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Lost Memory: Reconstructing Writers' Libraries

Introduction

A library is "a collection of books, which usually has been put together for noncommercial purposes." One may associate the word with a place of learning, work, or one of leisure. It may be a home, some sort of family, or a group of mentors both stern and gentle. It may be stylised as a serene paradise, or, if we think of Peter Kien in Canetti's Die Blendung, a prison, even an asylum. In the multitude of all these roles,² the library functions as a container for worlds without end, so it may seem. But the myth of the *Universalbibliothek*, the all-encompassing library of the world, has, from its inception, always contained the threat of its destruction, as embodied by the fate of the library of Alexandria. It therefore does not come as a surprise that comparative literature as a discipline pivots towards the idea of the library when contemplating the UNESCO Memory of World Programme, which was established out of "a growing awareness of the parlous state of preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage in various parts of the world." The dangers to that heritage, as outlined by the Programme's website, are manifold and easily applied to libraries: "Looting and dispersal, illegal trading, destruction, inadequate housing and funding have all played a part."4

The library as such does not just fascinate as a collection, a reservoir, but also as a foundational structure to build on, as a starting point towards the creation of something novel, of innovative poetry or fiction. The library of an author's choice – as a regular visitor, or, even more so, as its creator and, possibly, owner – forms the material basis for that author's writing and reading practices, and thus for his/her understanding by posterity. Consequently, the investigation of poets' and scholars' libraries⁵ is of great relevance to all research on the creation of knowledge, especially in a specific biographical context. More than often, the professional writer needs be a professional reader, and in consequence a library grows and diminishes in connection with its owner. It documents not

¹ Lohse. (My translation).

² Cf. the contributions in: Alker and Hölter 2015.

³ UNESCO Memory of the World.

⁴ UNESCO Memory of the World.

⁵ Cf. Knoche 2015.

merely his/her reading, but the potential of his interests and wishes beyond the capability to actually incorporate tens of thousands of volumes, hedged in only by availability of rare works and space to store them, the financial means necessary, and the will to collect. As with all worldly possessions, the library mirrors the fortunes of its proprietor, changing in times of success or inheritance, but also under financial strain, persecution, exile, and even death – for only few private libraries are not dispersed upon the passing of their owner. It is therefore quite understandable that historians, biographers, or literary scholars may be fascinated by the fragile but tangible possibility to rebuild a life, an intellectual period or setting, or an individual's creative climate by reconstructing the libraries they accumulated, and upon which they depended. The material character of a library satisfies the positivist mind of the scholar who inadvertently becomes a librarian of some sort in this undertaking, as he/she counts, assesses, evaluates, and catalogues another person's books. And at the same time, the seriality of printed books, and the stable genealogy of world literature in all its incarnations in various editions through the centuries, furthers an empathetic connectivity between owners of libraries, who may realise the extent of their intellectual family relationship with any given human by assessing the catalogue of their library to see to what degree their respective holdings will overlap. In a republic of scholars, all persons are related, for they all share the 'universal library', mirrored in that fragment, which is the personal library. From such a private collection, one may endeavor to reconstruct a whole biography, or a certain moment in time, and even though the undertaking may only be an approximation, the triangulation of an intellectual position through books brings surprisingly clear and vivid results. Imagine the voyages of the HMS Beagle, a self-contained world traveling through the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, carrying Charles Darwin to important early steps towards the formation of his scientific theories on evolution and natural selection. If one longs to understand the world of the HMS Beagle, the knowledge that sent it on survey expeditions to the far side of the world, and the foundations of Charles Darwin's work, one may study the library the ship carried along, which has been reconstructed online for our interest and perusal, 6 fascinating like Captain Nemo's fictitious book collection on board Jules Verne's submarine "Nautilus". Catalogues, as a result of constant recording or in the form of one-shot documentation, are our most important tools in this venture; correspondence, notes, documents, and other records are often indispensable for the painstakingly detailed efforts required to re-imagine and document a library that has been dispersed long ago.

⁶ http://darwin-online.org.uk/BeagleLibrary/Beagle_Library_Introduction.htm.

Reconstructing Writers' Libraries: The Case of Ludwig Tieck

The investigation of the genesis, form, and further history of writers' libraries has already created its own tradition, especially in the German-speaking countries, where the bibliography by Roland Folter (1975) is considered authoritative. Scholars' libraries have also been and are the focus of intense research. In Germany, the research field is particularly active, as is exemplified by the reconstruction of Christoph Martin Wieland's book collection⁷ or the renewed, this time computerassisted, recording of Goethe's Weimar library.⁸ It may suffice to hint to parallel projects here, also, because several research libraries are running a cooperative platform on the investigation of poets' libraries.⁹

Moreover, a special working section has been announced for 2025 at the IVG Conference. 10 Projects have elucidated the history of libraries of early modern scholars, or of those belonging to such essential writers and thinkers as Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Thomas Mann, Paul Celan etc. Princeton University's processing of Jacques Derrida's library may be cited as an example from beyond the German-speaking world. 11

⁷ https://wvb.ub.uni-freiburg.de/ — for general information see also: https://www.germanistikim-netz.de/informieren/detail/ressource/wielands-virtuelle-bibliothek/.

⁸ https://www.klassik-stiftung.de/herzogin-anna-amalia-bibliothek/projekte/sammlungsraeumedigital/ — Cf. https://haab.weimar-klassik.de/Goethe/about.html — Access to the Goethe catalogue under: https://lhwei.gbv.de/DB=2.5/.

⁹ https://www.mww-forschung.de/autorenbibliotheken.

¹⁰ https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/veranstaltungen/ivg-kongress-2025/unigrazform/Jaspers_ van Hulle Autorenbibliotheken.pdf.

¹¹ For an example of early modern libraries, see the reconstruction of the library of Benedikt Bahnsen (?-1669; https://bibliotheksrekonstruktion.hab.de/bahnsen/bahnsen-catSubjectFormat. html?); regarding examples of the reconstruction of famous writers' libraries, see Paul Celan's library (https://www.dla-marbach.de/bibliothek/spezialsammlungen/bestandsliste/bibliothekpaul-celan/?no_cache=1); the Freud Museum London website (https://www.freud.org.uk); Ludwig Denecke and Irmgard Teitge, Die Bibliothek der Brüder Grimm. Annotiertes Verzeichnis des festgestellten Bestandes. Ed. by Friedhilde Krause (Böhlau: Weimar 1989); "Goethe's libraries in Weimar" (https://www.klassik-stiftung.de/forschung/forschungsaktivitaeten/forschungsprojekte/ goethes-bibliotheken-in-weimar/); Thomas Mann's library (https://tma.ethz.ch/archiv/bibliotheks bestaende-und-nachlassbibliothek.html); Friedrich Menzel, Schillers Bibliothek: Versuch einer Rekonstruktion. Bearb. von Konrad Kratzsch (Klassik-Stiftung Weimar 2009); For a detailed account of Christoph Martin Wieland's estate, see Dieter Martin, Wielands Nachlass. Kapitalien, Hausrat, Bücher (Winter: Heidelberg 2020). Stephan Höppner, Goethes Bibliothek. Eine Sammlung und ihre Geschichte Frankfurt/M: Klostermann 2022.

Since 2014, I have been directing a research team at the University of Vienna with the goal of the virtual reconstruction of German romanticist Ludwig Tieck's (1773–1853) famous library which contained about 17.000 volumes, with numerous rare and precious prints from the sixteenth century through to his own era, which was sold at a Berlin auction in 1849/50. Such an appreciation of Tieck's library is a pioneer work for studies in European Romanticism, an important contribution to the systematic exploration of scholarly multilingual book collections – and an unparalleled opportunity to explore the international book trade in the nineteenth century. Our goal consists in listing Tieck's complete library, following modern standards of cataloguing, i.e. to assign comprehensive data on Tieck's purchase or use as well as to locate and evaluate all copies, as far as possible. The project has examined thousands of volumes in Berlin, Bonn, Bruxelles, Göttingen, Halle, Jena, Krakow, Łódź, London, Moscow, Munich, Saint Petersburg, Stuttgart, Vienna, Wrocław, and in private ownership. The results have already been processed in a database developed specifically for this purpose¹² and will be presented both in a monograph and a printed catalogue.

Ludwig Tieck's Library: A History

At the end of his life, Ludwig Tieck was one of the most famous bibliophiles of the nineteenth century, 13 which is the more remarkable as he neither inherited a book collection nor possessed a fortune of any importance. If Tieck's father owned a small number of books, only a few titles and no exact descriptions have come down to us. Moreover, what books a rope maker may have owned was certainly not comparable with tradesman Johann Caspar Goethe's private library, which is physically being recollected in Frankfurt/Main because of its supposed effect on the upbringing of his son. Young Tieck's intertextual archive, however, must be sought rather in the collections of his teachers and friends and in those Berlin libraries that were in the 1790s open to the public. One cannot know when exactly Tieck started to buy and classify books and complete his collection systematically. Presumably, his growing interest for medieval poetry around 1800 made the possession of manuscripts or early prints imperative for the first time. Possibly, the friendship with Clemens Brentano animated him to become a book hunter, along with the sudden flood of ancient books as a consequence of the secularisation of church patrimony.

¹² https://tieck-bibliothek.univie.ac.at — My gratitude to my many co-workers, currently to Theresa Mallmann and Clara Kollmann, and for this paper special thanks to Paul Ferstl.

¹³ Cf. Hölter 1989, 94-110, and 397-424; Hölter 2011.

His study years in 1792–1794, in particular with the benefits from Göttingen university library as well as a visit paid to Wolfenbüttel, must have given Tieck ideal images of libraries that bore a considerable influence on the philological side of his life achievement. There can be no doubt that his journeys (Bibliotheca Vaticana, St. Gallen in 1804–1806; Munich and Vienna in 1808–1810; Paris, London, Oxford, Stratford in 1817) may be considered as *Bibliotheksreisen*, 14 which were also useful for the purchase of books difficult to obtain in Germany. Thus the foundation of his collection had presumably yet been laid before his poetic vein grew temporarily weaker and he took to living mainly in Ziebingen near Frankfurt/Oder. By that time his erudition had widened to a real European horizon. In 1819 he moved his home to Dresden where he had declined the post of head librarian as early as 1812. The generous domicile on the Altmarkt must have comprised several rooms for the bookshelves, because at that time allusions become frequent to regular and important acquisitions at book auctions. Therefore, one can assume that the main body of his collection consisted of books bought in the 1820s and 1830s, one financial source being the substantial revenues from his novellas, another the private capital of his companion Henriette von Finckenstein. In addition, Tieck had his editors send him books instead of royalties, asking for extra gifts from their newest publications. Even dedicatory copies and items swapped with the Dresden library contributed to an ever-growing collection. But despite all of the testimonies from letters, book orders or other references, the provenance of his books has until now only been clarified in relatively few cases, prominent though the former proprietor may have been: in 1823, Tieck was the highest bidder for some books from J. J. Eschenburg's famous collection; in 1824, he acquired nearly 100 volumes from E. v.d. Malsburg's library. After the death of his daughter Dorothea and his wife Amalie, Tieck moved along with his books to Amalienstr. 15 in Dresden (with the book transport taking six days), then on to Berlin. There, the historical auction took place at the end of 1849.

The Auction of 1849/50 and the Structure of the Library

Many libraries of poets and scholars have come down to us at least indirectly via normally posthumous auction catalogues. Tieck was 76 years old when he released his books for a sale at bay. We can assume a number of motives for this decision: his landlord in Friedrichstraße 208, Berlin, may have objected to the massive weight of the paper, his brother was in urgent want of money, but the main reason for parting with his books in the year after the March revolution most likely pertains to bad health and/or late life depression. Thus, on 25 February 1849, Tieck sold his library to the Berlin auctioneer Adolf Asher for the comprehensive price of 7000 Taler. The question remains unsolved why he undertook the legal risk of this transaction at a time when the library was no longer in his possession: because on 8 June 1839, Tieck had already sold his library to the publisher Heinrich Brockhaus for 6000 Taler, to be paid as an annual pension of 300 Taler, and under the condition that Tieck would be guaranteed the usufruct during his lifetime! When Brockhaus, informed by a third party, found the sale confirmed by the auctioneer, a public scandal could only be avoided by the intervention of Tieck's friend Friedrich von Raumer, who convinced Brockhaus to officially sell the library back to Tieck on 14 April 1849. Thus the auction could take place as announced in the Börsenblatt on 30 November 1849, and elsewhere. The antiquarian Albert Cohn had already begun in 1848 with an examination of the library to prepare an auction catalogue, Catalogue de la bibliothèque célèbre de M. Ludwig Tieck ... This rare and important source was reprinted with a short preface by Erich Carlson as early as 1970. The catalogue, lacking detailed description, was conceived for the standards of that time, i.e., no longer dividing the books according to their size, but is still difficult to use as Asher's main concern was not to present the library as an organic unity of books, but to meet the demand of potential customers. The catalogue contains the categories: A. "Langue et litérature" [sic] with German, English, Asian, Spanish and Portuguese, French, Greek, Dutch, Italian, Latin, Scandinavian, Slavic literature, B. "Histoire" with general history, biographies, geography and travel literature, C. "Histoire litéraire [sic] et bibliographie" and D. literature concerning theatre. The categorie E. "Miscallenées" contains all other publications. All in all, the catalogue lists 7930 items, many of them consisting of works with more than one volume. The auction terminated on 10 January 1850. We have reports about the course of the auction from Ferdinand Joseph Wolf, agent of the Court Library in Vienna, and his superior, Hofbibliothek director Eligius Franz Joseph Frh. von Münch-Bellinghausen (known as a playwright under the pseudonym of Friedrich Halm).¹⁵ and from Asher's letters to the librarian of the British Museum, Antonio Panizzi.¹⁶

¹⁵ Cf. Hölter 1989, 409-423.

¹⁶ Cf. Ferstl and Mallmann, 2022, 53-76. Asher's business policy caused a scandal because he had already sold parts of the library en bloc. The curate of the British Museum's library, Antonio Panizzi, had gained a right of preemption especially for German literature and for precious English and Spanish books, so that about one eighth of the offered items went to London before the auc-

Tieck's library was thus dispersed all over Europe – with London and Vienna as main buyers in the auction, and, strangely enough, Ludwig Tieck himself, a bizarre fact, which could only be ascertained as a result of accidentally finding an auctioneer's copy of the sales catalogue. 17 He regretted the dispersion of his collection, 18 which was even more lamentable (also for the present time) as Heinrich Brockhaus had written in 1844: "I do not know yet what to do with Tieck's library, which will come into my possession sooner or later. It is likely I will donate it to a public institution." ¹⁹ Had Brockhaus kept the property at Tieck's books, they would today, as a whole, be part of an important public library or a museum of romanticism. So Tieck partook in the auction on his own account and bought back about 1.800 volumes. It seems that he had begun to build up a second library²⁰ for his friend, the Silesian Count Yorck von Wartenburg, again for the sum of 6000 Taler and again under the condition that the books become Yorck's property as a complete collection only after the poet's death. During this last year of his life, Tieck had this library catalogued by his secretary Dammas (no such document found), and his servant Glaser put the seal of Yorck von Wartenburg into each book.

The Destiny of the Library

Due to the intricate story of Tieck's famous library the books are now scattered all over Europe, though not without traces. Only the list of books from the first catalogue of 1849 can be seen as a reliable source for research in the field of literary history, because Tieck scarcely wrote any literary texts after the auction. Larger numbers of books can be found in the central academic libraries of Europe. It is difficult to estimate how many books have gone into private ownership, either en gros or as single volumes. Some item from Tieck's possession can now

tion even started. Asher simply skipped over these numbers as "missing" and omitted German, Scandinavian and Dutch literature (up to BT 1620) altogether.

¹⁷ Cf. Hölter, et al. 2021, 171-214.

¹⁸ Tieck expressed this regret several times in his letters, e.g. in one from 25 August 1850 to Eduard Leibrock, bookseller in Braunschweig and Tieck's confidant in the rebuilding of his library. He wrote about his "Uebereilung, meine sehr beträchtliche Bibliothek zu verkaufen". Tieck, 1850.

¹⁹ Brockhaus' Diary, Berlin 13.3.1844, in: von Möllendorff 1928. My translation.

²⁰ His numerous letters to Eduard Leibrock, 20 after June 1850, are devoted to the activities of book collecting. They are a valuable source since most of these letters contain lists of books Tieck wanted or had received.

and then be found for sale or in libraries, but the books are, all in all, even more difficult to locate because of losses due to war and the evacuation of the Berlin library to Krakow, Poland, where volumes from Tieck's library were integrated into the catalogue. It is not clear, either, how many of Tieck's books belonged to the Yorck collection, which was transferred after his death to the Silesian castle of Klein-Oels, and where Joachim Ringelnatz, later famous as a poet, attended to them as librarian in 1911. The fideicommissum library of 150,000 volumes perished when the Silesian territory was conquered near the end of World War II. Paul Graf Yorck von Wartenburg (1902-2002) managed to save 90 volumes from Tieck's possession in Western Germany. Some may have been destroyed; others could be found as parts of the collections in the university libraries of Krakow, Łódź, and Wrocław, and in holdings in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but the fate of many of Yorck's books is still to be established.

A Memory of His World: The Virtual **Reconstruction of Tieck's Library**

As the history of the dispersion of the "Bibliotheca Tieckiana" is extremely complex – through the dispersal across various European countries, and the possible destruction and transferal of parts of its holdings during the conflicts of the twentieth century – the only option and desideratum consists in listing Tieck's complete library, following modern standards of cataloguing, i.e., to assign comprehensive data on Tieck's purchase or use as well as to locate and evaluate all copies.

Tieck was a lover of books. And he was convinced, as he explained in a letter to Wilhelm Konrad Hallwachs on 14 August 1836, that a scholar had to own important books rather than borrow them, especially if he – like Tieck – was accustomed to marking the most important passages and to write his own marginalia. He was also particularly fascinated by auction catalogues, which he read like fine literature. The magic resulting from a large number of books is depicted in his fiction, e.g. the novellas Der Gelehrte ("What a mass of books, she cried, like in enchantment"²¹ or the famous Des Lebens Überfluss, in which Heinrich talks about his early love of books and auctions: "In my early youth, book auctions were my passion; and even though I mostly failed to purchase the works I loved, I nevertheless enjoyed to hear them offered and to think about the possibility that

²¹ Ludwig Tieck, Schriften, Vol. 22, Berlin 1853, 13. My translation.

I might possess them. I would read the auction catalogues like my favourite poets [...]".22

The library was apparently that of a philologist and literary historian with an interest in comparative literature. It contained, besides contemporary literature, presents from admirers and friends and specimen copies of his own works, mainly German literature from the early modern period, English literature with a focus on Shakespeare and his successors. The numbers of the collected prints show Tieck's interest in authors like Dante, Boccaccio, and Cervantes. The collection also contains a remarkable number of works of literary history, and, in addition to belles lettres, many books on history and art. A large section of Spanish drama of the seventeenth century in original prints shows that the philologist Tieck proceeded on the assumption that a solid understanding could only arise from examining literally hundreds of texts of the same type.

Our database is a necessary prerequisite for the monograph that will present all results of our project, while granting furthermore the sustainable use of this outcome and qualifying the project as a meeting point for the international community of researchers on Tieck, on Romanticism or on nineteenth and twentieth century book trade, who are kindly invited to contribute. Thanks to this endeavor, one of the most important libraries of a poet in literary history will, at least virtually, be restored and persevere – as a memory of Tieck's world of literature. This leads me to terminate with some general remarks:

The restoring or evaluating of authors' libraries offers a number of weighty advantages: 1. the intertextual basis for the respective literary oeuvre is secured and can be researched. 2. the books are optimally preserved and thus also kept usable as a historical book stock. 3. the aura of the original copies supports all the didactic effects intended by literary museums. 4. Authors' libraries are suitable for focusing attention on the material dispositives that condition intellectual life in general and the production of literature in particular. 5. scope, emphasis, internal order, dynamics (i.e. the internal history of the library's emergence and growth) are, case by case, essential components of a literary biography manifested in the library collected in parallel. Thus, book collections, that have already been researched do not infrequently offer surprises, as compared to prior assumptions or general knowledge about particular poets' personalities. 6. In this context, and this also emerges as a secondary theme of the Tieck reconstruction (taking into account the presence of his wife Amalie, his companion Henriette von Finckenstein, and his daughters Dorothea – the Shakespeare translator – and Agnes, in his Dresden household), the question of female book collecting is of spe-

²² Ludwig Tieck, Schriften, Vol. 26, Berlin 1854, 37–38. My translation.

cific interest, especially for older literary history. 23 Fundamentally, however, the safeguarding of cultural property, whether in concrete physical materiality or as a virtual reconstruction, is an urgent concern in the face of ever-emerging trouble spots, threats of war and real destruction of cultural institutions, which ultimately helps to preserve the information contained in an author's library not only as an ensemble, but also in the form of marginalia or traces of use, so that, as Lothar Jordan pointed out in the oral version of his talk (cf. p. 625–635), "important and celebrated special book collections, which represent distinctive monuments of the world's memory, need not be lost forever."

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²³ Jank, Dagmar 2019.