



PROJECT MUSE®

The Theory of the Literary Field and the Situation of the
First Modernity

Alain Viala, Michael Moriarty

Paragraph, Volume 29, Number 1, March 2006, pp. 80-93 (Article)

Published by Edinburgh University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/198415>

The Theory of the Literary Field and the Situation of the First Modernity

Alain Viala

I distinguish, for the purposes of this article, between ‘theory’ and ‘thesis’, along these lines: a theory is a set or more precisely a chain of concepts organized in such a way as to describe a phenomenon, and a thesis is an application of these concepts. My aim here is to reconsider the notion of the ‘literary field’.¹ I am thus positioning myself in the perspective opened up by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and subsequently developed by other investigators, such as Rémy Ponton, Jacques Dubois, Christophe Charle, Gisèle Sapiro, and, if I may say so, myself. I want to stress at the outset how great a debt research in literature owes Pierre Bourdieu. But one of the best ways to honour that debt is really to take his work seriously. By examining the scope of his theory of the literary field, and, should the need arise, questioning its applications, we shall do far more justice to what he has to offer in the way of tools (concepts) for understanding the real than by paying him a dogmatic, that is to say, sterile tribute.

I therefore wish to reconsider a question of literary history, that of the historical emergence of the literary field. I begin by summarizing some of Bourdieu’s key positions as regards the definition of the literary field. Then I shall compare these with the views of a theorist of literature of the so-called ‘classical’ period, namely Boileau. In the light of this comparison, I shall conclude with a few suggestions concerning the literary market, the values of art, and modernity.

The theory of the literary field is well enough known to need only a brief summary.² Bourdieu shows how literary practices have become constituted in a social set of agents (authors, publishers, critics) and of rules that forms a specific space. This space has its own distinctive structure, which Bourdieu characterizes as twofold: on the one hand, it functions according to the logic of the market (a work of literature is a commercial object among many others) and on the other it denies the logic of the market (literary value is a symbolic not a practical

value). In this way, the literary field is characterized by the existence of what Bourdieu calls two spheres, the commercial sphere of the mass market and the restricted sphere in which symbolic value is the dominant factor. In the distinctive logic of this social space, the major value resides in symbolic prestige; which is why Bourdieu is justified in speaking of the inverted logic of the literary field: the more heavily a type of book sells, the less distinctive literary value it possesses.

The literary field so described is shot through by unending conflicts and tensions, like a force field. In particular, there are always different and competing definitions of literature in play. And the main agents of this space, the writers, are caught up in this interplay of specific logics and of struggles. In keeping with their own social and cultural capital, inherited from their family background and incorporated into their *habitus*, they adopt attitudes, genres and themes, and, if the occasion arises, attach themselves to literary schools, all of which affords them a position that is more or less conspicuous, more or less rewarding, whether in symbolic or financial terms, within these practices. In Bourdieu's own words:

The literary field tends to organize itself according to two independent principles of differentiation between which a hierarchical relationship obtains: the main opposition, between pure production, directed at a restricted market of producers, and large-scale production orientated towards satisfying the expectations of the general public, reproduces the initial break that engenders the field of restricted production. (*Les Règles de l'art*, 175)

The field is thus an essential mediation between the social world taken as a whole and literary creations. The content and the aesthetic codes (of the texts) are constructed in the first place according to the logic of possible positions in this space, and not as a direct reflection of social and historical facts. In this way, the theory allows us to account for the autonomy of the literary in as much as this resides first and foremost in the existence of specific logics.

So much for 'structure', but now for the other term of Bourdieu's subtitle: the 'genesis' of the field, of the conditions and situations that enable us to speak of a literary field, and to apply the very concept of 'field' in a relevant fashion. The concept itself is not indeed exclusively literary, but a general sociological concept, which is employed here in order to analyse the social space of literary practice.

Bourdieu is also offering an historical application of the concept of 'field'. In the opening chapter of *Les Règles de l'art* he considers 'the conquest of autonomy or the critical phase in the emergence of

the field'; in the second, 'the emergence of a dualist structure'. The repetition of 'emergence' bears out the fact that he sees the field as being constituted only gradually and with difficulty. In fact, he refers to the first of the two phases as the 'heroic period'. He puts forward a clear chronology, locating the first of the two phases around 1850, and the second in the 1880s:

Having described the state of the intellectual field in the phase of its constitution, the heroic period during which the principles of autonomy, which later become objective mechanisms immanent within the logic of the field, are still largely a matter of agents' dispositions and actions, I should like here to put forward a model of the *state* of the literary field that establishes itself in the 1880s. (165; Bourdieu's emphasis)

At the same time, he makes clear that this emergence is linked to the activity of 'principles of autonomy', without which we could not properly speak of a 'field' at all. In the section of the opening chapter entitled 'An Inverted Economic World' he says this:

The symbolic revolution through which artists emancipate themselves from bourgeois demand by refusing to recognize any master other than their art has the effect of causing the market to disappear. In the struggle for mastery over the meaning and function of artistic activity, they can only conquer the 'bourgeois' by simultaneously cancelling him out as a potential purchaser. (121)

This struggle against the bourgeois also involves the refusal of all honours, which in the case of Baudelaire or Flaubert is here presented as a haughty intolerance towards all compromises with the world.

Thus Bourdieu establishes a rigorously logical correlation between the field and the market: the market is a necessary precondition for the establishment of the field, but paradoxically so, in that the emergence of the field involves a denial of the market itself. This leads into an analysis of the 'dualist structure', characterized as follows: 'The progression towards autonomy of the literary field is confirmed by the fact that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the hierarchy of genres (and of authors) according to the specific criteria of peer-judgements [judgements by fellow writers (*translator's note*)] is almost exactly the reverse of the hierarchy of commercial success' (165).

As an historian of literature, I find these analyses sound. They describe a configuration in which the question of the aesthetic value-judgement is correlated with the distribution of publics — fellow-writers on the one hand, the mass public of commercial success on the other — and with the time it takes for work to make an impact and gain recognition.

They have thus the outstanding merit of doing away with the procession of 'schools' and 'movements' of orthodox literary history: in fact these schools and movements generally clashed with each other in rather confused fashion, and those picked out by literary history were, moreover, not those that enjoyed a majority audience in their time. To take but one striking example, nineteenth-century theatre is dominated, both numerically and in terms of success, by plays of 'Classical' rather than 'Romantic' stamp. In short, Bourdieu's analyses certainly contain the fundamental ingredients of an historical history of literature.

But there is a caveat to enter here. Bourdieu's chronology seems to imply that this type of analysis cannot be applied to historical periods prior to (picking a convenient dividing-point) the French Revolution. Moreover, the analysis deals only with France, and it remains to be seen whether the same type of description applies to other cultural spaces. But I will leave this issue aside, and instead concern myself with the French situation in its chronological aspect. What is at issue is the 'power' of a theory, that is, what it enables us to describe and analyse, and its range of applicability.

This brings me to the sentence that follows the one last quoted: 'This [inverted hierarchy of genres] is not what we find in the seventeenth century when the two hierarchies more or less coincided, the most prestigious men of letters, in particular poets and scholars, being also those most amply provided with pensions and benefits' (166).³

This is a curious pair of sentences because the first speaks of the 'hierarchy of genres', in brackets, and the second of a hierarchy 'of authors' (which does not come to the same thing), with at the top 'the most prestigious men of letters'. Here also there is a slippage from the criterion of 'commercial success' to that of success in obtaining 'pensions and benefits', where again the equivalence is far from obvious. In short, there are strictly textual signs here of a perplexity. The cause of this perplexity, it seems to me, lies in what comes next, the assertion that 'only at the end of the nineteenth century is the system of distinctive features of the autonomous field finally established' (166 n.). As with the preceding analyses, I subscribe to this assertion. But it could be interpreted in a restrictive sense as implying that we cannot speak of a literary field before the nineteenth century, and this is, I think, the source of the perplexity. The historical data, and, to be sure, the thought of Pierre Bourdieu (he has more sensitive formulations elsewhere) are rather more complex.

So I propose to look at an earlier period, namely the seventeenth century, using a text by Boileau (whom Flaubert, as Bourdieu himself

tells us, constantly read and re-read) — Boileau's most famous text, in fact, the *Art poétique* (*Art of Poetry*). The fourth canto contains a passage about the status of the writer, the market, 'pensions and benefits', and their influence on literary creation — the very issues raised by Bourdieu in the passage just quoted from *Les Règles de l'art*.

The *Art poétique* is a famous text, but it is not always closely read. So it is worth citing the whole passage at length:

Travaillez pour la gloire, et qu'un sordide gain
 Ne soit jamais l'objet d'un illustre Ecrivain.
 Je sais qu'un noble Esprit peut sans honte et sans crime
 Tirer de son travail un tribut légitime;
 Mais je ne puis souffrir ces Auteurs renommés,
 Qui dégoûtez de gloire et d'argent affamez,
 Mettent leur Apollon aux gages d'un Libraire
 Et font d'un Art divin un métier mercenaire.
 (...)
 Mais enfin l'Indigence amenant la Bassesse
 Le Parnasse oublia sa première noblesse.
 Un vil amour du gain infectant les esprits,
 De mensonges grossiers souilla tous les écrits,
 Et par tout enfantant mille ouvrages frivoles
 Trafiqua du discours, et vendit les paroles.
 Ne vous flétrissez point par un vice si bas.
 Si l'or seul a pour vous d'invincibles appas,
 Fuyez ces lieux charmants qu'arrose le Permesse.
 Ce n'est point sur ses bords qu'habite la Richesse.
 Aux plus savants Auteurs comme aux plus grands Guerriers
 Apollon ne promet qu'un nom et des lauriers.
 Mais, quoy? Dans la disette une muse affammée
 Ne peut pas, dira-t-on, subsister de fumée.
 (...)
 Il est vrai: mais enfin cette affreuse disgrâce
 Rarement parmi nous afflige le Parnasse.
 Et que craindre en ce siècle où toujours les beaux Arts
 D'un Astre favorable éprouvent les regards,
 Où d'un Prince éclairé la sage prévoyance
 Fait partout au Mérite ignorer l'indigence.
 Muses, dictez sa gloire à tous vos Nourrissons.⁴

(Work for the sake of glory: sordid gain
 Should never be an illustrious writer's goal.

True, without shame or crime, a noble mind
May accept a lawful tribute for its work.
But I cannot endure these famous authors
Who, scorning glory, hungry but for gold,
Hire out Apollo to a bookseller,
And turn their art divine into a trade.
(...)
With poverty came baseness in its train:
Parnassus lost its first nobility.
Vile thirst for gain infected writers' minds,
And soiled their writings with the grossest lies,
Spawned frivolous productions by the thousand,
Marketed speech, and offered words for sale.
Avoid the stain of such a sordid vice.
If money's spell has you so much in thrall,
Fly the sweet regions watered by Permessus;
The home of wealth was never on its banks.
Most learned authors, greatest warriors,
Apollo promises you but fame and laurels.
But what, you say? Must the Muse starve to death?
It cannot live upon the smoke of praise.
(...)
True; but Parnassus seldom in our time
Experiences such a foul disgrace.
Nor need we fear it when so fair a star
Bestows its radiance upon the arts,
When merit has no fear of poverty,
Thanks to the enlightened foresight of a King.
Muses, his praise should be your pupils' theme.)

It is clear that we have here a vigorous and emphatic, even over-emphatic, denunciation, of the 'vile thirst for gain', and of the bookselling market, where the author is 'hired out' to a bookseller, and creation is degraded to a mere 'trade'.⁵ The logic of the market is even referred to as an 'infection' of the mind. Neither Flaubert nor the apostles of 'art for art's sake' ever went further than Boileau does here in condemning the commercial element in literature. Moreover, he states that the attraction of commercial gain is a source of 'lies', of sophisticated literature that 'markets speech'.

Over against this degenerate commercial literature, Boileau extols 'the art divine', 'Apollo' and his 'laurels'. This is a sacralization of art, and the two poles of the dualist structure analysed by Bourdieu, the

love of art on the one hand, commercial production on the other, are thus both present. So is the vision of an ‘inverted economy’. The point is that to achieve glory involves a wager over time, since ‘Apollo promises but fame and laurels’: he promises, that is, rather than giving. It thus seems to me that we are entitled to say that the structures disclosed by Bourdieu are attested as early as the seventeenth century: the opposition between a commercial literature and a literature committed to the loftiest symbolic values is already apparent.

To be sure, the last line of the passage quoted, and those that follow, are a eulogy of royal patronage. Does this mean that art is not effectively autonomous? Boileau, it would seem, rejects the market, only to fall into dependence on a patron. This corresponds pretty well to what Bourdieu says in the sentences quoted above.

But things are still more complex and Boileau’s text is far more precise and nuanced. It says (ll. 187–8) that ‘Parnassus seldom in our time/Experiences such a foul disgrace’ (poverty). What does this mean? It cannot be read as an affirmation of the dominance of patronage, because this is mentioned only in the next sentence, after the word ‘et’ (‘nor’), which here means ‘and if in fact it should occur’, that is, if a writer should fall into poverty. Semantically and syntactically, Boileau’s text is thus limpid and precise. Writers, he is saying, are usually sheltered from poverty because they have money of their own. In other words, most of them are rentiers. In this light, words like ‘nobility’, ‘noble mind’, ‘lawful tribute’ and ‘merit’ take on a significance we cannot overlook. For a noble to engage in trade was to fall into ‘shame’, to commit the ‘crime’ of *dérégence*, punishable by the forfeit of nobility. Thus aristocrats from the ‘nobility of the sword’ who exercised the trade (*métier*) of arms (as it was called) received no pay, but a global sum of money from which they had to pay their men, and themselves, if there was any left over (they frequently ended up out of pocket).⁶ The financial and judicial officials of the ‘nobility of the gown’ likewise received no salary: there was instead a system called the *paulette*, whereby they received an annuity indexed to the hefty contribution they had to pay before being allowed to take up office. In both cases, then, there was a trade, but no-one was ‘hired’: they received a ‘lawful tribute’ in return for their ‘work’ and their ‘merits’. This ‘merit’ so much stressed by Boileau means in seventeenth-century French not simply ‘the act of carrying out one’s task with care’ but also a ‘combination of several virtues or good qualities in a person, in respect of which he enjoys esteem’. One might say ‘This officer

has much merit: he is courageous, experienced, and competent'.⁷ In other words, 'merit' is an aristocratic evaluative category.

We can thus see a clear configuration taking shape in Boileau's text. A writer, usually a rentier, should not depend on writing for his livelihood, but since he has displayed his merits by making his work published, he may be rewarded by a 'lawful tribute'. This may come from the sale of his books or from a patron, but it is never an end in itself, rather a means to give the man of merit the 'lawful' signs that encourage him in his undertaking. Finally, this undertaking is in the service of 'truth'. Truth is the fundamental and disinterested value in respect of which texts are to be judged. Patronage then comes in either to compensate for a lack of financial resources (the king's 'foresight'), or to confirm and crown the recognition of 'fame'. The *Art poétique* thus presents the praise of the king, in the name of truth, as a tribute paid by grateful merit to the merit that he has had the merit of recognizing.

Moreover, in disavowing the market, Boileau sets the commercial hierarchy of genres against the hierarchy that depends on intellectual prestige. Thus in connection with Molière (a sign, as we too often forget, that one and the same author can now and again be caught up in two contrary logics) he declares:

Dans ce sac ridicule où Scapin s'enveloppe,
Je ne reconnois plus l'auteur du Misanthrope.⁸

When Scapin tangles with his stupid bag
I cannot see the man who wrote *The Misanthrope*.

On the one hand, the successful farce; on the other high comedy that aims to speak the truth, but that was a theatrical flop. Elsewhere he denounces authors of romance, and the romance itself, a highly successful genre that lacks nobility. He attacks Georges de Scudéry as follows:

Bienheureux Scudéry, dont la fertile plume
Peut tous les mois sans peine entasser un volume!
Tes écrits il est vrai, sans art et languissants,
Semblent être formés en dépit du bon sens;
Mais ils trouvent pourtant quoi qu'on en puisse dire,
Un marchand pour les vendre et des sots pour les lire!⁹

(O happy Scudéry! Your fertile pen
Brings forth a volume once a month with ease!

The writing's clumsy and the story dull,
 The whole is quite devoid of common sense,
 Critics may carp, but your books always find
 A bookseller to sell them, fools to read.)

And on the other hand, Boileau notes that the epic, at the time a genre at the top of the intellectual hierarchy, has no success in commercial terms.

The picture painted by Boileau here is confirmed by many other authors: Guez de Balzac, Furetière, Sorel.¹⁰ As Racine said, a gentleman should not follow the profession of poetry until he is financially set up as a gentleman for life.¹¹ It corresponds also to the results of socio-historical investigation. Writers of the time certainly display an 'aristocratic conditioned reflex' which is linked to a demand for autonomy in their material condition and in the evaluative criteria they apply when they judge works according to the truth of art. Thus the aristocratic attitude that Bourdieu observes in Baudelaire and Flaubert is well attested in the classical period, and inscribed within a long history of the 'emergence of the field'.

★ ★ ★

As Boileau's text suggests, then, the fundamental structures of the field are already in place in the Classical period. And since the nobility was the class in relation to which all the others are defined, the most prestigious image for a writer is one that corresponds to the distinctive features of the nobility. Hence the quest for reputation, the rejection of commercial success as degrading, and the acceptance of 'lawful tribute', should it be on offer. We have a logic here of equilibrium between the various sources of symbolic and concrete profit. It takes concrete shape in a genre such as tragedy, which enjoyed both respect in the intellectual hierarchy and a solid commercial public—but we must not forget that Corneille's *Le Cid* and Racine's *Andromaque* were the target of heavy and ferocious criticism, which again and again brought up the accusation that they were making too many concessions to commercial success.

During the Classical age, then, the structures of the field were taking shape in a situation that made possible this ideal of equilibrium. Two centuries later the situation had been violently disrupted. The fundamental structures were the same, but, with the explosion of the mass market and the disappearance of the nobility as the fixed point of social reference, the distribution and composition of values could

not remain the same. The logic of possible equilibrium is replaced by the logic of the affirmation of the break, of the aristocratic exploit, which is how the despair of merit expresses itself in aristocratic terms. I cannot here develop this point, but I would stress its importance, because, to my mind, it helps us make sense of the aristocratic stance of Flaubert or Baudelaire, as analysed by Bourdieu.

But this stance also belongs in the context of a question Bourdieu is aware of but does not really discuss: the relations between literature and the educational apparatus. In the past twenty years a whole set of studies have shown how the teaching of French literature took shape in the nineteenth century. The authors taught were none other than those of the seventeenth century, especially Boileau, whom Flaubert read and reread and whom Baudelaire also pored over and eventually pastiched. The history of literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seems to me to become much clearer if it also takes the teaching of literature into account, because the writers' claim to autonomy involves autonomy also from scholastic models.

The claim involves asserting one's modernity, to use Baudelaire's term, against those models. Modernity, that is, in relation to early modernity, that of the age of the Quarrel between Ancients and Moderns. It seems to me, and this is my third suggestion, that we need to ask the question 'What was referred to, what was meant, by all these discourses that have spoken, in one way or another, of modernity?' It then appears that modernities all involve an increased diffusion via print of knowledge and of the arts, and that the structuring of values within them is based on the production by the texts of the category (a new one in aesthetics) of the mediate 'disinterested' interest formulated by Kant. As it thus appears that there are at least two modernities, this suggests that there have been two states of the intellectual field, and, to my mind, only an analysis in terms of 'field' allows us to analyse these conceptual revivals of the same categories of thought. But since the power of a concept is proportional to its capacity to be legitimately and validly transferred, it seems to me that the concept of 'field' is certainly coextensive, in its problematic, with the spaces of modernity.

I am thus inclined to think that instead of confining the use of the concept 'field' to the nineteenth century and to France, we should thus examine its relevance to other times and places. It has, I think, been shown that it can be applied, not without care and qualification, to periods earlier than the nineteenth century. I think also that many studies over the last twenty years or so justify its extension 'lawfully' and 'without shame or crime' into other countries... The concept

has proved fruitful in research on Belgium, Switzerland, and Quebec, and we can surely envisage applying it to countries such as England. As I have elsewhere argued, I believe that this extension is productive, as long as the concept is not done to death, treated as a mere label to be stuck on any literary fact.¹² It should be used only when literature is being considered in socially specific fashion, with its particular dynamics and regulations, but also its particular resources. In a word: there is no field without a commercial market, since this is a precondition for the process of autonomization.

So the conversion of the text into an object of exchange (in book or periodical form) constitutes one condition, necessary but not in itself sufficient, for the use of the concept of 'field'. This is one more reason why the concept seems to me to belong, not as a ready-term, but as a component in the construction of a problematic, to periods that may be considered as 'modern'.

But it is in relation to the question of autonomization that the history of the literary, and the study of literature and art in general, assumes its full significance as an observation of the different ways in which values are constructed. Thus the idea of disinterested interest, which Kant imbibed from his study of the classics, is embodied in values such as truth and beauty. It thus appears that the study of the field is not an end in itself but a pathway to this investigation of values.



But such questions require a dialogue between literary scholars, historians, and sociologists. And this in turn presupposes shifts in the objects studied, and the crossing of the boundaries between the disciplines. Here, I think, we have an opportunity to see how Bourdieu's positions might be put to use. His thought was developed in a period of massive expansion in France's university sector, a period that afforded scope for new disciplines, but in which also there was intense competition between disciplines.¹³ Inevitably, sociology, as a new discipline, would end up taking extreme positions, bending the stick in the opposite direction, as Bourdieu himself used to say, in reaction to traditionalist approaches. I think that this is one of the reasons that caused him sometimes to propound rather rigid formulations about the history of the literary field. Another is that in the study of literature any formulation is worth only as much as the corpus on which it is based. Pierre Bourdieu made a remarkable effort to construct and analyse a literary corpus, but he could not do everything by himself. Therefore, if he underestimated the complexities of the Classical age,

we should regard that as a challenge, inviting us, as so much of his work seeks to do, to test out concepts more thoroughly.

The concept of the literary field, properly inserted in its historicity, emerges as all the stronger and all the more visible for what it is: a tool to be used in the study of the interplay of values. It is thus relevant to periods prior to those to which it has been mostly applied up to now. But this does not mean mechanically projecting categories developed in order to analyse the nineteenth-century French situation: the analysis has to be appropriate. For instance, in this case, we brought in the question of 'aristocratic unearned income' which Boileau cites as a potential source of autonomy for the writer.

But on the other hand its relevance to different periods needs to be gauged with care. Talk of the 'literary field' seems inappropriate to periods when literature is clearly under the sway of external agencies, such as the Church, especially, and the State, in the broad sense. This brings us back to a key point in Bourdieu's analyses: the field presupposes the market. It therefore presupposes the material support that turns the text into an object for the market: the book. So that it seems that periods prior to the book are not to be analysed in terms of 'field'. On the other hand, the period we can term the 'first modernity'—in which the protracted Quarrel of Ancients and Moderns took place—is clearly in dialogue with the second modernity that asserted itself in the nineteenth century.

But once these limits have been marked out, the general point emerges that, for as long as literary practice has existed (under this name or another), there have been literary theories. True, they are theories constructed by practitioners of literature, partial in both senses, and involved in the internal struggles of the field: but they are there. However, their partial character (again in both senses) causes them, for the most part, to gravitate towards the status of 'theses', and to lose their capacity to function as an overall description. As a result, it is only by placing these endogenous theories or theses side by side with an exogenous scientific theory that we can hope to enrich our understanding of phenomena, practices and works. In this dialogue, the positions developed by Pierre Bourdieu ('theoretical' in the strict sense) seem to me to involve a giant step forward in the analysis of the status and social role of literature, and although the theory may be qualified and refined by revisions of his historical theses, these revisions, far from invalidating the theory, confirm its value as a tool for understanding.

Translated by Michael Moriarty

NOTES

- 1 This is an adapted version of 'Bourdieu (re)lu par Boileau', to be published in *Text und Feld*, edited by Markus Joch and Norbert-Christian Wolf (forthcoming).
- 2 The theory's basic outlines appear in 'Champ intellectuel, projet créateur', *Les Temps Modernes*, 246 (November 1966), 865–906. Further clarification is given in 'Le Marché des biens symboliques', *L'Année sociologique*, 22 (1971), 49–126 (abridged translation by R. Swyer, 'The Market of Symbolic Goods', in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, edited with an introduction by Randall Johnson (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993)) and in *Les Règles de l'art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris, Seuil, 1992).
- 3 There is a footnote reference here to my own *Naissance de l'écrivain* (Paris, Minuit, 1985 (not 1984 as it says in the footnote)). This is rather puzzling because I do not remember saying that at this period the hierarchy of genres as determined by the judgement of fellow-writers 'more or less coincided' with the hierarchy of commercial success. In fact I am sure I said the opposite.
- 4 Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *L'Art poétique*, IV.125–32, 167–80, 187–93, in *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Antoine Adam and Françoise Escal, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1966), 183–4 (henceforth cited as OC).
- 5 The seventeenth-century bookseller was a publisher as well as a retailer (*translator's note*).
- 6 In English we normally say the 'profession of arms', but in French the word *métier* (as in the Boileau passage) can also apply to commercial trades (*translator's note*).
- 7 See Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*, edited by Alain Rey, 3 vols (Paris, SNL-Le Robert, 1978 (first published 1690)), s.v. *mérite*.
- 8 Boileau, *L'Art poétique*, III.399–400 (OC, 178). In Molière's *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, III.2, the cunning servant Scapin persuades his master's father Géronte that his life is in danger from enemies, and gets him to hide in Scapin's huge bag (a traditional farcical prop). Then, pretending that he himself is being attacked by thugs searching for Géronte, he thrashes the bag (*translator's note*).
- 9 Boileau, *Satire II*, 77–82 (OC, 19). The text is six years earlier than the *Art poétique*, so Boileau's views on this point remained unchanging.
- 10 See Mathilde Bombart, 'Guez de Balzac et la Querelle des Lettres', thesis, University of Paris III, 2003 (Paris, Honoré Champion, forthcoming); Antoine Furetière, *Nouvelle allégorique ou Histoire des derniers troubles arrivés au Royaume d'Éloquence*, edited by Mathilde Bombart and Nicolas Shapira (Toulouse, Société des Littératures Classiques, 2004); Michèle Rosellini, 'Charles Sorel et la formation du lecteur', thesis, University of Paris III, 2003 (Paris, Honoré Champion, forthcoming).

- 11 Racine, letter to the Abbé Le Vasseur, June 1661, in *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Raymond Picard, 2 vols., Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, Gallimard, 1951–2), II, 397.
- 12 See Denis Saint-Jacques and Alain Viala, ‘A propos du champ littéraire: histoire, géographie, histoire littéraire’, *Annales: histoire, sciences sociales*, 49:2 (March–April 1994), 395–406.
- 13 See Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Paris, Raisons d’agir, 2004).