PART 5

War and Peace: The Depredations of Modern Times

Lost Books of ‘Operation Gomorrah’: Rescue, Reconstruction, and Restitution at Hamburg’s Library in the Second World War

Jan L. Alessandrini

Luther comments on Galatians 5:13 that ‘[i]t is impossible for the people of Gomorrah to be ruled by the gospel of peace.’¹ This sentiment appears to have been shared by the Allied commanders when they unleashed ‘Operation Gomorrah’, at the time the most devastating aerial attack ever to be carried out against a city. Its target was the north German port city of Hamburg, and in military terms the raid must be judged a success. Hamburg was engulfed in a fire-storm that raged for ten nights and nine days (from 24 July until 3 August 1943), killing over 40,000 (mostly) civilians, leaving at least 900,000 homeless refugees, and razing the city to the ground.² The very first wave of attacks of incendiary bombs devastated Hamburg’s book district. They destroyed the ‘Bibliothek der Hansestadt Hamburg’ today called ‘Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky’, or affectionately ‘Stabi’.³ An estimated 250,000

1 “Denn es ist unmöglich, dass dieses Volk Gomorras durch das Evangelium des Friedens regiert werden sollte”: ‘Luthers große Auslegung der Epistel an die Galater und die übrigen exegetischen Schriften’, *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. by Johann Georg Walch, v. 9 (Groß-Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung H. Harms, 1987), cols. 657–661, col. 658.

2 As many as 278,000 homes were destroyed or became temporarily uninhabitable according to Hamburg historian Ursula Büttner, “Gomorrha”. *Hamburg im Bombenkrieg: die Wirkung der Luftangriffe auf Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft* (Hamburg: Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1993 [2005]), pp. 52–55. For details of the military attack and consequences for civilian population in Hamburg see Erik Verg, *Das Abenteuer das Hamburg heißt: der weite Weg zur Weltstadt* (Hamburg: Ellert & Richter, 1990), pp. 170–179; Hans Erich Nossack, *Der Untergang. Hamburg 1943* (Hamburg: Kabel, 1981).

3 Known during the war as Bibliothek der Hansestadt Hamburg, the old Bibliotheca Hamburgensis Publica would later regain its pre-1918 and current name, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, to which was added the name of pacifist and 1935 Nobel peace prize winner, Carl von Ossietzky, to mark the 50th anniversary of Nazi book burnings in 1983. At the time of destruction the library was 400 years old. Founded by Bugenhagen’s 1529 ‘Kirchenordnung’, it flourished from 1613 at its location in St Johannis Kloster am Plan. In 1842, shortly before Hamburg’s devastating fire it moved to the Johanneum. It contained rare

items survived the first bombing in the partially destroyed Johanneum building, which also housed the Commerzbibliothek, before it was finally laid to waste by bombs in June 1944.⁴ 700,000 of an original stock of over 850,000 volumes were lost to the flames.⁵

The raids ravaged pre-war holdings that according to the 'Deutsches Gesamtkatalog' placed Hamburg in third position after Berlin and Munich in terms of unique copies.⁶ Books that burnt in the reading rooms included an

book treasures, whole bequeathed private collections, most famously Goeze (known to literary history for his unfortunate feud with Lessing), who gave the library its rich Bible and songbook collection, which counted amongst the first and most significant in Germany, as well as collections of the Wolff brothers, Jungius, Placcius, Lindenberg and other learned Hamburg luminaries.

- 4 Hamburg's second largest academic library, the Commerzbibliothek (Commercial Library), dates from 1735 and had significant historical holdings on the city's economy, but no complete copy of its catalogue exists in any Hamburg library. It lost 174,000 out of 188,000 volumes following an air raid in 1943. Cf. Berta Backe-Dietrich and Eckart Klessmann (eds.), *250 Jahre Commerzbibliothek der Handelskammer Hamburg, 1735–1985* (Hamburg: Christians, 1985), p. 64.
- 5 Superintendent of Hamburg State Archive Heinrich Reincke's report on the bombings to the Reichs Libraries Advisory Board (Dr Becker, Preussische Staatsbibliothek Berlin, 22 November 1943) estimated the damage to the building and inventory to be 1 million Reichsmark, but the loss of manuscripts and imprints 27 million Reichsmark (Hamburg State Archive, Ministry of Finance, 442–40 K-3000, 22.5.1944); cf. Otto-Ernst Krawehl, 'Verlagert – verschollen – zum Teil restituiert: Das Schicksal der im 2. Weltkrieg ausgelagerten Bestände der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte*, 83 (1997), pp. 235–277, at pp. 248–249. Hermann Tiemann noted that the first bombings represented a record amongst the destruction of German libraries, and estimated the loss at 710,000 items after the second bombing on 27 June 1944. Hermann Tiemann, 'Die wiedererstehende Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg', *Libri*, 2, (1952–1953), pp. 15–20, at p. 15. At the time, the second bombing was deemed to be less destructive though it destroyed 1200–1500 volumes and several thousands of dissertations (SUB, Bonde's Letter to Reich's Exchange Office Berlin, 27 June 1944). Counting the losses at other libraries and institutions, including volumes of the Library of Hamburg's Patriotic Society (75,000), the Society of Hamburg History (25,000), the Hamburg Institute of International Economics (30,000), the Museum of Arts and Crafts (20,000), the German Naval Observatory (13,000), and the Eastern European Seminar (10,000), the war-time losses at Hamburg public libraries reached 1.2 million volumes. For a general overview of (German) library losses during the Second World War see Hans van der Hoeven and J. Van Albada, *Memory of the World: Lost Memory: Libraries and Archives Destroyed in the Twentieth Century*, CII-96/WS/1 (Paris: General Information Programme and UNISIST, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1996).
- 6 In 1939, measured in number of books and available storage space, Hamburg library occupied tenth position in Germany behind the Prussian and Bavarian state libraries, or third place after these two in terms of manuscripts held by a public library, and also behind

irreplaceable collection of 'Hamburgensien' with countless unique copies of imprints documenting four-hundred years of Hamburg's idiosyncratic economic history. Almost the entire pre-war catalogue material was lost, including the alphabetically ordered 'Bandkatalog', and two card indices.⁷ Most frustratingly, a printed catalogue of holdings up to the end of the nineteenth century, which would have illustrated the library's grandeur before the bombings, had never been undertaken because of prohibitive costs and the belief that only a relatively small proportion of readers would benefit.⁸ The 'Realkatolog', in 330 folio volumes, was the only catalogue to survive, but since it was completed in 1859 it appears to leave the modern book historian with a lacuna of seven decades up to the moment of destruction.⁹ Had the library retained its pre-war holdings of early imprints (1500–1800), and considering its more recently acquired status as University and State Library, Hamburg would today figure amongst Germany's top five decentralised national libraries with a significant regional mandate.¹⁰

Books are undeniably collateral victims of war. Hamburg Library's close ties with the university made it a direct target of Allied air raids aimed at the destruction of major institutes of technology. This was a fate it shared with libraries in Göttingen, Munich, Bonn, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Giessen, Münster,

regional and university libraries such as Göttingen, Leipzig, and Dresden. See *Jahrbuch der deutschen Bibliotheken*, 30 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1930), esp. pp. 45–49, 106–144, 166–200.

- 7 Bibliographies and encyclopaedias in a wide range of subjects were also destroyed; Werner Kayser, Hellmut Braun and Erich Zimmermann (eds.), *500 Jahre wissenschaftliche Bibliothek in Hamburg, 1479–1979: von der Ratsbücherei zur Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek* (Hamburg: Hauswedell, 1979), p. 167. For more on the decentralised library system in Germany and Hamburg's role see Klaus Garber, *Der Untergang der alten Hamburger Stadtbibliothek im Zweiten Weltkrieg: auf immer verlorene Barock- und Hamburgensien-Schätze nebst einer Rekonstruktion der Sammlungen Hamburger Gelegenheitsgedichte* (Herzberg: Traugott Bautz, 1993), p. 242.
- 8 Not even Hamburg's catastrophic fire of 1842, which destroyed parts of the City Archive and the entire unique 'Bibliothek der Hamburgerischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Künste und nützlichen Gewerbe', the so called 'Patriotische Gesellschaft' (1765), were cause enough for a printed catalogue to be commissioned. For more on the losses at the Patriotic Society see Christian Petersen, *Geschichte der Hamburgerischen Stadtbibliothek* (Hamburg: Perthes-Besser & Mauke, 1838), pp. xv–xvi.
- 9 See Kayser, *500 Jahre*, p. 167; see also 400 pages of systematic ordering of Hamburg library, *Übersicht der Systematischen Ordnung der Stadtbibliothek zu Hamburg* (Hamburg: Meissner, 1885); Max Schneider, *Sachregister des Realkatalogs der Stadtbibliothek zu Hamburg* (Hamburg: Lütcke & Wulff, 1897).
- 10 Cf. Garber, *Untergang*, p. 245.

Würzburg, Breslau and Kiel.¹¹ The damage caused to Germany's great libraries was not of course unique. It will not be possible to address here the equally important, and extensively researched, related issues of book plundering by the Third Reich across Europe; Nazi burning of books on home soil (1933) following the policy against degenerate art ('Entartete Kunst'); expropriation of Jewish libraries, from which Hamburg Library profited, prior to and after its destruction; nor the other numerous German libraries that suffered wartime damages.¹² All these certainly constitute modern, twentieth-century, losses of books. The focus in what follows, necessarily more limited in scope, will be placed on the loss and preservation of early printed books at Hamburg's library in the Second World War. This article sets out first to illustrate some of the measures taken to rescue the library's holdings during the conflict. Secondly, it will describe the reconstruction that took place after the war. Finally, we turn to a discussion of the thorny issue of restitution of looted and dispersed books.

Rescue

The administrative and practical procedures carried out by German libraries to rescue their holdings during the Second World War are still rather neglected by scholarship.¹³ The point is well made in Nicola Schneider's recent article on

- 11 Cf. Hilda Urén Stubbings, *Blitzkrieg and Books: British and European Libraries as Casualties of World War II* (Bloomington, Ind.: Rubena Press, 1993), p. 386.
- 12 On Nazi plundering see Cornelia Briel, *Beschlagnahmt, Erpresst, Erbeutet: NS-Raubgut, Reichstauschstelle und Preussische Staatsbibliothek zwischen 1933 und 1945* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013). On acquisitions of former Jewish libraries, see Ernst-Otto Krawehl, 'Erwerbungen der "Bibliothek der Hansestadt Hamburg" aus ehemals jüdischen Besitz (1940 bis 1944)', *Auskunft*, 22 (2002), pp. 3–17. For a comprehensive study of the comparable wartime destruction of the Berlin Library, see Werner Schochow, *Bücherschicksale: die Verlagerungsgeschichte der Preussischen Staatsbibliothek: Auslagerung, Zerstörung, Entfremdung, Rückführung: dargestellt aus den Quellen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003).
- 13 These should not be confused with the measures for the protection of valuable national patrimony, including both physical library sites and holdings, which were slowly being enshrined in international law since the end of the nineteenth-century. Events like the Treaty of Vienna, and the Hague Conferences 1899 and 1907 on the protection of cultural sites caught between belligerent parties (as long as these were not used for military purposes), and the prohibition of naval bombardment of historical buildings, were marred by problems of ratification and signing of agreements, as well as by the identification of what constituted cultural sites, with libraries and archives considered to have a very ambiguous status. Likewise ineffectual were the Roerich Pact between 21 nations (16 April

Darmstadt's library losses during the war.¹⁴ One practical problem, identified by Renate Decke-Cornill, is that many libraries restrict access to their archives, making the reconstruction of wartime administrative procedures a hard task.¹⁵ Art historians and musicologists have undoubtedly fared better reconstructing the wartime history of museums, arguably because looted artworks and the musical notation of famous composers now in places like Russia captivate the attention of the media and the public more easily than rare manuscripts or books scattered across the globe.¹⁶

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- 1935) that sought to protect educational and cultural institutions, and the Office Internationale des Musées, Assembly of Nations committee conference planned for Sept 1938 and intended to codify and formalise practices for the protection of cultural sites, which never took place. The Declaration of London (Jan. 1943) prohibited allied forces to ransack or loot their adversaries, and stipulated that even apparently formal and lawful selling could be judged as looting. For an explicit mention of archives and libraries we have to wait until the Hague Convention (14 May 1954) under the auspices of the UNESCO, which, however, the US and UK never ratified. For more on this see Stanislaw Edward Nahlik, *La protection internationale des biens culturels en cas de conflit armé*, Académie de droit international. Recueil des cours, 120, 1967-I, (Leiden: Brill, [1967] 2008), p. 110; Lynn H. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War* (New York: Knopf, 1994), pp. 214–215. For useful studies of wartime protection plans at libraries across Europe (especially Italy), as well as differences between Allied (US and UK) handling of cultural patrimony in German-occupied European territories, see Flavia Cristiano, 'I piani di protezione: le origini' and Ruggero Ranieri, 'Il ruolo degli alleati nella preservazione delle biblioteche e degli archivi durante l'esperienza di liberazione/occupazione, 1943–1946', both in Andrea Capaccioni, Andrea Paoli and Ruggero Ranieri (eds.), *Le biblioteche e gli archivi durante la seconda guerra mondiale: il caso italiano* (Bologna: Pendragon, 2007), pp. 1–32 and 167–209, respectively.
- 14 Nicola Schneider, 'The Losses of the Music Collection of the Hessische Landesbibliothek in Darmstadt in 1944: A Case Study on the Failure to Safeguard Historical Library Holdings', in Anja-Silvia Goeing, Anthony Grafton, Paul Michel and Adam Blauhut (eds.), *Collectors' Knowledge: What is Kept, What is Discarded* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 381–414, at p. 384.
- 15 Renate Decke-Cornill, *Repertorium bibliotheksgeschichtlicher Quellen: Archivalien bis 1945 in bundesdeutschen Bibliotheken und Archiven*, Repertorien zur Erforschung der frühen Neuzeit, 11 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992).
- 16 For case studies of 'lost' German music in other locations including Kraków, Kiev, Moscow, and St Petersburg, see Schochow, *Bücherschicksale*; Dieter Kirsch and Lenz Meierott, *Berliner Lautentabulaturen in Krakau: beschreibender Katalog der handschriftlichen Tabulaturen für Laute und verwandte Instrumente in der Biblioteka Jagiellońska Kraków aus dem Besitz der ehemaligen Preußischen Staatsbibliothek Berlin* (Mainz: Schott, 1992); Aleksandra Patalas, *Catalogue of Early Music Prints from the Collections of the Former Preussische Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, Kept at the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow* (Kraków: Musica Jagellonica, 1999); Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, *Bach is Back in Berlin: The Return of*

It is debatable whether the decentralised nature of German libraries and museums was the cause for the often late and consequently chaotic evacuations of valuable holdings.¹⁷ The fate of many German collections stands in marked contrast to France and Italy, where libraries fared considerably better.¹⁸ Hamburg Library was unusual in making a relatively early start in moving its most vulnerable items to places of safety in September 1939. Evacuations took place in three phases: at the outset of war, between the bombings of 1943 and 1944, and finally, through to the end of the war, with

the Sing-Akademie Archive from Ukraine in the Context of Displaced Cultural Treasures and Restitution Politics (Washington, DC: National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, 2003), pp. 1–45; Viacheslav Kartsovnik and Nina Rjanzanova, *Handschriften aus deutschen Sammlungen in der Russischen Nationalbibliothek Sankt Petersburg: Musikmanuskripte und Musikdrucke des 17.-20. Jhs. (Signaturgruppe "Fond 956, opis' 2")* (Berlin: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 2004).

- 17 Contrastingly, it is well-documented that the war had facilitated the centralisation of administration of German archives. Pivotal to this wartime centralisation was Dr Ernst Zipfel, general director of Prussian archive administration; see Astrid M. Eckert, *Kampf Um Die Akten: Die Westalliierten Und Die Rückgabe Von Deutschem Archivgut Nach Dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004), p. 127; Matthias Herrmann, *Das Reichsarchiv (1919–1945): Eine Archivische Institution Im Spannungsfeld Der Deutschen Politik* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Humboldt-University, Berlin, 1994), pp. 287, 338–340, 444–446; Wolfgang Leesch, *Die Deutschen Archivare: 1500–1945* (Munich: Saur, 1985), p. 695; Torsten Musial, *Staatsarchive Im Dritten Reich: Zur Geschichte des Staatlichen Archivwesens in Deutschland, 1933–1945* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1996), pp. 40 f., 94–96, 172 f.; Markus Pöhlmann, *Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik: Der Erste Weltkrieg: Die Amtliche Deutsche Militärgeschichtsschreibung 1914–1956* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2002), p. 127; Rohr, [Nekrolog] Zipfel; Johanna Weiser, *Geschichte der preußischen Archivverwaltung und ihrer Leitung. Von den Anfängen unter Staatskanzler von Hardenberg bis zur Auflösung im Jahre 1945*, Veröffentlichungen aus den Archiven preußischer Kulturbesitz, 7 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), pp. 144–146.
- 18 The first German official statement concerned with the protection of libraries was issued on 28 June 1939 ('Luftwaffen-Dienstvorschrift' no. 755), three years later than the Italian circular (no. 7774, 15 December 1936) which it copies. Italy's centrally administered libraries, which, having learned from recent wars fought out on her soil, began implementing pragmatic rescue plans. Germany seems to have taken a different approach because she had no experience of war on her soil, and greatly underestimated modern aerial warfare. Cf. Schneider, 'Darmstadt', pp. 382–384; Ettore Apollonj, *La ricostruzione delle biblioteche italiane dopo la guerra 1940–45*, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 2 vols. (Rome: Direzione Generale delle Accademie e Biblioteche e per la Diffusione della Cultura, [1947–1953]), vol. 1, p. 12; Andrea Paoli, Giorgio De Gregori, Andrea Capaccioni, and Mauro Guerrini (eds.), *"Salviamo la creatura": protezione e difesa delle biblioteche italiane nella seconda guerra mondiale* (Rome: Associazione Italiana Biblioteche, 2003).

the last salvage transport taking place on 21 February 1945, two months before end of the war.¹⁹

The initial evacuation operations at the outset of the war focused on three core areas: incunabula, an extensive collection of Reformation and Luther imprints, and German early modern literature, music, and philology.²⁰ It may appear defeatist and surprising for evacuations to have started as early as September 1939, but this was in fact in line with the aerial defence-raid provision issued on 26 August 1939, which demanded that 'downright irreplaceable works of culture' should be brought to fire-proof bomb shelters.²¹ The experience of air-raid in June 1940 led the director of the city archive to the ruinous conviction that the centre of Hamburg was less prone to bombings than the suburbs.²² An initial small consignment of supposedly the most valuable codices, incunabula, autographs, and Bibles, was brought to safes in the Harburg Rathaus and Reichsbank, and vaults under the tower of St Michael's Church (November 1939). Here irreplaceable books were stored unpackaged on iron shelves, and on the floor, behind a padlocked wooden door with little or no security.²³

- 19 The following section on rescue operations is indebted to Otto-Ernst Krawehl's detailed account of the displacement of Hamburg Library holdings during the Second World War: cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', p. 249. For a longer study of the comparable fate of Berlin Library see Ralf Breslau, *Verlagert, verschollen, vernichtet...: Das Schicksal der im 2. Weltkrieg ausgelagerten Bestände der Preussischen Staatsbibliothek* (Berlin: Staatsbibliothek, 1995).
- 20 See Arrey von Dommer, *Lutherdrucke auf der Hamburger Stadtbibliothek 1516–1523* (Leipzig: 1888 [repr. Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1962]); Otto-Ernst Krawehl and Jürgen Neubacher, 'Rückgabe kriegsbedingt verlagelter Handschriften und Drucke der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky aus Tiflis (1996) und Eriwan (1998)', *Auskunft. Mitteilungsblatt Hamburger Bibliotheken*, 19 (1999), pp. 133–145, pp. 136–137.
- 21 Viz. 'Durchführung des Luftschutzes in Museen, Büchereien, Archiven und ähnlichen Kulturstätten', L. Dv., 755/6, Richtlinien für die Durchführung des erweiterten Selbstschutzes im Luftschutz, [Der Reichsminister der Luftfahrt und Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe] (Berlin: Deutschland Reichsluftfahrtministerium, 1939); Hubert Darsow, Berthold Fokken, and Friedrich Nicolaus, *Kommentar zum Luftschutzgesetz und den Durchführungsbestimmungen nebst den einschlägigen Erlassen, Dienstvorschriften und polizeilichen Bestimmungen* (Munich: Beck, 1943), vol. 1, Appendix 2, 'Dienstvorschriften', no. 6, pp. 45–46.
- 22 See Reincke's letter to the General Director of the Reich Archive in Berlin, 20.6.1940 (Hamburg State Archive, HE II, 4); cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 240–241.
- 23 Between mid-September 1939 and April 1940, Johann Lemke and Bruno Schalmeyer brought to safety several crates containing valuable items such as 129 volumes of Händel's original manuscript musical notation, 327 valuable manuscripts, 100 Low German manuscripts and early imprints, papyri, and autographs, as is evidenced by various library work reports; cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 240–241.

New guidelines for aerial-protection issued on 28 August 1942 shifted the focus from safeguarding single significant items to entire collections, to be brought to areas less prone to aerial attack, such as remote castles or monasteries.²⁴ This led to two major transportation operations in Hamburg. First, valuable items previously taken to the church vaults plus further crates containing manuscripts and printed books were taken to surface air-raid shelters and bunkers in autumn 1943.²⁵ This marked the beginning of a larger scale evacuation of the main library building, and simultaneously the compiling of detailed lists that recorded contents of evacuated crates, known as 'Fluchtgutlisten', which continued until February 1945. Secondly, Schloss Lauenstein in Saxony was chosen for the largest and most valuable war-time transportation in April 1943, a few months before the bombings. This comprised 5,300 manuscripts, including 1,300 musical scores, 800 incunabula, 3,500 Reformation imprints, a variety of more recent printed material and 6,000 unique items from an autograph-collection of Hamburg Jewish ownership.²⁶

- 24 These guidelines, known as 'Richtlinien zur Durchführung des Luftschutzes in Bibliotheken: IV – Schutzmassnahmen an Bergungsorten', published by the Reichsminister für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung (Hamburg State Archive, HE II, 4), were partly prompted by severe British aerial attacks on Lübeck at the end of March 1942, and followed the mantra that protection should override access and use. See Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 239–241.
- 25 Air-raid shelters in Hasselbrook and by the harbour (an den Vorsetzen) received a total of 113 crates between 28 September and 6 November 1942, comprising materials previously evacuated to St Michael's plus (amongst other books) 34 Bibles, 144 sixteenth-century Hamburg imprints, issues of the 'Hamburger Correspondenten' (1724–1763), 57 Low German imprints and 169 sixteenth- to seventeenth-century volumes of printed music. See Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 242–243.
- 26 The music Mss were in great part an inheritance from the Society of Hamburg City Theatre containing c.450 Operas and musical comedies. The Reformation imprints were described by Arey von Dommer, who catalogued the collection, as one of the most important of its kind, and Hermann Tiemann defined it as a singular collection in Germany and the world; see Arey von Dommer, *Autotypen der Reformationszeit auf der Hamburger Stadtbibliothek* (Hamburg: Meissner, 1881), p. iii; Hamburg Library Internal Document, Tiemann's communiqué to the Office for Cultural Administration (11 March 1946). Amongst the more recent printed materials were 156 volumes of Friedrich Schiller's reference library, including 48 historical works with the author's annotations; see Georg Ruppelt, 'Zur Geschichte der 'Hamburger Schiller-Bibliothek'', *Philobiblon*, 24 (Hamburg: Hauswedell, 1980), pp. 54–56. The autograph collection of Jewish Hamburg merchant Hermann Kiewy (d. 1924) had been bought in October 1942 for 5,550 Reichsmark via Hamburg's Chief Finance Steering Committee, as can be gleaned from entries in the Journal of Acquisitions (27–28.10.1942) as well as the director's report to the Office for Cultural Administration (12 January 1943). In fact, from 1940 onwards the library's acquisition

So comprehensive was the destruction of the city's housing, so high the death toll, that the over-ground bunkers, which had been previously filled with people seeking shelter from the bombs, were designated for the storage of books by the authorities just ten days after the first bombings.²⁷ While a Flak bunker offered protection for new acquisitions, surface air-raid shelters took in valuable items salvaged from the firestorm, including a final cache of manuscripts and early printed books. The evacuation was hampered by sustained bombing and severe August downpours. The distance to the library posed a problem for salvage transport. Once in the bunkers, humidity and theft were the greatest dangers. Bunker space temporarily used for books from the library would soon be required again for human sanctuary as refugees slowly returned to the city.²⁸

The bombings exposed a fatal tendency to underestimate the destructiveness of aerial warfare. Consequently, rescue operations at Hamburg Library that continued until the end of the war were redirected to the transportation of holdings previously salvaged in bunkers and air-raid shelters within the city to locations further afield. In April 1944, castles in Hermsdorf (near Dresden) and Weissig in Upper Lusatia (Saxony) received books from various bunkers and from Lauenstein.²⁹ However, difficulties in reaching Saxony

journal documents books and autographs that openly came from Jewish private libraries, initially via the Asset Management Agency of the Chief Finance President, later more directly via the Gestapo. The director, Gustav Wahl, wrote to the Office for Cultural Administration on 19 August 1942 stating that Jewish private libraries taken by the Reich were not merely a 'bonus' but that they were urgently needed because of Hamburg's library central regional importance, which subsequently justified the appropriation of parts of or entire Jewish libraries as significant Hamburg cultural assets. Wahl used the same justification to appropriate the library of the Jewish Congregation in Hamburg in May 1943. The 99 so called 'Jewish-crates' ('Judenkisten') were initially held in Berlin, later collected by Schalmayer (22 July 1943), and taken to Weissig Castle (50 crates) and Hermsdorf Castle (49 crates) on 3 August 1943, as stated in an Office for Cultural Administration Memo (20 June 1943), and Schalmayer's work report (August 1943). See Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 246–247.

27 Paul Theodor Hoffmann, *Mit dem Zeiger der Weltenuhr: Bilder und Erinnerungen* (Hamburg: Springer, 1949), pp. 348–350.

28 Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 248–250.

29 On 18 April 1944, 113 crates stored at bunkers in Hasselbrook and the Harbour, containing some of the most valuable items saved at the outset of war together with those stored at the Reichsbank safes and Castle Lauenstein in Saxony, arrived in Hermsdorf near Dresden. They also contained manuscripts and books from private collections not insured by the library. This was the consequence of a ministerial decree issued in Berlin in February 1944 that obliged libraries in the Reich to protect private collections under their custodianship,

soon led to the evacuation of books to the potash colliery of Grasleben in Helmstedt.³⁰

By the end of the war Hamburg's air-raid shelters stored 220,000 volumes. 50,000 unsorted volumes had been evacuated to the potash colliery. 70,000 items went to Saxony, mostly accounted for by the 'Fluchtgutlisten'. A total of 340,000 volumes had been rescued.³¹ Of these approximately 12,000 were rare printed books, including incunabula, Reformation and Low German imprints, music, and German seventeenth-century literature. The library's stand-in director at the time would later write that only delicacies were saved, the daily bread that was vital for researchers was destroyed.³²

Bearing all this in mind, the salvage efforts at Hamburg Library require some further scrutiny: according to what criteria was the most valuable material chosen? How effective were the administrative measures, and what were the practical constraints? It seems rather odd for a library the size of Hamburg that the greatest proportion of material rescued was manuscripts and incunabula, while sixteenth to eighteenth-century imprints made up under 4% of evacuated material.³³ This led one book historian to query whether such a

which, once Hamburg's press widely spread news of this, led to private individuals coming forward to ask for their libraries to be protected by Hamburg Library, whose administration obliged happily. Crates of such family libraries returned from the castles as late as 1996. In 24 April 1944, 69 crates from the surface air-raid shelter on Eiffestrasse, containing material salvaged from ruins, went to Weissig Castle. This shipment was rather odd as two-thirds of it were modern, mechanically printed Hamburg dissertations, and only one-third rare books, including manuscripts and early prints, unique copies, music, erotica and German baroque prints. Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 251–252.

30 Grasleben in Lower Saxony received 375 crates in five transportations between August 1944 and February 1945. These were mainly new acquisitions, but also rarities from safes in Harburg's Rathaus and Reichsbank. See Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 252–253.

31 Hermann Tiemann on 31 July 1945, having been director of the library for just shy of a month, charted the account of evacuated material, much of it still dispersed; see Hermann Tiemann, 'Bibliothek der Hansestadt Hamburg – Zustand und Zukunftsmöglichkeiten in Hinblick auf die Eröffnung der Hamburger Universität, 31.07.1945', in Gustav Wahl (ed.), *Veröffentlichungen aus der Hamburger Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek. Neue Folge der Veröffentlichungen aus der Hamburger Stadtbibliothek* (Hamburg: Bibliothek der Hansestadt Hamburg, 1945); Hermann Tiemann, *Der Wiederaufbau der Staats- und Universitäts-Bibliothek (Bibliothek der Hansestadt Hamburg) bis zum Ende des Jahres 1945* (Hamburg: Hartung, 1946).

32 Hoffmann, *Mit dem Zeiger*, pp. 348–350. Temporary and chaotic arrangements enabled the library to provide access to 27,000 volumes, less than 4% of its pre-war holdings (cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 254–255).

33 Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', p. 244.

disparity should be attributed to lack of expertise or to omission and wilful neglect.³⁴

Despite the detailed lists of evacuated holdings, we lack evidence of the criteria applied in the selection process adopted by the directorship at the time. It is hard to imagine that the value of the holdings was underestimated. Whether by choice or necessity, decisions seemed above all to have been dictated by the earlier official guidelines of 1939 which ranked highly only manuscripts, autographs, single copies of incunabula and unique early imprints. The choice of which early imprints to preserve seems to have privileged materials exhibited over the twenty years in the run-up to the war, and perhaps represent an accurate cross-section of what a directorship close to the regime deemed the most valuable holdings.³⁵

By salvaging only single items of significance the library chose the first of two principal ways in which German libraries, like Leipzig, went about rescuing their collections at the height of the war. The alternative was to safeguard the integrity of whole collections, chosen by Dresden, for instance, where many of the old books were salvaged, despite equally destructive area bombings, while 'only' modern acquisitions were destroyed. Oddly, however, leaving books on shelves could also save them as it did in Breslau and Danzig for different reasons.³⁶

Personnel issues running through the whole administrative hierarchy also affected the practicalities of salvage operations and marred the library's wartime rescue effort. The library's long-serving librarian Gustav Wahl (1877–1947) fell ill and retired in early 1943, and was replaced by Heinrich Reincke (1881–1960), the superintendent of Hamburg's City Archive. He in turn was taken ill, crucially at the time of Operation Gomorrah; Paul Theodor Hoffmann (1891–1952), Hamburg's City Archivist, stood in as a temporary substitute.³⁷ Hoffmann

34 Garber comments that the equally numerous and precious early imprints are extremely under-represented in 'Fluchtgutlisten'; *Untergang*, pp. 801–802, 835, 846.

35 Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 245–246.

36 Cf. Klaus Garber, 'Geteilte historische Bibliotheken im vereinten Europa?', in K. Garber (ed.), *Das alte Buch im alten Europa: auf Spurensuche in den Schatzhäusern des alten Kontinents* (Munich: Fink, 2006) pp. 597–675, pp. 656, 670 f.

37 Other important wartime personnel at Hamburg Library include Willy Lüdtkke (1875–1945), subject librarian for Theology and Oriental studies, a pivotal figure in the appropriation of Judaic material, who appears never to have asked questions about provenance; Hildegard Bonde (1901–1992), who kept contact with the Reich's Exchange Office ('Reichstauschstelle'); post-war director Hermann Tiemann (1899–1981), who played an important role in reconstruction. Cf. Kayser: *500 Jahre*, p. 158 ff.; Klaus Garber, 'Die Nacht der brennenden Bücher', *Die Zeit*, 48 (30 July 1993), no. 3, p. 28.

concedes that it was impossible to salvage all books, but laments that more could have been saved had it been done more energetically and less bureaucratically.³⁸ Library personnel that had not perished had fled, and those that stayed were in extremely poor health; documents of the time also illustrate the difficulty of obtaining both forced labour and transportation.³⁹ The severing of lines of communication made it effectively impossible to coordinate operations.⁴⁰ Over 100 wooden crates were delivered to a demolished site a few days after the bombings. They had been ordered 15 months before. Of course, Hamburg librarians had their share of fantastical personal memories and war-time folklore. One librarian was said to have carried Beethoven's Last Will (1803) and a 1000-year old ivory bound Gospel through burning Hamburg to catch the train to Grasleben in 1944.⁴¹

At the same time, the administrative disorder at the library allowed more pragmatic figures with specialist librarian knowledge, such as Hildegard Bonde, to step into the frame. Her role in selecting books destined for salvage can be gleaned from the 'Fluchtgutlisten', where curiously amongst the most valuable material evacuated very early on we find woodcuts from Iceland. This may be explained by Frau Dr Bonde's predilection for, and expertise in, this subject, and perhaps also explains how her own book on the relationship between Hamburg and Iceland published in 1930 weathered the war. If this shows how personal interest influenced her choices, then the fact that the woodcuts on Iceland were still missing after the war when more significant items with which they had been evacuated returned, casts further aspersions on her conduct.⁴² Nonetheless, Bonde played an important, if occasionally unsavoury, role in the aftermath of the bombings, and in particular in the slow process of reconstruction.

38 Hoffmann, *Mit dem Zeiger*, pp. 348–350.

39 See Hamburg Library Letter, Reincke to Wahl, 16.02.1944. Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', p. 248.

40 Hoffmann's recollection of book enthusiasts amongst the prisoners, especially the French who he claims eagerly browsed through long-missed books, and equally the camaraderie he suggests existed between him and the workforce, must be taken with a grain of salt. Hoffmann, *Mit dem Zeiger*, pp. 348–350.

41 Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 252–253; 'Hamburgs Staatsbibliothek in der Bombennacht. Ein stolzes Kulturwerk der Hansestadt – Teile der wertvollen Bücherschätze gerettet', in *Mittagsblatt. Hamburger Illustrierte für Politik, Sport, Unterhaltung; zwischen Front und Heimat*, 5 (31 August 1943), no. 174, p. 3.

42 Maria Kesting, 'Die Suche nach NS-Raubgut in der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky', *AKMB-News*, 17, 2 (2011), pp. 18–24.

Reconstruction

Reconstruction of the library started with war still raging immediately after Operation Gomorrah. Without hesitation the library turned to offers from the Reich's Exchange Office ('Reichstauschstelle') in Berlin, which had intensified its redistribution of Gestapo-confiscated material to 'donate' to German libraries that had suffered severe losses during the war. Bonde is reported to have been sent there by Reincke because she could buy more cheaply at the Exchange Office than from private antiquarian booksellers.⁴³ In this way, 30,000 volumes taken from Jewish private libraries ('Judenbibliotheken') came into the possession of Hamburg Library.⁴⁴ Further books arrived via more salubrious avenues of acquisition and donation, including 10,000 volumes each from the Archive of the Hanseatic City, World Economic Archive, and approximately the same amount in total from numerous smaller private collections.⁴⁵

This flood of new arrivals created a major problem: duplicates. Chaotic war-time conditions and understaffing made it difficult if not impossible to check, catalogue and store books.⁴⁶ The problem of storage would not be resolved until 1960.⁴⁷ All up-to-date catalogues had been burnt. With an estimated two thirds of the library's holdings lost in the war, a guide to all Hamburg libraries listing 280 libraries and 2.5 million books was commissioned in 1945 and first published 1949, providing the basis of Hamburg's new Central Catalogue, which proved to be pivotal to reconstruction.⁴⁸

43 Cf. Kesting, 'NS-Raubgut', p. 19.

44 Kesting, 'NS-Raubgut', p. 18; see also 'NS-Raubgut in der Stabi', an on-going project aimed at the identification of Jewish-owned books looted by the Nazi regime.

45 The base-stock of specialist departments was reconstituted through donated private libraries such as August Kasch's extensive collection of writings from Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein. Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', p. 250. Other noteworthy libraries include the library of literary historian Heinrich Meyer-Benfey, the Navigation School Library, part of the 'Wehrkreisbücherei' and 'Lehrbibliothek' of the Christianeneum, libraries of Hamburg scholar of English Emil Wolff, Orientalist Arthur Schaade, Herman Stock (a pastor from Bremen), ethnographer Georg Friederici, and Merchant Ernst Kusche. But it also grew through purchases, such as that of the library of music historian and Handel scholar Friedrich Chrysander.

46 By end of 1949 the Commerzbibliothek contained over 30,000 volumes.

47 The new reading rooms would not be completed until 1982.

48 The commencement of the Hamburg Central Catalogue was a major success of the first library congress held in the British-occupied zone in October 1945, and aimed to provide an overview of books that had survived. The catalogue was first published in 1949, then re-published periodically, and is now available online as *Hamburger Bibliotheksführer*.

Attempts to retrieve salvaged books after the war produced very mixed results. Books that were returned in the immediate aftermath of war or during the early years of occupation included those precious books that had weathered the firestorm in nearby air-raid shelters.⁴⁹ Also 370 of 375 crates containing some of the most valuable items returned from the potash colliery in December 1945.⁵⁰ 113 crates stored in Weissig returned from the gates of a destroyed Dresden on the Elbe back to Hamburg by March 1945.⁵¹ Other books evacuated to Saxony, however, suffered further depredations. The Red Army occupied Hermsdorf castle in 1946. By 1947, 54 crates had been found opened, books stolen, or trampled on the floor, leaving only 30 crates worth of books.⁵² That year, the regional government in Saxony took 140 crates, which represented everything that had survived the plunder in Weissig and Hermsdorf, to Dresden's Johanneum for safe-keeping, guaranteeing that Hamburg would have access to its books.

Books in Lauenstein had been inspected, wooden crates and transport by ship ordered, following a British liaison officer's demand for the quick return of collections held in the Russian-occupied zone (1944–1945).⁵³ But it was too late: crates containing Hamburg books had by this point been confiscated by the Red Army and taken (bar three opened crates) to Berlin by Major Dashin of the Soviet Trophy Commission.⁵⁴ 30,000 volumes from Hamburg were included in a batch of 1.2 million books looted from various locations in the Russian-occupied

49 Krawehl and Neubacher, 'Rückgabe', 133; Hamburg Library Letter, Reincke to Office for Cultural Administration, 19.06.1945; cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 254–255.

50 See Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 256–257; Hamburg Library Letter, Tiemann to Capt. Charles [British military government in Hamburg], 8 December 1945.

51 With the Eastern Front closing in following the Dresden bombings (12.02.1945), authorities in Saxony informed Hamburg that items stored at Hermsdorf and Weissig Castles were no longer safe; see report dated 28 June 1948, Hamburg Department of Culture, Memo 36–002.22/1, Vols. 5–7. 50 crates of books of Hamburg's Jewish community, and 4 crates of personal family libraries/archives were left behind (Hamburg Library Memo, 28 March 1945). Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 254–255.

52 Hamburg Library Letter, Mayor of Hermsdorf to Börner, 23 February 1946; Hamburg Library Internal Document, Dittmer's report on Hamburg's evacuated holdings in Saxony, 05 March 1947; Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 258–259.

53 Hamburg Library Travel Report Erika Kreisner, 04 January 1945; Letter, Kreisner to Reincke, 19 December 1944. Hamburg Library Letter, Office for Cultural Administration to Hamburg Library, 15 November 1945; Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 256–257.

54 Hamburg Library Letter, Castle Administration Lauenstein to Otto Harrassowitz (publisher), Leipzig, 13 February 1946; Harrassowitz to Hamburg Library, 19 February 1946; Castle Administration Lauenstein to Hamburg Library, 19 February 1946. Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', p. 257.

zone, which the Soviet Military Administration ordered to be handed over to Comrade Senior Lieutenant Margerita Ivanovna Rudomino in 1946 and taken to Moscow.⁵⁵ 309 crates marked 'Hamburg Library' were part of a staggering 20,000 crates that left for Leningrad in five military trains in August 1946.⁵⁶

Restitution

In June 2013, 70 years after Operation Gomorrah, German chancellor Angela Merkel was not received by President Vladimir Putin, who had invited her to the opening of a Bronze Age exhibition in St Petersburg.⁵⁷ The reason: she wanted to use the occasion to reiterate Germany's claim to artefacts looted during the Second World War – this almost led to a diplomatic debacle between Russia and Germany.⁵⁸ Earlier that year two chief editors of *Der Spiegel* lost their positions because of a series of articles on the theme of looted art, as is alleged by a consultation paper on the issue of restitution published in September 2013 by the German Federal Office.⁵⁹ Restitution of looted art and books is a sensitive matter, which enmeshes disparate notions of morality, international law, national identity, and cultural memory. Occasionally – especially in moments of political convenience – it can become a highly emotional, divisive, and explosive issue.⁶⁰

- 55 Perhaps the books were intended to line the shelves of a 'super museum' akin to the one the Soviets had planned for artworks received from defeated Axis countries in Moscow. For more on the 'super museum' see Irvine Wayne Sandholtz, *Prohibiting Plunder: How Norms Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 159; Konstantin Akinsha and Grigorii Kozlov, *Stolen Treasure: The Hunt for the World's Lost Masterpieces* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995).
- 56 See Ingo Kolosa, "Sag mir, wo die Bücher sind..." Ein Beitrag zu "Beutekulturgütern" und "Trophäenkommissionen", in *ZfBB*, 42 (1995), pp. 339–345.
- 57 Such cancellations, of course, became more frequent with the intensification of the conflict in Ukraine in early 2014, most regrettably leading to the cancellation of the much anticipated 'Petersburger Dialog' in Sochi, autumn 2014.
- 58 Widely reported in German media outlets, e.g. 'Eklat überschattet Merkels Besuch in St. Petersburg', *DPA*, 21.06.2013.
- 59 See "'Spiegel'-braucht neuen Chefredakteur", *DPA*, 09.04.2013; Volker M. Schütterle, 'Beutekunst', Inforbrief Aktenzeichen: WD 1: Geschichte, Zeitgeschichte und Politik – 3010 – 024/13, 09 September 2013 <<https://www.bundestag.de/blob/194698/4f6453dd214bcf2f7375d3bea0bd2344/beutekunst-data.pdf>> (accessed 5 June 2014), pp. 4–19.
- 60 Cf. Ute Erdsiek-Rave, *Kulturgüter im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Verlagerung – Auffindung – Rückführung*, ed. by Veröffentlichungen der Koordinierungsstelle für Kulturgutverluste, 4 (Magdeburg: Koordinierungsstelle für Kulturgutverluste, 2007), p. 12.

Looted and dispersed books are part of a collective memory of war that unites Germany and Russia. While Germany lost approximately 4.8 million books to Russia alone according to latest calculations, it is hard to deny that Russia lost more books than Germany, even if we take the real figure to be somewhere between 76 million calculated by the Soviets and 4.5 million reckoned by the Germans.⁶¹ Their restitution represents a strange amalgam of the moral with the political. Restitution can be a measure of Russo-German relationships as the near debacle in 2013 illustrates. It may also act as a gauge for inward-looking national discourses: for the first German post-war generations it was taboo to talk about restitution because of its close connection with Germany's own destructive plundering across Europe.⁶² It remained a preserve of the far Right and Left.⁶³ A memoir published in 2010 by a chief German negotiator denounced the obstinacy of both Russian and German governments, and gave voice to the general frustration caused by the issue of restitution.⁶⁴ This illustrates a paradigm shift in public opinion towards restitution as

- 61 It is worth mentioning the 200,000 works of art and 3 km of archives taken by the Soviets at the end of the war; cf. Herbert Güttler, *Beutekunst? Kritische Betrachtungen zur Kulturpolitik* (Bonn: Bouvier, 2010), p. 26. For more on these figures as well as figures originally published by the Soviet regime in 1957, see Elena Syssoeva, *Kunst im Krieg: eine völkerrechtliche Betrachtung der deutsch-russischen Kontroverse um kriegsbedingt verbrachte Kulturgüter*, Schriften zum Völkerrecht, 152 (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2004), p. 54. It should be borne in mind that the Soviet Union lost more books during the Second World War than (German) books she brought back (Garber, 'Geteilte historische Bibliotheken', pp. 667–668).
- 62 W.G. Sebald's essay *Luftkrieg und Literatur: mit einem Essay zu Alfred Andersch* (Munich: Hanser, 1999), published in English as *A Natural History of Destruction* (New York: Random House, 2003), was one of the first impassioned accounts of the devastating area bombings suffered by German cities and the aftermath of allied aerial warfare.
- 63 For more on the politicisation of the post-war cultural dialogue between Germany and Russia see various publications of Lev Kopelev's project 'West-Östliche Spiegelungen', especially Dagmar Herrmann, Astrid Volpert, Maria Klassen and Karl-Heinz Korn (eds.), *Traum und Trauma: Russen und Deutsche im 20. Jahrhundert*, West-Östliche Spiegelungen, 2 (Munich: Fink, 2003).
- 64 See, for example, Herbert Güttler's first-hand account of his frustration working as one of the German government's chief negotiators with the Russian government on the issue of restitution. His angry memoir (and various news articles) does not pull any punches, painting a hair-raising picture of not just Russian, but also the German government's obstinacy. Furthermore, there are curious cases like that of Poland demanding the return of an item it had sold during a bout of purges of German culture at the end of the nineteenth century, now held in Nuremberg. For more on the general issue of legal ownership of looted art, see Michael Anton, 'Paradigmenwechsel im gutgläubigen Erwerb von Kunst- und Kulturgütern', *Juristische Rundschau*, 10 (2010), pp. 415–423, at p. 417; Syssoeva, *Kunst im Krieg*, p. 54.

a legal matter of social justice, a *Zeitgeist* that is not, however, inhabited by everyone in Russia and Germany.⁶⁵

Russia, or better the Soviet Union, played a key role in the dispersal of Hamburg books in the war. In 1957, the return of 5,432 Hamburg volumes from Saxony – initially in the Russian-occupied zone then part of the German Democratic Republic – occurred only because these books were surreptitiously hidden amongst a restitution of books to Hamburg's Jewish community.⁶⁶ Yet this return of books between the two states that made up a divided Germany was itself only possible because of prior Soviet restitutions, or exchanges and 'gestures of goodwill' to East Germany in the 1950s (1955 and 1957), then thought likely to stay within the Soviet sphere of influence indefinitely.⁶⁷

In 1989, 2,000 volumes returned from East Berlin's State Library (where they had been since 1959), including some of the most significant autographs and early imprints thought lost in distant Siberia and the Caucasus.⁶⁸ Acts of restitution in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union smack of political gestures intended to signal either rapprochement in Russian-German relations, or contrastingly, the distancing of former Soviet states from their Soviet past. In practice, 2,000 manuscripts and 9 incunabula returned from Moscow in 1990. The arrival in 1991 of 2,227 manuscripts from Leningrad (St Petersburg) meant that about 90% of the seventeenth to eighteenth-century music manuscripts had now returned.⁶⁹ In 1996, Georgia returned 70,000 titles, but this included only 103 items for Hamburg. In 1998 Armenia returned 575 items to Germany, most of which were for Hamburg.⁷⁰ In many of these cases, the administration

65 As exemplified by the unhappy circumstance that opinions of hardliners like Irina Antonova, former Director of the Pushkin Museum in Moscow (1961–2013), or Mikhail Piotrovsky, Director of the State Eremitage in St Petersburg, live on.

66 This haul containing material from Weissig and Hermsdorf Castles arrived in Hamburg in 1957. Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 264–265.

67 For more on exchanges between the GDR and FRG, as well as between Baltic and Hanseatic archives in the early 1990s, see Krawehl, 'Verlagert', 269–270.

68 Cf. Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 266–268.

69 These had been kept at the Saltykov-Scedrin Library since 1946, as shown by Klaus-Dieter Lehmann and Ingo Kolasa (eds.), *Die Trophäenkommissionen der Roten Armee: eine Dokumentensammlung zur Verschleppung von Büchern aus deutschen Bibliotheken*, Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie, 64 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1996), pp. 231–232; cf. K.D. Lehmann and I. Kolasa (eds.), *Restitution von Bibliotheksgut. Runder Tisch deutscher und russischer Bibliothekare in Moskau am 11./12.12.1992*, Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie, 56 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1993).

70 For details see Krawehl and Neubacher, 'Rückgabe', pp. 140–145; Horst Gronemeyer, 'Feierliche Übergabe der aus der DDR zurückgekehrten Handschriften am 29. November 1989', *Auskunft. Mitteilungsblatt Hamburger Bibliotheken*, 10 (1990), pp. 7–18; Jürgen Neubacher, 'Rückführung von Hamburger Musikhandschriften aus Armenien', *Die*

was not content with restitutions, questioning the importance and value of manuscripts and imprints saved during the war.⁷¹ Perhaps the returned materials tell us more about Soviet redistribution policies, that is that items deemed less valuable, like ephemera, were sent to peripheral Soviet states, while the more 'valuable' items were kept at the centre of the empire in Moscow and St Petersburg. These restitutions also help illustrate a significant difference in opinion between bibliographers and historians, the latter regarding ephemera as valuable cultural sources worthy of saving, identifying, and retrieving.⁷²

Restitution depends on identification. In the case of Hamburg Library (as elsewhere) restitution resulted from painstaking fieldwork in (Russian or Soviet) libraries and archives. Viacheslav Kartsovnik's fieldwork for his bilingual bibliography of German music manuscripts held in Russian libraries, conducted in the 1980s, helped identify Hamburg music items that were returned, but also other imprints that were not.⁷³ Other exploratory trips to St Petersburg and Tomsk in 1993, 1994, and 1995 revealed that many, if not all, of Hamburg's missing incunabula were in the former city and have not been returned.⁷⁴ Some historians attempted to separate the issue of restitution from the issue of identification of Hamburg (and more generally German) books still in Russian libraries and archives. By a strange law of inversion, books that were never used were recovered more easily than books which had been integrated and used in libraries for fifty, sixty or seventy years.⁷⁵ Russian worries that German interest in identification would result in claims for restitution continued after the Cold War. Up to the end of last century no instance of restitution appears

Musikforschung, 52 (1999), pp. 89–90; Lehmann and Kolasa, *Die Trophäenkommissionen*; cf. 'Ein Schatz kehrt heim. "Überlebt" und zurückgekehrt. Staatsbibliothek erhält wertvolle Beutekunst-Bücher aus Georgien', in *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 49 (1 November 1996), no. 256, pp. 1, 9; Klaus Garber, 'Eine Geste für Europa. Endlich daheim: Georgien gibt Deutschland 100,000 Bücher aus dem Beutegut des Zweiten Weltkrieg zurück', *Die Zeit*, 51 (8 November 1996), no. 46, p. 52; Stefanie Sifft, 'Staatsbibliothek über Rückgabe enttäuscht. Aus Georgien kamen nur 120 Bücher', *Die Welt* (Hamburg edn) (6 March 1997), no. 55, p. 1.

71 Cf. Krawehl and Neubacher, 'Rückgabe', pp. 133, 135–140.

72 Cf. Klaus Garber, 'Erbeutete Kultur hat im werdenden Europa keinen Platz!', *Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie*, 47 (2000), pp. 143–154, p. 148.

73 Viacheslav Kartsovnik and Nina Rjzanova, *Handschriften aus deutschen Sammlungen in der Russischen Nationalbibliothek Sankt Petersburg. Musikmanuskripte und Musikdrucke des 17.-20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2004).

74 Krawehl, 'Verlagert', pp. 274–276.

75 Cf. Garber, 'Geteilte historische Bibliotheken', p. 668; see also the indefatigable work at the Research Centre for East European Studies ('Forschungsstelle Ostoeuropa') in Bremen.

to have been initiated by Hamburg Library.⁷⁶ One possible (anecdotal) explanation for this otherwise remarkable circumstance is that the Russians needed to be seen as the ones magnanimously initiating restitution following the identification of looted books.

Brash politicians and bureaucratic officials all too often undid the trust established by bibliographers prior to such trips. Bilateral agreements between Russia and Germany in 1990 and 1992 initially paved the way for more dispassionate talks about restitution that culminated in the Moscow Round Table in 1992. This marked a paradigm shift in the Russian perspective on the issue of restitution (of books, in particular). While in 1945 the Soviets claimed to save books and other western patrimony from the spectre that fascism might return to the axis countries, throughout the Cold War the notion grew that a tit-for-tat custody for books by German authors was justified because it was akin to Germans holding Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky hostage. By the time of the Moscow Round Table a new consensus had grown around the idea that in terms of world patrimony, as a postulation of rights for entire humanity, it would not be important where books are kept as long as they are made accessible. Yet this academic imperative to guarantee researchers access to 'lost' books over demands for restitution was less than set in stone. Some German academics insisted that restitution was justified in order to place books back into their original cultural context. Others saw an opportunity for the victim to help the former aggressor to rediscover a connection to its pre-fascist past through the medium of books, in order to build a bridge to a new Europe; in any case, it was impossible for Germany to return what she had destroyed.⁷⁷ Yet from 1994 to 1998, with an astonishing speed for an otherwise lethargic Russian political apparatus, war trophies were declared Russian property and subject to export restrictions, contravening international law and bilateral agreements.⁷⁸ Archives and libraries became inaccessible once more, first in St Petersburg, then Moscow.

⁷⁶ Krawehl, 'Verlagert', p. 262.

⁷⁷ Cf. Garber, 'Geteilte historische Bibliotheken', pp. 669–673; see also Natalia Volkert's master thesis, which offers a succinct analysis of the complex issue of German and Russian art looted in the war by investigating archives like Moscow State Archiv (GARF), the State Archive for Literature and Art (RGALI) and the former Special Archive (CChlDK), many of which have now been closed again; *Kunst- und Kulturraub im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Versuch eines Vergleichs zwischen den Zielsetzungen und Praktiken der deutschen und der sowjetischen Beuteorganisationen unter Berücksichtigung der Restitutionsfragen* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000).

⁷⁸ Perhaps it is this kind of loss of face and credibility on the international stage that caused the US and UK not to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention decree on the protection of cultural artefacts in countries they may in the future intervene in militarily. Cf. Lucien X.

By way of conclusion, we may wish to ask where this leaves us with regard to Hamburg. What can be reconstructed? Piecemeal bibliographical reconstructions of Hamburg's lost books have been carried out in the past. In addition to the 330 folio volume 'Realkatalog', and the detailed lists of evacuated materials, there are specialist catalogues of some parts of the early printed material for the sixteenth century and for Luther imprints, as well as registers of acquisition covering the period from 1916 to 1940, and an inventory of holdings published in 1930.⁷⁹ All these help reconstruct pre-war collections with some precision – most doggedly by the library's former director Horst Gronemeyer and scholar Klaus Garber. On the other hand, only perfunctory attempts were made to reconstruct Hamburg ephemera, dissertations and disputations, missing ordinances and edicts, and private libraries, despite the existence of various catalogues, bibliographies and inventories.⁸⁰ Such reconstruction provided the basis for substitute acquisitions – funding permitting – when restitution proved impossible.

Another question posed is whether there is any viable alternative to physical restitution? In light of myriad projects, initiatives, and online databases dedicated to restitution of artefacts looted during the Second World War, it is worth highlighting the German-Russian Library Dialogue, initiated in 2009 by the M.I. Rudomino Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow and Berlin's State Library.⁸¹ Its ambitious goal: to identify, catalogue, preserve or restore, and

Polastron, *Books on Fire: The Tumultuous Story of the World's Great Libraries*, trans. [from the French] by Jon E. Graham (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), p. 232.

- 79 See Otto Christian Gaedechens (ed.), *Catalog der Hamburgensien der Hamburger Stadtbibliothek* (1839–1840); Werner Kayser and Claus Dehn, *Bibliographie der Hamburger Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg: Hauswedell, 1968); Conrad Borchling and Bruno Claussen, *Niederdeutsche Bibliographie; Gesamtverzeichnis der niederdeutschen Drucke bis zum Jahre 1800*, 2 vols. (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1931–1936); Dommer, *Autotypen*; Arnold Schuback and Peter Simon Brödermann (eds.), *Verzeichniss der von dem verstorbenen Herrn Arnold Schuback hinterlassenen Bibliothek* [with appended auction lists] (Hamburg: Wagener, 1834); Nicolaus Matthias Hübbe, *Alphabetisches Verzeichnis der hamburgischen Hochzeitsgedichte* (Hamburg: 1847); J.M. Lappenberg, *Geschichte der Buchdruckerkunst in Hamburg* (Hamburg: Weissner, 1840); Georg Behrmann, *Verzeichniß der von dem sel. Herrn Georg Behrmann hinterlassenen merkwürdigen und sehr vollständigen Sammlung gedruckter und geschriebener Hamburgensien und anderer Bücher, welche den 14ten October 1793 in einem bekannten Hause am Gänsemarkt durch den Auctionarius verkauft werden sollen* (Hamburg: Treder, 1793).
- 80 No printed catalogue of holdings was ever commissioned, not even after the fire of 1842; see acquisition lists ('Neuerwerbungslisten') from 1916–1940 contained in the Realkatalog; *Katalog der Commerz-Bibliothek* (1864). For a (so far only) study of Hamburg's private libraries see Friedrich Lorenz Hoffmann, 'Hamburgische Bibliophilen, Bibliographen und Literaturhistoriker', *Serapeum*, 13–30 (1852–1869).
- 81 Regrettably, now various joint projects have been put on hold or scrapped entirely, including those intended to transfer technology and investment from Germany to Russia, to

make publicly available books displaced during the war now in Russian and German libraries.⁸² This could reunite with their lost readers books lying still un-catalogued for political reasons in German and Russian libraries.

The process of digitization of German books kept in Moscow may be in its infancy but it creates the historically new possibility to reconstitute collections in virtual libraries and catalogues without physical restitution.⁸³ It does not take recent events in Crimea to remind us of the fragility of relations on which transnational initiatives like this are predicated – Putin's second term has seen a return to the late 1990s with archives and libraries closing or restricting access, visas being denied, and scholars being expelled. Only time will tell whether such projects can provide the middle ground between those who want books returned to their 'cultural context', those that feel entitled to them as compensation for irreparable losses, and those that argue that books should be kept by, or returned to, institutions with the means to preserve and protect them. Digitization may offer one resolution for the difficulty of reuniting physical Hamburg tomes located in different places but not lost. Yet this, given the nature of modern cyber warfare – it may be hoped that lessons have been learned from the past tendency to underestimate such threats – places books and the knowledge they are meant to preserve spread across in other ways volatile repositories: servers.

help with cataloguing and editing, as in the case of one of the largest neo-Latin collections in St Petersburg, or to aid accessibility (of German books looted in the war) now in former Soviet libraries like St Petersburg, Moscow, Minsk, Kiev, Novosibirsk, and Yerevan (cf. Garber, *Das alte Buch*, p. 674).

82 See Stephanie Jacobs, 'Resitution von Beutebüchern', *Dialog mit Bibliotheken*, 26 (2014), 68–71; cf. <www.lostart.de>.

83 This would give rise to what Elizabeth Niggemann, General Director of German National Library, describes as a mixed centralised and yet decentralised system (Jacobs, 'Restitution', pp. 70–71).