Mobility of the Paper Medium and Dynamics of Writing in Montesquieu's Drafts*

CLAIRE BUSTARRET
Centre Maurice Halbwachs, CNRS-EHESS-ENS, Paris

Although mobility appears today as a privilege of digital media, former means of written communication also were characterised by their portability and capacity to travel from hand to hand around the world as well as to move around in the working space of anyone producing texts. Some years before digital culture became available through the use of personal computers, scholars studying written communication started paying more attention to the material support and writing tools used to produce documents and books. Such a 'material turn' referred in particular to the methodology of palaeographers and codicologists to provide new perspectives to historians, anthropologists, and literary scholars.[1] They soon discovered materiality is not just a concept, it requires a specific approach. As a codicologist, when I mention studying 'the papers of Montesquieu', I am not using a metonymy, where 'papers' would stand for his manuscripts: I am literally describing my research, which consists in examining manuscripts as material artefacts made of paper. That is actually the scope of codicology (science of the codex), a discipline which developed in the wake of medieval studies and diplomatics, and was adapted during the 1970s by the members of Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes (CNRS) to a written artefact drastically different from the medieval codex, namely the modern manuscript, especially in the form of drafts.[2]

With the drafts of Stendhal and Marcel Duchamp, Montesquieu's was one of the major corpuses of modern and contemporary manuscripts and drafts submitted to systematic analysis when Serge Linkès and I started testing our codicology database entitled MUSE (Manuscrits, Usages des Supports d'Écriture) in the early 2000s. At first glance, the impressive mass of Montesquieu's manuscripts, kept in several repositories such as the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Bibliothèque

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[1] For instance, vol. 2 of *Lieux de Savoir*, entitled *Les mains de l'intellect,* directed by CHRISTIAN JACOB, Albin Michel, 2011, presents the results of such an orientation in the history of knowledge, as developed in France since the 1980s. See https://savoirs.info.

[2] JACQUES LEMAIRE, *Introduction à la codicologie* (Louvain-la-neuve: Institut d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, 1989); about modern manuscripts: LOUIS HAY, 'Eléments pour l'étude des manuscrits modernes', *Codicologica* 1 (1976): 91–108; HAY, *Les Manuscrits des écrivains* (Paris: CNRS Éditions-Hachette, 1993), and ALMUTH GRÉSILLON, *Éléments de critique génétique. Lire les manuscrits modernes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994).

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municipale de Bordeaux (henceforth BNF and MBX respectively), gives quite a contrasted picture. On the one hand heavy, compact volumes, apparently homogeneous in their composition, painstakingly calibrated and copied by the hands of secretaries, such as *Geographica*. On the other hand … a chaos of loose sheets, quires held by a single thread, small pieces of paper sliding out of a bundle, including small so-called 'papillons' ('butterflies', for pasted fragments) pinned here or there. A whole array of different paper qualities and formats, sheets covered with various handwritings, which require a detailed analysis, allowing us to describe, classify and cross-check data until we set up a specific frame of material characteristics of the works, which may be useful to help their interpretation.[3] Our methodology comprises measuring and examining each folio in order to identify the type of paper, according to a protocol that I will present hereafter, and finding out how the actual shape of the drafts may shed light on the various stages of the work. A detailed analysis is required to discover recurring aspects among several hundreds of sheets, or appropriate relationships between various files, to collect some geographical or chronological hints allowing to reconstruct step by step the dynamics of writing processes, the working habits and skills of Montesquieu and his amanuenses.[4]

As I shall try to demonstrate, the inventory of the papers found in a manuscript, relying on material analysis,[5] is merely a first stage of the research, indeed a most necessary beginning.[6] Data such as characteristics of the sheet production (dimensions, mould structure, watermark) allow to identify the paper types. Collecting them is most efficient when dealing with eighteenth century documents,[7] since handmade

[3] CLAIRE BUSTARRET, 'Les papiers de Montesquieu: une approche codicologique du fonds de La Brède', *Revue Montesquieu* 3 (1999): 179–87 ; 'A Study of Paper in the Manuscripts of two French Philosophers of the XVIIIth Century: Montesquieu and Condorcet', *IPH Congressbook-Livre des Congrès IPH* 14 (2004): 268–81; 'Descriptifs des manuscrits' et 'Tableau des mains et des papiers' in *Œuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, 22 vols, vols 3 and 4, *De l'esprit des loix*, eds PIERRE RÉTAT and CATHERINE VOLPILHAC-AUGER (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation; Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 2008), clxxvii-ccxxxvi and ccxlvi-ccli.

[4] As a model for this methodology, see PETER BOWER, *Turner's Papers, A Study of the Manufacture, Selection and Use of his Drawing Papers*, 2 vols (London: Tate Gallery, 1990), and *Turner's Later papers* (London: Tate Gallery, 1999), as well as PETER BOWER, 'Exploring John Constable's Choice and Use of Paper', in *John Constable*, ed. TERRY VAN DRUTEN (Haarlem: Teylers Museum; Bussum: Toth Publishers, 2020), 66–74.

[5] 'Material analysis', as opposed to textual analysis, covers the observation of a written corpus as a set of artefacts produced within a given writing craftmanship and technology; as far as my own expertise is concerned, applying to modern and contemporary literary or scientific manuscripts and drafts, paper is the main support used in Western culture. Our protocol is not referring at any chemical or physical data, such as fibres, dyes, fillers, etc.

[6] See CATHERINE VOLPILHAC-AUGER, with the contribution of CLAIRE BUSTARRET, 'Le manuscrit 2506: inventaire des papiers', in *L'Atelier de Montesquieu. Manuscrits inédits de La Brède*, special issue, *Cahiers Montesquieu* 7 (2001): 284–305, also available online at https://montesquieu.huma-num.fr/editions/esprit-des-lois/dossier-ms2506/introduction-generale. The following examples are taken from this inventory.

[7] To study watermarks, a major reference is of course CHARLES-MOÏSE BRIQUET's *Les filigranes. Dictionnaire historique des marques du papier*, 4 vols (1907; facsimile ed., Amsterdam: Paper Publication Society, 1968). Concerning eighteenth-century French watermarks, see RAYMOND GAUDRIAULT, *Filigranes et autres caractéristiques des papiers fabriqués en France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: CNRS Éditions 1995), as well as its *Supplément* (Angoulême: Association française pour l'histoire et l'étude du papier et des papeteries, 2017).

production, which is then still a craftsmanship, leaves its specific imprint on each sheet of paper. It is not the case with industrial paper. Yet such data are not enough to describe the manuscript as a material artefact, since the writer's many graphic and material manipulations, as well as those of his amanuenses, also leave some specific users' marks on the sheets.

When we are trying to give a full identification of all the different papers used on the writer's desk along the years, we quite naturally turn to history of paper bibliography for information.[8] Yet it should be noted that relevant answers to the basic question 'who produced what, where and when?' are not as readily available as could be expected. Some results regarding papermakers' biography, production dates or paper categories remain incomplete, sometimes barely reliable. Caution is required in how we make use of these paper history sources, while examining the material context of each corpus of documents. However, such a context may also be defined by its mobility, since as soon as it is used for writing, each new sheet enters a network of relationships with a group or several groups of sheets, a moving network changing with development and revision of the written composition.

As important as the paper production data, are the *ways of using papers*, the writer's (or secretaries') usual or accidental handling of the material, which have modified the aspect of the original sheet.[9] It is all the more necessary to study these transformations that they may often prevent the proper observation of the original characteristics of the sheet. Whereas a final neat copy generally presents only one kind of paper, gathering sheets of identical dimensions (which may be in their original state if the format is in-folio), a draft frequently comprises sheets of various sizes and qualities, which have been cut, folded, separated or assembled during the composition process. Such material alterations of the support make it a difficult task to recognise the sheets of the same type when they have been used in so many different fashions. Yet, it is precisely by paying attention to transformations that may have occurred in dimensions, folding or position of sheets and checking the quantity and location of each type of paper that we may be able to reconstruct successive operations such as copying, corrections and re-ordering which have shaped the irregular, heterogeneous aspects of a modern era 'manuscript'[10].

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[8] Besides the well-known repertories by EDWARD HEAWOOD, *Watermarks, mainly of the 17th and 18th centuries* (Hilversum: Paper Publications Society, 1950) and WILLIAM A. CHURCHILL, *Watermarks in Paper in the XVII and XVIII centuries* (Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 1935), for the French area see ALEXANDRE NICOLAÏ, *Histoire des moulins à papier du Sud-Ouest de la France (1300-1800)* (Bordeaux: Delmas, 1935); PIERRE DELAUNAY, *Filigranes d'Auvergne* (Clermont-Ferrand: Académie des Sciences, Belles-Lettres et Arts de Clermont-Ferrand, 1997); GABRIEL DELÂGE, *Moulins à papier d'Angoumois, Périgord et Limousin* (Paris: Bruno Sépulchre, 1991). See also the Memory of Paper portal (Bernstein project) at https://www.memoryofpaper.eu.

[9] CLAIRE BUSTARRET, 'Paper Evidence and the Interpretation of the Creative Process in Modern Literary Manuscripts', in *Looking at Paper: Evidence and Interpretation. Symposium Proceedings, Toronto 1999*, ed. JOHN SLAVIN ET AL. (Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, 2001), 88–94, available online at http://www.item.ens.fr/articles-en-ligne/paper-evidence-and-the-interpretation-of-the-creative-proces/.

[10] MONTESQUIEU, *Spicilège*, ed. ROLANDO MINUTI, in *Œuvres completes*, 22 vols, vol. 13 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation; Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 2013).

Although the examination of paper alone does not allow us to solve the many enigmas raised by the often-incomplete archive of the genetic process, the analysis may provide a network of material hints. When pieced together by reconstructing the logic of successive tasks affecting the writing support, the elements of the puzzle make sense, as they are produced by daily habits and recurring work procedures.[11] A thorough codicological study of Montesquieu's corpus thus brought about a re-evaluation of Robert Shackleton's essay on his amanuenses, flawed with mistakes as far as paper identification is concerned. Yet Shackleton was a pioneer in resorting to paper evidence, a daring step which must be acknowledged: Georges Benrekassa considered his essay a founding ground for a 'practical history of intellectual work'.[12]

After a brief presentation of the MUSE database, whose structure reflects the methodology adopted to describe Montesquieu's manuscripts, I shall try to show how mobility is a proper angle to approach this corpus, as far as paper production characteristics are concerned, as well as ways of using paper.

An expert tool for material analysis: the MUSE database

The MUSE database (M.U.S.E. standing for 'Manuscripts, Uses of Writing Supports' in French) was conceived at ITEM (CNRS)[13] in order to collect a full description of the manuscripts, specifically in their material composition, which means in the first place identifying the types of paper used as supports for writing.[14] By 'type of paper', we mean the virtual gathering of all the sheets that have been produced—in our case handmade—by the same papermaker with a single pair of moulds (the slight differences between the two moulds inferring small variants between the watermarks and laid structure in the sheets).[15] In order to distinguish paper types, we rely not only on the watermarks but also on production data that may be observed in the sheet by the naked eye or measured with portable instruments.

[11] Some unexpected results from material analysis may overthrow prevailing genetic scenarios, as happened with the drafts of Roussel and Stendhal: ANNE-MARIE BASSET and CLAIRE BUSTARRET, 'Les Cahiers d'*Impressions d'Afrique*: l'apport de la codicologie à l'étude génétique', *Genesis. Revue internationale de critique génétique* 5 (1994): 153–66 and SERGE LINKÈS, *Genèse de* Lamiel*, le chaînon manquant*, PhD diss., Université Paris VIII, 2000, published in STENDHAL, *Œuvres romanesques complètes*, 3 vols, vol. 3 (Gallimard: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2014).

[12] ROBERT SHACKLETON, 'Les secrétaires de Montesquieu', in *Œuvres complètes,* ed. ANDRÉ MASSON, 2 vols (Paris: Nagel, 1950), vol. 2, xxxv-xliii et GEORGES BENREKASSA, 'La fabrique de la pensée: l'étude, la connaissance et l'usage du manuscrit dans *L'Esprit des Lois* de Montesquieu', in *Écrire aux XVII^e^ et XVIII^e^ siècles. Genèses de textes littéraires et philosophiques*, eds JEAN-LOUIS LEBRAVE et ALMUTH GRÉSILLON (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2000), p. 105–35.

[13] Relational Database on FileMaker Pro by C. BUSTARRET and S. LINKÈS (Application: S. Linkès, Institut des Textes et Manuscrits modernes, CNRS).

[14] CLAIRE BUSTARRET and SERGE LINKÈS, 'Un nouvel instrument de travail pour l'analyse des manuscrits: la base de données *MUSE*', in *Genesis. Revue internationale de critique génétique* 21 (2003): 161–77.

[15] ALLAN H. STEVENSON, 'Watermarks are Twins', *Studies in Bibliography* 4 (1951–1952): 57–91. For a more recent study of moulds, specifically in France, see CLAIRE BUSTARRET, ed., *Formes et formaires. Protocole descriptif pour les formes papetières (XVIII^e^-XX^e^ s.) et répertoire des formaires en France (XVI^e^-XIX^e^ s.)* (Angoulême: Association française pour l'histoire et l'étude du papier et des papeteries, 2021).

Here are the main elements of our protocol:[16]

Description of paper

- Hand/machine made

- Laid/wove mesh: in the case of Montesquieu the whole corpus comprises, of course, only handmade laid paper.

- Colour: natural/azure/other tinctorial agents. In this corpus no tinctorial agent nor whitening substance is used, but we must be aware of possible alteration of colour due to various conservation contexts and chemical interaction with inks: sheets of the same type may slightly differ in colour today. So, colour *per se* is not a reliable criterium: since we do not use any chemical or optical analysis, in our view this aspect has to be interpreted rather than measured.

- Dimensions: height x width (unfolded full-size sheet)—as far as possible we are trying to find untrimmed in-folio sheets for each type, otherwise we reconstruct the dimensions of the original size of the complete sheet by calculation.

- Thickness (measured by a micrometre)

- Rugosity (estimated by hand, or measured by electronic perthometre)

- Short description of watermark (mark + counter-mark + supplementary sign)

- Distance between chain-lines: detailed data or at least minimum and maximum

Optional:

- Number of laid lines/cm

- Rigidity

- Look-through

- Quality of paper-stuff

- Defects

To give an example, the description of type 'BNF79' would read as follows:

[16] Our template comprises the major criteria selected by IPH, the International Association of Paper Historians (*International Standard for the Registration of papers with or without Watermarks*), as well as criteria of use of the paper, which are absent in IPH Standard. See CLAIRE BUSTARRET, 'Databases on Modern and Contemporary Papers: Shared Reference Lists or Working Tools for Research?', *IPH CongressbookLivre des Congrès* 19 (2013): 109–15. See also CLAIRE BUSTARRET and MATHIEU DUBOC, 'La base de données *MUSE* et l'étude des filigranes en codicologie moderne et contemporaine', in *Actes des journées d'étude « Les filigranes, une marque à explorer »*, ed. CLAUDE LAROQUE (Paris: Centre de Recherche Histoire Culturelle et Sociale de l'Art, 2020), 85–107, available online at https://hicsa.pantheonsorbonne.fr/sites/default/files/2023-09/livre_laroque_2020_05.pdf.

BNF79 Laid, natural, 370/490 mm, rather thick (0,137 mm), slight rugosity (8,7), watermarked: *Pomponne* coat of arms/'I (heart) C' + 'V (heart topped with lily) BEAL FIN/AUVERGNE', distance between chain-lines: 25–28 mm.

Description of watermark

- Single/double/triple structure: in French eighteenth-century paper the most frequent case is 'double'[17]

- Iconographic identification, transcription of mark, counter-mark, supplementary sign

- Characteristics of lettering: style, dimensions of letters or numbers

- Dimensions

- Location of each element in the full-size sheet

- Position of each element on/between chain-lines[18]

- Identification of the pair of moulds

- Digital photo by transmitted light, with scale in mm.[19]

- Reference in existing bibliography, repertoires or databases.

Identification of papermaker

Although eighteenth-century French paper most often bears the papermaker's and mill names, sometimes accompanied by a production date, this information is collected and checked through external sources: bibliography on paper history, repertoires such as Raymond Gaudriault's most reliable *Filigranes et autres caractéristiques du papier fabriqué en France aux XVII^e^ et XVIII^e^ siècles* (see note 7). Identifying the papermaker may provide some elements for dating, at least '*ante quem non*' limits, and allow cross-checking with other paper produced by the same mill, or in the same area.

List of occurrences

For each type of paper, we set up a list of all occurrences found in the examined volume, as well as other manuscripts or letters by the same author. This list is of utmost importance to evaluate if a volume is homogeneous or not as far as writing supports, it allows to interpret how various paper types are located in an individual corpus, either in a single project or in several works, including the correspondence. We then endeavour to establish a chronology of use of different types, or to locate specific places where a paper-type was used, or correlate its use to a specific task or socio-communicative purpose. When ordered by types, the drafts of Montesquieu's major

[17] The most common structure in French eighteenth-century paper is mark + countermark, generally placed in the middle of each folio, seldom with a supplementary sign, found on the edges or at the centre of the sheet.
[18] Position of the watermark between chain-lines facilitates comparison: a 'horn' between two chain-lines cannot be confused with one between three chain-lines.
[19] Our database started with digitised betaradiography images, before digital photography existed.

work *l'Esprit des lois*, kept in Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France) and Bordeaux (Bibliothèque municipale, MS 2506) have brought forth groundbreaking data about the genesis and organisation of the corpus.[20]

Unlike most paper history tools available, an original feature of the MUSE database is that it relates the nature of paper (type identification) with its use (list of occurrences), which allows a fine reconstitution of the drafting process.[21] When the writer's hand is known, it provides information on the possible place of use: vice-versa, the place of use may be most useful in the search to identify anonymous amanuenses. On a smaller scale, the collected data about cutting, folding and gluing gestures, which require a detailed observation sheet by sheet, may shed a new light on working routines and transformations operated during the textual composition.[22]

Paper identification and dating problems

Some difficulties in classifying papers arise from watermark identification problems. In eighteenth-century drafts such as Montesquieu's, the most common folding format is in-4°, which prevents the access to the complete watermark, especially when a folio bears a countermark composed of two or three lines, hidden in the fold of the *bifolium* (full sheet) or cut in halves and separated.[23] Moreover, it is of utmost importance to find out which mark and countermark belong together, although they have been separated when the initial *bifolium* has been cut in halves or quarters. Luckily, when a writer (or his secretary) uses paper folded into a quire, the preparation of the medium often allows us to find mark and countermark alternating in the sequence of the folded sheets, whether on a regular basis or not—that is in the case of drafts that have not been altered or re-arranged by later archival interventions.

It goes without saying that in order to prove that two sheets belong to the same paper-type, we do not merely rely on watermarks—there are so many different types bearing the most common motives of *Pomponne* coat of arms or *Horn*! We also check all the other aspects of the sheet described and measured according to our protocol. When scholars have not only limited their observation of the sheets to the mere watermark, but also overlooked the double (or triple) structure of French eighteenth-century watermarks, as did Robert Shackleton in his study of *L'Esprit des Lois* manuscripts for André Masson's edition of the *Œuvres complètes*—up to recently the most in-depth analysis of material aspects applied to Montesquieu's drafts—their

[20] See the inventory of MS 2506 by paper type and folio by folio, in *L'Atelier de Montesquieu*, annexe, 294–305.

[21] As demonstrated by the inventory of Condorcet's papers, available at https://www.inventaire-condorcet.com/Inventaire/Papiers_et_filigranes; see also NICOLAS RIEUCAU, 'Comment dater un manuscrit sans le comprendre? Le cas des archives Condorcet', *Dix-huitième siècle* 45, no. 1 (2013): 681–718.

[22] CLAIRE BUSTARRET, 'The Handmade Tale: The Paper Medium as the Place for Action', transl. JONATHAN BLOOM, in *Genesis and Revision in Modern British and Irish Writers*, eds CATHERINE ROVERA and JONATHAN BLOOM (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 169–99.

[23] Even worse with correspondence, often in in-8° format, without any probability to find the missing parts of the same folio in surrounding sheets, which is of great help in notebooks or drafts composed of many sheets.

description remains misleading. For instance, the mark Shackleton calls 'chevrons' is actually the rather complex coat of arms of marquis de *Pomponne*, an extremely common motive in eighteenth-century Auvergne writing papers. This wide iconographic category actually comprises dozens of different types, which may be easily differentiated thanks to their countermark. In *L'Esprit de Lois* drafts, there are at least three different types, respectively associated with countermarks 'A. M.' (sometimes with 'LAINE', meaning 'l'aîné', the eldest), 'I. C.' and 'P. C.', initials from the Cusson family, and 'G. MARCHEVAL'. Merging all the *Pomponne* marks into one type, and separating the various countermarks from the marks they are coupled with, definitely gives a mistaken picture of the paper-types.

Some reading mistakes are of lesser consequence: the scholar reads 'Ballange' instead of 'L. BALLANDE' (with 'IHS' monogram), which may prevent him to identify the Périgord papermaker as a local source when Montesquieu works in Bordeaux or in his domain of La Brède. There are also some 'JEAN BALLANDE' countermarks in the drafts of *L'esprit des Lois* (BnF, MS Nouvelles Acquisitions Français 12836, ff. 346, 356, 357), as well as another variant also bearing a date of production, '1744', in a different manuscript (*Mémoire sur la machine de Kunigsberg en Hongrie*, MS NAFR 15465). Such reading difficulties may be compensated by searching in Montesquieu's in-folio manuscripts of the same period, or composed in the same region, where a given watermark may appear more legible, with its complete dimensions: that is the reason why a systematic description of paper, allowing to compare the drafts of a single work with other occurrences, is required.

Other paper identification questions remain unsolved owing to the scarcity of historical sources. We manage to find out that recurring initials or names refer to well-known Périgord papermakers families, located in one or several mills, such as the Ballande family in Villeneuve (Majoulassy, Gavaudun, Martiloque mills) and in Couze, near Bergerac (Bayac mill), or the Dumas family, master papermakers in the Couze harbour. François Dumas seems to have been working since 1731, and Nicolaï makes reference to his widow, Jeanne Grellou, in 1753; Arnaud Dumas is featured from 1742 to 1772, or even 1787 (initial 'A.'), whereas a second François appears during the Revolution, for instance in the Martiloque mill. First names initials may provide precious chronological hints, yet one has to take into account the frequent use of a father or ancestor's initials, sometimes for several generations, which does not help dating operations! When a watermark bears only initials, such as 'A. M.' (type BNF488), one has to rely on repertoires such as Gaudriault's, who suggests reading 'A. Marcheval', belonging to the same family as the above-mentioned 'G. Marcheval' (BNF497); the Auvergne name of Cusson, implied in initials such as 'P. C.' (MBX34), 'I. C.' (BNF79) and 'H.-J. C.' (BNF489), also appears in full on several countermarks (MBX5, 33, 35). As for initials 'I. D. M.', associated with a Malta cross,[24] Nicolaï attributes them to Joseph Demichel, from the Cavart mill in Cahors (1739), yet they

[24] NICOLAÏ, *Histoire des moulins*, plate XXI, no. 2.

could also refer to Jean Demichel, working in the 1720–1740 period in the Saint-Michel and Chantoiseau mills near Angoulême.[25]

Moreover, when several names or initials are associated in a watermark, we do not always know the respective positions of each partner: some of them are owners, managers or operators, partners or debtors temporarily working for a neighbouring mill. For instance we find Cusson's initials I. C. with 'V. BEAL'; the name 'A. Dumas' sometimes appears alone, sometimes in the same sheet as 'L. (Louis or Léonard) Ballande'; 'J. Berger' sometimes shares the space with his father-in-law, Pierre Cusson (P. C.); the case of 'LAINE' or 'LAISNE' deserves attention: it could mean 'the elder' (l'aîné), here linked to Marcheval's initials (BNF488) or elsewhere it could be related to the Cusson family, according to Gaudriault (p. 299). Such approximations in historical data may be frustrating if one is looking for tangible proofs, yet the bibliography on papermaking and mills, although scarcely focusing on watermarks and paper products, often provides enough evidence to differentiate the various paper types encountered in a corpus of manuscripts.[26]

One last element concerning dating documents is to be noted: French eighteenth-century papers often bear a date of making, within the watermark. This is due to legal constraint (January 1739 and September 1741 royal decrees), requiring papermakers to mention their name, the quality of paper ('medium', 'fine', 'raw' etc.) as well as the area of production, followed by the date—the example given in the 1741 decree is '1742', since it applies to the first year of application of the decree.[27] By way of consequence, the '1742' date has been systematically used in watermarks for several years afterwards by many papermakers who tried to escape legal control, while literally respecting the text of the decree[28]… Yet the presence of the suspicious '1742' date means that the paper has definitely not been made earlier—although false, this hint provides a '*terminus ante quem non*' which may prove useful. In Bordeaux's MS 2506 (drafts of *L'Esprit des lois*), half of the watermarks of identified paper types comprise a date, and nine out of ten types actually bear '1742' (BNF490, MBX4, 5, 15, 28, 31, 33, 75). Among Montesquieu's manuscripts, two other dates appear: '1744' and '1750', which are more reliable as date of production (paper types BNF83 and MBX36). An average delay of three years seems a reasonable estimation of the timespan between the production date and the use of paper,[29] when circumstances of the user's work and life are considered stable.

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[25] GAUDRIAULT, *Filigranes*, 198, and DELÂGE, *Moulins à papier*, 258.

[26] GEORGES BUISSON rightfully insists on the mistakes in interpretation resulting from a misreading of watermarks or hasty observation of papers: 'Les papiers d'André Chénier', in *Sortir de la Révolution. Casanova, Chénier, Staël, Constant, Chateaubriand*, eds BÉATRICE DIDIER and JACQUES NEEFS (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1994), 33–57.

[27] GAUDRIAULT, *Filigranes*, 27.

[28] PETER BOWER mentions a similar phenomenon in the history of British papermaking about the date '1794' in 'The White Art: The Importance of Interpretation in the Analysis of Paper', in *Looking at Paper*, ed. SLAVIN ET AL., 5–16.

[29] GAUDRIAULT, *Filigranes*, 28. The average delay of five years given by Briquet applies to earlier periods and to printed material. For a critical examination of this point, see JEAN IRIGOIN, 'La datation par les

Dated watermarks may contribute to dating a document, but the scholarly method of cross-checking undated documents with dated documents sharing the same paper characteristics is our best guide. Although he failed to identify correctly the different types of paper they used, Shackleton showed us the way when working on the classification of Montesquieu's secretaries' hands. Applying the same methodology to the paper medium of Montesquieu's drafts and correspondence is still a work in progress, which has been launched following the results of Marianne Bockelkamp's material analysis of Diderot's manuscripts and letters.[30] Without going into details here, let us merely point out that in close collaboration with Catherine Volpilhac-Auger, who has studied and published the composition process of *L'Esprit des Lois*, we have been able to date several drafts thanks to the identification of types of paper which Montesquieu and his amanuenses also used for dated letters. These positive results also helped somewhat clarifying the chronology of Montesquieu's many secretaries, but several questions about them remained unsolved. Some of the philosopher's collaborators are still anonymous, so that scholars lack biographical data to figure out their role, for instance, in the process of composition of *L'Esprit des Lois*. Eighteenth-century professional handwritings are so normalised that it is difficult to distinguish them—fortunately, not all of his assistants were professional scribes.

Paper consumption in motion between Bordeaux and Paris

The watermarks' motives give some idea of the place where the paper was made, and as mentioned earlier the text of watermarks also often include, in keeping with the royal decrees, names of a region or mill.[31] As far as *L'Esprit des Lois* is concerned, the various parts of the archive clearly belong to two different paper-making areas, which are not surprisingly closely associated with the philosopher's dwelling places during the many years he devoted to this lengthy project. Montesquieu alternately lived in Paris and Bordeaux (or in his castle of La Brède in the vicinity), where he was President of the local parliament. The distinct paper-making regions concerned are on the one hand Auvergne, main provider of paper for the Paris area, and Périgord, where the paper-production was mostly oriented towards export through the harbour of Bordeaux, en route to Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands or even Russia.

So, it is rather obvious that the *Pomponne* as well as the *Le Tellier* coats of arms, or '*griffon*', bearing the names of Aurilhon, Beal, Berger, Cusson, Marcheval,

filigranes du papier', *Codicologica* 5 (1980): 9–36, and as concerns the eighteenth-century, RUSSELL JONES, 'From Papermaker to Scribe: The Lapse of Time', *Papers from the Third European Colloquium on Malay and Indonesian Studies*, eds LUIGI SANTA MARIA, FAIZAH SOENOTO RIVAI, and ANTONIO SORRENTINO (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1988), 153–69.

[30] MARIANNE BOCKELKAMP, 'L'analyse bétaradiographique du papier appliquée à l'étude des manuscrits de Diderot', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 254 (1988): 139–73. First results on Montesquieu's papers have been published in 'III. De la main à la plume. Les secrétaires de Montesquieu', in *Manuscrit de* L'Esprit des Lois, online edition (Lyon: École Normale Supérieure de Lyon), available at https://montesquieu.huma-num.fr/editions/esprit-des-lois/manuscrit/introduction-generale/de-la-main-a-la-plume; Annexe 'Manuscrits et écritures', available at https://montesquieu.huma-num.fr/editions/esprit-des-lois/manuscrit/annexes.

[31] GAUDRIAULT, *Filigranes*, 26.

Nourrisson or Tamisier, followed by 'AUVERGNE', come from mills in Thiers or Ambert. Whereas in the Aquitaine papers, the names of Ballande and Dumas (sometimes together), or Marot,[32] are associated with the *Amsterdam* coat of arms (whose local name was 'Stradam'), the *Christ monogram* (IHS), or very often *Horns* (placed on a shield generally topped with a crown, or seldom a simple lily)—all accompanied by the 'PERIGORD' legal mention. A single horn made in Auvergne by Nourrisson appears as an exception (MBX28). Although a part of Aquitaine as well, the region of Angouleme is scarcely represented (since its harbour on the Atlantic was not Bordeaux but La Rochelle), by a watermark bearing a name bound to become famous in French paper history during the nineteenth century: Laroche[33] (MBX50).

The group of papers made in each region shares several characteristics: Auvergne papers are often of larger dimensions, whereas Périgord papers are smaller and with nearly-square proportions in-plano, therefore presenting narrower sheets when folded in-folio.

Associated to the weight, the dimensions of the in-plano undergo precise legal control during the Ancien Régime.[34] Yet the craftsmen in smaller mills did not always manage to control their own production in this respect, as the negative reports of inspectors underlined, especially in Périgord.[35] In our corpus we find two main categories of paper sizes meant for handwriting purposes:

- Large sizes, i.e. in-plano 365 to 389 mm in height, by 450 to 510 mm in width (or average 370/250 mm when folded in-folio, and 250/185 in-4°)—associated with the *Pomponne* coat of arms, Bells, and large Horns;

- Small sizes, i.e. in-plano 350 to 360 mm in height, by 400 to 450 mm in width (or average 355/215 mm when folded in-folio, and 215/178 mm in-4°)—associated with the Amsterdam and Le Tellier coats of arms, as well as small Horns.

As Auvergne held a strong position during the early eighteenth century (not on technical terms, but commercially),[36] and Paris being the centre of French intellectual life, Auvergne papers are most common in contemporary writers' archives. Relying mainly on small local papermakers is a distinctive feature of Montesquieu's archive, which implies he did not need to carry with him a large stock of blank paper, when he travelled from Paris to Bordeaux, a large city and harbour with an active paper market. Our hypothesis is that he travelled only with sheets or quires that already bore some work in progress, since he needed them to continue amending his drafts. It was part

[32] NICOLAÏ, *Histoire des moulins*, plates CXLII et XI.
[33] RENÉ LAROCHE, *Les Laroche, papetiers charentais* (Angoulême: Fumées du Nil-Atelier Musée du papier, 1992), 31, mentions Léonard Laroche fils (1700–1752).
[34] See below, § How paper was used: gathering, moving around, transferring, about the folding of sheets.
[35] NICOLAÏ, *Histoire des moulins*, recalls at length.
[36] PIERRE-CLAUDE REYNARD, 'Les choix trop prudents des papetiers d'Ambert', *IPH Congress Book-Livre des Congrès IPH* 10 (1994): 80–82, and PIERRE-CLAUDE REYNARD, *Histoires de papier. La papeterie auvergnate et ses historiens* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2001).

of his secretaries' tasks to provide paper to the philosopher: when starting a new sheet or quire, Montesquieu wrote (or dictated) on local paper, that is Auvergne paper when working in Paris, and Périgord paper when working in Bordeaux. For instance, the secretary named 'H' by scholars, who took part in the first version of *L'Esprit des Lois*, written in Paris, used only Auvergne papers (BNF488, BNF489, MBX60). In case the sheet was used by several hands in successive stages of composition, which was usually the case with drafts, this observation of a geographical connection between the writing hand and the paper's local origin concerns exclusively the first user.[37]

We have focused, therefore, on several secretaries known for being employed by Montesquieu either in Paris or in Bordeaux and La Brède, trying to set up a list of the paper-types they used, more specifically the ones they used as 'first users'. Since the results confirmed our hypothesis, we then extrapolated to anonymous employees, which we were able to assign to Bordeaux or Paris by means of the local origin of the paper they used (as 'first users').[38] This is where the research on *the kind of paper* used, aiming at a typology of the whole corpus,[39] and the enquiry on *how papers were used* come together, allowing us to identify *by whom* (or at least in which of the two cities) the sheets were used.

How paper was used: gathering, moving around, transferring

Folding and cutting paper were everyday actions, most common, and even necessary when preparing the material for writing during the eighteenth century.[40] Paper was sold and probably also kept by the user in gatherings of twenty-five sheets folded in-folio, yet it was seldom used in its original shape, especially during the first stages of composition. As most of their colleagues, whether professional or not, Montesquieu's secretaries separated the bifolios in single sheets, which they often folded in two (in-4°), in order to get a smaller bifolio of four pages. Given the high quantity of paper used by the philosopher, it is likely that these recurring operations were made in a repetitive sequence of hand movements by the employee who transformed a whole series of sheets one after another.

[37] After a first version, written by him or dictated to a secretary, Montesquieu revised either alone or again with the help of a secretary, adding up to three of four interventions on some sheets before he asked someone to make a neat copy. This process could start in Bordeaux and be finished in Paris or viceversa.

[38] Results of this study have been published and commented by CATHERINE VOLPILHAC-AUGER: 'Les manuscrits de Montesquieu, un château de cartes?', *Dix-huitième siècle* 51, no. 1 (2019): 379–95, as well as in 'Une nouvelle datation de manuscrits de Montesquieu', Actualités de la recherche sur Montesquieu, Hypothèses website, 28 June 2019, available at https://montesquieu.hypotheses.org/3264 (concerning the *Spicilège*).

[39] For a typology of papers used by Montesquieu, established in 2005, see 'Analyse des papiers du manuscrit de *L'Esprit des lois* et du dossier Ms 2506 de Bordeaux', in *Manuscrit de* L'Esprit des Lois, online edition (Lyon: École Normale Supérieure de Lyon), available at https://montesquieu.huma-num.fr/editions/esprit-des-lois/manuscrit/introduction-generale/descriptifs-des-manuscrits#analyse-des-papiers. It should be completed in the near future.

[40] CLAIRE BUSTARRET, 'Couper, coller dans les manuscrits de travail du XVIII[e] au XX[e] siècle', in *Lieux de Savoir*, 2 vols, ed. CHRISTIAN JACOB, vol. 2, *Les mains de l'intellect* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2011), 353–75.

According to the current stage of work, copying excerpts, holograph or dictated drafting, the stock of in-4° bifolios were either used one by one (for instance in the bundle no. 8 of MS 2506), which means whenever the written piece exceeds four pages, the first page of the second bifolio is numbered '5'. Either—and in this archive it is a widely predominant choice—two to seven bifolios were set inside one another as an unbound booklet or quire, whenever a piece of text was planned to expand over four pages. The pages are in this case numbered with a page '3' on the front page of the second bifolio, following page 1 and 2 belonging to the first bifolio. When the text remained unfinished, or when its length had been overestimated, one or several pages remained blank at the end of the booklet. Tearing those apart in order to use the remaining sheets elsewhere would turn loose the first folios: such a risk is generally avoided by keeping the blank sheets. Which means that the quire, although most often unbound, is a material unit somehow taking care of the continuity of the textual unit.

As a matter of fact, the sheets of these handmade 'copybooks' were not necessarily sewn together—a good reason to number them—and whenever they are loosely bound, it is merely by a short needleful of thread, with two or three holes in the fold. In some bifolios, the presence of a larger number of holes reminds us that some sheets may have been added, substituted or extracted from the original set without much effort. Yet, whenever a bifolio was inserted afterwards in a bundle or unbound booklet, several hints betray the latecomer: a different type of paper, slight irregularities in the folding, gaps or changes in the numbering sequence…

Whether it is used for initial drafting or for a neat copy made up from previous drafts, the use of the quire or 'copybook' disposition, appropriate for a long sequence of text, does not mean it constitutes a close unit, with pre-established limits. The writer (or secretary) plans a definite number of pages to be prepared for his use into a handmade artefact, which, as opposed to nineteenth and twentieth industrially bound notebooks, may undergo unexpected transformations in the course of the drafting and/or revision process. Even in the case of handmade bound notebooks, or heavier volumes made up of several working notebooks sewn together, one may notice some sheets which have been cut out after writing (as seen in the fold where words have been truncated). Have these cut out (or torn out) sheets been eliminated or were they moved to a different part of the work? Once again, a detailed analysis of the paper characteristics may help scholars to trace them.

Among the operations aimed at gathering sheets, let me also mention some which produce smaller scale changes, as when one pins a small piece of paper to a larger sheet bearing some part of the text—pinned fragments that Montesquieu called 'papillons'. The minute dimensions of such fragments often make it difficult to identify the type of paper. Nevertheless, such a mode of using paper is typically motivated by mobility, whether they are used to insert a new component into the text, to bring a correction or a bibliographic reference to it or to comment its content or style. The choice of using a needle and not wax (frequently employed by Diderot or Buffon for this purpose) to 'paste' the small piece of paper enhances Montesquieu's concept of a

work in progress, endlessly remaining open to changes at will. Just as the unbound quire, the pinned 'butterfly' facilitates revisions and interpolations: both modalities support the mobility of writing.

Another form of shaping paper to promote mobility is the well-studied index card. Volpilhac-Auger records that Montesquieu used to call them 'bulletins': made of in-8° slips of paper, usually used vertically, they are meant to transfer data, by copying portions of text singled out to be transferred.[41] The cards are structured to facilitate interactions, possibly in several strategic sites. They may also bear instructions for a future action: they behave like movable marginalia, devoted to promoting mobility within the current corpus. Several cards sometimes come from a single sheet of paper, which betrays a serial preparation, and the use (possibly delayed in time) of a stock of available blank slips.

Finally, single in-4° sheets, usually of thick and even coarse paper, may be used as covers for draft bundles, what we would call a folder, which the philosopher appropriately calls an 'envelope' (although it is by no means a closed container). Several dissertations that Montesquieu composed in parallel or after *L'Esprit des Lois*, testify to a remarkable archive-like ordering process. Leftover scraps, aborted beginnings, reading excerpts are gathered in files thanks to these simple bifolios, conveying instructions for reordering the contents, as suggested by the titles they bear: 'Scraps for…', 'Scraps for dissertation or my reflections about…'; 'Everything that this envelope contains is proper material for dissertations on…'; 'I have merely kept all this in case…'; 'See where this would belong most appropriately…' Quite often those titles are cancelled and modified along with the changes made in the composition and ordering of the chapters.

Hence the folder itself, a strictly functional medium serving as mobile binding for an open file, also becomes a draft, subject to erasing and revision. In some cases, it is even folded backwards and used for a second time, endorsing a new purpose. The drafting folders are in charge of materially supporting a forthcoming structure, yet they are ephemeral, since they tend to disappear as soon as this structure is stabilised into chapters and sections of a book, well-ordered and numbered. Such observations enhance the role of the 'bundle' or file, however loose and open this material artefact may be, as the most appropriate descriptive unit for Montesquieu's work in progress.[42]

One may also pay attention to the functions of needles: when the smallest 'butterflies' as well as in-8° index slips or even in-4° draft sheets are pinned to a larger

[41] CATHERINE VOLPILHAC-AUGER, *L'Atelier de Montesquieu,* introduction, 17–19. See also CATHERINE VOLPILHAC-AUGER, 'Astrix, nottes et bultins', in *Manuscrit de* L'Esprit des Lois, online edition (Lyon: École Normale Supérieure de Lyon), available at https://montesquieu.huma-num.fr/editions/esprit-des-lois/manuscrit/annexes/astrix-nottes-bultins.

[42] GEORGES BENREKASSA, 'La fabrique de la pensée', 120: 'On rappellera que les livres, mais aussi les chapitres forment des liasses indépendantes, donc déplaçables, donc susceptibles de distributions et répartitions nouvelles' (Let's recall that books, but also chapters are made up of independent bundles, available for transfer, redistribution and new interpolations). A note on the translation: the 'books' and 'chapters' referred to here are the hierarchical sections of an essay such as *L'Esprit des Lois*.

folio (self-sustaining or gathered in a quire), they are so to say annexed to it, the needle then points out the act of insertion, enacting an implicit hierarchy. When two folios or pieces of paper of equal size and function are pinned together, the needle merely gathers them in a minimal scale bundle, temporarily binds them together in a removable conjunction.

The heterogeneous material composition of the bundles applies to the conceptual mobility of a major work, such as *L'Esprit des lois*, constantly revised and reordered over the years, as well as to the perpetually remodelled archive of side-projects left unfinished. Thoroughly analysing paper and identifying handwritings may provide useful keys to understand in both cases what is a work in progress, in the case of Montesquieu. The mad endeavour to follow the path of each bundle of folios back and forth between Paris and Bordeaux would shed light on the complex chronology of composition of the philosopher's major *opus*. The motion in space between the two cities and the accumulation in time of the paper medium add up with the constant circulation of the sheets between the hands of the author and that of his secretaries, as the layers of successive writing interventions on their surface testify, since each sheet may be used more than once by several persons and in different working places.[43]

The fact that, owing to Montesquieu's concern with his own complex archive, the rough drafts of *L'Esprit des Lois* have been preserved allows us to underline the mobility factor in a composition process that could be called a 'mobilisation' process, since it is using paper in motion.[44] The eighteenth-century philosopher's drafts illustrate what genetic criticism, relying on the working habits of much later authors such as Proust, has defined as the multidimensional, non-linear nature of writing processes. Such 'written intricacies'[45] are nevertheless guided by intentions, shaped by working skills which in this case include the interventions of several hands and the repeated change of working place. Albeit not planned initially, the transformations, reordering and mobilisation of the written material accumulated along the years are facilitated by the flexibility of gathering devices, by the lability and handiness of the paper medium. The writer's determination to build an intellectual project and his creative impulse while composing his masterpiece are not impeded by a rigid, predetermined, limited or formal materiality. Complex as it is, Montesquieu's drafting process implies on the contrary a remarkable resistance against any material restriction which would hinder the essential mobility of the writing act.

[43] CATHERINE VOLPILHAC-AUGER recently added up to this whirlwind vision of the archive, as she included in the picture the mobility of scholarly criticism itself in her 'Les manuscrits de Montesquieu'.
[44] BUSTARRET, 'The Handmade Tale'.
[45] YVES BONNEFOY, 'Enchevêtrements d'écriture. Entretien avec Michel Collot', *Genesis. Revue internationale de critique génétique* 2 (1992): 123–30.