

***Europäischer Buchmarkt und Gelehrtenrepublik:
Die transnationale Verlagsbuchhandlung
Treuttel & Würtz 1750-1850***

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'Books are and always have been both economic commodities and carriers of ideological, political, cultural and artistic content, which can be and has been valued and interpreted differently depending on necessity' (107).¹ In her 2023 book, Annika Haß provides an insightful and powerful study of books as a political, diplomatic, ethical, and commercial currency, demonstrating the centrality of the book trade to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European intellectual, cultural, and political history. This slightly modified version of her award-winning dissertation marks the first comprehensive business and family history of the Treuttel & Würtz publishing company. Due to the absence of a company archive, little research had been done on the Strasbourg-born booksellers and publishers. Haß undertook exhaustive international archival research, recovering and systematically analysing catalogues, notes, bills, family records, correspondence, legal documents, pamphlets and publications. In this, her work not only makes a valuable contribution but also serves as an instructive model and guide for future research into booksellers and publishing houses whose archives were previously declared scattered or lost.

Organised in three thematic parts, the book narrates the company's origins, success and decline spanning the century between 1750 and 1850. Beginning with the history of the bi-confessional, German and French speaking, bookselling and publishing milieu of Strasbourg, the study identifies the geographical, confessional, intellectual and cultural conditions for the wide-ranging and long-standing success and network of an international family-run business operating in the locations of Strasbourg (through the predecessor Bauer & Compagnie), Paris (since 1796), and London (since 1817). The central argument posits that Treuttel & Würtz's commercial success and international reputation were grounded in a self-understanding as

¹ 'Bücher sind und waren immer sowohl wirtschaftliche Ware als auch Träger eines ideellen, politischen, kulturellen und künstlerischen Inhalts, der je nach Bedarf unterschiedlich aufgewertet und ausgelegt werden kann und wurde'.

professional members of a transnational network of educated, conservative-liberal elites, which was strengthened through familial and friendship ties, strategic lobbying with politicians and rulers, and even holding public office. By the mid-nineteenth century, the unity of intersecting enlightened, professional, and protestant values had become inflexible in accommodating the absence of heirs and a diversifying European book market, which was increasingly operating on capitalist principles. The business declined in scope and reputation in the 1840s.

Haß introduced two very productive concepts to describe the European book market and reread the ‘republic of letters’ through the lens of booksellers and publishers. In analogy with political and diplomatic history, she speaks of the ‘diplomacy’ and ‘aristocracy of the book trade’ (76–79, 106–26). This approach relates Jean-Georges Treuttel (1744–1826) and Jean Godefroi Würtz (1768–1841) to much older studies, such as Daniel Moran’s work on their famous German colleague and collaborator, the publisher and politician Johann Gottfried Cotta.² Treuttel and Würtz served as mediators and translators between the French and German intellectual and literary spheres, both at home and abroad. The company played a crucial role in supplying and establishing libraries and national bibliographies (217–317). Treuttel and Würtz, along with their predecessor Bauer, applied the organisational practices, professional and political language, and professional confidence developed by their German colleagues to their own business networks in France with great success (50–57), marking the zenith of the business reaching its highest trade volume between 1811 and 1830 (343–44). Such activities included lobbying for exclusive trading rights and privileges, strict adherence to national and regional regulations, the plan for an association of booksellers and publishers, as well as petitions for state-financed public libraries to ensure an indirect subsidy and relief for the national book trade. Those familiar with the German story will find parallels in the essays and pamphlets of Philipp Erasmus Reich, published between 1765 and 1785 in Leipzig, as well as in the works of Friedrich Christoph Perthes, published between 1816 and 1828 in Hamburg and Gotha.³

The transnational applicability of German book trade principles marks a significant historiographical contribution, bringing together the well-established field of French book history with German book historical research, which enjoys significantly less institutional representation and national reputation. This much-needed intervention comes as no surprise when considering Haß’s supervisors were Frédéric Barbier and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, two exceptional scholars who have made major contributions to the study of cultural transfers between eighteenth and

² DANIEL MORAN, *Toward the Century of Words. Johann Cotta and the Politics of the Public Realm in Germany, 1795-1832*, (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

³ HAZEL ROSENSTRAUCH, *Buchbandelsmanufaktur und Aufklärung. Die Reformen des Buchhändlers und Verlegers Ph. E. Reich (1717-1787): sozialgeschichtliche Studie zur Entwicklung des literarischen Marktes*, (Frankfurt am Main: Buchhändler-Vereinigung, 1986). ULRIKE ANDERSCH, *Die Diskussion über den Büchernachdruck in Deutschland um 1700 bis 1815*, (Heidelberg: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

nineteenth-century France and Germany.⁴ In this vein, the case study of Treuttel and Würtz presents a classical subject in the tradition of *Kulturtransfer*, but it moves beyond familiar concerns, such as translation or literary cosmopolitanism. The business history presents an innovative study of publishing practices as a resource for *transcultural* exchange and identity formation, spanning from the intimacy of the family to regional, national, and transnational networks of professional and intellectual elites. It creates a local and translocal lens through which to intertwine the histories of the ancien régime, Romanticism, translation, the rise of liberalism, political movements, the development of capitalist structures, and the formulation of national and international copyrights.

The value of such a theoretical framework culminates in the third part, where Haß analyses catalogues, especially the trade and publication of translations into French (319–411). Here she explains how the success of the business model and programme fundamentally rested on transcultural, i.e., ethical and cosmopolitan, principles originating in Enlightenment thought. This intertwining of commerce and thought enables Haß to assert that publishers and booksellers were instrumental in the material form and distribution through which ideas and knowledge were mobilised. This has been overlooked for too long in aesthetic, literary, and philological studies of cultural transfers and translations (397). Treuttel and Würtz put into practice the aspirations and ideas of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's conceptualisation of *Weltliteratur* long before the ageing poet began to use and propagate the term in the late 1820s (411). The book, therefore, acts as a methodological intervention in response to a growing interest in material and book historical approaches to literary and political history. Haß's book should be read in connection with Daniel Purdy's *Chinese Sympathies: Media, Missionaries, and World Literature from Marco Polo* (2021) and James Brophy's *Print Markets and Political Dissent: Publishers in Central Europe, 1800-1870* (2024).

The book is as entertaining as it is enlightening due to its well-situated introduction of visual and material source material that are central to the history of publishing, intellectual elites, and translocal exchange and identity formation. It is adorned with an array of images, including maps, portraits, genealogical tables, frontispieces, title pages, and graphs, which each receive succinct yet detailed mention and inclusion in the well-written narrative. The reader not only delves into correspondence and transaction bills, but also into an *album amicorum* (59), multilingual Bibles (402–403), and the artistic self-representation of successful German and French publishers (140–47). Haß's curiosity about the relationship between the trade of books and colonial goods occasionally shines through, as she observes how paper, stationery items, and even tobacco were sold by Bauer, Treuttel, and Würtz, yet evidence of more exotic commodities remains (frustratingly) impossible to find (105, 156). This invites further study into the relationship between books, commodities and objects, their

⁴ FRÉDÉRIC BARBIER, *L'empire du livre. Le livre imprimé et la construction de l'Allemagne contemporaine (1815-1914)*, (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1995). HANS-JÜRGEN LÜSEBRINK AND ROLF REICHARDT, eds, *Kulturtransfer im Epochenumbruch: Frankreich-Deutschland 1770 bis 1815* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1997).

visual and material qualities, and their role in mobilising and translating ideas. Ultimately, Annika Haß's work is a timely and persuasive reminder that books were and are a multifaceted currency in the hands of publishers and booksellers that have endured and mediated epistemic changes and transnational exchange throughout history.