

# Figurations animalières à travers les textes et l'image en Europe

*Du Moyen Âge à nos jours  
Essais en hommage à Paul J. Smith*

*Edité par*

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# Table des matières

Remerciements ix

Liste d'illustrations xi

Données personnelles sur les auteurs xvi

## Introduction

De la cigale et la fourmi au lion et au-delà 1

*Alisa van de Haar et Annelies Schulte Nordholt*

## PARTIE 1

### *Identifications, déterminations*

- 1 Rabelais et ses sacrés oiseaux 15  
*Mireille Huchon*
- 2 La caractérisation des animaux venimeux chez Grévin traducteur de Nicandre 25  
*Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou*
- 3 Sur un animal exotique du bestiaire bartasien 38  
*Denis Bjaï*
- 4 Narrative Jewellery. Mythological Creatures in Two Sixteenth-Century Jewels from the Low Countries 50  
*Margot Leerink and Nicole Spaans*
- 5 Depicting Fish in Early-Modern Venice and Antwerp 63  
*Florike Egmond and Marlise Rijks*
- 6 The Ornithologist Francis Willughby's Visit to the 'Bird Paradise' of Zevenhuizen in June 1663 78  
*Tim R. Birkhead and Herman Berkhoudt*
- 7 The Fish That Could Climb Palm Trees. Observation, Rumour and Colonial Hearsay in Nineteenth-Century Ichthyology 89  
*Johannes Müller*

8 Birds in the Life and Work of Johan Huizinga (1872–1945) 101  
*Anton van der Lem*

**PARTIE 2**  
***Origines et influences***

9 Fable and Parable. The Prehistory and Reception of an Aesopic Motif in Flavius Josephus 117  
*Gert-Jan van Dijk*

10 The Enigmatic Death of Cuwaert. A Comparison between the *Roman de Renart* and the Dutch *Van den vos Reynaerde* 128  
*Jan de Putter*

11 On Horses – Two Medieval Authors, Their Manuscripts, Early Printed Books and Illustrations. An Evaluation 146  
*Boudewijn Commandeur*

12 Hirondelles de Rabelais 164  
*Romain Menini*

13 Rabelais scénariste des mondes imaginaires de Pline l'Ancien. *Pantagruel, Gargantua, le Tiers livre* et l'exemplaire BSB de l'*Histoire naturelle* (Bâle, Froben, 1525) 179  
*Claude La Charité*

14 Marcus Gheeraerts, Source of Inspiration for Tapestry-Designers. Sixteenth-Century Fable-Illustrations Used in Seventeenth-Century Tapestries 193  
*Dirk Geirnaert*

15 The *Unicornus Marinum* of Dr Nicolaes Tulp. A Scottish Sea-Unicorn Adrift 210  
*M.M. Zijlstra-Mondt*

16 Ascendances et sources du « Chat et un vieux Rat » (Jean de La Fontaine, *Fables*, III, 18) 221  
*Antoine Biscéré et Patrick Dandrey*

17 La Fontaine entre Ésope et Homère. À propos des *Deux Coqs* 239  
*Paul Pelckmans*

18 The Shark in the Library. Books and Non-book Artifacts in Private Library Auction Catalogues, 1665–1830 249  
*Alicia C. Montoya*

19 Medieval Animals in Middle-earth. J.R.R. Tolkien and the Old English and Middle English *Physiologus* 266  
*Thijs Porck*

**PARTIE 3**  
***Symbolisations animalières***

20 Le Veau d'or dans les adaptations bibliques en ancien français. Un animal à nature double 283  
*Julia C. Szirmai*

21 Allegorising Heraldic Animals in Two Laments by the Fourteenth-Century Dutch Poet Jan Knibbe 298  
*Wim van Anrooij*

22 Alciato the Animal Observer. On the Description of Animal Behaviour in the *Emblematum Liber* 311  
*Karl A.E. Enenkel*

23 Diptyque avec animaux. Un jeu éducatif de Barthélemy Aneau et sa suite (1542) 327  
*Kees Meerhoff*

24 Théodore de Bèze et le monde animal. Poésie et parodie 341  
*Jeltine L.R. Ledegang-Keegstra*

25 Montaigne et la sociabilité des bêtes 355  
*Philippe Desan*

26 Figurations animalières dans les *Œuvres poetiques* (1606) de Jean Passerat 364  
*François Rouget*

27 Horses of Power and Passion. Horses and Their Riders in  
Seventeenth-Century Dutch Adaptations of the Spanish *Comedia* 374  
*Olga van Marion and Tim Vergeer*

28 But What Does He Do All Day? Being an Animal in *Paradise Lost* 389  
*Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen*

29 De vol en vol – Raymond Roussel et les oiseaux 399  
*Sjef Houppermans*

30 Mythographie animalière dans *Le Roi des aulnes*  
de Michel Tournier 410  
*Nicolaas van der Toorn*

31 Slow Reading on the Wing. Entangling Enactive Literary Criticism, the  
*Energia* of Early Modern Imagining, and Artistic Research 422  
*Sophie van Romburgh*

Index des noms propres 435

## The Shark in the Library

*Books and Non-book Artifacts in Private Library Auction Catalogues,  
1665–1830*

*Alicia C. Montoya*

Drawing on the European Research Council-funded, bibliometric MEDIATE database, this essay provides a first overview of the non-book artifacts listed in printed catalogues of private libraries sold at auction in the Dutch Republic, France, and British Isles between 1665 and 1830. I argue that these artifacts functioned as tools in broader processes of self-fashioning, helping create specific images of individual readers, their societal networks, and class and professional allegiances: in short, the interpretive communities that emerged around certain kinds of knowledge. Focusing specifically on Dutch natural history cabinets, I show that these non-book items and auction catalogues could be many things at once, depending on the viewpoint of the beholder: from display of erudition to professorial life insurance plan, voyeuristic peek into the lives of the rich and famous, or old-fashioned cabinets of curiosities.

Cet article propose une première vue d'ensemble des objets autres que des livres recensés dans quelques centaines de catalogues de bibliothèques privées vendues aux enchères entre 1665 et 1830 dans les Provinces-Unies, en France et dans le Royaume-Uni, et réunis dans la base de données bibliométrique MEDIATE, financée par le Conseil Européen de la Recherche. Nous considérons ces objets comme autant d'outils dans la création d'une image de soi, des images de certains lectorats, de leurs réseaux sociaux et des groupes professionnels dont ils faisaient partie: bref, des 'communautés interprétatives' qui se sont constituées autour de certains types de savoir. Par le biais d'une micro-étude des cabinets néerlandais d'histoire naturelle, nous montrons que ces artefacts et ces catalogues pouvaient revêtir plusieurs rôles à la fois, en fonction de la perspective adoptée: exhibition publique de l'érudition du collectionneur, régime d'assurance-vie, coup d'œil voyeur révélant la vie intime des grands, et peut-être surtout, cabinet de curiosités.

On the afternoon of October 25, 1713, a small crowd gathered in the bookshop of Samuel Luchtmans, next to the university buildings along Leiden's stately Rapenburg canal, for the third, final day of the auction of the library of the

recently deceased anatomy professor-playwright Govard Bidloo (Fig. 18.1). Having accumulated multiple debts during his tumultuous career, Bidloo had left his widow Hendrickje Dirksz. with little choice but to sell his library, the tried and true method by which surviving family members of professors in the early-modern Dutch Republic cashed in on what amounted to a life insurance policy.<sup>1</sup> The first days of the sale had raked in a tidy profit, almost three thousand guilders, so it was likely with relief at having recouped some of his losses that the bookseller Luchtmans (one of Bidloo's creditors) now turned to the last part of the library, set aside for this final day of the sale.<sup>2</sup> This was Bidloo's sizeable collection of anatomical and natural history preparations, grandiloquently described in the catalogue as a 'Collectio praeparatum anatomicorum, method et industria autoris elaboratum, instrumentorum chirurgicorum, physio mechanicorum, in quibus antlia magna, multorumque rariorum exoticon ad historiam naturalem pertinentium'.<sup>3</sup>

On display were a motley array of medical and surgical instruments, as well as 131 anatomical preparations, or human organs preserved by injecting wax into them. These had presumably served as the basis for Gerard de Lairesse's illustrations for Bidloo's epoch-setting, 1685 *Anatomia Humani Corporis*, the first anatomical atlas since Andreas Vesalius' sixteenth-century opus. Just as noteworthy, and similarly typical of physicians' collections, were the natural history artifacts that were up for sale: 149 so-called wet animal specimens, i.e. animals or parts thereof preserved with an alcohol solution in glass jars, as well as an unspecified number of additional jars, boxes and drawers containing specimens labelled 'Several exotic animals, preserved in glass bottles and liquid' ('Verscheyde Uitheemsche Dieren, in Glaase Flessen en Vogt bewaart'). The wet specimens sold for 276 guilders and 14 stuivers, which was better than the meagre 177 guilders the dry anatomical preparations had fetched. The beginning of this natural history section of the auction catalogue reads like a Noah's ark gone slightly awry:

<sup>1</sup> On libraries as professors' life insurance policy, see Pettegree, A. – Weduwen, A. der, *The Bookshop of the World: Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Margócsy, D., "A Museum of Wonders or a Cemetery of Corpses? The Commercial Exchange of Anatomical Collections in Early Modern Netherlands", in Dupré, S. – Lüthy, C. (eds.), *Silent Messengers: The Circulation of Material Objects of Knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Berlin: LIT, 2011) 185–215.

<sup>3</sup> *Bibliotheca et Museum Bidloianum, sive catalogus librorum [....]* (Leiden: Samuel Luchtmans, 1713) title page.



FIGURE 18.1 *Bibliotheca et Museum Bidlooianum, sive catalogus librorum [....]* (Leiden: Samuel Luchtmans, 1713) title page

Een Mieren eter of Indiaansche Duyvel.  
 Een seer groote Slang met zwarte en gele vlekken.  
 Een kleyne Brislslang.  
 Een Indiaansche Hay met witte banden.  
 Een Foetus van 7 maanden.<sup>4</sup>

Ranging from an ant-eater to exotic snakes, a white-striped shark, and a seven-month-old human foetus – supposedly included in this section because it was a wet preparation, rather than a dry one like the other anatomical preparations – these may seem odd objects to appear in a library catalogue. Their gruesomely sensationalistic visual appeal, despite the collection's ostensibly scientific trappings, is obvious. As a dramatist himself, whose other workplace was the anatomical theatre, Bidloo was likely attuned to the theatrical element in medical collections. The largely reptilian company is further joined by multiple snakes, lizards and iguanas, a few crocodiles, and the odd mammal such as Siamese twin cats joined at the head, and a young ape. The class of the Aves is represented by a handful of fighting cocks and strange birds ('Twee vreemde Vogeltjes'), with a few preserved flowers – a white hyacinth, and a couple exotic 'branches' ('Een uytheemsch Takje met de Vrugte') – thrown in for good measure. Other than two sharks, the only other member of the Gnathostomata or jawed vertebrates is a so-called 'sea mouse' ('een Seemuys, of het Koninkje der Haringen'), possibly a juvenile ray or shark.<sup>5</sup>

What, then, is a pickled shark doing in an eighteenth-century library? Rather than considering the shark in Bidloo's library as an anomaly or an interesting curiosity, due only to Bidloo's work as a doctor, I posit that such non-book artifacts reveal more about early-modern library auction catalogues and what they represented. Library auction catalogues functioned as tools in broader processes of self-fashioning, helping create specific images of individual readers, their societal networks, and class and professional groups: in short, the interpretive communities that emerged around certain kinds of knowledge. Concurrently, they helped shape attitudes towards books as material objects, or commodities that could be bought and sold within the new consumer culture that was emerging throughout Europe in the eighteenth century. Indeed,

<sup>4</sup> 'An Ant eater or Indian Devil. / A very large Snake with black and yellow spots. / A small cobra. / An Indian Shark with white stripes. / A Foetus of 7 months.' *Bibliotheca et Museum Bidlooianum*, 104.

<sup>5</sup> *Bibliotheca et Museum Bidlooianum*, 107, 105, 108. The botanist Frederik Ruysch described a 'Zee muys' as 'Een kleen Rogje, nog in zyn asgraauwe schel of tasjen (testa) zittende, welke schell' t'onregt Zee muys geheeten is'. *Alle de onleed- genes- en Heekundige Werken*, trans. Arleboult, Y.G. (Amsterdam: Janssoons van Waesberge, 1744) 1272.

particular kinds of books – such as Elsevier's miniature-format, effectively unreadable set of *Republics*, or sumptuously illustrated volumes such as the natural history works of Maria Sibylla Merian – were valued more for their material aspect or external beauty than for the text.<sup>6</sup> But private library auction catalogues do not tell us only about book collectors and books. They also tell us about libraries as valued collections of things that were kept within specific physical spaces, as Abigail Williams has underlined, serving specific sociable roles:

By the end of the eighteenth century, the library had become the main informal living room in many country houses. [...] [Libraries] contained more than books – prints, coins, busts, and other antiquarian or natural history items, often the focus of conversation, were also in this space – though as William Parkes cautioned in *Domestic Duties* (1829), it was important not just to assemble these objects, but also find out something about them, or otherwise they would be 'mere baubles'.<sup>7</sup>

The non-book items in a library auction catalogue, viewed in this perspective, provide important clues about how libraries, as physical living spaces, were used by their owners, their households, and how they might have functioned within broader professional networks.

## 1 Non-book Items

In order to better understand the circulation of books through auction during the long eighteenth century, the European Research Council-funded MEDIATE project (*Measuring Enlightenment: Disseminating Ideas, Authors, and Texts in Europe, 1665–1830*),<sup>8</sup> has been creating a database comprising metadata and searchable, full-text versions of several hundred printed catalogues of private libraries sold at auction during this period, in the Netherlands, France, the British Isles, and Italy. These catalogues contain information on books

<sup>6</sup> McKitterick, D., *The Invention of Rare Books: Private Interest and Public Memory, 1600–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Montoya, A.C. – Jagersma, R., "Marketing Maria Sibylla Merian, 1720–1800: Book Auctions, Gender, and Book Culture in the Dutch Republic", *Book History* 21 (2018) 56–88.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, A., *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017) 50–51.

<sup>8</sup> The database will be publicly available from January 2022: <[www.mEDIATE18.nl](http://www.mEDIATE18.nl)> (accessed June 1, 2020).

circulating in Europe in Latin, French, Dutch, English, Italian and 25 other languages, providing an extraordinarily rich primary source for research on the history of the book, libraries, as well as the history of ideas. One of the unexpected elements that emerged early on in the project, however, was the presence of large numbers of non-book items in several of these catalogues, sometimes but not always grouped under separate category headings. Indeed, some 20% of the 430 catalogues examined so far (June 1st, 2020) report one or more non-book items. This quantitative presence seemed a clear indication of the importance of these objects, so rather than excluding non-book items from the database, the MEDIATE team decided to include them. This decision was further justified by the fact that early-modern cataloguers themselves had presented these items as an integral part of the collections being auctioned.

Most catalogues that list non-book items list fewer than a dozen. The most frequently reported of these incidentally occurring items are globes, book cases, and other pieces of furniture. Prints and maps occur with even greater regularity, but are recorded in the database as books when published in book form, and as non-book items only when in loose form. There are however many grey areas, for example prints or maps originally sold as part of a series, but also sold in book form, as well as so-called 'graingerized' books (after the collector James Grainger), in which the buyer interleaved printed books with additional prints.<sup>9</sup> The auction catalogue of the Rotterdam physician Clemens Laurentius Hellegers, whose library was sold in Leiden in 1762, is typical of catalogues that only incidentally report non-book items. After enumerating the collection's 451 book items, the catalogue lists nine lots containing a disparate array of non-book items:

Twee Boekekasten  
 Een Extra Fraai en Compleet Simplicie kabinet.  
 Een Schelet Zinnelyk bewaart zynde in een Kast.  
 Eenige Insecte.  
 Een Sagryen Leere Doos met Anatomische Instrumenten zeer Zinnelyk.  
 Eenige Dito  
 Een Fraye Clauwier zynde een Staartstuk.  
 Een Fraay Electricieteyt met hun toe behooren.  
 Een Doos met Penninge zeer raar.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> On this practice, see Brewer, J., *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London – New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997) 367–370.

<sup>10</sup> 'Two book cases / An extra fine and complete apothecary's simplicia cabinet / A skeleton neatly kept in a closet / Some insects / A chagrin leather box with anatomical instruments, very proper / A number of ditto / A fine, grand harpsichord /A fine electricity set with all its trappings / A box with coins, very rare.' *Catalogus Praestantissimorum*

If the skeleton, neatly kept in its closet, is likely to make a modern reader chuckle, such objects do reflect what appears to be a characteristically Enlightened desire among readers – and perhaps especially their heirs – to publicly display their knowledge and culture not only through books, but also objects kept in a library, and the new possibilities offered by the commercialisation of the material accoutrements of scientific culture.

Besides library catalogues listing just a handful of non-book items, a smaller number record substantial numbers of non-book items, heuristically defined as 10% or more. By this measure, 34 catalogues, or 8% of the catalogues currently in the MEDIEATE database, qualify for inclusion in this category [Table 18.1].

TABLE 18.1 Catalogues with large numbers of non-book items (> 10%)

Collector name	Catalogue place of publication	Year of publication	Collector biography	Total number of items	Percentage of non-book items	Most frequent type
Govert Bidloo	Leiden	1713	dramatist, anatomist	2357	20%	natural history
Arnoldus van Ede	Leiden	1714	Remonstrant minister	1607	19%	natural history
Crombez	Lille	1723	Catholic priest	260	30%	prints, maps
Thomas Coke	London	1728	member of Parliament	1945	14%	paintings
Maria van Arkel	Amsterdam	1737	widow artist family	856	62%	household
John Kennedy et al.	London	1760	physician?	488	55%	paintings
Joshua Blew	London	1765	society librarian	239	49%	household
Richard Pococke	Dublin	1766	minister, travel writer	984	16%	maps, prints
Folkert Snip	Amsterdam	1771	medical professor	901	44%	natural history
Dirk Macaré	Middelburg	1775	aristocrat, bailiff	498	16%	medals, curios
Anna Margareta Willink	Amsterdam	1776	widow	478	10%	prints, science
Henry Woodward	London	1777	actor	489	75%	paintings

*Librorum, Inter Quos excellunt medici, philologici, historici, ac miscellanei, Als mede een Fraaye Verzameling van Nederduytsche Godeleerde, Historische, Dichtkundige en andere Boeken, Quos maximâ ex parte Collegerat Clemens Laurentius Hellegers, (dum viveret) in Urbe Roterodami Med. Doctor [...] (Leiden: Carolus Delfos, 1762) 17.*

TABLE 18.1 Catalogues with large numbers of non-book items (&gt; 10%) (cont.)

Collector name	Catalogue place of publication	Year of publication	Collector biography	Total number of items	Percentage of non-book items	Most frequent type
William Sheldon	Warwick	1781	land-holding aristocrat	2814	40%	household goods, wine
Andreas Schouten	Middelburg	1784	notary	662	17%	paintings
Johannes Ghysels et al.	Dordrecht	1785	Goes minister	1281	16%	nat. history, paintings
François-Joseph Théry Gricourt	Douai	1788	church official	1311	54%	prints
E. Eyre	London	1792		1036	90%	paintings
Abraham d'Arrest	Weesp	1792	mayor	854	14%	prints, science
Johanna Susanna van der Mandere	Middelburg	1795	widow	525	10%	curios
Thomas Sandby	London	1799	professor architecture	429	79%	prints
Samuel Ireland	London	1801	visual artist	1151	43%	prints, curios
John Opie	London	1807	portraitist	246	39%	household
Cornelis Cardinaal	Zaandam	1808	merchant, sawmiller	607	18%	science
Jacob Covyn ter Bruggen	The Hague	1811	physician	629	27%	natural history
Dr. Hulme	Liverpool	1817	physician?	796	65%	house, farm
Johannes Beeldsnyder	Amsterdam	1818	magistrate	1173	31%	natural history
Thomas Lloyd	London	1820		1744	96%	prints
Jan van Eyk	The Hague	1822	poet, Reformed pastor	1598	42%	natural history
John Pooley	Manchester	1827	cotton industrialist	413	46%	prints, wine
Jacob Brants	Amsterdam	1828		693	15%	prints
Jan Schimmel-penninck & Johanna Gölcher	Amsterdam	1829	aristocratic couple	909	12%	paintings
William Yates	Manchester	1829	[leaving Manchester]	795	54%	household
John Henderson	London	1830		1040	69%	coins, paintings
Matthew Gregson	Liverpool	1830	antiquarian author	991	10%	prints

The figures in Table 18.1 suggest a number of notable differences in collecting, auction and cataloguing culture between the geographic regions and periods covered by the MEDIADE database. First of all, non-book items appear with increasing frequency as the period advances. While only 5 library auction catalogues reporting sizeable numbers of non-book artifacts date from before 1750, 15 of them date from the second half of the century, reaching an absolute peak in the 1820s, with 6 catalogues.

Secondly, only two of the catalogues listing more than 10% non-book items are French. The rest are divided between British (16) and Dutch (16) catalogues – despite the even distribution across countries of the MEDIADE corpus. In France, the only two library auction catalogues reporting large numbers of non-book items hailed from the peripheral – and in many ways, non-French – cities of Douai and Lille, far from the commercial hub of Paris. At the other end, when catalogues list exceptionally large number of non-book items, defined as 50% or more of the total, these are disproportionately often British. Half of the 16 British catalogues describe collections consisting for over 50% of non-book items, while this holds for only one of the 16 Dutch collections. In the French corpus, similarly, only a single catalogue, that of the Douai church official François-Joseph Théry Gricourt, manages to cross the 50% threshold.

Finally, while these national differences may be attributed in part to the preservation bias or selection criteria used in drawing up the original corpus of catalogues for the MEDIADE database, it does appear that in the Dutch Republic, women are overrepresented among collectors of non-book items. Although women accounted for less than 1% of all owners of collections sold at auction, four of the 16 Dutch collections, or fully one quarter, were female-owned, or partly female-owned. This would seem to support Abigail Williams' findings about physical library rooms in private homes as spaces of sociability, in which hostesses could receive guests surrounded by an array of objects conducive to conversation.

## 2 Mixed Library Auction Catalogues: British versus Dutch Models

Adopting a typological approach now to the non-book items in these catalogues, further patterns emerge. The most salient, perhaps, is the existence of two types of 'mixed library catalogue', that could be described roughly as the British and the Dutch models. The British model appears to have been a by-product of British auctioning practices more generally, in which exceptionally well-attended, theatrically staged auctions of household goods allowed members of the general public to take a peek into the lives of the high and mighty.

The voyeuristic aspect of the auction culture that developed is reflected in catalogue title-pages, Cynthia Wall has argued, bearing remarkable resemblances to the title pages of contemporary novels, complete with potted biographies of the protagonists, i.e. the deceased – or bankrupted, or imprisoned, or otherwise fallen on hard luck – collector.<sup>11</sup> Hence a typical British auction catalogue from our corpus, that of the books and household goods of a recently bankrupted member of the Warwickshire landed gentry, William Sheldon, does indeed mention a library – ‘The Capital Library of well-Chosen Books’ – but the five words in which it is swiftly dispatched contrast sharply with the 289 words of chatty detail of the full title, that begins:

A Catalogue Of all the Elegant and Rich Household Furniture, The Capital Library of well-chosen Books, Linen, China, Pictures, Prints and Drawings, about 400 Dozen of the choicest Wines, Consisting of fine Old Port, Claret, Burgundy, Champagne, Madeira, &c. in the highest State of Perfection, Curious Exotics, 25 fine Orange Trees, and other valuable Effects, of the late William Sheldon, Esq; dec. At his Seat, called Weston, near Long Compton, in the County of Warwick. The Furniture consists of Crimson and Yellow Silk Damask, Silk Lorine, beautiful Chintz-Pattern Cotton, Morine, and other Furniture in Suits of Beds, Window Curtains, Chairs and Sophas; large Pier and other Glasses; Axminster, Turkey and Wilton Carpets; fine Tapestry Hangings; great Variety of exceeding good Mahogany Articles in Wardrobes, Chests of Drawers, Tables, Chairs, &c. fine Old Japan Cabinets; large Brewing Coppers; exceeding good Kitchen Furniture, &c. &c. &c. Which will be Sold by Auction, By Mess. Christie and Ansell, On the Premises, On Monday, August 27, 1781, And 13 following Days [...].

Referencing a commodity occasionally on sale at British auctions, and exploiting the full commercial potential of this sale, the auctioneers helpfully added that ‘the Wines [may] be tasted on the 6th of September, on which Day they will be sold.’

The Dutch model of mixed library auction catalogues, by contrast, is an altogether more sober affair. Not only were the catalogues themselves more serious texts, that continued to be published in Latin well into the eighteenth century, possibly betraying the continuing dominance of the auction market by academic booksellers like the Luchtmans family. Their content was also

<sup>11</sup> Wall, C., “The English Auction: Narratives of Dismantlings”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31.1 (1997) 1–25.

different. While in British catalogues, the non-book items under the hammer are most often prints or household goods,<sup>12</sup> in Dutch catalogues non-book items are more often related to the owners' academic or scientific interests, and typically include medical instruments or anatomical and natural history specimens. Indeed, as table 1 shows, natural history collections – at least those large enough to make up over 10% of the catalogue – appear to be a Dutch specialty. In the Dutch Republic the learned, even professorial genealogy of the auction catalogue is evident in the fact that academics continued to be over-represented among the collectors whose libraries were sold at auction.

Dutch natural history collections were foregrounded and described explicitly on catalogue title pages, for example referencing the 'Exotica Animalia in Liquore Balsamico conservata, Insecta Rarissima, Conchas, Conchylia, Vestes, Arma Indica, aliaque continentis' collected by the Leiden Remonstrant minister Arnoldus van Ede, and auctioned in 1714, or the 'Cabinet precieux de Coquillages, Mineraux, Insectes, Preparation Anatomiques, Instrumens de Physique, divers Curiosités et Estampes magnifiquement encadrés &c. &c.' of the Hague-based physician Jacob Covyn ter Bruggen, auctioned in 1811. While 12 Dutch catalogues reported natural history specimens, only four British catalogues did so. Invariably, these were distinctly unimpressive collections, described, for example, as 'a collection of minerals from Barrow River, Winter Island, &c' (Henderson, London 1830) or 'a collection of shells and pebbles' (Yates, Manchester 1829).<sup>13</sup>

The largest natural history collections in the MEDIADE corpus are all Dutch-owned. The three largest are that of the medical professor Folkert Snip,

<sup>12</sup> Linked to the growth in eighteenth-century Britain of a new consumer culture around the production, buying and selling of prints. Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination* 360–371.

<sup>13</sup> *Catalogus Exquisitissimorum omni in Lingua Librorum Theologicorum [...] Quae omnia multo Sumpu ac Labore congesit Reverendissimus Vir D. Arnoldus van Ede, Dum vivere Ecclesiae Remonstrantium Lugduno-Batavae Verbi Divini Minister [...] (Leiden: Johannes van der Linden, junior, 1714)*, title page. *Catalogue d'une Magnifique Collection de Livres En divers genres de littérature et langues [...] Tout delaissés par seu Messieurs et Mr. N. G. Hartman, Conseiller en la cour de Justice du cidevant Departement de Hollande. J. Covyn ter Bruggen, Docteur en Medicine et Membre de divers Societes Litteraires. Et W. De Koning, Ministre du Culte Reformée a la Haye. Et par des Autres Amateurs [...] (The Hague: B. Scheurleer and B. Scheurleer le Jeune, 1811)* title page. *Catalogue of the Library, Prints, Drawings, Pictures, Gems, Bromes, Antiquities Coins and Medals, Of the Late John Henderson, Edq. of Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square [...] (London, Sotheby and Son: 1830)* 27. *Catalogue of the Household Furniture Antique Oak Furniture, Carvings, Ebony Chairs, Persian Cabinet, Antiquities, and Curiosities; Collection of Valuable Pictures and Portraits; Extensive Library of Books, In every department of Literature, &c. The genuine Property of Mr. WILLIAM YATES, (who is leaving Manchester) [...] (Manchester: R. Winstanley, printed by J. Clarke, 1829)* 12.

sold in 1771, that of the Amsterdam magistrate Johannes Beeldsnyder, auctioned in 1818, and the collection amassed by Loosduinen poet-pastor Johannes van Eyk, whose library was auctioned in 1822. Significantly, the two professional groups most likely to own large collections of natural history specimens in the Dutch Republic were clergymen (3 collections) and physicians (3 collections). The prevalence of clergymen appears to be a corollary of the theological origins of Dutch interest in the natural world, that viewed the scientific study of nature as a means to better admire the wonders of divine Creation, with the Book of Nature serving as a second, accessible book to complement the first Book, that of divine revelation.<sup>14</sup>

### 3 The Library as *Wunderkammer*

Yet despite the differences, what all these library auction catalogues have in common is the astounding variety of non-book artifacts recorded. Starting out with the simple, catch-all category 'non-book item', the MEDIATE team quickly discovered that that label was grossly insufficient to cover the range of objects progressively encountered in the auction catalogues. Adding new categories as the data-cleaning work moved along, the list of non-book items grew steadily, so that as current work stands – in June 2020 – it has reached 32 distinct categories, in descending order of frequency:

- Prints and etchings
- Paintings and drawings
- Furniture (excluding bookcases and textiles)
- Natural history specimens
- Other
- Coins, medals, seals
- Anatomical specimens
- Maps (loose)
- Scientific instruments
- Sculptures, figurines, plaster casts, wood carvings
- Food and drink
- Crockery, glasses, cutlery
- Pots, pans, cooking equipment
- Medical instruments, pharmacists' equipment

<sup>14</sup> Jorink, E., *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575–1715*, trans. Mason, P. (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

Linen, blankets, carpeting, tablecloths, drapes  
Pens, pencils, brushes, ink, paint, paper, blank books, portfolios  
Weapons and hunting gear  
Religious objects  
Gardening, farming and fishing tools  
Lenses, reading glasses, binoculars, camera obscura  
Musical instruments and music stands  
Bookcases and library equipment  
Globes, astrolabes, cartographic instruments  
Clothing  
Jewelry and watches  
Exotica and ethnographic collectibles  
Horses, horse care, riding equipment  
Printing material  
Toys and games  
Scales, weights, rulers, measuring equipment  
Antiquities  
Pipes, snuff boxes, smoking paraphernalia

Like a Borges plot set adrift, this ever-expanding list inspires several concluding reflections. The first concerns the changing nature of these non-book artifacts. Non-book items do not decrease in number as the eighteenth century progresses, but increase. There is, in particular, a dramatic increase in numbers of prints recorded in libraries. This surely reflects accelerating processes of commodification, and the growth of a modern consumer society, as studied especially for British contexts.<sup>15</sup> However, the ostensibly scientific nature of many of these objects, and their object-nature itself, may also reflect a more fundamental shift from text-based apprehensions of the world to visual, objective modes of perception, as part of the so-called scientific worldview that gained traction from the late seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> The increase in the numbers of prints in library collections is surely not an unrelated phenomenon. Tellingly, in the final decades of the eighteenth century, catalogues begin to appear that record multiple print illustrations of well-known works, such as Cervantes' *Don Quixote* or popular contemporary novels, in the absence of the original texts themselves, as if visual representation, and visual rhetoric, had effectively supplanted text.

<sup>15</sup> Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*.

<sup>16</sup> Daston, L. – Galison, P., *Objectivity* (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 2007).

Secondly, the appearance of new categories such as exotica and ethnographic collectibles reflects popularisations of knowledge, and collecting as a way to virtually travel and explore new worlds. As Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire has argued, this is a fundamental part of the Enlightenment project. The explosion of prints depicting far-away lands and customs, and the botanical specimens and ethnographic collectibles to accompany them, is part and parcel of the circulation of knowledge that marks this period, 'the world experienced as a collection'.<sup>17</sup> From the early botanical voyages of exploration to the later, imperialistic-minded ventures of the early nineteenth century, private libraries and their printed catalogues played a fundamental role as a site to visually display and re-organise the world anew.

The final set of reflections may seem at odds with the first. For there are also unexpected reminiscences in the list of types of non-book items of the earlier, *Wunderkammer* appeal of collections, especially perhaps of natural history collections. Although the corpus is too small to warrant generalisations, some catalogues even suggest a subtle resurgence, toward the end of the eighteenth century, of older ideals of the library as 'mere' cabinet of curiosities. To give one example, belief in unicorns had been generally discredited since the publication of Thomas Bartholinus' influential *De unicornu observationes novae* in 1645.<sup>18</sup> This *sensus communis* is reflected in the 1785 catalogue of the Goes minister Johannes Ghysels, that records a 'horn of the unicorn fish, commonly called narwhal' ('Hoorn van den Eenhoorn Visch, genaamd Narwan'), sensibly referencing the presumed unicorn horn's real provenance in the natural world.<sup>19</sup> Yet thirty years later, in the nineteenth century, readers would have encountered, in the 1805 auction catalogue of the sawmiller-merchant Cornelis Cardinaal, a lot listing an 'extra-large, fine unicorn [horn]' ('Extra groote Fraaie Eenhoorn').<sup>20</sup> How would potential buyers perusing the auc-

<sup>17</sup> Beaurepaire, P.-Y., *Les Lumières et le monde: Voyager, explorer, collectionner* (Paris: Belin, 2019) 16. See especially chapter 4, "Le monde est une collection".

<sup>18</sup> Roling, B., "Der Wal als Schauobjekt: Thomas Bartholin (1616–1680), die dänische Nation und das Ende der Einhörner", in Enenkel, K.A.E. – Smith, P.J. (eds.), *Zoology in Early Modern Culture: Intersections of Science, Theology, Philology and Political and Religious Education* (Leiden: Brill, 2014) 172–196.

<sup>19</sup> *Twee Verzamelingen Van zeer Fraaie en Welgeconditioneerde meest Nederduitsche, Godgeleerde, Historische, Natuurkundige, Poetische en andere Boeken, Waar onder veele van de beste en Nieuwste Werken Uitmuntun; De Eerste, Waar by ook enige Latynsche, Nagelaaten door den Eerwaardigen Heer Johannes Ghysels, In zijn Wel-Eerw: leeuen S. S. M. Canditatus onder de Classis van Goes; De Andere, Nagelaaten door een Voornaam Liefhebber [...] (Dordrecht: Pieter van Braam, 1785) 45.*

<sup>20</sup> *Catalogus Van Eene Fraaie Verzaameling van Welgeconditioneerde Nederduitsche Boeken; Benevens Eene Fraaie Collectie Van Wis- En Natuurkundige Werktuigen; Mitsgaders*

tion catalogue have read this? Was this a slip of the cataloguers' pen? Or did this unicorn, possibly, betray a lingering memory of the sensationalist appeal of earlier natural history libraries, with their misshapen foetuses and pickled sharks? Perhaps the most appropriate conclusion is that the non-book items in early-modern libraries show how libraries and their auction catalogues could be many things at once, depending on the viewpoint of the beholder: professorial life insurance plan, voyeuristic peek into the lives of the rich and famous, site of sociability, cabinet of curiosities, display of erudition – and conceivably even, on a rainy day, a source of books to be read.

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