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JEAN CALAS IN THE GERMAN PUBLIC SPHERE: MEDIAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF A LEGAL CASE

News does not stop at national borders – neither today nor two centuries ago. Cultures are not closed entities, but hybrid, porous, and strongly influenced by and acted upon by other cultures. This idea has been put forward by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner who have developed the concept of cultural transfer since the 1980s¹. Among the various means of identifying the nature and manners of cultural ties in recent years, that of studying media events has proved to be particularly promising². According to Horst Carl, media events are “concentrated nodes of public discourse” (*Verdichtungsknoten öffentlicher Diskurse*³). Their key feature is their singularity, which is mediated by the representation of the event in newspapers and the so-called present media (*Präsenzmedien*), i.e. theater and visual representa-

¹ Cf. Espagne, Michel/ Werner, Michael: *Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer als Forschungsgegenstand. Eine Problemskizze*; [in:] idem (eds.): *Transferts. Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVII^e–XIX^e siècle)*, Paris (Edition Recherches sur les Civilisations) 1988, p. 11–34.

² On the subject of historical media events several books have been published recently, some of them in the context of the research project “Transnational Media Events from Early Modern Times to the Present” in Giessen. The most important are: Vogel, Christine et. al. (eds.): *Medienereignisse im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2009, and Lenger, Friedrich/ Nünning, Ansgar (eds.): *Medienereignisse der Moderne*, Darmstadt 2008. Horst Carl has presented this theory together with Thomas Weißbrich in a conceptual contribution to the volume “European Perceptions”, however, with a slightly different focus; cf. Weißbrich, Thomas/ Carl, Horst: *Präsenz und Information. Frühneuzeitliche Konzeption von Medienereignissen*; [in:] Carl, Horst/ Eibach, Joachim (eds.): *Europäische Wahrnehmungen 1650–1850. Interkulturelle Kommunikation und Medienereignisse*, Hannover 2008, p. 75–98.

³ This outline of a theory of media events is based on a lecture by Horst Carls at the Interdisciplinary Center for Research on the European Enlightenment (IZEA) in Halle on April 15th 2008 under the title “Medienereignisse im 18. Jahrhundert – konzeptionelle Vorüberlegungen zu einem Forschungsfeld”. Concerning the ‘making’ of events through magazines cf.: Claude Labrosse: *L'incertain et le virtuel. L'événement en perspectives dans les gazettes du 18e siècle*, [in:] Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Jean-Yves Mollier (eds.): *Presse et événement. Journaux, gazette, almanachs XVIII^e–XIX^e siècles*. Bern et al. p. 7–25. Larousse claims: “Un énoncé d'événement est inséparable de sa fonction ‘médiatique’. De ce fait il est toujours un espace de ‘conversion’ Convertir de l'information en représentation (relation, récits, spectacles). Convertir ce monde représenté en un monde observé, en un espace d'exploration, en objet de réflexion. Convertir même ces analyses en pré-vision d'actions possibles.” p. 25.

tions. Only the interaction of various forms of mediation turns an event into a media event. The newspaper in particular relies on the recentness of the reported information. Based on these criteria of an early modern media event, this article shall investigate a legal case which has become known in history as the “Calas Affair.”

On 9th March 1762, the Huguenot merchant Jean Calas has been broken on the wheel following the court order of the parliament in Toulouse. The court had accused him of having murdered his eldest son for religious reasons. There were, however, no clear proofs of his guilt. In fact, many signs confirmed the hypothesis that it was actually a suicide, and as result, the father’s innocence. Suspicion now turned towards the judges of the Toulouse parliament, with rumors circulating that they were motivated by religious prejudices – that is, using the allegation as an excuse to punish a member of a religious minority. They ordered the execution following an obscure procedure including the application of torture – a method already conceived as distastefully cruel.

By mid-century more and more voices in Europe had been raised against unjust prosecution, such as the punishment of religious crimes and the use of torture and the death penalty. The debate on torture and execution had been initiated by Cesare Beccaria’s *Dei delitti e delle pene*, first published in 1762. It first found approval in the circles of French enlightenment philosophers, not least that of Voltaire⁴. Both practices were increasingly seen as medieval and dishonorable for such enlightened times, and were denounced as unreasonable and inappropriate. Nevertheless, executions remained a quite common phenomenon in eighteenth-century everyday life⁵. The incidents of Toulouse obtained a higher significance by virtue of the religious background mentioned above. It was this religious context that attracted the interest of Voltaire, who was key in bringing this case to a larger public. Through public pressure, the proceeding was revised two years later at the Parlement of Paris, and Jean Calas was found innocent and in 1765 finally posthumously rehabilitated. His family then received compensation from the king. This was a hitherto unprecedented occurrence in history: under pressure from the public, a legally-passed sentence was challenged and ultimately, after a review process, was adjudged as invalid.

Information about this incident was not limited to France. The event aroused attention across Europe through various media, making it an example of early modern cultural entanglement. In today’s research, however, this Europe-wide attention has entirely disappeared from view. Whereas the international fame commanded by this

⁴ For the European dimensions of the adoption of Beccaria’s ideas, cf. Strese-Gassiev, Larisa: Cesare Beccaria’s contractual theory of criminal law and its resonance in absolutist Russia, [in:] *Gremium* 5 (2011), p. 73–91.

⁵ Cf. Bastien, Pascal: *L’exécution publique à Paris au XIII^e siècle. Une histoire des rituels judiciaires*, Seyssel 2006.

case during the eighteenth century frames the case as an event and thus inscribes it in the historiographical memory, the international dimension of the public of this event is mentioned in current studies only incidentally at best. In the following, I attempt to trace the European dimensions of the Calas Affair by studying its reception both in the German political press as well as literature. By the example of this affair I shall examine at what point categories of national public are useful and applicable for the study of the eighteenth century.

For this purpose I will first discuss the central theses of ongoing research on the public sphere. Second, using the reception of the affair in the German public of the eighteenth century as my base, I will examine the extent to which one can discern European dimensions of the public sphere in this case. This study is based from one side on eight political newspapers active during the years 1762 to 1765: The *Staats- und gelehrte Zeitung des Hamburgischen unpartheyischen Correspondenten* [hereafter: *Hamburgischer unpartheyischer Correspondent*], the *Berlinischen Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen* (Haude- und Spencersche Zeitung), the *Berlinische privilegierte Zeitung* (Vossische Zeitung), the *Leipziger Zeitungen*, the *Magdeburgische privilegierte Zeitung*, the *Bayreuther Zeitung*, the *Auszug aus den Neuesten Weltbegebenheiten* and the *Wienerische Diarium*. The chosen newspapers were almost all based in the north or north-east of Germany. Moreover, they do not represent the confessional diversity of German-speaking lands, since only one of the examined papers was printed in a Catholic territory. This limitation, however, is only of small consequence for the objectives of this study⁶. On the other side, this study examines literary sources dealing with the Calas Affair between 1762 and the beginning of the nineteenth century, including theater plays, poems and literary reviews. Furthermore, German sources will be contrasted with French newspaper reports and literary productions.

Eighteenth century public sphere

“Il s’agit d’une affaire qui étonne l’Europe et qui l’indigne”⁷, wrote Voltaire in a letter dated 2nd July 1762. By ‘affair’ he meant the trial of Jean Calas. This ‘Europe-wide interest,’ most researchers agree, had in fact been created by Voltaire. His strategy was to move policy makers to revise and eventually reverse the indictment against

⁶ The main selection criterion here was the complete conservation of the newspaper during the period in question between 1761 up to about 1765.

⁷ Voltaire to Aymard Charles François Marquis de Nicolay, 2nd July 1762, (D 10551). The usual form of citing Voltaire’s correspondence is D + the number of the letter. This numbering is based on the 135 volumes large critical edition of Voltaire’s complete oeuvres by the Voltaire Foundation Oxford: *Les Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, 1968 et seq.

the Calas family by effectively making the case public⁸. The concept of the ‘cri public’ in this context is coined by the self-appointed defender of the Calas family⁹ and this shout resonates up to today, given that both scholarly and fictional works make allusion to the commitment of the *philosophe*. In his correspondence Voltaire incessantly stressed the importance of ‘publicité’ for his commitment. It was the publicity of the case that could build the necessary pressure for the restoration of justice.

Yet, the terms of ‘cri public’ and ‘publicité’ should not be confused with modern categories of the public sphere. The public which Voltaire had in mind and which he gradually constructed through spreading awareness about this legal case is hardly comparable with current forms of the public, especially as public sphere in a modern sense was only in the process of development in the eighteenth century. Therefore, some historians speak of a “partial public sphere” (Teilöffentlichkeit), by which they understand circles of communication that affected only certain parts of society and which were separated in hierarchically-structured groups¹⁰. Others maintain that Voltaire did not even aim for a public outcome to his writings, and rather only targeted individual public figures as his audience. Voltaire’s exposure to the public was then limited to private correspondence¹¹ and was therefore characterized less by publicizing than by excluding other parts of a public sphere more broadly conceived that were not granted clearance to this information. Thus one can conceive of the arcane aspects of such an understanding of the public opinion: it was in some measure precisely this restriction of recipients which made his ‘openness’ about such explosive issues possible, including judicial and religious criticism in the form of the notion of justice and the equal rights of men¹². And the letters of Voltaire and his

⁸ This strategy and the emphasis Voltaire puts into the rehabilitation campaign is best expressed in a letter to the count d’Argental: Voltaire to Charles Augustin Feriol, comte d’Argental and Jeanne Grâce Bosc Du Bouchet, compresse d’Argental, 12th July 1762 (D 10586).

⁹ Voltaire to Henri Cathala, July 3rd 1762, (D 10554). In his letters he also used other expressions to describe the public necessary to achieve the rehabilitation: ‘cri des nations’ (D 10538), ‘la voix public’ (D 10555).

¹⁰ Cf. Abrosimov, Kirill: Die Genese des Intellektuellen im Prozess der Kommunikation. Friedrich Melchior Grimms ‘Correspondance littéraire’, Voltaire und die Affäre Calas; [in:] *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33, 2 (2007), p. 163–197, here p. 166.

¹¹ Cf. Lietz, Jutta: Voltaires Korrespondenz zur Affäre Calas; [in:] *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, 49 (1998), p. 68–97, hier p. 76. In Voltaire’s correspondence about 500 letters deal with the Calas Affair; cf. *ibid.* p. 70.

¹² These mechanisms are to be found for example in how the *Correspondance littéraire* was published by Friedrich Melchior Grimm. This periodical could only maintain its position of radical Enlightenment by keeping it strictly secret and thus bypassing censorship. Grimm kept a jealous watch over the subscribers of his hand-written *Correspondance*, forbidding any sort of further publication of the texts and even forbid the contributors to read the other author’s texts. Through this exclusivity and absolute secrecy, the autonomy and high level of enlightenment critique in Grimm’s *Correspondance* was made possible. This has been convincingly argued by Kirill Abrosimov. Cf. Abrosimov: Die Genese des Intellektuellen (see note 10), for this context especially 170–177.

friends were without doubt the decisive factor in the second review of the documents submitted in the Calas case, since they directly pressured the relevant decision makers¹³. An examination of the interactions and influence of transnational communication networks on national criminal justice and politics is, indeed, still lacking for the Calas case. Such is also true for the eighteenth century in general. It is beyond doubt, however, that the expressions of sympathy by European princes who had been informed by Friedrich Melchior Grimm's *Correspondance littéraire* caused a certain pressure on French law courts¹⁴.

Yet, the public of the Calas Affair was not limited to this scope of an elitist 'partial' public sphere. Voltaire himself arranged for the publication of some of his letters and writings on the Calas case – not least in his 1763 *Traité sur la tolérance*, which he introduced with the "Histoire abrégée de la mort de Jean Calas." These writings reached a wider audience than the recipients of his letters and the *Correspondance littéraire* who had been invited to direct action. But how far could the 'cri public' actually be heard and who else in Europe outside of the Royal Courts was aware of this event? These questions lead us to a fundamental debate on the issue of the public sphere in the eighteenth century.

To this day, all theories approaching the eighteenth-century public sphere deal – be it in an approving or disapproving way – with the theory of Jürgen Habermas on the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere. It is well known that Habermas contended that in Germany a "literary public sphere" initially emerged and that this form of public evolved into a political public sphere by the end of the century¹⁵. For some time now, various scholars have criticized this claim of a 'non-political German Enlightenment' which is suggested by the separation between 'literary' and 'political' public spheres¹⁶. All these various new approaches have in common the rejection of

¹³ Voltaire tried to directly or indirectly influence the lawyers Pierre Mariette, Elie de Beaumont und Loyseau de Mauléon, the count de Choiseul, maréchal de Richelieu, cardinal Bernis and many other, cf. *ibid.*, p. 86 and 88.

¹⁴ Abrosimov talks about a 'European strategy of the *philosophes*' headed by Voltaire and Grimm. "Europa' wurde dabei zum 'Tribunal' über französische Verhältnisse erhoben"; Abrosimov: *Die Genese des Intellektuellen* (see note 10), p. 186. For the European correspondents of Voltaire cf. Mervaud, Christiane: *Réseaux européens de la 'Correspondance' de Voltaire 1759–1760*; [in:] Winklehner, Brigitte (ed.): *Voltaire und Europa. Der interkulturelle Kontext von Voltaires 'Correspondance'*, Tübingen 2006, p. 49–56.

¹⁵ "Noch bevor die Öffentlichkeit der öffentlichen Gewalt durch das politische Raisonement der Privatleute streitig gemacht und am Ende ganz entzogen wird, formiert sich unter der Decke eine Öffentlichkeit in unpolitischer Gestalt – die literarische Vorform der politisch fungierenden Öffentlichkeit."; Habermas, Jürgen: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchung zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Neuwied am Rhein/ Berlin 1965, p. 40.

¹⁶ Ursula Goldenbaum for example has emphasized that the public sphere was not at all limited to literary (poetic and artistic) circles, but on the contrary, legal and political discussions were already at the time of the early enlightenment shaping the public sphere. Cf. Goldenbaum, Ursula: *Appell an*

the reduction of early modern public sphere to associations, clubs and learned societies¹⁷. Attention is now focused on debates in public media. Through this new emphasis on the communicative structure of the Enlightenment, the concept of the public has been modified: instead of trying to comprehend how the one and only public sphere arose along with its conditions and structural features, scholars now try to demonstrate the existence of a variety of publics. The public sphere is thus now conceived as a system of spaces of communication¹⁸.

According to these criteria, any specific public – variously rendered as ‘degree of publicity,’ ‘level of public sphere’ or ‘partial public sphere’¹⁹ – can be classified as if it were in a coordinate system, depending on its penetration on the spatial and the social planes²⁰. In contrast with ideas of the public sphere as a permanent, extensive institution, embracing all social groups, this conception of the public sphere as a horizontally- and vertically-staged phenomenon seems to me more suitable for historical research.

All of the theories mentioned above share the disadvantage of a national focus. They have been prone to conceive of the public sphere as local, urban, regional or national (for the early modern period in the case of Germany, at broadest on the

das Publikum. Die öffentliche Debatte in der deutschen Aufklärung 1687–1796, vol. 1, Berlin 2004, p. 79 and 82. Andreas Würigler has come to similar results in his study on pre-modern discussions of social and political conflicts. He was able to show that in the first half of eighteenth century certain conflicts were already sparking public political debate. Cf. Würigler, Andreas: *Veröffentlichte Meinung – öffentliche Meinung. Lokal-internationale Kommunikationsnetze im 18. Jahrhundert*; [in:] Knabe, Peter-Eckhard (ed.): *Opinion*, Berlin 2000, p. 101–135. See also the earlier study by Welke, Martin: *Die Legende vom ‘unpolitischen Deutschen’. Zeitungslesen im 18. Jahrhundert als Spiegel des politischen Interesses*; [in:] *Jahrbuch der Wittheit zu Bremen*, 15 (1981), p. 161–188.

¹⁷ Cf. Hoffmann, Carl A.: ‘Öffentlichkeit’ und ‘Kommunikation’ in den Forschungen zur Vormoderne. Eine Skizze; [in:] C.A.H./ Kießling, Rolf (eds.): *Kommunikation und Region*, Konstanz 2001, p. 69–110.

¹⁸ This approach has been systematically developed by Carl A. Hoffmann who has discerned spatial and group-specific dimensions of the public sphere. He defines: „Kommunikationsräume werden im folgenden so verstanden, daß die Frage nach der Reichweite öffentlicher Kommunikation gestellt wird. Kommunikationskreise bestimmen die diversen Personengruppen oder Schichten, die in der Forschungsliteratur an der (politischen) öffentlichen Kommunikation als teilhabend betrachtet werden.“ Cf. Hoffmann: ‘Öffentlichkeit’ und ‘Kommunikation’ (see note 17), p. 71.

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. Abrosimov: *Die Genese des Intellektuellen* (see note 10), p. 187.

²⁰ Hoffman also gives a demonstrative overview of the historiographical research on the public sphere since Habermas, where he contrasts the studies on the period of the Enlightenment with some studies on the middle ages and the absolutist era and stresses their possibly useful input for the research on the modern public sphere. For example he detects an “occasional” public sphere during the middle ages (cf. p. 84, 90, 96 and 99) that was temporarily and spatially limited and emerged at the occasion of certain events; and he talks about “thematically bound” communication processes during the Reformation or again about a public sphere divided according to the social corporations or the opposition “public – secret” during the absolutist era. These features continue to shape the public sphere during the eighteenth century.

level of 'Reich'). Only Andreas Würgler has presented a concept of a transnational public sphere. He examined the interaction between local and international publics in mass media, and found them to be entangled in "discussions on political conflicts, crosslinking local and international levels"²¹. Connecting this approach with the plural understanding of the public sphere, we arrive at a spatially- and temporally-defined conception of the public that allows us to abstract away from national categories and to instead identify various forms of modern public relations – in particular their European dimension. It can be shown that processes of communication have always been wider than the simply national, and in particular that European-wide processes and thus a European sphere of public existed, or, even further, that categories of a nationally-shielded public sphere in pre-modern Europe ignore historical reality. To be sure, there were communication processes limited to local or regional areas; however, certain individual events evidence pan-European interest, and neither the actors nor the recipients were limited to scholarly circles²².

The difference between the two levels is primarily found in medial form. While the local public was based on verbal exchanges, the international context of communication was mediated via written form. Since the seventeenth century, in addition to individual printings, periodical publications increasingly become the preferred place to discuss specific issues and events²³. It is this form of the public that can be

²¹ Würgler: *Veröffentlichte Meinung – öffentliche Meinung* (see note 16), p. 130.

²² Cf. *ibid.* p. 121.

²³ For a long time the magazine has been seen as the only media that assured the discourse of Enlightenment. In contrast to that the press history of the last decades also brings to the fore the impact of newspapers on the emergence of the public sphere during the eighteenth century. Newspapers started to form a political public opinion already during the first half of the century. Cf. Waibel, Nicole: *Nationale und patriotische Publizistik in der Freien Reichsstadt Augsburg. Studien zur periodischen Presse im Zeitalter der Aufklärung (1748–1770)*, Bremen 2008, p. 18. I would argue, however, that this point should be differentiated. To be sure there were newspapers during the first half of the century that included elements of opinion making, but the newspapers generally kept the practice to bring the news without any commentary. This is the case at least for the newspapers examined between 1761 and 1765 examined here. The most important German newspaper of the eighteenth century in 1783 still insists: "Es ist nicht die Sache des Zeitungsschreibers, dem Leser die Schlüsse vorzumachen, welche dieser leicht von selbst und gemeinlich besser macht." *Hamburgischer unpartheyischer Correspondent*, 1783, no. 74, cited in Böning, Holger: *Ohne Zeitung keine Aufklärung*; [in:] *idem/Blome, Astrid (eds.): Presse und Geschichte. Leistungen und Perspektiven der historischen Presseforschung*, Bremen 2008, p. 142–178, here p. 170. Nevertheless the newspaper increasingly gained importance as media that could continually widen its public particularly in the view of the fact that a process of an ever larger reading public and an increasing capacity to read was under way during the century. Cf. Welke, Martin: *Gemeinsame Lektüre und frühe Formen von Gruppenbildung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Zeitunglesen in Deutschland*; [in:] *Dann, Otto (ed.): Lesegesellschaften und bürgerliche Emanzipation*, Munich 1981, p. 29–53. Welke emphasizes the political interest which constituted the original motivation for learning how to read. And it was only in the course of the eighteenth century that it was joined by the success of the novel literature. This larger readership thus constitutes a public sphere that goes far beyond the elitist circles of the philosophers of the Enlightenment or the

identified with modern forms of the public sphere. It can be shown that at the level of the growing reading public, the public sphere too was a European phenomenon from the start. Thus, not only ‘miscellaneous facts’ or important political and social decisions or events from most European countries were deemed newsworthy, but most newspapers were especially focused on news from abroad²⁴. In that way newspapers provided a window to the (political) world. The public sphere of the eighteenth century must therefore be thought of in European categories and should not be misconstrued as discrete English, German or French public spheres.

The reception of the Calas affair in German-speaking lands

The examination of the public of the Calas Affair in German-speaking lands suggests the classification of three succeeding phases of its reception. The first phase was one initiated by Voltaire in spreading knowledge about it from France to other European courts. The level of a semi-public, semi-private correspondence with a variety of French and European correspondents basically started immediately after Voltaire noted the execution of Jean Calas. From the beginning, he influenced, albeit via a narrowed elite public, audiences beyond France. In 1762 these writings were complemented by documents directly written for more than one person. The translation of the *Traité sur la tolérance* was soon published in Leipzig in 1764 under the title *Abhandlung über die Religionsduldung*²⁵. This publication was prefaced by the story of Jean Calas. The first text published in German on the Calas case, however, appeared two years earlier, shortly after the execution of Calas in 1762. This was a translation of an originally French text, published under the title of “Authentische Briefe [...] der reformierten Familie Calas”²⁶. Both texts, in addition to the subse-

still relatively small group of learned people. The public Enlightenment only begins in the last third of the eighteenth century, mainly fostered by the periodical press as Holger Böning could show; cf. Böning: *Ohne Zeitung keine Aufklärung*, p. 141–178.

²⁴ In the vast majority of newspapers those information prevail that report from abroad. One of the reasons is to avoid censorship which often suppresses local news. Cf. this: Lindemann, Margot: *Deutsche Presse bis 1815. Geschichte der deutschen Presse*, part 1, Berlin 1969, p. 144. Yet, this aspect should not be overestimated, since it could be shown that the political landscape in Germany, divided in different counties and confessions, fostered a particularly liberal situation of censorship, while the authorities were being aware of the impact of the press and thus the public opinion; cf. Welke: *Die Legende vom ‘unpolitischen Deutschen’*, (see note 16), p. 179–182.

²⁵ Voltaire: *Abhandlung über die Religionsduldung aus dem Französischen*, Leipzig 1764.

²⁶ Voltaire: *Authentische Briefe welche das traurige Schicksal der reformierten Familie Calas zu Toulouse nach der Wahrheit vor Augen legen. Aus dem Französischen übersetzt*, [no place of publication] 1762. This is the title on the cover, at the first page the title is: *Authentische Nachrichten, betreffend den Tod der Herren Calas, und das Urtheil, so zu Toulouse gesprochen worden*. The last one matches the French original: *Pièces originales concernant la mort des Sieurs Calas et le jugement rendu à Toulouse*.

quent reports of the Parisian advocates, attracted attention in Germany. The public which knew about the story of the Calas family by the start of the review process in 1764 was still very limited – particularly to courtly and scholarly circles – but was not simply limited to the French-speaking world.

The second phase of making the Calas Affair public was its coverage in the political press in the years during the review process, 1764 and 1765. An examination of the newspapers shows that the German press kept its readers up-to-date with the state of the review process and its happy outcome for Calas' family, sometimes in more detail than could be found in French. A Hamburg newspaper reader, for example, may have been just as well-informed about the progress of the review process as a denizen of Paris. Apart from magazines and publications in book form, the newspaper was the main media form of the eighteenth century. In Germany a remarkable level of circulation and diversity prevailed. In the first half of the eighteenth century about 50–60 titles were published, and in the second half about 200–250. Average circulation per paper was about 600 to 700 copies. When one considers the fact that newspaper reading was not limited to individual private reading, but that a single copy could reach several readers (or listeners,) attests that the newspaper was the mass medium of the era. Estimates of total newspaper readership in Germany in the middle of the century number about one million readers²⁷.

In Germany, the first news about the Calas case in periodicals appeared in 1764. The trial of Jean Calas and his execution had not yet met with any attention, and it was not until the Parisian Parliament scraped the verdict of Toulouse and began a review process that newspapers started to cover the case. The *Hamburgische unpartheyische Correspondent* wrote on 26th June 1764:

“In diesem Conseil [Königlicher Staatsrat], wurde in Ansehung der von der Wittve Calas und ihren Kindern überreichten Bittschrift zu Recht erkannt, worinn sie um die Aufhebung des vom Parlament zu Toulouse unterm 9. März 1762 abgefaßten Arrets, wodurch ihr Ehemann, Johann Calas, wegen eines ihm überwiesenen an seinem ältesten Sohne, Marcus Antonius Calas, verübten Mordes zum Tode verurtheilet worden und [...] so wurde das Arrets des besagten Parlements nebst allem demjenigen, was daraus entstanden war, durch die Mehrheit der Stimmen aufgehoben, wiederrufen und annullieret“²⁸.

But the state of the Calas family in the newspapers was not yet the ‘Calas Affair,’ although Voltaire has used this term in his letters since 1762. This is the reason why in this early article the necessity to scrape the “Arret” is emphasized by stating that

²⁷ Cf. Wilke, Jürgen: Grundzüge der Medien- und Kommunikationsgeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis ins 20. Jahrhundert, Köln 2000, p. 78 and 93. See also Welke: Gemeinsame Lektüre (see note 23), here p. 30. What the newspapers cover is perceived by a large part of the population, if you will, at the moment it is covered, that is, when it turns into an event.

²⁸ Hamburgischer unpartheyischer Correspondent, 1764, no. 101.

justice needs to be done for an “innocently suffering person who paid with his life.” That he and his family deserved justice would immediately be apparent to all considering the destiny of these “unfortunate people.” The topos of the ‘unfortunate family Calas’ is characteristic of the early reporting of the newspapers and would remain so in the following year, as the decision of the trial reverberated through the press. By the spring 1765 the story of the “unfortunate Calas family” was known to a wide audience in Germany by way of the newspapers. Unlike the year before, the papers now spoke about the “Sache”, the “Proceß-Sache”, or the “Streitsache” of the unfortunate Calas family or the “berüchtigten Sache des Hn. Calas.” “Sache” in this context is the translation of the French ‘affaire’ into German. In April 1765, it was sufficient just to mention the ‘Sache der Familie Calas’ to trigger a whole chain of associations. Only two months earlier still completely unknown in some German regions and sectors of the population, the Calas case had now matured into the ‘Calas Affair’. From that point on, up to when the appeals process had made its final sentence, which was covered by almost every German newspaper under examination here, every single information relating to the Calas Affair was reported in German-language newspapers. Introductory words were no longer needed in reporting about the progress of the events surrounding the family in the summer of 1765. Additionally, a much wider level of publicity was evident now in the Calas Affair, which has become an event in 1765: the international interest in the topic itself was now explicitly made a subject of discussion. To emphasize the public nature of the event, one article called the case that “which has caused so much sensation across the whole of Europe”²⁹.

The idea that this event concerned everyone in Europe and in the end all of humanity was taken from the writings of Voltaire. This reveals one function of the German press to be a multiplier of enlightened thought. The newspapers showed extremely little fear in professing a critical observation of social and political conditions. The case was considered by the papers in the light of Enlightenment ideas and attained via the use of key concepts such as “justice”, “happiness”, “prejudice” and “fanatism” a universalist thrust transcending local peculiarities. The correspondents of the trans-regional press considered the court case to be newsworthy and publishers and censors considered it printable; opinions which did not change on the basis of a country’s given borders. In the case of the Calas Affair the physical distance and thus the distance from the political territory of the respective publisher sites might have been of certain significance. Reports from foreign countries were far less subject to censorship than regional or local news. However, a critical analysis of situations abroad, outlining the ideas of liberal thinkers often unwelcome to the authorities,

²⁹ Magdeburgische privilegierte Zeitung, May 39th 1765, no. 39.

may have themselves represented an attempt by the papers to criticize domestic situations and to increase the sensitivity of the public on these issues.

When compared with the French press reports on the Calas case, however, two fundamental differences can be discerned. On the one hand, it can be shown that the Calas Affair was treated in the German political press in significantly more detail than was the case in French newspapers. Several factors may have been decisive. In the first place, the press system in pre-revolutionary France was much less developed and subject to much more effective censorship than in Germany, where a diverse landscape of newspapers and magazines with different regulations for censorship has emerged, not least as a result of the denominational and political fragmentation. In the second place, it is important to note that with the Parisian papers, the proximity to the place where the event has happened and thus the alternative channels of distributing news – for example by oral colportage – had an impact on what was covered by the press. On the other hand, a big debate on whether Jean Calas was actually guilty or innocent was largely limited to French-language newspapers³⁰. Such a discussion on the contrary cannot be found in German periodicals – there, the innocence of the executed was more or less taken for granted.

Hence, while one can at first discern a rather unitary participation in the Calas Affair in the literary publish sphere of both countries, a third phase of the Calas Affair emerged in 1765, where the media forms of its representation began to diversify nationally. The use of historical occurrences as a means of implementing new approaches to literary theory, in this case the aesthetic stylization of Jean Calas as a hero and role model, happened initially in the German-speaking world, not in France. At least a decade earlier than in France, German plays on the Affair came to stage, poems were written and discussed in literary magazines, and pictorial representations of the Affair found a broad resonance amongst the German public. The treatment of the historical event was characterized by an impressive medial variety, which in turn generated a large number of semantic concepts. This enables the distinguishing of different motifs in the literary public from 1760 to 1790. The critique of fanaticism and the idea of tolerance played a central role in the literary transformation of the Calas Affair. The most important example of the aesthetic expression of such Enlightenment thinking was the play by Christian Felix Weiße:

³⁰ Cf. *Journal encyclopédique*, June 15th 1765, vol. IV.3, p. 129 et seq.

“Dieß ist dein Werk, schrecklicher Fanatismus! O daß es doch das letzte Beyspiel seiner traurigen Folgen wäre, und alle Sterbliche auf Erden ohne Unterschied der Religionen den süßen Einfluß der brüderlichen Liebe in ihren Herzen fühlten!”³¹.

After these proclamatory words the curtain fell. The script would not be printed until 1780, at least seven years after its composition³². That meant that Weiße took the story of the Calas family as the basis for a theatrical work far earlier than any French poet³³. Two years after its first publication, the piece was performed at the Electoral Theater in Munich³⁴. It was staged in Berlin as well, although the exact date remains unclear³⁵. As the quoted passage from the end of the play shows, the author wanted it to be understood as a critique of ongoing intolerance and religious fanaticism. It thus joined in with the literature of the Enlightenment, taking up the cause of the war against prejudice and the obsession over religious differences now perceived outdated, along with the fight for freedom³⁶. This was expressed quite explicitly in the preface to the edition of 1782, where “false religious zeal” and “intolerance” were both discussed in contrast with the “spirit of tolerance and religious freedom”. The role of Calas was not limited to that of the pitiful, innocent victim,

³¹ Weiße, Christian Felix: *Der Fanatismus oder Jean Calas. Ein historisches Schauspiel in fünf Aufzügen. Samt einer kurzen Geschichte von seinem Tode*; [in:] *Neue Schauspiele*, vol. 10, Augsburg 1780, p. 176.

³² The author emphasizes this point in his preface; cf. *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, July 22nd 1780, p. 480. It is also documented by a letter by Christian Garve to Weiße dated November 4th 1773; cf. Christian Garve, *Briefe von Christian Garve an Christian Felix Weiße und einige andere Freunde*, part 1, (ed. by Wölfel, Kurt), [reprint of the Breslau edition 1803], Hildesheim/Zürich/New York 1999, p. 28–40.

³³ The first French piece I could find is dated in 1778, while the first play in Europe about the death of Calas was published in the Netherlands: Van Hooegeven, Cornelis: *De Dood van Calas, Treuerspel*, Leiden 1767. A detailed examination of other European literatures, particularly the English, is still lacking to definitively answer this question.

³⁴ This is proven by the 1782 edition of the plays given there: *Neue Schauspiele. Aufgeführt auf dem Churfürstlichen Theater zu München. Zehnter Band*, Augsburg 1782. It is probably the theater of the Electoral Palace. It is very unlikely that it was the Residenz Theater, better known as Cuvillies-Theater where only operas were performed.

³⁵ Cf. Weiße, Christian Ernst/ Fritzsche, Samuel Gottlob (eds.): *Christian Felix Weißens Selbstbiographie*, Leipzig 1807, p. 162f. The autobiography has been written by Weiße himself in the third person and published posthumously by his son and son in law.

³⁶ Katrin Löffler points to the proximity of this with the ideas in the sermons of a friend of Weiße, the Leipzig Calvinist Georg Joachim Zollighofer. She interprets this similarity as evidence that Weiße’s ideas were drawn from theological conviction and emphasizes the “Protestant position” and the “remnants of a confessional polemic”. Cf. Löffler, Kathrin: *Aufklärung und Konfessionspolitik. Weißes Trauerspiel ‘Der Fanatismus, oder: Jean Calas’*; [in:] K.L./ Ludwig Stockinger (eds.): *Christian Felix Weiße und die Leipziger Aufklärung*, Hildesheim 2006, p. 95–127, hier besonders p. 120–127. In contrast, I would stress the enlightened ideas that will spread via the play into the public sphere, and I cannot find anti-Catholic polemics in this Weiße’s work.

although this indeed constituted a fundamental aspect of the tragedy³⁷. In his conciliatory demeanor he did not blame the Catholic religion itself for his misery, and in that way held up a mirror to the fanatical judges. The Jean Calas of the play conceived of the followers of a different faith as nevertheless his brother and identified the hatred against him as a religious delusion deviating from the true faith. In this manner he embodied enlightened reason.

“Laßt euch, meine Kinder, [...] nie einen blinden Eifer gegen andere Glaubensgenossen, von welchem sie auch sein mögen hinreißen; Ihr könnt irren, wie sie. Ihr seht die traurigen Folgen an mir, dem Opfer eines solchen blinden Eifers“³⁸.

Weiße forged a link in the preface to the play between the idea of tolerance and the aesthetic ideal of sensibility: the “Spirit of tolerance” for him was “the spirit of meekness and love”³⁹. Enlightenment ideas thus originated in the aesthetic program of bourgeois tragedy, or at least found their very own expression in that form. Virtuous behavior was demonstrated in terms of exciting a greater feeling of humanity, which was accompanied by tears as the witness of emotion⁴⁰. “Was inzwischen die Geschichte sowohl als die Charaktere, und die Entwicklung sowohl als die Ausführung anbetrifft, so hat sich der Verfasser so strenge an die Geschichte gehalten, daß kein historischer Zug, ich möchte fast sagen, kein Ausdruck darinnen ist, den er nicht aus dem Prozesse selbst und aus den Schutzreden in Paris, gezogen hätte”⁴¹. But even if the poet claimed to have kept to the historical events, the ultimate goal of his drama remained the generation of “mystification and emotion” (Täuschung und Rührung)⁴². And this is for the aim of enlightening the public.

On the one hand the fate of Jean Calas thus served to illustrate the necessity of implementing the ideas of Enlightenment. On the other hand, the aesthetic stylization of the Huguenot merchant as hero gained its own momentum in German literature. The medial communication and spread of the motive of Calas as a steadfast model of the enlightened citizen constitutes an interesting story. A poem published in 1779 in the *Deutsches Museum* impressively reflected this motive⁴³. The title directly paid tribute to the visual medium serving as literary inspiration: “In front of

³⁷ Cf. for example the seventh entrance of the third act: Weiße: *Der Fanatismus oder Jean Calas* (see note 31), p. 102–106.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2 of the preface (without pagination).

⁴⁰ Cf. Žmegač, Viktor: *Gellert und die Anfänge der Empfindsamkeit*; [in:] V.Ž. (ed.): *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin 2000, vol. 1.1, p. 245–269, here p. 253.

⁴¹ Weiße: *Der Fanatismus oder Jean Calas* (see note 31), of the preface (without pagination).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 4 of the preface (without pagination).

⁴³ *Deutsches Museum*, 1779, vol. 2, p. 167 f.

Chodowiecki's Calas". In 1767 the illustrator Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki from Berlin had made a copper engraving of the farewell scene of the Calas family shortly before the execution of the father⁴⁴. An engraving of the Calas family by a French author already existed, which, however, was not well circulated, though copies of it did reach Germany. It was Chodowiecki's engraving that gave rise to a lyrical devotion to Calas, imagined as unwavering in his belief and even in the face of death still in defiance of his executioners. The last stanza of the poem refers to him as an example:

*Oh Calas! Calas! wo ich geh' und stehe,
sei du Begleiter mir und Freund,
Begleiter, wann ich einsam flehe,
Begleiter, wann mein Auge trostlos weint!
Und bliebe mir, unfähig je zu heucheln,
unfähig, je zu kriechen und zu schmeicheln,
selbst trocknes Brod und Wasser nicht;
so sage mir dein engelsfrei Gesicht,
das seine Blicke jenseits lenkt,
schon ganz des Himmels Glück sich denkt:
es gibt ja dort noch bessere Welten,
wo Kezerhaß und Priestereifer nicht,
nicht würgende Despoten gelten!*⁴⁵

Jean Calas has become the intimate "friend" of the anonymous author. Familiarity was provided with the mere mention of the intimate family name. The Jean Calas broken on the wheel and who in the *Traité sur la tolérance* had been described mainly as a victim of religious fanaticism had become the secular martyr of public suffering under social and political abuses. About fifteen years after the execution in Toulouse, the intellectual identification with the Protestant merchant has attained a remarkable quality. Initiated by individual artists, this identification reached a wide audience through visual and lyrical portrayals. Calas has become the model of the "righteous man"⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Cf. Busch, Werner: *Das sentimentalische Bild. Die Krise der Kunst im 18. Jahrhundert und die Geburt der Moderne*, Munich 1993, p. 44. Busch mistakes Charles Delafosse as the author of the image. But this is impossible, since he died long before the time of the affair. Jean-Baptiste Delafosse was named as the author in most of the work I had access to.

⁴⁵ Emphasis mine.

⁴⁶ Weiße: *Der Fanatismus oder Jean Calas* (see note 31), p. 1 of the preface (without pagination).

The poem penetrated the public sphere through the channels of magazines, and the engraving enjoyed great popularity in German Protestant circles, catering the taste for “sentimentally-shaped critiques of society”⁴⁷. The example of the engraving and Calas’ literary transformation attests to multiple refractions in the medial mirror. The artistic adaptations did not directly refer to the historical event, but rather arranged it on the basis of its form transmitted by the various media. The Calas in the poem or the theater was already coagulated into a symbolic dramatic figure, which was directly linked to an aesthetic complex of design, serving the taste and theory of the new bourgeois literature. Just as the engraving by Chodowiecki had become a moral example through his sympathy-inducing situation, the individual and relative was overcome by the universalizing aspiration⁴⁸.

The topos of Calas as hero goes back to the time immediately following the rehabilitation of the family in 1765. The motive of the imagined goodbye between Calas and his ‘beloved ones’ shortly before his execution runs like a common thread through all the literary works concerned here. It was employed by poets immediately after the case had become known to the public, and continued to shape “Calas literature” for many years to come. The farewell scene came to serve as the pivotal point of Calas’ fate, the situation in which the entire constellation of conflict could be visualized in a condensed manner. The moment when Calas faced death and was forced to part with his family includes a universalist shape that made it uniquely suitable for public feeling. It was therefore taken up by various media and at various times: in the form of engravings, poems and tragedies.

That fact that Jean Calas and his family could become a literary motif implies that the German-speaking public knew about their fate. Werner Busch summarizes this fact in the context of the adoption of pictorial representations of the Calas Affair as follows: “This covering works upon an interested public that already knows about the circumstances and only needs the authentic portrait as reminder”⁴⁹. Direct testimonies as well as the writings of Voltaire and the lawyers in the revision process⁵⁰ may have contributed to the emergence of a public. „So hat es der

⁴⁷ Der Abschied des Jean Calas von seiner Familie; [in:] Michaelis, Rainer: Das weltliche Ereignisbild in Berlin und Brandenburg-Preußen im 18. Jahrhundert. Ausstellungskatalog, Berlin 1987, p. 40–42, here p. 41.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Busch: *Das sentimentalische Bild* (see note 44), p. 44 [translation mine].

⁵⁰ Pleadings of the lawyers Beaumont, Loyseau de Mauléon, Lassalle and Mariette were published in 1762 and 1763 and again in 1765. Cf. Loyseau de Mauléon, Alexandre Jérôme: *Memoire pour Donat, Pierre et Louis Calas, au sujet du jugement rendu à Toulouse contre le Sieur Jean Calas leur père*, The Hague 1763; Lassalle, Joseph-Mathieu de: *Observation pour le Sieur Jean Calas, la Dame de Cabibel, son épouse, & le Sieur Pierre Calas, leur fils*, [no place of publication] 1762; Mariette: *Memoir pour Dame Anne-Rose Cabibel, veuve de Sieur Calas, Marchand à Toulouse, Louis & Louis-Donat Calas leurs fils, & Anne-Rose & Anne Calas leurs filles, Demandeurs en cassation d’un Arrêt du*

französische Monarch, so hat es die französische Nation, so hat es ganz Europa erfahren, so haben alle empfindliche Seelen das Urtheil darüber gesprochen⁵¹.

In the literary public sphere of the *ancien régime* a consistent image of the protagonist “Calas” emerged, whose distance to the historical person of that name was lexically expressed by the omission of the first name and usually any characterizing attribute. This “Calas,” stripped of any personal attribute, symbolized enlightened Protestantism in battle with the religious fanaticism. Detached from genuine Protestant criticism, Calas was stylized as a hero in the struggle against the religious, social, political and legal shortcomings of absolutist Europe and held up as the model of a virtuous citizen. Literary criticism in contemporary magazines as well shows that Calas has become by the 1760s a constant component of the artistic repertoire. Obviously no author bothered to remind the audience of his fate. As a consequence, the public targeted by these works was up to 1780 fully aware of the story of the Calas family and its “Affair”. Literary interest in the historical event coincided in Germany with French interest. Artistic approaches to and communication of the Calas and his family developed in the *ancien régime* independently from the French context. The great interest for the two engravings of the farewell scene of the family is – because of the wider Protestant audience – thus not surprising⁵².

Other controversies were on the contrary sparking in the French public sphere, and completely different circumstances prevailed in France than in Germany when the affair finally aroused artistic interest in the wake of the political upheaval of the revolution. The delayed awakening of this taste however also saw numerous plays on the story of Calas to be staged. The transformation of the Calas affair into Drama thus happened in an unexpectedly asymmetric manner.

Not a single play dealing with the story was printed in France until the end of the *ancien régime*. It is telling that the only piece in French before the revolution was published in Germany. The Secret Principal Printer of the court in Berlin published a play under the title of “Les Calas” in 1778⁵³. It would take until the Revolution before the political impact of the topic was recognized in France. It was only after

Parlement de Toulouse du 9 Mars 1762, [no place of publication] 1762; and Élie de Beaumont, Jean Baptiste Jacques: Memoire a consulter, et consultation pour la Dame Anne-Rose Cabibel, veuve Calas, & ses enfans, Paris (LeBreton) 1762; and É.d.B.: Memoire pour Dame Anne-Rose Cabibel, veuve Calas, et pour ses enfans, sur le renvoi aux requetes de l'hotel au Souverain: ordonné par arret du Conseil du 4 juin 1764, Paris (Cellot) 1765.

⁵¹ Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek, 1774, vol. 21.1, p. 387.

⁵² Cf. note 44.

⁵³ Guyton de Morveau, N.: Drame Nouveau. Les Calas, en trois actes & en prose, Berlin 1778. The French author concealed his identity via a pseudonym; as M. de Brumore, the Baron de Guyton was protected by prince Henri, the Prussian king's brother, while writing explicitly for the Protestant public. De Guyton is the brother of Baron Louis-Bernard Guyton de Morveau, a chemist who would become known as a politician during the revolution.

the events of summer 1789 that the French artistic world discovered the potential of such a well-known and, due to its manifold political, legal and religious dimensions, interesting legal case. The revolutionary ideology turned Jean Calas into an exemplary victim of the unjust criminal justice system of the *ancien régime*. But things now proceed very quickly, as if the artists were just waiting for the right moment. On 17th December 1790 the drama “Calas, ou le fanatisme”⁵⁴ was first performed at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal. Only one day later the Théâtre de la Nation staged a tragedy entitled “Jean Calas”⁵⁵. The Parisian public had its chance to choose between two premiers on the same topic. The artistic grappling with this topic was hectic, almost constituting a sort of race, with several writers immediately after the political revolution addressing the resultant cultural shift with the model of the Calas Affair. In this ‘race’ there was no outright winner: none of the authors can claim proper originality. Five plays on the topic of the Calas Affair were to be produced in the 1790 and 1791⁵⁶, with the next one composed thirty years later⁵⁷.

One of the two plays first performed a year and a half after the beginning of the revolution was by Auguste Jacques Lemierre d’Argy, with a strikingly similar title to its German predecessor: “Calas, ou le fanatisme”. Moreover, the author chose a similar section of the story to create his plot: apart from some artistic liberties, both plays were faithful to the reported facts of the story.

“Je ne m’en [de la vérité historique] écarte qu’en deux points assez indifférens par eux-même : lorsque je fais un capitoul de M. de la Salle, et lorsque j’amene à Toulouse les deux filles de Calas, qui dans le temps de la mort de Marc-Antoine, étaient à la campagne”⁵⁸.

Weißer, too, had changed the facts at this very same moment in the story. Scenes from the bourgeois household form the harmonious prelude in both plays (Act 1, scene 1). The bourgeois idyll represents here the happiness which was suddenly violated by the disaster of the suicide leading to the climax of the judicial murder at the end of the process against Calas. This however does not prove with certainty that Lemierre actually used Weißer’s play as a template. Both pieces adhere strictly to the story told by Voltaire, and the striking similarities in artistic twists on the ‘facts’ could very well be coincidental.

⁵⁴ Lemierre d’Argy, Auguste-Jacques: *Calas, ou le fanatisme*. Paris (Bureau des Révolutions de Paris) 1791.

⁵⁵ Laya, Jean-Louis: *Jean Calas, Tragédie en cinq actes et en vers*, Avignon 1791.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; Laya, Jean-Louis: *Jean Calas, Tragédie en cinq actes et en vers*, Avignon 1791; Abendcourt, Willemain (d’): *La bienfaisance de Voltaire. Pièce dramatique en un acte*, Paris 1791; Chénier, Marie-Joseph (de): *Jean Calas. Tragédie en cinq actes*, Paris (Moutard) 1793 and Pujoulx, Jean-Baptiste: *La veuve Calas à Paris, ou le triomphe de Voltaire, pièce en un acte en prose*, Paris (Brunet) 1791.

⁵⁷ Ducange, Victor: *Calas. Mélodrame en 3 actes*, Paris 1819.

⁵⁸ Lemierre d’Argy: *Calas, ou le fanatisme* (see note 54), p. xxii.

By this example we can see that the enlightened possibility of historical material was detected and converted into a new literature in France only after the political and social changings induced by the revolution. This Calas however was not the hero into which he had been stylized in German literature. He was rather used as an example of the inhumanity of the judicial system that had just been abolished in France. His fate was not so much interpreted as the grounds for construing him as a role model, but rather as something produced by an old social practice that now had to be reprimanded. Therefore the story was not so much about the emotional farewell between Calas and his family as in German literature. Unlike in Weißé's play, the family does not stand in the center of attention. Rather, the family serves a supporting role to the main start of legal-religious discussion about guilt and innocence. These issues played the leading role in both the debate of the *Journal encyclopédique* as well as in French literature.

Conclusion

The idea that Germany was simply an emulator of a French cultural model must be radically called into question. Whereas the recent research on cultural transfer has extended its perspective to so-called popular culture, a larger media base and the question of reception⁵⁹, it continues to adhere to the idea that the transfer of knowledge, concepts and symbols occurred mainly in the direction of France to Germany⁶⁰. The example of the Calas Affair disproves this notion of one-dimensional transfer. Germany's role was not limited to the mere adoption of French impulses. Even a case originating in France shows that the one-dimensional scheme of a model and a recipient country is not suitable for picturing the complex cultural developments of the eighteenth century. The Calas affair generated independent literary productions in German, and in fact much earlier than in France.

By the second phase of the reception of the Calas Affair, an incident which occurred in France was constituted as an event not only by the political press in the territories of the *ancien régime*, but also in other European countries. This indicates that the distinction between national and European publics does not make much sense for the eighteenth century. The concept of national unity – with all its hypostatized implications of cultural homogeneity, ideational sense of belonging and tendencies to distinguish this national construct from others – is not useful for under-

⁵⁹ Cf. Lüsebrink, Hans-Jürgen/ Reichardt, Rolf: Kulturtransfer im Epochenbruch. Fragestellungen, methodische Konzepte, Forschungsperspektiven; [in:] H.J.L./ R.R. (eds.): Kulturtransfer im Epochenbruch. Frankreich – Deutschland 1770 bis 1815, vol. 1, Leipzig 1997, p. 9–26, here p. 24–25.

⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 10–13.

standing the genesis of the modern public sphere as the unity of a critical audience, as has been presented by Habermas and numerous other researchers. Rather, restriction to specific national cultural spaces are historiographically obscurative, since the public's attention was at no time simply limited to what was happening in its own country. The modern public sphere thus exceeded supposed cultural and national boundaries, and that from the very beginning of its formation. Its structures were such that it always transcended the cultural aspects that may have been hemmed in a single space⁶¹. The examination of an event opens the perspective on diverse media communication streams, evolving in unpredictable waves, and which in their various forms of expression could not be detected by the classical category of culture transfer. It is not simply about the mere sending and receiving of certain information, ideas, images, and their possible adaptation to local cultures.

It is already debatable whether this restriction of cultural spaces has not always been simply a theoretical construct in the service of different ideologies, and therefore it is debatable whether the phenomenon of culture can ever be understood in that way. As for the asynchronies revealed in the third phase, these only become apparent if one determines *a priori* two extant and clearly-distinguished cultural spaces: the French and German. Upon closer inspection, however, their only firm criterion of difference proves to be different languages⁶². The idea of a clear distinction between cultural spaces is a relic from research on cultural comparison and is basically maintained from early research on culture transfer. For the purpose of comparison or transfers, scholars assumed two distinct cultural regions that could be compared or between which there had been a transfer of cultural phenomena. These, according to a projected extension of a national state, arbitrarily separated cultural spaces conceived of as temporally and spatially invariant. The effort to investigate transfers between cultures thus introduced at the same time a separation of these cultures: the units between which the transfer takes place first had to be determined and distinguished. I would therefore contest the very term of cultural *transfer* as inappropriate. The cultural processes exemplified by the Calas Affair, but also studied successfully in other contexts, could be termed cultural 'entanglement', or 'intertwining' of culture, or again 'overlapping' of cultural spaces without extending the idea of a uniform culture to the European context. Recent research aims to

⁶¹ Evidence for this contention is provided by the research on intercultural awareness that has detected a particular interest of the audience for the strange and exotic facts. Cf. the introducing article by Joachim Eibach: *Annäherung – Abgrenzung – Exotisierung: Typen der Wahrnehmung des 'Anderen' in Europa am Beispiel der Türken, Chinas und der Schweiz (16. bis frühes 19. Jahrhundert)*; [in:] J.E./Carl: *Europäische Wahrnehmungen* (see note 2), p. 13–73.

⁶² And this is only partly valid, given widespread knowledge of French by large sections of the population in Germany.

overcome this dilemma by assuming cultural exchange processes to be relative in time and space. On the spatial scale the entanglement of cultures implies a sort of mesh, a certain proximity and permeable barrier between different areas. The dimensions of the cultural regions are variable: in addition to national frames, regional and local units linked by cultural entanglement come to the fore⁶³. This perspective challenges the overly schematic classification of certain cultural spaces in favor of a more complex idea of processes of cultural integration.

Entanglement also permits confronting the deficits of earlier conflicts by overcoming temporal invariance. Entanglement is not understood as a fixed state, but as a process. Entangled cultural areas can be permanent but also those construed only from a single event, ones which can be called 'occasional,' based on the previously mentioned concepts of medieval research. Cultures 'entangle' during certain events and on the basis of dynamic networks varying depending on the occasion. This variable concept of interpenetration of cultural spaces enables us to comprehend all kinds of dynamics in the development of cultures, how they interpenetrate each other, how they are interdependent from each other, and which networks they create between each other. Further, one can also observe processes of delimitation, conscious demarcation and rejections through the understanding of certain cultural compounds as 'foreign', as occurred within Europe following the formation of nation states in the nineteenth century.

These aspects of the dynamic understanding of cultural transfer are to be found in several recent approaches, such as the concept of shared history, history of entanglement, the history of globalization, cross-cultural history, postcolonial studies and world history.

As numerous as the theories are the ideas about what can best reveal the interpenetration of cultures. One of these approaches is the use of media events, as presented in this article. Events can serve to unsheathe multidimensional reception and transformation, as well as the occasional or longer term waves of attention evoked by cultural phenomena.

The degree of European cultural entanglement has been measured in proportion to the extension of the public sphere. The study of how the Calas Affair was covered in Germany and how information about it penetrated the German-speaking public, as well the comparison of this with the French press, served to address the question of how public space was constituted by this event, which in contrast to wars or other events in terms of its internal structure had no European dimension. The case of the

⁶³ An early example of such studies is the volume by Espagne, Michel/ Midell, Matthias (eds.): *Von der Elbe bis an die Seine. Kulturtransfer zwischen Sachsen und Frankreich im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Leipzig 1993.

Calas Affair has shown that the public sphere created by it was from the outset never structured nationally but was instead structured transnationally. Public attention differs spatially, penetrates some places deeper than others, appears in different forms and generates differing interpretations. Some elements remain the same, but even if specific terms are adopted everywhere, these undergo independent reformulations, reaching other or broader sections of population, sometimes losing its way in one place and emerging in another in full force⁶⁴. The public defined here is that of the Calas Affair, not that of a specific, pre-defined, geographic or national area. The latter may hardly be ascertained, since the public sphere is always determined according to certain topics attracting attention. The public of a certain event, on the contrary, can be revealed properly, precisely and, given the source material is available, to an exhaustive degree by examining its various possible medial forms – such as periodicals, literature or visualizations. Spatial differences and especially time trends can be highlighted.

By the example of the 'Calas Affair' media event I hope to have shown that the public sphere of the eighteenth century had from the beginning European dimensions, and to narrow examination to pre-defined areas would possess fatal consequences for the understanding of these historical phenomena. That there have been certain events reaching a European public, shows that the cultures of this area cannot be conceived of as closed units. Depending on the specific temporal, socio-political, religious and philosophical constellation they more or less open, permeable, intertwined or closed towards other areas.

This study seems to convey evidence about one thing: that it is not possible to speak of the one and only general public sphere, nor of unified cultures – neither for the eighteenth century nor for today. If we understand culture as a communication system, then the boundaries of culture are to be found where communication comes to an end. Correspondingly we must assume an entangled cultural area if far-flung communications networks can be observed as is the case in our example. National cultural areas, by contrast, fade out as (ex-post) intellectual concepts often arbitrarily set at political borders, and, already in early modern times, artificially unified, promoted and patriotically charged via 'cultural policies'⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Nowadays we are all familiar with this kind of phenomena. Even if it sometimes may seem that our news is completely globalized and thus uniform, dissynchronic receptions still occurred in the twentieth century as well as the present. An example that in the context of this study may perhaps bring a smile: The structural transformation of the public sphere has only been discussed in the U.S. since the 1990s because of a 27-year delay in the first English translation of Habermas' book.

⁶⁵ One might think, for example, of the policy of standardizing of the French language and its vigorous enforcement over the whole French territory beginning in the seventeenth century.

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JEAN CALAS IN THE GERMAN PUBLIC SPHERE: MEDIAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF A LEGAL CASE

Artykuł dotyczy europejskiego wymiaru rozwoju sfery publicznej w XVIII wieku. Stosując analizę wydarzeń medialnych, autor sugeruje, że od swojego początku sfera publiczna obejmowała w pewnym stopniu całą Europę. Sprawa *affair calas*, skandal sądowy, który miał miejsce we Francji w latach 60 osiemnastego wieku dotyczący protestanckiego kupca, który pomimo swojej niewinności został skazany na łamanie kołem, pokazuje, że już w połowie osiemnastego wieku wieści rozpowszechniały się poza granice państw. Niemiecka prasa doniosła o historii rodziny Calas w tym samym czasie co francuska. Dodatkowo, wydarzenia te równomiernie zainspirowały poetów i malarzy w obu tych państwach. W zasadzie, podczas analizy kolejnych podań dotyczących sprawy Calas można zauważyć, że budziła ona zainteresowanie w Niemczech nawet wcześniej niż we Francji. Prawie natychmiast po rozpowszechnieniu się wieści w Europie, w Niemczech powstały adaptacje teatralne dotyczące sprawy, natomiast we Francji pojawiły się one dopiero po wybuchu rewolucji francuskiej, której charakter upolitycznił adaptacje tym samym znacznie różniąc je od niemieckich. Niemcy podkreślili nieszczęścia jakie spotkały protestancką, aczkolwiek oświeconą mieszczańską rodzinę Calas i przedstawiali je jako rodzinną tragedię, natomiast Francuzi wykorzystali sprawę jako przykład niesprawiedliwości starego systemu sądownictwa. Postrzeganie i punkt widzenia na *affaire calas* różnił się w zależności od kraju. Medialność tego wydarzenia pokazuje również, że Europejczycy byli informowani o wydarzeniach w ten sam sposób. Można zatem twierdzić, że nigdy nie funkcjonowały narodowe sfery publiczne we Francji, w Niemczech czy gdziekolwiek indziej w Europie. Komunikacja i wszelkie jej formy są przekazem kulturowym i nie można jej postrzegać jako odbywającej się wewnątrz zamkniętych granic. To właśnie naruszalność tych granic dowodzi rozwoju kultury europejskiej w osiemnastym wieku jak i dziś.