

Charmet and the Book Police: Clandestinity, Illegality and Popular Reading in Late Ancien Régime France

Simon Burrows

On September 7, 1778, Modeste Monnot, *Inspecteur de la librairie*, and his adjunct, the bookseller Nicolas-Anne de St Agathe, called at the bookshop of Jean-Félix Charmet. They were searching for contraband works. What they found in Charmet's boutique on the *Grand'rue* at the Place Saint-Pierre in Besançon has the power to shock. It also calls us to rethink our understanding of the book trade of the later enlightenment, to re-contextualize the place of clandestine publishing, and to radically revise standard accounts of popular reading in the late eighteenth century. As for Charmet, his business clearly bore little resemblance to descriptions in existing historical literature.

Jean-Félix Charmet is well known to book historians. Robert Darnton singled him out in *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (1996) as a dealer in illegal "free-thinking" or "libertine" works, many of which he sourced from the celebrated Swiss publisher-booksellers the Société typographique de Neuchâtel [STN].¹ Indeed, the business run by Charmet, and then from late 1782 by his widow,

Simon Burrows is Professor of History at the University of Western Sydney. He is known for his innovative database project on the French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe (FBTEE) and studies of French exile writers in London. He is currently working on a monograph based on his database project.

The author wishes to thank the participants at the Round the World Digital Symposium (2014), Secularisation Symposium at UWS (2013); British Association for Romantic Studies conference (2013) and the 2014 Rudé Seminar for feedback on early drafts of parts of this paper and the editors of the Russian-language journal *Annual French Studies* (2014) for permission to reuse some material. He also wishes to acknowledge the work of the FBTEE team, past and present; financial support of the project by British Arts and Humanities Research Council and University of Western Sydney; and input of Nigel Aston, Jane McLeod and Wallace Kirsop.

¹ For Darnton's original treatment of Charmet, see Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York and London, 1996), 32-39. This should be supplemented by Darnton's 2014 essay "Charmet", published just as this article went to press, at www.robertdarnton.org/literarytour/booksellers/charmet (consulted on 2 September 2014). The host site was launched on 1 September 2014. I am grateful to Julie Kalman for allowing me to recall this paper to make some post-submission amendments in response to the materials on the site. The most

was the longest-serving client of the STN in France.² It also had the most extensive correspondence with the STN of all their French customers.³ Darnton finds this correspondence so rich that it “may be the most important single source of information about a provincial bookseller in eighteenth-century France.”⁴ It also, as we shall see, gives a highly misleading impression of Charmet’s commerce.

Darnton revealed that the Charmets were the most persistent orderers from the STN’s illegal catalogues, placing requests for ninety-seven illegal titles over a period of more than fifteen years. The STN were among their favored suppliers and the company’s directors became Charmet’s friends. A survey of the Charmets’ orders for clandestine works suggests that they demanded significant numbers of scandalous and pornographic works. Foremost amongst them were the scabrous, anonymous *Lettre philosophique de V****, with one hundred and fifty copies ordered. This was closely followed by du Lauren’s pornographic *L’Arretin*; the *Lyre gaillarde*, an anthology of erotic poems; Pidansat de Mairobert’s muck-raking biography of the royal mistress *Anecdotes sur Mme du Barry*; and a scandalous life of her royal lover, Mouffle d’Angerville’s *Vie privée de Louis XV*.⁵ Darnton notes that the Charmets’ orders show a particular predilection for scandalous political works, and that their letters suggest that “the market was flooded with this sort of literature.”⁶

The Charmets’ correspondence with the STN reveals that they conducted their illegal trade under the protection of Charles-André de Lacoré. As Intendant of the *généralité* of Besançon from 1761, Lacoré was until the foundation of Besançon’s *Chambre syndicale* in 1778, directly responsible for overseeing in the local book trade. Book shipments entering the town were inspected in the intendancy. Darnton reveals that Lacoré supplied the Charmets with “permissions de l’intendance” to facilitate their commerce and traded books for favors when the STN’s shipments got into trouble.⁷ On other occasions Charmet was able to bribe Lacoré’s men to

extensive studies of the STN to date are Michel Schlup, ed., *L’Edition neuchâteloise au siècle des lumières: La Société typographique de Neuchâtel (1769-1789)* (Neuchâtel, 2002); Robert Darnton and Michel Schlup, eds, *Le rayonnement d’une maison d’édition dans l’Europe des Lumières: La Société typographique de Neuchâtel 1769-1789*, (Neuchâtel, 2005); Jeffrey Freedman, *Books without Borders in Enlightenment Europe: French Cosmopolitanism and German Literary Markets*, (Philadelphia, 2012). See also Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, (Cambridge, MA and London, 1982). These will be supplemented by the two volumes arising from the French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe [FBTEE] database project: Mark Curran, *Selling Enlightenment* and Simon Burrows, *Enlightenment Bestsellers*. Both are scheduled to appear with Bloomsbury in 2015.

² The STN’s extensive archives are held in the Bibliothèque publique et universitaire de Neuchâtel [BPUN]. I am grateful to Michel Schlup and the BPUN for giving permission to create the FBTEE database. Charmet died after a four month illness in early January 1783. His burial on 4 January 1783 is recorded (under the name Charmet *l’aîné*) in a letter of Dominique Lépagnez to the STN dated 5 January 1782 [sic] but annotated 5 January 1783, by the STN clerks (see BPUN MS 1174 fol. 221-22). Internal evidence confirms the letter indeed dates from 1783. Furthermore, a letter written by Lépagnez on 9 January 1782 (BPUN, MS 1174, fol. 223-24) shows that Charmet *l’aîné* was very much alive at that time.

³ Thierry Rigogne, “Librairie et réseaux commerciaux du livre en France à la fin de l’ancien régime,” in *Le Rayonnement d’une maison d’édition*, Robert Darnton and Michel Schlup, eds, 375-404 (381).

⁴ See Darnton, “Charmet”.

⁵ Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 34.

⁶ Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 39.

⁷ Darnton, *Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1979), 289-90 and Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 35-36, after BPUN, MS 1134 fol. 98-99, Charmet to STN, 18 October 1775. Darnton names the intendant concerned as Pierre-Etienne Bourgeois de Boynes, Lacoré’s predecessor, but Charmet’s account of an *auto da fé* in the courtyard of the intendancy in which innocuous books were substituted for clandestine fare, makes clear that his protector was the current intendant. On this occasion the intendant’s reward

undertake only cursory inspections.⁸ By these means Charmet was able to circulate enlightenment materialist works with relative impunity for much of the 1770s and open up a route into the French heartland for the STN's clandestine works. Such protection for several years made involvement in the illegal trade a lot less risky for the Besançon dealers.

What remains unclear in *Forbidden Bestsellers* is the true extent of the Charmets' exposure to the clandestine sector. However, digital resources prepared respectively by teams headed by Darnton and the current author now allow us to contextualize the Charmets' illegal trade against the general run of their commerce with the STN. Darnton's personal website, www.robertdarnton.org, which was launched in September 2014, offers a new statistical overview of Charmet's orders for all works, both legal and clandestine, as well as an article on "Charmet" that serves as something of a corrective to his earlier work. It suggests that Charmet was in fact highly cautious in his involvement in the illegal trade: "he never dealt heavily in illegal books and he always avoided risks." Nevertheless, a 'top ten' table of all Charmet's orders still includes two scandalous lives of Louis XV alongside more innocuous illegal works by Mercier and the comte de Saint-Germain (see Table 1 below). Darnton asserts, moreover, that this table gives "a clear view of demand for literature in a provincial capital."⁹

Rank	Author	Title	Copies Ordered	Copies Supplied
1	Jacques Necker	<i>Mémoire donné au roi ... sur l'administration provincial</i>	167	484
2	Mme de Genlis	<i>Théâtre à l'usage des jeunes personnes</i>	110	80
3	Mouffle d'Angerville	<i>Vie privée de Louis XV</i>	104	52
4	Voltaire	<i>Au révérend père ... Jean de Beauvais</i>	100	0
5	Gaetano Sertor	<i>Conclave de 1774, drame</i>	100	0
6	Grimouard	<i>Lettre de M. le marquis de Caraccioli a M. d'Alembert</i>	100	400
7	Marmontel	<i>Les Incas</i>	87	150
8	Anon	<i>Mémoires de Louis XV</i>	80	6
9	Saint-Germain	<i>Mémoires de M. le comte de Saint-Germain</i>	76	78
10	L.-S. Mercier	<i>Tableau de Paris</i>	65	42

Table 1: Charmet's most ordered works from STN (source: www.robertdarnton.org) compared with copies supplied (source: FBTEE database)

Here it might be objected, however, that booksellers' orders actually have surprisingly little relationship to the reality of what the publisher-wholesalers could supply. In other words, cultural demand and supply were only loosely matched. This

was a luxury-bound copy of the abbé Raynal's celebrated *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerces des Européens dans les deux Indes*, which was not published until 1770, well after Bourgeois de Boyne's intendantscy. Lacoré served as intendant until 1784.

⁸ See Darnton, "Charmet". These methods are outlined in BPUN, MS 1134 fol. 82-83 and 88-89, letters of Charmet to the STN, 13 August and 30 September 1775.

⁹ Darnton, "Charmet".

was true for both the STN's legal and illegal trades, as the final column of Table 1 makes clear. These discrepancies were often significant, reflecting the uncertainties, time-lags and limited information that prevailed in eighteenth-century long-distance trade. Sometimes they also reflect publishers' decisions to predict and pre-empt customer demand, though this risked upsetting valued trading partners.¹⁰ Clearly, then, a 'demand side' approach to the *ancien régime* book trade fails to recognize the supply side problems that bedeviled long distance commerce in the eighteenth century.

Luckily, we can supplement Darnton's demand-side portrait of the Charmets' commerce by consulting the French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe (FBTEE) database of the STN's entire known commerce, which is now available on-line through the Western Sydney University.¹¹ It gives a truer picture of their trade with the STN by recording what books the Swiss booksellers actually dispatched.¹² The database reveals details of 7,064 copies of 393 works sent to the Charmets by the STN between December 26, 1771 and July 16, 1788. The works they sent in the largest numbers are listed in Table 2 (below).

	Title	Copies Taken
1	Necker, <i>Mémoire donné au roi ... sur l'administration provinciale</i> ¹³	484
2	Grimouard, <i>Lettre du Marquis de Caraccioli à M. d'Alembert</i>	400
3	Anon, <i>Requête au roi sur la retraite de Mr. Necker</i>	400
4	<i>Réponse du sieur Bourbonloulon au Compte rendu au roi par M. Necker</i> ¹⁴	400

¹⁰ In fact, as table one shows, they were able to fulfill less than forty percent of the Charmet's orders for works in Darnton's top ten illegal 'best-sellers'. Equally, Charmet was happy to receive and pay for four hundred copies of works such as the *Mémoire de Necker sur l'administration provinciale* and *Lettre de Caraccioli à M. d'Alembert*, even though he only ordered one hundred, or Calonne's *Les Commentaires*, which he had not requested at all. See BPUN, MS 1134, fol. 199-200, Charmet to STN, 29 June 1781; fol. 201-02, Charmet to STN, 18 July 1781. Indeed, in a letter of 9 June 1781 (fol. 192-93) Charmet told the STN that they had done well not to listen to him when he asked for only one hundred copies of the *Mémoire de Necker*. For a more global treatment of the discrepancy between supply and demand, particularly for illegal works, see Mark Curran, "Beyond the Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France," *Historical Journal* 56 (2013), 89-112.

¹¹ The FBTEE database was developed at the University of Leeds with funding from the British Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). In 2013 the University of Leeds signed a memorandum of transfer to allow UWS to take over its IP in the project and hosting rights. The project is now housed at fbtee.uws.edu.au/main/.

¹² On the merits of the two different approaches (which technically measure different things), see especially Robert Darnton's extensive and largely complimentary review of the FBTEE database at www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1355 and my response. For further methodological discussions see Simon Burrows, "In Search of Enlightenment: From Mapping Books to Cultural History," *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, special issue on "The Digital Turn," 13:4 (Fall 2013), 3-28; and Curran, "Beyond Forbidden Best-Sellers". Darnton's latest contribution to this debate "Literary Demand: Sources and Methods" at www.robertdarnton.org/literarytour/booksellers attempts to dismiss the (original) FBTEE database as being based on a "flawed methodology," but only by ignoring FBTEE's potential to filter out the very problems he identifies. A more fundamental difficulty with original FBTEE database, as the current article reveals, is that the STN archive fails to represent some of the most significant sectors of the French book trade in the late enlightenment. The further development of the database aims to compensate for this problem.

¹³ This total includes fifty-four copies sent on 5 July 1781 recorded under the title *Mémoires sur les ? provincials* [sic] in the FBTEE database.

¹⁴ This was considered an illegal work by the French authorities: see Robert L. Dawson, *Confiscations at Customs: Banned Books and the French Book Trade during the Last Years of the Ancien Régime*,

5	Calonne, <i>Les comments</i>	400
6	Robert de Saint-Vincent, <i>Observations modestes d'un citoyen sur les opérations de finances de M. Necker</i> ¹⁵	400
7	Marmontel, <i>Les Incas</i>	150
8	<i>Lettres du Pape Clément XIV</i>	122
9	[<i>Mémoires de Beaumarchais</i>] ¹⁶	103
10	Jean-Jacques Rutledge, <i>Le bureau d'esprit</i> ¹⁷	100

Table 2: Works supplied in greatest number to Charmet and his widow by the STN, 26 December 1771 to 16 July 1788 (source: FBTEE database)

Although the table needs to be treated with a certain degree of caution, because Charmet occasionally received consignments of books ordered jointly with other local booksellers, the FBTEE database nevertheless suggests that, as a proportion of the Charmets' trade with the STN, clandestine 'libertine' works were a relative sideline: instead financial and political pamphlets dealing with Necker's role at the head of the French financial administration dominate the top six places on Charmet's bestsellers list, accounting for 2,484 of the 7,064 units the STN sent him.¹⁸ In contrast, the STN sent them only 1,661 copies of eighty-three titles from Darnton's *Corpus of Clandestine Literature*. Sexually salacious political works concerning France comprised less than one-tenth of this total.¹⁹

While the FBTEE data implies that the Charmets' trade in illegal works, particularly scandalous *libelles*, was less important to their business than hitherto believed, it reinforces Darnton's portrayal of the couple as cautious traders. They usually purchased large numbers of titles in small bundles of one to six copies, or just occasionally thirteen or twenty-five, for as Madame Charmet explained, "my husband had as a principle to take a great many items and a small number of each."²⁰ Most of the STN's other retail customers ordered books in similarly small quantities. Moreover, the only time that Jean-Félix broke his cardinal rule by placing speculative orders for 400 copies of several pamphlets relating to Necker and French finances, he

SVEC 2006:7 (Oxford, 2006), 273. It does not appear on the list of libertine illegal works in Robert Darnton, *The Corpus of Clandestine Literature in France, 1769-1789* (New York and London, 1995).

¹⁵ This book was considered an illegal work: it appears on the Versailles bookseller Poinçot's inventory of confiscated books found in the Bastille's secret book *dépôt* after the fortress was stormed in July 1789. See Dawson, *Confiscations at Customs*, 274.

¹⁶ This work was condemned during the Goëzman affair, and hence illegal, but does not register under any of the FBTEE project's markers of illegality, including presence in Darnton's *Corpus of Clandestine Literature*.

¹⁷ This work was illegal and appears in Darnton's *Corpus of Clandestine Literature*, 28, but Darnton did not record any orders. In fact, at least five of his clandestine booksellers received copies from the STN (viz Manoury, Lépagnez, Charmet, Bonnard and Gerlache).

¹⁸ A letter of 23 December 1779 (BPUN, MS 1134 fol. 165-66) refers to Charmet receiving works for Lépagnez *cadet* in his own consignments. Likewise, a letter of Lépagnez *cadet* to the STN dated 26 June 1781 (BPUN, MS 1174 fol. 210-11) reveals that two hundred of Charmet's consignments of four hundred copies of Necker's *Mémoire sur l'administration provinciale* were ultimately destined for Lépagnez. The same may have been true for consignments of other works relating to the Necker's policies. Lépagnez's STN dossier can be consulted at www.robertdarnton.org.

¹⁹ The works in question were the *Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barry* (ninety copies); the *Vie privée de Louis XV* (fifty-two copies); and the *Mémoires de Louis XV* (six copies). The STN were unable to meet a substantial order from Charmet for the *Vie privée* because their supplier favored other dealers when he ran short. See Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 38.

²⁰ Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 36.

found the market saturated.²¹ He never repeated such recklessness in his dealings with the STN.

As a result, we might easily imagine the Charmets' boutique, and most other *ancien régime* retail book stores, to resemble large antiquarian bookshops today, offering a wide stock but only a few titles in multiple copies. The same impression is given by perusing the catalogues of major book dealers. For example, the Genevan-born London-based French bookseller David Boissière's 1775 catalogue, one of the more extensive of the era, lists 3,000 different titles including significant numbers from the 1750s and 1760s.²² The natural conclusion is that he held only one or a few copies of most works on the list. This fits with Darnton's assurance that, because there was no system of returns, booksellers did not take stock unless they knew it would sell, and certainly the Charmets generally seem to have ordered books on the basis of advance orders from established customers.²³ According to this vision, which implies that both stock and turnover were relatively limited, the most interesting and valuable stock was a small selection of 'bad books', hidden from sight below the shop counter for preferred and trusted clients. It was these highly profitable illicit books which kept dealers afloat.

This view of Charmet's enterprise, premises and stock contrasts strongly with accounts in governmental records. An official survey of the French print trade conducted in 1764 insists that Charmet was a man of good character and that his presses primarily ran off the anodyne and staple products of a provincial publisher: missals, graduals and new antiphonies for the ecclesiastical authorities, local almanacs and occasional trial briefs for cases of local import.²⁴ Part of a book trade dynasty established in Besançon since the turn of the century, Jean-Félix had been licensed to practice as a printer by an *arrêt* (decree) of the Royal Council dated February 15, 1762, and rapidly built a successful business.²⁵ Within two years, aged just twenty-five, he was running three presses and employing ten workers. Shortly afterwards he

²¹ BPUN, MS 1134 fol. 209-10, Charmet to STN, Besançon, 12 October 1781.

²² *Catalogue général des livres qui se trouvent chez la Société typographique à Londres* (London, n.d. [1775]). The "Société typographique de Londres" was one of Boissière's several imprints. This catalogue has been misdated to 1790: a survey of its content suggests it was published in 1775. On Boissière see Simon Burrows, *Blackmail, Scandal and Revolution: London's French Libellistes, 1758-1792* (Manchester, 2006), 63-78, 123-28 and *passim*. This can be supplemented by Robert Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water, or the Art of Slander from Louis XV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia, 2010).

²³ Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 56.

²⁴ The survey is preserved in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France [hereafter BNF], Manuscrits français [hereafter MS Fr.] 22, 184: the entries for Besançon are at fol. 60. Worldcat lists the following editions published by Jean-Félix Charmet before 1765. *Missale bisuntinum* (Vesuntione [i.e. Besançon]: J.-F. Charmet, 1761); *Du festin du Roi-Boît* (1762); *Formule d'instruction sur les connoissances générales des chevaux de guerre, et sur d'autres objets relatifs à la Cavalerie* (Besançon: Jean-Félix Charmet, 1764). Another dozen editions with various Charmet imprints appeared between 1765 and 1769: half of them were religious works and the rest a similar miscellaneous mix to Charmet's other works. For reasons of space they are not listed here. For Charmet editions produced between 1770 and 1788, see appendix.

²⁵ BNF, MS Fr 22,126 piece 157 fol. 314-24, "Extrait des déclarations faites par les imprimeurs et libraires, qui sont établis dans les villes de Bourgogne, en execution de l'arrêt du Conseil du six décembre mil sept cents" lists (fol. 320) the twenty-six year old bookseller Nicolas Charmet, a native of Besançon who was newly established in the town after several years working "en qualité de facteur et de relieur" in Paris, Lyon, Troyes, Besançon and Dijon. Other members of his family were also in the book trade at Besançon during Jean-Félix Charmet's lifetime, including Jean-Baptiste Charmet (died c. 1752) and his widow, who remained active in publishing in the early 1750s. Charmet's younger brother Charles-Antoine was also in the trade: the 1764 survey reveals he had recently gone bankrupt, and it appears that Jean-Félix took over his premises.

moved into retail bookselling and papermaking as well,²⁶ initially in partnership with his siblings, with whom he also published several editions under the imprint “Charmet frères et soeurs.”²⁷ The family partnership broke up in the early 1770s, probably due to financial pressures, and Jean-Félix briefly considered working for the STN;²⁸ however, by the late 1770s the business was prospering once more and Charmet was considered the most prosperous of Besançon’s fourteen book dealers.²⁹ This, then, was no marginal or fly-by-night operation. Charmet instead appears typical of his cohort of prosperous, state-licensed printer-booksellers who, as Jane McLeod has argued, found it in their best economic and political interests to cooperate with state edicts and regulation. Of course, such mercenary “licenced loyalty” was not absolute and could not be taken for granted by the government.³⁰ Such men (and occasionally women) might dabble in the highly profitable illegal sector; particularly if, like Charmet, they had powerful protectors, but they were unlikely to take serious risks in this line of trade.

And yet, as we shall see, there were illegal works that the Charmets were happy to stock in almost industrial quantities: pirate copies of licensed works. These, rather than under-the-counter illegal works, are what Monnot and St Agathe were looking for. Their inspections fulfilled the requirements of a decree issued on August 30, 1777, by which, in an effort to stamp down on literary piracy, the French government had declared a kind of amnesty. It allowed existing counterfeit editions to circulate legally if given an official stamp.³¹ Thereafter, printers would be allowed to reprint formerly *privilègèd* (i.e. copyright) and protected works in return for registering their new editions and paying a small fee, which would help to support a beefed up inspection system.³² As a first step to establishing this system, booksellers

²⁶ In fact the first contact between the Charmet family and the STN was in their capacity as papermakers not booksellers. It is documented in Charmet’s dossier in the STN archives at BPUN, MS 1134 fol. 1, [Charles-Antoine] Charmet *cadet* to STN, Besançon 14 July 1769. None of the correspondence in the Charmet dossier in the STN archive contains the correspondent’s Christian name or initials, and it generally identifies the long-term correspondent of the STN as “Charmet libraire,” who gave his address as Rue St Pierre (where Charles-Antoine also had a shop). It also identifies him as Charmet *l’aîné*. So how can we be sure that Charmet *l’aîné* was Jean-Félix? Primarily because the correspondence makes clear that Charmet *l’aîné* also ran a print shop. This is important because printers’ licenses allowed them to sell books as well, but booksellers could not operate as printers. The only Charmet licensed to print books in Besançon was Jean-Félix.

²⁷ BNF, MS Fr. 22,184, fol. 60. Worldcat lists five editions produced in Besançon under the “Charmet Frères and Soeurs” imprint between 1765 and 1769. They were *Histoire de la sainte jeunesse de Jésus-Christ: tirée de l’Evangile par forme d’entretiens* (1765, 1769); Jean-Baptiste Rose, *Traité élémentaire de morale, dans lequel on développe les principes d’honneur et de vertu, et les devoirs de l’homme envers la société* (1767); Jean-Baptiste Bullet, *Discours extrait de l’Histoire de l’établissement du Christianisme* (1767) and a missal and breviary entitled: *Ordo missae privatae et ejusdem ceremoniae, cum quitus-dam additionibus. Juxta Missale bisuntinum. - Rubricae generale. Breviarii bisuntini*. (Vesuntione [i.e. Besançon]: apud fratres et sorores Charmet, 1769). Three more Charmet frères and soeurs editions published between 1770 and 1772 are listed in the appendix. Worldcat searches were last verified 11 September 2014.

²⁸ BPUN, MS 1134 fol. 54-55, [Jean-Félix] “Charmet *l’aîné*” to STN, 1 October 1772.

²⁹ On the number of booksellers in Besançon, see below note 52.

³⁰ Jane McLeod, *Licensing Loyalty: Printers, Patrons and the State in Early Modern France* (University Park, 2011).

³¹ *Arrêt du conseil concernant les contrefaçons des livres: Du 30 août 1777* (Paris, 1777). The amnesty and stamping arrangements are given in articles VI to IX. I consulted the copies at BNF, MS Fr 22,075 fol. 389-90 and 391-92.

³² *Arrêt du conseil d’État du Roi, portant Règlement sur la durée des Privilèges en Librairie: Du 30 août 1777* (Paris, 1777), articles VII and X. I consulted the copy of this *arrêt* in the Desaint archives in the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, NA 490.9, chemise 7, pièce 7.

around the kingdom were invited to declare their illicit stock and get it stamped.³³ This process involved dull, repetitive work and could take several days at a well-stocked book store. Stamping and inventorying 7,150 volumes at Charmet's shop took the two officials the best part of two days.³⁴

The decree on counterfeited works of August 30, 1777 was only one part of a new system of control of the book trade. Five other *Arrêts* of the Royal Council promulgated on the same day required booksellers and printers to apply for new licenses. They also reduced the number of printers in the kingdom and reorganized the *Chambres syndicales de la librairie et de l'imprimerie* (booksellers and printers' guilds) across the country, suppressing some while creating others, and attaching centrally-paid inspectors to each.³⁵ The decrees outlined the inspectors' functions in considerable detail. These included quarterly tours of inspection of every printing shop under their jurisdiction, after which they were to report their findings to the central government.³⁶ The effects of the decree were profound, and in all probability all that the government could have wished. The sight of a number of well-established printers stripped of their livelihoods, when combined with a rigorous system of inspections, inspired widespread compliance. Over the next ten years the kingdom's booksellers were queuing up to register new printings of formerly *privilègèd* titles. Printing permissions (*permissions simples*) survive for almost three million copies of these works, and these are currently being added to the FBTEE database.³⁷

The original FBTEE database suggests that the new inspection system decimated the STN's traffic in libertine literature to France (see Fig. 1 below). Thereafter, the only dealers in France who would touch this material were fly-by-night clandestine dealers and *colporteurs* (hawkers), marginal men whose influence on the overall trade was slight.³⁸ The collapse in demand was so extreme that, in a measure unique in their history, on April 27, 1779, a desperate STN dumped some 3,729 copies of forty-nine libertine works on a bookseller named Malherbe, who, as Darnton has shown, supplied a veritable army of *colporteurs* from his secret book silo

³³ *Arrêt du conseil concernant les contrefaçons*, articles VI to IX.

³⁴ The inspection took place on Monday September 7 and Wednesday September 9, 1778. Between inspections Charmet's unstamped stock was placed under seal.

³⁵ *Arrest du conseil d'État du Roi, portant suppression & creation de différentes Chambres syndicales dans le royaume: Du 30 août 1777* (Lille, 1778). For an account of the system and full list of *arrêts*, see Robert L. Dawson, *The French Book Trade and the Permission Simple of 1777: Copyright and the Public Domain*, SVEC 301 (Oxford, 1992), 7-11. As Dawson notes, all six decrees appear in François André Isambert et al., *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises* (Paris 1822-23), xxv, 108-28. They also appear in the *Almanach de la librairie* (Paris, 1781), 151-87. However, I first consulted them in the various editions noted here.

³⁶ See the *Arrest du conseil d'État du Roi, portant suppression & creation de différentes Chambres syndicales*. Sadly detailed records of these inspections, which would have been invaluable, have mostly perished. However a few examples of inspectors' reports from 1788-1790 survive in the Archives nationales in Paris at V¹ 549-53. I thank Jane McLeod for drawing these to my attention.

³⁷ The two registers are at BNF, MS Fr 22,018 and 22,019. Their content is listed in printed form in Dawson, *The French Book Trade*, 353-610, but its inclusion in the FBTEE database will exponentially increase its potential for analysis. I thank Catherine Bishop for preparing the initial spreadsheet of data from these sources for incorporation into FBTEE.

³⁸ From 1778 almost all such works sent to France were sent to just two dealers, Malherbe of Loudun (see below) and Mauvelain of Troyes. On Mauvelain see Robert Darnton, "Trade in the Taboo: The Life of a Clandestine Book Dealer in Prerevolutionary France," in *The Widening Circle: Essays on the Circulation of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Paul J. Korshin, ed. (Philadelphia, 1976), 11-83, but cf. my critique in Burrows, *Blackmail, Scandal and Revolution*, 147-51.

in the sleepy Poitevin town of Loudun.³⁹ By that time, dealers like the Charmets were eschewing such fare. With the book trade inspector leaning over his shoulder, and the government keen to see the regulations enforced, Charmet concluded that the clandestine and pirate book trades had become just too dangerous. On February 20, 1778, he informed the STN that he could no longer help them to forward illegal books around France and was renouncing his own trade in “philosophical works.”⁴⁰

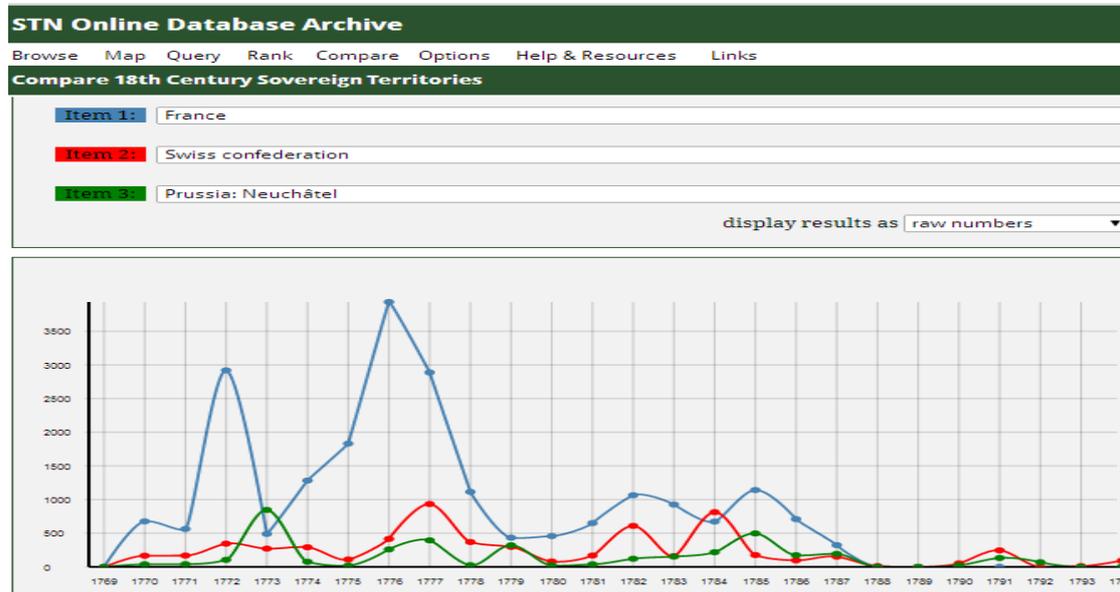


Fig. 1. Annualized sales of works in Darnton’s *Corpus of Clandestine Literature* by the STN to clients in France and Switzerland, 1769-1795.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the official account (*procès verbal*) of Monnot and St Agathe reveals that there were certain types of illegal book that Charmet stocked by the thousand.⁴² This implies that Charmet’s shop was not at all like the modern antiquarian shop described above. Instead, it resembled the student book store of a modern university just before the start of term. On shelves around the walls are books that have been in stock a while, slow sellers, out of favor texts, in ones, twos and half-dozen copies. Stacked high on tables, the floor and counters, and resembling set course texts, are a few dozen more popular titles, some of them piled up in their hundreds. What sorts of titles fulfilled this role in Charmet’s shop in the summer of 1778? Certainly nothing acquired from the STN. In the first nine months of 1778, he only took twenty-five sets of the STN’s joint edition of William Robertson’s *Histoire*

³⁹ Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 16; Simon Burrows and Mark Curran, “The French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe Database, 1769-1794,” *STN Online Network*, accessed: 29 August 2014; browse client: Malherbe, fbtee.uws.edu.au/stn/interface/.

⁴⁰ BPUN MS 1134, fol. 140-1, Charmet to STN, 20 February 1778.

⁴¹ Source: Burrows and Curran, *The French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe Database, 1769-1794*. Compare eighteenth-century sovereign territories France, Swiss Confederation and Prussia: Neuchâtel. To avoid data distortions, works commissioned by their authors or other publishers have been excluded from the figures, as have sales to “foreign wholesale clients,” including Malherbe.

⁴² This inspection and the other Besançon inspections described below are found in BNF, MS Fr. 21,834, “Etat de la Librairie, 1778.” The inspection of Charmet’s shop is at fol. 167. Further inspection reports for other towns can be found across MS Fr. 21,831-34. This data is currently being added into the FBTEE database.

d'Amérique and twenty copies of a *Fragment sur les colonies* taken from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.⁴³

We can however reconstruct some of his likely stock from a survey of the editions he published in 1777 and 1778, as recorded in the collective database of global library holdings, Worldcat. These include three panegyrics by the abbé François Xavier Talbert (*Eloge de Michel de l'Hôpital*, *Eloge historique du Cardinal d'Amboise*, and an *Eloge de Philippe d'Orléans*), Jean-Baptiste d'Auxiron's *Observations sur les juridictions anciennes et modernes de la ville de Besançon*; and some *Ordonnances ... concernant les corps royaux de l'artillerie*, all of which appeared in 1777. In addition, in 1778 Charmet published a speech given in the Academy de Besançon by Claude-François-Adrien Lézay de Marnézia under the title *Essai sur la minéralogie du bailliage d'Orgelet, en Franche-Comté*. Such works were normally produced in small print runs of around 500 to 750 copies. It is unlikely that they comprised the bulk of his stock.⁴⁴ Far more typical, in all probability, was the Charmets' final edition listed in Worldcat from the same two-year period, an octavo volume of *Instructions familières en forme de catéchisme sur les preuves de la religion* (1778).

For Jean-Félix Charmet, a bookseller known to the academic world as a specialist in illegal books, conducted a hitherto unsuspected trade in books unfamiliar to most enlightenment historians. These books were present in his store in massive numbers when the inspectors called. Pride of place was given to the Jesuit Jacques Coret's devotional manual *L'ange conducteur dans la dévotion chrétienne* (*The Guiding Angel for Christian Devotion*).⁴⁵ First published in 1681, it was not a new book, but it was a popular one. It had run to at least 500 different editions by the mid-nineteenth century and probably many more. Much of the appeal of Coret's devotional manual lay in a combination of its simple language and appeal to the cult of the guardian angel, which was strongly inculcated by the Jesuit missionary culture in which Coret was immersed.⁴⁶ Accompanying the devotions, hymns and offices throughout the book were preliminary prayers to the believer's guardian angel, calling for his blessing on each act of worship.⁴⁷

In Charmet's shop the inspectors found and stamped no less than 1,275 copies of one edition in-18 of the *Ange conducteur* and a mind-blowing 4,000 copies of

⁴³ Burrows and Curran, *French Book Trade Database*, browse client: Charmet.

⁴⁴ Michel Vernus, "A Provincial Perspective," in *Revolution in Print: The Press in France, 1775-1800*, Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche, eds (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1989), 124-38 (125).

⁴⁵ Philippe Martin, *Une religion des livres, 1640-1850* (Paris, 2003), 279.

⁴⁶ Jacques Carel, "La dévotion à l'ange gardien dans la nord de la Lorraine," *Cahiers Lorrains* 1 (1995), 23-34.

⁴⁷ Strangely, although this distinctive feature of the book was reflected in the title, it appears to have been weeded out of later editions sometime before the mid-nineteenth century. Martin, *Une religion des livres*, 122-23, has shown that between a Luxembourg edition of 1759 and a Saint-Dié edition of 1829, the amount of space given over to prayers to angels fell from twenty-one percent to one percent of the *Ange conducteur*, a shift that rather negated the distinctive title of the work (though as late as 1822 a Vandekerckhove *filis* edition produced in Gand, for example, still contained many prayers to the guardian angel). I have consulted several of the eighteenth-century editions of the *Ange conducteur* available through Google Books to confirm the presence of the common features listed here, since editions could often vary in precise content, and certain items (such as calendars of festivals) were updated between editions. Thus text, content and the precise title of the *Ange conducteur* were all unstable and could vary significantly from edition to edition. It should also be noted that although the *permission simple* registers treat the *Ange conducteur* and *Nouvel ange conducteur* as separate items, the discussion here and the FBTEE database treat both as the same work, since they are clearly both the same intellectual project.

another in duodecimo. According to their title pages, both editions had been published by Charmet in 1777. It was not a short work either: Bassompierre's Liège edition of 1768 – which was still being sold in Besançon a decade later – ran to 427 pages; others were even longer, and content varied substantially between editions.⁴⁸ Nor was this the only pious work that they encountered there. There were also 1,875 copies of Denis-Xavier Clément's *La journée du chrétien sanctifiée par la prière* (*The Christian's Day Sanctified by Prayer*), a devotional work that across the late 1770s and 1780s apparently outsold even the *Ange conducteur*.⁴⁹ This edition, too, was published by Charmet. Yet although Charmet printed them in significant numbers, none of these three editions is listed in any library currently in Worldcat. But for the survival of the inspection records, their existence would remain unknown.

A survey of other editions in Worldcat attributable to Jean-Félix Charmet or his wife during the years they traded with the STN confirms their strong predilection for religious fare (see Appendix). In all, Worldcat allows us to link the couple to twenty-six editions published between 1771 and 1788, several of which have already been noted.⁵⁰ Seven of these editions were religious works and an eighth was a manual for choral singing; the rest might be considered standard secular fare for a provincial publisher-bookseller. They include six government ordinances relating to the army; three panegyrics to popular figures from French history; a trial brief on a spat between clerics; two medical dissertations; a legal primer, a textbook on local history, and further volumes on the mineralogy of the Franche-Comté and local legal jurisdictions; a refutation of Buffon's theories by the Besançon based engineer and geologist Philippe Bertrand; and a volume of sentimental *Idylles* by local poet Charles Verny. With the possible exceptions of the trial brief and Bertrand's work, this was all relatively innocuous fare and unlikely to offend anyone. Save for the religious titles, the historical textbook and perhaps the panegyrics, they were probably only produced in limited print runs for local consumption: they barely feature in Charmet's correspondence with the STN.⁵¹ So Jean-Félix Charmet, a bookseller previously notorious as a dealer in scandalous literature, was in fact a major pusher of religious works. And many of them were pirated printings to boot, most notably the *Ange conducteur*. But was Charmet a statistical freak? Let us find out by accompanying our inspectors in a tour of some neighboring bookshops.

In all, Messieurs Monnot and de St Agathe inspected twelve bookshops in Besançon, including the latter's own shop.⁵² They encountered and stamped copies of the *Ange conducteur* and/or *Le nouvel ange conducteur* in nine of them. Their discoveries at the shop of veuve Tissot et fils (widow Tissot and sons), where they called on August 27, 1778, were fairly typical. There, on the first day of their visit,

⁴⁸ Martin, *Une religion des livres*, 122.

⁴⁹ See BN, MS Fr. 22,019 fol. 53-55, 57-58, 61 and below.

⁵⁰ This listing includes works published under the "frères et soeurs Charmet", "J.-F. Charmet", "Veuve Charmet", "Charmet" and "Charmet, libraire" imprints.

⁵¹ The main exception is Talbert's *Eloge* to Michel de l'Hôpital: see BPUN, MS 1134 fol. 130, Charmet to STN, Besançon, October 1777; fol. 132-33, Madame Charmet to STN, undated letter, received 19 October 1777.

⁵² The four licensed printers operating in Besançon in 1777 according to an "Etat général des imprimeurs du royaume fait en 1777" (BNF, MS Fr 21,832 fol. 1-22 at fol. 4) were Charmet, Daclin, Jean-Mathieu Couché and Quentin Boguillot, a "libraire de livres de classes et de piété." The last two, though involved in bookselling, do not appear in the *estampillage* returns for Besançon in BNF, MS Fr 21,834. This takes the total of booksellers in Besançon around the time of the inspections (1777-1778) to fourteen. The *Almanach de la librairie* for 1781 (page 42) lists the four printer-booksellers plus twelve booksellers, for a total of sixteen.

they stamped 2,676 copies of nine separate editions of the *Ange conducteur*. These included 819 copies of a duodecimo edition of *Le nouvel ange conducteur* published by Sébastien in Paris in 1777; 400 copies of another published in the neighboring town of Dôle chez P. F. Tonnet in 1775; and 404 copies of a 1769 edition. The following day they stamped a further three editions. Altogether they legalized a grand total of 3,768 “*Anges conducteurs* in different formats, character [*essence*], and editions,” all in just one shop. Finally, after stamping 1,600 copies of a further eleven titles, all religious, widow Tissot assured them they had seen every pirated edition in her possession.⁵³

The widow Tissot’s figures are not exceptional. Five other Besançon booksellers also presented only religious works for stamping, and three of these had an even higher proportion of *Anges conducteurs* among their stamped stock than the widow Tissot. Among them was St Agathe, whose own shop contained 2,584 copies of five editions of the *Ange conducteur* or *Nouvel ange conducteur*, the vast majority an in-18 edition dating from 1773. Holdings of *Ange conducteurs* are notable for both the number of copies in stock (an average of 1,500 per bookseller in Besançon) and the variety of editions held. In Charles-Joseph-Gabriel Lépagnez, *l’aîné* [the elder]’s shop they found five editions of the *Ange conducteur*, totaling 1,387 copies, as well as 6,142 copies of a further twenty-seven religious works.⁵⁴ At Jean Bertrand’s shop they found only 852 *Anges conducteurs*, but they comprised five separate editions; however, there were also 18,362 copies of other religious works. At Pierre-Urbain Girard’s there were a further 1,509 copies of ten editions of the *Ange conducteur* amongst the 6,057 books they stamped, almost all of which were religious works. Thomas Faivre also had ten editions of the *Ange conducteur* in stock, totaling 1,868 copies. Jean-Baptiste Gonset had just five counterfeit editions at his premises, but three of them were *Anges conducteurs*, amounting to sixty-two copies. Claude-Joseph Daclin, *imprimeur du Roi*, had only one item to declare – a 1773 edition of the *Nouvel ange conducteur* which he had had printed for him at Paris. He still had 1,425 copies.⁵⁵

Thus during the inspections of August and September 1778, the booksellers of Besançon had over 18,730 *Anges conducteurs* in stock, which they held in multiple editions, some of them a decade old. Altogether, copies of the *Ange conducteur* or *Nouvel ange conducteur* accounted for thirty percent of their combined stock of pirated works (see table three). Religious works as a whole accounted for nearly ninety percent of the works that Besançon booksellers declared to the inspectors.

Name	Total Editions (Items) Declared	Total Books Stamped	Editions ⁵⁶ of <i>Ange conducteur</i>	Total <i>Ange conducteur</i>	Total Religious Books ⁵⁷	% <i>Anges conducteurs</i> as % of Stamped Stock	Religious Works as % of Stamped Stock
Daclin	1	1,425	1	1,425	1,425	100	100
St Agathe	8	3,206	5	2,584	3,206	81	100
Charmet, Jean-	3	7,150	2	5,275	7,150	74	100

⁵³ BNF, MS Fr 21,834 fol. 156-61, quote at fol. 161.

⁵⁴ NB: Official documents often refer to him as Lépagnez *l’aîné* to distinguish him from Charmet’s main rival Dominique Lépagnez, *cadet*, who is also discussed here.

⁵⁵ BNF, MS Fr. 21,834 fol. 118-93.

⁵⁶ Includes variants such as *Nouvel ange conducteur*.

⁵⁷ Includes sacred histories but not ecclesiastical law and military orders.

Félix							
Veuve Tissot	23	5,383	12	3,768	5,383	70	100
Gonset	5	130	3	62	130	48	100
Lépaignez l'aîné	32	7,527	5	1,387	7,527	18	100
Faivre	23	5,286	10	1,868	5,149 ⁵⁸	35	97
Bertrand	66	19,732 ⁵⁹	5	852	19,112	4	97
Girard	22	6,057 ⁶⁰	10	1,509	5,827 ⁶¹	25	96
Metoyer	27	168	0	0	63	0	37.5
Lépaignez cadet	128	5,980	0	0	281 ⁶²	0	5
Charmet, Ch.-Ant.	7	32	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	345	62,068	51	18,730	55,253	30	89

Table 3. Breakdowns of stamped stock of the twelve Besançon book dealers inspected during the *estampillage* visits of August-September 1778. (Source: BNF, MS Fr. 21,834 fol. 118-93)

Nor is this the end of the story, for on April 9-10, 1779, Jean-Félix Charmet was granted *permissions* to print two further editions of the *Ange conducteur* in different formats, comprising 3,000 copies each. Further *permissions* for a total of 12,000 copies were given to Besançon printers in November 1781; February 1785; January and April 1786; and May 1788.⁶³ Moreover, Besançon booksellers evidently continued to buy further editions on a regular basis as they appeared. Sadly, the registers of the twice-weekly inspections of book consignments at France's twenty *Chambres syndicales de l'imprimerie et de la librairie* have perished, but by a strange twist of fate, the inspection inventory for Besançon for the week of August 24, 1779 survives. It informs us that in that week alone, sizeable consignments of *Anges conducteurs* were received from Bruyère destined for five of our booksellers, *viz* veuve Tissot and Messieurs St Agathe, Bertrand, Faivre and Girard. In each case, these consignments were completed by a selection from three further religious titles: *L'ange à table*, *Instructions de la jeunesse*, and *Office de l'église*. In addition, Madame Bertrand received four crates of *Anges conducteurs* from Vesoul together with further copies in a "caisse" of religious works sent from Paris.⁶⁴ Clearly, then, the *Ange conducteur* was still topping the bestsellers' list over a century after it was first published. Moreover, the booksellers of Besançon stocked it in bulk knowing that their competitors held similar volumes of stock. More than 36,700 copies passed through their hands in a single decade, all in a town of 32,000 people, and one with a significant Protestant minority, who would choose other angels to guide them.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ The non-religious books are predictably enough 137 copies of Barême's *Comptes faits*, a set of mathematical tables designed to assist with financial calculations. These were indispensable to any business in the era.

⁵⁹ A miscalculation in the document gives Bertrand's total books stamped as 19,782.

⁶⁰ A miscalculation in the document gives Girard's total as 6,053 books stamped.

⁶¹ The only non-religious work listed was 230 copies of a folio edition of Jean Petromand's *Recueil des ordonnances et edits de la franche comté de Bourgogne* (Dole, 1619). Worldcat lists a counterfeit edition dated 1619 but supposedly printed in "about 1780" by Samuel Fauche in Neuchâtel, and this may be the edition in question.

⁶² Does not include work on ecclesiastical law and military orders which would treble total.

⁶³ BN, MS Fr. 22,019 fol. 1, 3, 5, 7, 8.

⁶⁴ BN, MS 21,927, fol. 20, "Etat des Balles, Ballots, Caisses et Malles qui ont passé à la Chambre syndicale de Besançon pendant la semaine dernière."

⁶⁵ The Protestant population of Besançon was about a thousand strong.

Was Besançon unusual in its devotion? Perhaps, though not unduly. Although a significant ecclesiastical center and former imperial free city, ruled as recently as 1648 by a prince-archbishop, Besançon also had a *parlement*, a garrison and a university. It also boasted an academy and a theatre and was a centre of local government as the capital of the *généralité* de Besançon. Bristling with lawyers, local and central government officials, some 4,500 soldiers and no less than 800 clergy (some ten percent of the adult male population) attached to the archbishopric, cathedral chapter, seven wealthy parishes and a dozen monasteries and convents, the town was a microcosm of *ancien régime* administrative and ecclesiastical society. It had many significant civic and commercial institutions, but largely lacked industrial development. While the presence of so many clergy may have helped to fuel production of religious works, the city also proved fertile ground for the enlightenment, as shown by sales of the quarto edition of the *Encyclopédie*, a venture in which the STN were heavily invested. To the surprise of Charmet, who had declined the STN's invitation to sell subscriptions, his arch-rival Dominique Lépagnez placed no less than 338 copies. Lépagnez, too, was surprised at this success, having expected to place only one or two dozen, and so, initially, was Robert Darnton.

These sales made Besançon (including its hinterland) the quarto edition's fifth biggest outlet, although it was only the twenty-first most populous town in France.⁶⁶ They also underlined a fact emphasized by much subsequent research: that enlightenment culture was more the domain of the *ancien régime* aristocratic and administrative elite than any rising middle class.⁶⁷ In fact, a published list of Lépagnez's first 253 subscribers contains only seventeen businessmen and fifteen professionals as opposed to thirty-six clergy, thirty-seven public servants, thirty-one military men, thirty-one *parlementaires* and forty-four other lawyers. Over forty-five percent of these subscribers belonged to the privileged orders.⁶⁸ In short, Besançon's public appears to have had, in comparison with other towns, a healthy appetite for enlightenment works alongside more traditional religious fare. But while Besançon's several hundred clergy might increase demand for a range of religious texts, their impact on sales of popular devotional works such as the *Ange conducteur*, which the Besançon book dealers sold in their many thousands, can only have been marginal.

Was Besançon, then, as the Archdiocesan center, supplying the entire Franche-Comté with *Ange conducteurs*? The answer appears to be no. A will inventory from 1781 for the aforementioned Dôle printer-bookseller Pierre-François Tonnet from 1781 confirms that his stock of just five *livres de piété* (pious works) ran to 15,679 copies, including an astonishing 7,000 *Ange conducteurs*.⁶⁹ Intriguingly, in the September 1778 visitation, Tonnet did not declare a single copy of the *Ange conducteur*, though in nearby Vesoul the printer Poirson had no less than 6,576. It is hard not to conclude that the Franche-Comté was inundated with this book. Likewise, in other dioceses where the *Ange conducteur* was widely used, we can find book dealers holding the work in multiple editions. In Amiens, for example, Charles Caron

⁶⁶ Darnton, *Business of Enlightenment*, 595. This account of Besançon draws on pages 287-94 of this work, as well as the profile of Besançon in Darnton, "A Tour of France" and Vernus, "A Provincial Perspective".

⁶⁷ Among many commentators arguing the close alliance between elites and enlightenment see, for example, Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia D. Cochrane (Durham, N.C. and London, 1991), especially 84-85; Antoine Lilti, *Le monde des salons: Sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2005); Daniel Roche, *Le siècle de lumières en province: Académies et académiciens provinciaux, 1680-1789*, 2 vols (Paris, 1978).

⁶⁸ See Darnton, *Business of Enlightenment*, 290-93, esp. figs. 6 and 7.

⁶⁹ Martin, *Une religion des livres*, 132.

had copies of twelve different editions of the *Ange conducteur* among the sixty-six items that he declared to inspectors for stamping.⁷⁰ An 1807 survey of clergymen in the diocese of Metz suggests that while local demand for the *Ange conducteur* was strongly influenced by diocesan approval, it was the laity who were actually buying most of the copies.⁷¹ The statistics for the *Ange conducteur* presented here suggest that already under the *ancien régime*, religious book ownership in the Franche-Comté's 800,000-strong population extended well beyond the province's estimated 10,000 "educated citizens." Among the peasantry, the rate of ownership almost certainly significantly exceeded the figure of five percent derived through surveys of will inventories.⁷²

The register of *permissions simples* from 1777 to the Revolution further confirms the popularity of *L'Ange conducteur* across France. It records a staggering sixty-six licensed editions in a single decade, with total print-runs of 125,400.⁷³ Yet the *Ange conducteur* was only one of the most prominent of numerous devotional and religious works listed on the *permissions simples* registers. In fact, nineteen of the top twenty most-printed works in the registers are religious texts. They include Thomas à Kempis's perennially popular *Imitation de Christ* both 73,800; and *Instructions chrétiennes pour les jeunes gens*, with 48,800.⁷⁴ Both are also encountered in considerable numbers among the pirated stocks of Besançon booksellers stamped during the August-September 1778 inspections. However, the number one religious best-seller was *La journée du chrétien*, with print-runs totaling 150,150 in sixty-one editions.⁷⁵ Worldcat currently contains fifteen editions of this work dating from the same period, but only five of them appear in the register. The other editions were never registered, suggesting that widespread piracy continued after 1777 and that total French output of *La journée du chrétien* in the dozen years before the Revolution may have run to 180 editions and up to 450,000 copies.⁷⁶ Confiscation records hint that piracy of the *Ange conducteur* may also have been rife even after the August 30, 1777 decree.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ MS Fr 21,834 fol. 2-8.

⁷¹ Carel, "La dévotion à l'ange gardien," 24. A systematic survey of will inventories from the bilingual village of Saint-Arvold in Lorraine between 1701 and 1790 found five copies of the *Ange conducteur* among 561 religious books and *livres de piété*, but there may have been more among the 113 generic "Livre de prières" also listed. However, the *Ange conducteur* does not seem to have been approved for local diocesan usage, as it was not stocked by the booksellers of Nancy. The same survey found twenty *Journées chrétiennes* [sic]. See Denis Metzger, "Livres, bibliothèques et lecture, à Saint-Arvold au XVIIIe siècle," *Mémoires de l'académie nationale de Metz*, année 1999 (2000), 89-111 (106).

⁷² See Vernus, "A Provincial Perspective," 125, 127. Vernus notes that will inventory surveys of the Franche-Comté record that six percent of peasants owned books and eighty percent (i.e. 4.8% of the total) of those owned religious books. Assuming 600,000 peasants among the province's 640,000 rural inhabitants, this would imply about 29,000 peasant owners of religious books. This falls well short of the 50,000+ *Ange conducteurs* that this article has spotted circulating in the Franche-Comté in the 1770s and 1780s.

⁷³ BN, MS Fr. 22,019 fol. 1, 3, 5, 7, 8. This is my own preliminary count; cf. Dawson, *The French Book Trade*, 457-58.

⁷⁴ BN, MS Fr. 22,019 fol. 52-53, 56, 59-61

⁷⁵ BN, MS Fr. 22,019 fol. 53-55, 57-58, 61.

⁷⁶ There are several variant titles of *La journée du chrétien* on the register of *permissions simples*, including bilingual editions: see BN MS Fr 22,019 fol. 53, 54-55, 57-58, 61. This total combines all variants. The earliest dateable edition of this work listed in Worldcat (searched 11 October 2013) is from 1742. The earliest reference to this work in Martin, *Une religion des livres*, dates from 1803. Nevertheless, it was clearly very popular at an earlier date.

⁷⁷ For example, a Parisian confiscation register at BNF, MS Fr 21,934, item no. 122, 22 May 1778, records that a consignment of forty-three copies of the *Ange conducteur* were confiscated with other

The *permissions simples* registers also indicate that Charmet and his widow had an enduring involvement in religious printing. In fact, every single *permission simple* that they requested related to religious works. Besides two editions of the *Ange conducteur*, they asked for permission to print *Le chemin du Ciel* (1779); *Considérations chrétiennes en forme de méditations pendant tous les jours du mois* (1779); *Histoire de la sainte jeunesse de notre seigneur Jésus Christ* (1779); Gonnellieu's popular translation of the *Imitation de Jésus Christ avec une pratique de prières* (1779); Pierre Humbert's *Pensées sur les plus importantes vérités de la religion et sur les principaux devoirs du christianisme* (1783); *Instructions abrégées sur les devoirs et les exercices du chrétien* (1783); and, almost inevitably, *La journée du chrétien sanctifiée par la prière* (1779).⁷⁸ In total, this amounted to a licensed output of 23,500 copies of religious works, yet only one of these nine editions has been positively identified through the Worldcat collective library database.⁷⁹ Evidently cheap editions of popular pious works have not generally survived in the world's research collections. This contrasts sharply with the FBTEE evidence concerning novels, where almost every identifiable title and edition of novelesque works traded by the STN has survived.

The *permissions simples* register contains hundreds of religious works, but only a handful of novels, notably Dorat's *Les malheurs de l'inconstance* (*The Misfortunes of Inconstancy*) and Madame Graffigny's works. Yet the reprints of novels listed in the register generally have print runs of only 750 to 2,000 copies and at most two or three editions. They are massively outnumbered by religious works, whose print runs are often listed in the 3,000 to 9,000 range. We have a fairly accurate idea of the European output of novelistic works in French in the later eighteenth-century due to the exhaustive bibliographic work of Angus Martin, Vivienne Mylne and Richard Frautschi, which will soon be integrated with the FBTEE data. In all, for the years 1777 to 1788, they list 2,026 editions of which over two-thirds (1,378) were reprints.⁸⁰ Assuming average print-runs of 1,000, this equates to just over 2,000,000 copies of novels. Clearly many of these were not going to go through the *permission simple* process, because only one edition was ever published, they were foreign editions, had other forms of *permission* or formed part of the clandestine or pirate trades.

Yet the trade in novels was dwarfed by that in religious works, many of which also evaded the *permissions* system. They too were produced in numerous editions, but relatively few survive in public library collections. The evidence presented in this paper, particularly when taken alongside the ground-breaking work of Philippe Martin on religious works and Robert Dawson on the *permissions simples*, suggests that right up to the Revolution, religious publishing was enormously significant, particularly in the French provinces.⁸¹ In the 1770s and 1780s, at the height of the enlightenment,

pirated and clandestine works *en route* from Lille to the Parisian bookseller La Porte. They were ordered to be sold as counterfeits for the profit of the Chambre syndicale. In the case of the *Ange conducteur* it is hard to draw any conclusions about piracy from Worldcat data as only four editions from 1777-1788 are listed there. Of these, three appear in the register (*viz.*, the edition of Le Houcq, Lille, 1781; Bertrand, Besançon, 1784 and *veuve* Vivot, Bruyère, 1786). The fourth edition, published by Valleyre (Paris, 1777) may pre-date the register.

⁷⁸ BN, MS Fr 22019 fol. 11, 41, 51, 52, 56, 86.

⁷⁹ Worldcat advanced searches for the keyword combination "Charmet" and "Besançon" for the years 1750-1790 were conducted between 24 August and 10 September 2014.

⁸⁰ Angus Martin, Vivienne Mylne and Richard Frautschi, eds, *Bibliographie du genre romanesque français, 1751-1800* (London and Paris, 1977), xxxvii.

⁸¹ Martin, *Une religion des livres*; Dawson, *The French Book-Trade*.

and on the very eve of the French Revolution, it probably accounted for in excess of half of the output of French printed books.

The suggestion that religious publishing in France remained so important through to the end of the *ancien régime* is not entirely new: the work of Daniel Roche on Parisian will inventories; of François Furet, Jacques Ozouf and their collaborators on literacy; and of Robert Mandrou on the cheap popular chapbooks of the *bibliothèque bleue* has long hinted at the penetration of religious works among the lower orders in late eighteenth-century France.⁸² However, the comparative magnitude of the trade in religious books has been masked by the methods used by both general bibliographers and book historians in previous surveys attempting to uncover popular reading (see Fig. 2). For we will not find the extent of religious printing if we focus on the catalogues of large private libraries, book dealers or public collections; reviews of new works; the lists of new editions advertised at the Frankfurt and Leipzig book fairs; or the STN archive, with its bias towards the international, Protestant and clandestine trades. The predilections of ordinary readers with traditional tastes and small personal libraries do not register in these sources; nor do the religious congregations who presumably bought up many devotional works in large numbers. For they were all quite happy using older, established, familiar devotional works, each reader or congregation in their preferred editions, which were probably used and cherished until they quite literally fell apart. Such editions were generally sourced locally, since individual dioceses often prescribed their own rites and produced or sponsored their own liturgical and devotional texts. Hence when the French government passed regulations in June 1783 insisting that all book imports must be sent to Paris for inspection, the *Chambre syndicale* of Lille protested that this was causing difficulties in French districts of the diocese of Tournay, since churches throughout the diocese sourced their liturgical books from the Austrian Netherlands.⁸³ Likewise, the *Ange conducteur* does not feature in the surviving *estampillage* registers from several corners of France, presumably because it was not recommended for use by the local dioceses in those areas.⁸⁴ In contrast, works of private devotions such as *La journée d'un chrétien* and *Imitation de Christ* are ubiquitous in these records.

⁸² Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century*, trans. Marie Evans (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987), 212-17 and *passim*; François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, eds, *Lire et écrire: L'alphabétisation des français de Calvin à Jules Ferry* (Paris, 1977); Robert Mandrou, *De la culture populaire aux 17^e et 18^e siècles: La bibliothèque bleue de Troyes* (Paris, 1985).

⁸³ BN, MS Fr 21,883, fol. 70-71: "Mémoire" from the Syndics and adjoints of the *Chambre syndicale* de Lille to the procureur général of the Parlement of Flanders on behalf of their *confrères* in Flanders, Hainault, Cambrésis, Artois and Boulonois, [Summer 1783].

⁸⁴ The *Ange conducteur* is not found, for example, in the *estampillage* records for Nancy, although the work was used in Lorraine.

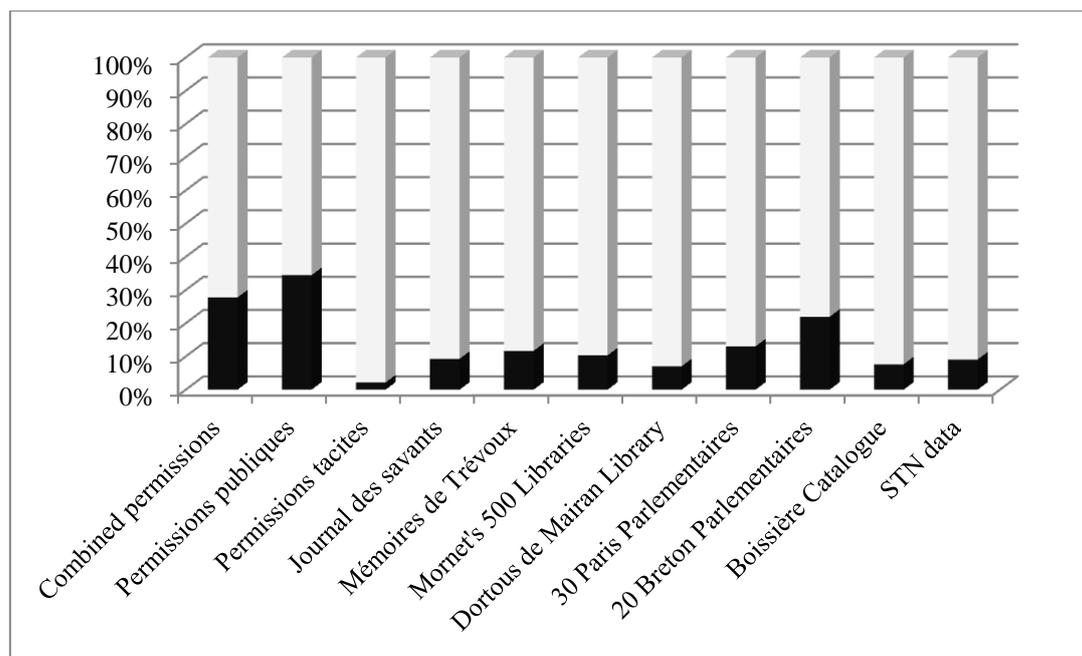


Fig. 2: Religious works (*Théologie*) as a proportion of books found in previous surveys of eighteenth century reading matter⁸⁵

This has important implications for future work on the eighteenth-century book trade, shaped as it has been by studies of the most notorious parts of the illegal sector, censorship and foreign booksellers' archives, above all the STN.⁸⁶ For the confiscation registers of the French book police and the magnificent archives of publishers like the STN and Luchtmans, both of which were based in Protestant jurisdictions, will never grant us insights into the most significant segment of the book trade of late *ancien régime* France by volume and readership. That segment was in all probability by some way the majority portion of both the legal book trade and an illegal sector which Roger Chartier has suggested comprised half of all books sold.⁸⁷ It dwarfed commerce in both mainstream enlightenment works and in Darnton's *Corpus* of 'libertine' works, which now appears to have been increasingly marginal to the book business in the decades before the revolution. It also dwarfed sales of popular novels and voyages, or indeed any other part of the entire corpus of works habitually handled by large cosmopolitan publisher-wholesalers. This dominant segment of the trade – as the Charmet case shows – involved something traditional, conventional and fundamental: religious works, particularly those belonging to a long-established canon. Even in highly literate north-eastern towns such works dominated provincial book markets, suggesting that religious values, practices and devotions were more deeply entrenched than many narratives of enlightenment and its

⁸⁵ Bars one to nine of this graph (reading from the left) are adapted from Darnton, *Literary Underground*, 180; column ten is from my own previously unpublished research and bar eleven is drawn from FBTEE global data on the STN's trade.

⁸⁶ In addition to the works already cited on the STN and the illegal sector, further classic studies include Raymond Birn, *Royal Censorship of Books in 18th-Century France* (Stanford, 2012); Nicole Hermann-Mascard, *La censure des livres à Paris à la fin de l'ancien régime (1750-1789)* (Paris, 1968); Barbara De Negroni, *Lectures interdites: le travail des censeurs au XVIII^e siècle, 1723-1774* (Paris, 1995).

⁸⁷ Roger Chartier, "Book Markets and Reading in France at the End of the Old Regime," in *Publishing and Readership in Revolutionary France and America*, Carol Armbruster, ed. (Westport, 1993), 117-37 (123).

concomitant secularizing process suppose. To conclude, this article offers provocative new answers to two of the most celebrated questions in book history. To Daniel Mornet's query "What did the French read in the eighteenth century," we must now respond "above all, locally produced traditional pious works." But as we are supposedly in the century of Rolf Enseling's reading revolution, we must also ask "How did they read them?" Presumably attentively, intensively and prayerfully. And, in all probability, on their knees.

Appendix: Publishing output of J.-F. Charmet and his widow, 1770-1788, according to Worldcat. (NB: Worldcat omits the bulk of the Charmet's religious output)

	Edition Title	Date	Imprint Details from Worldcat
1	Louis-François-Xavier Magnin, <i>Remarques sur les matières criminelles</i>	1770	A Besançon: chez les Freres & Soeurs Charmet
2	<i>Mémoire pour M. le cardinal de Choiseul, archevêque de Besançon,... contre le sieur de Chaffois,... le chanoine Ribaud</i>	1771	Besançon, Imp. de J.-F. Charmet
3	<i>L'art du plain-chant, ou méthode de le chanter par mesure, suivant la composition des nouveaux livres de choeur du diocèse de Besançon</i>	1772	A Besançon: chez les Freres & Soeurs Charmet
4	Jean-Baptiste Rose, <i>La morale évangélique comparée a celle des différentes sectes de religion et de philosophie</i>	1772	A Besançon: chez les Freres & Soeurs Charmet
5	<i>Instruction pastorale... pour le Carême de 1773</i>	1773	Besançon, J.-F. Charmet
6	Claude-François Nonnotte (abbé), <i>Dictionnaire philosophique de la religion, où l'on établit tous les points de la religion, attaqués par les incrédules, & où l'on répond à toutes leurs objections</i> (4 vols.)	1774 (and possibly one other edition)	Besançon, De l'Imprimerie de Jean-Félix Charmet
7	<i>Instructions chrétiennes pour les jeunes gens, utiles à toutes sortes de personnes, mêlées de plusieurs traits d'histoires & d'exemples édifiants, corrigées de nouveau & réimprimées par ordre de Monseigneur l'Archevêque de Besançon</i>	1774	Besançon, Charmet
8	<i>Nouvelles ordonnances militaires</i>	1776	Besançon, chez Charmet, Libraire, Grand'rue, près la Place Saint Pierre ⁸⁸
9	<i>Suite des Nouvelles ordonnances militaires</i>	1776	Besançon, chez Charmet, Libraire, Grand'rue, près la Place Saint Pierre ⁸⁹
10	<i>Ordonnance... portant règlement sur</i>	[1776] ⁹⁰	Besançon, Charmet

⁸⁸ The BNF catalogue seems to mistakenly link this edition to the "Frères and Soeurs Charmet," whereas the imprint explicitly links it to "Charmet libraire" in the singular.

⁸⁹ The BNF catalogue seems to mistakenly link this edition to the "Frères and Soeurs Charmet," whereas the imprint explicitly links it to "Charmet libraire" in the singular.

⁹⁰ The edition date given here is derived from the fact that nine other editions of this work are all from 1776. A 1776 printing therefore seems highly probable.

	<i>l'administration de tous les corps, tant d'infanterie que cavalerie, dragons et hussards, sur l'habillement, sur les recrues... la discipline</i>		
11	<i>Ordonnance du roi pour régler l'exercice de ses troupes d'infanterie du 1er juin 1776</i>	1776	Besançon, Charmet
12	François Xavier Talbert (abbé), <i>Eloge de Michel de l'Hôpital</i>	1777	Besançon, Charmet
13	François Xavier Talbert (abbé), <i>Eloge historique du Cardinal d'Amboise</i>	1777	Besançon, Charmet
14	François Xavier Talbert (abbé), <i>Eloge de Philippe d'Orléans;</i>	1777	Besançon, Charmet
15	Jean Baptiste d'Auxiron, <i>Observations sur les juridictions anciennes et modernes de la ville de Besançon</i>	1777	A Besançon, Chez Charmet, libraire, grand'rue.
16	<i>Ordonnances ... concernant les corps royaux de l'artillerie</i>	1777	Besançon, Charmet
17	Claude-François-Adrien Lézay de Marnézia, <i>Essai sur la minéralogie du bailliage d'Orgelet, en Franche-Comté</i>	1778	Besançon, Charmet
18	<i>Instructions familières en forme de catéchisme sur les preuves de la religion</i>	1778	Besançon, F. Charmet [sic]
19	Nicolas Sébastien Lefèvre, <i>An in magnis circà anum abcessibus, incisio rectisemper instituenda?</i>	(MA thesis in surgery), 1779	Besançon, Charmet
20	M. Thomassin, <i>Dissertation sur le charbon malin de la Bourgogne, ou la pustule maligne: ouvrage couronné par l'Académie des sciences, arts & belles-lettres de Dijon, le 14 février 1780</i>	1780	A Dijon : Chez Antoine Benoit, libraire; A Besançon: Chez Lépagnez cadet, libraire; de l'imprimerie de Jean-Félix Charmet
21	Pierre-Philippe Grappin, <i>Histoire abrégée du comté de Bourgogne, à l'usage des colléges</i>	Nouvelle édition, 1780	Besançon, J.-F. Charmet
22	Philippe Bertrand, <i>Lettre à M. le comte de Buffon: Ou critique et nouvel essai sur la théorie générale de la terre, Seconde édition</i>	1782	Besançon, Charmet
23	Thomas à Kempis, <i>L'imitation de Jesus-Christ, traduction nouvelle avec une pratique & une priere à la fin de chaque chapitre, par le R.P. de Gonnellieu</i>	1784	Besançon : Chez Jean-Félix Charmet
24	Paul Signieri, <i>Considérations chrétiennes pour tous les jours de la</i>	Nouvelle édition,	Besançon : J.-F. Charmet, 1784 ⁹¹

⁹¹ This imprint suggests that Madame Charmet continued using her husband's imprint for some time after this death.

	<i>semaine</i>	1784	
25	Charles Verny, <i>Idylles sentimentales: suivies de Mes voeux</i>	1787	A Genève; Et se trouve à Besançon: Chez Lépagnez cadet, libraire [et] la veuve Charmet, libraire, Grand rue.
26	<i>Instruction provisoire concernant l'exercice et les manoeuvres des troupes à cheval, du 20 mai 1788</i>	1788	Besançon: Vve Charmet, 1788