

NICHOLAS MARLOWE

No.8: VOLTAIRE 'LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES'

LIST 8:
VOLTAIRE'S 'LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES'



2025

NICHOLAS MARLOWE

LIST 8:

VOLTAIRE'S 'LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES'

145 WILMOT STREET, LONDON E2 OBU UK

17 BOULEVARD LOUIS BLANC, MONTPELLIER 34000 FRANCE

[RAREBOOKS@NICHOLASMARLOWE.CO.UK](mailto:rarebooks@nicholasmarlowe.co.uk)

WWW.NICHOLASMARLOWE.CO.UK

2025

TERMS

All material is offered subject to prior sale. Notice of return must be given within seven days of receipt. We accept payment via US and UK domestic bank/wire transfer, international bank transfer, USD and GBP cheque, and credit card.

CONTENTS

The catalogue: p. 3

Introduction to the *Lettres philosophiques*. p. 5

Publication of the *Letters Concerning the English Nation*. p. 11

Publication of the *Lettres Écrites de Londres sur les Anglois*. p. 19

Publication of the *Lettres philosophiques*. p. 29

Voltaire and Jore. p. 63

The Invisible *Lettres Philosophiques*. p. 75

The *Lettre sur l'âme*. p. 93

Reception of the *Lettres Philosophiques*. p. 101



*Ce monstre démasqué vous découvre l'Auteur
Et de mon infortune et de son deshonneur.*

THE CATALOGUE

This catalogue brings together a wider range of texts associated with the *Lettres philosophiques* than have ever been assembled before in a sale or exhibition catalogue. We hope this provides fresh insight into the publishing of one of the most important texts of the Enlightenment, and amongst the earliest influential radical texts.

It draws upon the extraordinary recent scholarship of volume 6 of the *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire* (*Complete Works of Voltaire* referred to in the catalogue as OCV), published in four tomes by the Voltaire Foundation of the University of Oxford (2020-22), edited by Nicholas Cronk, Nick Treuherz, Nicolas Fréry, Antony McKenna, Geneviève Artigas-Menant, Ruggero Sciuto, and Gianluca Mori. It also draws on David Wootton's *Voltaire's 'Lettres Philosophiques': A Study in Clandestine Printing*, published in French in Cahiers Voltaire 23 (2025) and in English on c18.net, and David Wootton, *Falsifying history: Voltaire's lost reply to David Boullier on Pascal and Locke*, published in the Journal for the History of European Ideas (2024).

INTRODUCTION TO THE *LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES*

Voltaire’s *Lettres philosophiques* (1734) are amongst the most important texts of the Enlightenment, and amongst the earliest influential radical texts. Gustave Lanson described them as “the first bomb aimed at the *ancien régime*”, heralding the Revolution. They caused an immediate furore on publication, being immediately condemned by the Parlement and the Council of State. A *lettre de cachet* for Voltaire’s arrest was issued, and Voltaire was forced to flee into internal exile, first to Lorraine, and then to Cirey, the estate of Mme du Châtelet.

While the English publication went unheeded, the French reception of the 25 letters has become legendary: the work, published without approbation, was immediately censored. Authorities confiscated the edition, arrested the publisher, and issued a proscription and warrant of arrest against Voltaire, who was immediately recognized as the author. The Parisian parliament accused the letters of subverting religion and manners, as well as the government, and ordered a public book burning at the stairs of the Palais de Justice. A Jansenist pamphlet referred to them as ‘lettres diaboliques.’ The author had to flee Paris. The strong censure indicates that the letters were considered a threat to both the political and religious order. A few decades after its publication, *Lettres philosophiques* was nearly canonized as revolutionary. ‘Cet ouvrage fut parmi nous l’époque d’une révolution’. (‘This work would start the era of a revolution among us’), Condorcet stated in his biography *Vie de Voltaire* (1787) (Condorcet, 1994, p. 46), a view the French literary historian Gustave Lanson would adopt more than a century later, confirming that the letters were ‘la première bombe lancée contre l’ancien régime’ (Lanson, 1910, p. 52). Voltaire’s work was seen as an intervention in an emerging and changing public space. It not only provoked public reaction, but also participated in the construction of the public sphere as such. Thus it was, as a later critic, Shirley Jones, has put it, ‘a political act’. (Kjørholt pp.162).

Copies of the various “first” editions are rare (for many were destroyed by the authorities), and considerable confusion surrounds them. This is partly because three bear the same publication information on the title page – Amsterdam: E. Lucas, au Livre d’or, 1734 – the “Lucas” editions – and are hard to distinguish in library catalogues: indeed WorldCat amalgamates copies of all three editions under one entry. But it is also because until now little progress had been made since Lanson’s pathbreaking edition of 1909 in establishing Voltaire’s role in their clandestine publication.

The *Lettres philosophiques* represented a new type of printing enterprise. Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes*, published in Amsterdam (1721), had, after some initial difficulty, been allowed to circulate freely in France. In 1723 the authorities acted against imports of the French translation of Swift’s *Tale of*

a *Tub*, but this was exceptional, and demand for the book was limited. Precisely because the *Lettres philosophiques* was the “first bomb”, both Voltaire, in setting out to print them, and his printer Jore, in putting them through the press, were improvising. Later, after 1763, the routes for smuggling books from Holland and Switzerland into France became well-established, and censorship crumbled. Books would get through, Diderot insisted, even if the frontiers were lined with soldiers with fixed bayonets. But in 1734 the printing and distribution of clandestine books was a novel enterprise, for the *Lettres philosophiques* was the first subversive “philosophical” book which was also a best seller. Voltaire succeeded beyond any reasonable expectation; but, as the enterprise was unprecedented and the authorities were alerted from an early date, the road from manuscript to print, and from print to illegal sale, was full of set-backs and risks. The *Lettres philosophiques* became the archetype for all of Voltaire’s militant “philosophical” writing for the next fifty years. What started out as twenty five letters in the *Lettres philosophiques*, multiplied, when put together alphabetically in the famous posthumous edition of his works published at Kehl, into over 600 articles or letters. (These articles were taken from future iterations of Voltaire’s “lettres philosophiques” such as the *Questions sur L’Encyclopedie*, the *Dictionnaire Philosophique portatif*, *La Raison par l’Alphabet*, etc).

Voltaire remained in internal exile, effectively under house arrest, as a result of the publication of the *Lettres philosophiques*, until after the death of Cardinal Fleury (1743), and three printers were deprived of their licences for printing the work. It would be six years before Voltaire would try again to publish a book to which he knew the authorities were hostile, the *Recueil de pièces fugitives en prose et en vers* (see item no. 15). And another six years would pass until the scandal caused by Diderot’s *Pensées philosophiques* and Toussaint’s *Les mœurs*. Others were in no hurry to follow in the footsteps of Voltaire and Jore; in that respect, the condemnation of the *Lettres philosophiques* by Parlement and government had served its purpose.

Voltaire spent the years 1726 to 1728 in exile in England: his punishment for trying to engage the Chevalier de Rohan in a duel after Rohan had had his servants administer a beating to Voltaire for talking back to him. In England he published the *Henriade*, and (in English) an *Essay on Epic Poetry* in which he announced he was working on a book on English scientific and literary culture and advertised for information. Thus early drafts of some of the letters surely date to his time in England.

Serious work on what would become the *Lettres philosophiques* began in the first half of 1731, while Voltaire was living in Rouen and working closely with the printer Claude François Jore, to whom he dictated his drafts. In the second half of 1732 Voltaire worked on the scientific and philosophical chapters, seeking advice from experts. The first version of the book was completed

by January 1733, and Voltaire set about arranging publication in England (with his close friend and fixer Nicolas-Claude Thieriot as intermediary) and in France, relying on Jore to print in strict secrecy. The complete text of volume one of the first edition of Voltaire’s *Histoire de Charles XII* (1731) had been seized by the authorities and destroyed, so he was keen to ensure that if the *Lettres Philosophiques* was seized in France it would still appear elsewhere.

In England, Thieriot took care of the publication, and he was to be paid by the publishers, Davis and Lyon — between his return from England and the publication of the *Lettres philosophiques* Voltaire had become rich through dubious speculation and he no longer sought to turn writing into a source of income for himself. Owing to the peculiarities of the English copyright system there could be no copyright in foreign language texts, so Davis and Lyon were primarily interested in publishing the work in translation, and were happy to hold back the distribution of the French edition as this ensured no one could produce a competing translation.

Voltaire had become extremely anxious that publication would get him into serious trouble with the French authorities, and the manuscript Thieriot received had already been toned down: Voltaire had read the chapters on the Quakers to the prime minister, Cardinal Fleury, but had first cut out much that might give offence, and he had taken advice on his discussion of Locke’s claim that God might have given matter the capacity to think (a claim that implied the soul would die with the body) in order to produce a text which would could pass as compatible with Christian belief. His much bolder first draft was later put into print by those hostile to him (from a manuscript copy that escaped Voltaire’s control) entitled the *Lettre sur l’Ame* or the *26ième Lettre Philosophique*, and became a best-seller in the years between 1738 and the Revolution. (See items 16 and 17.)

Voltaire added two final letters to the text he had started in January 1731, one on English academies, and the other a reply to criticism of Voltaire’s *Charles XII*. These 24 letters, all but the last on subjects relating to England, were translated by John Lockman into English, and appeared in August 1733 in an edition of 2,000 copies, printed by Bowyer for Davis and Lyon, as the *Letters Concerning the English Nation*. Bowyer began printing the original French text of the 24 letters in May 1733 with the title *Lettres écrites de Londres sur les Anglois et autres sujets*, also for Davis and Lyon. Jore had also, simultaneously, started printing the work in Rouen in France. In July of that year Voltaire gave the long and important 25th letter on Pascal to Jore to add to to his edition, meaning it now required a new title, the *Lettres Philosophiques*, as the work was no longer exclusively about England. Although there was talk of supplying this 25th letter on Pascal to Thieriot in London, it seems no copy of it reached England.

Meanwhile Voltaire had become rightly concerned that if the work was published in France he would be in severe trouble, and the authorities would have no difficulty in identifying Jore as the printer, and would know that he was directly involved in its printing. He therefore decided to delay the publication of the French text in both England and France until a better opportunity presented itself, and he could put into place a plan to disguise the origin of the printing of the work by using multiple printers. That opportunity finally arose in April of 1734. Within a few weeks the three disguised “Lucas” editions of the *Lettres philosophiques* appeared, each, as we shall see, with a claim to be an authentic “first” edition. Simultaneously, the *Lettres sur les Anglois* finally appeared on the market in England.

Between 1734 and 1739 there was a flurry of editions of the *Lettres philosophiques* and the *Lettres sur les Anglois*. But after 1739 the letters did not appear as a stand alone volume (except for a privately printed edition of 30, printed for Beuchot in 1818) until the pathbreaking edition of Gustave Lanson in 1909. Lanson’s account of the relationship of the three “Lucas” editions of 1734 to each other was, in nearly every respect, upheld by the OCV edition of 2020-2022, and has only now come into question. As we shall see, the third “Lucas” edition is also of considerable interest because it derives directly from Voltaire’s manuscript.

PUBLICATION OF THE
LETTERS CONCERNING THE ENGLISH NATION

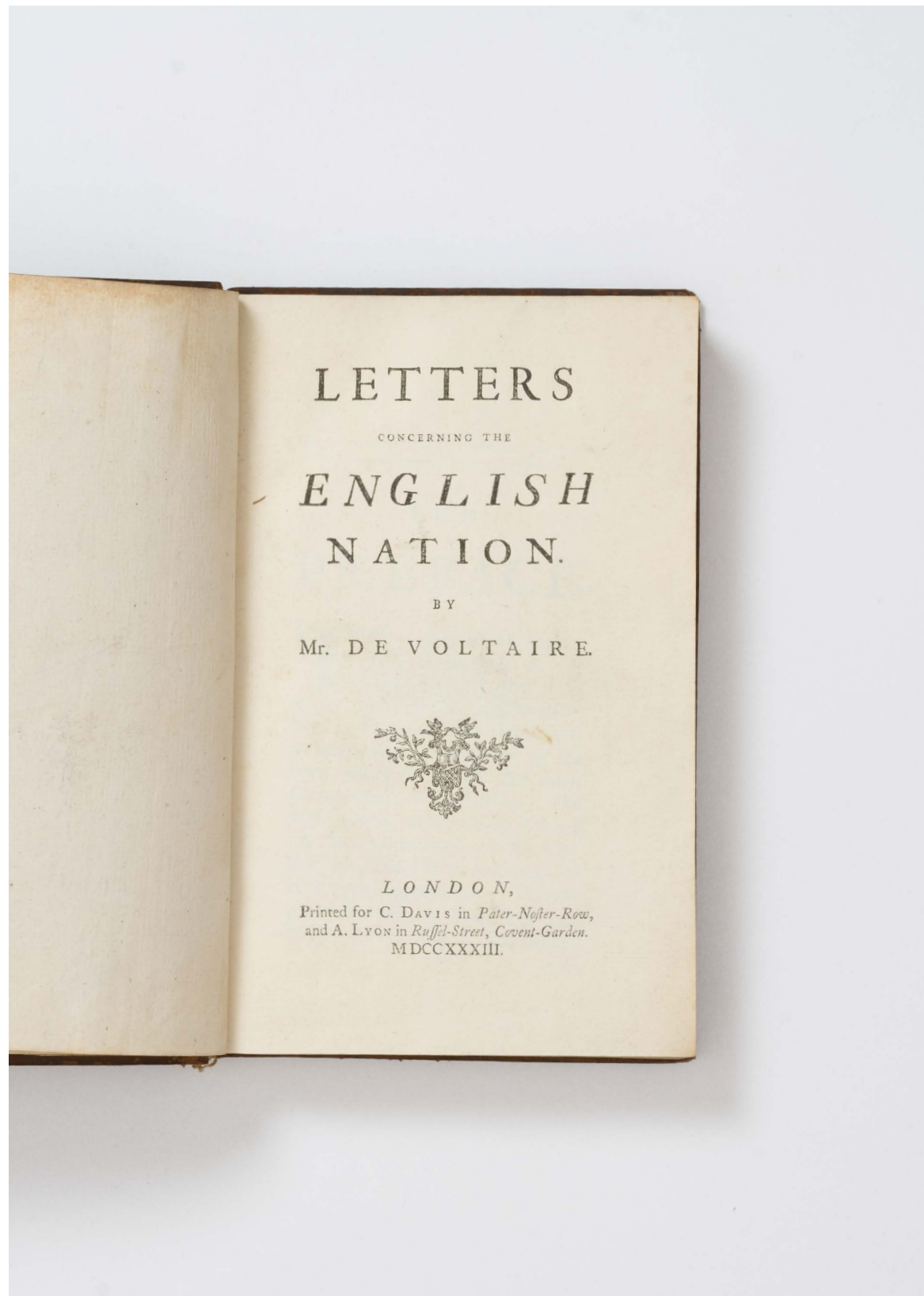
The *Letters* first appeared in English in August of 1733: *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733), by Mr. de Voltaire, printed in 2,000 copies by William Bowyer, published by C. Davis and A. Lyon, and translated by John Lockman. Why publish first in England, and first in English? Voltaire had every reason to expect that his book would run into trouble with the French censors, and took elaborate precautions on the assumption that it would. In 1730 the first volume of the first edition of his *Histoire de Charles XII* had been confiscated from his Paris printer; two clandestine editions, printed by Jore, appeared a year later. A copy of *Charles XII* had already been sent to England, presumably as a precaution in case Jore's editions were also confiscated, so that an English edition came out at almost the same time as the French edition. Printing an edition in England was thus a secure way of ensuring that the book actually appeared and survived; Voltaire's close friend Thieriot was already in England available to oversee publication. The book was about England, indeed it was written in praise of all things English (and thus implicitly in criticism of all things French) and so of interest to an English publisher.

But why publish first in English not French? One might think that it would simply be easier for an English publisher to sell the English than the French edition, but this isn't necessarily true. There was a healthy market in England for works in French. Bowyer had printed the French edition of Voltaire's *Charles XII* for Davis and Lyon in 1731 before any English edition had appeared. The crucial consideration which mandated publication first in English was not the likely immediate demand for the book but its value over time: unlike the English text, the French text of the *Lettres sur les Anglois* could have no copyright protection. Voltaire had published the *Henriade* in England in 1728, first in a privately printed edition for subscribers only, and then in a copyrighted edition. But at that time he was living in England; a foreigner living abroad could not obtain copyright protection, which left English printers free to copy French texts printed by authors living outside the United Kingdom. Translations, on the other hand, were protected by copyright as long as the translator lived in the United Kingdom, and Davis and Lyon were thus prepared to pay Thieriot for the French text primarily because they could translate it and have copyright protection in the translation. This would not necessarily prevent competitors entering the market – successful French texts often generated several competing English translations, each protected by copyright. But it did represent an effective barrier to pirated editions. Because Lockman's translation enjoyed copyright protection Davis and Lyon were able to produce a volume of a high standard – good paper, large format, extensive index – which they advertised as “Beautifully printed”. These were the standard benefits of copyright, but inevitably, high production values meant slow sales, and the work was not reprinted until 1739.

Since there was nothing to prevent several translations of a foreign-language

text being independently copyrighted Davis and Lyon naturally would have wanted their translation to appear as long as possible before the French text, since no one could commission a competing translation without access to the original. As it turned out, the only competition they faced was from Dublin editions of the Lockman translation. The *Letters* were only a modest success in their English edition. On the other hand, Davis and Lyon did not want to delay publication of the French edition so long that they lost the advantage of being first to market. They were thus happy to hold back the French edition, sitting half-printed in their stockroom, while Voltaire prepared the Jore edition in France, and then dithered over when - and indeed if - to publish, but they were keen for theirs to appear shortly ahead of any edition published abroad, and crucially before the Dutch printers could swing into action with their competing counterfeit editions. Thieriot had given his word that they would be given sufficient notice, and indeed, according to Voltaire, had agreed there would be a financial penalty if they were not. The publishers and Voltaire thus could agree to delay publication of the French edition: the publisher because this made commercial sense, and Voltaire because he was afraid that a French edition would provoke the anger of the authorities in France.

As his irony was not immediately discernible to the English, Voltaire's work caused no real offence in England (apart from to the Quakers who were the focus of several letters). The great subtlety and power of the work only becomes apparent in French to a French audience. On the political level, for example, the French clearly saw that the panegyric of the English government merely satirised that of the French. In the literary field too, it was understood perfectly that when Voltaire expressed surprise at the failure of Dr Swift's project to found an academy for the English language, it was merely a pretext for raging against the Académie française. Finally, a French audience would immediately see that - far from defending Scripture - Voltaire's comment that God did not reveal to the prophets the fact that a scientist would one day count more than 7,000 stars, was a direct attack on religious orthodoxy.



First edition and first translation

No. 1

VOLTAIRE.

LETTERS CONCERNING THE ENGLISH NATION BY MR. DE VOLTAIRE.

London: printed for C. Davis in Pater-Noster-Row, and A. Lyon in Russel-Street, Covent-Garden, MDCCXXXIII. [1733].

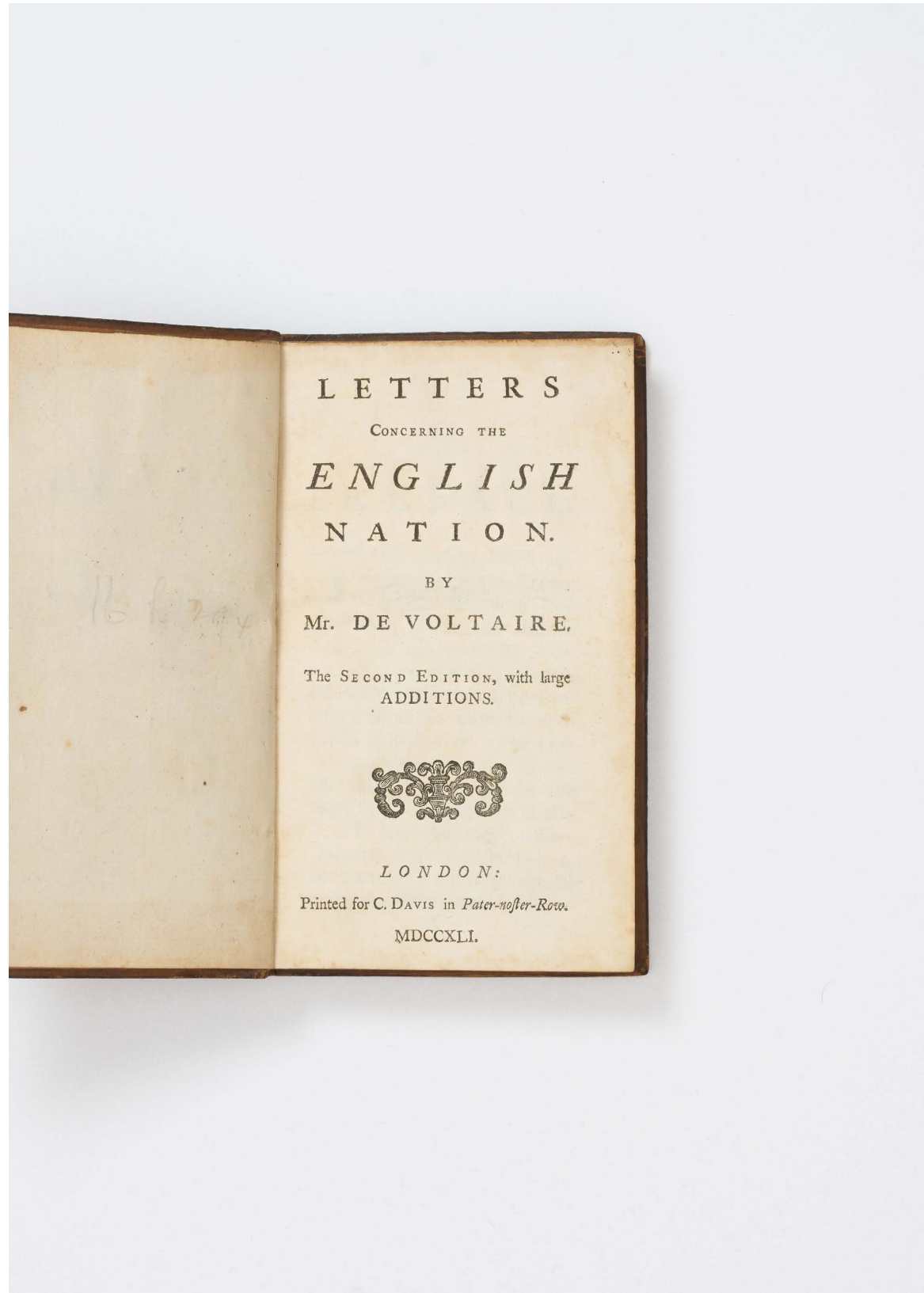
Octavo (197 x 123 mm) pp. [16], 253, [19]: A-S⁸ (±A4 and G3). A4 and G3 are cancels. Woodcut ornament on title, woodcut tail-pieces. In contemporary English speckled calf, covers bordered with a double blind rule with blind dentelle border, blind fleurons to outer corners, spine with raised bands, edges gilt scrolled. Lower joint cracking, small loss of calf to lower inner corner of upper cover, headbands chipped, corners a little worn, later red morocco gilt letter-piece. A very good copy, internally absolutely crisp and clean.

¶ First edition and the first translation of the first incarnation of the *Lettres philosophiques*. OCV states that some copies also have cancels for the leaves F6 and S1. They do not know of a copy with all 4 of these cancels nor have they found a single copy without cancels. A handsome copy of the first edition.

RARITY

Not institutionally rare, nor is it rare on the market. It was beautifully printed on good quality paper and was never subject to confiscation or censorship. Copies in good contemporary binding are, of course, scarcer.

OCV E33L. Evans 346. ESTC T137614.



First edition in English complete
with the 25th letter on Pascal

No. 2

VOLTAIRE.

LETTERS CONCERNING THE ENGLISH NATION BY MR. DE
VOLTAIRE THE SECOND EDITION WITH LARGE ADDITIONS.
London: Printed for C. Davis in Pater-Noster-Row, MDCCXLI [1741].

Duodecimo (162 x 109 mm.) pp. x, (6), 255 (29): A8, B-M12, N6, 04. (Leaf N3 missigned N5), the final [7]p contain bookseller's advertisements. Woodcut ornament on title, woodcut tail-pieces. In excellent contemporary English speckled calf, covers bordered with a double gilt rule spine with raised gilt ruled bands, edges scrolled in blind. Tiny worm trail in blanc upper margin of four leaves in preface, well away from text. Joints beginning to crack, but firm, corners slightly worn. A very good copy, crisp and very clean.

¶ The first edition in English complete with the 25th letter, a translation of the *Lettre sur Pascal*. An unusually good copy in contemporary English calf. This edition gives the same errata list as the first edition, with the page numbers altered so they work for this edition whilst still repeating the same errors in the text. Voltaire's correspondence shows that in the summer of 1733 he wanted to send the text of the *Lettre sur Pascal* to Thieriot for Bowyer to print in English and French. However, by the time Voltaire received Jore's printed text Voltaire had become uncertain about whether printing in France could ever go ahead, and it seems unlikely that he ever sent a copy to Thieriot, in which case this edition must have used a French edition of the work as the source for the text (cf. OCV).

RARITY

Considerably rarer than the first edition in English. Jisc-Copac records 7 copies in UK libraries only. No copies recorded at auction by RBH.

OCV E41L. ESTC N11479.

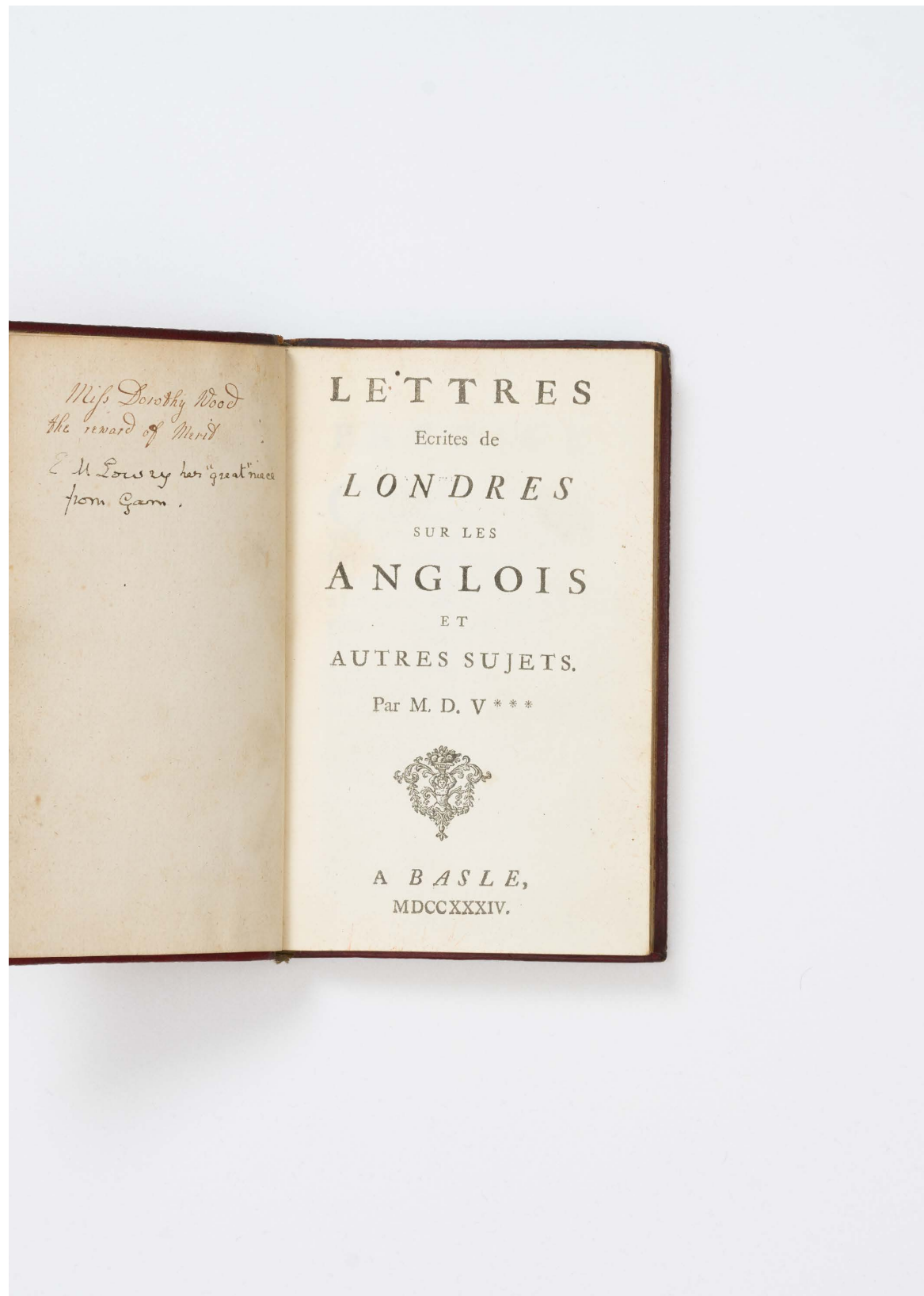
PUBLICATION OF
THE LETTRES ÉCRITES DE LONDRES SUR LES ANGLOIS



Davis and Lyon's *Lettres écrites de Londres sur les Anglois*, falsely claiming to be printed in Basle, was printed in 1,500 copies from Voltaire's manuscript. As it did not have copyright protection in England, and would certainly face competition abroad, it is a much less impressive volume than the English edition of the Letters, but still of a higher standard than the clandestine French publications: first, because Davis and Lyon expected to be first to market, and second, because the English and Dutch markets (both of which provided a form of copyright) were accustomed to higher production values.

Voltaire's peculiar spellings of English words and names (Quaquers, Loke) were corrected by Thieriot or the printer, but otherwise editorial interventions were minimal, and the text was a faithful reproduction of the manuscript – we can be confident of this, even though no manuscript survives, because we can compare it with the translation and with the editions printed in France. Voltaire added a few lines to the fourth letter for publication in France, and made some small adjustments to his discussion of Newton's physics, but the changes were minor. Thus the Basle edition represents the earliest known state of the text, but it corresponds very closely with the final state as represented by the Jore edition, discussed below (apart from the addition of the long 25th letter on Pascal in the Jore edition). It was printed and put on the market at the same time as the Jore edition, from a manuscript supplied by Voltaire, and under the supervision of his close friend Thieriot.

After the banning of the *Lettres Philosophiques* by both the Parlement and the government, editions continued to be published outside of France under the earlier title *Lettres écrites de Londres sur les Anglois*, at least for a short while, as a way of getting around the censorship. These editions were updated with further letters including the 25th letter on Pascal. However the last stand-alone edition to appear with either the titles *Lettres Philosophiques* or the *Lettres écrites de Londres sur les Anglois* was published in 1739 (see item 5).



A fine copy of the first edition in French in
a contemporary English morocco prize binding

No.3

[VOLTAIRE].

LETTRES ECRITES DE LONDRES SUR LES ANGLOIS ET
AUTRES SUJETS PAR M. D. V***.

Basle [i.e. London: William Bowyer], 1734.

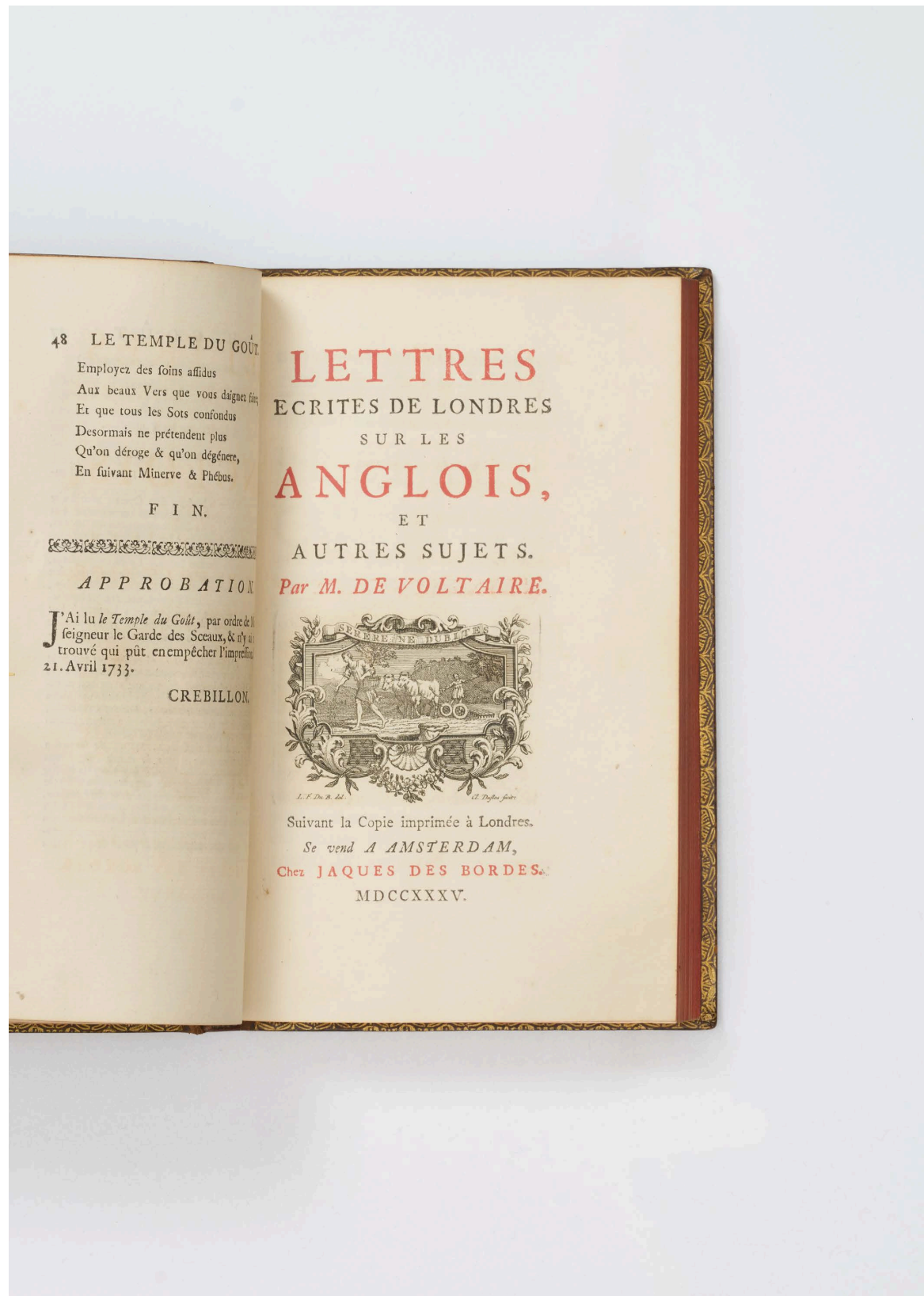
Octavo (164 x 104 mm) pp. [8], 228, [20]: A4, A-P8, Q4. Woodcut ornament on title, woodcut tail-pieces. In contemporary English crimson morocco, covers bordered with a gilt and dentelle rule, wide outer border of gilt scrolled tools, spine with gilt ruled raised bands, richly gilt in compartments with small star tools in diapered design, edges gilt scrolled, all edges gilt, combed marble endpapers. Spine a little darkened, extremities fractionally rubbed. A fine copy.

¶ A fine copy of the first French edition in a contemporary English morocco prize binding. The first edition in French was printed in England by Bowyer (as with the first English edition E33L: see K.I.D. Maslen's "The Bowyer ornament stock", 1973). The work was published under Thierot's direction and he made several corrections; the work represents the earliest state of the text before the minor revisions that Voltaire made for the French edition printed by Jore at Rouen. The distribution of the work was deliberately withheld until copies of the French edition began to circulate. Catchwords, press figures and signing confirm its English origin. Considerably rarer than the first edition in English; 4 copies only in libraries in the UK: BL, the Library of the Society of Friends, Weston Library Oxford, and at Queens University Belfast.

PROVENANCE

Contemporary engraved armorial bookplate of D. Wood on pastedown, "Miss Dorothy Wood the reward of merit" in contemporary hand on fly, "E. M. Lowry her 'great' niece" in later hand below.

OCV 34B. ESTC T138264.



A fine copy of the first European edition bound with the first official edition of *Le Temple du Gout*

No.4

VOLTAIRE.

LETTRES ECRITES DE LONDRES SUR LES ANGLOIS ET AUTRES SUJETS PAR M. DE VOLTAIRE.

Suivant la copie imprimée à Londres. Se vend à Amsterdam: Chez Jaques Des Bordes. MDCCXXXV [1735]. (Bound after.)

LE TEMPLE DU GOUT PAR MR. DE VOLTAIRE EDITION VERITABLE.

Amsterdam: Chez Jaques Des Bordes, MDCCXXXIII [1733].

Octavo, 2 volumes in 1 (201 x 124 mm) vol. 1) pp. (2), xiv, 48: *8, A-C8. (A8 folded back to make first blank?). Vol. 2) pp. [8], 216 pages, [16]: *4, A-O8, P4. Title page in red and black, engraved printer's device on title, typographical headpieces, woodcut tail-pieces. In contemporary French mottled calf, covers bordered with a triple gilt rule, spine with gilt ruled raised bands, richly gilt in compartments with gilt fleurons, tan morocco label gilt lettered, edges gilt ruled, turn ins gilt scrolled, all edges red, marbled endpapers. A fine copy with large margins, exceptionally crisp and clean.

¶ A fine copy of the first edition of the *Lettres écrites de Londres sur les Anglois* printed in Europe. It was published under its original title in Amsterdam, even though it was printed a year after the first publication of the *Lettres Philosophiques*, as a way of getting around the censor as the *Lettres Philosophiques* was a banned title. It is bound with the *Temple du Gout*, here present in its first authorised edition, which differs significantly from the earlier editions printed by Jore in Rouen. See OCV 9:102. This edition (which also appears in a variant with Ledet's name as printer) was widely distributed: WorldCat shows 24 libraries as holding copies. Contains 24 "Lettres sur les Anglois," and "Lettre sur l'incendie de la ville d'Altena". WorldCat shows 11 libraries as holding copies (where the publisher is clearly identified).

OCV 35A.



Rare: the last stand alone
edition in French until the Modern period

Contains the *Lettre sur Pascal*

No. 5

VOLTAIRE.

*LETTRES ECRITES DE LONDRES SUR LES ANGLOIS, ET
AUTRES SUJETS. PAR M. DE VOLTAIRE.*

Suivant la copie imprimée à Londres. Se vend à Amsterdam [Rouen], Chez
Jaques Des Bordes, MDCCXXXIX [1739].

*Duodecimo (170 x 107 mm) pp. [4], 176, [8], [16]: *2, A-L8, M6.
Woodcut ornament on title, typographical head and tailpieces. In
contemporary French speckled calf, spine with raised bands, gilt in
compartments with pointillé tools, red morocco label gilt, edges gilt
scrolled, all edges red, combed marble endpapers. Very light age toning,
upper joint cracking with early repair at head, corners a little worn. A very
good copy, crisp and clean.*

¶ An exceptionally rare edition of the *Lettres*: the last stand-alone edition in French until the Modern period. It contains the 26 lettres, with the *Lettre sur l'incendie de la ville d'Altena* as the 25th lettre and the *Lettre sur les Pensées de M. Pascal* as the 26th. The "Table des lettres" is placed at the end before the "Table des principales matières".

PROVENANCE

Early mss. shelf mark on fly.

RARITY

Very rare: we have found no copy at auction in RBH. There are no copies in UK libraries.

OCV 39A.

PUBLICATION OF *THE LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES*

LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES.

PAR M. DE V....



A AMSTERDAM,
Chez E. LUCAS, au Livre d'or.

M D C C X X I V.

Rouen, Jore.

LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES

Par M. de V.....



A AMSTERDAM,
Chez E. LUCAS, au Livre d'or.

M. D. C. C. X X X I V.

Bayeux? Paris? Duval?

LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES.

PAR M. DE V***



A AMSTERDAM
Chez E. LUCAS, au Livre d'or.

M. D. C. C. X X X I V.

Paris, Josse.

LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES

Par M. de V.....



A R O U E N,
Chez J O R E Libraire,

M D C C X X X I V.

Amsterdam, Ledet.

With the addition of the important and lengthy 25th letter on Pascal, the work as a whole was ostensibly no longer exclusively about England and was given its emblematic new title, the *Lettres Philosophiques*, for its French publication. The subterfuge Voltaire used in the printing of the *Lettres Philosophiques* in France (infinitely more dangerous and difficult than its printing in England), with his employment of multiple “counterfeit” printers to produce editions that would appear simultaneously in various locations, would also become the model Voltaire would refine for the rest of his life in the publication of his most controversial works. The printing of the *Lettres Philosophiques* in France was an act of enormous determination, deviousness, and, above all, courage in the face of censorship and repression.

Copies of at least two and perhaps all three of the “Lucas” 1734 editions were confiscated by the authorities. In the case of the Jore edition we know there were 2500 printed, but it would seem a substantial proportion were destroyed: there is only one copy to be found in the libraries listed in the UK’s Library Hub Discover, which includes all major libraries, although there are five in the Bibliothèque Nationale, thanks to the indefatigable collecting of Beuchot and Bengesco. Jore implied that the whole edition was seized, but that is evidently a self-serving exaggeration: see OCV 87:498. Claude-François Jore also contradicted himself in his *Les aventures Portugaises* (2 vols., Bragance: [s.n.], 1756), where he implicitly acknowledges some sales, including possibly some from copies that had been stolen from him. These confiscations mean that calculations of the total number of copies of the *Lettres philosophiques*, which were printed between 1734 and 1739, as in René Pomeau, *Voltaire en son temps* (2 vols., Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995), should not be taken to correspond to the number actually sold; although it should also be noted that confiscated copies sometimes escaped destruction and re-entered the market. The sole UK copy is in the National Library of Scotland: remarkably there is no copy in the exceptional Voltaire collection held in Oxford at the Taylorian. Two copies of the Josse edition are to be found in Library Hub Discover, at Oxford and St Andrews (four at the Bibliothèque Nationale), and five copies of the third “Lucas” edition (five at the Bibliothèque Nationale). A further edition, based on the Josse edition, was seized and destroyed in Paris before it could get to market. OCV 6A:621 (Geneviève Artigas-Menant), 633.



First edition of the *Lettres Philosophiques*,
seized by the authorities

A rare work; exceptionally so
in a contemporary armorial binding

Important contemporary provenance;
President Jean Bouhier's copy.

No. 6

VOLTAIRE.

LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES PAR M. DE V....

À Amsterdam, Chez E. Lucas, au Livre d'or MDCCXXXIV [Rouen, Jore,
1734].

Duodecimo (164 x 91mm), pp. [4], 387 [1]: []2, A-Q12, R2. [H3 signed G3, I4 signed I5]. Woodcut ornament on title. In fine contemporary speckled calf, arms of Le President Bouhier gilt stamped on sides, spine with gilt ruled raised bands, richly gilt in compartments with small tools, edges gilt scrolled, all edges red. Light age toning, very minor spotting in places, tiny 9mm. crack in lower upper joint, one corner fractionally worn. A very good copy.*

¶ While printing of the *Lettres sur les Anglois* was beginning in England, Voltaire was arranging with Claude François Jore in Rouen for a clandestine edition to be printed in France. Publication in London alone was not sufficient to ensure distribution in France: it was a common complaint that books published in Amsterdam or London were almost unobtainable in France, and so if the book was to have an impact on French culture it must be printed in France. Jore had already printed *L'histoire de Charles XII*, and much of the *Lettres philosophiques* had been written in his house. He would print Voltaire's *Zayre* (for the Parisian printer Jean-Baptiste Bauche), and his *Temple du Goust* in 1733. Voltaire's friend Pierre-Robert Le Cornier de Cideville was available to act as an intermediary, and his friend Jean Baptiste Nicolas Formont divided his time between Paris and Rouen.

In order to understand the printing history of the Jore edition we need to bear in mind that Voltaire was some 135 kilometres from Jore's printing press in an age when communication was slow. The normal practice in the eighteenth century was for authors to see proofs if they could attend the press;

otherwise the book would be read in proof by the corrector, and when published it would contain a list of errata (often supplied by the author, and added sometimes after early copies had already been sold), and, if the list was long, an apology for the errors that had resulted from the author's absence. If an error was significant a whole leaf or bifolium might be replaced. Authors thus naturally preferred to see proofs themselves; and Voltaire and Jore read proofs of *Charles XII* together while Voltaire was living with Jore. A striking example is provided by the printing history of Voltaire's *Zadig*. The first half of the book was printed in Paris while Voltaire was available to attend the press; the second half and the preliminaries were printed in Nancy while Voltaire was at Lunéville, thirty kilometres away: Voltaire evidently saw proofs, and the result was a book without cancels, and, although there is a list of errata, they are attributed to "the editor" (i.e. Voltaire) not the printer.

Voltaire, however, did not always take such precautions. The *Siècle de Louis XIV* was printed in Berlin by C.F. Henning in 1751. Voltaire was in Potsdam, only 35 kilometres away. But he had assumed the manuscript would present no problems for the printer, and only saw printed sheets after the print run had been completed. He found, to his dismay, that there were many mistakes, and numerous cancels had to be printed. When Walther in Dresden published a revised edition in 1753, Voltaire was still in Potsdam, 200 kilometres from Dresden; at first, once again, he hoped to rely on the corrector at the press, but he soon discovered that there were many errors, and he then insisted that he should receive the proofs of every page.

Jore's edition falls between these two models: Voltaire writes of seeing both "proofs" and "sheets". This terminology is important: by "proofs" Voltaire means a sample run off before the bulk of the printing is done, and by "sheets" a sample of the final printed text. Proofs could be corrected; sheets could only be changed by introducing a cancel; alternatively errors could be listed in the errata. Jore claims to have sent Voltaire in Paris the proofs of the first pages, with the implication that he did not send proofs of all the pages. Voltaire, in a letter to Cideville, insists on being sent proofs by post, "sur tout celles où il est question de philosophie et de calcul". Voltaire was sent proofs of the first pages by post in late May or early June. On 10 June he was correcting the letter on "Loke" (Letter 13). If we look at the cancels in Jore's edition we find that there are none in the first eleven letters, none between 13 and 18 (which includes the philosophical and mathematical letters), four between 19 and 23, and none in 24 and 25. It thus seems likely that Voltaire did not see proofs of, at least, Letter 12 and Letters 19 to 23. We can also conclude, as we shall see, that he did not see proofs of either Letter 24 or Letter 25.

We come now to an important letter to Cideville of 3 July in which Voltaire refers to returning *la dernière épreuve*. Lanson, Rousseau, and OCV believe that Voltaire corrected the book in proof, and OCV believes (it would seem)

that at this point Voltaire had read and was returning the last of the proofs, including by implication letter 25, on Pascal. But this is impossible because only two days before he had informed Cideville that he had just now sent off the text of letter 25 to Jore. By 3 July Jore had perhaps received the manuscript, but he certainly had not had time to set the ninety pages of text in type and return proofs. On 24 July Voltaire explained to Thiriot that he was still waiting for Jore to return the 25th letter to him: in other words he was waiting for the return of either the proofs or the sheets and perhaps, with them, the manuscript. Only when he had a spare copy would he be able to send a copy to Thiriot with a view to its inclusion in the English editions. Actually it seems clear that what Voltaire was expecting was not the proofs but the sheets: on 14 July he had told Thiriot that he had received four sheets of letter 25 and is waiting for two more, and on 26 July he referred to the printing of the *Lettres* as being completed, but evidently the last two sheets had not yet arrived, for on the 28th he still had nothing to send to Thiriot. Moreover, there is a significant piece of evidence which demonstrates that on 3 July Voltaire had not seen the proofs of Letter 24, let alone Letter 25. Letter 24 ends with the word FIN. Had Voltaire seen that in proof during June he would have deleted it, for throughout that month he will have been at work on Letter 25. By the time Jore received Letter 25, say on 4 July, he must already have printed out all the copies of Letter 24, so that it was by then too late to make a correction.

Yet one can see how one might form the impression from a reading of the letter of 3 July that Voltaire had already seen the proofs of the complete book:

Je vous donne mon cher amy plus de soins que les plaideurs dont vous raporte les affaires, et je me flatte que vous avez égard à mon bon droit contre mr Pascal. J'examine scrupuleuse[ment] mes petites remarques lorsque je relis l'épreuve, et je me confirme de plus en plus dans l'opinion que les plus grands hommes sont aussi sujets à se tromper que les plus bornés. Je pense qu'il en est de la force de l'esprit comme de celle du corps. Les plus robustes la perdent quelquefois, et les hommes les plus faibles donnent la main aux plus forts quand ceux cy sont malades. Voilà pourquoy j'ose attaquer Pascal.

Je renvoye à J . . . la dernière épreuve avec une petite addition. Je vous supplie de luy dire d'envoyer sur le champ au messenger à l'adresse de Demoulin, deux exemplaires complets afin que je puisse faire l'errata, et marquer les endroits qui exigeront des cartons. Je prévoiy qu'il y en aura beaucoup.

At first sight it would indeed seem when Voltaire says he is returning the last proofs, having made two references to Pascal, that the proofs include those for the last letter. But he must mean either that he is returning the most recent

proofs (ending with Letter 18), or that he is returning the last proofs that he expects to see. And when he refers to “*mes petites remarques*” which he reconsiders carefully as he reads the proofs he means, not his critical remarks on Pascal (which are hardly “little”), but his critical remarks on *les plus grands hommes*. Voltaire always uses the term *grand homme* approvingly, and he would be unlikely to use it of Pascal, whom he calls, in his first reference to what would become letter 25, a *géant* -- he is great, but not *un grand homme*. Rather he is thinking of the highly critical comments on Descartes in Letter 13 (“Notre Descartes né pour découvrir les erreurs de l’antiquité, mais pour y substituer les siennes, et entraîné par cet esprit systématique qui aveugle les plus grands hommes...”) and Letter 14, and of the hostile discussion of Newton’s chronology in Letter 16. Newton had tried to argue that the standard Biblical chronologies, according to which the universe was created in 4004 B.C., mistakenly made the earth five hundred years older than it really was, when of course all enlightened philosophers knew that the earth must be much older than it appeared from the traditional interpretation, let alone from Newton’s abbreviated chronology: one could hardly think of a more remarkable example of a great man going completely astray because he had clung to a literal interpretation of the Bible. If one could dare to correct the great Newton then surely one could be permitted to criticise Pascal!

When Voltaire says he is sending back the proofs *and* a little addition (which is, as we shall see, an addition to Letter 19) this is not a correction marked on the proofs – there would hardly be a need to mention it if it were – but rather an addition to a letter that he (mistakenly) hopes has not yet gone to press and which he does not expect to see in proof as the subject is not philosophical.

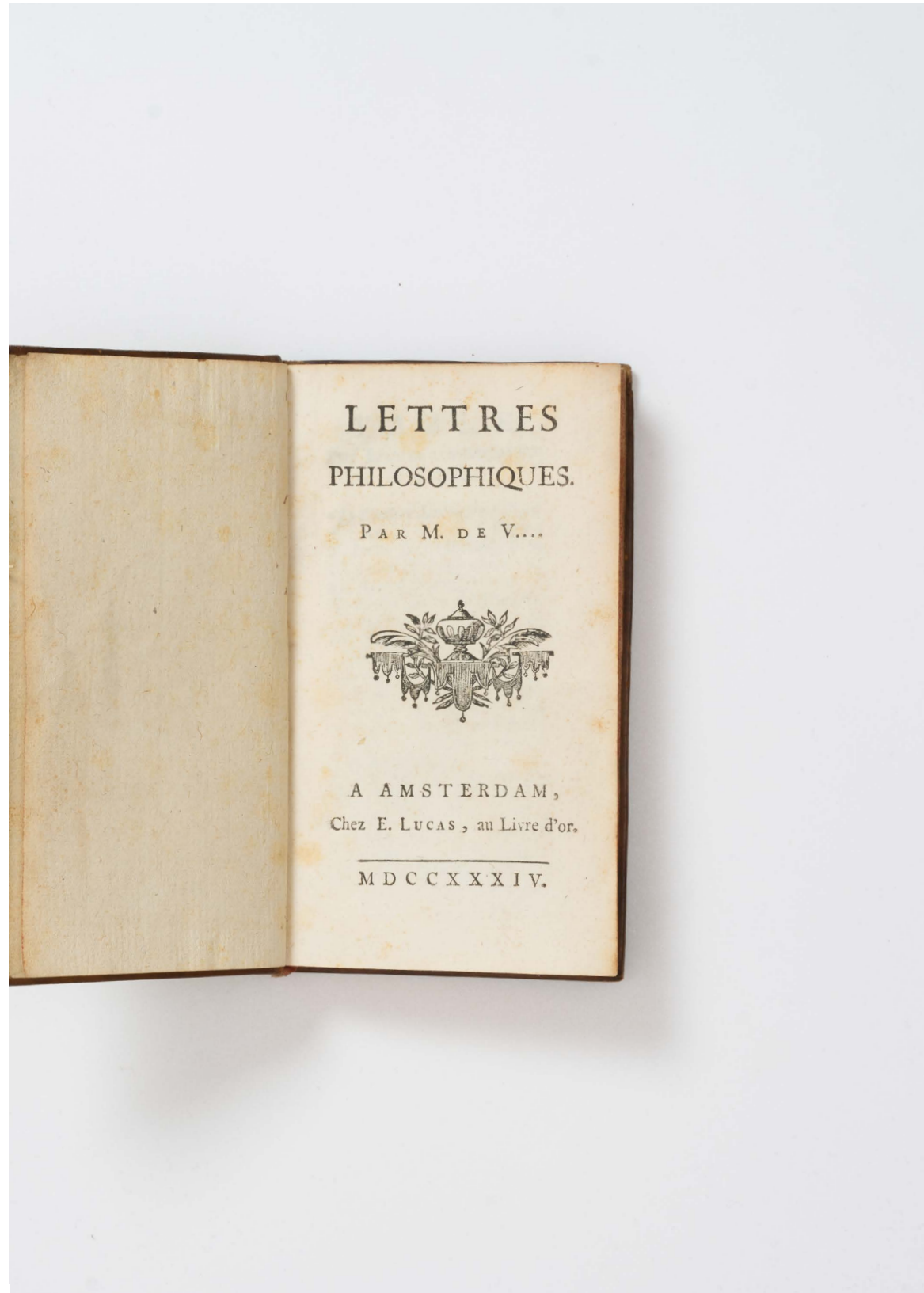
This reconstruction enables one to understand why Voltaire wants to be sent the complete text so that he can compile the errata and mark the pages where it is necessary to introduce cancels: the cancels and errata were going to be necessary because Voltaire had not seen proofs consistently as printing progressed. The complete text that Jore returned to him already included six cancels (E6, K8, K9, L4, L7, M4): we can be sure of this because this text was the basis of Josse’s edition, which follows the cancels. There is, however, no evidence that Voltaire ever compiled a list of further cancels or of errata, although there is (as we shall see) an indication that he proposed one final revision which was not adopted by Jore.

The six cancels do not necessarily represent revisions to the text, although Voltaire was a compulsive reviser: some or all of them may merely have been corrections where Jore had garbled the text to such an extent that the sense had been lost: Voltaire was firmly opposed to errata in such cases. Because only one copy has been found in which a single cancel has not replaced the original text, we can only identify one correction, referred to in the letter of

3 July, to E6, where Voltaire remembered the discussion of Lord Chancellor Bacon as including the sentence “*Ses ennemis étaient à Londres ses admirateurs*”, when the manuscript sent to Jore read, or, Voltaire says, should have read, “*Ses ennemis étaient à la cour de Londres, ses admirateurs étaient dans toute l’Europe*”. This cancel thus records, not a late revision to the text, but a correction to an error made either by Voltaire’s scribe or by Jore’s typesetter. The text printed in the “Basle” edition reads: “*ses admirateurs étoient les étrangers*”. It would seem either that Bowyer’s compositor had revised Voltaire’s text (after all Britain is in Europe), or Voltaire had done so in order to take account of a French reader who would not regard himself as a foreigner. Either way, this was not a revision to the text made after Jore had received it.

It follows that we cannot simply conclude (as scholars have been tempted to do) that if the text of other editions corresponds to that of Jore’s cancels, it automatically follows that the later editions are based on the final text of Jore’s edition: they might equally be based on a correct reading of Jore’s manuscript, or of another manuscript supplied by Voltaire. However, as we have seen, Voltaire does say in this letter of 3 July that he is proposing “*une petite addition*”. It is a straightforward task to compare the text of the Jore edition on the cancelled pages with that of the “Basle” edition. There appear to be only two “additions” apart from the phrase about Bacon’s enemies. One is in fact not properly speaking an addition but rather a subtraction made (deliberately or accidentally) by the English printer: at L4 Voltaire writes “& je vais continuer sur ce ton”, a phrase missing from the “Basle” edition, but present in Lockman’s translation and in Jore’s edition. But the other appears to be the little addition to which Voltaire refers, for at K9 (Letter 19) the printer has squeezed an extra line into the page in order to make the addition “*de même qu’un Mead fait cas d’un Helvetius & d’un Silva*”; and indeed in one copy this cancel, with the little additions, is missing. This phrase is missing both from the “Basle” edition and Lockman’s translation, so that it can with confidence be identified as the “little addition” made on 3 July. Thus of the six cancels, five would appear merely to be corrections to errors introduced by Jore, not changes of mind on Voltaire’s part.

Voltaire had insisted that Jore work in the greatest secrecy, and they had constructed a cover story according to which Jore was to claim he had been working from a manuscript supplied by an Englishman called Sanderson. In any case, Voltaire insisted that Jore must not release the printed book until he had the go ahead; and he evidently decided in the course of July 1733 that it would be too easy, because of their previous association, to identify Jore as the printer; indeed it seems an anonymous letter had been received by the authorities denouncing Jore. In July the *garde des sceaux*, Germain Louis Chauvelin, threatened Voltaire: “He sais he will undo me if the letters come out into the world,” wrote Voltaire in English. Voltaire feared that both Jore



and he were about to be arrested; and this fear was stirred up again in September. The book must be withheld, and Jore must be required to turn over the printed sheets – which he refused to do – and offered compensation for his financial loss. Jore went into hiding, travelling from one place to another in disguise.

LE PRESIDENT BOUHIER 1673-1746

Born in Dijon, Bouhier was Jurisconsult and President of the Dijon Parliament, an erudite literary scholar, archaeologist, translator, and mediocre poet. He created a small “academy” at his home in Dijon where his extensive library was made available to scholars. He was elected to the Académie Française on 26 June 1727 though he rarely attended. He was a friend of the abbé d’Olivet with whom he kept up a correspondence; he fought Montesquieu and supported the lawyer Mathieu-Maraïs against him. Born into a family of collectors, President Bouhier was an eminent bibliophile who read and annotated his books. His library was known throughout Europe and contained more than 35,000 volumes, 2,000 manuscripts and boxes of prints, mainly relating to the history of Burgundy. He drew up his own catalogue. His son-in-law Chartraire de Bourbonne inherited the library, which was eventually sold to the Abbey of Clairvaux in 1784.

“Issu d’une illustre famille de collectionneurs, le président Bouhier (1673-1746) fut un bibliophile d’une classe supérieure qui lisait et annotait ses livres ; sa bibliothèque, connue dans toute l’Europe, comptait de nombreux volumes rares et richement reliés. Cette collection passa à son gendre Chartraire de bourbonne qui l’augmenta”. (Olivier & Hermal, pl. 2423).

“Deux fers servirent à marquer la bibliothèque Bouhier. Ils n’appartiennent pas en propre au président Bouhier mais aux membres de la famille chez lesquels elle avait successivement passé. Le président Bouhier était le type du bibliophile. Il ne se contentait pas d’amasser des livres, mais il les lisait, et sur les marges même des volumes il consignait ses remarques, toujours judicieuses et pleines de savoir.” (Guigard, II, pp.75-79).

President Bouhier’s archives are also remarkable in containing one of the only known contemporary responses to the *Lettres Philosophiques*, a letter from Abbé Leblanc to Bouhier, which describes in some detail the appearance of the French edition, its content, and speculates on its reception by the authorities (la Bastille). The Abbé offers to procure a copy for Bouhier (the present copy?) though he apologises for the great expense of the work which is being sold “sous le manteau”. The letter below was first published in an article in 1940: *Un Texte inédit de l’abbé Leblanc sur les Lettres philosophiques de Voltaire* by G. Bonno. Modern Language Notes, Vol. 55, No. 7 (Nov., 1940), pp. 503-50: The Johns Hopkins University Press. We reproduce the article in

its entirety here:

UN TEXTE INÉDIT DE L'ABBÉ LEBLANC SUR LES LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES DE VOLTAIRE

Parmi les papiers rassemblés dans les portefeuilles du Président Bouhier à la section des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale, on trouve une lettre de l'abbé Leblanc, adressée au Président, qui contient plusieurs indications intéressantes sur la publication des *Lettres Philosophiques* de Voltaire. Cette lettre ne figure pas parmi les textes cités dans l'ouvrage d'Emmanuel de Broglie sur Les Portefeuilles du Président Bouhier (Paris, Hachette, 1896). Elle n'est pas signalée non plus par Gustave Lanson, dans sa remarquable édition critique des *Lettres Philosophiques*, parmi les textes exprimant les réactions des contemporains en face de cet ouvrage de Voltaire. Limitées à des sujets particuliers, les études les plus récentes consacrées à l'abbé Leblanc ne font pas mention de ce texte. Il y a donc lieu, semble-t-il, de glisser une fiche additionnelle dans le dossier déjà volumineux des *Lettres Philosophiques*, en publiant ce commentaire inédit (Bibliothèque nationale; Mss. fond français, 24. 412, if. 434).

'J'ai lu enfin les *Lettres Philosophiques* de Voltaire. C'est une édition autre que celle qui a été faite en Angleterre et que le Ministère a fait arrêter; quand je dis autre, je veux dire que ce n'est pas la même, non que c'en soit une différente. Sur le peu de connaissance que j'ai de l'imprimerie et des différentes manières d'imprimer de Paris, de Londres, de Hollande, etc . . . , ainsi que des différents caractères, je parierois tout ce que j'ai vaillant que celle-ci est faite & Paris. Je ne voudrois pas en être l'imprimeur et je ne sais comment lui, s'il est découvert, et Voltaire s'en tireront car Mr le Garde des Sceaux l'a menacé très sérieusement de la Bastille si ces *Lettres* paroissoient de façon quelconque.'

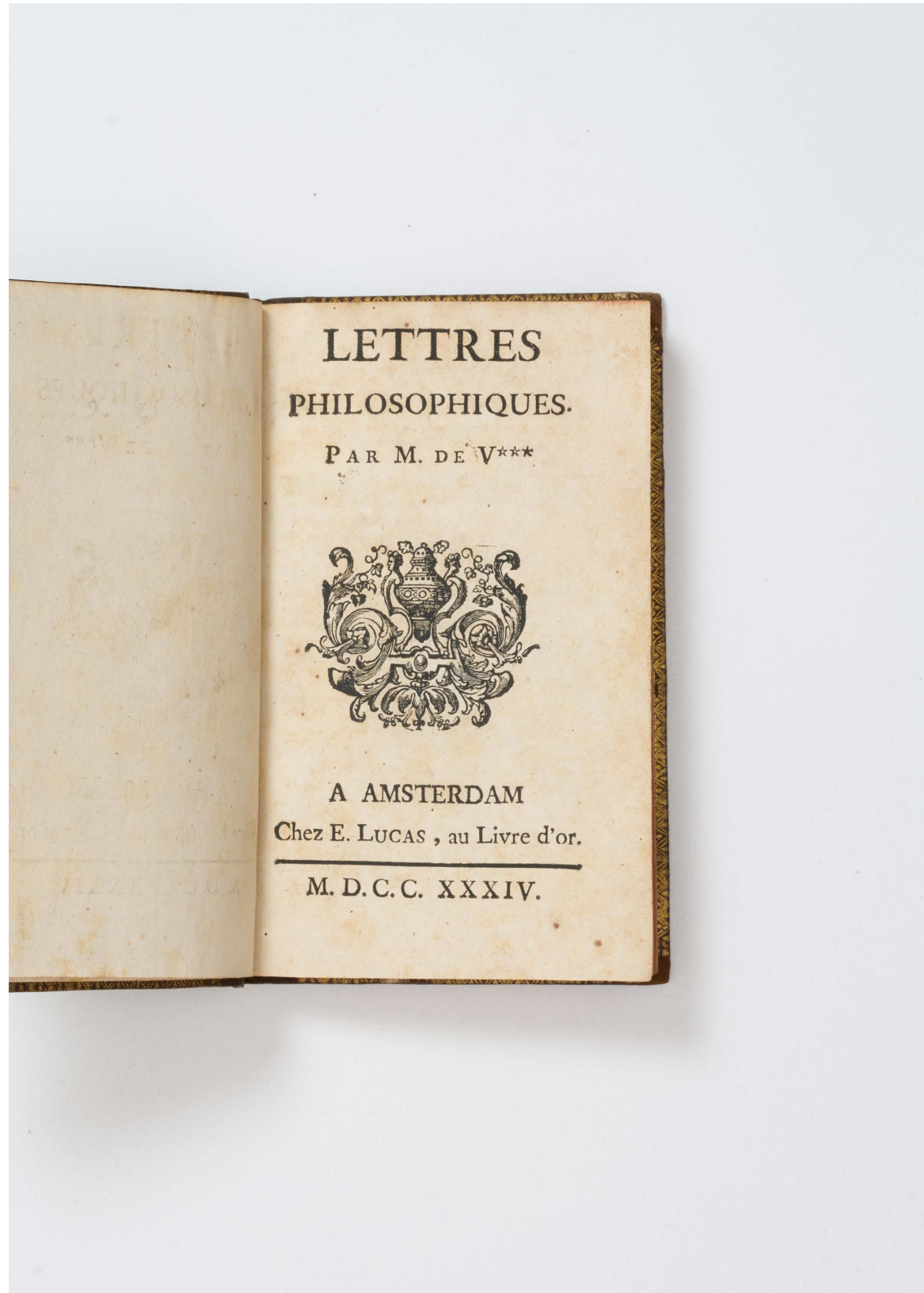
'Pour vous dire présentement ce qu'il m'en semble, il y a 7 ou 8 lettres sur les Quakers d'Angleterre qui n'en apprennent rien de nouveau mais qui sont, à quelque chose près, très plaisamment écrites. Le reste, j'en suis moins content, et en général je suis choqué d'un ton de mépris qui y règne partout et ce mépris porte également sur sa nation, sur notre gouvernement, sur nos ministres, surtout sur ce qu'il y a de plus respectable, en un mot sur la Religion. Il décide aussi cavalièrement de ces matières que du mérite ou des défauts de 4 vers anglais. Cela est d'une indécence horrible et j'ai bien peur que cela ne lui fasse des affaires. Les jansénistes surtout le vont beaucoup decrier; il tire sur eux dès qu'il en trouve l'occasion et il tire à boulets rouges. Il les attaque de front. Mr Pascal, le géomètre si renommé, cet homme de tant d'esprit et de savoir, l'auteur des Provinciales, en un mot l'un des Patriarches du parti, il le traite comme un misérable, comme un laquais. Ce sont ses Pensées sur

la Religion qu'il attaque et cela d'un ton cavalier qu'on n'avoit peut-être encore jamais porté dans des matières si graves et avec un ton aussi méprisant que si il écrivoit contre l'auteur de la Gazette d'Amsterdam ou de Bruxelles. Et toujours attaquant la Religion en faisant semblant de la respecter. Et il y a outre cela une exposition de la philosophie de Descartes et de Newton et une appréciation de ce que l'un et l'autre peuvent avoir de mérites en géométrie. Voilà ce que j'ai lu sans rien juger. Ceux qui le peuvent faire m'ont assuré qu'il y a tout à parier qu'on lui a fourni les matériaux de ce morceau; il m'a paru assez bien fait pour ce que j'y ai entendu. Le livre coûte six francs et ne se vend que sous le manteau et avec peine. Si cependant vous en souhaitez un exemplaire, je me charge de vous l'envoyer. J'avoue qu'il est horriblement cher, car relier il n'aura guère que l'épaisseur d'un doigt et il se vend ainsi broché.'

RARITY

It is very difficult to understand the institutional rarity of this first edition, as the "Amsterdam, Chez E. Lucas, 1734" editions are often indistinguishable in libraries: unless some bibliographical detail such as a pagination is given it is impossible to tell which edition is which. The same problem occurs in auction records. One indication of the rarity of the first editions is that Rare Book Hub records only seven copies appearing at auction, since 1970, of any of the three "Amsterdam, Chez E. Lucas 1734" editions of the *Lettres Philosophiques*.

OCV6: 34A1. Bengesco, n 1558,1. Lanson, 34.



The first edition distributed in Paris

A “clandestine” edition, the publication of which
was organised by the Voltaire

Probably the edition that was most subject to the “bucher”

No. 7

VOLTAIRE.

LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES PAR M. DE V***

À Amsterdam Chez E. Lucas, au Livre d’or, MDCCXXXIV [Paris, François
et René Josse, 1734].

Octavo (186 x 110mm), pp. 124, 56 [i.e. 57],[1]: A-H8, I4, K2, A-C8, D5 [1Aiii signed Av]. Woodcut ornament on title. In contemporary speckled calf, spine with gilt ruled raised bands, richly gilt in compartments, tan morocco title label, edges and turn-ins gilt scrolled, combed marbled end-papers, all edges red. Light age toning, minor spotting in places, extremities expertly restored. A very good copy in handsome contemporary calf.

¶ In mid-April 1734 Parisian booksellers began to sell copies of the *Lettres philosophiques*, and around the same time (and surely not coincidentally) the Davis and Lyon edition of the *Lettres sur les Anglois* was finally put on sale in England.

In June 1734 and again in March of 1736 Voltaire claimed that the edition which appeared on sale in Paris was not authorised. At first he tried to claim that Jore must be to blame for it, and that he must have supplied someone with a copy of his printed text. A comparative analysis would show, he claimed, that the Paris edition derived from Jore’s edition (which was true), and so Jore must be responsible (which was false). It should be stressed that Voltaire named Jore in order to protect Jean-François Josse, but did not expect Jore to be placed in serious difficulty by the accusation, for Jore would be able to show (and did show) that the Josse edition did not use the type to be found in his workshop.

The authorities however quickly saw through this ruse. Unable to fix responsibility on Jore, Voltaire quickly changed his story. He settled on the claim that he had obtained two or three copies of the complete printed text from

Jore (the copies requested on 3 July and presumably received at the end of that month). One of the copies was unbound, and he had given it to a printer called Jean-François Josse to bind; Josse (who was well-known to Voltaire) had, according to Voltaire, overnight made a manuscript copy which had become the basis of his own edition. Jore later expressed the suspicion that Voltaire must have been in cahoots with Josse, and it is difficult not to agree. The implication is that the Josse edition, being a faithful copy of the Jore edition, was surely made directly from the printed text and not from an intervening manuscript, and thus has no independent authority with regard to determining Voltaire's intended text.

According to Lanson and OCV, the Josse edition is simply a straightforward copy of the completed Jore edition because it contains the correction and the addition Voltaire had discussed making on 3 July and which would eventually appear as cancel pages in the Jore edition. Lanson, as a result of a simple error, thought the Josse edition combined the text of a proof copy with the text of the cancel pages, making it a very peculiar beast, but OCV corrects him: they state differences between the Jore edition and the Josse edition are so minor as to be simple typesetting errors. OCV concludes that since Voltaire and Josse were in collusion, what Josse produced was, as Jore claimed, a *contrefaçon* of the Jore edition. The story of the intervening manuscript was constructed by Voltaire solely so that he could deny any responsibility for Josse's edition.

Nevertheless, Josse's edition was evidently produced in haste. The first twenty-four letters are published in pages 1-124, and then letter twenty-five begins with a new numbering, 1-58, and new signatures. The typeface for letter twenty-five is larger than for the main body of the book. OCV suggests letter twenty-five may have been printed in a different shop, simultaneously with 1-24, because the printer was in a hurry. This fits with the fact that the table of contents was printed as part of sheet A, not, as would usually be the case, after the volume as a whole was completed. The table of contents consequently contains no page numbers, as the printer could not predict what they would be. On the other hand, the printer knew when he prepared the table of contents that the last letter would be included – it was not added (as it was to the Jore edition) as an afterthought. In that edition letter 24 concludes with the word FIN, which was clearly intended to mark the end of the book. But letter 25 is paginated correctly and the table of contents is complete: both were added afterward.

What then was the sequence of printing of the Josse edition? If letter 25 had been printed in the normal fashion, after letters 1-24 and before the table of contents, the page numbering would be sequential and the table of contents would include page numbers. But letter 25 can hardly have been printed *before* letters 1-24 because the compositor was clearly copying the layout of

those letters. Although the font of the main text is bigger than for letters 1-24, it is the same typeface. The title of the letter is set in exactly the same typeface as that of the other letters. And the running head uses an italic version of the typeface used in the other letters – its size is the same, and the gap between it and the first line of text is the same. If letter 25 had been printed first it would not have been set up with an undersized running head and a squeezed gap between it and the first line of text. It would seem to follow that Letter 25 was printed not only at the same time but also in the same shop as Letters 1-24. Why then print it separately? The obvious answer is that the printer was in a hurry and so two compositors were working simultaneously. Type will have been distributed in type cases, and two compositors could not stand in front of the same type case without getting in each other's way. Thus each compositor was assigned a different type case, each containing a particular size of type. The compositor of Letter 25 made more numerous errors than his colleagues working on Letters 1 to 24.

We come now to an issue which, strangely, has been overlooked by previous commentators. Bowyer in England and Jore in Rouen must have held back printing the title page, and with it the table of contents, until late 1733 or 1734, since that date appears on all the early editions (or else they must have been forced to reprint the first gathering). Although Bowyer had begun printing the "Basle" edition on 19 May 1733, the finished text did not leave his shop until March 1734. Thus the text that Voltaire placed in Josse's hands, if it was the one received from Jore in the summer of 1733, will not have included a printed title page, and the table of contents will only have been in manuscript. Indeed it is not clear that the book will yet have had a title: the new Letter 25 implied a new title for the work as a whole, for it was no longer dedicated to the English and their culture, but there is no evidence that the new title had been adopted before Josse's book went to press.

This explains an anomaly in the Josse edition which, oddly, escaped the notice of both Lanson and OCV: letter twelve is mistitled in this edition, for instead of being "sur le chancelier Bacon" it is "sur le chevalier Bacon". Josse was copying from Jore's printed text, in which the title appears in large bold letters, so why would he make such a mistake? The answer has to be that he had already printed the table of contents, in which he had misread the title (because he was reading manuscript not print) as "sur le chevalier Bacon"; for consistency he then retitled letter twelve to match the table of contents – although, in it, Bacon is nowhere referred to as a *chevalier* – and used the new title for the running head.

Why was Josse in a hurry as he printed the *Lettres philosophiques*? The question is not difficult to answer. In 1733 Voltaire had said that he dare not leave Paris as the authorities would suspect him of doing so to publish forbidden books. Voltaire needed to be out of the way when the book first

VOLTAIRE

appeared in Paris, or the authorities would suspect him of having supervised its printing or having imported it personally (as he had done with copies of the first version of the *Henriade*). And if he was out of Paris, he would have a better chance of making his escape if the authorities decided to arrest him. But he must not leave Paris for a city, such as Rouen, where printers were active. On 6 April Voltaire's friend le duc de Richelieu was to marry Mlle de Guise at Montjeu par Autun, 300 kilometers from Paris. Voltaire was to be present as a witness, and left Paris on the 31st March. This was the perfect excuse to make himself scarce when the book appeared, and Voltaire must have handed an unbound copy of the Jore edition to Josse a few weeks before he left, with instructions that it must at all costs appear early in April. In all likelihood, Davis and Lyon in England were tipped off.

These precautions did not prevent Voltaire from falling under suspicion, and the fact that he was known to be the author of the first twenty-four letters meant that the authorities did not hesitate to issue a *lettre de cachet* for his arrest. But Voltaire was at least able to escape to Lorraine, and then to Cirey, where the authorities were willing to leave him unmolested.

PROVENANCE

B. B. in a contemporary hand on fly.

RARITY

It is very difficult to understand the institutional rarity of this edition as the "Amsterdam, Chez E. Lucas, 1734" editions are often indistinguishable in Libraries: unless some bibliographical detail such as a pagination is given it is impossible to tell which edition is which. The same problem occurs in auction records. One indication of the rarity of the first editions is that Rare Book Hub records only seven copies appearing at auction, since 1970, of any of the three "Amsterdam, Chez E. Lucas 1734" editions of the *Lettres Philosophiques*.

OCV6: 34A2. Lanson, 34b. Bengesco, n° 1558, note p. 15-16.



In contemporary morocco

From the library of Lucien Graux

Printed from Voltaire's original manuscript,
probably provided by Jore but possibly by Voltaire

No. 8

VOLTAIRE.

LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES PAR M. DE V.....

À Amsterdam, Chez E. Lucas, au Livre d'or, MDCCXXXIV [Bayeux?,
Paris?, Duval?, 1734].

Duodecimo (154 x 88mm), pp.[4], 356 [i.e. 324]: []2, A-Z8-4, Aa-Cc8-4, D6. Grotesque woodcut ornament on title, corresponding to an ornament used by Elsevier in the seventeenth century. In contemporary dark red morocco, sides bordered with a triple gilt rule, spine double gilt ruled in compartments gilt with fleurons, green morocco title label gilt lettered, edges gilt ruled, turn-ins with gilt dentelle scroll, combed marbled end-papers, all edges gilt. Light age toning, minor spotting in places, water-staining on several quires. A good copy in fine contemporary morocco.*

¶ We come now to the third "Lucas" edition of 1734. As far as Lanson and OCV are concerned, this too is simply a counterfeit - and indeed anyone working closely with the notes to their editions would find little to suggest otherwise. Dismissed as insignificant, this edition has received little attention. Both Lanson and OCV compared it with the Jore edition, but in fact they miss the crucial evidence of its manuscript origin for the simple reason that they were both already convinced that they knew what they were dealing with. It thus has independent authority in regard to determining Voltaire's intended text. Almost as soon as one picks up a copy one can see that it cannot be a mere counterfeit. The errata, following the table of contents, include a very strange correction, and point us to p. 215, where one finds this:

sur la Tragédie 215
 tout le monde & qui commen-
 ce par ce vers.

To be , or not to be that is the.

Question. C'est Hamlet Prince
 de Dannemarck, qui parle.

Compare with the Jore edition:

J'ai choisi le monologue de
 la Tragédie d'Hamlet, qui est
 sçu de tout le monde & qui
 commence par ce Vers.

To be , or not to be that is the question.

C'est Hamlet Prince de Dan-
 nemarck qui parle.

It's impossible to see how someone copying from the second text would produce the first, even given a complete ignorance of the English language.

Here is another example (pp. 216-217), a quotation from Dryden:

Ce Morceau commence ainsi :

When ; consid' der li fe , t'is All a cheat ,

Y

sur la Tragédie. 217

Y & fool , d by hope , men favour the deceit.

Again the supposed source text is straightforward:

When j consider life , t'is all a cheat ,

Yet fool'd by hope , men favour the deceit.

The only way in which one could go so badly wrong (reading “i” as “;”, “fool’d” as “fool,d”, “Yet” as “Y &”) is if one were copying (without knowing any English at all) not from a printed edition but from a manuscript. The errata catch the first error, the misplaced “Question”, because anyone with competence in English could identify it; the second error stands uncorrected because only someone who knew the original quotation, or had Jore’s printed text in front of him, could correct it.

With this clue, a whole series of anomalies become apparent: this edition has *Anglois* not, like the Jore and Josse editions, *Anglais* -- the printer, like Bowyer, obviously felt it necessary to correct Voltaire’s spelling. This edition has *Quaquers*, not *Quakers*, and so on:

<i>Jore.</i>	<i>This third "Lucas" edition.</i>
la Mecca	Lamecque
Duc de Yorc	Duc de Yorch
Bolinbrooke	Bolingbrook
Malboroug	Malbourough
Shakespear	Shakespéar
Hamlet	Hamelet
Otway	Osway (repeatedly)
Hochstet	Hochtech
Suift	Swift (!)
Sophocle	Sophocles
Wilston	Wilstou
Wicherley	Wicharley

Over and over again, this edition and the Jore edition disagree over whether a word is singular or plural: evidently the terminal "s" was indistinct in Voltaire's MS. Punctuation and paragraphing (e.g. p. 91) are often substantially different. There are passages (pp. 6, 9, 14) where Jore marks a quotation in italics, but this edition fails to do so, presumably because italics or underlining were not present in the manuscript. There are simple misreadings:

- p. 22: *Juge du Pays* for *juge de paix*
- p. 80: *font* for *sont*
- p. 84: *les Infidèles* for *des Infideles*
- p. 147: *de ces Cometes* for *des Comètes*
- p. 158: *aux yeux* for *à nos yeux*
- p. 160 *ces découvertes* for *ses découvertes*
- p. 163: *les choses* for *des choses*
- p. 168: *conteste* for *contesta*
- p. 217: *emporté* for *ampoulé*
- p. 218: *guidée* for *guindée*
- p. 228: *au-dessus* for *au-dessous*
- p. 251: *devoient* for *devroient*
- p. 253: *2000* for *vingt mille* [presumably 20000 in the MS]
- pp. 285-6: *s'éclaircir* for *s'éclairer*
- p. 295: *sa nature* for *la nature*
- p. 300: *la Loy* for *sa loi*
- p. 330: *subsistances* for *substances*

for example, which would be easy to make when following a manuscript, but impossible to make when following a printed text. Further evidence that the

printer was not copying the Jore or Josse editions is provided by the table of contents: both Jore and Josse mistakenly list the title of Letter XII as *Lettre sur le chevalier Bacon*; while this edition correctly states the title as *Lettre sur le chancelier Bacon*.

There are also a few significant differences between the texts – the difference that led the cataloguer of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, relying on Lanson, to claim that the Josse edition was based partly on an early version of Voltaire's text occurs not in Josse's edition, as Lanson claimed, but in this edition: *une imagination vive & forte* (p. 121) for *une imagination brillante & forte*. The substitution of *vive* for *brillante* is perhaps a copyediting improvement – the word *brillante* is repeated a few lines below. So too is the decision (made also in the "Basle" edition) to replace the puzzling *notre ami appelle* (where the dots stand perhaps for "Bolingbroke") by the unproblematic *notre ami appelle* (p. 51). Other such differences are:

- p. 24: *vérités heroïques* for *vérités hardies*
- p. 44: *l'orgueilleux Platon* for *l'orgueil de Platon*
- p. 66: *trouvoient* for *trouvèrent*
- p. 101: *elle résolut bien tôt* for *elle résolut*
- p. 104: *aux Peres* for *à nos Peres*
- p. 104: *plusieurs dans les premiers siècles, plusieurs dis-je* for *plusieurs dans les premiers siècles;*
- p. 154: *a été* for *étoit*
- p. 201: *ce même nombre* for *ce nombre*
- p. 237: *que Despreaux* for *que notre celebre Despreaux*
- p. 300: *trompé* for *mépris*
- p. 300: *se donnent* for *se trouvent*.

Most strikingly of all, perhaps, this edition omits the famous sentence which ends the sixth letter:

S'il n'y avoit en Angleterre qu'une Religion le despotisme seroit à craindre, s'il y en avoit deux, elles se couperoient la gorge; mais il y en a trente, & elles vivent en paix & heureuses.

Here we need to go back to Voltaire's letter to Cideville of 3 July: there, having asked for Jore to send him two complete copies, he writes:

Deplus en voyant le péril approcher, je commence un peu à trembler, je commence à croire trop hardi ce qu'on ne trouvera à Londres que simple et ordinaire. J'ai quelque scrupules sur deux ou trois lettres que je veux communiquer à ceux qui savent mieux que moy à quel point il faut

respecter icy les impertinances scolastiques, et ce ne sera qu'après leur examen et leur décision que je hazarday de faire paroître le livre.

And on 26 July he was asking Formont in Rouen to re-read the printed text with a view to proposing revisions. It would seem that Jore's printed text was shown to Maurepas, who was minister for the navy, and also to Mme de Verrue, who was close to Chauvelin, and to Louis Fagon, who had useful contacts. If these enquiries resulted in proposals for changes, Jore did not make them. But this looks like exactly the sort of revision that his advisers would have recommended, since it implied that French government policy since the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 was directed towards establishing a despotism. It is thus difficult to avoid the conclusion that Voltaire contacted Jore in the second half of 1733 proposing this revision, which would require a new cancel; Jore never printed the cancel, but must have marked the requested revision in the manuscript that was used to print the third "Lucas" edition. Thus the third "Lucas" edition, and not the Jore edition, represents the final state of Voltaire's text, and in detail, in spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing, is probably closer to Voltaire's manuscript than is Jore's edition.

We come now to some evidence which has been passed over, seemingly with good reason, by generations of Voltaire scholars. It is to be found in Jore's *factum* against Voltaire of 1736. Jore is describing the situation in the summer of 1733, when Voltaire was at a loss as to how he could get the *Lettres philosophiques* safely into print.

Ce fut alors que l'imagination vive & fécond du Sieur de Voltaire lui fit enfanter un project admirable pour se tirer d'affaire. J'étois en procès avec le Sieur Ferrant Imprimeur de Roüen, qui avoit contrefait un Livre dont j'avois le privilège. Le Sieur de Voltaire me conseilla de lui faire donner sous-main son Ouvrage en manuscrit. Il ne manquera pas, ajoûta-t-il, de tomber dans le piège & de l'imprimer: l'édition sera saisie à propos: les Supérieurs, instruit que je n'aurai eu aucune part à l'impression, jugeront que le Manuscrit m'aura été volé, & que par conséquent je ne puis être responsable des autres éditions qui en pourront paroître. Par ce moyen j'aurai la liberté de publier la mienne sans obstacle, & nous serons l'un et l'autre à l'abri.

Le Sieur de Voltaire s'applaudit beaucoup de cette invention, qui lui paroissoit merveilleuse, & fut surpris d'appercevoir que je l'écoutois froidement. Je m'excusai sur la pesanteur de mon esprit, qui m'empêchoit de goûter cet expédient. Ma simplicité lui fit pitié; elle m'attira même une riche profusion d'épithètes, malgré lesquelles je persistai dans mon refus.

According to Jore nothing came of Voltaire's clever scheme, so naturally scholars have thought Jore's story was essentially irrelevant. But it is now apparent that the third "Lucas" edition of the *Lettres philosophiques* has exactly the characteristics we would expect if it had been produced, not from Jore's printed text, but from Voltaire's manuscript. So we must conclude that this scheme, perhaps in some modified version, was indeed put into effect. Jore's motives then, in the *factum*, would appear transparent: he wanted to insist that responsibility for this scheme lay with Voltaire, and that he had no part in carrying it out. There would be little point to the story if Jore did not fear that he might indeed be accused of having brought about a third publication of the *Lettres philosophiques*, one based on Voltaire's manuscript: indeed he may well have been afraid that Voltaire would levy this accusation against him. And we should not be surprised if Jore (or Voltaire), keen to make all later editions look as if they derived from this stolen manuscript, ensured that the tell-tale addition to Letter 19 that Voltaire had made while the work was in press was added to the manuscript before it was handed over.

First we must ask ourselves if Ferrand, having had the manuscript of the *Lettres philosophiques* passed to him by some means or other (either by Jore pretending to do him a favour, or, more plausibly, by some workman of Jore's pretending to have stolen it) went ahead and published an edition? Copies of books published by Charles Ferrand of Rouen can be found online: in them the type used is similar to, but not identical to, that of the third "Lucas" edition. The ornament found on the title page of the third "Lucas" edition derives from one regularly used by the Elsevier press in the seventeenth century and does not appear in any works published by Ferrand that have been digitised. However, the work nearest in time to the *Lettres philosophiques* is dated 1727 and Ferrand might well have acquired new type or borrowed someone else's type for a clandestine edition in 1734.

There is, however, a more persuasive account of what happened to Voltaire's manuscript when it left Jore's possession. On 23 October 1734 a number of printers were punished for having published editions of the *Lettres philosophiques*. Jore, of course, and also René Josse. In printing the *Lettres philosophiques* Jean-Francois Josse had been assisted by his cousin René. When the *Lettres philosophiques* became a sought-after book René set out to print his own edition: Voltaire (keen to disclaim any responsibility for the publication of the book, and keen to stop further publication in France in view of the risks he faced) reported him to the authorities (although, characteristically, he claimed that it was Jean-Francois Josse who had done so); he was arrested and it would seem every copy of the edition was destroyed. There was thus a clear distinction in Voltaire's mind between Jean-Francois Josse's edition and that of René: he had authorised the first, did nothing to prevent its sale, and did not report Jean-François Josse to the authorities;

while he had not authorised the second, and saw no need to protect it or its printer, whom he happily sacrificed in order to demonstrate his own willingness to cooperate.

The *Arrêt du conseil d'Etat qui destitue les nommés Jorre fils, René Josse et Duval de la qualité de maîtres imprimeurs et libraires* first cites the evidence against Jore, and then turns to René Josse:

Sa Majesté estant pareillement instruite, que le nommé René Josse Libraire à Paris, a imprimé sans qualité, dans une imprimerie clandestine chez le nommé Coubray maistre Papetier de cette Ville, les Lettres intitulées, *Lettres Philosophiques par M. de V.... à Amsterdam, chez E. Lucas, au Livre d'or. 1734* supprimées par Arrest du Parlement du 10. Juin dernier; ce qui est prouvé par les interrogatoires de Marguerite Laserriere femme Guillain, & de Loüise Guillain femme Coubray, du 28 May de la presente année 1734. & par l'évasion mesme dudit Josse, qui en effet n'a plus reparu depuis dans sa boutique; & que le nommé Duval, dit le Grenadier, Imprimeur à Bayeux, à quitté ladite ville pour venir travailler à Paris dans des imprimeries clandestines: toutes lesquelles contraventions méritent... d'estre punies....

The *Arrêt*, having decreed punishment for Jore, René Josse, and Duval, goes on to determine the fate of the books printed by Jore and Josse which have been seized: they are to be transported to the Bastille. No mention is made of books printed by Duval. Geneviève Artigas-Menant and others are satisfied that Jean-Augustin Duval, known as the Grenadier, was punished for assisting René Josse, i.e. for what he had done after arriving in Paris; Bengesco, on the other hand, relying on a summary of the text in Querard's *Bibliographie Voltairienne*, thought that Duval had been punished for printing an edition of the *Lettres philosophiques* in Bayeux, an edition which he takes to be our third "Lucas" edition, which indeed appears to have been printed by a provincial printer.

Which of them is right? The text has an obviously puzzling feature: Jore and Josse are condemned for publishing the *Lettres philosophiques*, but it does not say explicitly that this is why Duval has been condemned. Evidence is carefully cited against Jore and Josse and the seizure of their wares is detailed. No evidence is cited against Duval. There can surely be no doubt that if Duval had been condemned on the testimony of the wives of Guillain and Coubray the *Arrêt* would say so. One possibility would seem to be that Duval was not condemned for printing the *Lettres philosophiques* but for working in clandestine print shops in Paris: but if this was the case the evidence ought to have been specified.

The only plausible explanation is that Phelypeaux, who drew up the *Arrêt*,

knew there was satisfactory evidence against Duval, but did not have it to hand. Duval was guilty, like Jore and Josse, of printing the *Lettres philosophiques*: this is why Jore, when looking for a pseudonym while engaging in correspondence about Voltaire and the *Lettres philosophiques*, chose the name Duval, the name of another printer of the *Lettres philosophiques*, confident that the recipient would break the code. But the copies that had been seized, the bills and other papers that had been examined, the witnesses that had been interrogated, were all far away. The evidence against Jore had been seized in Passy, a village outside Paris: the report was to hand and could be cited, and the transport of the books could be arranged. Duval might now be in Paris, but he had not been in Paris when he committed his crime: the interrogatories were not to hand, and the location of any seized books was unknown. The *Arrêt* asks us, in effect, to take Duval's guilt on trust. The King's Council surely had good reason for condemning Duval, and for joining his name with those of Jore and Josse, but we cannot now reconstruct the evidence.

We do not know where Duval was between 1721, when he was in Bayeux, and 1734, when he was believed to be in Paris. One possibility is that Ferrand, having received Voltaire's manuscript from Jore, realised it was too hot to hold on to and passed it to Duval. But Voltaire's clever scheme had an obvious drawback, and it is hardly surprising that Jore did not welcome it: it involved Jore in entering into dealings with his enemy Ferrand, and it carried the risk that he would end up doing Ferrand a favour, and possibly providing Ferrand with material with which he could blackmail Jore. It seems more likely that, as the months passed, Jore looked around for someone more suitable to carry out a version of Voltaire's scheme, and came across Duval, who was perhaps in Rouen; Duval printed the text, and then, when he discovered the authorities were on to him, fled to Paris. There, despite being prohibited from printing, he continued to print forbidden books: in 1744 he was condemned to be placed in the stocks and banished from the jurisdiction of the Parlement of Paris for five years. Our third "Lucas" edition is thus, as Bengesco surmised, Duval's edition, printed from Voltaire's manuscript at Jore's instigation.

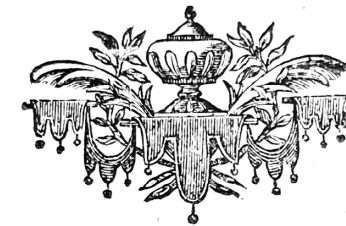
PROVENANCE

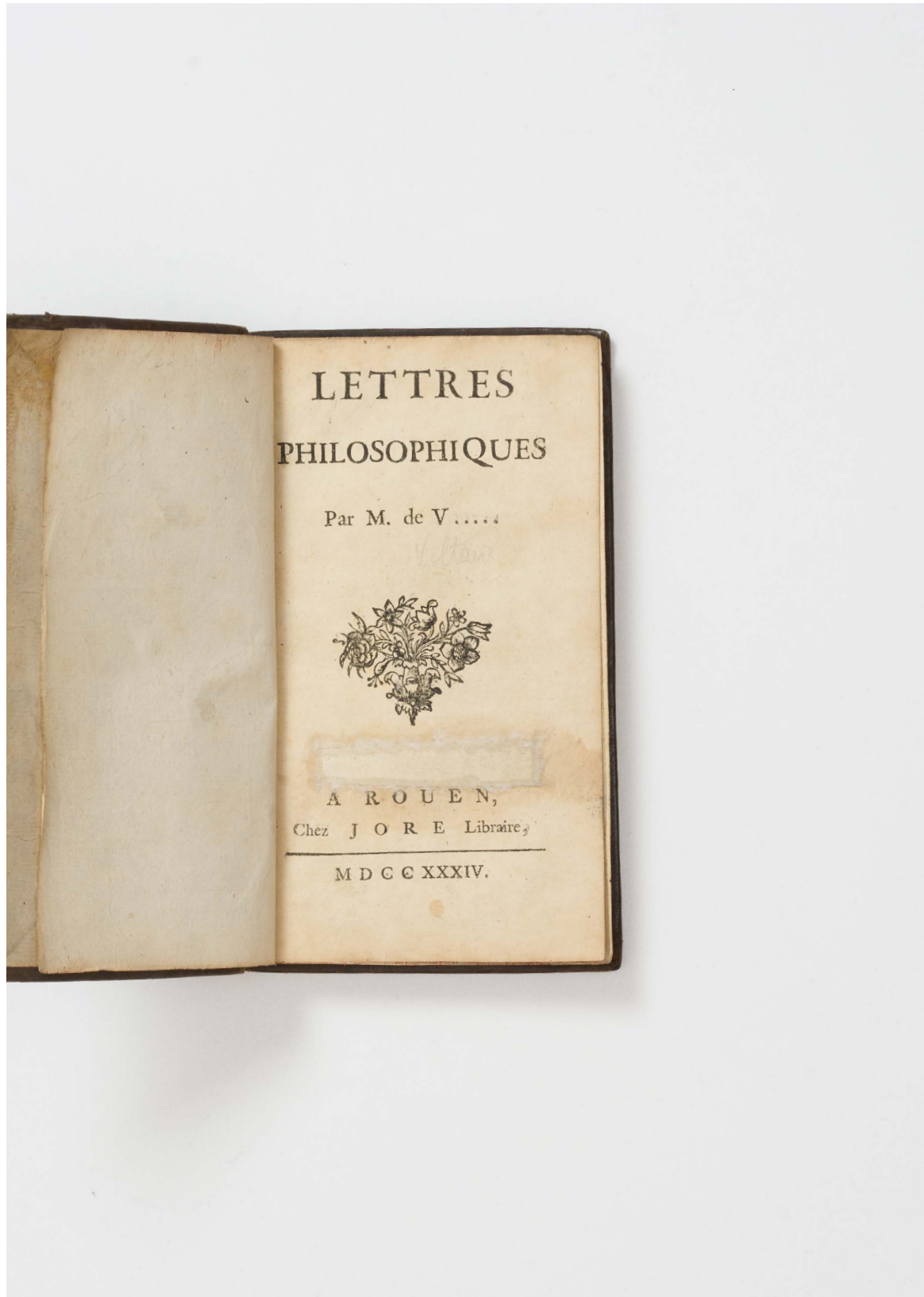
From the celebrated library of Lucien Graux (his bookplate on paste-down) a prolific poet, novelist, essayist and writer on medicine, who died at Dachau concentration camp and was connected with the Resistance. His extraordinary library, sold by order of his widow, contained rare editions of early and modern French literature, important association copies, livres d'artistes, fine bindings, historical and literary manuscripts, autograph music, and illustrated books. Bookplate of 'Siegel' below.

RARITY

It is very difficult to understand the institutional rarity of this edition as the “Amsterdam, Chez E. Lucas, 1734” editions are often indistinguishable in Libraries: unless some bibliographical detail such as a pagination is given it is impossible to tell which edition is which. The same problem occurs in auction records. One indication of the rarity of the first editions is that Rare Book Hub records only seven copies appearing at auction, since 1970, of any of the three “Amsterdam, Chez E. Lucas 1734” editions of the *Lettres Philosophiques*.

OCV6: 34A3. Bengesco, n 1358, note p. 18-19, Lanson, 34 d.





No. 9

VOLTAIRE.

LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES PAR M. DE V.....

À Rouen, Chez Jore libraire, MDCCXXXIV [Amsterdam?, Ledet? 1734].

Octavo (154 x 91mm), pp.[2] 190 : []2, A-M8 [last blank]. Woodcut ornament on title, woodcut headpiece and initial. In contemporary calf, spine with raised bands, gilt in compartments, red morocco title label, all edges sprinkled red. Light age toning, autograph cut from blank on title restored. A very good copy.*

¶ A very rare edition, the final contemporary edition of the *Lettres Philosophiques*, (excepting a further direct copy of this edition, also printed in Amsterdam in 1737). It was printed in in Holland by Ledet; the text of this edition was based on the English edition of the *Lettres sur les anglois* with letter twenty- five on Pascal added; however, it also contains, the *Lettre sur l'incendie de la ville d'Altena*, printed after the 25th letter and titled as the 26th letter. The attribution to Ledet as the printer comes from Jore's account of the events of the printing of the *Lettes Philosophiques*.

RARITY

We have a better idea of the rarity of this edition as it is distinguishable from the previous three due to its different imprint. It is not as rare as the first three editions as it was printed outside France and did not directly face confiscation from the authorities as they did. We have located 6 copies in UK libraries. It is, however, a rare work on the market; Rare Book Hub records three copies only of this edition at auction since 1970.

OCV 34R. Bengesco, n 1558, p. 18, et Lanson, 34 e.

VOLTAIRE AND JORE



A key source for Jore's account of the publication of the *Lettres Philosophiques*

No. 10

[PIERRE-FRANÇOIS GUYOT DESFONTAINES], [CLAUDE FRANÇOIS JORE].

LA VOLTAIROMANIE avec le Préservatif et le Factum du Sr. Claude-François Jore.

À Londres, [n. pr.], MDCCXXXIX [1739]. [after]

SIMON JOSEPH PELLEGRIN.

PELOPEE. TRAGÉDIE.

Paris, Chez François le Breton, DCCXXXIII [1733]. [with]

L'ENFANT PRODIGE.

Paris, Chez Prault fils, MDCCXXXVIII [1738]. [with]

VOLTAIRE.

ÉPÎTRES SUR LE BONHEUR, LA LIBERTÉ ET L'ENVIE.

Amsterdam, Chez Jacques Desbordes, MDCCXXXVIII [1738]. [with]

Campeçon GRESSET.

ÉDOUARD III. TRAGÉDIE.

Paris, Chez Prault père, MDCCXL [1740].

*Octavo, 5 works in 1 volume (193 x 120mm). Vol 1: pp. (12), 69, (1): a6, A-D8, E3 (lacking E4 blank). Vol. 2: pp. (8), 104: a4, A-F8, G4 (first issue, without the 'approbation du Roy' added as singleton at rear). Vol. 3: pp. 3-28: A7 (lacking A1, likely half-title), B6. Vol. 4: 3 works in 1, separate titles to first and second, drop-down title to third, pp. (8), 88: *4, A-E8, F4. Vol. 5: pp. (4), 98: [*]2, A-F8, G1 (lacking G2, probably blank). Woodcut vignette to titles, typographical headpieces, woodcut tail-pieces. In contemporary French mottled calf, covers single blind ruled, spine with raised bands, richly gilt in compartments with gilt fleurons, tan morocco label gilt lettered, all edges red, marbled endpapers. Fine, well-margined copies.*

VOLTAIRE

¶ A fine and most interesting sammelband containing the *Voltairemanie*. The *Voltairemanie* is Desfontaines' response to Voltaire's attack on him in *Le Préservatif* (a very rare text reproduced here). Desfontaines adds Jore's *factum* against Voltaire of 1736 to this edition — the key source for the history of the publication of the *Lettres philosophiques*. This is the first edition of the *Voltairemanie* with Jore's *Factum* and *Memoire* attached. The publication led to litigation between Voltaire and Desfontaines, from which neither side emerged victorious, and Voltaire's reputation never fully recovered from this attack. *La Voltairemanie* is the key source for Jore's account of the publication. There are earlier editions of the *Factum*, but they are exceptionally rare (see No. 12).

PROVENANCE

c.1700 armorial bookplate of Pierre François Delabarre de Joncy, councillor in the Parliament of Bourgogne.

RARITY

There is no copy of any edition of the *Voltairemanie* recorded at auction by Rare Book Hub.





Exceptionally rare: two copies recorded
in North American libraries

The only autobiography of a
significant Enlightenment printer

No.11

[CLAUDE-FRANÇOIS JORE 1699-1775?].

LES AVANTURES PORTUGAISES.

À Bragance [i.e. Paris]: s.n. [Pierre-Nicolas Delormel], MDCCLVI [1756].

Duodecimo (142 x 84 mm), two volumes in one: Vol. 1) pp. [4], 188, [2], with separate engraved frontispiece: ()2, A-Q 8/4, (lacking last blank Q4). Vol. 2) [4], 206, [2]: (*)2, A-R 8/4. Typographical ornament on both titles, woodcut head-piece in each vol. In contemporary French mottled calf, spine gilt ruled in compartments with small gilt tools, red morocco title label gilt lettered, edges gilt scrolled, swirled marbled endpapers, all edges red. Light age toning, first title a little dusty, the rare marginal mark or spot, small repairs to joints and a piece of the lower cover, head and tail bands chipped, extremities rubbed. A good copy.*

¶ Extremely rare first edition of this autobiography in fictional form by Jore. The book was printed in Paris with a tacit permission. It is, transparently a *roman à clef*: and perhaps the only surviving autobiography by a significant eighteenth-century printer. The book is written in a code, which is easy to decipher: Portugal is France, Lisbon is Paris, Bragança is Rouen, Dom Vilaino de Maigralles is the “wicked” Voltaire, the origin of all Jore’s misfortunes, Dom V. is Thieriot, and so on. The fact that it obtained a tacit permission is an indication of how hostile the French government was to Voltaire in the years after his departure from Berlin.

There are two obvious and related questions: is the book by Jore; and how reliable is the story it tells? Evidently, if the book tells a reliable story containing new material that can be checked, then that increases the likelihood of it being written by, or at least in collaboration with, Jore; and, if the book is by Jore, the case for regarding its reliability is strengthened. The book certainly has its limitations. It is noticeable that the author implicates Jore in no crimes of which the authorities were not already aware, so there is nothing in the *Avantures* about the publication of the third “Lucas” edition; there is not even an explicit reference to the publication of the *Histoire de Charles XII*.

But in every other respect the story he tells fits the facts as we can establish them from other sources.

Indeed, to anyone reading the book it would seem straightforwardly obvious that the book is by Jore, and as such is the only surviving autobiography by a significant Enlightenment printer. But, at some point, doubts were raised about the authenticity of the text, and it was claimed that it could not be by Jore because Jore was not in Paris but in Poland when it was published. These doubts initially received canonical expression in a *notice d'autorité* on the website of the Bibliothèque Nationale. In the OCV the *Avantures portugaises* are referred to as “an exotic novel”, “a bad novel”, but no information is drawn from them and they are not listed in the “works cited”.

Yet the claim that Jore was not in Paris when the *Avantures portugaises* were published is simply wrong. Fréron had no hesitation in attributing it to Jore; and Grimm remarked that Jore, its putative author, was present in Paris. In a letter to Voltaire, Jore gives a comprehensive account of his movements which establishes clearly that he was in Paris at the time of publication. Quite properly, the Bibliothèque Nationale has revised its *notice d'autorité* accordingly. So the source needs to be re-examined. Is it a “bad novel” or a reliable autobiography?

The evidence that it is a reliable autobiography is straightforward: whenever we can check the *Avantures* against the facts as we know them from other sources, the *Avantures* are reliable -- which we would not expect to be the case in a fiction. This is true for the outline of Jore's life and the details of his relations with Voltaire. Let us take two seemingly insignificant test cases. In the *Avantures*, Jore (for I have no doubt that he is the author) reports that, around the time when Voltaire was writing the *Lettres philosophiques*, he had a cunning plan. There was a great fuss about a scandal involving a cleric whose name Jore, in 1756, could no longer remember. It was traditional to publish the depositions relating to court cases in folio form. Jore had the bright idea of publishing the accumulated texts in this scandal in a cheap duodecimo. This infuriated the printers who had invested in the folio publication, which led to conflicts and compromises, and to attempts to have Jore imprisoned.

So, a simple question: can we identify these competing folio and duodecimo editions? And the answer is that we can. The folio edition is *Recueil des factums de la demoiselle Catherine Cadiere. Du Pere Jean-Baptiste Girard Jesuite* (Aix: D. David, 1731); and the duodecimo edition (printed in a great hurry by Jore, who had his printers working day and night on seven presses) is the *Recueil général des pièces concernant le procès entre la demoiselle Cadiere, de la ville de Toulon, et le P. Girard* (La Haye: Swart, 1731). The reliability of Jore's account thus survives this test, and it most unlikely that

anyone other than Jore, remembering what had really happened, would have thought of fitting the *affaire* of Catherine Cadiere into the events of Jore's life.

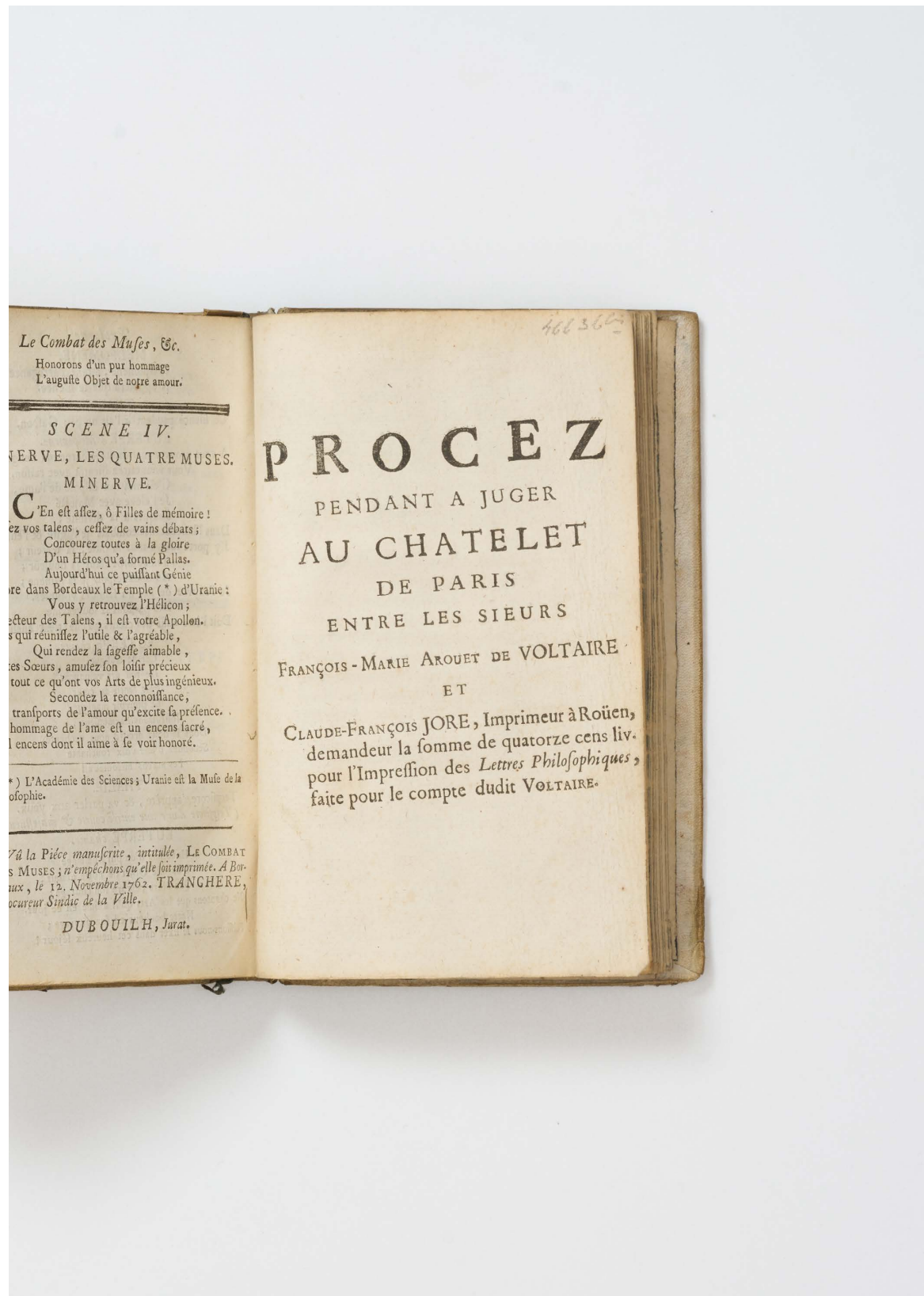
Take another example. Jore reports that when Voltaire was staying with him in Rouen he wrote a series of letters to a friend claiming that they were being written from Canterbury. Jore mocks the intelligence of Voltaire's friend, who surely should have realised that letters that arrived in Paris within two days of being posted were surely not coming from Canterbury. Can we confirm this story? In effect, we can. In March 1731 Voltaire wrote: “Je pars pour l'Angleterre dans quatre ou cinq jours.” On 1 June 1731 Voltaire wrote to Thieriot pretending he was writing from abroad: he had heard rumours of government hostility provoked by manuscript circulation of his poem on the death of Mlle. Lecouvreur: “et qu'il ne seroit pas sûr pour moy de retourner en France, où pourtant mes affaires m'appellent.” In July he published a letter in *La Nouvelliste de Parnasse* claiming to be writing from “Fakener, près de Canterbury”; and in a letter published the same month in the *Mercure de France* he claimed to be writing “De Fahner, près de Londres.” Thus Voltaire evidently established an elaborate false story in the spring and summer of 1731 that he was not in Rouen but England, and indeed “près de Canterbury.” Jore's account fits in with this perfectly.

The *Avantures* may thus be taken as a reasonably accurate account of Jore's life. As Fréron concluded in his review: “Le tout est écrit avec une naïveté & une simplicité qui ne permet pas de douter un moment de la vérité des faits.”

RARITY

We have found eight copies of this work recorded in libraries worldwide. UK copies: University of Cambridge. EU copies: BnF; Bayerische Staatsbibliothek; Göttingen; Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal; Ville de Geneve. North American libraries: NY Public library (Martin J. Gross Collection); Berkeley (Bancroft library). Rare Book Hub records no copy at auction.

Cioranescu, A. 18 s. 34623. See comments in Firmin Didot Frères. *Nouv. biogr. générale*, v. 26, p. 944.



Not in the Bnf

No copy has been located in any public library nor any copy at auction

No.12

[VOLTAIRE; CLAUDE-FRANÇOIS JORE].

PROCEZ PENDANT A JUGER AU CHATELET DE PARIS ENTRE
LES SIEURS FRANÇOIS-MARIE-AROUET VOLTAIRE ET
CLAUDE-FRANÇOIS JORE IMPRIMEUR À ROÛEN...

N.pl., n.pub, n.d. [circa 1736?]. (Bound afte)]

EDME-LOUIS BILLARDON DE SAUVIGNY.

HISTOIRE AMOUREUSE DE PIERRE LE LONG ET DE SA TRÈS
HONORÉE DAME BLANCHE BAZU, NOUVELLE ÉDITION,
(ETC..)

Londres: n.pub., 1768. etc.

Quarto and octavo (178 x 117 mm), three vols in one. 1) pp. xxx, [ii], 124. engraved plates and music, etc. Procez: pp. [ii] 31 [i]: A-D4. In contemporary vellum, spine with raised bands gilt in compartments, red morocco label gilt lettered, edges marbled in blue. Procez with light age toning, cut close in lower margins just touching a few letters of quire signatures, vellum a little soiled, spine slightly rubbed. A good copy.

¶ An exceptionally rare early edition of Jore's factum against Voltaire, preceded by Voltaire's response. Although both had been published before, this is the only edition in which they are printed side by side. An identical copy is reproduced in *Les Voltairiens*, ed. Jérôme Vercuysse (7 vols., Millwood N.Y.: Kraus, 1983), vol. 4, perhaps from Vercuysse's private collection. No copy has been located in any public library nor any copy at auction.

Unrecorded

THE INVISIBLE *LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES*

There was no separate edition of the *Lettres philosophiques* published between 1739 and 1818; indeed there was no proper independent edition until Lanson's edition in 1908. In 1739, in the four-volume edition of Voltaire's Oeuvres, published with his collaboration in Amsterdam, the *Lettres* appear in sequence, but their collective identity has disappeared, except for a brief reference in the table of contents to "Lettres sur les Anglais". In later editions of Voltaire's works they were first split up into groups and then scattered about -- it's a real effort to track them down in the many volumes of the posthumous Kehl edition. When Palissot tried to reconstruct their contents at the end of the eighteenth century he made a complete hash of it -- he had obviously no access to a pre-1739 copy of the text. The 1820s editions of Voltaire's works began to reunite the letters under their original title, but only one independent edition appeared: edited by Beuchot in 1818, it was limited to thirty copies -- it seems there are two copies in the Bibliothèque nationale, but we can find none elsewhere. In effect, the *Lettres philosophiques*, as a free-standing text, ceased to exist between 1739 and 1908.

The publishing history of the *Lettres philosophiques* is thus exceptional among "classic" texts. The book made an enormous splash when it first appeared; but after 1739 it ceased to appear in French as a distinct work under its original title. Why is this? Censorship alone does not provide an explanation: plenty of forbidden books were regularly reprinted. Rather the book may be said to have naturally fallen apart into its separate chapters, and a number of the most important chapters quickly became outdated. The four chapters on the Quakers were delightfully subversive, but an account of an eccentric sect was hardly required reading when everyone was debating Jansenist "enthusiasm" in the form of the miracles on the tomb of the abbé de Pâris. After 1738 a reader interested in Newton read Voltaire's *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton*, not the *Lettres philosophiques*. One interested in his views on the soul read his "*Lettre sur l'âme*" (the original draft of Letter 13, which Voltaire had revised before publication because it was too evidently irreligious) which, after its appearance in the Poppy edition of 1738, went through twenty-one editions by 1784, far outselling the real *Lettres Philosophiques*. For a brief moment the *Lettres* were at the cutting edge of Enlightenment culture, but by 1739 they were already on the point of becoming obsolete, surpassed by Voltaire's various later publications on the same subjects. Their reinvention as a classic text in the twentieth century is a peculiar triumph of what we might call literary archaeology.

Although the *Lettres philosophiques* no longer appear as a stand-alone text, they do however appear, in a hidden fashion, revised and updated by Voltaire, in editions of his works under the new and anodyne general title of *Mélange*

s de littérature et de philosophie - which were also often designed to be sold as individual volumes. Nicholas Cronk beautifully describes this transformation (our translation):

The *Lettres philosophiques* now occupy a pre-eminent place in the Voltairean canon, and yet it is perhaps surprising to discover that this book did not seem to enjoy the same status in the eighteenth century as an indisputable masterpiece that it does for us now. The *Lettres philosophiques*, as we read them now, are in some ways a pedagogical invention of the Third Republic. Gustave Lanson's masterly critical edition, published in 1909, ushered in the modern era of scientific editions; it established the text's predominance in the Voltairean canon (the first critical edition of *Candide*, by André Morize, a pupil of Lanson, did not appear until four years later, in 1913), and set the parameters that continue to shape our reading of the work. In terms of the history of ideas, this work has also acquired great importance, because in the context of the teaching of eighteenth-century French culture, both in France and abroad, the *Lettres philosophiques* have become a key text in explaining the genesis and profile of the French Enlightenment.

However for eighteenth-century readers, the work appeared as an unstable, and evanescent text, in stark contrast to the stable, fixed text established by Gustave Lanson, whose title, *Lettres philosophiques*, has since become the only authoritative one for a century. The multifaceted identity of the work derives firstly from the fact that three editions appeared in 1733 and 1734, each bearing a specific title; and it is considerably complicated by the censorship that hit the book as soon as it appeared in France.

In France, Jore's Rouen edition caused an immediate scandal, and many authors took up the pen to reply to Voltaire. In his edition, Lanson identifies fourteen responses to the *Lettres philosophiques*, a list that is far from exhaustive. In the face of this criticism, Voltaire remained... Britishly phlegmatic, because the real danger, as he knew, lay elsewhere:

'Je crains plus les lettres de cachet que tous les ouvrages qu'on peut faire contre les lettres philosophiques', as he wrote to Cideville (24 juillet 1734 [D772])

As Voltaire explained to Helvétius in early 1739, he wanted to forget the *Lettres philosophiques* and turn a new page:

'Je veux vivre et mourir dans ma patrie avec mes amis et je jetterai plutôt dans le feu les lettres philosophiques que de faire encor un voyage à Amsterdam au mois de janvier avec un flux de sang, dans l'incertitude

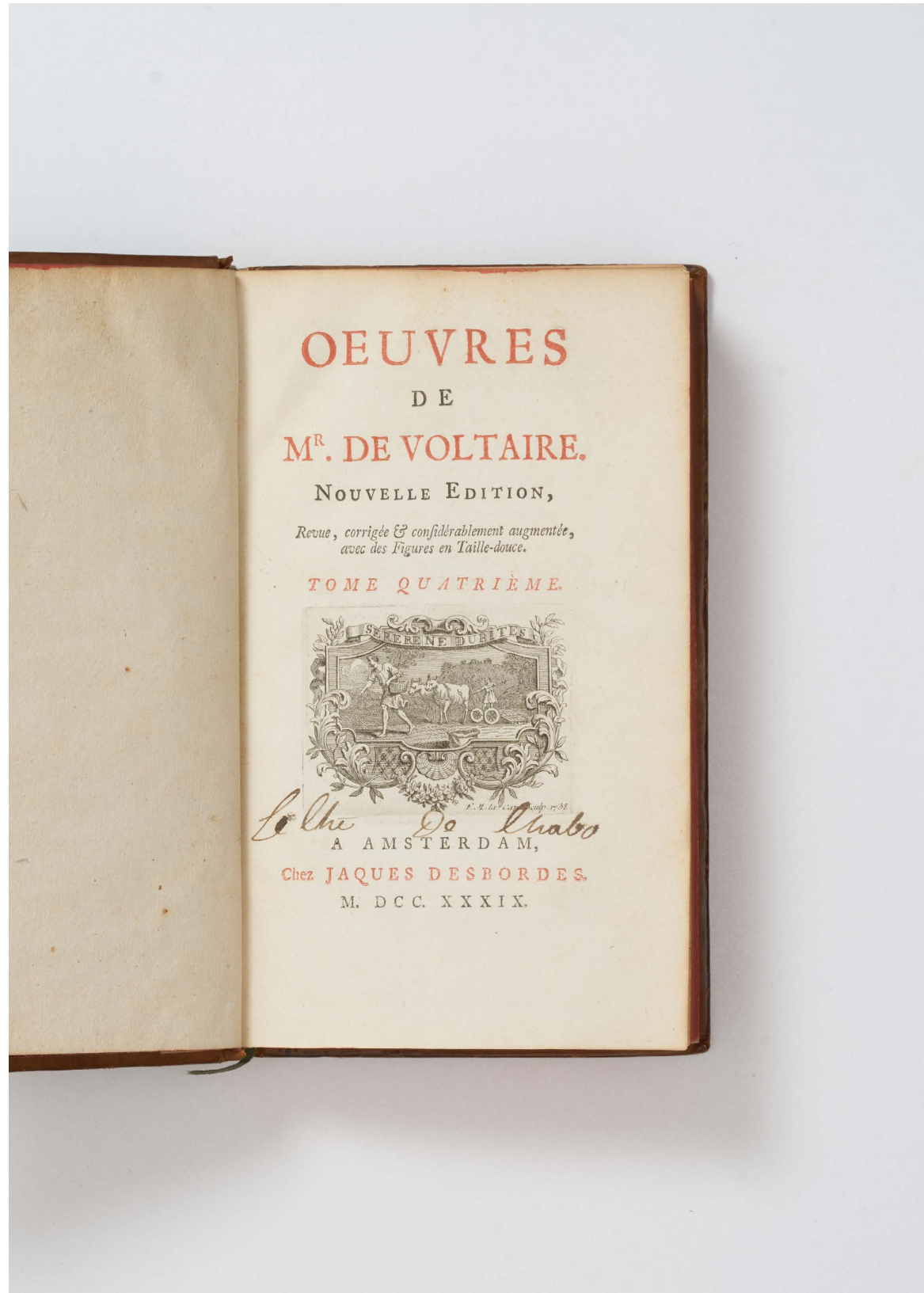
de retourner auprès de mes amis. Il faut une bonne fois pour toutes me procurer du repos, et mes amis devroient me forcer à tenir cette conduite si je m'en écartois. Primum vivere.'

This, of course, was not at all the case. The Ledet edition of Voltaire's works, published in four volumes in Amsterdam in 1738-1739, marked a decisive turning point in the genesis of the *Lettres sur les Anglais*: they appeared at the end of the last volume, dated 1739, accompanied by a new title, *Mélanges de littérature et de philosophie*. Since censorship prohibited the republication of the book entitled *Lettres philosophiques*, Voltaire realised that he had to create a diversion by burying the title and imposing a different, perfectly harmless title. He himself, when referring to the work in an article published in the Bibliothèque française in 1739, spoke simply of 'mélanges de philosophie'. Voltaire thus succeeded in republishing his book without reviving the censorship, an act of bravery he was not sure of succeeding in, since in July 1738 Voltaire had provided Ledet with an ostensible letter for all practical purposes:

'Je ne suis point [...] l'auteur des Lettres philosophiques telles qu'elles ont été débitées, elles sont pleines d'impertinences [...]. Je vous déclare [...] que si vous imprimez sous mon nom quelque chose que ce puisse être avec le titre de Lettres philosophiques, je serai en droit de me plaindre, même à vos magistrats, car il n'est permis nulle part d'imputer à un homme ce qu'il désavoue.' (D1546)

Voltaire's publishing manoeuvre worked perfectly, as the *Mélanges* were subsequently republished without problem (outside France) and, remarkably, no pirate edition of the *Lettres philosophiques* can be found after 1739"¹

¹ Translated from Nicholas Cronk. *Les Lettres Sur Les Anglais en France au Dix-Huitième Siècle: Questions de Reception et de Réputation*. *Revue Voltaire*, No. 13, 2013, pp 142-5.



The first edition of the *Lettre sur le Suicide*, originally meant for the *Lettres Philosophiques*

Complete with all the *Lettres Philosophiques* as originally intended

No.13

VOLTAIRE.

OEUVRES DE Mr. DE VOLTAIRE.

Amsterdam: Chez Jacques Desbordes, M DCC XXXIX [1739].

Octavo, 4 volumes (199 x 116mm, 198 x 115mm, 197 x 116mm, 197 x 116mm) vol 1) pp. (4), xxxii, (2) 349, (1): [*]1, [*]1, *-**8, A-X8, Y7 (without Y8, probably blank) + 11 separate leaves of plates. Vol. 2) pp. pp. (6), 366, (2): [*]2, [*]1, A-Z8 + 3 separate leaves of plates. Vol. 3) pp. (4), xix, (1), 372: [*]2, A-Z8, Aa8, Bb4 + 4 separate leaves of plates. Vol. 4): pp. (4), 377, (19), v, (1), 133, (1): [*]1, [*]1, A-Z8, Aa6, Bb8, [*]4, A-H8, I4 (I4 blank) + 1 separate leaf of plates. Title page in red and black, engraved printer's device on title, typographical headpieces, woodcut tailpieces. In contemporary Dutch mottled calf, spine with gilt ruled raised bands, richly gilt in compartments with gilt fleurons, tan morocco labels gilt lettered, outer edges gilt, all edges red, marbled endpapers. Occasional toning, the odd marginal spot or paper flaw. Tiny loss at head of spines of vols 2 (restored) and 3, upper joint of vol. 1 just split at head, few corners a bit bumped. Very good, clean copies.

¶ Published under Voltaire's supervision; the *Lettres* are advertised in the table of contents, but merged with other essays in the actual volumes. The letter on suicide, which was most probably written in England and originally intended for the first edition of the *Lettres Philosophiques*, appears for first time. According to the table of contents (which Voltaire may well not have seen) this included "*Réflexions sur les Anglais*" followed by "*Remarques sur les Pensées de Mr. Pascal*", but in fact the essays on England, preceded by three others, appear in the body of the text under the title and running head "*Mélanges de littérature et de philosophie*", followed by the Remarks on Pascal. Thereafter, the *Lettres philosophiques* or *Lettres sur les Anglois* disappear as the title for a group of texts until Beuchot's nineteenth-century edition of the *Oeuvres*, although the individual essays continued to appear (and to be revised) in editions of Voltaire's works. Apart from an edition limited to thirty copies published by Beuchot in 1818, there was no independent edition

VOLTAIRE

of the *Lettres philosophiques* until Lanson's in 1909.

PROVENANCE

Contemporary signature 'Le C[o]mte de Chabo' to titles and upper margin of a couple of leaves. Likely Charles (1715-after 1782), Count of Chabo, Lieutenant General of the Armies of the King and commander of the Military Order of St. Louis. He was the subject of the biography *La vie du Comte de Chabo* (Londres, 1782), which recounted his participation in the most important wars and battles of the French army in the second half of the 18th century.

Bengescu, G. Voltaire, v. 4, item 2120, variant ed.





The edition with the most revisions by Voltaire

No. 14

[VOLTAIRE].

MELANGES DE LITTERATURE, D'HISTOIRE ET DE PHILOSOPHIE.
[n. pl.], [n. pub.], MDCCLVI [1756].

Octavo, (192 x 116mm) pp. (4), 400: []2, A-Z8, Aa-Bb8. Titles in red and black, woodcut vignette to title, typographical headpieces, woodcut tail-pieces. In contemporary French mottled calf, covers single blind ruled, spine with raised bands, richly gilt in compartments with gilt fleurons, tan morocco labels gilt lettered, all edges red, marbled endpapers. Occasional light toning, the odd marginal spot, tiny hole at foot of lower joint. A very good copy, well-margined.*

¶ The major revision of the text of the *Lettres philosophiques*. It contains an addition to letter 10, extensions to letters 11 and 18, the addition of *De Newton* which partially replaces the original letters 16 and 17, the addition of *De Prior*, *du poème singulier d'Hudibras*, *et du doyen Swift*, and *De Pope*, which together replace the 22nd letter. Also contains the revisions which had appeared in the rare cancels to the 1748 edition of the *Oeuvres*.

PROVENANCE

Contemporary armorial bookplate of the Library of Count Moreau de Coeffy. Rietstap (1926) attributes this bookplate to the family from Champagne. Their library must have been quite extensive as numerous books have appeared on the market with the same, or a very similar, bookplate.



Exceptionally rare. All copies of this first edition were seized by the authorities.

First appearance of the *Essai sur le Siècle de Louis XIV*.

The first French publication of the important and highly controversial poem, “*Le Mondain*”.

No. 15

[VOLTAIRE].

RECUEIL DE PIÈCES FUGITIVES EN PROSE ET EN VERS. PAR MR. DE V***.

N.p., N.d. [Paris, Laurent-François Prault], MDCCXL [1740, but 1739].

Octavo [203 x 124mm], pp. [2] iv, [2], 275, [1] (Pagination errors: pp. 170-171 as “174”, “175”, page 205 as “105”, page 207 as “270”): []2, a2, A-R8, S2. (C8 is a cancel). Title with charming vignette of putti engraved by Claude Duflos after François Boucher. Contemporary speckled French calf, sides bordered with a single blind rule, spine with gilt tooled raised bands double gilt ruled in compartments, large fleurons gilt to centres, red morocco title label gilt lettered, edges gilt scrolled, swirled marbled endpapers, all edges sprinkled red. A fine, well margined copy, crisp and clean.

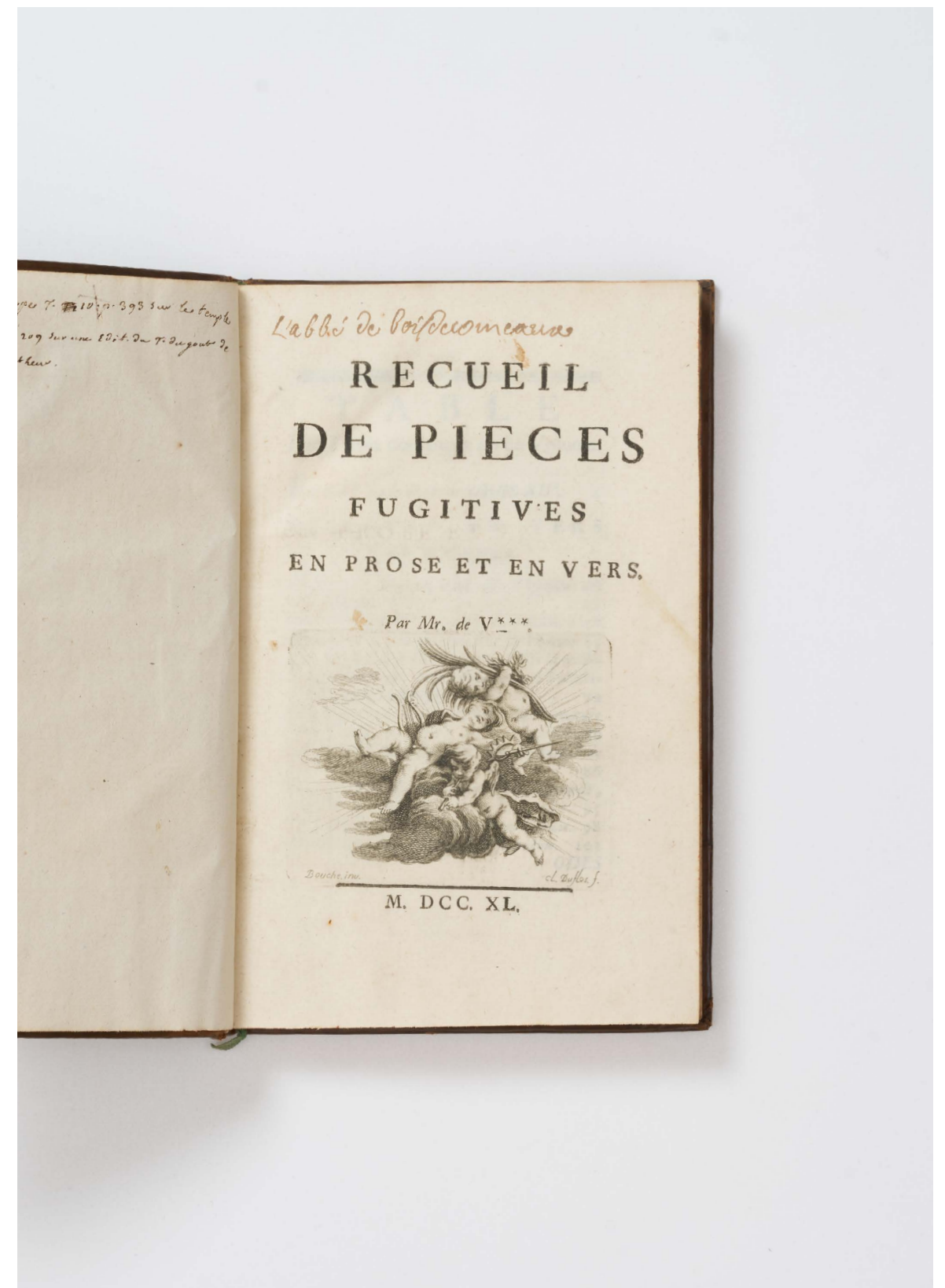
¶ Exceptionally rare first edition of this important collection of texts. Condemned and pilloried by the Conseil d’Etat on December 4, 1739 [while still in sheets and not yet for sale], this “collection of fugitive pieces”, in prose and in verse, represents an important step in Voltaire’s literary and publishing development. It looks back to the *Lettres philosophiques* in providing the first French publication of a number of texts that Voltaire had considered publishing as part of the *Lettres philosophiques*: the *Temple du Goût* in yet another revised form; the poem on the death of Mlle LeCouvreur; and “Du suicide”, the text of which has variants to the first edition and might have a different source. It also fulfils the promise he had made in 1733 to publish (“within a year or two”) a collection of *Pièces fugitives* in France (an earlier collection had appeared in 1732). It makes available for the first time in France, in a “pocket” format, numerous works first published in the four volumes of the 1739 *Oeuvres*. Thus it provides the first French publication of the important and highly controversial poem, “*Le Mondain*”. And it provides the first two chapters of *Le siècle de Louis XIV*, a work only completed in 1751 and

published in Berlin: it seems to have been published simultaneously in Holland and Paris — news of its Dutch publication reaches France after the Paris publication. There's a year's difference in date, but both are printed in 1739.

It is surely the publication of the work-in-progress on Louis XIV which most provoked the authorities who had made clear that permission for publication would not be granted. Voltaire was not dismayed when the whole stock was seized. He was confident some copies would reappear on the black market, and lead to unofficial reprints (of which there were several) and he had arranged for simultaneous publication in Holland (by Du Sauzet) of the "Essai sur le siècle de Louis XIV". But he promptly fled the country for fear of arrest.

Although Prault's shop was closed for three months, the publication of the *Recueil* was a success: it established that Voltaire did not have to arrange the printing of large numbers of copies of his own works - the market would see to that, even if a book was banned, provided printers had access to copies they could replicate. It marks Voltaire's commitment to a double strategy he was to pursue for the rest of his intellectual life: on the one hand, expensive editions of the *Oeuvres*, each larger than the one before; and on the other pocket editions, cheap to print though often expensive to buy if banned, designed for wide circulation.

Contains: *Essai sur le siècle de Louis XIV* [1st ed.]; *Discours en vers sur l'homme* [1st ed of all six discours together; first ed anywhere of last two]; *Fragment d'une lettre sur un usage très utile établi en Hollande* [1st ed]; *de la Gloire, ou Entretien avec un Chinois* [2nd ed -- the first appeared in 1739 *Oeuvres*]; *du Suicide, ou de l'Homicide de soi-même* [ditto]; *Odes: Sur le fanatisme* [ditto]; *Pour Messieurs de l'Académie des sciences qui ont été au Cercle polaire et sous l'Équateur déterminer la figure de la terre* [1st ed of complete text]; *Sur la paix* [1st ed in 1739 *Oeuvres*]; *le Mondain* [1st ed in 1739 *Oeuvres*]; *Lettre de M. Melon, ci-devant secrétaire du Régent, à Mme de Vêrue sur "le Mondain"* [1st ed in 1739 *Oeuvres*; fictitious letter]; *Deffense du "Mondain"*, *ou l'Apologie du luxe* [1st ed in 1739 *Oeuvres*]; *Épître sur la calomnie* [1st ed in 1736 *Oeuvres*]; *le Temple de l'amitié* [1st ed 1733]; *l'Anti-Giton* [1st ed in this form, an attack on Desfontaines]; *le Cadenat* [reproduces version first ed in 1739 *Oeuvres*]; *À Mme la Mise Du Chastellet sur la phisique de Neuton* [1st pub in 1738 Newton]; *Aux mânes de M. de Genonville* [1st pub 1732]; *la Mort de Mlle Le Couvreur* [1st pub 1732; this ed is the revised version]; *Lettres familières (en vers)*; *À M. l'abbé de Chaulieu, de Sully, le 5 juillet 1717* [1st ed 1717]; *À M. le duc de Sully, à Paris, le 18 aoust 1720* [1st ed 1732]; *À Mgr le Pce de Vendôme* [1st ed 1716]; *À M. de Genonville sur une maladie* [1st ed 1737]; *À M. le Mal de Villars* [1st ed 1722]; *À Mme de Fontaine-Martel* [1st pub *Oeuvres* of 1739]; *À M. Pallu, aoust 1729* [this is first ed]; *Réponse à une dame ou soi-disant telle* [1st pub



VOLTAIRE

1732] ; À M. de Bussy, évêque de Luçon [this is the first ed]; À M. de Formont en lui renvoyant les oeuvres de Descartes et de Malbranche [this is the first ed]; À M. le duc de La Feuillade [this is the first ed]; À M. de Fontenelle, de Villars, le 1er septembre 1720 [1st ed 1726]; Réponse [ditto]; Stances sur les poètes épiques [1st complete text 1739]; Au Camp de Philisbourg, le 3 juillet 1734 [this is first ed]; Madrigal, les Deux amours [1st ed 1725]; Autre : De votre esprit, la force est si puissante... [1st ed in the 1739 Oeuvres]; Autre (à Mme la Mise Du Châtelet “Tout est égal...”) [1st ed in the 1739 Oeuvres]; Autre, en envoyant les oeuvres mystiques de Fénelon [1st ed in the 1739 Oeuvres]; le Temple du goût [restores some passages cut in the first authorised ed]; Remarques servant d’éclaircissement sur les principaux sujets du “Temple du goût”.

PROVENANCE

Autograph of “L’Abbé de Bois de Comeaux” at head of title page, occasional marginal “nota bene”, probably in his hand. Bibliographical notes in a nineteenth century hand on fly.

RARITY

Exceptionally rare. All copies of the first edition were seized by the authorities. Rare Book Hub records no copies at auction. Strangely the highest concentration of copies found in libraires occurs in the UK with 5 locations.

Copies libraries: Bnf; Chateau Gontier, (it seems dated 1739?); Toulouse; Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München; Berlin Staatsbibliothek; Dresden; University of Cambridge; University of Manchester Library; National Library of Scotland; National Trust Libraries; University of Oxford. Two copies only in American Libraries: Harvard and UT Austin.

Bengesco, no 2193. *Recueil de pièces fugitives en prose et en vers, par M. de V**** : 1739 éd. Olivier Ferret et Myrtille Méricam-Bourdet, 2012. OCV.

THE *LETTRE SUR L'ÂME*

Voltaire's much bolder first draft of his *Lettre sur Locke*, the thirteenth letter in the *Lettres Philosophiques*, was revised by Voltaire after its first publication. It was put into print by those hostile to him (from a manuscript copy that escaped Voltaire's control) and now entitled the *Lettre sur l'Âme* or the 26ième *Lettre Philosophique*, and became a best-seller in the years between 1738 and the Revolution. Antony McKenna and Gianluca Mori in their remarkable critical edition of the *Lettre sur Locke* have unlocked the secrets to the printing history of this most important and influential work:

The thirteenth of the *Lettres Philosophiques* deals with Locke and the question of the soul. The first version of the *Lettre sur Locke* was discarded by Voltaire from the *Lettres sur les Anglais* in 1733 because its quasi-materialistic daring risked censorship of the whole work, and it was replaced by the watered-down version we know today as *Lettre 13*. Voltaire took up the first version again in 1736, developing the comparison between man and animal, going much further than the prudent Locke had done in his *Essay on Human Understanding* towards the assertion of an essential link between the "organisation" of bodies and their cognitive properties. The Letter then escaped his grasp, circulating in manuscript and in numerous editions throughout the eighteenth century. It played an important role in the emergence of materialist thought at the heart of the French Enlightenment. In the version published by 'Poppy' it became a bestseller, going through 21 editions by 1784.

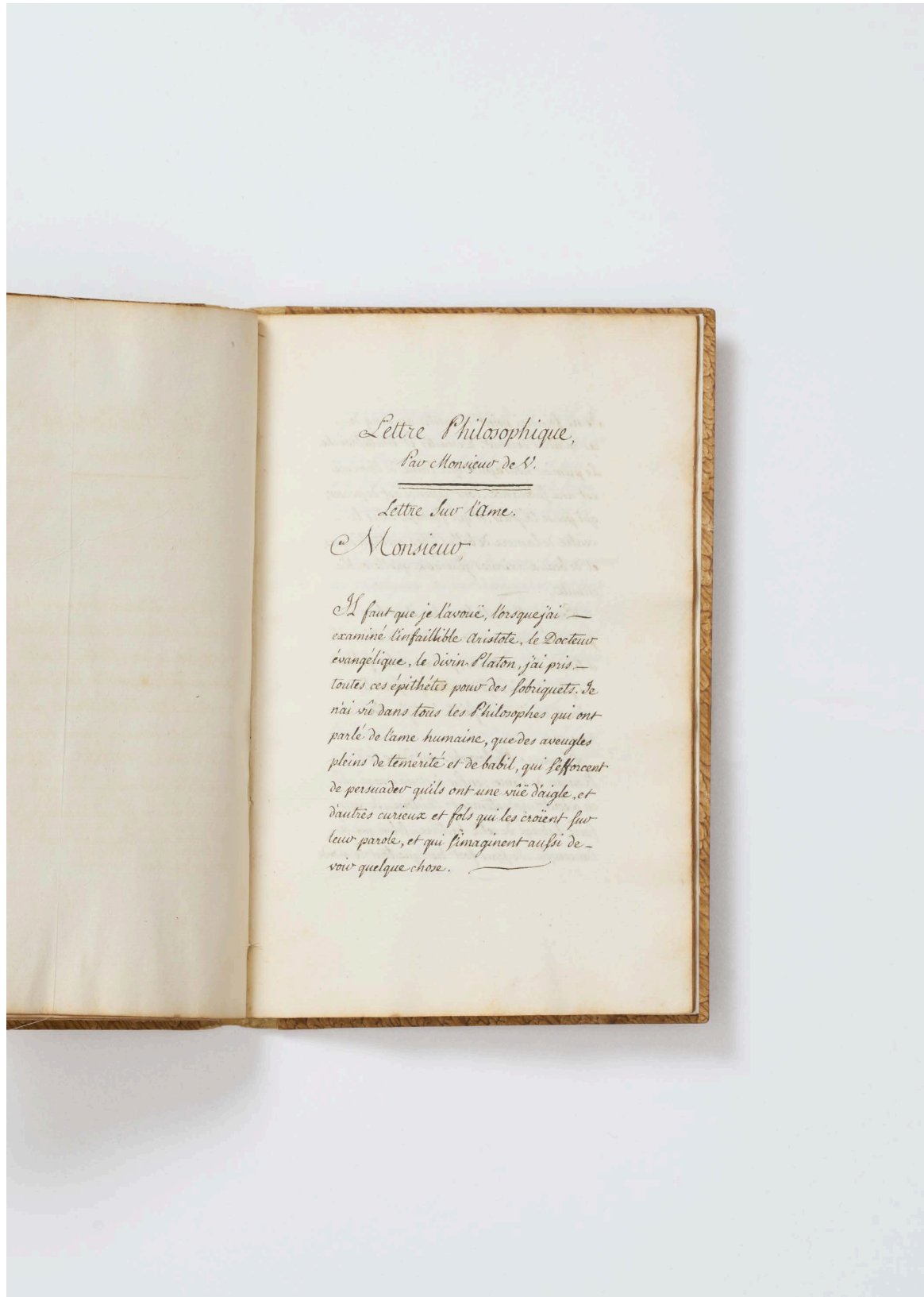
Following the clues revealed by the announcement in June 1736 of the circulation of an unpublished version of the *Lettre sur Locke* led to a collection of clandestine manuscripts preserved at the Library of the Arsenal in Paris, which turned out to be the source of all known manuscript copies and, of the very many editions published during the eighteenth century. These, it turned out, were the product of Voltaire's enemies and their accomplices who worked to disseminate the *Lettre sur Locke* and other contentious writings by Voltaire. At the end of their extraordinary investigation, McKenna and Mori discovered the existence of a concerted strategy by a group of Voltaire's enemies to exploit an aspect of Voltaire's writings that made him vulnerable: his irreligion. Voltaire stormed back and forth, denying again and again; he lodged complaints, and launched investigations, searches, seizures, arrests and interrogations to no avail. Printers, booksellers, peddlers, pamphleteers, journalists, authors great and small, and even a violinist at the opera - were all involved, but nothing was done: behind the scenes, the state authorities kept a watchful eye and ensured impunity for the culprits.

McKenna and Mori's research revealed a series of malicious initiatives on the part of Voltaire's enemies, led by Alexis Piron, who was jealous of Voltaire's success and indignant at the contemptuous way the poet-philosopher treated him. Piron frequented Moncrif at the Société du Bout du Banc; he obtained a copy of the *Lettre clandestine* and had it published by his accomplice, the

journalist La Varenne. La Marre, Voltaire's protégé, had already joined the conspiracy: in 1735, he collaborated with Moncrif in the publication of a *Recueil du cosmopolite* (1735) containing the first edition - hitherto unknown - of the *Epître à Uranie*. This collection was part of a veritable campaign to publish Voltaire's compromising writings, as revealed by Piron's anti-Voltaire tale entitled *La Malle-Bosse*, first published in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des colporteurs* (1748) and again in the *Voltariana* (1749).

Their further investigation, based on a study of typographical ornaments in the various editions, enabled the identification the main culprits: firstly Prault fils, who collected every compromising piece of writing that came from Voltaire's pen; secondly Simon fils, who hid behind the pseudonym of 'Pierre Poppy' and published the first French edition of the *Lettre sur Locke* in 1738. A few years later, the same Simon fils - official printer to the Archbishop of Paris - published Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques* and Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* with the characteristic 'tousled philosopher's head' ornament. Voltaire's enemies published his scandalous works with the intention of compromising him with the authorities by highlighting his anti-Christian beliefs. Maurepas was only waiting for such a pretext to have him condemned. It is, however, thanks to these betrayals and clandestine circulation that Voltaire's *Lettre sur L'Âme* was able to play its part - along with the reflections of Guillaume Lamy, Bayle, Collins and Toland - in the emergence of materialist thought at the heart of the French Enlightenment.¹

¹ Translated and adapted from Antony McKenna et Gianluca Mori. *L'âme de Voltaire dans tous ses états: l'édition critique de la version clandestine de la Lettre sur Locke*. Voltaire Foundation.



Extremely rare manuscript of the *Lettre sur L'Âme*:
the seventh known manuscript

Exceptional collection of anti-religious
and anti-monarchist texts in manuscript

No.16

[VOLTAIRE].

LETTRE PHILOSOPHIQUE, PAR MONSIEUR DE V. LETTRE
SUR L'ÂME. (after) ÉPITRE A URANIE ETC... (with)

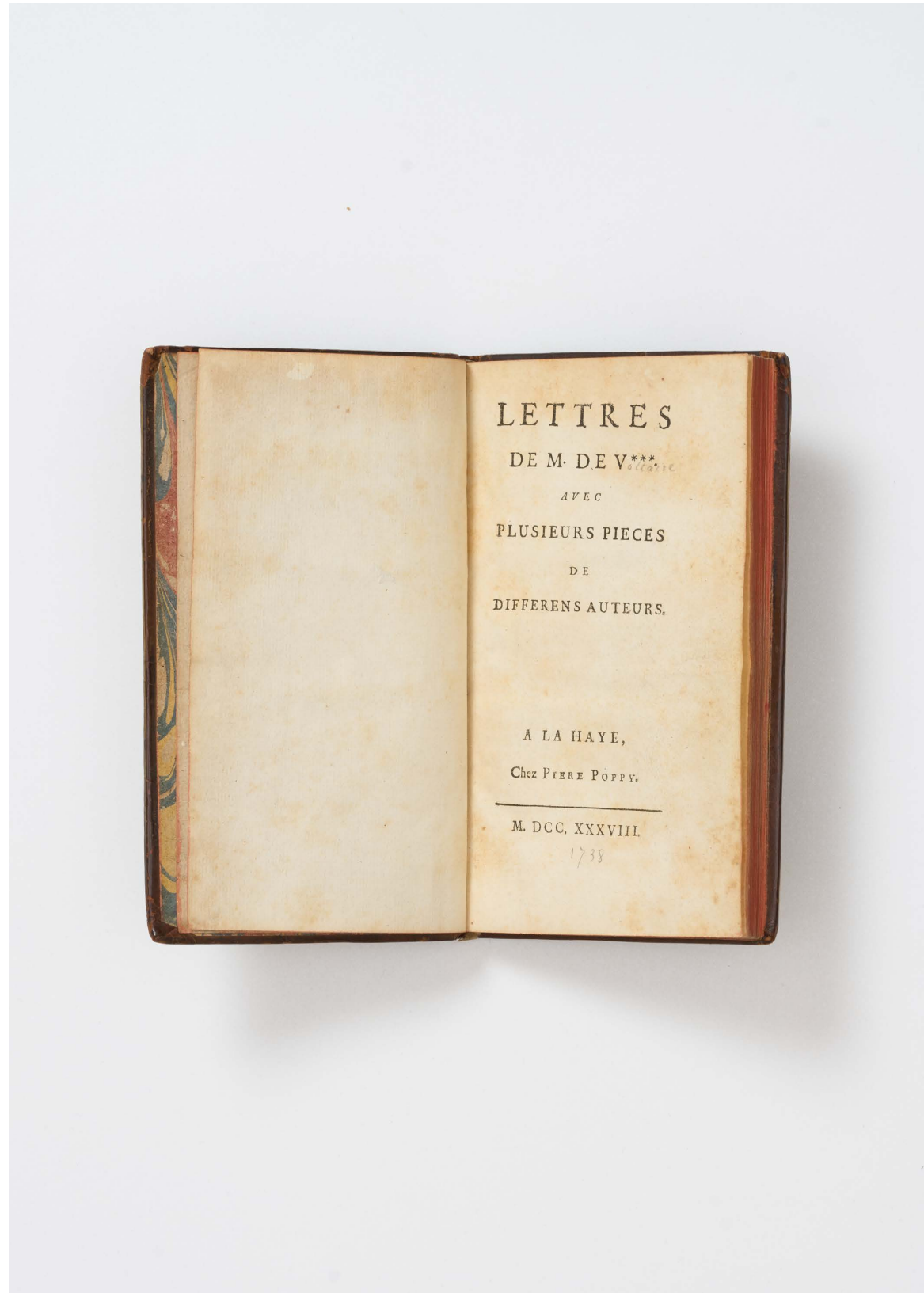
FRANÇOIS-JOSEPH DE LAGRANGE-CHANCEL.

PHILIPPIQUES.

Manuscript. N.pl., N.d. [circa 1750].

Octavo (196 x 128 mm) pp. 93, numbered in manuscript, [29] (including 5 blank pages). Manuscript in a beautiful copyist's hand in imitation of a larger Roman type and a small italic type, on fine letter paper (watermark unidentifiable). In modern quarter vellum over daubed paper boards. First leaf a little dusty with small tear in lower blank margin and traces of an old tape repair. A very good copy, beautifully manuscript.

¶ Exceptionally rare and important manuscript of the most influential *Lettre sur L'âme*. Miguel Benitez has located six copies of the *Lettre sur l'âme* in manuscript in collections worldwide, including the final one he discovered and presented in his most recent article, *Une Nouvelle copie Manuscrite de la Lettre sur l'âme de Voltaire*. This would make a seventh manuscript. The present manuscript corresponds with the Foni Tissen manuscript Benitez presents in this article in that it copies the Poppy "family of manuscripts". The title of this version would suggest that it was taken from the 1547 edition printed "A Paris, au depens de la compagnie" as it follows the same title in that edition and not the title as given in the Poppy editions which present the work in the title as the "26ième lettre Philosophique".



Extremely rare: the first
edition of the Lettre sur L'Ame

No. 17

[VOLTAIRE].

LETTRES DE M. DE V***. AVEC PLUSIEURS PIECES DE
DIFFERENS AUTEURS.

A La Haye: Chez Piere Poppy, M. DCC. XXXVIII. [1738] [i.e. Paris? par
Claude-François Simon? -- as established by McKenna and Mori in
OCV6C]

Duodecimo (164 x 97mm) pp. [2], 175, [3]: ()1, A-D6, E5, F-O6,
P5.[Numerous leaves missigned, errata on p. [3] at end]. Typographical
ornaments. Contemporary mottled calf, spine double gilt ruled in
compartments with gilt fleurons, red morocco label gilt lettered, edges gilt
ruled, wide-combed marbled end-papers, all edges red. Light spotting on
title and first few leaves, upper corners very slightly worn, joints
fractionally rubbed. A very good, well-margined copy.*

¶ Extremely rare first book form edition of the *Lettre sur l'âme*. The collec-
tion contains thirty-one pieces, chiefly in verse, by various authors. M. de
V*** is identified in the table of contents as Voltaire. The Lettre sur l'âme is
presented as the 26th Lettre Philosophique and is titled *Lettres philosophiques
par M. de V***. XXVI*. The collection includes three works by Voltaire:
Lettre sur l'âme, *Epître à Uranie*, and *La mule du Pape* [1st ed].

RARITY

We have found no copy of this edition at auction. In libraries, two
locations in France: BnF and Institut de France. UK: Taylor Institute,
Oxford. Rest of Europe: Bruxelles; Potsdam (Frederick II copy); Berlin
Staatsbibliothek; Halle University; Geneva; Sachsen-Anhalt University.
North America: Yale, Beinecke; NYPL; Library of Congress; Toronto,
Thomas Fisher.

OCV PP38. Bengesco 1558. BnC 37099

RECEPTION OF THE *LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES*

To understand the context of the reception of the *Lettres Philosophiques* it is important to grasp two conventions which will seem alien to anglophone readers. First, the *Lettres philosophiques* had been banned by both the Parlement and the government. This meant that it was illegal to sell a copy, but not illegal to own or even to buy a copy. (Voltaire was thus horrified when a copy of his *Dictionnaire philosophique* was burnt along with the body of François-Jean de la Barre in 1766, as if ownership of his book was itself a crime.) In principle then there was nothing to prevent readers of the *Lettres philosophiques* debating Voltaire's text, and indeed that was true as far as conversations and letters were concerned. But it was also a convention that no text could be approved for publication if it named a banned book. The most striking example of the working of this convention is Voltaire's letter to the Académie française of 1776 in which he protested that no one was giving him credit for having introduced the French to Shakespeare. He was referring, of course, to the *Lettres philosophiques*, but he never mentions the work by name. The Académie printed Voltaire's letter but could not get permission to distribute it, as the implicit reference to the *Lettres philosophiques* was too obvious; Voltaire was trying to smuggle discussion of a banned book into an official publication. As a result Voltaire had to publish the letter himself, in Geneva. This convention meant that the first works which appeared attacking the *Lettres philosophiques* had to pretend to have been published abroad, and could not receive an approbation.

The second convention to bear in mind is that in France (unlike England) it was regarded as dishonouring for an author to reply to his critics, who must be treated as if they were beneath contempt. Voltaire insisted that he reserved the right to reply to attacks on his personal character, but he insisted he would never respond to anyone criticising his published works (OCV 14:123). It should not surprise us then that Voltaire would seem never to have replied to criticisms of the *Lettres philosophiques*. Except he did; in order to do so, he had to find a way of replying which he could claim was not in fact a reply (see No. 23).

The *Lettres Philosophiques* influence was huge but that is necessarily difficult to prove, as being a banned work, even citing it would cause the censor to intervene. It was a book that was read but that no one dared mention. One striking example of the work's direct influence can be found in Alembert's *Discours préliminaire* in the *Encyclopedie*, even though the title the *Lettres philosophiques* is not directly cited once in the entire work.

'L'influence indirecte des *Lettres philosophiques* est nécessairement difficile à prouver, mais elle se fait sentir dans de nombreux articles qui concernent, par exemple, le progrès des Lumières. Exemple incontestable, le « Discours préliminaire » de D'Alembert: on n'y trouve aucune référence

explicite aux *Lettres philosophiques*, mais leur influence est omniprésente, en particulier dans l'importance centrale que D'Alembert accorde à Locke et à Newton face à l'émergence capitale de la pensée empirique: « Concluons de toute cette histoire », écrit D'Alembert, « que l'Angleterre nous doit la naissance de cette Philosophie que nous avons reçue d'elle »'.¹

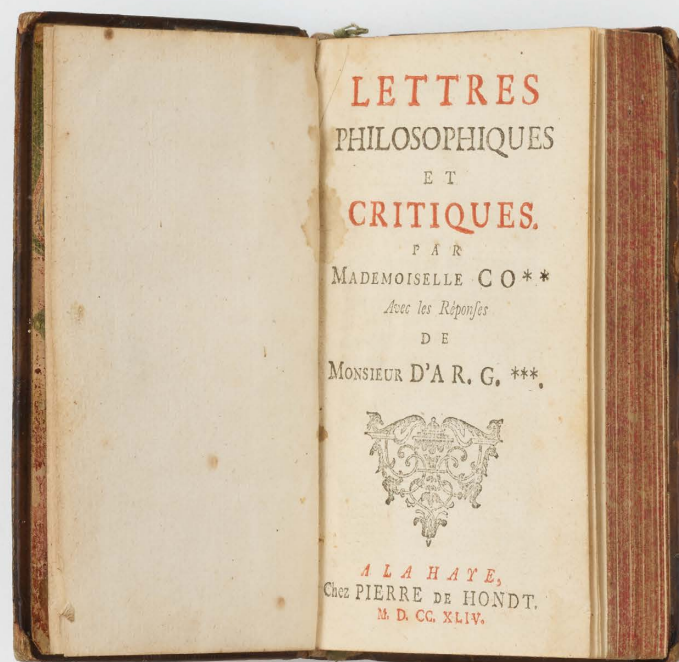
Nicolas Cronk has also discovered the direct influence of the *Lettres Philosophiques* on numerous articles in the *Encyclopedie* itself:

The rewriting of the *Lettres philosophiques* within the *Encyclopédie* remains a striking example of the ubiquitous presence of Voltaire's work in the minds of certain encyclopaedists, and an example of the extent to which the *Lettres philosophiques* had permeated Enlightenment thought.

In the eighteenth century, the *Lettres philosophiques* quickly became a book that people read, but did not dare name, and in this simple act of refusal, we can already see the work's radical potential.²

¹ Translated from Nicholas Cronk. *Les Lettres Sur Les Anglais en France au Dix-Huitième Siècle: Questions de Reception et de Réputation*. Revue Voltaire, No. 13, 2013, pp 148 and 1578.

² Translated from Nicholas Cronk. *Les Lettres Sur Les Anglais en France au Dix-Huitième Siècle: Questions de Reception et de Réputation*. Revue Voltaire, No. 13, 2013, pp 148 and 1578.



THE ADMIRERS

No.18

JEAN-BAPTISTE DE BOYER D' ARGENS [1704-1771].

LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES ET CRITIQUES PAR MADEMOISELLE
CO **. AVEC LES RÉPONSES DE MONSIEUR D'AR. G. ***.
À La Haye: Chez Pierre de Hondt, M.D.CC.XLVI [1744].

Duodecimo (134 x 75 mm) pp. [4], 132: ()2, A-N12. Title in red and black with woodcut ornament, typographical ornaments. In contemporary French speckled calf, covers bordered with a triple gilt rule, spine with gilt ruled raised bands, gilt in compartments with small tools, red morocco title label gilt, edges gilt ruled, swirled marbled endpapers, all edges red. Light age toning, small water stain at gutter in first few leaves, head band chipped, corners and board edges worn in places. A very good copy, crisp and clean.*

¶ This most interesting work is supposedly (and perhaps really) co-authored by d'Argens and Babette Cochois, his mistress and later wife. Babette Cochois is presented as a Cartesian, hostile to Locke on the soul and Newton on the void. In its insistence on women as philosophers, the work is a significant feminist text (e.g. letter 9) though ignored in the literature. On page 60 D'Argens echoes Voltaire on LeCouvreur and the poem is quoted pp. 70-71. The work contains the text of d'Argens' opening address to the first sessions of the Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Prusse pp. 83-98 - Praise of Du Chatelet at pp. 104-105; her *Institutions de Physique* are discussed on p. 284. Voltaire discussion of female philosophers quoted, pp. 106, from *Épître à Madame la Marquise du Chatelet* in *Alzire* (1736). Voltaire and Shakespeare are discussed on pp. 121-128, 143-196, where Voltaire's translation of Hamlet's soliloquy is held to be superior to the original (this section ends with a quote from Letter 18 of the *Lettres Philosophiques*). Letter 19 is a response to Voltaire on thinking matter (though he is not named in the text).

D'Argens was a long-standing friend of Voltaire's. Publishing in the United Provinces he could refer to the *Lettres philosophiques* by name. He had also praised them in his *Lettres juives* (OCV 6A: 181-182) - OCV does not mention the *Lettres philosophiques et critiques*, and we can find no modern authority who has noticed the references to Voltaire in this work. It thus represents an important, neglected text in the reception of the *Lettres philosophiques*.

Not in OCV



No.19

JULIEN OFFRAY DE LA METTRIE.

TRAITÉ DE LA PETITE VEROLE AVEC LA MANIERE DE GUERIR CETTE MALADIE SUIVANT LES PRINCIPES DE MR HERMAN BOERHAAVE..

Paris: chez Huart, Briasson, M. DCC. XL. [1740]. (Bound after.)

[ANON]

LE PROGÉS DE LA MEDECINE JOURNAL SINGULIER POUR L'ANNÉE 1698

Paris: Chez Laurent D'Houray, M. DC. XCIV. [1699].

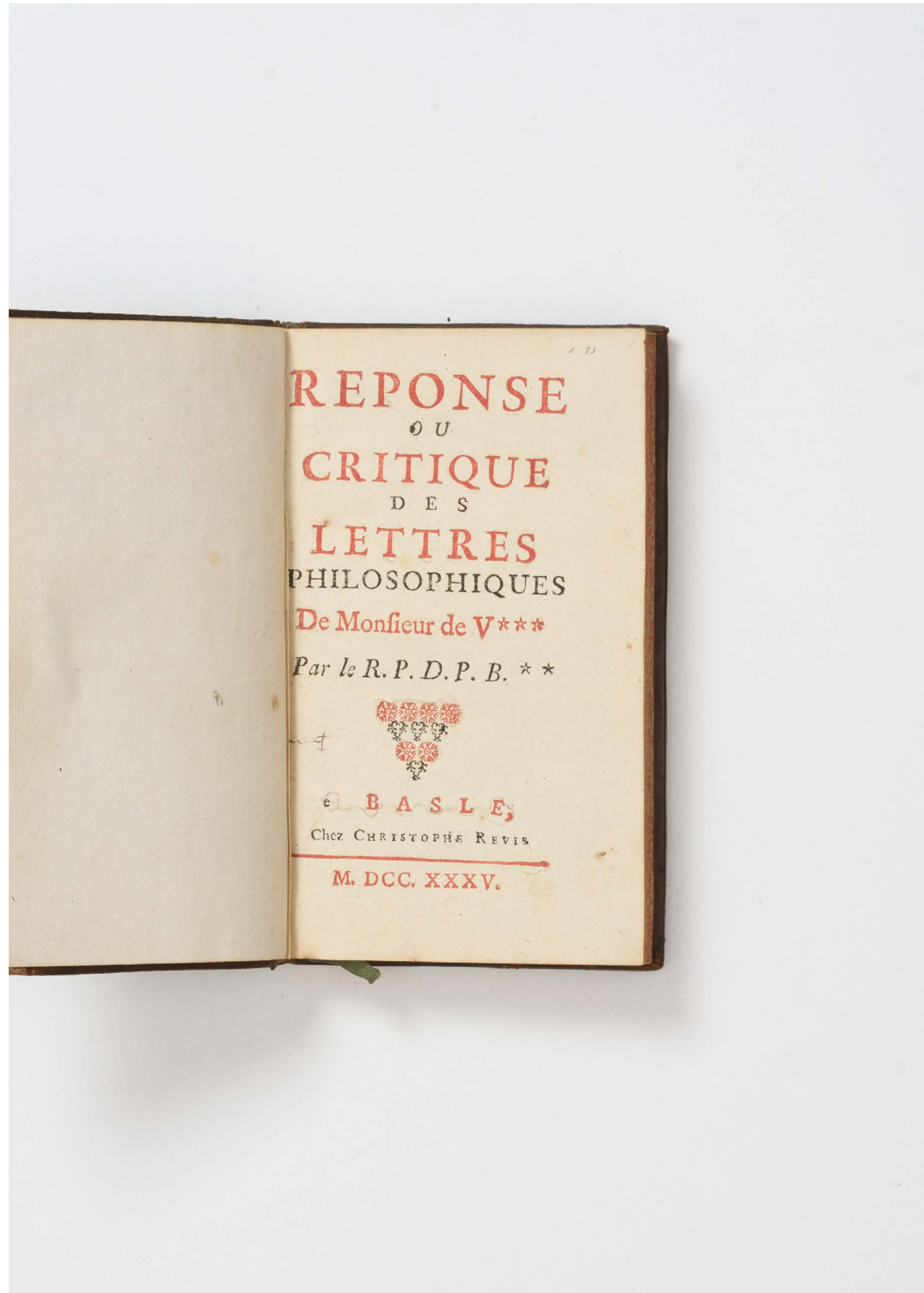
Duodecimo (154 x 87 mm), two volumes in one. Vol 1: pp. [4] 80, 47 [1], 91 [1]: []2, A-G 8/4, A-D 8/4, a-g 8/4, h2, and 3 separate engraved plates. Vol 2: pp. xxiv, 190: a8, é4, A-Q 8/4 [E2 a cancel]. Woodcut ornament on both titles, typographical and woodcut ornaments. In early eighteenth-century French mottled calf, spine with raised bands, double gilt ruled in compartments fleurons gilt at centres, swirled marbled endpapers, all edges red. Light age toning, light waterstaining in places in first volume, lower corners worn. A very good copy.

¶ Published with approbation and privilege: the privilege is for La Mettrie's translation of Boerhaave, but the approbation states this is a continuation of that treatise. Voltaire is named on p. 9 of chapter 2 on inoculation, and the 11th lettre philosophique quoted at length and named directly on pages 10-13. This appears to be the only case of a text published with approbation by a named author, which names the Lettres philosophiques, prior to the approbation given for Boullier (see item 22).

RARITY

The *Traité* is not institutionally rare though RBH records only three copies at auction since 1979.

Not in OCV.



THE CRITICS

No.20

[PIERRE-FRANÇOIS LE COQ DE VILLERAY DE ROUER, (1703-1778) OR EDME PERRAULT (1675-1741)].

RÉPONSE OU CRITIQUE DES LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES DE MR DE V*** PAR LE R. P. D. P. B**.

À Basle [i.e. Reims]: chez Christophe Revis [Claude-François Jore?], M. DCC.XXXV [1735].

Duodecimo, (158x 91 mm) pp. (2) 250 (2): ()1, A-V8/4, X4, Y2. Title printed in red and black, with typographical ornament, woodcut headpiece. In contemporary French mottled calf, covers bordered with a blind rule, 'E. Ternier' gilt stamped within oval on upper cover, spine with raised bands, gilt in compartments, red morocco title label gilt, edges gilt scrolled, combed marbled endpapers, all edges red. Light age toning, very minor light marginal damp-stain to a few lower outer corners, small tear caused by printing process in title with no loss, lower corner of upper board a little worn, head band slightly chipped. A very good, handsome copy, crisp and clean.*

¶ A lovely copy of the rare first edition of this critical response to the *Lettres Philosophiques* that provides remarkable insight into the contemporary reception of the *Lettres*. It was printed under a false address by Jore in Rouen.

.. It is important to remember the scandal caused by Voltaire's work in Christian circles. At the beginning of the 18th century, Enlightenment philosophy was still in its infancy. Neither the *Encyclopédie* nor the *Dictionnaire philosophique* had yet been published, let alone the more openly materialistic texts such as Baron Holbach's *Système de la Nature*, which would later appear in large numbers. The first skirmish against religion, represented in 1721 by the *Lettres Persanes* in which Montesquieu, under the guise of a foreigner, shows some irreverence for the religious practices of his country, was, all in all, a joyous romp of no great consequence. When it appeared in France in 1734, the *Lettres philosophiques* could therefore be considered the first serious attack on religion. In his four letters on the Quakers, Voltaire called into question the Church, the sacraments and priests, praising tolerance and Socinianism in the next three, before pushing on to materialism in his thirteenth letter on Locke. What's more, this reckless poet had the audacity to attack the learned Pascal in his 25th and last letter, in particular denying the

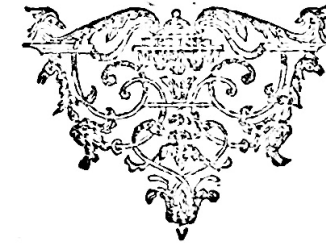
double meaning of the prophecies.

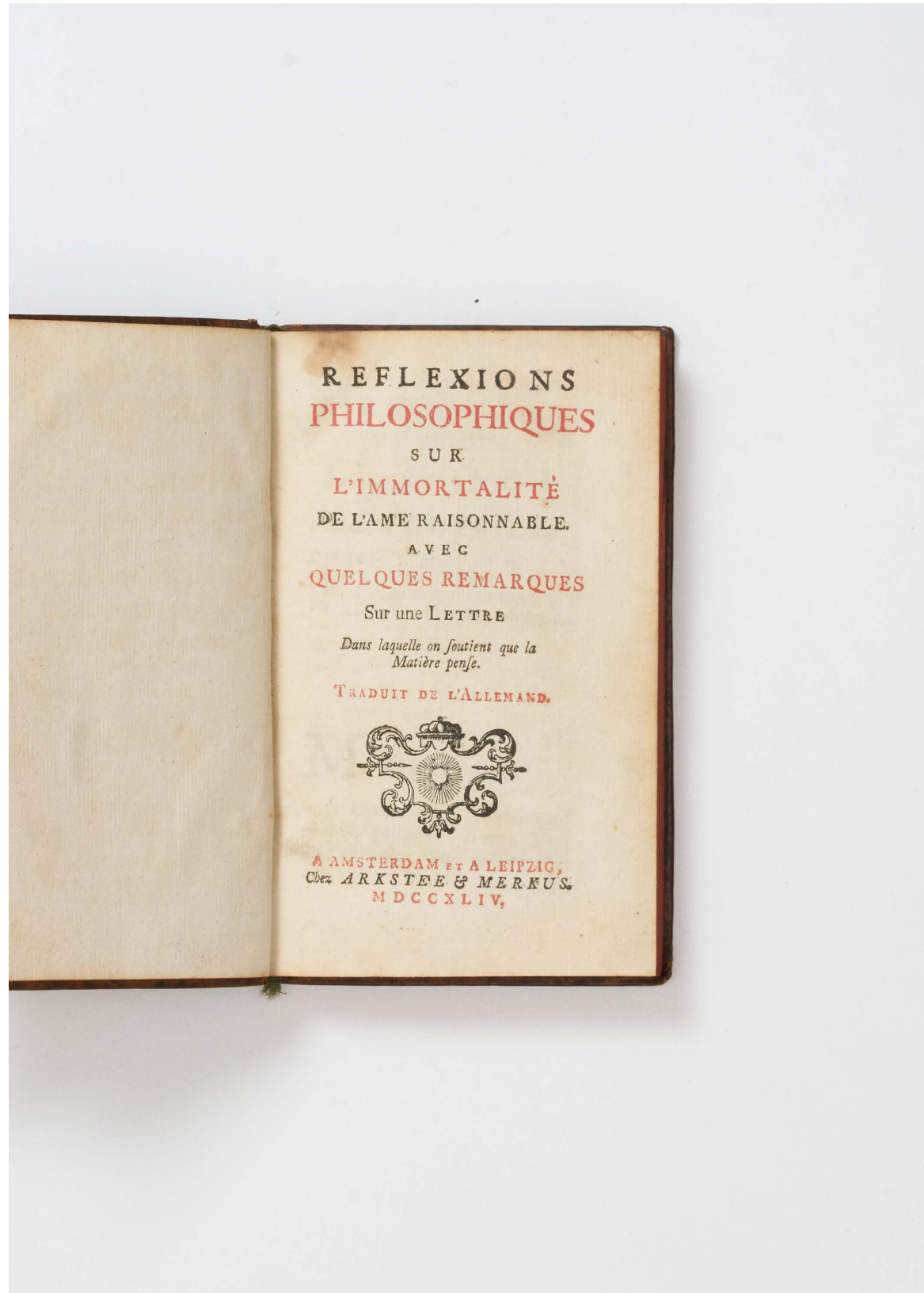
... In Normandy, Le Coq de Villeray, who was probably made aware of the *Lettres philosophiques* by the Rouen context in which they were published, set himself the onerous task of refuting them one by one. This occasional apologist was certainly aware that such a challenge to the Crown and the Church deserved a systematic rebuttal, which alone would make it possible to hinder the pernicious effects of these *Lettres* on the public, by pointing out the constants in Voltairian thought and putting forward a coherent Christianity with an answer for everything. But he left this criticism to others who were more learned and in less of a hurry. What we have here is a first-hand account, which throws interesting light on the reception of Voltaire's work in many details, and in particular on the significance for a contemporary mind of such and such a remark, the meaning of which might at first sight seem insignificant.

It is in fact essentially to highlight Voltaire's 'malignant intentions' that his adversary sets his sights, whatever the field in which they occur. In the political sphere, for example, Le Coq clearly saw that the eulogy of the English government was only there to satirise that of the French by contrast, and that the praise of English trade was above all intended to boast of the use they had made of it against their king. In the literary sphere too, he understood perfectly well that when Voltaire was astonished at the failure of Dr Swift's project to found an academy in English for the language, it was merely a pretext for raging against the Académie française. Finally, on the subject of religion, he shows, among other things, how Voltaire's comment that God did not reveal to the prophets the fact that a scientist would one day count more than 7,000 stars, far from defending Scripture, serves only to mock the prophets. From letter to letter, the portrait emerges of a devious man, more intent on deceiving than on seeking the truth, guided exclusively by the lure of gain."

PROVENANCE

E. Ternier gilt stamped on upper cover of binding.





No.21

JOHANN GUSTAV REINBECK [1682-1741].

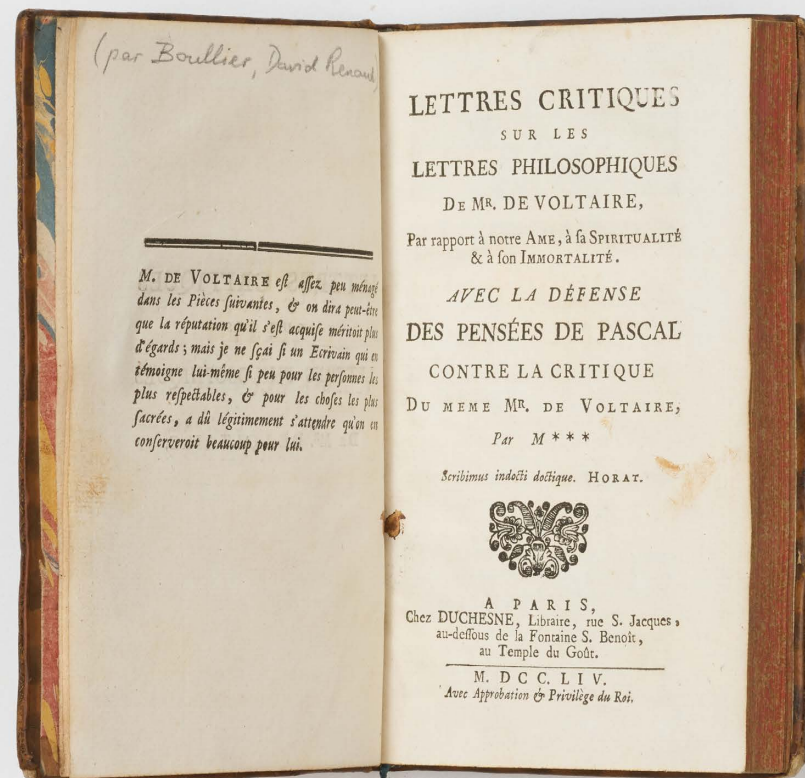
REFLEXIONS PHILOSOPHIQUES SUR L'IMMORTALITÉ DE L'ÂME RAISONNABLE. AVEC QUELQUES REMARQUES SUR UNE LETTRE DANS LAQUELLE ON SOUTIENT QUE LA MATIÈRE PENSE. TRADUIT DE L'ALLEMAND.

A Amsterdam et a Leipzig: chez Arkstée & Merkus. 1744.

*Duodecimo (134 x 75 mm) pp. [32], 323 [13]: *¹², 2*⁴, A-O¹², (O11-12 blank). Title in red and black with woodcut ornament, typographical ornaments. In contemporary French mottled calf, covers bordered with a blind rule, spine with raised bands, gilt in compartments with small tools, red morocco title label gilt, edges gilt ruled, combed marbled endpapers, all edges red. Light age toning, spine fractionally rubbed. A very good copy, crisp and clean.*

¶ Reinbeck published the text of Voltaire's clandestine "Lettre sur l'ame" with a German translation in his *Philosophische Gedanken über die vernünftige Seele und deren Unsterblichkeit*, first printed in 1739 (reprinted 1740). His friend Formey then produced this French translation of his work, published in 1744 after Reinbeck's death. Formey reprints the commentary by Reinbeck on Voltaire's letter but not the original text -- OCV does not understand why this is, but denial of the immortality of the soul was illegal in Holland, and so as this was a legal publication, carrying its printer's true name, it could not include the text of the letter. On Reinbeck see OCV 6A:174-178 and Nicholas Cronk, *Autour des lettres philosophiques: la reponse de Johann Gustav Reinbeck a la lettre sur Locke* *Revue Voltaire* 19 (2019), 109-122.

OCV 6A:174-178. Nicholas Cronk, *Autour des lettres philosophiques: la reponse de Johann Gustav Reinbeck a la lettre sur Locke* *Revue Voltaire* 19 (2019), 109-122



No.22

[DAVID-RENAUD BOULLIER].

LETTRES CRITIQUES SUR LES LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUES
DE MR. DE VOLTAIRE, PAR RAPPORT À NOTRE ÂME, À SA
SPIRITUALITÉ & SON IMORTALITÉ. AVEC LA DEFENSE DE
PASCAL CONTRE LA CRITIQUE DU MEME MR. DE VOLTAIRE.

À Paris: chez Duchesne, Libraire, rue S. Jaques, au-dessous de la fontaine S. Benoit, au Temple du Gout, M. DCC. LIV [1754]. ["A Saint-Omer, de l'Imprimerie de Fertel à L'Enseigne de S. Bertin" 1753.]

Duodecimo (161 x 99 mm) pp. (4) 215 (1): (*)2, A-I12. Woodcut ornament on title, woodcut head and tail-pieces, typographical ornaments. In contemporary French mottled calf, spine with raised bands, gilt in compartments with crowned 'Dauphin' tool at centres, red morocco title label gilt, edges gilt scrolled, swirled marbled endpapers, all edges red. Light paper browning especially on the first few leaves, lower corners worn. A very good copy.

¶ The Convention that no book could be approved for publication if it named a banned book was subject to a remarkable breach: in 1753, and again in 1754, David Boullier's attack on the *Lettres philosophiques* (named explicitly in the title) was published in Paris with an approbation. The printer provided a short preface:

M. de Voltaire est assez peu ménagé dans les Pieces suivantes, & on dira peut- être que la réputation qu'il s'est acquise méritoit plus d'égards; mais je ne sai si un Ecrivain qui en témoigne lui-même si peu pour les personnes les plus respectables, & pour les choses les plus sacrées, a dû légitimement s'attendre qu'on en conserveroit beaucoup pour lui.

The approbation is dated 7 December 1752; Voltaire had fled Frederick the Great's Prussia, and the French government had refused to let him return to France. The publication of Boullier's *Lettres critiques sur les Lettres philosophiques de Mr de Voltaire, par rapport à notre âme, à sa spiritualité et à son immortalité; avec la défense des pensées de Pascal contre la critique du même Mr de Voltaire, par M**** with an approbation effectively declared Voltaire an outlaw in the world of French letters, someone who could be vilified publicly and whose banned books could be named providing they were roundly condemned. This does not just mark a shift in Voltaire's relations with the French authorities; it is also a marker of growing tensions over the spread of philosophical ideas for this was also the year in which publication of the *Encyclopédie* was first halted.

This constitutes the second issue of this edition, as it contains the sheets of the first published in St. Omer with a new title page and half title with the approbation; the colophon on the verso of the last leaf states “A Saint-Omer, de l’Imprimerie de Fertel à L’Enseigne de S. Bertin 1753”.



VOLTAIRE'S REPLY

No.23

[VOLTAIRE].

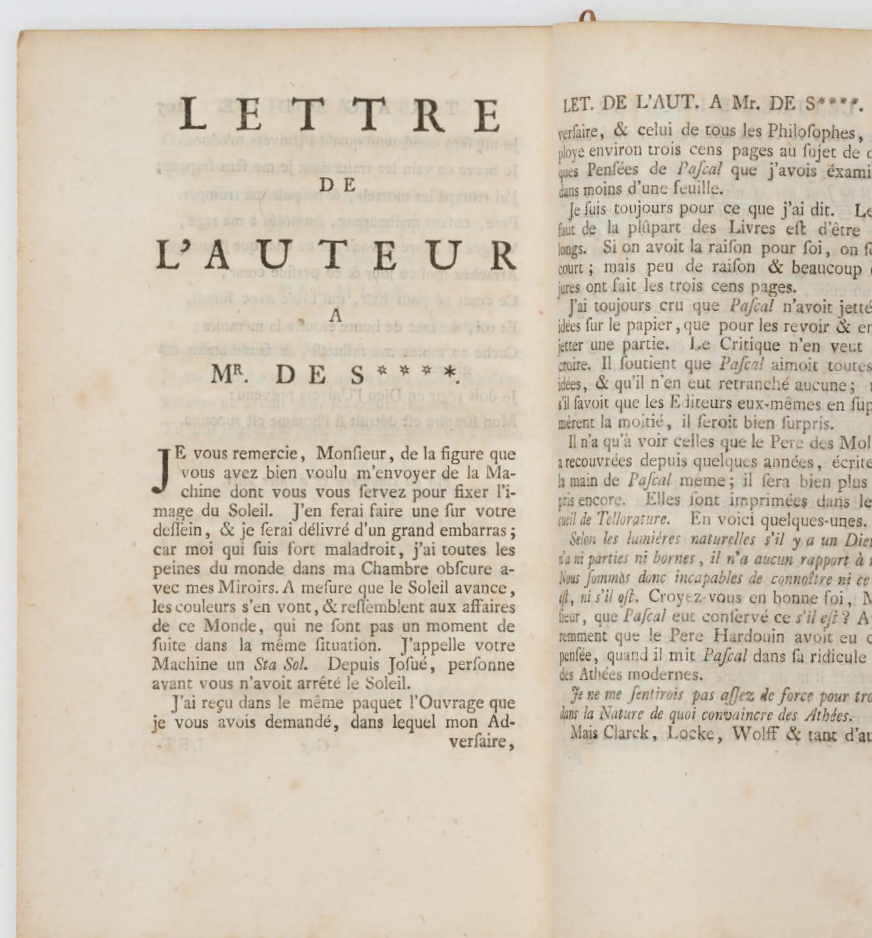
LE FANATISME OU MAHOMET LE PROPHETE, TRAGEDIE.
Amsterdam, Chez Jacques Desbordes, MDCCXLIII [1743].

Octavo, (198 x 123mm) pp. (24), 112: *8, **4, A-G8 (without the plate).
Title in red and black, woodcut vignette, typographical headpieces,
woodcut tail-pieces. Disbound, traces of later leather to spine. Slight
marginal foxing to last gathering. A very good copy.

¶ First edition of Voltaire's only reply to his critics. It takes the form of a fictitious letter written to 's-Gravesande and published with the first edition of Mahomet that was published under Voltaire's supervision (see Wootton *Voltaire's Lost Reply to David Boullier in Defence of his Critique of Pascal and his Views on the Soul ...*). Voltaire withdrew the play after three performances in Paris to prevent an "interdiction" from the Parlement de Paris given its direct criticism of religion.

Voltaire's reply is directed at the first (1741) publication in Amsterdam of Boullier's *défense des Pensées de Pascal contre la critique de Mr de Voltaire, et trois Lettres relatives à la philosophie de ce poète* (the same work given an approbation in 1753) in volume 2 of his *Lettres sur les vrais principes de la religion*, a work in which Boullier also criticises the *Lettre sur l'âme*, the most radical statement of Voltaire's views on the soul, which by 1741 had appeared three times in print, thanks to Voltaire's enemies, who sought to publicise his irreligion. Boullier's critique was to prove the most successful attack on the irreligion of the *Lettres philosophiques*, going through ten editions. Voltaire's reply takes the form of a letter to the Newtonian natural philosopher 's-Gravesande which was published with the first 'authorised' edition of Voltaire's play *Mahomet* (Amsterdam: Ledet, 1743). The word "authorised" here needs to be placed in inverted commas. Voltaire carefully supervised the publication; but in appearance the volume was edited by 'P.D.L.M.'. (César de Missy, who served as Voltaire's intermediary with the publisher.) Thus, in appearance, Voltaire's private letter to 's-Gravesande had made its way into print without his authorisation: he had replied without replying.

The letter, which is not a serious rebuttal of Boullier, but (as de Missy



saw) a mockery of him. Boullier, he insists, is long-winded and, by implication, tedious, while Voltaire's own discussion of Pascal had been succinct (less than a sheet of printed paper, he claims, although in the first edition it occupies more than four sheets, or 96 pages. As for Pascal, had he lived he would have rejected many of his own *pensées*. Moreover Pascal went mad: in the last year of his life he was convinced that there was an abyss beside his chair.

But the first key point, Voltaire insists, is that we do not live in a world corrupted by sin:

'Le fonds de mes petites notes sur les pensées de Pascal c'est qu'il faut croire sans doute au péché originel puisque la foy l'ordonne et qu'il faut y croire d'autant plus que la raison est absolument impuissante à nous apprendre que la nature humaine est déchue. La révélation seule peut nous l'apprendre: Platon s'y étoit jadis cassé le nez. Comment pouvoit il savoir que les hommes avoient été autrefois plus baux, plus grand, plus fort, qu'ils avoient eu de belles ailes, et qu'ils avoient fait des enfans sans femmes? Tous ceux qui se sont servis de la phisique pour prouver la décadence de ce petit globe de notre monde n'ont pas eu meilleur fortune que Platon. Voyez vous ces vilaines montagnes? disoient ils, ces mers qui entrent dans les terres? ces lacs sans issue? Ce sont de débris d'un globe maudit. Mais quand on y a regardé de plus près, on a vu que ces montagnes étoient nécessaires pour nous donner des rivières et des mines, et que ce sont de perfections d'un monde bénit.

.... C'est une étrange rage, que celle de quelques messieurs qui veuillent absolument que nous soyons misérables. Je n'aime point un charlatan qui veut me faire croire que je suis malade pour me vendre ses pillules. Garde ta drogue mon amy et laisse moy ma santé, mais pourquoy me dis tu des injures par ce que je me porte bien, et que je ne veut point de ton orviétan?'

And the second is that we must recognise the limits of our understanding:

'Plus je relis Loke, et plus je voudrois que tous ces messieurs l'étudiassent. Il me semble qu'il a fait comme Auguste qui donna un édit, *de coercendo intra fines imperio*. Loke a resserée l'empire de la science pour l'affermir. Qu'esce que l'âme? je n'en sçais rien. Qu'esce que la matière? je n'en sçais rien. Voilà Joseph Leibnits qui a découvert que la matière est un assemblage de monades. Soit. Je ne le comprends pas ny luy non plus. Eh bien mon âme sera une monade! Ne me voilà t'il pas bien instruit? Je vais vous prouver que vous êtes immortels, me dit mon docteur, mais vraiment il me fera plaisir. J'ay tout aussi grande envie que luy d'être immortel. Je n'ay fait la Henriade que pour cela. Mais mon homme se

croit bien plus sûr de l'immortalité par ses arguments que moy par ma Henriade.

... Mesurer, peser, calculer, voilà ce qu'a faites Neuton, voilà ce que vous faites avec monsieur Mushembrock. Mais pour les premiers principes des choses nous n'en sçavons pas plus qu'Epistémon et maître Editue. Les philosophes qui font de système sur la secrette construction de l'univers, sont comme nos voyageurs qui vont à Contantinople et qui parlent du serrail; il n'en ont vu que les dehors, et ils prétendent savoir ce que fait le sultan avec ses favorites'.

Because Voltaire disowns the *Lettre sur l'Âme* in the letter he has to avoid adopting any of its characteristic arguments. Thus where the *Lettre sur l'Âme* emphasises our similarity to other animals, here he simply avoids presenting arguments for or against immortality, while effectively insinuating that he has no hope of life after death, and that all sensible people should share his view.

Does restoring the (fictitious) letter to 's-Gravesande to the vast array of Voltaire's publications make a difference to our understanding of either the *Lettres philosophiques* or of Voltaire? It does. First it states explicitly that the crux of his quarrel with Pascal is over the doctrine of original sin. Second, it states explicitly that Locke's great achievement is to recognise the limits of human understanding. Both of these are very helpful for understanding what he is about in the *Lettres philosophiques*.

Second, his emphasis that Locke's key role was to emphasise the limits of human understanding is at odds with the thrust of the *Elements of Newton's Philosophy* (1738) and the *Metaphysics of Newton* (1740), in which he himself had been prepared to propound a system on the secret construction of the universe. The letter thus marks a key stage in Voltaire's retreat from metaphysical Newtonianism.

At the same time the forceful rejection of Leibniz points to the growing tensions in his relationship with Mme du Châtelet (he was to begin his long alliance with Mme Denis in 1744), tensions made worse by her conversion to Leibnizianism. Indeed the whole letter may be taken as a rejection of her efforts to bring him back within officially respectable French intellectual life, for Voltaire makes absolutely clear his rejection of the Biblical account of the creation and fall of humankind, expressing himself much more forcefully and directly than he had done in the *Lettres philosophiques*. Living at Cirey, within the jurisdiction of France, Voltaire had actively sought an accommodation with the Jesuits. Now, outside French jurisdiction (because Mme du Châtelet was residing in Brussels in order to pursue a court case), he expressed his hostility to revealed

VOLTAIRE

religion more forcefully than he had previously done in print.

Lastly, the letter opens up a new dispute with Pascal. Pascal, Voltaire has now discovered, had written:

‘Si selon les lumières naturelles il y a un dieu, il n’a n’y bornes, il n’a aucun raport à nous; nous sommes donc incapables de connaître ni ce qu’il est, ny s’il est.’

and again:

‘Je ne me sentirois pas assez de force pour trouver dans la nature de quoy convaincre des athées.’

Here Voltaire allies himself with Locke, Clarke, and Wolff: he would always insist that the universe demonstrated the workings of an intelligence, and we see here an indication of his future conflict with the materialist atheism of a d’Holbach. The problem with Pascal is thus not only that he accepts revealed religion; it is also that he is soft on atheism. Thus the fictitious letter to ’s-Gravesande marks the first occasion on which Voltaire marks out in print what might be termed his mature position on religion: the rejection of revealed religion and belief in immortality (and hence of theism), but equally the rejection of a Lucretian atheism which denies the existence of some sort of intelligence at work in the universe.”¹

RARITY

The work is not institutionally rare but is rare on the market. RBH records one copy only at auction of either the Ledet or Desbordes editions.

¹ Wootton *Voltaire’s Lost Reply to David Boullier in Defence of his Critique of Pascal and his Views on the Soul*



FINAL THOUGHTS

Condorcet's "éloge" to both Voltaire and Pascal

Clandestinely printed in Geneva by
Gabriel Grasset under Voltaire's supervision

No.24

[VOLTAIRE] JEAN-ANTOINE-NICOLAS DE CARITAT.
CONDORCET.

ELOGES ET PENSEES DE PASCAL.

A Paris [i.e. Geneva] n.pb. [Gabriel Grasset], MDCCLXXVIII [1778].

Octavo, (197 x 120mm) pp. xii, 316 (p. 163 misnumbered 139; p. 193 misnumbered 391): a6, A-T8, V6 + 2 separate plates as frontispieces. Title within typographical border, woodcut vignette, engraved portraits of Voltaire (by Bricbet) and Pascal, typographical headpieces, woodcut tailpieces. In contemporary French tree calf, covers bordered with a single blind rule, spine triple gilt ruled in compartments, richly gilt, red morocco label gilt lettered, edges gilt ruled, marbled endpapers, all edges red. Extremities fractionally rubbed. A fine copy, crisp and clean with good margins.

¶ This work was overseen and published clandestinely by Voltaire in Geneva using his usual printer for his most radical and prohibited works, Gabriel Grasset (see Andrew Brown & Ulla Kölving, "Voltaire and Cramer?" *le Siecle de Voltaire Homage a René Pomeau* Vol. 1 pp.149 - 183). "Grasset appears to have received the manuscript on 14th June 1777, for on the following day he writes to Neuchâtel: 'J'ai reçu hier L'éloge et les Pensées de Pascal commenté et augmenté d'un bon tiers par M. de Voltaire .. Dans tous les cas où je recevrai du nouveau de mon bon patron, je vous ferai les mêmes offres.' Eleven months later Wagnière tells Voltaire: 'Grasset m'a envoyé pour vous deux Pascal Condor ... reliés' (D21179; see also D21192)" (Brown & Kölving p.169). The work is a reprint of Condorcet's selection from the *Pensées* with his own notes to which Voltaire has added a selection from the "*Remarques sur les Pensées de Pascal*" first published as "*Lettre sur les Pensées de M. Pascal in the editions of the Lettres philosophiques*". Voltaire's notes in the present edition are signed "Second éditeur" or (p. 8) "Note du présent éditeur."

PROVENANCE

“V. Zach” stamp on title page, with blind stamp in Gothic letter below.



REFERENCES:

Sylviane Albertan-Coppola. *Un Normand contre Voltaire. Le Coq de Villeray, apologiste et historien rouennais*. Études Normandes, 1997, 46-1, pp. 31-43).

Giles Barber. 'Les dessous d'un livre-bombe: l'impression de la première version des Lettres philosophiques.' *Le livre et l'historien: études offertes en l'honneur du professeur Henri-Jean Martin*, pp. 465–79. Paris: Droz, 1997.

George Bengesco. *Voltaire: bibliographie de ses oeuvres*. Paris: E. Perrin, 1882-1885.

Bibliothèque Nationale. *Catalogue général des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1978.

Andrew Brown. 'Gabriel Grasset, éditeur de Voltaire.' *Voltaire et le livre, edited by François Bessire and Françoise Tilkin*, 67–105. Ferney-Voltaire: Centre international d'étude du XVIIIe siècle, 2009

Samuel Buckley. *A Short State of the publick Encouragement given to Printing and Bookselling in France, Holland, Germany, and at London*. n.l.: n.p., n.d.

Nicholas Cronk etc. (edited by). *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*. Volume 6. Voltaire Foundation, University of Oxford (2020-22).

Nicholas Cronk. *Les Lettres Sur Les Anglais en France au Dix-Huitième Siècle: Questions de Reception et de Réputation*. Revue Voltaire, No. 13, 2013, pp 141.

George Ticknor Curtis. *A Treatise on the Law of Copyright*. London: C.C. Little and J. Brown, 1847

Robert Darnton. *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996.

Martin-Dominique Fertel. *La Science pratique de l'imprimerie: contenant des instructions très-faciles pour se perfectionner dans cet art*. St. Omer: M.D. Fertel, 1723

Mme de Graffigny. *Correspondance de Madame de Graffigny*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1985.

Josephine Grieder. *Anglomania in France, 1740-1789 : fact, fiction, and political discourse*. Genève: Librairie Droz, 1985.

Ludvig Holberg. *Relation d'un voyage du pole arctique, au pole antarctique par le centre du monde. Avec figures*. Amsterdam: 1721

Claude-François Jore. *Les aventures Portugaises*. Bragança: [s.n.], 1756
Gary Kates. *The Books that Made the European Enlightenment: A History in 12 Case Studies*. 2022

Ingvild Hagen Kjørholt. 'Naturally free, politically unfree.: Voltaire's Quakers and the modern discourse of human rights'. *To Be Unfree: Republicanism and Unfreedom in History, Literature, and Philosophy*, 2014, pp. 157-176

J. Patrick Lee. *The unexamined premise: Voltaire, John Lockman, and the myth of the English Letters*. SVEC 10 (2001): 240–70

Keith I Maslen. 'Some Early Editions Of Voltaire Printed In London.' *The Library* 5, no. 4 (1959): 287–93

John Turberville Needham. *Les vrais Quakers, ou les exhortations, harangues et prédictions des vrais serviteurs du Seigneur Dieu*. Londres [Paris]: n.p., 1771

René Pomeau. 'En marge des Lettres philosophiques : un essai de Voltaire sur le suicide.' *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 75 (1954): 285–94

René Pomeau. *Voltaire en son temps*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995

André-Michel Rousseau. 'Naissance d'un livre et d'un texte: les Letters concerning the English Nation.' *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 179 (1979): 25–46

Ruth Weiss. 'Eine Jungfrau von zweifelhaftem Ruf: Die Publikationsgeschichte von Voltaires La Pucelle d'Orléans (Die Jungfrau von Orléans), 1730–1762

DW Smith. 'The Publication Of Helvétius's De L'esprit (1758–9).' *French Studies* 18 (1964): 332–44

Voltaire. *Lettres philosophiques*. Paris: Didier, 1964

Françoise Weil. *Livres interdits, livres persécutés*. Oxford: Voltaire foundation, 20010620

David Wootton. *Voltaire's Lettres Philosophiques: A Study in Clandestine Printing*. Cahiers Voltaire 22 (2023).

David Wootton. *Falsifying history: Voltaire's lost reply to David Boullier on Pascal and Locke*. Journal for the History of European Ideas (2024).

David Wootton. *Voltaire on Liberty*. Journal des Économistes et des Études Humaines 28, no. 1 (2023): 59–90

David Wootton. *Voltaire: from Newtonianism to Spinozism*. History of European Ideas (2024): 1–22

NICHOLAS MARLOWE RARE BOOKS

145 WILMOT STREET, LONDON E2 0BU, UK

17 BOULEVARD LOUIS BLANC, MONTPELLIER 34000, FRANCE

RAREBOOKS@NICHOLASMARLOWE.CO.UK

WWW.NICHOLASMARLOWE.CO.UK

© 2025 NICHOLAS MARLOWE RARE BOOKS

