



Schau-Platz Der Masquirten und Demasquirten Gelehrten
bey ihren verdeckten und entdeckten Schrifftten

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DAS ACHTZEHNTE JAHRHUNDERT

Zeitschrift der Deutschen Gesellschaft
für die Erforschung des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts

Schöpferischer Wettbewerb?
Ästhetische und kommerzielle
Konkurrenz in den
schönen Wissenschaften

Zusammengestellt von
York-Gothart Mix und Carlos Spoerhase

Herausgegeben im Auftrag des Vorstandes
vom Sekretariat der Gesellschaft

Geschäftsführender Herausgeber: Carsten Zelle

JAHRGANG 36 • HEFT 2 • WOLFENBÜTTEL 2012
WALLSTEIN VERLAG

Das Frontispiz zeigt das Frontispiz zu Peter Dahlmann: Schau-Platz Der Masquirten und Demasquirten Gelehrten bey ihren verdeckten und nunmehr entdeckten Schrifften. Leipzig: Gleditsch 1710 (Halle/Saale, Franckesche Stiftungen, Sign.: BFSr: 93 C 75).

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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Anschrift des Geschäftsführenden Herausgebers:

Carsten Zelle, Herzog August Bibliothek, D-38299 Wolfenbüttel

Verlag und Vertrieb: Wallstein Verlag GmbH, www.wallstein-verlag.de, Göttingen 2012

Druck: Hubert & Co, Göttingen

gedruckt auf säure- und chlorfreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier

ISBN 978-3-8353-1141-1

ISSN 0722-740-X

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The Status of Authors in the Literary Market. A Comparison of Eighteenth-century England and France

Der vorliegende Aufsatz schreibt dem literarischen Markt zwei verschiedene, aber interdependente Wertesysteme zu: ein kommerzielles und ein symbolisches. Während ersteres von rechtlichen, technischen und sozialen Faktoren bestimmt wird, liegen letzterem kulturelle Dispositionen zugrunde. Beide Wertesysteme beeinflussen die Statushierarchien und Selbstdarstellungen von Autoren. Wie sie das tun, versucht der Aufsatz anhand eines Vergleiches von England und Frankreich im 18. Jahrhundert zu umreißen. Es geht dabei weniger darum, die – teils massiven – Veränderungen des literarischen Marktes in diesem Zeitraum nachzuzeichnen, als strukturelle und kulturelle Konstanten herauszuarbeiten, die möglicherweise bis in die Spätmoderne nachwirken. Eine solche Konstante betrifft die Möglichkeit »von der Feder« zu leben und die Anerkennung, die Autoren aus ihr gewinnen können. Genau in diesem Punkt macht der Aufsatz einen fundamentalen Unterschied zwischen England und Frankreich fest.

Cet article attribue au marché littéraire deux systèmes de valeurs, certes différents mais interdépendants: l'un commercial, l'autre symbolique. Alors que le premier est régi par des facteurs juridiques, techniques et sociaux, le second repose sur des prédispositions culturelles. Ces deux systèmes de valeurs exercent une influence sur les hiérarchies statutaires et l'autopromotion des auteurs. La présente étude se propose de décrire le fonctionnement de cette influence en se basant sur une comparaison entre l'Angleterre et la France du XVIII^e siècle. Il ne s'agit pas tant de reconstituer les changements, parfois profonds, qui ont bouleversé le marché littéraire des deux pays pendant la période d'observation que de faire ressortir des constantes structurelles et culturelles dont l'impact se ressent vraisemblablement jusqu'à l'époque moderne tardive. Une de ces constantes concerne la possibilité, pour les auteurs, de vivre de leur plume ainsi que l'estime publique qu'ils en retirent. C'est précisément ici que, selon nous, se manifeste une différence fondamentale entre l'Angleterre et la France.

»No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.« Samuel Johnson, as quoted in James Boswell: *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791)

»Rien de vigoureux, rien de grand ne peut partir d'une plume toute vénales.« Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Confessions* (1782)

Prologue

In 2007, historians at the University of Cambridge were busy speculating about one burning question: »Did he really get a million dollars?« The person in question was Richard Evans, who then occupied the Chair of Modern History, and the sum in question was the advance payment he had received for his three-volume *History of the Third Reich*.¹ I, as a

¹ Richard Evans: *The Coming of the Third Reich*. New York 2003 (= *The History of the Third Reich*, 1); ders.: *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939*. New York 2005 (= *The History of the Third Reich*, 2); ders.: *The Third Reich at War, 1939-1945*. New York 2008 (= *The History of the Third Reich*, 3). – The author would like to thank Carlos Spoerhase for valuable suggestions and Katherine Hughes for necessary corrections. Some readers may wonder why a Swiss historian publishes an English paper in a German journal. There are two pragmatic reasons for this: First, this essay is based on an English talk I gave to an international audience at the University

newcomer to the scene, was not only surprised by the amount of money, but also by the reaction of Evans's fellow historians to the speculation. Nobody insinuated that such a deal would corrupt the author's academic independence or diminish the intellectual weight of his work. Quite the contrary, the sum was regarded as a reflection of the academic distinction Evans enjoyed. Thus, the meanest thing that could be said about the deal was to allege that the sum had in fact been lower.

Evans himself refrained from any comment. Instead, he introduced some colleagues at the History Faculty to his literary agent, the notorious Andrew Wylie, also known as »The Jackal«. Wylie was the reason why the sum of a million dollars seemed credible. He had acquired his nickname in 1995, when his agency poached the novelist Martin Amis by securing half a million pounds in advance for his novel *The Information*. By 2007, Wylie's list of authors contained more than 600 names, most of them distinctively »highbrow« such as Philipp Roth and Salman Rushdie, among the living, and Jorge Louis Borges and Vladimir Nabokov, among the dead. His main selling point to publishers was that high-quality authors would deserve just as much money as »commercial« writers because they promised to be long-term sellers. The argument apparently holds, not least thanks to the gradual extension of copyright terms during the last three hundred or so years. As recently as 1998, the United States added another twenty years to the period of protection, defined by the then-existing legislation that had only been introduced in 1976. In most countries, single authors, their publishers and their offspring currently enjoy a copyright period for the author's life plus seventy years. In 1709, when the first copyright act was introduced in England, the time of protection was limited to fourteen years plus an additional period of the same duration if the author were still alive by then.

After signing famous novelists, Wylie reached out to established historians, too. His first big catch was Niall Ferguson, who, thanks to his high-speed publishing, regular TV appearances and frequent controversies, quickly became a major cash cow among the Wylie clients. Richard Evans followed soon after. In 2008, he was elected to the Regius Chair of History, the most prestigious professorship at Cambridge. And by the time he gave his inaugural lecture in 2009, there were already a few other professors moving into bigger houses or adding an extension to their existing residence, which, at least in one case familiar to me, was then christened, tongue-in-cheek, as the »Wylie-Wing«.

The Symbolic and Economic Value of Literary Commerce

On a basic level, Wylie's activities give an indication as to what extent commercial interests can be intertwined with academic scholarship without seemingly affecting the status of academics as independent authors. Dealing with the Wylie Agency not only changed the standard of living of half a dozen Cambridge historians, it also had an impact on the way academic books are planned, produced and marketed – and it may have even influenced the balance of power within the History Faculty. Yet, all these factors were not seen

of St. Gallen in 2011; secondly, its content may be of interest to English and French speaking scholars of whom only a small minority read German.

as an impediment to the quality of the intellectual work done by Faculty members, quite the contrary.

On a broader level, Wylie's success can help to highlight two different, but intertwined value systems that determine the relationship between authors and the literary market: one is commercial, the other symbolic. The commercial value is defined through technologies for copying and distributing text, through the size, wealth and spending behaviour of the readership and through the legislation and enforcement of censorship and copyright. The symbolic value, in contrast, is based on cultural attitudes towards literary and epistemic authority. In a certain cultural setting, a rumour about a huge advance may raise a writer's reputation as a serious, independent author, whereas in another, it may taint him as a populist, mercenary scribbler. It is hard to believe, for instance, that there is a place for the Wylie agency in Pierre Bourdieu's model of the French field of cultural production as an »economic world reversed«.²

If the relationship between authorial status and literary commerce is relative to cultural preconceptions, it may be worthwhile to look at the historical formation of these preconceptions on a comparative basis. After all, they neither develop nor change overnight. On the following pages I will attempt such a comparison by first taking a short look at Britain and then an even shorter look at France. Both countries play a seminal role in the forming of the literary market, especially in the eighteenth century, and both offer, thanks to profound legal and political differences at the time, an excellent basis of comparison. A comparative approach, of course, risks blinding out cross-cultural processes and tends to overemphasise the differences between the societies observed. However, in order to analyse the interdependence of legal, economic and cultural factors in the formation of literary commerce, a comparative perspective still promises to bear the richest fruit.

The Whig History of Living by the Pen

In many Western countries, there exists a dominant narrative about the rise of modern authors to independence and respectability. It tells the story of a radical renunciation of patronage followed by heroic attempts at living by the pen, which first meant suffering poverty for liberty, and eventually, thanks to the growth of an educated public and improved legal protection of authors, brought financial rewards to the brave and talented. Nowhere has this narrative been more deeply imbedded than in England, and this is not only due to seemingly rich evidential bases, but to a specific way of shaping the national past, which has been most popular in the nineteenth century and labelled *Whig history* in the twentieth. The term, mostly used in derogatory fashion, refers to a tradition of liberal historiography, which defined Britain's global mission in spreading prosperity and liberty through free trade and democracy. Obviously, the image of the independent author as an

entrepreneur selling the products of his literary genius suited the Whig interpretation of national history rather well.

To cite an example: In 1848, the Whig politician Thomas Babington Macaulay published the first two volumes of his *History of England* that would grow to five volumes in the subsequent years and become one of the most formative historical works of the nineteenth century. Despite its huge size, it only covered the period from 1685 to 1702. In the first volume, Macaulay described the situation of authors in the seventeenth century: »The recompense which the wits of that age could obtain from the public was so small, that they were under the necessity of eking out their incomes by levying contributions on the great. Every rich and goodnatured lord was pestered by authors with a mendicancy so importunate, and a flattery so abject, as may in our time seem incredible. The patron to whom a work was inscribed was expected to reward the writer with a purse of gold. The fee paid for the dedication of a book was often much larger than the sum which any publisher would give for the copyright. Books were therefore frequently printed merely that they might be dedicated. This traffic in praise produced the effect which might have been expected. Adulation pushed to the verge, sometimes of nonsense, and sometimes of impiety, was not thought to disgrace a poet. Independence, veracity, selfrespect, were things not required from him. In truth, he was in morals something between a pandar and a beggar.«³

This deplorable state of affairs, according to Macaulay, was resolved in a miracle that went unnoticed by those who had enacted it. In 1695, Parliament decided not to renew the so-called *Licensing Act*, which had regulated pre-publication censorship and publishing privileges. Macaulay argued that the decision had been taken because the committee in charge had failed to report to Parliament on time. And so, as Macaulay later pronounced in volume four, »English literature was emancipated for ever, from the control of the government.«⁴ The story of authorial liberation culminated in the statement: »From the day on which the emancipation of our literature was accomplished, the purification of our literature began. That purification was effected, not by the intervention of senates or magistrates, but by the opinion of the great body of educated Englishmen.«⁵

Macaulay's narrative of authorial liberation through judicial reform and economic *laissez faire* was soon extended to a two-part story, starting with the lapse of the *Licensing Act* in 1695 and culminating with the introduction of the *Copyright Act* in 1709, which allegedly brought about a re-regulation of the book trade based on literary property and freedom of ideas. More importantly, the narrative of legal and economic change was complemented with biographical stories of heroic liberation. A pioneering role was ascribed to Alexander Pope, a man of modest origins who became rich thanks to his translations of Homer's *Iliad* (1715-20) and *Odyssey* (1726) and proudly declared in a letter of 1723: »I take my self to be the only Scribler of my Time, of any degree of distinction, who never receiv'd any places from the Establishment, any Pension from a Court, or any

2 Pierre Bourdieu: »The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed«, In: *Poetics* 12 (1983), 311-356.

3 Thomas Babington Macaulay: *The History of England from the Accession of James II.* New York 1850, Bd. 1, 305.

4 *Ibid.*, Bd. 4, 126.

5 *Ibid.*, 175.

Presents from a Ministry.⁶ A biography published in 1857 emphasised that Pope's income was about 800£ per annum, arising from life annuities, chiefly purchased after the Homer subscription, from three or four thousand pounds left him by his father, and from the sale of his works. He is said to have given away 100£ a year in charity.⁷

More heroic still was the role attributed to Samuel Johnson, admirer of Pope and author of the *Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1755. His alleged act of liberation was the *Letter to Lord Chesterfield* from February of the same year, in which Johnson denied his patron the dedication of the Dictionary. One of the main creators of this hero's story was the Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle. In an essay written in 1832, he commented on Johnson's letter to Chesterfield: »At the time of Johnson's appearance on the field, Literature, in many senses, was in a transitional state; chiefly in this sense, as respects the pecuniary subsistence of its cultivators. It was in the very act of passing from the protection of Patrons into that of the Public; no longer to supply its necessities by laudatory Dedications to the Great, but by judicious Bargains with the Booksellers.«⁸ Carlyle called this transition »a happy change« and labelled Johnson's letter »that far-famed Blast of Doom, proclaiming into the ear of Lord Chesterfield, and, through him, of the listening world, that Patronage should be no more!«⁹

Macaulay, Carlyle and other nineteenth-century scholars created a liberation narrative of modern authorship that can be summarised as follows: The literary market, after having gained independence from state supervision, was able to expand according to the demands of a growing emancipated British readership, and in turn enabled British authors to liberate themselves from the yoke of patronage. The liberation was thus regarded as threefold – of commerce, readers and authors, from state regulation, censorship and patronage, respectively.

This narrative has proved more powerful and long-lasting than Whig history itself. As late as 1987 Alvin Kernan declared Johnson's letter »the Magna Carta of the modern author«.¹⁰ In 2003 – around the same time that Andrew Wylie reached out to historians – John G. A. Pocock wrote that »the expansion of genteel publishing« in London and Edinburgh had enabled eighteenth-century historians, such as David Hume, William Robertson and Edward Gibbon »to live in affluence from the sales of their copyrights, independent of either patrons or booksellers.«¹¹ And, to close the circle with a personal anecdote, in 2008 Richard Evans responded to a talk of mine about the precarious status of eighteenth-century lexicographers with a quote from Samuel Johnson: »No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.«¹² It may not be too bold an assumption to say

that Whig history's cultural imprint still helps commercially successful British authors today to acquire or strengthen a reputation of high independence and significance.

Monopolistic Market and Commercial Patronage

As is often the case with ideologically charged accounts, the Whig history of authorial independence is not entirely wrong, but blinds out a lot and over-simplifies the rest. The end of the *Licensing Act*, for instance, was not exactly the beginning of the freedom of expression. Libellous, blasphemous and treasonous writings remained prohibited, and some authors continued to suffer draconian punishments for the content of their publications. Neither did the *Copyright Act* mark the dawn of a free literary market. For decades, the new law made by Parliament had hardly any practical significance because it was not defended in court. While the act, based on seventeenth-century patent legislation¹³, prescribed a copyright limit of fourteen years, with possible extensions if the author were still alive after that period, English printers and publishers continued to demand an unlimited »property in the copy« from their authors.¹⁴ They were able to do so because English literary commerce was not organised as a free market of competing publishers, but as a monopoly controlled by the powerful London guild of printers, publishers and paper producers, the long-established Stationers' Company. It defended its interests throughout England with lawyers, bribes and a police of its own. As Roger Chartier and others have pointed out, the Stationers' legal strategy was derived from John Locke's theory of private property.¹⁵ The Stationers and their attorneys presented authors as free owners of literary property and portrayed themselves as defenders of authorial rights. In other words, they fostered the modern concept of the author as independent proprietor in order to preserve a pre-modern business model. Thus, there was not only a gap between legal rule and economic practice, but also between the ideological and the actual position of the author as owner of literary property.

The monopolistic structure helped to establish a high-price market, dominated by large and heavy tomes, which found its main clients among the gentlemanly classes whose wealth had risen considerably during the expansion of the British Empire. William St Clair concludes that »to an extent, the control over access to ideas which had previously been exercised by state censorship was now effected by the weight, price, and immobility of modern books.«¹⁶ Yet, thanks to the high prices, those authors and editors whose literary production was selling well with the British educated elite, were, for the first time in history, »able to demand not only large payments but a rising share of the

6 Alexander Pope: »Letter to Lord Carteret«, 16 February 1723; quoted after Edward G. Andrew: *Patrons of Enlightenment*. Toronto 2006, 42.

7 Robert Carruthers: *The Life of Alexander Pope*. London 1857, 409.

8 Thomas Carlyle: »Review of [a New Edition of] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*«. In: *Fraser's Magazine* 28 (1832), Bd. 5, 379–413, here 396.

9 Ibid., 398.

10 Alvin Kernan: *Samuel Johnson & the Impact of Print*. Princeton 1987, 105.

11 John G. A. Pocock: *Barbarism and Religion: The First Decline and Fall*. Cambridge 2005, 7.

12 James Boswell: *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. London 1791, 241.

13 B. Zorina Kahn: *The Democratisation of Invention: Patents and Copyrights in American Economic Development 1790–1920*. Cambridge 2005, 30 f.

14 Adrian Johns: *The Nature of the Book. Print and Knowledge in the Making*. Chicago, London 1998, 352 f.

15 Roger Chartier: »The Man of Letters«. In: *Enlightenment Portraits*, Hg. Michel Vovelle. Chicago 1997, 142–189, here 171–173.

16 William St Clair: *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge 2004, 100.

total receipts.¹⁷ This is how writers from Alexander Pope to Edward Gibbon could not only credibly claim to live by their pen, but also use this claim to raise their status, as they were participating in an exclusive print culture. The same logic explains why those writers who actually had to survive in a sort of free market competition – the Grub Street hacks »scribbling« for newspapers, gazettes and pamphlets – had no incentive to link literary commerce to authorial independence, let alone pride themselves on living by the pen. The high-price monopoly only collapsed following decades of relentless pressure, both legal and commercial, by Scottish printers, who had long adopted the system of limited copyright. After a landmark trial in the House of Lords in 1774 the *Copyright Act* of 1709 was eventually implemented in England, too.

As to Samuel Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield, the Whiggish historians have indeed chosen a meaningful event, but largely for the wrong reason. Johnson did not refute patronage in favour of making a living by the pen, but criticised Chesterfield for not behaving as a true patron during the making of the dictionary. There was no juxtaposition between patronage and commerce in the letter. However, there was an unusual tone of authority from Johnson's traditionally inferior position as an author. This tone looks even more indicative of a cultural shift within the asymmetric author-patron relationship when we look at Chesterfield's reaction to the letter. He was proud to receive it, displayed it publicly and expressed his admiration for Johnson's elegant style and powerful mind.¹⁸ Apparently, the rising status of authors enabled some writers to address their potential patrons as if they were independent, and it forced would-be patrons to act accordingly.

Patronage was neither repressed nor replaced by the literary market in the eighteenth century. Why should it have been? They were perfectly compatible, as can be seen, on the one hand, in the continuation of older forms of patronage for commercially successful authors such as Hume and Gibbon and, on the other hand, in the expansion of newer forms of patronage, which were intimately combined with commercial practices.¹⁹ One such form of commercial patronage was the production of expensive books by subscription, which basically meant advance financing by later readers.²⁰ Subscribers acted as both financial investors and collective patrons because they were given the privilege of being named in subscribers' lists published at the beginning of the book. The symbolic function of such lists was similar to a dedication: the higher the rank of subscribers, the greater the prestige for the author. Consequently, most publishers listed subscribers in order of their rank within each letter of the alphabet.

The alleged opposition between literary patronage and commerce, conceived in retrospect, distracts from another opposition at the time, which was at the heart of the tensions between the ideal of independent authorship and the literary market. This was the juxtaposition of commercial and gentleman writers. In both science and literature, a gen-

tleman was generally considered most independent and most trustworthy, and one reason for this high reputation was that, thanks to the steady income of his landed property, he did not need a patron's, government's or bookseller's money.²¹ Consequently, within gentlemanly culture, not much could be more derogatory than leading a »mercenary« existence through living by the pen. To some gentlemen, even the idea of seeing their own writings in a bookstore with a price tag attached was so unbearable that they refused to publish anything at all.²²

The cultural impact of gentlemanly attitudes was even acknowledged by some of those authors who defended the role of commercial writers. The historian and political writer James Ralph began his remarkable treatise on *The Case of Authors by Profession or Trade*, published anonymously in 1758, with the following sentences: »There is hardly a Page in the Annals of the World which does not seem to show, That Wit and Money have been always at War, and always treated one another with reciprocal Contempt.«²³ This outdated logic, according to Ralph, served privileged authors as an ideological weapon in contemporary Britain: »The Volunter, or Gentleman-Writer, may be content with the Point of Honour, and make a Compliment of the Profit to his Bookseller if he pleases: But were the Writer by Profession to do the same, I am afraid Those who now disparage him to the Score of Venality, would discover the same good Nature, in endeavouring to disparage him as much for his Folly.«²⁴ Ralph, in order to demonstrate the anachronism of the gentlemanly standpoint and to legitimate the commercial writer, introduced a nationalist argument: »Commerce is one great source of our national efficiency; [...] instead of censuring an Author for taking Money for his Works, we ought to esteem Those most who get most Money by them.«²⁵

It is difficult to imagine a more extreme capitalist reduction of literary fame, but we have to keep in mind that this was a programme of emancipation directed against privileged authors at the time. Commercial writers such as James Ralph, who lacked the durable patronage of a nobleman, had no prospect of leading a gentleman's life. It therefore seemed an appropriate strategy to portray themselves as exponents of the modern mercantile nation. As we have seen with the Whig history of authorial liberation, this argument proved successful in the long run – so successful in fact that many Whig historians could not even imagine juxtaposing commercial with gentlemen writers anymore. In their eyes, both could be equally independent.

¹⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹⁸ Walter Jackson Bate: *Samuel Johnson*. New York 1977, 257.

¹⁹ For Hume, Gibbon and others see Andrew: *Patrons of Enlightenment* (= note 6), 81, 125–129.

²⁰ Paul J. Korshin: »Types of Eighteenth-Century Literary Patronage«. In: *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7 (1974), 453–473, here 459–466; Richard Yeo: *Encyclopaedic Visions. Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture*. Cambridge UK 2001, 47–49.

²¹ Steven Shapin: *A Social History of Truth. Civility and Science in Eighteenth Century England*. Chicago, London 1994.

²² Adrian Johns: *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making*. Chicago, London 1998, 175 f.

²³ James Ralph: *The Case of Author by Profession or Trade*. London 1758, 1.

²⁴ Ibid., 6 f.

²⁵ Ibid., 6.

In contrast to Britain, I do not know of a single French author in the eighteenth century who proudly declared himself a professional writer. However, there were quite a few, and not just well-off writers, who took pleasure in denigrating those who had to do it. *Vivre de sa plume* was generally regarded as the sad fate of the not-so-talented and unlucky 'Rousseaus du ruisseau' or 'canaille écrivante'. Voltaire, for instance, repeatedly mocked professional writers as 'mercenary authors' and 'poor devils' and accused them of 'turning literature into the meanest of all professions'.²⁶ Rousseau, who, just as Voltaire, earned quite a fortune from the sales of his books, reported in his *Confessions* that 'writing for bread would soon have stifled my genius and killed my talent'.²⁷

The prospect of living by the pen in France was not only more miserable symbolically, but also economically. Pre-publication censorship was still in place and so was a royal licensing system applying double standards: it issued official privileges for welcome publications and tacit permissions for works judged unwelcome, but harmless enough to be printed in France. The problem with the big bulk of tacit permissions was that they could be withdrawn as soon as the official judgement changed. Under such risky conditions, Paris printers were less willing than their London counterparts to pay big advances to promising authors, although they enjoyed similar monopolistic privileges. Furthermore, writers under threat of censorship often sent their manuscripts to printers abroad asking them for anonymous publications, which hardly put them in a good bargaining position for a financially attractive deal.

Interestingly, the rejection of literary commerce could coexist with a radical criticism of patronage that had no equivalent in English literature at the time. Jean le Rond d'Alembert, in his *Essay on the Society of men of letters and of the Great* of 1753 called for a scholarly existence free from noble protection and courtly entertainment because they corrupted the character and diminished the love of truth.²⁸ The role model he commended to his fellow men of letters was the Greek philosopher Diogenes, and the virtues he associated with him sound today like a prelude to a political slogan of a later period of French history: 'liberté, vérité et pauvreté'.²⁹

How should we read d'Alembert's plea for authorial poverty? In the same essay, he rendered homage to Frederic the Great and praised the *Académie Française* as an ideal institution for freedom-loving men of letters because it allowed them to be on a par with

highly ranked noblemen. In the end, his anti-patronage rhetoric came down to a rejection of private in favour of public, that is royal, patronage. One year after the publication, d'Alembert was awarded a pension of 1200 *livres* by Frederic the Great and elected into the French academy.³⁰

The then co-editor of the *Encyclopédie* was no exception in portraying state patronage as an ideal way to authorial independence. Voltaire, in his *Encyclopédie*-article on *Gens de lettres*, argued that men of letters 'usually have more independence of mind than other people and those who are born without fortune easily find in the foundations of Louis XIV [i.e. the royal academies] all they need to secure this independence'.³¹ This was a sunny picture of the state of affairs, both in terms of places available and independence granted in royal academies. It turned cloudier, when authors demanded a further expansion of government support for men of letters. On such occasions, they repeatedly compared France unfavourably with other countries, and the two kingdoms they particularly liked to invoke were China, with its meritocratic class of Mandarins, and, paradoxically, England. When the famous meteorologist and leading academician Réaumur blamed the French state for neglecting men of letters in the 1720s, he emphasised the 'value the Chinese place upon letters', referred to Isaac Newton being appointed Master of the Royal Mint for his scientific achievements and asked the French crown to endow the *Académie Royale des Sciences* with a permanent foundation such as 'the landed properties possessed by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge' in order to grant all academicians a regular salary.³² Similarly, Voltaire stated in his *Lettres philosophiques*: 'The English have so great a veneration for exalted Talents, that a Man of Merit in their Country is always sure of making his Fortune. [...] Mr. Addison was rais'd to the Post of Secretary of State in England. Sir Isaac Newton was made Warden of the Royal Mint. Mr. Congreve had a considerable * Employment [*secretary for Jamaica]. Mr. Prior was Plenipotentiary. Dr. Swift is Dean of St. Patrick in Dublin.'³³ And how about Alexander Pope? Voltaire treated his embrace of a commercial existence as an exception: Pope's Catholic religion had excluded him 'from Preferments of ev'ry kind' in the State and Church of England. So when it came to pressing the French state for the realisation of a publicly financed class of independent men of letters, England easily turned into a better version of France — a

26 Quoted in Eric Walther: 'Les auteurs et le champ littéraire'. In: *Histoire de l'édition française*. T. II: Le livre triomphant: 1660-1830. Ed. Roger Chartier, Henri-Jean Martin, Paris 1984, 383-399, here 386 f., 394; for further examples, see, for instance, Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville: *Mémoires de Brissot*. Ed. Claude Perroud. T. 1. Paris 1910, 3.

27 '[...] écrire pour avoir du pain aurait bientôt étouffé mon génie et tué mon talent [...]'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Les confessions*. Paris 1858, 393.

28 Jean le Rond d'Alembert: 'Essai sur la société des gens de lettres et des grands, sur la réputation, sur les Mécènes, et sur récompenses littéraires'. In: Ders.: *Œuvres*. T. 4. Paris 1822, 335-373, here 356.

29 Ibid., 367 f.

30 Ronald Grimsley: *Jean d'Alembert (1717-1783)*. Oxford 1963, 158.

31 Voltaire: 'Gens de Lettres'. In: *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*. Ed. Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond d'Alembert. Paris, Neuchâtel, Amsterdam 1751-1772, T. 7, 599-600, here 600.

32 René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur: *Réflexions sur l'utilité dont l'Académie des sciences pourroit être au Royaume si le Royaume lui donnoit les secours dont elle a besoin* (Archives de l'Académie des Sciences. Paris, Fonds Réaumur 69 J, 68/10); the text is edited in Ernest Maindron: *L'académie des sciences*. Paris 1988, 103-110, here 107, 110.

33 Voltaire: *Letters Concerning the English Nation*. London 1733, 224 f. Vgl. Voltaire: *Lettres philosophiques*. Amsterdam 1734, 115 f.: 'Tel est le respect que ce peuple a pour les talents qu'un homme de mérite y fait toujours fortune. [...] il [Mr. Addison] a été secrétaire d'État. M. Newton étoit intendant des Monnoies du Royaume; M. Congreve avoit une charge importante; M. Prior a été Plenipotentiare; le Docteur Swift est Doien d'Irlande.'

paradise of state-sponsored literature and scholarship – and all the fundamental differences of its literary market were just as easily brushed aside.

The ideal of a publicly financed literary life must have been deeply imbedded in French culture by the end of the Old Regime. In 1785, French government officials established a list of all authors who had requested royal pensions. When the American historian Robert Darnton found that list two hundred years later in the national archives of France, it looked to him like a »Who's who« of the French literary World.³⁴

But what advantages were expected from such an ambivalent position where the most probable persecutor was also the most important protector? Contrary to the patronage of noblemen, royal patronage bestowed an air of impartiality upon men of letters and promised them official recognition as distinguished authors, especially if accompanied with a court office or academy fellowship. While the French monarchy used such official recognition as a means to secure the support of influential writers, many writers themselves used it as a declaration of their independence.³⁵ And indeed, once they were recognised as state protégés, the state had greater difficulties in taking action against them.

This contradictory system was confirmed by the French revolution; it was upheld in the Napoleonic era and reinforced in the July Monarchy. 1838 saw the foundation of a *Société des gens de lettres* that received its first government subsidy eight years later.³⁶ When, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the French literary market was able to remunerate a growing number of writers, partly thanks to the new steam-powered printing press, independent authorship was so firmly established in opposition to literary commerce that even those authors who promoted themselves as avant-garde and repudiated state-sponsored literature – the Flauberts and Baudelaires – continued to celebrate great contempt for commercial success. This is how the modern French field of independent literary production, as Pierre Bourdieu has shown, emerged as a topsy-turvy market, in which autonomous authors devoted to literary quality were not supposed to make much money.³⁷

Conclusion

The assumption that producers of spiritual and intellectual goods have to be independent in order to be credible is neither uniquely modern nor uniquely European. It can be found in ancient Greek as well as in pre-modern Hindu culture.³⁸ However, the way this

independence is culturally constructed varies greatly between different cultures and is subjected to constant change. I have chosen Britain and France to highlight such cultural differences in two countries, which, despite monitoring each other constantly, have developed contrasting models of independent authorship. And I have chosen the eighteenth century because it was a period when these models underwent profound shifts under the influence of a new economic and legal factor – the literary market. While many leading British authors welcomed the literary market as a new basis of authorial independence, most French authors rejected it as a new basis of authorial slavery. The impact of these attitudes, I believe, can still be felt today.

It is not my goal to judge these contrasting attitudes in terms of their empirical adequacy. I just want to note that all authorial claims to independence can only be upheld through concealment. British authors claiming to live by their pen had to conceal the patronage they continued to receive, as did French authors officially living on state pensions. Generally, discourses of authorial independence tend to obscure the fact that the field of literary production has never gone through a thorough process of professionalisation to the present day.³⁹ Hardly any author lives from one source of income only, and most authors undertake a profession at the margins or outside of the field. They are teachers, lawyers, professors etc. and lead a »double life« as authors.⁴⁰ Under such conditions, those authors who lay their social, economic and cultural dependencies open to the readers may be regarded the most independent.

Finally, to come back to the Wylie anecdote at the beginning of this paper: there is hardly an institution today that relies more on the authority of independent authorship than the university. However, as universities become more international and thus both economically and culturally more hybrid, they inevitably harbour competing (and often incompatible) ideals of authorial independence within their walls. Academic publications can be financed through state subsidies, publishing houses, corporate money or private donations, and all these types of financing are connected with specific claims to authorial independence. These claims cannot be measured against each other because they belong to different symbolic value systems. Yet, they have to be openly discussed in order to maintain the public credibility of universities. A sensible approach to such a discussion is to historicise competing concepts of authorial independence by analysing their cultural foundations. This essay is intended to be a small step in this direction.

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³⁴ Robert Darnton: *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge MA 1982, 7.

³⁵ Verf.: »Magistrate der Öffentlichkeit. Politische Selbstdarstellung aufklärerischer Gelehrter im Gewand antiker Autoren«. In: *Macht Antike Politik? Politische Antiketransformationen in der Europäischen Geschichte*. Hg. Johannes Helmuth u. a. Berlin, New York (forthcoming).

³⁶ Andrew: *Patrons of Enlightenment* (= note 6), 186 f.

³⁷ Pierre Bourdieu: *Die Regeln der Kunst. Genese und Struktur des literarischen Feldes*. Frankfurt a. M. 1999, 134–140, 228 f.

³⁸ For Greek philosophy, especially the example of Socrates, see Thomas Pangle: »Socrates in Xenophon's Political Writings.« In: *The Socratic Movement*. Hg. Paul A. Vander Waerdt. Ithaca

NY 1994, 136; for Hindu Culture see the latest issue of the *Journal of Hindu Studies*, especially the essay by Jessica Frazier: »Reason and Rationality in Hindu Studies«. In: *Journal of Hindu Studies* 4 (2011), 1–11, here 6–9.

³⁹ Geoffrey Turnovsky: *The Literary Market: Authorship and Modernity in the Old Regime*. Philadelphia 2010, 17.

⁴⁰ Bernhard Lahire: *La condition littéraire. La double vie des écrivains*. Paris 2006.