the physical or virtual home of large and diverse collections of books, world literature begins to appear as the contents of a global bookmobile, a collection of dispersed literary texts, which are either forever homeless in the new languages in which they exist or have found new homes on the shelves of new readers beyond their points of linguistic and cultural origin. World literature becomes a mode of access to the world through books, an imagination of the world through literature, *a* literary catalog of the world, which might contain some but not all items from canonical catalogs of national literatures. World literature, however, cannot be *the* definitive literary catalog of the world. Akin to the multiple definitions of literature itself, the catalog too is dynamic and transformative and is defined differently in different literary traditions and historical moments.

At once dynamic and ever changing, a library of world literature comprises texts that migrate in the original or translation, and that are both cause and effect of bibliomigrancy. Access to world literature gives access to the literary catalog of the world and, in turn, to an imaginary global bookmobile.

The primary task of this book is to explore ways in which libraries in their multiple meanings fortify, enrich, and challenge our understanding of world literature. I am interested in exploring the affinities, proclivities,

liaisons, and mutually enriching synergy of books, libraries, and world literature. I want to emphasize the dual role of books and libraries as material (*Gut*) and intellectual (*Geist*) artifacts in the circulation of literature *as* world literature, in the construction of a world literary space, and in the creation of a world literary readership. Books and libraries, I argue in this book, are crucial to bibliomigrancy and the coding and recoding of literature as world literature.

Since the moment of its documented inception in the European literary space as *Weltliteratur*—a term that gained traction after its use by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1827) and its immortalization by Goethe's secretary Johann Peter Eckermann (1836)[6]—world literature has promised access to literature as *Gemeingut* (shared property), implying something larger, something greater; that which is more than the sum of its parts. The term carves a space that operates in relation to—and simultaneously at a distance from—national, regional, and local arrangements of literature. World literature insinuates a mode of construction and organization of literary knowledge founded on comparison on a global scale. Like many libraries—and often assisted by literal libraries—the concept of world literature imagines the gathering, collecting, and arranging of texts that cross linguistic, national, chronological, and regional origins.

This book makes the claim that an engagement with the materiality of literary circulation sheds new light on the conceptual and ideological creation and proliferation of world literature. Three central arguments support this claim. First, the term *world literature* is a construct, and the construction of the category "world literature," especially since the early nineteenth century, has relied on an indelible connection between the book and the socio-political world. Second, libraries have served as important way stations in the collection and dissemination of world literary texts as books or manuscripts in the original and in translation; along with publishers and booksellers, libraries have contributed to the conceptualization of world literature as a literary catalog of the world. Third, and most importantly, world literature as a literary catalog of the world is far from a neutral, alphabetically organized bibliography of masterpieces translated into world languages. Translations of literary works into other languages and their circulation and reception beyond cultural or national origins do not happen in a historical, socio-cultural, or political vacuum. The proliferation of world literature in a society depends on its relationship with print culture: its pact with books.

The title of the book invokes two meanings of *coding*. One comes directly from the vocabulary of library professionals, where *coding* refers to identifi-

cation and classification of an item, the act of assigning a call number. The other derives from translation studies: recoding as an act of rendering a literary work legible, accessible, and comprehensible in another language, thereby assuring a new life of the work in the new language. Coding can now also refer to the digitization of books, and certainly electronic collections are changing the nature of both libraries and access to world literature.

By discussing dual processes of coding and recoding, the identification of works of literature in the original as *national literature* and their reidentification in translation as *world literature*, I underscore the dynamic nature of world literature. What is identified as world literature undergoes transformation in different historical times and in different geographical locations and linguistic traditions. World literature is historically conditioned, culturally determined, and politically charged. A print cultural investigation of world literature in tandem with historical-political conditions assists in understanding the multiple formations, identifications, and codifications of world literature.

Scholarly works published in the last ten years ask new questions of the very institution and institutionalization of world literature. However, the walls of the classroom, the borders of the university campus, and the precincts of the conference venue have largely defined the physical and conceptual parameters of institutionality. Current debates often conflate the historic burden of the international division of literary labor with that of scholarly expertise, reducing world literature to a largely academic discipline with its foremost concerns being those of teachers and students. Scholars either focus on individual works and authors that have already gained a world literary status or critique institutions such as universities and academic publishing houses that have contributed to the proliferation of world literature as a consumable product. The intellect (*Geist*) trumps the matter (*Gut/Ware*); the imagination (*Vorstellung*) of the world somehow stays detached from the processes that defined the position (*Stellung*) of the world and world literature, now or in the past. The political, cultural, and social conditions that initiated, facilitated, even suppressed the circulation of world literature as *Gemeingut*—with all the problems that come with *shared* and *property*—are overshadowed in contemporary scholarship by an excessive attention to the conceptual. And when scholars do turn attention to institutions and material artifacts, they have most often focused on their own world—the world of academic textbooks and curricula. The larger public interaction with world literature through the circulation and collection of material books and literal collections—libraries—has remained largely invisible.

In order to make world literary studies relevant for us in the early twenty-first century, we need to relocate world literature in the public sphere where it is institutionalized in ways that are not always the same as its modes of institutionalization in the university. To this end, I discuss books and libraries in their multifaceted entities: imaginary and material, conceptual and physical, intimate and public; singular, yet connected to the multiple. Bringing these together, I propose, opens up multiple meanings of world literature: as a philosophical ideal, a mode of reading, a pedagogical strategy, a unit of aesthetic evaluation, a strategy of affiliation, and a system of classification.

Literary studies have witnessed a revitalization of interest in the term *world literature* in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It would be a fallacy to claim that such revitalization has been entirely unproblematic, or that the interest has succeeded in replacing the historically firm institutional habits of organizing literature within national political boundaries. Nonetheless, supporters and critics of world literary studies have together contributed to its reestablishment as an academic field. While this book draws on the scholarly work of world literature, it also departs from it, arguing that recent scholars of world literature have been too deeply invested in presentist concerns of economic globalization, dominance of English as a world language, and a market-driven construction of world literature. This book seeks to historicize these concerns.

By unveiling historical, cultural, and political aspects of world literature, this study is itself historical. In many ways it is a product of our current post–Cold War and post-9/11 world, where inclusive cosmopolitan affiliations continue to coexist with exclusive nationalist fervor. The necessity to develop a vocabulary for understanding the contemporary world and its power structures is exerting heretofore unforeseen influence on the humanities and social sciences. The fast pace of globalizing world economies, in tandem with developments in digital technology in the past two decades, has ushered in a new era of conceptualizing and reflecting on libraries as well as books.

The migration of books and libraries into digital space has coincided with other forms of human migration. If the second half of the twentieth century was marked by large-scale *physical* migration of human beings *from* postcolonial nations *to* metropolitan centers of Europe and North America, migration in the first decade and a half of the twenty-first century is increasingly multidirectional and multidimensional. Migration patterns within the southern hemisphere are as prolific as from the southern to the northern hemispheres. Furthermore, technological advances in

the communication sector have resulted in the *virtual* migration of labor through outsourcing.[7]

In addition, as we all know, the publishing and reading landscape has drastically changed within the first decade and a half of the twenty-first century. As research in digital and electronic media is enriching the fields of library and information studies and the history of the book and print cultures, the growing field of digital humanities is reshaping the research tools as well as the critical agenda for literary studies. We are living in a time when technological innovations are, yet again, transforming the meaning of *the book* and *the library*. A book is no longer only a "portable volume consisting of a series of written, printed, or illustrated pages bound together for ease of reading,"[8] it is also a "digital file containing a body of text and images suitable for distributing electronically and displaying on-screen in a manner similar to a printed book."[9] A library is not merely a "building, room, or set of rooms, containing a collection of books for the use of the public."[10] Today it is also a virtual space, an electronic surrogate, free from the walls of the building or room, and as portable as the printed or the digital book. Search engines such as Google, electronic catalogs such as WorldCat, and numerous digital archives with open public access create the impression that we are one step closer to that idealized catalog of catalogs. Books and libraries, in other words, are migrating into the digital space, changing rules of accessibility to information and knowledge. These phenomena are also impacting readers' access to literary works: in the original languages of creation, as well as in translation.

From our current vantage point, witnessing the transformation of books and libraries and a resurgence of discussions on world literature, my book spotlights important moments in the construction of world literature over the past two centuries. I claim that beyond the author, the translator, the academic critic, or the classroom readers, a plethora of actors, institutions, and media plays an important role in the construction of world literature and its readers. These include librarians, editors, publishers, literary magazines, book fairs, special interest groups, government censors and promoters, and more recently technological innovations such as electronic reading devices and digital libraries.

In order to provide sharper focus to this precociously ambitious enterprise, this book concentrates on the German-speaking world. Germany is a case study—an instance—but one that draws attention to the relations between multiple cultural institutions and political histories in providing or limiting access to world literature. I focus on the various incarnations of "Germany"—as a conglomerate of smaller states in the early nineteenth

century to a unified nation in the late nineteenth century; as a short-lived Weimar Republic and then a totalitarian state in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by two nation-states after World War II to a reunified nation-state since 1989. This is neither to fetishize the German origins of the word *Weltliteratur*, nor to underline a special path (*Sonderweg*) to bolster German particularity. Germany becomes an important case study for investigating world literature because of its turbulent historical and political transformations over the past two hundred years, which, as this book seeks to demonstrate, were intimately connected with print-cultural politics, an ever-transforming pact with books.

The proliferation of world literature in a nation, I argue in this book, is not merely the manifestation of a nation's cosmopolitan disposition. World literature can also be modified, twisted, and manipulated to serve nationalist interests, as happened in Germany, especially during the Nazi times. Circulation of world literature in a national cultural space shapes and informs national identity formation. It is my hope that the case study presented here will provide impetus for investigations of world literature as a pact with books in other linguistic, cultural, or national contexts.

Recoding World Literature asks two intertwined questions: How does our imagination of the world rely on our access to books and libraries? And conversely, how does our access to world literature shape our understanding of books and libraries? The five chapters of this book approach these core questions from multiple angles, showcasing library collections, book series, sponsored translation projects, publisher's histories, and digital libraries. First, however, I want to present how libraries in their multiple significations have paved way historically for the "worlding" of literature and sometimes even posed challenges to world literary circulation. Then, I will cover some classical articulations of the term *Weltliteratur* to show how they inform current debates. Finally, I will close with a discussion of bibliomigrancy as a way of understanding Germany's pact with books and in turn world literature.

Libraries, Books, and the Worlding of Literature

The "house of books," or *Bibliothek* (library), is far from a neutral space. Libraries are sites rife with the politics of literacy and sanctioned illiteracy, historical contingencies that condition accumulation and classification, circulation and distribution, patronage and accession, orderly organization and disorderly contention. If public libraries, like many museums, serve as major institutions of various forms of local, national, regional, or trans-

national representations, private libraries often represent individual collectors. If *books*, considered for a moment simply to be a publication medium for human creativity and intellect, have historically served as manifestations of the zeitgeist, libraries have served as manifestations of the *Weltbild*, the image of the world.

In moments of globalization through trade, violent conquests, imperialism, and colonialism, all the way to modern-day interaction between nation-states through multinational commerce, the worlding of peoples has initiated and facilitated the worlding of literature. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (ca. 2600–2200 BCE) from Mesopotamia, the *Ramayana* (ca. 500 BCE) from the Indian subcontinent, *The Epic of Sunjata* (ca. 1200 CE) from West Africa, the Brothers Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812–1851) are just a few examples of narratives traveling from one part of the world to another, and in the process acquiring new forms and transforming themselves as they transform their new cultural and linguistic homes. The dissemination of literary narratives sometimes occurred through a privileging of the oral *Kaṇṭhastha* (in the throat) over the written *Granthastha* (in the book), as in the case of many Pali and Sanskrit texts toward the end of the first millennium BCE.[11] Memorization and recitation—either in private or in public through performances—have been at the heart of numerous oral, written, and theatrically interpreted "tellings" of the *Ramayana* in over two dozen languages from northern India to Thailand.[12] At other times, technologies of writing or visual media such as paintings played a pivotal role in the circulation, distribution, and reception of literary narratives. If clay tablets carried the first translations of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* from the Babylonians to the Hittites in the second millennium BCE,[13] a book of Mughal miniatures entitled *Razmnama* (1598–1599; The book of war) brought the text of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata* to Persia.[14] Orhan Pamuk's Turkish novel *Benim Adım Kırmızı* (1998) appropriates and translates the bimedial (writing/painting) discourse of historical documentation dating back to 1258 CE.[15] The English translation, *My Name is Red*, can be part of one's electronic library on a Kindle, Nook, or iPad.

If books have served as instruments of preservation and proliferation of cultural memory, catapulting literary works beyond their linguistic and cultural origins, libraries have acted as social and political agents of collection and dissemination of cultural power.

Moments of globalization—whether by decree, conquest, colonialism, or diplomacy—often entailed the pillaging and destroying of established libraries and sometimes the endowing and constructing of new ones. As early as 2097–2049 BCE, the Babylonian King Shulgi established the stone-tablet

houses in Ur and Nippur, "in which scribes and minstrels could consult mastercopies of . . . the Sumerian songbook."[16] The collections included earlier Akkadian versions of *Bilgames*, a text that later became famous as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Much later, under the patronage of King Ashurbanipal (668–627 BCE), the royal libraries of Nineveh documented and stored Sumerian and Akkadian narratives "in wooden writing boards surfaced with wax, as well as on clay tablets."[17] The scriptorium is claimed to have engaged "prisoners-of-war and political hostages" as copyists.[18] These libraries become one of the first known examples of multilingual collections that promoted literature beyond local boundaries, worlding literature in the earliest moments of documented literary history.

Mahmud of Ghazni (998–1030 CE), in what is now Afghanistan, is known for his invasion of the commercial and religious center of Somanatha in the modern-day state of Gujarat in western India. Mahmud deployed multilingual state symbols and confiscated intellectual production from conquered states to establish power. On the one hand, he insisted that Ghaznavid coins carry the Koranic *Kalima* in colloquial Sanskrit, documenting his victory over Somanatha.[19] On the other hand, as the historian Romilla Thapar reports, it was important for Mahmud to establish Ghazni as a cultural center of the early Muslim world to compete with Baghdad and Alexandria. Therefore, "Persian libraries were looted, books regarded as heretical were burned, and others brought back to Ghazni and Samarqand."[20]

Tariq Ali's novel *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* is another example: the story starts in Al-Andalus in 1499 CE with a negotiation over the incineration of Arabic and Hebrew manuscripts. The plea to save the texts comes not from Muslims and Jews but from scholars in the service of the Catholic Church, who would rather have the manuscripts confiscated than burned. The Grand Inquisitor, Ximenes de Cisneros, agrees, at least briefly. He has plans to endow a new library in Alcalá, where he promises to house these manuscripts.[21]

The symbolic and material significance of libraries as pawns in political games continues into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.[22] The Jaffna National Library was attacked by Sri Lankan soldiers in May 1981. Hundreds of thousands of books and magazines were burned, including the *Yalpanam Vaipuavama*, a historical account of Jaffna.[23] The National Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina was destroyed during the siege of Sarajevo in August 1992.[24] In April 2003, the Baghdad National Library was pillaged along with the city's museum, leading to the destruction of books and manuscripts in the thousands, spanning several centuries and many languages. One of those books was the first Arabic translation of

the *Mahabharata*.[25] "Freedom is messy," was how US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld brushed off the entire incident, taking cover under the great "American" virtue that the Iraqis had supposedly internalized.[26] Most recently, one of the prime targets for Al-Qaeda and other groups in Mali were massive collections of ancient manuscripts. The brave librarians in Timbuktu—led by Abdel Kader Haidra—devised an ingenious plan of saving about three hundred thousand ancient manuscripts by smuggling them to Bamako. While it is hoped that the manuscripts will return home to Timbuktu one day, at the time of writing these lines, the fate of the manuscripts remains unclear, as many are now prone to destruction in the extremely humid conditions of Bamako.[27]

The political history of libraries certainly affects the German pact with books. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Royal Library (Königliche Bibliothek) in Berlin was buying major collections of Oriental manuscripts as well as single items from Asia. The state library that later incorporated this royal collection—the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin State Library, Prussian Cultural Heritage)—today houses one of the largest collections in the world of items that originated thousands of miles away from Prussia. The library's holdings include 41,700 Oriental manuscripts, more than double its 18,400 occidental manuscripts.[28]

Close to home for me is an example from 1957, when the new postcolonial nation of India entered into a treaty with the United States to pay back its Wheat Loan. Under Public Law 480 1962, part of the amount to be paid back to the United States by India was earmarked for the acquisition of cultural documents by US research centers.[29] A certain number of copies of every book published in India were sent to the Library of Congress, which then distributed them to designated libraries—including Memorial Library, the primary research library of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where research for this book began.

Libraries do not only contribute to the worlding of literatures. This book argues that they also play a very important role in nationalizing and even racializing literatures. Modern American public libraries and their self-proclaimed and state-assigned roles have both guaranteed access to texts and not infrequently withheld them from public view. Visionary librarians have fought hard to ensure readers' borrowing privileges as a civic right, as shown by Louis Robbins in *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown*, and as discussed by Ethelene Whitmire in *Regina Anderson Andrews: Harlem Renaissance Librarian*. Cataloging systems often reflect the political climate of their origin, creating linguistic, regional, and also national hierarchies.

The National Bibliography section of the *Library of Congress Classification Class Z* (1898; in force 1902) devised a geolinguistic cataloging system based primarily on three factors: "Books printed and published in that country; Books by natives and residents; Books written in the language of the country by foreigners."[30] The *Library of Congress Classification Class P* (1928), which includes philology, linguistics, and literature, extended these criteria: call letters PD–PF were assigned for Germanic philology and linguistics, including English; PJ–PL for Oriental philology and linguistics, which included everything from Indo-Iranian (PK) to African (PL) linguistics. However, two call letters, PR and PS were created for English and American literatures respectively. German, Dutch, and Scandinavian literatures received a separate call number, PT, whereas all Oriental literatures were subsumed under PX, to be further categorized following the PJ–PL (linguistic) category.[31]

Cataloguing systems and call numbers change over time, reflecting and entrenching powerful political and social values. Even more materially, the very *mediality*—the modes of creation and circulation of texts—has also changed the work of libraries over time. The cuneiform tablet depositories patronized by King Ashurbanipal in the seventh century BCE might have been meant for a few literate patrons. While ancient and medieval royal libraries were primarily intended for in-house use by select literate members of the ruling classes, monastic libraries functioned as storehouses for books as well as sites of book production through the enterprise of copying manuscripts. The print collections of the Asiatic Society Library in Calcutta (established in 1784) were largely reserved for Orientalists and officers of the British East India Company. Like university libraries with restricted use for members of the university, the early nineteenth century saw an increase in the number of private lending libraries (*Leihbibliotheken*), as well as public libraries in European capital cities that were declared national libraries, which often functioned as national archives.[32] The Library of Congress (established in 1800 in Washington, DC) is technically in the service of the US Congress, although it is open to public use. Commercial book series that packaged books into so-called libraries, such as Reclam's Universal-Bibliothek (launched in 1867 in Leipzig), the Modern Library (launched in 1917 in New York City), Penguin Classics (launched in 1946 in London), and Heinemann's African Writers Series (launched in 1962 in London) offer affordable editions for personal collections. The mediality of each of these libraries is defined by the media available for circulation—joining their material forms and their modes of access. Thus while borrowing privileges of members of a city or a county library may include

access to music CDs, DVDs, and even video games, university or national libraries may restrict the physical access to their holdings, or conversely they may make whole sections of their holdings digitally accessible without restrictions.

The Google Book project continues to appropriate old and new published books into its database. Sales figures for Amazon's Kindle and Barnes and Nobel's Nook keep rising, even as "physical" books remain an important reading device for most readers around the world.[33] The virtual migration of books, apart from changing reading habits, reading strategies, and reader accessibility, is transforming the position, role, function, and indeed the very definition of the library as a house of books. The European Library (launched in 2005 in The Hague), the Universal Digital Library, the UNESCO-supported World Digital Library (launched in 2009 in Washington, DC), and most recently the Harvard University– and Library of Congress–sponsored Digital Public Library of America (launched in 2011 in Washington, DC) are prime examples of this change—each one of them ambitious and politically charged.[34]

As these examples show, books have constantly been on the move. Technological advances, translation enterprises, collections by libraries: all of these have allowed books to find new homes on new shelves. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, European colonialism in Asia and Africa facilitated a new kind of movement of books, a new accessibility to "the world in print." This in turn created the conditions that led to Goethe's famous usage of the term *Weltliteratur*.

Weltliteratur: *From an Empire of Books to a Reunified Nation-State*

Among German intellectuals, the idea of world literature has carried a dual valence since its inception. On the one hand, as an integral part of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and universalism, it is positioned against national literature. On the other hand, since colonialism and Orientalism play a central role in facilitating the movement of books, world literature serves to code and classify other literatures in terms of their national origins and becomes an accomplice in "measuring the world"—offering an illusion of global knowledge and mastery to its enlightened readers.

Daniel Kehlmann's international bestseller *Die Vermessung der Welt* (2005; *Measuring the World*, 2007) documents how Enlightenment knowledge crucially served European ends.[35] He narrates the quest for knowledge through the lives of two giants of the nineteenth century: the botanist and geographer Alexander von Humboldt and the mathematician and

physicist Carl Friedrich Gauss. Gauss's travels are in a virtual space of numbers. Humboldt's quest for scientific knowledge would take him to the geographical "new" world. In Kehlmann's novel, Humboldt arrives in New Amsterdam, Trinidad, in 1799 and visits a Christian mission, set up to baptize the natives. The monks cannot figure out what he and his companion Bonpland want of them; the abbot expresses his suspicion thusly: "Nobody traveled half way around the world to measure land that didn't even belong to him."[36]

Kehlmann does not give much print space to Alexander's older brother Wilhelm, but I want to comment on him briefly since he shows us the side of the Enlightenment desire to "measure the world" that depended on books and libraries. Apart from Greek and Latin, Wilhelm von Humboldt was competent in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese and was working on his theories of comparative linguistics and grammatical forms. Along with his translations of Pindar's *Olympic Odes* and Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, Wilhelm also translated the *Bhagavad-Gita* from Sanskrit into Latin, which would be published in 1820. Unlike Alexander, Wilhelm did not have to travel afar to identify certain works as world literary works. His access to literature and languages of faraway lands was made possible through libraries in Paris.

Collections like these were themselves a result of geopolitical maneuvering. French and British colonial presence in Asia and parts of northern Africa was initiating and facilitating the arrival of many works of literature to Europe—in their original languages and in translations. Along with the geographical, botanical, zoological, physical, and chemical cataloguing of the world, Europeans were developing a literary catalog of the world. Intersections of aesthetic forms, the selection of subject matters and their treatment, and affinities between modes of creative expression were already being carried out piecemeal among literatures on the European continent; the canvas was being enlarged now with increased access to literatures from other geolinguistic spaces. In other words, through acquisition of languages, translations of literary works, and constructions of rules of grammar, Wilhelm von Humboldt and others were also finding ways of "measuring" parts of the world that did not belong to them by birth or inheritance. It is in this transformative period that Germany strived to become a *Bücherreich*, an "empire of books," creating the material conditions that gave traction to the idea of *Weltliteratur*.

Goethe was not the first German intellectual to use the term *Weltliteratur*, but he certainly highlighted it, eagerly anticipating the arrival of the epoch of world literature through an engagement with that which is

not one's own: the strange, the foreign. One of the first uses of the word actually occurs in 1801 when Christoph Martin Wieland located *Weltliteratur* in the urban context ("Urbanität") of ancient Rome, connecting it with character building and well-being that is derived from reading the best authors and from interactions with the most cultivated and exquisite persons in a sophisticated time period. Wieland's concept of world literature is closely tied to the world citizen, whose great familiarity with world literature cultivates his world citizenship.[37] From 1801 to 1803, August Wilhelm Schlegel used the term *Weltliteratur* in his lectures on literary history in Berlin as an idea in the service of a progressive universal poesy.[38] Herder, who attempted to construct connections between German "national" literature and other literatures in his writings on literary history, might not have commented in detail on *Nationalliteratur* or *Weltliteratur*,[39] but his thinking about a literature of humanity (*Literatur der Menschheit*) aligns him with Goethe's idea of world literature.[40]

What distinguishes Goethe's statement is its direct reference to a non-European work. In Eckermann's entry from January 31, 1827, Goethe remarks that he is currently reading a Chinese novel, whose title remains unmentioned.[41] Goethe's access to Chinese literary works reveals a larger network of works from Asia entering the European space in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whereby translators, publishing houses, and libraries played a significant role. Without reference to the imperial and commercial routes that were bringing books to him, Goethe established world literature as *Gemeingut*, a philosophical, humanistic ideal, a mode of transnational arrangement of texts.

If Goethe privileges the conceptual and ideational dimension of *Weltliteratur*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels first acknowledge the coming of age of *Weltliteratur* by locating it in the material history of nineteenth century Europe. In *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei* (*The Manifesto of the Communist Party*), first published in German and English in London in 1848—followed since by countless translations in many world languages—Marx and Engels point to the material conditions that are hastening the approach of world literature through the spread of bourgeois capital. Not unlike Goethe, for Marx and Engels literature emerges as the *Gemeingut* of humankind. However, they highlight the *Gut* (wares, material artifacts) in *Gemeingut* and credit the emergence of the term to a rise in a "cosmopolitan consumption" through a worldwide circulation of books and literature that depends on transnational trade. Outlining the cultural consequences of the financial interdependence of nations, Marx and Engels describe the emergence of world literature out of the many national literatures.[42]

In articulating the connections between a worldwide marketplace and world literature, Marx and Engels—unlike Goethe—do not refer to a specific text that emanates outside of the European cultural space. We do know that Marx's own readings comprised literary and philosophical works from the Greek, French, Spanish, and English—many of them he had accessed at the British Library.[43]

In the second half of the nineteenth century, German discussions of world literature developed through the further establishment of Orientalist studies, exemplified among others through the founding of the German Oriental Society (Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1844), and the mass acquisition of non-European manuscripts and prints, such as the Aloys Sprenger Collection at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin in 1857. The rise of direct translations of non-European works into German—without English or French serving as intermediary languages—led to the publication of major world literary anthologies, such as Johannes Scheer's *Bildersaal der Weltliteratur* (1848). Reclam's Universal-Bibliothek series (established in 1867) expanded because of the availability of new translations, and in turn contributed to the expansion of readership of translated works. Affordable publication series like these then facilitated the growth of private libraries. This was also a period in which rising nationalism—culminating in German unification in 1871—declared world literature a penchant of Jewish intellectuals, and critiques of world literature acquired a particularly anti-Semitic character.

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a reemergence of discussions of world literature around the mass violence caused by the two World Wars. Hermann Hesse, hitherto ignored in discussions of world literature, would be the first author to discuss world literature together with private libraries. In his essay *Eine Bibliothek der Weltliteratur* (1929), Hesse emphasizes the significance of *Weltliteratur* as one aspect of the *Bildung* (education or formation) of human beings based on love for literature and a passion for books. Drawing examples from his own library, Hesse provides his readers with an extensive guide to literatures from around the world, mentioning over four hundred works that are available in German translation. The Goethe scholar Fritz Strich would reemphasize the philosophical ideal carried by the term. In *Goethe und die Weltliteratur* (1946)—written in exile in Zurich—Strich returned to the term as part of a legacy of humanism and universalism that was relegated to the margins and trumped by National Socialist forces. Strich did not comment on the Nationalist Socialist recoding of world literature. The Nazis did not merely reject world literature for its cosmopolitan weltanschauung; they

manipulated the Goethean ideal to their advantage, especially through two magazines: *Weltliteratur* and *Die Weltliteratur*. The two German states, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, favored two distinctly ideological traditions of world literature: one favoring a free market economy, the other establishing solidarity with socialist, communist, and third-world countries.

When world literature entered the US academy in the 1930s and 1940s, it was soon laden with disciplinary anxieties. What Hesse and Strich diagnosed as the general potential of world literature in the education of a human being was rejected as too general or too unhistoricized. In the US context, the meaning of world literature shifted, the philosophical ideal giving way to pedagogical discourse. In their famous book *Theory of Literature* (1942), René Wellek and Austin Warren label the term as "needlessly grandiose" and decry the necessity of studying "literature on all five continents, from New Zealand to Iceland." With their eye on "objectivity" that must be part of the theory of literature that they have set out to expound, Wellek and Warren reject world literature for the "sentimental cosmopolitanism" it apparently invokes.[44]

Their concerns found extension in the ideas of Erich Auerbach, who after writing his magnum opus, *Mimesis* (1946), in Istanbul, reflected on the term during the last station of his exilic existence in New Haven, Connecticut. In "Philologie der Weltliteratur" (1952), an essay written as a contribution to Fritz Strich's *Festschrift*, Auerbach is at best skeptical toward the idealism associated with the term *Weltliteratur*.[45] Rather than augment the idea of literature as *Gemeingut*, Auerbach operates on the pragmatics of difference. Writing in the midst of the historical sweep of decolonization in the twentieth century and the rise of a new world order immediately following World War II, Auerbach identifies a pedagogical challenge that accompanies exposure to many more new national literatures from around the world. After making the dubious claim that *Mimesis* was written in Istanbul in the absence of any libraries,[46] Auerbach seems overwhelmed by the Yale University Library. He laments the lack of *Geschichtlichkeit* (historicity)—which he specifically identifies in Goethe's age—within the philosophical consciousness of his own historical moment.[47] Auerbach's essay conveys a strong sense of restraint in the possible hastening of the approach of *Weltliteratur*, declaring its impossibility in the Goethean sense for the late twentieth century.

These years—1827, 1848, and 1952—are not the only moments when the term *Weltliteratur* surfaced and changed, but these were certainly the moments of its most prominently discussed pronouncements in theoretical

discussions today. The geographical origins of these statements form a trinity of their own. Goethe's Weimar was the seat of German classicism in the nineteenth century, and it will also play home to the short-lived republic between Wilhelmine Germany and the Third Reich in the early twentieth century. Marx and Engels's London was, along with Paris, one of the most powerful commercial and colonial capitals of the world; it was also home to many political dissidents and émigrés. And Auerbach's 1950s New Haven enjoyed its prestigious status as the seat of Yale University, a racially segregated university town that became home to many Jewish intellectual exiles from Europe during the Third Reich. Due to well-funded universities and dominant languages of the production of scholarship, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States also left the marks of their commercial, political, and pedagogical hegemony on literary studies—throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Academic discussions of world literature in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are cast in the shadow of this Holy Trinity—the Father: Goethe; the Son: Auerbach; and the Holy Ghost: Karl Marx.

World Literature: Historical Burdens, Contemporary Anxieties

The end of the Napoleonic wars coinciding with the rising empire of books led to Goethe's moment. The industrial revolution and the establishment of the world market led to Marx and Engels's moment. The end of World War II became central to Auerbach's uneasy relationship to world literature.

What historical conditions mark the current revival of interest in world literature? I locate these in the latest period of economic globalization, mass-migration, and a post–Cold War and post-9/11 world requiring a renewed understanding of geopolitical and transnational power structures.[48] Like the dual valence that the term *Weltliteratur* acquired in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century, current discussions locate world literature within the legacies of Enlightenment and cosmopolitanism, while remaining aware of uneven access to the production and consumption of literatures of the world. Recent scholars conceptualize world literature through the circulation and distribution of texts in translation, through patterns of aesthetic expression that stay local or acquire global currency, through a world system of center-peripheral economic and political relations, and through pedagogical practices in the US classroom.[49] The questions that have most concerned theorists of world literature revolve around which texts constitute world literature, the modes of access to such texts

(in the original or in translation), the pedagogical aims or challenges of studying texts identified as part of world literature, and last but not least, the usability or utility of studying world literature.[50]

Most discussions of world literature today are marked by skepticism toward a restrictive nationalization of literature through traditional literary canons. They also exhibit a distinctive optimism toward literature's capacity to unsettle narrow nationalisms. Current theories try to confront the question of Euro-American cultural centers and non-Western cultural peripheries, colonial dominance and uneven playing fields of world literary circulation. In fact, some of the most heated debates—on topics ranging from the value of translations in world literary comparisons and the manifestation of the North-South divide in differential access to literary productions, to the dominance of literary works in English or French within the postcolonial canon—have revolved around the purpose, scope, and design of specific national and comparative literature departments.

Criticisms of world literature today exhibit three main trends. First, there exists an uneasy relationship with access to literature solely in translation, especially in the so-called dominant languages of European descent. Second is the question of specialized training of readers within the university. World literary studies are criticized for compromising and even obstructing or rendering superfluous literary comparison in original languages, thus entrenching the acceptance of English as the dominant language of cultural and intellectual commerce of our times.[51] And third, there is cynicism toward the growing market for literature in translation as well as scholarly publications on world literature. Most positions on world literature touch upon—without entirely engaging with—the commerce of literature itself.

In the account of recent criticism that follows, I will show how influential scholars imagine world literature in terms of networks, translations, and ideologically constructed collections of authors, texts, and titles. We can see how critics register varying degrees of attention to material, political, or socio-cultural conditions that led to circulation, translation, and collection. And most importantly, we can see how preoccupied so many scholars remain with the practices of the university—pedagogy and disciplinary methods.

It would not be an exaggeration to state that David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* (2003) reenergized debates on world literature. With a catalog comprised of works and authors as varied as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Mechtild von Magdeburg, Franz Kafka, and Rigoberta Menchu, among others, Damrosch declares that world literature is not so much an "in-

finite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and reading"; "a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our place and time."[52] Circulation, translation, and production are central to Damrosch's conceptualization of world literature.[53] He identifies a double process through which a work enters into world literature: "first, by being read as literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin."[54] Translation is crucial to the second step of the said double process: "world literature is writing that gains in translation,"[55] Damrosch writes. Translation serves as a vehicle for reception and circulation of a literary "work" as it becomes part of a "network" of texts that inhabit the world literary space.[56] World literature, as a network for individual works, then emerges as "an elliptical refraction of national literatures."[57]

For critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an engagement with worlds beyond one's place or time is anything but detached. In her Wellek Library Lectures (2000), published as *Comparative Literature: Death of a Discipline* (2003), Spivak underlines, above all, the work of literary comparison to understand the highly intense and politicized interactions between nations and regions.[58] With Jacques Derrida, Virginia Woolf, Tayeb Salih, and Mahashweta Devi on her reading list, Spivak comments on various kinds of "collectivities" that enable but also challenge comparative evaluations of economically disparate societies. If Damrosch privileges gains rather than losses in translation, Spivak laments the loss of other worlds when they are accessed solely in translation. For Spivak, world literature in translation underrecognizes a systemic linguistic hegemony that impedes the entry of certain literary works into the world literary space while assuring a red carpet welcome to others.[59] She cautions against an overinvestment in access to world literature in translation, for it erodes the linguistic and cultural differences that are woven into the fabric of literary texts. However, Spivak's rightful insistence on the reason for a less nationally frightened and more globally enthused curiosity for literary works in the "less commonly taught languages" is weakened by her overestimation of the relationship between academic and nonacademic readings of world literature. Spivak's highly critical and largely dismissive evaluation of world literature is in fact based on her idea of their purported reliance on "others" to translate difference for them, signaling her own fetishization of the original, an untranslatable original that forecloses access to any outsider. In a more recent essay, "The Stakes of a World Literature," she proposes the "loosening" of terms world and literature in order to discover the "relativistic anachronism" of the term.[60] Once again, her privileging of the

original language of creation over translation becomes key to this "loosening."[61] The main political institution at stake here is the academy.

Emily Apter's critique of world literature, based primarily on a collection of words—Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intradusibles* (2004)—challenges the very notion of "translatability." In *Against World Literature* (2013), Apter echoes Auerbach's and Spivak's concerns that access to world literary works solely in translation might lead to standardization and homogeneity. Apter seeks to challenge the singularity of world literature by privileging the plurality of world literature*s*,[62] cautioning at the same time against the danger posed to the diversity of comparative literature caused by a neglect of "untranslatability."[63] Criticizing pedagogical programs that compromise language acquisition, Apter denounces contemporary discussions of world literature as "an entrepreneurial, bulimic drive to anthologize and curricularize the world's cultural resources."[64] And herein lies the contradiction in her work: as she rejects the "translation assumption," she celebrates translation theory and proposes a partnering of "translation theory as Weltliteratur [which] would challenge flaccid globalisms that paid lip service to alterity while doing little more than to buttress neoliberal 'big tent' syllabi taught in English."[65] As in Spivak's work, the fears are geopolitical, but the focus of the argument most clearly targets the university.

The sense of imbalance and inequality between dominant and dominated literatures that perturbs Spivak and Apter was anticipated by Franco Moretti in his essay "Conjectures on World Literature" (2000). Drawing on the center-periphery model of Immanuel Wallerstein's "World Systems Theory," Moretti also identifies the "one and unequal" nature of world literature.[66] In order to diagnose such unity and inequality, Moretti gestures toward the materiality of literary production, arguing that literary studies have far too long concentrated on a small, select body of texts that comprise the literary canon. However, for Moretti as well, scholarly expertise and modes of production of scholarly knowledge became central to the enterprise of world literature. Characterizing world literature as a "permanent intellectual challenge to national literature," Moretti imagines a clear division between the pursuit of national and world literature in research and classroom contexts: "national literature for people who see trees; world literature for people who see waves."[67]

While most discussions of world literature have centered on pedagogical institutions and specialized, disciplinary reading strategies, there is one that breaks the mold. In her study *The World Republic of Letters* (2004), Pascale Casanova offers for consideration crucial aspects of the construction of

literature as a public sphere institution, which becomes an instrument of national cultural and linguistic politics. Casanova identifies in sixteenth-century Europe the creation of an "international literary sphere" whereby literature establishes itself as a site for contestation and competition among nations, and she sets out to chart how, through the intensified processes of nation building, especially in the nineteenth century, there emerged a "world republic of letters."[68] Distinguishing the world of letters from "the received view of literature as a peaceful domain," Casanova points out that its history [of the world of letters] "is one of incessant struggle and competition on the very nature of literature itself."[69] As literature establishes itself as national cultural capital, the world of letters is increasingly marked by national rivalries; "these rivalries," she states, "are what have created world literature."[70]

The premise of Casanova's study is commendable. She aspires to wrest world literature from a purportedly humanitarian, universal, harmoniously cosmopolitan imagination and uncover the chaotic competition that splits and informs the world literary space, where many actors beyond the author acquire key roles. Paying attention to these actors makes it possible "to measure the literariness (the power, prestige, and volume of linguistic and literary capital) of a language, not in terms of the number of writers and readers it has, but in terms of the number of cosmopolitan intermediaries—publishers, editors, critics, and especially translators—who assure the circulation of texts into the language or out of it."[71]

The aim of Casanova's study seems to augment the politically charged nature of literature and its circulation as world literature.[72] However, at the center of her thinking about the world literary sphere is a sense of an aesthetic and artistic "autonomy" of the literary enterprise, a step-by-step "emancipation" that literary production must acquire from its immediate political-historical circumstances; a vague implication of the "freedom" of literature from the very politicized public sphere from which it emanates that jeopardizes an understanding of the very relationship of world literature as an institution of the international literary space.[73] While Casanova is right in pointing out that neither literary history nor literary geography can be reduced to political history, she is circumspect at best about whether the foundations of an international literary space and "the measure of literariness" could be easily dissociated from the political conditions in which these elements thrive. In other words, the generalization fails unless the complexities of the conditions of literary production within a political historical period are also given due account. Casanova cautions against the "misunderstandings and misreadings" of a "naive" conception of a "pure,

dehistoricized, denationalized, and depoliticized conception of literature," warning that "misreadings . . . conferred by the leading centers . . . are evidence of the ethnocentric blindness of these centers."[74] Nonetheless, her own ethnocentric blindness becomes clear when she also states, that "literature remains relatively dependent on politics, above all in countries that are relatively under-endowed with literary resources."[75] The idea of an international public sphere that Casanova proposes is exclusively intra-European, with a projective power that far exceeds the boundaries of Europe, and reportedly applies, with manipulated flexibility, in other times and other spaces. The model of nation-building and the establishment of a nation-state that becomes the basis of Casanova's understanding of the establishment of language as a national artifact and literature as a national-cultural product is itself based on a hierarchical and progressive model:

> Renaissance Italy, fortified by its Latin heritage, was the first recognized literary power. Next came France, with the rise of the Plédidade in the mid-sixteenth century, which in challenging both the hegemony of Latin and the advance of Italian produced a first tentative sketch of a transnational literary space. Then Spain and England, followed by the rest of the countries of Europe, gradually entered into competition on the strength of their own literary "assets" and traditions. The nationalist movements that appeared in central Europe during the nineteenth century—a century that also saw the arrival of North America and Latin America on the literary scene—generated new claims to literary existence. Finally, with decolonization, countries in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Asia demanded access to literary legitimacy and existence as well.[76]

While the import of the Western-European nation-state onto the post-colonial political organization within decolonized African and Asian nations cannot be entirely denied, what is astounding about this passage is the not-so-subtle denial of the presence of any literary spaces within "Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Asia" prior to, during, or even well after the nineteenth century. It is only with decolonization that a "demand" for literary legitimacy is put forth. A model of literary history that relies largely on the monolingual composition of a nation-state makes it difficult for Casanova to grasp the complexity of multilingual literary productions sometimes within, sometimes despite, the political boundaries of a given nation-state. Hindi and Serbian literatures are suddenly reduced to "small literatures," apparently due to the lack of an army of cosmopolite and polyglot intermediaries to assure the rise of their cultural stock exchange in the

international literary market; Arabic, Kikuyu, Catalan, and Gaelic stand to the same "objective measures of current political and literary position" in the "median literary spaces,"[77] even though she states earlier in her book that "the most independent territories of the literary world are able to state their own law, to lay down the specific standards and principles applied by their internal hierarchies, and to evaluate works and pronounce judgements without regard for political and national divisions."[78]

In sum, a confused relationship with political history, a naive investment in a singular model of literary history, and an undifferentiated understanding of economic history compromise the larger ambition of Casanova's work. Furthermore, the projection of post-Enlightenment print-cultural developments in Western Europe to the rest of the world hardly takes into account the uneven modes of capital-dependent literary circulation, especially in Asia and Africa. For Casanova, the world literary sphere, and by inference world literature itself, become a dominion of France, "the most autonomous literary space," and Paris, its undisputed capital.[79]

To think of literature as a cultural institution that is in a constant struggle for emancipation from politics would be to think of human subjectivity itself as apolitical, as existing in an aesthetic space completely unmoored from history. This would mean a total detachment of world literature from the project of European Enlightenment, which, as I have mentioned before, expanded parallel to processes of exclusionary nation building and expansion of colonialism. It is time now to address the binaries that criticism has developed and to ask how the political and social contexts of production, circulation, and reception beyond the university might move us past rigid dichotomies. How does world literature come to be in an elliptical relationship with national literatures, as David Damrosch would like us to imagine? Is world literature in translation necessarily an erosion of cultural and linguistic particularities, as Spivak and Apter remind us? Or can looking at the materiality of translation through construction of foreign literature canons actually result in establishing better connections between world literary studies and national literary studies? Does it have to be a choice between close and distant readings, "trees" and "waves," as Moretti would like us to think? Does locating the world literary space necessarily need the identification of a singular center of literary production, a singular model of literary history? Must world literature necessarily be seen in terms of an "emancipation" from national politics, as an expression of aesthetic "autonomy," as Casanova would prefer? To move out of the impasse of conceptualizing world literature as an "imaginary" collection that belongs mostly to the university, I want to suggest that it is time to think

about the concrete political, historical, and social realities that contribute to the creation of such a collection.

Recent or archaic, singular or plural, permanent or ephemeral, homogenizing or heterogenizing, disciplined or undisciplined, comparative or assimilative, universal or particular, original or in translation: world literature, as I imagine it, is not a choice between these binaries. It is in fact the productive tension between these binaries that gives world literature its many contested meanings, which in fact are in turn historically constructed, culturally located, and politically charged. It is time to part ways with the three major trends, to focus on some of the neglected, glossed over, abject, and repudiated aspects of the discussion, and to cast the terms of debate differently. It is my contention that paying attention to bibliomigrancy and attending to our pacts with books can help us to develop a new understanding of world literature.

Bibliomigrancy: Bibliothek, Bibliograph, Bibliophile, Bibliophobe

Bibliomigrancy is the term I use for the physical and virtual migration of books. It encompasses multiple modes of movement of literary narratives in original languages or translation. Bibliomigrancy contributes to the worlding of literature, the making of the catalog of the imaginary global bookmobile. The book historian Robert Darnton defines the "life-cycle" of the book in terms of the progression from author to publisher, printer, shipper, and then bookseller, before it finally reaches the reader.[80] He uses these stations to outline multiple ways of approaching the history of the book, adding, "books belong to circuits of communication that operate in consistent patterns."[81] Darnton's ideas serve as a point of departure for my thinking about bibliomigrancy. However, books do not have identical life cycles, especially if they originate in cultural-linguistic spaces in which the circulation of commercial capital follows radically different trajectories than in affluent book production centers in Europe or North America. In addition, circuits of communication are hardly ever consistent. They are also culturally determined, historically conditioned, and politically charged. Bibliomigrancy is thus a way of narrating the life cycle of books by factoring in cultural, historical, and political aspects that shape and inform such a life cycle; it is a mode of tracing and accounting for the diversity of circuits of communication to which books belong; it is a conduit for the processes that help us understand the consistencies as well as inconsistencies of book circulation patterns. The comparative literary scholar César Domínguez duly notes: "literary works do not circulate by themselves in an aesthetic

vacuum. Otherwise, circulation will be at best an empty and metaphorical signifier." To illustrate his point, he offers three important factors crucial for circulation: "historical context, agency, physicality."[82] Bibliomigrancy is a term that grants insights to historical context and agency by recognizing the physicality of circulation.

Admittedly, the compound noun *bibliomigrancy* is as odd and awkward as the language of the migrant who has newly arrived in a foreign land. The term's mixed linguistic origins—*biblio* (Greek) and *migration* (Middle French and Latin)[83]—indicate code switching and free borrowing, all the while breaking grammatical rules of alliance and concord. Despite these imperfections, discordance, and defiance—and maybe even a little bit because of them—the term serves its purpose. Both halves of the word are intended in their broadest senses. *Biblio* may be opened up to acknowledge all kinds of books: written and oral, printed and handwritten, bound and unbound, stationary and portable, legible and—borrowing from Lorraine Piroux's *Moins que livres*—those which contest the ultra-legibility of the Western book form since Enlightenment. *Migrancy* takes on multiple meanings of migration, from the movement of human beings and ideas, to the "process of changing from the use of one platform, environment, IT system, etc., to another."[84]

Bibliomigrancy might seem to imply an embrace of the written word, but I want the term to be more expansive to include multiple forms of dissemination of literature. It need not imply a teleological, linear, and evolutionary progression from orality to literacy. In her insightful essay "The Great Unwritten," Caroline Levine argues that "institutions of world literature have persistently valorized literacy," and she cautions us against "the great embrace of the written word."[85] Thinking of the migration of literary narratives through multiple medialities, that is, their *coexistence* in aural, literal, and visual forms rather than the replacement of one by another, might be the best way of circumventing the valorization of the written word. After all, books existed in different forms in different cultures over different periods of time; and the traditional notion of bound books has once again been challenged by e-books. Furthermore, in the field of world literature, multiple modes of bibliomigrancy could assist with a stronger acknowledgment of bi- or multilingual, multicultural, and multilocational existences of literary works, rather than the privileging of the singularity of the original to underplay the multiplicity of translations.

On the one hand, bibliomigrancy stands for the actual *physical* movement of books from one part of the world to another through trade and travel, conquest and colonialism, donation and diplomacy, and human mi-

gration, both willed and forced. On the other hand, the term can be opened up to account for instances of *virtual* migration: through the transliteration from an oral into a written language, though the translation into a new language, through the transformation from one medium into another through recitation, illustration, illumination, installation, painting, performance, cinema, or television adaptations, and through the migration of the material book from physical into digital space. Take three different versions of bibliomigrancy in the history of *Gilgamesh*: the revision of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* from an oral tradition into an authoritative inscribed form by the Babylonian priest Sîn-lique-unnini (around 1200 BCE), the excavation of cuneiform tablets in Nineveh by Austin Henry Layard and Hormuzd Rassam (1853),[86] and then the translation of *Gilgamesh* into many modern languages. The carrying over of slave songs across the Atlantic and their translations and transformations in the North American colonies are as much a part of bibliomigrancy, as the controversial collection and annotation of *Slave Songs of the United States* during the Civil War to preserve the "relics of a state of society."[87]

Bibliomigrancy is also a way of understanding the historical valence, cultural ambition, and political charge of books and libraries. The interdiscursive connections between libraries and world literature become conspicuous when the following four terms are considered together:

Bibliothek: The material and symbolic space created and inhabited by literary artifacts; the space that conditions and shapes the pact with books.

Bibliograph: The writing of the inventory of such artifacts and objects into a catalog; the realization of the pact with books.

Bibliophile: Not merely a book lover or book collector in the traditional sense but also authors, translators, publishers, librarians, book festival organizers, and of course readers who exercise agency and imagine their subjectivities through the bibliothek and the bibliograph in multiple ways; a signatory of the pact with books.

Bibliophobe: The person, agency, cultural collective, ideological entity, or state apparatus that recognizes the power of books and libraries by impeding access by banning, burning, or censoring books, or by barring individuals or groups from having access to libraries; a manipulator or breaker of the pact with books.

In *The Order of Books*, Roger Chartier enables a rethinking of all of these terms through the concept of the inventory. In Chartier's history of the book in early modern Europe, three key features come into relief:

"the author as an organizational principle for designating the work, the dream of a universal library, real or imagined, containing all the works that have ever been written, and the emergence of a new definition of the book that made an indissoluble connection between an object, a text, and an author."[88] In his elaborations of these three points, Chartier sets up an archive that consists of affordable editions that create new communities of readers, decrees that become precursors of contemporary copyright laws, title pages that erode the exclusive anonymity of the author and establish his authority as a subject of literary discourse, and, last but not least, bibliographic catalogs that turn that author and subject into an object of epistemological organization.

The order initiated and created by the book—discursive, social, cultural, and political—comes to completion in Chartier's book through a very engaging and amusing discussion of the spats and feuds between two bibliophiles, Antoine du Verdier and La Croix de Maine, about their respective *bibliothèques*, not so much the ones between four walls but those between the covers of a folio. These folios house a tall order of titles—both real and imaginary.[89] At the source of the mutually inflicted acerbic comments of du Verdier and de Maine is not merely the question of antecedence of one work over the other, but as Chartier explains, the ordering of knowledge as it would be in a library with walls. Most importantly, the *bibliothèques* of du Verdier and de Maine inventory all discoverable titles, in anticipation of the creation of a universal library, one that contained all books. The order of books that Chartier creates for his readers ends with the invocation of extravagant happiness that accompanied the proclamation of such a library, the scale and scope of the ambition of the inventory and its implications for understanding the materiality of books, the spaces in which they are organized, and the modes of their organization: questions central to the European projects of Enlightenment and modernity.

Chartier's characters help us to see how libraries are both imaginary collections and real spaces. Michel Foucault conceptualized libraries as "heterotopias," as the "other" spaces of utopias: "effectively enacted utopias," which simultaneously represent, contest, and invert all the other real sites found in a culture.[90] Among the several heterotopias that Foucault discusses in his lecture, the library and the museum cross-reference both *topos* and *chronos*: libraries become sites of collective cultural constructs, real and imaginary, where "the pious descendents of time" conflict with "the determined inhabitants of space":[91]

> Museums and libraries have become heterotopias in which time never stops building up and topping its own summit. . . . By contrast, the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity.[92]

Foucault opens up the possibility of imagining museums and libraries as spaces where the cross-referencing of time and space make them collective cultural constructs, both real and imaginary. Thinking along with Chartier, world literature becomes a consciously conceived inventory of literary works. And Foucault invites us to understand how world literature comes to be shaped by concepts of simultaneity, juxtaposition, and dispersion across multiple sites, collections, and inventories in spaces that acquire meaning in reference to other geoculturally locatable sites.

The bibliothek, the bibliograph, the bibliophile, and the bibliophobe converge and depart to shape bibliomigrancy. While the chapters of this book will not explicitly list each one of them individually, these terms will inform discussions of literary propriety, systems of patronage of translation, communitarian affiliations of readers, and accessibility of literary works through translations, publications, and library acquisitions.

The book or the author as an object of study and epistemological organization, the idea of a massive collection that contains as many discoverable titles as possible, and a catalog that is universal in scope and global in scale—these are just a few ideas that have been central to the ideological conceptualization of world literature since the early nineteenth century. All of these have shaped the building and organization of real libraries. They have also sparked the creation of imaginary libraries of world literature. The inventory of world literature has been, since its inception, implicitly prospective, explicitly retrospective, and inherently interconnected with other bibliographs. It has also always carried with it an awareness—sometimes dim and sometimes sharp—of the linguistic, discursive, and material accessibility and inaccessibility that shadows the gathering of all discoverable titles from the world, classified and understood under the rubric of literature.

A Pact with Books

Rethinking world literature for the twenty-first century means changing the framework in which we ask what constitutes world literature. From the outset, the discourse of masterpieces overwhelmed the construction of world literature, and we have been struggling to get out from under this model without asking how it came to dominate the landscape in the first place. Our rethinking here will involve not only paying attention to the objects that inhabit the so-called world literary space but also constantly focusing on the nodes, the agencies, the points of transfer that become key to the construction of world literary spaces and collections and inventories. Reimagining world literature for the twenty-first century means learning lessons from the most prolific and all-encompassing discourse of our times, that of public media. And to embrace this challenge, I propose a genealogy of world literature that shifts the focus from presentist academic concerns in professionalized forms of reading and pangeographical projections of a "world republic of letters" with a single center, where one size fits all nations and publics.

I am proposing a genealogy of world literature which has at its center the notion of bibliomigrancy—the physical and virtual movement of books—which manifests itself though many material nodes: oral storytellers, authors, publishers, translators, traders, booksellers, printers, reprinters, collectors, political groups, librarians, listeners, and readers. This book uses the idea of bibliomigrancy to conceptualize the materialization of literature across multiple literary systems. In her essay "The Location of Literature," Rebecca Walkowitz writes: "[L]iterary studies will have to examine the global writing of books, in addition to their classification, design, publication, translation, anthologizing, and reception across multiple geographies. Books are no longer imagined to exist in a single literary system but may exist, now and in the future, in several literary systems, through various and uneven practices of world circulation."[93] Bibliomigrancy will help us to understand consistencies and inconsistencies in book circulation, the existence of books in multiple literary systems. I add to this an examination of what I call the *pact with books*. This phrase, as I define it, is intended to help us to understand the relations between specific publics and books, as well as the conditions in which those relations come into being in the first place and how they transform over the course of time. In particular, I seek to draw attention to the very large body of actors—beyond the author and the translator of a literary work—who determine a reader's access to literary works. If a work of literature originates in a space beyond the im-

mediate geolinguistic location of the reader, the number of actors increases exponentially. If the author and the reader were to be tentatively imagined in a producer-consumer relationship, there is also an entire set of mediators, crossing many institutions and media, who enable the distribution and circulation of a literary artifact for a worldwide readership.

In other words, a public life of world literature exists in which various individuals and collectives come together to institutionalize world literature. And these individuals and collectives do not exist in a historical-political vacuum. In fact, the historical and political conditions for any conception of world literature often create and exert ideological pressures that emerge from within the political boundaries of a nation. One argument that emerges from my work on the German example shows that national identities and agendas do not merely shape the public life of a national literature but also the public life of world literature. The cooptation of literature as a cultural artifact in the service of the nation plays a significant role in the definition of world literature. This includes the promotion of certain authors and texts as national icons on the one hand, and the writing out of other authors and texts through censorship or other means of suppression on the other hand. The creation of a readership for literature beyond national languages and the institutionalization of world literature within a society are thus functions of the cultural politics of a society at a given historical moment. To assume, however, that a national society operates in absolute isolation from the international community would be a fallacy. The national literary space shapes itself—sometimes consciously, at other times less consciously—in relationship to the world literary space, and vice versa. Statements on national or world literature by authors, thinkers, and critics can therefore hardly be entirely dislodged from the political histories of the moments and the milieu in which they were made. World literature, if it is to find its relevance for us in the twenty-first century, needs to be understood in the larger public life of literature: beyond the university classroom, beyond the specialized community of readers.

Understanding multiple publics' pacts with books is crucial to understanding how the processes of nationalization of literature in one part of the world impacts the reception of literature from another part of the world. In other words, one needs to scrutinize ways in which the patrimony of a given national political and literary prestige actually underwrites or subsidizes the way for works from other literary spheres to enter the larger world literary space. An engagement with material conditions for public access to books helps us relearn how through habits and practices of read-

ing, translated works become alibis for cultural nativism, cultural relativism, cultural pluralism, and, as the history of colonialism reflects, cultural subjugation. The challenge lies in unsuppressing the curiosity about new forms of reading practices that form and, in return, are informed by the multiplicity of literary spaces created and inhabited by books.

The approach I favor here focuses on the interaction of national-political histories that together create interactive cultural spaces that operate at times in alliance with, and at other times in defiance of, national political spaces. In order to understand this, we need to move beyond tracing the proliferation of world literature merely as an innocent form of reading, a "detached engagement" with literature, or as an informed discourse of academic experts in the new century. As Djelal Kadir aptly observes, "in a world marked by the systematic and meticulous capitalization of everything into a fungible commodity, literature is not immune."[94] Remaining oblivious to the commodification of literature as world literature is not a choice. We need to outline a new genealogy of world literature that helps us account for socio-political, cultural, and commercial factors that bring a vast range of readers together with a worldly variety of books.

It is the trajectory of the simultaneous making and unmaking of world literature that this book follows, unveiling institutional networks and nodes in order to draw attention to the encounters between intellectual and commercial capital that influence the circulation, distribution, and reception of world literature. If this seems like a plausible and productive line of inquiry, the next step would be to ask how local and translocal, national and transnational, provincial and cosmopolitan actors and institutions work toward the creation of a world literary space.

This examination of public pacts with books has implications for the debates about translation that have troubled world literature scholarship. Translations form the very foundations of world literature and global literary comparison and so do not always impede the idea of world literary access but do allow us to track the question of power and access. The significance of translations is not merely thinkable in terms of the task of the translator but also the power-politics of the translation industry. Production, circulation, and distribution of literature is not a given at specific points of time in history. As social capital interacts with intellectual capital, conditions arise of uneven circulation and distribution.

In some ways, the lines of inquiry that I pursue in this book intersect with those of two recently published monographs: Rebecca Walkowitz's *Born Translated* (2015), which casts translations as essential to world literary comparison, and Aamir Mufti's *Forget English!* (2016), which investigates

power and access through a critical scrutiny of global English. Focusing on the contemporary novel, Walkowitz challenges the "dominant modes of literary sequencing, in which circulation always trails production," and offers for consideration "born translated works," to upset binaries of "author and translator, original and derivation, native and foreign, just to name a few of the foundational distinctions that have shaped world literature as we've known it."[95] While Walkowitz focuses primarily on Anglophone translations, Mufti questions the very status of English as the "dominant world literary language,"[96] to propose that "*the genealogy of world literature leads to Orientalism*."[97] He pursues the relationship between "the *universal* in the 'universal library' and *world* in 'world literature'"[98] to "elucidate how 'India' has been implicated in the entanglement of Orientalism and world literature, but also, more crucially, how can it also be a site for a *critique* of this entanglement."[99]

Akin to Walkowitz, I emphasize in this book how translations into German were crucial to world literary access and comparison. In following histories of translations and publications, I suggest how these works acquired lives of their own in the German public sphere. Furthermore, through an inclusion of publication and library histories, state policies, and the book market, I underline that an entire network of social structures and institutions facilitates, and at times jeopardizes, the conditions under which a literary work can be identified as "born translated." While I concur with Mufti that the genealogy of world literature leads to Orientalism, as the case of Germany in the nineteenth century clearly reveals, our paths diverge in our investigations of the twentieth century, because of the specificity of the political contexts discussed. In the Indian context, the suppression of Indian literary traditions at the expense of English in colonial India and the rise of postcolonial Anglophone literatures on the Indian subcontinent in the late twentieth century create a genealogy of world literature that finds a continuation of historical Orientalist practices into the contemporary cultural text through the politics of language. In the case of Germany, the language of politics gains precedence over the politics of language. National Socialism, the ideological divide that characterized the two German states, the presence of a large migrant population in post–World War II (West) Germany, and the iconic fall of the Berlin Wall beg a very different set of questions to parse the relationship between the universal in the "universal library" and the world in "world literature."

The story of *Weltliteratur* within the German-speaking world is not a singular story; it both gives us models for understanding other sites and moments and itself unfolds in conjunction with other spaces around the

world. The five main chapters of this book tell several stories of the construction of world literature within the German-speaking public sphere.

Instead of starting with *Weltliteratur* and looking for an inductive definition, as other critics have done, I suggest starting with one story that opens outward; following traces, bits, and shards of knowledge might help us approach the fragments that contribute to the narrative of world literature. Each chapter identifies a concern central to world literary discussions and examines it along with aspects of libraries and related print cultural institutions.

Chapter 1 focuses on canon formation in the early nineteenth century alongside the flow of Asian works in manuscript and translations that flooded German libraries in the first half of the nineteenth century. The chapter juxtaposes Goethe's celebration of non-Western literature with a statement about the supposed inferiority of non-Western literatures as proposed by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay. This juxtaposition assists in highlighting how colonialism initiated and facilitated a climate that was fertile for the inception of the term *Weltliteratur*; furthermore, it helps in locating the comparative world literary practices that followed translations of non-European works into European languages around that time. By including a discussion of the British Oriental Translation Fund (organized in 1828) and the role of the Asiatick Society in Calcutta, I demonstrate how Germany becomes the beneficiary of British colonialism. By focusing on discussions on world literature and libraries in literary magazines like *Literarisches Conversations-Blatt* (later *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*), the chapter emphasizes the creation of a world literary market and a world literary readership. The chapter ends with a discussion of the public trial of Eckermann on the case he fought with his publishers over royalties for *Gespräche mit Goethe*, ultimately making it a masterpiece but rendering Eckermann the subservient slave.

Chapter 2 follows the conceptual career of the term *Weltliteratur* beyond Goethe. Central to the chapter is Heine's concept of *Welthülfsliteratur* (world-help literature) through which he accords primacy to the function of literature in the public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*). On the one hand, in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels would unmoor the Goethean idea of world literature from *Poesie* (poesy) as the *Gemeingut* of the human race and firmly anchor it in the bourgeois production and consumption of literature. On the other hand, supporters of national literature, such as Wolfgang Menzel and Ernst Moritz Arndt, would emerge as staunch detractors of world literature and criticize it through their anticosmopoli-

tan and at times anti-Semitic ideologies. The chapter thus presents an account of two trajectories of world literature beyond Goethe's ideas. The theorization of world literature becomes politically charged and refracted through the question of national literature. The practice of world literature—acquisition, translation, publication—becomes a niche activity, carried on almost as if it were depoliticized and disconnected from the larger social politics of the times. I discuss the publication of anthologies such as Johannes Scherr's *Bildersaal der Weltliteratur* (1848); the establishment of the library of "Die deutsche morgenländische Gesellschaft" (1844); the acquisition, by the Königliche Bibliothek in Berlin, of the Aloys Sprenger Collection, the largest acquisition of Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu works by a German library in the nineteenth century, and the launching of Reclam's Universal-Bibliothek (1867).

Chapter 3 extends the findings of chapter 2 into the twentieth century. I read Walter Benjamin's famous essay "Unpacking my Library" (1928) along with Hermann Hesse's essay "A Library of World Literature" (1929)—an important but hitherto neglected statement on world literature—to chart modes in which the early twentieth century ushers in a new relationship with books. Using Romain Rolland and Rabindranath Tagore's (failed) attempts to create a "world library" in the late 1920s as a turning point, the chapter moves to National Socialist conceptualizations of world literature as evident in the Nazi literary magazines, *Weltliteratur* and *Die Weltliteratur*. Through a detailed discussion of Nazi policies on libraries and print culture, especially translated literature, the chapter shows how direct and indirect censorship, cultural politics of intimidation, and the ethnicization of German national literature during the Nazi period radically transform the concept of world literature.

Chapter 4 has at its center the statement by Erich Auerbach (1952) on the challenges of conceptualizing world literature in the Goethean sense after World War II. Animating Auerbach's concept of historicity, the chapter considers how the cultural authorities from the United States and the former Soviet Union split the German literary market and libraries immediately following the war. By juxtaposing the state-sponsored program for publication and reception of world literature through the Leipzig Book Fair in the former German Democratic Republic with the free-market book trade led by the Frankfurt Book Fair in the Federal Republic of Germany, the chapter investigates the uneasy intimacy between history and ideology and its impact on the definition of world literature in a divided Germany. The chapter includes the first English-language discussion of

the East German pedagogical program for creating a world literary readership through the publishing company Volk und Welt, which had close links to the GDR Ministries of Education and Culture.

Chapter 5 focuses on the cosmopolitan orientation of the post-1989 years and the further transformation of German national literature, first from contributions by authors of non-German ethnicities in the German language, and second through advancements in digital technologies and the establishment of pan-European literary portals like the European Library. Using the double meaning of *migration* as a point of departure, I move to the digital era of publication, and the emergence of new digital universal libraries in the early twenty-first century. I discuss the transnational construction, the cosmopolitan ambition, and the purportedly universal mission of the European Digital Library. As technology reglobalizes the "text," I account for ways in which the politics of acquisition, admission, and accumulation of digital texts impacts access to world literature.

The maps accompanying the introduction and chapters are visual depictions of accounts of bibliomigrancy narrated in the chapters. They serve a dual purpose: they illustrate the multicentric nature of world literary construction, and underline Germany's position as a node in the network of world literary circulation. The lines connecting distant spaces depict the physical circuits of bibliomigrancy and orient the readers to the geocultural spaces discussed in the chapters. But even a cursory glance would suffice to trace the transformation of patterns of bibliomigrancy over a course of two centuries, supporting the central argument of the book, that world literature is historically conditioned, culturally determined, and politically charged.

Coding/Recoding

What was world literature for Goethe, Marx, Engels, Auerbach, or even Hesse cannot exactly be the same for authors and thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century. In 1965, Mahadevi Varma—the renowned Hindi poet, essayist, and short-story writer—addressed the legislative assembly of Uttar Pradesh, a state in Northern India. In her speech, "Sāhitya, Sanskriti, aur Śāsan" (Literature, culture, and governance), Varma emphasized literature as a shared cultural heritage of humanity that breaks down barriers between nations and peoples. Juxtaposing Sanskrit and Awadhi authors such as Kalidasa and Tulasidasa with English and Russian authors such as Shakespeare and Tolstoy respectively, Varma asserted that they belonged as much to the specific linguistic and national communities of their

origin as to those outside of these communities: "They belong to everyone in that they belong to each one."[100]

Forty years after Varma's remarks, in October 2003, the American author Susan Sontag addressed the audience at Frankfurt's famous Paulskirche on the occasion of receiving the German Peace Prize (Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels).[101] In her acceptance speech, entitled "Literature is Freedom," Sontag reflected on "the fragile alliance" between Europe and the United States.[102] She reminisced about books—among others by German authors such as Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann—that she read growing up in Arizona and California as a third-generation American of Polish and Lithuanian decent: "To have *access to literature*, *world literature*, was to escape the prison of national vanity, of philistinism, of compulsory provincialism, of inane schooling, of imperfect destinies and bad luck. Literature was the passport to enter a larger life; that is, the zone of freedom."[103]

In 1999, during the 250th anniversary celebrations of Goethe in Weimar, Orhan Pamuk gave a speech, "Dünya Edebiyatı" (world literature).[104] Pamuk began with prudent uncertainty: "world literature?" he asked, calling the term at once "thought provoking" and "mysterious." By associating world literature with "a high brotherhood of those who read books" and asking if "the whole world's literature" implied a "global fraternity of literature,"[105] Pamuk at once diagnosed authority and naïveté in the term. The initial skepticism quickly gave way to a confident investment in world literature as Pamuk highlighted "influences, borrowings, and infatuations" of the last two centuries to declare, that "literature is as much a delicately constructed memory as it is a subtly constructed forgetting."[106]

The occasions on which Varma, Sontag, and Pamuk delivered their thoughts are separated by roughly forty years and the three distinct political worlds to which they belonged. And yet, their thoughts intersect in their respective understanding of literary figures and access to literature from other parts of the world in times of intense nationalization. These authors emphasize the power of engagement with literature outside of the political boundaries of a nation-state as a solution to man-made divisions, collective national narcissisms, and the consequent power hierarchies among nations. By devaluating a necessarily national arrangement of literature, these authors emancipate themselves from the overpowering burden of being "representatives" of only the nations of their origins. Their thoughts are undergirded by a cosmopolitan disposition acutely wary of a nationalistic privileging of literature. They promote world literature as an instrument of international cultural understanding, in effect, as a political and philosophical ideal.

However, their statements are hardly a continuation of earlier discussions. Unlike their German predecessors from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these authors cannot anticipate the arrival of world literature in the future. They can ill afford to reduce the literary activity of the twentieth century to merely a formidable pedagogical challenge for American undergraduate or graduate students. They cannot circumvent the historical sedimentation of 250 years that divides the world and literary labor into geopolitical centers and peripheries. It is therefore the present, the now- and here-ness of world literature that they must confront.

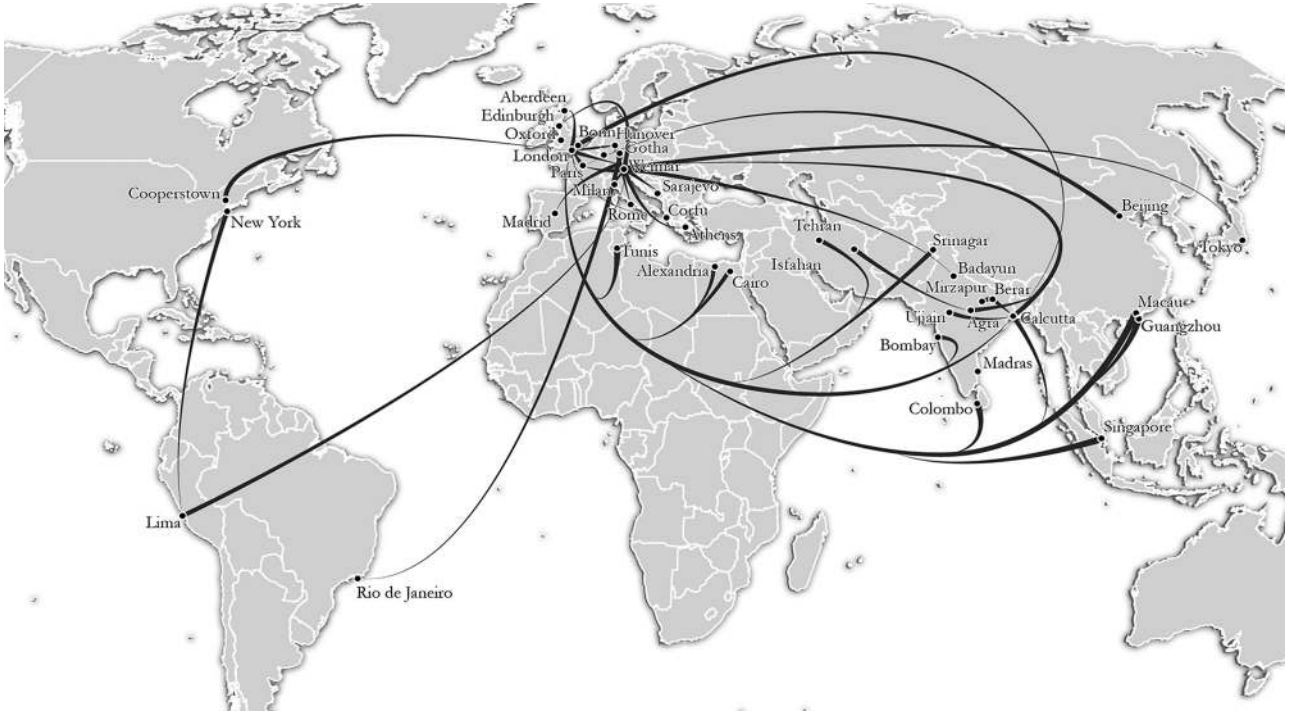
Weltliteratur, world literature, *viśva sāhitya*, *dünya edebiyatı*, *verdensliteratur*, *literatura mundial*: No matter how limited the choice of languages—six out of at least two hundred listed in the UNESCO World Cultures Report 2010—each term for world literature carries a different inflection. If the languages represented here bear the marks of development of their own long political and cultural histories, so do their terms for world literature. While in each of these languages the term denotes something extra-local, extra-linguistic, extra-national, indeed "worldly" in scale and scope, no term is identical to the other in its import; similar, equivalent, intersecting, perhaps, but not identical. Each one of these terms derives its meaning in the relational and comparative framework that defines the position of its specific literary corpus in the world of literature. The terms and conditions of such a relation also change through time and space. In other words, the term *world literature* is from the outset relational and comparative. Such relation and comparison however do not detract from the idea of literature as a shared cultural heritage of human beings.

The story of world literature is not a single story; it comprises multiple stories of difference and comparison, of acquisition and appropriation, inhabitation and naturalization. World literature is less about ownership and expertise and more about access to and familiarity with that which is not one's own through the accident of birth and naturalness of a mother tongue. World literature is characterized by, to use another term from US library professionals, *borrowing privileges*. These privileges are defined by access: to basic literacy and the ability to read, to the production and reception of literature as a cultural artifact, to books and other media of the public dissemination of literature, and furthermore to a specific kind of linguistic and cultural literacy that readers and authors from one part of the world acquire when they access literatures from other parts of the world. This access does not necessarily have to lead to a harmonious dialogue; in fact, often it is borne out of conflicted circumstances—such as colonialism, political dominance, financial subjugation—and may very well re-

store the conflict in the process of reading. Thinking of world literature in terms of a pact with books helps us to understand how we as readers recode world literature, as we are recoded by reading world literary works. This dual awareness of recoding frames our understanding of the shared and the unshared in literature; it calls upon us to acknowledge ownership, usurpation, co-optation, and every other form of privileged possession through which readers associate with a literary text. Privileges, as we know, cannot be understood unless they are refracted against restriction. A careful examination of privileged and underprivileged conditions of world literary circulation can help us understand the uneven force field of literary production and circulation.

The project of world literature is fraught with tensions between local formations and global transformations, national demarcations and transnational projections, individual differentiations and universal configurations. World literature incorporates various institutions of literature, literary readings being just one of them. The act of reading is inherently connected with bibliomigrancy, of accessibility or inaccessibility to intellectual and imaginative labor of texts from elsewhere by readers from elsewhere. The space of reading—the physical and metaphorical space of the library—demands an account of the owned and the borrowed, the shared and the unshared, the agreed upon and the contestable as shelf-lives of books are created beyond their points of origin. When the act and space of reading are considered in tandem, borrowing privileges acquire new meanings. World literature ceases to remain a space encoded in infinitely accumulating time and consecutively arranged sites. It becomes recoded through multiple sites with discontinuous temporalities, each one deriving its meaning through—to use Foucault's terms—vectors of juxtaposition, dispersion, inversion, and contestation. Through this discontinuous and nonconsecutive arrangement of time and space—chronos and topos—world literature acquires its cosmochronic and cosmotopic dimensions.

To envision the intersection of the cosmochronic with the cosmotropic, I will now turn to the moment of inception of *Weltliteratur* by Goethe. Faust is waiting in his study, eager to make a pact with the devil, and, with books.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