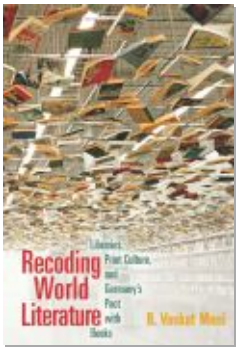
Chapter 1 Of Masters and Masterpieces: An Empire of Books, a Mythic European Library



CHAPTER I

Of Masters and Masterpieces: An Empire of Books, a Mythic European Library

"But," I said, "perhaps this Chinese novel is one of their outstanding ones?" "Not at all," said Goethe, "the Chinese have them by the thousand and already had them when our ancestors were still living in the forests."

—JOHANN PETER ECKERMANN, *Conversations with Goethe* (1836)[1]

I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

—THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY, *Minute on Indian Education* (1835)[2]

In "Night," the opening scene of Goethe's *Faust* (Part I), Heinrich Faust sits at his desk in his study, ruminating over the usability of his erudition. Faust is restless in his dark and restrictive workspace. The study is described as a "narrow, high-vaulted Gothic chamber,"[3] a "prison," and Faust curses the "dank frowsty cabinet/Where even heaven's dear ray can pass/But murkily through tinted glass!"[4] The "lofty walls with a hundred shelves" are a domicile of moths. Faust has spent his life accumulating and studying books on philosophy, medicine, law, and theology, an enterprise that has earned him the titles of master and doctor. And yet, books become the very source of the crisis that defines Faust's world. Books are enveloped in dust, devoured by worms, and reach high up to the vault of the study; the library becomes a space "stuffed tightly with *ancestral junk*."[5]

Faust's study exemplifies the dichotomy that exists between the outer world of action and the inner world composed of mainly words, from which he longs to free himself. The passage does not only suggest a *figurative* emancipation from the world of words to a world of action but also a *physical* migration from the materiality of books to the materiality of the world outside. The crisis of the intellectual intensifies through the very

crisis of the relationship between the medium of dissemination of knowledge—the books—and the place where they are stored: the intellectual's private library ("Gelehrtenbibliothek"). The pact with Mephistopheles, as is well established, assures Faust's movement from the realm of knowledge ("Erkenntnis") to experience ("Erfahrung").[6]

Through the figure of Faust, Goethe offers for consideration a pact with books in a library that is architecturally insulated, resembles a prison, and yet is the scholar's righteous abode: the space of reading, writing, and critical thinking. Faust's private library stages the collision of myth and prophecy with rational thought and enlightened discourse. After all, the master and doctor is reading *The Book of Nostradamus*. The study is also the space where the dichotomous soul of books—as material objects and intellectual artifacts—anticipates another famous duality that Faust identifies: "Two souls, alas, are dwelling in my breast,/and either would be severed from its brother."[7]

In an uncanny way, the opening scence of *Faust* brings forth the dichotomous nature of books as identified by the philosopher Immanuel Kant in the late eighteenth century. In a letter to the Berlin publisher Friedrich Nicolai written in 1798, Kant urged Nicolai to recognize the powerful social function of books as an agency of enlightenment and emphatically asked him to not give into market forces. Kant praised book production as an important line of business in a culture where reading had become common and indispensible. However, he chastised publishers for using books merely to stimulate the book market by focusing on their commodity function. The enlightening power of books rested for Kant in the restoration of their intellectual prowess, which he thought would be compromised when publishers gave in to market forces and accommodated populist ideas through mass production. The world of enlightenment that Kant wanted the readers of the book to inhabit is a world with a higher purpose, a world where rationality and intellectual discourse triumphed through a publisher's careful selection of content.[8] Kant presented the dual personalities of books: as an intellectual (*Geist*) and as a material (*Ware*) artifact; a source of knowledge as well as a commodity.

But there is another kind of pact with books that Goethe's *Faust* offers for consideration: a pact with books outside the German-speaking world.

The scope and scale of the Faustian drama has invigorated discussions on its uniqueness as a masterpiece; Goethe enters into a dialogue with the longer tradition of the Faustian myth in Europe, and in return becomes

the reference point for many following discussions in the next two centuries. For its representation of the uniqueness of linguistic expression, the complexity of human thought, the conflicted nature of the human self, and the bifurcated realities of power, desire, and intellect, *Faust* is considered a masterpiece, worthy of inclusion in all major anthologies of world literature. In his essay "Goethe's Faust as a Modern Epic," Franco Moretti discusses *Faust* as a part of "world texts," highlighting the "larger geographical ambition: a global ambition, of which Faust is the unchallenged archetype." For Moretti, *Faust* becomes constitutive of "an ascending teleology—which will then end by legitimizing the dominion of the 'advanced' West over the 'backward' periphery."[9]

What is also noteworthy—and is often reduced to a footnote in many publications of *Faust*—is that *Faust* is also in dialogue with a major non-European work, whose translation and circulation in England, France, and Germany was facilitated by British colonialism in India. The publication of Georg Forster's German translation of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* in 1791 (from William Jones's English translation of 1789) led to Goethe's addition of "Vorspiel auf dem Theater" ("Prelude in the Theater") as the second of the three prologues in his play.[10] The dialogue between the director, the "Buffoon" ("lustige Person"), and the author was inspired indeed by the prologue in Kalisada's *Sakuntala*. The prologue to *Faust* thus paves the way to thinking about the study not merely as a space of reading, writing, and critical thinking of an intellectual from which he desires to emancipate himself but as a way of connecting with another world that is political, historical, cultural, as well as literary.

Goethe is supposed to have composed the second prologue to *Faust* in the late 1790s,[11] at the same time as Kant composed his letter to Nicolai. However, it is not the chronological coincidence but rather the awareness of the split nature of books that is interesting for our discussion.

In this chapter, I want to mobilize Faust's study as a way to think about two kinds of pacts with books: the first, following Kant, reveals the duality of books as intellectual and material objects; and the second, pursuing Goethe's engagement with *Sakuntala* in his "Prologue," materializes as a pact between German (or European) and non-European literatures that marks the time when Goethe gives traction to the term *Weltliteratur*. I am interested in knowing what kind of windows open up in a mythic European library when Goethe's engagement with a growing empire of books marks a turning point in the reception of non-European works in the European cultural space. To what extent do national (or local) and world literatures

find themselves in a "dual soul" relationship, a mutual conflict, waiting to be severed from each other?

Extending Moretti's thoughts beyond *Faust*, I contend that in the first half of the nineteenth century, world literature in Germany is constructed as an engagement of the European center with its non-European peripheries. This engagement is by no means unproblematic; in fact, it reveals equations of power and mastery concomitant with colonialism. On the one hand, world literature becomes an accomplice in the process of legitimizing Western domination over the Eastern periphery. On the other hand, through these processes, the "ancestral junk" ("Urväter Hausrat") of Germany and Europe undergoes scrutiny as new literary works arrive from elsewhere and national literature is posited against world literature.

Furthermore, I argue that British (and French) colonialism in Asia and Africa initiates and facilitates a specific kind of colonial bibliomigrancy: movement of Sanskrit, Chinese, Persian, and Arabic texts in the original as manuscripts and in translation. The German literary space becomes first a beneficiary and subsequently an agent of colonial bibliomigrancy. These developments prepare the intellectual climate that enables the inception and incubation of the term *Weltliteratur*. Nurturing this construction of world literature are also important local factors such as the rise in book production and magazine publications and the expansion of German libraries.

My goal is to demonstrate the connections between German constructions of *Weltliteratur* and British colonialism through three important examples. First, I compare Goethe's statement on *Weltliteratur* (first published in 1836) with Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Great Minute on Indian Education" (1835). The juxtaposition of these mutually conflictual positions will help to establish the indelible mark of colonialism and Orientalism in the institutionalization of world literature. Second, I discuss August Wilhelm Schlegel's plans to publish a series on Indian classics, which he submitted as a proposal to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (Calcutta). Third, I offer an overview of the Oriental Translation Society (established in 1828), which served as a major globally situated translation enterprise. I end with a commentary on the afterlife of Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* in Germany, a remarkable story symptomatic of dominance and subservience.

In the rest of the discussion, I want to locate Goethe's moment within the specific tensions underlying the access to the world "in print," which also form part of the German intellectual landscape of the first half of the

nineteenth century. Crucial to this section is the discussion of an intensified understanding of the dual role of the book as an intellectual and cultural artifact at the height of the German Enlightenment and the changing face of the library, especially the literal and figurative transformation of the "European library."

British colonialism and German scholarly Orientalism went hand in hand to set the stage from which Goethe and Macaulay expounded their ideas. In the midst of an international circulation of books, certain principles of global literary comparison gain currency. The literary value of a foreign text is inflated by declaring it a masterpiece, and various kinds of "masters" from a variety of institutions play their parts in the making of the masterpiece. And this is the story of world literature that this chapter unfolds: a story of relation and comparison, legislation and legitimization, masters and masterpieces.

Comparative World Literature: Goethe and Macaulay

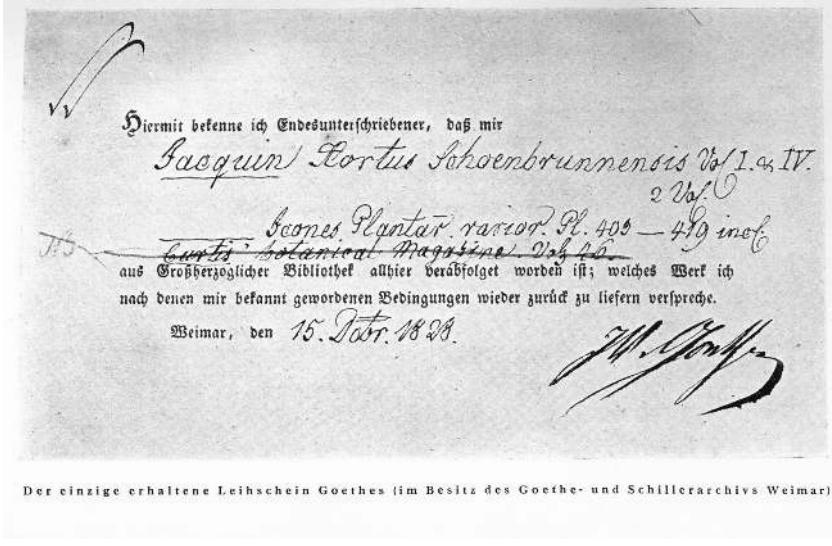
December 31, 1827: Goethe has just finished reading a Chinese novel in translation. He shares his reflections on the novel with his editorial assistant, secretary, and, after his death, the executor of his literary will, Johann Peter Eckermann. Goethe determines the aesthetic value of the novel in comparison to a recent work he has read by the French novelist Béranger. A work from a faraway linguistic tradition that makes its way into the European literary space must be compared with something from nearby, something familiar. And to make a case for it to be read by others, it must be declared *vorzüglichst* (most outstanding).[12] The novel is *vorzüglichst*, and Goethe knows that the Chinese have "thousands of them," but he neither mentions the title of the novel nor does he possess his own copy. His extensive personal library with over 5,000 volumes has no entry for any Chinese work in translation. Goethe's library contained works from many literary traditions, including German (448), Greek (139), Latin (126), French (112), Italian (60), English (58), Oriental and Indian (32), Eastern European (25), Spanish and Portuguese (18), and Nordic (6).[13] *Goethes Bibliothek: Katalog* (1958), the comprehensive catalog of the Goethe National Library in Weimar—including holdings from Goethe's private library as well as his father's library—documents titles of literary works in twenty languages, in the original or in translation, that Goethe had acquired during his lifetime.[14] Non-European works include Georg Forster's translation of Kalidasa's *Sakontala* (1791), Wilhelm von Humboldt's *Bhagavad-Gita* (1826),

and Joseph von Hammer Purgstall's translation from Persian into German of Shamsuddin Hafiz's poetic *Diwan* (1812–1813), with which Goethe engaged in his own *West-östlicher Divan* (1814–1819).[15]

The *Katalog* does not mention a single work of Chinese literature, in the original or in translation. However, the library of the Großherzogliches Haus Sachsen-Weimar (Grand Duchy of Saxony-Weimar)—today the Klassik Stiftung Weimar, a UNESCO World Heritage institution—might have enabled Goethe's access to Chinese literature. In 1797, Goethe was appointed overseer of the library by Großherzog Carl August, a position he held until his death in 1832. And although the Goethe-Schiller Archives at the Klassik Stiftung only have evidence of one borrowing card signed by Goethe (figure 1-1), as overseer and regular user he had unfettered access to the library. Akin to other well-endowed European libraries of the early nineteenth century, this library was proactively acquiring non-European works: in translations or in the original as manuscripts. From a total of 49,000 volumes in the field of literature and linguistics, many were acquired in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Jürgen Weber reports in his description of the collection, "works of world literature are in original languages, often also well represented through French translations."[16] In *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek*, Elise von Keudell documents literary works checked out by Goethe from the Anna Amalia Bibliothek. These included translations of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish works by Hammar Purgstall,[17] Chinese and Japanese manuscripts of Julius Klaproth,[18] and Horace Wilson's English translation of Kalidasa's *Megha Duta* (*The Cloud Messenger*).[19] One of the works Goethe checked out was Peter Perring Thoms's *Chinese Courtship*,[20] the English translation of a Chinese work, which probably became the immediate precursor to Goethe's most famous statement on world literature:

> I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times. . . . But of course, if we Germans do not look beyond the narrow circle of our own environment, we all too easily fall into this kind of pedantic arrogance. I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations and advise everyone else to do so. *National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its coming.*[21]

February 2, 1835: As Eckermann prepares the manuscript of *Gespräche* to be sent to the publisher F. A. Brockhaus in Leipzig, in another part of the world, Thomas Babington Macaulay, a British lawyer and advisor to the



Der einzige erhaltene Leihschein Goethes (im Besitz des Goethe- und Schillerarchivs Weimar)

Figure 1-1. Book borrowing card with Goethe's signature, 1828. (Courtesy of Klassik Stiftung Weimar.)

Supreme Council of the British East India Company, proposes his mode of comparing world literatures. In his infamous "Great Minute on Indian Education," Macaulay simply dismisses the possibility of any work from a non-European space to ever qualify as a masterpiece or *vorzüglichst* to use Goethe's term. Macaulay is not too distant from Goethe in purpose—he is also concerned with determining the aesthetic value of a literary work from a faraway space through comparison with something familiar. Principles of aesthetic evaluation shared by the two are somewhat similar: superiority, outstanding quality, and greatness; though for Macaulay, linguistic utility will become a prime factor in privileging one kind of literature over others. Macaulay's recoding of world literature would be shaped by knowledge he claims to have borrowed from Orientalist translators. At a time when the well-oiled establishment of Orientalism is finding ever new modes of colonial patronage both for the collecting of manuscripts in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Chinese, and for their translations into English, Macaulay declares, as cited in the epigraph:

> I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have

> conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that *a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia*. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the Oriental plan of education.[22]

Weimar and Calcutta, Goethe and Macaulay: two cities, two masters, two imaginations of a masterpiece, two moments of an emerging discourse of what David Damrosch succinctly calls "comparative world literature."[23] At the center of this comparative enterprise is the mythic European library. So what is the bibliograph of this so-called European library? Let us have a closer look at Goethe's and Macaulay's statements.

Eckermann's diary entry for Wednesday, December 31, 1827, begins, as mentioned earlier, with Goethe's discussion of an unnamed Chinese novel, which Goethe finds "im hohen Grade merkwürdig" (highly remarkable, but also strange).[24] Eckermann's first response is indeed about the strange and foreign ("fremdartig") nature of the novel, Goethe clarifies by turning to the commonalities, rather than differences, between the foreign product and the local, more familiar genre of the European novel. Remarkable here is Goethe's turning not so much to the aesthetic but more anthropological commonalities. While it is ambiguous from the passage if Goethe refers to the Chinese people in general or the characters in the novel, the premise of his establishing commonalities between a European *we* and a Chinese *they* remains grounded in modes in which human beings "think, behave, and feel" ("denken, handeln, empfinden"), which makes the *we* "like them" or "akin to them" ("ihresgleichen").[25]

The initial evaluation quickly changes from being generally anthropological to specifically aesthetic and representational. Goethe remarks how in the Chinese narration everything happens "more cleanly, lucidly, and morally," and that the representation is more "steady, and without great passion or poetic verve, and in this regard is very similar to my *Hermann and Dorothea* as well as to the English novels of Richardson."[26] Having established these commonalities between the German (or European) Self and the Chinese Other, Goethe moves to delineating differences in modes of depiction of nature, interactions between nature and human beings, and human beings and objects. More specifically, he singles out "sedan chairs" as an example of the lightness, beauty, and grace he finds in the

Chinese novel. Goethe's broader aesthetic evaluations zoom in on language as he comments on the presence of legends and proverbs woven into the narrative—with a clear eye on the morals and traditions that are part of "the Chinese culture" that Goethe receives. The story of the girl and the boy who spend hours in a room without giving into carnal pleasures becomes important to Goethe. This leads to his much larger comment on Chinese culture, which is based on "severe moderation" ("strenge Mäßigung") through which the Chinese empire has been able to exist and shall continue to do so. In other words, the unnamed Chinese novel immediately becomes the most outstanding "native informant" text. Following Goethe's critique of Béranger and his apparently insufficient motivation to engage with the cleanliness and properness that characterize the Chinese novel, Goethe turns to his most important articulation on world literature but not until Eckermann prompts him. Eckermann asks categorically if the novel Goethe mentions is one of the most outstanding ones they have; Goethe ends his discourse on the Chinese novel on an evolutionary note: "the Chinese have them by the thousands and had them when our ancestors were still living in the forests."[27]

The actual statements on world literature that follow the above-mentioned sentence grant the anthropological insinuation a more panhumanistic inflection, albeit with limitations. Goethe mentions *Poesie* as the *Gemeingut* (shared property) of humanity and confirms that the gift of poetry appears in "hundreds and hundreds" of individuals. With a curious comparison of himself with Friedrich von Matthisson—a very popular but quickly forgotten poet of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—Goethe moves on to state the necessity of looking beyond the individual, indeed the local. This is the crucial sentence where Goethe links the inaugural ideas about the remarkable nature of the Chinese novel and Eckermann's comment on its *fremdartig* nature to the necessity of engaging with that which is strange/foreign. The *we* here is explicitly German—"wir Deutschen" (we Germans) must look beyond in order to prevent a falling into the trap of pedantic arrogance. That is when he comments on the fact that national literature has little to say now and, in an instructive tone, adds that everyone must endeavor to hasten the coming of world literature.

The idea of world literature for Goethe in this statement, however, lies neither in the complete embrace of the foreign nor in the substitution of the foreign with the local, but rather in a historic repositioning of the foreign. Goethe comments that in evaluating the foreign, one must not cling to the particularities of, say, "the Chinese," the medieval Spanish

poet Pedro Calderon, or the German medieval epic *Nibelungenlied*. But he also insists that literary works do indeed become indissoluble with a people, and vice versa. Nonetheless, for Goethe the pinnacle for the ideal "pattern" ("Muster") remains the authority of the Greeks. Greek literature, according to Goethe, is the gold standard for all literatures, especially for the German *we*: "In our need for the exemplary, we must always return to the ancient Greeks, for in their works, it is at all times man in his beauty that is depicted. Everything else we must regard mainly from a historic point of view, and adopt as much of the good in it as we can."[28]

Thus, despite the initial laudatory remarks about the Chinese and their literature, Greek literature assumes a paramount position. Following this, the conversation takes a slightly different turn and becomes more oriented to European literature. As Goethe compares works of Manzoni to his own historical fiction, Shakespeare's historical plays provide the comparative fulcrum. Shakespeare's historical figures are his interpretations of those figures, Goethe states, adding categorically that Egmont is "my Egmont" ("mein Egmont"). As Goethe moves between text-internal and text-external comparisons, between a collective (the Chinese) and an individual (Béranger), aesthetic comparison paves way for a peculiar anthropological conjecturing. And through this, the primacy of the outstanding—the best and the most representative—is established.

Based on this discussion, the bibliograph of the European library that Goethe presents to Eckermann is the following: the Greeks (Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles); the medieval epics and epic poets: *Nibelungenlied* and Calderon; the British classical dramatists: Shakespeare; his contemporaries: Béranger, Manzoni, and of course himself. The Chinese might have had thousands of novels akin to what Goethe has read, but, despite all their narrative and moralistic qualities, along with the Serbs and Calderon, they remain merely a historical reference point to Goethe's idea of world literature.

For Macaulay, the Greeks form the most important part of the inventory of the European library, if only to declare non-European literatures bereft of any quality. Macaulay's mode of literary comparison is based on the usability of literature, and in that sense, compared to Goethe, he is less aesthetically driven. Macaulay privileges the material (*Ware*) over the intellectual (*Geist*) value of books, albeit in the service of Western-style enlightenment for his colonial subjects.

The purpose of Macaulay's statement was the distribution of resources and allocation of funds to educational establishments in India funded by the British East India Company. Through an act of Parliament in 1813,

the British had set aside funds for the education of local pupils in Sanskrit, Farsi, and, in the case of Egypt, Arabic; funding was supported until 1835, the year Macaulay arrived in India. This act was considered to be part of the British responsibility to educate the natives in their own languages. Macaulay's plan was to steer the funding toward education in English. Macaulay's ideas are also full of internal ambiguities and built-in contradictions. While Goethe insinuates the superiority of Chinese literature, only to quickly marginalize it, Macaulay rejects the possibility of any non-European works to be a model altogether. And he couches his concerns by vouching for the ability of non-Europeans in acquiring training and education in English. The text is therefore more cryptic than it first appears to be, because it actually highlights an enlightenment function in order to include the colonial subjects into the project of modernity, without their languages or literatures:

> We have a fund to be employed as Government shall direct for the intellectual improvement of the people of this country. The simple question is, what is the most useful way of employing it? All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary or scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter it will not be easy to translate any valuable work to them.[29]

One of the first tasks that Macaulay has upon his arrival is to radically redesign the medium of education and dissemination of knowledge among the subjects of the British Empire. His argument is categorically against the education of the natives in their native languages. Indeed Macaulay starts his argument by accusing the members of the Committee of Public Instruction that they "never would have given the honorable appellation of 'a learned native' to a native who was familiar with the poetry of Milton, the Metaphysics of Locke, and the Physics of Newton."[30] Much like Goethe, Macaulay's literary evaluation is also evolutionary. However, unlike Goethe, who privileges the Chinese in their literary evolution, Macaulay rejects the Indians for only developing knowledge about "all the uses of the cusa-grass" and the Egyptians for "hieroglyphics . . . all the doctrines disguised under the fable of Osiris . . . [and] the rituals with which cats were anciently adorned."[31] Macaulay presents English and French as languages that bear the keys to modern science, prophesizing that Sanskrit, Arabic, and other languages may one day "become useless."[32] Dismissing Indian languages as "poor and rude" dialects, Macaulay declares

the impossibility of any Western work that could be translated into them due to the lack of a necessary correspondent vocabulary.

In his discussion of the Chinese novel, Goethe is quick to identify a piece of furniture—sedan chairs—that never receive any representation in Western literature. Macaulay also chooses a piece of furniture: a book shelf. Goethe picks his French contemporary and moves to Greek and Latin classics; Macaulay starts with Greek and Latin classics and then moves to contemporary English literature. Macaulay and Goethe make their statements in the light of "access" to literatures from various parts of the world; Macaulay privileges the total suppression of non-Western literatures through his stringent "aesthetic" evaluation, Goethe momentarily accepts the significance of reading non-Western literatures by identifying poetry as the shared property of humankind, even if to eventually establish the primacy of Western literatures.

Macaulay's statement sparks curiosity about the orderly composition of "a good European library"; it draws attention, through comparison, to the unruly heap on which Macaulay throws literatures from India and Arabia. Indeed, Macaulay prompts an investigation of the transcultural and transcontinental principles of evaluating literature through which he grants a superior space to Western literatures. Goethe, with a perspective radically different from Macaulay, further inspires an investigation of how the European library was indeed changing around the time when he pronounces the arrival of the epoch of world literature.

There is one crucial difference between Goethe and Macaulay. While Goethe is perfectly at ease with reading the Chinese novel in translation—even though he does not mention if he reads it in English or French translation—Macaulay passes a judgment on literature based on language. Speaking against the support of publications in Arabic, Farsi, and Sanskrit, Macaulay makes his grand bid to usurp the funds allocated for such tasks and to divert them to the support of education in English, categorically declaring: "The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the Oriental plan of education."[33] The inventory of this "good European library" is based on the comparison of superlative works. While Macaulay hails "Eastern writers" for their "highest stand in poetry," he states, "when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded, and general principles investigated, the superiority of Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable." Historical writing in Sanskrit becomes comparable to "paltry abridgments used in preparatory schools in England."[34] English emerges as the supreme language of commerce and intellect, fact and

fiction, "a pre-eminent language of the West" which "abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us."[35] Macaulay is in fact most explicit in his mention of Greek lineages of European literatures. English is indeed the new Latin and Greek, as Macaulay establishes in his evaluation of the development of vernaculars within English. He also wants Indians to engage with the foreign. "Let us teach them a foreign language" he says, referring to the teaching of English, which apparently will assist in overcoming the ignorance and backwardness of native languages.[36]

Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" inaugurated the systematic institutionalization of English as a medium of education on the Indian subcontinent and has acquired the status of a classic document of intellectual and creative colonization. Through its ideological implication, the document singles out and expels literary traditions in Sanskrit and Arabic from the larger literary landscape of the world. But by implication, he dismisses many unnamed languages and literatures that populated the vast terrains owned and managed by the British. Through its legislative conviction, the document executes the scientific and philosophical hegemony of the colonial metropolis in the management of languages and literatures of the colony (and in the colony). Most importantly, through its discursive ambition, Macaulay's minute signifies the colonial epistemic violence that forever transforms the medium of dominant literary production on the Indian subcontinent as well as in other colonies for centuries to come.

In short, Goethe had one person in his intellectual apprenticeship, Macaulay was about to gain millions more.

Macaulay's concerns are pecuniary, and this is where the idea of the book as a material artifact becomes most pronounced. Macaulay laments the waste of money on the publication of Sanskrit and Arabic books: "Twenty-three thousand volumes, most of them in folios and quartos, fill the libraries, or rather the lumber rooms."[37] The "lumber rooms" must be replaced with one good shelf of a European library. The mythic European library would become one with books by Milton, Newton, the Greeks, and maybe some French literature.

This juxtaposition of Macaulay and Goethe serves well not just to think through literature in the abstract but also through its materiality: the medium of literary dissemination—in translation or in the original, as books or as other print cultural artifacts. At the center of Macaulay's and Goethe's statements are their visions of a "European library"—which through the historical forces of colonialism is transforming in unprecedented ways. In other words, Goethe's moment of *Weltliteratur* is concurrent with the

moment when a particular colonialist stance on Western literatures would inaugurate an entire set of comparative literary approaches, which will project—for most of the nineteenth and well into the late twentieth century—the political power structures of European superiority onto literatures and languages from non-European parts of the world. Through these strategies, many images of the world in binary oppositions would emerge: dominant and dominated, civilized and savage, developed and underdeveloped—in other words, important and unimportant. These worlds will clash eternally and struggle with each other in literary and political recognition, creating many divisions between literary centers and peripheries, empiricisms and theories, and major and minor literatures. With this juxtaposition in mind, let us move to see how despite Macaulay's efforts in India, an empire of books was already on the rise elsewhere, namely in Germany, and acknowledged as such.

Beyond Scholarly Orientalism

The most familiar retelling of the story of Goethe's pronouncement of the dawning of the epoch of world literature is one in which Goethe is at the center, standing, looking down at Eckermann, who sits with his head buried in a stack of pages in which he is industriously recording every word said by his master. The only interruptions occur when Eckermann looks up to ask a question, only to bow his head into the paper again when the master responds.

This mode of discussion is particularly characteristic of the German tradition. Goethe is the hero of Fritz Strich's foundational study *Goethe und die Weltliteratur* (1946). Written in exile in Switzerland during the height of the National Socialist takeover of Germany and published after the end of World War II, Strich's *Goethe* is the embodiment of the humanistic tradition represented by German thought, which was forgotten by the Nazis as they committed crimes against humanity. When Erich Auerbach publishes his essay "Philologie und die Weltliteratur" (1952) in the *Festschrift* for Strich, the two images of Goethe are somewhat aligned. Writing, once again, under the shadow of recent history, Auerbach declares the impossibility of world literature in the Goethean sense, primarily due to the lack of a kind of historicity associated with the appreciation of world literature that he sees during Goethe's era.[38] In more recent interpretations, the grandeur of Goethe returns. "Goethe verkündet bei Tisch eine neue Idee" (Goethe announces a new idea at the dinner table) is the opening chapter of Dieter

Lamping's *Die Idee der Weltliteratur: Ein Konzept Goethes und seine Karriere* (2010): an evolutionary history of the idea of world literature as developed by Goethe.[39] Anchored around the word *verkünden*—to announce, but also to foretell or prophesy (as in to herald a new epoch)—Lamping's Goethe of the twenty-first century is a perfect silhouette of the romantic genius.

This is one mode of evaluating Goethe. The second is to link the very idea of *Weltliteratur* to the birth of the *Weltmarkt*, as Antoine Berman aptly proposes in *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany* (1992). Berman accentuates Goethe's investment in reading translations of German works by himself and his contemporaries, and the significance Goethe accords to the translator.

The third mode of reading extends this idea into Pascale Casanova's proclamation of a *World Republic of Letters*, of which Paris is the unquestioned capital, and Goethe, though a German, a permanent resident if not a citizen. For Casanova, "Goethe elaborates the notion of *Weltliteratur* precisely at the moment of Germany's entry into the international literary space."[40] Let it be clear that with this "entry," Casanova implies a one-way traffic, of German literary works acquiring readerships elsewhere, and not the entry of non-German works into Germany. However, Goethe's foreign exchange brokerage seems limited to that of mostly Western European literatures within the European literary space. So here is Goethe, the harbinger of the age of *Weltliteratur*, the great cosmopolitan spirit, the reader, translator, and interpreter of works from Latin, Greek, Italian, French, and English, the quintessential European literary embodiment, who in a stroke of genius pronounces an idea that shall transform perception of literature for centuries to come!

Apart from the centrality of the figure of Goethe, these modes of interpretation share a few other lines of argumentation. First, the immitigable primacy of literary traditions in languages such as French, English, German, and Italian, with some references to peninsular Spanish, that set the standards for literary evaluations. Second, an established, and seemingly insular intra-European network of translations, which co-opt classical Greek and Latin texts. This itself is a hierarchical network, with London, Paris, Weimar, and Florence forming the first tier of centers of literary and cultural exchange, and northern European cities such as Copenhagen, Christiania, Uppsala, Lund, or southern European such as Madrid and Lisbon as the second-tier, and therefore insignificant, centers. And third, an arbitrary, almost insignificant discursive space granted to literary works from non-European languages in the nineteenth-century construction of

world literature. This fact is particularly jarring when one reads an almost unquestioned significance bestowed upon Asian and African literatures (mostly in English or French) in the late twentieth century. Lamping performs it under the pretext of postcolonial migration to Europe; Casanova traces postcolonial literary developments all the way back to Paris to dismiss other "vernaculars": Hindi, Serbian, Turkish—to name just a few—as "small literatures."

As an alternative line of thought to the above-mentioned modes of argumentation, let us consider a slightly different conceptual prehistory of world literature. In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak characterizes late eighteenth-century Germany as a place of "self-styled difference," a space that is yet to organize itself as a homogenous, unified nation-state, a space that defines itself through the act of comparison. Spivak identifies in this period the birth of several comparative disciplines—comparative religion, comparative linguistics, and eventually comparative literature—which result in the "'scientific' fabrication of new representations of self and world that would provide alibis for the domination, exploitation, and epistemic violation entailed by colony and empire."[41] Through these brief introductory insights on German engagements with India, Spivak modifies and qualifies Edward Said's claim in his influential work *Orientalism*, specifically his assertion that in the absence of colonies, "[the] German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient. . . . Yet what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture."[42]

Said's own statement proves that there is no such thing as an "exclusively, scholarly" Orient. I should mention here that a number of scholars in German studies—including Vanessa Agnew, Nina Berman, Todd Kontje, Suzanne Marchand, Kamakshi Murti, and Georg Steinmetz—have successfully challenged Said's proposition and revealed the nexus between Orientalism and German philosophical, literary, historical, and cultural anthropological discourses about the non-Western Other. Focusing on a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary investigations in musicology, sociology, literary studies, philosophy, historiography, science, and art history, these scholars have shown the construction of a non-European Other in the German cultural tradition was embedded in the larger hegemonic European discourse of the European Self.[43] However, print cultural institutions, especially in conjunction with the proliferation of the term *Weltliteratur*, have remained outside the critical spectrum of this rich

body of scholarship. What is important for our discussion here, is how the scholarly, classical Orient was not entirely exclusive in the fundamental manipulation of Oriental knowledge, it in fact, benefited from it. What is more important is how this scholarly, classical Orient becomes both the harbinger of a self-styled difference and an alibi of colonial dominance and subjugation through the conduit of world literature.

Preparations for Goethe's and Macaulay's statements begin in the early nineteenth century with a new idea of the world and a new idea of the world-in-print that one can access in Europe. Not yet a unified nation (like Britain and France) and not an established colonial power (such as Britain, France, Spain, or Portugal), Germany becomes a major beneficiary of continued physical access to faraway societies and cultures opened through colonialisms in Asia and Africa. There is an unprecedented mass acquisition of knowledge and sources of knowledge as well as a systematic accumulation and collation of these sources in royal, university, and private libraries (of intellectuals). In addition, there occurs a major change in print-cultural production and dissemination: the mass production of books, the rise of multiple publication houses, the proliferation of literary magazines and catalogues, and the establishment of lending libraries create an atmosphere whereby discussions on "the book"—the quintessential medium for access of printed matter—must consider both its intellectual as well as its material aspects.

Goethe did not announce or prophesize his idea on world literature in a historical vacuum. The stage was already set for the master to be in the spotlight and say the dialogue in front of his understudy and apprentice Eckermann. The stage was also set for Macaulay to denounce any usability for Oriental literatures. Apart from Goethe and Macaulay's centrality in their spheres of influence—literary and political—there was another element that would play out in curious ways in the lives of their famous texts: the very stature of "the book" as an institution and its bifurcated nature as intellect (*Geist*) and material object (*Ware*), an idea that would take central stage in both Germany and British India in the first half of the nineteenth century. A massive force field—generated by structures of political governance, organized and sponsored through translation enterprises, print cultural institutions (such as literary magazines) and collection or distribution mechanisms (such as libraries)—builds up before the decade in which Goethe reflects on *Weltliteratur*. Drawing attention to this force field, I want to suggest, might assist in understanding the inauguration of comparative world literature with a mythic European library at its center.

Works and Networks in an Empire of Books

The idea of a mythic European library as underlined by Goethe and Macaulay must be evaluated against the radical change in its face value in the early nineteenth century as non-European works, through manuscripts and translations, acquired their assigned places on bookshelves and treasure chambers across Europe. A century and a half before the migration of individuals from Asia and Africa to parts of Europe and North America happened on a large scale, a different kind of migration of ideas from these continents was already taking place.

The early nineteenth century is the time when a very particular kind of bibliomigrancy—in print and in manuscript form—mostly from South, Central, and East Asia as well as Northern Africa to Europe happens on an unprecedented scale. The idea of the "New World," in its history and contemporaneity, becomes an object of fascination and exploration. The travelogue, which had long served as a major source of knowledge about the world in past centuries, still found validation. What was new was the privileging of a different kind of travel narrative that was not merely about impressions but about knowledge: evaluated, tested, and scientifically *exact* knowledge. The world, be it in its metaphysical, epistemological, ontological, or physical form, was now being accessed through scientific treatises, documents, and maps. New developments in the sciences and technology exemplify the vital energy that characterized the dawn of a speedier age.[44] The launching of several encyclopedias—Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1751), *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1768), which expanded to twenty volumes by 1810, and Renatus Gotthelf Löbel and Christian Wilhelm Franke's *Conversations-Lexicon* (1796), which became the *Brockhaus Enzyklopedie* in 1808—were part of the collection, collation, and classification of knowledge about the world. In other words, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, textual knowledge becomes key to grasping a world beyond one's physical reach. Accessibility to the world was not merely a function of travel; the world was fast becoming accessible *in print*.

It would be a fallacy indeed to assume that the growth of knowledge and the support to quench the curiosity about the world happened in a vacuum. The growing trade between Asian and European nations gave birth to the idea of world trade (*Welthandel*) and world market (*Weltmarkt*) to designate international exchange of goods and international traffic of capital.[45] This growing mercantilism, which led eventually to the establishment of colonial regimes, facilitated access to geographical and historical knowledge

about distant parts of the world.[46] A sense of comparative world history was developing. Leading intellectuals and thinkers, especially in Germany—such as Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel—were all developing comparative modalities of world history (*Weltgeschichte*).[47]

However, this growing sense of "worldliness" in the German-speaking world was in competition with a sense of "national" community, which, in the absence of a nation-state, was largely shaped around the idea of language and literature. On the one hand, as the translator and scholar Susan Bernofsky outlines in *Foreign Words* (2005), there is a massive proliferation of translations in Germany in the early nineteenth century. On the other hand, the Napoleonic Wars create a concentrated interest in German as a national language and literature—exemplified among others by the Brothers Grimm's ascription of a specific "German" nature to their curation and publication of fairy tales (1812–1851), as well as the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (launched in 1838). As Lynne Tatlock notes in the introduction to the anthology *Publishing Culture and the Reading Nation* (2010), expansion of book production in Germany in the early decades of the nineteenth century doubles from the last half of the eighteenth century.[48] Tatlock identifies an emerging sense of a national reading public, whereby books create a "national" reading community—even in the absence of a nation-state—as much as readers augment and affirm their national communitarian affiliations through reading.[49] Andrew Piper, in his authoritative study *Dreaming in Books* (2009), elaborates on the "bibliographic imagination" of the German romantic period. Documenting the publishing strategies around the 1820s, Piper lists how novellas, keepsakes, collected works, but also translations led to a surplus of books in the German-speaking world.

It is in this important and transformative period in German literary and political history that the "bibliographic imagination" slowly but surely starts to include works from non-German, non-European spaces. The surplus of books goes beyond local creative production; it starts acquiring a worldly dimension as well. The "reading nation" reads the national and that which is extranational. While an intra-European circulation of literature in translation and original languages was already in place, an extra-European traffic of books was growing at an unprecedented rate. Germany at that point in time was more than just a "republic of letters"; there is a recognition of the expansion of the empire of books ("die Vermehrung des Bücherreichs").[50] This empire of books creates the conditions for Goethe's pronouncement of the term *Weltliteratur*. Books were delivered, literally, to one's doorstep, including Goethe's.

Consider the example of *Sakuntal*a. In 1791, Johann Georg Adam Forster, a young German migrant living in London, acquired a copy of *Sakontala*, the English translation of the Sanskrit play *Abhigyana Sakuntalam* (ca. 500–600 CE) by Kalidasa. The play was translated into English by Sir William Jones, Orientalist, comparative linguist, and judge of the supreme court at the seat of the British East India Company in Calcutta. Forster, who had been living in England since the age of seven, had just returned from a long trip; he and his father, Johann Reinhold Forster, had accompanied Captain James Cook on his second voyage around the world (1772–1775). Georg had published the journals of his father, first in English as *A Voyage Towards the South Pole and Round the World* (1777), and then in German as *Reise um die Welt* (1778–1780), which had already found him critical appreciation from German literary figures and thinkers such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Goethe. Fascinated by what he had read, Forster decided to translate *Sakontala* into German, giving it the title *Sakontala oder der entscheidende Ring, ein indisches Schauspiel von Kalidasa*. He then sent the translation to Herder, who received it with enthusiasm. It is this particular translation that Goethe receives with the following reaction:

> Will ich die Blumen des frühen, die Früchte des späteren Jahres,
> Will ich, was reizt und erquickt, will ich was sättigt und nährt,
> Will ich den Himmel, die Erde, mit einem Worte begreifen,
> Nenn' ich Sakontala dich, und so ist alles gesagt.[51]

The English translation of this verse by Georg Forster was referenced by Rabindranath Tagore in his Bengali essay "Shakuntala" (1902):

> Shall I embrace the blossoms of spring, the fruits of the autumn,
> All that enchants and that charms, all that nurtures and fills?
> Shall I embrace in a name all heaven and all of the earth,
> Call I, Shakuntala, thee—all is comprised in one name.[52]

Calling Goethe "the wise master in the line of European Poets," Tagore stated, "Goethe's observation is not a hyperbolic expression of delight; it is the considered judgment of a connoisseur."[53] An act of translation that originated in the British Empire initiated an entire tradition of translations—both literally and figuratively. More importantly, it facilitated a new organization of knowledge in Germany through the very idea of comparison. *Sakontala* will be subsequently translated for the German stage by William Gerhard in 1820, and published by F. A. Brockhaus in Leipzig, the first publishers of Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe*.

Goethe's evaluation of non-European literatures in superlative terms became central to his many writings on world literature published before and after 1827. In an essay, "Indian Poetry" ("Indische Dichtungen"), written around the end of 1821 and published only after his death, Goethe stated that we (Germans) would be "most ungrateful, if we were not to mention Indian poetry also in glowing terms." He found Indian poetry admirable for its ability to manage the "conflict with the most abstruse philosophy on the one side and the most monstrous religion on the other in a most happy temperament."[54] Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* and *Megha-Duta*, as well as Jayadeva's *Gita-Govinda* belonged for him to this category of works. Calling William Jones "incomparable," Goethe praises him for his understanding of his "western islanders," for he was apparently able to hold the limits of European propriety and yet was daring enough to present all innuendos contained in the text. In a set of writings on Asian literatures, Goethe praised Carl Jakob Ludwig Iken's German translation (*Das Papageienbuch*, published 1822) of Muhammad Khudavand Kadiri's version (ca. 1600) of Ziya-al-din Nakshabi's *Tuti Nameh* (Tales of a parrot, ca. 1329), for "with every line one is lead over the whole world, through allegories and tropes, through the amassing and showering of related subjects."[55] After reading Hagen's translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* Goethe wrote: "The subject matter [is] real, absolutely contemporary, through its inestimable richness often oppressive, but never irritating. . . . With this in mind there will be hardly be more meaningful work to be found."[56]

While Goethe was mostly concerned with the reception of Indian or Asian literature, there was another German intellectual who had exacted plans to publish Indian literature, even before Goethe. In 1823, the German philologist, critic, and poet August Wilhelm Schlegel submitted a "Prospectus" for publishing Oriental literature in Europe to the Royal Asiatic Society in London. Schlegel was an honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society; the "Prospectus" was published (in English) in the January 1824 issue of *The Asiatic Journal*.[57] In the "Prospectus," Schlegel announced his plans to "publish a series of editions of some works, selected from the most distinguished production of the ancient and original literatures of the Brahmins."[58] After presenting his credentials as the translator of the *Bhagvad-Gita* into Latin,[59] Schlegel proposes the translation and publication of "the complete edition of the epic poem Ramayana, or *The Exploits of Rama*."[60] Akin to his brother Friedrich Schlegel's positioning of Sanskrit literature in his *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (*On the Language and Wisdom of Indians*, 1808), August Wilhelm Schlegel also underlines the

uniqueness, originality, and, most importantly, the comparability of Sanskrit texts to those from classical Greek and Latin literatures:

> The literature of ancient Greece was still in existence at Constantinople, when, in the 15th Century, some Greek fugitives taught their languages in Western Europe. These Greeks were undoubtedly very learned; but they laboured under certain prejudices, and were grown old in certain habits; and if the task of editing the classic authors had been left to them alone, we should never had had any text so correct, nor any comments so satisfactory, as those of which we are now in possession.[61]

In fact, August Wilhelm Schlegel is the first German intellectual to explicitly locate the necessity of translation of (Sanskrit) literary works into European languages for the development of comparative scientific knowledge:

> The admirable structure of that language, its surprising affinity with the Persian, the Greek, the Latin, and the Teutonic languages makes it a leading object of a science, which may be called quite new, *viz*. comparative grammar, a science which, being upheld by facts, will advance with a progressive and sure step; while conjectural etymology, treated as it has been, had led to nothing but chimerical systems. Moreover, the ancient religion, the mythology . . . throw the greatest light on similar objects . . . especially among the Egyptians. The written monuments of a literature . . . make us acquainted with the source of their manners and customs, of their notions and prejudices. . . . In one word, it may be affirmed that a thorough knowledge of ancient India is the only key to the state of modern India.[62]

However, August Wilhelm Schlegel's "Prospectus" distinguishes itself through its main focus, which is less on the content and more on material sources of literary works that he proposes to publish. He expands his plans to publish voluminous Latin translations of Sanskrit epics. The prerequisite for such a mammoth task, he declares, is the evaluation of "genuineness and correctness" of available Sanskrit manuscripts, a task he claims necessitates the acquisition and comparison of as many manuscripts as possible from different parts of India. In addition to promising explanatory footnotes along with annotated commentaries on the texts in his edition, Schlegel lays out a plan whereby the Sanskrit manuscripts would be transformed into printed books. They would be published in Paris in the Devanagari script, "of which the types were cut and cast, under my [Schlegel's] direction, by order of the Prussian government."[63] Furthermore, he

promises institutional libraries and private collectors a high quality of paper and exactitude of typographical execution and projects the publication of eight volumes of the *Ramayana*, to be delivered in 1825 at the retail price of four pounds. A Latin translation of Valmiki's *Ramayana* by Schlegel was indeed published in 1829—four years after the projected date of publication—as *Rāmāyana, id est, carmen epicum de Ramæ rebus gestis poetæ antiquissimi Valmicis opus* (The Ramayana, the epic song of Rama, the great work of the ancient poet Valmiki). In many ways, the "Prospectus" extends some of the ideas that Schlegel published in the foreword to the first volume of the periodical *Die indische Bibliothek* (1820), which specialized in translations of Sanskrit literature into German.

Schlegel was not alone in his desire to establish a journal called "indische Bibliothek" or publish Sanskrit works in Europe. In 1826, Othmar Frank, Professor Ordinarius at the Königlich Bayerische Ludwig Maximilians Universität, München—also an honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society—published the first volume of the journal *Vjāsa: über Philosophie, Mythologie, Literatur und Sprache der Hindu*, which was dedicated to the idea of proliferating Sanskrit literature in the German academy. The *Vorrede* (preface) to the first volume acknowledges Maximilian I and Ludwig I as "the first princes of Germany to understand the value of knowledge of ancient India . . . who, in this endeavor, [were able to] imitate the royal government of Prussia."[64] In addition, he states that "in Germany, Bavaria was also the first place where for the first time the suggestion for a Sanskrit-typeset press was made, the first Sanskrit script was printed (with the help of lithograph), and the first elementary Sanskrit works were edited."[65] As Frank reports, the journal was printed by the university press of the Ludwig Maximilians Universität, with the Sanskrit typeface provided by the Mayer foundry in Nuremberg. It was the second place to publish Devanagari in Germany after Berlin (with the typeface designed in Bonn, also known as the Bonner Schrift).[66]

Frank positions himself as a collector and mediator of the knowledge imparted by the "written monuments" ("schriftliche Denkmäler") of ancient India. And for this reason, he states, the journal is named after "*Vjāsa*, also known as *Vædavjāsa* (collector and organizer of Vedas) . . . who is considered to be the inaugural and the focal point of all Indian literature, mythology, and philosophy."[67] Having established himself as the modern-day equivalent of Vyasa, Frank moves to the actual act of collecting, collating, editing, and publishing: through his journal, but also through the library.

A comparison of statements by Schlegel and Frank with regard to lavishing praise on their royal patrons for the acquisition of manuscripts and

the setting up of prototypes for the Devanagari script reveals how non-European manuscripts, positioned as "masterpieces," were also sources of competition for prestige between Prussia and Bavaria. In his preface, Frank reports with a fair degree of lament that he had already planned the journal in 1817, but, unbeknownst to him, was superseded by the earlier publication of another "indische Bibliothek"—explicitly leaving the editor's name unmentioned—while emphasizing immediately that given the extensive nature and the significance of Sanskrit literature, and the difference in content, perspective, and treatment, there would be many libraries with similar names published in the following years.

Beyond this internal rivalry, what is most striking is Frank's detailed account of the number of Sanskrit manuscripts with origins spanning a wide period that are available in London at the British Library and in many private collections, with whom he sees himself in competition. In his opening essay on the "Scientific Content of Sanskrit Literature" in the journal,[68] Frank comments on the collection of H. T. Colebrooke, director of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, who acquired his collection carefully ("sorgfältig") and assiduously ("mit Eifer") during his various positions of authority in Mirzapur and Berar in Eastern India, and who was assisted in his collecting by the most thorough experts and critics ("gründlichsten Kenner und Kritiker").[69] Frank lists 57 medical, 67 mathematical and astronomical, 136 grammatical, 61 lexical, 239 puranic, mythic, and saga-related, and 200 nonreligious poetic works, and many more as being part of Colebrooke's collection. In addition, he sends clear signals to his royal patrons encouraging them to acquire some of them by stating the richness of the 1807 catalogue of the Royal Library of Paris and the unknown number of works that exist in the Propaganda Library in Rome.[70]

While royal libraries in Germany were engaged in their own feuds about manuscripts, the availability of translated works in print was enabling literary magazines to build a wider readership interested in world literature. As already mentioned, Wieland and Schlegel were precursors to Goethe's discussion of the term *Weltliteratur* in the German-speaking world. But beyond these well-known figures, there were others, publishing anonymously in literary magazines, identifying the rise of access to a "world-in-print" through books and literature, examining the connections between a changing geopolitical world order in an era of colonialism to the east and the south and the establishment of the United States to the west of the European continent, seeing *Weltliteratur* both as a catalyst and a product of an "empire of books."

The literary magazine *Literarisches Conversations-Blatt* (1820–1825), later entitled *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* (1826–1898)—published in Leipzig by F. A. Brockhaus—became an important platform for these anonymous voices. As Heinrich Eduard Brockhaus discusses in his history of the publishing company, *Die Firma F. A. Brockhaus* (1905), the magazine was acquired by Friedrich Arnold Brockhaus in 1820 from August von Kotzbue in Weimar, who published it as *Literarisches-Wochenblatt* (1818–1820). The change of names came about due to two separate instances of the magazine's banning in Prussia, the first because of the publication of a piece about König Friedrich Wilhelm and his wife from the perspective of a French diplomat (1820), after which the magazine acquired the new name *Literarisches Conversations-Blatt*. And a second time due to the publication of the Prussian calendar without the official endorsement of König Friedrich Wilhelm (1825), after which the magazine changed its name to *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*.[71] The magazine was published daily (except Sundays), thus amounting to three hundred issues a year. Neither the subscription numbers nor the print run of the magazine can be reproduced exactly, especially since the Brockhaus Archives were destroyed during World War II; one can only speculate that the readership must have included an educated elite as well as a discerning bourgeois readership. Just between 1826 and 1828, so roughly two years before Goethe's pronouncement of *Weltliteratur*, the magazine published around two hundred major feature articles, advertisements, or publication news on literary works primarily from European languages other than German and on works from Asia, the United States, and occasionally from South America, which were translated into English, French, and German. The magazine regularly carried news features on acquisitions of major European libraries, such as the Propaganda Library in Italy, the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, the British Museum, as well as libraries in Asia, such as the collections of the Asiatick Society in Calcutta, or British plans to acquire new libraries *en masse*, such as the Tibetan library in Lhasa. In sum, the magazine profiled local (German) and world literatures, with a keen eye on the transformation in the book market. Two articles in particular, published prior to Goethe's pronouncement of *Weltliteratur*, merit attention for my discussion.

On November 27, 1822, the *Conversations-Blatt* published an article, "Betrachtungen über Bücher und Büchervermehrung" (Reflections on books and the growth of books). The article begins with a discussion of a "wealthy, mercantile England" ("reiche, kaufmännische England") complaining about the rising poverty and declining gold and silver reserves in Europe. Against these products that decline by overuse, the author locates

in Europe one product that increases by its use, namely, literary products ("literarische Erzeugnisse"), a sector in which other parts of the world lag behind the comparatively smaller continent of Europe. Crediting the current stock of books ("Büchervorrath") to the history of increased book production in Europe since the invention of Gutenberg's printing press, the anonymous author moves quickly to articulate the problem of this ever-growing stock of books as a problem of "librarians and litterateurs, whose duty it is to recognize and order this stock" ("Bibliothekare und Literatoren, deren Pflicht es ist, diese Masse zu erkennen und zu ordnen"). Fortified by the idealism of the immortality of books and the supremacy of the European share in book production, the author declares:

> One can say, most certainly, that all the current large book-collections do not have the required space, and that in a shorter or longer period of time, they will not be able to make space for the surging treasures of books. In the coming centuries this surge will become stronger and richer, depending upon how *the culture* spreads on all parts of the globe. For a long time, Europe will have the largest share in the growth of the *empire of books*. But the literature of North America is already not entirely insignificant, and the hard-fought freedom and independence of the present European colonies in those parts of the world will add to a flourishing literature. (The Europeans must either give those colonies a constitution concurrent with the demands of the Zeitgeist and the rising culture, or they will sooner or later be lost for Europe). Books are written and published in Asia as well. European literature itself can perhaps expect a significant expansion in the future; because in the old fatherland of classical writings in Attica, as in the rest of Greece, after a successful struggle for freedom, a born-again empire of writing will certainly arise. . . . Such happy prospects for the literature as a whole, or for a world-literature, might have, as per the above-mentioned perspective, something disturbing for librarians and literati; but only apparently so.[72] (Italics added)

This long quotation encapsulates several mutually conflicting and yet mutually fortifying thoughts. The increased awareness of a growing "empire of books" directs the author's attention to worlds outside of Europe where book production is on the rise: Asia must be acknowledged for its literary productions; the new access to North American writings can no longer be ignored. However—no different than Goethe or Macaulay—the vested interest in a purported European supremacy over literary production and

the book market will trace the roots of European literature squarely in Attica and the rest of Greece. Furthermore, these tensions add to a very mono-dimensional implication of "culture" as European culture, which the colonial regimes must deploy—in service of a Hegelian manifestation of the Zeitgeist—to manage the colonies through the dissemination of European culture. By setting up the opposition between commodities such as gold and silver and books, the author implicitly establishes the German-speaking world (through Europe) as the foundational force behind the empire of books. England is reduced to a mercantile nation as opposed to the cultural and intellectual dimensions that set apart the German-speaking world. I will soon turn to the role of England in establishing a global network of production of world literature in translation, which will also feature German intellectuals. Suffice it to say now that there is a strong implication of a German *Kulturnation*, which becomes part of the discussions of world literature in early nineteenth-century Germany.[73]

The anonymous author emphasizes the role of the library as the central agency, whose work it is to collect both old and new books, from Europe and abroad. And yet this library remains necessarily Eurocentric. In other words, the positive outlook on the expansion of the book market and the new rising "empire of books" is expressed along with uncertainties and anxieties about the unknown aspects of that expanding empire.

These anxieties, mixed with skepticism toward growing readerships of European works outside of Europe, are articulated in a much stronger register in another article, published on August 4, 1827—just a few months before Goethe's famous pronouncement of the term—in the *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*. Entitled "Weltliteratur: Cooper's neuster Roman," the article was a damning review of the German translation of James Fennimore Cooper's *The Prairie* (1827). The opening section of the review is worthy of a lengthy citation:

> World literature and yet ephemeral literature [*Tagesliteratur*]! We want to talk not of the old immortals whose continued worth, resembled the growing currents that fulfilled every long century, and which, like those currents, conducted by the ever powerful rampaging education, are carried over from their motherland over the big seas to Asia, Africa, and America. May the old Homer boast to the immortals up there that he is read on the borders of the Hottentots, the Burmese, and the Sioux; what more is it, than what the editor of the "British Chronicle" can prove with his works published here below, after it is merely a few

> months old. Isn't the king [*Kaiser*] of Brazil its first subscriber? Is it not published in Gotha and New York, does it not circulate in Rio de Janeiro and Petersburg, in Vienna and Washington, in London and Paris, in Berlin and Calcutta, not to mention Weimar and Lima? Who knows, what would become of the cabinet library of German classics, if the petty guilds of booksellers in Leipzig and Berlin were in the position to consider the excellent plan of the Bibliographic Institute in Gotha and New York, which certainly went from the premise to introduce Schiller's, Goethe's and Jean Paul's great works in the capital cities of the Burmese, the Californians, and the Kaffirs. . . . The prospects, which are opening up in similar undertakings for world literature, are so big and vast, that they can make one dizzy. We shall refrain from them and turn to the latest novel by the North American Walter Scott, who in short would be called Cooper and who, in comparison to the book-list of the Bibliographic Institutes in Gotha and New York only has a moderate world public. Because that novel, "The Prairie," entitled *Die Prairie* in German, has appeared, as announced, at most in four countries and three languages simultaneously, in the original language in London and New York, in French in Paris, and in German in Berlin with Duncker and Humblot.[74]

Comparable to, but also differing from Goethe and Macaulay, the author of this article establishes several sets of hierarchies: of circulated materials, trajectories of circulation, as well the recipients of circulation—all as distinguishing features of the category of world literature. *Tagesliteratur* is a term used for regionally or locally circulated writings. The inauguration of the article with a distinction between world literature (*Weltliteratur*) and ephemeral literature (*Tagesliteratur*) is particularly instructive to understand the set of hierarchies—composed of binary opposites—that the author of the article would create and then pursue in order to situate his reading of Cooper's novel. The immediate following of a reference to the German poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock's first poem "Der Lehrling der Griechen" (1747; The apprentice to the Greeks)—a poem that is supposed to reintroduce classical lyric meter into German poetry—further substantiates the distinction between the two: world literature is Greek, i.e., of timeless value, whereas a purportedly badly written novel such as *The Prairie* might be published in several languages simultaneously, and although it may acquire some readership beyond its point of origin, it will remain the flavor of the day (*Tagesgeschmack*) and therefore ephemeral. With a sarcastic tone, the geographies of literary circulation acquire var-

ied statuses. The rampaging power of education (*Bildung*) might carry a Homer to natives in West Africa, South East Asia, or the American Midwest; a phenomenon that would be no more and no less than the readership of the *British Chronicle* in places as distant as Lima and St. Petersburg. The suspicion that follows—about the fate of German classics with a reference to the "Miniatur Bibliothek" of the Bibliographic Institute of Gotha and New York (established in 1826)—is equally uncharitable. When read in context, the use of German literature by the Burmese, Californians, the Sioux, or even the Kaffirs—then and until the end of Apartheid a pejorative term for Blacks in South Africa—remains questionable for the author. The "dizzying" prospect of world literature thus becomes the immediate precursor to the circulation trajectory of a North American author, who, the author declares later in the essay, is by no means an American Walter Scott.

These are two examples, selected from hundreds published in *Die Blätter*, become symptomatic of the tensions and anxieties that are ascribed to the term *Weltliteratur* in the early nineteenth-century German literary sphere. Along with English-language works published in the United States, available traditionally through England but now being translated into German and French, there was a growing awareness of *Weltliteratur* that was in full swing parallel to—and not merely as a consequence of—the famous statement by Goethe. In addition to the acquisition of manuscripts by royal and university libraries, and the publication of translations into German, the period also saw the organization and establishment of some of the first worldwide-sponsored translation funds, the most prominent of them being the Oriental Translation Fund, to which I now turn.

The Oriental Translation Fund and the Unnamed Chinese "Novel"

The Oriental Translation Fund was set up by the Oriental Translation Committee in London in 1828, with the "Plan for translating and publishing such interesting and valuable Works on Eastern History, Science, and Belles-Lettres as are still in M[anu]S[cript] in the Libraries of the Universities, the British Museum, and the East-India House, and in other Collections, in Asia and Africa, as well as in Europe, and for providing Funds to carry this object into execution."[75] The committee's connections to German-speaking Europe were first through royalty: the main patron was King George IV of Great Britain and Ireland and King of Hanover; one of the first vice-patrons included Royal Highness Prince Leopold I

of Saxe-Coburg, who had his roots in modern day Thuringia; later German universities became subscribers to their publications. The administrative structure of the committee reflected the nexus between aristocratic, academic, and colonial elites; it also embodied the global scale and scope of the plan. The vice-patrons included the Dukes of Clarence, Sussex, and Wellington, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the chancellors of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Overseas vice-patrons included Lord William Bentinck (at the time, the Governor-General of India), governors of the presidencies of Bombay, Ceylon, and Madras, and H. T. Colebrook (who at the time was the director of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland). The committee itself was globally constituted, with representation from professors of Hebrew, Arabic, Sanskrit, Hindustani, and "Oriental Languages, and History" both in England and in cities as far flung as Aberdeen, Alexandria, Colombo, Calcutta, Corfu, Bombay, Madras, Tehran, Tunis, and Singapore, to name just a few.[76] The first report lists about one hundred subscribers, ranging from individuals—mostly nobility—to all major libraries in England, as well as literary societies of major cities in the British colonies and the Asiatic society in Calcutta.[77] Even by today's standards, the endeavor was impressively multinational.

However, it is not merely the globality of the enterprise but its aim and scope that makes it worthy of consideration even in the contemporary context. The organization's task was to acquire manuscripts, commision translations, and subsidize the production of Oriental texts in European languages. The network of trajectories of manuscripts and books thus becomes more complex than one can imagine. The committee positioned itself transnationally—promising to act as a liaison between British centers of learning with those in the colonies—and appointed itself to make Eastern literature accessible to the public. The Prospectus of the Committee from 1828 explicitly mentions the significance of public accessibility to literary and scholarly works. The very first point of the prospectus underscores how the committee's goal is to explore ways through which "the public may be put in possession of all that is valuable in Eastern literature, and an opportunity be presented for shewing that this country is not at present backward in contributing to the advancement of Oriental learning, which she has long held the foremost rank."[78] The agenda of publications reflects this spirit: the committee identifies several works in Arabic, Persian, Syrian, Sanskrit, and Hindustani, in fields as diverse as geography, statistics, history, law, and literature. The results of this endeavor are consequently promised for both "England and its Eastern possessions . . . productive for the good of both the governors and the governed."[79] The

legislative source and the executive force of the last quotes attest the power of the Oriental discourse as described by Edward Said and the numerous publications thereafter. What is equally remarkable, and must be noted, is the idea of the *Gemeingut*—the common or shared property—which appears in the prospectus to qualify literary works. Texts, when converted from manuscripts to mass-published books—in the original and in translation—acquire their dual role as intellectual and material artifacts.

Which works were first identified as worthy of translation and publication? The annotated bibliography of the Second Report of the Oriental Translation Fund attests the multilingual nature and the historical range of these texts. The bibliography groups works under three rubrics: "Theology, Ethics, and Metaphysics," "History, Geography, and Travels," and "Belles Lettres." Richard Clarke's translation from Tamil of Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural* (2 BCE to 8 CE), H. T. Colebrooke's translation from Sanskrit of Gauḍapāda's *Sānkhyakārikā* (400–500 CE), and James Ross's translation from Farsi of Sheikh Sa'adi's *Bostān* (1257 CE) fall under the first category; Henderson's translation from Arabic of Ibn Khaldun's *Kitab-ul-Ibar* (ca. 1400 CE) and Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's translation from Turkish of Evliya Çelebi's *Seyāhatnāme* form part of the second group. The "Belles Lettres" category lists three works, all originally in Persian: the popular poem *Meher va Mushteri*, the accounts of *Hātim Tāi*, and the love story of *Shirin and Ferhād*. This list would expand considerably in the next years. The second report includes translations of two literary works (classified as romances) from Chinese;[80] the third report lists over fifty works in three categories in six languages.[81]

The Oriental Translation Fund provides an important link in juxtaposing Goethe's and Macaulay's statements on the literary evaluation of non-European works. While Macaulay's reliance on the "translations by Orientalists" can be linked easily to the Oriental Translation Fund, a brief discussion of the story of Goethe's "unnamed" Chinese novel helps to make further connections.

Since the late nineteenth century, speculative discussions about the exact title of the novel have abounded among members of the subfield of "Goethe-Philology" within German studies (*Germanistik*), establishing *Hau-qiu zhuan* (German: *Haoh Kjöh Tschwen*) as the most likely title.[82] Not all scholarly sources agree with this speculation. Hanns Eppelsheimer's authoritative *Handbuch der Weltliteratur* annotates *Yu Jiaoli* (German: *Yu Giaoli oder die Beiden Basen*) with the remark that this humble story of manners ("diese bescheidene Sittengeschichte") is being included in the handbook only because of its European fame ("europäischen Rufes"); the

readers are directed to Eckermann's *Gespräche*.[83] U. C. Fischer links *Chin Ku Chi' Kuan* (German: *Kin-ku-ki-kuan*) with Goethe's *Chinesisch-Deutsche Jahre- und Tageszeiten* (1827), claiming that an English translation of the novel was present in Goethe's library in Weimar.[84] In most of these discussions, details of the content of the Chinese novel provided by Goethe—his mention of the moon, goldfish, "Rohrstühle" (sedan chairs), a couple in love, Chinese legends, and most importantly the specific comparative reference to his own novel *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797)—become conclusive evidence for detecting the title of the novel. Underlying these discoveries are expectations of exactitude from Eckermann who, in the foreword to *Gespräche*, categorically defies such anticipations by stating that his book portrays "*mein Goethe*" (*my Goethe*; italics in the original), to the extent that he (Eckermann) "was able to perceive and depict him."[85]

Such expectations notwithstanding, 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 play a significant role. *Hao-qiu zhuan* was first translated into English by James Wilkinson (later edited by Thomas Percy) as *The Pleasing History* (1761); its translation into German by Christoph Gottlieb von Murr, *Haoh Kjöh Tschwen d. i. die angenehme Geschichte des Haoh Kjöh. Ein chinesischer Roman* (1766) references the English title and was published by the famous Johann Friedrich Junius Verlag. Wilhelm Grimm, in a letter to his brother Jakob, mentioned that Goethe read from the novel in Heidelberg in 1815.[86] In the early twentieth century, a new German translation of *Hao-qiu zhuan* by the philologist Franz Kuhn was published by Insel Verlag. The long title, *Eisherz und Edeljaspis oder Die Geschichte einer glücklichen Gattenwahl: ein Roman aus der Ming-Zeit* (literal translation: "Ice-Heart and the royal Jasper or the story of a happy choice of spouse: A novel from the Ming-times") was perhaps meant to signal an improvement over von Murr's translation from English; Kuhn had translated the Chinese work into German. However, the translation bears no mention of von Murr. In his afterword to the translation, Kuhn cites the passage on the Chinese novel from *Gespräche* to affirm the superiority of his translation over the inadequate ("unzulänglich") French translation of the novel by Abel Rémusat that was purportedly available to Goethe in 1827.[87] Rémusat's translation of *Yu Jiaoli* as *Ju-kiao-li, ou les deux cousines: Roman chinois* from Chinese into French was published in Paris by Moutardier in 1826, and was indeed available at the Großherzogliche Bibliothek in Weimar. A German translation, *Ju-kiao-li, oder die beiden Basen: ein chinesischer Roman* (translator unknown) was published by Franckh in Stuttgart

in 1827. As for *Chin Ku Chi' Kuan*, Eduard Griesbach's German translation was first published in 1880 as *Kin-ku-ki-kuan*: *neue und alte Novellen der chinesischen 1001 Nacht*, thus positioning the novel as the Chinese *Alif Laila wa Laila* for German readers. Unlike von Murr's reliance on Percy's English translation of *Hao-qiu zhuan*, Griesbach's translation did not rely on the first English translation of *Chin Ku Chi' Kuan*.

In 1820, Peter Perring Thoms, an employee of the British East India Company stationed in Macau, had published *The Affectionate Pair, or The History of Sung-kin: A Chinese Tale* with the London-based publisher Black, Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen (BKPA). In the early nineteenth century BKPA was the leading publishing house of books about and translations from the British colonies. Next to Perring's translation, BKPA published John B. Gilchrist's *The Stranger's Infallible East-Indian Guide* (1820) and Charles Mills's *History of Mohammedanism* (1817), and held publishing rights to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1818 edition). In 1829, John Francis Davis published a new English translation of *Hao-qiu zhuan* as *The Fortunate Union: A Romance* with BKPA, who then were also the official printers for the Oriental Translation Fund. Thoms also published the work *Chinese Courtship* (BKPA, 1824), which Goethe had access to in 1827.[88] Bookended by *The Pleasing History* (1761) and *The Fortunate Union* (1829), Goethe's moment of giving traction to the term *Weltliteratur* from 1827 becomes part of a larger network of literary works that made their way to Europe in translation.

Goethe was aware of this growing traffic of works in the age of faster book publication. In his address to the "Gesellschaft für ausländische schöne Literatur" (Society for foreign beautiful literature) founded on the occasion of his birthday on August 28, 1829, Goethe encouraged their endeavors and their mission, stating that in the quick-acting contemporary book market, one was able to refer to any work in haste, but he also warned that it is no small task to be able to penetrate literature of the latest times.[89] From asking everyone to hasten the approach of world literature in 1827, two years later Goethe thinks of world literature as an extension of national literature: "When such a world literature, which is inevitable in the case of the growing speed of traffic, forms next time, we may no longer and not otherwise expect from it than what they can afford and guarantee. The vast world, as extended it may be, is always only an expanded homeland, and strictly speaking, does not give us more than what was awarded by the native soil."[90]

Goethe's sentiment about the world as an expanded homeland will be echoed by Erich Auerbach after World War II, as I will discuss in detail in

chapter 4. Suffice it to say that the growing traffic of literature in translation granted Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* new homelands in many languages. David Damrosch has wonderfully sketched the many lives of Eckermann's book in English in the introduction to *What Is World Literature?*[91] But there is another story of Eckermann's book, one that further reveals the dual nature of books through a legal battle in which Eckermann was involved with his publisher. While *Conversations with Goethe* gained in translation, *Gespräche mit Goethe* caused Eckermann to lose a few battles of his own. After a long walk through print cultural developments contributing to the primacy of masters and masterpieces, I will next cast a final glance at another pact: the one between master Goethe and his apprentice Eckermann.

Eckermann after Goethe

Eckermann is duly credited with bringing to public light Goethe's famous statement about world literature through his *Gespräche*. However, the story of the making of this masterpiece is also a story of Eckermann's subservience and total dedication that occurs through his exploitation at Goethe's hands and ultimately his betrayal by Goethe's descendants. It is also a story of legal intrigue through copyright law at a time of transition in the book market of the German-speaking world. The story of world literature is incomplete without the story of Eckermann.

"Bei Goethe zu Tisch" (Dinner with Goethe), so begins Eckermann's entry for December 31, 1827, in *Gespräche mit Goethe in letzten Jahren seines Lebens*. Eckermann might not have realized that this was a fateful New Year's Eve dinner, and Goethe's conversations with him, especially his dictum on *Weltliteratur*, would contribute to the making of Eckermann's book into his most, and sadly only, notable work. Eckermann also did not know that this work was the beginning of the end of his literary career, and he would pay dearly for his service and his many conversations with Goethe until the end of his life. By 1827 Eckermann had been in Weimar for a good four years, documenting and reconstructing his meetings with the larger-than-life literary figure—the reigning master of literature and the arts, not only in Germany, but in all of Europe at the time. His subservience vis-à-vis Goethe was self-generated and self-confessed: "My relationship to him was of a peculiar kind and [of] a very delicate nature. It was that of a pupil to his master, a son to the father, of someone needy of education to the erudite."[92] That Goethe hugely benefited from Eckermann's taking up residence in Weimar would be an understatement. Apart from providing

editorial supervision for the publication of *Faust II*, *Dichtung und Wahrheit IV*, and a forty-volume collected works—all unpaid—Eckermann was living on a meager income of less than three hundred thaler a year, earned mostly by providing German lessons to young Englishmen spending time in Weimar.[93] He had been instructed by Goethe—who earned three thousand thaler a year just from the court of Weimar and thousands more through his royalties—to do so. Eckermann was obliged to be in Goethe's company. He started humbly as the son of a door-to-door cloth merchant in Winsen an der Lühe near Hamburg, as he also states in the preface to *Gespräche*. His childhood interest in becoming a painter was denied because the villagers could not imagine that he wanted to be a painter of art, and not a house painter, and since Hamburg had buildings over five stories high, painting was declared a dangerous profession and so off-limits for him. After serving in the Franco-Prussian wars and then managing to study for two years at the University of Göttingen on a stipend, Eckermann felt that he had finally arrived when he met with Goethe for the first time in Weimar in June 1823. Eckermann had sent his treatise on Goethe's poetry to him prior to his arrival and was hoping that his own poetry would one day be blessed by Goethe. But Goethe had other plans. Goethe was more than obliged to have a young man both as an acolyte to archive his ideas in the last stages of his life and as a secretary and editor until his death in 1832.

Three years after Goethe's death, in December 1835, Eckermann sent the manuscript of the first volume of *Gespräche mit Goethe* to the publishing house F. A. Brockhaus in Leipzig. Eckermann's pitch was no less grandiose than Goethe's actual following: in his initial letter to Friederick Brockhaus, Eckermann stated how the book would be of immense interest to English, French, Italian, and Spanish reading publics. The proposal was approved with some important negotiations and the first two parts were set to be released as a book at the Ostermesse in Leipzig (today the annual Leipziger Buchmesse) in June 1836.[94]

Eckermann's publication of the volume happens around the same time when the definition of copyright law was being transformed due to the change in the primary employment of authors. Unlike Goethe, an employee of the court of Weimar, a new generation of authors with professions ranging from medicine, law, and university teaching was on the rise. The rising number of authors wanting to make their living through writing and demanding more control over their works also challenged publishers and by extension the copyright law. The dissemination of works now took place through intermediary book dealers (*Zwischenbuchhändler*), which ba-

sically meant that books were bought by bookstores and prices paid and accounts settled at the end of the year.

Eckermann, who, on Goethe's instructions, had funded himself primarily as a German teacher for the English who came to Weimar, was left with no pecuniary resources after Goethe's death. His sole source of income through writing was focused on *Gespräch*e, and in 1843 he realized that something might be wrong with the figures provided by the accounting department of Brockhaus. In his bid to correct the error, he wrote to Brockhaus, noting that he had heard many praises about his book and expected more copies to be sold than was projected. Heinrich Brockhaus wrote to him personally, first assuring him that he would look into the matter, pretending all the same that there might not be an error, as all copies sold were yet to be accounted for. However, upon finding out that there was indeed an error in the payment of manuscripts, he immediately sent more money. But the errors and misunderstandings continued, and a spate of correspondence followed—first between Eckermann and Brockhaus, and then between Eckermann's lawyer, Dr. Wydenbrygk, and Brockhaus's lawyer, Dr. Schreckenberg. The trial ran for three years. Brockhaus, who himself was a prominent politician apart from being a member of the Dresden parliament, decided to fight tooth and nail and won the political and the print-cultural battle. Eckermann was left to fend for himself. He suggested a reconciliation with Brockhaus and wanted to publish the last volume of *Gespräche*. Brockhaus wrote back in utmost disgust and denial, declaring that his interactions with Eckermann were the most disgusting ("erwidrigste") experience in his life. The proposed volume was never published.

It is hardly a surprise that the drama between Eckermann and Goethe that plays out in *Gespräche* would lend itself to the theatrical form. Martin Walser's play *In Goethes Hand* (1982) and Jan Decker's theatrical monologue *Eckermann oder die Geburt der modernen Psychologie* (2012) depict Goethe's exploitation of Eckermann and Eckermann's own moral masochism with amazing facility. At the core of these plays are Goethe's instruction and Eckermann's dedication; Goethe's sexual and erotic prowess even at the very end of his life and Eckermann's asexual existence as he serves Goethe. The pact between the book, the author, and the author's assistant gets depicted in two poignant scenes, with which I will end this chapter.

In Decker's monologue, Eckermann lies on a chaise longue in a room full of bird cages in front of Dr. Johann Christian August Heinroth, professor of psychotherapy at the University of Leipzig. Eckermann's initial description of Goethe attests to and critiques Goethe's stature in the world

of literature: "We had a god in Weimar, who was called Goethe. His life comprised childish pleasures, otherwise he tended towards melancholia."[95] Eckermann sums up his contributions to Goethe's life in the following way: "What I gave Goethe, was my life. What I got for it, you can see laying in front of you: a classically minded soul. And a doctorate, for which I can buy nothing . . . Not a good deal, you would say."[96] The wonderful illustrations by the Jena-based artist Kay Voigtmann in the limited edition publication of the play illustrate Goethe's power over Eckermann: Goethe carries a book by its spine over his erect penis, his semen ejaculating; the dripping pen is replaced by a dripping penis.

While Decker's Eckermann is seeking to finally distinguish his ego from the Goethean super-ego, Walser's Eckermann is exploited by Goethe on the one hand and the court culture of Weimar on the other. As a slew of painters wait for one of Goethe's "sittings" to paint him, Eckermann briefs them: "How does one represent Goethe? I would say . . . Beautifully."[97]

The second act of Walser's play is set in November 1848, sixteen years after Goethe's death. Eckermann lives in a tiny apartment on the Brauhausgasse in Weimar; he is poor and sick. Unlike his former master Goethe, Eckermann does not own a well-organized library. "More cage-birds than books. We are at Eckermann's" comments Gustchen, a character in the play.[98] Someone knocks on the door, it is the poet Ferdinand Freiligrath, who has come to "interview the author of *Conversations with Goethe*." Eckermann greets Freiligrath with praise for his poems, Freiligrath wittily responds that one of his poems landed him in jail; it is the time of the revolution and the censorship of writings against the establishment. Freiligrath tells Eckermann of Karl Marx, who asked him to work for *NRZ* (*Die neurheinische Zeitung*), adding that Marx was initially skeptical about the idea for the interview because "Weimar represents for him temple ghetto, senior bureaucrats, and memorial swindle."[99] Eckermann does not know the editor; Freiligrath assists: "Marx, you know him, right?" Eckermann responds warily: "Poet?"[100]

Karl Marx might not have become famous for what Eckermann was taught to understand under the term poetry. However, the same year in which the fictitious scene takes place, together with his collaborator Friedrich Engels, Marx publishes the *Communist Manifesto*, a text that would revolutionize political thought for over a century to come and would provide an extension of Goethe's idea of world literature by locating it squarely in the commerce between nations, when the empire of books would undergo further expansion.

Masters and Masterpieces

"Masterpieces of world literature," "world classics," "great books," "great works of world literature," "Great Works series"—these are just some of the labels that publishers, authors, translators, but also librarians, critics, academics, and nonprofessional readers around the world have used for at least the past two centuries to designate specific texts. Especially in the context of something as grand sounding as world literature, these terms appear as categorical notations: on covers of book series and anthologies, card catalogs, online search portals, course titles, and syllabi. From John Macy's *The Story of the World's Literature* (1932) to Paul Wiegler's *Geschichte der fremdsprachigen Weltliteratur* (1933) to Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon* (1994) and more recently *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* (2004), the aforementioned labels are inescapable. The reader's reception, conditioned by such an elaborate publication and distribution apparatus therefore reaffirms these categories. The best, the most representative of a linguistic, cultural, or national narrative tradition, the foremost, the outstanding, the larger-than-life, the timeless—these are consequently some of the first, if not the only associations that informed readers often ascribe to world literature.

A literary work is hailed as a masterpiece when it exhibits uniqueness of poetic expression, complexity of aesthetic representation, a large scale and scope, or a search for reflections of an indefatigable human spirit with or without divine intervention; indeed, a sense of mastery of the human being on the human self has traditionally determined the definition of a "great work" of literature. Through comparison on a local and a transnational scale—a specific kind of vetting—a process of value judgment is carried out whereby masterpieces are constructed and propagated as such. In the case of multiauthored works or where authors are speculatively identifiable, mastery is either collectively ascribed to a civilization and its inhabitants: the Sumerians (*The Epic of Gilgamesh*), the Egyptians (*The Egyptian Book of the Dead*), or the Indians (*Vedas*). When the author is identifiable (in some cases) the masterpiece becomes a function of the craftsmanship of single authors, the masters: Aeschylus, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Dickens, Tolstoy, Strindberg, Ibsen, Mann, Nexø, Premchand, Pamuk, and so on. In the university classroom, where language as the medium of instruction plays a significant role, mastery acquires a different meaning: the masterpiece must in turn be mastered—in the original or in translation—by the teacher who mediates the superiority of the text and the stu-

dent who must then emulate the teacher. A translated work itself is seen as a product of someone having mastered the original language in order to render the work masterfully in the target language, thus further attesting to the primacy of a masterpiece.

The masterpiece is today a debatable category. Like many other grand narratives, the narrative of the masterpiece is slowly being un-written. It is being punctured, eroded, unraveled, because it has come to represent the burden of dominant eurocentrism that has been an inimitable feature of our cultural histories. In the light of the multiple canon debates—classical, modern, feminist, national, postcolonial, multicultural—one either witnesses a careful surpassing of the issue of great works at a safe distance or a circumvention of the same by declaring the literary field as composed of major and minor literary traditions with major and minor contributions to world literature.[101] Amidst the resurgence in discussions of world literature in the early twenty-first century, a neat line is often drawn between "Old World" and "New World" literatures, insinuating the grand canon of world literature versus the seemingly more democratic category of literatures of the world. However, the transition to the more subaltern impactful, influential, significant, and therefore the "must-read" does not always guarantee an absolute overcoming of nineteenth-century principles of evaluation: aesthetic and political representation and mastery.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines masterpiece as a "work of outstanding artistry or skill, specially the greatest work of a particular artist, writer, etc.; a consummate example of some skill or other kind of excellence. Also: a piece of work produced by a craftsman in order to be admitted to a guild as an acknowledged master."[102] German splits the different usages into two words: *Meisterstück* and *Meisterwerk*. *Trübners Deutsches Wörterbuch* defines the *Meisterstück* as "die Probearbeit eines Gesellen, mit der er die Meisterwürde erringen will" a definition that corresponds with the second meaning listed in the *OED*.[103] *Meisterwerk*, "was der Meister anfertigt," is captured by the first meaning in English.[104] *Trübners* also claims that the "English Masterpiece is the oldest calque (loan-translation) of a low-High German word into English."[105] The juxtaposition of these lexical definitions thus serves more than to merely present the nuanced linguistic differences between English and German usages of the term *masterpiece*. In fact, this juxtaposition energizes the inquiry into the establishment of the masterpiece as an evaluative principle of world literary comparison, especially around the time of its most well-known conceptualization in the European literary space by Goethe, captured in his statement on *Weltliteratur* (1827).[106]

As this chapter has shown, starting with the first documentations of its inception in the European literary space, world literature became a guild where a foreign literary work or an author had to pass a test of standards to become a member. World literature started as a hierarchical system to classify literary works from around the world; the cosmopolitan spirit of Goethe's statement was from the very beginning fractured through dominance and subjugation. The idea of mastery and the establishment of the discourse of masterpieces shaped and informed this ideational space. Comparison and relation were manipulated in the public sphere—among common readers—to give world literature its categorical designation of aesthetic superiority.

The empire of books, as well as the mythic European library, were constructed through multiple processes of legislation and legitimization of masters and masterpieces. The dual nature of the pact with books—as material and cultural artifacts as well as between European and non-European sources—had a tremendous effect on literary comparison and relation in the early nineteenth century. From Goethe's engagement with *Sakuntala* in the "Prologue" to *Faust*, all the way to the story of his unnamed Chinese novel, the circulation and reception of literary works as *world* literary works went through the colonial highway. The establishment of the Oriental Translation Fund, the celebration of Sanskrit masterpieces by August Wilhelm Schlegel, the desire to acquire more manuscripts for the royal library in Munich as presented by Othmar Frank, the anxiety about the growing empire of books that will create unknown results when European works are read by the Burmese, the positing of world literature not just against national but also "ephemeral" literature—all signify ways in which the "ancestral junk" of Europe, to use Goethe's term, was slowly being challenged through the availability of literary works from elsewhere. And this availability did not create an instant, harmonious dialogue between European and non-European works, nor did it lead to an immediate acceptance of non-European works as those at par with the purportedly superior Greek works.

The best, the greatest, the most representative works must have their others—the good, the average, the worst. The unique prerequisites the common, the superior prerequisites the imagined inferior, the dominant prerequisites the potential subservient, the timeless prerequisites the would-be ephemeral. A prerequisite must be legitimized and legislated in order for it to sustain its existence as a prerequisite. Every masterpiece needs a master, every master needs an apprentice, and sometimes, the apprentice is in fact enslaved. The beginnings of the discourse of *Weltliteratur*

around Goethe's time attests to this legislation and legitimization of world literary masterpieces. Any attempt to overcome eurocentrism within discourses of world literature will have to confront the beginnings of this itinerary. *Vorzüglichst* or not, as we will soon discover, the burden of the masters would weigh heavy on the shoulders of the enslaved apprentices.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