

# Books in Space and Time: Bibliomania and Early Modern Histories of Learning and “Literature” in France

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Early modern histories of learning and *belles-lettres* took authors, works, and (sometimes) editions as their objects. By contrast, bibliomaniacs craved objects that were far more particular: individual copies of books (or else specific manuscripts). My aim is to investigate the relationship between these two apparently disparate forms of early modern interest in the book production of the past: bibliomania and, on the other hand, histories of learning and *belles-lettres*.

Bibliomania began to be identified as a phenomenon in France in the second half of the seventeenth century. It spectacularly inflated the prices of *livres rares et curieux* on the Paris market throughout the eighteenth century, especially from about 1720, by which time it had also become prominent in England and the Low Countries.<sup>1</sup> Isaac Dis-

<sup>1</sup> My account is greatly indebted to two excellent essays by Jean Viardot on bibliomania and its relationship to other kinds of collecting: “Livres rares et pratiques bibliophiliques,” in *Le Livre triomphant, 1660–1830*, ed. Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, vol. 2 of *Histoire de l'édition française* (Paris: Promodis, 1984), 447–67; and “Naissance de la bibliophilie: Les Cabinets de livres rares,” in *Les Bibliothèques sous l'Ancien Régime, 1530–1789*, ed. Claude Jolly, vol. 2 of *Histoire des bibliothèques*

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raeli later called bibliomania a “luxury of literature.”<sup>2</sup> Although the love of books, the collecting of books, and a concern for them as material artifacts were obviously not new and can be conveniently designated by the term bibliophilia,<sup>3</sup> bibliomania was more extreme in that it involved an almost complete disregard for the most common use of books: reading.

Bibliomania therefore seems to have been a far cry from early modern efforts to write in French the history of various objects known in the period as *lettres*, *belles-lettres*, *littérature*, *auteurs*, *hommes illustres dans la République des lettres*, *poètes*, *poésie*, *ouvrages*, and *livres*. These efforts were often considered to be connected to each other, though there was no consistent overall term for them. Many were histories of learning, that is, vernacular versions of what was called in Latin *historia litteraria*, the idea of which had been formulated most famously by Francis Bacon in the early seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> The phrase *histoire littéraire*,

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*françaises* (Paris: Promodis, 1988), 269–89. The first drastic rises in rare book prices were caused by public sales from the famous collections of Etienne Baluze (1719) and Cisternay du Fay (1725): see Françoise Bléchet, *Les Ventes publiques de livres en France, 1630–1750: Répertoire des catalogues conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991), 51–2; and Viardot, “Livres rares,” 451. The first known occurrence of *bibliomanie* is 1654 (Guy Patin, who seems also to have used *bibliomane*): see *Trésor de la langue française*, 16 vols. (Paris: CNRS, 1971–94). There have been numerous important recent studies of early modern collecting, e.g., Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux: Paris, Venise: XVIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Disraeli, *Curiosities of Literature* (London, 1791), 19.

<sup>3</sup> The earliest occurrence of *bibliophile* of which I am aware is in 1738, quoted by Bléchet, 15–7.

<sup>4</sup> On some varieties of *historia litteraria* see Claude Cristin, *Aux origines de l'histoire littéraire* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1973), 98–9, 105–6; Paul Nelles, “Private Teaching and Professorial Collections at the University of Kiel: Morhof and *Historia Litteraria*,” in Daniel Morhof, *destins et enjeux*, ed. Françoise Waquet (Wiesbaden: Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, forthcoming); B. H. G. Wormald,

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common in the late seventeenth century, began to appear in the “history of learning” sense in the titles of some vernacular histories from the first half of the eighteenth century, when it was also applied retrospectively to many earlier histories. (I use *histoire littéraire* in this period sense instead of in its modern ones, for which I reserve the phrase “literary history.”) Although the Latin concept was mostly thought of in relation to the transnational Republic of Letters, the French phrase was sometimes understood more nationalistically, denoting the history of *French* learning, an enterprise that also had its late-sixteenth-century antecedents, notably in the alphabetically arranged bibliographies compiled by François Grudé de La Croix du Maine and Antoine du Verdier.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, other more narrowly focused histories written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were of works (such as poetry, oratory, historiography) that were considered eloquent. These were histories of *belles-lettres* in the rhetoric- and vernacular-oriented sense of that term, which developed in the seventeenth century. They were considered either rivals to, or subdivisions of, histories of *belles-lettres* in the broader, older “erudition” sense, which also subsisted well into the eighteenth century (and which corresponded roughly to *littéraire* in *histoire littéraire*). (Whenever I use *belles-lettres*, it will be in both the broad and narrow senses, unless one of the two is specified.) Subsequently, by the end of the eighteenth century, the less rhetorically oriented term *littérature* had displaced *belles-lettres* from many contexts.<sup>6</sup> As Emmanuelle Mortgat demonstrates in what promises to be an important study, the precursors of these histories of *belles-lettres* in the narrow sense included late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century histories of

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Francis Bacon: *History, Politics, and Science, 1561–1626* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 216–9; and Helmut Zedelmaier, *Bibliotheca universalis und bibliotheca selecta: Das Problem der Ordnung des gelehrten Wissens in der frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1992), chap. 4.

<sup>5</sup> On these two see Roger Chartier, *L'Ordre des livres: Lecteurs, auteurs, bibliothèques en Europe entre XIVe et XVIIIe siècle* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinea, 1992), 81–93; and Claude Longeon, “Antoine du Verdier et François Grudé de La Croix du Maine,” in *Actes du colloque Renaissance-classicisme du Maine: Le Mans, 1971* (Paris: Nizet, 1975), 213–33.

<sup>6</sup> See Philippe Caron, *Des “belles lettres” à la “littérature”: Une archéologie des signes du savoir profane en langue française (1680–1760)* (Paris: Société pour l'Information Grammaticale, 1992).

vernacular poetry undertaken by the *Grands Rhétoriciens* and then, as part of their nationalistic historiographical projects, by the Gallican scholars Etienne Pasquier and Claude Fauchet.<sup>7</sup> As has been well documented, *belles-lettres* in the restricted, rhetorical sense was, in turn, one of the roots of modern conceptions of “literature” as aesthetic creation.<sup>8</sup>

At first glance, bibliomania seems to have been antithetical to these various early modern kinds of *histoire littéraire*. Bibliomania was radically particularist. It constructed books as material objects existing in particular spaces, as surfaces: it valued certain kinds of typography, binding, paper, illustrations, format, and even accidental contingencies, such as printing errors distinguishing one copy or edition from another. It also ascribed to books extrinsic value that was market-driven. And it fetishized such books, when collected in cabinets, as repositories of cultural capital, showing off the wealth of the private individual in whose name they had been collected and lending him honor and distinction. Such collectors were mainly male, either from the aristocracy or else from the world of finance and business.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, some histories of *belles-lettres* constructed books instead as transcendent, idealized, and immaterial objects (inhabiting not particular spaces but rather time, whether a delimited period or a time line stretching back into the past), as depth and not surface or ornament, as substance and not accident, and as deriving intrinsic value from their own intellectual, moral, or aesthetic merits. Like bibliomania, these histories also fetishized books (when collected together conceptually) as repositories of cultural capital, but the concomitant honor and distinction redounded on public, collective entities, especially the nation, rather than on a private individual.

<sup>7</sup> Mortgat, *Clio au Parnasse: Naissance de l’“histoire littéraire” des lettres françaises aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Champion, forthcoming). I am grateful to the author for providing me with a summary of the doctoral thesis on which this book is based.

<sup>8</sup> On the early modern semantic field of *belles-lettres* and the emergence of modern concepts of literature, literary history, and the writer see Paul Bénichou, *Le Sacre de l’écrivain, 1750–1830: Essai sur l’avènement d’un pouvoir spirituel laïque dans la France moderne* (Paris: Corti, 1973); Caron, *Des “belles lettres”*; Cristin, *Aux origines*; Marc Fumaroli, *L’Age de l’éloquence: Rhétorique et “res literaria” de la Renaissance au seuil de l’époque classique* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), 17–32; and Alain Viala, *Naissance de l’écrivain: Sociologie de l’écrivain à l’âge classique* (Paris: Minuit, 1985).

<sup>9</sup> See Viardot, “Naissance,” 269.

However, despite the conflicting aims of bibliomania and these histories, there was also considerable, if sometimes unacknowledged, affinity as well as antagonism between the two. Interest in books as material objects (copies) was shared by some strands of *histoire littéraire*, which relied on bibliomania as a source of information. On a figurative level, some *histoire littéraire* was written not only as a kind of metaphorical erudite library but also at times as a kind of metaphorical cabinet (much more redolent of bibliomania). However, by the start of the nineteenth century, bibliomania had drifted much farther apart from histories of learning or of texts deemed aesthetically creative.

The antagonisms and continuities between bibliomania and these histories were, to some extent, disagreements and agreements about the roles played by space and time in organizing the book production of the past. For bibliomaniacs, spaces were paramount, whether the cabinets in which they stored their copies or the market in which those copies sometimes circulated. For writers of *histoire littéraire*, actual physical spaces were important instruments, most obviously the erudite library or the cabinet. Yet in some eighteenth-century versions of *histoire littéraire* overall chronological frameworks became more conceptually prominent than spatial ones. The very notion of *histoire littéraire* became more detached from physical libraries and then even from metaphorical ones. This change was a shift in emphasis, but not a complete reversal, given the impossibility of separating space from time. Whereas libraries and cabinets downplayed the histories of their objects and of their own formation by being presented in apparently synchronic space, some histories of *belles-lettres* minimized the material world of physical space, but they could not rid themselves of dependence on it. The shift in emphasis from space to time that accompanied the rise of some *histoire littéraire* is perhaps one instance of a more general shift, in some but certainly not all quarters of early modern intellectual culture, from the spatial representations of knowledge that, in Walter Ong's thesis, initially thrived with the spread of printing,<sup>10</sup> to historicizing representations of knowledge, culminating in works such as Johann Jakob Brucker's monumental *Historia critica*

<sup>10</sup> Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), 314–8.

*philosophiae* (1742–44), for example. To evoke another recent, even more tendentiously generalizing paradigm, the partial displacement of library and cabinet by *histoire littéraire* and histories of *belles-lettres* is perhaps consonant with Michel de Certeau's argument that the early modern period saw the emergence of a distinctively Western separation of a dead past from a living present.<sup>11</sup> Some of these written histories introduced sharper kinds of distinctions between past and present than those that subsisted in spatially organized collections of books.

Although the shift in emphasis from space to time was not uniform or straightforward, it is useful as a heuristic device to explore the relation between bibliomania and histories of *belles-lettres*. After considering the role played by literal and metaphorical spaces in the organization of past book production, I examine the discursive insertion of authors and works into more emphatically temporal frameworks.

## Copies in Space

### Library

Physical collections of books in seventeenth-century France were either libraries (*bibliothèques*) or cabinets. These have recently been subdivided by Jean Viardot in a typology that largely reflects distinctions made in the period. Largest and organized on the most scholarly principles were the libraries founded by great families of the legal nobility from the late sixteenth century onward. Much smaller, but still arranged for intellectual and moral usefulness in keeping with scholarly, not bibliomaniacal principles, was the select library (*bibliothèque choisie*) of the urbane *honnête homme*. From the late seventeenth century, this type could shade into a different category, that of the *cabinet choisi*, in which the owner had a dose of bibliomania as well as concern for subject matter, whereas if bibliomania (rather than reading) was the owner's sole motive, then the result was a *cabinet curieux* or *cabinet de raretés*, the plaything of the bibliomaniac.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the seventeenth century in France, the library re-

<sup>11</sup> Certeau, *L'Écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 9–19.

<sup>12</sup> See the two essays by Viardot (n. 1 above).

mained the dominant model for the collecting of books.<sup>13</sup> Surprising as it may seem, this spatial model eventually became compatible with a time-oriented, nationalistic enterprise: histories of *belles-lettres*.

An early step toward this compatibility was the attribution of public significance to some libraries (in contrast to cabinets, which were usually considered as spaces for private gratification). For example, Gabriel Naudé's *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* (1627) encouraged the elite of the parliamentary legal nobility to continue building great libraries that would above all be useful, not shut away for the private delight of their founder but open to some of the public, notably learned but impoverished scholars from the bourgeoisie who could not afford their own libraries, such as the Gallican humanist Naudé himself.<sup>14</sup> The payoff for the *robins* would be glory and prestige of the kind that did indeed accrue to the likes of the de Thou, de Mesmes, Bouhier, and Séguier families thanks to their great libraries. Naudé excludes from his ideal library the kinds of exotic luxury books that were later collected on a large scale in some cabinets.<sup>15</sup> As well as giving libraries greater public significance, Naudé injected a temporal axis into them. As Paul Nelles has shown, Naudé conceived of the library as an instrument for the transnational history of learning known as *historia litteraria*.<sup>16</sup>

Four decades later, Charles Sorel similarly endowed his ideal library with public significance, but now of a national rather than a transnational kind. His 1664 contribution to the genre of library advice books was partly a riposte to Naudé, and it described a different

<sup>13</sup> The spatial denotations of *bibliothèque* varied, ranging from a collection of books to the item of furniture in which they were displayed: see Roger Chartier, *Lectures et lecteurs dans la France d'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 181–4. On the library as a dominant model for the ordering of knowledge in the early modern period see Chartier, *L'Ordre des livres*; and Zedelmaier, *Bibliotheca universalis*.

<sup>14</sup> See Jack A. Clarke, *Gabriel Naudé, 1600–1653* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1970), 17–22; and Viardot, “Livres rares,” 448–50.

<sup>15</sup> See Viardot, “Livres rares,” 467–8.

<sup>16</sup> Nelles, “The Library as an Instrument of Discovery: Gabriel Naudé and the Uses of History,” in *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Donald R. Kelley (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 1997), 41–57, esp. 52. Naudé's ideal library also had a more national-oriented role, as political counselor: see Robert Damien, *Bibliothèque et état: Naissance d'une raison politique dans la France du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995).

kind of library, something closer to a *bibliothèque choisie*, much more *moderne* in its exclusive focus on the vernacular and in its *mondain* preference for *belles-lettres* in the new, restricted, “eloquent” sense of “aesthetic creation” rather than for university-style theology and philosophy.<sup>17</sup> “Since the main wealth [*le principal bien*] derives from our good French books, it is *they* that should be honored as much as the curious people who collected them. I have made this selection of books not with a view to building the kind of libraries that people try to stock only with great books, valuable for their rarity and fine typography. Rather, our books have been sought out by subject with a view to reading the most profitable ones, not to displaying them in the cabinets of rich men.”<sup>18</sup> Cultural capital, which resides in French books, should honor *them* and so, by metonymic implication, France itself, to which Sorel’s manual is dedicated.<sup>19</sup> The nationalistic, symbolic use of the library was taken up still more forcefully in *histoire littéraire* projects some sixty to seventy years later. Sorel’s carefully balanced phrasing shows that *some* of the honor could still be reserved for the private individual owning the library, as long as personal wealth was not the library’s overt *signifié*. (Since a degree of wealth was nonetheless necessary to establish even a modest library, some ideological mystification was involved here.)

In early-eighteenth-century France the library model became associated in new ways with (what was now called) *histoire littéraire*, by being sometimes detached from literal, physical spaces altogether and projected metaphorically onto a temporal axis.<sup>20</sup> Naudé and Sorel had

<sup>17</sup> Sorel, *Bibliothèque française, ou Le Choix et l'examen des livres français qui traitent de l'éloquence, de la philosophie, de la dévotion, et de la conduite des mœurs* (Paris, 1664), 241. An earlier related work, more on how to read than on what to collect, is Sorel’s *De la connoissance des bons livres, ou Examen de plusieurs auteurs* (Paris, 1671). Despite the connection with *bibliothèques choisies*, Sorel envisaged his readership as comprising a wider range of estates than just *honnêtes gens*, as he makes clear in *De la connoissance* (3). On the scope of *belles-lettres* in Sorel see Viala, 286–8.

<sup>18</sup> Sorel, *Bibliothèque française*, sigs. [a xi<sup>v</sup>]-[a xii<sup>r</sup>]; all translations are mine.

<sup>19</sup> On the bourgeois Sorel’s nationalism and social status see Robin Howells, *Carnival to Classicism: The Comic Novels of Charles Sorel* (Paris: PFSCS, 1989), 12–4; Emile Roy, *La Vie et les œuvres de Charles Sorel sieur de Souvigny (1602–1674)* (Paris: Hachette, 1891), 4–10, chap. 11.

<sup>20</sup> For a much fuller analysis of the roughly contemporaneous historicization of the notion of a library (in German learned culture) see Zedelmaier, chap. 4.



mainly been giving advice about physical libraries, and even La Croix du Maine's *Bibliothèque* of French-language authors (1584), frequently cited in the early modern period as a bibliography and republished in 1772–73 along with Antoine du Verdier's bibliography of 1585, was in fact part of La Croix du Maine's project for an actual physical library. However, the concept of a library also had an array of metaphorical senses.<sup>21</sup> In the early eighteenth century, some of them became so detached from their literal term that they could be temporal at least as much as spatial. Hence the wave of new periodicals published in Amsterdam with titles such as *Bibliothèque angloise, ou Histoire littéraire de la Grande Bretagne* (1717 onward) and *Bibliothèque française, ou Histoire littéraire de la France* (1723–42).<sup>22</sup> In these critical surveys of the recent scholarly and other book production in the relevant language or country, the "library" had become the periodical itself, a fixed-format typographical space with contents regularly changing over time.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> For some of these senses see Chartier, *L'Ordre des livres*. A survey of the different meanings of *bibliotheca* and *bibliothèque* in book titles is provided by Claude-François Ménéstrier in his *Bibliothèque curieuse et instructive* (Trévoux, 1704), 1:13–32.

<sup>22</sup> See Cristin, 96–7.

<sup>23</sup> The author of the preface to the first volume of the *Bibliothèque française* (probably Denis François Camusat) is well aware of this departure from the previous common association of *bibliothèque* with literal libraries or bibliographies: "This *Bibliothèque française* has nothing in common with other works that have the same title, and it should not be viewed as an alphabetical or descriptive catalog of writers who have written in our language, like those catalogs compiled in the past by Du Verdier, La Croix du Maine, and Sorel" (*Bibliothèque française . . . Tome premier . . . seconde édition* [Amsterdam, 1735], sig. \* 2<sup>v</sup>). In their relation to time, these early-eighteenth-century periodicals can be seen as successors to the seventeenth-century national bibliographies that took over from the declining Frankfurt fair catalog, such as the annual bibliographies of French and Parisian book production between 1642 and 1653, compiled by the Carmelite father Louis Jacob. Jacob's aims were nationalistic and commercial, promoting French culture while also advertising books for sale. (Some of his bibliographies were printed by Sébastien Cramoisy, *imprimeur du roi* and the dominant figure in the Paris printing trade.) However, the erudite library model also influenced the conception and form of these bibliographies, which were encouraged by Jacob's friend Naudé and broadly followed the latter's classification system. See Bernard Barbiche, "Le Régime de l'édition," in *Le Livre conquérant: Du moyen âge au milieu du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, vol. 1 of *Histoire de l'édition française* (Paris: Promodis, 1982), 375–6; Henri-Jean Martin, "Classements et conjonctures," in Martin and Chartier, *Le Livre conquérant*, 440–1; Henri-Jean Martin, "Renouvellements et concurrences," in Martin and Chartier, *Le Livre conquérant*, 382–3; and Viala, 286.

It was one of those involved in the *Bibliothèque française* periodical, l'abbé Claude-Pierre Goujet, who subsequently wrote a more monumental "library" in which that temporal flux was fixed as a past one, structured not as one great time line but as an array of discrete linear progressions, most of them running from the start of printing to the present, each of them under the aegis of a particular subject (such as *belles-lettres* in a narrow sense, history, the sciences and arts, or subdivisions thereof). His *Bibliothèque française, ou Histoire de la littérature française* (1740–56) is mainly organized as a series of essays on the chronological history of these subjects, each of which is followed by a nonchronological bibliography of French-language works on that subject. Goujet has cut the umbilical cord between this library and literal ones. The cultural capital supplied by the books can now redound to the glory not of any individual (as was still half the case in Sorel's manual seventy-six years earlier) but of "our nation."<sup>24</sup> Indeed, this nationalistic work had close links with the higher reaches of political power: the idea for it seems to have arisen when Goujet (who wrote partly to earn money) was commissioned to write an *histoire littéraire* of France by the comte d'Argenson, whose many official roles included that of *conseiller d'état*.<sup>25</sup>

Goujet's occultation of literal space is paralleled by an occultation of the literal, private wealth that is both the cause and the standard *signifié* of cabinets of books: instead, it is the nation's figurative "riches of learning and literature [*richesses littéraires*]" (1:iv, xxiii) that are on display. Also occulted is the very matter of books: Goujet lists different editions of works, but it is essentially "works" (*ouvrages*) that interest him, not physical copies (1:v). Yet access to the work is through the copy, and so his brief acknowledgments of help received in gaining access to relatively inaccessible copies held in private "cabinets" are hints of the debt he may owe to the world of bibliomania (though many of these cabinets may be more learned than bibliomaniacal) (5:iv–vi, 9:vi).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Goujet, *Bibliothèque française*, 18 vols. (Paris, 1740–56), 1:xxiv. Goujet sees Sorel as having achieved an embryonic version of his own project, although Sorel was confined far more to *belles-lettres* in the narrow sense (1:vi–viii). On Goujet's project see Cristin, 107–8; and Clément Moisan, *L'Histoire littéraire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), 69–71.

<sup>25</sup> See J. Baiteau, M. Barroux, and Michel Prévost, eds., *Dictionnaire de biographie française* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1933–), s.v. "Goujet."

<sup>26</sup> For a further reference to collectors (perhaps bibliomaniacs) who possess but do not read copies of old French romances see 9:23–4.

## Library or Cabinet?

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw the publication of a hybrid group of manuals that were more or less designed to give advice to those wishing to compile book collections that lay somewhere between the extremes of the great library of the legal nobility and the *cabinet curieux*. These manuals were metaphorically titled *Bibliothèque* themselves, yet all (unlike Goujet's subsequent *Bibliothèque françoise*) remained firmly oriented toward literal libraries. A brief survey shows that they had varying and complex relations to both bibliomania and early modern histories of *belles-lettres*.

Some advocated a little bibliomania but hardly any *histoire littéraire*. For example, the Jesuit Claude-François Ménéstrier's *Bibliothèque curieuse et instructive de divers ouvrages anciens et modernes, de littérature et des arts*, a *mondain* manual instructing *honnêtes gens* how to form both a *bibliothèque choisie* and a *cabinet choisi*,<sup>27</sup> presents books not in any systematic historical framework but purely as facilitators of performance in the present. A modest library is enough to give the *honnête homme* the reading resources necessary to shine in conversation. Personal rather than national distinction is the aim (indeed the contents of the library are certainly not uniquely French). As for the *cabinet choisi*, the books it contains are significant less for their contents than for their symbolic value. Primarily, they symbolize not oldness or history but rather the uniqueness of the *honnête homme* and his individual taste, whether for history, travel accounts, romance, poetry, or emblems. His search for distinction may involve a mild, circumscribed amount of bibliomania,<sup>28</sup> but it has little to do with *histoire littéraire*.

On the other hand, other kinds of publications designed to help *honnêtes gens* form *bibliothèques choisies* did have much closer links with *histoire littéraire* (of the transnational, *historia litteraria* variety) while distancing themselves still more from bibliomania. These were unsystematic compilations of anecdotes, judgments, and bibliographical remarks on a selection of *bons livres* (mostly specific editions). One

<sup>27</sup> Ménéstrier, *Bibliothèque curieuse et instructive de divers ouvrages anciens et modernes, de littérature et des arts*, 2 vols. (Trévoux, 1704). On *cabinets choisis* see Viardot, "Naissance," 282–9.

<sup>28</sup>Although *honnêtes gens* are being encouraged to collect *livres rares et curieux* for their cabinets, they are discouraged from acquiring bibliomaniacal expertise in typography and so on (Ménéstrier, 1:86–7).

example is the *Nouvelle Bibliothèque choisie* by Nicolas Barat, which begins with an immediate disavowal of any connections to “La bibliomanie,” (1:a iii<sup>r</sup>–a iv<sup>r</sup>), thereby revealing, however, the perceived danger of being associated with it.<sup>29</sup> Another example is the *Bibliothèque choisie* of the Huguenot Paul Colomiès, erstwhile librarian to the archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft.<sup>30</sup> Colomiès is aiming at a slightly more learned audience (mostly fellow librarians) (iv), and his title is designed to distinguish this work from extensive, systematic bibliographies such as that of La Croix du Maine. The editors revising the Colomiès volume for republication in 1731 saw it as the fruit of his “Histoire littéraire” (viii), thereby conceiving of the latter not as a written text but as an internalized body of knowledge. Moreover, these editors had been intending to publish their edition of Colomiès together with Guillaume Colletet’s *Histoire générale et particulière des poètes françois*. Although the project failed, it reveals the perception at this time of a congruity between these two apparently disparate works and so between scholarly *histoire littéraire* and the history of *belles-lettres* (in the restricted sense). The pairing appears all the more comprehensible in light of Colomiès’s long-standing association with Gerardus Vossius, an even more celebrated contributor than Colletet to the genre of illustrious lives. However, the spatial metaphor as used by Colomiès and Barat still resists temporality: when Colomiès does contemplate the future possibility of a more systematic bibliography, restricted to French texts, it is still an updating of the La Croix du Maine model that both he and his two annotators, Bourdelot and La Monnoye, envisage (in separate footnotes, 99–101), not a projection of that model onto time à la Goujet.

At least one manual was much closer to the world of bibliomania than were the publications of Ménestrier, Barat, or Colomiès while also, however, being congruent with histories of *belles-lettres* in the narrow, *moderne* sense: the *Bibliothèque des romans* (1734) by Nicolas Lenglet-Dufresnoy, a bibliography forming the second volume of his famous *De l’usage des romans*.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Barat, *Nouvelle Bibliothèque choisie*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1714).

<sup>30</sup> Colomiès, *Bibliothèque choisie* (Paris, 1682).

<sup>31</sup> Lenglet-Dufresnoy, *Bibliothèque des romans* ([Rouen], 1734). On his *De l’usage des romans* see Geraldine Sheridan, *Nicolas Lenglet-Dufresnoy and the Literary Underworld of the “Ancien Régime”* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1989), 141–61.

Of these manuals, all connected with collections that lie between the extremes of the great library of the legal nobility and the bibliomaniacal *cabinet curieux*, none, not even those with an affinity to histories of *belles-lettres*, seek to turn the literal or figurative space of collections into historical narrative, nor even into a repository of old books whose primary symbolic meaning is their oldness rather than, for example, the collector's distinction. On the other hand, some early-eighteenth-century cabinets did come to be understood in the period partly as repositories of the history of vernacular *belles-lettres* (in the *moderne* sense rather than the older sense of Gallican erudition) and so can be seen as nationalistic versions of Lenglet-Dufresnoy's nonnationalistic *Bibliothèque des romans*.

*Le cabinet d'antiquités gauloises*

Owners of what Jean Viardot calls *cabinets d'antiquités gauloises* do seem to have aimed partly at nationalistic history as well as at personal distinction.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the status of these cabinets as historical repositories correlated with the amount of prestige that their cultural capital furnished for the nation rather than just the private collector. Among their contents were French *belles-lettres* (in the *moderne* sense) from the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, as well as documents relating to French provincial history. As Viardot has shown, their owners came not from the ranks of erudite Gallicanism (which had long condemned indigenous *romans* and the like as frivolous or pernicious) but from the *grande bourgeoisie* of the financial world or the *mondain* aristocracy. Certainly, such collections were still largely signifiers of personal wealth, taste, and distinction.<sup>33</sup> And there seems to be no evidence that their spatial organization reflected linear history.<sup>34</sup> One

<sup>32</sup> See Viardot, "Naissance," 271–5.

<sup>33</sup> See the prefaces to the *Catalogue des livres de feu M. [Jean-Louis] Barré, auditeur des comptes*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1743), and the *Catalogue des livres du cabinet de M. \*\*\* [Pierre Imbert Châtre de Cangé]* (Paris, 1733). See also the quotation in Viardot, "Naissance," 271, from the 1759 sales catalog for the cabinet of J.-B. Denis Guyon de Sardière. A contemporary review of the Du Fay sales catalog sees no intrinsic value whatsoever ("Their rarity gives them their pecuniary value") in that part of the cabinet that is "a fairly rare collection of the most curious romances, and especially of books of chivalry" (*Bibliothèque française, ou Histoire littéraire de la France*, January–February 1726, 54).

<sup>34</sup> Their sales catalogs, which probably do not reflect the actual organization of the collections, use the standard bibliographical system of the period.

temporal axis does figure in their presentation for sale, but this is the time it took for the collection to be “formed by assiduous labor over many years” rather than the time of the collected books’ original composition (*Catalogue des livres du cabinet de M. [Cangé], [i]*). The sales pitch can also include strong pleas for a single buyer, so that the collection will remain intact. Although the argument against dismembering it again involves invocation of the owner (emphasizing his investment of labor, finance, and emotion) rather than of the historical coherence of the collection, nonetheless the fact that these collections were sometimes purchased whole and made accessible to some scholars suggests that they came to be seen as historical repositories that thereby had public significance. Pierre Imbert Châtre de Cangé’s concern for this significance is also evident in his collaboration in the “collection Coustelier,” which published some of the old French poets. The wholesale purchase of the Cangé cabinet by the Bibliothèque du Roi in 1733 and that of the Guyon de Sardière cabinet by the duc de la Vallière in 1759 signal the integration of private cabinets into semi-public libraries of the kinds that, when projected imaginatively onto a temporal axis, were providing the model, in these very years, for nationalistic *histoire littéraire*.<sup>35</sup>

## Market

The eighteenth-century market in *livres rares et curieux* seems to have been a space even further removed from histories of *belles-lettres* than were literal libraries and cabinets, since the latter at least sought to fix individual copies in a spatial framework, whereas in the market the value of such copies fluctuated depending on where and when they were evaluated.<sup>36</sup> From this mobility arose a relational system of value strikingly at odds with the search for intrinsic value made by those who sought to write nationalistic histories of French book production.

However, despite the antipathy between the market (with its mate-

<sup>35</sup> The duc de la Vallière made his library a resource for scholars. For this and the last two points see Viardot, “Naissance,” 271–2.

<sup>36</sup> See Guillaume-François Debure le Jeune, *Bibliographie instructive: ou Traité de la connoissance des livres rares et singuliers*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1763–82), volume on theology (1763), no. 3; volume on *belles-lettres* (1765), no. 131. On the mobility of copies in the market see Bléchet, 17.

rial objects) and some histories of *belles-lettres* (with their transcendent objects), it is perhaps no coincidence that this market reached its greatest scope and heights of organization at the same time as various kinds of nationalistic histories of *belles-lettres* were thriving, in the mid- and late eighteenth century. In addition to the market in bibliomania furnishing some sources for such histories (as in the cases of Lenglet-Dufresnoy and Cangé, for example), for a while certain structural parallels and affinities existed between the two systems, which were not yet as distinct as they would become in subsequent years. The affinities can be detected even in the *Bibliographie instructive: ou Traité de la connoissance des livres rares et singuliers* (1763–82) by Guillaume-François Debure le Jeune, a descriptive list of all items sought by *curieux* bibliomaniacs, compiled by the market's dominant dealer in old printed books.<sup>37</sup> Like many histories of *belles-lettres*, Debure's system of value is predicated on the existence of masterpieces, the difference being that his are produced by printers, not by authors: one edition of Virgil's *Opera* is "held to be one of the finest masterpieces that printing can produce."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, although bibliomania values printing errors and other imperfections where they make a copy unique and so more collectible, whereas the *ouvrage* valued by many histories of *belles-lettres* transcends such material error, nonetheless the bibliomaniacal grail—the perfect copy—seems endowed with similarly ideal qualities. For example, the one travel book sought above all others by bibliomaniacs was the seven-volume folio *Collectiones peregrinationum in Indiam Orientalem et Indiam Occidentalem* (1590–1634), with illustrations by the De Bry brothers.<sup>39</sup> Debure devotes more pages to it (120) than to any other book. Not only did its emblematic status as *the* travel book endow any copy with a certain symbolic and transcendent quality, but the perfect copy of this book could in turn transcend all other copies. Various "Curieux" had tried "to complete this work, and to perfect their copy," notably one abbé de Rothelin, who hired several scholars to do supplementary research, enabling him to add to his own copy various texts that were not in the original work but "were necessary for a copy

<sup>37</sup> See Viardot, "Livres rares," 458–63.

<sup>38</sup> Debure, Volume on *belles-lettres*, no. 2696.

<sup>39</sup> See Viardot, "Livres rares," 463. See Debure, volume on history (1768), no. 4230 (67–187).

that was brought to the highest point of perfection” (69). The perfect copy incorporated unique but essential additions to the work.

Furthermore, although space appears to be the dominant axis in the organization of the market, the market also depended on time. Although the copies circulating were not primarily seen by their *curieux* buyers as individual fixed points in one overall historical framework, they were seen as inhabiting another time, that of the market, which could change their value on virtually a daily basis. Moreover, their value was also determined partly by various microhistories—concerning not their contents but the circumstances of their composition, reception, and so on—which became metonymically attached to specific physical copies. Even if these histories were fictitious, they could still add value. Debure reports the claim that friends of Descartes had traveled to Spain to buy up all the copies of the 1558 *Nova et vera medicina* by Gómez Pereira, in order to quash the rumor that Descartes had cribbed from the Spaniard some of his ideas on animals.<sup>40</sup> Here the value-adding anecdote is also a purported explanation of the scarcity of copies. The belief that extrinsic anecdotes add value to copies or works was even shared by Debure’s antagonist l’abbé Barthélemy Mercier de Saint-Léger, who provided the most detailed and dogged of the attacks by scholarly “bibliologists” on Debure’s manual.<sup>41</sup> They disagreed about which anecdotes were sufficiently *rare*s to add to the *rareté* (in the sense of “market desirability”) of copies,<sup>42</sup> but not about the basic principle that anecdotes add value. There is a continuum here stretching from bibliomania to scholarly bibliography and also to *histoire*

<sup>40</sup> Debure, volume on jurisprudence, sciences, and arts (1764), no. 1292. For a discussion of Pereira that focuses on the question of Descartes’s alleged plagiarism see Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique . . . nouvelle édition*, 16 vols. (Paris, 1820), 11:546–64. In fact, the work in which Pereira discusses the souls of animals is not the *Nova et vera medicina* but the *Antoniana margarita* (Medina del Campo, 1554). I am grateful to Ian Maclean for pointing this out. For other value-adding anecdotes see Debure, volume on jurisprudence, sciences, and arts, nos. 1220, 1363; and *Catalogue des livres de feu M. Barré*, “Avertissement.”

<sup>41</sup> On anecdote see Mercier de Saint-Léger, *Lettre aux auteurs de ces Mémoires sur la “Bibliographie instructive” de M. Debure*, in *Mémoires pour l’histoire des sciences et beaux-arts* (the *Journal de Trévoux*) (Trévoux), July 1763, 1639. The term *bibliologie* was coined by l’abbé Jean-Joseph Rive: see Viardot, “Livres rares,” 460.

<sup>42</sup> See Debure’s riposte to Mercier de Saint-Léger in the preface to his volume on jurisprudence, sciences, and arts (v).



*littéraire* as practiced by Goujet, for example, who describes his history as one not of authors but of “books . . . what occasioned them, the debates they gave rise to, and the criticisms they received.”<sup>43</sup>

Although most bibliologists were not concerned with writing linear *histoire littéraire* à la Goujet, they did conceive of *histoire littéraire* as a body of learning that they possessed (as we have seen with Colomiès).<sup>44</sup> They were fighting with Debure and the other major sellers of rare books over the right to determine the value of books. This battle was partly over the meaning of key terms such as *rare*. For the bibliologists *rare* mainly meant “relatively scarce” and had no implications for a book’s intrinsic value; for Debure *rare* mainly meant “sought by *curieux*” and so was precisely connected to its monetary value.<sup>45</sup> Debure presents himself as merely describing the value attached to copies by the authority of the market, whereas the bibliologist Mercier de Saint-Léger prescribes value to books by using scholarly criteria and the authority of learned bibliographers. For the market, value resided in material, spatial, and also temporal factors extrinsic to the work itself (the materiality of copies, whether they are situated in France or elsewhere, whether they are for sale this year or next, the anecdotes attached to them). By contrast, the values ascribed by what Debure calls the world of *littérature*, that is, of learning, are intrinsic to the work or edition, like those ascribed by various histories of *belles-lettres*. However, although this extrinsic-intrinsic opposition is endorsed by Debure himself,<sup>46</sup> it is problematic. He calls some works *rares* less for obviously “extrinsic” reasons (such as their fine illustrations or the anecdotes attached to them) than for potentially “intrinsic” ones, that is, ones to do with reading rather than just collecting. This is especially true of erotica and other books on sexual matters, as well as of books suppressed or condemned as heretical, heterodox, or satirical. Debure

<sup>43</sup> Goujet, 1:viii–ix.

<sup>44</sup> See Mercier de Saint-Léger, 168o.

<sup>45</sup> See Viardot, “Livres rares,” 460–1. However, this use of terminology is not entirely stable. Debure does occasionally use *rare* to denote items that are relatively scarce and yet not sought after, not *curieux* (e.g., volume on theology, no. 6), as well as using *curieux* to denote items that are sought after but not *rares*, by which he here means “relatively scarce” (e.g., volume on *belles-lettres*, no. 2715).

<sup>46</sup> *Lettre à M.\*\*\* servant de réponse à une critique de la “Bibliographie instructive”* (n.p., 1763), 8.

disingenuously argues that these books are *rare*s because of the scandalous anecdotes attached to them and also because of their relative scarcity (owing to suppression).<sup>47</sup> However, he noticeably almost always provides a titillating comment on their contents,<sup>48</sup> whereas most entries in his bibliography include no comment on a work's contents. The use of the "extrinsic" concerns of bibliomania as a Trojan horse for secret reading practices shows that scholarly bibliology and *histoire littéraire* were not after all the sole purveyors of "intrinsic" value in the period. Although the clash between Debure and Mercier de Saint-Léger was one between two antagonistic systems of value, its very existence also points to the overlap between those systems, which depended on partly differing, partly overlapping applications of the same key terms.

However, by the end of the eighteenth century, a larger gap developed between the systems of value constructed by bibliomania and *histoire littéraire*. The bibliomania system seems to have determined value in increasingly precise financial terms. Whereas Debure's vague quantifications of value (*rare, assez rare* [quite rare]), *fort recherché* [highly sought], and so on) caused confusion by being partially indistinct from Mercier de Saint-Léger's scholarly value system, no such confusion is possible in the catalog of *Curiosités bibliographiques* published by the librarian and historian Etienne Gabriel Peignot in 1804. The books listed are quite simply ones that have fetched more than one thousand francs. Peignot is attempting nothing less than an integration of the two notoriously incommensurable value systems inherent in language and money, describing "the items which we know to be the most curious, financially speaking [*ce que nous connaissons de plus curieux sous le rapport de l'estimation pécuniaire*]." <sup>49</sup> Although in subsequent works he

<sup>47</sup> E.g., Debure, volume on jurisprudence, sciences, and arts, no. 80; volume on *belles-lettres*, no. 2868.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., Debure, volume on *belles-lettres*, nos. 2878, 2927, 2978–9, 3040. On the role played by censorship in heightening the desirability of *livres rares et curieux* see Anne Sauvy, *Livres saisis à Paris entre 1678 et 1701* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1972), 1–21. On censorship and its application see also Daniel Roche, "La Police du livre," in Martin and Chartier, *Le Livre conquérant*, 84–91.

<sup>49</sup> Peignot, *Curiosités bibliographiques* (Paris, 1804), xlii. On this incommensurability in the case of "curiosity" see Neil Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe: Word Histories* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 161–3.

listed books that qualified as “curieux” on other grounds (mostly reminiscent of Debure’s criteria) (ii), here he is beginning with the sovereign financial criterion, “because we believe that the rarest and most curious objects must be in this category” (iv). This canon bears no resemblance to emergent nationalistic ones.<sup>50</sup> Even more unashamedly than Debure, Peignot is facilitating and glorifying the self-distinguishing buying of fetishized objects by a small, extremely rich elite (iv). His statement that these books are “the most curious, and the richest” is the economic flip side of Goujet’s “riches of learning and literature” metonymy.<sup>51</sup> So systematic is Peignot’s monetary account of value that he even takes the logical but astonishing step of extending it to the production as well as the reception of books, listing sums paid to well-known authors by patrons and the like from antiquity to the seventeenth century (iv–xvi). He does not go quite so far as to say that the best-paid authors produced the best books, but that is the implication. It is as if bibliomania has become an uncanny repository for the stratum of economics that has by this time been gradually written out of grand, nationalistic histories of *belles-lettres* or (by this date) of *littérature*, which have distanced themselves increasingly from privately owned libraries of the wealthy. This economic stratum is largely absent even from the sociopolitical contexts written into literary history by Madame de Staël in *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (1800) and even from a celebrated modern particularist survey such as Gustave Lanson’s *Histoire de la littérature française* (1894).

Not that bibliomania became more distant from *all* varieties of *histoire littéraire* in the nineteenth century. It retained close affinities with those particularist, marginal zones of *histoire littéraire* that were also frequently termed *curiosités* and were constructed as fragments of knowledge, not fitting into any chronological grand narrative. For example, a volume on *Curiosités bibliographiques* (including such bibliomaniacal favorites as incunabula, the destruction of books, and errata) was included in Ludovic Lalanne’s *Bibliothèque de poche* (1845–47), along with volumes on *Curiosités littéraires*, *Curiosités biographiques*, and *Curiosités des traditions, des mœurs et des légendes*. The whole series is pre-

<sup>50</sup> “We are not mentioning modern classics, French or foreign, since there is nothing curious about most of their first editions” (Peignot, ii).

<sup>51</sup> For similar occurrences of “riches” see Peignot, iv, xlii.

sented as containing “varied and interesting particulars” from “l’histoire littéraire” (still in a sense reminiscent of *historia litteraria*).<sup>52</sup> More limited in scope, largely devoted to *ana* (sayings of the famous) and anecdotes, but more of a best-seller was Isaac Disraeli’s *Curiosities of Literature* (1791), translated into French in 1810.<sup>53</sup> Like bibliomania, these marginal supplements to *histoire littéraire* carried relatively little cultural capital when compared with nationalistic, grand-narrative monuments emanating from institutions (whether from the Benedictine order and the Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres in the case of the *Histoire littéraire de la France* or from universities in the case of Lanson). Although bibliomania enjoyed considerable cultural prominence in the second half of the eighteenth century (evidenced by the extent to which it threatened guardians of scholarly *histoire littéraire*, by the buoyancy of the rare books market, and by the amount of space periodicals devoted to sales catalogs and to the controversies surrounding bibliomania), it would never again enjoy such centrality in intellectual and cultural debate in France, whereas *histoire littéraire* would (in its modern guises).

### Authors and Works in Time

By the mid-eighteenth century, libraries and cabinets were sometimes understood not only as literal instruments for the investigation of the history of *belles-lettres* but also as metaphorical frames within which it could be written. As the case of Goujet shows, where emphasis shifted from literal to figurative spaces it became possible to think of the space of a library as a diachronic time line that was not a synchronic space.

All histories of *belles-lettres* continued to depend more or less on the literal spaces of scholarly libraries and bibliomaniacal cabinets, and on the physical copies that both contained. For example, the scholarly historian of the genre of romance, Pierre-Daniel Huet, laments that it is impossible to confirm whether Martin Fumée’s *Du vray et parfait*

<sup>52</sup> Lalanne, *Curiosités littéraires* (Paris, 1845), [vii].

<sup>53</sup> It was frequently reprinted in England throughout the nineteenth century. A later example is Roger Alexandre, *Le Musée de la conversation: Répertoire de citations françaises, dictons modernes, curiosités littéraires, historiques et anecdotes*, 3d ed. (Paris, 1897).

*amour* (1598) really is a translation of a work by Athenagoras rather than an original composition, since the Greek copy Fumée cites has disappeared from circulation, is absent from library catalogs, and “if still extant, must be hidden in the dust of the cabinet either of some ignoramus who unwittingly possesses this treasure, or else of some envious person who could communicate it to the public but does not want to”: in other words, either a bibliomaniac or else a bibliophile.<sup>54</sup>

However, the dependence on literal spaces seems to have been more irksome to some historians of *belles-lettres* than to others. In the world of scholars and bibliologists such as Colomiès and Mercier de Saint-Léger, *histoire littéraire* seems to have been conceived as a sprawling body of knowledge contained not only in works but also in infinite editions and copies and thus too vast to be assimilated by one person or to be written down in systematic form. This view is also evident in a pedagogical treatise such as the *Essais sur l'histoire des belles lettres, des s[ci]ences et des arts* by Félix Juvenel de Carlenca.<sup>55</sup> Although this treatise has a systematic structure similar (in miniature) to that adopted by Goujet (by discipline, but including the history of each discipline, along with its main authors), we are reminded that these are but *essais*, since authors have only given us “*histoire littéraire* bit by bit, instead of giving it to us in its entirety and full scope.” The insistent rhetoric of fragmentation gives the impression that not just a library but also still a metaphorical cabinet lurks in the background,<sup>56</sup> a compilation of discrete items rather than an integrated whole: “Let’s constantly pile up knowledge, one curiosity at a time” (1:viii). Even those fragments, which do not add up to a whole, cannot be gleaned from any single manual but only from a vast range of heterogeneous texts. The list of such “authors of *histoire littéraire*” (3:55–67) gives an idea of that range, that is, of texts that were counted in this period as *histoire littéraire*, from

<sup>54</sup> Huet, *De l'origine des romans* (Paris, 1670), 38. In this case, ironically, the damage done by bibliomania to the history of the romance genre was probably imaginary on Huet’s part, since the “translation” was probably a hoax: see Walther Küchler, “Martin Fumée’s Roman *Du vray et parfait amour*: (Ein Renaissanceroman),” *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 37 (1911): 139–47.

<sup>55</sup> Carlenca, *Essais sur l'histoire des belles lettres, des s[ci]ences et des arts*, 4 vols. (Lyons, 1749), first published in 1740–44.

<sup>56</sup> E.g., “this scattered material” (1:xi); “the different chunks of *histoire littéraire* which we have” (1:xv).

works on the lives of illustrious practitioners of a particular discipline (Vossius on mathematicians and on Greek and Latin poets, Vasari on artists, Diogenes Laertius on philosophers, Cicero and Quintilian on orators) to works on all disciplines but variously ordered (chronologically over the centuries, limited to one period, to one nation, to the contribution made by one religious order, or to illustrious persons again, but this time across disciplines).

On the other hand, some histories of *belles-lettres* aimed at coverage that their compilers considered complete in some sense or at least more systematic.<sup>57</sup> Hence perhaps Huet's irritation with his phantom bibliomaniac. These histories were equally dependent on literal spaces and the physical copies in them, but their ultimate aim was to produce an ordered narration, accessible to far more people than had access to all the necessary copies on which that narration was based. In other words, this strand strove (to varying extents) to insert authors and works into time lines and idealized spaces ("France," the Republic of Letters) that might transcend the literal, material, economics-based spaces of the library, the cabinet, and the market, in which copies were stored and circulated.

However, it proved impossible to transcend in this way the material realm, which always reined in these totalizing aspirations characteristic of some histories of *belles-lettres*. The latter remained dependent on the place-bound copies in which not only their sources were held but they themselves were inscribed.

To explore the difficulties of transcending the space-bound copy, I examine two of the major attempts to insert authors and works systematically into time: first, the genre of illustrious lives; second, the Maurist *Histoire littéraire de la France*. The first enjoyed a renewal from the early seventeenth century; the second dates from 1733 on. But both were considered by Juvenel de Carlenas in the 1740s to be examples of "histoire littéraire."

### Illustrious Lives

Although the genre of illustrious lives dates to antiquity, it received new impetus in seventeenth-century France. When the lives in question were those of writers, the genre often sought to situate them in an

<sup>57</sup> E.g., Goujet, 5:iv.

idealized time (a past period, now finished and so able to be represented as a totality) and an idealized space (the nation, the Republic of Letters) that transcended actual physical copies of those writer's works (scattered around the material spaces of libraries),<sup>58</sup> as well as transcending the physical copy in which the illustrious lives were themselves inscribed and also the time required to write them. This dynamic certainly does not characterize all instances of the genre to the same extent, but traces of it can be found in most.

On the one hand, Scévole de Sainte-Marthe's eulogies of French sixteenth-century writers (male and female) and Charles Perrault's lives of seventeenth-century "hommes illustres" (including learning and the "beaux-arts") do not entirely shut off the new century from the old.<sup>59</sup> They claim the closing century's achievements as cultural capital for the beginning one, which should seek to emulate them, thereby establishing a continuum between past and present. Yet the recent figures they praise can achieve classic status only by being dead and by belonging to a century that is now numerically over. Even this venerated recent past is dead, in contrast to the living present. This making of monuments also involves a transition from the private space of a library to the public, national prestige of a written history, as becomes clear when Perrault explains how his eulogies came to be published together with the engraved portraits. His patron, Michel Bégon, a royal-appointed administrator in law and shipping, initially commissioned paintings for his own library, but, "not being satisfied just with adorning this *library* with their portraits, he wanted to honor them more and satisfy the *public* by putting them in everyone's hands" (1:a iiiiv; my italics).<sup>60</sup> So he had engravings made of them, with accompanying prose eulogies.

Although the sense of a dead, semiclosed period is strong in Scév-

<sup>58</sup> On this genre's functions within the Republic of Letters see A. Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 147–9.

<sup>59</sup> Scévole de Sainte-Marthe, *Eloges des hommes illustres, qui depuis un siecle ont fleury en France dans la profession des lettres* (Paris, 1654), first published in Latin in 1598; Perrault, *Les Hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siecle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1696–1700).

<sup>60</sup> There were seven thousand printed books as well as manuscripts, medals, engravings, and paintings in Bégon's library when he died in 1710. See Balteau, Barroux, and Prévost.

ole de Sainte-Marthe and Perrault, that past is not yet constructed as a single overarching time line. Traces of such a time line do exist in Scévole de Sainte-Marthe, but Perrault's lives are organized by profession (ecclesiastics, "hommes de lettres," and so on), thereby providing a *mondain* equivalent of a more learned author- (but not life-) based survey such as Adrien Baillet's *Jugemens des savants sur les principaux ouvrages des auteurs* (1685–86).

In a similar vein, a past period is structured more by disciplines than as a time line in the cleric Claude-François Lambert's *Histoire littéraire du regne de Louis XIV* and in Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV* (both 1751, too late to be mentioned by Juvenel de Carleucas), which closely resemble the *vitæ* genre but now merge their eulogies into a discursive framework instead of having a separate entry for each life. Both again divide the recent past from the living present, styling themselves as standing outside a period that is dead in the sense that it is finished, a "siècle" now in the sense of "age" rather than "numerical century," delimited not only at its end but also, even more sharply, at its beginning, since it is radically discontinuous with the denigrated past that preceded it. The period of Louis XIV is identified as the pinnacle of national cultural achievement, potentially continuous with the present (in that the present seeks further cultural "progress" still) and yet also fenced off as a monument by a chronological cutoff point.

Lambert's and Voltaire's surveys of disciplines and subject areas mainly take the form of eulogies of individuals. Compared even with Goujet, such surveys entail a concerted attempt to transcend particularism: with a few exceptions, Lambert's highly sketchy and uneven bibliographical information relates to works, not to copies or even editions. Many works are not even dated by him. Voltaire goes even further: his chapter (32) on written "beaux-arts," in keeping with his general distaste for dotting the *i*'s in historiography,<sup>61</sup> is entirely unconcerned with editions and copies, understanding "books" not as material objects existing in literal space but as "works" and "productions of genius." Adopting a more recognizably modern conception of "littérature" than Lambert,<sup>62</sup> he associates it with eloquence, poetry,

<sup>61</sup> See Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (London: Faber, 1997), 95.

<sup>62</sup> Voltaire, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, ed. A. Adam, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), 1:45.



ethics, entertainment, and focuses on the modern classics (Racine et al.), exactly the kind of work later specifically *excluded* from Etienne Peignot's manual for bibliomaniacs (1804). Unlike Lambert, Voltaire does work his eulogies of individuals within a certain discipline (such as "beaux-arts") into a chronological narrative.

So by the mid-eighteenth century it was just becoming possible to insert illustrious lives into an overall chronological narrative that could represent the *littérature* of a closed, past period. However, the genre of illustrious lives did not always have such totalizing aims. Indeed, the most substantial French example was not founded on a distinction between past and present and was not itself styled as a finished historical narrative, standing outside time and space: Jean-Pierre Nicéron's *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres dans la République des Lettres*.<sup>63</sup> Here are "mémoires" toward a history rather than a completed, totalizing history in themselves. Far from standing outside time, their own gradual writing and publication are emphatically situated in historical time: "Besides, this is only a tentative sketch [*un essai*] . . . the gaps and defects of which will only be repaired by *time* and industry. . . . Such is the lot of dictionaries, library catalogues, and other such books: they appear first in an imperfect state and are only dragged out of it in *time*, by the observations and criticisms of those who read them" (1:[a v<sup>r</sup>]-[a vi<sup>r</sup>]; my italics).<sup>64</sup> The appeal for public help in a communal enterprise is common in histories of *belles-lettres* written in this period, but Nicéron is unusually explicit in linking this help to the time of composition and publication. This work, after all, is a *periodical*, and so the chronological time of its own researching, writing, and publishing outweighs any of the other times, places, or orders that its critics would like to see imposed on the subject matter (whether historical chronology, nation-based order, or alphabetical): "I admit that, in a complete work . . . one of those orders would have to be followed. . . . But I think that would be pretty useless in a periodical

<sup>63</sup> Nicéron, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres dans la République des Lettres*, 45 vols. (Paris, 1729-45).

<sup>64</sup> By evoking the time taken to compile not libraries but library catalogues, Nicéron is distancing his project one step further from physical libraries, as opposed to ones represented in writing. Yet that spatial model has still not entirely disappeared. On the relation of his project to physical and metaphorical libraries see also 1:a ii'.

work [*Ouvrage périodique*] like mine” (3:[a v]). Not that the *Mémoires* are altogether immune from the recent emergence of chronological narrative in histories of *belles-lettres*. Such a narrative is confined to a virtual presence here. With the exception of the first volume, all the rest, randomly structured, end with a table listing that volume’s “hommes illustres” in order of their dates of death, making it theoretically possible for readers to merge these tables into their own single overall time line, should they wish.

The sheer heterogeneity of the genre of illustrious lives is a sign of the tensions and problems within it. These difficulties were nowhere more evident than in the fortunes, from the early seventeenth to the late nineteenth century, of a famous mammoth contribution to the genre, Guillaume Colletet’s *Histoire générale et particulière des poètes françois, anciens et modernes, contenant leurs vies, suivant l’ordre chronologique, le jugement de leurs écrits imprimés*.<sup>65</sup> Whereas later contributions settled for a high degree of generality (Voltaire) or particularism (Nicéron), Colletet was aiming at both, as his totalizing title indicates. His work, which was understood in all subsequent centuries as *histoire littéraire*, provides by far the most extensive early example of a single overall chronological framework being adopted in a history of French *belles-lettres* in a narrow sense (taking up from Pasquier, for example).<sup>66</sup> One date (albeit inconsistently calculated) is given for each writer and determines his or her position in the chronological structure.<sup>67</sup> By gathering an enormous amount of information from relatively inaccessible places, ordering it according to the time of the historical actors rather than (as in Nicéron’s case) the time of its own composition, Colletet, a charter member of the Académie Française, seems to have come as close as anyone to creating a public, nationalistic monument of *belles-lettres*. Yet its conflicting aims made it impossible to complete. Moreover, far from encapsulating the whole of its historical object and so transcending time and place, it was haunted and eventu-

<sup>65</sup> See Paul Bonnefon, “Contribution à un essai de restitution du manuscrit de G. Colletet, intitulé *Vies des poètes françois*,” *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France* 2 (1895): 59.

<sup>66</sup> See Mortgat, *Clio au Parnasse*.

<sup>67</sup> The single year marked by Colletet for each poet indicates either when the poet died, when a major work by that poet appeared, or roughly when the poet lived (see Bonnefon, 72n).

ally destroyed by the specificity of its own existence in time and place.

When Colletet died in 1659, he had written some 450 or so lives and seems to have been close to finishing. Some of the most obvious gaps (Agrippa d'Aubigné, Philippe Desportes, François de Malherbe, Théophile de Viau) were recent poets whom Colletet knew best, and so he probably intended to devote lengthy entries to them.<sup>68</sup> Thus it could be argued that the noncompletion and by the same token the nonpublication were necessary rather than contingent given the scope of the project ("anciens et modernes"), which would always have labored to catch up with recent major developments.

The precious manuscript inhabited a series of specific places over the next 212 years, in five boxes in 1730 and in four volumes when in its final resting place, the Bibliothèque du Louvre, from 1803 or later.<sup>69</sup> Exhortations "to give it to the public,"<sup>70</sup> emanating from the scholarly community, predate Colletet's death and continued for over two centuries, frustrated by factors obvious (such as finance) and not so obvious. Even in the seventeenth century, Colletet's son François trumpeted it in advance of his intended publication as "awaited for more than thirty years."<sup>71</sup> A later project to publish it together with the *Bibliothèque choisie* of Colomiès, presumably as a different but complementary form of *histoire littéraire*, also came to nothing, and the Colomiès edition appeared on its own in 1731.<sup>72</sup> Although some in the eighteenth century were granted access to the manuscript, others were not, among them Goujet and Mercier de Saint-Léger.<sup>73</sup> Goujet therefore sought to liberate the manuscript from a single specific space by laboriously recomposing it, in the form of several volumes (devoted to

<sup>68</sup> Bonnefon, 60. On Colletet's manuscript and its fortunes see Bonnefon, "Contribution"; and Léopold Pannier, "Essai de restitution du manuscrit de Guillaume Colletet," *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature* 52 (1870): 324–38.

<sup>69</sup> See Bonnefon, 59–60; and Lenita Locey, Michael Locey, and Janis L. Pallister, introduction to *Vies des poètes tourangeaux*, by Guillaume Colletet (Paris: PFSCCL, 1989), v.

<sup>70</sup> Gilles Ménage (1666), quoted in Bonnefon, 61–2.

<sup>71</sup> See Bonnefon, 61.

<sup>72</sup> A *privilège* had been granted to Gabriel Martin and others to print the two works together: see Bonnefon, 63; Colomiès, sigs. [Kk v<sup>v</sup>]–[Kk vi<sup>v</sup>]. Martin was a key figure in the new bibliomania market too, preparing the 1725 Du Fay catalog, for example.

<sup>73</sup> See Bonnefon, 64–6.

French poets) of his *Bibliothèque française*, without having set eyes on it: "I resolved on doing what I imagine that Colletet did himself" (9:vi).<sup>74</sup> Goujet presumably considers his and Colletet's versions as two incarnations of one transcendent history of French poetry, above time and place, a fantasy subsequently shared by Sainte-Beuve, who argued that there was no need to publish Colletet, since everything was now in Goujet anyway.<sup>75</sup> A cruel test of this theory occurred when, five years after the latest call in print for the manuscript's publication ("The history of poets is part of the history of the very nation"),<sup>76</sup> it was burned to cinders in the Paris Commune. Although manuscript reproduction had ensured that almost half of the lives had been "saved," either transcribed or summarized by scholars,<sup>77</sup> most of the near monument had vanished. Far from transcending space, time, and the market, this manuscript *histoire littéraire* remained emphatically material, mortal, and until its end always had a specific price tag on it as a collector's item.<sup>78</sup>

#### The Maurist *Histoire littéraire de la France*

Another mammoth attempt at a totalizing, finished history, in this instance with apparently better chances of completion owing to a centuries-long distance between its dead, circumscribed object and its own composition, is the *Histoire littéraire de la France*, published in Paris from 1733 to 1763 by the Benedictines of the Congrégation de Saint-Maur (famous for their large-scale erudite works), edited until 1749 by Dom Rivet (André Rivet de la Grange), and then taken up in 1814 by the Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres, which by 1985 had reached the fourteenth century.<sup>79</sup> This work situates itself even more outside the time of its historical object than does, say, Voltaire. The *Histoire littéraire* incorporates illustrious lives into a grand chronological narrative of a distant past. Yet the implicit notion that this dis-

<sup>74</sup> See also 11:xii-xiii.

<sup>75</sup> See Bonnefon, 70.

<sup>76</sup> Gaston Paris, quoted in Bonnefon, 70.

<sup>77</sup> See Locey, Locey, and Pallister, vi.

<sup>78</sup> It fetched 145 livres in 1799 and was on sale for 222 livres in 1803 (see Bonnefon, 59, 64-6).

<sup>79</sup> On this work see Moisan, 69-71.

tance makes the narrative easier to complete, its historical object being distant from the unfinished present, becomes problematic given that the time of the work's actual composition is still ticking away so slowly.

Emanating even more than Goujet's work from the world of erudite Gallican clergy rather than from that of *mondain* and courtly *honnêteté*, this relatively inclusive history is one of learning, not of *belles-lettres* in the *moderne* sense. Its one major break with the tradition of *historia litteraria* is that it is written in French rather than Latin. Whereas in Goujet's history the term *bibliothèque* becomes detached from any literal library, here history has, at least in principle, become detached from even any figurative library. Not only is the familiar, almost expected term *bibliothèque* absent from the title, but the overall structure is chronologically linear, departing both from library subject classifications (which Goujet had reflected) and from the standard schema that had been adopted by booksellers. Moreover, unlike "une simple Bibliothèque choisie" (*Histoire littéraire*, 2:vii), which can include only writers who have left material traces in the form of books, this history is free to include writers for whom no such metonymic object is extant. The time line of *histoire littéraire* can open up a whole world beyond that of physical objects stored or circulating in specific places. That further world includes idealized versions of works that do exist in print, but only imperfectly: of Lactantius we read that "we do not have his works exactly as they flowed from his pen" (12:87).

The replacement of library by history does not mean that space is banished from the editors' conceptualization of the project. On the contrary, vaster, more intangible, public, and to some extent imaginary spaces now become identified with the contents of the huge work: the nation and the Republic of Letters (1.1:ii,vi).<sup>80</sup> Whereas Goujet's use of the term *bibliothèque* points to the fact that his history is of books printed, the Benedictines' history is of the learning of "France" from its "origins." It is a history not of French learning, nor of learning in French, but of learning in "France," whose changing borders are carefully defined. It includes not only the French and the Gauls but also, through a rather vague residence requirement, anyone else who

<sup>80</sup> On the Republic of Letters as a space in the mind see Goldgar, esp. 2–3.

sojourned there, preferably dying there too (*Histoire littéraire*, 1.1:vi-x). Hence the inclusion of the likes of Petronius (claimed to have been born near Marseilles) and Lactantius (claimed to have died in Gaul) (1.1:187, 1.2:65). It is as if, at the moment when libraries and cabinets were losing their monopoly as models for the literal or figurative collection of texts, the idealized space of the nation, as well as the time of history, was taking over as the new arena for collection, an arena constructed to transcend the economics and social distinctions of actual current book ownership. The detachment from literal libraries enables the Benedictines, like Goujet, to pursue the prestige of the nation, not of individual collectors: ownership of this immense corpus, this “public wealth [*bien public*]” (1.1:ii), is metaphorically reassigned from collectors to nation. As with Goujet’s “riches of learning and literature,” the figurative trope occults economics.

However, this history remains profoundly dependent on literal spaces, libraries and cabinets, without which it could not have been composed, all the more so because it supplements its declared focus on writers and works (1.1:xi-xii) with extensive information about editions and indeed copies, printed and manuscript. The information provides the crucial epistemological authority designed to prevent this history from becoming fiction (“to show that we back up everything with proof” [1.1:xxv]). The proofs emanate from the world of scholarly bibliography and even from that of bibliomania: the strain of combining this sea of particularism with the general outline of a history is enormous. No wonder that Goujet can only point in humble awe at this project and that it remains unfinished still. Modern literary history, an eventual remote descendant of such early modern *histoire littéraire*, would eventually cut itself much more adrift from this epistemological anchor embedded in the materiality of the world of libraries, cabinets, and bibliomania.

To secure the anchor, margin references to numerous libraries, cabinets, and/or their catalogs accompany the discussion of editions and copies. Although many are great monastic, royal, or legal libraries, a few are collections amassed wholly or partly along bibliomaniacal lines, such as those of Jean-Baptiste Colbert and his librarian Etienne Baluze, Jean and Emery Bigot, Henri-Charles du Cambout de Coislin, Charles-Jérôme du Fay, or D. de Lorchere (*lieutenant-général* of Le

Mans).<sup>81</sup> For example, four editions of Petronius seem known to the editors only through their existence in Lorchere's relatively obscure, probably provincial cabinet (*Histoire littéraire*, 1.1:204–5),<sup>82</sup> an unlikely foundation for part of a towering edifice of *histoire littéraire*.

This extraordinary degree of particularism hardly favors the onward march of general historical narration. Indeed, because of the impossibility of merging the two harmoniously, the overall historical narrative is confined to a "historical discourse" on institutions of learning and the like given at the start of the treatment of each era (1.1:xviii) and to a chronological table given at the end. The bulk is taken up by discrete author entries that descend into detailed particularism and lose sight of the historical ebbs and flows advertised on the title page. Rivet justifies this organization by revealing the continued proximity of his ambitious project to the genre of illustrious lives, arguing that "l'Histoire littéraire" is structurally more akin to hagiography than to the continuous narrative of ecclesiastical or political history (1.1:xxii).

<sup>81</sup> Colbert: The references are to the 1728 sales catalog of Colbert's great library, which was perceived by contemporaries as both learned and bibliomaniacal, as containing both "every great corpus of works" and also "most of the books that can be recommended for their rarity, singularity, and exorbitant pecuniary value" (*Journal des savans*, June 1728, 376; quoted by Denise Bloch, "La Bibliothèque de Colbert," in Jolly, 165). Baluze: The references are to the 1719 sales catalog of Baluze's personal library. So well disposed was he toward *curieux* bibliomaniacs that for their sakes he stipulated that it should not be sold to any single buyer. The exorbitant prices fetched by his books signaled the arrival of bibliomania as a market force. See Bléchet, 73; Bloch, 178n; and Viardot, "Livres rares," 451. Bigot: The references are to the 1706 sales catalog of the Bigot library in Rouen, which contained about 200 incunabula and 522 manuscripts among its 21,000 or so volumes. See Jean-Dominique Mellot, "Rouen au XVIIe siècle," in Jolly, 462. Coislin: The references are to the 1715 sales catalog of the Greek manuscripts in Coislin's library, which had formerly been that of the chancellor Pierre Séguier, who was both an erudite humanist and a bibliophile interested in the beauty or rarity of copies. On Séguier's library see Yannick Nexon, "La Bibliothèque du chancelier Séguier," in Jolly, 146–55. Du Fay: The references are to the 1725 sales catalog. On this famous sale and its exorbitant prices see Viardot, "Livres rares," 451. Lorchere: There is no reference to a sales catalog. Instead, Rivet or his agents seem to have had direct access to the library of Lorchere, "who enriches it every day with curious and choice books" (*Histoire littéraire*, 1.1:xlii).

<sup>82</sup> The lists of sources at the start of each tome of the *Histoire littéraire* show that Colbert is referred to in volumes 1–4; Baluze in 1, 2, and 4–6; the Bigot family in 4–6, 9, and 11; Coislin in 1; Du Fay in 8 and 9; and Lorchere in 1 and 2.

Rivet describes the tension between the general and the particular as one between a unified “body of history” and fragmentary “curious things” (1.1:xviii).<sup>83</sup> Here again, even in this totalizing work there lurks, as in the *Essais sur l'histoire des belles lettres* of Juvenel de Carlenca, the shadow of the cabinet, the assemblage of heterogeneous objects that can be united only by the labor of their collector. Indeed, Rivet describes the Benedictine history in terms remarkably reminiscent of contemporary descriptions of cabinets, such as that of Cangé. Here are Rivet's words:

the industry and care that must be applied in order to establish such harmonious connections between those discrete facts that they make up a uniform, quasi-natural whole. (1.1:v)

It is from the known monuments of the learning [*littérature*] of Gaul and France—sought with care, brought together with method, put in their natural order, explained at due length, accompanied by appropriate connections—that we are forming our *Histoire littéraire de la France*. (1.1:xix)

The following description of Cangé's cabinet was published in the same year, 1733, as the words above:

One of those coherent bodies, which inspire such respect through the correspondence and unity of their parts that they cannot be separated without a kind of violence and cruelty. . . . Formed by assiduous labor over many years. . . . It is a precious child, nurtured with much care. (*Catalogue des livres du cabinet de M. [Cangé]*, [i–ii])

Rivet hesitates between calling his historical schema “naturel” or “comme naturel.” If it is not authentically “naturel,” then his “formons,” like Cangé's “formé,” denotes the active creation of structure, in which case Rivet is on a par with the collector, “the master of the cabinet” ([ii]). On the whole, the largely anonymous presentation of the *Histoire littéraire* moves away from any such notion of collector-like creation, but it is not totally absent.

The tensions between bibliomania and early modern histories of learning and *belles-lettres* were perhaps eventually dissipated with the emer-

<sup>83</sup> For “corps” see also 1.1:ii, 2:ix.



gence of a distant modern successor to those histories—literary history, which has always enjoyed far more cultural capital than the private world of the bibliomaniac. The eventual occupation of the cultural high ground by literary history is partly a story of public, national narratives winning out over private spaces. For early members of the winning side, such as Voltaire, the narratives spawned by histories of *belles-lettres* are ones of cultural progress, and it is tempting with hindsight to collude with those winners by seeing the very emergence of early modern *histoire littéraire* and then of modern literary history as itself another sign of that progress, since these seem to be higher life forms that democratically distribute cultural capital to the general public, regardless of wealth, in contrast with the shamelessly individualistic elitism of bibliomania.

However, this interpretation is only one possibility. Nationalistic histories, whether early modern ones of *belles-lettres* or modern ones of “literature,” can also be viewed as seeking to repress (to varying extents) the spatial, material, and economic dimensions of book reception, collection, and ownership that were flaunted in bibliomania. Even early modern *histoire littéraire* of the most particularist kind fell far short of the particularism of bibliomania in this respect. The motives for this repression may often have been, from a modern perspective, praiseworthy, the hope being that the inequities arising from connections between economics and book reception would vanish. Even the vernacular canons that took shape in the mid-eighteenth century and are now usually villains in the history of literary history can be understood as part of this apparently praiseworthy project,<sup>84</sup> reducing the number of works in which cultural capital is located, fostering the mass print reproduction of those works and so undermining the links between the prestigious work and the singular, expensive copy. However, not only did those canons eventually exclude for ideological reasons vast swathes of past book production (such as much women’s writing), as has come to be recognized, but they also tended to occult what continued to be the material connection between book reception and economics (and therefore class and gender), blurring that connection

<sup>84</sup> For a succinct account of the rise of vernacular canons see Joan DeJean, “1700: Classics in the Making,” in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 391–6.

in a haze of ideological mystification rather than destroying it. So the distance established by some early modern histories of *belles-lettres* between themselves and the economic, the spatial, the material is another example to be added to the list of systems and concepts (such as “interest”) to have drifted from the realm of the economic to that of the intellect.<sup>85</sup> And yet, as can be seen from recent socioeconomic histories of reception and reading,<sup>86</sup> the fact that early modern bibliomania gave radical particularism a bad name is no reason to exclude new versions of such particularism from modern literary history.

<sup>85</sup> On “interest” see Kenny, 143–52.

<sup>86</sup> Esp. works by Roger Chartier and Robert Darnton, such as Chartier, *Lectures et lecteurs*; and Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: Norton, 1995).