



Belphegor

Littérature populaire et culture médiatique

13-1 | 2015

Distinctions That Matter/Fictions Économiques

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/belphegor/609>

DOI: 10.4000/belphegor.609

ISSN: 1499-7185

Publisher

LPCM

Electronic reference

Jennifer Tsien, « Diderot's Battle against Books : Books as Objects during the Enlightenment and Revolution », *Belphegor* [Online], 13-1 | 2015, Online since 01 June 2015, connection on 30 April 2019.

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/belphegor/609> ; DOI : 10.4000/belphegor.609

This text was automatically generated on 30 April 2019.



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Diderot's Battle against Books : Books as Objects during the Enlightenment and Revolution

Jennifer Tsien

- 1 Diderot against books? The idea may seem surprising, considering the popular assumption that the Enlightenment, in which Diderot played a leading role, had always advocated education for all, and education necessarily required literacy and access to books. This optimistic vision reflects the desire of our contemporaries to see a linear progression from the eighteenth century to the Revolution and ultimately to the Republican values of present-day France. In fact, Diderot and his fellow *philosophes* did not set out to democratize knowledge. Instead, the rise of literacy during their lifetime alarmed them ; they denounced the quantity of books in circulation and the populace's avidity for them. It was only in the last years of the eighteenth century that reformers such as Benjamin Franklin and the marquis de Condorcet saw access to books as a desirable goal for a society.
- 2 In what ways was Diderot against books ? Despite his current reputation as a precursor to the Revolution, he described ways of reading, interpreting, and collecting books that depended on a sharp distinction between the *savants* (such as himself) and ordinary readers. In his view, only a few people deserved to have books, and only a few books deserved to be printed. In regard to his personal attitude towards books as objects, we can see much ambivalence in his relationship to his own publishers. Despite his feat of producing the massive *Encyclopédie* and despite his defense of *libraires*¹ in his *Lettre sur le commerce de la librairie*, we can still see traces of distrust against the act of publishing. Finally, in his persona of collector, he put into practice the idea that books were meant not to be idolized but to be circulated. In all of the areas above, we can see that the essential distinction that Diderot makes is between, on the one hand, books as objects that people want to possess for their monetary value or their social prestige, and, on the other hand, books as useful objects or tools that allow experts to produce more books.

Ultimately, he champions the latter use of books and even declares them to be disposable once they have served their purpose – a shocking idea for our contemporaries.

- 3 Several scholars have already documented the history of skepticism against book-collecting, satirically labeled bibliomania,² so I will suggest ways in which one can build on this foundation. First, I will explore what the statements against excesses in the literary market reveal about French Enlightenment thought, especially Diderot's conflicted relationship to the book as object. Second, I will look at the continuity and ultimate break from Enlightenment opinions to Revolutionary acts. Once Diderot's successors had the chance to set national policy, would they go through with an actual purge of books ?

Good Books and Bad Books

- 4 Diderot and his Enlightenment colleagues took full advantage of their self-appointed position as critics to create an imaginary triage among the multitude of books that were available in their time. In their opinion, what was a good book ? The anonymous author of the article "Livre" in the *Encyclopédie* has a number of answers, all of which restrict the mass of books to a few "useful" ones :

Bons livres : ce sont communément les livres de dévotion et de piété, comme les soliloques, les méditations, les prières. Voyez Shaftsbury, tom. I. *caract.* pag. 165. & tome III. page 327. Un bon livre, selon le langage des libraires, est un livre qui se vend bien ; selon les curieux, c'est un livre rare et selon un homme de bon sens, c'est un livre instructif.³

- 5 The author points out, with subtle humor, that a "good book" according to a Christian merely refers to a type of devotional text. The author of this article follows this apparently innocuous sentence with a reference to Shaftesbury.⁴ If we follow this trace, we find, in the 1723 edition of *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, on the two pages he indicates, Shaftesbury in the middle of a vigorous rant against religion. In these passages, he grumbles that "good books" are not good at all ; they are badly written "religious *Cruditys*." Their value is derived from the vanity of ecclesiastical figures and of pious ladies who show off these books in prominent shelves in their rooms, along with other gilded ornaments.⁵ With this reference to Shaftesbury, the author of "Livre" eliminates the possibility of taking this concept of a "good book" seriously.
- 6 Next, the author of "Livre" discusses the other ways in which a good book is not actually good : to booksellers, it means a product that sells, and to collectors, it is merely something of which there are few copies. The mercenary idea of "un livre qui se vend bien" goes to the heart of the inevitable conflict between a man of letters and a man of business : it is a matter of quality versus quantity. One can notice that in French, *un livre* (a book), ironically happens to be the same word as *une livre* (a pound – both the weight and the eighteenth-century monetary unit), though with a different gender and etymology. The thought of a work of literature, the first type of *livre*, being measured by mere price or weight, the second type of *livre*, is precisely what Enlightenment authors beheld with horror.⁶ In fact, the author of "Livre" makes the provocative suggestion that the more pages a tome contains, the worse the content must be :

Quelques - uns croient qu'on doit juger d'un *livre* d'après sa grosseur & son volume, suivant la règle du grammairien Callimaque ; que plus un *livre* est gros, & plus il est rempli de mauvaises choses... qu'une seule feuille des *livres* des sibylles étoit préférable aux vastes annales de Volusius. Cependant Pline est d'une opinion

contraire, & qui souvent se trouve véritable ; savoir, qu'un bon *livre* est d'autant meilleur qu'il est plus gros... Martial nous enseigne un remède fort aisé contre l'immensité d'un *livre*, c'est d'en lire peu.⁷

- 7 These reflections about the ratio of the number of pages to literary merit will be followed to their absurd conclusion in other Enlightenment texts, particularly in fantasies of minimal libraries.
- 8 Having discredited the religious and commercial definitions of a “good book,” what better alternative does the author of “Livre” propose ? The only opinion that we are meant to take seriously in the quote from this *Encyclopédie* entry is that of the “homme de bon sens,” that a good book is an instructive book. This expression harks back to the very beginning of “Livre” :
- LIVRE, s. m. (*Littér.*) écrit composé par quelque personne intelligente sur quelque point de science, pour l'instruction & l'amusement du lecteur. On peut encore définir un *livre*, une composition d'un homme de lettres, faite pour communiquer au public & à la postérité quelque chose qu'il a inventée, vûe, expérimentée, & recueillie, & qui doit être d'une étendue assez considérable pour faire un volume.⁸
- 9 This definition applies not just to “good books” but to books in general. The book must be written by an intelligent person who reveals some type of new knowledge to the public, not to mention that it must be well written and of a “considerable” length – a very restrictive definition, even by modern-day standards. The question one cannot help but ask is, what does this passage exclude ? An infinite number of publications can simply not meet these standards. Does that mean that they do not count as books ?
- 10 The author seems to contradict himself afterwards by providing a very lengthy list of different types of books, many of which do not fit his definition, though he does not say so outright. He proposes several ways of classifying books, such as by material (parchment, leather, wax, ivory) or by “situation” (lost books, books promised but never delivered, imaginary books), an amusing classification that may remind modern-day readers of the beginning of Michel Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses*.⁹ In fact, the article “Livre” is deliberately cluttered with lists of various types of books, most of them obviously useless to any of the Encyclopedists : “livres des aruspices” (in which one reads the future based on observations of animals' entrails), “livres fatals” (that predict how long people will live), “livres noirs” (that deal with magic), “livres rouges” (that deal with judgments of people who use *livres noirs*), etc. I believe that the purpose of the elaborate list of these types of books, which the author undoubtedly held in contempt, is to create a metaphorical library on the very page of the *Encyclopédie* – a library full of junk, with only one or two examples of books one would want to keep, the *livres instructifs* or *livres utiles* that “traitent des choses nécessaires ou aux connoissances humaines, ou à la conduite des mœurs.”¹⁰ This matter of *utilité* or usefulness will be mentioned repeatedly in the discussions about the status of books during both the Enlightenment and the Revolution.

The One-Book Library

- 11 The very format of the article “Livre” conveys the message that, if one could only dispense with the clutter of books that contain no useful information, one could happily, and usefully, retain only a few volumes. The author addresses the idea of a minimal library ; admittedly, he mocks it via *reductio ad absurdum*, suggesting that the best library would contain only one book, or three at most : “Ainsi un petit nombre de *livres* choisis

est suffisant. Quelques uns en bornent la quantité au seul *livre* de la bible, comme contenant toutes les sciences. Et les Turcs se réduisent à l'alcoran.”¹¹ The fact that Christians and Muslims express these ideas undercuts the plausibility that this statement is offered seriously. The idea that the Bible contains “all the sciences” is also obviously laughable, even if one takes the word *science* to mean *knowledge*, not the natural sciences.¹² However, the author does add other, more secular but still ambiguous, opinions from such thinkers as Girolamo Cardano, a Renaissance mathematician but also astrologer :¹³ “Cardan croit que trois *livres* suffisent à une personne qui ne fait profession d'aucune science, savoir, une vie des saints & des autres hommes vertueux, un *livre* de poésie pour amuser l'esprit, & un troisieme qui traite des régles de la vie civile.”¹⁴ It is significant, however, that the author states that Cardano thought this rule should apply to non-scholars, those who “do not profess any science,” which brings his ideas in line with the division Diderot makes between *savants* and the rest of the people.¹⁵

- 12 However, as dubious as these minimal libraries may sound to us, they do offer an extreme solution to the situation that the author of “*Livre*” sees in his day : too many publications. He complains, after all, of the excessive output of certain authors :

ces écrivains qui donnent au public... six ou huit *livres* par an, & cela pendant le cours de dix ou douze années, comme Lintenpius, professeur à Copenhague, qui a donné un catalogue de 72 *livres* qu'il composa en douze ans.... On n'y comprendra pas non plus ces auteurs volumineux qui comptent leurs *livres* par vingtaines, par centaines, tel qu'étoit le P. Macedo, de l'ordre de saint François, qui a écrit de lui-même qu'il avoit composé 44 volumes, 53 panégyriques, 60 (suivant l'anglois) *speeches* latins, 105 épitaphes, 500 élégies, 110 odes, 212 épîtres dédicatoires, 500 épîtres familiares, *poëmata epica juxta bis mille sexcenta* : on doit supposer que par - là il entend 2600 petits poëmes en vers héroïques ou hexametres, & en enfin 150 mille vers.¹⁶

- 13 This almost demented overflow of publications surely calls for a remedy of some sort.
- 14 To reduce the mass of books to a minimal library, it would be necessary to dispose of all the superfluous books, and this is why one fantasy appears repeatedly – that of a great bonfire of books. The idea appears, for example, in Louis-Sébastien Mercier's futuristic utopia 2440 and in writings by D'Alembert. As Daniel Desormeaux tells us, “D'Alembert, qui s'érige contre l'historiographie, propose la mesure suivante : ‘Il serait à souhaiter que tous les cent ans on fit un extrait des faits historiques réellement utile, et qu'on brûlât tout le reste...’ L'image des livres bannis, brûlés ou déchirés devient une constante littéraire.”¹⁷ This image is highly ironic because a number of Enlightenment works suffered this fate in reality, when the agents of the Inquisition or of the French Parliament censored their books and ritually burned them in public. Nevertheless, the *philosophes* usurp this authority, at least in their imagination, in order to censor not immoral or dangerous works, as theirs were considered, but useless and ridiculous books.
- 15 Diderot mentions book-burning as a beneficial thing in the following anecdote, in one of his letters to Sophie Volland. He recounts how a certain Chinese emperor, “Shy-Wang-Ti,” who had “donné les lois les plus sages de l'univers,”
- fit brûler tous les livres, et défendit, sous peine de mort, d'en conserver d'autres que d'agriculture, d'architecture et de médecine. Si Rousseau avoit reconnu ce trait historique, le beau parti qu'il en eut tiré ! Comme il eût fait valoir les raisons de l'empereur chinois !
- 16 And why would a wise emperor choose to burn all but the most practical of books ?

Shy-Wang-Ti disoit que...partout où il y avoit plus de gloire à penser qu'à faire, le nombre de ceux qu'on appelle penseurs devoit toujours aller en argumentant, et avec eux le nombre des oisifs, des orgueilleux, des inutiles et des fainéants.... ; que les productions de l'esprit sont froides et maussades lorsque le génie n'est pas l'organe des passions, et qu'alors elles sont dangereuses. Le beau texte que voilà !"¹⁸

- 17 One may be tempted to interpret Diderot's exclamations as sarcastic, but I believe that a straightforward reading of this passage is more consistent with his stated opinions and those of his fellow *philosophes*. They agree that reading and writing create a class of idle people who are a drain on society – though surely they excluded themselves from this group. In the fantasy world of several Enlightenment writers, therefore, book-burning was seen as necessary if society was to purify itself of its present corruption. It remained to be seen whether this idea could, or should, ever be implemented.
- 18 According to the article “Livre,” only one benefit can be derived from having many books : if a political leader ever decides to have all books destroyed, the existence of multiple copies of a text will make it more probable that that particular text will survive. But this scenario does not make the author fetishize the book as a precious object ; instead, it merely suggests a strategy to keep worthy books from disappearing from the face of the earth, a threat that had been realized during the Fall of Rome.
- 19 It is not surprising that the Shy-Wang-Ti anecdote reminds Diderot of his friend Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who famously argues in his 1750 *Discours sur les arts et les lettres* that the invention and increasing sophistication of knowledge can only corrupt society : “Voilà l'effet le plus évident de toutes nos études, et la plus dangereuse de toutes leurs conséquences. On ne demande plus d'un homme s'il a de la probité, mais s'il a des talens ; ni d'un Livre s'il est utile, mais s'il est bien écrit.”¹⁹ Once again, utility is the standard for the worthiness of a book. As Rousseau sees it, young men, instead of learning civic virtues, accumulate useless bits of information and become caught up in the competition for *bel esprit*, or wit. This contrast between useful (ethical) knowledge and mere mental clutter – something akin to Montaigne's concepts of *tête bien faite* and *tête bien pleine* – appears in his other works as well.
- 20 For example, when the tutor Saint-Preux creates an educational program for his pupil and lover Julie in Rousseau's novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the first thing he does is eliminate most conventional subjects of study : languages, sciences, modern history, and mathematics. His “system,” as he calls it, aims to “faire un petit recueil d'une grande bibliothèque.”²⁰ He then expresses himself with a double metaphor of knowledge as currency and as a cabinet of curiosities, both meant to be scorned : “nos Savants... n'amassent dans le cabinet que pour répandre dans le public.”²¹ While he criticizes those scholars who amass knowledge to show it off and then to resell it, he compares the correct way to deal with knowledge to the digestive process : the reader gathers information, absorbs it, and is nourished by it – and presumably discards the rest. As good readers, Saint-Preux declares, we learn things “pour nous en nourrir.”²² He describes the proper approach to books : “peu lire, et beaucoup méditer nos lectures, ... en causer beaucoup entre nous, est le moyen de les bien digérer.”²³ While the theme of education explicitly occupies only one letter of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Rousseau expands these theories in his treatise *Emile*, in which he continues to insist on his distrust of books in favor of first-hand experience. It is interesting that Rousseau's ideal object of study, as described in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, is moral philosophy, since that partly coincides with the

definition of *livres utiles* or *instructifs* in the article "Livre," which "traitent des choses nécessaires ou aux connoissances humaines, ou à la conduite des mœurs."²⁴

- 21 Rousseau's stance against the sophistication of society was more radical than that of his fellow *philosophes*, however. While Rousseau had a vision of society (unattainable for those of us living in an already corrupted world) that needed no language and only minimal technical mastery of the elements, Diderot, Voltaire, and others favored the advancement of all aspects of knowledge, including eloquence and the natural sciences. Their attitudes were more in accordance with the initial definition of "Livre," in which the author must "communiquer au public & à la postérité quelque chose qu'il a inventée, vûe, expérimentée, & recueillie,"²⁵ requiring that each new book bring the world a step forward in one discipline or other.

Hints from Diderot's Life

- 22 Given the insistence on minimal libraries, one may well ask how Diderot justified his astonishingly prolific output. After all, the *Encyclopédie* alone occupied 17 folio volumes of text and 11 additional ones of illustrations ! It is worthwhile, I think, to mention three aspects of his relationship to printed books, with the caveat that these are speculations about Diderot rather than definitive proof to support an argument : first, his nonchalant attitude towards his own collection of books ; second, his reluctance to publish some of the texts for which he is now most famous ; and third, his ambivalence towards *libraires*, who were responsible for making his works available to the greater public.
- 23 Diderot, so passionate in other respects, showed a surprising indifference to the books in his possession. As he mentions in his correspondence, he had been trying to sell his library for years ; his poverty distressed him, he said, because he needed to amass enough money to give his daughter a dowry. As to his books, he had expressed a cavalier attitude about keeping or losing them. In one letter to Sophie Volland, he remarks : "Ma bibliothèque ajoutera six à sept cent livres de rente foncière à mon revenu. Qu'on me la laisse ou qu'on l'enlève à l'instant, peu m'importe."²⁶ In another, he unsentimentally weighs the pros and cons of receiving money in exchange for his books : "Ceux qui marchandent ma bibliothèque en ont fait faire de leur côté une appréciation qui est de mille écus au-dessous de la mienne. La différence est forte ; mais qu'importe ? Si l'affaire manque, mon Homère et mon Platon me resteront."²⁷ Finally, he famously accepted Catherine II of Russia's offer to pay him 15,000 *livres* (the monetary unit) for his 3,000 books ; she generously allowed him to keep the books during his lifetime and she had them sent to Saint Petersburg only after his death. He was delighted with this unexpected proposition, as we can see in his correspondence.²⁸
- 24 His cheery attitude at the thought of losing his books is consistent with his statements about the surpassability of books ; once they have been of use, there is no need to prize them for their own sake. While he takes advantage of the book market – or rather, he had tried to but failed and in the end benefited from the old-fashioned patronage of the empress of Russia – he did it not as a merchant but in order to transform books into money. The money, in turn, was not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end, since it allowed him to ensure his daughter's marriage and future comfort. As if by some alchemical transformation, books would dissolve into money, which would dissolve into paternal love.

- 25 In terms of publication, Diderot also showed little interest in books for books' sake. Diderot scholars have struggled to reconstruct his *œuvre* by chasing after the scattered manuscript pages he left all over Europe, some of them behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. Why did he not keep his works intact? Why was he so careless about leaving masterpieces in handwritten form? Herbert Dieckmann, an editor of Diderot's complete works, expresses his puzzlement: "Il ne semble avoir fait aucun effort pour faire paraître ses véritables chefs-d'œuvre, le *Neveu de Rameau*, *Jacques le Fataliste*, *la Religieuse*, *le Rêve de d'Alembert*, *le Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, ou *la Réfutation d'Helvétius*."²⁹ These works only found their way to printed form through circuitous, sometimes accidental paths, decades after Diderot's death. Why this reluctance to publish? Diderot specialists have yet to find an answer.
- 26 And yet, in spite of his disdain for books, Diderot achieved the unprecedented feat of publishing the *Encyclopédie*. According to Jacques Proust, the project was impressive not only because of its scale and the amount of money invested, but also "par la nouveauté de la conception, l'ampleur des moyens financiers et techniques mis en jeu, l'étendue du public atteint, soit dans la recherche des collaborateurs, soit dans celle des souscripteurs...."³⁰ Diderot was able to negotiate with all the major players in the publishing game, though not always with success. The most notorious incident during the publication process involved the removal of large sections from certain articles by his editor, Le Breton. As Diderot submitted manuscript texts, Le Breton presumably censored the parts that he judged too controversial to meet the approval of the French government, which had at this stage given permission to publish.³¹ Diderot only discovered these excisions when it was too late and his original manuscripts had been destroyed. He was understandably enraged by this state of affairs, and this incident was only one of his complaints against the publishers of the *Encyclopédie*. His bitterness surely tainted his future relations to publishers. It would be understandable if he equated printing with intellectual compromise because the sale of a manuscript (at the time, authors sold their text to a *libraire*, who then became its proprietor) could lead to gross infidelity between the author's original handwritten text and the finished product.
- 27 As to the *Encyclopédie*'s sheer bulk, one could argue that Diderot did not mean to add to the mass of books available, but to replace them. Daniel Desormeaux suggests as much when he refers to this work as "le Livre unique": "Choisir entre la bibliomanie et la pensée encyclopédique au XVIIIe siècle, c'est comme choisir entre une masse de livres et le Livre unique. Car l'esprit encyclopédique, c'est un peu la croyance en la possibilité de réduire à quelques volumes la mémoire écrite depuis des siècles."³² Instead of having a one-book library consisting of the Bible or the Koran, one could just own an *Encyclopédie*. It is unclear whether Diderot would agree, but Desormeaux's idea is a tempting one.
- 28 Some may see Diderot's *Lettre sur le commerce de la librairie* (which, ironically, remained unpublished until 1859) as proof of his advocacy of the publishing industry. However, scholars question his motives, some suggesting that he was under pressure to write this essay in 1763, while in the middle of the vast Encyclopedic project, when he needed the support of publishers the most. Indeed, Diderot himself admits that this *Letter* goes against his typical stance against the exclusivity of guilds, which would suggest that he did not write this letter entirely from his own free will. According to Jacques Proust, Diderot wrote this text out of self-interest and tactical considerations.³³ For example, one can argue that Diderot's real purpose is the second major point that he makes in this essay, which calls for authors' rights vis-à-vis government censorship.³⁴

- 29 The ostensible purpose of the letter is to persuade the *Inspecteur de la librairie*, Joseph d'Hémery, to restrict the rights to print certain classic works to a small number of *libraires*. Otherwise, he argues, the competition between printers for financial gain causes the market to be flooded with rapidly-produced and thus inferior editions of classic works. Some restriction in the market would allow *libraires* to make long-term investments in carefully produced, well-edited editions. Diderot makes his case with scholars' interests in mind. By emphasizing quality over quantity, he effectively dismisses the advantages of making cheaper books more readily available to a larger number of people. In fact, the ultimate consequence of the *Lettre* would be for people to publish not more, but less.
- 30 Ultimately, for Diderot and the other *philosophes*, a useful book was not an end in itself but a means to something else. For this reason, they mocked book collectors as ignorant people who merely accumulated possessions without benefiting from them or without allowing others to benefit. As Daniel Desormeaux remarks, Enlightenment writers wanted books to circulate, to be read, the important parts to be absorbed, and then to be passed along. By contrast, the *bibliomane*, or crazed book-lover, fetishized the book and his ultimate goal was to hoard: "l'image du bibliomane correspond avant tout à quelqu'un qui soustrait le livre de la circulation en recourant largement à l'argent."³⁵ For this reason, the Encyclopedists favored book collectors who, in the aristocratic mold, allowed scholars access to their libraries, as opposed to wealthy private buyers with no such sense of noblesse oblige.
- 31 Not only are books supposed to stay "active" in the hands of scholars, but they should also be subject to being washed away by future waves of new discoveries. In the *Lettre sur le commerce de la librairie*, Diderot includes a brief history of publishing that hardly glorifies Gutenberg or his French contemporaries. The first publications that ever existed, Diderot tells us, were "petits ouvrages de peu de valeur."³⁶ They were mere "essais que cet art n'offrait un jour au public que comme des gages de ce qu'on en pouvait attendre un jour, qu'on ne dut pas rechercher longtemps parce qu'ils étaient destinés à tomber dans le mépris à mesure qu'on s'éclairerait."³⁷ Eventually, Diderot claims, printers did become enlightened enough to produce good literature: "on entreprit des ouvrages d'une utilité générale & d'un usage journalier"³⁸ that would sell reliably over the years. His choice of the word *utilité* links this passage with earlier calls to reduce literature to only what is useful, in terms of teaching virtue or advancing science.
- 32 In this and other works, Diderot creates a schema of time that borrows from both sides of the Battle of the Ancients and the Moderns. Like the Moderns, he asserts that old books have less value because they have been surpassed by new books. On the other hand, his standard examples of books that are worth publishing are nearly always classics by Greek and Roman authors, such as Homer, Plato, and Virgil (in addition to a few Enlightenment favorites, such as Pierre Bayle, Isaac Newton, and Voltaire):
- les livres savants & d'un certain ordre n'ont eu, n'ont & n'auront jamais qu'un petit nombre d'acheteurs & que sans le faste de notre siècle qui s'est malheureusement étendu sur toute sorte d'objets, trois ou quatre éditions même des œuvres de Corneille, de Racine, de de Voltaire suffiraient pour la France entière; combien en faudrait-il moins de Bayle, de Moreri, de Pline, de Neuton, & d'une infinité d'autres ouvrages.³⁹

- 33 The problem with publishing useful classics, he tells us, is that so few people need these works – he refers to *savants* like himself – that *libraires* would be out of business if they did not augment their profits with bad books or bad editions.
- 34 The apparent contradiction between Diderot's Modern and Ancient viewpoints can be resolved if we distinguish science from the type of imaginative literature that was called *belles-lettres* in the eighteenth century. In the article "Encyclopédie," Diderot proclaims that science based on observation of the natural world, supplemented by rationality, "s'avance à grands pas ; qu'elle soumet à son empire tous les objets de son ressort ; que son ton est le ton dominant, & qu'on commence à secouer le joug de l'autorité & de l'exemple pour s'en tenir aux lois de la raison."⁴⁰ Therefore, previous works will become "suranné[s]" and people will find them unsatisfying : "le tems est arrivé, où des ouvrages qui jouissent encore de la plus haute réputation, en perdront une partie, ou même tomberont entierement dans l'oubli."⁴¹ On the other hand, "certain genres of literature" that pertain to morals will fall out of favor, but not from their own fault : "certains genres de littérature, qui, faute d'une vie réelle & de mœurs subsistantes qui leur servent de modeles, ne peuvent avoir de poétique invariable & sensée, seront négligés..."⁴² These great works of ethics may be neglected when they are no longer in sync with the morals of the times – Diderot's subtle criticism of his society's ills. On the whole, Diderot's vision of the world of books is one of constant movement ; books appear and disappear, their reputation rises and falls, and society changes with every revolution of the historic cycle. Little did Diderot suspect that when he evokes future "revolutions" in this article, referring to the idea of cyclical change, the French Revolution would soon take place and some of his ideas would have the chance to be put into practice.⁴³

Revolution

- 35 The *philosophes* created an opposition between two ways of perceiving books : one is practiced by the ignorant, who worship volumes as idols or show them off as objects of luxury, and the second by experts who see them as mere work tools. Diderot's successors at first espoused the idea of distinguishing between *livres utiles* to be kept and the mass of useless relics of the past that could be destroyed. Once the utopian visions of the Enlightenment could actually be realized in the policies of the newly established French republic, the mass burning of "unnecessary" books became a topic to be discussed at the National Assembly. Voltaire's protégé Condorcet, as well as the progressive abbé Grégoire, for example, proposed the destruction of any textual remains of aristocratic privilege. In a speech to the Assembly on June 19, 1792 Condorcet proclaimed :
- C'est aujourd'hui que la raison brûle au pied de la statue de Louis XIV ces immenses volumes qui attestaient la vanité de cette caste [la noblesse]. D'autres vestiges en subsistent encore dans les Bibliothèques publiques, dans les chambres des comptes, des les chapitres à preuve et dans les maisons des généalogistes. Il faut envelopper ces dépôts dans une destruction commune...⁴⁴ (emphasis added)
- 36 The image of the bonfire of books recalls passages from Diderot, Rousseau, and Mercier concerning the perfect minimal library. Condorcet's proposal was "adopted without discussion,"⁴⁵ but there was some disagreement afterwards about its implementation. Some believed that this initiative exclusively applied to genealogical documents and property deeds; others assumed it applied to any historical documents or any book that bore a coat of arms on its binding. If the policy was understood as applying to books, then

the old, rare, and luxuriously bound volumes that had been ensconced in aristocratic homes and in religious institutions⁴⁶ would be subjected to a stern triage. The prospect of such destruction provoked the poet Marie-Joseph Chénier (the brother of André Chénier) to exclaim, “c’est aux livres que nous devons la Révolution Française!... faudra-t-il les brûler?”⁴⁷

- 37 While most modern-day people would look upon the idea of book-burning with horror, the question remains whether the radical plans for the reduction of “useless” books proposed during the Revolution was a continuation of Enlightenment ideas about books, such as those advanced by Diderot and Rousseau. On the one hand, the idea of *livres utiles* that advances science seems strikingly similar in Enlightenment and Revolutionary discourse. The useful book remains useful only until a newer one comes along, as Diderot had explained in his article “Encyclopédie.” Then the older, now obsolete, book must be destroyed, lest it continue to spread erroneous information. Condorcet, for example, recommends in his report on public education that the populace be kept away from Greek and Latin texts, because they contain too much outdated information:

il ne se trouve aucun ouvrage de science, de philosophie, de politique vraiment important, qui n’ait été traduit ; mais toutes les vérités que renferment ces livres existent, et mieux développées, et réunies à des vérités nouvelles, dans des livres écrits en langue vulgaire. La lecture des originaux n’est proprement utile qu’à ceux dont l’objet n’est pas l’étude de la science même, mais celle de son histoire.... l’étude longue, approfondie des langues des anciens, étude qui nécessiterait la lecture des livres qu’ils nous ont laissés, serait peut-être plus nuisible qu’utile. Nous cherchons dans l’éducation à faire connaître des vérités, et ces livres sont remplis d’erreurs. Nous cherchons à former la raison, et ces livres peuvent l’égarer. Nous sommes si éloignés des anciens, nous les avons tellement devancés dans la route de la vérité, qu’il faut avoir sa raison déjà tout armée, pour que ces précieuses dépouilles puissent l’enrichir sans la corrompre.⁴⁸

- 38 This idea is compatible with Diderot’s statements about the progress of scholarship.
- 39 On the other hand, the motivations behind the book-burning plans of the Revolution were fundamentally different from those of the Enlightenment writers. The *philosophes* argued for restrictions on publication in order to uphold their own authority as critics. They wished to transfer the privileges of the elites to themselves, not create a system of equality in intellectual matters. By contrast, the Revolutionaries, such as Condorcet, wished to sweep away evidence that supported past aristocratic privilege and institute a system of education from which all would benefit, even if there would be an eventual selection of better students who could move on to higher spheres of scholarship. Opposing the idolization of books is not the same as advocating for mass education.⁴⁹ In fact, when referring to the future of science, Diderot had expressed doubts about the ability of the general public to participate in such elevated intellectual matters. In “Encyclopédie,” he states:

Mais la masse générale de l’espece n’est faite ni pour suivre, ni pour connoître cette marche de l’esprit humain. Le point d’instruction le plus élevé qu’elle puisse atteindre, a ses limites : d’où il s’ensuit qu’il y aura des ouvrages qui resteront toujours au - dessus de la portée commune des hommes...⁵⁰

- 40 By contrast, Condorcet proposed a wide-ranging educational plan for French people of all classes, before his prosecution by the Revolutionary government.⁵¹
- 41 Ultimately, plans for the mass destruction of thousands of volumes all over France could not be easily implemented. At the same time, the tide of opinion turned when the abbé

Grégoire, who had at first advocated the reduction of collections to *livres utiles*, came out in defense of France's vast literary collections. When he presented his *Rapport sur la bibliographie* to the National Convention in 1794, he made the case for selective destruction and preservation, using very similar terms as the Enlightenment *philosophes*. He mentions the plans for burning books in a way that recalls Rousseau's radical educational system: "à Paris, à Marseille et ailleurs, on proposoit de brûler les bibliothèques: la théologie, disoit-on, parce que c'est du fanatisme; la jurisprudence, des chicanes, l'histoire, des mensonges; la philosophie, des rêves; les sciences, on n'en a pas besoin."⁵² Although his tone is indignant when he speaks of this destruction, he still makes concessions to those who would object that not all books are worth keeping when he remarks, "Certainement peu d'écrivains se présentent avec éclat à la postérité."⁵³ Even the legendary library of Alexandria, he says, must have contained, as do the French ones, "bien des rêveries qui sont le scandale de la raison.... Ces vastes réservoirs des pensées, des projets de tous les siècles, de tous les pays, sont en même temps la honte et la gloire de l'espèce humaine."⁵⁴ His solution is to allow the experts, whom he designates with the abstract words "le goût" and "la philosophie," to preside over the separation of good books from bad: "nous appellerons le goût et la philosophie pour... chercher la paillette d'or jusques dans la fange des livres absurdes."⁵⁵ He even calls this triage an "*index de la raison*,"⁵⁶ emphasizing the similarities between the intellectual judgment of books and the Inquisition! This remarkable comparison of two types of censorship, one virtual and emanating from the Enlightenment and the other one real and emanating from one of its greatest enemies, may suggest that Grégoire disapproved of their similarly violent reactions to what they considered bad books. It is appropriate, then, that he calls for the preservation of knowledge, even if it has been superseded. First, he justifies this new policy by claiming that printing and binding are arts in themselves, so we must value rare books. Then he tells us that in our navigation in the sea of knowledge, faulty books can actually be useful, since they can show us the "écueils" or reefs to avoid. Finally, he makes a suggestion that would sound perfectly reasonable to present-day scholars: that the history of past wrongs is not an encouragement to commit these wrongs. For example, "une histoire de la féodalité, qui fut une des grandes erreurs de l'esprit humain, seroit un morceau très-philosophique."⁵⁷ In this statement he foresees that simply to study the past, even if it is a culpable part of it, does not compromise the present.

- 42 The decision to preserve the old and rare books would involve a new way of thinking about time. Diderot focused on making progress by surpassing the past; this past would become disposable, as it was replaced with new and better knowledge – in other words, new and better books. Nevertheless, those who wished to preserve old books, as well as historical archives and other elements of the French *patrimoine*, also relied on a linear vision of time,⁵⁸ but in this case, the passing of time would allow the past to be safely contained, no longer a threat to the present or the future.
- 43 As the vision of the past and acceptance of its oddities became incorporated into French (and other Europeans') efforts to preserve the national patrimony, it had an effect on the commercial status of old books. In fact, faulty versions of old texts, if they were old and rare enough, became prizes of unheard-of monetary value for collectors and libraries during the time of the French Revolution. According to the Enlightenment definition, these would be perfect examples of "useless" books, but as Kristian Jensen informs us, they became national treasures. When the Bodleian Library of Oxford University started buying fifteenth-century editions from France in the 1790s, for example, its librarians

claimed that they needed these in order to establish good scholarly editions of Greek and Latin classics.⁵⁹ This was a project that Diderot would have considered worthwhile, as we can see in such texts as the *Discours préliminaire* of the *Encyclopédie*. Soon, however, Oxford librarians as well as private collectors dropped this pretense and started buying books because of their age and other external properties. According to Jensen, “a consensus began to emerge that incunable editions were, most often, based on inferior manuscripts. The collections undermined the original intellectual motives for their formation.”⁶⁰ Dealers started buying books with errors or with no obvious scholarly value, acknowledging that their clients had adjusted their point of view on the past; some “now acknowledged that incunable editions had a different type of importance for men of culture.”⁶¹

- 44 The incunabula, which Diderot had looked down on in the *Lettre sur le commerce de la librairie* as “petits ouvrages de peu de valeur,” suddenly gained a new prestige. If Diderot considered the taste for these objects “bizarre,” then this bizarreness began to be shared by richer and more numerous people, as well as national institutions like the French Bibliothèque Nationale, which began to see the advantages of acquiring rare books for its own national interest.

Conclusion

- 45 In his 1874 essay “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” Friedrich Nietzsche presents three competing approaches to history: the “monumental” applies to those people who are inspired by history to perform heroic deeds; the “antiquarian” represents the feeble scholars who “preserve and revere” knowledge for its own sake; and the “critical” is practiced by those who judge the past as worthy or unworthy according to their present values.⁶² We can equally well apply this schema to the different ways in which people thought about books at the end of the eighteenth century. Rousseau advocates the “monumental” use of books, since he expects his ideal reader to emulate the virtues of the ancient Greek and Roman heroes that he reads about. On the other hand, Rousseau and his fellow *philosophes* scorn the “antiquarians” for their servility to ancient texts, as we can see in the *Discours préliminaire* of the *Encyclopédie*; nonetheless, this approach to literature began to flourish after the Revolution. The “critical” attitude, in turn, best describes the *philosophes*’ and some of the Revolutionaries’ desire to select the books they found useful and destroy the rest. In Nietzsche’s words, the critical reader feels that he “must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past: he does this by bringing it before a tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it.”⁶³ The very mention of the word *tribunal* recalls the French Revolutionaries and their unflinching judgments of people, of institutions, and, momentarily, of books.
- 46 If we wanted to be strictly faithful to the ideals of the Enlightenment *philosophes*, then, we would scorn what they scorn: the book as a precious object. We would celebrate the advent of the disembodied text, the computer file that can be transferred or copied infinitely. Not only can the computerized document detach itself from any commercial considerations, since it is free as long as it does not have a copyright, but it also cannot be fetishized as an object. As a nineteenth-century commentator on the Enlightenment contempt for books remarks, “Il y a eu des membres de l’Académie française qui ont aimé à se vanter de n’avoir pas même dans leur cabinet un exemplaire de leurs propres

œuvres : Dieu n'enregistre point les oracles qu'il prononce."⁶⁴ Perhaps the digitized format would come closest to Rousseau's ideal of transmission of knowledge that can be free from its medium – for example, from an individual computer.⁶⁵ And yet the computer file would still need a device on which one could read it and it would still appear in the form of words. Rousseau's ideal goes even further than Diderot's, since Rousseau reflects nostalgically about a pre-publishing,⁶⁶ pre-writing world, when men communicated through action and in each other's presence. His fantasy of separating message from medium and his contempt for the latter now strikes us as naïve. How can people communicate without the conventional signs of language? Doesn't language create a reality? The very modernity of Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* lies in the fact that it makes us turn away from idealizing "pure" content that could discard its means of transmission – the *philosophes'* ideal – and he makes us see the medium as an object worthy of study.

- 47 Aside from the newly-elevated status of media, the aspect of the present-day book world that would confound the Enlightenment *philosophes* is its fragmentation. Admittedly, in the eighteenth century, there were enormous leather-bound folios with gilt edges at one end of the commercial scale and, at the other, cheap mass-produced almanacs from the *bibliothèque bleue*,⁶⁷ but the *philosophes* tried to rein in this unruly production under one standard – of good taste, of utility, or of scientific truth. Their campaign may have had some success, to the extent that politicians were even willing to carry out their ideals in reality by burning books. But the tide turned, rare books became part of the *patrimoine*, and the ever-increasing number of readers demanded to enjoy literature according to their own varied standards. We have inherited this state of affairs. In different parts of our society, antiquarians will work to preserve rare books regardless of content; in another, thinkers at the forefront of their fields will use and discard textual materials as their research progresses. In yet other parts of our society, the intelligentsia will laud the latest post-modernist novel, but a separate segment of the reading public will still defend the virtues of Stephen King, Tyler Perry, and the *Twilight* series, without any group bothering to oppose or even being conscious of the other.

NOTES

1. In eighteenth-century France, *libraire* referred to the profession of book printer and seller, since it was a single enterprise at the time.
2. See Daniel Desormeaux, *La Figure du bibliomane : histoire du livre et stratégie littéraire au XIX^e siècle* (St-Genoulph : Nizet, 2001); Bernhard Metz, "Bibliomania and the Folly of Reading," *Comparative Critical Studies* 5/2-3 (2008), 249-269; Jennifer Tsien, *The Bad Taste of Others* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), chapter 1.
3. "Livre," *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert. University of Chicago : ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Spring 2011 Edition), Robert Morrissey (ed), [<http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu>], tome IX, p. 604. Diderot may or may not have written this article, but as editor, he needed to have read and approved it.

4. The fact that Diderot translated this philosopher's writings into French could suggest that he also penned this article.
5. Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of men, manners, opinions, times* (London, 1723). vol. 1 of 3, "Advice to an Author," p. 164-65 and vol. 3 of 3, "Miscellaneous Thoughts" p. 327-28. "If our Candidates for Authorship happen to be of the sanctify'd kind.... These may be term'd a sort of *Pseudo-Asceticks*, who can have no real Converse either with themselves, or with Heaven, whilst they look thus a-squint upon the World, and carry *Titles* and *Editions* along with 'em in their Meditations. And altho the Books of this sort, by a common Idiom, are call'd *good Books* ; the Authors, for certain, are a sorry Race : for religious *Cruditys* are undoubtedly the worst of any." "...devotional Works, which carry the Rites, Ceremonys and Pomp of Worship... In effect, we see the Reverend Doctor's Treatises standing, as it were, in the Front of this Order of Authors, and as the foremost of those *Good-Books* us'd by the politest and most refin'd *Devotees* of either Sex. They maintain the principal Place in the Study of almost every elegant and high *Divine*. They stand in Folio's and other Volumes, adorn'd with variety of Pictures, Gildings, and other Decorations, on the advanc'd Shelves or Glass-Cupboards of the *Ladys Closets*."
6. The seventeenth-century poet Boileau, who was much admired by the *philosophes*, exploits this pun in his Satire IX, in which he deplores the passing of literary fame : "combien d'écrivains," he asks, "pour quelques mois, ont vu fleurir leur livre,/Dont les vers en paquet se vendent à la livre ?" An author's nightmare : books that were once successful are now being sold as scrap paper, by the pound. Nicolas Boileau, "Satire IX," tome II of *Œuvres complètes* (Paris : Garnier Frères, 1872), 38.
7. "Livre," IX : 610.
8. *Ibid.*, IX : 601.
9. In the preface to *Les Mots et les choses*, Michel Foucault cites a passage from Jorge Luis Borges that describes a classification system for animals, supposedly from ancient China, that includes those "a) appartenant à l'Empereur, b) embaumés, c) apprivoisés, d) cochons de lait, e) sirènes... i) qui s'agitent comme des fous, j) innombrables... m) qui viennent de casser la cruche..." Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris : Gallimard, 1966), 7.
10. "Livre," IX : 604.
11. *Ibid.*, IX : 609.
12. The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, in its various eighteenth-century editions, defines "science" merely as "Connoissance qu'on a de quelque chose," with examples such as "La science du monde. La science de la Cour. La science du salut." The definition is closer to the Latin *scientia* (knowledge) than to our modern-day understanding of a discipline that includes biology, chemistry, physics, etc. *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (Paris : Brunet, 1762).
13. On Girolamo Cardano and his relationship to the history of the book, see chapter 7 of Ian Maclean, *Learning and the Market Place. Essays in the History of the Early Modern Book* (Leiden and Boston : Brill, 2009).
14. "Livre," IX : 609.
15. In works such as the *Lettre sur les sourds et les muets*, the *Salons*, the article "Beau" of the *Encyclopédie*, and *De L'interprétation de la nature*, Diderot makes a distinction between the way "savants" and "hommes de goût" interpret things differently from the "vulgaire" and the "lecteurs ordinaires." See Tsien, *Bad Taste*, p. 62-63.
16. "Livre," IX : 606.
17. Desormeaux cites D'Alembert, *Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire et de philosophie*, t. 2, Berlin, 1753, p. 3-4, in *La Figure du bibliomane*, p. 61.
18. 3 novembre 1760. Denis Diderot, *Lettres à Sophie Volland* (Paris : NRF, 1930), vol. 1 of 3, 306-07.
19. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, tome III des *Œuvres complètes* (NRF Gallimard, 1964), 25.

20. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, tome II des *Œuvres complètes* (NRF Gallimard, 1964) Lettre XII, p. 57.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, 57-58.
24. "Livre," IX : 604.
25. *Ibid.*, IX : 601.
26. *Ibid.* À Sophie Volland, 12 octobre 1761, tome III, p. 337.
27. *Ibid.* À Sophie Volland, 28 juillet 1762, tome IV, p. 76.
28. "Voici un événement qui ne les réjouira pas plus que votre ouvrage. J'avois fait proposer par Grimm à l'impératrice de Russie d'acheter ma bibliothèque. Sçavez-vous ce qu'elle a fait ? Elle la prend, elle me la fait payer ce que j'en ai demandé, elle me la laisse, et elle y ajoute cent pistoles de pension ; et il faut voir avec quelle attention, quelle délicatesse, quelle grâce, tous ces bienfaits sont accordés ! Me voilà donc heureux, et complètement heureux." À d'Alembert, vers le 10 mai 1765. Denis Diderot, *Correspondance* (Paris : Minuit, 1755-66), tome V, 32.
29. *Inventaire du fonds Vandeul et inédits de Diderot*, éd. Herbert Dieckmann (Droz, 1951). Introduction, p. xii.
30. Jacques Proust, *Diderot et l'Encyclopédie* (Geneva and Paris : Slatkine, 1982 [1962]), 45.
31. One remaining volume of proofs that still contains the excised parts, crossed out by hand, can be found in the rare book collection of the University of Virginia.
32. Desormeaux, 64-65.
33. Proust, 81-82.
34. See Jacques Proust's introduction to the *Lettre* in Denis Diderot, *Œuvres complètes*, tome VIII (Paris : Hermann, 1976), 467-75.
35. Desormeaux, 54.
36. Diderot, *Lettre sur le commerce de la librairie*, 482.
37. *Ibid.* Tellingly, though, he does admit that these inferior works have some appeal, since they are "aujourd'hui précieusement recueillis ... par la curiosité bizarre de quelques personnages singuliers qui préfèrent un livre rare à un bon livre, un bibliomane comme moi, un érudit qui s'occupe de l'histoire de la typographie comme le professeur Schopfling."
38. *Ibid.*, 483.
39. *Ibid.*, 484.
40. Diderot, "Encyclopédie," *Encyclopédie*. Volume V, page 363.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. Daniel Desormeaux, however, may be too quick to attribute proto-Revolutionary intentions to the *philosophes* in their critique of book hoarders. In the minds of the *philosophes* who criticized bibliomania, he states, "[le bibliomane] apparaît comme une espèce de privilégié qui perpétue les inégalités sociales, qui détourne le livre de sa vocation manifestement pédagogique en en faisant un objet de luxe, qui bloque tout partage équitable des biens de l'esprit tant souhaité par les philosophes" (54-55). "Le livre, instrument de combat, doit servir avant tout à éclairer la multitude et à réformer les anciennes mentalités. À la veille de la Révolution, dans les écrits philosophiques, il est souvent questions de déprivatiser le savoir, de tenir les bibliothèques ouvertes à tout le monde sans faire aucune distinction" (58-59). In reality, evidence shows that Diderot and Voltaire took a far more elitist stance, not in terms of wealth but in terms of erudition. Even Desormeaux's note to the second quotation above proves Voltaire's insistence of the rights of the expert, not the populace : "L'article 'Bibliothèque' de Voltaire fait bien le point : "La bibliothèque publique du roi de France est la plus belle du monde entier, moins encore par le nombre et la rareté des volumes que par la facilité et la politesse avec laquelle les bibliothécaires les prêtent à tous les savants" (58-59, emphasis added).

44. Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, tome I of *Œuvres* (Stuttgart : Friedrich Fromann Verlag, 1968), 534.
45. "Adopté dans la même séance, et sans discussion." *Ibid.*, 535.
46. On November 2, 1789, the state claimed the property of religious institutions, especially libraries. On February 9, 1792, the state took control of the property of exiled nobles.
47. The debates over the burning of books during the Revolution are documented in Françoise Bléchet, "Le vandalisme à la Bibliothèque du Roi / Nationale sous la Révolution," in *Révolution française et Vandalisme révolutionnaire* (Paris : Universitas, 1992), 265-276.
48. Condorcet, *Rapport et projet de décret relatifs à l'organisation générale de l'instruction publique. Présentation à l'Assemblée législative*, 20 et 21 avril 1792. [<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/7ed.asp>] It is also worth noting that Condorcet's educational system creates an elite, based on merit, that alone has access to a classical education.
49. Anne Kupiec, in *Le Livre-sauveur. La Question du livre sous la Révolution française 1789-1799* (Paris : Kimé, 1998), studies the relation between the Enlightenment views of the book and revolutionary educational policies.
50. Diderot, "Encyclopédie," 637.
51. For a thorough, though somewhat celebratory, study of Condorcet's educational policies, see Catherine Kintzler, *Condorcet, instruction publique et la naissance du citoyen* (Paris, Folio-Essais, 1987).
52. Henri Grégoire, *Rapport sur la bibliographie, 22 Germinal, An II* (Paris, 1793-94), 11.
53. Grégoire, 12.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, 13. In Early Modern France, "Index" referred to the "*Index expurgatoire*, ou simplement *Index*, Un Catalogue de Livres défendus à Rome par les Inquisiteurs" (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*).
57. *Ibid.*, 12.
58. Up to the eighteenth century, people had thought of time in other ways than linear ; as cyclical, as a decline from a Golden Age, or as millenairan/eschatological, etc.
59. "At first the Bodleian Library set out to buy the first and best editions of the classical authors, the intention being to provide a working tool for the preparation of classical texts to be published by the University Press.... Yet one of the most expensive acquisitions was Duranti on the divine office, printed in 1459, a medieval text of no classical significance, bought in 1790 for £ 80 10s." Kristian Jensen, *Revolution and the Antiquarian Book: Reshaping the Past, 1780-1815* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.
60. Jensen, 73.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67, 72.
63. *Ibid.*, 75-76.
64. L[éopold] Derome, *Le Luxe des livres* (Paris : Rouveyre, 1879), 74. In this essay, Derome defends book collecting against the attacks of the previous century.
65. Jean Starobinski discussed Rousseau's dream of unmediated communication, or even better, no communication at all. See *Jean-Jacques Rousseau : la transparence et l'obstacle* (Paris, Gallimard, 1971), 176-184. Sophia Rosenfeld further examines the ideal of perfect communication in *A Revolution in Language : The Problem of Signs in Late 18th-Century France* (Stanford University Press, 2001).
66. In his *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, Rousseau anticipates much of what Marshall McLuhan writes in his *Gutenberg Galaxy*, particularly in the shifts in thinking that came about when printing was invented.

67. These cheap Early Modern editions have been extensively studied by Lise Andries, Geneviève Bollème, and Henri-Jean Martin.