

new ideas—through her careful reading of the print archive alongside music analysis—and fresh paths through well-trodden Mozartian ground, by considering how familiar sources invited different kinds of engagement from contemporary audiences. As father-*cum*-promoter Leopold Mozart might have said in today's parlance: this book is a must-read.

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The Power of Persuasion: Becoming a Merchant in the 18th Century

By Lucas Haasis. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2022. Pp. 657. Paperback €60.00. ISBN: 978-3837656527.

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In 1745, a British privateer intercepted the ship *Hope* on its way from Brest to Hamburg. On board was a chest containing the private business archive of the Hamburg merchant Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens (1716–1788). Eventually, the archive became part of the prize paper collection held by the National Archives in Kew, where Luetkens' papers lay undisturbed for 264 years. Here it was discovered by Lucas Haasis. Even among the archival treasure trove of the prize papers stemming from 35,000 English privateering raids between 1652 and 1815, the Luetkens archive is unique as it contains 2,286 letters sent to and from a single person over the course of a couple of years. Furthermore, it has been preserved in its original material state.

While Luetkens went on to become a prominent member of the wealthy Hamburg mercantile elite, Haasis deals in his book with Luetkens' formative years as a merchant, from 1743 till 1745. The central aim of the book is to provide a microhistorical analysis of this "establishment phase," arguing that "proficient and convincing skills in the practice of letter writing and shrewd business practices via this medium were key" (24). To analyze the letters as a "polyphonic conversations" (50), a term borrowed from Francesca Trivellato, and to give justice to their material qualities, Haasis employs an advanced set of methodological tools that are very much indebted to ethnographic approaches and commonly used in microhistorical studies. By focusing on practices defined as "patterns of actions collectively shared and performed by several people or groups of people" (572), Haasis, however, introduces a praxeological twist to these proven methods. To contextualize his material, he also draws heavily on contemporary advice literature, such as merchant's handbooks and letter-writing manuals. To provide proper context for both approach and material, the study opens with an extensive introduction as well as a background chapter on Luetkens before moving on to five case studies featuring select groupings of letters.

The first case study presents Luetkens as a shrewd businessman who did not fail to exploit to full capacity the many legal grey areas existing at the time in order to promote his business. While Luetkens was active in France, the War of the Austrian Succession raged, meaning that mercantile shipping was a highly precarious affair as ships and their cargo were always in danger of being seized by one of the warring parties. To make full use of Hamburg's status as a neutral party, in a complicated maneuver Luetkens sold his ships to his younger brother, who resided in Hamburg, and then leased them back from him. By unearthing such mercantile practices on the ground, Haasis does indeed contribute to the history of eighteenth-century merchants and the Atlantic trade, as is his stated aim. In

fact, both in this chapter and the following one, on the commission trade, the volume reads almost like a qualitative companion piece to Klaus Weber's magisterial study on German merchants in the Atlantic, *Deutsche Kaufleute im Atlantikhandel 1680–1830* (2004). Somewhat surprisingly, there is little explicit discussion of the notions of trust, credit, and reputation and how these shaped long-distance trade, nor is the language register of amity considered.

In the case study focusing on high-risk trade, a new theater of operation is introduced, namely the Mediterranean. Just like in the other chapters, Haasis provides here what he calls a “thick contextualisation,” (324) explaining in (too) great detail the *Turkish Threat* faced by traders in the Mediterranean and the system of the *Sklavenkasse* to pay ransom for captured sailors. In comparison to this extensive contextualization, the actual episode this chapter covers is rather short, consisting mostly of Luetkens' successful endeavors to convince both captain and crew of his ships to sail in the Mediterranean Sea. In a rather fascinating reading of an exchange of letters between Luetkens and his captain as historical speech acts, Haasis draws out the many nuances contained in the, at first glance rather formulaic, missives and how these letters were turned into means of persuasion.

The last two episodes demonstrate how the mercantile establishment phase came to its successful end by finding not only a suitable business partner as well as a reliable agent but also a wife. In the first instance, by contrasting normative sources such as mercantile guidebooks and the actual letters, Haasis shows how the canon of requirements for a merchant was, in fact, open to negotiation and dependent on personal preferences; incidentally, Luetkens rated corresponding skills the highest. In both episodes, letters played a key role as they allowed people to overcome spatial separation but also because the contemporaries were so well-versed in letter practices that by the very set-up of the respective letters, by enclosing gifts or adding postscripts, they managed to transmit a full range of meaning and significance. Consequently, even courtship could exclusively and successfully be conducted by letter. It is the great achievement of *Powers of Persuasion* to have deciphered the many different messages contained in these sources.

In short, anyone interested in eighteenth-century letter writing, both mercantile and non-mercantile, will find this book a very helpful reference to understand the wide range of practices as well as the different language registers that went into the maintenance of correspondence. They might, at times, find the book somewhat heavy reading as it does contain a fair share of repetition and a line of argument not always clearly presented. Also, a more thorough language editing would have improved the book. All the same, Lucas Haasis has produced a highly interesting book providing new insights into the world of merchants in the eighteenth century and their many means of persuasion.

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Fleiß, Glaube, Bildung. Kaufleute als gebildete Stände im Wuppertal 1760–1840

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Wuppertal was an important economic region in the eighteenth century. Its main products were bleached linen yarn, twine, ribbon goods, linen cloths, and linen-cotton fabrics.