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Marketing Maria Sibylla Merian, 1720 – 1800:

Book Auctions, Gender, and Reading Culture in the Dutch Republic

Alicia C. Montoya and Rindert Jagersma

On May 29, 1798, almost two years after the death of Clara Magdalena Dupeyrou, the widow of a prominent Amsterdam magistrate, a catalogue was drawn up of her library in preparation for selling the books at auction. To her library was added that of another recently deceased magistrate's widow, Cornelia Jacoba van Schuylenburch. This is one of only a handful of extant printed auction catalogues recording the contents of a library that had belonged, at least in part, to an eighteenth-century woman,¹ and is hence of particular interest for studying women's access to books. In this article, we address some of the questions suggested by this catalogue and others like it by tracing the reception and circulation of the works of a single author-illustrator, the prominent natural scientist Maria Sibylla Merian (1647 – 1717). We argue that auction catalogues are an underused source which can be used effectively to study the public personas of collectors, as well as the complexities of book ownership, authorial reputation, the literary market, and reading practices. Moving beyond methodology, and addressing issues more specifically of gender and reading culture, our case study ultimately seeks to nuance inherited generalizations concerning women's book collecting practices and the reception of female authors by bringing new source material to the table, and exploring new ways to use it.

The printed catalogue of the 1789 auction of Dupeyrou's and Schuylenburch's books recorded the contents of the two libraries separately, with the title page advertising several of

the more attractive volumes to be auctioned. These included legal works such as a six-volume folio *Corpus Juris* and the “*Corps diplomatique* by Dumont, Rousset, Barbeyrac, le Clerc &c. 33 parts bound in calf”² – which one may suppose had belonged to the magistrate husbands rather than their wives – as well as a complete set of the *Encyclopédie*, a quarto edition of Voltaire’s *Oeuvres* in 24 volumes, and works by Rousseau, Fielding, and Hume. Most of these books figured in the larger collection, that of Clara Magdalena Dupeyrou. Dupeyrou’s library catalogue listed 1477 book lots,³ while Schuylenburch’s smaller library comprised 808 numbered lots. (Numbers of lots corresponded to a slightly higher number of books since lots sometimes contained multiple items; errors in the catalogue numbering and incomplete sets further confuse the exact tally.)

One of the books in Dupeyrou’s library was an unspecified edition of the entomologist Maria Sibylla Merian’s sumptuously illustrated folio *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* (Metamorphosis of the Surinamese Insects), originally published in Amsterdam in 1705, to which was joined her book on European caterpillars, originally published in 1679 (Nuremberg, Johann Andreas Graff: part 1) and 1683 (Frankfurt, David Funken: part 2) as *Der Raupen wunderbare Verwandlung und sonderbare Blumen-nahrung* (The wondrous transformation of caterpillars and their remarkable diet of flowers). Merian’s works of natural history have attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years, with historians such as Natalie Zemon Davis and Ella Reitsma examining both the artistry and scientific originality of her works, as well as the complex ways in which they may have been affected by her position as a “woman on the margin”.⁴ Given the importance of feminist approaches in recent scholarship on Merian, it appears significant to note her books’ presence here, in a female-owned library, a little over a century after their first publication.

The description in the catalogue read: “M.S. Merian European and Surinamese Insects, colored after life, large paper, in a r.b. [raised band], a rare copy”.⁵ The catalogue entry was

characteristically sparse on bibliographic details, but this might well have been a composite volume bringing together the two separate titles – unless it was a copy of the bilingual Latin-French edition of the two works, published together in Paris by L. C. Desnos in 1771 in three volumes, under the title *Histoire générale des insectes de Surinam et de toute l'Europe* (General history of the insects of Surinam and all Europe). Given the substantial sum this luxurious volume might have been expected to fetch at auction, it is no surprise that it featured prominently in the catalogue, with explicit mention made of the Merian volume on the catalogue's title page.⁶

Besides Merian's books, the auction catalogue also listed a few other volumes by women – not mentioned on the title page – including the *Letters* of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, which Dupeyrou read in French (“Lettres de Milady Montague, 1763. 2 tom.”),⁷ and two bestselling religious works by Dutch poet Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken, *Het nut der tegenspoeden* (The use of adversity; 1762) and her epic *David* (1767). The other books by women recorded in Dupeyrou's catalogue were popular novels of the day: Swiss author Isabelle de Montolieu's *Caroline de Lichtfeld* (1786), the Dutch bestseller *Historie van mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart* by Agatha Deken en Elisabeth Wolff-Bekker (1782), and Dutch-language translations of Frances Brooke's *History of Lady Julia Mandeville* (1763), Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), and Frances Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), the last two sold together as a single lot.

Dupeyrou's library holdings might seem at first sight to confirm the common assumption that women collectors during the early modern period and eighteenth century showed some partiality toward works by members of their own sex, and tended to collect books by women authors. (We make no conceptual distinction between book “collectors” and “owners”, and use the terms interchangeably throughout this article.) In a study of the library catalogue of Christine Charlotte von Ostfriesland, Sabine Heissler distinguished three distinct

types of female libraries: small collections devoted primarily to devotional and domestic, practical literature; learned women's libraries; and libraries displaying a marked leaning toward female-authored works, particularly novels. Similar findings have been elaborated in more recent studies of Anglo-German women's book ownership,⁸ and have been replicated for other geographical regions.⁹ The evidence these studies have presented on real women's book ownership has been flanked, moreover, by publications focusing on representations of the woman reader, particularly the contemporary critical trope that held that women were the most avid readers of novels – themselves perceived at the time as a genre gendered by the dominance of women authors.¹⁰ As one of these studies states outright, in describing the eighteenth-century context, “women were the primary consumers of novels”.¹¹ Such evidence lends support to the idea that early modern and eighteenth-century women increasingly participated in specifically female networks, both as readers and writers. Gerda Lerner summed these arguments up in an influential chapter on “Female Clusters, Female Networks, Social Spaces”: “in the modern world, clusters of learned women . . . appear in the form of supportive networks of female friends, which I will call ‘affinitive clusters’. In the 17th and 18th centuries, female readership constitutes such affinitive clusters.”¹²

Yet despite some consensus on the existence of such female networks, a quantitative approach to Dupeyrou's library complicates overly tidy conclusions. Statistically speaking, after all, the nine titles or seven lots of books by women authors listed in her 1798 auction catalogue do not amount to very much in a catalogue that listed 1477 book lots: only 0.47% of the total. These percentages are corroborated by a study of women's libraries from 1545 – 1700, where Marie-Louise Coolahan and Mark Empey reported similar low figures. Of the thirty-seven women's collections they analyzed, only seven included books authored by women, and even there the proportions were low: between 1.25% and 7.69% of the total (the latter in a collection of only thirty-nine books).¹³ While it may well be possible that these

figures rose with the increased availability of works by women toward the end of the seventeenth century, reaching unprecedented levels during the eighteenth century, the data lending support to this claim remains fragmentary – despite suggestive case studies by scholars like Heissler, Alessa Johns, or Máire Kennedy.¹⁴ We posit, then, that statements about women’s preference for works by other women, as well as ideas regarding the gendered reception of works authored by women, need to be weighed carefully, since they sometimes seem to fit rather too easily into modern-day gender categories. As Coolahan and Empey remind us in another article on early modern ownership of books by women, “our approaches to the writing of women’s literary history must be vigilant in forging modern ideas about gender while listening to the ways in which it may *not* have coloured early modern reception” (our emphasis).¹⁵

Female-Authored Works and Eighteenth-Century Private Libraries

Building on the statistical evidence that is beginning to emerge about both women’s book ownership and the circulation of female-authored works before 1800, this article proposes new data and methods to address these questions. We focus for several reasons on Maria Sibylla Merian, the female writer most prominent in Dupeyrou’s library auction catalogue, and the circulation of her works in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. Merian offers an especially suitable case to study patterns of circulation because hers were costly, luxurious volumes that were more likely to be reported in library inventories than less prestigious works by women such as novels. At the same time, Merian’s authorship of her works was never contested, so that issues of attribution that sometimes cloud the study of the reception of women authors need not enter into our considerations. Finally, the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic provides an ideal setting to study patterns of book ownership, both because of the

availability of exceptionally complete corpora to document book ownership (on which we say more below) and because it remained, in terms both of production and distribution, a vital crossroads of the European book trade during this period: as it was aptly described by Voltaire in 1722, “the warehouse of the universe.”¹⁶

If the available data on the reception of female-authored works and book ownership suggests that a more quantitative approach may enhance our understanding of the relationship between women and books before 1800, the advent of sophisticated text digitization and digital database technologies has now made such questioning possible. Two recent bibliometric projects, both funded by the European Research Council, are using digital methods to address the questions of women’s ownership of books as individual collectors, and the ownership (by both male and female collectors) of works authored by women.¹⁷ The RECIRC project (The Reception and Circulation of Early Modern Women’s Writing, 1550 – 1700), based at the National University of Ireland in Galway, and running from 2014 to 2019, seeks to map the impact made by English-language women writers and their works in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The MEDIATE project (Middlebrow Enlightenment: Disseminating Ideas, Authors, and Texts in Europe, 1665 – 1820), based at Radboud University in the Netherlands, planned to run from 2016 to 2021, focuses on individual book ownership, both male and female, in the British Isles, France, and the Dutch Republic. By its periodization, MEDIATE follows up on the groundwork laid by RECIRC, so that together, the two databases will allow researchers to chronologically trace the development of women’s relation to books, both as readers and writers.

Both the RECIRC and MEDIATE projects draw a substantial part of their data from a unique, hitherto underused source: printed private library inventories and auction catalogues. The printed library auction catalogue was a Dutch invention, dating at least to 1599, that allowed booksellers to circulate information about the collections they were auctioning before

the sale took place.¹⁸ In many cases, printed auction catalogues described the holdings of private libraries belonging to individuals named on the title page of the catalogue. Following the Dutch example, the practice of printing auction catalogues spread throughout Europe, providing historians today with a valuable resource to trace the history both of print and of reading culture – even if the use of private library auction catalogues as a source is not without its own specific complexities. Booksellers sometimes filled out auction catalogues of private libraries with their own holdings, amalgamated multiple collections in a single catalogue, or even created fictitious collections to provide a sales outlet for their own unwanted stock. Before drawing up auction catalogues, heirs could also remove books they wanted to keep themselves, while others might be sold among booksellers. Books that had been literally read to pieces, or that represented little monetary value, may have been left out of the catalogues altogether. While the presence of a title in a printed catalogue cannot therefore be taken as incontrovertible evidence that that particular book had also been owned by the named owner of the library, reported book ownership in itself is a significant marker allowing historians to trace the impact and circulation of specific titles. The presence of a given title in a private auction catalogue may provide indications about the intellectual aspirations of the collector and his or her public persona, the association of specific social groups with specific kinds of reading material, the relative prestige and value assigned to particular books as a form of cultural capital, and booksellers' evaluation of books' monetary value.

In practical terms, auction catalogues of private collections are an attractive resource for researching print and reading culture for three reasons. First, there are large numbers of them: although comprehensive inventories are lacking for most regions in which printed auction catalogues were published before 1800,¹⁹ their numbers certainly run to the thousands if not tens of thousands for the long eighteenth century. The most systematic inventory to

date, started in the 1980s by the late Bert van Selm and his collaborators, sought to document all extant book sales catalogues printed in the Dutch Republic before 1800.²⁰ Now continued as Brill's electronic resource *Book Sales Catalogues Online* (BSCO), it currently includes some five thousand facsimiles of surviving auction catalogues for the period 1599 – 1800, possibly representing around 10% of the catalogue titles that were produced during that period.²¹ Numbers for France and the British Isles, where the practice of printing auction catalogues only took off in the eighteenth century, may be even higher. Secondly, these catalogues are relatively accessible, both through existing databases such as the aforementioned BSCO platform or the *Private Libraries in Renaissance England* database,²² through various digital text repositories, and increasingly through the availability of digitized copies in Google Books. Finally, private library auction catalogues have the advantage of bringing us closer not only to the production side of books, but also to their reception, in the form of booksellers, collectors, and possibly even readers. Private library auction catalogues, in short, allow us to address questions regarding several aspects of the reception – gendered or not – of a female author like Maria Sibylla Merian.

Merian's Works in Library Auction Catalogues

Maria Sibylla Merian's books were, by any measure, exceptional. The daughter of the famous Frankfurt engraver and publisher Matthäus Merian, Maria was the author of three major richly illustrated works of natural history, each of which was published under several different manifestations in her lifetime. The first was a three-part illustrated *Blumenbuch* (Flower book) containing twelve plates per volume, published in Nuremberg in 1675 – 1680. It was followed in 1680 by a *Neues Blumenbuch* (New flower book), which was intended to be used by young women as a pattern book for embroidery work; some examples survive of

embroidery, both on paper and cloth, based on Merian's illustrations.²³ This makes the *Blumenbuch* Merian's most female-gendered work, and is a salutary reminder to book historians that books could be put to other uses than reading.

But from her earliest years, besides her work as an artist, Merian also dedicated herself to studying the life cycle and metamorphoses of caterpillars into chrysalises and butterflies, which she described in her first scientific work, *Der Raupen wunderbare Verwandlung und sonderbare Blumen-nahrung*. The first part of this book was published in Nuremberg in 1679, containing fifty plates in quarto, all engraved by herself, and the second part in Frankfurt in 1683. After moving to the Dutch Republic in 1685, Merian travelled to the Dutch Caribbean colony of Surinam in 1699 to study its insect life, accompanied by her younger daughter. This resulted in the publication of her most famous book, her *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium*, containing sixty plates, in 1705. Merian produced a number of exclusive copies of this book, hand-colored by herself and her daughters, that sold for high prices. This volume thus was celebrated internationally not only for its scientific content but just as much for its beautiful plates, based on Merian's own illustrations. Merian's legacy was kept alive by her two daughters, Dorothea Maria Graff and Johanna Helena Herolt, who continued her editorial and artistic work after her death, in Russia and Surinam respectively.²⁴

Merian's books, as one would expect of volumes that were both costly and beautiful, remained well represented in private libraries during the eighteenth century. Hailed by contemporaries as "the foremost and most curious work ever painted in America",²⁵ her Surinam book especially attracted attention both as a scientific work, as a bibliophile collectors' item, and perhaps in a few cases, as in today's growing scholarship on Merian, as the work of a female author. As Kate Heard writes:

The *Metamorphosis* could be found in any self-respecting European library. Jean-Jacques Rousseau prepared notes on her life for his patron Madame Dupin, who was planning a book on noteworthy women. In 1710 the German travellers Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach described seeing “excellent illuminations” by Merian during a visit to Sir Hans Sloane’s house in Bloomsbury; other eighteenth-century British owners included Thomas Holles-Pelham, 1st Duke of Newcastle and Prime Minister (whose copy was described as “coloured from the life”), Martin Folkes, President of the Royal Society, and the library of the Royal Society of Physicians in London.²⁶

The evidence from Dutch private library auction catalogues confirms this picture of prestige and widespread circulation of Merian’s works in elite circles. In a previous study of female-authored books in a corpus of 256 Dutch library auction catalogues from the period 1700 – 1800,²⁷ Merian’s works fared well compared to those of other well-known authors, present in 19% of the catalogues. By comparison, the most frequently reported eighteenth-century authors, François Fénelon and journalists Joseph Addison and Richard Steele were reported in respectively 66% and 65% of the catalogues, with the figures for Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot at 63%, 43%, and 27%.²⁸ While Merian’s works were not the most often-cited titles, their presence in almost one in five catalogues still made them a staple of the second-hand book trade. Statistically speaking, their appeal was comparable to the works of another prominent eighteenth-century naturalist, Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, whose works occurred in 26% of the catalogues of libraries auctioned after 1749, the publication date of the first volume of his *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière* (General and particular natural history). As compared to other female authors, Merian belonged to the middle range of authors who enjoyed some commercial success but were not among the top sellers of their day; this honor belonged to the French pedagogue Marie Leprince de

Beaumont, whose books were in 50% of the catalogues, and the Dutch novelist team Elisabeth Wolff-Bekker and Agatha Deken, reported in 35% of the libraries.

In addition to the auction catalogues reporting works by Merian in this previous study, we have identified a number of additional private library catalogues from the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic in which one or more of her books can be found. This brings the total of libraries reporting her works to 66, and the number of collectors – since some of the catalogues represented multiple libraries – to 78.²⁹ These 78 collectors include 24 collectors who were anonymous, although anonymity itself is relative: “anonymous” catalogues range from those of collectors identified by their initials, such as “baron G.N.*” or “E.D.C.A” (identified on the title page as a foreign statesman), to a “British Medical Doctor”, or more vaguely described individuals such as “a man of quality” or “Two Prominent Amateurs”. Of the 66 catalogues reporting works by Merian, seven libraries were described on the title page as having belonged at least in part to a female collector; an additional anonymous catalogue of a library auctioned in 1799 was annotated by an unknown contemporary hand, which identified it as belonging to “the widow Markon”, thereby bringing the total of (partially) female-owned libraries to eight.

These were, in general, slightly larger-than-average collections within the broader corpus of libraries sold at auction in the Dutch Republic. The largest was the library of the two Hague magistrates Paulus van Assendelft and Pieter de Veer, which reported 6418 lots and was auctioned in 1765. (Interestingly, Paulus van Assendelft’s tastes seem to have been similar to those of his father, Willem van Assendelft, whose library had been sold two decades previously and also contained several titles by Merian.) The smallest collection was that of the anonymous collector whose natural history cabinet was auctioned in Leiden on June 14 and 15, 1782, containing (alongside stuffed animals and specimens) 47 books and one packet of unnamed books. The smallest auction catalogue reporting primarily books was that

of the Mennonite sawyer-woodseller and citizen of Zaandam Cornelis Middelhoven, listing 431 lots and sold in 1797.

When library catalogues did list books by Merian,³⁰ they quite frequently appeared in multiple copies. The 1774 library auction catalogue of the medical doctor Johannes Jacobus Ostens, for example, listed four copies of books by Merian:³¹ two copies of her Surinam insect book, one in Dutch and one bilingual French-Latin, one copy of her European insect book, as well as a *Theatrum Insectorum* (Theatre of insects) published in Amsterdam. This last title does not correspond to any known work of hers, and may have been a falsely attributed copy of Thomas Muffet's *Insectorum sive Minimorum Animalium Theatrum*, originally published in 1634. In this case, the false attribution would suggest that Merian was by then the better-known of the two scientists. The Amsterdam bookseller-auctioneer Petrus Schouten clearly took some pains to present the books by Merian as exceptional copies, which would have been attractive to bibliophile buyers. Thus he claimed that three of the books contained plates colored by Merian herself – though two of them were dated 1726 and 1730, and she died in 1717. Presenting the book plates as having been colored by Merian herself – as opposed to her daughters, who took over this work in her old age and after her death, or another artist altogether – was a common marketing strategy to drive prices up for her books. In addition, two of the books were described as having a luxurious tortoiseshell binding. These were, then, prize items.

Merian's most frequently cited work was her book on European insects, available in the original German edition, *Der Raupen wunderbare Verwandlung und sonderbare Blumennahrung* (1679 and 1683); a Dutch translation, *Der rupsen begin, voedzel en wonderbaare verandering* (1712 for parts I and II; 1717 for part III); a Latin translation, *Erucarum ortus, alimentum et paradoxa metamorphosis* (1718); and two posthumous editions, in both French and Dutch, published by Jean Frederic Bernard (1730). The auction

catalogues list a total of 66 copies of this work. Its most frequent manifestation is the 1730 Dutch-language edition of *De Europische insecten* published in Amsterdam by Jean Frederic Bernard: this is cited 29 times in the auction catalogues, and 12 times in other or non-identifiable editions. In addition, the catalogues cite 14 copies of *Erucarum ortus*, 8 copies of the Dutch-language *Rupsen*, and three copies of the original Nuremberg 1679 edition.

Ostens's collection gave pride of place to another of Merian's works, the *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium*, of which he owned two copies. This is the second most frequently cited title by Merian in the auction library catalogues, and we have identified 61 copies in total. Of these 61 copies, 46 are Dutch-language copies, and the rest are in French or bilingual French-Latin editions. Although booksellers did not always cite exact editions, in 27 cases, it is clear that the one described was the Amsterdam 1730 edition. There were also ten reported copies of the 1726 French-Latin edition printed in The Hague, five of the 1719 edition printed in Amsterdam, and just one of the 1705 edition. Finally, the catalogues list a single copy of Merian's *Neues Blumenbuch* published in 1680, as well as a number of incomplete editions: four of the Dutch-language *Rupsen* (parts I and III only), three sets of the plates only of the *Rupsen*, and one set of plates only of the *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium*. This brings the total of copies of Merian's works in extant auction catalogues to 127, excluding incomplete copies and uncertain attributions – although in a number of cases, some caution is called for, since catalogues may be listing occurrences of the same copy of the book, as it passed from one collection to another; we discuss one such case of a possible “repeat” mention below.

The catalogues provide evidence, in short, on both notable presences and absences. Other than the sheer number of copies of Merian's books they report, what is most immediately apparent is collectors' preference for Dutch-language copies of the books. Yet among the Dutch-language editions, only a single copy can unambiguously be identified as

the original 1705 edition of Merian's Surinam insect book. Although booksellers described a number of copies as "the original edition", these cannot conclusively be identified as such, lacking either a date or full title. This is perhaps curious, since one might suppose this edition was not significantly rarer than others; indeed, 67 copies of it have been traced in modern-day libraries and collections.³² Finally, another near-absence is that of the original German-language edition of Merian's *Raupen*, published in Nuremberg in 1679. This is important from a history of science perspective, since Kay Etheridge has demonstrated that this edition offered a much more detailed and scientifically thorough exposition of Merian's entomological findings than the later Dutch translations, which were essentially abridgements.³³ As Etheridge argues, readers' reliance on the later faulty editions may help explain why Merian's reputation as a naturalist diminished during the course of the eighteenth century. More generally, from a reading culture perspective, one might draw the tentative conclusion that collectors' interest in Merian's works was motivated as much by the books' plates and visual appeal, as by the books' scientific content – a point to which we shall return below.

Auctions and Catalogue Rhetoric

If the presence of Merian's books in eighteenth-century libraries suggests bibliophile motives on the part of many collectors, then some attention might usefully be paid to what could be described as the rhetoric of the catalogue genre. Drawing among others on Mieke Bal's argument that collecting can be studied as a narrative,³⁴ we posit that book collections and their catalogues similarly seek to tell a particular story about the collector and the collector's aspirations, in which the auctioneer and bookseller act as narrators supplementing the collector's own tale. This narrative is perhaps nowhere stated as explicitly as on the

catalogues' title pages and prefatory material, often prolific to a fault, which describe not only the person and character of the collector, but (just as importantly) the contents of the collection. Significantly, Merian's name is evoked explicitly on ten of the title pages or prefaces of the 66 catalogues that list her works.³⁵ In addition, several other title pages allude to full-color illustrated works of natural history, in what could be read as a transparent allusion to her works. Paulus van Assendelft and Pieter de Veer's 1765 catalogue, for example, advertised "a number of the most beautiful and great Works principally of Universal Natural History (Among which several are superbly illuminated with colors after Nature)". An example of a title page mentioning Merian by name is provided by the 1771 auction catalogue of Daniel Jansz Schorer's collection:

Catalogue of a Splendid Collection of Choice and Well-conditioned Latin, Dutch and French Books. Consisting of Theological, Legal, Medical, Philosophical, Historical, Poetical, Travel and Biographical Accounts and Varia; among which many Considerable Works. Such as Moubach, Scheuchser, Weimann, Encyclopedie, Meriam [*sic*], Vondel, Luyken and others to which is added A fine Cabinet of Paintings, an Organ, Ships, Musical Instruments, 2 especially fine Globes, and other Rarities and Fine Pieces. All left by the Honourable Gentleman Daniel Schorer, in life a registrar of the Council of Flanders in Middelburg etc. residing in Middelburg.

As in most title pages, the mention of Merian's name is brief (and in this case misspelled), and juxtaposed to a host of other names, betraying no obvious classificatory principle other than the book's monetary value. Interestingly, the only Merian mentioned in the catalogue titles is Maria Sibylla: her father Matthäus, who had published a number of books equally

prized by bibliophiles, is named not a single time on any of the title pages of the four thousand auction catalogues currently available in BSCO.

In addition to the libraries auctioned in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic for which a printed catalogue has been preserved, other auctions took place that have left traces only in the periodical press. Among these, we have identified a further 37 auctions (for which no catalogue remains) of private collections that according to the announcements contained one or more books or prints (in the case of three collections) by Maria Sibylla Merian. This brings the total number of libraries reporting works by Merian to 103, and the total number of collectors to 123. More importantly, the fact that Merian is named explicitly in these 37 announcements of auctions is a further indication of her name recognition in the eighteenth century. In many cases, she was the only or one of only a few authors mentioned. The *Leydse Courant* of July 3, 1737, for example, announced that:

Tomorrow, being Thursday July 4, Juriaan van Paddenburg, Bookseller in Utrecht, will sell a fine Collection of Dutch BOOKS, consisting in Theological [*sic*], Histories, Antiquities, Travel accounts, Poetic and other pre-eminent Works, among which stand out Munting on the Plants, and Merian European and Surinamese Insects, beautifully colored, left by the late Sr. Abraham Wilbung [Wilburg?]³⁶

In another case, Merian's is the single name mentioned, in what may well be a sale of one of the particularly rare and expensive copies of the hand-colored counterproof editions she produced of her Surinam book on vellum; these were valued because they resembled an original painting more than a print. The complete notice in the *Amsterdamse courant* of November 14, 1758, reads:

Tomorrow being Wednesday, November 15, in Amsterdam, at the house of the Widow of J. Ameland, on the Cingel [canal] the 7th house from the Oude Leystraat, the sale will start of an exquisite Collection of all Dutch Books, in which many preeminent Works stand out, and among them Merian Surinamese and European Insects on counterproofs [“op overdrukken”] colored by herself after life.

Merian’s mention by name on catalogue title pages and in auction announcements in the periodical press appears to be a historically localized phenomenon. In the press, after a single first mention in 1737,³⁷ only three occurrences of her name can be identified in the 1740s and 1750s. Most announcements of auctions mentioning works by Merian are concentrated instead in the decades from the 1760s through 1790s. In the extant printed catalogues, the first title-page mention of Merian’s name occurs in 1767, and the last in 1798, with all the other instances occurring in the 1770s and 1780s. Thus, the rise to prominence of Maria Sibylla Merian’s name in the newspaper advertisements and catalogue title pages seems to correspond to the decline in selling power of her father’s works. Matthäus Merian’s works are not only completely absent from the titles of the extant auction catalogues; they are also mentioned but six times in newspaper announcements of book sales in the eighteenth century, in 1725, 1729, 1730, 1737, 1739, and a last time in 1758. This suggests that Maria Sibylla Merian’s works, supplanting those of her father, had become recognized collector’s items by the 1760s, forty years after her own death, and remained so at least until the end of the century.

The mention of Merian’s name on auction catalogue title pages and in newspaper announcements of auctions is an unambiguous indication of the value book auctioneers and cataloguers attributed to them. It appears, then, that the name “Merian” was a recognizable brand, and all the listings of her books within the catalogues, with a single exception,³⁸ are

accompanied by her name. This is certainly noteworthy, since cataloguers frequently omitted author names altogether. Feminist scholars have long debated the importance of naming strategies for the reputation of female authors,³⁹ and Merian's own choice as a published author to retain her father's name has also been noted. Only in a single instance, that of the original 1679 *Raupen*, does a catalogue call her by any other name than this one; there, following the book's title, she is referred to as "Maria Sibylla Graffin M. Merian's Daughter".⁴⁰ Most often, she is simply referred to as "M.S. Merian", with no further indication of her sex such as the accompanying "Mejuffrow" (Miss or Missus), "Madame" or other such terms commonly found in the catalogues. Other variants are "Merian", "M. Merian", and more rarely, "Mar. Sib. Merian".⁴¹ It was clear to eighteenth-century book buyers, then, who "Merian" was. Remarkably, her works are in no way framed as those of a female author in the printed catalogues, suggesting that gender was – at least in her case – not a relevant category to the booksellers drawing them up. Further research is clearly needed on the way individual readers reacted to her works to assess the role gender may have played in this reception, but it seems possible that Merian's exceptionality and her status as a scientist may have conferred a kind of honorary masculinity on her, as sometimes bestowed on other women authors who practiced literary genres dominated by male writers.

There are further, as mentioned, a few references in the periodical press to sales of Maria Sibylla's works as prints rather than books. The *Leydse Courant* of April 1, 1768, for example, announced the sale of "a fine Collection of bound and loose prints (including the Gallery of Luxemburg, by P. P. Rubens, M. S. Merian's Insect-Work etc.)" that had belonged to a certain D. van Dyk and J. V. S. In *De Nieuwe Haagse Nederlandse Courant* of October 2, 1799, a sale was announced, intriguingly, of "Print books for children" that included fifty plates by Merian of "Flowers, Caterpillars and Butterflies". (One is tempted to proleptically read this as a reference to the young Vladimir Nabokov, over a century later, famously taking

down Merian's books from his parents' library and being inspired by them to a lifelong fascination with butterflies.) Finally, in a few instances, newspapers announced sales of prints by Merian's daughters. On March 18, 1733, the *'s Gravenhaegse Courant* advertised the sale of "curious Miniatures by the Misses Merian and Herolt", and on January 20, 1763 the *Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant* announced the sale, alongside a collection of various "specimens and insects", of "69 exquisite, fine coloured Drawings, by the oldest Daughter of Miss Maria Sibilla Merian". With a single possible exception,⁴² then, it was only when she was named alongside her daughter that Merian's gender was referenced at all in the newspaper announcements. At the same time, the fact that the name of her daughter Johanna Helena Herolt was not mentioned explicitly, while Maria Sibylla's own was, appears indicative of the relative weight accorded the work of the two women by eighteenth-century booksellers.

The value attributed to Merian's books was also expressed by other, less rhetorical means, i.e. by the prices buyers paid for them. A small number of the extant library auction catalogues bear contemporary annotations noting the amounts paid for the books at auction, and sometimes also the price at which bidding was set to start. In many cases, prices obtained at auction remained close to the original prices buyers had paid for Merian's books at the beginning of the century. In 1705, the original subscription price for an uncolored version of the *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium*, sold by Merian herself, had been 15 florins; this later rose to 18 florins. A hand-colored copy could be purchased from Merian for 45 florins, while the asking price for a hand-colored counterproof copy was 75 florins,⁴³ or the equivalent, in 2016 currency, of between €550 and €915.⁴⁴

In the Dutch auction catalogues, the lowest sales price listed is 1 florin and 10 stuivers, paid in 1748 for a copy of the relatively rare, original 1679 Nuremberg edition of *Der Raupen Verwandlung*, together with a copy of Jan Swammerdam's *Historia insectorum generalis*,

ofte Algemeene verhandeling van de bloedeloose dierkens (General history of insects, or treatise on the bloodless little animals, 1669), sold as part of the library of Gerard Schaak, or approximately €10 in modern-day currency. Another copy of the 1679 edition of *Der Raupen Verwandlung* was sold for 6 florins when auctioned as part of an anonymous collection on November 4, 1778 – although we know that Merian herself charged the Frankfurt scholar Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach only 5 florins for an uncolored copy of this book when he visited her in 1711.⁴⁵ The highest price recorded is 305 florins paid in 1776 for an edition of the *Metamorphosis* that was clearly a copy of the original 1705 edition, colored by Merian herself;⁴⁶ this would be the equivalent of about €2950 today. In addition, the plates were sometimes sold separately from the published book edition: thus in 1767 the collector or bookseller Tongerlo paid 120 florins for the plates only of the Surinam book, which had been listed as item 118 of the “Dutch-language historical and travel books in folio” in the auction catalogue of the library of the well-known art collector Jeronimo de Bosch (Figure 1).

It emerges, then, that a wide range of copies of Merian’s works were offered for sale in the Dutch Republic during the eighteenth century, ranging from “originals” and editions that had supposedly been colored by Merian herself and editions in luxurious bindings to more worn and more mundane copies. It is clear that, regardless of their condition, these books were valued, but there are no indications provided by the catalogues that this value was in any way connected to the author’s gender.

Who Might Have Read Merian? Reading Communities and Access to Books

While the evidence provided by the printed catalogues and marginal annotations is inconclusive regarding gendered receptions of Merian’s works, the population of collectors may provide us with further clues concerning the identity of potential readers and their

interactions with these books. Data on collectors, if gathered on a large enough scale, can help historians trace the provenance and circulation of individual copies of books – even if we are still far today from a comprehensive view of the movement of even a single copy of Merian’s works. Comparing the collector names identified to date to the provenance data unearthed by Marieke van Delft for the 67 extant copies of the 1705 edition of the *Metamorphosis Surinamiensis*, for example, brings to light not a single match.⁴⁷ While linking books to individual collectors, let alone “readers”, is a notoriously difficult undertaking, approaching collectors as a group can resolve some of the issues involved, especially if we can draw on a corpus of hundreds or even thousands of library catalogues. A suitably nuanced approach to this material may yield plausible conclusions not about individual “readers” of specific titles but about patterns of ownership and circulation, populations and social categories of collectors, and the brand-name recognition of specific books or authors.

There is a further factor that needs to be taken into account when studying auction catalogues as a reflection of reading culture. This is the frequently semi-public nature of libraries and the collective nature of reading in the eighteenth century; as James Raven notes for England, “many apparently private libraries were designed for display and for use by friends and neighbours”.⁴⁸ Similarly, in the Dutch Republic as elsewhere, the practice of opening scholars’ libraries to interested students and visitors was widespread. Thus, while a catalogue may list a single collector’s name on the title page, books could be part of a well-known scholars’ collection or family library and hence circulate widely among professional colleagues, family members, and beyond. Reading itself often took place in family and group settings that are only beginning to be understood fully.⁴⁹ The collective dimension of book access and reading is particularly important when studying women’s relationship and access to books. Susan Staves has demonstrated the importance of these “borrowing and sharing networks” as instruments for women to secure books, and emphasizes that these are “physical

book[s] embedded in a personal relationship”, with multiple (affective) exchanges taking place alongside that of the books themselves.⁵⁰

The semi-public nature of eighteenth-century libraries and their embeddedness within larger family and social structures means that each of the 103 libraries listing works by Maria Sibylla Merian might have been used by multiple readers. Of the 71 collectors whose identity is known, we have been able to establish that at least 33, or almost half of them, had a spouse who most likely also had access to the library, and further biographic research will surely reveal more. Many of these collectors also had children or other relatives living with them. One collector, the Utrecht magistrate Gisbertus Franco baron de Milan Visconti, bequeathed his belongings to his housekeeper, Jacoba Johanna Guitton, suggesting that this relationship may have been a particularly intimate one. In many cases, it is hard to tell which family member acquired the volume. Clara Magdalena Dupeyrou, whose library was discussed earlier, married and was widowed three times over the course of her life. She first married Lucas Trip in Amsterdam at age 21. Her second husband was the Leiden professor of medicine Bernhard Siegfried Albinus, whom she married at 41, in 1765. She married her third husband, Gerrit Hooft, in 1773. Having outlived them all, her library most likely held not only books she had sought out herself, but also a number that had belonged to one of her three husbands, all prominent government officials. Without further evidence from ego-documents or other sources, it is impossible to tell who was responsible for acquiring – and possibly, reading – the nine works by women authors in her library described at the beginning of this essay.

Similarly, the library auction catalogue drawn up after the death of the German-born adventurer-speculator, one-time secretary to George I, and Leiden citizen Frederic de Thoms also recorded two books by Merian, the 1730 editions of both her Surinam and European insect books. Thoms himself, however, was known ~~in later life~~ primarily as a collector of

antiquities. When attempting to identify the person responsible for buying Merian's books, one is therefore tempted to look instead to his trophy wife, Johanna Maria Boerhaave, the daughter of the famous Leiden professor and doctor-anatomist Herman Boerhaave. Indeed, the auction catalogue of Herman Boerhaave's library also contained a copy of Merian's *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamiensum*. As the editor of Jan Swammerdam's posthumously published *Biblia naturae* (1737), a major work on the metamorphoses of caterpillars and butterflies, Boerhaave was more than familiar with the field in which Merian left her mark as a scientist. That the taste for Merian may have run in the family is suggested, finally, by the curious fact that Herman's daughter Johanna Maria Boerhaave named her own first-born Sybilla Maria (or Sibille Marie). Besides Sybilla Maria, there was also a second daughter, Hermina Jacoba. From a history of reading perspective, then, this brings the total of family members who might have plausibly read Merian's works in the Thoms household to four: three women and one man, with circumstantial evidence pointing toward the women rather than the male head of the household as the most likely party responsible for the acquisition and reading of Merian's works.

A final example demonstrating the difficulties in identifying readers of a specific title within a larger household is provided by the Amsterdam apothecary Jeronimo de Bosch, who besides his medical work also accumulated a celebrated collection of prints and artworks. In the 1767 auction catalogue of his collection of books, sold after his death, mention was made of a set of full-color plates from the *Metamorphosis*, also referenced on the catalogue's title page. But de Bosch was only one member in an extended family network, as illustrated by an elegant family portrait, dated 1754, by Tibout Regters (Figure 2). In this painting, Jeronimo de Bosch is portrayed with his five children and their spouses. From left to right are Jeronimo I, shown seated and wearing widower's black; his son the poet-broker Bernardus, holding one of his own poems in his hand; Bernardus's wife Margaretha Leuvening, in a yellow dress; his

daughter-in-law Catharina van der Heyden, in blue, seated before a large book; behind her, standing, her husband Jeronimo II; his son Joannes, holding a portrait of his mother Judith Willink; his daughter Elisabeth, sitting at the table; Elisabeth's husband Willem Schuyt; and his son Hendrik, standing by the door. In the background is a cabinet bearing an allegorical representation of Pictura, two putti, and a head of Apollo.

Several details bear noting in this group portrait. First, the patriarch Jeronimo is portrayed in widowers' black, and in the middle of the painting figures a portrait of his wife Judith Willink, who had died in 1747. It is therefore she who is represented as the moral center of this family group. This, coupled with the foregrounding of images pointing to the family's investment in cultural values – the allegorical representation of Pictura, and the print and book displayed prominently on the table –⁵¹ suggests that she may have had an important part to play in choices made in this domain. But it is above all the collective nature of the family's culture that is emphasized by the portraitist. As Abigail Williams comments on a portrait very similar to that of the Bosch family, “there is widespread anecdotal evidence of readers who describe reading aloud or performing literary texts in the home, and contemporary paintings and engravings depict scenes of performed reading in groups. Conversation-piece portraits of the era commonly depict books as part of the proudly displayed cultural capital of the sitters”.⁵² Indeed, the large book prominently displayed on the table is both a clear marker of the family's cultural interests and a tantalizing clue to the historian searching for traces of Merian's readers. Its folio format would certainly make it a plausible candidate for a copy of the *Metamorphosis*, but the title remains, alas, illegible.

In all three cases, it is impossible to tell, by the mention alone of a book by Merian in a library auction catalogue, who was the individual responsible for acquiring the book and thereby marking their interest in her work, despite the mention on the catalogue title page of a male collector only. In two of these cases, in addition, it is women family members who

emerge as likely readers of the book. While this would seem to lend support to the hypothesis of women's predilection for women writers, without systematic biographical research into each one of the family members of collectors whose libraries were sold at auction, it is quite simply too early to draw any conclusions.

Owners of Merian's Works: Collectors, Scientists, and Colonial Administrators

Among the 71 identified collectors of Merian's works, three distinct professional groups predominate: bibliophiles, scientists, and colonial administrators. In a sense, all the owners of her works could be described as bibliophile collectors, given the luxurious nature and visual appeal of her books, but several of these individual owners were especially well-known for their collecting habits. Jeronimo de Bosch, mentioned above, was also a noted collector of Netherlandish paintings; a separate catalogue was issued for the sale of his collection of prints and paintings, also in 1767, in which figured several prominent names such as Rembrandt and Rubens. Similarly, Frederic de Thoms was an eminent collector of antiquities, whose collection lay the groundwork for the present-day national museum of archeology in Leiden.

Owners of books by Merian also included celebrated natural scientists such as Pieter van Musschenbroek, the inventor of the Leyden jar, and professor of medicine Daniel Mobachius Quaet. Prominent among this group were apothecaries and medical doctors, who would have been particularly interested in the botanical and medicinal aspects of the flora and fauna studied by Merian. In her Surinam book she had on occasion noted local uses of New World plants as medicine.⁵³ She was in her lifetime part of an international network of scientists, which included among her most faithful correspondents the London apothecary James Petiver, so it was only natural that this professional group would continue to follow her work after her death. Among Merian book owners, Jeronimo de Bosch, besides his activities

as a collector, was an apothecary. Other collectors included a dozen surgeons, doctors, and other scientist-naturalists,⁵⁴ bringing the total to 20% of the identified library owners whose catalogues reported works by Merian; by comparison, previous studies calculated that only 10% of the population of library owners in the Dutch Republic for whom auction catalogues have been preserved were doctors or involved in the medical professions.⁵⁵

Two particularly notable scientists' collections that report works by Merian are those of Pieter Cramer, whose collection was auctioned in 1777, and an anonymous natural history cabinet sold in 1782. Pieter Cramer had become an internationally renowned entomologist with the publication between 1775 and 1782 of his bilingual illustrated *De uitlandsche Kapellen voorkomende in de drie Waereld-Deelen Asia, Africa en America – Papillons exotiques des trois parties du monde l'Asie, l'Afrique et l'Amerique* (The foreign butterflies appearing in the three parts of the world: Asia, Africa and America). Like Merian's book, his work was prized for its illustrations; however, unlike her ecologically conscious, artistic portrayal of insects on the plants on which they lived,⁵⁶ Cramer followed Linnaeus's classificatory system and portrayed his subjects context-free. Besides copies of Merian's Surinam and European insect books, his library also boasted a series of original drawings purportedly used by the naturalist-apothecary Albertus Saba in his work. Cramer's interest in Merian's books was clearly scientific, and in his own work he referenced her repeatedly, occasionally correcting claims she had made in her *Metamorphosis Surinamensium*. The second scientist's library, the anonymous natural history cabinet auctioned on June 14 and 15, 1782, listed a copy of the 1730 edition of Merian's European and Surinam books as the very first item named in the catalogue. It was followed immediately by a copy of Georg Everhard Rumphius's *D'Amboinsche rariteitkamer* (The Ambonese cabinet of curiosities), a work for which Merian had been credited, possibly falsely,⁵⁷ with producing the illustrations; and then by a 28-volume edition of the works of Buffon, that sold for the enormous sum of 430 florins

(€3600 in 2016 prices). Like Cramer, this collector's interest in Merian's work was scholarly: besides the 47 books it listed, the catalogue was devoted primarily to describing the collection of stuffed animals, shells, mounted insects, and specimens the anonymous collector had accumulated. These included 51 lots of "East Indies and Cape butterflies", among others. The collection's scientific interest was further evidenced by the fact that buyers included the prominent naturalists Engelbertus Heenck, director of the natural history cabinet of Leiden University (who had helped draw up the catalogue of the collection); and "Le Francq", possibly the well-known scientist and natural history illustrator Johannes le Francq van Berkhey.

But undoubtedly the most famous of the scientist collectors of Merian's works was the internationally celebrated anatomist Herman Boerhaave, the father-in-law of the antiquities collector Frederic de Thoms. The catalogue of his library drawn up shortly after his death, and published in Leiden in 1739 by Samuel Luchtman as *Bibliotheca Boerhaaviana*,⁵⁸ lists as lot number 674, "M. Sivylla Merian metamorphosis of the Surinamese Insects ibid. with finely coloured plates French binding". The "ibid." may refer either to the place of publication, Amsterdam, or the year 1705. In the latter case, that would make this one of the rare copies of the 1705 original edition of Merian's Surinam book to be listed in the catalogues.

Interestingly, Merian's book was listed immediately after Rumphius's *D'Amboinsche rariteitkamer* – as indeed it was increasingly named in the company of other scientific works with other illustrated books such as Blaeu's famous atlas, and occasionally Swammerdam's books, with the rise of the natural sciences Merian was increasingly named alongside contemporary fellow scientist-illustrators like Mark Catesby, George Edwards, Albertus Seba, Georg Wolfgang Knorr, Otto Friedrich Müller and Cornelius Nozeman. **[Q: Provide full names]**

The appearance of Merian's Surinam book in Boerhaave's catalogue raises a number of questions. The first concerns the exact relationship between her and the Boerhaave family. Boerhaave's network among fellow scientists was extensive, but there are no indications so far that Merian was part of it.⁵⁹ However, as previously noted, Boerhaave's granddaughter – the daughter of his only surviving child, Johanna – was given the unusual name "Sybilla Maria". Furthermore, Boerhaave's name shows up in another auction catalogue, that of the Dordrecht medical doctor Arent Cant, in 1724. In a London copy of Cant's auction catalogue, an unknown hand added handwritten prices to the lots. In a single instance, there was also a buyer's name added: that of "Boerhaave", next to a copy of Merian's Surinam book, listed as "Metamorphosis insectorum, or the changes of the Surinam insects pictured and described after life by Maria Sibilla Meriam [*sic*] Amst. with figures. Colored after life by the same Maria Sibilla Merian very fine in French binding", for which the buyer paid 41 florins (Figure 3). This might have been the same copy found later in the auction catalogue of Boerhaave's library; unfortunately, the description is insufficiently detailed to establish this with certainty. The reason for the handwritten addition of this single name may be to explain to a certain "M", cited elsewhere in the catalogue as a buyer who had given his agent orders to bid on specific books for him, why he had been unable to secure the Merian volume: losing a bid to the celebrated Boerhaave would have provided an acceptable explanation to "M" of this failure on his agent's part.

Besides collectors and scientists, a third group with a marked predilection for Merian's works were colonial officers, including some who had connections in Surinam, where she had conducted her entomological research. Paulus Gevers accumulated various government positions in his native Rotterdam, among them in the West Indies Company, and sold his considerable library in 1776 upon "going to the Indies", as a handwritten annotation on a catalogue in the Royal Library at the Hague informs us.⁶⁰ Gerrit Hooft, the third husband of

Clara Magdalena Dupeyrou, was both an official of the East Indies Company and the director of the Surinam Society; in this capacity, and given the very small size of the Dutch colony, he may well have been in contact with Maria Sibylla Merian's daughter Johanna Helena Herolt, who had moved with her husband to Surinam after her mother's death. Johanna (Jeanne) Aldegonda Diodati, whose library was sold with another collection in 1760, was the wife of Johan François de Witte van Schooten, who had made his fortune as an official in the East Indies, before settling in The Hague with Johanna. Johanna may in fact have grown up in the colonies herself, as her brother Philippe did, before pursuing a government career there and dying in Batavia, most likely childless, in 1734. The exotic appeal of Merian's "American" book, it appears, made it a suitable candidate for colonial officials' libraries.

Women Collectors

Eight of the library auction catalogues recording works by Merian belonged at least in part to a woman, representing 27% of all the extant library auction catalogues recording women's collections in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. Women thus appeared statistically more likely to own a book by Merian than did men, among whom her books are found in 19% of the auction catalogues. These numbers are similar to those obtaining for other women authors, who occur more frequently in female-owned libraries than in male ones – even if caution is called for in drawing conclusions from these numbers, given the very small sample size and the fact that most women's libraries date from the last decades of the eighteenth century, when nonprofessional forms of reading were on the rise more generally.⁶¹

In addition, any conclusions about gendered collecting practices are mitigated by the fact that over half of these women's libraries were presented on the catalogue title page in relation to the collection of a male owner. Thus, Johanna Adelgunda Diodati's library was

sold together with the library of an unidentified “baron G. N.*”. The collection of Cornelia Schellinger was sold together with the library of her husband Pieter Steyn in 1784. The “widow A. G. Schopman”, whose library was sold in 1787, is linked to a deceased husband by her designation as a widow. A 1787 catalogue cites the “widow of Jacques Paul duc d’Aumale” as the collection’s owner, and only additional biographical research reveals the widow’s own name: Jacqueline Cornelia de Geer van Rijnhuizen. “Mrs. J. L. van Rees”, whose collection was sold in 1788, had to share a catalogue with “two prominent amateurs”, and, as the widow of a sea captain, probably also included some of her husband’s books in her collection. Anne Bout de Lieshout was described as the “dowager of Guillaume count of Hogendorp” on the title page of her 1797 library auction catalogue. Clara Magdalena Dupeyrou, as noted, had been widowed three times by the time her library was auctioned in 1798. And the anonymous catalogue sold in 1799 and identified by a contemporary hand as that of “the widow Markon” similarly referenced a male spouse’s name rather than the female owner’s in its attribution.

Despite these caveats, some general tendencies appear in these (partially) female-owned collections. Most of them, like Dupeyrou’s catalogue, do not list exceptionally large numbers of female-authored works: the numbers range between three titles (the widow Markon) and 69 titles (Diodati), with proportions between 0.06% and 2% of the total. Diodati’s library, containing the largest collection of female-authored works, is notable both for the predominance of popular novels, which Diodati read in French, and for the strong presence of religious works: the catalogue lists fourteen titles by the Netherlands-based mystic Antoinette Bourignon, as well as Elizabeth Singer Rowe’s *Devout Exercises* (1737). Secondly, women’s collections that listed Merian’s works were all relatively large, certainly when compared to other female collections: only one listed less than a thousand book items, with the average number of book items listed per owner at 1501. In none of the catalogues,

finally, was there any attempt to group or otherwise categorize works by female authors together – as one finds, exceptionally, in some later British provincial book sales catalogues.⁶²

Only in a single case might one of these catalogues represent a woman's book collection only, sold separately from her husband's. This is the anonymous catalogue of the collection sold in Leiden in 1799, identified by an unknown hand as that of "the widow Markon". We hypothesize that this may have been the catalogue of Maria Suzanna Barnaart, who died in 1799 in Leiden, ten years after her second husband, the occasional poet Jan Pauluszoon Markon. Markon had put together a collection of books (similarly containing a copy of Merian's *Metamorphosis*) that had already been sold at auction following his own death, in 1789. Markon's library had listed 911 titles, while his widow's catalogue ten years later listed 982; the numbers suggest that she may have bought back or removed a number of books from her husband's collection – as indeed it appears she bought back some of the paintings that had belonged to her first husband when these were sold at auction.⁶³ If this is indeed the catalogue of Maria Barnaart's library, then it is one of only a handful of such auction catalogues, extant for the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, that record a female collection separate from a male spouse's.⁶⁴

But in the case of Maria Suzanna Barnaart, we are lucky to have more clues regarding the uses to which she may have put Merian's books. Before marrying Markon, Maria Suzanna had been the wife of the wealthy Leiden doctor Jan Tak, who was also noted as a collector of paintings and prints. In his collection, sold after his death, he had brought together works by Rembrandt, Rubens, and Breughel, among others. The catalogue of his library, which was also sold after his death, seems unfortunately not to have survived. Maria Suzanna had lived with Tak in their stately house on the Breestraat in Leiden, and remained living there with her daughter Magdalena Maria Tak after his death in 1780 and after her own remarriage with Markon. In 1781, after the death of Tak, a detailed inventory was drawn up of the house's

interior.⁶⁵ Among the many objects and furnishings listed in this inventory, the cataloguer noted the presence of “some papers sown with flowers”,⁶⁶ a reference to a characteristically female needlework practice associated with Merian’s first book, her *Blumenbuch*. One is tempted to wonder whether these were the work of Suzanna Maria or of her daughter Magdalena Maria, and what pattern books they may have used.

More concretely, the inventory also informs us that the house had a library, described in the inventory as a “book room”, containing a number of bookcases that could be shut with curtains, as well as a bookcase ladder. This room boasted a study desk, two chairs, a comfortable armchair, and a small cabinet to house “simplicia”, or simple medicines used by apothecaries in learning the trade. Like other eighteenth-century aristocratic libraries, this “book room” appears to have been conceived as “a communal centre of the house”; as Abigail Williams explains, a library “contained more than books – prints, coins, busts, and other antiquarian or natural history items, often the focus of conversation, were also in this space”.⁶⁷ Most interestingly for a collector of Merian’s books, this particular “book room” showcased, besides the apothecary’s cabinet, only one other item: “a number of insects in liquor”, as well as various specimens or preparations.⁶⁸ Did these belong to Maria Suzanna’s doctor husband, or were they, rather, part of Maria Suzanna’s own, possibly Merian-inspired entomological pursuits? No prints by Merian figure in the printed auction catalogue of Tak’s paintings and prints, while his wife’s library catalogue does list Merian’s published work, so Maria Suzanna’s interest appears keener. As with the male scientists who collected Merian’s books, it seems likely that women collectors too may have used these works in the pursuit of scientific interests of their own.

Maria Suzanna Barnaart was not the only female collector whose interest in Merian’s work extended beyond the mere possession of a particularly attractive volume. In the auction catalogue of the library of Johanna Diodati, mention is made of French-language copies of

Merian's European and Surinam insect books, but also of a "Magnificent Collection of over seven hundred fifty different Insects, Butterflies, Flies, Flowers, etc. on which they feed, all of them superbly illuminated in their own colors, and pasted in their own Class on imperial paper, [a] Work of extraordinary beauty collected at great trouble and cost, this work is bound very neatly in calf, gilt edges and cover".⁶⁹ The collecting of books, in this case, led to other kinds of collecting, with women following Merian along the entomological path that she had marked out at the end of the seventeenth century, by collecting insects and their visual representations and gathering these in new collections of their own.

Conclusions

The available evidence from eighteenth-century Dutch auction catalogues, coupled with references in the press to sales of works by Maria Sibylla Merian, warrant several observations. First of all, the name "Merian" represented a recognizable brand, with which booksellers sought to attract buyers, especially from the 1760s onwards. This is evident from the fact that booksellers attached her name also to works in which she had had no part, including Muffet's *Theatrum insectorum*; posthumously published works that she had supposedly "colored herself"; and prints by her daughter Johanna Helena Herolt. Secondly, the presence of Merian's works in collections put together by scientists and colonial administrators suggests that they had immediate practical value as works documenting natural phenomena that had long intrigued scientists – the life cycle and metamorphoses of caterpillars into chrysalises and butterflies – as well as the flora and fauna of far-flung colonial possessions. At the same time, these were books to be looked at and admired as much as read. The near-absence of the original Nuremberg edition of Merian's *Raupen*, scientifically the most significant of her publications, points toward an interest that focused on

the visual and exotic as much as the scientific. Indeed, the rhetoric of the catalogues positions Merian's publications as belonging to the category of books as status objects or cultural capital – as appears also in the conversation-piece portrait of Jeronimo de Bosch's family, where the book prominently displayed on the table serves as an indicator of the high socio-cultural standing of the family members.

It is difficult to draw conclusions specifically on women's relationship to books in the eighteenth century on the basis of these Dutch library auction catalogues. In them Merian was nowhere framed explicitly as a woman author; only in a very few announcements in the periodical press was mention made of her gender. And while women collectors appear to have owned her books slightly more often than male collectors, the sample size is too small and chronologically too unrepresentative to justify any firm conclusions. Perhaps the most important finding, then, is that Merian's reception was in many cases a collective phenomenon, shaped by booksellers as much as by book buyers, and governed by family and societal ties as much as by individual choices. If an author's brand name was a collective creation, so too did book ownership operate in many ways as a collective phenomenon, making women's collections difficult to disambiguate from their male relatives'. The question of women's reading culture and interactions with the printed word is ultimately as revealing of our own twenty-first century concerns, then, as of eighteenth-century readers' experiences.

Notes

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¹ For the Dutch Republic, the country for which we currently possess the most complete inventory of extant library auction catalogues, the Brill *Book Sales Catalogue Online* platform lists only 30 catalogues recording collections that belonged at least in part to women for the period 1719 to 1800, out of a total of slightly less than 2000 private auction catalogues for the eighteenth century. *Book Sales Catalogues Online - Book Auctioning in*

the Dutch Republic, ca. 1500-ca. 1800, ed. Karel Bostoën, Marieke van Delft, Otto Lankhorst, and Alicia C. Montoya (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), online: <http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/book-sales-catalogues-online> (accessed July 25, 2017).

² All translations are our own.

³ The catalogue also listed 14 miscellaneous items, including globes, bookcases, and musical instruments in a separate section at the end.

⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 140 – 202; Ella Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters: Women of Art and Science* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008).

⁵ Under “Historische Boeken in Folio” (Historical books in folio), listed as number 123 (page 6).

⁶ The title page lists, among other books to be auctioned, “In Folio. Corpus Juris 6 vol. Voet, Cujacius, ch. maj. 12 vol. Herodotus, d’Orville, Morelis and Sallengre Thesaurus, ch. maj. Corps Diplomatique by Dumont, Rousset, Barbeyrac, le Clerc &c. 33 parts bound in XVII vol calf, Monument de Costumes by Moreau, Vie des Hommes Illustres ENCYCLOPEDIE ou DICTIONNAIRE des Sciences, des Arts & des Metiers, true & original Edition compl. XXXV vol. half calf. Dictionnaire of Savary, Chomel, Moreri and Bayle, Bible with plates, Biblical Hist. Calmet, Josephus and Basnage, Suyker and Verburg on large paper in 10 tortoiseshell covers. Cats, van Loon en van Mieris on large pap. Wagenaar, Commelin, Nieuwhoff; *Merian and Knoop with col. plates*. Cau and Scheltus 2 times, van de Wall, Atlases, and the Groote Zee Atlas by van Keulen, colored, in VI turtle bindings” (our emphasis).

⁷ Listed as lot 347 of “Livres François in octavo” (page 35).

⁸ Alessa Johns, “The Book as Cosmopolitan Object: Women’s Publishing, Collecting and Anglo-German Exchange”, in *Women and Material Culture, 1660 – 1830*, ed. Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 176 – 191.

⁹ See for example Sabine Heissler, “Christine Charlotte von Ostfriesland (1645 – 1699) und Ihre Bücher oder lessen Frauen anderes?”, *Daphnis* 27.2 (1998): 335 – 418; Johns, “The Book as Cosmopolitan Object”; Máire Kennedy, “Women and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Ireland,” in *The Experience of Reading: Irish Historical Perspectives*, ed. Bernadette Cunningham and Máire Kennedy (Dublin: Rare Books Group of the Library Association of Ireland and Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1999), 88-94.

¹⁰ Suellen Diaconoff, *Through the Reading Glass: Women, Books, and Sex in the French Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain 1750 – 1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹¹ Diaconoff, *Through the Reading Glass*, 7.

¹² Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 226 – 27.

¹³ Marie-Louise Coolahan and Mark Empey, “Women’s Book Ownership and the Reception of Early Modern Women’s Texts, 1545 – 1700”, in press.

¹⁴ Heissler, “Christine Charlotte von Ostfriesland (1645 – 1699) und Ihre Bücher”; Johns, “The Book as Cosmopolitan Object”; Kennedy, “Women and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Ireland.”

¹⁵ Marie-Louise Coolahan and Mark Empey, “‘There are Numbers of Very Choice Books’: Book Ownership and the Circulation of Women’s Texts, 1680 – 98”, in *Women’s Writing, 1660 – 1830: Feminisms and Futures*, ed. Jennie Batchelor and Gillian Dow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 139 – 55 (154).

¹⁶ Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, Hans Bots, Paul G. Hoftijzer, and Otto S. Lankhorst, eds., “*Le Magasin de l’Univers*”: *The Dutch Republic as the Centre of the European Book Trade* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

¹⁷ The groundwork for this approach was laid by a number of large-scale digitization and bibliographic projects that, starting in the 1980s, set out to explore the reading culture of women, both as producers and consumers of books. On the production side, the pioneering work carried out by the US-based Brown Women Writer’s project and its various offshoots, including the Women Writers Online resource, now available to institutions by subscription, inspired a host of other projects exploring specific aspects of women’s literary production. On the reception side, the circulation of female-authored works was the central concern of the Women Writers database (<http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/womenwriters>) currently hosted by the Huygens Institute in the Netherlands, and was one of the themes that emerged early on in the RED (Reading Experience Database) project (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/>) based at the Open University in the U.K.. The authors of this article gratefully acknowledge the inspiration and valuable lessons learned from these projects.

¹⁸ For the history and development of the book auction trade in the Dutch Republic, see Bert van Selm, “*Een Menigte Treffelijcke Boeken*”: *Nederlandse Boekhandelscatalogi in het Begin van de Zeventiende Eeuw* (Utrecht: HES, 1987).

¹⁹ See however, for the British Isles, A. N. L. Munby and Lenore Coral, *British Book Sale Catalogues 1678 – 1800: A Union List* (London: Mansell, 1977). For France, see Françoise Bléchet, *Les ventes publiques de livres*

en France, 1630-1750, *répertoire des catalogues conservés à la Bibliothèque nationale* (Oxford : Voltaire Foundation, 1991) and Annie Charon, ed., *Esprit des livres* : <http://elec.enc.sorbonne.fr/cataloguevente/> (accessed August 6, 2017). Other resources include Gerhard Loh, *Die Europäischen Privatbibliotheken und Buchauktionen: Ein Verzeichnis Ihre Kataloge* (Leipzig: G. Loh, 1995 – 2015). On the Dutch Republic, see note 2.

²⁰ Bert van Selm, Henk W. de Kooker, and J. A. Gruys, *Book Sales Catalogues of the Dutch Republic, 1599 – 1800* microfiche collection (Leiden: Inter Document Company, 1990 – 2003).

²¹ Hannie van Goinga, *Alom te Bekomen: Veranderingen in de Boekdistributie in de Republiek 1720 – 1800* (Amsterdam: De Buitenkant, 1999).

²² R. J. Fehrenbach, Joseph L. Black and E. S. Leedham-Green, eds., *Private Libraries in Renaissance England* database, Folger Shakespeare Library, <http://plre.folger.edu/> (accessed August 1, 2017).

²³ Christine Sauer, “Painting Flowers with Needles”, in press.

²⁴ On this mother-daughter collaboration, and more generally about the production of Merian’s books, see Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters*.

²⁵ Maria Sibylla Merian, *Metamorphosis Insectorum, Surinamensium 1705*, ed. Marieke van Delft and Hans Mulder (The Hague: KB National Library of the Netherlands and Tiel: Lannoo), unpaginated foreword.

²⁶ Kate Heard, *Maria Merian’s Butterflies* (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2016), 28.

²⁷ Alicia C. Montoya, “French and English Women Writers in Dutch Library Catalogues, 1700-1800: Some Methodological Considerations and Preliminary Results”, in *“I Have Heard about You”: Foreign Women’s Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlöf*, ed. Suzan van Dijk, Petra Broomans, Janet F. van der Meulen, and Pim van Oostrum (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004), 182-216.

²⁸ By relevant catalogues, we mean catalogues in which an author’s work could plausibly have appeared, given their publication dates, i.e. it makes no sense to look for a book first published in 1750 in a catalogue from 1730. Hence, these percentages do not in all cases reflect the presence of authors in all 254 of the catalogues that made up the corpus.

²⁹ These are the libraries of Abraham van Limburg, sold 1720; Carolus Rosenboom, 1722; Arent Cant, 1724; Gentilet, 1724; E. D. C. A., 1725; Willem de Wilde, 1730; “un homme de qualité”, 1735; a “Britann. Med. Doctor”, 1735; “Domini B. G. & D. V. L.”, 1736; Herman Boerhaave, 1739; Jacobus Wittichius, 1740; Willem van Assendelft, 1741; an anonymous library sold on October 8, 1742 (possibly booksellers’ stock); an

anonymous library sold on August 23, 1743; Joannes Scipio Orema, 1747; Johan Bernard van der Marck, 1747; Gerard Schaak, 1748; Frederic, Count of Thoms, 1749; Constantin Sautyn, 1752; Johannes Esigers, 1756; Arnoldus Penninck, 1759; Johanna Adelgonda Diodati and Baron G. N.*, 1760; Pieter van Musschenbroek, 1762; Paulus van Assendelft and Pieter de Veer, 1765; Jeronimo de Bosch, 1767; Franciscus van de Wynpersse, 1767; N. N., 1769; Daniel Jansz Schorer, 1771; Johannes Jacobus Ostens, 1774; Paulus Gevers, 1776; Pieter Cramer, 1777; an anonymous library sold on November 4, 1778; Johannes Nettis, 1778; Gisbertus Franco, Baron de Milan Visconti, 1782; an anonymous collection sold on June 14 – 15, 1782; “Twee Voorname Liefhebbers” (two prominent amateurs), 1783; another “Twee voorname Liefhebbers”, 1783; an anonymous collection sold on March 11, 1783; Dirk van Heemskerck, 1783; Petrus Steyn and Cornelia Schellinger, 1784; Daniel Mobachius Quaet “en twee voorname liefhebbers” (and two prominent amateurs), 1785; Johannes Lambertus van Romondt, 1785; Harmanus Cluwen and L. W. N., 1786; Pierre Le Clerc, 1787; the widow Schopman, 1787; the widow of Jacob Paulus Grave van Aumale (Jacquelina Cornelia de Geer van Rijnhuizen), 1787; Mrs. J. L. van Rees “en twee voorname liefhebbers” (and two prominent amateurs), 1788; “een voornaam liefhebber” (a prominent amateur), 1788; J. H. Bruyn, 1788; an anonymous catalogue sold on November 20, 1789; Jan Pz Markon, 1789; Philip Kops, 1791; Quirynd van Bambeck van Stryen, 1792; J. H. Martens, 1793; Anne Bout de Lieshout, douairière de Guillaume Jean comte de Hogendorp, 1797; Monsieur J. D. and J. J. Guicherit, 1797; Cornelis Middelhoven, 1797; Jacob Adank (?), 1798; Clara Magdalena Dupeyrou, 1798; Wigboldus Muilman, 1798; an anonymous collection sold on October 8, 1798; Cornelis van Bevoordt, 1799; Alexander Petrus Nahuys, 1799; anon. (= the widow Markon), 1799; David van Royen, 1800; and “un Amateur de distinction”, 1800. Scans of all catalogues can be found in Brill’s *Book Sales Catalogues Online* resource.

³⁰ All books reported in the auction catalogues are listed in our MEDIATE database, which also allows for more refined, specific searches. The database will be made publicly available in 2019; before then, it can be accessed in consultation with the authors.

³¹ These are listed in the auction catalogue as “M. S. Merian de Generatione & Metamorphosibus Insectorum Surinamensium Lat. Gall. Hagae 1726, figurae propria Auctores manu nitide coloribus depictae sunt”; “M. S. Merian Surinaamsche Insecten. Ib. [Amst.] 1730, met pl. Door haar zelf fraay afgezet. in schildp. b.”; “M. S. Merian Europese Insecten. Amst. met pl. door haar zelve fraay afgezet. Schildb. band”; and “M. S. Merian Theatrum Insectorum, Amst. c. fig.”

³² Marieke van Delft, “Worldwide Copies of *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium* 1705”, in Maria Sibylla Merian *Metamorphosis insectorum, Surinamensium* 1705, ed. Van Delft and Mulder, 187 – 89.

³³ Kay Etheridge, “A Biologist to the Bone”, paper presented at the conference “Changing the Nature of Art and Science / Intersections with Maria Sibylla Merian,” June 7, 2017, Amsterdam.

³⁴ Mieke Bal, “Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting”, in *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), 97 – 115.

³⁵ Merian’s works are mentioned on the title page of the catalogue of the library, sold in 1767, of Jeronimo de Bosch; in 1771, of Daniel Jansz Schorer; in 1774, of Johannes Jacobus Ostens; in 1776, of Paulus Gevers; in 1783, of Dirk van Heemskerck; in 1786, of Harmanus Cluwen and D. L. W. N.; in 1788, of J. H. Bruyn; in 1789, the anonymous collection sold on November 20; in 1789, of Jan Pz Markon; and in 1798, of Clara Magdalena Dupeyrou and Cornelia Jacoba van Schuylenburch.

³⁶ Digital reproductions of the original periodicals cited here can all be found through the KB-National Library’s Delpher database of Dutch periodicals, journals, and books, www.delpher.nl (accessed August 30, 2017).

³⁷ Other, that is, than the advertisements Merian had placed herself in the press in November 1703, April and December 1704, March 1705, and November 1712 to raise enough funds by subscription for the publication of her works.

³⁸ In 1725, the auction catalogue of the foreign statesman E. D. C. A. listed only the title of the Surinam insect book, but omitted the author’s name. The book was listed as number 949 of the Folio Books on pp. 77-78.

³⁹ Joan DeJean, “Lafayette’s Ellipses: The Privileges of Anonymity”, *PMLA* 99 (1984): 884 – 902; Coolahan and Empey, “There are Numbers of Very Choice Books”, 151 – 52.

⁴⁰ In the catalogue of the library of the Mennonite preacher and medical doctor Johannes Nettis, sold in 1778, the book is listed under the “Libri Hist. Natur. & alii in Quarto” as number 110, on p. 8. The same edition is also listed in the anonymous catalogue of the collection sold on March 11, 1783, but is listed after the name “Mariae Sibillae Merian” (“Libri in Quarto” number 168, on p. 24).

⁴¹ Other versions, that appear each only a single time, are “M. Merian”, “M. J. Merian”, “S. M. Merian”, “A. S. Merian”, “M. Sibilla Merian”, “M. Sib. Merian”, “Maria Meriaan”, “Maria Sebilla Merian”, “Marie Sebille Merian”, “Marie Sibille Merian”, “Maria Sybilla Merian”, and “Maria Sybilla Merian”.

⁴² In the announcement in the *Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant* of July 23, 1765 of the sale of the “famous cabinet” of Johanna Koerten Blok, including “the best drawings” of “Missus Merian”.

⁴³ Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters*, 166.

⁴⁴ According to the conversion tables of the Netherlands-based International Institute of Social History: <http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate.php> (accessed August 6, 2017).

⁴⁵ Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters*, 210.

⁴⁶ Although no date is listed in the catalogue, the mention of 60 plates makes it clear that this was the original 1705 edition.

⁴⁷ Van Delft, “Worldwide Copies of *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium* 1705”.

⁴⁸ James Raven, “From Promotion to Prescription: Arrangements for Reading and Eighteenth-Century Libraries”, in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 175 – 201 (176).

⁴⁹ Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

⁵⁰ Susan Staves, “‘Books Without Which I Cannot Write’: How Did Eighteenth-Century Women Writers Get the Books They Read?”, in *Women and Material Culture, 1660 – 1830*, 192 – 211 (208).

⁵¹ In a study by Regters possibly made prior to the painting, the book is missing but the cupboard is open, displaying several folio volumes lying down; this suggests the addition of the book was a conscious choice – perhaps made by the sitters – in the final painted group portrait. On the painting, see E. Pelinck, “Een Amsterdams familiestuk: Jeronimo de Bosch en zijn kinderen”, *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 46 (1954): 105 – 9.

⁵² Williams, *The Social Life of Books*, 7.

⁵³ Merian’s interaction with her indigenous informants has been discussed by Natalie Zemon Davis in her chapter on Merian in *Women on the Margins*.

⁵⁴ These doctors included Abraham van Limburg, Arent Cant, the British medical doctor whose library was auctioned in 1735, the Middelburg doctor Franciscus van de Wynperse, Johannes Jacobus Ostens, Johannes Nettis, the surgeon Harmanus Cluwen, Alexander Petrus Nahuys, and David van Royen, besides the collectors discussed in the article.

⁵⁵ Montoya, “French and English Women Writers”, 187.

⁵⁶ On the ecological aspects of Merian’s work, see Davis, *Women on the Margins*, 151.

⁵⁷ For the reasons for his attribution, see Reitsma, *Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters*. The attribution has been contested on stylistic and biographic grounds by Florence Pieters in her paper “Maria Sibylla Merian’s Additions to Alba Amicorum (Friendship Albums)”, paper presented at the conference “Changing the Nature of Art and Science / Intersections with Maria Sibylla Merian”, June 7, 2017, Amsterdam.

⁵⁸ For complete scans of the catalogue, see the BSCO platform:

<http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/book-sales-catalogues-online/bibliotheca-boerhaaviana-collected->

[by-a-leiden-professor-of-medicine-and-botany-the-appendix-was-sold-17390615-leiden-samuel-i-luchtmans-1739.](#)

⁵⁹ The most comprehensive, recent biography of Boerhaave, Luuc Kooijman's *Het orakel: De man die de geneeskunde opnieuw uitvond, Herman Boerhaave, 1668 - 1738* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2011) makes no mention of Merian. Neither does his follow-up *De Geest van Boerhaave: Onderzoek in een kil klimaat* (Amsterdam: Prometheus – Bert Bakker, 2014), despite some attention paid to Thoms and his wife Johanna Jacoba.

⁶⁰ KB Royal Library, The Hague, call number Verz. Cat. 36001.

⁶¹ Montoya, "French and English Women Writers".

⁶² Personal communication, Juliette Reboul.

⁶³ Janneke van Golen, *Achttiende-eeuwse wooncultuur in Leiden: Een onderzoek naar vier panden en hun eigenaren: Breestraat 117 en 24, Hogewoerd 144, Hooigracht 27* (Leiden: Dienst Monumenten & Archeologie, 2012), 23, 62.

⁶⁴ Other examples are the catalogue of another woman of letters, Maria Leti Le Clerc, and the catalogue of the famous library of Maria Elisabeth de Walé, lady of Ankeveen. Neither of these catalogues list works by Merian. A fourth possible example, the auction catalogue of the books belonging to the author couple Elisabeth Wolff-Bekker and Agatha Deken, has been shown to have included books of a third owner added to the catalogue by the bookseller. Alicia C. Montoya, "A Woman Reader at the Turn of the Century: Maria Leti Le Clerc's 1735 Library Auction Catalogue", in *Origines: Actes du 39e congrès annuel de la North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, ed. Russell Ganim and Thomas M. Carr, Jr. (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2009), 129 – 140; Ria Dijkstra-Van Bakelen, "De veilingcatalogus van maart 1789 van Betje Wolff en Aagje Deken", *Documentatieblad Werkgroep 18e Eeuw* 34 – 35 (1977): 123 – 48.

⁶⁵ Reproduced in Van Golen, *Achttiende-eeuwse wooncultuur in Leiden*, 149 – 82.

⁶⁶ Van Golen, *Achttiende-eeuwse wooncultuur in Leiden*, 159.

⁶⁷ Williams, *The Social Life of Books*, 50-1.

⁶⁸ Van Golen, *Achttiende-eeuwse wooncultuur in Leiden*, 175.

⁶⁹ Listed under "Medical books and natural history in folio", on p. 8, item 90.