

## ‘The traffic of books’: libraries, friends and conversation

JOHN Toland read a great deal. The scholarly apparatus to his written work is ample evidence of this. A more intimate view of his own library survives in the manuscript fragments recording the piles of books left at his death in the room he rented in Putney. Gathered on top of chairs, a chest of drawers and on the floor was Toland’s working library of some one hundred and fifty volumes.<sup>1</sup> The collection was eclectic. It contained a number of foreign language works in French, Spanish and Italian while the majority of the works were in the commonplace scholarly languages of Greek and Latin. The range of subject matter was broad, although a few suspect books were evident (a book was noted without full title to be a ‘Family of Love’ work), the vast majority were concerned with the staples of orthodox erudition. Biblical and patristic studies were a constituent part: amongst many significant titles were those, for example, by his own tutor at the University of Leiden, Frederic Spanheim, a number of volumes by the controversial Arminian theologian Jean Leclerc, the collected works of the Lutheran Biblical critic Johann Albertus Fabricius, philological studies by the orientalist Von Hardt of Helmstadt, as well as key grammatical volumes by the younger and older Buxtorfs. He owned copies of the Bible in Greek, Latin, English and Irish. Alongside these works of orthodox (in the main Protestant) piety were volumes of and about rabbinical learning, as well as reasonably modern studies of Islam. So for example, Toland owned the rather rare Italian work of Simon Luzzatto on the politics of the Hebrew state: as we will see, he used the work as the basis for his arguments in favour of naturalising the Jews, and indeed proposed an English translation in 1714. Another work by the eminent Dutch orientalist Adrian Reland was plundered by Toland to bring scholarly credit to his own work on the *Gospel of Barnabas*. He also had a number of volumes of studies in alchemical experiments and medicinal texts. The study of antiquities – Roman, French or Celtic – was abundant. Again as will be discussed below, many of

these books by a variety of continental scholars (men like the Frenchman Pezron or the Irish scholars O'Flaherty and MacCurtin) formed the basis for intellectual projects undertaken by Toland.

Without doubt this was a working collection: the dictionaries, lexicons and grammar books show the grounding of Toland's scholarly routines. What is intriguing about the collection is its utterly unexceptionable character. It is clear that its owner had perhaps fashionably broad tastes (and certainly an erudition capable of digesting books in a number of difficult or unfamiliar languages). Supplementing the works of religious learning are a generous collection of classical sources by Cicero, Justin, Caesar, Seneca, Lucan, Virgil, Horace, and, perhaps significantly both a Latin and Italian edition of Lucretius *de rerum natura*. It would not however be sensible or appropriate to suggest that somehow these works were a determinant of the character of Toland's intellectual disposition. In contrast to the works on theology and classical antiquity, there were, scattered amongst the piles in the room, a few volumes (by Sarpi, Selden, Herbert of Cherbury and John Locke) which might be considered unorthodox in the wrong company, but which also were a staple of many clerical libraries. Owning copies of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the works of Hermes Trismegisticus, and Claude Berigard's *Circulus Pisanus* did not necessarily imply a bent towards heresy or heterodoxy, since they were works that cropped up in other scholarly libraries with unremarkable frequency.

What can be said then about any man from his books? It has been a commonplace of historical studies to try to deduce the intellectual disposition of an individual from the bibliographical character of books they owned. Whether studying the remarkable cosmological world of Menocchio the miller of Friuli, or the mental worlds of more elite figures like John Webster, Samuel Jeake, John Locke and Isaac Newton, a close examination of their books has been a suggested means for casting a shaft of illumination into the real nature of their intellectual temperament. This historiography has tended to assert a rather reductive, and indeed passive, relationship between owner and reader, and between the content of a book and the experience of reading it. More recently much more attention has been paid to the various social contexts for the encounter between men (and women) and books. In this view the significance of reading a book may lie not in a purely intellectual transaction, but in a combination of this with other factors such as where the work was read (in a public library, in an intimate's parlour), or who recommended it, or indeed who condemned it. A specific invitation to read a particular book in a special location provided a different experience to that of stealing a view of a work in a clandestine moment. As we will see, for Toland, and the individuals he cultivated, books were as much instruments of sociability as carriers of intellectual meaning. The pursuit of certain books caused intimacies amongst

booksellers, authors, buyers: the composition of works similarly required, and produced, patrons, printers, booksellers and reviewers. The books Toland wrote, and used, were given cultural value by a combination of the sociabilities necessary to produce them (both material and cultural); their reception (readers bought them, read them, answered them) and circulation (reviewers identified their worth, people lent and borrowed them). Books were important to Toland, not simply as bearers of arguments but as means for brokering political and social transactions.

Exploring the encounters Toland had with a series of individuals and their 'libraries' will lay the foundations for establishing the extent of the community of readers in which he lived.<sup>2</sup> An insight into the social dimensions that underpinned this world of books can be seen in the very first surviving letter in Toland's printed correspondence very possibly written in 1694 to John Locke, an early sponsor of his studies in Oxford. In this letter the young student, fresh from studying in Leiden, described his arrival in Oxford late on a Monday evening in the middle of a tempestuous storm, having narrowly escaped robbery by highwaymen. Having spent the journey in the company of a Fellow of New Hall, 'a violent partisan of the clergy', Toland insisted that he was well informed about the 'abilities, genius and disposition of the Doctors of the University'. His first impression of the 'air' of university was that of learning. Having settled into lodgings at Mr Bodington's by All Soul's College, a location convenient for the Bodleian Library, Toland immediately found himself at the centre of attention. Through the agency of the 'extraordinarily civil' Mr Creech he was introduced to 'three or four of the most ingenious men in the university', as well as being visited by powerful scholars like Dr John Mill and White Kennet. Toland described in some detail the trials of his encounter with these men of learning, as he put it 'à la mode de France'. 'At great agonies ... to answer the expectations of those grand virtuosos', Toland noted that he was subjected to a barrage of testing enquiries 'especially [by] some of their Antiquaries and Linguists, who saluted me with peals of barbarous sounds and obsolete words'. He responded in kind. 'I spent upon them all my Anglo-Saxon and old British etymologies; which I hope gave them abundant satisfaction'. Preparing for future encounters Toland commented 'Hebrew and Irish, I hope, will bear me out for some weeks' but by then he realised that he would have to recharge his intellectual capital 'furnish'd from the library'.

Access to the collections in the Bodleian would provide Toland with material upon which he could maintain his intellectual credibility: this repute also opened doors to further avenues of learning. Upon establishing himself in Oxford, Toland was immediately integrated within a network of lending, borrowing and recommending books. Toland passed on news of Mr Creech's new edition of Lucretius and Manilus, indicating his intimacy with pre-

publication projects. He noted too that the famous Biblical scholar, John Mill, 'has already communicated his Testament to me'. This is clear evidence of Toland being made part of the informal collaboration of scholars working on the critical edition of the New Testament finally published in 1707. In fact, Toland was inundated with books; as he modestly wrote 'others sent me several books, I only inquired after, without any design of making bold so soon to borrow; all which I attribute to the respect they own their friends'.<sup>3</sup>

There are some significant themes to tease out of these descriptions of the callow fledgling scholar immersed in a complex web of scholarly personality and learning. The first point to underline is the connections between status and erudition: Toland's initiation into the world of Oxford learning was conducted through a robust inquisition of his skills. Reading books and displaying knowledge derived from them had positive benefits. Convincing performance created cultural status and authority, which in turn laid the foundations for further absorption into the circle of Oxford Fellows. Admission to this milieu was helped by the duties and protocols of friendship. Toland was introduced to men like Creech and Mill because of the 'respect' they owed to a mutual friend. One of the ways in which the tendrils of such friendship manifested themselves was in the lending of books. As we will see below this was one of the powerful mediums by which books dispersed amongst a community of the learned. As Anne Goldgar has underscored, in commentary on the sociability underpinning the republic of letters, such bibliographical transactions and exchanges of reciprocal service were central to establishing what can be called intellectual communities.<sup>4</sup>

Toland's intimacy with a number of individuals and their libraries illustrates the function of books and learning in his life. The theme to foreground here is not that these liaisons just brought him into contact with dangerous books, but that the pursuit of 'bad' books initiated him into a circle of powerful and radical figures. In the early 1690s Toland first came to the notice of the republic of letters through his association with Benjamin Furly, the radical Quaker friend of John Locke. Typically, Toland acted as a carrier of books between Locke and his friends (organised through the recommendation of Furly). His intimacy with Furly, reinforced by his connections to figures like Anthony Ashley (third Earl of Shaftesbury), Prince Eugene of Savoy, and Anthony Collins who were also closely associated with the Quaker, brought him acquaintance with a series of libraries of international repute. The jewel in the crown of such libraries was that belonging to Benjamin Furly.

Furly, merchant of Rotterdam, was extraordinarily proud of his library. The notoriety of his intellectual hospitality prompted his close friend Anthony Ashley to decline his offer of accommodation on the grounds that the house was too 'public' for his requirements of 'easy and private' philosophical tranquillity.<sup>5</sup> From the early 1680s the reputation of Furly's library attracted

many learned and philosophically *avant garde* visitors. Toland followed in the path of many others. The library's attraction was not simply the intellectual resources found on the shelves but also the people that met there. Furly's library was a space of sociability in which Toland made many acquaintances. Evidence of the content of the library, and the large quantity of correspondence with a range of late seventeenth-century figures that Furly had, can provide a significant pathway into the sociability of the world of ideas in which Toland moved. As a collector and reader Furly came to know many of the learned authors and publishers associated with the radical side of the republic of letters. Men like Charles Levier, Thomas Johnson and Jean Aymon also came to work closely with Toland on a number of projects through intimacy with Furly.

The dubious reputation of Furly's library was widespread. Having described the approximately 4,000 volumes shelved along the walls of the *comptoir*, the visiting bibliophile Von Uffenbach noted that the books were 'mostly on theological subjects, of the *suspectae fidei* order, and appear to be well suited to Mr. Benjamin Furly's taste, who is a paradoxical and peculiar man, who soon gave us to understand that he adhered to no special religion'.<sup>6</sup> Historians, like the German visitor, have readily made the connection between the possession of suspect books, and Furly's heresy and irreligion. Furly admitted that the 'infection of heresie' was cultured within this environment of suspect books.<sup>7</sup> At least one regular meeting known as the 'Lantern' met in Furly's house. On these occasions a sociability based on the consumption of drink, the communal reading of books and consequent conversation, according to Furly, commonly encouraged heresy to 'rise up a pace in the Lanterne when so watered'.<sup>8</sup> Even the cautious Locke feared he might be 'heretickated' by such company.<sup>9</sup> The radical potential of Furly's intimate meetings can best be seen in the fact that it was in this library that the compilation and scribal distribution of the manuscript text *Le traité des trois imposteurs* was composed. This work (which dismissed all organised religion as imposture and tyranny) was a *bricolage* of works readily available in Furly's collection.<sup>10</sup> It was no coincidence that this work, one of the most celebrated and feared clandestine works of the eighteenth century, was the product of Furly's sociability. As the evidence of a number of archives shows, the first copy of the work was made in 1711 in Furly's library. Many of his friends were responsible for expanding various scribal and printed 'versions' between 1711 and 1719. Other evidence indicates that one of the other libraries with which Toland was familiar (that of Eugene and Hohendorf in Vienna) was also a source for the distribution of the same work. As will be discussed below (chapter 7), through his relationship with Furly and Eugene of Savoy, Toland was certainly intimate with its content and most probably was involved in making additions to the text. Libraries were places not only for reading but for writing too.<sup>11</sup>

Visitors to Furly's library were not without their own collections. Libraries were not simply spaces where books sat dumbly on shelves, but were where like-minded men gathered to discuss books, create ideas and compose texts. Although it is not possible to be precise in detail, it was through Furly that Toland met many of the powerful men who provided the intellectual and political platforms for his public mission. These connections might originally have been made through the medium of a mutual interest in books, but they were to develop into relationships that produced a compelling series of public discourses. In reading these men's books, Toland made himself a broker of cultural authority. Men like Anthony Collins (a gentlemen freethinker and intimate of Locke in his last years who was known to Toland from the early 1700s) threw open their substantial libraries for Toland's use. As evidence of the manuscript catalogue of Collins's collection establishes, his library offered Toland many heterodox resources.<sup>12</sup> Collins was in his own words, 'a severe judge of books' who had the reputation of being a relentless hunter of books. One contemporary described Collins as a man 'whom I thought no book could escape'.<sup>13</sup> Although there has been no systematic study of Collins's collection the case could certainly be put for describing it as erudite, and perhaps *libertin erudit*.<sup>14</sup>

Just like Furly's volumes, Collins's collection was not simply made up of works of dubious piety, but included a range of orthodox theology, patristics and biblical commentary, as well as an impressive holding of classical Roman and Greek literature (very often in multiple editions and translations). Reflecting a continental rather than insular learning, the majority of these works were in Latin, and in French. The theology ranged from hyper-Catholic and High Church Anglican (Bellarmine and Bossuet, Hickes and Dodwell), to broadly reformed apologetics (Allix, Limborch and Hoadly). Again, a little like Furly's collection, the radical sectarians of the English revolution were well represented in the works of Muggleton, Penn and Naylor. Notably, the commonwealth political tradition, to which Toland was to make a seminal contribution, was also well represented in the form of *monarchomach* and republican works by Hotman, Buchanan, Milton, Harrington, Gordon and Molesworth. To supplement this variety of orthodox and radical material were 'dangerous books' by Bruno, Spinoza, Vanini, Blount and Tindal. Toland's intimacy with the library can be seen in Collins's possession of a number of his manuscripts. Like others in Toland's circle, Collins accumulated these books by the intellectual recommendation found in the full range of literary journals such as the *Acta Eruditorum* (1682–1719), the *Journal des Sçavans*, the *Journal Littéraire*, and various *Bibliothèques* of French and German literature, which he owned. For comparison (and perhaps purchase) he also owned twenty-one catalogues of private and institutional libraries, including those of his friends Furly and Hohendorf as well as those for the universities of Oxford

and Leiden and the Vatican. This library (like the others that Toland haunted) was a material manifestation of the intellectual culture of the republic of letters.

Making such libraries involved both economic and intellectual transactions. The purchase, selection and circulation of books brought men together creating networks of communication and cultural power. The example of Collins indicates that his pursuit of titles led him into a series of relationships with a variety of people and places. He had met Locke in Churchill's bookshop. He had also used the same London bookshop (Christopher Bateman's in Paternoster Row) as Eugene of Savoy and Baron d'Hohendorf. The intimacy of contact is further evidenced in Collins's visit to Furly in 1711. Here he met Eugene of Savoy, noting that '[I] was several times in conversation with Prince Eugene there'. One can only speculate about what books they discussed, but it seems a very remote possibility that the three men who owned the most dangerous collections in Europe did not share bibliographical secrets and desires. It also seems unlikely that Toland, who was conducting a secret correspondence with Eugene at the time, as well as visiting Collins regularly, did not share these secrets. Certainly, Collins owned a copy of the *La vie et l'esprit de Spinoza*, as well as a trinity of very anti-Christian manuscripts written by Spanish Jews like Troki, Mortiera and Orobio which, according to Desmaiseauz, he had acquired in Holland before 1714.<sup>15</sup>

Toland used the access he had to these libraries in a variety of ways. One significant role was to act as a broker of 'lost' ideas. This can be best be seen in his role in the circulation of Giordano Bruno's works, which is typical of how he spent a lifetime springing dangerous works from library shelves. Toland first came into contact with Bruno's work in 1698. From this point he was conducting a lengthy correspondence with Leibniz and others over the meaning of the *Spaccio*, one of Bruno's most subversive texts. By 1713 he was implicated in the publication of a translation of the same work.<sup>16</sup> The list of 'lent' manuscripts (which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter) indicates that as late as 1719–20 Toland was still undertaking the distribution of Bruno's works. He sent a 'Life' of Bruno to Nicholas Hartsoeker in Holland, and two other minor works to Englishmen.<sup>17</sup> Further evidence of Toland's labours in translating and commenting on Bruno's work are found both in his archive and in the (1726) printed collection.<sup>18</sup> In distributing such texts he was acting both as an intermediary between geographically dispersed archives, and between private collections and the public sphere. The Viennese library of Baron d'Hohendorf and Prince Eugene, as Toland acknowledged to Leibniz, was another resource he exploited in this role.<sup>19</sup> Anthony Collins's library was the source of the translation that ultimately resulted in the printed edition of the *Spaccio* (1713). The translation had originally been made 'for the private use of Mr Collins, nor ever intended to be printed'. Toland borrowed it, promptly sending it to the press.<sup>20</sup> It was no surprise then that after his death

Collins anxiously wrote inquiring about a number of volumes Toland had failed (repeatedly) to return.

Another powerful visitor to Furly's library with whom Toland became intimate was Anthony Ashley, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury. Although Shaftesbury's writings have been subjected to close study by literary scholars, the full dimensions of his political commitments in the 1690s and 1700s have not been fully explored. Having entered Parliament in 1695, Shaftesbury was a focus for the 'true Whig' war for 'common liberty' until his retirement from national politics in 1704. As evidence of his correspondence with Goldolphin shows, even after this date he was a powerful figure in elite politics, potentially brokering support for various ministries in the late 1700s. The earl was not simply a mediator of commonwealth commitments in England, but importantly had a network of connections with key figures in European politics, like Furly, Eugene of Savoy and Sophia of Hanover herself. Again these relationships were cast in opposition to the 'foreign and universal tyranny' of Louis XIV. As Shaftesbury's lengthy correspondence with Furly establishes, his relationships were based upon a defence of liberty and free government. This devotion stayed with Shaftesbury throughout his life: as he commented after the trial of the 'seditious priest' Sacheverell in 1710, never 'was the principle of liberty and hatred of slavery and priestcraft ever higher in its ascendant'. For the earl, liberty would be preserved by the security of the Protestant succession. The tenure of free government was secured then by parliamentary measures like the Act of Settlement.<sup>21</sup> From the late 1690s Toland and Shaftesbury collaborated upon a number of 'commonwealth' political projects. In turn this relationship brought, not only patronage, but also access to further library collections and circles of intimates. The evidence of Shaftesbury's own substantial library catalogue suggests he was a keen and discerning owner. The manuscript catalogues in Latin, Greek and English compiled c. 1708 for his Chelsea residence indicate a sophisticated collection dominated by a comprehensive range of classical texts. The quality and size of editions as well as place of publication were prestigious (folios from Amsterdam, Rome, Paris, and Venice) reflecting Shaftesbury's wealth. The library contained an impressive collection of republican political theory from Buchanan to Harrington, and the *Vindicae contra tyrannos* (Edinburgh, 1579) to Machiavelli. Supplementary were works of erudition (Spanheim, Kircher, Fabricius, Vossius, Selden) and biblical criticism (including the works of Richard Simon 'suivant la copie de Paris'). But there was also a batch of more popular pamphlet literature. Especially prominent were the political writings from the 1680s and 1700s in particular those produced by the Commonwealth publishers Richard Baldwin and John Darby. Overall the collection is eclectic although more secular than theological, although there were significant holdings of Calvinist, Catholic and Anglican works (including writings by Whiston, Stillingfleet, and Tillotson) as



well as High Church works by Atterbury and Hicckes.<sup>22</sup> It is important to acknowledge that the intellectual culture in which Toland and his ilk operated was learned as well as subversive. Their ideas were formed in dialogue with libraries that contained the canons of orthodox culture rather than simply generating new views unanchored from commonplace tradition.

From the fragments of correspondence we know, then, that Toland had access to a series of significant libraries. These introduced him into learned circles in Oxford, heterodox communities in Rotterdam, and gentle society in London. His acquaintance with Eugene of Savoy, which started as early as 1708, brought him into contact with not only a patron of European-wide reputation and status, but with a book collector on an immense scale. Whereas Shaftesbury's library was dominated by classical works, and Furlly's was replete with theology, Prince Eugene's library, reflecting his wealth, was, perhaps simply because of its size, a much more determinedly 'erudite' collection. Whereas Furlly owned perhaps as much as a few shelves of impious works and a handful of clandestine manuscripts, Eugene owned rooms of such books, and dozens of such manuscripts.<sup>23</sup> Eugene's contemporary reputation as 'a soul inaccessible to superstition' and a 'man of reason' was prompted by his collections.<sup>24</sup> His librarian, the minor poet Jean-Baptiste Rousseau noted 'the astounding fact is that there is hardly a book which the Prince has not read, or at least looked through, before sending it to be bound'.<sup>25</sup> One contemporary warned him of the danger of his books, 'Take care, monsieur, for your vast knowledge will damn you, but my ignorance will be my salvation'.<sup>26</sup> To complement Eugene's collection his friend Baron d'Hohendorf, gatekeeper to Eugene's more dangerous works, had accumulated his own impressive collection, which again is distinguished by its resolutely secular contents. The character of the library is perhaps best indicated by the absence of theological works (in any significant numbers).<sup>27</sup> This was the intellectual culture that underpinned Prince Eugene's reputation and role as leading military defender of the international Protestant interest. As will be argued in a later chapter, we know that Toland's relationship with these two figures prompted him to compose a number of works which were initially only conceived of as private scribal works intended for inclusion in their libraries. In these connections and encounters with men and books lie the origins of Toland's lifetime work. This cultural encounter prompted first dialogue, and then transformation of the commonplace certainties of that orthodox culture. How he set about establishing this dialogue will form the backbone of this current study.

The 'library' (the sort of space Toland studied in, in the houses and palaces of men like Furlly, Shaftesbury, Collins and Eugene), was then both a place where a network of individuals met for conversation and collaboration, and also a material resource in the form of a collection of books and manuscripts.

Bearing in mind Borges' remark 'that books in themselves have no meaning', we need to think harder about how the intellectual community focused on the late seventeenth-century library worked. Rather than simply regarding it as a place where books were stored, the intention will be to make an inquiry into how the library's human subjects interacted with books, to explore how books (and their writers and readers) not only produced intellectual statements, but also forged political relationships and brokered cultural power.

A starting point is to ask what Toland's contemporaries thought a library was for. By examining the surviving catalogues of various collections it is possible to be quite precise about the contents of any particular library, but it is not quite so easy to grasp its broader cultural function. Reconstructing the dynamics of the material process of making a library is to underscore the complex relationships formed between authors, booksellers, purchasers and readers.<sup>28</sup> A convenient contemporary perception of the cultural function of a library is Gabriel Naudé's *Instructions concerning the erection of a library* (translated by John Evelyn, London 1661). The work sets out to discuss how a gentleman might 'regulate himself concerning the choice of books, the means of procuring them, and how they should be disposed of'.<sup>29</sup> A good library was the premise for being cosmopolitan. Books were not only the instruments of cultural ornament but crucial for study too.

How did one exercise refinement and discretion in the purchase of works? In making a library, what books ought to be bought and what excluded? The best means of identifying a 'canon' of good books was to peruse the sales-catalogues of book auctions: 'by this means', commented Naudé, 'one may sometimes do a friend service and pleasure; and when we cannot furnish him with the book he is in quest of, shew and direct him to the place where he may find some copie'.<sup>30</sup> Men like Collins, Shaftesbury and Locke used such catalogues to identify desired books. Again, as the evidence of Toland's letter suggested above, the importance of the intimacy between books and sociability is underscored. Circulating knowledge about books and using ownership of books as part of the protocols of friendship and service was essential. Naudé was pragmatic in his description of the motives for purchase and pursuit of titles. It was well known 'that every man who seeks for a book, judges it to be good'.<sup>31</sup> Importantly for our consideration of the sources of Toland's impiety, Naudé recommended that books on all subjects ought to be included in a collection, even those that might be considered dangerous or heretical.<sup>32</sup> Although more interested in the provision of public libraries, Naudé was insistent that libraries were to be used for the benefit of as many as possible: access to libraries thus ought to be regulated by rules of civility and sociability.<sup>33</sup>

The principal points to be made here are inter-related. The contents of a library were to be calculated for instrumental purposes rather than mere display. As a consequence the perceived intellectual value of books was shaped

by individual desires and appreciation. Books were meant to mean things. The merits and cultural status of any particular book was the product of shifting conventional standards. Collections of books (libraries) represent, then, the results of a series of such changing aspirations, the material accretion of human inter-action, choice and cooperation. One consequence of this slow accretive process of making a collection suggests that historians ought to exercise considerable caution about too readily defining a library as radical or orthodox. Such a description would presume some single-minded objective behind its making, when in fact a collection was the result of a series of exchanges and conversations. It also raises a number of points in relation to the arguments of historians who have suggested with confidence that the circulation and ownership of radical books laid the foundations for radical political action in the period. As this book will endeavour to argue, the radicalism of Toland's project was determined not simply by his access to radical resources in the form of dangerous ideas contained in a corpus of clandestine and heterodox literature, but in how he attempted to subvert the commonplaces of orthodox discourses by appropriating their status and values. The presence of clandestine literature in these various libraries may have been a symptom rather than a cause of a subversive intellectual disposition. The primary function of these texts may not have been intellectual as much as social: subversive works may have acted as badges of identity, rather than carriers of precise philosophical meaning. The intellectual work of attacking the hegemonic discourses of orthodoxy carried out by Toland was undertaken by immersion in works of theology, scripture and patristics rather than by mere imitation and reproduction of the radical arguments of a subversive tradition.

The pursuit of books was driven by both the ambitions of sociability and the intellectual priorities of the period. In buying books intellectual aspiration, economic logistics and social protocols converged. A library was after all a physical collection of books: a material residue of an intellectual culture. Not only do the books themselves indicate the contours of debate and controversies, but they are also a sediment of 'intellectual' problems. These same books were the products of a series of economic transactions and social negotiations: books were bought by individuals from booksellers for themselves or others. The decisions determining purchase were made by assessment of intellectual and economic worth. Ownership was determined both by availability and a network of knowledge about where such a book could be got. Making libraries was a collective act.

For men like Furlly, Shaftesbury, Eugene and Collins, books were the very stuff of life. Intellectual 'conversation' about books amongst this group of men had its own form of social etiquette. Exploring these protocols of conduct will lay some foundations for thinking about how the circulation of ideas in the

period functioned. Harold Love has persuasively asserted that there was a connection between sociability and the circulation of scribal texts. Patterns of cultural exchange made not only readers, but also communities of readers.<sup>34</sup> Toland, as will be established below, certainly acted as a broker and maker of such a radical milieu by his transmission of books and ‘clandestine’ texts. Just as the circulation and exchange of manuscripts made communities, so did libraries. The exchange of news about books, gleaned from literary journals, or on the recommendation of a helpful bookseller, meant that any one individual had potential access to a network of information across Europe. As we will see, Toland not only contributed many works that became the subject of this literary exchange, but also was responsible for circulating other texts for communal discussion.

One insight into the sort of ‘conversation’ about books can be gleaned from the long and intimate correspondence between Furlly and Locke, cementing a friendship that developed when Locke was in exile in the 1680s. Much of the conversation concerned the pursuit of books and discussion of their merits. It is in this cut and thrust of bibliographical erudition that such men formed, changed, developed and altered their beliefs and opinions. Men in pursuit of important books were tenacious. Evidence of a collaborative concern to track down titles in England and abroad is prevalent in the correspondence.<sup>35</sup> Each man would borrow catalogues, arrange for intermediaries and warn the other of sharp practice in the second-hand trade.<sup>36</sup> Throughout the letters there are repeated instructions from both men about the transport of books between Holland and England, sometimes carried by themselves, sometimes by friends and sometimes by carriers (in which case strict details were given on how the package should be wrapped).<sup>37</sup> It is possible to trace the shared interest in a particular author through the correspondence: Locke repeatedly wrote to Furlly in quest of the critical works of Richard Simon, complaining of the delay and loss of volumes in transit.<sup>38</sup> We should recall that Toland’s first introduction to this circle was as a book carrier between Furlly, Locke and Leclerc.

One of the key benefits of this sort of community was the mutual lending of books. As Collins recalled he, repeatedly, lent books to Toland which were difficult to retrieve.<sup>39</sup> The swift exchange of volumes, accompanied by some sort of commentary or reflection is a repeated theme of many letters passed between Furlly and Locke. At some moments it seems that the two men were reading the same book simultaneously, separated only by the North Sea. So for example in December 1690 having discussed a number of polemical writings Furlly noted similarities with ‘that book we read together’.<sup>40</sup> At other points both men asked for the written opinions of the other on books they were about to read. In August 1692 Furlly sent Locke a parcel of books (some of which came from Jean Leclerc) including a volume of Van Helmont’s

which he noted, I 'now expect your account of it I never having read it'.<sup>41</sup> Again in 1694, Furly requested Locke to give his commentary on a difficult book, 'I doubt not, but you have read the book through, and desire you would freely, as a friend give me your thoughts of it'.<sup>42</sup> Writing in 1697 about a book examining obscure terms in the New Testament, Furly concluded his remarks, 'But I will not trouble you any longer with my observations on this treatise, desiring rather to see yours, when you have read them'.<sup>43</sup>

These letters are peppered with such exchanges about books read, books sought out, books lost, books recommended. The discussion of an issue might lead to recommendations of further reading or as Furly commented 'this has made me search my library'.<sup>44</sup> Toland's skill was to absorb the dynamic of inquiry, and to set up his own lines of controversy. Although the subject matter debated between Locke and Furly covered a range material – politics, natural philosophy, and theology – a recurrent and persistent interest was a concern about the textuality of Scripture.<sup>45</sup> This was to be a theme that Toland developed as a central issue in many of his public writings. Having identified the 'weak' points in orthodox learning through forensic discussion with others, in works like *Amyntor* and especially *Nazarenus*, Toland would contrive material for similar discussion. Responding to new polemics, contemporary scholarship, and often very controversial writings, was the declared ambition of such conversations. This process of answering and absorbing the arguments of a variety of works enabled individuals to construct their respective intellectual critiques. Books were the staple of this process of making conviction. It was this intellectual substance, pondered by a community of readers, which produced beliefs and principles. In this way, as Furly put it, I may 'weigh my reasonings'.<sup>46</sup>

That the 'traffick in Books' (in their material form as well as their intellectual meaning) provided the stuff of intellectual community is also readily exemplified in the relations between John Locke and the fledgling 'freethinker' Anthony Collins.<sup>47</sup> Their friendship was cemented 'past ceremony' when Collins successfully and swiftly completed Locke's instructions for binding books on his behalf.<sup>48</sup> An interesting insight into this relationship can be seen in the very exact instructions Locke gave Collins about the physical preparation of his Bibles. Their material condition was important for his intended use. The size of margins was critical to how he would use the books, as he explained in one letter, he required a Bible with 'ordinary binding but strong and that will open well' and in another a binding 'so well sown and ordered in the back that it will lye open anywhere'.<sup>49</sup> If the task was not well undertaken he was critical and complained to Collins of the faults of the binder by 'the running of his pareing knife too deep into the margent'.<sup>50</sup> Like Locke and Collins, we must imagine Toland carefully reading, annotating and collating his own copies of the Bible.

Books were for Locke, as for many of his friends, ‘instruments of truth and knowledge’. They were (in his pithy phrase) the ‘fodder of our understanding’. Men informed themselves by a ‘tiresome rummaging in the mistakes and jargon of pretenders to knowledge’.<sup>51</sup> A presumably tired Locke sometimes resented the labours he had devoted to reading bad books.<sup>52</sup> Regardless of these critical remarks, as with Furly, Locke’s correspondence with Collins was structured by the pursuit of sought after books. ‘There is nothing publish’d of late in England worth acquainting you with’, ‘at present wee have but few worth taking notice of’ are repeated phrases from Collins’s letters. Encouraged by Locke to keep him informed of new works in Holland and France, Collins sometimes supplied him directly with his own copies of books.<sup>53</sup> Locke was particularly keen to get hold of a copy of Jean Leclerc’s edition of the New Testament: ‘I shall be glad to see it since Mr Bold has told you how desirous I was to see it. I have expected one of them from Holland ever since they have been out, and so I hope to restore it you again in a few days’. Collins had unexpectedly received a copy and could ‘therefore very well spare it for your use’.<sup>54</sup> Eventually, Locke received two copies of the work and suggested Collins take one ‘unless you have some particular reason to desire your own again’.<sup>55</sup> Throughout these series of transactions Locke repeatedly asked Collins to supply him with any details of how Leclerc’s volume had been received: did it ‘make any noise amongst the men of letters or divinity in your Town?’<sup>56</sup> Again the urgency of acquiring a copy of a particular work was only matched by the desire to know what other readers thought of the book. Toland’s publications repeatedly set up such ripples of expectation and criticism across the republic of letters.

As well as being concerned to identify and provide details of books that a ‘rational man’ could take pleasure in and instruction from, Locke and Collins also exchanged a number of recommendations and reviews. Sometimes this involved them in the posting of volumes, other times a recommendation led to the individual reading a book he already possessed. As Collins noted to Locke’s suggestion that he lend him a copy of Limborch’s *Vita Episcopii*, ‘I have the book and will read it upon your recommendation’.<sup>57</sup> As well as examining the worth of recent publications, Locke and Collins also gave each other very explicit accounts of why they read books. When Collins offered Locke a copy of Bossuet’s work against Richard Simon (direct from the publishers in Paris) he indicated he was only interested in reading the book if it discussed matters beyond that of the status of the Vulgate: ‘if it gives any light into the true sense of the S. Scripture by establishing the Greek text or explaining the sense of any obscure or difficult passages I shall be glad to see it’.<sup>58</sup> Locke, in his turn, attempted to give Collins careful advice about the necessary ‘application’ required when reading Scripture, only to be rebutted by Collins who insisted that his method of reading was adequate, ‘for I have no

design to find any particular opinion there but only to endeavour to get the same idea that the author had when he wrote'.<sup>59</sup> Again these different strategies for reading texts, and making meaning from them, were born in epistolary conversation with friends. This unrelenting dialogue with print culture was a self-conscious and collective enterprise: being part of the conversation meant potentially having the ability to shape and determine the beliefs and convictions of a community of people.

One important thing to note about the tone of these epistolary exchanges is the equality of discussion. Despite clear distinctions in wealth and social prestige, men like Locke, Collins, Furly and Toland treated each other as equals in debate. Clearly men like Locke and Collins had financial advantages that allowed them to participate in the relatively expensive business of book buying. Although an element of deference was evident (especially to Locke whose public intellectual status was profound) there was considerable disagreement and free expression. As part of this community it is possible to imagine how, despite his lowly birth and lack of wealth, Toland's intellectual facilities qualified him for participation in the conversation. His intimacy with men like Furly and Collins gave him access to large and diverse collections of books, but also to a different set of personal networks to the world of print culture. Furly was best connected in the Low Countries, being intimate with *libraires* like Leers, Wettstein and Johnson. Locke conducted most of his business through the services of Awnsam Churchill, while Collins, through the agency of Pierre Desmaizeaux, had efficient relations with French booksellers in London like Vaillant and Du Noyer. These routes for acquiring the latest volumes, or the most valuable edition, were also available to Toland to distribute his own work. In tracing the cut and thrust of changing interests, the responses to new works and the debates about the merits of particular arguments and ideas it is possible to see the process by which individual conviction was made. In these routine, mundane, repeated and habitual transactions the grit of cultural change was gradually deposited amongst this community of friends and associates. Toland was a master at making ripples of controversy in these constantly ebbing waters.

In the letters passed between two of Toland's other close friends – Anthony Collins and Pierre Desmaizeaux – it is evident that the 'traffick in books' was not insular, but involved participation in a European-wide republic of letters. As we will see later in this book, one of Toland's supreme skills was to be able to broker intellectual resources from a variety of cultural capitals – London, Hanover, Leiden, Dublin and Vienna being the most obvious. Pierre Desmaizeaux's massive correspondence is an ideal archive for reconstructing the cultural mechanics of book buying in some detail.<sup>60</sup> The letters between him and Collins give a sense of these transactions, close to the experience of Toland. Unlike the exchange of letters with Locke, although it is clear that

Collins has respect for Desmaizeaux's learning and bibliographical taste, he was treated as an intermediary rather than an equal: very few of the letters have extended discussion of the contents of the works sought out or received. Collins's relationship with the Frenchman was based upon his efficiency as a mediator and networker with a variety of booksellers in London, Paris and Holland. Like many of his friends, Collins relied on a combination of news by word of mouth, letter or literary review to make his choice of books to buy. A recurrent request was to be told the 'literary news of the town'.<sup>61</sup> Collins subscribed to a variety of literary journals and was particular that he received them punctually. He took seriously the reviews he read. When purchasing duplicate copies of works like Adrian Reland's *de religione mahommedica* (a work that Toland exploited in *Nazarenus*) he noted 'that there are very considerable additions in it'. When enquiring after a new edition of Naudé's *Apologie* he instructed purchase only 'if the notes are in your opinion curious; for I have an old edition of it, printed at The Hague without notes'.<sup>62</sup> On his regular visits to London, Collins took the opportunity, as he put it 'to try some of the books in the catalogues you sent me'.<sup>63</sup> Sometimes Collins appealed to Desmaizeaux for help with books he could not find like Richard Simon's *Discourse upon Ecclesiastical Revenues*, 'it is a book I want very much; and you would do me a favour if by any means you could procure it for me'. His regular booksellers Vaillant and Du Noyer could not get hold of a copy, but Desmaizeaux could.<sup>64</sup>

Collins was not profligate in his purchases: through the agency of Desmaizeaux he exercised a refined discrimination. His books were not for mere ornament. Keen to have them used, Collins encouraged access to his collection at Great Baddow, repeatedly inviting and entertaining men like Toland, Sallengre and another of Toland's friends Hugh Wrottesley. He promised one visitor 'good fires, good books, good wine, philosophers meals, and country appetites'.<sup>65</sup> Inviting Desmaizeaux to stay in 1710, he noted that 'you may be so private as not to be subject to any manner of animadversion on for keeping bad company'.<sup>66</sup> Again the provision of books laid the foundation for a form of intellectual sociability. Like Furlly's meetings at the Lantern, the evidence of Collins's correspondence indicates that at the same time as ordering his books he made sure a plentiful supply of good wine was bought too. Collins, although reluctant to borrow books himself, freely lent copies to others. Some borrowers like Hewett and Toland failed to return volumes causing Collins to buy duplicates.<sup>67</sup> Although a generous lender Collins was anxious about 'losing' volumes as he explained to Desmaizeaux: 'as to the other books I am willing you should keep them till you have don with them; but then I would have them returned; for tho they are of no great value, I would not be without them, as wanting sometimes to consult them, and knowing not where to get them again'.<sup>68</sup>



When thinking about the milieu in which Toland lived we need to be cautious about over-emphasising the intellectual ‘radicalism’ of his contacts. There is little doubt that one of the results of his involvement with these people (and many others) was constant conversation. The ‘traffic’ of ideas was carried out in both the material form of books and the social process of communication. A model of reading based upon passive consumption or absorption of the content of books is untenable given the evidence of the interactions of these men. Toland, like Furly, Collins, Locke *et al.* were not just interested in reading ‘radical’ books, but primarily wanted to engage with the arguments of the mainstream. It is also important to emphasise the diversity of the ‘community’ that Toland engaged with. Men like Furly, Jean Leclerc, Phillip Limborch, John Locke, Anthony Collins, Shaftesbury, Charles Levier, Jean Aymon, Eugene of Savoy, and d’Hohendorf did have common interests, but they also offered different intellectual and political opportunities. Toland’s skill was to be able to exploit a range of different (and sometimes conflicting) political interests. As we will see, Toland compromised some of these relationships: it is quite clear that John Locke was keen to disassociate himself from Toland, while his close friends Anthony Collins and Furly kept up their intimacy throughout their lives.

John Toland established his cultural credentials by a variety of relationships with the written word. In his life books were lent, borrowed, lost, misplaced, annotated, condemned, hidden, and even (as we will see in the next chapter) imagined. Access to libraries, deals with booksellers, controversies with authors, contracts with printers, and failed editorial projects structured the shape of Toland’s intellectual and social environment. In the material form of books we have the residue of this complex current of communication between, and amongst, individuals. The books that Toland wrote, read and circulated were not simply passive texts, but also a forum where ideas and convictions were made. A considerable amount of thought has been devoted to thinking about how individuals formed their Christian beliefs in dialogue with Scriptural discourses; less labour has engaged with the cultural processes of disengagement from such traditional forms of reading. The books owned collectively by men like Furly, Toland and Eugene were possessed to be read as part of a collaborative enterprise. These men were ‘reading for action’.<sup>69</sup> The ‘fodder’ contained within books cultivated beliefs and convictions. Whether imagining Furly and Locke in conversation about the difficulties of establishing the precise textual integrity of Scripture, mirrored in Locke and Newton exchanging dissertations about specific textual corruptions in the *Gospel of John*, or John Toland and Robert Molesworth using the margins of a particular book to discuss their project on the history of Celtic learning, it will be central to this book that the cultivation of ideas worked in this dynamic of oral or literary conversation.<sup>70</sup> Books had meaning read into them. Within this world of

books we can see different trajectories and characters: the theological eclecticism of Furly's library both reflected, and determined, the character of his tolerant attitude to all sincere theological opinion; the more actively hostile and irreligious contents of Eugene and Hohendorf's collections both made, and were made, by their anticlerical and anti-theological commitments. The variety of books found in the libraries of Furly, Shaftesbury, Locke, Collins, Eugene and Hohendorf provided a cultural infrastructure for the making of authority. The provision, reception and circulation of books, manuscripts and ideas amongst this community also brought Toland enormous cultural credibility and status. In these conversations (literary and oral) Toland formed the relationships that meant his ideas had a theatre of influence that unfolded across Europe.

## NOTES

- 1 For a full list see *Nazarenus* pp. 302–314.
- 2 See A. Ophir and S. Shapin 'The place of knowledge: a methodological survey' in *Science in Context* 4 (1991) pp. 3–21.
- 3 *Collections* 2 pp. 292–294.
- 4 A. Goldgar *Impolite learning* (New Haven, 1995).
- 5 Foster *Letters* pp. 198, 201.
- 6 W. I. Hull *Benjamin Furly and Quakerism in Rotterdam* (Swarthmore College Monographs, 1941) p. 152.
- 7 *Correspondence* No. 947 p. 230.
- 8 *Correspondence* No. 986 p. 316.
- 9 *Correspondence* No. 993 pp. 332–333.
- 10 See S. Berti *Trattato dei tre impostori* (Turin, 1994) 'Introduction'.
- 11 P. Marchand 'Impostoribus' in Berti *et al. Heterodoxy* p. 510.
- 12 See *Bibliotheca Antonii Collins* (1731). BL 270 I 23 (1–2) has prices marked. A manuscript version is at Keynes Mss 217, King's College, Cambridge.
- 13 *Correspondence* No. 3391 p. 129; No. 3326 p. 53.
- 14 See J. O'Higgins *Anthony Collins: the man and his works* (The Hague, 1970) pp. 23–39.
- 15 BL Add Mss 4282 fo. 242. See Keynes Mss 217: fos. 235, 305, 325 [the Spanish mss], 431 [*Le vie et L'espirit*]. On the acquisition of the Spanish works see BL Add Mss 4254 fo. 11; O'Higgins *Anthony Collins* p. 38.
- 16 See S. Ricci *La Fortuna del Pensiero di Giordano Bruno 1600–1750* (Florence, 1986); G. Carabelli 'John Toland e G.W. Leibniz: otto lettere' *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 29 (1974) pp. 412–431; *Champion Pillars* pp. 150–154.
- 17 See Carabelli 'John Toland e G.W. Leibniz' p. 425.
- 18 See BL Add Mss 4295 fo. 64r 'A Psalm before Sermon in Praise of Asinity' and fo. 65r

- 'A very pious Psalm after Sermon about the meaning of the Asse & her Foal'. The 1726 collection included *De genere, loco, et tempore mortis Jordani Bruni Nolani* (dedicated to Hohendorf dated 1709) and an account of Bruno's 'Of the infinite Universe'.
- 19 Carabelli 'John Toland e G.W. Leibniz' p. 425, 'I found my self oblig'd to send as farr as Vienna a kind of dissertation on this subject'.
  - 20 See Ricci, *Giordano Bruno*, p. 250.
  - 21 See Foster *Letters* p. 200 and *passim*. On Shaftesbury's political career see L. Klein *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness* (Cambridge, 1994). The best account is M. L. de Miranda 'The moral, social and political thought of the third earl of Shaftesbury, 1671–1713: unbelief and Whig republicanism in the early Enlightenment' (Cambridge University PhD, 1994).
  - 22 See the catalogues in PRO 30/24/23/10–11.
  - 23 See Ricuperati 'Libertinismo'. A manuscript copy of the library is to be found at Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (ONB) 13,966.
  - 24 J. Banks *The life of Prince Eugen of Savoy* (1702) pp. 291, 350.
  - 25 D. McKay *Prince Eugene of Savoy* (1977) p. 197.
  - 26 McKay *Eugene* p. 199.
  - 27 Archer Taylor *Book Catalogues: their variety and uses* (1986) p. 246.
  - 28 See R. Chartier *The order of books* (1994).
  - 29 G. Naudé *Instructions concerning the erection of a library* (translated by John Evelyn, London 1661) p. 2.
  - 30 Naudé *Instructions* p. 14.
  - 31 *Ibid.* p. 24.
  - 32 *Ibid.* pp. 30–31.
  - 33 *Ibid.* pp. 89, 90, 91.
  - 34 See H. Love *The culture and commerce of texts: scribal publication in seventeenth century England* (Amhurst, 1998).
  - 35 *Correspondence* No. 993 p. 333.
  - 36 *Correspondence* No. 995 p. 335.
  - 37 *Correspondence* No. 1506 p. 461.
  - 38 *Correspondence* Nos. 1356, 1364, 1371, 1379, 1392, 1400, 1407.
  - 39 *Correspondence* No. 1325 p. 147.
  - 40 *Correspondence* No. 1344 p. 172.
  - 41 *Correspondence* No. 1533 p. 512.
  - 42 *Correspondence* No. 1702 p. 2.
  - 43 *Correspondence* No. 2287 p. 161.
  - 44 *Correspondence* No. 2200 p. 2.
  - 45 *Correspondence* No. 995 p. 337; No. 1480 pp. 416–418; No. 1533 p. 512.
  - 46 *Correspondence* No. 1480 p. 418.

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- 47 *Correspondence* No. 3530 p. 287.
- 48 *Correspondence* No. 3293, 3435 pp. 177–178, 3438.
- 49 *Correspondence* No. 3474 p. 217; No. 3483 p. 232; No. 3530 p. 287.
- 50 *Correspondence* No. 3556 p. 314.
- 51 *Correspondence* No. 3449 p. 189; No 3556 p. 314.
- 52 *Correspondence* No. 3311 p. 24. The book was Broughton's *Psychologia*; Samuel Bold dismissed it as worthless No. 3326 pp. 50–53.
- 53 *Correspondence* No. 3385 p. 123; No. 3422 p. 169; No. 3361 p. 98; No. 3372 p. III.
- 54 *Correspondence* No. 3311 p. 26; No. 3318 p. 33.
- 55 *Correspondence* No. 3332 p. 62.
- 56 *Correspondence* No. 3342 p. 73.
- 57 *Correspondence* No. 3488 p. 238; No. 3493 p. 247.
- 58 *Correspondence* No. 3387 pp. 125–126, replying to Collin's letter No. 3385 p. 123.
- 59 *Correspondence* No. 3567 p. 332.
- 60 See J. Almagor *Pierre Desmaizeaux (1673–1745), Journalist and English correspondent for Franco-Dutch periodicals, 1700–1720* (Amsterdam, 1989).
- 61 BL Add Mss 4282 fos. 206, 208.
- 62 BL Add Mss 4282 fos. 144, 180.
- 63 BL Add Mss 4282 fo. 208.
- 64 BL Add Mss 4282 fos. 186, 192.
- 65 BL Add Mss 4282 fo. 224.
- 66 BL Add Mss 4282 fo. 232.
- 67 BL Add Mss 4282 fos. 228, 190.
- 68 BL Add Mss 4282 fo. 180.
- 69 See A. Grafton and L. Jardine “‘Studied for action’: How Gabriel Harvey read his Livy” *Past and Present* 129 (1990) pp. 30–78.
- 70 See below, chapter 9.