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Review of Graham Jefcoate, *An Ocean of Literature: John Henry Bohte
and the Anglo-German Book Trade in the Early Nineteenth Century*
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GRAHAM JEFCOATE, *An Ocean of Literature: John Henry Bohte and the Anglo-German Book Trade in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2020), xxxii + 540 pp. ISBN 978 3 487 15840 2 (paperback). €58.00

The British book historian Graham Jefcoate, a leading expert on the history of both the German and British book trades, fills an important gap in the research in his latest book. Using the example of the Bremen-based bookseller John Henry Bohte (1784–1824), he examines German–English trade relations in the two book markets in the early nineteenth century. Jefcoate’s work is a continuation of his equally opulent study on German printers and booksellers in London between 1680 and 1811.¹ Little is known about the actors, structures, and conditions of the foreign book trade in both countries, about transnational transactions, and especially about the turbulent years following the Napoleonic Wars.² Over 500 pages, and relying strictly on source materials, Jefcoate has now traced the history of a hitherto completely unknown individual in the history of the German book trade, and has thus been able to make exemplary statements about the strategies, actions, and business areas of trade relations.

Taking Bohte’s biography as a starting point, Jefcoate examines his bookselling and publishing activities against the background of the development of the bookseller profession and the history of the book trade. The study draws on extensive printed and unprinted source materials from libraries and archives in the UK, Germany, France, and even Australia and the USA. These include printed stock catalogues, correspondences, and order lists. As a young bookseller aged just 20, Bohte was in contact with Johann Friedrich Cotta in Stuttgart, Georg

¹ Graham Jefcoate, *Deutsche Drucker und Buchhändler in London 1680–1811: Strukturen und Bedeutung des deutschen Anteils am englischen Buchhandel* (Berlin, 2015). See the review by Michael Schaich in *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, 39/2 (2017), 73–9.

² The foreign branches of German publishers have become the main focus of attention, while the retail book trade has been largely ignored. See the overview by Monika Estermann, ‘Beziehungen zum Ausland’, in Georg Jäger (ed.), *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. i: *Das Kaiserreich 1871–1918*, pt. 3 (Berlin, 2010), 470–517.

Joachim Göschen, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Carl Christian Philipp Tauchnitz, and many others.

Bohte came to London in 1811 at the latest, where he opened his book import and export business at 3 York Street, Covent Garden, in 1813. At first, he specialized in importing German books and German editions of the Greek and Roman classics. At the request of 'many friends of German literature' (p. 115), he soon affiliated his bookshop with the 'Deutsche Lesebibliothek' (the German Circulating Library), which also stocked the most important German periodicals, such as the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, the *Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, and other journals. Eventually, Bohte also became active as a publisher and prepared, for example, an edition of the famous Faust illustrations by Moritz Retzsch. From 1814 onwards, Bohte regularly attended the Leipzig Book Fair, where none other than the former publisher of Goethe and Schiller, Georg Joachim Göschen, became his commission agent, as did Leipzig's major publisher Steinacker & Wagner. However, Bohte was unable to attend the fair in 1817, which can now be seen as a stroke of luck from a book trade historical perspective as his correspondence with Göschen is particularly extensive in that year, providing information on book orders, offers, payment processing, and logistics. Göschen also supplied Bohte with antiquarian books, including some incunabula (p. 195). In 1822, Bohte even bought a Gutenberg Bible for the Duke of Sussex at an auction.

From 1820 onwards, Bohte was not only firmly established on the English book market, but also had excellent connections with the German book trade. He was, for example, in close contact with the director of the newly founded Bonn University Library (1818) and professor of philology and archaeology, Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, and also supplied English literature. Jefcoate is able to dedicate a source-saturated chapter to this business relationship, as the correspondence between Bohte and Welcker is preserved in the Bonn University and State Library. On multiple occasions, Welcker ordered several hundred copies of English works at short intervals and took out subscriptions to English academic journals. Bohte also provided Welcker with information on interesting new publications. This resulted in a lively and close exchange over a period of several years.

Bohte's professional success led to the award of a Royal Warrant as 'Foreign Bookseller to His Majesty the King' in early 1820.

After examining Bohte's professional network, which included European professional colleagues, librarians, and writers, Jefcoate devotes himself to Bohte's publishing profile and range of products. To this end, Jefcoate has meticulously analysed Bohte's surviving printed catalogues between 1814 and 1826 (after his death). In summary, his programme included literature used in classical humanistic education, and offered a cross-section of German high culture.

After his death, his widow Sarah Bohte took over the company for a short time; however, in June 1826, she initiated the closure of the business for health reasons and took the last orders. In November 1826, the first part of Bohte's stock was auctioned off, but Andreas Stäheli, who had opened a 'Deutsche Buchhandlung' (German bookstore) in London at the end of 1826, had apparently already acquired up to two-thirds of the remaining books (p. 431). However, he sold his company to his London colleagues Koller and Cahlmann only one year later. The remainder of Bohte's stock was auctioned off in 1831.

Finally, Jefcoate traces the history of British-German book market relations beyond the death of Bohte and examines the long nineteenth century (1789-1914) in the same manner in which he profiles Bohte's predecessors in the London German book trade from 1749 at the beginning of his analysis. This approach is extremely useful because it allows us to place Bohte's merits in a larger context. Bohte was followed by the German booksellers Black and Co., Bohn and Son, Boosey and Sons, Koller and Cahlmann and Treuttel, and Würtz and Co. – some of which existed at the same time as Bohte's company.

Jefcoate (p. 458) lists Bohte's activities as importing German books and Continental editions of the Greek and Roman classics into England; exporting English books to Germany; establishing contacts with a wider European network of booksellers; selling printed material from his shop in Covent Garden to both personal and institutional customers; acquiring a Royal Warrant as Foreign Bookseller to the King; developing and maintaining a retail presence in Leipzig in collaboration with his agents there; supplying Bonn University Library and other German institutions; issuing specialist catalogues and lists of recent publications; running a circulating library in London

specializing in German books; developing a publishing programme focused on selected works of English literature, German literature, bibliography, and natural history; acquiring Cooke's Editions and other stereotype pocket editions of the classics and marketing them in both Britain and Germany; and establishing connections in literary and scholarly circles in both countries. As Jefcoate himself states, 'Few of these activities were unique to Bohte, and parallels for most of them can be found among his predecessors, contemporaries and successors. What may make Bohte unique is the sheer range of his activities during the eleven years of his business life as well as the scope of his personal ambition' (p. 458). Thanks to his detailed research, Graham Jefcoate's exemplary study succeeds in increasing our knowledge of the foreign book trade and transnational trade relations and in developing new research questions from these findings.

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