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Debating Bibliomania and the Collection of Books in the Eighteenth Century

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The social categorization of the book collectors in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain informs the relationship between bibliomania and the private library. Much bibliomania was middle-class, with much emulation of celebrated aristocratic collectors and collections. Privacy, however, remained an important concern. Collectors often shared their books with others, but their passion was regarded as an individual one, with private space associated with the collecting habit. Paralleling the commercial restructuring of bookselling was a boom in the fashioning and equipping of domestic libraries, and by 1800 the middle classes were building more libraries than ever before, often to enhance their social prestige. The essay also interrogates the ambiguity of connoisseurship, which sometimes involved destruction as well as conservation. What needs further investigation is the motivation of library owners, as evidenced by correspondence and the prefaces to library catalogues.

KEYWORDS private libraries, bibliomania, collecting, library furniture, book trade, Dibdin

In 1836, the fifteen-year-old Gustave Flaubert recast the well-known history of Don Vincente, the Spanish monk who spirited away hundreds of ancient books from his own and other monasteries during the secularization of the 1830s. Marvellously, following his thefts, Don Vincente opened a bookshop full of monastic treasures in Barcelona. Soon, his passion to own what he believed to be the only existing copy of a 1482 incunable by the first Spanish printer, resulted in his murderous arson attack on a rival bookseller and in his own death on the gallows. Young Flaubert called his cautionary tale 'Bibliomanie' (or 'bibliomania'). In it, Flaubert described the monk as having 'but one idea, but one love, but one passion: books. And this love, this passion burned within him, used up his days, devoured his existence'.[1]

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Flaubert's further description is almost pornographic:

> These feverish and burning nights he [Don Vincente] passed among his books. He ran through the store rooms, he ran through the galleries of his library with ecstasy and delight. Then he stopped, his hair in disorder, his eyes fixed and sparkling. His hands, warm and damp, trembled on touching the wood of the shelves. He took a book, turned over the leaves, felt the paper, examined the gilding, the cover, the letters, the ink, the folds, and the arrangement of drawings for the word *Finis*. Then he changed its place, put it on a higher shelf, and remained for entire hours looking at its title and form.[2]

If the tale was startling, Flaubert's title was not. By the time of Flaubert's adolescence in the 1830s, the term 'bibliomania' was well known and debated. As Arnold Hunt has claimed, much of the great collecting activity has been associated with bibliomania. He suggests that the word 'seems to sum up the great private libraries of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries'.[3] But how exactly was the term 'bibliomania' used? Did the balance between its condemnatory and fearful use and a more positive application reflect differences in collecting habits, intentions, and the status and perception of the collector? And how far did the mania extend beyond the great private libraries?

Collecting and the transformation of the private library

In many private and classical libraries during the second half of the eighteenth century, the value of collecting rarities increasingly came to exceed values based simply on the number and size of books. More collectors came to value first editions, irrespective of textual accomplishment. Published guides to what was worth collecting and how to identify it supported increasingly keen standards of connoisseurship. Certain editions, moreover, soared to the top of the trophy chart. The Gutenberg Bible and the Shakespeare first Folio led a sort of discriminating canon of tradable and collectable antique titles.[4] Alongside this hunt for prize exemplars and growing attention to incunables, the libraries of classical, that is Greek and Latin, texts were supplemented by new enthusiasm for the literature of the Romance languages. Despite a developing interest in the Gothic, interest in manuscripts appears to have been low, however venerable they were. Auctioneers' hammers fell on particular sales of the valuable and celebrated, whose exhibition and sale were broadcast by catalogue and newspaper (and whose acme was the iconic, legendary sale in June 1812 of the library recently inherited by the fifth Duke of Roxburghe).

What Hunt labels as the 'gentrification of the private library' was, in its upper reaches increasingly exclusive. By the early nineteenth century, refined taste in collecting brought refined prices for a new generation of aristocratic collectors, knowledgeable about books and about collecting. In a variety of forms, however, bibliomania also became a middle-class and library-owning passion. For a while, men of different backgrounds met in this new marketplace, before the mania for collecting early printed books inflated prices to a predictable bursting point in the 1820s.[5] It is even possible to perceive, albeit in very broad terms, the development of a more settled, even patriotic bibliomania that links aristocratic and commercial interests in the pursuit of a collective canon.[6] Alongside this, it has been argued, the bibliomaniac also made himself a public 'pest', destabilizing early nineteenth-century literary culture and categorization by deliberately flaunted eccentricity.[7]

By 1799 at least, a few London auctions were devoted entirely to incunabula, many immediately rebound by proud but recklessly anti-historical (and anti-monastic) purchasers.[8] Incunable catalogues were issued internationally and the word itself, derived from Latin metaphor for childhood or early origins, circulated widely. Its first usage apparently related to printing in Germany.[9] Secularization and the suppression of monasteries in the Austrian, French, and then Spanish realms, undoubtedly added to the supply of antique volumes, boosted also by the émigrés of the revolution, books as well as men. It was a crucial observation of Revd Thomas Frognall Dibdin (1776–1847), librarian to the second Earl Spencer at Althorp, and whose *Bibliomania* is a pivotal but complicated focus for much modern discussion (including what follows below). As the Scottish poet and writer Robert Pearse Gillies recorded in his 1851 memoirs, 'there had sprung up a kind of mania for purchasing black letter volumes, although the purchasers themselves, from year's end to year's end, did not read, far less write, fifty pages consecutively. Among such people, it must be owned, the bibliographical propensity, though it had, indirectly, good results, was nearly as absurd as the *ce-devant* "tulip-madness" in Holland'.[10]

Historical discussion of the formation of domestic libraries in Tudor and early Stuart England is much detained by the transformation of collections into libraries, of the transfer of books from different closets and chests to studies with shelves and then to dedicated rooms known and valued as a 'libraries'.[11] At the end of the seventeenth century, modest libraries had been incorporated into some English country houses, but the event was 'still rare enough to call notice'.[12] By the mid-eighteenth century the 'library' had become a focal living and entertaining room for much of the English nobility and upper gentry. As the concept of the library gained greater acceptance in larger town and country houses, its history turns to consideration of design and equipment, of how library furniture related to library use.

A connected and wider passion followed the deepening of what we might call the literary infrastructure. Paralleling the commercial success of bookselling in eighteenth-century Britain was a boom in the fashioning and equipping of domestic libraries, from the palatial attempts of great (and often new) wealth to the emulative ventures of provincial gentlefolk and well-to-do tradesmen. The Earl of Chesterfield's new library boasted 'stucco allegorical frames' of the great men of letters.[13] Harewood House housed a complete Chippendale library set, featuring a library commode decorated with the goddess Minerva, and with several matching library tables and companion pieces.[14] Such elegance was easily replicated. In relatively modest gentry establishments, mass-produced plaster busts of celebrated writers, both classical and English, were to adorn library niches or rest atop library shelving.

Many of the production-line, standard models offered in catalogues and trade advertisements were again modelled on the latest fancies of the rich and famous. One upwardly mobile gentleman, Sir Richard Worsley of Appuldurcombe Park in the Isle of Wight, invested in a set of bookcase beds, eight library busts and figurines, and '8 Mahogany Elbow Chairs, Antique Urn back, carved & inlaid, an Author's Head near the top of each back by Wedgewood [*sic*]'.[15] *The Director* contained numerous designs for library furniture that could be executed by Chippendale. Bookcases could be Gothic, oriental, or Indian. Library tables might be oval or kidney, extendable or convertible, and be provided with any number of stands for decanters and tea

services, easels for sketching, stands for sheet music, or book and print rests. The library of the peer could be recreated on an appropriate scale and to an appropriate budget in any gentleman's house. Bibliomania bridged very different collecting and library worlds and desires.

By 1800 the propertied were building more libraries than ever before, and not just for collecting books. Aspirant gentry could now outdistance established neighbours in buying books and prints to decorate their homes and lend weight to their social prestige. The production of library furniture, a growth industry by the end of the eighteenth century, pandered to similar desires. Chippendale's *Director* manual included exquisitely turned and decorated library chairs, library steps, library desks, library footstools, library mirrors, library globes, and library hearth ornaments. A catalogue of 1793 issued by the London cabinet-makers, probably more of a pricing than a pattern book, described and illustrated three types of free-standing bookcase, six different types of library writing table, two types of 'moving library or book-stand', and a 'library press bedstead'. All these items were listed with full specifications and charges for dozens of different 'extras' and modifications, together with a range of beading, mouldings, veneers, and other decorative embellishments for shelves and domestic library fitments.[16] Dibdin referred to the antechamber of the Bierley library of Miss Currer at Eshton ('the Head of all female Collectors of Europe') as 'fitted up with furniture equally *bibliomaniacal*'.[17]

At superlative houses like Tatton and Stourhead, the splendour of the library fittings reflected the lavish decoration and furnishing of other areas of the house more generally. Elsewhere, the expenditure on the housing of books is the more striking in relation to the modesty of other rooms. The catalogue for the estate of James Thomson, the poet, in 1749, lists a 'deale case, with shelves for books' from the writer's back parlour, listed at 10s. 6d. A. N. L. Munby, in his edition of the catalogue, concluded that this was 'probably a fixed price at which they would be sold to the first applicant'.[18] The notorious and extravagant Dr William Dodd, whose trial and Tyburn execution for forgery in 1777 was a sensation of the age, owned an elegant 'eighteen by ten foot mahogany bookcase with glazed gothic doors'.[19] The eighteen lots of the sales catalogue provide evidence of the furnishing of Dodd's library. It included many prints and paintings, a mahogany box table and reading stand, a '6 leaved India paper screen', 'three sets of deal book shelves, lined with baize', and 'an elegant mahogany library book case, 18 feet by 10, glazed, Gothic doors, richly carved, with presses underneath'. Dodd set off his library with literary representations included 'an elegant china figure of Milton' and four china figures of 'the 4 Quarters of the World'.

Much similar sales catalogue evidence of library tastes survives. Mrs Thrale's library at Streatham Park boasted a hearth with a 'handsome steel cut and pierced fender' and a 'Brussels carpet planned to the room, about 10½ yards by 5½', a 'grand piano-forte, by Stodart', a 'mahogany library step ladder', and a 'mahogany library table' and two other tables. With a couch and twenty-two chairs in the library, it was clearly a room for entertaining.[20] Far more explanatory than any sales particulars, Ralph Willett's extended and curious *Description of the Library at Merly* sets out a physical description of the murals, painted ceiling, and sculptures of the Dorset library as part of his remarkable 'Plan'. Here, 'the Book-cases are now adorned with

24 busts of eminent men: all these are gilt with the inscriptions on a white Pedestal or Basement'. A bust of Gutenberg ('guttenburgh') presided over the entrance door, and over the other door a bust of Caxton. Twenty-four more busts over the bookcases included all the 'greats': Socrates, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Horace, Homer, Addison, Newton, and Willett himself.[21] Willett epitomized, albeit on a grand scale, the opportunity to mould a collection according to a plan, even, as at Merly, to set out a grand vision of the library as the representation of the 'Rise and Progress of Knowledge'. This also explains the importance placed upon owning copies of the sale catalogues of great libraries. Boswell said that 'notwithstanding its defects', Osborne's catalogue of the Harleian collection of books, with the preface by Dr Johnson, was 'the best Catalogue of a large Library of which we can boast. It should be in every good collection'.[22]

Diagnosing 'bibliomania'

The diversity of aspiration, form, and function discernible in the assembly of private libraries in the eighteenth century often contributed to their owners' ruminations about their own efforts. 'Bibliomania' expressed real concern as much as jocular, self-upbraiding, but it could also problematically disguise consistency in collecting practice, discrimination, and dignified motivation. Contemporary elaboration and scorn of bibliomania might also have been akin to contemporary criticism of circulating libraries, the frequent targets of moralists.[23]

Thomas Hearne was mistakenly given credit for first coining the word 'bibliomania' in his 1734 *Diary* (published posthumously). More notoriously, 'bibliomania' as a fixation with books or 'book madness' was used by Dibdin in the title to his 1809 book, *The Bibliomania; or, Book-Madness; Containing Some Account of the History, Symptoms and Cure of this Fatal Disease. In an Epistle to Richard Heber.* Dibdin wrote of 'courage, slaughter, devastation, and phrensy' in acquiring and understanding books. With his extended discussion of obsessive collecting, Dibdin gave new prominence to the term, even though, as Ina Ferris reminds us, the relatively slim and, in part, satirical 1809 *Bibliomania* (with some serious suggestions for 'cures') was extended in 1811 into a vast six-part 'Bibliographical Romance' offering multiple (and contradictory) histories of 'bookism'.[24] Within a generation, the term 'bibliomania' was taken up by dozens of others, from James Beresford whose 1810 *Bibliosophia* wittily parodies Didbin, to F. Somner Merryweather, author, in 1849, of *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages* for which the author apologized in his introduction: 'perhaps the reader will suspect that my own mind is slightly tinged with the bibliomania of which I write'.[25] Merryweather's history described how 'the very tenor of a monastic life compelled the monk to seek the sweet yet silent companionship of books' and how the love of books became the consolation to 'the darkness of many long and dreary centuries'.[26] These early nineteenth-century studies and histories provided wondrous examples of the individual bibliomaniac. Of John Bagford (1650/51–1716), shoemaker, bookseller, antiquary, and highly regarded collector of rare books and broadsides, Dibdin wrote that 'his whole mind was devoted to book-hunting'.[27]

Privacy was an important feature of the collecting urge. Collections were often to be shared with family, friends, and admirers (including cognoscenti who came from far to visit the more famous collections), but the passion was seen as an individual

one, with private space associated with the collecting habit. The resort, the enclosure, the sanctuary for such activity, after composed orders sent to booksellers or the personal rifling of bookshops, was the private library. Many domestic libraries served as arenas for book, print, and catalogue enthusiasm that sometimes bordered on fetishism. It was shared sometimes with fellow sufferers, also offering a quixotic interpretation of what a 'library' was. On visiting Richard Heber's library in his Pimlico town house, Dibdin was overwhelmed:

> I had never seen rooms, cupboards, passages, and corridors, so choked, so suffocated with books. Treble rows were here, double rows were there. Hundreds of slim quartos — several upon each other — were longitudinally placed over thin and stunted duodecimos, reaching from one extremity of a shelf to another. Up to the very ceiling the piles of *volumes* extended; while the floor was strewed with them, in loose and numerous heaps.[28]

Dibdin's *Reminiscences of a Literary Life* published in 1836, in which this memoir appeared, featured many private book collectors, and notably Frances-Mary Richardson Currer (1785–1861) of Eshton Hall, near Skipton, Yorkshire, and, once again, Heber (1774–1833), with his country seat of Marton Hall located near to Currer's great library.[29] Of Currer, Dibdin wrote: 'her passion both for reading and amassing books has been extreme; and fortunately her means enable her to gratify this passion to an extent of placing her at THE HEAD of all female Collectors in Europe'.[30]

Consumption and discrimination

Looking back from the age of Dibdin, the origins of the increase in the number of individual obsessive book collectors and private library builders is suggested by the history of auctions, salesrooms, and sale days during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. An inspiration for many collectors were the earlier saleroom activities of Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford and of his son, Edward the second Earl, or rather, of their agent Humfry Wanley, palaeographer and Anglo-Saxonist.[31] Less exalted but still notable among book-collecting antiquaries were Bagford (a founder member of the Society of Antiquaries) and George Vertue, while the later efforts of the Marquess of Bute and the Dukes of Bedford seem more emulative of the library creation of George III.[32] The Elzevirs and the Estiennes, the Caxtons and the Pynsons featured in increasing numbers of cabinet collections. The activities of the early and mid-eighteenth century, however, were nothing as compared to the wider (and institutional) buying of ancient books from the 1790s, and not only in Britain. By the end of the century, and most noticeably in its final decade, the huge sums of money were spent on old books, formerly regarded as worthless, while old books, and notably incunabula, were remade to conform to new collecting expectations and changed understandings of the past.[33]

The ambition of collecting might have been given new status and justification, but a broader critique of the consequences of increased book production escalated and certainly informed criticism of indiscriminate library collecting. Censure often contrasted to new appreciation of the rarities and beauties of the first decades of printing. Warning commentaries surfaced soon after the late seventeenth-century increase in

print and book production and sale. The strain to household purses became familiar enough and featured in numerous mid-eighteenth century jeremiads about domestic extravagance and luxury. There were historical references, too. Jacques Lacombe in his history of Queen Christina of Sweden wrote of 'the great disorder in her finances for the gratification of this *Bibliomania*'.[34]

Foolish expense was also linked to foolish ambition and pretension. In the celebrated letters to his son, Lord Chesterfield had advised:

> Buy good books, and read them; the best books are the commonest, and the last editions are always the best, if the editors are not blockheads; for they may profit of the former. But take care not to understand editions and title-pages too well. It always smells of pedantry, and not always of learning. What curious books I have, they are indeed but few, shall be at your service. I have some of the Old Collana, and the Machiavel of 1550. Beware of the *Bibliomanie*.[35]

Bibliomania was never to be an agreed expression, but for most writers (and the following depends heavily on published commentary rather than private correspondence), certain things were agreed: bibliomania was not bibliophily: it was madness, not love; it was as much disease as it was wholesome; and it was far more based on collecting for collecting's sake than on any appreciation for the literary or for ideas between covers. Less agreed were the impulses to such madness and such collecting mania — for some (and this relates to a social critique of the afflicted) it was driven by pride in the rarity of objects collected, but for others it was part, sometimes contradictorily, of a much broader disease of indiscriminate book consumption. The more obvious social distinctions were picked up by Dibdin: '[bibliomania] has almost uniformly confined its attacks to the male sex, and, among these, to people in the higher and middling class of society, while the artificer, labourer, and peasant have escaped wholly uninjured'.[36] Bibliomania, like libraries, private or institutional, required funding.

Of course, for many, there was genuine intersection between books as conveyers of thought and books as adored material objects, but questions of materiality do dominate the glorification of books, as well, contrariwise, their commercialization and what we might call their greater democratization during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Mania for books, however much the specific interest for some in the antique and the rare, was closely related to the changing history of book *production*, and, in the view of many, of overproduction. Dibdin himself recognized this. He did focus on the maniac collector, but he also wrote of the historical advance of the disease, that 'during this [seventeenth] century [. . .] like the fumes of tobacco, which drive the concealed and clotted insects from the interior to the extremity of the leaves, the infectious particles of the Bibliomania set a thousand busy brains a thinking, and produced ten thousand capricious works'.[37]

A generation before Hearne, the earliest use of the word 'bibliomania', or rather of 'bibliomanie', in England apparently dates from about 1719 when Myles Davies reported in his news-sheet, *Athenae Britannicae*, that a Mr Menschen, then editing writings by the library keeper to the King of Denmark, 'declared against those who are troubl'd with Bibliomanie, of having too many Books: that is, who will neither read them themselves nor let any Bode else'.[38] This mania was a mania nor just for

collecting but a mania that reflected the unprecedented availability of a material good, and comparative perspectives are illuminating. Numerous other consumer goods, not just books, advanced as a result of the increased strength of disposable incomes. As the money economy deepened and prices stabilized, foodstuffs became relatively cheaper. Increased disposable income boosted the demand for non-essential and luxury goods.[39] Prominent among the luxuries were books and print. The transformation of the literary market that followed was distinguished by bitter struggles within the trade but also by a remarkable range of products, producers, circulation methods, and literary intermediaries. Between the Restoration and the Regency, dozens of entrepreneurs (for whom training in printing or publishing or bookselling was not requisite) advanced the publication of religious guidebooks, novels, periodical reviews, magazines, daily, weekly and country-town newspapers, dictionaries, and etiquette books. The market supported flamboyant booksellers and authors, the first library societies and commercial circulating libraries, literary reviewers, and finer distinctions between popular, polite, and elite forms of literature, their suppliers and consumers.[40]

The book, pamphlet, broadside, print, newspaper, and magazine reside full square in the consumer and innovation revolution that penetrated the homes and work and lounging places of the propertied, along with painted, printed, and embroidered cottons, silverware, porcelain, and fine pottery, tobacco, tea, and teapots, quality shoes, caps and ready-made clothes, sugar, coffee, and chocolate.[41] In parallel to a moral debate about these new 'luxuries', the consequence of the overwhelming number of domestic print products was pondered. For some, it led to a confusion of values and it became the key to subtly changing definitions of bibliomania. Many publishing booksellers promoted large and cheaper editions in a manner that courted charges of literary devaluation and vulgar commercialism, despite the appeal of price and swift production. The progressive distancing of refinement from commodification proved a later feature of the consumerism that often seemed to engulf publishing and bookselling. Crudely put, men and women of property regarded books as vehicles of enlightenment and instruction, but also, in consequence, as instruments of social and cultural assertiveness. From the late eighteenth century, many readers and collectors perceived valued books, new as well as antiquarian, and destined for the shelves of the private library, as quite different entities to commercialized, gadfly ephemeral literature (including fashionable magazines and circulating library fodder). Many publishing booksellers were vilified agents in this business. As the poet laureate William Whitehead (1715–85) wrote in 1762 of the booksellers, promoting the commercialization of their wares:

> Lords of their workhouse see the tyrants sit,
> Brokers in books, and stock-jobbers in wit.[42]

Connoisseurship, however, was not always what we might think. In the privacy and sanctuary of the domestic or gentleman's library, much early bibliomania maimed and destroyed rare and precious books. Bagford proved an obsessive mutilator of rare books and broadsides. As Dibdin wrote, Bagford 'was the most hungry and rapacious of all book and print collectors'.[43] A 'museum of title pages' now preserved in the British Library was established in his own library by Joseph Ames, 1749 author of *Typographical Antiquities: Being an Historical Account of Printing in England.*

For his cutting-out of title pages, Ames was later condemned as a 'biblioclast' by William Blades in his 1896 *The Enemies of Books*. Much more recently, scholars of *Sammelbände* have explored their splitting and rejoining and what was reassembled and destroyed as a result of late seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century collecting manias.[44]

Categories of concern

We might therefore suggest that at least two 'bibliomanias' were operating, one working off the other. The one is of passionate (sometimes maniacal) collecting, disdainful of the common and the incurious; the other, the representation of a rude deluge of books, or rather the rude deluged by books, in which taste and reason were said to be in danger of being overwhelmed. One way of tracking this background fear of the overproduction of books is to examine successive editions of dictionaries. Various dictionaries, through their editions and translations, chronicle changing definitions of 'bibliomania' or 'bibliomanie', a course which is in fact somewhat chaotic. Abel Boyer's English and French *Royal Dictionary* is a case in point. Early editions (Amsterdam 1752, Lyons 1756, 'Londres' 1759, and Basle 1768–69) defined 'bibliomanie' as 'passion d'avoir & d'acheter des livres', translated in all these editions as 'bookishness, eagerness to get and buy books'. This positive and complimentary definition was similar to that in the dictionary of François Girard, translated by Thomas Dyche in 1756 as 'passion des livres'.[45] In the eleventh edition of Boyer of 1764 and (at least) the fourteenth edition of 1777, 'bibliomanie' was given as 'an itch for books'. Bibliography, incidentally, was described in the early Boyer editions as 'the knowledge of the antient way of writing, and manuscripts' and in the later 1764 and 1777 editions as 'a skill in translating'.

Further dictionary watching attests to a fluid, ranging translation of 'bibliomanie'. In Ferdinando Bottarelli's three-volume 1777 *The New Italian, English and French Pocket-Dictionary* 'bibliomania' / 'bibliomany' / 'bibliomanie' is simply 'bookishness'.[46] Most significant are the changes introduced in the later editions. As early as the 1773 Boyer 'Londres' edition (probably published in Antwerp or Amsterdam) edition, 'bibliomanie' — 'passion d'avoir & d'acheter des livres' — was changed in the English to 'a *foolish* fondness for books'. The term maintained its currency, and appeared regularly in language dictionaries, alongside 'bibliography' and sometimes 'bibliomane', as a bookish person. Biblio-vocabulary reproduced alarmingly at the turn of the nineteenth century. Gabriel Peignot's *Dictionnaire raisonné de bibliologie* of 1802 offered a long entry for 'la bibiomanie' as 'la fureur de posseder des livres, non pas tant pour s'instruire que pour les avoir et pour en repaitre sa vue' in which objectives ranged from antiquity, beauty, and title pages, and in which collecting could be divided into two classes: 'les généraux' (indiscriminate book passion) and 'les particuliers' (the collection of certain classes or subject of book).[47] At greater length, the same volume also defined 'bibliophile' ('ce titre convient à toutes ces personnes qui aiment les livres'), 'bibliographe' ('etude et connaissance des livres'), 'bibliotaphe' (the 'enterreur de livres', or the interrer, burier, or hoarder of books), and 'bibliognoste' ('un habile bibliographe').[48] Dibdin referred to his associates, John and Arthur Arch, as 'old and respectable friends, social as well as bibliopolistical'.[49]

In more extended published discussions, the library collection of books increasingly attracted warnings about collecting for the sake of it. In the early nineteenth century, Isaac D'Israeli asserted that 'a passion for collecting books is not always a passion for literature'.[50] In this, accusations about the non-appreciation of books shade into concern over consumerist material possession. Book buying becomes all too easy and can cripple the mind. Even earlier than D'Israeli, the Presbyterian minister and biblical scholar Edward Harwood, had published his *A View of the Various Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics* in 1775. He offered a cautionary, if uptight, introduction:

> The first object that occurs to an ingenuous youth, after having passed the discipline and exercises of a public school, where his mind hath been fired with emulation, and stricken with a passion for literary glory, is the singular felicity of possessing correct and elegant Editions [...] Instantly he commences a Collector of Classics; and, in the ardour of this laudable pursuit, incurs many a dire disaster through his inexperience in the ways of booksellers, and his perfect ignorance of the best Editions of those Authors he is impatient to possess. The knowledge of books, like the knowledge of every art that is arduous and useful, must be purchased at a high price; and can only be acquired by an assiduous and judicious application to this pursuit for a considerable number of years. Some, indeed, whom God hath blessed with more opulence than understanding, burn with an insatiable ardour of enjoying every beauteous form of a favourite book that hath ever been exhibited in any country since the invention of the typographical art; and others have the bibliomania in so dire and frantic a degree, that those rare Editions, which they despair of securing by their wealth, they will not hesitate about secreting from libraries by their ingenuity.
>
> The pleasure of collecting Classics like other pleasures, may be carried to a ridiculous and criminal extravagance; and, like other enjoyments, then only becomes meritorious and laudable, when it is judiciously restrained within the limits of moderation and good sense.[51]

Harwood includes there a reprimand against avaricious booksellers, but the reference to collecting editions of a favourite book 'since the invention of the typographical art' relates also to much increased attention in essays and pieces in periodicals and newspapers to the sale-room and sale-catalogue concept of a book's rarity.

Rarity was much discussed in the increasing number of eighteenth-century books devoted to the understanding of the history of books and especially of printing. In 1819, Thomas Hodgson, wrote an introduction to his translation of Carlos Antonio de la Serna y Santander's 1796 and 1805–07 *Historical Essay on the Origin of Printing*. Hodgson declared that 'The number of books, which have been written upon both the general and the local History of Printing, is so great, that the mere enumeration of them would fill a volume'.[52] Few, however, had been wholly original. In 1825, Thomas Curson Hansard wrote his *Typographia: An Historical Sketch of the Origin and Progress of Printing* to continue, he stated, the 1808 work of Stower,[53] a printer's manual that in turn averred that its predecessors all copied from one another.[54] Luckombe's 1770 *History of the Art of Printing* used Smith's 1755 *Printer Grammar* and Joseph Ames in 1749 had relied on Moxon. Samuel Palmer half-completed his history of printing before it was taken over by the hack George Psalmanazar and

printed in 1732 as the *General History of Printing*.[55] Ames used the notes of Rev. John Lewis, antiquary and Vicar of Margate. Certainly this trailing pedigree did not satisfy William Savage whose 1841 *Dictionary of the Art of Printing* opened by noting that 'there has, in reality, hitherto been but little said on the History and Practice of Printing, the numerous books on the subject being chiefly copies from one or two of the earliest writers'.[56]

Savage wrote too harshly, and the eighteenth-century works on the history of print could be said to have culminated in the publication in July 1814 of Thomas Hartwell Horne's two-volume *Introduction to the Study of Bibliography*. Horne (1780–1862) chronicled the art and mystery of printing but also offered lessons in the 'infant science of Bibliography'.[57] The *Introduction* was published only a few months before the first successful introduction of steam-driven printing presses, giving his *Study of Bibliography* an immediate patina of the study of a lost or at least closing age. Horne gave great attention to the idea of a rare book[58] in which rarity enhances prices and 'in more recent times the prices of books have become so arbitrary, from the competition of purchasers, that no criterion can possibly be laid down, by which to assist the young bibliographer in making purchases'.[59] D'Israeli echoed Horne, commenting that 'the "curious" prices now given among the connoisseurs of our earliest typography for their "Caxtons", as his Gothic works are thus honourably distinguished, have induced some, conforming to traditional prejudice, to appreciate by the same fanciful value "the Caxtonian style"'.[60] Avarice for the rare was indeed behind Dibdin's further dissection of the 'disease', in which he identified eight different targets: (1) large paper copies, (2) uncut copies, (3) illustrated copies (concerning which Dibdin noted the fashion for grangerizing), (4) unique copies, (5) copies printed upon vellum, (6) first editions, (7) true editions, and (8) a general desire for the black letter.[61]

It was also during Dibdin's lifetime (he died in 1847) that the more general fear of bibliomania, of being overwhelmed by books, reached new peaks of hysteria. Periodical and critical reviews drip-fed the apprehension. Both the periodical review listings and the other catalogues, those of booksellers and of the salerooms, fuelled the further perception of an uncontrollable avalanche of print, while offering unprecedented assistance to would-be purchasers to locate books. Dibdin also noted the impact of catalogues, looking back as far as the late sixteenth century to Maunsell's pioneering catalogues, which, he claimed, 'helped to inflame the passions of purchasers, and [back to his recurrent jibe] to fill the coffers of booksellers'.[62]

Contemporary correspondence by library owners offers further evidence of what they thought they were trying to achieve, as, in more public ways, do the prefaces to grand library catalogues. These catalogue prefaces (or later editions of them by friends and family) compiled by rich and proud book collectors often reveal the thought and skill which went into the assembly and organization of collections.

Again, the aristocratic model established trends. The library became one of the major features of the rebuilding projects of noble families. Houses such as Tatton Hall, Stourhead, and Woburn Abbey were renowned for their newly built or redesigned libraries, equipped with all the latest and most elegant library paraphernalia.[63] The motives behind this activity are to be found, at least in part, from the contents and prefaces of catalogues. The large collection of novels in the library at Tatton Hall

built between 1780 and 1825 by Samuel and Lewis Wyatt for William and Wilbraham Egerton is remarkable, for example, for the pristine condition of many of the volumes, still in their original paper covers, just as they were received from the publishers and obviously intended to be bound on receipt (but were not). The survival of such books, left untouched in cupboards below the superb mahogany bookcases built by Gillow of Lancaster, has been a great boon to historical bibliography. The books in the cupboard, however, should not overshadow the 12,000-volume collection begun by Samuel Egerton (1711–80) kept behind the brass grilles of the bookcases and attesting to his compulsive enthusiasm for Italian architecture, fine arts, topography, law, and classical antiquities.[64] A similar example is the topographical library at Stourhead that served as the practical resource for Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1758–1838) and his fellow Italophile scholars. In Hoare's own words from his 1812 privately printed library catalogue:

> A love for drawing and literature induced me to visit this once happy and enlightened country [between 1785 and 1791]; and a desire of examining the less frequented and most picturesque provinces, obliged me to search for more detailed and satisfactory information than could be found in the usual tract of modern tour-writers. I began by collecting the provincial histories; the Bibliomania increased, and at the close of two successive excursions into Italy, produced the Following Topographical Collection.[65]

Conclusion

From the second half of the eighteenth century, the efforts of notable private collectors from Charles Dibdin to Horace Walpole (who also established his own press at Strawberry Hill),[66] encouraged others to embark on whimsical or cabinet collections of printed ephemera or curiosities. The market in early or unusual books remained largely for the discerning scholar, antiquarian, or even eccentric, all of whom, increasingly, needed ample resources as the price of incunables and rarities rose at the end of the eighteenth century. For the lesser purse, many collections were sought as necessary fillers to the *de rigueur* house library. Even when relatively expensive to buy, fashionable modern literature, paraded as exclusive and required reading, was both more desirable and more collectable for the successful small estate-owner or tradesman and his family. Such books ranged widely, from new social commentaries and devotional works, and reprinted classics of Cervantes or Richardson, to encyclopaedias of useful knowledge and bound collections of prints and designs.

Contemporary allusions to bibliomania as a pseudo-psychological disorder and the various forms and means by which it materialized are consequently useful pointers to future research about private libraries. We need to know more about what collectors thought they were doing and need to examine further catalogue prefaces and correspondence. The comparison of discourse and practice suggests that allusions to 'bibliomania' and its different forms, were not simply rhetorical criticism but also, in an increasingly commercialized but also evaluative society, a more involved commentary upon the nature of books — as repositories of thought but also as luxuries, as intellectual and practical mentors, and as material objects of consumption and addictive collection.

Notes

[1] Gustave Flaubert, *Bibliomania: A Tale*, trans. edn (London and Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press, 1954), p. 10.

[2] Ibid., p. 11.

[3] Arnold Hunt, 'Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, II: *1640–1850*, ed. by G. Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 438–58 (p. 438).

[4] Ibid., pp. 438–39; Kristian Jensen, *Revolution and the Antiquarian Book: Reshaping the Past, 1780–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 4–5; see also Philip Connell, 'Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics, and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain', *Representations*, 71 (2000), 24–47.

[5] See Ina Ferris, 'Book Fancy: Bibliomania and the Literary Word', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 58 (2009), 33–52.

[6] The basic premise of Connell; cf. Jon Klancher, 'Wild Bibliography: The Rise and Fall of Book History in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *Bookish Histories: Books, Literature and Commercial Modernity 1700–1900*, ed. by Ina Ferris and Paul Keen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 19–40.

[7] Deirdre Lynch, '"Wedded to Books": Bibliomania and the Romantic Essayists', *Romantic Libraries* internet posting, cited in Ferris, 'Book Fancy', pp. 33–34.

[8] Jensen, p. 144.

[9] Ibid., p. 99.

[10] R. P. Gillies, *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), II, 2.

[11] Discussed in James Raven, 'Country Houses and the Beginnings of Bibliomania', in *The Intellectual Culture of the British Country House*, ed. by Matthew Dimmock, Andrew Hadfield, and Margaret Healey (Manchester, forthcoming 2013).

[12] Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 169.

[13] Illustrated in Christopher Simon Sykes, *Private Palaces: Life in the Great London Houses* (London: Viking Books, 1985), p. 127.

[14] Anthea Stephenson, 'Chippendale Furniture at Harewood', *Furniture History*, 4 (1968), 62–80 (p. 67).

[15] 1780 inventory of furniture, in L. O. J. Boynton, 'Sir Richard Worsley's Furniture at Appuldurcombe Park', *Furniture History*, 1 (1965), 39–58 (p. 45).

[16] *The Cabinet-Makers' London Book of Prices and Designs of Cabinet Work*, 2nd edn (London, 1793), also reproduced in *Furniture History*, 18 (1982), [23]–[359].

[17] Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*, 2 vols (London: John Major, 1836), II, 949, 951.

[18] *Sales Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons*, ed. by A. N. L. Munby, 5 vols (London, 1971–72), I, 51.

[19] 'A Catalogue of all the Genteel and Fashionable Household Furniture ... of the Rev. W. Dodd D. D.', repr. in ibid., V, 359.

[20] Streatham Park, Surrey, 'A Catalogue of the Excellent and Genuine Household Furniture ... the genuine Property of Mrs Piozzi', 1816, repr. in *Sale Catalogues*, V, 34–35.

[21] Sketches and MSS notes pasted in Cambridge University Library copy of *A Description of the Library at Merly in the County of Dorset* (London: printed for the author by John Nichols, 1785).

[22] Cited in John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, 9 vols (London, 1812–15; repr. New York: Kraus, 1966), III, 403.

[23] See James Raven, 'The Noble Brothers and Popular Publishing', *The Library*, 6th ser., 12 (1990), 239–345.

[24] See Ferris, 'Book Fancy', pp. 36–37; and cf. Connell, p. 33.

[25] F. Somner Merryweather, *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages: Sketches of Bookworms, Collectors* (London: Merryweather, 1849), p. 1.

[26] Ibid., pp. 9, 207.

[27] Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *The Bibliomania; or, Book-Madness; Containing Some Account of the History, Symptoms and Cure of this Fatal Disease. In an Epistle to Richard Heber*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1809), I, 432, also cited in Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Study of Bibliography: To which is Prefixed a Memoir of the Publick Libraries of the Antients*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1814), II, 472.

[28] Dibdin, *Reminiscences*, I, 436–37.

[29] See Humphrey Gawthrop, 'Frances-Mary Richardson Currer and Richard Heber: Two Unwearied Bibliophiles on the Fringe of the Brontë World', *Brontë Studies*, 27 (November 2002), 225–34; I am grateful to Dr Bob Duckett for this reference.

[30] Dibdin, *Reminiscences*, II, 952.

[31] See C. E. Wright, 'Edward Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford 1689–1741', *Book Collector*, 11 (1962), 158–74; Nigel Ramsay, 'English Book Collectors and the Salesrooms in the Eighteenth Century', in *Under the Hammer: Book Auctions since the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote (London and New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2001), pp. 89–130.

[32] Arnold Hunt, 'The Sale of Richard Heber's Library', in *Under the Hammer*, pp. 143–65.

[33] A particular perspective is offered in Jensen.

[34] Jacques Lacombe, *The History of Christina, Queen of Sweden* (London: George Kearsly, 1766), p. 95.

[35] Stanhope, Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, *Letters Written ... to his Son*, 2 vols (London: J. Dodsley, 1774), I, 567.

[36] Dibdin, *Bibliomania*, I, 11.

[37] Ibid., p. 22.

[38] Myles Davies, *Athenae Britannicae: or, The Critical News, and Parallels of Miscellanies* [sic], V [London, ?1719].

[39] A much-debated issue, linked to specific social and economic groups; see E. A. Wrigley, *People, Cities and Wealth: The Transformation of Traditional Society* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1987), chs 1, 7, 9; and Sara Pennell, 'Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), 549–64.

[40] James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450–1850* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[41] See John Styles, 'Product Innovation in Early Modern London', *Past and Present*, 168 (2000), 124–69.

[42] William Whitehead, *Charge to the Poets* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1762).

[43] Dibdin, *Bibliomania*, I, 431.

[44] See, for example, Alexandra Gillespie, 'Poets, Printers, and Early English Sammelbände', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67.2 (2004), 189–214; Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and their Books 1473–1557* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

[45] Thomas Dyche, *Nouveau dictionnaire universal des arts et des sciences* (Avignon, 1756).

[46] Ferdinando Bottarelli, *The New Italian, English and French Pocket-Dictionary, Carefully Compiled from the Dictionaries of La Crusca, Dr S. Johnson, the French from Other Dictionaries of the Best Authorities*, 3 vols (London: J. Nourse, 1777), I, 175.

[47] Gabriel Peignot, *Dictionnaire raisonné de bibliologie*, 2 vols (Paris, 1802), I, 51–52.

[48] Ibid., pp. 49, 50, 52, 53.

[49] Dibdin, *Reminiscences*, p. 906.

[50] *Isaac D'Israeli on Books: Pre-Victorian Essays on the History of Literature*, ed. by Marvin Spevack (London and Delaware: British Library, 2004), p. 117; cf. the illuminating discussion of D'Israeli in Connell, pp. 36–42.

[51] Edward Harwood, *A View of the Various Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics* (London, 1775), pp. vi–viii.

[52] [Santander], *Thomas Hodgson An Historical Essay on the Origin of Printing Translated from the French of M. De la Serne, Santander* (Newcastle, 1819), p. xi.

[53] Thomas Curson Hansard, *Typographia: An Historical Sketch of the Origin and Progress of Printing* (London, 1825); Caleb Stower, *The Compositor's and Pressman's Guide to the Art of Printing* (London, 1808).

[54] Stower, pp. xi–xii.

[55] T. A. Birrell, 'Anthony Wood, John Bagford and Thomas Hearne as Bibliographers', in *Pioneers in Bibliography*, ed. by Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester and New Castle, DE: St Paul's Bibliographies and Oak Knoll Press, 1988), p. 40.

[56] William Savage, *Dictionary of the Art of Printing* (London, 1841), p. vi.

[57] Horne, I, p. viii.

[58] Ibid., pp. 319–25.

[59] Ibid., p. 348.

[60] *Isaac D'Israeli on Books*, p. 56.

[61] Dibdin, *Bibliomania*, I, 44.

[62] Ibid., II, 301.

[63] Each of these libraries is illustrated in John Cornforth, *English Interiors 1790–1848: The Quest for Comfort* (London: Barrie & Jenkins Ltd, 1978), pp. 42–43, 76–77.

[64] See E. J. Miller, introduction to *A Catalogue of the Library at Tatton Park Knutsford Cheshire* (Wallasey: Cheshire Libraries & Museums, 1977), p. iv.

[65] J. B. Nichols, *Catalogue of the Hoare Library of Stourhead Co. Wilts* (London, 1840), p. vi, preface, citing R. C. Hoare's preface to his privately printed catalogue dated 1812 (printed in twelve copies only).

[66] See Stephen Clarke, *The Strawberry Hill Press and its Printing House: An Account and an Iconography* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2011).

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