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# Voltaire et la Correspondance

Section coordonnée par Nicholas Cronk



## PREFACE

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The 2015 ISECS Congress, held in Rotterdam, focused on the theme of trade and commerce, and correspondence networks emerged as a recurrent topic of the meeting, starting with the plenary lecture given by Dan Edelstein, who spoke about an ongoing project to use *Electronic Enlightenment's* metadata to describe eighteenth-century epistolary social networks. The papers brought together here were presented at a panel organised by the Voltaire Foundation and the Société des études voltairiennes devoted specifically to Voltaire's correspondence. The metaphor of epistolary commerce is of course familiar to Voltaire, who uses the expression *commercium epistolicum* in a letter to Frederick to refer to their own exchanges of letters (20 May 1738, D1506; the same expression appears in a letter to Thiriot, D1717). This is at an early stage in their epistolary relationship, and Voltaire is seemingly picking up on a theme first developed by Frederick: 'Être en correspondance c'est être en trafic de pensées, mais j'ai cet avantage de notre trafic, que vous me donnez de retour de l'esprit et des vérités' (19 November 1737, D1392). A few weeks later, Frederick returns to his subject: 'Il serait à souhaiter que tout commerce pût être un trafic de vérité ; mais combien y a-t-il d'hommes capables de l'écouter ?' (25 December 1737, D1413). It seems fitting that the young Frederick should speculate in this way with Voltaire about the ideal of intellectual exchange. Reality would come to temper this idealism, of course: the older Voltaire still has recourse to the image of epistolary commerce, but the patriarch of Ferney takes the metaphor literally, lamenting that the trade in ideas is anything but a free trade: 'Mon village de Ferney envoie tous les ans pour cent mille francs de marchandises au bout du monde, et ne peut pas envoyer une pensée à Paris,' he writes to Mme Du Deffand. 'Le commerce des idées est de contrebande' (13 August 1773, D18511).

How we understand Voltaire's trade in ideas will depend very much on the particular correspondent we have in mind, and two of the papers here focus on a specific sub-corpus within the overall correspondence. The letters to the

chevalier de Jaucourt, studied by Nicholas Cronk,<sup>1</sup> hardly seem a promising subject because they are so few in number, but now that ten letters in all have been identified (compared with only one letter in the first Besterman edition), this corpus provides an interesting case-study for the way in which new letters can be discovered, and known letters be ‘rediscovered’ when their addressee can be reassigned. There is certainly now a sufficient body of evidence for us to be able to characterise the (predominantly epistolary) relationship between Voltaire and Jaucourt, and to make a supposition about what seems to have been its most concentrated moment.

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The Marquis d’Argenson is a different matter, as here we have a corpus of 103 letters extending over many years and ranging widely over matters including international affairs. Andrew Jainchill<sup>2</sup> demonstrates how each partner in this epistolary trade has a vested interest in its success, exemplifying nicely what Christiane Mervaud writes about epistolary protocols: ‘Tous [les auteurs] connaissent le bon usage de cet acte de la vie sociale qui se situe au carrefour de la relation avec autrui et de la représentation qu’on entend donner de soi-même.’<sup>3</sup> Voltaire’s exchanges with Jaucourt, though their friendship seems sincere, are essentially letters of business: Jaucourt is performing an essential service in acting as Voltaire’s agent with a printer in the Low Countries, and Voltaire responds with appropriate gratitude; when Jaucourt’s usefulness comes to an end, so too (so far as we can tell, given the present state of our knowledge) does their correspondence. Unlike these somewhat utilitarian exchanges, those with D’Argenson possess considerable intellectual interest and moreover have an evident importance for each man’s career: Voltaire undoubtedly covets the advantage of the protection of a figure at court from a famous family, while D’Argenson, ultimately more gifted as a thinker than as a politician, seeks the cultural validation that a public connection with Voltaire brings. For this epistolary relationship is a matter of public knowledge: Voltaire would never have dreamed of publishing his letters to Jaucourt, but he sets considerable store by his letters to D’Argenson, singling out for comment their sheer number (‘une très grande quantité’) in the *Commentaire historique*. Letters do not have to be published to be famous, or useful.

It is impossible to understand the significance of Voltaire’s correspondence without taking account of his unprecedented celebrity, as recently described

1 N. Cronk, ‘Voltaire and the Chevalier de Jaucourt: the lessons of an epistolary corpus’, below, pp. 215–28.

2 A. Jainchill, ‘Politics, patronage, and peace: the correspondence of Voltaire and the Marquis d’Argenson’, below, pp. 229–40.

3 ‘Un jeu de lettres : jeux et enjeux’, in *Voltaire : Un jeu de lettres, 1723–1778*, ed. Nicholas Cronk et al. (Orléans, Paradigme, 2011), p. 42.

by Antoine Lilti.<sup>4</sup> For D'Argenson, the mere fact of being known to be a correspondent of Voltaire brought with it a certain intellectual cachet; and surprisingly, even Voltaire's death does not entirely change this state of affairs. Kelsey Rubin-Detlev shows how correspondents of the highest social status, monarchs like Catherine the Great no less, found it expedient to use the name of the deceased philosophe as a 'token of exchange': attributing views to Voltaire became a sort of rhetorical short-cut for evoking the authority of a certain Enlightenment élite.<sup>5</sup> Voltaire's letters sometimes participate genuinely in the 'traffic' of intellectual exchange; but with the passing of time and the growth of his celebrity, the 'Voltaire effect' means that a network made up of a multiplicity of epistolary voices is transformed into a monovocal and monolithic correspondence, with an objectified symbolic value all of its own.

Voltaire published a small number of carefully selected letters – and the *Correspondance littéraire* circulated even more, albeit for an élite readership – but it is the Kehl editors who in 1784 effectively 'invent' the Correspondence. In assembling a corpus of some 4,500 letters which they placed at the end of the edition, their aim was to provide a complement to the rest of Voltaire's *œuvre* and of course to present the great man in the most glowing light possible. As Linda Gil argues, Beaumarchais, Condorcet and their colleagues have a clear agenda in producing their path-breaking edition, and the Kehl correspondence, presenting only letters from Voltaire, is clearly designed to underpin the ideological stance of the edition as a whole.<sup>6</sup> This version of the correspondence, with all its merits, certainly does not set out to capture the essence of what is perhaps the Enlightenment's most remarkable – and untypical – epistolary network.<sup>7</sup>

On the long road leading from the Kehl edition, that first created Voltaire's correspondence, to Theodore Besterman, who (in addition to founding ISECS) recreated the correspondence for us (twice!), the single most important intellectual contribution is that made by Beuchot. His edition of the collected works appeared between 1829 and 1834, and Nicolas Morel reveals the extent and importance of Beuchot's editorial work in preparing the correspondence for this publication, establishing the texts with new accuracy (in cases where the Kehl editors had conflated two letters into one, for example), improving

4 A. Lilti, *Figures publiques : l'invention de la célébrité (1750-1850)* (Paris, Fayard, 2014).

5 K. Rubin-Detlev, "'What Would Voltaire Say?': Voltaire's exchange value in the correspondence of Catherine the Great", below, pp.241-52.

6 L. Gil, 'La *Correspondance* de Voltaire dans l'édition de Kehl : le commerce des idées', henceforth pp.253-70.

7 See Christophe Cave's discussion in 'Le réseau épistolaire voltairien', in *Réseaux de correspondance à l'Âge classique (xvi<sup>e</sup>-xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, ed. P.-Y. Beaurepaire, J. Häselser and A. McKenna (Saint-Étienne, Publications de l'université de Saint-Étienne, 2006), pp.237-50.

and extending the existing annotation, and for the first time placing the letters in one chronological sequence.<sup>8</sup> Beuchot declared that he found Voltaire's correspondence 'la partie la plus curieuse de ses œuvres,' and his scholarly contribution in this area has been underappreciated. To the Kehl editors falls the honour of producing the first edition of Voltaire's correspondence; but it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that Beuchot produced the first modern edition.

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8 N. Morel, "N'est-ce pas la plus étonnante ?" Beuchot, Cayrol et la *Correspondance* de Voltaire', below, pp.271-83.

VOLTAIRE AND THE CHEVALIER DE JAUCOURT:  
THE LESSONS OF AN EPISTOLARY CORPUS\*

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To talk about Voltaire's correspondence is always a daunting task, and one way to approach this vast corpus is to break it down into a series of smaller corpora, as defined by correspondent. This can be a fruitful avenue of research, as each sub-corpus describes and defines a specific relationship: each has its own particular history in respect of the way the letters have survived, each has its own inner dynamic in terms of its structure and function in Voltaire's career, and each has its specific linguistic (and even literary) features.

The chevalier de Jaucourt (1704-79) is of course remembered primarily for his key contribution to the *Encyclopédie*. Author of over 17,000 articles, he pretty much carried the project after D'Alembert's withdrawal in early 1758. In public, as is well known, Diderot paid extravagant praise to his collaborator,<sup>1</sup> while in private, in a letter to Sophie Volland, sounding a more acerbic note: 'Ne craignez pas qu'il [Jaucourt] s'ennuie de moudre des articles : Dieu le fit pour cela.'<sup>2</sup> Voltaire, however, is equally acerbic, in Jaucourt's defense, when he writes to Damilaville: 'En lisant le *dictionnaire* je m'aperçois que le ch<sup>lier</sup> de Jaucourt en a fait les trois quarts. Votre ami [Diderot] était donc occupé ailleurs ?' (4 April 1766, D13234). It has been too easy to dismiss Jaucourt as 'merely' the workhorse of the *Encyclopédie*: he was in fact formidably erudite, and in his greatest articles, as when he speaks about slavery ('Esclavage', 'Traite des noirs') or war ('Guerre'), he has an altogether distinctive, some would say Huguenot, voice. On the subject of *l'Infâme*, moreover, in his relentless attacks on intolerance and persecution (in many 'minor' articles as well as in the better known 'Inquisition' or 'Superstition'), it has even been suggested that his voice

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1 'Si nous avons poussé le cri de joie du matelot, lorsqu'il aperçoit la terre, après une nuit obscure qui l'a tenu égaré entre le ciel et les eaux, c'est à M. le Chevalier de Jaucourt que nous le devons.' (*Encyclopédie*, vol.8, 'Avertissement').

2 Letter from Diderot to Sophie Volland, 25 November 1760.

appears more strident than either Diderot's or D'Alembert's.<sup>3</sup> Hidden away in the geographical article 'Ross', for example, Jaucourt refers to the sixteenth-century Scottish Catholic bishop and historian John Lesley: 'Dans les disputes de religion, il prit le parti des catholiques romains ; mais cela ne l'empêcha pas de cultiver les sciences'; and he goes on to lament the writer's lack of discrimination in his history of Scotland: 'l'auteur aurait dû [...] s'être abstenu d'y mêler des contes de vieilles, et des histoires romanesques de miracles.'<sup>4</sup> In this art of indirect polemic, Voltaire could hardly have done better. If we wonder why, many years later, Voltaire will express such appreciation for Jaucourt's contribution to the *Encyclopédie*, the answer lies perhaps in the fact that Jaucourt was one of those contributors who brought (among other things) an unmistakably Voltairean voice to the collective enterprise.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE EXISTING VOLTAIRE-JAUCOURT SUB-CORPUS

The sub-corpus of letters between Voltaire and Jaucourt is certainly modest in terms of size, and moreover it is lopsided, in that we know of no letters at all from Jaucourt to Voltaire. It provides however an instructive example of how we can exploit the correspondence as an object of study. In the first iteration of Voltaire's correspondence, that of the Kehl edition (1784-89), there are no letters to the chevalier de Jaucourt, though his name appears there in a letter Voltaire writes in 1770 to the marquis de Jaucourt, when he adds a postscript about his relative: 'Je lis actuellement tous les articles de M. le chevalier de Jaucourt. Vous ne sauriez croire combien il me fait aimer sa belle âme, et comme je m'instruis avec lui.'<sup>6</sup>

It is the Beuchot edition in 1831 that first prints a letter from Voltaire to the chevalier de Jaucourt; and this letter, dated 15 October 1749, is still the only known letter exchanged between the two men in the first Besterman edition of Voltaire's correspondence (1953-64).<sup>7</sup> Our starting-point is therefore a corpus of one.

3 'Au contraire de Diderot et D'Alembert, Jaucourt s'est engagé corps et âme dans la lutte pour la tolérance [...]. Cet engagement courageux a été [...] un acte conscient et explicite' (Georges A. Perla, 'La philosophie de Jaucourt dans l'*Encyclopédie*', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 197, 1980, pp. 59-78, at p. 75). On the chevalier de Jaucourt, see Madeleine F. Morris, *Le Chevalier de Jaucourt : un ami de la terre (1704-1780)* (Genève, Droz, 1979); Jean Haechler, *L'Encyclopédie de Diderot et de... Jaucourt. Essai biographique sur le Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt* (Paris, H. Champion, 1995); and more recently, Gilles Barroux et François Pépin (ed.), *Le chevalier de Jaucourt. L'homme aux dix-sept mille articles* (Paris, Société Diderot, 2015).

4 *Encyclopédie*, vol. 14, p. 374.

5 On this matter, see the forthcoming work by Olivier Ferret, *Voltaire dans l'Encyclopédie* (Paris, Société Diderot, 2016), Part 2, 'Jaucourt et Voltaire'.

6 D16325; κ84, vol. 61, pp. 339-40.

7 This letter (D4040) first appeared in the Beuchot edition, vol. 55 (1831), pp. 350-51. Beuchot explains in a footnote that the letter was 'communiquée par M. Rouard, bibliothécaire de la ville d'Aix'.

Even as the first edition of the *Correspondence* was appearing, Besterman continued to publish regular supplements containing new discoveries, and in 1962, Jean-Daniel Candaux argued persuasively that three of the letters published in these supplements – one of them addressed to a certain ‘Monsieur de Neuville’ (we will return to this name below), and two others whose addressee was unidentified – were in fact all written to Louis de Jaucourt.<sup>8</sup> Besterman evidently accepted these arguments, as he includes all three as letters to Jaucourt in his second, ‘definitive’ edition of the *Correspondence* (1968–76), where the number of letters written to Jaucourt now rises from one to four.<sup>9</sup> Then in 1976, Steve Larkin, in a study of Voltaire and Prévost, argued that a letter whose addressee was identified by Besterman as A.F. Prévost d’Exiles (the proof-corrector of the Ledet edition of the *Éléments*) was in fact written to the chevalier de Jaucourt.<sup>10</sup> By 1976, therefore, the corpus of letters written from Voltaire to Jaucourt had risen from one to five, and the shape of that corpus was beginning to look rather different. The first letter known dates from 1749, and is a response to a letter of condolence following the death of Émilie Du Châtelet; the four letters to emerge subsequently all date from 1737 and are essentially business letters, bearing witness to a certain intensity in the relationship of the two men in that year.

#### NEW DISCOVERIES

It is interesting to reflect on the different ways that ‘new’ letters can emerge. Of course there are those letters that remain hidden in public or private archives, and that come to light only at the moment of a sale, or when a researcher chances upon them, perhaps uncatalogued or miscatalogued, in a library. More intriguingly, as with the three letters reattributed by J.-D. Candaux, there are also those letters that are hidden in broad daylight, that is to say, letters that are known but either unidentified or sometimes misidentified. In the particular case of Jaucourt, it has been possible to identify new letters in all these categories.

(1) *Archival discoveries.* New discoveries in archives are not infrequent, and a hitherto unknown letter from Voltaire to Jaucourt has recently come to light in the collections of the Musée des Lettres et Manuscrits in Paris: dated 28 March 1738, this letter is concerned with the publication of the

8 See Jean-Daniel Candaux, ‘Trois lettres de Voltaire au chevalier de Jaucourt’, *Bulletin de la Société d’histoire du protestantisme français* 108 (1962), pp. 254–55.

9 The three newly added letters are dated 6 February 1737 (D1280), 1 March 1737 (D1292) and 29 March 1737 (D1305). Regarding D1292, see also *OCV*, vol. 130 (1976), p. 61.

10 Letter dated 16 March 1737 (D1298). See Steve Larkin, ‘Voltaire and Prévost: a reappraisal’, *SVEC* 160 (1976), pp. 7–135, at pp. 35–37.

*Éléments de la philosophie de Newton*, and confirms what we already knew about Jaucourt's role in acting as Voltaire's agent in dealings with Ledet in Amsterdam.<sup>11</sup>

(2) *Misidentified letters*. I mentioned above a letter addressed to 'Monsieur de Neuville' that J.-D. Candaux rightly attributed to Jaucourt. As Richard Schwab explains, Jaucourt went under the name of 'Louis de Neuville' (sometimes spelled 'Neufville') from the time he first went to study in Geneva in 1719:

Le chevalier se faisait appeler 'de Neuville' à Genève, probablement afin de faire passer inaperçue la présence d'un cadet Jaucourt. Il signa ainsi ses lettres de Hollande et d'Angleterre, et jusqu'à 1736 au moins, tous ses correspondants lui donnent ce nom.<sup>12</sup>

218 So established was this assumed name, that Jaucourt even employed it in a publication: the 1734 edition of Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée* was prefaced by a *Vie de Leibnitz* attributed to L. de Neuville (though interestingly a re-edition of 1747 attributed the same work to 'le chevalier de Jaucourt').

If we now turn to the Besterman edition, we find a letter, or rather an extract from a letter, dated 20 October 1737 (D1377), and minimal in the extreme:

... Je ne parle pas de moi mais de la dame du château. Je vous embrasse tendrement et suis à vous pour la vie. / V....

Besterman's only source for this text is a volume of 1903, in which a great collector, Paul Dablin, published just the valedictions of the most famous items in his collection that was then about to go under the hammer. Besterman indicates that this stub of a letter was addressed to a 'de Neuville,' speculating in the Textual Notes whether the letter was written to 'M. de La Neuville' or perhaps to his wife.<sup>13</sup> It is odd that Besterman ignores the precise description given by Dablin (whom one assumes to be a scrupulous witness): 'L. a. sig. V., à M<sup>r</sup> de Neuville : Cirey. 20 octobre 1737.'<sup>14</sup> We must hope that the manuscript, sold in 1903, will one day resurface, so that we can know the entire text of the letter; in the meantime, there seems no doubt, as Jean Haechler has

11 This letter is published in Nicholas Cronk, 'La correspondance de Voltaire : quinze lettres inédites', *RHLF* 115 (2015), pp.667-94; for the letter to Jaucourt, see pp.668-71.

12 Richard N. Schwab, 'Un Encyclopédiste huguenot : le chevalier de Jaucourt', *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français* 108 (1962), pp.45-75, at p.50.

13 Besterman seems to have in mind the 'Mme de la Neuville' mentioned in a letter to Mme de Champonin in 1739 (D2067); see also D2015.

14 Paul Dablin, *Les Souscriptions de lettres dans la correspondance depuis le xv<sup>e</sup> siècle, jusqu'à nos jours* (Vendôme, F. Empaytaz, 1903), p.55. Besterman also corrects the spelling of 'chatau' in reproducing this source.

recently indicated,<sup>15</sup> that this letter was addressed to M. de Neuville, that is, to Jaucourt.

A further letter addressed to 'M. de Neuville,' dated 22 April 1737, came up for sale in Paris in 1988. For the moment, we know only the extract of the letter reproduced in the sale catalogue (which fails to identify 'M. de Neuville' as Jaucourt), and we can once more entertain hopes that the manuscript will come to light soon. However, the content of the extract of the letter as we have it clearly fits into and complements the exchanges between Voltaire and Jaucourt already known to us: without question, this is another letter addressed to Neuville / Jaucourt.<sup>16</sup> R. Schwab, cited above, suggests that Jaucourt went under the name of Neuville until at least 1736; the evidence of these last two letters allows us to assert that Voltaire, at least, was still addressing his friend by the name of Neuville as late as the autumn of 1737.

(3) *Unidentified letters.* There are finally those letters whose addressee remains unknown. This is not an infrequent occurrence, since it is common for eighteenth-century letters to begin *in medias res* rather than with a salutation; in cases where the sheet of paper has been folded and sealed, we have the name and address of the addressee on the sheet itself, but if the letter was placed in an envelope, and, as is usually the case, that envelope is now missing, it can sometimes be impossible to be certain of the identity of the addressee. In such cases, we have to rely on intuition, seeking to pinpoint aspects of the content that are common to other letters; and in these circumstances, it is obvious that the larger a given sub-corpus, the easier it is to situate any particular letter in a known sequence and context. This form of research has been made easier by the inclusion of the Besterman edition in the *Electronic Enlightenment* database,<sup>17</sup> and its search function enables us to quickly test out alternative hypotheses of attribution. When Voltaire writes to officials in the administration, for example, ever sensitive to their (and his own) social status, he is generally precise and consistent in composing the valediction.<sup>18</sup> It is also true that the relationship with a particular correspondent is very often characterised by a network of friendship, so that names of friends held in common are repeated from one letter to another, almost as a form of ritualised bonding. Voltaire knows, for example, that Jaucourt is especially close to M. Du Fay: 'vous vivez avec un philosophe que j'aime tendrement [...]. Vous

<sup>15</sup> Jean Haechler, *L'Encyclopédie de Diderot et de... Jaucourt*, p. 107.

<sup>16</sup> D1317a; see Appendix, letter (1).

<sup>17</sup> [www.e-enlightenment.com](http://www.e-enlightenment.com)

<sup>18</sup> For example, a letter of 18 December 1767 (D14599) can be attributed to Marc Duval, the *lieutenant général du bailliage de Gex*, largely on the basis of the valediction: see N. Cronk, 'La correspondance de Voltaire : quelques lettres inédites', *Revue Voltaire* 12 (2012), pp. 261-73, at pp. 272-73.

croyez bien que c'est m<sup>r</sup> Dufay dont je vous parle;<sup>19</sup> and a simple search in the *Electronic Enlightenment* database for letters written in the late 1730s that mention 'Du Fay' is very likely to produce letters written to Jaucourt.

In this way, it has proved possible to identify two further letters in the Besterman edition whose addressee is recorded as 'unknown' but which are quite clearly addressed to Jaucourt. In the case of a letter dated 10 December 1738 (D1683), the allusions to location (the addressee has finally returned to Paris), to themes (such as the Ledet edition of the *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton*) and to persons (such as Du Fay) recurrent in other letters to Jaucourt make this attribution certain.<sup>20</sup>

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A second letter, or rather fragment of a letter, dated 15 November 1737 (D1390), is also recorded as having an unknown addressee, and the brevity of the fragment, which Besterman took from a nineteenth-century sale catalogue, makes it difficult to formulate any conjecture as to the identity of the correspondent.<sup>21</sup> The holograph manuscript has recently come to light, however, and now that we know the letter in its entirety, it is evident that the references to a proposed visit to Cirey, to s'Gravesande, to Du Fay – which complement and parallel similar references in other letters to Jaucourt – all identify Jaucourt as the addressee of the letter. As the sub-corpus grows in size, so we can fit together the pieces of the jigsaw with ever greater certainty.

#### LETTERS FROM VOLTAIRE TO LOUIS DE JAUCOURT [M. DE NEUVILLE]

So beginning with a single letter to Jaucourt in Beuchor's edition, we are now in a position, through a combination of new discoveries and of reattributing letters already known, to describe a corpus of ten letters in all. The new letters as well as the revisions to existing letters are numbered here according to the principles put in place for the revision of the Besterman edition.<sup>22</sup> We include in the Appendix two letters newly attributed to Jaucourt that are not present in the Besterman edition.

(A) Letters in the 'definitive' Besterman edition, identifying Jaucourt as addressee.

(B) Letters in the 'definitive' Besterman edition, mis- or unattributed.

(C) Letters not present in the 'definitive' Besterman edition.

<sup>19</sup> 15 November 1737, D1390-R2; see Appendix, letter (2). Charles François de Cisternay Du Fay (1698-1739) is a chemist who in 1732 was appointed as *intendant du Jardin du roi*; after his premature death, he was succeeded in this post by Buffon.

<sup>20</sup> For additional information about the manuscripts of this letter, see also *OCV*, vol.130, p.65.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix, letter (2), D1390-R2.

<sup>22</sup> See N. Cronk, 'La correspondance de Voltaire : la première mise à jour (2011) de l'édition de Th. Besterman', *Revue Voltaire* 11 (2011), pp.195-96.

|                  | (A)   | (B)                    | (C)                    |
|------------------|-------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 6 February 1737  | D1280 |                        |                        |
| 1 March 1737     | D1292 |                        |                        |
| 16 March 1737    |       | D1298-NI               |                        |
| 29 March 1737    | D1305 |                        |                        |
| 22 April 1737    |       |                        | D1317a <sup>23</sup>   |
| 20 October 1737  |       | D1377-NI               |                        |
| 15 November 1737 |       | D1390-R1 <sup>24</sup> | D1390-R2 <sup>25</sup> |
| 28 March 1738    |       |                        | D1475a <sup>26</sup>   |
| 10 December 1738 |       |                        | D1683-NI               |
| 15 October 1749  | D4040 |                        |                        |

## CONCLUSIONS

This small-scale experiment in attribution might encourage us to re-examine other letters in the Voltaire corpus with unattributed (or misattributed) authors or addressees. The existence of the *Electronic Enlightenment* database makes possible forms of searching which were unthinkable when we were obliged to rely on the printed volumes and their indexes. Looking to the future, we can envisage developing more sophisticated Digital Humanities research tools, in particular using clustering techniques, to examine in greater depth the corpus of Voltaire's correspondence: such investigations would allow us to study far more extensively these questions of attribution, and eventually could enable other forms of research, such as helping to detect those cases where letters have undergone substantial revision at a later date.

To return to the Voltaire-Jaucourt sub-corpus, it is clear that, having now established a body of ten letters, we can begin to describe the shape of this particular epistolary relationship in a way that was not previously possible. And it does possess a clearly discernable shape: the response to the condolence note of 1749, for a long time the only letter that we knew from Voltaire to Jaucourt, turns out to be something of an outlier, given that the other nine letters all date from between February 1737 and December 1738. This two-year period emerges as a time of intense exchange between the two men, so much so that Voltaire alludes explicitly to the problem of their letters crossing in the post: 'Les lettres qui se croisent en chemin ont été la cause de nos petits malentendus.'<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Appendix, letter (1).

<sup>24</sup> Supplement, *OCV*, vol.130, pp.61-62.

<sup>25</sup> Appendix, letter (2).

<sup>26</sup> Published in N. Cronk, 'La correspondance de Voltaire : quinze lettres inédites', pp.668-71.

<sup>27</sup> D1317a; Appendix, letter (1).

Voltaire's ambition was to publish the *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton* with Prault in Paris, but the likelihood of censorship in France obliged him to prepare in parallel an edition with Ledet in Amsterdam: Jaucourt, being then based in the Low Countries, was well placed to liaise with Ledet, and his role as Voltaire's representative was clearly a significant one.<sup>28</sup> The repeated and insistent invitations to visit the château de Cirey that are extended to Jaucourt in the letters show Voltaire's sincere gratitude for his help, his esteem for his learning, and perhaps also his (and Émilie Du Châtelet's) sense of intellectual isolation in these years.

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We can reasonably expect that further autograph letters will come to light, but it is noteworthy that we still have none of the letters written by Jaucourt to Voltaire. Clearly, when Voltaire had to leave Cirey in something of a hurry in 1749, in the immediate aftermath of Émilie Du Châtelet's death, the situation was confused, and many papers were undoubtedly left behind or destroyed; even so, Voltaire managed to leave with two cartloads bearing twenty-five 'grosses caisses' of books and papers,<sup>29</sup> so if he had been really intent on keeping Jaucourt's letters, it should have been possible. The friendship was clearly a close one, but for Voltaire at least theirs was an instrumental relationship, and Voltaire was certainly not corresponding with Jaucourt with any idea in mind that their letters might one day be published (or be publishable). Indeed it is entirely possible that Jaucourt's letters were destroyed as soon as they had been answered – we recall the sobering remark made by Voltaire, late in life, to C.-J. Panckoucke: 'Comme il m'arrive fort souvent de brûler les lettres que je reçois, surtout quand je suis plus malade qu'à l'ordinaire, je ne sais pas ce que je vous dois' (D20844). Jaucourt, on the other hand, on the evidence of what has survived, evidently kept (at least some of) the letters he received from Voltaire. Manuscript letters from the later years of Voltaire's life are of course far more plentiful, but these are rarely autographs. In contrast, all the letters to Jaucourt that we know of are written entirely in Voltaire's own characteristic hand – at this early stage in his career, he does not normally employ a secretary – and for that reason they have been especially appealing to collectors of autographs, another reason to hope that other letters to Jaucourt have been carefully preserved and remain still to be discovered.

In later years, after their epistolary relationship appears to have tailed off, Voltaire remained a stalwart defender of Jaucourt's articles in the *Encyclopédie*. Writing to Damilaville in 1766, Voltaire refers to one such article: 'On a mis

<sup>28</sup> See the important article by William Hanley, 'Voltaire, Newton, and the law', *The Library*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 13 (1991), pp.48-65.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to Mme Denis, 29 September 1749, D4028.

dans les gazettes que l'article *peuple* avait indisposé beaucoup le ministère, je ne le crois pas ; il me semble que tout ministre sage devrait signer cet article' (12 May 1766, D13295). In late 1768, when Panckoucke was planning a revision of the *Encyclopédie*, Voltaire told him to be sure to keep all of Jaucourt's work:

Quant à votre entreprise de la nouvelle Encyclopédie, gardez-vous bien encore une fois de retrancher tous les articles de M. le chevalier de Jaucourt. Il y en a d'extrêmement utiles, et qui se ressentent de la noblesse d'âme d'un homme de qualité et d'un bon citoyen, tels que celui du Labarum. (October/November 1768, D15280)<sup>30</sup>

What Voltaire omits to say here is that in the brief article 'Labarum' in the *Encyclopédie*, Jaucourt states explicitly his indebtedness to Voltaire, as he does in countless other 'minor' historical articles. It is notable that in the *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, it is never Jaucourt's articles that come in for criticism or qualification – not least, it would seem, because they quite often draw on Voltaire's own work. The intensity of the epistolary exchanges between Voltaire and Jaucourt in the years 1737-38 is a new discovery, and it provides a part of the context for understanding Voltaire's defence of his Huguenot friend in later years. What is perhaps Voltaire's most fulsome public tribute to Jaucourt, in the *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, was written over thirty years after the epistolary exchanges examined here:

[...] M. le chevalier de Jaucour, homme au-dessus des philosophes de l'antiquité, en ce qu'il a préféré la retraite, la vraie philosophie, le travail infatigable à tous les avantages que pouvaient lui procurer sa naissance, dans un pays où l'on préfère cet avantage à tout le reste, excepté à l'argent.<sup>31</sup>

30 Diderot, on the other hand, seems to have wanted to suppress a large number of Jaucourt's articles in any future revision of the *Encyclopédie*; see G. A. Perla, 'La philosophie de Jaucourt dans l'*Encyclopédie*', p. 76, n. 38.

31 Article 'Figure', *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, OCV, vol. 41 (2010), p. 399.

APPENDIX  
TWO NEWLY ATTRIBUTED LETTERS FROM VOLTAIRE  
TO JAUCOURT

(1)

Voltaire to M. de Neuville [Louis de Jaucourt]

Cirey, 22 April 1737

D1317a

224 [...] Jay reçu mon cher monsieur lhonneur de la votre du 9 du courant. [...] Les lettres qui se croisent en chemin ont été la cause de nos petits malentendus Vous devez a présent avoir reçu ma dernière par laquelle je vous mandois que vous etes attendu à Cirey dont le séjour philosophique est digne de vous posséder.<sup>32</sup> Je vais réitérer mes instances et celles de la philosophie qui mérite votre voiage. Je ne scai ce que cest que cette ode, et cette parodie, je ny comprends rien.<sup>33</sup> Cest aparement quelque nouvelle imposture dans le gout de celle que Mr sgravesende a si bien confondue.<sup>34</sup> Je me flatte que vous serez mon sgravesende dans cette nouvelle affaire. Mettez moi au fait je vous prie quesceque cest que ce libelle ? chez qui s'imprime-t-il, honorez moy dun petit mot, ou plutot venez dans une solitude qui vaut peut être le fracas de paris. [...]

V

Holograph letter, signed. 1 page, 11 x 16 cm. With address.

The holograph manuscript was sold in Paris in 1988, presented as a letter addressed to a 'Monsieur de Neuville.'<sup>35</sup> The sales catalogue of 1988 contains

<sup>32</sup> This must refer to his letter of 29 March (D1305).

<sup>33</sup> An allusion to the 'deux pièces attribuées à M. de Voltaire', in circulation from late 1736, that Voltaire refers to in his *Vie de Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Rousseau*: 'L'une est une *Ode sur l'ingratitude*, et l'autre une espèce d'allégorie et de conte' (OCV, vol.18A [2007], p. 73). Concerning the *Ode sur l'ingratitude*, quoted in full in the *Vie* (OCV, vol.18A, pp.74-78), see OCV, vol.16 (2003), pp. 460-65; concerning the second piece, entitled *La Crépinade*, see OCV, vol.16, pp. 315-29. I am grateful to Olivier Ferret for his help with this note.

<sup>34</sup> From December 1736 to February 1737, Voltaire spent time in the Low Countries, in Amsterdam and Leiden. Jean-Baptiste Rousseau sought to embarrass Voltaire, by making reference to *La Pucelle* and alleging that Voltaire had embarrassed 'sGravesande, whose lectures he was attending, with remarks about the existence of God. See D1272, and *VST*, vol.1, pp. 330-35.

<sup>35</sup> *Autographes Frédéric Castaing*, Paris, November 1988, No 75.

an extract of the letter, reproduced the following year by François Moureau, who describes it as a 'belle lettre à Monsieur de Neuville;'<sup>36</sup> although he does not connect the names of Neuville and Jaucourt, he interestingly suggests a link with the letter of 20 October 1737 (D1377) examined above. The addressee of the letter is identified here as Jaucourt for the first time; and the text of the extract of the letter reproduces the version reprinted by F. Moureau.

(2)

Voltaire to Louis de Jaucourt  
Cirey, 15 November 1737  
D1390-R2

a cirey par vassy ce 15 9<sup>br</sup> 1737

je suis tres aise monsieur que vous soyez a paris et tres faché que vous n'ayez pas pu passer par la champagne[.] madame la marquise du Chastelet qui conoit ce que vous valez me charge de vous offrir de sa part generally tout ce qui dependra d'elle pour vous faire prendre votre route par cirey si vous retournez en hollande[.] il y a encor par exemple une tres bonne et tres douce berline qui est encor a paris[.] on lenverra chercher quand vous voudrez et les chevaux et la berline seront a vos ordres. Si vous aimez mieux une chaize de poste et que vous n'ayez point la votre, je prendrai la liberté de vous envoyer la mienne avec des chevaux a troyes, et vous vous en servirez ensuite pour votre retour. je serois trop mortifié si vous etiez venu en france sans que j'eusse le bonheur de vous revoir.

Vous pourez si vous voulez faire lapoteose de la philosophe de cirey, et vous verrez quelle en est tres digne, quand vous laurez connue. vous verrez une ame éclairée par tout ce que les lokes, les clarke, les leibnits, les volf, ont de bon[.] vous verrez une femme qui sait l'optique de neuton aussi bien que les s'gravesandes et les mushenbroeks, qui en sachant tout cela ne croit pas savoir grand chose, et qui ne permet pas que ces sciences lui otent rien de ses devoirs et de ses amusements[.] vous verrez un cœur capable d'amitié, au dessus des petites des femmes et des calomnies des femmes et des hommes. voyla monsieur l'unique apoteose qu'on doit faire d'elle. pour celle dont on vous a parlé, je peux vous assurer que cest une des plus absurdes et des plus impertinentes histoires que des esprits oisifs aient pu inventer. il n'y a pas a cela la moindre ombre de fondement. c'est un conte aussi faux, aussi calomnieux que celui qu'un miserable avait

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NICHOLAS CRONK Voltaire and the chevalier de Jaucourt

<sup>36</sup> François Moureau, 'Autographes et documents', *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie* 6 (1989), pp. 175-90, at p. 186.

fait de m<sup>r</sup> s'gravesande et de moy.<sup>37</sup> je suis destiné a etre calomnié parce que jay le malheur d'etre connu. je scai bien que mon royaume n'est point de ce monde,<sup>38</sup> et qu'il faut que je meure pour qu'on me rende justice. mais comme je ne cherche et ne veux dans ce monde cy<sup>39</sup> que la retraite et la liberté, je puis en jouissant de ces deux biens, mepriser en paix les calomniateurs qui me les envient. je me retirerois pour cultiver les lettres, dans le sejour ou vous mavez vu, si je n'étois pas a cirey.<sup>40</sup> et je vous répons que tant que j'y serai, paris me sera fort etranger. des nouvelles dont vous me parlez, le seule ou je prenne part, c'est ce qui concerne les observations faites dans le nord par m<sup>rs</sup> de l'academie des sciences.<sup>41</sup> Si vous en savez quelque chose monsieur, vous me ferez un plaisir extreme de vouloir bien m'en faire part. vous vivez avec un philosophe que jaiime tendrement, et que j'estime depuis longtems[,] je vous suplie de me menager toujours ses bonnes graces. vous croyez bien que cest m<sup>r</sup> du fay dont je vous parle. Nous ne sommes pas icy grands botanistes le terrain n'y est gueres propre. mais nous commencons a faire un cabinet de phisique, sur lequel vous devriez bien venir donner vos conseils. noubliez pas monsieur, un amy veritable qui vous est attaché pour toujours avec le plus tendre devouement

volt

Holograph letter, signed. 3 p. in-4. Without address.

Manuscript: Nantes, musée Dobrée, collection autographes n° 1317.<sup>42</sup>

The text has been re-established from the holograph manuscript. The transcription is literal; to facilitate the reading of the text, a number of signs of punctuation have been introduced and placed in square brackets.

The holograph manuscript came up for sale in Paris in 1874. Besterman was able to publish an extract of the letter, whose addressee was not identified, using information contained in the sale catalogue (see D1390, manuscripts). The holograph letter, which lacks an address, was then rediscovered by Jean Sareil, in the collections of the musée Dobrée in Nantes. He published the letter in 1970, noting that Voltaire 'éprouve visiblement la plus grande estime

37 On the calumny against s'Gravesande and Voltaire, see note 34 above; it has not been possible to identify the specific calumny aimed at Émilie du Châtelet.

38 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18.36).

39 'cy' has been added above the line.

40 Voltaire and Jaucourt had met in Amsterdam; this is a qualified confirmation of the rumour that Voltaire was considering settling in the Low Countries, a rumour that was designed to damage his reputation with the French authorities.

41 A reference to the expedition of Maupertuis, Clairaut and others in 1736-37 to investigate the question of whether or not the earth was flattened at its poles. They had returned to Paris in late August 1737, so some ten weeks before this letter was written.

42 I am most grateful to Mme Nicole Lemoine, of the Musée Dobrée, Nantes, for her help in providing a copy of this manuscript.

pour ce correspondant savant que nous n'avons pu identifier malgré les renseignements dont la lettre abonde.'<sup>43</sup> Besterman included Sareil's discovery in his *Supplement to the Correspondence*, published in 1976.<sup>44</sup> The addressee of the letter is identified here as Jaucourt for the first time; as noted above, the range of references contained in the letter put this attribution beyond doubt.

<sup>43</sup> Jean Sareil, 'Quelques lettres de Voltaire et de ses amis', *RHLF* 70 (1970), pp.653-58, at p.653.

<sup>44</sup> *OCV*, vol.130, p.61-62. We refer to this version of the letter as D1390-R1.

