



H.G. Bronn, Ernst Haeckel, and the Origins of German Darwinism: A Study in Translation and Transformation (Transformations: Studies in the History of Science and Technology)

Sander Gliboff

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The German translation of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* appeared in 1860, just months after the original, thanks to Heinrich Georg Bronn, a distinguished German paleontologist whose work in some ways paralleled Darwin's. Bronn's version of the book (with his own notes and commentary appended) did much to determine how Darwin's theory was understood and applied by German biologists, for the translation process involved more than the mere substitution of German words for English. In this book, Sander Gliboff tells the story of how *The Origin of Species* came to be translated into German, how it served Bronn's purposes as well as Darwin's, and how it challenged German scholars to think in new ways about morphology, systematics, paleontology, and other biological disciplines. Gliboff traces Bronn's influence on German Darwinism through the early career of Ernst Haeckel, Darwin's most famous nineteenth-century proponent and popularizer in Germany, who learned his Darwinism from the Bronn translation. Gliboff argues, contrary to most interpretations, that the German authors were not attempting to "tame" Darwin or assimilate him to outmoded systems of romantic Naturphilosophie. Rather, Bronn and Haeckel were participants in Darwin's project of revolutionizing biology. We should not, Gliboff cautions, read pre-Darwinian meanings into Bronn's and Haeckel's Darwinian words. Gliboff describes interpretive problems faced by Bronn and Haeckel that range from the verbal (how to express Darwin's ideas in the existing German technical vocabulary) to the conceptual. One of these conceptual problems, the origins of novel variation and the proper balance between creativity and constraint in evolution, emerges as crucial. Evolutionists today, Gliboff points out, continue to grapple with comparable questions--continuing a larger process of translation and interpretation of Darwin's work

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