Five Economies of *Weltliteratur*: Designs for Circulation.

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Abstract

The paper looks at a range of economic ideas that various conceptualizations of world literature have confronted, drew on, or interacted with. What I attempt to demonstrate is that contrary to the tendency in recent debates to identify world literature as the cultural manifestation of modern capitalism per se, the multifariousness of the concept has corresponded to the heterogeneity of economic thought. I explore models of 1) free trade economy, 2) gift economy, 3) planned economy, 4) national protectionism and 5) common/shared possessions in the writings of Goethe, Thomas Carlyle, Fichte, the Young Germany movement, and Karl Marx.

Keywords

world literature – political economy – commerce – gift – property

Introduction

In recent discussions, it has become a truism that the concept and the practices of world literature are wedded to the operations of global capitalism. For Pascale Casanova's and Franco Moretti's explorations of an "international literary space" or a "world literary system" alongside a systemic world-economy (and, less directly, for David Damrosch's "ontology" of world literature as a "circulation" of texts), this structural homology served as an interpretive frame – in their reception, it has grown into an ideological target.

In Pheng Cheah's verdict, their theories were "mesmerized by market exchange" and it is only by regaining an "ethicopolitically committed" (that is, temporal, not spatial) understanding of world literature that it could be liberated from the spell of the "world market created by capital" (Cheah 7, 34). For Aamir R. Mufti, the problem is not so much that world literature has been distorted into a tool of global capitalism but that it has always been one: Historically,

it was born in "the culture of capitalist society", that is, European bourgeois modernity tied up with exploitative international trade, colonialism, and imperial violence; currently, it epitomizes "neoliberal global capitalism" and its tendency "to monopolize all possibilities of the international into the global life of capital" (Mufti xi-xii, 20, 91). The Warwick Research Collective has pointed at literary innovations in various peripheries "registering" the "uneven and combined" development of modernity, yet identified world literature even more straightforwardly as *the* literature of "the modern capitalist world-system" (Warwick 15). While it has been suggested that the encroaching logic of economics' reductive equivalences should be resisted by abandoning economic system-analysis in favor of more flexible, for example, ecological, models (Beecroft 17–18), others have found that the capitalism of world literature must be confronted precisely by scrutinizing its material constitution – that is, "how labour, property, and ownership work within the literary system" – rather than condemning it from an illusory external position (Brouilette 99). (It is worth noting that Germanists, perhaps not accidentally, have been more eager to save *Weltliteratur* from this stigma – by contending either that Goethe's concept was essentially a *literarische Idee* with incidental political, technological or economic aspects [Lamping 135], or that his notion of a "free trade of ideas" in fact provided "an alternative model" to "globalization's free market" [Noyes 101].)

If Casanova, Damrosch, or Moretti were "mesmerized" by the alienated world of the world market, this body of criticism has been no less captivated by a vision of capitalism as "the outright embodiment of evil" (Kocka 168), or the "bogeyman" of a loosely defined neoliberalism representing it (Fisk 158–9, 165). Ironically, if we turn world literature studies into an ideological platform of anti-capitalist politics, however justifiable its aims may be, we tie the concept only more tightly to the historical and geographical confines of capitalist modernity. And, arguably, this "myopic" reduction commits "philological violence" against

"millennia-long of histories of world literature" which predate or are "critically coextensive with" the European world systems model (Ganguly 10–15, 36).

My aim in this article is to demonstrate that there is more to the political economy of world literature even within the scope of capitalist modernity. With a routinized identification of world literature and modern capitalism *per se*, we are losing sight of a heterogeneity *within* economic thought and neglecting the ways in which disparate economic ideas have informed modern European concepts of world literature. This so far uncharted dynamic, I believe, can be rendered in terms of a structural typology differentiating between five models. These models are

1) free trade economy,
2) gift economy,
3) planned/command economy,
4) national protectionism,
5) an economy of common/shared possessions.

1 "More or less" free trade

Goethe framed the idea of *Weltliteratur* in commercial terms on multiple occasions, either as a "general spiritual commerce" where all nations offer their "wares" (Norton 18), or as a "more or less free spiritual trade" between nations seeking to satisfy their new intellectual needs aroused by the Napoleonic wars (*Leben Schillers* vii). He embraced the "free trade of concepts and sentiments" on the grounds that it contributed to the "wealth and general welfare of mankind" just as "the traffic of manufactured and agricultural products" was expected to do (*Gespräche* 151–2). Importantly, Goethe maintained this analogy not only in the sense that commercial relations would foster intellectual ones, but also the way round: By establishing

bonds of trust between nations, he believed, it is *Weltliteratur* that would propel "industrial and commercial activities" ("Faszikel" 868).

Goethe's free trade of ideas, then, was not a counter-concept to commercial exchange but its complementary. Nor were his trade-related terms, as it has been suggested, merely metaphors that Moretti or Casanova would have, illicitly, "literalized" (Cheah 34, 63; Prendergast 7–9). Goethe was far from indifferent to the commercial profit to be accrued should world literary exchanges be conducted mainly through German translations. He hoped that foreigners "will need to come to our market" and purchase literary "wares" unavailable in their own language in "our mediation" ("Serbische Lieder" 135). Taking this aspect further, he also observed that while in the past Germans had been "obliged to pay good money" for foreign literary products, now, with a growing interest for their cultural goods abroad, they could look forward to a more favorable "balance of trade" in terms of both "applause and sales" ("Bezüge" 428).

Goethe's considerations had clear resonances with the free trade discourses of the late 1820s, enmeshed in theoretical debates, commercial rivalry, diplomatic confrontations, and social conflicts across Europe and the globe. In fact, this framing of world literature demonstrates his up-to-datedness on the central economic and political questions of the age. His endorsement of the mutuality of spiritual and commercial relations in *Weltliteratur* was inspired by the French liberal weekly *Le Globe* and their propagation of a "littérature occidentale ou européenne", taking shape through the joint circulation of material and intellectual goods, where "the nations most occupied with industry and commerce are the most likely to exchange ideas with one another" (cited in Hamm 440–1). Nonetheless, Goethe's idea of "geistiger Handelsverkehr", i.e. his equivalent of *Le Globe*'s "commerce intellectuel", also harked back to an immense German tradition of associating commercial and intellectual traffic from Leibniz to Kant to Novalis (Koch 57–81). And he had knowledge of

much earlier debates over the freedom of trade than the ones that *Le Globe* mediated to him. During a trip to Alsace in the summer of 1770 – when the area was ravaged by famine, bakers withheld their stock to raise prices and state granaries had to intervene to feed the populace – he and his entourage improvised "comical" hymns to Ceres, addressing the "important dispute over free or limited trade" (*Dichtung* 497). This passing remark clearly alludes to the widely publicized grain-debates of the 1760-70s and their dilemma whether the free market could secure reliable supply in subsistence goods and reasonable prices at the same time. Thus, Goethe had been well aware of the difficulties in reconciling market efficiency with human life. Still, when casting the concept of world literature in terms of *Freihandel*, he embraced it as the harbinger of a mutualist and brotherly unity of mankind overcoming retrograde nationalist seclusion – that is, very much along the lines of the mid-nineteenth-century celebrations of free trade as a conception of "community and cooperation rather than market and competition" (Trentmann 218–232).

Accordingly, Goethe seemed to have believed that intercultural exchange was mutually beneficial and the "great benefit" that world literature generated were "corrections" that otherwise would hardly have occurred: Carlyle judged Schiller better than the Germans, the Germans in turn understood Shakespeare or Byron better than the English (Eckermann 337). In this predetermined complementariness of an international division of interpretive labor, as he highlighted while comparing reviews of the Helena scene in *Faust II*, the Scot seeks to "penetrate", the French to "understand", the Russian to "appropriate" foreign literary works ("Helena" 514–5). On the other hand, Goethe also recognized self-interest as the driving force behind intercultural encounters. In the notes prepared for the introduction to Carlyle's Schiller-biography, he explicitly frames *Weltliteratur* in such terms: In a "violently whirling" world that threatens to "sweep away" the individual, only "the purest and strictest egoism can save us" ("Faszikel" 867). Here Goethe echoes an episode from his own *Wilhelm Meisters*

Wanderjahre where Wilhelm comes to understand the unity of self-interest and generosity, "property" and "common good", i.e. *Besitz* and *Gemeingut*, and declares that "one must be egoistic in order not to become an egoist" because only by "keeping together what one has" will one be able to "spend it" for others. By also suggesting that "capital should not be attacked" because over time "its interests will belong to everyone anyway", the novel justifies the unequal distribution of wealth in terms comparable to Adam Smith's apology for commercial societies. However, unlike Smithian market automatisms, for Wilhelm it is personal paternalistic care that reconciles the public good with self-interest. As we learn, the rich and mighty should not give "property" to "the poor" but act as their "steward" (*Verwalter*) and manage their assets on their behalf (*Wanderjahre* 68). (Here Goethe seems to hark back to the tenets of Cameralism, i.e. the administrative economics of German lands at the time of his active participation in Weimar state management, and its idealization of the sovereign as a caring *Hausvater*.)

Goethe cast the image of world literary traffic in a similar paternalistic pattern. While he watched with delight that the "treasures" of foreign literatures, Serbian folk poetry in particular, were becoming "deutsches Gemeingut" via translation ("Serbische Gedichte" 387), he also hoped that these goods would be re-exported to the world market in German mediation. This design no less thrives on, and justifies, inequality than the social model outlined in the *Wanderjahre*. Just as much as social rank entitles managing the assets of the poor, a more widely accessible literature should act as a "steward" for the less prominent because the concentration of "capital" – in the hands of the benevolent rich or in dominant literatures – generates "interests" for the poor or the culturally backward as well. And just as much as the wealthy deservedly pocket, in Wilhelm's eyes, social appreciation for sharing their surplus, a (preferably, German) cultural center distributing the marginal justly secures symbolic and commercial dominance. (Note that in his 1848 anthology *Bildersaal der*

Weltliteratur, Johannes Scherr takes up precisely this dialectic of "common good" and "property" to claim that by distributing translations of the literary treasures of the world as a German *Gemeingut* Germans become the *Besitzer* of world literature [Scherr vi].)

Thus, contrary to idealizing interpretations, unequal positions and lopsided exchange were constitutive aspects of Goethe's understanding of world literature. In his conversations with Eckermann, he repeatedly points at profound inequalities between intellectual and aesthetic resources in various national literatures (often determined by the material infrastructure of their respective socio-cultural environments) and the humiliating effect of confronting cultural superiority: In his most vivid observation, Shakespeare hands over "golden apples in silver bowls" but Germans can only put "potatoes in them" (Eckermann 212). At the same time, he was eager to see Germans acquiring a growing share from the symbolic and material capital generated in intercultural circulation and repeatedly returned to the prospects opening up for Germans in this emulative race. Once it is his optimism about an "honorable role" awaiting them ("Le Tasse" 356), then the anxiety of Germans having "the most to lose" (*Wanderjahre* 482), or the French "drawing the greatest advantages" again (WA, IV, 45, 294).

That is, while Goethe liked to think of world literature as a forum for idiosyncratic national individualities mutually improving one another, he also had an eye for the systemic inequality of these exchanges, their dynamic of gain and loss**,** both as a source of anxiety and as a condition to exploit. With this he evoked elements from both the pre-modern *complementary* and the modern *competitive* designs in the theories of long-distance trade – in the first, God scattered different resources in different regions of the globe to reunite mankind through peaceful exchange; in the second, fierce competition among already self-sufficient modern economies keep international markets in a war-like status (Hont *Jealousy* 51–2).

Goethe's approach mixed modern and pre-modern features in further aspects. Three of these can be briefly recounted here. One is the persistence of the imagery of the household (and the heritage of the Aristotelian household economy) in his formulations of cultural trade. In an 1821 letter to Johann Heinrich Voß, Goethe asserts that the task of the translator is to adjust alien "treasures" to the domestic milieu of one's "everyday surroundings" by making them as "enjoyable" as *Hausmannskost*, that is, "home-cooking" – and, he adds, Voß's translations of Homer and others are "appetizing" exactly in this sense (WA, IV, 35, 24). This culinary image of the cultural household and its preference for familiar flavors seems radically different from the decidedly free trade analogies that Goethe otherwise offers. But he hardly saw them as antithetical: His personal world was never as international as in the last years of his life when he rarely left the "everyday surroundings" of his own household. What also lends a sense of obsolescence to his notion of *Weltverkehr* is that he models it on the circulation of specie (*Münze*) in an age increasingly characterized by paper currencies (Norton 17). In Goethe's time, German states recognized hundreds of species, German and non-German alike, as legal tender. It was precisely by this frantic diversity, in which the external was present within the local, the foreign within the national, that the German monetary system could supply an allegory of internal variability within a hypothetic unity: It circulated *Münzen* of various values and denominations against the background of an imaginary common unit of account, the *Reichstaler*, just as much as Goethe's world literature circulated the morphological variables of national literatures against the background of an imaginary *allgemeine Menschliche*. Third, Goethe's understanding of commerce, and hence his vision of world literary trade, was determined by the image of the fair. Growing up in Frankfurt and coming of age in Leipzig, it was *die Messe* that gave him a sense of how "the world produces what it needs" and how the representatives of "various parts of the world come together to exchange" their goods in a colorful multiethnic cavalcade (*Dichtung* 22, 244–5). For Goethe,

then, market exchange was not an invisible matrix of impersonal and disembedded forces but the felt presence of a messy, disorderly and intransparent traffic, in which the exotic intermingled with the familiar, the old with the new, the outstanding with the useless. It is in this sense that he captures intercultural trade as an Oriental bazar, where the "most precious and lowest commodities" share the same space, and not only the wares themselves but the means of their transportation ("barrels, boxes, sacks"), not only tradeable goods ("herbs, roots and fruits") but their waste ("scraps, peels and stalks"), that is, the already-consumed and the never-to-be-bought junk, are also on display ("Noten" 204).

Goethe's enchantment with the fair distanced his understanding of commerce from *laissez faire* principles – already Turgot's 1757 entry 'Foire' in the *Encyclopédie* condemned fairs as atavistic, unnatural, and antithetical to the true freedom of trade (Turgot 14–20) – and perhaps from modern capitalism as a whole. His reminiscences of an early-modern merchant capitalism should remind us that the persistence of non-modern social structures and archaic economic forms – in the "uneven but combined development" of modernity (Warwick) – was encoded already in this early phase of the conceptual and imaginative work on world literature. And not only as something residual. The subsequent career of the fair as a site of exchange and contact demonstrates how atavistic practices and institutions are constantly reinvented in modern capitalism. From the 1850s onwards, world exhibitions repositioned the fair as a global site of self-representation, equally utilizable for internationalist and nation-branding efforts. And, importantly, with the rise of the international book fair (emblematically, the one held in Goethe's Frankfurt) as a canon-forming authority, the fair was losing precisely its uncanonical nature (and its indifference to systematization with regard to value and kind) that made it so dear to Goethe.

No doubt, Goethe had serious reservations about the thorough commercialization of literature and the generalized mediocrity that he feared it would help to prevail. But he saw it as

collateral damage in the efficient circulation of "truly meritorious" works and ideas, enabled by the advanced (and commerce-driven) means of communication and transportation. Accordingly, he set apart two layers of *Weltliteratur*, one in which "whatever pleases the masses will expand without borders" and one in which the devotees of the "true progress of mankind" assemble in a "quiet, almost oppressed, church" ("Faszikel" 866). This distinction has been approached as a Bourdieu-style 'double economy' (Wolf 59–74). I suggest that it reflects more the difference (highlighted in Istvan Hont's analysis comparing modern and pre-modern trade) between "commercial society in the full Smithian sense" and a "partnership of Christian traders", that is, an informally organized group externally engaged in the competitive individualism of commerce yet internally "glued" together by "beneficence, friendship, and solidarity" (Hont *Politics* 3–4). Goethe's "quiet church", molded more as a freemasonic than a Christian community, is united by moral bonds unavailable for purely commercial authors but is not a closed enclave within all-surrounding markets. Even "high-minded" authors would sell their texts and ideas on the market (as Goethe himself did in his experimental ways, for example, by offering them to publishers through informal auctions), while within their circles they may exchange them on non-commercial terms.

2 The *kula ring* of world literature

Exemplifying this duality, Goethe shared his most directly commercial analogies with Thomas Carlyle, yet also used him to build a personal network along a non-commercial economy of evaluation, circulation, and community formation – that is, by the means of *gifting*. Gifts were at the core of the nexus between Goethe and Carlyle. The young Scot approached his idol by sending him complimentary copies of his works, first, in 1824, the freshly released translation of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, then, in the spring of 1827, *The*

Life of Schiller and the volumes of *German Romance*. It was this second round of gifts that really earned Carlyle Goethe's attention – and even more: a cascade of counter-gifts. From then onwards, their correspondence unfolded inseparably from the exchange of books, journals, proof-sheets, scores, and manuscripts, coming and going in tandem with jewelry, drawings, interior ornaments and all sorts of knick-knackery as well as with intangible gifts such as favors, information, and advice.

The to-and-fro movement of texts, items, and ideas between Weimar and Edinburgh (later, Craigenputtock) staged an economy of circulation that channeled the "ethos of cooperation and service" inherited from the republic of letters tradition (Goldgar 12–53), but also reproduced much of the dynamic in indigenous gifting and its practices of creating social bonds, negotiating conflict and establishing superordination. For Goethe, gifting and commerce were mutually embedded in the intersecting operations of his "quiet church" and the wider spheres of world literary circulation. The economy of this gift-circuitry of world literature was no less material than that of commercial traffic, even if it generated small-scale circulation. Previously, Goethe had conducted similar transfers with Byron and Alessandro Manzoni, but it was his gifting with Carlyle that gave him the most palpable experiences of world literature being in the making. Especially that, as we will see below, their private exchanges grew into extended circles of contact and tribute.

While market transactions are singular, gifts induce the always renewable obligation to reciprocate. This pattern of reciprocity can be witnessed in the Carlyle–Goethe correspondence right from the outset. In April 1827 Carlyle sends the Schiller-biography and his translations collected in the volumes of *German Romance* as a counter-gift for the "packet from Weimar, containing your kind Letter and Present" which he had received from Goethe in 1824 (Norton 7). That packet in turn was Goethe's counter-gift for the translation of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* already offered as a counter-gift for the intellectual enrichment Carlyle

had received from reading it in German. As Carlyle put it in the first line of his first letter to Goethe: "Permit me, Sir, in soliciting your acceptance of this Translation to return you my sincere thanks for the profit which, in common with many millions, I have derived from the Original" (Norton 1). What Carlyle captures here is the transformation of an idealistic cross-cultural gift (the effect of *Wilhelm Meister* on him) into a commodity (his translation for the British book market), then into a personal gift (a complimentary copy) in symbolic debt repayment to Goethe. In terms of what Marcel Mauss has called "the spirit of the gift" (Mauss 13–6), that is, its willingness to return to its original owner, here Carlyle *sends back* to Goethe his own gift, or, rather, "the fruits of the gift" (Sahlins 175), that is, its reconfiguration in another language.

This kind of reciprocity circulates debt, not profit. (The "profit" that Carlyle mentions above differs from the profit he pocketed from his publisher because he didn't have to repay the latter.) Symbolic indebtedness to Goethe as "the man to whom I owe more than to any other – namely, some measure of spiritual Light and Freedom" (Norton 152–3) will remain Carlyle's main trope for their relationship; his late *Reminiscences* also emphasizes that "thank Heaven for its highest gift. I then felt, and still feel, endlessly indebted to Goethe" (143). Using the image of debt repayment for relations between creditor/debtor authors or nations, Carlyle even suggests that retranslation is to compensate for the debt generated by a previous bad translation: Condemning Lord Gower's *Faust* as "perhaps the very worst" translation ever, he exclaims that "our Island (…) owes you some amends; would that I were the man to pay it!" (Norton 254).

For Goethe, gifting constituted bonds of unity between equals, albeit with himself in the center; for Carlyle, it congregated disciples around a master to perform "worship" in the "grand Metropolitan Temple" of "literature" (*Unfinished* 8). Western anthropology has sought in the concept of the gift a cooperative model of solidarity as an alternative to competitive

capitalism – for Carlyle it exemplified the central message of his moral and social philosophy, that is, the willing submission to authority: "the weak submitting to the strong; (…) the ignorant submitting to the wise" by offering "obedience" in return for "guidance" ("Characteristics" 11–2).

Carlyle, however, was also aware that by translating and popularizing his works he had also made Goethe *his* debtor. When he solicited Goethe to support his application for the professorship of moral philosophy at the University of St. Andrews, he wanted to capitalize on what Goethe owed him. And Goethe was not miserly when it came to paying his dues. The letter of recommendation which he did write, in vain, his jubilant review of *German Romance*, the lengthy introduction to the German translation of the Schiller-biography, and his arranging for Carlyle's honorary membership in the Berlin Society for Foreign Literature – all contributed to his own debt repayment. With which, in turn, he generated new debts to be repaid by further services: Goethe was expecting to see from Carlyle an English translation of *Faust II* and a new translation of *Faust I* (Norton 106).

Goethe also seemed to have realized that their personal gifting could model a similar reciprocity between national literatures. He called on the members of the Berlin Society to produce a German biography of Burns in order to reciprocate Carlyle's biography of Schiller in a "friendly counter-service" to the honorable Scottish nation (*Leben Schillers* xxi). It was indeed this model of gifts and counter-gifts that came to supply the self-perception of the world republic of letters as a platform of selfless, generous reciprocity. (Which still reverberates in observations that gifting between Carlyle and Goethe, a "diplomatic exchange" between "two cultures", demonstrated "a nice balance" of historical "obligation" in which Shakespeare liberated German literature in the 18th century while Germans in return gave stimulus to British literati in the 19th century [Reed 225, 231].) And when Casanova debunked this ideology of cooperative mutualism, she was following in the footsteps of

Bourdieu's anthropology unmasking "gift exchange" as "the paradigm" of a collectively produced "reality-denying reality" in Kabyle communities (110). Importantly, Casanova's vision of a latently competitive world literary space can also be traced back to early comparative literary histories which captured this intercultural gift-economy in more emulative terms: Hermann Hettner's 1856–70 work on eighteenth-century French, English and German literatures contended that the Germans rose to prominence by turning from "receivers" into "givers" in the exchange of enlightened ideas (Goßens 344). From this perspective, intellectual history is not a humanistic *agape* but a *potlach* party where the hegemonic demonstrates its superiority by lavishing its excess on the world.

The gift-exchange between and around Goethe and Carlyle, however, operated more like the Melanesian *kula ring* – along which shells, necklaces and also "customs, songs, art motives and general cultural influences" are circulating in "definite trade routes" (Malinowski 65, 70) – as far as it was meant to establish an informal community beyond their personal nexus. To lend a physical emblem to these connections, in January 1828 Goethe sends six medals, struck with his own portrait, to his British "well-wishers" (Norton 38). He stipulates that two should go to Walter Scott (proving that a dominating presence in transnational literary markets does not disqualify authors from the "quiet church") but leaves the decision over the rest to Carlyle. Who eventually passes them on to John Lockhart, the editor of *Quarterly Review* and Scott's son-in-law, to Francis Jeffrey, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review,* and to George Moir, the translator of Schiller's *Wallenstein*. (One might note that this adds up to five; Carlyle probably kept the sixth for himself.) Goethe's gesture of rewarding editors, translators, reviewers with a personal gift imitated the condescending grace of a sovereign honoring the service of his subjects – using Carlyle as a proxy, it aligned with indigenous rituals where gifting needs to involve a third party (Sahlins 149–65).

A few years later, Goethe's medals were duly reciprocated in a collective ritual of giving. In the summer of 1831, on Carlyle's initiative, "a little poetic *Tugendbund* of Philo-Germans", or a group of "Fifteen English Friends" (which included the three recipients of Goethe's medals and, among others, Southey and Wordsworth), sent Goethe a counter-gift, a golden seal, formally for his "approaching Birthday" (Norton 281). The seal featured two Greek theater masks, two griffins and roses (representing England) intertwining with a wreath of oak-leaves (representing Germany) and it had the line "To the German Master: From Friends in England: 28th August: 1831" engraved on the sides. The congratulatory letter which accompanied the gift was phrased in a characteristic Carlylean rhetoric of debt repayment: This "small English gift, proceeding from us all equally" was meant to be the "memorial of the gratitude we owe him, and think the whole world owes him" (Norton 290–4). Goethe reciprocated the present right away with a poem entitled *Den Fünfzehen Englischen Freunden,* in which he mused that while poetic words have immediate effect in their homeland, it is always doubtful how they are received in foreign lands; yet the Britons have clearly understood the message.[1] Privately, he seemed less content. He fumed that the seal was "without any art, without anything represented, without meaning, just precious and expensive", proving that after a long period of decline by now the English had "lost their sense of art completely" (cited in Hecht 72). Perhaps Goethe was not only unhappy with this particular gift but – recognizing tastelessness even among those "better ones" to whose network he entrusted the "true progress of mankind" – also he was becoming skeptical of what an intercultural gift community could produce as a whole. At any rate, his exchanges with Carlyle ended here. The seal was, in Malinowski's terms, a "final gift" given to "clinch the whole transaction" (Malinowski 75).

[1] "Worte die der Dichter spricht,/ Treu in heimischen Bezircken,/ Wircken gleich, doch weiss er nicht/ Ob sie in die Ferne wircken./ Britten! habt sie aufgefasst/ 'Thatigen Sinn! das Thun gezügelt;/ Stetig Streben, ohne Hast.'/ Und so wollt Ihr es besiegelt." (Norton 295).

In the *kula ring*, direction and distance determine the meaning and value of gift-items. The exchanges between Carlyle and Goethe also mapped out a symbolic geography of world literature. Besides gifts, this space could also be crossed by another ritualized form of movement, that is, pilgrimage. Carlyle repeatedly expressed his wish to visit "the grand Sanctuary" of Weimar. When he finally does so in 1852, the trajectories of a gift and its giver finally intersect, albeit in a space already abandoned by the recipient: In Goethe's study Carlyle finds one of the books that he has sent to him, a copy of William Taylor's *Historic Survey of German Poetry*, and inside "a crumb of paper torn" from his own essay on Samuel Johnson, "still sticking in, after twenty years" (Froude 96).

Looking at this symbolic geography from another angle, Carlyle underlined early on that his aim was to "conquer" for Goethe "a new province of mental empire" and "for my countrymen a new treasure of wisdom" (Norton 9). With performing translation as a form of conquest and positioning himself as an eagerly submissive self-colonizer, Carlyle wanted to graft the idealism of (what he consistently misquoted from Goethe as) "Ganzen, Guten, Wahren" onto the shallow "mechanical intellect" of Britain and thereby awaken it from its "death-sleep" (Norton 283–84).[2] Yet as much as he wanted to replenish the intellectual resources of Britain by the injection of German values, he also believed that the global reach of these values could in turn be secured by British imperial power. Notifying Goethe about his forthcoming essay on Schiller, Carlyle enthused that "a knowledge and appreciation of Foreign, especially of German, Literature, is spreading with increased rapidity over all the domain of the English tongue; so that almost at the Antipodes, in New Holland itself, the wise of your country are by this time preaching their wisdom" (Norton 161–2). As already noted, Goethe wished to see translations into German as a vast re-exporting industry giving access to all the literatures of

[2] Goethe's poem *Generalbeichte* reads "im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen/ Resolut zu leben". Replacing "beauty" with "truth", Carlyle projected his own puritanism onto Goethe (Ashton 16).

the world – for Carlyle, translations into English were to extend the reach of German thought through the globalizing medium of the "English tongue". In this vision of a Teutonic cultural empire, for which Germans supplied the aesthetic-moral, the British the military-commercial, force, the symbolic map of world literary gifting was fading into the imperial geography of colonial expansion.

Neither Goethe nor Carlyle were aware that by then Goethe's poetry had indeed been preached in the South Pacific. In January 1817, the French-German writer Adelbert von Chamisso reached, aboard a Russian expedition ship where he was hired as a botanist, the island of Radack in Polynesia. The crew was warmly welcomed by the islanders, who performed songs and dances for the visitors. To reciprocate, Chamisso recited Goethe's poetry to the natives, and, reportedly, they managed to repeat "Und im Ganzen, Vollen, Schönen/ Resolut zu leben" (Uhlig – Zhang 124–5). As these lines, so central to Carlyle's project of redeeming Britain, were resounding in the Pacific night on the lips of a native audience (note that Chamisso was also misquoting the poem!), Teutonic wisdom did engage in an indigenous ritual of gifting – yet not through the expansion of the British but by the explorations of a rival Euro-Asian empire.

3 Planned exchanges among enlightened, insular, totalitarian states

Whereas Goethe suggested that commerce gives a positive incentive to intellectual exchanges and despite its undesirable effects it could harbor more elevated interactions, Johann Gottlieb Fichte believed that genuine cultural communication would only occur after the full elimination of international commerce. In his 1800 tract *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat* (The Closed Commercial State), Fichte made a case for a global system of insular national states, with governments planning and commanding domestic production and distribution in each, as

the only way to safeguard global peace. And at the end of the book he points at one particular field, that of science and culture, where inter-state interactions should be maintained: "Academies financed by the state will introduce the treasures of foreign literature (*die Schätze der Literatur des Auslandes*) into the country, with the treasures of domestic literature offered in exchange. (…) Nothing, it follows, will prevent the scholars and artists of all nations (*die Gelehrten und Künstler aller Nationen*) from entering into the freest communication with one another" (*Commercial* 198–9; *Handelsstaat* 141).

Fichte's proposal for the circulation of intellectual and artistic products and achievements among otherwise self-enclosing states, I suggest, marks an alternative concept of world literature based on the operation of planned or command economies. Of course, Fichte never speaks of a *Weltliteratur* and his understanding of literature aligns more with the humanist *litterae* and its all-encompassing field of learning than the modern notion of imaginative writing. This should not, however, exclude him from the histories of world literature discourses, especially because Goethe's ideas were no less rooted in the "neo-classical sense of 'letters'" and "universal erudition" (Hoesel-Uhlig 32–40). The shift from *litterae* to literature, from *Wissen* to imagination, or, rather, the persistent interplay between scholarly and aesthetic writing, cuts across the conceptual genealogy of world literature and Fichte's take on cultural-scientific communication is an important element in these trajectories.[3]

Where their concepts most conspicuously diverge is that while Goethe's world literature is a self-generating entity, Fichte's relies on active governance. It is not simply the "free movement of ideas" that he offers in the place of the unhindered flow of commercial goods

[3] Recently, the Goethean "regime of intellectual mobility and free trade in ideas" has been associated with Fichte's *Handelsstaat* by suggesting that both were seeking alternatives to the "free flow of goods" under the commercial doctrine of free trade (cf. Noyes 102). I believe that, unlike Fichte, Goethe trusted that material and intellectual trade could be mutually supportive. Also, the *Handelsstaat* is more of a counter-example to what Noyes calls the "free movement of bodies" as it permits mobility only for scholars and artists.

but a regime of planned intellectual trade under the institutional supervision of the state. The organization to which Fichte assigns this task is the "academy". Academies, "financed by the state", should preside over the form and the content of inter-state communication and determine what is offered for foreign distribution and what is taken in return from other states. As opposed to Goethe's ideal of the freely enterprising translator-merchant, the agent of a Fichtean world literature is the intellectual in state service. He grants them the privilege of international mobility amidst a social and political order that otherwise rests on the negation of free movement. And what he offers this caste is not aesthetic or intellectual freedom but a "vocation", that is, the duty of the "supreme supervision" of mankind's education ("Scholar's Vocation" 172). In Fichte's view, the path of this universal *Bildung* is set by the predetermined course of world history, a metaphysical plan planned by the most supreme planning agency, the *Weltplan* itself, and realized politically by the planned economies of enlightened states.

Fichte underlines that "true literature" (*wahre Schrifstellerei*) is written "for Eternity" and is addressed "to all men in every age" (*Wesen des Gelehrten* 138). Texts worthy of the name of literature, then, intrinsically form a world literature, or a *literature for the world* as a single transhistorical and trans-spatial whole, unified by the shared emotional and intellectual faculties of mankind and the singularity of human history. By exempting the realm of the intellect and aesthetics from isolation, Fichte's goal was not, as for Goethe, to refresh national cultures by inputs of otherness but to secure the unitary progress of reason. Given that humanity is one moral community with "a single system of cognition" (*System of Ethics* 327), national contributions (e.g. philosophical ideas, discoveries of science, works of art) are universally commensurable, thus internationally exchangeable, as long as they belong to this shared field of *Wissen*. In Fichte's thought this universal was increasingly defined by the supremacy of German science and literature, contending that "true poetry" could only arise

from a “living language” such as the German, as opposed to “dead” ones, such as the French (*Addresses* 64–5).

Seemingly a case of utopian fancy, a regime where intellectual and cultural exchange takes place between states in planned and supervised forms and with carefully selected content, in fact, came to function during long periods of the 20th century. This was the form of literary transnationalism developed under the aegis of the Soviet republic of letters. Although socialist states and their planned economies did not exist, as Fichte had advised, in commercial insularity from one another – the task of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, operating from 1949 to 1991, was precisely to encourage trade among member states and to coordinate their economic planning – literary exchange within the Communist Bloc and its satellites was organized in strikingly Fichtean ways. The utopia/dystopia of the Fichtean and the reality of the Soviet world-system both replaced market circulation with bureaucratic channels of inter-state exchange. Just as the *Handelsstaat* redefined scientific and cultural communication as an affair of states, not individuals or private companies, the transnational dissemination of socialist literature was also in the care of state institutions, or, rather, institutions of political parties monopolizing the state. Alongside other, material forms of “mutual assistance”, literary trade within the Communist Bloc was regulated by periodically renewed bilateral treaties: In their “work plans”, often determining exact numbers, countries negotiated what to translate from the literatures of “friendly peoples” and what to offer in return for translation from their own cultural treasury. And as much as Fichte endowed enlightened scholars with the exclusive right to travel abroad, socialist authors or party intellectuals also enjoyed the privilege of international mobility as cultural envoys.

This system of intra-socialist literary exchange (surely not monolithic, yet maintaining the main contours of its ideological and infrastructural layout throughout its history) was informed by the formidable ideological importance attached to the concept of world literature

in the Soviet Union. Following in the footsteps of the immense book series that the World Literature Publishing House launched as early as 1918, in the 1930s the Comintern set out to establish a Moscow-centered leftist world literary network along an anti-formalist aesthetic program distributed through congresses and institutions funded by the Soviet state (Khomitsky; Clark). From the late 1940s onwards, this informal network was institutionalized in the contractual relations of socialist states and their centralized and bureaucratized channels of planning and supervising cultural transfers in the Soviet sphere.

Exploring the ideology and infrastructure of socialist cultural internationalism, Nicolai Volland and Rossen Djagalov have demonstrated the enormous emancipatory potential of its decidedly non-Eurocentric approach for the Third World: Setting a "counterhegemonic agenda" against Western dominance, Soviet-style world literature redrew the political geography of transnationalism along East–East connections. The zeal for a worldwide civilizational emancipation was not absent from Fichte's scheme, either. He suggested that "one nation must await the other and one continent the other on the common path", so its "communication with itself" could propel the whole of mankind, with unified force and "at one pace", to more advanced forms of self-development (*Vocation* 86). Yet, as much as Fichte's humanistic universalism was framed, as noted, by his belief in German supremacy (set against French or British hegemonies), the socialist regime of economic and cultural assistance also had its imperialistic undercurrents: In its pursuit of a "superpower status" the USSR ended up "denying agency to newly assertive Third-Worldist forces" (Djagalov 13). (It should be noted that the mid-20th century witnessed comparable efforts of states instrumentalizing world literature for their foreign policies. In the Third Reich, *Weltliteratur* was put to the service of racial politics. During the Cold War the politics of translation was also manipulated in the West, the Congress for Cultural Freedom is a notorious example, so as to steer world literary circulation toward anti-communistic agendas.)

It has been pointed at as a "paradox" that after 1931–1932 the Soviet Union, as well as the People's Republic of China in the 1950s, "became more open" in terms of its cultural internationalism "just as it became a closed society" (Volland 11–12). I suggest that precisely this was the Fichtean moment of these regimes. It was Fichte's combination of enlightened universalism and totalitarian social arrangement that prefigured the orchestrated transnational mobility of socialist humanism.

One can hardly deny that capitalist world literary trade, rather than mapping out "a seamless and traversable space", has been "a regime of *enforced* mobility and therefore of *immobility* as well" (Mufti 9). But the command economies of cultural exchange were also "border regimes", with their own peculiar deformations of movement. Under the rule of markets, world literature tends to coincide with what *travels well* – in planned cultural economies, it is restricted to what is *permitted to travel at all*.

4 World literature and the passion of self-defense

In the early German condemnations of the concept and praxis of *Weltliteratur* one can witness another border regime of international literary exchange, in this case informed by the tenets of economic protectionism. Protectionists accepted the market as the general frame of exchange, yet contended that if left to its own mechanisms it would only serve the expansion of the already hegemonic. The creation of a German customs union, the *Zollverein*, in 1834 redefined the conflictual relationship of political fragmentation and cultural unity. And also changed the perception of German literature's position in international literary trade.

In his 1841 book on the "national system of political economy", Friedrich List, the moving spirit of the German protectionist movement, insisted that "every nation reaches a point in its development where further progress and equal status with more advanced nations can only be

achieved by restricting its international traffic" (List 3–4). One finds this rhetoric reverberating in the German literary histories of the 1840s. Georg Gervinus denounces *Weltliteratur* on the grounds that in return for the exportation of "intellectual property from Germany" it grants "duty-free entry" (*zollfreier Eingang*) for foreign ideas into the German cultural realm. Gervinus admits that it is alluring to see the German intellectual products in international circulation, but, he adds, "all these victories" are lost if the German youth embarks on "the universalistic path" and humbly imitates foreign authors. The Goethean mirage of German becoming a "Weltsprache" connecting all the literatures of the world, therefore, in fact endangers its development as a self-containing national literature (577–9). Theodore Mundt also warned against the "lifting of the borders of nationality" (*Gränzaufhebung der Nationalität*) and claimed that in "the age of commercial treaties" with "widely opened trade routes" nations should expose themselves to world literary perspectives only after having fully developed their national characteristics (432–3).

Disturbingly cosmopolitan and threateningly free trade, Goethe's ideas also seemed to conceal mere commercialism. The international distribution of literary goods, Gervinus points out, is a business that serves vested interests: The literary trade strives to maximize the number of exchanges – and make sure that "not even a crumb of bread from other nations' table" is "lost" – in order to maintain itself and "support its people" (577). The same perception of over-trading informed the critique of the German "translation industry" in the writings of Karl Gutzkow and Georg Herwegh, prominent members of the Young Germany movement in the late 1830s. While Goethe cherished the fantasy that German translations would rule world literary commerce, Gutzkow and Herwegh pointed out that the opposite was the case. Its open market relegated German literature to the position of a passive recipient of foreign goods with which it was unable to compete. The reason for this, Herwegh opined, was not only the symbolic prestige of anything foreign but also that, unlike French oyster and

champagne, literary translations from French were irresistibly cheap. He admitted that translations were indispensable for the advancement of world literature, the idea of which he otherwise supported, but maintained that their range had to be limited: "We shouldn't translate everything. Where originality, wit, passion, and depth emerge, where a new peculiarity in a people is revealed, these are works that are worth transferring." Hence his proposal for the creation of a society of writers to survey foreign production and recommend the "wirklich weltliterarisch" to domestic publishers (188–9). Gutzkow also confined world literature to what was "worthy of translation" (*Göthe* 102), and argued that imported goods not only depressed the value of domestic wares but made Germans appear as a "ridiculous monkey nation" dependent on foreign authors in the absence of "poetic assets/skills (*Vermögen*)" on their own ("Uebersetzungsfabriken"). He proclaimed that "in the age of industrial egoism" nations enchanted by free trade should be "enlightened about their real interests" – especially Germans for whose "recently established customs union" the competition with English business was "a question of life or death" ("Literarische Industrie").

Although speaking from very remote political and aesthetic vantage points, Herwegh's and Gutzkow's aversions to the unlimited inflow of foreign literary products undermining the livelihood of domestic authors were not far from Gervinus' alarm that unrestrained exchange curbed the development of aesthetic originality in national literatures still in the making. Exemplifying what Herder had deemed the most powerful "passion" in all "living things", that is, the "passion of self-defense" (Herder 687), their shared ambivalence toward world literature was an important early indicator of the discontent with the imbalance of cultural and commercial power encoded in its cosmopolitanism. Their gestures adumbrated later anti-hegemonic arguments – and not only in nationalist thought (in which the preferred form of world literature was the coexistence of monadic national literatures) but also in postcolonial discussions.

List's crusade for the protection of "infant industries" was underpinned by his theory of *Überschwemmung*. He believed that after the Napoleonic wars Britain intentionally "flooded" continental markets with cheap products to destroy their manufacturing capacities. This imagery of "overflowing" was already there in the Herderian rhetoric of cultural self-defense,[4] and continued to reverberate in the cultural protectionism of the 1830-40s. In his article on the translation industry Gutzkow speaks against the "overfilling" of the national market with foreign goods; in his book on Goethe he hopes that precisely the low profitability of true world literature would spare the German market from "being overflown" (*Göthe* 103). Herwegh also urged to build "a dam against the deluge" of English and French literary "excrement" (189). These tropes repeatedly cropped up in Goethe's musings about world literature as well. His famous letter to Streckfuß observes that the "English spring tide" will inevitably find its way into the German market, so one only has to wait and see what this "floodwater" brings; in turn, Italian and French works, less to the German taste, should be "escorted" in (WA, IV, 42, 27). A year later, however, he points at a demonic, unstoppable flow that even its conjurer – like the *Zauberlehrling* in his eponymous 1797 ballad – cannot contain anymore: "the world literature that I, like the sorcerer's apprentice, have invoked, flows towards me and drowns me (*auf mich* […] *zum Ersäufen zuströmt*)" (WA, IV, 44, 100). This image informs Goethe's distinction between the commercial and the elevated layers of world literature: It would be a futile attempt to "resist the everyday deluge" of transnational mediocrity; what better minds can do is to hold on "until the flood has passed" ("Aus dem Faszikel" 866–7).

For Goethe, then, the real problem was not that dominant literatures, such as the English or the French, would overflow less dominant ones, such as the German. He contrasted high and

[4] Herder praised the providential design of setting the "diversity of languages, ethics, inclinations, and ways of life" as "a dam against foreign inundations (*Überschwemmungen*)" (Herder 687). Wordsworth also used flood imagery to describe unwelcomed foreign cultural inputs (Damrosch 14).

low, not domestic and foreign, and what he wanted to protect was not the national market but an international community of "truly meritorious" authors, regardless of national belonging. By contrast, for Herwegh and Gutzkow it was not a transnational literary elite but the German national author per se who deserved protection. And what they wanted to fence off was not simply *Trivialliteratur*: Gutzkow mentions Dickens and his "Pickwick-Unsinn" among the worthless foreign wares invading the German market ("Uebersetzungsfabriken"). And when Herwegh urges German readers to purchase the domestic equivalents of foreign goods, namely, Jean Paul instead of Sterne or Boz (188), his characteristically protectionist argument also reveals that, in spite of the felt idiosyncrasy of national literatures, only national interest made a difference between otherwise interchangeable authors.

5 Dialectics of property and the specter of communism

Whereas Fichte envisioned a global system of commercially insular but culturally interconnected national states and the protectionists cried for the limitation of international trade in favor of nascent national cultures and their budding markets, for Marx and Engels material and intellectual interactions were not only inseparable but determined by the material side and protectionism was hardly more than the nationalistic mystification of class interest. Accordingly, the *Communist Manifesto* captured world literature as the offspring of the inevitably "universal inter-dependence" (*allseitige Abhängigkeit*) installed by the global reach of production and distribution in the age of industrialism (*Manifesto* 223–4; "Manifest" 466).

It has been customary to place these remarks in a dialectical frame and suggest that for Marx bourgeois world literature paves the way for an internationalist literary culture which

ultimately transcends its enabling condition, the world market.[5] This dialectic might be further explored in a so far rarely emphasized direction, namely, with regard to the status of "common good" (*Gemeingut*) that the *Manifesto* attributes to "intellectual creations".[6] Marx and Engels do not elaborate on what a *Gemeingut* is and how world literature could be one, yet their use of it evokes an intricate complexity of meanings previously invested in this term. For Schiller, it marked the moral equality to be established once knowledge has become the "common good of all human society" under the rule of "aesthetic semblance" (Schiller 667–8). In Fichte's concept of social *Bildung*, individual excellence was to be channeled into "a common store for the free use of everyone" ("The Scholar's Vocation" 164; *Bestimmung des Gelehrten* 45). Adam Müller's political philosophy pointed at language and money as "two great common goods of men" which held societies together through verbal and monetary exchange (Müller 29). The historical jurisprudence of Savigny and Niebuhr, while demonstrating that in Roman and early German history communal possession had preceded private property, also captured cultural entities, such as law or archaic oral poetry, in the status of shared ownership; in their wake, the Grimms approached the "mysterious" origins of poetry as being in the "common possession of the people" (Schnack and Schoof 183). For Goethe, the poetic faculty itself was a "universal possession of mankind", immune to privatization along the lines of nationality or class (Eckermann 270).

Thus *Gemeingut* had figured in German thought as a catchword for a wide range of cultural, moral, legal and economic considerations, both with regard to national communities and to mankind as a whole. Prior to the *Manifesto*, Marx had used the term with respect to material possessions – either to reassert the status of resources traditionally held in *usus publicus*

[5] See, for example, Ahmad 28–9, Puchner 51–58, Mufti 87–8. Peter Goßens, however, questions this dialectical rendering and claims that here Marx's intention was to denounce the social reformism of German socialists who appropriated the idea of *Weltliteratur* for their political agenda (295–307).
[6] To my knowledge, only B. Venkat Mani has taken a closer look at the function of this label in the *Manifesto* (Mani 12–13).

("Thefts of Wood" 233–5), or to denounce rival socialist proposals for the communal appropriation of private or as yet un-propertized assets ("Circular" 42–3). In the *Manifesto*, the term refers decidedly to symbolic ownership, yet in an argument focusing on the materiality of economic transformation: It is the growing intensity and extent of industrial production and commercial connections that turn intellectual products into supranational common goods. As far as these intertwining processes are driven by the worldwide expansion of bourgeois social organization, that is, the lure of private property, the rise of world literature as a common property seems less the cultural equivalent of modernity's economic transformation than a *countertendency* to it. It is tempting to see in the symbolic common ownership of intellectual products (insofar as they contest the driving force behind the global march of capital, i.e. propertization) the harbinger of the communalization of material assets and resources. But this doesn't seem to be the case. In his earlier writings, Marx had ridiculed utopian proposals of forming social associations on the basis of *Gemeingut* precisely for merely recasting "tribal property" in terms of petit-bourgeois ideals (*German Ideology* 389–415). In view of this critique, the *Manifesto* rather seems to suggest that the shared ownership of cultural goods is in fact compatible with bourgeois propertization and constitutes, at most, a politically harmless enclave destined to dissolve or to fall prey to commercialization.

Still, by citing an emblematic notion of shared ownership in the context of all-pervading propertization, the *Manifesto* does point, if only inadvertently, at problems intrinsic to the modern status of literature. In the case of literary works, it is not the *privatization* of their ideal content that establishes property (hence profitability) but the act of making them publicly accessible, that is, their publication (Achermann 127–8). Unlike their communal sharedness in orality (as the Grimms understood poetry), in modern print cultures literary goods become "common" not in spite but because of their market distribution. In his 1840 book on the contemporary relevance of Roman Law, Savigny gave a typology of conflictual

claims of collective and individual ownership by differentiating between common property in common use (*Gemeingut* in *Gemeingenuß*), common property in private use (*Gemeingut* in *Privatgenuß*), and private property in private use (*Privatgut* in *Privatgenuß*) (Savigny 367–9). Modern literature, as a commercialized common good, exemplifies something that his scheme did not recognize: It is a *Privatgut* in *Gemeingenuß*.

This ambivalent property status of literary works had been inscribed into the histories of copyright legislation. Around the years when the *Manifesto* was written, national regimes of literary property (acknowledging, as a tendency, the ownership of authors, not publishers) were more or less consolidated, yet national legislations proved to be useless abroad. The difficulties of enforcing property rights internationally grew in concordance with the geographical expansion of a now uncontrollably vast literary market, stretching over inconsistent and incommensurable legal environments. Distributed mainly through pirated reprints and unlicensed translations, the transnational circulation of literature was thriving on the inconsistent property status of its goods. World literature was born as unowned property, in other words, a *Gemeingut* up for grabs.

From the 1840s onwards, this decidedly piratic character of world literary trade was gradually regulated in the form of bilateral treaties, securing the mutual recognition of the respective copyright legislations of partner countries. These treaties were eventually systematized and given a nearly global scope by the 1886 Berne Convention. This development highlights, as César Domínguez has recently reminded us, the importance of legal frames in constructing world literature as "one of the superstructures of capitalism" ("World Literature and Law" 31). Domínguez tracks the vicissitudes of international copyright from the 1830s to the 1880s to reveal how it was "elaborated upon Western conceptions of authorship and creativity", hence entangled in the "Eurocentric hegemony of copyright history" ("Law" 45–46). He also points at the agency of the 1878 Paris Literary Congress, and that of Victor Hugo in

particular, in linking the internationalization of copyright to a sense of transnational literary solidarity and the idea of the public domain in which literary works would belong "to the human genre" ("Authorial Personhood" 206). One might add that rather than countering the demands of the book industry, in effect both the internationalization of copyright and the rising idea of a transnational public domain played into the hegemonic tendencies of "capitalist imperialism". The Berne Convention created a legal environment where core countries, i.e. European colonial powers, could protect their commercial interests *and* turn their literary goods into global cultural *Gemeingüter* at the same time. No wonder that Hugó von Meltzl, following the news of the Paris Congress in a semi-periphery of a semi-periphery, was outraged by its preoccupation with the issue of copyright, hence with the financialization of literary transnationalism: Great literature-exporting nations, he fretted, shouldn't be lamenting about pirates plundering their products but feel sorry instead for the countries where their junk was being exported (Meltzl 12–20).

The internationalization of copyright was shaping the rise of transnational authorship decisively, but so were persistent notions of common ownership. These contestations of the propertization of literature highlighted the inherently ambivalent property status of literary texts, ideas, mediums, and devices from political, legal, cultural or aesthetic perspectives. Whereas pirates claimed that literary works were *nobody's* property, the public domain constituted common ownership on the grounds that great authors were *everybody's* property. Yet occasionally on strictly national grounds: When in 1867 the copyrights of authors deceased before 1837 were eliminated in Germany, German classics were declared to be the "Gemeingut der Nation" (Schulz 11). Countries which opted to stay out of the Berne Convention – and not only the United States, which is usually foregrounded in these histories, but also the European peripheries such as Austria-Hungary or Russia – continued to regard

foreign literary works as of free use, hence maintained the business model on which their thriving foreign novel publishing industries depended, that is, the saving of royalty costs.

Collective sharedness in the poetic sense also informed Goethe's thoughts on world literature. He saw not only, as noted, the poetic faculty *per se* but also the products of this faculty as common goods. He believed that literary ideas, unlike scientific discoveries, were the "inborn property of all men" and insisted that if the author "used [them] aright" appropriations of forms or motifs were justified (Eckermann 662, 152). When Goethe came forward publicly with the concept of a "universal world literature", it was an unlicensed foreign remaking of his own work that inspired his observations. Comparing the reviews of a French drama based on his *Torquato Tasso*, he was ready to swallow that foreigners "borrow from us without thanks and make use of us without acknowledgment" if it facilitated the progress of mankind through intercultural exchange ("Le Tasse" 356). Thus, otherwise outraged by piratic reprints circulating on the German market, Goethe regarded writerly borrowings, even in cases bordering on plagiarism, as benignly preying on the intertextual *Gemeingut* of world literature.

Marx had grappled with the "indeterminate", neither "definitely private" nor "definitely common", character of public properties in his 1842 articles on wood theft. There he criticized forest owners for "monopolizing common property" (*ein Gemeingut monopolisieren*) and claimed that fallen wood had returned to the state of nature from private ownership, thus it may be freely "occupied". The conflict between forest owners and wood gatherers is not unlike the conflict between authors and piratic publishers as far as both play out Savigny's distinction between legal right (*Eigentum*) and factual possession (*Besitz*). Taking texts in international circulation as a common *Besitz* whose "occupation" does not infringe on anyone's private *Eigentum*, the book pirate, just like Marx's wood gatherer, "pronounce[d] on his own authority a sentence on property", a sentence that was "already

pronounced by the very nature of the property" (227–35). By appropriating, that is, re-privatizing, these common assets for their own financial gain, however, book pirates also exemplified the very eagerness of capital to commercialize common property. The creation of the public domain shares much of the same dynamic: A work whose copyright expires resembles fallen wood returning to nature. Yet, the ensuing race for the re-publication of classics – plundering the nation's literary heritage – generated a vast market, with fierce competition and large profits. Anton Philipp Reclam famously made a fortune from his Universal-Bibliothek, a book series he launched on the very day when the German copyright reform went into effect.

The entwining tendencies of propertization and de-propertization, monopolization and the democratization of access are encoded in the material history of world literature as it was taking shape in the international book trade. The indeterminacy of ownership – echoing Marx's diagnosis of "private property driv[ing] itself in its economic movement towards its own dissolution" (*Holy Family* 36) – has only been more exacerbated in our digital present. Controversies over property and access in the age of limitless digital reproducibility have found an apt allegory in the backlash following the decision of publisher Lawrence & Wishart in 2014 to withdraw their series *Marx/Engels Collected Works* from freely available online sources (Cohen). The irony of the situation (claiming copyright on the emblematic political philosophy of common ownership) not only demonstrated capitalism's relentless drive to absorb its others but also restaged the nineteenth-century contradictions of legal and cultural ownership, right and possession. Those who insisted that the digitized oeuvre of Marx and Engels should belong to the world even or especially in the face of the overwhelming forces of propertization, revived the very dialectic that the *Manifesto* had invested into the concept of *Gemeingut*.

Conclusions

In the disparate economies of world literature that I have surveyed in this article, variability can be witnessed on multiple levels. Not only do forms of exchange (e.g. purchase, gifting, barter, appropriation, sharing) differ from type to type but also the status of what is being exchanged (e.g. wares, treasures, gifts, common goods). These models negotiate various assets (debt or profit) and properties (private or common), feature various incentives (gain or expenditure), circulate various resources (from market revenues to state subsidies), and utilize a wide range of agents and institutions, individual or collective, personal or impersonal, which may initiate, conduct or supervise these transfers. Also, each model seems to imply a specific socio-political system in which they could operate, such as *commercial society*, the *republic* of letters (embedded in or fading into symbolic or actual *empires*), *enlightened-totalitarian* communitarian states, or the bourgeois *nation-state*. In short, rather than demonstrating the uncontested historical triumph of a single all-absorbing logic, that of capitalism, what these economies of world literature exemplify is the very complexity of the socio-politico-economic structuration of modernity.

These various economic models of world literature are not only discursive reflections (detached from the materiality of exchange) but are themselves capitalism's intellectual products. Which were, in turn, intervening in its operations, either as weapons in its political and theoretical campaigns of self-legitimization or as sites of contestation and resistance. As such, they had immense political and cultural consequences. As much as the consolidation of the international legal system of world literary circulation in the Berne Convention grew out of the capitalist ideology of property and the alleged humanism of free trade, the rise of a socialist internationalism of world literature (or that of its present digital economies of sharing) are unthinkable without the intellectual and moral appeal of non-capitalist political economies.

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