

'Il sest vendu depuis peu une assez bonne bibliotheque': The Republic of Letters and the Sale Catalogue of the Library of Pierre Briot (1679)

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Half a century after its first publication, Henri-Jean Martin's monumental study *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVII^e siècle (1598–1701)* still stands out as the most comprehensive work on the seventeenth-century Parisian book world and, as such, it continues to serve as the reference work *par excellence* for scholars interested in the French book trade in the *Grand Siècle*.¹ As far as book trade catalogues are concerned, Martin has made ample use of publishers' and booksellers' catalogues for his quantitative and qualitative analysis of the production and the distribution of books in the French capital.² Other types of contemporary book trade catalogues, such as auction catalogues and other printed catalogues of private collections offered for sale, do, however,

1 Henri-Jean Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVII^e siècle (1598–1701)* (2 vols., Genève: Droz, 1969). The research described in this article was carried out in the context of the MEDIANE project (<http://mediate18.nl/>). This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 682022.

The quote in the title is from a letter written by Eusèbe Renaudot in August 1679 and published in E.S. De Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. 11 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 73.

2 It must be noted that in *Livre, pouvoirs et société*, the *catalogues de libraires* are just one type of source among many others. Martin drew on the rich collection of publishers' and booksellers' catalogues conserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France and made an eclectic use of these publications. A catalogue of the collection has been published in 2006 by Claire Lesage, Ève Netchine and Véronique Sarrazin under the title *Catalogues de libraires 1473–1810* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France). On these catalogues, see Annie Charon, Claire Lesage and Ève Netchine (eds.), *Le livre entre le commerce et l'histoire des idées; les catalogues de libraires (XV^e–XIX^e siècle)* (Paris: École des chartes, 2011), and Giles Mandelbrote, 'La nouvelle édition de Graham Pollard et Albert Ehrman, *The Distribution of Books by Catalogue, from the invention of printing to AD 1800*. Bilan des travaux préparatoires: catalogues français', in Annie Charon and Élisabeth Parinet (eds.), *Les ventes de livres et leurs catalogues XVII^e–XX^e siècle. Actes des journées organisées par l'École nationale des chartes (Paris, 15 janvier 1998) et par l'ENSSIB (Villeurbanne, 22 janvier 1998)* (Paris: École nationale des chartes, 2000), pp. 49–76.

play no role of importance in *Livre, pouvoirs et société*.³ Martin certainly signals the circulation of old and used books, but since the focus of his study is primarily on the development of the production and distribution of new books and not on the second-hand book market, it discusses neither the scope and nature of this part of the book trade nor the persons who specialised in it.

Up till now, these lacunae in our understanding of the seventeenth-century Parisian book world have not been properly addressed. While, in the last decades of the twentieth century, the phenomena of book auctions and sale catalogues of private libraries have been thoroughly studied in book historical research dedicated to seventeenth-century publishing centres in the Dutch Republic and the British Isles, the two major synthetic studies in the field of the history of the book in early modern France, the *Histoire de l'édition française* and the *Histoire des bibliothèques françaises*, barely touch upon this subject.⁴ The introduction to Françoise Bléchet's list of seventeenth and eighteenth-century French sale catalogues held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the collective volume on book sales and book sale catalogues published by Annie Charon and Élisabeth Parinet present valuable data and insights, but that does not change the fact that the French *ventes publiques* and their relation to the second-hand book trade of the period before 1701 remain largely *terra incognita*.⁵

The present article aims to take the reader on a voyage of discovery into this unknown territory and to explore its contours by focusing on a particularly interesting case: the sale of the library of Pierre Briot, a fairly unknown Parisian Protestant, who was active as a translator of English works in the fields of natural history, geography and philosophy. After Briot's death in 1678, an anonymous

3 Martin's discussion of the size and the contents of seventeenth-century Parisian private libraries is based on a corpus of 600 probate inventories and on a number of secondary sources. The catalogue of the library of Charles-Maurice Le Tellier, the *Bibliotheca Telleriana* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1693), is the only printed private library catalogue mentioned in this context.

4 Both works briefly address the question of Parisian book auctions and printed (sale) catalogues, but only in the context of the – better documented – eighteenth-century market of old and antiquarian books. Cf. Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin (eds.), *Histoire de l'édition française*, vols. I and II (first edition Paris: Promodis, 1982–1984, second edition Paris: Promodis/Fayard, 1989–1990), and Claude Jolly (ed.), *Histoire des bibliothèques françaises*, vol. II (Paris: Promodis, 1989, reprinted in 2008).

5 Cf. Françoise Bléchet, *Les ventes publiques de livres en France 1630–1750; répertoire des catalogues conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1991), and Charon and Parinet (eds.), *Les ventes de livres et leurs catalogues*. See also the comment in Jean-Dominique Mellot's magisterial work *L'édition rouennaise et ses marchés (vers 1600–vers 1730); dynamisme provincial et centralisme parisien* (Paris: École des chartes, 1998), p. 208: '... les riches archives ecclésiastiques rouennaises qui nous ouvrent des horizons sur le domaine, encore à peu près vierge pour le XVII^e siècle, des ventes après décès.'

publisher produced a sale catalogue of his collection with the imprint 'Paris, 1679'. In the summer of 2017, I discovered a unique manuscript of the actual sale of Briot's library in the Médiathèque François-Mitterrand in Poitiers. Since then, I have gathered a number of manuscript and printed sources containing information regarding Briot, his library and the circumstances of its sale in 1679. The documentation I collected and that I present in the following pages, sheds light on numerous aspects of the organisation of sales of private book collections in seventeenth-century Paris that have hitherto remained hidden and, as such, it is of importance for the study of the French second-hand book market of that period. I will also argue that the Briot case clearly demonstrates how private collections and catalogues of private library sales played a central role in the early modern Republic of Letters.

Printed Private Library Catalogues in Seventeenth-Century France

The printed sale catalogue of Pierre Briot's book collection, the *Catalogue des livres de feu Mr Briot*, published in Paris in 1679, is one of the rare printed private library catalogues that have come down to us from seventeenth-century France. The repertory of French book sales established by Françoise Bléchet lists 56 catalogues for the period 1630–1700, seven of which do not concern private collections. It must be noted that, in spite of the title of Bléchet's book, not all the listed catalogues are auction catalogues: several catalogues lack any indication of a sale whatsoever and some of these, like the *Catalogue des livres qui sont dans la bibliothèque de feu Mr. Galland* (Paris: Pierre Deshayes, 1653) and the *Bibliotheca Telleriana* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1693), can be qualified as 'catalogues domestiques', primarily designed for the use of the owner and his friends, as well as to publicise the library, evidently to the greater honour of the proud collector.⁶ Extensive additional research allowed me to add eleven catalogues to Bléchet's list, but compared to the hundreds of seventeenth-century printed catalogues of private libraries recorded for the Dutch Republic and for the British Isles, 60 French catalogues is a surprisingly meagre harvest.⁷

6 Cf. Bléchet, *Les ventes publiques*. On the 'catalogues domestiques', see Yann Sordet, 'Une approche des "catalogues domestiques" de bibliothèques privées (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècle), instruments et miroirs de collections particulières', *Bulletin du bibliophile*, 1 (1997), pp. 92–123.

7 Cf. J.A. (Hans) Gruys and Henk W. de Kooker (eds.), *Book Sales Catalogues of the Dutch Republic, 1599–1800. Guide* (Leiden: IDC Publishers, 1997), the database *Book Sales Catalogues Online* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015, online: <<http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/book-sales-catalogues-online>>), and Alan N.L. Munby and Lenore Coral (eds.), *British Book Sale Catalogues 1676–1800: a union list* (London: Mansell, 1977).

The fact that the first Dutch printed private library catalogue dates back as far as 1599 and that in the Dutch Republic, it was obligatory to print a catalogue for every book sale, can only partly explain the striking difference between the number of known catalogues for seventeenth-century France on the one hand, and the Dutch Republic and the British Isles on the other.⁸ During the last decades of the seventeenth century, members of the book trade both in France and in Britain started to publish catalogues of private libraries. Neither group was acting on a corporate or legal obligation to produce printed lists of the books offered for sale. There are indeed several traces of – voluntary and forced – private library sales conducted in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for which no printed catalogue seems to have been available. For example, the board of the *Hôtel-Dieu* used to put up for sale book collections that were bequeathed to the institution, like those of Jacques Scalquin (1587) and Jean Ballesdens (1676).⁹ Around 1659, the decision of Guillaume Colletet's widow Claude Le Hain to sell the poet's precious collection of books by auction was denounced in a poem by Colletet's son François:

Chères délices de mon père, / Livres doctes et précieux. /
 Qui de nos esprits curieux / Fustes l'entretien ordinaire. /
 Vous qu'en quarante ou cinquante ans. / Malgré les misères du tems. /
 Il acquit avec tant de peine. / Quoi donc, je ne vous verrai plus; /
 Puisqu'il faut que cette semaine / A l'encan vous soyez vendus!¹⁰

In one rather curious case, the bookseller Pierre Du Buisson presented books coming from the collections of two former professors of the Protestant Academies of Sedan and Nîmes, Emmanuele Tremellio (d. 1590) and Jean Fauchet (d. 1628), in separate sections of a trade catalogue he published in 1639 for the *foire Saint-Germain* in Paris.¹¹

8 Otto Lankhorst, 'Les ventes de livres en Hollande et leurs catalogues (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles)', in Charon and Parinet (eds.), *Les ventes de livres et leurs catalogues*, p. 15.

9 Cf. Léon Brièle, *Collection de documents pour servir à l'histoire des hôpitaux de Paris*, vol. IV-1 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1885), p. 30, and Léon Brièle, *Inventaire-sommaire des archives hospitalières antérieures à 1790, Hôtel-Dieu*, vol. II (Paris: Grandremy et Henon, 1884), p. 37.

10 François Colletet, 'Contre Claudine, ode', in Frédéric Lachèvre, *Bibliographie des recueils collectifs de poésies publiés de 1597 à 1700*, vol. II (Paris: Leclerc, 1903), p. 209.

11 *Catalogue de livres de theologie, philosophie, droict, medecine, mathematiques, histoires, romans & autres: portez à Paris cette presente année 1639. par Du Buisson marchand libraire demeurant à Montpellier: et se vendront en sa boutique à la foire Saint Germain* (S.l.: s.n., 1639) [Paris, BnF, 8-Q10A-179]. Cf. Michel Simonin, 'La Méditerranée à l'assaut de Paris. Pierre Du Buisson, ses catalogues et ses livres', in Michel Simonin, *L'encre et la*

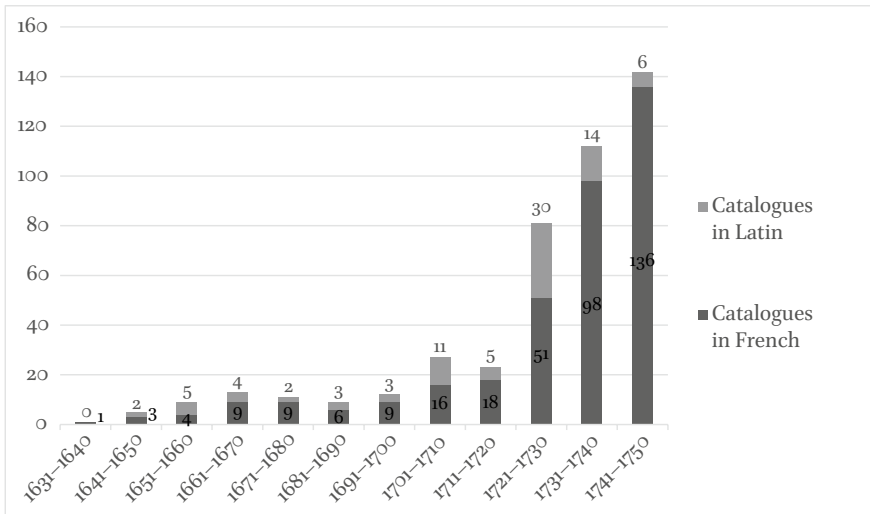


FIGURE 13.1 Catalogues of private libraries published in France (1631–1750)

But while in the British Isles book auctioning and the publication of private library sale catalogues seem to have boomed almost immediately, in France this practice developed slowly. Conflicts of interest and responsibility between the printers' and booksellers' guild and the *communauté* of the *huissiers-priseurs*, which held a monopoly on the organisation of public auctions, may have played a role here.¹² In any case, it was not until the 1720s that the production of printed private library sale catalogues started to increase significantly in France.¹³

Since the French were under no obligation to print a list of items prior to a book sale, one would perhaps assume that only large, prestigious and valuable collections were deemed worthy of publication in the seventeenth century,

lumière, quarante-sept articles (1976–2000) (Genève: Droz, 2004), pp. 815–830. See also the *Catalogue des livres apportez a Paris cette année 1650. par Pierre Du Buisson, marchand libraire de Montpellier. Qu'il a tirez des plus curieux cabinets de France, Catalogne, Italie, &c. Lesquels livres se vendront au Collelege [sic] royal près Saint Benoist* (S.l.: s.n., [1650]) [Paris, BnF, Q-8930], and the *Catalogue de divers livres curieux recueillis de diverses bibliothèques, & achetez par Michel Duhan, marchand libraire, de present à Paris lesquels se ven[n]dront par luy à la foire de S. Germain, cette année 1655* ([Lyon]: Michel Duhan, [1655]) [Paris, BnF, Q-8931].

12 On these conflicts, see the next section.

13 Judged by the number of (surviving) catalogues on my personal file of catalogues printed in early modern France. Although the production of sale catalogues increased in the eighteenth century, it would be a misconception to think that by that time, every book sale was accompanied by a printed catalogue.

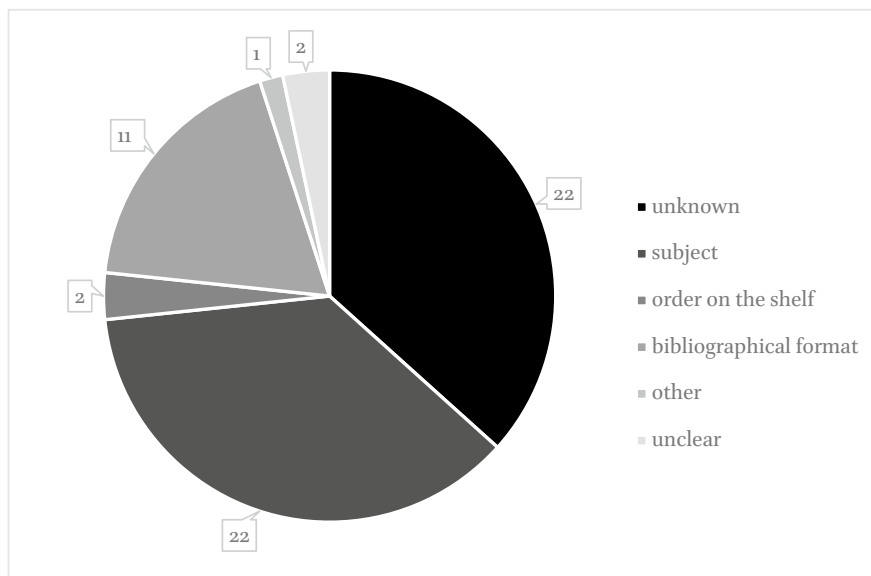


FIGURE 13.2 Main organising principles in French private library catalogues (1631–1750)

but the corpus of printed private library catalogues is actually highly diverse when it comes to content, language, layout, printing quality, arrangement, format and number of items. One of the first things that catches the eye when one browses the list, is the fact that the Parisian booksellers did not have a monopoly on the publication of private library catalogues: out of 39 catalogues that mention a place of publication, no fewer than 12 emanate from provincial publishing and printing houses. As for the contents of the catalogues, some Latin catalogues, like the *Bibliothecae Cordesianae catalogus* (Paris: Laurent Saunier, 1643) and the *Catalogus bibliothecae Belharnosianae* (Orléans: Jean Boyer, 1683), advertise famous scholarly collections composed of thousands of books and arranged in a thematic order. Such catalogues often contain paratextual elements, like a preface, an *éloge*, an index or a list of works and authors cited. But not all the substantial catalogues are in Latin, we can also find French ones. Other, less voluminous, catalogues present relatively modest libraries or a selection of books that form part of a larger collection.¹⁴ Many catalogues are primarily arranged according to the format of the books or their arrangement on the shelves, but besides those, we encounter examples where

14 For example, the printed catalogue of Fouquet's library, *Mémoire des manuscrits de la bibliothèque de monsieur Foucquet* (Paris: Denys Thierry, 1667), only lists manuscripts, and that of Guy Patin's collection, *Inventaire des livres in folio de la bibliothèque de défunt M. Patin* (S.l.: s.n., 1673), is just a list of his folio books.

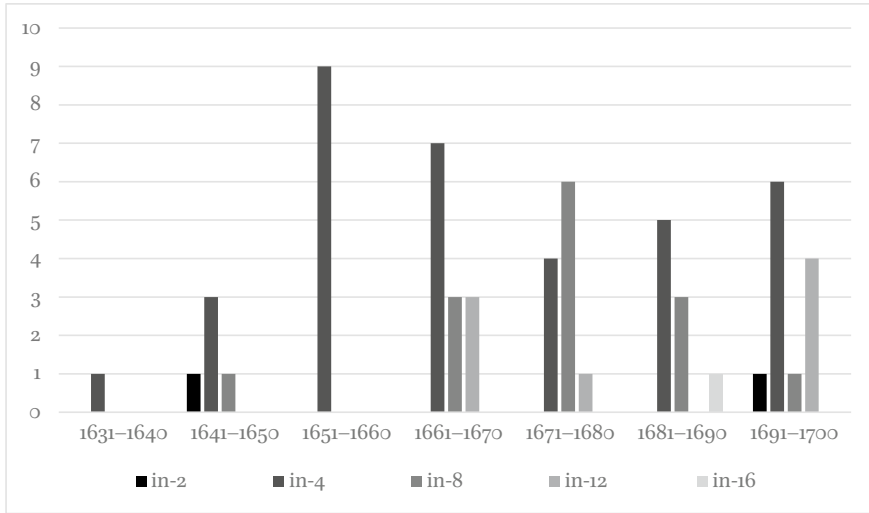


FIGURE 13.3 Private library catalogues published in France (1631–1750): bibliographical formats

the language of the books or the order and composition of the lots in the notary’s probate inventory have been chosen as the leading principle for establishing the catalogue.

Although the collection of 2,716 items described in the *Catalogue des livres de feu M^r Briot* could not compete – neither in volume nor in quality – with libraries of men like Raphaël Trichet du Fresne (1662) or with the *Catalogus bibliothecae Thuanae* (the catalogue of the de Thou family library, published in 1679, shortly after Briot’s catalogue), compared to other sale catalogues of private libraries published in France during the second half of the seventeenth century, it is a relatively voluminous, detailed, and neatly printed catalogue.¹⁵

Who Was M^r Briot?

The rather vague way in which the *Catalogue des livres de feu M^r Briot* indicates the owner of the collection could easily put modern researchers on the wrong track, but seventeenth-century readers interested in books probably guessed immediately that the Briot in question was Pierre Briot, a well-established member of the Protestant bourgeoisie, who lived in the house of the Duke

¹⁵ Cf. *Catalogus librorum bibliothecae Raphaelis Tricheti Du Fresne* (Paris: apud vidua, & haeredes, 1662), and *Catalogus bibliothecae Thuanae* (Paris: impensis directionis, 1679).

of La Trémoille in Paris.¹⁶ Pierre Briot was born in 1613 to Susanne Rambour (d. before 1627) and Isaac Briot (1585–1670), an engraver of prints whose work ornaments several seventeenth-century editions.¹⁷ In July 1655, Pierre married Madeleine Jouard (d. before August 1678), daughter of Pierre Jouard, *procureur* at the Parisian *parlement*, and Anne Perreaux. They had at least seven children, of whom only four survived to adulthood: Élisabeth (b. 1658), Émilie (b. 1663?), Hélène Esther (b. 1665), and Isaac (b. 1667).¹⁸

Pierre Briot was trained as a medical doctor; he is mentioned as a student at the medical faculty in Paris in documents dating from 1643 and 1648, but I have found no traces of him as a practising physician.¹⁹ It is however certain that from 1660 onwards, he took a vivid interest in natural history and philosophy, especially the work of authors associated with the Royal Society of London or discussed in its *Philosophical Transactions*. Not only did his library hold English editions of major works in these fields published between 1660 and 1678, as well as a series of *Philosophical Transactions* starting in 1665, Briot himself published several French translations of important English books on these subjects: *Irelands Naturall History*, written by Gerard Boate and published by Samuel Hartlib (1652, tr. 1666), Joshua Childrey's *Natural Rarities of England, Scotland and Wales* (1660, tr. 1667), *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects in the East Indies* by Henry Lord (1630, tr. 1667), Paul Rycaut's *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1665, tr. 1670), and Henry More's *Immortality of the Soul* (1659, tr. 1677–1678). The last work did not appear in print, maybe because Briot passed away in December 1678. Around 1665, Briot had made plans to translate Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica or Enquiries into Very Many Received Tenents and Commonly Presumed Truths* (4th revised edition 1658), but this seems to have fallen through.²⁰ According to the preface to the third volume of David Wilkins' 1726 edition of *The Works of John Selden, esq.*, Briot had also intended to translate Selden's *Titles of Honor* (1614, largely revised

16 See for example Françoise Bléchet, who suggests two names: Nicolas Briot or Isaac Briot (Bléchet, *Les ventes publiques*, p. 63). In 1670, Pierre Briot was already living in the *hôtel* La Trémoille, but in 1657 he resided in the faubourg Saint-Martin, rue d'Enfer.

17 Isaac also worked at the Royal Mint.

18 The biographical information provided on the Briot family is based on research in several archival and other sources, including notary documents from the National Archives in Paris, and the Protestant church records available on FamilySearch.org. It would take up too much space to justify every detail.

19 Cf. 'Procès-verbaux de la Commission des antiquités de la Seine-Inférieure pendant l'année 1897, séance du 30 juillet 1897', in *Bulletin de la Commission des antiquités de la Seine-Inférieure*, XI-1 (1898), p. 142.

20 See the letter Browne wrote in September 1665 to his son Edward, in S. Wilkin (ed.), *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, vol. 111 (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852), p. 412.

edition 1631) 'for the use of the French Nobility', but 'Death prevented Monsieur Briot from executing His Design'.²¹ I have not found further evidence for this, except that Briot must indeed have been an admirer of Selden: his library contained several of his works, including two editions of the *Titles of Honor*. Briot's translation of *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* was the most influential of his publications. It went through several editions and other authors used it as a reference work. One of them was Jean Racine, who stated in the foreword to his 'oriental' play *Bajazet* (1671/1672), that he had consulted Briot's recent translation of Rycaut's work.

It would be interesting to know when and how Pierre Briot obtained this knowledge of the English language, that was quite uncommon in Paris at the time.²² I have not been able to gather any hard evidence yet, but it is very well possible that in his twenties, Briot spent a long period of time with relatives in England.²³ His uncle, the famous engraver Nicolas Briot (c. 1579–1646), had moved there in 1625 and had been appointed chief engraver to the Royal Mint. H.J. Reesink has suggested that when Denis de Sallo, editor of the first French literary and scientific journal, the *Journal des savants*, founded in 1665, announced in 1666 that he had finally found someone who could review interesting articles from the *Philosophical Transactions*, he meant Pierre Briot.²⁴

Through his marriage, Pierre Briot was related to several prominent Protestant and Catholic families. The lawyer Jacques de Falaiseau, one of the elders of the church in Charenton, whose son Pierre worked as a diplomat at the English embassy in Paris, was his brother-in-law. Pierre's sister-in-law Élisabeth Jouard had been married to Jacques de Rozemont, sieur de Boucour (d. 1653), *intendant* of Henri III de La Trémoille, duc de Thouars, prince de Tarente, comte de Laval etc. Élisabeth herself was a close friend of Henri's sister Charlotte, spouse of James Stanley, Earl of Derby and feudal Lord of the Isle of Man. It is very likely that Briot was invited to the weekly reunions of 'virtuosi' organised by his fellow church member, the scholar and royal administrator Henri Justel. This 'cercle Justel' has been described as the centre of

21 David Wilkins (ed.), *The Works of John Selden, esq.*, vol. III. Containing his English tracts (London: T. Wood, 1726), *To the reader*.

22 Cf. Georges Ascoli, *La Grande-Bretagne devant l'opinion française au XVII^e siècle*, vol. II (Paris: Librairie universitaire J. Gamber, 1930), pp. 1–27.

23 According to Louis Jouve, young Pierre had resided with the family of his uncle Nicolas in England, but it is not clear where he got this information. Louis Jouve, *Les Wiriot et les Briot, artistes lorrains du XVI^e et du XVII^e siècle: nouvelles esquisses* (Paris: chez l'auteur, 1891), p. 135.

24 H.J. Reesink, *L'Angleterre et la littérature anglaise dans les trois plus anciens périodiques français de Hollande de 1684 à 1709* (Paris: H. Champion, 1931), p. 64.

intellectual life in Paris at the time. Justel had a large correspondence network that included numerous early modern philosophers, scholars and scientists, among whom we find the secretary of the Royal Society Henry Oldenburg, Christiaan Huygens and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Justel mentions Briot in two letters to Oldenburg dated June 1668 and September 1668. In the latter one, he relates that, through his microscope, Briot has observed living midges issued from the belly of a fly. Oldenburg took note of this, reminding himself that he should ask Robert Hooke about it.²⁵ During his two-year stay in Paris (1677–1679), John Locke regularly attended the meetings. It was at Justel's place that he got acquainted with his friend for life Nicolas Thoynard and it might have been Thoynard who further introduced him to Briot. Two of the topics Locke discussed with Briot were Samuel Cottereau Duclos' recipe for potable gold and the comparative research Locke conducted on the monetary systems of France, England and the Dutch Republic.²⁶ In October 1677, Thomas Stringer wrote to Locke that he had made some inquiries after the books 'for monsieur Briott' Locke had mentioned in one of his letters.²⁷ Almost a year later Thoynard informed Locke of the passing away of Briot: 'Nous avons perdu ici mr Briot en moins d'un jour'.²⁸

It seems that Pierre Briot also maintained ties with another prominent person, namely Johann Friedrich (1625–1679), Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Calenberg (Hanover). In 1667, he dedicated his translation of Childrey's *Natural Rarities of England, Scotland and Wales* to the Duke and the following year, the two men exchanged letters on experiments with venom-attracting stone.²⁹ It is not clear how they became acquainted. In his youth, Johann Friedrich made several educational trips to France and in 1668, he married Benedicta Henrietta Philippina, daughter of the landless Prince

25 A. Rupert Hall & Marie Boas Hall (eds.), *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, vol. v: 1668–1669 (Madison, Milwaukee, London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), pp. 37 and 40. After his emigration to England in 1681, Justel himself was appointed Fellow of the Royal Society.

26 See Peter R. Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), p. 174, and Peter King, *The Life of John Locke: with extracts from his correspondence*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1810), p. 150. Briot is mentioned several times in Locke's diaries and notebooks. His journal for 1677 contains a reading note concerning p. 280 of the 1636 edition of Hayward's *Life and Raigne of King Edward*, that Locke might have borrowed from Briot's library. It says that he wants to ask Briot what the author meant by 'abaseing the mony'. John Lough, 'Locke's Reading during his Stay in France (1675–1679)', *The Library*, VIII (1953), p. 242.

27 Probably a lost letter. De Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. 1, p. 517.

28 In a letter dated 21 November 1678. De Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. 1, p. 632.

29 See the letter of Justel to Oldenburg in A. Rupert Hall & Marie Boas Hall (eds.), *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, vol. v: 1668–1669, p. 37.

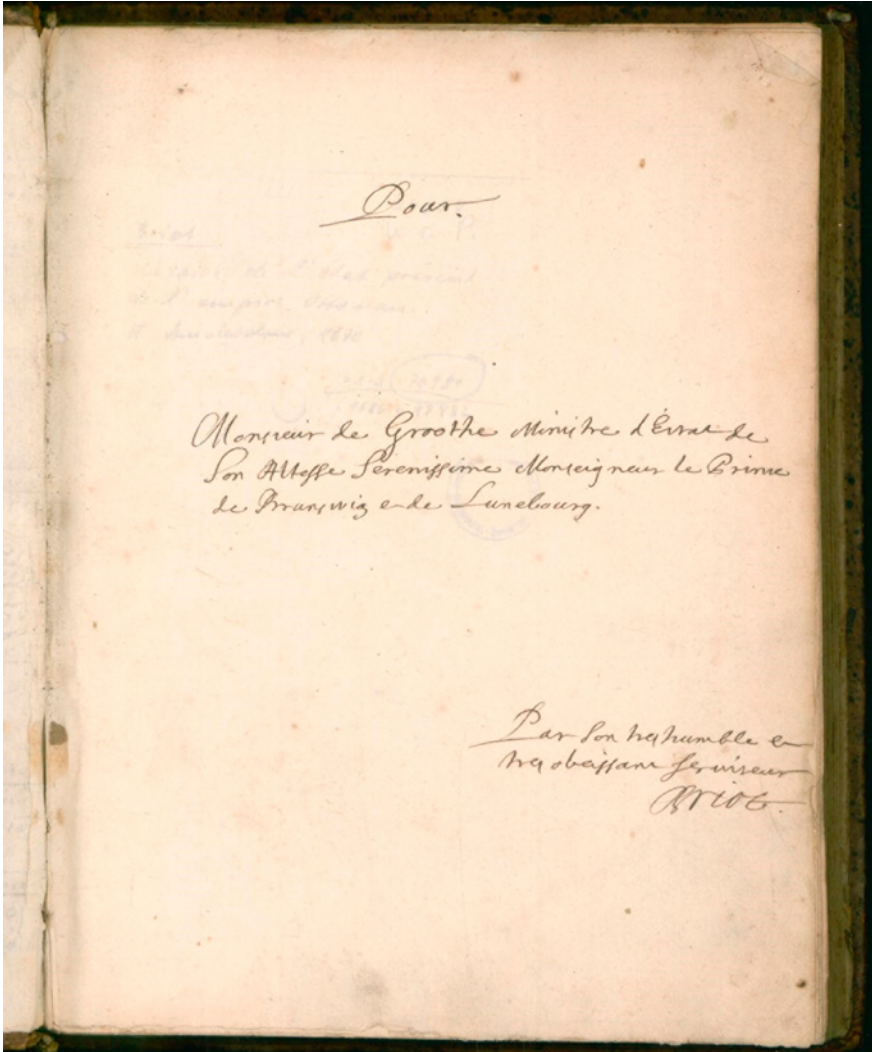


FIGURE 13.4 Autograph address by Pierre Briot in a copy of the *Histoire de l'état présent de l'empire ottoman* (Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy, 1670). Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen Anhalt in Halle (Saale), ZWB 1ZEA/Europ. Aufklaerung, AB 70981. Online: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:3-34766>
COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY

Palatine Edward, who lived in Paris. Briot's dedication in the 1667 translation of the *Natural Rarities* suggests that, at that point, the translator had met some of the Duke's *domestiques*. A copy of the 1670 folio edition of Briot's translation of Rycaut's *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* held at the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, contains further proof of

contacts between Briot and the court of Johann Friedrich: it carries a handwritten address to Otto Grote zu Schauen, privy councillor and chamberlain of the Duke (Figure 13.4). At the time of Briot's death, a manuscript containing his translation of Henry More's *Immortality of the Soul* could be found in the Johann Friedrich's library. Like the *Natural Rarities*, it had been dedicated to the Duke. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who had been named librarian of the ducal library around 1676, used this translation when studying More's ideas.³⁰

The Compilation and Production of a Sale Catalogue

Many intriguing questions surround the practice of producing book sale catalogues in early modern France. Who compiled these catalogues and how? Who paid for their publication? What was the print run of these catalogues? Who distributed them and via which channels? Did purchasers have to pay for their catalogue? Although we do have some answers to these questions, our knowledge of the actual process of producing sale catalogues of private libraries in seventeenth-century France is in fact limited. Almost all available studies pertaining to early modern French private library sale catalogues focus on the eighteenth century and very few of them discuss the practical details of compiling, publishing and distributing these book lists.³¹ A large-scale in-depth study of seventeenth-century catalogues and other archival sources concerning their compilation and publication could uncover new information and help us reach a better understanding of the realities of the production of book trade catalogues in the early modern period. The data on French, English and Dutch catalogues currently being harvested by the members of the MEDATE

30 Cf. Leibniz-Forschungsstelle der Universität Münster (ed.), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophische Schriften*, vol. IV (1677 – Juni 1690), Teil A (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), no. 331. Leibniz's notes date from the period 1677–1678.

31 Cf. for example Charon and Parinet (eds.), *Les ventes de livres et leurs catalogues*; Friedhelm Beckmann, *Französische Privatbibliotheken. Untersuchungen zu Literatursystematik und Buchbesitz im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Büchhändler-Vereinigung, 1988); Michel Marion, *Collections et collectionneurs de livres au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999); Elsa Liardet, *Le livre dans la société grenobloise au XVIII^e siècle: études des bibliothèques de particuliers au travers des inventaires et ventes après décès*. UGA UFR ARSH – Université Grenoble Alpes – UFR Arts & Sciences Humaines. Histoire. 2010. Online: <https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-00611483>, and Emmanuelle Chapron, 'Monde savant et ventes de bibliothèques en France méridionale dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle', *Annales du Midi*, 283 (2013), pp. 409–429.

project team at Nijmegen University form a good starting point for such an undertaking from a transnational point of view.³²

As far as the Briot catalogue is concerned, at least ten surviving copies of this publication are held in public libraries all over the world. All copies are in quarto and contain 86 numbered pages plus an unnumbered one-page *avis*, a notice containing some details regarding the catalogue and the sale. A closer look reveals that these copies represent two different states of the catalogue. The variants concern the title-page, pages 1–4, and the place of the *avis*. In one version, this notice can be found at the very end of the catalogue. This is, of course, unpractical, and it might explain why in the other version, the *avis* precedes the text of the catalogue. This rearrangement would probably have required a resetting of the title-page and the first two folios.

The imprint of the catalogue only mentions a year and a place of publication. This is typical of French private library catalogues of the period: unlike eighteenth-century Parisian catalogues, which generally list the name of the publisher and in many cases, even the name of the printer, the first catalogues of private libraries printed in France seldom indicate the publisher's or printer's name. Among those that have a detailed imprint on the title-page, only two emanate from the same publishing house.³³ At the early stages of what was later to develop into a flourishing public sales market for old and rare books, the role of booksellers seems to have been less dominant than it was during the following century. In the second half of the seventeenth century, booksellers were regularly involved in the estimation and description of books recorded in probate inventories and they also maintained a lively commerce in used books bought from those estates. According to the documentation on the regulation of the book trade in seventeenth and eighteenth-century France assembled by Anisson-Duperron, seventeenth-century booksellers often tried to buy up entire libraries at a low price with the purpose of selling the individual items at

32 See <http://mediate18.nl/>; Alicia C. Montoya, 'Shifting Perspectives and Moving Targets: from Conceptual Vistas to Bits of Data in the First Year of the MEDiate Project', in Simon Burrows and Glenn Roe (eds.), *Digitizing Enlightenment* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 198–218, and Helwi Blom, Rindert Jagersma and Juliette Reboul, 'Printed Private Library Catalogues as a Source for the History of Reading in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Europe', in Mary Hammond (ed.), *The Edinburgh History of Reading. Early Readers* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2020), pp. 249–269.

In spite of the fact that the eighteenth-century French catalogues have been more thoroughly studied than the seventeenth-century catalogues, there is no general survey of (known) printed editions of these catalogues. In the context of the MEDiate project, I am currently working on establishing such an inventory.

33 The *Bibliothecae Seguierianae catalogus* (1685) and the *Catalogus librorum D. de M****** [Pierre de Maridat] (1687) were both issued by the Parisian bookseller André Cramoisy.

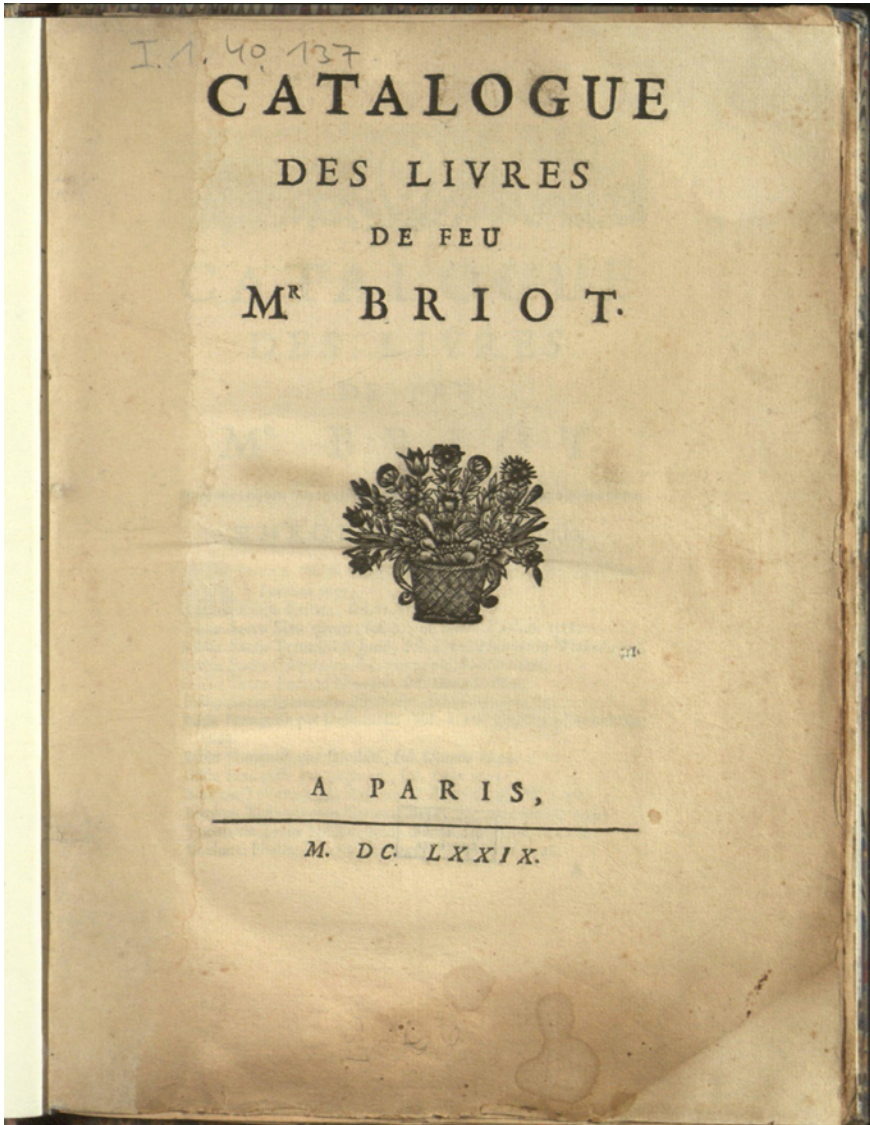


FIGURE 13.5 *Catalogue des livres de feu Mr. Briot*. Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, 02/I.1.4.137, title-page
COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AUGSBURG

a profit in their shops.³⁴ The Parisian booksellers Thomas Moette and Jacques Villery had specialised in this trade and their names come up regularly in contemporary documents discussing the question of where to find old and rare books.³⁵ A manuscript note on one of the copies of the catalogue of Michel Poncet's library indicates that in 1689, Moette bought the entire library.³⁶ We learn from another handwritten annotation on the catalogue of the collection of Jean de Mesgrigny (c. 1680–1690) that this library was sold 'chez Moette, Libraire'.³⁷ The name of Moette appears again in the *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de défunt M. Boucot* (Paris: s.n., 1699), that has been described as the first genuine French library auction catalogue. Its *avis* explains that Boucot's heirs had entrusted Moette and his colleague Jean Boudot with printing the catalogue and taking care of the sale. It would be interesting to know what the exact circumstances and conditions of the transaction were. Nicolas Clément states that the auction took place after the booksellers had first bought the library themselves: 'les sieurs Moette et Boudot, qui ont acheté la bibliothèque entière pour 18,000 livres, prétendent vendre tout au plus offrant, ce qui sera fort incommode pour ceux qui voudront avoir quelque chose'.³⁸ As for Jacques Villery, when the creditors of the estate of Jacques-Auguste II de Thou (d. 1677) needed someone to organise the *vente en détail* of the important family library, they contracted the reputed bookseller from the rue de la Vieille Bouclerie.³⁹ Gabriel Martin, the 'champion' of the eighteenth-century French auction

34 Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Ms. fr. 22083;22.

35 See for example two letters written in 1685 and 1688 by Richard Simon published in the *Bibliothèque critique ou recueil de diverses pièces critiques*, vol. IV (Amsterdam: Jean Louis Delorme, 1710), pp. 143 and 204, and É. Fournier (ed.), *Le livre commode des adresses de Paris pour 1692*, vol. I (Paris: Paul Daffis, 1878), p. 192.

36 *Catalogus librorum bibliothecae illustrissimi ac reverendissimi D.D. Michaelis Poncet* (Paris: François Le Cointe, s.d.) [BnF, DELTA-3248].

37 *Bibliothèque de feu Monsieur de Mesgrigny, conseiller d'etat* (Paris: s.n., [c. 1680–1690]) [British Library, 820.c.1(6) (digitised)]. According to Giles Mandelbrote, Henri Sloane's copy of the *Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque de feu Monsieur Gallemant* (S.l.: s.n., [1666]) also has a handwritten reference to the Parisian bookseller: 'Pour M. Moette'. See Giles Mandelbrote, 'Les catalogues de libraires dans les collections de Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753): provenance et transmission', in Charon, Lesage and Netchine, *Le livre entre le commerce*, p. 214.

38 Letter quoted in Edmond Bonnaffé, *Dictionnaire des amateurs français au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: A. Quantin, 1884), p. 35.

39 For details of this sale, which took place in 1680, see H. Harisse, *Le président de Thou et ses descendants, leur célèbre bibliothèque, leurs armoiries et les traductions françaises de J.-A. Thuani Historiarum sui temporis; d'après des documents nouveaux* (Paris: Henri Leclerc, 1905).

catalogue, learned the trade in the bookshop of Jacques Villery, with whom he collaborated for almost four years and whose daughter Geneviève became his wife.

In spite of this evidence pointing at the presence, in late seventeenth-century Paris, of booksellers targeting a second-hand book market that largely revolved around the sale of private libraries, there are no signs indicating that at this point, public sales of privately owned libraries were considered an upcoming niche market and that booksellers wanted to establish a name in this field, for example by engaging in the publication or distribution of printed catalogues. This might have had something to do with the fact that the monopoly on the estimation of goods in probate inventories, conducted under the responsibility of a notary, as well as the organisation of public auctions, resided with the guild of the *huissiers-priseurs*. If necessary, the latter would call upon the expertise of booksellers for the appraisal of books in the inventory. The handwritten catalogues established by professionals of the book trade would be co-signed by the *huissiers* and attached to the inventory. Keen on defending their privileges, these officials successfully sued booksellers who compiled inventory catalogues without their participation. Furthermore, regulations stipulated that the only way booksellers could purchase books coming from collections they appraised themselves, was by placing their bids in the public auction. Around 1680, a turf war broke out between the *huissiers-priseurs* and the members of the printers' and booksellers' guild. It led to several court cases regarding the interpretation of existing regulations and to new legislation. Due to ambiguities and inconsistencies, the new rules gave rise to more conflicts and lawsuits, but it seems that during the first decades of the eighteenth century, the booksellers successfully contested the monopoly of the *huissiers-priseurs* in the field of estimating books in probate inventories and selling them in a public sale.⁴⁰

40 See [C.M. Saugrain], *Code de la librairie et imprimerie de Paris, ou Conférence du règlement arrêté au Conseil d'État du Roy, le 28 février 1723, et rendu commun pour tout le royaume, par arrêt du Conseil d'État du 24 mars 1744. Avec les anciennes ordonnances depuis l'an 1332, jusqu'à présent* (Paris: aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1744), pp. 465–480, and BnF, Ms. fr. 22083. The question of competence and the division of roles between both parties regularly resurfaced in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century legislation on the subject of public sales. For example, the postrevolutionary law of 18 March 1801 (loi du 27 ventôse an IX), that re-established the office of the *huissier-priseur*, now called *commissaire-priseur*, stipulated that as from 1 April 1801, all public sales in Paris were to be led by members of this profession. F.A. Pic, *Code des imprimeurs, libraires, écrivains et artistes ou Recueil et concordance des dispositions législatives qui déterminent leurs obligations et leurs droits* (Paris: Corby, 1827), pp. 96 and 204.

It can be assumed that, like the catalogues of the libraries of Raphaël Trichet du Fresne (Paris: 'apud vidua, & haeredes', 1662) and Henri Gras (Lyon: 'ex sumptibus haeredum', 1667), the Briot catalogue was published at the expense of his heirs, the four surviving children. If this was indeed the case, one must acknowledge that the heirs, or rather their cousin Jacques de Rozemont, sieur de Boucoeur, who was their legal representative, did not go for what probably would have been the cheapest option: providing a local printer with (a copy of) the handwritten catalogue of the library, compiled by the Parisian booksellers Jacques Villery and Claude Barbin during the inventory of Briot's estate in December 1678.⁴¹ This catalogue, which has been preserved, lists the books according to format.⁴² Although each section seems to reflect a rough subject-division (theology-history-science-humanities), the only explicit thematic subdivision is provided by separate subsections for books in English 'que l'on a trouvé à propos de mettre à la fin de l'inventaire [i.e. the format section in question] pour y avoir recours en cas de besoing'. There are indeed notable differences between the manuscript catalogue and the printed version. The most striking one is the thematic approach in the printed catalogue. It creates

41 At the end of the seventeenth century, there were several men called Jacques de Rozemont in the entourage of the Briot family. I haven't been able to establish with certainty the exact relationship between them. The first Jacques de Rozemont is the sieur de Boucour, Bonco(e)ur, sieur de Boucour, Bonco(e)ur, or Boucoeur, intendant of the Duke of La Trémoille. He was Pierre Briot's brother-in-law and died in 1653. The second Jacques de Rozemont, also sieur de Boucoeur, must have been the son of the first Jacques de Rozemont. He was an envoy of the Dukes of Braunschweig-Lüneburg (Celle) at the court of Louis XIV and it is this Rozemont who acts on behalf of Briot's children after the death of their father. Around the time of the sale, Sébastien Leclerc, who designed and engraved the illustrations for Briot's translation of the *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, dedicated a volume of his drawings to Boucoeur. See Sébastien Leclerc, *Divers desseins de figures dédiés à Monsieur de Boucoeur* ([Paris: Jeaurat, c. 1679]). Apparently, this Rozemont is not the same person as the Jacques de Rozemont who replaced Jacques de Rozemont the elder in his function as intendant of the Duke of La Trémoille (until 1677). This Jacques, who married a woman named Mary Dorr, might have been a nephew of the first sieur de Boucoeur. He also had a son named Jacques, born in 1649, who served as a minister in a Protestant church in the Champagne region.

42 The catalogue is dated 15 December 1678 (and subsequent days) and bears the signatures of the two notaries responsible for the probate inventory (Reims, Bibliothèque Carnegie, Ms. 2092, falsely catalogued as the *Inventaire de la bibliothèque de Paul Briot*). Following standard procedure, the probate inventory of the estate of Pierre Briot (Paris, Archives Nationales, MC/ET/XCVIII/267, inventory dated 15 December 1678) mentions the existence of the catalogue of the library and indicates the estimated value of the books in it, but there is no copy of the catalogue attached to it. It might be that the catalogue in the public library in Reims was once part of the files of the notary Claude II le Vasseur in Paris.

six main categories: *Théologiens*, *Historiens*, *Voyages*, *Géographes*, *Historiens naturalistes*, and *Humanistes*. Within each category, there are subdivisions for different formats with each time a separate section for books in English. The number of books per category is as follows:

Theology: 646 (147 in English)
 History: 718 (74 in English)
 Travel accounts: 170 (29 in English)
 Geography (all mixed): 15
 Natural history: 699 (74 in English)
 Humanists: 468 (43 in English)
 Total: 2,716 (357 in English)

This choice of categories and the number and the titles of the books present in each group show a clear focus on theological and philosophical works, among which we find a wide variety of Protestant authors as well as Spinoza's *Tractatus*, and on travel accounts, natural history and history in general. The nature of Briot's collection seems to differ from the large humanistic libraries and the professional or bibliophile collections described in many seventeenth-century French catalogues. Although confessional books are well represented, the importance of accounts of distant cultures and recent scientific works in French, Latin and English, as well as the presence of philosophical works by René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Robert Boyle and others evoke a type of library that could be associated with the early Enlightenment. Briot's library is not a comprehensive 'universal library', but it seems to meet Leibniz's criterion that a library should reflect the current state of knowledge and debate in different branches of learning.⁴³

The *avis* stresses the fact that the author/publisher had intended the catalogue to preserve the arrangement of the books established by Briot himself, but that this was not possible because, during the inventory, everything got so mixed up, that he had difficulty putting together a reasonable list. This comment seems to corroborate one of the allegations advanced in the conflict opposing the *huissiers-priseurs* to the booksellers' guild: according to the *huissiers*, booksellers involved in the estimation of libraries made a habit of changing the existing order of books, in order to make sure that the inventory

43 See Dominique Varry, 'Grandes collections et bibliothèques des élites', in Claude Joly (ed.), *Histoire des bibliothèques françaises* (Paris: Electre, 2008), vol. 11, pp. 295–323, and Jonathan I. Israel, 'Libraries and Enlightenment', in his *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 119–126 and 138.

could not be used as a model for the sale catalogue. If people needed a sale catalogue, they would have to hire them to compile it, and thus they were paid twice for making a list of the books in one and the same library.⁴⁴ The author of the *avis* presents the format that was finally selected for the Briot catalogue as a way of accommodating potential buyers interested in specific subjects, but since the choice of listing the English books separately was made during the inventory, he probably tried to make a virtue of a necessity. The question remains who this author was, and more generally who the persons involved in the process of producing and distributing this catalogue were. After comparing the typographical material used by the printer to other Parisian editions from the second half of the seventeenth century, I can lift a tip of the veil: the typographic ornaments that appear in the catalogue are identical to a number of fleurons, headpieces and rules used in books printed between 1667 and 1683 in the workshop of Louis Billaine, a bookseller-printer who ran an important publishing house in Paris, with multiple foreign subsidiaries.⁴⁵ He produced a high-quality catalogue that would not have come cheap. Pierre's father Isaac was the designer of the printer's mark used by Louis' father Piere Billaine. But since Isaac worked as an engraver for several other Parisian printers and booksellers – he also designed Pierre Roccolet's mark – this in itself is not enough to advance the hypothesis that there was a special link between the Briot family and the Billaines. In fact, in that same year 1679, Louis Billaine was also involved in the production of another private library sale catalogue, the catalogue of the prestigious *Bibliotheca Thuana*. The title-page of this publication states that the catalogue was edited by Joseph Quesnel, the last librarian of the de Thou library, but the annotations on the index cards used to prepare the catalogue, held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, show that Quesnel collaborated closely with Billaine.⁴⁶

Besides two Parisian catalogues from around 1700, which we know were distributed for free, we have only one seventeenth-century catalogue with an indication of price: the *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de défunt M. Boucot* and the *Catalogue des estampes et livres à figures de défunt Mr Boucot* were sold together for 16 *sols*.⁴⁷ We know from other sources that it was not unusual to ask

44 Cf. BnF, Ms. fr. 22083, f. 68v.

45 See my illustrated blogpost 'The *Catalogue des livres de feu Mr Briot* or the making of a book sale catalogue' on the MEDIATE weblog *The Mediator, book lists and book lust in the eighteenth century*. Online: <http://bibliomediator.nl/2018/10/16/the-catalogue-des-livres-de-feu-mr-briot-or-the-making-of-a-book-sale-catalogue/>.

46 Harisse, *Le président de Thou*, p. 66.

47 The *Catalogue des bibliothèques des défunts Mrs D.F. et D.M.* (Paris: s.n., [before 1700]), and the *Catalogue des livres de Mrs. D.B. & C.* (Paris: s.n., [c. 1700]) mention that they can be acquired *gratis*.

potential customers to pay for a printed sale catalogue, especially in the case of large catalogues of prestigious collections like the *Catalogus bibliothecae Thuanae*, for which Étienne Baluze paid 3 *livres* in 1679.⁴⁸ I have found evidence that Jacques de Rozemont was, at least partly, involved himself in the distribution of the catalogue of Briot's books. According to Justel, 'Mr de Boucoeur' gave a copy to John Brisbane, a British diplomat who served as a secretary to the delegation in Paris and as a maritime agent.⁴⁹ He apparently also promised one to Locke, but the scholar, who had returned to England in May 1679, did not receive it.⁵⁰

Selling Briot's Books: Practicalities, Prices and Purchasers

The questions raised at the beginning of the last section can be extended to the issue of the book sales themselves. What types of book sales do we find in seventeenth-century France? Who organised and conducted them? Where did they take place? What were the sale conditions? What kind of persons attended the sales? Who profited and in what ways? In 2000, Giles Mandelbrote already signalled the lack of information on this point and he suggested that this might be a nice research topic for French book historians.⁵¹ Unfortunately, his appeal did not lead to the desired publications. The printed sale catalogues themselves sometimes shed some light on these questions, but the information they provide is often incomplete and difficult to interpret. For example, the *avis* in the Briot catalogue states the address where potential buyers could view the books, but it does not give any details about the date and the terms of the sale. The only thing that can be deduced from the text is that the sellers were open to bids on the entire collection or part of it. This kind of vagueness is not unusual for seventeenth and eighteenth-century catalogues printed in France. Sellers usually waited until the last moment before taking a decision about the exact date, the order and the conditions of the sale. Relevant information was

48 BnF, Ms. Baluze 366, f. 7r. See also the letter from Friedrich-Adolf Hansen to Leibniz dated 21 August 1679 in Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Allgemeiner politischer und historischer Briefwechsel*, vol. II (1676–1679) (Darmstadt: Reichl, 1927), p. 512.

49 Letter from Justel to Locke dated 11 June 1679 in De Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. II, p. 35.

50 Letter from Locke to Thoynard dated 20 September and 13 October 1679 in De Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. II, p. 113.

51 Giles Mandelbrote, 'La nouvelle édition de Graham Pollard et Albert Ehrman', p. 59.

announced in *placards* posted in the streets or sometimes in the press.⁵² In the meantime, the selling party remained flexible as to accepting or declining different kinds of offers from interested parties. In the case of the de Thou library for example, the creditors had made arrangements to sell the printed books individually, but during one of the first sessions, Jean-Jacques Charron, the Marquis de Ménars, made an offer they could not resist, and that was the end of a sale that was supposed to take three months.⁵³

All this seems practical from a commercial point of view, but in the case of Briot's library, confusion about the exact form of the sale caused John Locke to miss out on the occasion. People had told him that the library would be sold as a whole, and that is why he had abstained from making an offer. When he discovered that the books had been sold separately, he was not amused.⁵⁴ A century later, the problem of accessing relevant sale information on time was still an issue: in a letter dated London, 4 July 1788, published in the *Analyse des papiers anglais*, a certain George Gr*** complained about the fact that French auction catalogues appeared only one or two days before the start of the sale, even in summer, when most 'amateurs' were residing in the country. For this reason, the Parisian bookseller he hired was not able to get him the books he wanted. He suspects this was done on purpose: with no or very few bidders in the house, booksellers could purchase books at very low cost and resell them at a profit to the book collectors who had wanted to buy them at auction.⁵⁵

As for names of buyers and prices, as in the case of many other annotated catalogues, the handwritten notes in the copies of the *Catalogue des livres de feu Mr Briot* that I have consulted thus far tell us disappointingly little. We can see that the annotators marked certain titles they were probably interested in and that for one of them, the material quality of certain editions was important enough to add notes to the catalogue descriptions. We also have a few prices scribbled in the margins, but as long as we do not know who made the

52 During the last decades of the seventeenth century, the subsequent periodicals published by François Colletet announced some of the book sales held in Paris. See Arthur Heulhard (ed.), *Le journal de Colletet: premier petit journal parisien (1676). Avec une notice sur Colletet, gazetier* (Paris: Le Moniteur du Bibliophile, 1878), pp. 36, 114, 126–128. At the time, the *Journal des savants* did not inform its readers about book sales as such, but it occasionally mentioned and even reviewed newly published catalogues, like the *Catalogus bibliothecae Thuanae* (August 1679) and the *Bibliotheca Telleriana* (November 1693). Unfortunately, it contains no reference to Briot's catalogue.

53 Harisse, *Le président de Thou*, pp. 30–36.

54 See the letter from Locke to Thoynard dated 20 September and 13 October 1679 in De Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. II, p. 113.

55 *Analyse des papiers anglais*, LXII (1788), pp. 305–307.

annotations and what the prices stand for, the usefulness of this information is very limited. To make sense of these disparate elements we need additional data from other sources. For example, the fact that copies of the *Catalogue des livres de feu Mr Briot* can be found in the sale catalogues of three contemporaries, Charles Bulteau, Friedrich-Adolph Hansen and Étienne Baluze, might indicate that they attended the sale.⁵⁶ Yet, even though more and more archival sources and early modern books are being made available digitally, searching for information regarding specific early modern book sale events is time-consuming and often fruitless. One would, in fact, need a stroke of luck to find documents revealing the kind of details we would like to discover. But occasionally, luck actually strikes for the persistent researcher, as it did for me when, during a family holiday in the Poitou region, I was browsing the online catalogue of the Médiathèque François-Mitterrand in Poitiers and found in it a mention of an undated manuscript regarding the *Vente de la bibliothèque de M. Briot par M. de Boncoeur et M. Battiste de Rozemont*. At that moment, the name 'Briot' did not ring a bell, but since I was interested in book sales, I asked to see it. After concluding that the manuscript probably dated from the seventeenth century, I suddenly realised that there was a catalogue of the library of a monsieur Briot in my file of French seventeenth-century privately library catalogues. It seemed farfetched to think that both documents could relate to the same person, but a comparison of their contents confirmed my wild hopes: the manuscript I was holding was an account of the actual sale of the books listed in the 1679 *Catalogue des livres de Mr. Briot*.⁵⁷

Judging by what seems to be a table of contents on the back cover, the document must once have been part of a bundle of notarial documents regarding the settlement of the Briot inheritance, including a report of the 'vente des meubles', some financial statements by Boucoeur and the Duke of La Trémoille, and a mysterious 'compte de ce qui m'est deu' that possibly refers to the notary's fees.⁵⁸ It is not clear how it ended up in the Médiathèque in Poitiers. An annotation on the front cover indicates that it was a gift of a 'Thouvenon', probably the twentieth-century doctor of law Georges Thouvenon, who lived in Poitiers and published on local history. The manuscript lists the last names of the buyers who attended the sale and indicates the titles they bought as well as the

56 *Bibliotheca Bultelliana*, vol. II (Paris: Pierre Giffart and Gabriel Martin, 1711), no. 8359; *Viri illustris Friderici Adolphi Hansen ab Ehrencron bibliotheca* (The Hague: Abraham De Hondt, 1718), no. 2088; *Bibliotheca Baluziana seu catalogus librorum bibliothecae V. Cl. D. Steph. Baluzii Tutelensis*, vol. I (Paris: Gabriel Martin and Jean Boudot, 1719), no. 4922.

57 Poitiers, Bibliothèque Municipale François-Mitterrand, Ms. 836.

58 There is an inscription on the account of the sale that probably indicates its original shelf-mark: 'Cotte Lv, 3 pieces' (?).

prices of the lots they acquired. There are 135 named buyers on the list, and a few unnamed: an 'inconnu', a 'proposant', a 'libraire anglais', and an 'ecclésiastique' (two occurrences). The document also reveals some unique details of the sale process, although it must be said that every piece of information I found seemed to generate further questions. For example, several of the listed names are those of well-known personalities of the time, but the identification of many of the buyers and the matching of titles in the printed catalogue to those mentioned in the document is less easy, especially since the spelling of names and the rendering of book titles is as arbitrary, sloppy and inconsistent as it is in a lot of other contemporary documents. In the majority of the cases, my only clue for identifying buyers was that the names had to refer to people who could have been in Paris at the time of the sale.

Practicalities

The report is 102 pages long and appears to be written in one hand, but it consists of three separate accounts that probably represent three different stages of the sale.⁵⁹ The first part lists the books sold by 'Monsieur de Boucoeur', a man I have identified as Jacques de Rozemont, sieur de Boucoeur, a cousin of the Briot children. The second section contains the books sold by 'Monsieur Baptiste de Rozemont', that is Jean-Baptiste de Rozemont or Rosemond (b. 1657), a son of a Jacques de Rozemont whose blood-relationship to the sieur de Boucoeur is not entirely clear. Like Pierre Briot, Jean-Baptiste de Rozemont had an excellent knowledge of the English language, but while he would follow in Briot's footsteps by translating numerous English works into French between 1679 and 1692, his focus lay on theology and the history of the church.⁶⁰ The last part of the document lists 'le reste' of the library, that was sold by 'Mr. Claude'. I first assumed that this person was Jean Claude, a very well-known minister of the church the Briot family attended, who had a large network in Europe. Jean Claude had one son, Isaac (b. 1653), who had finished

59 The pages have been numbered by a modern hand, but the first two parts also have an original numbering on them. These numbers run from 1 through 39 for the first part, and from 1 through 27 for the second part.

60 Jean-Baptiste was born in 1657 as a son of the Jacques de Rozemont that presumably replaced (his uncle?) the sieur de Boucoeur as *intendant* of the Duke of La Trémoille. The *album amicorum* of the Dutch minister and author Gerard Croese contains an inscription signed by Jean-Baptiste and dated 4 August 1677. The Hague, Royal Library, 131 H 33, fol. 56r. Online: https://www.europeana.eu/portal/nl/record/92065/BibliographicResource_1000056104026.html.

his studies in the fall of 1678 and had been appointed minister of the Protestant church of Clermont-en-Beauvaisies. It seemed likelier that Claude senior was the person referred to in the document. However, a passage in a letter written by Jean in March 1684 has cast some doubt on the validity of this assumption. The letter is addressed to Isaac, who had married Pierre Briot's daughter Émilie in February 1681 and had emigrated with her to the Dutch Republic. Claude senior writes about the settlement of the Briot estate and indicates that he has found a book list written partially by Isaac and partially by 'monsieur Baptiste'. He wonders what it means and worries that Isaac has bought all these books that he thinks are 'horriblement chers'.⁶¹ If this list is indeed part of the documents regarding the sale of Briot's library, Isaac was probably the 'M^r. Claude' mentioned in our document. It also suggests that the settlement of the estate took several years. The section regarding the books sold by Claude does not specify the names of the buyers, but only gives a detailed description of the remaining books and the revenue of the sale. It is plausible to assume that the manuscript is a copy that brings together the contents of three different documents for the purpose of establishing an official account for the heirs. This could also explain the fact that we can distinguish multiple voices in the document: those of the three sellers, referring to themselves as 'I', and another voice that speaks of them in the third person.⁶²

Judging from our document, Briot's library was sold privately under the responsibility of the curator of Briot's children. Interested parties could buy books by the unit. It is not clear whether the books were priced and if these prices were negotiable. Nothing indicates that it was an auction. During the first days of the sale, which started in August 1679, there were apparently 'sergens' from the guild of the *huissiers-priseurs* present to conduct the transactions, but when the heirs saw that after six days (17–19, 21–23 August) only 75 of the 2,716 books listed in the catalogue had been sold, they dismissed them: at this speed of selling, their fee would become far too expensive, while they clearly had no knowledge of the books they were selling. The heirs only kept a 'compagnon libraire', a certain Westenel (Westein?). The document does not inform us about the payments made for the services provided by the persons involved in organising and conducting the sale. We know that in eighteenth-century France, booksellers used to be paid per session, but this was not necessarily the

61 See Leiden, University Library, BPL 292, letter dated 30 March 1684.

62 I noted a small but eloquent difference in style between Jacques de Rozemont and Jean-Baptiste: while the former simply writes down the last names of the male buyers, with only a few exceptions, most notably for 'M^r Claude, a minister, Rozemont the younger consistently puts 'M^r' before their names.

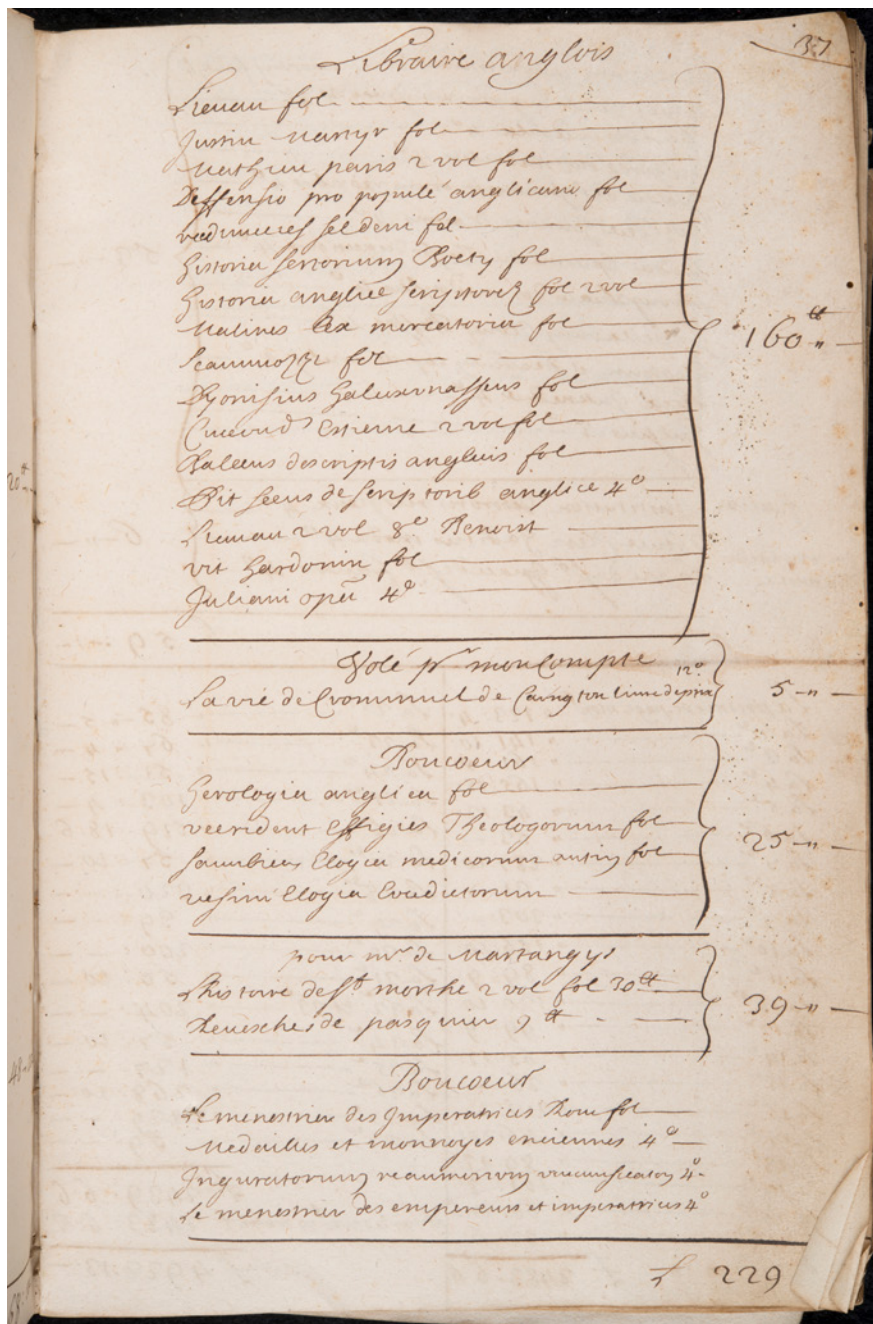


FIGURE 13.6 Vente de la bibliothèque de M. Briot par M. de Boncoeur et M. Battiste de Rozemont. Poitiers, Médiathèque François-Mitterrand, Ms. 836, p. 37
COURTESY OF THE MÉDIATHÈQUE IN POITIERS

case in the seventeenth century.⁶³ In the case of the de Thou sale for instance, the contract between Jacques Villery and the creditors of the estate stipulated that ‘pour ses peines, sallaires et vacations’, Villery would receive 1 *sol* for every *livre* earned.⁶⁴

After the decision to dismiss the ‘sergens’ was taken, the conductors of the sale, unfortunately, stopped noting dates, so that we have no clue of how much time it took to sell the rest of the books that appear on the list.⁶⁵ At a certain point (1,005 titles sold), Jean-Baptiste de Rozemont took over from Jacques de Rozemont. At the end of the section enumerating the books sold by Rozemont the younger (563 in total), he states that he hopes that he can sell the remaining books to an English bookseller, but the deal must have fallen through because these books were eventually disposed of by Jean or Isaac Claude. Jean-Baptiste’s notes also reveal that he paid 5 *livres* to compensate for the loss of a prize copy of Carrington’s *Life of Cromwell* that was stolen during the sale.

Another interesting aspect concerning the rhythm of the sale is the number of transactions for individual buyers and their size. Forty-three of the 135 named buyers are listed more than once because, after their first purchase, they decided to buy more, either on the same day or on a later date. Ninety-three persons made only one transaction, and almost half of them (45) bought no more than one or two books. One can imagine that this sales strategy suited collectors interested in specific items and booksellers waiting for a bargain, but that the process was painstaking, expensive and at times frustrating for the organisers and the heirs.

Prices

As an official document that was part of the probate inventory, the appraisal of Briot’s library made in December 1678 should have been kept in the notary’s archives, but it is not unthinkable that the sellers used (a copy of) it as a guide to price the books during the sale.⁶⁶ Since the sums given in the account are those paid for lots purchased by an individual buyer in one transaction, it is not possible to trace specific selling prices for all books, but the amounts paid by people who only bought one book at a time allow us to compare the values

63 Cf. Bléchet, *Les ventes publiques*, p. 20.

64 Contract dated 26 March 1680, see Harisse, *Le président de Thou*, pp. 249–250.

65 In Jacques de Rozemont’s section, the only date entered after 23 August, is 27 August.

66 This could explain the fact that the manuscript inventory of the books got separated from the probate inventory itself.

*Vente des livres de la Bibliothèque de feu M.
Monsieur Briot*

17^e août
matin

Par Monsieur de Boncoeur:

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Bibles de fute 2 vol fol | cinquante fol | 36 th |
| un eclesiastique | | |
| Geographie sacra civi fol | | 9 th |
| Belamoiste | | |
| Geographie de varannes | 8 ^o | |
| Quatuor de machu | 4 ^o | |
| Blau des gloubes | 4 ^o | |
| Suyent felleura farurumuz | 4 ^o | |
| Beshelley | | |
| Les metamorphoses d'ouide angloises | | 1-10 |
| Boirat | | |
| Volkeluis de vera religion | 4 th | 24 |
| Baluze | | |
| Vadianus de Euphrasia fol | | 7 |
| Baluze | | |
| Adami vita Blul 5 vol | 8 ^o | 15-14 |
| Baluze | | |
| Aucorus de scriptis Anglicis fol | | 18 |
| et vauus de scriptis anglia | 4 ^o | |

£ 12

FIGURE 13.7 *Vente de la bibliothèque de M. Briot par M. de Boncoeur et M. Battiste de Rozemont. Poitiers, Médiathèque François-Mitterrand, Ms. 836, p. 1*
COURTESY OF THE MÉDIATHÈQUE IN POITIERS

in the probate inventory with the actual selling prices. For some books, the prices listed in the sale report are identical to the estimations in the inventory, but in many cases, the books were sold at a price that exceeded the estimated value. Booksellers were, of course, experts when it came to appraising books, but that does not mean that the estimated value indicated in probate inventories was a faithful reflection of the market price. Professionals in the book trade were notorious for their underestimations, which helped them to purchase the books at a price that both allowed them to satisfy the misled sellers and to make a considerable profit when reselling their acquisitions.⁶⁷ The revenue of the Briot sale – 8,811 *livres* and 18 *sous* against an estimation of 6,515 *livres* and 15 *sous* – seems to confirm the suspicions, although the results are probably at least partly due to the efforts of Rozemont. Perhaps the amount realised at the sale was even higher than our manuscript says. A receipt kept by Étienne Baluze, the first buyer to appear on 17 August 1679, indicates that he paid 39.14 for the 1592 edition of the *Vulgata Sixto-Clementina* instead of the 36 *livres* we find in the manuscript, and 16.5 instead of 15.14 for Melchior Adam's *Vitae Philosophorum, Theologorum Germanorum* (1620). The relatively low prices paid for other books match those indicated in the sale report.⁶⁸ How can we explain this difference? Was the heirs' dissatisfaction with the 'sergens' more justified than they knew? Or is there another explanation for these anomalies?

Purchasers

Judging by the people present at the sale of Briot's collection and by comments in contemporary letters, the dispersal of the library constituted an event that aroused the attention of the members of the Republic of Letters. I already referred to John Locke's annoyance about his missing out on the sale. In October 1679, Locke received two letters written in August by his Parisian friends Nicolas Thoynard and Eusèbe Renaudot. Both men informed him that they had acquired some books from this quality library.⁶⁹ Their comments are echoed in a letter of the Danish bibliophile Friedrich-Adolf Hansen ab Ehrencron to Leibniz: 'On vend la Bibliotheque de feu M. Briot, qui contient de fort bons livres.'⁷⁰ Hansen does not mention the fact that he acquired a

67 These practices are among those cited by the *huissiers* to fortify their claims against the booksellers.

68 See BnF, Ms. Baluze 366, ff. 6 and 7v.

69 De Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. 11, pp. 73 and 83.

70 In the years 1677–1679 Hansen resided in Paris. Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Allgemeiner politischer und historischer Briefwechsel*, vol. 11 (1676–1679) (Darmstadt: Reichl, 1927), p. 512.

catalogue of the collection. His name is not on the list of buyers, but he could have been one of the two buyers referred to as 'un inconnu' and 'un proposant'. The collection had presumably already earned a reputation during Briot's lifetime. Besides Locke and Thoynard, other scholars frequenting Justel's circle would have known about it and may even have had the opportunity to visit Briot's library, with its richly decorated vestibule and its curious 'petite apothiquairie'. For example, in the *Mélanges historiques* (1675), Paul Colomiès acknowledges his debt to Briot, who had lent him a copy of an account relating to Jacob Golius' visit to the king of Morocco in 1622.⁷¹

The results of a prosopographical analysis of the buyers that I have been able to identify with reasonable certainty (around 40%) indicate that we can distinguish several partly interconnected networks associated with different aspects of Briot's life and work. First of all, the family members: Jacques de Rozemont himself, maternal cousin of the Briot children, a few other members of the Rozemont family, Jacques de Falaiseau, an uncle from the mother's side, and his son Pierre, a diplomat at the English embassy.⁷² So far, no family members from Briot's side of the family have been identified. Most of them lived in Normandy, but that does not exclude the fact that they could have come to Paris for this occasion. Pierre's half-brother Jean Briot was present for the making of the inventory and he was named as an honorary guardian of three of his brother's children who were still minors. The group of family members partly overlaps with members of the Protestant church in Charenton, led by Jean Claude, a high-profile minister, whose son Isaac married Émilie Briot in 1681. The Rozemont family attended this church, as did the Falaiseau family. Some of the booksellers who bought books from Briot's collection, like Étienne Lucas, Charles Du Pin, Antoine Cellier and his son-in-law Daniel Hortemels, had shops in the avenue leading up to the church in Charenton. Furthermore, several of the names that appear on the list of buyers can be linked to prominent Protestant families that fled France in the last decades of the seventeenth century: the 'marquise d'Heucourt', [César?] Caze, Guy Mesmin and Jean Rou.

Briot's rich collection attracted also a whole range of Catholic officials: le père [François] Martin, cordelier and future librarian of the Franciscan convent in Caen, father Bérart on behalf of the Jesuits, the abbé Dangeau, the abbé

71 [Paul Colomiès], *Mélanges historiques* (Orange: Jacques & Rousseau, 1675), p. 78. In his *Gallia Orientalis* (The Hague: Adriaan Vlaque, 1665), Colomiès refers to another rare manuscript he has seen 'in Musaeo Clarissimi viri D. Briot' (p. 85).

72 Besides the sieur de Boucoeur and [Jean-]Baptiste, the document lists 'Messieurs de Rozemond', brothers of Jean-Baptiste?, and a 'Desforages', possibly Paul Acéré, brother-in-law of Jacques de Rozemont the elder.

de Lyon, Jean-Baptiste Thiers, the abbé Eusèbe Renaudot, who could not abstain from explaining to Locke that there were a lot of books on [Protestant?] devotion and religious controversy, 'dans lesquels je ne m'occupe pas aussi volontiers que dans les autres', a few unnamed 'ecclésiastiques' etc.⁷³

Booksellers form another well-represented group within the whole, even if their part in the sale was not as important as might perhaps have been expected.⁷⁴ Besides the four Parisian Protestant *libraires* named before, we find Robert de Ninville, publisher of some of Briot's translations, Louis Billaine, probably the printer/publisher of Briot's catalogue, father and son Clouzier, André Praslard, Antoine Dezallier, Claude Barbin, who bought extensively at this sale of a collection he helped to value, and two Englishmen: Isaac Littlebury and an unidentified English bookseller.⁷⁵ In the same realm, librarians and bibliophiles proved equally eager to purchase items from the collection. As we have seen, the first person on the list is Étienne Baluze, historian, lawyer and librarian of the prestigious collection of minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert. On 17 August 1679, he completed four separate transactions. On 22 August he came back and bought another five items. Thanks to his meticulous administration, which survived the ravages of time, we know that part of the books he bought were destined for Colbert's library.⁷⁶ This confronts us at the same time with one of the possible pitfalls in interpreting our document. In a number of cases, it explicitly indicates that the person in question is buying on behalf of someone else, but the availability of this kind of information depended on the candour of the buyer and there is no guarantee of consistency or even reliability. To give another example: according to a letter written by Pierre Bayle in November 1679, the books acquired by Jean Rou, or at least some of them, were meant for Bayle, who resided in Sedan at the time.⁷⁷ Among the bibliophiles present at the sale we find several owners of collections that were so famous that – like Briot's library – they were deemed worthy to figure in François

73 De Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. II, p. 73.

74 On this point our document seems to corroborate David McKitterick's affirmation regarding the importance of private buyers in the early modern (English) auction trade: 'for years it was often private individuals, not members of the trade, who dominated the names of successful bidders.' David McKitterick, *The Invention of Rare Books. Private Interest and Public Memory, 1600–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 109.

75 Isaac was the son of the London bookseller Robert Littlebury. Around 1679, he acted as his father's agent in Paris. Cf. Matthew Yeo, *The Acquisition of Books by Chetham's Library, 1655–1700* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), p. 93.

76 See BnF, Ms. Baluze 366, ff. 6 and 7v.

77 See Bayle's letter to Jean Rou, dated 21 November 1679, online: <http://bayle-correspondance.univ-st-etienne.fr/?Lettre-178-Pierre-Bayle-a-Jean-Rou&lang=fr>.

Le Gallois' *Traité des plus belles bibliothèques de l'Europe* (1680): Melchisédec Thévenot, scientist, traveler, cartographer, orientalist, inventor, diplomat and member of Justel's circle, the lawyer Jean Chuppé, and the abbé [Antoine] Faure, head of the *collège* Saint-Michel and vicar-general of the archbishop of Reims.⁷⁸ Charles Bulteau, the bibliophile from Rouen who owned a copy of Briot's catalogue, also bought several books from the collection. Some of these book lovers, like Thévenot, shared specific interests with Briot. This was also the case for a large number of other buyers. For example, Jean-Baptiste Denis, also a member of the Justel crowd, Arthur Filsac, Guy Mesmin and François de Monginot all had a medical background. Pierre Dipy and Eusèbe Renaudot were specialists in oriental languages and culture and knew Briot's translation of *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*.⁷⁹

Several other groups can be singled out. Firstly, those individuals engaged in education, like the abbé Faure, Jean-Baptiste Liout, who was a teacher at the *collège* d'Harcourt, Pierre Dipy, professor of Arab at the *Collège royal* and his colleague Jean-Baptiste Sarrazin, professor of Hebrew, Pierre Bayle, who held a chair of philosophy in Sedan and Allain Manesson-Mallet, 'Maître de mathématiques des pages du roi de France'. Secondly, the list of buyers contains several names of men employed in diplomatic service: Pierre Falaiseau, Ezechiel Spanheim, Jean-Yves de Saint-Prez, the abbé Dangeau and Hyacinthe-Guillaume Foullé, seigneur de Martangis. At least some of them would have been acquainted with Jacques de Rozemont in his capacity as an envoy of the Dukes of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. The aristocrats who purchased books from the Briot library form yet another interesting group of buyers. Rozemont himself was, of course, a member of the lesser nobility, as were Briot's brothers-in-law Pierre Jouard and Jacques Falaiseau. Briot himself lived in the *hôtel* of the Duke of La Trémoille. La Trémoille was not present at the sale, nor was Pierre Jouard, but we do find a number of other Protestant and Catholic noblemen, like Maurice Lauberon de Montigny, César Cazé, the marquise de Heucourt, the Comte de Tréville, the abbé de Lyonne and de

78 Cf. [François] Le Gallois, *Traité des plus belles bibliothèques* (Paris: Estienne Michallet, 1680), pp. 123–133. It was only thanks to an anecdote told in Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique* (ed. Amsterdam: Reinier Leers, 1697, vol. II, p. 781), that I discovered that the 'Foore' in my document wasn't an Englishman, but the same person as the 'abbé Faure' mentioned elsewhere. Bayle relates that Faure had told him that he couldn't believe his luck when he acquired Briot's copy of the 1554 folio edition of the *Anthoniana Margarita* at the price of only 'deux Louïs'.

79 Renaudot used it in a project on the 'Histoire des Mahométans'. See BnF, Ms. NAF 7478:XXIII.

Saint-Laurent. The Duke of Chevreuse did not attend himself but asked someone else to buy some books for him.

It is interesting to see that several attendees of the sale seem to have mainly targeted works they could use in a professional capacity. Among the theological works bought by Jean-Baptiste Sarrazin, Doctor of Theology and Professor of Hebrew, we find Lightfoot's *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae* and a Latin translation of a work by Maimonides. Arthur Filsac, a specialist on mineral water sources, purchased a work on hydrotherapy, and Claude Bourdelin, a pharmacist and chemist who conducted experiments at the Académie Royale des Sciences with plants' juices, bought four works on plants and a book on pyrotechnics. Allain Manesson-Mallet might have used the *Ambassade des Hollandois à la Chine* he purchased at the Briot sale for his *Description de l'univers* (1683): in this work, he quotes a copy of the *Ambassade* that matches the one in Briot's library. Several buyers were indeed authors themselves. Briot's contacts with Justel, Thoynard and Locke, and their international scholarly networks, combined with his own work as a translator and the reputation of his library, can serve as an explanation for the relatively strong presence of well-known persons in the Republic of Letters and people with specific links to the Royal Society and its French counterpart, the Académie Royale des Sciences. The names of Jean Claude, Guy Mesmin, Jean-Baptiste Denys, Melchisédec Thévenot, the botanist Jean Marchant, the abbé [François] Le Vasseur and the abbé Dangeau are only a few of the names of attendees at the sale that also appear in the correspondence of the secretary of the Royal Society, Henry Oldenburg. There is also a record of a female author in our document: Madame Des Houlières bought a copy of the 1560 Geneva edition of the *Alcoran des cordeliers*, for which she paid 7 livres. The great absence in our document is Justel himself. It is probably not that he would not have been interested in his friend's books, but Justel had since long been aware of the deteriorating situation of the French Protestants and it is possible that at this point, he was already considering selling his own library and leaving the country.⁸⁰

Although not all the buyers have been identified, these results give in my opinion a clear idea of the importance of the Briot sale and of the wide variety of buyers it attracted. People from various countries, from different backgrounds, and with different tastes, most of them belonging to one or more of Briot's social and professional networks, came to buy specific works and

80 The sale of Justel's library took place in August 1680. Cf. BnF, Ms. Baluze 366, f. 92v. Justel and his family emigrated in 1681 to England.

editions they were interested in, or just to look for a nice bargain, and perhaps also simply out of loyalty or curiosity, or a combination of the two.

Concluding Remarks

By way of conclusion, I would like to highlight a few points and to formulate some *desiderata*. First of all, my research on the *Catalogue des livres de feu Mr. Briot* has led to the uncovering of a wealth of information on the activities, the acquaintances and the library of a man who is practically unknown to modern literary historians and scholars of book history. In fact, the editors of the 1728 augmented edition of Pierre Richelet's *Dictionnaire*, which provided biographical notes on all the authors cited in the text of the dictionary, were already at a loss when they tried to find information on the Briot that had translated the much-quoted *Histoire de l'état présent de l'empire ottoman*.⁸¹ Yet, it seems that Briot was a key figure in the Parisian literary circles of the late seventeenth century. One might call him a 'cultural broker' in a large sense of the term. Not only did he translate many works from English into French, he also put his books and his knowledge at the disposition of other members of the international Republic of Letters. The edition of the *Observationes sacrae* by Paul Colomiès, published in 1679, includes a letter of introduction written by Briot on behalf of Colomiès and dated 4 December 1664. It is addressed to a certain Arcerius in Amsterdam, possibly Johannes or Samuel Arcerius, who were both active in the book trade in Franeker. Briot characterises Colomiès as a man who has 'une admirable connoissance des Livres' and he asks Arcerius to assist Colomiès in every possible way.⁸² This was probably not the only letter of this kind sent by our translator to his contacts in France and abroad. Besides his knowledge, his books and his contacts, Briot also used his money to help his connections in the Parisian book world. In 1657, he loaned large sums of money to Jacques Villery, Thomas Jolly, François Clousier and a few other booksellers in order to help them acquire the library of a certain Cagné, principal of the Collège de Navarre.⁸³

81 *Dictionnaire de la langue française, ancienne et moderne, de Pierre Richelet augmenté de plusieurs additions d'histoire, de grammaire, de critique, de jurisprudence, et d'un nouvel abrégé de la vie des auteurs cités dans tout l'ouvrage*, vol. 1 (Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1728), p. xlj.

82 Paul Colomiès, *Observationes sacrae* (Amsterdam: Joannes Scot, 1679), p. 192.

83 M. le Vicomte de Grouchy, 'Documents officiels (inédits) sur quelques libraires, imprimeurs et relieurs aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles (1656–1727)', *Bulletin du bibliophile et du bibliothécaire*, 1895, pp. 422–423. There were, at least, two seventeenth-century

More generally, when it comes to book trade catalogues and the second-hand book market, the findings of this study demonstrate certain specificities of the French book market of the late seventeenth century. The modest number of printed private library catalogues that saw the light in this period, as well as the relatively slow development of a form of public book auctioning that involved specialist booksellers and standardised practices, stand in contrast with developments in other European countries, most notably the Dutch Republic and the British Isles. The lack of details provided in the French sale catalogues regarding the organisers and the conditions of the sale is in fact striking. Yet, the material gathered for this study also shows that public sales of books coming from private collections were far from uncommon in France at the end of the seventeenth century and that there were booksellers who specialised in the second-hand book trade, and more specifically in buying up and selling off entire libraries. In the case of the Briot sale, we have seen that it attracted a large group of interested buyers and although this might partly have been due to Briot's large network and the international reputation of his library, there is no reason to suppose that other sales would not have aroused the interest of the public. Briot's collection was certainly special, but it was smaller and less prestigious than several of the other collections for which a printed catalogue has survived. These specificities of the French market are worthy of investigation and this research should preferably take a transnational perspective.

As for the printed private library sale catalogues, the findings of this article invite us to consider them not only as windows into the contents of private collections, but also as a genre in their own right, one that reflects contemporary ideas on book collecting and literary culture, as well as practical and commercial aspects of the second-hand book trade in the *Grand Siècle*. The fact that after missing out on the Briot sale, Locke asked Thoynard if the catalogue was still available and if he could buy a copy, demonstrates that sale catalogues had other functions besides advertising a sale.⁸⁴ At the same time, the small size of the corpus of seventeenth-century printed private library sale catalogues and their silence on certain details regarding the sales they advertise force us to look for other sources that could provide substantial information on the size and scope of this trade and on the people involved in it. The French publishers' and booksellers' catalogues in the Bibliothèque nationale de France that have

principals of the college who went by the name Cagné: Pierre Cagné (d. 1619) and Nicole Cagné, who is mentioned in an act dated 6 December 1649. I have not been able to find further details on what happened to the library in question.

84 Letter from Locke to Thoynard dated 20 September and 13 October 1679 in De Beer (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. 11, p. 113.

recently been the object of an inventory and a collective volume could form a good starting point for a study seeking to complement Henry-Jean Martin's *Livre, pouvoirs et société* by mapping the Parisian market for old and used books.⁸⁵ But ultimately we should turn to archival sources or at least to the rich, but often ignored, nineteenth-century material inventorying and transcribing these sources. Even if the archives of the Parisian *huissiers-priseurs* of the early modern period have almost entirely disappeared, there are multiple other archival collections in Paris that contain relevant information and the ongoing digitisation of their materials facilitate this search. The discovery of the account of the Briot sale was a stroke of luck, but it is certainly not impossible to trace more of these wonderful unedited sources on early modern book sales. I have for instance already located a number of documents in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, in the Archives Nationales and in the Archives de l'Assistance Publique et des Hôpitaux that contain information on seventeenth-century private library sales.⁸⁶

Finally, a large contextual study of this material and of the networks of the persons involved would not only be crucial to our understanding of the seventeenth-century Parisian and French second-hand book market, but, as in the case-study of the Briot sale, it could generate new information and insights that are of interest to a whole range of other historical subdisciplines.

85 See Lesage, Netchine and Sarrazin (eds.), *Catalogues de libraires 1473–1810*, and Charon, Lesage and Netchine (eds.), *Le livre entre le commerce et l'histoire des idées*.

86 See also the reports of the *venduës* of household inventories of clergymen preserved in the archives of the cathedral chapter of Rouen analysed by Jean-Dominique Mellot. Mellot, *L'édition rouennaise et ses marchés*, pp. 208–220.