



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Chapter 4 Windows on the Berlin Wall: Unfinished Histories of World Literature in a Divided Germany

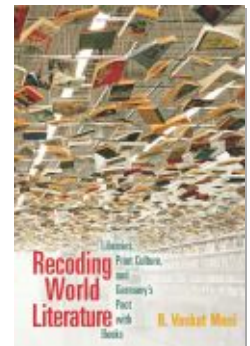
Published by

Mani, B. Venkat.

Recoding World Literature: Libraries, Print Culture, and Germany's Pact with Books.

Fordham University Press, 2016.

Project MUSE. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/book.48096>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/48096>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.  
[136.0.111.243] Project MUSE (2025-01-18 20:29 GMT)

## Windows on the Berlin Wall: Unfinished Histories of World Literature in a Divided Germany

By token of this, our conception of *Weltliteratur* and its philology is no less human, no less humanistic, than its antecedent; the implicit comprehension of history—which underlies this conception of *Weltliteratur*—is not the same as the former one, yet it is a development of it and unthinkable without it.

—ERICH AUERBACH, “Philology and *Weltliteratur*” (1952)<sup>1</sup>

You would not consider [it] book burning, a rather vicious thing, if we insist that you do not have the works of Communist authors on your shelves to indoctrinate the German people?

—SENATOR JOSEPH R. MCCARTHY, “Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings” (1953)<sup>2</sup>

The East German author Volker Braun’s novel *Unvollendete Geschichte* (Unfinished story/history, 1975) is regarded as one of the most controversial and widely discussed literary works critiquing social life in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). The novel sutures individual and collective stories and histories. The protagonist Frank, thirty-two years old and socially isolated, is chastised by the parents of his girlfriend, Karin, for his connections to the West and is later reported to the state. Karin’s father, a state official and member of the ruling socialist party, is dismayed by her relationship with Frank. During one of her visits home, the father decides to read a poem to her. Karin finds it strange, because her father never showed any interest in literature. Literature had a utilitarian function for the party, and it could be referenced through “official praise or a semi-official critique”: “The reason for this was that authors write in unfocused ways about all possible things, almost as it occurred to them, instead of agreeing on the essential, current question, and preferably writing that *one*, necessary book instead of so many confusing ones. Moreover, as a trained historian with statistical leanings he [the father] had an aversion to the belletristic mode of representation.”<sup>3</sup> As an example of clear and

focused writing with a purpose, Karin's father reads a poem about political commitment by Johannes R. Becher, the GDR's first cultural minister. The poem extols the "real" socialism of a *Menschen-Staat*, a state built on the foundations of humanity.

Karin's disconnect with her father's beliefs and ideas on literature take a turn at Frank's place; in his personal library she discovers the novel *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (1976; *The New Sorrows of Young W.*), an equally controversial social commentary on East Germany by Ulrich Plenzdorf, who rose to fame with the publication of this work. The novel, a late twentieth-century treatment of Goethe's *Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1776), documents the coming of age of the teenager Edgar Wiebeau, a young man growing up in East Germany. Edgar is fascinated by Werther's resistance to imposed social norms and his obsession with Charlotte. However, unlike Werther's penchant for painting and the Scottish author James McPharson's *Ossian* (1760), Edgar is enamored by American jeans, beat music, and two books that he almost knows by heart: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Edgar's attitude towards books makes his appreciation of Defoe and Salinger particularly interesting:

My opinion on books was: no human being can read all books, not even all the very good ones. Consequently, I concentrated on two. Anyway, in my opinion, in every book there are almost *all* the books. I do not know if anyone understands me. I mean, in order to write a book, one must have read a couple of thousand other pieces. . . . My two favorite books were: Robinson Crusoe . . . the other one was from that Salinger. And I got hold of it by pure chance. I mean, no one recommended them or so. . . . My experience with prescribed books was mightily miserable.<sup>4</sup>

Braun's *Unvollendete Geschichte* draws attention to the function of literature as a utilitarian tool to support a system or a state ideology. The father, a state official for whom history is curiously statistical, displays aversion to literature and privileges singularity of opinion over the multiplicity of narratives. Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* offers for consideration the question of individual and collective readership by setting up a contrast between "prescribed" and "self-discovered" titles. The two books that quell the sorrows of young Edgar originate from and are set in other worlds and other times. As Edgar reports, these books are not part of prescribed texts; they are his favorite precisely because they help him escape a programmatic social conformation.

Braun and Plenzdorf's novels criticize the use of literature as an ideological tool in the GDR. They can easily be read, as has been done before, as examples of a nation in which a purportedly "liberal" censorship—one that was on its face extremely tolerant, even open to many world literary traditions—worked within the parameters of a tightly defined, purportedly pro-worker and pro-citizen state ideology. However, it would be historically biased and in line with the widespread pro-market opinion, if the GDR were declared to be nothing but an ideologized, completely totalitarian, closed state with no connections to the rest of the world. It would be as naive to think of world literary circulation in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as independent of any ideological pressures, where any and every work was accessible to a reader through the virtues of a free-market press. To circumvent the simplistic bifurcation that would draw a straight line from Nazi censorship to East German censorship—portraying West Germany as the haven of unbiased publishing and reading (a picture in which world literature in Germany finally receives emancipation through the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989)—I propose to take a closer look at some of the defining moments pertaining to books, libraries, and world literature in the GDR and the FRG. This will allow us to view how ideological forces shaped the construction of the idea of the world, and in turn world literature, in the two German states.

There is no doubt that in a divided German public sphere, two rather different collections of texts came to be understood under the rubric of world literature. While the state apparatus's involvement in the promotion of world literature in the GDR was much more active than in the FRG, the procapitalist agenda of the FRG was also clearly visible in the orientation of the book market. Considering these two states in tandem will provide a far better picture of how world literature, through the politics of books, becomes instrumental to and an instrument of political ideology in a divided Germany. The two states differed not merely in their reception of literatures from other parts of the world but also in their production of a concept of world literature for their respective readerships. This story of two distinct modes of the institutionalization of world literature in a divided Germany, a story that was framed around the iconicity of the Berlin Wall, is the focus of this chapter.

How were books and literature politicized in the occupation zones (1945–1949)? How did this politicization shape and define the course of world literature in the two German states (1949–1989)? To what extent did the United States and the Soviet Union—as primary funders and

subsidizers of the initial phase of cultural politics in the two respective German states—influence book production, translations, and library acquisition and circulation? Did the ideological division impede or facilitate the translation and reception of literatures from newly decolonized nations in Asia and Africa? What role was played by the postwar migration programs of the two German states in the introduction of newer literatures from Asia and Africa? These questions are central to this chapter, and to answer them we must first consider the question of world literature in conjunction with the predicament of history in a new world order after World War II. To approach these questions, I begin with the German exiled scholar Erich Auerbach. His seminal essay “Philologie der Weltliteratur” (1952) was written in the United States during his professorship at Yale. The moment and the milieu of the essay’s origin make it an excellent document for the construction of world literary debates after World War II.

### *Auerbach and the Impossibility of World Literature*

Auerbach’s “Philology and *Weltliteratur*” is often cited in current debates in world literary studies.<sup>5</sup> In his comparative reading of Auerbach and the Danish intellectual Georg Brandes, Peter Madsen identifies “variegation, unification, and the idea of inner history” as key terms in Auerbach’s essay, proposing that the central question for Auerbach was “whether a similar set of terms made sense in his [Auerbach’s] own time, in a situation that seemed to be entirely determined by the process of modernization.”<sup>6</sup> Aamir Mufti parses Auerbach through filters of nationalism and Orientalism on the one hand, and exile and diversification on the other. Mufti forcefully argues that “Auerbach’s essay, while seeking to refashion the concept of *Weltliteratur* in the light of the contemporary turning point in the history of the West, in effect absolves the Goethean tradition of its involvement with the modern imperial process and remains itself ambivalent about the emerging postcolonial contours of the postwar world.”<sup>7</sup>

The following discussion takes the insights of these scholars into consideration. However, in my reading of the text I want to demonstrate that Auerbach’s ambivalence is not merely historical and theoretical but also political and pedagogical, and these multiple levels of ambivalence impact his imagination of world literature. The title of the English translation of the German text foregrounds such ambivalence in interesting ways.

The German original, published under the title “Philologie der *Weltliteratur*” in the *Festschrift* for Fritz Strich (1952), insinuates an investigation of the philology *of* world literature. However, in their translation,

published seventeen years after the original, Maire and Edward Said chose to replace the genitive possessive in the title with a conjunction. They also decided in favor of not translating the term *Weltliteratur*:

In our translation of Auerbach's article we have chosen not to put *Weltliteratur* into English. An expedient such as "world literature" betrays the rather unique tradition behind the German word. It is, of course, Goethe's own word [*sic*] which he used increasingly after 1827 for universal literature, or literature which expresses *Humanität*, humanity, and this expression is literature's ultimate purpose. *Weltliteratur* is therefore a visionary concept, for it transcends national literatures without, at the same time, destroying their individualities. Moreover, *Weltliteratur* is not to be understood as a selective collection of world classics or great books—although Goethe seemed often to be implying this—but rather as a concert among all the literature produced by man about man. (*PaW*, 1)

Notwithstanding the fact that *Weltliteratur* was not exclusively Goethe's term, with this particular framing of the text, the translators project in a way their own imagination of world literature onto Auerbach's. They locate Goethean *Weltliteratur* in a history of ideas whose proponents include "Herder, Grimm, Schlegel, and especially in Auerbach's case, Giambattista Vico" (*PaW*, 1). The Saids extrapolate from Auerbach the meaning of philology as "all, or most of human verbal activity," intimately connected to and even dominated by the discipline of history, and they thus locate Auerbach's ideas in the "German idealist tradition of historiography" (*PaW*, 2; *PdW*, 39). The translators' privileging of the German *Weltliteratur* over world literature is symptomatic of the visionary aspect of world literature that they aim to underline in Auerbach's essay. Although, as we are about to see, Auerbach is prudently skeptical, even anxious about the term. To understand Auerbach's skepticism and anxiety, it might be productive to briefly review some of the foundational moments of his essay.

"It is time to ask what meaning the word *Weltliteratur* can still have if we relate it, as Goethe did, both to the past and to the future" (*PaW*, 2; *PdW*, 39), thus begins Auerbach's inquiry on the meaning of the term. The simultaneously prospective and retrospective nature of this beginning has its origins in a transitional period of history—a point that both Madsen and Mufti also register in their readings. The essay is thus the product *and* witness of its historical moment, a revisitation of the legacies of the European philological tradition at an important world historical and intellectual juncture. Having experienced a period when traditions of historiography

and philology were completely usurped by fascist ideology, and living in a period where national reconstruction and the revival of civic life is manifesting itself in diverse ways in Europe but also in the newly decolonized nations of Asia and Africa, Auerbach is not concerned with a simplistic revival of the German idealist tradition. His central focus is on the imminent threat that he sees in the “imposed uniformity . . . of individual traditions” (*PaW*, 2; *PdW*, 39). Seeing the world polarized through “European-American” or “Russian-Bolshevist” modes of human activity, Auerbach is quick to point out that the “differences between these two patterns are comparatively minimal when they are both contrasted with the basic patterns underlying the Islamic, Indian, or Chinese traditions” (*PaW*, 3; *PdW*, 39).

With this curious mixture of continental, ideological, religious, and linguistic/cultural grouping of the peoples of the world, Auerbach spells out two phenomena that challenge “relating” to the Goethean concept in the new world order: standardization and radical diversification. However, without quite resolving the tension between the two, he anticipates a world in which “a single literary culture, only a few literary languages, and perhaps even a single literary language” would gain precedence, and the Goethean concept would be “at once realized and destroyed” (*PaW*, 3; *PdW*, 39). Having started on a historical note, he now turns to a “*sense of historicism*” (italics added) that for him “permitted the formation of the concept of *Weltliteratur*” (*PaW*, 3; *PdW*, 40).

The unresolved tension between Auerbach’s anticipation of simultaneous standardization and diversification permeates the rest of the essay. A derivative historicism forms the force field of this tension. On the one hand, Auerbach’s concerns are directed toward a possible intellectual exchange between peoples and nations through literature. On the other hand, he also recognizes the limitations of such a hope in the select nature of these kinds of exchanges. Literature seems to be the perfect vehicle for cultural dialogue and mutual understanding, possibly even reconciliation between people. However, in light of his perceived standardization of “world culture,” he sees more challenges than opportunities in placing hope in world literature as the great conciliator and mediator of humanity. And this is the point when history reenters the discourse, because despite the politicized difference that polarizes people (but curiously standardizes world culture), for Auerbach history is what apparently becomes the agent of difference, of particularity, thus rendering world literature in the twentieth century as human—and as humanistic—as the Goethean concept. Auerbach presupposes an “implicit comprehension of history” (*PaW*, 7; *PdW*, 43) for an in-

dividual to achieve “a scholarly and synthesizing philology of *Weltliteratur*” (*PaW*, 9; *PdW*, 44).

Auerbach’s conceptualization of world literature sways between the historical and the contemporary, the (localized) literary and the (worldly) cultural, the political and the aesthetic, but ultimately it moves to the practical. The ambivalence that Mufti points out actually manifests itself not so much in Auerbach’s nuanced understanding or even presentation of pressing current historical concerns. The ambivalence in fact is couched in a negotiation of the distance between a theoretical understanding of world literature and its political utility for the mid-twentieth century. And in a bid to negotiate this distance, Auerbach turns away from history to zoom into the relatively selective field of literature and literary pedagogy. For him, the question of an individual’s command and mastery over world literary material remains as crucial as the ability of an individual to process this material through a sense of historicism, which he mentions earlier on in the essay. This also pervades his understanding of cultures; the anxiety about the standardization of the world is the anxiety of the commingling of diverse cultures, which—although he does not explicitly admit it—seems to come from a particular perception of culture.

In remembering the historicism of Goethe’s period with a sense of profound loss, Auerbach forgets the inherent hybridity that has long informed the formation of cultures, not just in the current moment of his writing about world literature but also within the historical time of Goethe. A monolingual and monocultural—unmixed and therefore unadulterated—perception of both history and culture informs his anxiety about the linguistic and literary training required to deepen a scholarly understanding of world literature. Despite his curiosity about the larger public interaction through literature, world literature remains, for Auerbach, too, an exchange between literary works representative of those cultures. And the mediators of such a world literature will be the trained experts in specific literary fields, trained, one may add, in a particular synthesis of philology. As the Saids were quick to pick up in their introduction, philology emerges as a field where “foreign, nonphilological, or scientific methods begin to be felt” (*PaW*, 8; *PdW*, 43). The task of philology seems to be the assimilation and ordering of these methods and concepts. What Auerbach seems to be encouraging is a way out of specialization, while promoting it all the same. His invocation of “a commanding overview of the European material,” as a special trait of the “generation that matured before the two World Wars,” is particularly illustrative of this point: “These scholars cannot be replaced



very easily, for since their generation the academic study of Greek, Latin, and the Bible—which was a mainstay of the late period of the bourgeois humanistic culture—has collapsed nearly everywhere. If I may draw conclusions from my own experiences in Turkey, then it is easy to note corresponding changes in non-European, but equally ancient, cultures” (*PaW*, 9; *PdW*, 44).

This point is debatable on several counts. First, as we have already seen in the course of the nineteenth century, even for the generation before the two world wars, non-European cultures became part of a bourgeois humanistic ideal through the concept of world literature. Second, the European bourgeois humanistic ideal was itself not formed without the political and ideological contradictions of the nineteenth century, in fact it developed parallel to, and in spite of, the politics of dominance and subjugation that were challenged by many in the nineteenth century—Heine and Marx being just two among them. Third, and this relates directly to the immediate context of training for a world literary, synthesizing philology: note how the “academic training” in Greek and Latin is conveniently pitted against Auerbach’s “experiences” in Turkey. While an engagement with the *textual traditions* of Europe is essential to arrive at a philology of world literature, *life experiences* in other cultures will suffice as the basis of knowledge.

It is precisely this asymmetry that makes its way into Auerbach’s call for a “history-from-within,” (which Madsen refers to as “inner history”). That “history-from-within” is also decidedly Eurocentric; for Auerbach, history itself is “the genos of the *European* tradition of literary art” (*PaW*, 12, italics added; *PdW*, 46). Buried in this sentence is a century of ideas about the disconnect between history and literary narrative in the non-European world. So it is not really standardization (through colonialism and, in the twentieth century, the nation-state imperialism in Europe) that Auerbach cannot seem to resolve. This difference between history and literature is at the root of Auerbach’s practical and pedagogical anxiety, which in his opinion the Western academy is woefully underprepared to process in order to train its subjects in newly circulating literatures of the “Islamic, Indian, and . . . Chinese” worlds. Auerbach’s evaluation of world literature is thus very close to Goethe’s own momentary celebration of the Chinese novel, only to then present Greek antiquity as the model of all Western literary works, as has already been discussed.

In sum, the Saids’ choice to retain the German *Weltliteratur* was right, although for all the wrong reasons. In the distance from “Philologie der Weltliteratur” to “Philology and *Weltliteratur*,” from the genitive possessive (*der*) to the coordinating conjunction (and), what remains unchanged is the understanding of *Weltliteratur* itself. Unlike the translators’ projec-

tion that for Auerbach world literature emerges as a “concert between literatures,” Auerbachian world literature remains a primarily European “collection of texts”; the harmony of the concert seems to be threatened by the cacophony of literatures from the Islamic, Indian, and Chinese worlds. Auerbach thus emerges as the model nonsanguine son and inheritor of Goethe—a twentieth-century version of Eckermann.

Despite Auerbach’s lopsided view of culture and non-European literatures, the necessity for a multiplicity of points of departures (“Ansatzpunkte”) that he presents as essential to developing a world literary philology remain singularly helpful. On the one hand, his ideas about the lack of intellectual preparation (in the West) for the entry and reception of non-Western literatures serve well to capture the state of literary circulation in the historical moment following World War II. On the other hand, the essay exudes a sense of uneasiness between the historical moment and the sense of historicism that Auerbach promotes, an uneasiness that makes world literature in the Goethean sense impossible for the twentieth century. It is precisely this uneasiness that, when harnessed, can shed new light on the correspondences between historical forces that shape the idea of the world and of world literature.

Auerbach starts his essay by pointing out that “the presupposition of world literature is a *felix culpa*: mankind’s division into many cultures” (*PaW*, 2; *PdW*, 93). In a slight reformulation of Goethe’s idea of the world as an extended homeland, Auerbach ends his essay by stating that the earth, not the nation, is our philological home. Nonetheless, in line with Goethe, he still points out, that “the most priceless and indispensable part of a philologist’s heritage is still his own nation’s culture and language. Only when he is separated from this heritage, however, and then transcends it does it become truly effective” (*PaW*, 17). Somewhere between the happy fault or sin (*felix culpa*) and the philological home, the nation and its separation, new definitions of world literature in practice, not just in theory, would start to emerge in the twentieth century. And some of the most dramatic manifestations of this division and separation would be visible in the materiality of the literary world in a place that Auerbach once called home—a Germany that would be taken over by forces of history from within and from without.

### *Split Bibliographs: The German Book Industry after World War II*

The revival of the book market in postwar Germany is an uncanny repetition of historical circumstances. As early as the mid-seventeenth century,

immediately following the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), the East German city of Leipzig replaced the monopoly of Frankfurt am Main as the main center of the German book trade. Since the early nineteenth century, Leipzig was not only the prime site for book production and publication but also book trade through its Buchhändler Messe (book fair). In the aftermath of World War II, Frankfurt would regain its status as the most important German city for book trade (if not for book production).<sup>8</sup>

Following World War II, the German publishing industry split. Leipzig was under US control until April 16, 1945, but in line with the horse-trading at the Yalta Conference (1945), US forces had to pull out of middle Germany. At the instigation of the headquarters of the Allies, Major Douglas Waplas—in his civil life a professor of the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago—asked a slew of German publishers such as Brockhaus, Georg Thieme, Dietrich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, and Insel to “transfer” to Wiesbaden with a US army convoy.<sup>9</sup> Within months, Georg Kurt Schauer—publisher and book historian—was given the license for the West German edition of the *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel*.

The division of the book fair was not far. When the Leipzig Book Fair was revived in 1946 as the “First Leipzig Peace Book Fair,” the representation was mostly local; at the second Book Fair in 1947, the representation was overwhelmingly from publishing houses from the Soviet occupation zone: seventy, as compared to twenty from the other zones. Notably present were publishers from Venezuela and Uruguay. But a number of Western publishers and all American publishers declined to participate.<sup>10</sup> The Americans were already planning to found a new German National Library in Frankfurt. On February 16, 1946, the representatives of the book trade in Frankfurt signed a contract according to which all works published since May 6, 1945, would be sent in trust to the library of the University of Frankfurt, the Deutsche Bücherei in Leipzig (today the German National Library), and the future (West) German National Library in Frankfurt. The British occupation forces supported the plan, and through a contract signed on March 24, 1947, the new publishing house of the Börsenverein in West Germany was authorized to publish the national bibliography in Frankfurt.<sup>11</sup> The political division of the country was reflected in the splitting of the national bibliography.

It was in these two terrains of ideologically divided “national” bibliographies that two different—albeit at times intersecting—“bibliographs” of world literature came into being. In the FRG, the Frankfurt Book Fair would play a major role in capitalizing on world literary goods, thus be-

coming a point of dissemination for literatures from around the world and establishing an international book market (*Büchermarkt*). In the GDR, the state apparatus, in opposition to a *Büchermarkt*, would strive to create a “reading nation” (*Leseland*). While the impact of the Leipziger Buchmesse on the larger German-language book market would be somewhat curtailed, publishing houses such as Reclam and Volk und Buch—especially designated for the publication of international literature—would bring world literary works to the reading public.

### *Books and Libraries in East Germany*

To understand the picture of world literature in the former GDR, it might be best to return to Plenzdorf’s Edgar and ask if there was indeed a prescribed list of foreign literary works—was world literature indeed part of the socialist government’s pedagogical plan? Crucial to understanding this would be the cultural orientation of the state under the Soviet occupation zone, which reveals a new politics of libraries and books and a top-down, quick renunciation of recent history.

The rebuilding of libraries following World War II had three main concerns: the extraction (“Aussonderung”) of National Socialist literature; the construction of a new antifascist library collection; and the winning of new classes of readers for the library.<sup>12</sup> Within a month of the end of World War II, on September 15, 1945, Marshall G. Shukov, commander-in-chief of the Soviet military government in the eastern zone released an order directed to all individuals, university, school, public, and private libraries, as well as bookstores, publishers, and wholesale book suppliers to hand over “all books, brochures, magazines, albums, and other literature containing fascist propaganda, race theory, literature about forceful acquisition of foreign nations, furthermore *all kinds of literature directed against the Soviet Union and other united nations.*”<sup>13</sup> The deadline for turning in the banned materials was set for October 1, 1945, which obviously was too soon. So a slightly modified version of this order—with the deletion of “Soviet Union”—was released by the Allied Board of Control (Alliierten Kontrollrate) on May 13, 1946, allowing a period of two months for the submission of such materials.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to the second order, on February 1, 1946, a document entitled “Satzung für Volksbücherein” set the foundational framework for the renewal of public libraries in the Soviet occupation zone. The central purpose of the libraries was spelled out as “leading the people to the valuable classical and progressive literature of Germany and of other nations, and

through that to found a humane and democratic Weltanschauung of the German people.”<sup>15</sup> The idea of world literature was at the center of the development of this “humane and democratic Weltanschauung.” Erich Schröter, director of the Leipzig School of Library Science, understood the cultural and political work that lay in front of German libraries. Privileging an open, transparent system of public libraries to replace the centrally controlled system during the NS era, Schröter argued:

The public library should come out of the kingdom of sleeping beauty, in which it has often stood. It belongs to the pulsating streets of our lives. It should circulate the treasures of literature before us, it should place works of our classic authors and of world literature next to books about contemporary politics in front of us. It [the library] should urge us to take a position on the intellectual and political problems of our times, it should avail material pertaining to that and should not bury [this material] as in a holy shrine, far away from the reality of everyday life.<sup>16</sup>

An extension of Schröter’s ideas can be found in a statement of Ernst Adler, who, along with Schröter, was a leading figure in library sciences as well as one of the editors of the journal *Der Volksbibliothekar*. Adler underlined that the libraries should not merely serve as “the memory of the nation” but also “as the conscience of the nation.”<sup>17</sup>

The distinction between the library as the “memory” versus the “conscience” of the nation — privileging one function over the other — is a problematic one. In order to promote the role of the library as a conscience to the nation, the first task was to dismantle any recent memory of substantial central control and mass destruction. For this reason, any books that propagated Nazi ideology and propaganda, supported racist theories, instigated people to war, or in general opposed the political values represented by the Allies were promptly removed. Already in 1946 the Central Authority of Public Education in the Soviet occupation zone released a list of books to be eliminated from libraries.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the Deutsche Bücherei (Leipzig) also followed the order of the Allied headquarters from May 13, 1946, to facilitate the process of de-Nazification in the libraries. Books authored by Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels, and other NS officials were pulled off the shelves. After 1948, upon the completed political division of Germany, the GDR developed its own rules for the design and development of private libraries. With the political orientation of the GDR toward a new socialist state, the acquisition policies for open, public libraries were designed and shaped accordingly. On February 4, 1949, the parliament of Saxony passed

the Law for Democratization of the Book Industry.<sup>19</sup> Libraries now went beyond the negative measures of crossing out and removing fascist literature and moved to a positive phase of identifying works that would orient the new public libraries to its working-class reading public.

But to assume that this democratization happened without a glitch would be a fallacy. Already in 1950, an impactful report released by a librarian in Thuringia planned a program that would take the idea of “democratic and progressive” to an extreme.<sup>20</sup> Not only did the report urge the banning of fascist literature, it insisted upon libraries to abide by the following measures: “Works of authors who have appeared as anti-Soviet, nationalist, militant, chauvinistic, imperialist . . . as they do not contribute to the progressive cultural work . . . authors who express anti-Polish and anti-Soviet sentiments (for example Sinclair) . . . must be most strictly examined. . . . Literature that has lost its meaning for a new progressive consciousness . . . must be most strictly examined (for example [Jack] London).”<sup>21</sup> This document advised librarians to favor a collection of anti-imperialist, antiracial, and antinationalist literature. It preferred books that positively depicted the GDR, German-Soviet friendship, and class struggle, for example. However, in the field of belletristic, the document advised in favor of a “new progressive literature,” one that promoted the humanistic and progressive literatures of all times and peoples. As a measure for raising the literary *niveau* of the reading public, the report argued for “the elimination of kitschy, decadent, tear-jerking, banal, immoral and purely sensational literature.” Thus one already sees the problem of an overzealous presentation of the library as a “conscience of the nation”: it easily became a forced conscience that would prescribe a particular political direction and could be manipulated for the sake of state power over public pedagogy.

There is no easy way to directly connect this report from Thuringia to the officially executed policy for the selection of literary works for libraries. However, one can see its impact on the formation of the literary canon—both German national and world literary—that emerges in the GDR.

In 1950, the Central Institute of Library Sciences came up with a list of “100 Titles for the Basic Acquisition of a Small Library.”<sup>22</sup> The section on “Erzählung, Romane und Gedichte” (narration, novels, and poems) included a few German authors such as Becher, Fallada, Fontane, Goethe, Grimmshausen, Seghers, and Zweig. Most of the authors listed belonged to the sphere of international literature, with Martin Anderson Nexø topping the list with four works. Mentioned among others were works by

Fadyev, Gorki, Pavlenko, Rolland, and Sholokhov. Andersen, Chekhov, Tolstoy, and Twain become part of “Jugendliteratur” (children’s literature); Nexø, Gorki, and Smedley were included in recommended biographies; Marx and Engels, along with Lenin, Stalin, and Walter Ulbricht form the category “Politik, Wirtschaft und Geschichte” (politics, economics, and history). The majority of foreign works were from the Soviet Union. From German literature, important names such as Thomas Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Franz Kafka, Herman Hesse, Heinrich Mann, and even Bertolt Brecht were absent from the list. In a nation fast trying to distance itself from the literature of the West and still in search of voices that narrated its own story, a few Russian authors and a Danish icon become the necessary building blocks for public libraries. So impactful were Nexø, Gorki, and Sholokhov that questions about them were also included in exams for library professionals.<sup>23</sup>

However, no effort to create a new readership for a democratic and progressive world literature could have taken place without the necessary books being available. This particular niche was filled by the Leipzig branch of the publisher Reclam, and also by Volk und Welt, a publishing company dedicated completely to world literature.

### *The Reading Nation: World Literature in the Postwar GDR*

After a period of conformation to the NS regime, Reclam emerged to reclaim its position in the German publishing scene, but its reemergence would be as a split personality, with one office in the West (Stuttgart), and the other one in the East (Leipzig). On March 14, 1946, Ernst Reclam received the license from the Soviet occupational forces to reopen the publication house in Leipzig,<sup>24</sup> but he left the city in 1950—a move that was reported in the centenary publication of the Leipzig-based Reclam as “illegal”<sup>25</sup>—and died in 1953. Reclam (Leipzig) was reincarnated as a publically owned publishing company (Volkseigener Verlag), and starting 1963, it became one of the state-run publishing companies with the Aufbau Verlag (Berlin and Weimar). In this new incarnation, the publishing house now turned to literature for the workers and the proletariat, that is, all the leftist and communist literature that was banned during the Nazi period.

The revival of the Universal-Bibliothek was one of the prime foci of the company. As a gesture of turning a new leaf—and, it must be added, a total silence over the history of the past two decades—the 1949 catalog of Universal-Bibliothek opened with two statements of praise by Arnold

Zweig and Gerhart Hauptmann, followed by a message from the publisher, strategically placed as a nod to the proletarian literature that was going to be primarily featured in the new regime:

These confessions [by Zweig and Hauptmann] say what millions of Germans, whether workers or intellectuals, pupils or university students understand under the term Reclam: popular for every affordable little volume, which represent the factor of people's education that has become indispensable and self-understood since the founding of Reclam's Universal-Bibliothek in 1867. The classic works of world literature, the legacy of great thinkers, and contemporary national and foreign literature have ever since determined the face of Reclam. With the purpose of this universality, since the end of the war, the publishing house is keen to continue with the collection in the spirit of the demands of our time, through new editions of lively works of the past as well as through the inclusion of authors of our time, and through that to serve the cultural reconstruction of Germany.<sup>26</sup>

This blurb from the catalog appears as a strange mixture of partial silence over the history of the company during National Socialism and of partial urgency to look to the future in the face of a new historical reality. A list of works published by the Universal-Bibliothek (Leipzig) in 1952, covering the previous five years, gives strong clues to the reorientation of the publishing house. Prominently listed are works of the Danish author Nexø—who by this time had moved to Dresden and was an honorary citizen of the GDR—along with Dostoyevsky, Gogol, Gorki, Heine, and of course, Marx and Engels.<sup>27</sup> By 1955, Reclam Leipzig had been officially blessed by Walter Ulbricht, for whom the name Reclam was synonymous with the “popular, interesting, and inexpensive editions of Universal-Bibliothek” for “readers from around the world.”<sup>28</sup> Ulbricht's statement did not just seem to refer to German migrants around the world. By 1957, Reclam had authorized booksellers in the capital cities of several socialist and communist republics, including Albania, Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the USSR;<sup>29</sup> in 1959 the list was expanded to include (North) Korea (Pyongyang), Vietnam (Hanoi), and a few major cities in the former Yugoslavia: Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Belgrade.<sup>30</sup>

These circulation connections became part of the publication agenda as well. Mao-Tse Tung is first seen in a catalog from 1960,<sup>31</sup> the same year that the *Reclam-Buch* (1960) replaces so-called humanistic education (“humani-



täre Bildung”)—a key phrase in Universal-Bibliothek’s marketing strategy since its inception (and until 1933)—with socialist upbringing (“sozialistische Erziehung”), which implied more than learning from books. Walter Ulbricht’s thoughts on this new direction are expressed in his speech “Purpose of Socialist Upbringing” given at the Fifth Convention of the Socialist Unity Party (SED): “All-round development of the personality, education for solidarity and collective action. Education for love of work, education for militant activity, mediation of a high theoretical and general knowledge. Development of all the mental and physical abilities, that is, formation of socialist consciousness for the benefit of the people and the nation.”<sup>32</sup> This message is fortified through the statistical presentation of developments in the GDR’s investment in education (1951–1958), followed by a quote from Nikita Khrushchev, a statement from the Twenty-First Convention of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: “The best school of education and the strictest teacher is life, our socialist reality. A bookish knowledge of the communist principles, detached from praxis, is no good.”<sup>33</sup>

These citations served to frame the “practice” of a new form of socialist education through an engagement with literature, and both national and world literature were part of this enterprise. The *Reclam-Buch* (1960) published a special list of literary works to be used in the classroom from middle through high school. Among Russian authors, the recommended reading list included Pushkin’s Robinhood-esque *Dubrowski* (seventh grade), Tolstoy (eighth grade), Otrowski (ninth and tenth grade), Sholokhov (eleventh grade), and Gorki (twelfth grade). The list of non-Russian authors ranged from German and other classical authors—including Goethe, Schiller, and Shakespeare—to twentieth-century German authors such as Bertolt Brecht, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, and Anna Seghers.<sup>34</sup> Reclam was thus contributing to the construction of a world literary readership through a state-sponsored and -administered education program; it was also participating in the state’s vision of such a program with the slogan, “Eine neue Zeit erfordert eine neue Schule” (figure 4-1).

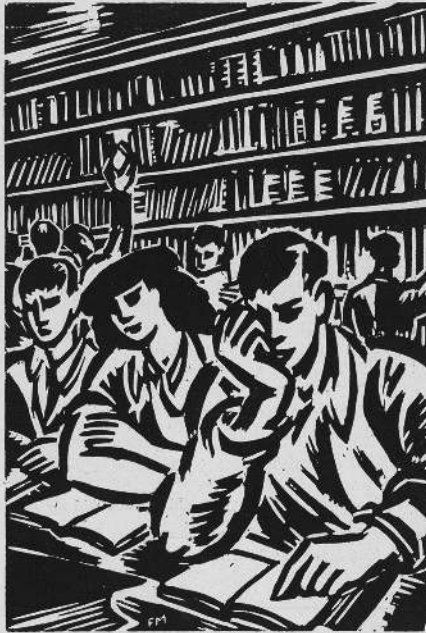
In 1963, Reclam signed an agreement with the state-owned publishing house Volk und Wissen (people and knowledge) concerning a yearly contribution of the Universal-Bibliothek to the school system of the GDR through the publication of textbooks. This commitment came with formal and content-based changes: the number system was reorganized, the format was redesigned to fit the new GDR measurements for a pocketbook (10.3 × 16.5cm), and the covers were color coded to represent the new thematic groups: prose, poetry, drama, and social sciences; history and

# DAS RECLAM-BUCH



MITTEILUNGEN DES VERLAGES PHILIPP RECLAM JUN. LEIPZIG  
ERSCHEINEN IN ZWANGLOSER FOLGE

FEBRUAR 1960 · HEFT 14



EINE NEUE ZEIT ERFORDERT  
EINE NEUE SCHULE

Figure 4-1. "A New Time Requires a New School." Reclam catalog of February 1960 (Leipzig). (Courtesy of Deutsche Nationalbibliothek and Buch- und Schriftmuseum Leipzig, and Philipp Reclam jun. Verlag Stuttgart.)

culture; language, literature, and music; and biographies and documents. In addition, the Universal-Bibliothek's publication list was to eliminate titles with controversial content or content "unworthy" of reprint: "The new formation of 1963 was not to carry signs of Hesse's perception of world literature, but was to be inspired by the revolutionary spirituality of Friedrich Wolf."<sup>35</sup>

Friedrich Wolf (1888–1953) was a prolific German dramatist, essayist, and political activist. In August 1934, at the first Soviet Writers' Congress in Moscow, presided by Maxim Gorki, Wolf registered his opposition against Karl B. Radek (1885–1939), a prominent Marxist essayist, political author, and, for a short time, editor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (1907).<sup>36</sup> In his speech, "Contemporary World Literature and the Tasks of Proletarian Art," Radek drew a very bleak picture of the Western bourgeoisie as well as revolutionary literature. In his own address, Wolf emphasized the differences between the political reality of the former USSR and other European nations, stating that a new revolutionary aesthetic was in fact on the rise.<sup>37</sup> It is not clear whether the "revolutionary spirituality" embraced by Reclam was based on Wolf's reaction to Radek's speech or Wolf's life work, which included many successful and well-known plays in which Wolf centralized class-struggles—a number of them performed even in the United States.

The source of this reorientation to Wolf notwithstanding, the shift from Hesse's idea of the pursuit of world literature as a goal unto itself to the new "revolutionary spirituality" was manifest not only in Reclam's agenda for world literature but in the GDR's own conceptualization of world literature for schools. In fact, the GDR could have easily been one of the only European countries with a dedicated program for educating school children in world literature.

In 1971 (around the time Plenzdorf's novel takes place), the Ministry for Public Education (Ministerium für Volksbildung) came up with a plan for education in the social sciences (Gesellschaftswissenschaft) for extended secondary school students (Erweiterte Oberschule) with a list of selected works of world literature from the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Stipulated in a document entitled *Lehrgang ausgewählter Werke der Weltliteratur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, the purpose of this plan was to instill international values in the pupils, familiarizing them with "writings of world literary rank" and conveying to them "world literary developments" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The central purpose of this education in world literature at the school level was the "artistically created human image," in close alignment with the official pedagogical party line:

At the center of the consideration of select works of world literature is the artistically created human image. The pupils are to understand how humanistic authors form—artistically and in diverse and original ways—their *Weltanschauung* and ideals, their experiences, insights, and assessments as well as their position vis-à-vis the struggle of the people against exploitation and for a meaningful existence. In close connection with the exploration of the ideal-aesthetic form of the writings, the pupils will enrich their literary-theoretical knowledge and their insights in various national literatures and in the developmental process of world literature. . . . The reception and acquisition of important works of world literature contributes to [the fact] that through decisions and contingencies of literary figures and of the authors, the pupils better understand the dialectic of class analysis in the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism, and that [they] detect the connections between *Weltanschauung* and artistic mastery.<sup>38</sup>

While phrases such as “dialectic of class analysis” and the “transition from capitalism to socialism” are predictably in the service of state-sponsored ideology, it is the projected combination of literary and social interventionist comparison that makes the plan so interesting. Teachers were directed to incorporate these works into their teaching to expand the horizons of the students beyond the palate of German literature; in addition, they were asked to pay attention not merely to the social text of the narrative but to lay importance on the creative and literary aspects of the texts, to train students in “the interpretation of excerpts, scenes and poems, the exploration of artistic imagery, motives and plot lines, [drawing] comparisons, [and making] juxtapositions and summarizing observations.”<sup>39</sup> Admittedly, the list for the nineteenth century was dominated by Russian authors such as Chekhov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Gorki, with a few works by Stendahl, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, Scott, Dickens, Twain, Ibsen, Hauptmann, and Thomas Mann. The teaching directions underline a socialist framing of these texts, privileging the reading and interpretation of “works of bourgeois-humanist authors” of the nineteenth century through Russian and French literature, especially Stendhal, Tolstoy, and Gorki. The instructions further ask teachers to refer to earlier works by Gorki as an introduction to socialist literature around 1900 and the artistic representation of the working class.

There is no way to reconstruct the classroom execution of this document today. While the framing of the document is ideologically determined, there is little doubt that works chosen for students from grades seven through twelve were indeed those that had entered the world literary space, including that of Germany, through the medium of translation. The

geographic and linguistic cultural diversity of the chosen works, especially from the twentieth century, is quite remarkable in this context. The recommended list of readings for the twentieth century does include a number of Russian and Soviet authors such as Alexander Serafimovich, Alexander Fadeyev (cofounder of the Union of Soviet writers), Chinghiz Aitmatov (the Kirghiz-Turkish author who wrote in Russian and Kirghiz), Aleksei Arbuzov, Vladimir Mayakovski, and of course the 1965 Nobel Laureate Mikhail Sholokhov. While this is not unpredictable, what is interesting is the representation of modern German-language literature and other non-Soviet literatures on the twentieth-century list. Among German authors, Johannes R. Becher becomes the sole East German on the list; others include German-Jewish authors such as Lion Feuchtwanger, the Austrian author Stephan Zweig, the Swiss author Friedrich Dürrenmatt, and from the nineteenth century Heinrich Mann and August Bebel. Within European literature, the list includes Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw, Martin Andersen Nexø, Alberto Moravia, and García Lorca. Pablo Neruda is the only Latin American author on the list; Tagore is the only (South) Asian. The teaching directions to this section present Feuchtwanger's works as prime examples of antifascist literature, Shaw and Dreiser as examples of world literary realism, and Hemingway as the example of bourgeois humanistic realism. These themes would be extended in the study of poems by Mayakovski, Lorca, and Neruda.

While not all East German children went to the Gymnasium—the high school with special education in the sciences and humanities—choosing instead the vocational *Realschule*, the list is noteworthy in its effort to construct a world literary readership at an early stage of education. Given the literary politics of the GDR, which became rather programmatic and propagandistic after the Bitterfelder Weg (1965)—a movement to promote the writing worker (“schreibender Arbeiter”), under which the category of a professional author with no experience of work in factories or fields was considered bourgeois—the program comes across as impressive even in hindsight. The idea was not merely to educate students in world literature within the school but to create conditions whereby the appropriation of world literary treasures by the pupils becomes a life necessity (“Lebensbedürfnis”) for them.<sup>40</sup>

No pedagogical plan, no creation of world literature as a *Lebensbedürfnis*, would actually succeed without a lifeline that granted access to the objects necessary for the readers' intellectual lives. While Reclam (Leipzig) provided inexpensive editions in the standard Universal-Bibliothek format, an

entire publication program around world literary works for the general public was developed through a specialized publishing company, Volk und Welt. This would be the apt time to reveal that in the list of prescribed books of world literature, North America was represented by two US authors: Ernest Hemingway, with *Der alte Mann und das Meer* (*The Old Man and the Sea*), and J. D. Salinger, with *Der Fänger im Roggen*—Heinrich Böll and Irene Muehlon's translation of the *Catcher in the Rye*, which Edgar Wibeau discovers “outside of” the prescribed list of books. The translation was first published in Cologne by Kiepenheuer und Witsch (in 1962), and the East German edition was published by Volk und Welt (in 1965).

In his introduction to the volume *Fenster zur Welt* (2003; *Window to the world*), the book historian Siegfried Lokatis comments: “One can only regret that in the Federal Republic there was no place for a publishing house with a cultural function of connecting people [with each other], whose program offered a clear focus on the entirety of world literature, which systematically explored the literature of Eastern Europe and the Soviet states through translations, whose special engagement was aimed at the authors of the Third World.”<sup>41</sup> There is little exaggeration in Lokatis's words. From its establishment in 1947 to its end in 1989, Volk und Welt published 3,334 works (first editions) of 1,800 authors from about 76 nations.<sup>42</sup> Admittedly, in accordance with the larger cultural politics of the nation, Volk und Welt had a special predilection for works from the former Soviet Union and various other Eastern European nations, such as Poland, the former Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Romania. But the authors were not limited to these “friendly states.” Volk und Welt's publication list included US authors (e.g., William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, Norman Mailer, Woody Allen, Saul Bellow, Truman Capote, John Steinbeck, and Toni Morrison), Central and Latin American authors (e.g., Miguel Ángel Asturias, Alejo Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes, Jorge Amado, Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, and Octavio Paz), African authors (e.g., Nadine Gordimer, Naguib Mahfouz, Mehmud Darwish, Wole Soyinka, Mehmud Taymur, Ngugi wa' Thiongo, Mongo Beti, Chinua Achebe, and Pepetela),<sup>43</sup> British authors (e.g., Charles Dickens, Kingsley Amis, and Herbert Smith), and Asian authors, which included Indian writers (such as Rabindranath Tagore, Munshi Premchand, and S. H. Vatsyayana Agyeya); Indonesian writers (e.g., Pramodeya Ananta Toer), the Korean feminist author Kang Kyöng-ae (Kong Gama); the Chinese author Mao Dun [Sheng Yanbing], and Japanese authors (e.g., Yasunari Kawabata and Kenzaburo Oe), as well as Turkish authors (e.g., Yeshar Kemal and Nazim Hikmet).

Why was *Volk und Welt* particularly successful in its vetting of authors from around the world? What gave its editorial direction this kind of freedom of expression and ideas? Most importantly, how was *Volk und Welt* framing world literature for its readership and providing them access to it? To answer these questions, it might be best to take a quick look at the history of *Volk und Welt*, followed by a brief, detailed discussion of *Bücherkarren* (bookcarts), the literary magazine (and marketing symbol) of *Volk und Welt* that also served as its seasonal catalog.

*Volk und Welt* was born as a post-World War II institution with an antifascist, pacifist disposition. It was established in 1947 by Michael Tschesno-Hell (1902–1980; editor-in-chief 1947–1950)—who came upon the idea at a Swiss Internship camp—initially as a publishing house for Soviet literature in German translation. *Neue deutsche Literatur*, the literary journal of the publishing house—edited by Willi Bredel as the flagship journal of the (East) German association of writers (Deutscher Schriftstellerverband, DSV)—was singularly beholden to the Soviet Union; the April 1953 issue was dedicated to Stalin and included a telegram from the German to the Soviet writers' association mourning Stalin's death.<sup>44</sup> However, the monograph publication of *Volk und Welt* under the leadership of Tschesno-Hell's successors—Bruno Peterson (1950–1954), Walter Czollek (1954–1972), and during the fifties the (executive) editor Marianne Dreifuß—established itself beyond the Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup>

The East German publishing industry went through a profiling (*Profilierung*) in 1960, whereby specific firms were also assigned specific roles in the publication of books according to subjects. This process happened parallel to the efforts to stabilize and strengthen the East German mark against foreign currencies. While there were other publishers such as Reclam and Insel in Leipzig that published works of both local and international authors, there was no publishing house that focused primarily on world literature, and *Volk und Welt* was able to fill that niche. As Lokatis observes in his essay on *Volk und Welt*, at a time when the East German cultural politics under Walter Ulbricht (cited by Karin's father in Braun's *Unvollendete Geschichte*) was strongly oriented toward Moscow—and when anyone from the West, especially West German migrants, were looked upon with suspicion—*Volk und Welt* was unusually West-oriented, with special connections to the world outside the Soviet bloc nations. The scholar Hans Mayer (who moved to West Germany) and the author Stephan Hermlin supported *Volk und Welt* with their Western connections; Marianne Dreifuß and Walter Czollek had made first acquaintance in Shanghai while in exile; the five-member editorial board with Dr. Hans Petersen,

Roland Links, Leonhard Kossuth, Jutta Janke, and Christina Links had permission to travel to most countries around the world to scout the best works and their authors.

Volk und Welt also had an army of twenty-five editors and another dozen readers and fact checkers. And every leading editor had access to trained translators, external evaluators and editors, and qualified scholars who would serve as authors of prefaces and afterwords. The five editorial divisions were responsible for: (1) literatures of the Soviet Union (including Siberia and the Caucasus mountains) and Eastern Europe, (2) literatures of people's democracies in countries as far flung as Mongolia and North Korea, (3) literatures of the two German states and Scandinavian countries, (4) Romance literatures, dominated primarily by French and Italian; while peninsular Spanish and Portuguese literatures were not well represented, significance was laid on literatures from their former colonies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, (5) literatures of Great Britain, North America, Australia, Asian countries and Africa, as well as Asian and African writings in English.<sup>46</sup> Except for novels published under the series "ad-libitum," "Roman-Zeitung," or "Spektrum," the publication of shorter works was carried out under a magazine series called "Erkundungen" (explorations).<sup>47</sup>

There is little doubt, as Lokatis agrees, that the division of the world within the publishing house was resonant of the new postcolonial cartographies of the world marked by colonial historical burden on the one hand and the GDR's socialist ideology on the other. However, within these divisions and assignments there were important contributions for making less commonly available literatures accessible for general readers in German translations. *Bücherkarren*, the publishing house's official catalog and bi-monthly literary magazine, played an important role in presenting international authors to its readers. Starting in August 1960 with issue no. 4, the catalog, which was earlier meant only for librarians and publishing houses, was turned into a literary magazine with essays on new publications, including brief biographies of authors, their major literary accomplishments, and the significance of the work in the creative trajectory of the author.<sup>48</sup> A few examples would suffice to illustrate the framing of the authors. The Cuban author Nicholas Guillén is presented alongside Jorge Amado and Pablo Neruda, as authors dedicated to democratic values of freedom and independence in Latin America. Guillén is also credited with bringing to the forefront the histories of "Negroes and Mulattos" in his work. Rabin-dranath Tagore is presented as the author who "was helped by farmers out of his ivory tower, and he did all he could as an individual to help them."<sup>49</sup> He is particularly praised for his letters about Russia ("Briefe über Rußland"),



which he wrote during his visit to Moscow.<sup>50</sup> William Faulkner becomes the quintessential author to depict the polarization of blacks and whites and the unresolved past (“nicht-überwundene Vergangenheit”) of the American South, whereas John Steinbeck, Erskine Caldwell, and Arthur Miller belong to the “other America” committed to class equality and political emancipation of the working class.<sup>51</sup> In an introduction to Frank London Brown, the first African-American author published by Volk und Welt, the magazine cites Alan Paton’s review in the *Chicago Tribune*: “Of the courage, which is narrated in this novel, America should be proud. Even though it might shame white America and white people everywhere else.”<sup>52</sup>

In the publication program for 1989, Volk und Welt released works of authors from thirty-six nations: sixty-nine from the USSR, twenty-nine from Eastern European socialist countries, thirty-nine from German-speaking countries, thirty from Italy, Spain, and France, thirteen from Scandinavia, thirty-four from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, ten from Asia, eleven from Latin- and Central America, six from Africa, three from Greece, two from the Netherlands, and one translated from Yiddish.<sup>53</sup> The last years of the publishing company are reflected in a slow cultural shift in the publication agenda, as can be gathered from issues of *Bücherkarren*. The last available issue from 1988 announces the publication of a number of authors from the Soviet Union: Tatyana Tolstoya, Sergei Antonov, and Juri Trifonov,<sup>54</sup> as well as authors from “other socialist countries,” such as Magda Szabó (Hungary), Ai Wu (China), Vasko Popa (Yugoslavia), and Nicolas Guillén (Cuba).<sup>55</sup> The solidarity with authors from Asian and African nations continues: Naguib Mahfouz,<sup>56</sup> and later Octavio Paz,<sup>57</sup> are celebrated for their Nobel Prize; in addition, Volk und Welt declares its solidarity with Salman Rushdie against the Fatwah.<sup>58</sup>

Volk und Welt’s attempts to democratize public opinion, to make their readers aware of political inequalities in the world through literary works—even though the situation at home was no less problematic—were made possible due to, and in spite of, the cultural politics of the GDR. Thomas Reschke, long-time editor and translator of Russian works into German, believed that in its own way, the publishing houses even prepared the way for the events of 1989.<sup>59</sup> Reschke’s thoughts find resonance with the East German mathematician and political activist Thomas Klein. In an interview about “The Unknown Reader,” Klein states:

As is generally known, the West Berliners felt walled in, but when I think about Volk und Welt, you would actually have to say that the GDR was a walled enclave itself. In this respect the publishing house

offered a window to the world, and it was not a bad view you had there. Probably a lot of censorship, preselection, and abridgements will be discussed in this context, but on the whole the books of Volk und Welt made it possible for the inhabitants of the “reading nation” to have a very dignified view of foreign literature.<sup>60</sup>

Volk und Welt carried its legacy even into the last decade of the twentieth century. The publishing list was expanded with contemporary literatures from hitherto less published nations: from Canada, Alberto Manguel; from the United States, William Saphire; and from Slovenia, the debated Slavoj Žižek.<sup>61</sup> However, with the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the necessity for having this special window to the world was lost in the euphoria of a new brand of freedom. Volk und Welt was finally liquidated in April 2001.

### *The Book Market: World Literature in Postwar West Germany*

Indeed, it was a new brand of freedom of thought that was also promised by the United States to West Germany at the end of World War II.

While in the Soviet Occupation Zone and later in the GDR the value of socialist, progressive literature was on the rise, the nature of the concerns in the West were exactly the opposite. Along with the support of the German public libraries through the UNESCO commission, the Americans were also setting up new open American libraries—Amerika Gedankbibliotheken or Amerika Häuser as they were known in West Germany. Precursors to these libraries were the Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek (German freedom library) in Paris and the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books at the Brooklyn Jewish Center in New York, both established in 1934 as a gesture against the Nazi book burnings.<sup>62</sup> Through an order of the Allied Control Council from May 13, 1946, all materials belonging to any German libraries that contained any kind of Nazi propaganda were recalled.<sup>63</sup> While the official cultural program of the *Occupied Countries News Notes* (March 18, 1949) categorically stated that to force Germans into an American system of education was not part of the “fundamental principles”; the reorientation of West German occupied zones had already started taking place. The interest of the Americans was in a re-education of the entire nation. And through a program devised in collaboration with the Library of Congress, the circulation of American books in Germany was made possible.

The first Amerika Haus was founded on November 14, 1945, in Frankfurt. With its open-access shelving and a few reading programs, this library became a quintessential symbol of the United States. Dean Acheson, who

led the program as the secretary of state, wrote, “The Public Library symbolizes the American philosophy of Freedom to learn, to study and to search after truth. This is the essence of a free society. This is the source of our freedom.”<sup>64</sup> In addition to the libraries, the Americans also sponsored bookmobiles and translation services for university libraries. In fact, these libraries were to help Germans understand that “America was more than a nation of lady wrestlers, bloody strikes, and boogie-woogie fiends that Hitler had portrayed.”<sup>65</sup> For West German readers, these libraries became a renewed source of world literature from the United States: “*Gone with the Wind*, with later novels of Hemingway, Faulker, and Thomas Wolfe, the poems of Emily Dickinson and Robert Lowell, or the plays of Eugene O’Neill and Thornton Wilder.”<sup>66</sup>

However, to think that this symbol for American freedom stood forever would be a mistake. Already between 1951 and 1953, Joseph McCarthy, the Republican senator from Wisconsin, started promoting censorship measures. As Louise Robbins reports in her study about “Freedom to Read,” the purpose of these libraries was to open “windows to the West.” However, they were busy in making sure that any “windows to the communist East” were not by mistake opened on the American dime. McCarthy wanted thirty thousand books by communist authors—which had been “‘publicly exposed’ by his representatives Roy M. Cohn, chief counsel for the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which McCarthy chaired, and the Committee consultant David Schine”—to be removed from all libraries in Germany.<sup>67</sup> The appearance of Howard Fast, author of *Citizen Tom Paine* and self-avowed communist, in front of the McCarthy Committee in February 1953, “alerted Amerika Häuser and the United States that McCarthy had taken aim at them and the directive that allowed latitude in book selection and presented the libraries from just being another propaganda organ.”<sup>68</sup> Cohn and Schine were sent by McCarthy, and slowly any books by authors who had not shown up at McCarthy’s trials were “stored” away. This did not go unnoticed in the German press. The famous German journalist Marion Gräfin Dönhoff reported:

Once again libraries are being cleansed, books are being ripped from shelves . . . twenty years after May 9, 1933, when Dr. Goebbels, in the presence of Berlin’s student body, threw the un-German, foreign, decomposing, and rotten literature to the flames . . . today on McCarthy’s request books are being eradicated, pulped, burnt, locked away. . . . Fortunately, in America there are other forces at work next to McCarthy. President Eisenhower warned on June 26 in Los Angeles against

the zealots and pointed out that freedom can neither be disposed [*verfügt*] law nor can it be brought about by censorship.<sup>69</sup>

The incident was followed by a media controversy in the United States when librarians became vocal against the program. Especially after Eisenhower's letter to the libraries in America, the *New York Times* ranked "Freedom to Read" as one of America's best state papers. While the controversy around the censorship slowly subsided both in the United States and in Germany, the aggressiveness with which literature from the Allied countries was promoted as a prominent aspect of world literature was criticized in the FRG—and not just in the context of originals available in libraries but also in translations sponsored by the Allied forces. A new magazine called *Freude an Büchern: Monatshefte für Weltliteratur* (Joy in books: Monthly magazine for world literature, 1950–1954) prominently featured the debate on translated foreign literature in the early 1950s.<sup>70</sup>

With the pre- and post-Nazi magazine (*Die Weltliteratur*) no longer in existence, *Freude an Büchern* emerged as an important forum for world literary discussions after World War II in the German-speaking world. Founded by theater scholars Heinz Kindermann and Margeret Dietrich, the magazine was edited and published in Vienna and distributed through the Großbuchhandlung Carl Gabler in Munich. Contributors included new Austrian authors of the postwar generation—Ilse Aichinger, H. C. Artmann, and Ernst Jandl—as well as contemporary authors from continental Europe and the United States. The magazine featured discussions on both canonical and contemporary world literature. Excerpted texts by important European authors such as T. S. Eliot,<sup>71</sup> interviews with American authors such as Thornton Wilder,<sup>72</sup> and reports on non-Western literatures were often featured in the magazine.<sup>73</sup> The essential role of the magazine was to revive the culture of reading and discussions around books, which had been lost during the political events of the last decade and a half. In the inaugural issue, the program statement of the magazine underlined the role of books:

Books are windows to the world. The hard-fought path of individual life is narrow, the horizon of every "I" necessarily limited. However, books, these messengers of spirit, which carry the inexhaustible wealth of knowledge, of fantasy, and formative reports through all peoples and ages, give a clear view of foreign life. They open the gates to the previously unimaginable. They have long-forgotten treasures or they break through the wall of impending paralysis and prepare the new,

the upcoming. Their peculiar light illuminates anyone who is willing to open up his heart and to become an understanding person. Books build [*wölben*] bridges between countries and eras.<sup>74</sup>

The cultural bridge between countries, especially between the Allied Forces and the FRG, was also built through diplomatic state outfits. The United States Information Service sponsored the publication of a special brochure on the American novel from 1850–1951, included with the magazine's February 1951 issue. However, the magazine was not limited to a pro-American stance. The promotion of foreign literatures, especially literature from Allied countries in German translation, was questioned by Otto Flake (1880–1963), a prolific German novelist, essayist, and translator of works by Montaigne, Dumas, Balzac, and Diderot into German. In an essay entitled “Übersetzungswut” (translation rage), published in *Freude an Büchern*, Flake criticized the ferocity with which translated works were taking over the German literary landscape. Flake notes that following the introduction of the new German mark in 1948, a slew of foreign publishers started arriving in the FRG, pushing the translations of literary works into German. This translation wave (“Übersetzungswelle”) had taken the shape of a storm tide (“Sturmflut”), and consequently the literary landscape around him is nothing else but a bad dream (“ein böser Traum”).<sup>75</sup> Akin to Menzel in the nineteenth century, Flake claims that “the Germans are on a zeal to translate the good from all nations and to realize the Goethean concept of world literature; however, this time around they had become overzealous, something that had turned a few into (literary) lackeys.”<sup>76</sup> Unlike Menzel, however, Flake insists that his perspectives are not offered in a nationalist spirit; he recognizes that in an era of intermingling and intermeshing between nations, translations are a matter of course. Furthermore, Germans, he states, have the need to catch up on world literature, as they were cut off from the world for over a decade.<sup>77</sup> He holds publishing houses—which should have a function to serve national writers as well—responsible for an unreflective promotion of foreign works, each one presented as a best seller. Flake describes the situation bitterly: apparently a number of German authors were forced to turn to translation as their prime source of income. And the resulting translations, he states, are neither valuable nor of high literary quality; rather, any work that grants a Western perspective is considered worthy of translation. It is this mass production, Flake complains, that is compromising the literary landscape of Germany.

Flake's thoughts were published in the light of an open letter to Theodor Heuss, the first president of the FRG, written by another prolific author and essayist, Wilhelm von Scholz (1874–1969). Scholz, who was officially loyal to the National Socialists and whose works were widely promoted during the NS-period, was declared a fellow traveller (*Mitläufer*) and managed to become the president of the (West) German writers' association in 1949. In his letter, Scholz "took a strong stance against the indiscriminate getting-out-of-hand of—often badly translated and primitive—foreign literature, and championed measures for the benefit of literature at home."<sup>78</sup> Scholz urged Heuss that "for each translation into German, one must be established from German into the respective foreign language."<sup>79</sup>

Given the significance of these ideas for the times, *Freude an Büchern* published a small debate on the topic, titled "Für und gegen Auslandsliteratur" (for and against foreign literature), as a supplement to Flake's essay. The first response was from Karl Friedrich Boree, secretary of the German Academy for Language and Literature in Darmstadt. Boree did not mince his words in his response to Scholz: "Until now I do not fear a sustainable alienation of the German spirit through the excessive inflow of foreign literature."<sup>80</sup> On the one hand, Boree mentions the revival of the German book market through the publication of new editions of German literary works, but on the other hand, he also stresses the fact that the "import of foreign books after 1945 was a cultural duty of German publishers."<sup>81</sup> He further notes that this import led to a popularity of foreign literature among readers, and now the "indiscriminate" import of any book, precisely because it originated elsewhere, is perhaps a result of this initial movement. Short statements from other contributors—all of them academics—demonstrate mixed sympathies to Scholz and the question of alienation or literally "overforeignization" of German literature through the import of foreign books. Without explicitly mentioning Scholz's own Nazi past, Rudolf Brunnberger, professor at the University of Vienna, recognized a deplorable state of affairs ("Mißstand") in the contemporary German literary landscape, while also warning against the cultural occupation of one country by another: "Political supremacy, and especially even to the extent of the occupation, almost always results in grotesque developments in the intellectual realm as well: one only need to recall the [system of] export[ation] that the Third Reich wanted to sustain in occupied Europe."<sup>82</sup>

The story of world literary circulation in the FRG, especially in the formative years and through the *Wirtschaftswunder* ("economic miracle") is a story of subsidized translation and book importation, both facilitated

through a currency reform and cast as “a cultural duty.” What develops in the next generations is a much more heterogeneous story, and Reclam’s Universal-Bibliothek was a small part of it. As mentioned earlier, the two-state solution for Germany was reflected also in the splitting of Reclam, reflected also in the difference between the covers of Reclam catalogs for Leipzig (figure 4-1) and Stuttgart (figure 4-2).<sup>83</sup> On August 4, 1962, “Reclam” and “Universal-Bibliothek” were patented by Reclam Stuttgart. The new publishing house positioned itself as one focused on contemporary literature. Thus a new series of anthologies was launched with the first two volumes on contemporary French and Yugoslavian literatures, followed by anthologies on Italian (1964), American (Short Stories, 1964), Hungarian (1965), Irish (1965), Dutch (1966), Spanish (1968), and Danish (1968) writers. The non-Western agenda was still directed toward antiquity—in collaboration with UNESCO and under the rubric “UNESCO-Sammlung,” Reclam Stuttgart also published collections such as *Chinese poets of the Tang period*, *Diwan of Jhaluddin Rumi*, *Nala and Damayanti* from the Mahabharata, and Japanese stories from the *Konjaku-Monogatari*.<sup>84</sup> As announced in their newsletter *Die Begegnung*, these were aimed to serve a further understanding between the Eastern and the Western worlds.

But Reclam was not the only publishing company in the FRG. There were many others: Insel, Suhrkamp, various outfits of Bertelsmann, and the Switzerland-based Manesse Verlag, who played a major role in the distribution of world literature in the postwar years. But it was not merely publication houses that played a role in world literary circulation. In the FRG, it was the Frankfurt Book Fair that became a node for world literary exchanges.

In September 1949, the (West) German Book Trade Association (Deutsche Buchhandelsverein) initiated a revival of the Frankfurt Book Fair. From the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, the Frankfurt Book Fair was claimed to be the biggest book fair in Germany and one of the largest in Europe, only to be taken over by the Leipzig Book Fair in the eighteenth century. The fame enjoyed by the Leipzig Book Fair for over a century was to come to an end in 1949. A new era of commercial publication, circulation, and distribution of books was about to begin, whereby decolonized nations of Asia and Africa and rising powers like China would play an important role. The Frankfurt Book Fair was to serve as an important hub for these transnational transactions of print culture, and by the end of the twentieth century it became the largest book fair in the world, the prime center for negotiation of translation rights, the place to showcase developing readerships in the world through a special “guest of honor”

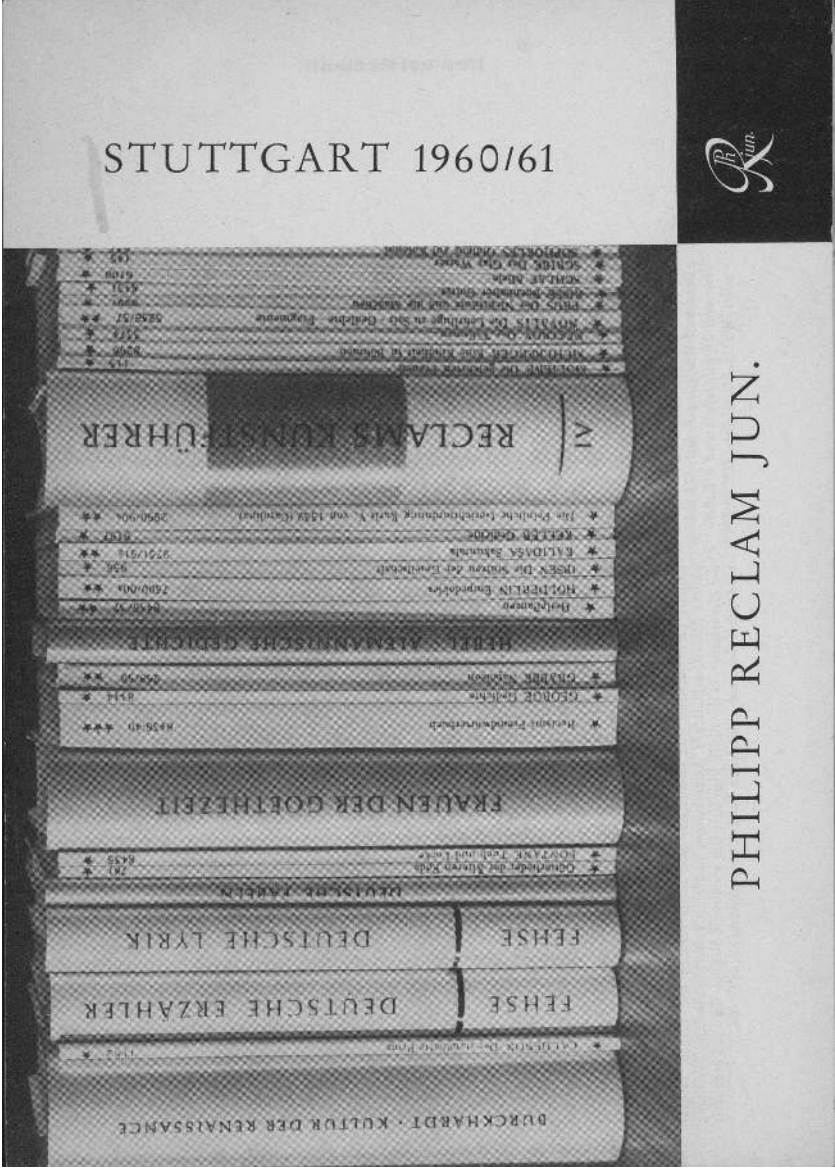


Figure 4-2. Cover of a Reclam catalog, 1960/61 (Stuttgart). (Courtesy of Deutsche Nationalbibliothek and Buch- und Schriftmuseum Leipzig, and Reclam Verlag Stuttgart.)



status accorded to different countries, and more recently, the platform to think about new media and the future of the book. In short, Frankfurt was to become to the world of the late twentieth century what Timbuktu was to the African book market and what Baghdad was to the Afro-Asian book markets from the eleventh through the seventeenth centuries.

One year into the new beginnings of the Frankfurt Book Fair, Europe was still reeling from the effects of World War II and was ready to prepare for another ideological bifurcation through the advent of the Cold War. As a counter-statement to these growing divisions, the organizers of the Book Fair inaugurated the German Peace Prize (Der Deutsche Friedenspreis) in 1950.<sup>85</sup> The prize was established to recognize the outstanding contribution of an author, scholar, or an artist in promoting international cultural understanding. The first recipient of the prize was Max Tau, a German writer who lived in exile in Norway during the Third Reich. With the second recipient, Albert Schweitzer (1951), the ceremonial conferral of the prize was moved to the Paulskirche in Frankfurt—the seat of the Frankfurt National Assembly (Frankfurter Nationalversammlung, 1848). Since then, the impressive list of recipients has included the German-Jewish thinker Martin Buber (1953), the former president of India and translator (from Sanskrit into English) of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan (1962), the first Senegalese president and anticolonial activist Leopold Senghor (1968), and the Jewish composer and conductor Yehudi Menuhin (1979). The list also reveals a number of novelists whose work has found recognition and readerships around the world: Hermann Hesse (1955), Octavio Paz (1984), Mario Vargas Llosa (1996), Chinua Achebe (2002), and Orhan Pamuk (2005), who was the second Turkish author to receive the award after Yesar Kemal (1997). Several of these were also Nobel Laureates in literature.

The Frankfurt Book Fair had become, and continues to be, a way station for bibliomigrancy, indeed for the “worlding” of literature in the post-World War II era. It was also marked by West Germany’s own history of migration, initiated during the years of the *Wirtschaftswunder* under Konrad Adenauer in the 1950s. As I discuss in chapter 5, authors featured in the Frankfurt Book Fair—not the ones from East Germany, or even West German authors of migrant background and non-German heritages—would dominate conceptual associations with world literature in a united Germany. Discussions of world literature in the contemporary context are quick to point out the rise of migrant writings in Germany as part of the “new world literature.” The story, however, is more complex than a quick assimilation of Germanophone literature with the more widely read An-

glophone, Francophone, Hispanophone, or Lusophone writings. Unraveling the complexity of world literary circulation in a unified Germany into the twenty-first century is the task of chapter 5. For now, I will cast one last glance at the ideological bifurcation that formed and informed prospects of world literary circulation in the divided Germany.

### *Unfinished Histories*

This chapter started with a discussion of Volker Braun's *Unvollendete Geschichte* and Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* Both of these works squarely locate literary production and reception in the political and social text of a nation, in which ideological state participation was key to all aspects of public life, including the construction of world literature. In the case of West Germany, while the poisonous material was not necessarily identified by the state itself, there were other factors involved. Political forces elsewhere at play—across the Atlantic Ocean—were key to the control and distribution of texts, either couched in diplomacy or in outright censorship. Despite these tendencies, individuals and institutions found ways of translating, publishing, and disseminating world literature. The case of Volk und Welt is a prime example of this phenomenon. Regardless of “prescribed” literature, much was to be found, discovered, engaged with, and used as a way to obscure state politics and policies.

Whether or not Auerbach thought that the Western student was prepared or pedagogically trained to process literatures from “Islamic, Chinese, and Indian” worlds, whether or not Reclam decided to change its program from Hesse's humanistic ideal to a “revolutionary spirituality,” the creation of readerships occurred because of, and sometimes at a distance from, market forces and dominant political ideologies. When seen from the current perspective, world literary creation does not appear as a choice between national memory and conscience. Texts circulated in East and West Germany, through Reclam and Volk und Welt, through the Leipzig and Frankfurt Book Fairs, attest to both the memory and the conscience of the divided German states.

Around the Fall of the Berlin Wall, along with other cultural institutions, the differences in the book industry and reading cultures of the two German states underwent comprehensive public scrutiny. As Martin Ahrends reported in *Die Zeit*, in an article tellingly entitled “Leseland BRDDR” (Reading nation FRGDR), the number of books published in the GDR was far larger than in the FRG, even if more book titles were published in the FRG. The GDR also excelled the FRG in its publication

of literary works (*Belletristik*): 35 percent of total titles published every year in the GDR were literary works, as opposed to 18 percent in the FRG. More books were read in the GDR, even if the number of volumes sold in the FRG was much higher.<sup>86</sup> Ahrends's observations were based partially on Ursula E. E. Köhler's *Lesekultur der beiden deutschen Staaten* (1988), an authoritative comparison based on forty years of available data in the FRG and GDR. While Köhler did not isolate world literature as a separate category, statistics on reading preferences classified by genre showed that even in the late 1970s, the number of readers who preferred novels and short stories, for example, were 16.5 percent and 14.5 percent respectively in the GDR, almost double the numbers of readers in the FRG, 8.8 percent and 6.8 percent.<sup>87</sup> The number of library users in the GDR (35 percent of the population) exceeded those in the FRG (24.5 percent of the population).<sup>88</sup>

Public libraries in the GDR played a very important role in the creation of readership. The months following the Fall of the Berlin Wall were particularly eventful for East German libraries. On the one hand, the "Giftschrank" (poison cabinet)—a befitting epithet to the cabinets of books banned in the GDR—was opened up for public access, including the one in the Deutsche Bücherei.<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, the lack of financial investment in libraries of the GDR had left them far behind those in the FRG, both in infrastructural support and in modes of free access to information.<sup>90</sup> In addition, a different kind of "purging" of literature would take place in the GDR libraries. Books pertaining to Marxist and communist ideologies were either simply deacquired or proactively dumped, creating a situation where the historical memory of a recently transformed nation was once again under erasure. Documents pertaining to the history of the GDR were decommissioned, and often sold or dumped in the trash.<sup>91</sup>

The book culture in the *Leseland* was fast changing. Books read by East Germans were disappearing from the bookstores, and booksellers had begun to cater to the tastes of their new readers. When Dieter E. Zimmer, one of the main editors of *Die Zeit* traveled to Leipzig to write an essay on the changing book industry in East Germany, he visited many bookstores.<sup>92</sup> At one of the stores, he witnessed a young man asking for a copy of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* in German translation, which was published by Volk und Welt. The new edition, the young man was told, was postponed by a year. Zimmer, who was next in line, asked for a book of poems by the Russian romantic poet Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841), and the autobiography of GDR premier Erich Honecker (1912–1994). Lermontov—most probably the edition published by Universal-Bibliothek<sup>93</sup>—Zimmer was told, was unavailable at the time, and Honecker's *Aus meinem Leben*

had sold out, because it had suddenly gained the status of a treasured object for bibliophiles.<sup>94</sup> The bookseller's comments succinctly capture the sentiment of the time: "I am also pissed about this . . . that they could just take it out of the consignment, as if they can cancel history."<sup>95</sup>

The coming together of German states might have enjoyed the grand closure culminating in the Fall of the Berlin Wall. But the history and the story of world literature in the two states are still entangled in mutual opposition, still left unfinished.

