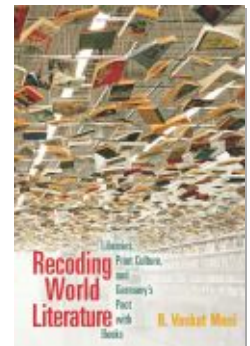




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Chapter 2 Half Epic, Half Drastic: From a Parliament of Letters to a National Library

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Half Epic, Half Drastic: From a Parliament of Letters to a National Library

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the World Market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. . . . And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises world literature.

—KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS,
The Communist Manifesto (1848)¹

Oriental nations are no longer able to take care of their own literary treasures . . . they allow their books to rot, to be devoured by insects and destroyed by neglect, though a Muslim never willfully tears up a book. . . . Under these circumstances the duty of taking care of the patrimony of our eastern brethren devolves upon the enlightened public of Europe, and every man who finds an opportunity ought to secure as many books as he can.

—ALOYS SPRENGER, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (1857)²

Heinrich Heine's *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen* (1844; *Germany: A Winter's Tale*) begins at the political border between France and Germany. On a windy morning in the "dreary month of November," the lyrical "I" returns home from exile.³ The opening stanzas capture the returnee's sensory perceptions as he refamiliarizes himself with a place he once called home. His eyes try to capture the expansive pastoral landscape; his mind recalls the words of a folk song sung by a local village girl. Before he can realize, the exilic subject is pulled away from nostalgia and romanticism to return to face the logistics of border control. It is the time of political upheaval and dissent, and freedom of speech is compromised. Heine belonged to the group of authors who were identified as *Junges Deutschland* (Young Germany)—champions of political liberalism, free speech, and the emancipation of individuals, women, and Jews, and supporters of a cosmopolitan perspective on life—whose ideas against convention, orthodoxy,

absolutism, and feudalism led to the banning of their writings by the German Convention of 1835. As Prussian soldiers rummage through Heine's belongings, checking for contraband objects, Heine responds:

And I carry many books in my head—
Solemnly I state it:
My head is a bird's nest twittering
With books to be confiscated.⁴

He calls the Prussian customs officers “fools,” stating that “the contraband that journeys with me / I've stuck away in my mind.”⁵ He assures them that the books he carries in his head are more dangerous than those that can be found in Satan's library.⁶

Heine's defiance of censorship and authority, his proclamation of carrying dangerous books, indeed an entire library worse than that of Satan, acquires a special meaning a few verses later when the lyrical “I” is addressed by a fellow traveler, for whom a customs union (“Zollverein”) “will be our true foundation, / and bind the dismembered fatherland / Into one great nation.”⁷ But that customs union, explains the fellow traveler, will only provide external unity; the spiritual unity will come from the censors. Censorship, which forces a unity of thought, a unity that is built on the grave of any semblance of diversity or dissent, becomes the agency of unity among a people that is in urgent need of it—from the inside, and the outside!⁸

“Germany: A Winter's Tale” contains one of the most amazing literary depictions of an ideologically charged bibliomigrancy. With astounding wit, seasoned with sharp sarcasm, Heine pits the financial union against the suppression of ideational diversity; he places the library—at once physical and virtual, material and mnemonic—at the border between two political territories. Books appear as both palpable (material) and invisible (intellectual) artifacts. They are the kind of contraband that can be carried in one's head, which—as he accepts—are his weapons as he crosses the border. Heine thus undergirds the remarkable role of print-cultural artifacts and their promotion, or suppression in determining the self-image of a nation as performance and pedagogy. The political state is scared of the printed word; it is so concerned about sustaining its power that it will allow no unwanted book or pamphlet to penetrate its political boundaries.

Heine's imagination of the power of books and printed material was reanimated, albeit in very different terms, on a global scale by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels point toward a very different kind of border crossing of literary works, as

cited in the epigraph of this chapter.⁹ It is in this text that Marx and Engels unmoor the Goethean idea of world literature from *Poesie* (poesy) as the *Gemeingut* (shared property) of the human race and firmly anchor it in the bourgeois production and consumption of literature. If Goethe establishes world literature as a poetic-aesthetic ideal, Marx and Engels recognize the commercial and material networks across national political boundaries that lead to the establishment of such an ideal. Marx and Engels chime with Goethe in augmenting the cosmopolitan and transnational nature of world literature; and yet, instead of referring to *Poesie* as the universal shared entity among peoples of the world, they provide a whole new meaning to the term *Gemeingut*, thereby enhancing the material and commercial aspects of world literature. While Goethe anticipates the idea of *Weltliteratur* and asks everyone to hasten its approach, for Marx and Engels the commercial interdependence of nations has already hastened the approach of *Weltliteratur*. World literature appears as a parliament of letters, a conglomeration of local and national literatures.

The beginning of Heine's *Wintermärchen* and the passage from the *Communist Manifesto* serve as apt points of departure to imagine the trajectory of world literature through books and libraries in Germany beyond Goethe. Censorship remains a crucial defining element in the period around the March Revolution of 1848, following which a starker nationalism paves way for an even more conservative nationalization of literature. Between Goethe's pronouncement of *Weltliteratur* (1827) and Marx and Engel's statement (1848), some critics of world literature and cosmopolitanism call for a hastening of *Nationalliteratur* rather than *Weltliteratur*. This trend resurfaces in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially after German unification in 1871. "German" surfaces ever more prominently as a national, rather than merely a linguistic, qualifier for literature written and produced within the political boundaries of Germany. The national, the worldly, and the universal at some times clash and at other times lead parallel existences.

To be sure, these processes do not completely impede public access to world literature. If the story of world literature as it unfolds in the first half of the nineteenth century in Germany is a story of comparison through relation, then in the second half of the nineteenth century it is largely a story of comparison through domestication, through national integration. There are two particular trajectories of development. Publications of anthologies and new book series, discussions in literary magazines, acquisition of world literary manuscripts and printed volumes in public libraries, in other words, the *practice* of world literary circulation and dissemination

continues, even though it sometimes appears as a niche activity, carried out along with, and sometimes despite, the larger social politics of the times. However, in *theoretical* conceptualizations after Goethe, world literature becomes more politically charged, increasingly more contrasted with the space of national political representation through literature. Within the course of a few decades, world literature simultaneously experiences idealization on the one hand and total negation in the larger political sphere on the other. In the academic sphere, the connections but also tensions between national and world literature start becoming conspicuous. And in the print-cultural field, one witnesses a combination of these trends, whereby world literature undergoes further commercialization and institutionalization. What will qualify as the best and foremost would be those works favored by political critics in support of a particular kind of ethnic German nation. Jewish authors and critics play a prominent role in the construction of world literary anthologies, only to be shunned by conservative nationalist critics for their purported rootlessness and antipatriotic disposition. In other words, world literature and national literature become contested fields of cosmopolitanism and patriotism. German national literature itself would gain prominence as a “hall of fame,” a space to recognize the achievements of the nation, and in relation to it, of other nations; something that would prominently figure in a petition for the foundation of an imperial library (*Reichsbibliothek*) that the German Writers’ Association would submit to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1881.

How does the conceptualization of world literature change from a humanitarian philosophical idea to one that gains a sharper political edge and a material dimension in Germany after Goethe? What was the nature of the literary landscape: a “nationalized” civic space or a more internationally oriented, cosmopolitan space? How was the idea of the most outstanding (*vorzüglichst*) literary quality expanded and challenged in the second half of the nineteenth century towards the creation of a world literary readership? What role did anthologies, libraries, and book series play in the propagation of world literature? How did the proliferation of German Orientalist scholarship contribute to the expansion of the inventory of world literature?

To find answers to these questions, we must step out of Goethe’s Juno Room, the stage for the theater of Eckermann’s subservience; out of the office of Lord William Babington Macaulay in Calcutta, where the contract of subservience of local literary traditions over colonial languages has been sealed. From the mass-acquisition of manuscripts, translations, and adaptations of works from non-European literatures into European

languages, we must turn to a historical moment in which public affordability of printed books becomes a key access to world literature, a period that is marked by the expansion of lending and public libraries (*Leih- und Volksbibliotheken*) and the establishment of affordable book series such as the Reclam Universal-Bibliothek.

This chapter follows the cultural consequences of the worldwide distribution and consumption of books that Marx and Engels mention in the *Communist Manifesto*. However, instead of naively searching for a potential revolution caused by public access to literary works from other parts of the world, this chapter traces how the very project of world literature in the second half of the nineteenth century becomes more closely linked to a more anthologized collection and acquisition, as it is simultaneously co-opted by the institution of national literature. It is in this space that world literature emerges as an institution of a particular kind of middle-class education (*bildungspolitische Institution*), whereby the internationalization of the literary market will proceed along with, and sometimes in spite of, the nationalization of public institutions in the face of German unification of 1871. In addition, this period is marked by the acquisition of one of the largest consignment of books in non-European languages by a European library in the nineteenth century. The story of Aloys Sprenger, a native Austrian who later became an important British East India Company official, and the controversy surrounding the Prussian Reichsbibliothek's acquisition of the "Bibliotheca Sprengeriana" will form the last part of this chapter, to see how the idea of shared property was also misused to propagate a particular European prerogative over non-European literary traditions.

Let us turn our attention to some other voices from around Goethe's time to understand how the tensions between the national and the worldly slowly come to a point of culmination.

A Parliament of Letters: Heine's Welthülfsliteratur

In extant scholarship, the pre- and post-1848 discourse of world literature in the German sphere has been widely discussed as a contestation between cosmopolitan world literary ideals and rising nationalist tendencies. Heine, as well as Marx and Engels, have served as important figures in this discussion. For John Pizer, Heine becomes the "mediator of *Weltliteratur* as understood by Goethe."¹⁰ In his study of Heine and Young Germany, Pizer chooses to focus on the term's "temporally limiting and fixed aspects in its subsequent mediation and reception in Germany until 1848."¹¹ The

post-1848 period for Pizer is the actual period of “Nationalism and Revival,” with Marx and Engels serving as a turning point. For Peter Goßens, Marx and Engels’s statement marks the end of a political appropriation of the term and the beginning of a “purely literary historical and canonizing engagement” with the “object” that is world literature.¹² In the discussion that follows, I want to argue that the story is much more complicated than a mere mediation of Goethe’s concept by Heine or a complete aestheticization of the term in the second half of the nineteenth century. I will start with Heine, who, as I want to show, is not simply a mediator but also a modifier and, in his own right, a challenger of the Goethean idea of world literature. Heine’s awareness of material, intellectual, and political aspects of books and libraries, captured in his many witty remarks, might be a good place to start.

“The library and the town-hall pub are ruining me,” Heine wrote to his friend Moses Moser on February 25, 1824.¹³ Heine was at the time a student of law at the University of Göttingen. He mentions in his letter that the “Corpus Juris is my pillow, but I also undertake other things, among them reading chronicles and drinking beer.”¹⁴ As Walter Kanowsky notes, in the 1820s, the library of the University of Göttingen was the most-used library in Europe. Around 200 books were checked out everyday from a collection that was roughly 240,000 volumes strong. The services of the library made it unique: complete collections of international literature, model displays, and good catalogues, among others.¹⁵ However, in his letter, Heine is least concerned about tabulating these immense achievements of the Göttingen university library. He simply confesses that he is a “monotheist” neither in drinking nor in love—he drinks “double beer” and is in love with the statue of the Medican Venus at the library as well as the cook of his landlord, Hofrath Bayer. But unsuccessfully so—one of them is made of plaster of Paris (“Gyps”) and the other is too “venerable.” The Göttingen university library finds a mention again in Heine’s *Harzreise* (1824), where he describes Göttingen as the city famous for its “sausages and the university, a library and a town-hall pub where the beer is good.”¹⁶ Furthermore, he mentions that he is delighted to have left Göttingen early in the morning when “the intellectual certainly lay in bed and dreamed habitually that he turns into a beautiful garden, on whose beds grow numerous white papers with quotes.”¹⁷

Heine’s profound suspicion of institutionalized intellectualism, its self-referential nature, and its tendency to take itself seriously is most evident at the beginning of his essay “Concerning History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany”:

I am not a scholar, I am one of the people myself. I am not a scholar, I am not among the seven hundred wise men of Germany. I stand with the great multitude before portals of their wisdom, and if any bit of truth has slipped through, and if this truth has gotten as far as to me, then it has gone far enough;—I write it on paper in pretty lettering and give it to the compositor; he sets it in lead and gives it to the printer; the latter prints it, and then it belongs to the whole world.¹⁸

The dissemination process of an idea from its genesis to its distribution in print is hard to miss in this quote. What is equally prominent is a parallel combination of attachment and detachment, reverence and irreverence that marks the unique openness and playfulness that characterizes Heine's relationship with libraries. It is also this double-love, this dual-edged approach that will define Heine's relationship with literary/intellectual production in general and with world literature in particular.

In *Der Tannhäuser* (1836), a witty interpretation of the legendary figure, Heine famously makes fun of Weimar, calling it the “home of the widowed muses” (“Musenwitwensitz”) where people are wailing over the death of Goethe as Eckermann lives on.¹⁹ Eckermann was for Heine nothing more than Goethe's parrot.²⁰ Heine also had a unique way of engaging with world literature. In theory and in practice, both aesthetically and politically, Heine situated himself at a distance from the poetic ideal set up by Goethe.

As early as 1828, the same year Goethe made his famous statement but before it saw public light, Heine came up with the term *Welthüflsliteratur* (world-help literature). In a note to the *English Fragments* (1828), Heine commented on the French magazine *Le Globe*, which Goethe also referenced in conjunction with his works and his idea of world literature. Heine refers to an intellectual revolution in France, which, according to him, goes beyond well-known names. Focusing on the innovations that mark the content of *Le Globe*, Heine privileges in world literature the possibility of sharing what is usable from various parts of the world and is made available to the readers:

World-Help Literature: At the mention of this intellectual revolution in France one thinks certainly of the beautiful names: Cousin, Jouffroy, Guizot, Batante, Thierry, Thiérs, Mignet etc.; but I have much more in sight the youth of the new France, whose organ I consider the *Globe*, a journal appearing in Paris for many years now, in which young democrats of the sciences, unanimous in purpose and bereft of vanity, publish the results of their research, often the researching itself, in that

they clearly articulate the most important questions of the human race, *l'ordre du jour*, or better stated *l'ordre du siècle*, and exactly dictate world-help literature, make the preparatory work of all nations usable, and simultaneously facilitate the collective studying of a whole generation in a wonderful way.²¹

Heine does not explain in this passage what exactly he means by the “usable” literature from various parts of the world; he could be using “literature” to mean not just fiction but also other forms of scientific writing. However, the “usability”—or more clearly stated, the purposiveness—of world literature becomes central to his discussion. To arrive at an understanding of Heine’s “world-help” literature, it might be useful to think about his interventions in literature—German and French, but also other languages that range from ancient Greek and Sanskrit to medieval Spanish and modern English—exemplified in his work as an author and poet, a translator, a critic, and a “user” of literature within and beyond his national boundaries. What binds all these facets of Heine’s personality and his work is ultimately his disregard for iconicity and cult worship, especially the kind that is constantly in the service of the nation. Heine’s iconoclastic approach is evident in another letter to his friend Moser, in which he declares himself a Persian poet:

Actually, I am also no German, as you know . . . there are only three educated, and civilized people: the French, the Chinese, and the Persians. I am proud to be a Persian. That I write poetry in German has its own reasons. The beautiful Gulnar heard from a sheep’s head that German is related to my mother tongue Persian, and now the beautiful girl sits in Isfahan and studies the German language from my songs . . . I miss the minarets and the fragrant gardens . . . it is a horrendous fate for a Persian poet that he should toil with your dastardly jolty language and your equally jolty post wagons, your bad weather, your dumb tobacco faces, your Roman pandects and your philosophical cants, and the rest of your lumpen existence. O Firdausi, O Jami, O Hafiz, how sad is your brother!²²

This passage from a personal letter to a friend is just another example of Heine’s witty and imaginative engagement with world literature, which continues in *Die Romantische Schule* (1833), with which Heine attempted to transform the discourse about contemporary German literature in France as expounded by the figures made famous in France by Germaine de Staël through her book *De l’Allemagne* (1813). Here one sees Heine’s suspicion of a fetishized nationalism, first, through a dual engagement with a national

and international literature, and second, through his critique of the stalwarts of German literature, including Goethe and the brothers Schlegel. By questioning the stature of Mme. de Staël's book as the prime source of information for the French "concerning the intellectual life of Germany," Heine also wanted to interrogate whether Goethe's death should be the most important historical marker in contemporary German literature—if "with Goethe's death a new literary period began in Germany, that the old Germany went to the grave with him, that the aristocratic period of literature came to an end and the democratic began."²³ Heine's own engagement with Goethe in this text is worth considering, because he focuses both on Goethe's suppression of talented new voices in the national sphere as he amplified his stature on the national and the world literary scene. Heine compares Goethe to "Louis XI who oppressed the nobility and exalted the *tiers état*,"²⁴ and he considered him to be a "centennial oak whose branches towered far above them [new poets] and overshadowed them . . . The general public, however, revered the tree just because it was so magnificent in its independence."²⁵ To this end, Heine engages with Goethe's critics and with those whom he calls his "apologists"—Eckermann among them. However, instead of regurgitating their ideas, Heine presents his own evaluations of Goethe's engagement with world literary works. Especially significant here is his discussion of Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan* (1819), whereby Heine extols the book but also pans it in the same playful tone in which he declares Hafiz, Jami, and Firdausi his brothers:

It [*West-östlicher Divan*] contains, in its bright lyrics and pithy gnomic poems, the Oriental manner of thought and feeling; and there is a fragrance and glow in the book like a harem full of odalisks with black, rouged, gazelle-like eyes and passionate white arms. . . . Sometimes the reader even seems to be stretched out comfortably on a Persian carpet, smoking the golden tobacco of Turkistan from a long-stemmed water pipe, while a black slave woman cools him with a colorful fan of peacock feathers and a handsome lad reaches him a cup of genuine mocha coffee . . . and while doing so Goethe is always smiling serenely and is as innocent as a child and full of wisdom as an old man. . . . The magic of the book defies description, it is a salaam sent by the Occident to the Orient.²⁶

At a distance from Goethe's adulation for *Sakuntala* (discussed in chapter 1), Heine detected in Goethe an apparent "repugnance for India," which he thought "may have arisen because he [Goethe] suspected Catholic vile in the Sanskrit studies of the Schlegels and their friends."²⁷ Heine locates Goethe's affinity for Persian and Arabic literatures in the peculiar way in

which “these gentlemen [the Schlegel brothers] regarded Hindustan as the cradle of the Catholic world order,” where they found their “trinity, their incarnation, their penance . . . and all their other beloved manias.”²⁸

Goethe’s essay on Indian literature (mentioned in chapter 1) was published posthumously, and Heine may not have had access to the essay. Nonetheless, his opinion of the Schlegels’ responsibility for Goethe’s repugnance of India is worth a pause. Heine’s criticism is based on the evaluation of literary translations by the Schlegels, which he considers to be ideologically appropriated. He presents strategies of comparative literary evaluation that focus on difference rather than mere similarities between texts and textual traditions.

Heine’s comments on the Sanskrit translations by the Schlegel brothers are particularly illustrative of these observations. He starts with telegraphically communicating an intellectual outline of the differences as he sees between Germany and France and moves quickly to an evaluation of the Schlegel brothers’ work in Sanskrit. Heine foregrounds his thoughts on Friedrich Schlegel by criticizing the novel *Lucinde*, which he considers a work that decidedly espouses Catholic values. Calling religion and hypocrisy twin sisters, “with the same figure, clothing and speech” Heine ascribes hypocrisy to the ability to use the word *love* more than religion, only to declare: “I am speaking of Germany; in France the one sister has died, and we see the other still in deepest mourning.”²⁹

With these comparative intra-European “national” worlds in tow, Heine turns to the extra-European world of comparison through Friedrich Schlegel, calling his works *Die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (1808) and *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Literatur* (1810) his best and therefore most famous. Heine praises Friedrich Schlegel for his efforts in educating himself in Sanskrit and for establishing Sanskrit studies in Germany; for Heine, Schlegel is for Germany what William Jones was for England. Heine commends Friedrich Schlegel for his perspectival depth (“tiefes Anschauungsvermögen”) that grants him access to the “Shloka,” the epic verse-form from India. Nonetheless, Heine finds his brother August Wilhelm Schlegel petty (“kleinlich”) with his translations of “Sanskrit verses in Hexameters” whereby he (August Wilhelm) merely ends up carving some tricks from Alexandrian poetry. He also deducts a level of appropriation of the otherness through translation when he diagnoses in the work of Friedrich Schlegel a rediscovery of Catholicism:

My only criticism is the ulterior motive behind the book. It was written in the interests of Catholicism. These people had rediscovered in the

Indian poems not merely the mysteries of Catholicism, but the whole Catholic hierarchy as well as its struggles with secular authority. In the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* they saw, as it were, the elephantine middle ages. As a matter of fact, when in the latter epic King Vishwamitra quarrels with the priest Vashishtha, this quarrel concerns the same interests about which the Emperor quarreled with the Pope, although here in Europe the point in dispute was called investiture and there in India it was called the cow Sabala.³⁰

The specificity and authority with which Heine comments on these translations stem from his own training in Sanskrit literature with the Indologist Franz Bopp (1791–1867) at the University of Berlin when Heine attended his seminar on Comparative Grammar in 1822. Heine was familiar with Bopp's translations of Sanskrit works, especially episodes from the *Mahabharata*.³¹ But it is not just Heine's familiarity with Sanskrit that reveals itself in his critique of the Schlegels' translations. Heine shows a special eye for the localization of world literature, a proclivity to detect personal, political, and religious projections, as evidenced in his criticism. Living up to his own reputation as *enfant terrible* of German literature, he also had a special disposition for mocking trendsetters and their acolytes, as registered in his critique of Goethe. In a poem, "Oestliche Poeten" (Eastern poets) published in *Romanzero* (1851), his final collection of poems, Heine described the Persian poet Sheikh Saadi (1215–1292) as the Pied Piper of Hamelin, who is ready to be followed by all the "small singers." Ridiculing the trend to "coo in the manner of Saadi," Heine adds that for him it hardly makes a difference if one puts about in water like a poodle in an Eastern or Western way; there is no difference between the Persian bird Bulbul or Ovid's Philomela turned into a nightingale. The desire to "worship the cows of pious Indians," he notes wittily, is based on the desire to "find Mount Olympus [or a mount of dung] in the cowshed." For him, such poets "steal fruits from the garden of Shiraz" and end up regurgitating Ghazals.³²

If the Schlegel brothers and Goethe turn world literature into a sacrosanct ideal, Heine comes and punctures it without being a jingoist or a nationalist. He does not pretend to have imaginative conversations with foreign poets and yet he is able to declare himself one with them, challenging his own Germanness. While Goethe sees himself as the epitome of a German author, Heine sees the exact opposite. And in that move away from the narcissism of a collective that will contest his deserved space, Heine becomes the most flamboyant and perhaps also the most political practitioner of world literature.

Heine's uneasy relationship with the dominance of a nationalist discourse and the cooptation of literature as a national artifact is central to his itinerary as an author and a political figure. As someone associated with the Young Germany movement—although he himself never explicitly avowed this connection—Heine was involved in the mobilization of the public against the tyranny of monarchy through his writings, expressed in his support of the weavers' uprising in Silesia in 1844 and best represented in his poem *Die schlesischen Weber* (1844), first published in Karl Marx's newspaper *Vorwärts!* (Forward!). *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen* (1844)—whose subtitle carries a direct reference to Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1623)—was conceived during Heine's years in exile in France. In this work, Heine had critically engaged with the text of the German "nation" as a cultural and a political-geographical unit much before Germany unified as a nation in 1871. The democratizing spirit of situating literature politically is reflected in Heine's accordance of primacy to the function of literature in the public sphere. Heine's writings lay the groundwork on which the tensions between national literature and world literature, indeed a national literary public sphere and a world literary public sphere emerge. At the center of Heine's thought is his profound belief in the transformative role of literature but also his deep suspicion of the institutionalization of literature through genial figures and their acolytes. Furthermore, Heine had a deep understanding of the materiality of literary production and its instrumentalization. It is this public-sphere figure of Heine as a philosophical idealist and a print-cultural pragmatist that makes him a useful figure to start thinking about the transformations in the materiality of print-cultural influences and the institutionalization of world literature in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Heine's concept of *Welthülfsliteratur*, his cosmopolitanism, his attempts to add new dimensions to the discourse of world literature, and his attitude toward the institution of the nation and national literature make him unique in many ways. No one understood the fetishization of national and world literatures better than Heine, who intervenes most uniquely in the parallel textuality of national and world literatures. Through his stringent critique of earlier propagators of world literature, such as Goethe and the Schlegel brothers, through his avant-garde approach to the enterprise of literary history as necessarily transnational and therefore comparative, and through his political commitment to the cosmopolitan dimension of world literature—through the term *Welthülfsliteratur*—Heine in many ways clears the way for Marx and Engels's explicit mention of world literature as a product of transnational cosmopolitan consumption. As I discuss

in the following sections, Heine's *Weltbüßliteratur* and Marx and Engels's "circulated" world literature provide keys to understanding detractors of world literature as well as practitioners who contribute to its construction through anthologies, library acquisitions, book series, and translation enterprises.

Against Cosmopolitanism: Critics of Weltliteratur

If Goethe declared the meaninglessness of national literature, Heine called for a world-help literature, and Marx and Engels conceived the formation of world literature through many local and national literatures, there were many other voices in Germany in the nineteenth century for whom world literature was not an emancipation from national literature but in fact dependent on it. For others still, world literature was an impediment to the construction of national literature, indeed a threat to nationalism itself.

In the essay "Über Goethe im Wendepunkt zweier Jahrhunderte" (1835), the author Karl Gutzkow (1811–1878) addressed the question of world literature. Locating Goethe at the turn of two centuries, Gutzkow decidedly expresses the fortification of national literature through world literature. The term *national* for Gutzkow serves as a ring around the perspectives of an author that brings all of the images and thoughts to a central point. "The nation wants to be reflected in the literature," Gutzkow wrote, underlining that the will of the nation is that literature becomes the means of expression for its political, religious, and moral conditions. The idea of world literature is for him not opposed to but in the service of the nation:

World literature does not suppress nationality. It does not demand that one gives up one's native hills and valleys to get used to cosmopolitan images and foreign landscapes. World literature, on the contrary, is the guarantee of nationality. At least it will make possible certain things in front of a European forum, which still seems inadmissible at home. Nationality is not canceled by the world literary state, but rather justified by it. The evaluation and the birth of domestic literature is facilitated by it [the world literary state].³³

Gutzkow found the idea of national self-reliance in literature and the criticism of world literature "quarrelsome" ("zänkisch") and "hypochondriac," and he called for an examination of the "outer physiognomy" of world literature to understand its nature. And for him, world literature was "everything that is worthy of translation in a foreign language, so that

all discoveries, through which the sciences can be enriched, and all phenomena, which appear to devise a new law in the arts and which destroy the rules of old aesthetic."³⁴ While Gutzkow's definition of world literature includes scientific works—thus intersecting with Heine's ideas of *Welthüflsliteratur*—the value of aesthetic works remains central to his understanding of the term. Gutzkow sees in the growth of world literature a possibility of infusing a higher purpose to fields of intellectual inquiry as an alternative to mediocrity and its decoration with "false laurels." His sharpest critique is against the philologist and poet Ludwig Uhland—author of *Vaterländische Gedichte* (1815)—in whose poetry Gutzkow sees a festive and yet placid "Sunday mood" ("Sonntagsstimmung"). Such poetry, according to Gutzkow, becomes symptomatic as a German genre, "a collection of national costumes, which an Englishman buys for himself when he returns home."³⁵ Gutzkow criticizes the patriotic coquetterie and vanity that he thinks comes to rescue the justification of the purportedly higher quality of German writings against French or English in the German literary scene. According to him, "The so-called real German products of our literature are surely the most mediocre."³⁶

Goethe's suggestion of world literature is for Gutzkow an attempt to "flee the so-called [mediocre] contemporary poetry."³⁷ He sees in Goethe's suggestion a means to regulate the internal values of Germans through an exposure to the foreign. Gutzkow's explicit pronouncement for the guaranteeing of national literature through world literature might seem to be in opposition to the otherwise cosmopolitan idea of world literature *per se*; for John Pizer, Gutzkow seems to be taking a "defensive posture."³⁸ However, Gutzkow goes a great distance to criticize the mediocrity of home-grown "real German" products. Gutzkow's own political leanings and his intellectual and creative engagement with the world outside of Germany and Europe—exemplified at the very beginning of his career in a socio-philosophical satire on the Dalai Lama as a human god in *Maha Guru* (1833)—leave room for such speculations. In his own words, "anyone who wants to partake in foreign life, should gamble his own first."³⁹

However, there were other critics, harsher and more uncharitable than Gutzkow, for whom partaking in foreign life through world literature was an unworthy gamble. Premier among them is the historical and social critic Wolfgang Menzel (1798–1873). Menzel was the editor of the literary journal *Literatur-Blatt* (published by Goethe's publisher, Cotta, in Stuttgart) from 1825–1849 and the author of the four-volume *Die deutsche Literatur* (1828, expanded revised edition 1835). Menzel, who had brought Gutzkow to Stuttgart and acted as his mentor, quickly became his staunchest critic.

While Gutzkow saw the possibility of a guarantee of national literature through world literature, Menzel was critical of German engagements with foreign literatures. In his essay, "Influence of Foreign Literature," Menzel detects a special "imitative propensity of the Germans [which] prevails to a very great extent in their literature."⁴⁰ He classifies Germans as either "imitators" or "purists" and identifies a sense of self-loathing within these groups. On the one hand, Menzel is pragmatic in his evaluation of the inevitability of foreign influences. Anticipating Marx and Engels's famous proclamation by a good decade, Menzel states that as much as the commercial connections between nations lead to circulation of material products, literature has the potential of becoming the agent of a larger dissemination of the "intellectual treasures of a nation."⁴¹ On the other hand, he also thinks that the "extraordinary predilection for what is foreign, and a rare ability for imitation" have led the Germans to "an unnatural forgetfulness of their own worth."⁴² Menzel considers Germans to be "thorough cosmopolitans," ready to "substitute for our national individuality something applicable to the whole human race."⁴³

Menzel's views on engagement with the foreign are guided by a purposiveness and utility. He is open to the idea of adapting to that which serves national progress, culture, and civilization; an unreflective appropriation, he states however, leads to two kinds of faults: "that of a blind slavish devotion to everything foreign, and that of blindly undervaluing ourselves."⁴⁴ Such an undervaluation of the German Self becomes crucial to Menzel's identification of various kinds of "mania" for foreign trends, which he claims, in the end, balance themselves out due to the sheer diversity among themselves: "Thus the ultra-refinement of the Gallomania has been counterbalanced by the blunt humor of the Anglomania, the cold and regular classicality of Grecomania, by the luxuriant riches of Orientalism, the superficial Rationalism by the mystic Romanticism."⁴⁵

The manifestation of German proclivity for the foreign, Menzel notes, is evident in the abundance of translations into German. He states that Germans translate notoriously, thereby turning Germany into a factory of translated works. Referencing a whole array of multiple translations from Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, and other languages into German in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Menzel curiously claims that this appropriation of the foreign is slowly coming to an end: "we have now returned home for a while, and we are meditating."⁴⁶ This imagined return becomes central to the last section of his essay, where he cites at length his own review of Heinrich Stieglitz's *Bilder des Orients*, crucifying him for wandering in other nations and indulging in a slavish fascination for the

foreign. Here the idea of the native-born versus the foreign imitation, the original versus the translation takes precedence. Menzel locates Stieglitz among the many Gallo-, Anglo-, Turko-, Indo-, Perso- and other maniacs, holding him and others of his ilk responsible for turning German literature into “a madhouse, in which hundreds of fools are aping the costume and habits, the language and ideas of a hundred different nations of ancient and modern times.”⁴⁷ Criticizing Stieglitz for his “affected imitations” of Hafiz, Firdausi, Jami, and Kalidasa, Menzel completes a full circle by bemoaning the German propensity for foreign imitation.

Menzel’s stringent critique of foreign influence on German literature, couched in an otherwise appealing criticism of affective imitations, acquires a much stronger, anti-world literature stance in his other essays. The idea of “foreign-mania” would be picked up again by Menzel in two essays with which he ends the fourth volume of the *Die Deutsche Literatur*: “The New Anglo-Mania” and “The New Gallo-Mania.” The latter would also become central to his critique of the authors of Young Germany, whom he considered unpatriotic, anti-German, and pro-France:

The coterie took the name of Young Germans [das junge Deutschland], only, however, as an emancipation from Young Europe, for they expressly declared that patriotism was nothing but “an animal impulse of the blood,” that, therefore, a man must not devote himself to one nation, but to all mankind, which, however, was deduced from France; and that, therefore, all national literature must be done away with, and a “world literature” put in its place. . . . In Germany they were much applauded by Jews, who had long before deified their Heine.⁴⁸

Clearly for Menzel, world literature is a product of antipatriotic thought as despicable as other ideas and movements emanating from Paris. Read through Menzel, world literature appears not as a humanitarian, philosophical ideal but as an agency that inspires commitments away from those to the national public, as a force that disintegrates a nation and disrespects its own literature. Menzel calls “young Paris” a conglomerating point of fugitives from the rest of Europe, a space that initiates movements such as Young Italy and Young Germany. These fugitives, he adds, work heavily under the influence of French literature and work with French sources, like a number of Heine followers in Germany. He suggests that the Young Germans are influenced by the new French free spiriters who fight against religion and morality and have launched a war of destruction against it. In his vicious polemic against writers of Young Germany, he finds Heine to be the degenerate and misguided leader of the Francophile crowd.

Heine stays at the center of Menzel's critique of world literature. Heine becomes the instrument and the product, the cause and the effect of Menzel's critique. Menzel first praises Heine; for him, Heine is not only a humorist in prose writings but also the first one to introduce irony in lyrical form, the one who had the capability of combining the most daring frivolity and the most cutting wit with the tenderest sentimentality.⁴⁹ Menzel considers Heine's *Französische Zustände* (1833) his best prose work. But he also sees the book as the cause of his being derailed from his poetic track, causing his turn to the political, critical, historical, and philosophical writings.⁵⁰

Menzel's thoughts were not limited to his literary history; as the editor of the *Literatur-Blatt*, with a much larger nonspecialized audience, Menzel used his position to influence public opinion against the authors associated with Young Germany and also against world literature. As Peter Goßens points out in his study, a slightly modified version of his ideas in *Die deutsche Literatur* was published as part of a series of articles in the *Literatur-Blatt* (1836), in which he explicitly used the word *staatsgefährdend* (dangerous for the state) for the authors of Young Germany. His anti-Semitic and anti-French stance becomes even more explicit. Citing long passages from an anonymous publication against authors connected with Young Germany, Menzel mobilizes hate speech to privilege the cause of German nationality over French and Jewish influences. According to him, the French and the Jews "stir up the unholy fire that saps our best juices, that poisons the calm patrimony of our inner nationality."⁵¹

By pitching patriotism against cosmopolitanism, national literature against world literature, by calling world literature essentially French and Jewish, Menzel actually extends a line of thought that systematically excludes German-Jewish subjects from the mainstream of the German nation.

Menzel represents one of the most prominent voices for whom the nation must look inward in order to define its exteriority. The basis of comparison for Menzel remains French literature. But there were critics for whom the interactive tension between the national and the foreign stayed at the center of the conceptualization of world literature. World literature for them did emerge as an international parliament of letters where national literature must acquire a prominent place. It also emerges as a hall of fame where works of other nations enter and acquire their prominent places. Ludolf Wienbarg, for example, in an essay entitled "Goethe und die Weltliteratur" (1835) sensed a positive transformation in the position of German national literature within world literature. For him, while German literature was traditionally a recipient of literary ideas from England

and France, it was now ready to leave its mark on those literatures, largely due to increased interactions between people of various nations: "This much is for sure, the mutual effect between the literature of the earth can only grow and become intimate, with the continuously growing brotherly band of nations."⁵² Wienbarg's ideas were challenged by Michael Enk von der Burg (1835), who considered the idea of world literature to be something that extends beyond the literary, warning that the attractive idea of world literature should not lead to the forgetting of national particularity and the feeling of (a national) self.⁵³ Theodor Mundt remained skeptical of the Goethean idea; for him *Weltliteratur* was more a "beautiful word or a great dream rather than a true idea."⁵⁴

One of the strongest reactions against a world literary cosmopolitanism came from Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769–1860). Arndt considered world literature a kind of seduction away from the nation and national literature. In his essay, "Lasset Euch nicht verführen, oder die Weltliteratur" (1842; Do not let yourself be seduced, or world literature), Arndt insinuates that many a statement that Goethe made in the last stages of his life have become more significant than they ought to have. Arndt considers Goethe's ideas in the last years of his life a product of the "tired and sleeping time, when the power of the creator and the doer are also stalked by a tired slumber."⁵⁵ Arndt further contends that Goethe had also become comfortable, affable, and talkative in the last years of his life, and his engagements with the foreign are to be seen in this light: "In his later years, Goethe is said to have sampled all periods and peoples and ways, many even strange to himself . . . Indians, Chinese, Arabs and Mongols and Tartars with their structures and possible and actual customs and views and feelings are said to have given the younger entrants and trackers much material. How cute! As the saying goes: What does the German not do for money?"⁵⁶

Goethe's use of the term *Weltliteratur* is for Arndt the result of this state of being comfortable and affable, a state in which Goethe took the latest findings and products from works of all foreign peoples, and it is in this context that he also created a few "casual and agreeable" ("gelegentlich und gefällig") terms which came about through his "soft and flattering" friendships with Italians and Englishmen (insinuating Manzoni and Carlyle) and his "light and thin conversations" (insinuating the ones with Eckermann). Arndt blames younger authors of according undue significance to Goethe's term, for receiving it with "huge gaiety and intensity" ("großer Lustigkeit und Heftigkeit") and for applying and exploiting it in ways that even "the great master" ("der große Meister") would have never intentioned.⁵⁷ His advice to the younger generation is simple: "Dwell in the land and

you shall be fed!”⁵⁸ Arndt states that he does want Germans to learn the best from every country that there is, but he also insists that “[a German] should follow this beautiful desire with wisdom and moderation and use it with reason.”⁵⁹ By this he means a local orientation of intellect, which he claimed could never ever be attained in full. Pursuing a nativist politics, Arndt thinks that the only thing one ever has access to, one can ever enjoy in totality, is what one was born into: “Do you believe then, you German, also you very learned and educated Germans, that when you read your Aristophanes, Sophocles, that you read like an Athenian, when you read Shakespeare, you read like an Englishman, when you read Racine and Béranger, that you can feel and taste them like a Parisian, in sum, that you can entirely and fully enjoy them? No! No!”⁶⁰ Arndt believes the native language to be like the mother’s milk: the most natural, and therefore the most accessible. Arndt also accredits the accessibility to literatures other than German and the growing market of *Allerweltliteratur* (literature of the whole world) in the German intellectual and educated class’s desire to engage with world literature. But he also warns that from this *Allerweltliteratur* one cannot hope for the approach of *Weltliteratur*.

While this is by no means an exhaustive list of all voices from the German-speaking world, suffice it to say that the tensions between belonging to a national community and the understanding of the national self were at the heart of debates on nationalism’s world literary cosmopolitanism. These tensions informed conceptualizations of world literature as a collection, as exemplified in the first published anthology of world literature in Germany.

Anthologizing World Literature

In the midst of the loud contestation for the value of national and world literatures, between the suppression of free speech, restrictions laid upon literary productivity, and the proposed insularity of German-language literature, the first ever anthology of world literature was printed in Germany in 1848. The editor was Johannes Scherr (1817–1886), a critic and cultural historian educated in Zürich and Tübingen, whose name was also associated with the Young Germany movement. Scherr called his anthology *Bildersaal der Weltliteratur* (Portrait gallery of world literature). In this volume that spans over twelve hundred pages, Scherr utilized regional, national, and linguistic categories to organize world literary works in ten sections, each divided into five to seven subsections. Book 1 covers the Orient (*Morgenland*) and consisted of translated works from Sanskrit, Chinese,

Hebrew, Turkish, Persian, and Arabic languages; Book 2 samples ancient Greek and Latin literatures; Book 3 is dedicated to Troubadors and literatures in European languages; and the last book ends with writings from Slavic nations. Most of the shorter works were published in whole, and some works are excerpted in their German translations; each category is preceded by a small essay about the regional or national work whose examples the reader is about to examine.

In the epilogue to the anthology, Scherr quotes three authors: the Indologist and Sanskrit translator Friedrich Rückert, Ludolf Wienbarg, and, of course, Goethe.⁶¹ The first quote by Rückert, the translator of Sanskrit poetry into German, invites those readers who like to befriend the coaxing habitation (“schmeichelnde Gewöhnung”) with foreign accents, asking them to recognize that world poesy (“Weltpoesie”) is world reconciliation (“Weltversöhnung”). The last quote by Ludolf Wienbarg (1802–1872)—a *Vormärz* author who also wrote aesthetic theory—provides the means to access world poesy through the plethora of various national forms of poesy; the “German” becomes the collector, who goes around the world and gathers from holy streams of various national *poesies* with a crystal begging bowl (“Opferschale”) of humanity. Between Rückert and Wienbarg, the quote by Goethe reminds the readers that the world is an extended fatherland.

The epilogue thus frames the significance of world literature for the reader politically and aesthetically. The relationship between national and world literature in the context of (world) historical developments is particularly noticeable in the preface. Scherr begins by calling the February Revolution in France (1848) a signal for Germany to “impede its literary activity in the service of history.”⁶² He is of the point of view that Germans have learned nothing from recent history, and that the enthusiastic embrace of the principles of revolution has been rendered stagnant by the fact that the revolution has been co-opted by enthusiastic bureaucrats. According to Scherr, the liberals are now playing with democracy much as they did with absolutism; that the French and Swiss borders of Germany are full of banished people. Those who were for the revolution, he claims, are not denying it, such are the autumnal winds of despair that come after the hope of a revolutionary spring. The tone of the preface changes when Scherr turns from commenting on politics to focusing on his work. Scherr asks his readers for forgiveness and turns then to the topic of world literature. Three factors gain primacy: the space of the production of the work (Germany), the mediators (translators), and the receivers (the German reading public).⁶³ Scherr categorically states that the target readership

for the book is the larger public. He adds that along with the purpose of teaching (“Belehrung”), the book is also meant for the entertainment (“Unterhaltung”) of its reading public, a certain kind of “poetic pleasure.”⁶⁴

By suturing his comments on the contemporary political situation in Germany with those on the compendium, Scherr most directly lets the national confront the worldly, thereby illuminating many questions about the relationship of world and national literatures around the time that Scherr published the compendium and also for the coming years.

“A book such as the one in hand is only possible in Germany,”⁶⁵ Scherr notes, expanding immediately on the reasons for such a specifically German facility for world literature. First, he credits the “universality of the German intellect and the inexhaustibility of German sciences,” which have led to an understanding of the “intellectual products of all peoples and times” to a degree that no other group could afford. Second, he mentions the abundance of “masterful translations, which no other nation has,” and which has made the literary treasures of foreign nations into Germany’s shared property. Finally, Scherr goes to the extent of calling Germans “owners” of the Goethean term *Weltliteratur*.⁶⁶

Scherr situates his compendium within this “German ownership” of world literature. He characterizes his collection as one that contains everything from the “fantastic darkness of the Indian ages” to Greek antiquity, from the Middle Ages to the modern times, from folksongs to tragedies. The aim and scope of his anthology, he insists, is to provide a complete picture of the poetic creativity of humanity (“Gesamtbild des dichterischen Schaffens der Menschheit”).⁶⁷ He promises a comprehensive history of poetic literature from various nations in a chronological order. This is precisely where the Goethean idea of the “Vorzüglichste”—the most superior example of aesthetic expression—gains currency to distinguish *Weltliteratur* from *Allerweltliteratur*. Aesthetic representation (“Darstellung”) becomes part of cultural and political representation (“Vertretung”). The Indians are credited with “fantastic darkness,” the Orient becomes the source of rich imagery and profoundness (“Bilderpracht und Tiefseinn”), the Greek antiquity is the site for sculptural plasticity and wisdom (“Plastik und Weisheit”), the Romans have warm passion and blazing fantasy (“heisse Leidenschaft und lodernde Phantasie”), the Germanic people are seen as possessing intellectual majesty, power, and soul-purposiveness (“Geisteshoheit, Kraft, und Gemütsinnigkeit”) and the Slavs are the owners of a melodious melancholy (“melodienreiche Schwermuth”).⁶⁸ Scherr states that the inclusion of German poetry in great numbers requires no justification and should not alienate anyone; neither would the inclusion of

old Germanic poetry in new German translations. The reason, he states, is because the book is meant for the larger public. Scherr ends his preface with a few notes on what he perceives as some shortcomings of the anthology: among other things, a rearrangement of certain texts or reframing of certain excerpts. He wishes the publication of a second edition but quickly expresses the impossibility of his wish, bringing the readers back to contemporary times. He mentions that as politics take over aesthetic concerns in the German-speaking world, the primacy accorded to literature and authors faces a decline. Nonetheless, he ends on an upbeat note, stating that the idea of beauty is as immortal as the thought of freedom, and a short period of darkness and barbarism does not entirely compromise its future.⁶⁹

Scherr highlights not just intellectual but also consumerist aspects of literature. Cashing in on the abundance of translations from world literature into German in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, he showcases them—even if to declare a very specific German “ownership” of world literature. And last, but not least, through his long commentary on contemporary German politics, Scherr immediately situates world literature within the sociopolitical reality of Germany. Scherr embeds world literature in the political and ideological climate in which it is conceived. Its conceptualization remains an inimitable feature of the society in which it develops. Scherr made his statement, as noted before, in 1848, a year in which the most well-known statement by Marx and Engels would appear in the *Communist Manifesto*. Scherr is not too distant from Marx and Engels. Like them, he would use the term *geistige Produkte* to determine the intellectual production of a particular nation and also present books as the *Gemeingut* (shared wares) of humanity. This idea of shared property would undergo further transformation. The formal organization of the German Orientalist Society institutionalized world literature in many different ways. Aloys Sprenger, world-traveled cataloger and book collector, played a central role in this process.

The German Oriental Society and Aloys Sprenger

What Scherr institutionalized in his anthology, especially with regard to non-Western literatures, is part of a continuation of a tradition of translation. If the first half of the nineteenth century witnesses a selective albeit concentrated effort in the entry of literatures from non-European languages into the German-speaking sphere, by the second half of the nineteenth century these efforts systematize themselves. First, there is an increase in the number of translations into German directly from languages such

as Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese, Persian (and later, Japanese). English and French slowly lose their status as “intermediary” languages. Second, there is a concerted effort to institutionalize acquisition, collection, translation, publication, research, and education in non-European languages and literatures, exemplified among other things by the foundation and efforts of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (German Oriental Society) in 1844, a society that also establishes the first specialized library for non-European manuscripts and printed books.⁷⁰

From October 1 to 4, 1844, a conference of German Orientalists took place in Dresden.⁷¹ The conference, the first of its kind in Germany, was a sign of the growing institutionalization of Oriental studies in Germany. The participants came from various principalities in Germany but also universities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although the group was first called the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Kunde des Morgenlandes (German Society for the Study of the Orient), the participants decided in 1845 that they were going to change the name to Morgenländische Gesellschaft für Deutschland (Orientalist Society for Germany). The prominence of Orientalists from Middle-Germany (Mittel-Deutschland) such as Dr. Fleischer (Professor, University of Leipzig), and Dr. Brockhaus (University of Leipzig) is particularly notable, because it was not in Berlin (Prussia) or in Munich (Bavaria) but in smaller cities that an institutionalization of non-European literatures would take place. Leipzig had long since established its status as the “book city” (Buchstadt Leipzig). It was also the city where Hermann Brockhaus, heir to the Brockhaus print empire and professor of Sanskrit at the University of Leipzig would find his seat and would make the first suggestions for printing non-European works, especially those from Sanskrit, Pali, and Hindi Zend in the Latin script. The opening statement of *Ueber den Druck sanskritischer Werke mit Lateinischen Buchstaben*—Brockhaus’s prospectus to publish literary works in original and translation, as well as textbooks and grammar books for students—captures the print cultural realization of Orientalist condescension and world literary institutionalization:

Everyday the Orient moves closer to us. Europe now has the high assignment of breathing new life into the ossifying East. But for the Orient to not be a merely external shell copy of the West, rather regenerate itself from its own inner cores, stimulated by our [Europe’s] higher and more developed intelligence, it needs to be researched and recognized from its own sources. Herein lies the true meaning and value of Oriental studies. In order to understand and grasp the monuments of

Oriental spirit, one must open the way to the languages of the Orient through grammars and dictionaries, and by domesticating its most important and significant literary products of the same by publishing the originals, by translations and adaptations.⁷²

Brockhaus's message of recognition, organization, and domestication of the orient in order to breathe new life into it and save it from becoming rigid was echoed in the guidelines of the Orientalist Society. The organization's purpose was to promote knowledge of Asia and a stronger relationship with Asian countries. However, the organization was not only concerned about Oriental antiquity but also wished to engage with "recent history and the contemporary conditions" in these countries.⁷³ The fulfillment of these objectives was proposed through the following means:

Through the collection of Oriental natural and cultural products, print and manuscripts.

Through the publication, translation, and exploitation (output) of Oriental literary works.

Through the publication of a journal.

Through the encouragement, privileging, and support for undertakings (enterprises) for the promotion of knowledge about Asia.

Through the maintenance of relations with similar societies and intellectuals within the nation and abroad.⁷⁴

The foundational guidelines of the society further emphasize the establishment of a library and the appointment of the second secretary of the society as the group's librarian. His responsibilities included the ordering, numbering, marking, and preservation of materials acquired by the library through purchase or through gifts. The librarian's responsibilities also included the opening and closing of the library, the distribution and collection of materials from the members, as well as the preparation of a yearly report for the annual conference. The society's reports from the first years of its founding make frequent mentions of the libraries in Leiden, Berlin, Paris, and London, which were prominently acquiring books and manuscripts from Asia. The curious connection that one sees here is the dependence on diplomatic missions in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and other Middle-Eastern places for the acquisition of manuscripts and printed books in Arabic, Persian, Chughtai Turkish, and Ottoman Turkish, and the close ties with the Christian religious missionaries in Halle (who in turn were connected with Danish missionaries) to acquire manuscripts and printed books from the Indian subcontinent, especially southern India.

A report published by the society's journal, the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (ZDMG) in 1847 listed about ten manuscripts and over twenty printed works acquired from India by the University of Tübingen. These works are in addition to the gifts to the university by missionaries in Kerala and Karnataka in Southern India. They include copies of *Keralā Utpatti*, *Hari Vansbā*, and *Sarva Sidhbantā Sangraba*, in palm leaves and written in the Tamil script; titles which were also to be found in the McKenzie Manuscripts at the Madras Christian College.⁷⁵

The interest of this organization in systematically fortifying Oriental studies in Germany, its desire to acquire new manuscripts and translations, and its reports on print-cultural developments in other countries are well illustrated by three documents published in the very first years of its foundation.

In 1849, the ZDMG published a short note about an Oriental library in Rhodes (Greece). Sent by authors traveling in the region in 1842, the brief note reports that the library was founded in 1792 by Turbend Amasi Ahmed Aga and contains about one thousand Oriental works. The travelers had a nice conversation with the librarian, Haji Mehmed Effendi, and found him to be a “real bookworm, buried under manuscripts and folios.” The report further states: “May traveling Orientalists follow this pointed finger and try to send us a catalog of this library.”⁷⁶

This report is followed by a letter from Dr. Friedrich Max Müller from Oxford University, considered to be the preeminent translator and interlocutor of Sanskrit religious texts in the late nineteenth century. Müller writes about the progress on his planned publication of the *Rig Veda*; seventy pages in Sanskrit, he reports, have already been printed, and he is working with proofs now. Mentioning the English translation of the *Rig Veda* by Dr. Wilson, Müller adds comments on his own ongoing translation of the work. In addition, Max Müller reports on the developments on the Veda in India: Dr. Roer has published two chapters from the Sayan's commentary on the *Rig Veda* in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* and is about to publish the *Bṛihad-Araṇya-Upaniṣad* with commentary and translation.⁷⁷ Max Müller then lists a number of works of Sanskrit literature: *Tatva Bodhini*, *Tatva Kaumudi*, *Rusamanjali*—all of them newly republished in India from existing manuscripts. He adds that Dr. Wilson is done with his *History of India*, and that his next project would be a lexicon of native expressions from Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, and new Indian languages, which are now common practice in India. Dr. Wilson would also publish a catalog of the Sanskrit manuscripts at the India House in London, where new Vedic commentaries are to be expected.

That the society was part of an international network of scholars and librarians is evident from its members list. The society included translators such as Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall and Friedrich Rückert. Among its corresponding members was also Aloys Sprenger, the Austrian Orientalist who, with his student Aly Akbar of Delhi College, cataloged the Farsi, Arabic, and Urdu collections of the libraries of the Kingdom of Oudh (archaic spelling of Awadh).

In 1849, Aloys Sprenger sent a letter from India reporting on the state of literature. Entitled “Literaturbericht aus Ostindien,” the letter, written on November 5, 1848, reports on the developments in Indian magazines and books during the mid-nineteenth century. Sprenger starts his letter with a historical acknowledgment: “It has been almost one hundred years since the British, the locomotors of European education in its developments outside, have been ruling India and working on the intellectual rebirth of this wonderful country. Their efforts and the creative power of the conditions, in which India has entered through English rule, has already had great effects.”⁷⁸ Sprenger lists among these the immense number of magazines that are now being published in India in indigenous languages. Delhi, he reports, has six political magazines, published weekly, two of which have a section on literature, and one that is a literary monthly. He lists the languages in which these and other magazines are published (Farsi, Hindi, Urdu) and the originating cities (Calcutta, Bombay, Agra, Bareilly, Ghazipur, and Benaras). Crediting the British for this achievement, Sprenger notes that the government is not distrustful of its own child: enlightenment. He mentions schoolbooks, medicinal publications, scholarly works, and illustrated works, and notes that these are in lithography and typeset. Sprenger then lists about two dozen publications in Persian and Arabic, including textbooks. Praising the Asiatic company for its commitment to knowledge and learning, Sprenger mentions a “learning expedition” that the British government had sent to Tibet, and then discusses his primary assignment: the compilation of a bibliography of the collections in Lucknow, a major center for Islamic Studies in India. Sprenger promises to send reports of his findings to the *ZDMG* and ends his letter abruptly on the note: “my history of Mohammad is currently in press.”⁷⁹ Sprenger’s contributions to this volume went beyond the literary report. He published an essay on the *Kitáb Tabaqát al-Kabyr* (ca. 1318), which he called the most important codex he had ever seen in India.⁸⁰ The journal itself celebrated Sprenger by stating: “Our compatriot and correspondent Dr. A. Sprenger, head of a scholarly institution in Delhi, seems to have been appointed to that post by science itself, to redeem the Oriental school

studies from its one-sidedness and uniformity and to revive the exploitation of the rich treasure trove of Arabic and Persian literature."⁸¹

The journal was not exaggerating. Sprenger merits special discussion, because he becomes one of the most important agents of acquisition, collation, and then transportation of the largest collection of literary and scientific works in Urdu, Farsi, Arabic, and Hindustani to a European nation. Sprenger was born in 1813 in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in a small village of Nassereith near Innsbruck in Tirol. His father was a toll-tax collector. He studied Arabic, Persian, and Turkish at the University of Vienna (1832–1836) with the leading translator Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856), whose translations of Hafiz were read by Goethe. Despite Hammer-Purgstall's support, Sprenger was denied a university position at the Viennese Oriental Academy, so he went to England and is supposed to have helped the Earl of Munster (1749–1842), president of the Royal Asiatic Society, with his project on the history of Mongol invasions in India.

Sprenger became a British citizen in 1838, and then—it is not clear whether through the sponsorship of the Earl of Munster—he went to Leiden (Netherlands) to study medicine and wrote his dissertation on medical history in the Arab world. As a doctor of medicine, Sprenger had the necessary qualifications to be sent to India as an assistant surgeon in the service of the British East India Company, and he arrived at Fort William (Calcutta) on September 2, 1843.⁸² Sprenger's expertise in fields beyond medicine opened new avenues for him to pursue his primary interest in Oriental literatures. On March 6, 1845, he was appointed the principal of Delhi College, a premier institution that had its beginnings in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century as a Madrasa with Persian and Arabic as languages of instruction. Starting in 1825, it was established as a British college with classes offered in English as well.⁸³

Delhi College, which some historians consider modern and advanced for its time due to its pedagogical innovations (especially in Farsi literature) and its strong Vernacular Translation Society (since 1827), seems to have been a good fit for Sprenger, who introduced *One Thousand and One Nights* and *Kalilā-wa-Dimmā* to the college's Arabic syllabus. Within two years of his principalship, Sprenger was appointed as a temporary "extra-assistant" to the British resident of Lucknow for the purpose of preparing a catalog of the royal libraries of Awadh. Sprenger had several other important positions with the East India company, including principal of the Calcutta Madrasa (1850) and Persian translator of the Government of India (1850). But it is his position as the official cataloger of the libraries of Awadh that makes him an important and passionate bibliophile, albeit, as I am about

to show, with suspicious intentions—the creator of a world literary bibliography of Arabic, Persian, and Hindustani texts *and* a dubious agent of bibliomigrancy.

The first volume of Sprenger's *Catalogue* was published in Calcutta in 1854. As Sprenger writes in the preface, he worked on cataloging the libraries of Awadh for two years (1848–1850). During this time, he examined ten thousand volumes.⁸⁴ In the preface to the *Catalogue*, Sprenger gives a historical account of the libraries in Awadh, their upkeep, and the modes of their maintenance. He mentions that many of the works are in duplicate, because the librarians (*daroghas* or custodians) are concerned more with maintaining numbers and not the content of the books. He discusses the establishment of lithographic presses and the transformation from rote learning to learning through texts that underwent an expansion in India. The annotated bibliography he provides consists of twelve chapters, with a few thousand major and minor poets and scholars from the entire Persian- and Arabic-speaking world as well as poets of Rekhtah—a hybrid language with Persian, Arabic, and various forms of Hindi developing alongside Urdu in India—spanning over six hundred pages in the volume. This is an important document of world literature that evidences the circulation of literary texts from Baghdad, Isphahan, Ghazni, Khorasan, Cairo, and many others to—in this case—Lucknow. However, a European city with no direct colonial administrative relationship to India becomes added to this list of cities, and it must be discussed, because it is through Sprenger that an entire contingent of world literary artifacts finds a new home in another royal library—in Berlin.

Following the publication of the *Catalogue* in 1854, Sprenger traveled to various countries in the Middle East. Upon his return to India in July 1856, he was charged with dishonoring a financial commitment made to Boutros, the former principal of the Delhi College, and removed from all his civil appointments,⁸⁵ forcing Sprenger to return to Germany—but not empty-handed.

In 1857, upon his return to Germany, Sprenger published *Bibliotheca Orientalis Sprengeriana*,⁸⁶ a catalogue of his personal collection of about two thousand manuscripts. The preface to this volume is much harsher and bitterer than the one to the *Catalogue* (1854). In it Sprenger mentions his years of service in India and his travels to Egypt, Syria, and Iraq during which he “visited every library, public or private, to which [he] could obtain access, [he] examined every book [he] could lay hold of, [he] spared no expense to secure a good manuscript,” and claims even to have agents who acquired books for him from the holy centers of Mecca and Medinah

(*CBOS*, iii). Sprenger declares that he collected books not out of a “childish bibliomania” but out of “a sense of duty” (*CBOS*, iv). Akin to Macaulay, he states: “I admit that the literature of the East has no intrinsic value . . . it contains few facts, if any . . . even in poetry and philosophy, Oriental works contain few sentiments and ideas which we can admire or would like to adopt. Nevertheless it deserves to be cultivated” (*CBOS*, iv). The reasons for the cultivation of this literature, Sprenger states, lie in its history, which is longer than that of European literature, and its ability to help one expand beyond the “narrow limits of European prejudices and associations” (*CBOS*, iv). Sprenger swings like a pendulum between his praise of Oriental literature—which belongs to his collection—and his disgust for the Oriental destruction of books. On the one hand, Sprenger praises the veneration of knowledge—especially in the case of religious texts—which he witnessed in his travels through the East. On the other hand, it is not a lack of veneration but the “apathy and imbecility” of the Orientals that he claims is the reason for the neglect and disrespect of books by the general population in the East. Sprenger blames the Orientals for “an erroneous view of their own literature,” for their inability to recognize the significance of “bags and bags of old leaves of the most valuable volumes” (*CBOS*, iv). From India, all the way to Lebanon, he mentions the existence of books not on bookshelves but in large heaps or in trunks where they coexist with rats. Under these circumstances, he declares, “the duty of taking care of the patrimony of our eastern brethren devolves upon the enlightened public of Europe, and every man who finds an opportunity ought to secure as many good books as he can” (*CBOS*, iii). Having made a case for his mass acquisition of books, Sprenger highlights the features of his collection, which he claims contains the “complete knowledge of habits, life, and literature of Asia,” represented through “manuscripts, but also books that have been issued through Musulman presses” (*CBOS*, iv). In sum, he claims that his is the most complete of all collections, and his private library is equivalent to the best collections in Europe.

Sprenger was not exaggerating. The two thousand volumes he had managed to bring with him included many rare manuscripts, such as Yaqut al-Hamawi’s part geographical dictionary, part literary history, *Mu’jam al-buldan* (ca. 1228), and copies of works of some of the most well-known authors, including the Indian Sufi Amir Khusrow (1253–1325). The works listed in the *Bibliotheca Orientalis Sprengeriana* included 267 works of Arabic poetry and prose (*CBOS*, 69–77), 165 works of Persian poetry (*CBOS*, 77–84), 11 translations of Sanskrit works into Persian and Hindustani (*CBOS*, 90–91), 96 works of Hindustani literature (*CBOS*, 91–96), and several

hundred aesthetic, grammatical, logical, medical, geographical, historical, astronomical, and encyclopedic volumes in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Chaghatai Turkish. As Hars Kurio aptly notes in his brief but insightful analysis of the Arabic Manuscripts of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis Sprengeriana*: “The emergence of the ‘Bibliotheca Orientalis Sprengeriana’ is embedded in a specific historical situation in Europe; both intellectual history—the rise of Oriental studies, romanticism—as well as political and economic factors are relevant here. The creation of this collection is incomprehensible without the intellectual-historical and political developments, in which it is woven.”⁸⁷ Kurio does not provide information on the political conditions in which Sprenger “acquired” his collection. Were all these volumes acquired through legal and legitimate means? Or was Sprenger a book thief? One cannot say for sure, even when Sprenger takes for granted his borrowing privileges in the libraries that he visited. His acquisition process does not seem to disturb his employers in India or, for that matter, the purchasers of his collection in Berlin. However, the story of the acquisition of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis Sprengeriana* by the Reichsbibliothek in Berlin was itself not free of controversy. As documented in the files “Sprenger, Seine Sammlung” (Sprenger Collection files; figure 2-1) housed today at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, the long-drawn process of acquisition



Figure 2-1. Cover of the Sprenger Collection files of Oriental manuscripts: “Sprenger, Seine Sammlung,” Acta III B 49, 1857. (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.)

reveals the same competition for Oriental manuscripts between the Munich and Berlin royal libraries as seen in the description of Othmar Frank in chapter 1.

As Dr. Karl Halm, director of the Staatsbibliothek in Munich reported, his correspondence with Sprenger began around the time the news of Sprenger's collection was published—on February 9, 1857—in a newspaper based in Weinheim. Halm wrote to him on February 13 expressing interest in buying his collection; he also offered him a position at the library, thinking that someone who acquired this collection with so much love would hardly be ready to part with it.⁸⁸ In his own *Denkschrift* against Halm, Sprenger claimed that he did not want to sell it before it arrived in Hamburg, because he had yet to decide where he would finally settle.⁸⁹ Sprenger asked for fifty thousand Dutch gulden for his collection, to which Halm agreed on the condition of the collection's appraisal upon its arrival in Hamburg. Both parties agreed to these terms in principle, as also documented by Sprenger. A sum of money was advanced by the library in Munich, but a series of misunderstandings and accusations started in April 1857 when Sprenger was approached by Dr. Pinder, director of the Reichsbibliothek in Berlin. Halm claimed that Sprenger's collection did not tally with the inventory of items he had provided; Sprenger claimed otherwise, stating that Berlin was ready to offer him the asked price for his collection. The case was brought to an arbitration tribunal in Heidelberg that decided in favor of Sprenger, and the collection was bought by the Reichsbibliothek. The news of acquisition of the Sprenger Collection—1,515 manuscripts, 558 lithographs, and 2 stone tablets with cuneiform script—was published in the *Preussische Staatsanzeiger* on September 2, 1857, on the same page that carried the news of the “Indian Revolt” of 1857.⁹⁰

The huge number of foreign works acquired by the Reichsbibliothek in the form of *Bibliotheca Sprengeriana* was not immediately open to the public. However, not far from Berlin, in the book city of Leipzig, another development was taking place, which would heavily emphasize the access of world literature in translation to its readers in affordable editions, a development that would change the face of world literary circulation in Germany far beyond the nineteenth century.

Hall of Fame: Reclam's Universal-Bibliothek

In 1828, a young man of twenty-one years called Anton Phillip Reclam (1807–1896) borrowed three thousand thaler from his father and bought a

lending library called Literarisches Museum on the Grimmaische Strasse in Leipzig. The library contained “the latest in German, French, English, and Italian literature” and had a reading room with about seventy-eight newspapers and magazines.⁹¹ Reclam sold the Literarisches Museum in 1837 and founded the Philipp Reclam jun. Verlag with the plan to publish contemporary and classical literature, entertainment literature, as well as left-liberal political writings, which would continue for the next decade, especially around the political turmoil of 1848.⁹² The turning point came in 1858 when Reclam published a twelve-volume *Complete Works of Shakespeare*—by twelve different translators—at half the price (1.5 thaler for the collected works) of other available editions. The edition was so popular that it went into fifth and sixth editions within the second year of its publication and turned Reclam into a major player within the publishing landscape of the German-speaking world.⁹³ To continue the marketing success of these translations, Reclam introduced individual dramas of Shakespeare in paperback in 1865 at a price of two groschen apiece.⁹⁴

Reclam’s rise to the ranks of a leading publisher came at a time of landmark change within the German publishing industry. German-language publishers had fully accepted the benefits of the free trade enterprise introduced in 1810, and technological innovations in typesetting and binding had opened up new possibilities for the publishing industry. The growth of literacy had created new markets of readership that resulted in the expansion of booksellers and publishers: between 1840 and 1865 the number of firms trading in books (publishing and sale) had doubled. Starting in 1867, the *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel*, the most important trade paper for the book industry, was published on all business days. Most importantly, on November 9, 1867, works of German authors who died before 1837 went out of copyright and became the “common property of the nation” (“Gemeingut der Nation”).⁹⁵ Many publishers were preparing for the upcoming change and so was Reclam.

The commercial success of the Shakespeare edition gave birth to the idea of a series that would be universal in scope—it would include titles from German literature and from other national literatures in German translations—and reach; the editions would be cheap and therefore affordable to interested readers from all classes of society. And so on November 10, 1867, Reclam’s Universal-Bibliothek series was launched with Goethe’s *Faust. Eine Tragödie (Faust Part I)* as the first title. Along with German translations of Shakespeare, Reclam published canonical German authors such as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Friedrich Schiller, and Jean Paul. The publishing house was cashing in on the growing reading public

with its volumes priced so low that Anton Philipp acquired the nickname “Groschenreclam” in the publishing industry.⁹⁶

Anton Philipp’s vision was energized further when his son Hans Heinrich Reclam joined the firm. While the commercial nature of the venture can hardly be denied, the intellectual impetus came from left-liberal rebels of Young Germany. As the Reclam historian Dietrich Bode notes, Universal-Bibliothek was geared toward an “enormous construction of a library of world literature,”⁹⁷ each with a uniquely assigned Reclam Universal-Bibliothek (RUB) number. Drama became the preferred genre in the first steps toward building this library. Along with Shakespeare, Spanish (Agustín Moreto y Cavana’s *Donna Diana*, Pedro Calderón’s *La Vida es Sueño*) and French (Racine’s *Phèdre*, Molière’s *L’École des Maris*) dramas were the first to be published by Reclam.⁹⁸

Reclam thus very much relied on the idea of “masterpieces.” There is no doubt that the Universal-Bibliothek was a world literary library of already established national canons. While the editions were cheap, the purpose was loftier. There was a growing sense of educating the public through national and world literatures. As Bode observes, ancient Greek and Latin authors, philosophers, and historians, along with the German classical works, came to and continue to embody the “humanist educational ideal,” and therefore the centerpiece of Universal-Bibliothek’s publication agenda.⁹⁹ Johann Heinrich Voss’s translations of Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Homer’s *Illiad* and *Odysee* were some of the first works to be published in the year leading up to German unification.¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, Reclam’s program for non-European “Oriental” literatures relied on the name recognition of famous works and authors. On the other hand, it also benefited from the growing number of translations into German, partially also due to the activities of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft. These included Ludwig Fritzes’s translations of Kalidasa’s *Vikramorvasiyam* and *Mālavikāgnimitra*, and Bhavabhuti’s *Mālatimādhava*.¹⁰¹ Kalidasa’s *Sakuntala* was published twice: once as Alfred von Wolzogen’s “free” interpretation for stage to mark Reclam’s inaugural publication of Indian literature,¹⁰² and then as Hermann Camillo Kellner’s new translation of *Sakuntala*,¹⁰³ released to mark the centennial of Georg Forster’s German translation of the play.

Parallel to—or in spite of—the rise of significance of national literature after 1871, Reclam continued to expand its publication of non-German works in translation. And the publishing agenda was slowly turning from canonical works from antiquity or early modern periods to translations of contemporary literatures. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha* became the first American work to be published in the

Universal-Bibliothek series,¹⁰⁴ followed by Pushkin's *Prisoner of the Caucasus* and *Eugene Onegin*.¹⁰⁵ In fact, Russian and Scandinavian literatures signified Universal-Bibliothek's most sustained engagement with world literary contemporaneity. Alexander Turgenev's works, such as *King Lear of the Steppe* and *Fathers and Sons*,¹⁰⁶ were published in the 1880s, probably also because of his connections with German authors such as Theodor Storm and Heyse. These were followed by works of Gogol, Tolstoi, Gorki, and Chekhov in quick succession.¹⁰⁷ Henrik Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* marked the beginning of Reclam's publication of his plays;¹⁰⁸ by 1893 Reclam had published eighteen plays by Ibsen, gaining the status of "Ibsen-publishers."¹⁰⁹

While Reclam's unique contribution to the expansion of the circulation of world literature cannot be denied, especially in the unified Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, there is no doubt that a growing body of readership already existed. Reclam contributed to increasing that readership in a time when national literature was regaining importance. One last example will suffice to illustrate this change from the first to the second half of the nineteenth century.

In 1832, the year Goethe died, a literary journal called *Das Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes* was founded in Berlin by Joseph Lehmann.¹¹⁰ Much like the *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, *Das Magazin* identified the larger public as its target readership and was published three times a week. The articles were organized under geolinguistic rubrics covering all major European literatures as well as literatures from East-India, North America, the Orient (China, Japan, and Korea) and Egypt (mostly covering literatures in Arabic). In addition, every issue featured a section on "German Literature Abroad" ("Deutsche Literatur im Auslande"), highlighting the publication of German-language fiction, drama, newspapers, but also lexicons and dictionaries in migrant communities such as the United States.

With its fiftieth anniversary issue (January 1881), the magazine changed its name. From a journal dedicated primarily to literatures in foreign languages, it included domestic literature in its title and became *Das Magazin für die Literatur des In- und Auslandes: Kritisches Organ der Weltliteratur*.¹¹¹ Eduard Engel—literary critic, linguist, and later editor of an anthology on world literature—became the new editor.¹¹² While all the other historical features were retained, a new expanded section on Germany titled "Deutschland" was added to the journal. The editorial foreword promised that the magazine was "not in service of any political party"¹¹³ and was meant to provide all readers access to "all significant phenomena and currents of all literatures,"¹¹⁴ including German literature: "The magazine

vouches that the educated reader should have knowledge of that which is meaningful, created in literary nations on both sides of the ocean. That the literary movement in Germany and the neighboring countries will be given special attention, needs no explanation.”¹¹⁵

The lead article, “Weltliteratur und Humanität,” was authored by well-known German-Jewish poet and writer Berthold Auerbach (Moyses Baruch Auerbach, 1812–1882).¹¹⁶ Auerbach starts the article by stating that the idea of humanity as proposed by Lessing and Herder was appended by Goethe through his idea of world literature but laments what he sees as a dwindling in the currency of the word *humanity* (“Humanität”) in the late nineteenth century. Humanity, he reports, has been transformed in the late nineteenth century by extreme spirits (“Starkgeister”) into an expression of softness (“Weichlichkeit”), sweetness (“Süsslichkeit”), and sentimentality (“Sentimentalität”).¹¹⁷ Speaking in the context of a rising materialist thought within the society on the one hand and realpolitik on the other, Auerbach identifies the question of power (“Machtfrage”) as it has acquired central stage in individual as well as social lives. It is in this rise of the question of power that Auerbach gives currency to the word *human*, describing it as an act of putting oneself in other conditions of existence (“sich in andere Daseinsbedingungen zu versetzen”).¹¹⁸ Identifying language as the main distinguishing element between humans and other animals, Auerbach states that “the division of human beings through languages does not dissolve the unity of human beings, it is given much more life-content through it.”¹¹⁹ It is in this context of a power-infested and divisive politics—between a borderless humanity and a nationally defined public based on language—that Auerbach presents his understanding of world literature: “World literature! It would be unfair if it were named together with the utopia of a world empire and a world language. For world literature already exists and is growing more and more, regardless that in our time peoples are collecting themselves even more strongly within [themselves] and perhaps because of that.”¹²⁰ Underlining the significance of nationally and historically conditioned forms of expression (“Erscheinungsformen”), Auerbach declares the unity of world literature in its diversity: “The truth is the united, but the truthfulness is the diversity of its appearance. The innermost being of the genius is truthfulness—subjective, national, timely—and what emanates from truthfulness, that lives and has an effect later.”¹²¹

Auerbach was aware that it would be erroneous to expect from world literature to give expression to something that is universally human (“allgemein menschlich”), that a work does not carry a signature of its spatial or temporal origin. Instead, he argues that the more physiognomically

recognizable the appearance is, the purer the diversity of the countenance, and more willingly is it understood by foreign nations and other times. Calling Shakespeare and Walter Scott national authors who were received by all nations and referring to *Faust*, *Nathan the Wise*, and *Wilhelm Tell* as the greatest works of German literature that are becoming a “property of the world” (“Weltbesitz”), Auerbach ends his essay with the coda: “The essence and concept of world literature is not uniformity, but rather the accord of different notes towards world harmony.”¹²²

It is this particular story of world literature that unfolds in the German-speaking space in the second half of the nineteenth century: marked by a growing consciousness in materialist conceptions of class relations and society on the one hand, and a growing understanding of the materialist dimensions of the intellectual market on the other. In addition, the forces of nation building, the advent of the unified German nation, and a growing sense of national self-recognition give rise to a complicated but very interesting text in which world literature ceases to be merely a philosophical ideal emanating from the Enlightenment concept of a universal humanity but, in fact, aligns itself more with the national in its examination of the universal. World literature thus acquires a more public and more political appearance. Both within the theory and in practice, world literature now emerges as a space where the universally human is staged through the national, where the universal unity is imagined only through national particularity. This ideational composition of world literature is evident—even when it cannot always be called a direct consequence of it—in the practice of publishing world literature in German translation as the “national” literature of foreign countries. The effort to augment and forefront the national also comes in the form of the first efforts to establish a national library.

The May 21, 1881, issue of *Das Magazin* published a petition by the executive council (Vorstand) of the Association of German Authors (Allgemeine Deutsche Schriftstellerband). Signed in Leipzig on March 30, 1881, the petition was addressed to the Reich’s Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, asking for the establishment of a German Imperial Library (Deutsche Reichsbibliothek) as a hall of fame (*Ruhmeshalle*) of German intellectual achievements.¹²³

In its prefatory note to the petition, the magazine referred to an “evil” which should have been long removed in the land of authors and thinkers if the government’s concern about the intellectual superpower-standing of Germany were to become even just a miniscule part of the protection of the material outlook of the country.¹²⁴ The petition itself starts by underlining the significance of libraries for the intellectual culture of the Ger-

man people and then moves quickly to outline a print-cultural portrayal of Germany. The signatories go a bit overboard in declaring “every writing that has appeared in print: from the most encompassing scientific work to the smallest of an ephemeral pamphlet” as representative of the expression of the intellectual life of the nation and as a cultural-historical witness of the moment.¹²⁵ To illustrate their point, the signatories mention the donation by Kaiser Wilhelm I of all documents related to the Franco-Prussian war to the Royal Library in Berlin.

The petitioners make a case for a change in the perception of libraries and their function as they also present a review of how libraries functioned in the past. They ask for a change in the agenda of libraries, specifically, a freedom from the intellectual bias of librarians. The acquisition and collection within a library was a function of the decisions made by the librarians; they collected what they thought was the best. The petitioners want this process to be replaced by an objective one. They ask for change by mentioning that a library should not just acquire objects according to what is readable but also that which is produced. A library was so far a workshop where specific tools were stored in order to produce specific things. But it was never the purpose to produce the knowledge of the national spirit (“*Volksgeist*”) and its history, and no one needed the means for it. Now the literary production of a time becomes its intellectual consciousness.¹²⁶

The petitioners further compare the cultural significance of this library project with other state-funded German projects, such as the archeological project in Rome and the excavation in Olympia, among others. As role models for such a library they list the national libraries in Paris and Washington, DC, and the English libraries, whereby every theater brochure, every ticket, every little piece concerning Shakespeare can be consulted if one were doing research on it. In addition, they also mention libraries in England, Italy, Austria, and the United States, where free copies of every publication by law must be sent to the national library for its collection.

This particular petition demonstrates the acceptance of the changing role of books and of libraries that was manifest in Germany by the end of the nineteenth century. Fueling this growing consciousness was the self-image of the nation—now unified—as a nation of thinkers and authors. There was also an added value attached to the institution of national literature, especially *belles lettres*, which, according to the petitioners, had not been given the all-encompassing attention that it deserved.

If public libraries, meaning university or research libraries (*Gelehrten Bibliotheken*) during the first half of the nineteenth century bore marks of the individual niche that the library or its patrons had created for themselves,

by the end of the nineteenth century it was about to change to depict literature on a national level. In addition, a close look at the petition reveals that all printed matter—everything that appears in print—rather than as manuscript, is now promoted as the witness to or evidence of national intellectual life. Books become the victorious trophies of a nation, deserving their own hall of fame. They cease to be tools from which other products can be generated. Consequently, libraries cease to be workshops where other products are manufactured through the existing tools; libraries become the showcases of a workshop, the display cabinet for national memory. In short, through both anthologizing and the development of academic societies, the acquisition, distribution, and circulation of non-German literatures continues. Sometimes this activity is categorically labeled world literature and, at other times, merely as literatures from the world. That this period is marked also by censorship and impediments to the circulation of local and national literature makes it even more interesting: the second half of the nineteenth century in Germany is a time when the forces of nation-building exert their influence on the construction of both national and world literature.

Half Epic, Half Drastic: From Cosmopolitanism to Nationalism

The picture of world literature in the German-speaking world in the post-Goethean age is very complex. Nationalist sentiments coexist with cosmopolitan ideas. Anti-Semitism, as well as an out-and-open racial stereotyping of the Orientals and their literature, their reading habits and their sheer ignorance of book culture punctuate the larger text of world literature. While Heine, Marx, and Engels, and later proponents of the programmatic publications of world literature like Reclam's Universal-Bibliothek, promote a cosmopolitan view of literature, there are "birthers" in the business of national literature who deem anything foreign as dangerous to the national, and anything non-Christian and critical of the nation as unpatriotic and worthy of being written out of the text of the nation. The concept of the "national" library that is constructed is the library primarily of works by white Christian authors.

The empire of books that started taking shape in the German-speaking world in the early nineteenth century found its competitor in a national parliament of letters in a united German nation. The anti-Semitic nationalism of Arndt and others would acquire a much stronger form in the twentieth century. The *Lebensraum* concept would fuel the way to an empire built on military might and assumed racial superiority. Step by step,

the Jewish dimension of German culture would be annihilated; and book collection would be replaced by book burning.

No one understood this better than Heinrich Heine. Unlike Aloys Sprenger, who considered that the destruction of books or engaging in their willful neglect was a special prerogative of non-European, Eastern brethren, Heine had a different opinion. In *Wintermärchen*, he could declare that his ideas, his books, the library he carried in his head, was the most dangerous item he had when he crossed borders. On the other hand, he also knew that the European Christian brethren had the equal pleasure of destroying books when it came to political and intellectual occupation.

This chapter started with a discussion of the homecoming of an exiled subject in Heine's *Wintermärchen*. In closing, I turn to one of his earliest works, *Almansor: Eine Tragödie* (1823). Set in 1492, the play refracts the question of assimilation into the majority culture through the issue of religious conversion; the Christianization of Islamic and Jewish subjects is part of the administrative mission of the Conquistadors. The prologue introduces the play as "half epic, half drastic."¹²⁷ Almansor, son of an Arab exile, returns to his homeland Granada to witness the cultural horror initiated by the Spaniards. As Almansor examines his abandoned house, he runs into his childhood friend Hassan, who reports to him about the burning of books in Andalusia. The tyranny of monocultural solidarity expresses its wrath upon books—copies of the Holy Koran are being burned, Hassan explains to him, adding, "it was just a foreplay, there, where one burns books, in the end human beings are burned."¹²⁸

When the Jewish-German author Berthold Auerbach pleaded for the diversity of perspective in the time of nationalist power and asked for looking at world literature as a way of understanding "other conditions of existence," he did not know what was in store in the next century. What happens in the field of world literature, books, and libraries in the second half of the nineteenth century could indeed be considered a half epic, half drastic foreplay for many things to come. First books, and in the end, human beings would be burned, demanding a new meaning of the world and world literature.

