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PREFACE TO

HISTOIRE DE DOM BOUGRE

PORTIER DES CHARTREUX

Nouvelle édition revue sur le texte original,
augmentée de tous les passages supprimés
dans toutes les éditions modernes

[Translated by Patrick Kearney]

Cluny [Paris] :
Chez le Sacristen des Carmes [Maurice Duflou]
[1924]

Bakersfield, CA
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Here is the most famous and the oldest of French erotic novels. The oldest, because the earlier works were not novels but Dialogues; examples include *L'École des Filles* and the translations of *Meursius*. *Le Portier des Chartreux* is the first erotic novel written according to that formula of the modern novel—at once philosophical and realistic—which replaced the interminable seventeenth-century novels, precious, pretentious, and tedious.

The *Portier des Chartreux* tells us a lived story, or at least one imagined as if it had been lived, and the author seasons his narrative with philosophical considerations, many of which do not lack audacity, even for the period.

Until now, it was to Voltaire that the invention of the philosophical novel had been attributed. Yet the *Portier des Chartreux* has, over Voltaire's tales, the merit of priority. When the *Portier* appeared, Voltaire was forty-five years old and had not yet written either *Candide* or *Zadig*. It was therefore two young law clerks, two youths of twenty years, who, in play, gave the French novel its definitive form, at least the one it has adopted for nearly two centuries.

Would one believe it? The *Portier des Chartreux*, the first French novel in the modern formula; the *Portier des Chartreux*, the first French erotic novel; the *Portier des Chartreux*, a licentious work whose celebrity was eclipsed, after a century, only by that of *Gamiani*—the *Portier des Chartreux* has remained a book of uncertain origins.

It is generally attributed to a young lawyer, Gervaise de Latouche, but without further precision, and it has not yet been possible to reach agreement on the date of the first edition, bibliographical estimates ranging from 1741 to 1750!

The contemporary printed documents number only two: an analysis of the novel, published in 1742, and a note

by Bachaumont, dated 1782, announcing the death of the author.

Meagre fare. I lay claim to the discovery of two important dossiers of original documents relating to the first three editions of the *Portier*. Let us be clear. I did not cause these dossiers, crammed with precious and precise information, to rise from the dust of secret archives. Before me, others might have consulted them, and M. Funck-Brentano had carefully examined them and included them in the printed Catalogue of the Archives of the Bastille, at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. My merit, if merit there be, was simply to have gone to consult, after many fruitless searches, the said Catalogue.

It is true that this very simple idea had not yet occurred to any of those who have had to reprint the *Portier des Chartreux*, or to establish its civil status, so to speak. They confined themselves to drawing from Jules Gay's *Bibliographie*, that monument of bibliographical errors, which is obviously easier and less absorbing than rummaging about in libraries.

Thus, one finds, in the Archives of the Bastille, under the call numbers 11505 and 11694, two dossiers crammed with information on the *Portier des Chartreux*, without prejudice to various indications scattered through several other files. It is from there that I have drawn all the details I am about to provide. These voluminous dossiers are composed of original documents: police reports and notes, denunciations by "informers," *lettres de cachet*, committal orders, requests for release, petitions from the imprisoned or from their families, etc., etc.

At the storming of the Bastille in 1789, they were, along with the others, scattered to the winds and trampled into the mud. What could be recovered after several days was carefully sorted and reclassified, and it forms the files as they have come down to us. But both of them—especially

the first—are certainly incomplete. It is likely that many documents were lost or destroyed. Apart from this presumption, there are two definite proofs, which are as follows:

1°. A note in file 11505 reads as follows (folio 29):

> Delivered to Monsieur documents in which Gervaise was mentioned as being suspected of being the author of Le Portier. 5 September 1753.
>
> Notes and information concerning all the co-accused in this affair.

It cannot be a question of "Monsieur," the title reserved for the king's brother, since in 1753 we were under Louis XV and he had no brother. Most likely, "Monsieur" should have been followed by a name, omitted by the writer of the note, and which could only have been that of the Lieutenant of Police. We shall see later what may be concluded from this removal of important documents.

2° In the *Monmerqué* Catalogue (Paris, Téchener, 1861), the 1806 edition of Peignot's *Dictionnaire critique* is cited under no. 3689, with the following addition:

> An autograph letter denouncing to the Lieutenant of Police Demarville, as the authors of *Dom Bougre, Portier des Chartreux*, Billard and Gervaise, clerks of the Palais, and bearing at the head a police note listing nine names of the authors of this book. The letter is signed with initials.

It is clear that this concerns a document removed in 1789 from the *Dom Bougre* file.

Let us see, after this preamble, the details provided to us by the original documents of the Bastille.

The Authors of " Portier "

I cited Bachaumont above. It is from this single source that, for a century and a half, all the bibliographers have drawn who have attributed *Le Portier des Chartreux* to the

lawyer Jacques-Charles Gervaise de Latouche, born in Amiens around 1719.[1] Bachaumont, therefore, in volume XXII of *Mémoires Secrets pour servir à l'Histoire de la République des Lettres en France* (London, 1783), publishes the following note:

> On 30 November 1782, M. Gervaise, the author of *Le Portier des Chartreux*, a book so famous and which had caused him so much distress, has just died. He had since devoted himself entirely to the Bar, where he composed very polished, very learned briefs, quite at odds with that first production. He had a cold outward demeanor, which contrasted wonderfully with the prodigious warmth of the work cited above, an original masterpiece in its kind, in which, alongside the most licentious and most obscene scenes, one sometimes finds the most exquisite morality.
>
> M. Gervaise was beginning to grow old; he had invested all his savings with the Prince de Guemenée, and it is claimed that the news of that bankruptcy dealt him the blow that caused his death.

It should be noted here, in passing, the legend of the manuscript "found among the author's papers after his death." It is most likely nothing more than an publisher's deception, intended to conceal a "considerably reduced" reprint, no doubt for reasons of economy. On this subject, see the bibliography below.

Let us return to the author. On what does Bachaumont's assertion rest? Should Gervaise de Latouche be regarded as the author of *Le Portier des Chartreux*? Yes, since dossier 11505 of the Bastille provides us with evidence, or at least strong presumptions, for no trace of any actual proof remains. We have seen above that in 1753 a certain personage, who may have been the Lieutenant of Police, removed from the file certain documents "in

[1] I am the one giving this date; I will explain why later.

which Gervaise was mentioned as being suspected of being the author of the *Portier*." It seems to me that there is something like an admission here, and that this removal of compromising papers could only have taken place at Gervaise's own request. But this is only a hypothesis, and I confine myself to presenting it.

Dossier 11505 is titled :

YEAR 1741. — OFFICE OF SIEUR DUVAL AT THE POLICE.

AUTHORS, PRINTERS, AND PEDDLERS OF OBSCENE BOOKS.

Let us see what pertains to the author, or rather to the two authors, for there were two suspected authors, "jointly and severally," as one would say in a lawyer's style, and not one after the other.

From 23 February 1741 to 10 June of the same year, twelve persons "accused and charged with having composed, sold, peddled, printed, and distributed a book full of Indecent Engravings, entitled *Dom B... Portier des Chartreux*, and several other works contrary to Religion and good morals"—twelve persons, I say, were arrested and detained at the Bastille or at Bicêtre, through the efforts of Commissary Regnard the Elder, and upon investigations conducted by Sieur Dubut, "exempt of the general provostship of the Monnoyes." Four other persons were likewise "investigated," but not arrested, and among these four appears the "so-called Gervaise, clerk to a procurator."

A first note (folio 17), dated 15 April, reads: "Authors of *D. B.*: Billard and Gervaise, clerks to a procurator. 3 documents. — To be joined to the file." These three documents have disappeared.

Another document (folio 27) reads: "Gervaise, Billard, clerks to a procurator, who are said to be the authors."

We find further on two anonymous denunciations concerning the authors: the first (folio 65) is worded as follows:

> The author of Dom B… lives in a house next to the theatre. He is about twenty-two years old,[2] does not carry a sword, wears a black coat and a tied blond wig, and is said to be a lawyer

"There he is indeed — the conspirator in the blond wig and black collar!"

The other (folio 66), is more precise :

> Monsieur Dubut, an exempt, is informed that one of those for whom he holds *lettres de cachet* concerning the affair of the porter of the Chartreux, named Sr. Billiard (sic), is constantly on the move, and that this evening he went to fetch Mr. Desportes, the young painter who lives in the cloister of Saint-Nicolas, opposite the porter's shop.[3] He said that tomorrow, around eight o'clock, he would go to the countryside. He is presently at the aforesaid residence.

A note (folio 68) on the back of the summary of an interrogation of the abbé Nourry — we shall have to return to this person — reads:

> To ascertain who the author is and the price for which the manuscript was sold.
>
> It is known that it was sold for four to five hundred livres, and that it was the named Gervaise, clerk to Mr. Lambotte, who sold it.
>
> It is also known that the said Gervaise repented of it upon seeing the inquiries that were being made about it.

On 8 April 1741, the exempt Dubut wrote to the police officer Duval:

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[2] This means that Gervaise—unless it was Billard!—would have been born in 1719.

[3] Should we interpret this to mean that Desportes lived opposite the porter's shop, which makes no sense, or rather, as I believe, that Billard went to Desportes to fetch copies of *Portier*?

Sir,

I have the honour to report to you that, in consequence of your orders, I have made inquiries into the contents of the letter that was addressed to you this morning. I have learned that the named Billard and Gervaises reside with Sieur Lambotte, procureur, and that they are clerks there.

The information given to you in that letter appears all the more reliable in that it is the same house that has long been indicated as the residence of the author of Dom B…; that the said author was likewise described as being a clerk and as residing with a man of the Palais where there were other clerks besides himself.

The only reason that prevented you from taking action was the fear that one might arrest the wrong man for the other, not knowing the name of the said author.

On the reverse of this note, in two different hands:

Mr. Duval gave me this note for my first assignment with M. de Maurepas.

A search may be carried out at the home of Madame Dalainville under the pretext of contraband, and the two clerks of Lambot arrested; first ascertain whether they are not lawyers.

On 14 April, the Lieutenant of Police, M. de Marville, signed this search warrant:

In consequence of the King's orders, the said Commissioner shall proceed to the room of the Srs. Gervaise and Billiard, clerks to Sieur Lambotte, procureur, in order to carry out a search there and to seize any manuscripts and printed works contrary to Religion, to the State, and to good morals that may be found there, and of which the said Commissioner shall draw up an official report.

No document reporting on the search is to be found in the file. No doubt the official report figures among the compromising papers removed from the file in 1753. But on 15 April, Dubut notes:

Monsieur de Marville considers it appropriate to obtain a royal order to arrest the named Gervaises and Billiard, clerks to a procureur, for having composed an obscene book entitled *Dom B… Portier des Chartreux*.

And on 19 April, there is another note:

> The named Gervaise and Billiard. These are two clerks to a procureur who have composed the book entitled *Dom B… Portier des Chartreux*, an abominable book with indecent engravings. I think it would be appropriate to have these two individuals arrested and taken to the Bastille.

On the following folio there is another note, undated but subsequent:

> His Eminence Monseigneur the Cardinal de Fleury
> The named Billard.
> He is a clerk to a procureur and the author of the book entitled *Dom B… Portier des Chartreux*, a most obscene work. I had him taken to the Bastille on 19 April 1741. It is necessary that an order in proper form be issued of the same date. I think it would also be appropriate to have the named Gervaises, his associate, who worked with him on this work, taken there as well.

And the Cardinal endorsed it with a single word: *Good*.

Examined on 24 April with regard to the authors, the abbé Nourry replied:

> He said that he does not know them; that earlier he heard it said that it was a certain Morand, formerly a notary who owned a house at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges; that it was even Sieur Morand who provided the funds for the printing of the work; that he also heard others named, such as Destouches and Gervaise, but that he is not certain of it…

Under these two names one recognizes the same Gervaise de Latouche.

On 9 May, Billard was released after twenty days in the Bastille. See folio 144:

> His Eminence Monseigneur the Cardinal de Fleury.
> The named Billard was taken to the Bastille by order of the King dated 19 April 1741 because he was strongly suspected of being the author of a book entitled *Le Dom B…* As he appears to have had no part in this work, I signed an order to set him at liberty on 9 May 1741. It is necessary that one in proper form be issued of the same date.

The Cardinal annotated: *Approved for release.*

And there is no further mention of Billard, nor any more of Gervaise. We do not know the result of the search of their room; nor whether Billard was interrogated and what he said; nor why the order to arrest Gervaise was not signed. Several conclusions may be drawn from this. For my part, I shall draw this one: Gervaise de Latouche had powerful protectors. As early as 1741, they were able to spare him a *lettre de cachet* and to secure the prompt release from the Bastille of his friend and collaborator Billard. In 1753, they caused all the compromising documents concerning the young clerk— who had since become a lawyer, if he was not one already in 1741—to disappear from the file

I also believe that *Le Portier des Chartreux* may, without possible dispute, be attributed not to Gervaise de Latouche alone, but to the two young clerks of the procureur Lambotte: Billard and Gervaise.

To conclude with the authors, let us quote this excerpt from the Gay *Bibliographie* (4th edition, 1894–1897):

> The learned Mr. Hubaud, the Marseille bibliophile, wrote to us shortly before his death: "I append here two anecdotes that were told to me by the nephew of an intimate friend of the author, named Mr. Is… The latter was arrested in Paris by police agents in order to be brought before the minister. As he was being led away, he was encountered by a person he knew, who, surprised to see him being taken off in this manner, inquired of the agents. They replied that they had been charged with arresting the lawyer Gervaise. — 'But it is not the lawyer Gervaise whom you are taking,' said the questioner, 'it is Mr. Is…' The matter having been recognized, the latter was released. The incident was a very fortunate one for him, since if searches had been carried out at his residence, a trunk containing the entire edition of the *Portier* would have been discovered—a trunk which the lawyer Gervaise de Latouche, by way

of prudence, had asked him to keep for him.".[4] The other particularity is that the said Mr. Is…, who was in the confidence of the lawyer Gervaise, had succeeded in persuading him to suppress many exceedingly filthy details described in the manuscript. Any attentive reader will perceive that there are indeed gaps in the printed text, notably in the scenes of the organs and of the swimming pool. A few phrases still remaining at the eighteenth engraving[5] might point the way to one of these mutilations. Moreover, this second part has scarcely more than a third of the pages of the first."

I confess that, despite a very attentive reading, I have not succeeded in finding any trace of the famous gaps. This must again be an unfounded legend. Unless the writer consulted a shortened nineteenth-century edition?

The first edition : January 1741.

The space allotted to this Preface does not allow me to continue examining the file as I have done up to now, and I shall confine myself to giving the indications it provides, with a minimum of quotations, reserving for myself the right to return to this curious story in a more complete study.

Some bibliographers have given the date 1750, others that of 1745, for the original edition of the *Portier*. The Gay *Bibliographie* places it before 1 June 1741, because a document of that date speaks of a second edition in preparation. We shall return to this point later.

The Bastille file provides us with precise information on this subject:

1° The upholsterer Blangy — whom we shall encounter again in another chapter — states that he had the first

[4] There is no trace of this Mr. Is... and his adventure in file 15505.

[5] The second edition of the Gay *Bibliographie* states: "... *and* the 18th engraving," which gives a different meaning.

plates of the *Portier* engraved "more than two years earlier," that is to say in 1738. It must therefore be concluded that the work was written, and perhaps even already in the course of being printed, as early as 1738.

2° The first police actions relating to the first edition date from 4 February 1741. But it is likely that two or three weeks must have elapsed between the publication of the volume and the arrests. By fixing January 1741 as the date of the original edition, one comes very close to the truth. Moreover, the abbé Nourry declared that the work had been printed, he believed, in December or January.

I would add that no evidence allows us to identify this first edition, any more than the second, and on this point I refer the reader to the Bibliography that follows.

The publishers: A notary, a marquis, an actress and… a Carmelite friar!

We have seen, from one of the documents we have cited, that a former notary named Morand, residing at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, had advanced the funds (five thousand livres) for the publication of the work. This backer was not troubled.

The true publishers were the Marquis Le Camus and his mistress, a certain Mademoiselle Ollier, an actress. An amusing detail: the exempt Dubut classifies them, in a note, as "Jansenists, authors and distributors of prohibited books." For they appear, in fact, to have regularly engaged in the trade of prohibited books, whether Jansenist or… obscene. Another note by the same Dubut repeats: "Jansenist convulsionaries and dealers in indecent prints."

The marquis and the actress had been living together for about nine years. Mademoiselle Ollier resided at the home of a Madame d'Alainville.

"The Misses Ollier," says Dubut, "are two sisters; they have

> toured the provincial theatres; they are now performing in Paris; besides that, they have always involved themselves in having prohibited works printed and in distributing them…"

The Marquis Le Camus was no more troubled than the notary Morand, although he is cited as the publisher in all the notes and interrogations. Mademoiselle Ollier was taken to the Bastille on 8 March. A report by Dubut, dated 21 March, indicates that the marquis scarcely leaves the abbé Nourry, and that the two of them are taking steps to secure Ollier's release.

The actress was released on 22 June and exiled to Toulouse. She contented herself with going to Rueil, to the home of one of her aunts, where she soon scandalized the respectable people by her conduct. On 11 September 1743, a certain Lyonnard, son-in-law of the said aunt, addressed a petition to the lieutenant of police Berryer to denounce Mademoiselle Ollier, guilty of leading an immoral life, of having broken her ban of exile, and above all of squandering her aunt's property, of which the son of the said petitioner was heir… In 1746 still, the complaints—now anonymous—continued. But the lieutenant of police had written in the margin of the first denunciation: "I cannot meddle in this affair," and Mademoiselle Ollier continued to lead a merry life at Rueil or at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, "although the parish priest had been informed."

The marquis had the Portier printed in the region of Blois, and even brought back from there some silver dice, known as Blois dice.

The printer, "having received no payment whatsoever"[6] kept part of the edition. Another portion was seized, in sheets, in the house of Madame d'Alainville, in a room rented by Mademoiselle Ollier. Moreover, of the

[6] Should we understand that he had not received a penny, or that he had only been paid in part?

fourteen to fifteen hundred copies of the complete edition[7] Seven hundred had been sent to Holland by a certain Stella — whom we shall encounter again later — through the intermediary of a printer of Rouen, Jean-Baptiste Mazuel or Machuel. The recipient was the bookseller Paupie, of The Hague. The police officer Duval instructed his colleague Pontcarré, of Rouen, to intercept in transit the large bale of books containing the *Histoire de Dom B…* It had left Paris a few days before 19 February. This surveillance came to nothing. Another portion of the edition had been stored at Versailles, at the home of a man named Maillard, valet de chambre and upholsterer to the duc de Tallard. Maillard was first detained at the Hôtel de Ville, then transferred to Bicêtre on 10 April. No doubt the copies deposited with him were seized, but the file is silent on this point, as well as on the date of his release.

A fourth person was involved in the January 1741 edition of the Portier des Chartreux, and it was… a sacristan of the Carmelites of Cluny!

Abbé Charles Nourry, aged forty-five, born in Paris, a tonsured cleric, sacristan of Saint-Sébastien in Trière of the Order of Cluny, had been living in Paris for five years at the home of his sister, Madame d'Alainville, in the rue de la Comédie-Française. He had come there in connection with a lawsuit he had against the Chapter of Lyon.

It was he who had undertaken, "to oblige the Marquis Le Camus, at the request of Madame d'Alainville, his sister," to sell the *Portier* to the peddlers, who paid a louis for it. His nephew assisted him in this edifying propaganda. I pass over the abbé's initial denials, and his admissions—at first reluctant, then more explicit. Imprisoned in the Bastille on 14 April, the sacristan of the Carmelites of Cluny was released on 5 July, at the request of the Cardinal of

[7] Figure indicated by the Abbot. The upholsterer Blangy, meanwhile, says 2,000 copies.

Auvergne, in order to be exiled to the abbey of Saint-Rambert, in the diocese of Lyon.

Several peddlers were likewise arrested, whose names matter little.

The engravers of the plates.

Two other accomplices of greater importance must be mentioned: a certain Blangy, upholsterer, and Philippe Lefèvre, engraver.

Blangy had undertaken, at the request of the marquis, in 1738, to have the plates of the Portier engraved. He had entrusted this task to Philippe Lefèvre. As they were engraved, Blangy handed the plates over to the marquis, at Mademoiselle Ollier's residence. It was the marquis who supplied him with the drawings. The file does not indicate the name of the draftsman. We saw above that Billard frequented a young painter named Desportes. Might we have here the name of the designer of the plates?

To return to Blangy: the upholsterer discovered that Lefèvre had printed for his own account 400 copies of the plates, and that the printers Benoît and Jacques Thévenard had put them on sale after printing at the bottom some "posetige" (postiche) verses! The marquis, for his part, was supplied with 2,000 copies. I do not believe that this separate suite of the Portier, sold independently with verses at the bottom of the plates, has ever been identified. Be that as it may, Blangy, outraged by Lefèvre's sharp practice, had abandoned the enterprise "more than two years earlier." (Written declaration of 5 May 1741.) He had not earned 50 livres, and the marquis still owed him 48! Blangy had

thus had 18 plates engraved by Lefèvre, and the 10 others—for there were to have been 28[8] — were engraved by persons unknown.

I have encountered no copy of the original edition—or of what I believe to be the original—with 28 plates. The copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale has only 16 plates and a frontispiece. But it is well known that the iconography of erotic works is impossible to establish, most copies being incomplete as to the engravings, or padded out with additional plates.

Another engraver was implicated in this affair, a certain Sieur Lucas, residing in the rue Saint-Jacques, at the Hôtel de la Couture. A search was conducted at his home on 4 February 1741. Lucas was in bed, and it was noticed that he "was tucking away and crumpling something" in his bed. They were two prints measuring about twelve inches high by eighteen wide.

It is not entirely certain, however, that this affair is connected with that of the Portier, despite the filing of the document with the others, for the name of Lucas does not appear on the list entered at the head of file 11505.

A report by Dubut, dated 21 March, moreover, gives the following indication:

> …I have just learned that it was Stella who had the plates of *Dom B…* engraved for the Marquis Le Camus and Ollier; that he is closely connected with them; that he left today for Spain; and that he instructed the named Lefèvre to go to Monsieur le comte de Quélus and ask him to solicit the revocation of his letter of exile.

Several bibliographers attribute, it should be noted, the engraving of the plates to the Comte de Caylus. Did the latter engrave the final plates, at Stella's request? I am more

[8] This figure of 20 coincides with the 28 miniatures in the Paulmy copy. See Bibliography.

inclined to think that it was as a "colleague" that Lefèvre was invited to seek the protection of the Comte de Caylus.

The engraver Philippe Lefèvre, imprisoned in the Bastille on February 28, was not released until July 6, despite several interventions by his colleagues and by other persons.

Blangy and his wife were likewise arrested on February 28. The wife was released on April 15 and the husband on May 13.

The second edition : June 1741.

As I noted above, the Gay *Bibliographie* states that the original edition predates June 1, 1741, since it is mentioned, on that date, in *Les Amusemens du cœur et de l'esprit* (The Hague, 1742, 5th edition, vol. IV).

This work, indeed, devotes several pages to a letter concerning *Le Portier.* This letter[9] is dated June 1, 1741, and states explicitly: "We are being threatened with a new Edition of a Book which… It is a question of *Le Portier des Chartreux*.

This precise indication is expressly confirmed by file 11505 of the Bastille (folio 160), in a note by the exempt Dubut:

> … I arrested and conducted to the Château de la Bastille the named Dameret and Guillaume the younger, and the woman Michelle Neveu, for having sold a book entitled *Dom B…* and for being involved in the plot concerning the second edition of the said book.
>
> 10 June 1741.

Another undated note, mistakenly filed in the first part of the dossier, denounces the man named Minet[10] as "one of those who had *Dom B…* reprinted. There are six of

[9] I give a large excerpt from it below..

[10] This young man's real name was Thominet, as we shall see later.

them." It was Minet who sold them to Dameret. Let us note that Dameret is described as an engraver. After two interventions by the Marquis de La Luzerne and his wife, Mme Guignonville de La Luzerne—whose letters are in the file—Dameret was released, together with his two accomplices, on August 11. The bookseller Charles Guillaume, of the Quai des Augustins, was a repeat offender in the clandestine book trade, if Dubut is to be believed. He had set up a secret printing press in his home and had, for that reason, been taken to the Bastille along with his workmen. He had sworn not to begin again, but it is clear that he had not kept his word. He is said to have sold more than forty copies of the second edition of *Le Portier*, "which he held from the one who had it printed. It is not even known whether he did not have a hand in the edition, but one is not certain of this circumstance.

A denunciation signed Domet, and dated July 11, accuses a man named François of having carried out the printing:

> I am assured that the man named François, printer, is at present printing *D. B.* and having it distributed in Paris by a niece who has a little Savoyard boy walk in front of her with a sack filled with this Book and others of the same kind…

An informer reports that the man called Minet is in fact named Thominet. The denunciation targeting Dameret, unsigned and dated June 3, is addressed to the exempt Dubut and ends with this delightful sentence:

> You will not leave the unfortunate man in destitution.

Antoine Dameret paid 7 or 8 livres per copy. Michelle Neveu was a girl adopted by Dameret and his wife, and she helped them in their book trade. It is not entirely clear why Dameret is described as an engraver. A lengthy justificatory memorandum, which he wrote in the Bastille, recounts his life and his misfortunes. First a shoemaker, he

came to Paris to set up a soap manufactory there, an industry brought into fashion "by the contagion of Marseille." But his project failed, and he was forced to become a peddler. Finally, his wife left him after carrying off goods (liqueurs, hardware) and money. She went to La Ferté-Milon, her native town, to one of her sisters, who advised her to leave Dameret after extracting as much money as possible from him.

We have seen that on July 11 there was still talk of the printing of the second edition. I think it was quite simply a matter of the stitching or binding, the print run having necessarily been completed as early as the beginning of June.

An anonymous letter dated September 20 denounces another of the six "publishers":

> To suppress the new plate [the plates?] of *Dom Bougre* and to prevent the sale of the copies, one need only put the screws to the man named Boudelot, a notorious peddler; he knows the warehouse and by himself sells more than all the others together. He also has dealings with foreigners and conducts more than one shady trade. He lodges in the rue Brise-Miche, at the house of a shoemaker; he also goes by the name of Lesperance.

In December, finally, the police were once again alerted. Two musicians, who sang in the cafés "the most licentious songs," named Cligny and Roussel, were also selling *Le Portier*. They obtained it from a lame man who took his meals in the rue des Augustins, at the Panier Fleury. The lame man, who claimed to be a former officer, was a Swede named Le Baron. He lived on the second floor, rue des Fossés-de-Monsieur-le-Prince, at the home of the sieur Villebrun, an upholsterer. It had previously been Stella's residence… Cligny and Roussel were arrested on a charge of counterfeiting. The file does not say whether the search ordered at the Swede's lodging was carried out, nor what subsequently became of the affair.

The second edition was accompanied by a *Suite*, sold separately, of engravings "of the most indecent sort." Nothing makes it possible to identify this second edition and its plates: it was probably no more than a textual reprint of the first (with reproduction of the *Suite*), and perhaps under the same imprint.

The third edition : 1748.

In January 1749, Simon Viélard, a shoemaker, and Simon Le Clerc, a day laborer, were sent to the Bastille "for having meddled in *Le Portier*." Since October 20, 1748, the authorities had been on the trail of a new edition. Surveillance, which came to nothing, had been set up in the Rue and Faubourg Saint-Jacques, in the vicinity of the shop of the Widow Bruyère, where, every Tuesday and Friday, a courier from the Abbey of Gif arrived with a black horse bearing two large baskets covered with oilcloth and containing papers.

On February 2, 1749, a new accused man, who had just been arrested, was questioned: François-Xavier d'Arles de Montigny, 47 years old, a native of Besançon, esquire, Catholic, residing in the Rue Traversière, at the home of his sister, Mademoiselle d'Arles.

Arles de Montigny, a secret agent in Liège, had taken advantage of his stay there to undertake the printing of obscene books. He had financed the original edition of *Thérèse Philosophe* and a new edition of *Le Portier*. This can only be the one bearing the date 1748 and the imprint Frankfurt. At the Bastille, the esquire-spy sang and denounced his accomplices. The printer was a man named Delorme Latour, a bookseller in Liège. (On March 17, 1750, he was in Paris, and it was asked whether he should be arrested.)

On March 2, 1749, the esquire offered, in exchange for his release, to hand over to the police the manuscripts (sic) and original plates of *Thérèse Philosophe*. He recalled that he had revealed the existence—known to him alone—of 1,200 copies of *Le Portier* in the vicinity of Paris, at Petit Montreuil or at Bourg-la-Reine. These twelve bales of *Le Portier* were subsequently transported to Versailles. Or rather, the first two indications provided by Montigny were false, and the 1,200 copies had from the beginning been deposited at Versailles.

On Montigny's information, a search was conducted at the home of Michel Gamache, bookbinder, in the Rue Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, in the house adjoining the Collège de Montaigu. A man named Louvet had proposed to Gamache that he bring the 1,200 copies of *Le Portier* into Paris. He gave him a card bearing a sign (it was the jack of hearts). Gamache went to Versailles, to the carrier Lalonde, who showed him a jack of hearts bearing the same identifying mark, and handed over the twelve bales. Gamache took them to the Château de Versailles, to a room on the second floor, near the Chapel.

This may seem astonishing. But there is something even more extraordinary. A note dated July 26, 1749, addressed to M. d'Argenson and preserved in the file, informs us that the police found the twelve bales of *Le Portier des Chartreux* at Versailles, in the chamber of the King's Preacher!!!

Thus, the first edition of *Dom Bougre* was sold by a sacristan of the Carmelites, and the third edition was stored at the residence of the King's Preacher!…

This is no joke, for the assertion is repeated on the very cover of file 11694:

> The Sieur d'Arles de Montigny, in the Bastille in 1749.
>
> For having had *Thérèse Philosophe* printed and *Le Portier des Chartreux* reprinted.
>
> Part of the edition of *Le Portier* was found at Versailles in the chamber of the King's Preacher.

And as if this proof were not sufficient, two other Bastille documents provide us with a second and a third.

Indeed, in the *List of Printed Works which are in the depot of the Bastille and intended to be burned or pulped in the Château*, May 1749 (file 10505), one finds these two entries:

> 21. — *Histoire du portier des Chartreux*, in-12, 1741, unbound, of which no copies were withdrawn for M. Berryer
> 22. — *Histoire du portier des Chartreux*, in octavo, 1748. Two volumes in sheets from the King's Chapel (sic).

And in another document of the same date (May 1749): *Statement of Printed Works which are in the depot of the Bastille… and from which several copies have been withdrawn to be delivered to M. Berryer, Lieutenant of Police* (File no. 7067), one finds this entry:

> No. 17. — *Histoire du Portier des Chartreux*. Two vols., in octavo. The entire edition is there. Edition of 1748. Without illustrations. 20 copies. The sheet counts as two. Seized in the chamber of the King's Preacher, at the Chapel at Versailles.

Finally, in the *Statement of Seized Books which are at M. Berryer's, in the Book Room* (begun on November 6, 1749), *Le Portier des Chartreux* without illustrations is listed under no. 16. It is certainly the 1748 edition, since no copies of the 1741 edition were taken for M. Berryer.

Arles de Montigny was not released until August 16, 1750. His denunciations had been of little use to him.

Bibliographie.

First edition. January 1741. — **Histoire de Dom B…, Portier des Chartreux**. *Écrite par lui-même*. Avec figures. A Rome, chez Philotanus, imprimeur.

> Copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Enfer 326), seized from Alfred Bégis in 1866. One volume, in-16, 2 + 318 pp. With 1 frontispiece and 16 erotic plates, including two large

folding ones. The second part begins on page 193.

The Gay *Bibliographie* states that this is the oldest known edition. It is cited only in the manuscript catalogue of the Marquis de Paulmy (no. 6060), but a copy is in the collection of M. B. The engravings it contains—some of which appear unrelated to the subject—number 23; they are said to have been engraved by Caylus. They are well engraved, though rather poorly drawn. Paulmy's copy was exceptionally adorned with 28 miniatures painted on vellum, but it was no doubt destroyed along with the other erotic books of the Arsenal Collection.

I believe that this Rome edition, undated, should be regarded as the first edition… or the second. The date 1745, given by Gay, is fanciful. An edition of 1745 would certainly have been mentioned in the Bastille records.

2nd edition. June 1741. — Edition unknown. It may perhaps bear the same imprint as the first. See what I have said about it in a previous chapter of this Preface.

3rd edition. 1748. — **Histoire de Dom B***, Portier des Chartreux**. *Écrite par lui-même*. À Francfort, chez J.-J. Trotener, imprimeur-libraire, aux Cigognes, MDCCXLVIII.

Bibliothèque Nationale (Enfer 328). Copy of J. L. Hubaud. With 1 frontispiece and 20 erotic plates. The frontispiece is framed with ornaments in the Louis XV style. A suite different from the preceding one. One volume, in octavo, 288 pages. It is the edition printed at Liège, at the expense of Arles de Montigny.

4th edition. 1751. — … A Rome, chez Philotanus, 1751.

Cited by Gay, without further details.

5th edition. 1756. — … A Rome, chez Philotanus. 1756.

One small octavo volume of 290 pages, with illustrations. Cited by Gay.

6th edition. 1771. — … 1771 (without indication of imprint).

One octavo volume with a *Satirical Dedication to M. de Sartine*. Cited by Gay. I have not encountered any of the four editions containing this Dedication.

7th edition. 1772. — **Histoire de Gouberdom, Portier des Chartreux**. Première Partie. Cette édition a été revue, corrigée et augmentée sous les yeux du Saint-Père.

Communicated by a bookseller. One volume of 6+333 pages. With 1 frontispiece, 20 erotic plates, and an engraved vignette on the title page: on a sofa, the Pope lifts a woman's skirts. An incomplete copy at the Bibliothèque Nationale (Enfer 846).

Edition enlarged with several pieces of verse:1. *On baise la mule du Pape. L'origine de cette cérémonie* (39 vers). — 2. *Félicités éternelles* (12 vers). — 3. *Imitation* (4 vers). — 4. *Chapitre général des Cordeliers* (172 vers). The first appears at the beginning, the next two at the end of the first part, and the last at the end of the volume.

8th edition. 1776. — **Histoire de Dom B**… — … 1776 (without indication of imprint).

One octavo volume, with the Dedication to M. de Sartine. Cited by Gay.

9th edition. 1777. — … 1777 (without indication of imprint).

One octavo volume, with the Dedication to M. de Sartine. Cited by Gay.

10th edition. 1777. — **Histoire de Dom B***, Portier des Chartreux**. *Écrite par lui-même*. Nouvelle édition, revue, corrigée et augmentée, sous les yeux du Saint-Père. Avec vingt-une figures en taille-douce. Première Partie. À Rome. Aux dépens des Chartreux, MDCCLXXVII.

Bibliothèque Nationale (Enfer 329). Two volumes of 4 + 176 and 4 + 115 pages. With 1 frontispiece and only 8 plates, out of the 20. Frontispiece different from that of 1748.

This 1777 edition does not contain the Dedication to M. de Sartine. It is therefore different from the preceding one.

11th edition. 1781. — **Histoire de Gouberdom**… Rome. 1781.

Two parts, large octavo, with 1 frontispiece and 22 plates different from those of all the other editions. Cited by Gay.

12th edition. 1783. — **Histoire de Gouberdom, Portier des Chartreux**. Nouvelle édition, revue, corrigée et augmentée sous les yeux du Saint-Père. Première Partie. À Rome, MDCCLXXXIII.

Communicated by a bookseller. Two volumes of 2 + 250 and 2 + 175 pages. With 1 frontispiece and 18 plates (out of 19), printed in pale sanguine. M. D. owns two incomplete copies of the same edition. In one, the engravings are printed in black; in the other, in pale sanguine.

13th edition. 1784. — **Le Portier des Chartreux**… Bruxelles. 1784.

Two volumes, in-18, with illustrations. Cited by Gay.

I believe that the imprint is, in fact: London. See my note on the 21st edition.

14th edition. 1786. — **Histoire de Gouberdom**… Rome. 1786.

Two parts, large octavo, with 1 frontispiece and 12 engravings. Cited by Gay.

15th edition. 1787. — **Histoire de Dom B**… 1787.

One octavo volume, with the Dedication to M. de Sartine. Cited by Gay.

16th edition. 1787. — **Mémoires de Saturnin**, Écrits par lui-même. Nouvelle édition, corrigée et augmentée, avec Figures. Première Partie. À Londres, MDCCLXXXVII.

Bibliothèque Nationale (Enfer 330–331). Two volumes of 4 + 235 and 4 + 151 pages. Copy seized from Alfred Bégis in 1866. With 1 frontispiece and 23 erotic plates, engraved by Elluin and Borel. A second copy (Enfer 889) has no engravings, but is in octavo format, on large green-tinted paper.

First Cazin edition. It is the suite—the most beautiful of all—from which we have reproduced the most interesting plates.

17th edition. 1788. — **Le Portier des Chartreux**. Londres. 1788.

Two volumes, in-18 (Cazin), with 24 plates. There are also octavo copies on Angoulême or Annonay paper. Cited by Gay.

18th edition. 1789. — **Mémoires de Saturnin**. Londres. 1787.

Piracy of the first Cazin edition. Cited by Gay. I place it at 1789.

19th edition. 1789. — **Histoire de Gouberdom**. Versailles. 1790.

Two parts, in-18, 175 and 126 pages, and 20 engravings. With a *Dedicatory Epistle to Marie-Antoinette*. Cited by Gay.

20th edition. 1830. — **Le Portier des Chartreux ou Mémoires de Saturnin**. Nouvelle édition, imprimée sur le vrai manuscrit de l'auteur, après sa mort. Tome premier. Londres. 1788.

Bibliothèque Nationale (Enfer 1003). Printed wrapper on blue paper. Two volumes of 168 and 88 pages. With 23 colored lithographs. No frontispiece.

Edition produced around 1830 and which must reproduce the title of the second Cazin edition. The story of the "true manuscript of the author" can only be a ruse intended to justify numerous cuts in the text. It is known that *Gervaise de Latouche* died in 1782. It is unlikely that he preserved so compromising a manuscript. This 1830 edition — and doubtless that of 1788 — contains two pieces of verse: page 5 of tome I: *Épitre au Portier des Chartreux* (12 lines). — Page 5 of tome II: *Conversion du Portier des Chartreux* (12 lines).

21st edition. 1835. — **Le Portier des Chartreux ou Mémoires de Saturnin**. Nouvelle édition, imprimée sur le vrai manuscrit de l'auteur, après sa mort. Orné de vingt-six gravures. Tome premier. Londres. 1784.

Bibliothèque D. Two volumes of 216 and 114 pages. With 1 frontispiece and 25 engravings.

The two pieces of verse from the preceding edition are likewise reproduced. Reprint made around 1835. Gay mentions it, with the imprint 1783 or 1784. I believe that this is yet another confusion attributable to the Gay *Bibliographie*. The thirteenth edition must bear the imprint London, 1784. It is this one (1835) that would have been reprinted in Brussels, under the same imprint and the same date. In any case, the mention of the author's manuscript would have appeared in 1784 and not in 1788.

22nd edition. 1840. — **Histoire de Dom B**… Rome. 1777.

Two volumes, in-12, at 17 francs. German reprint, on poor paper and without illustrations, cited by Gay, and which I date to 1840.

23rd edition. 1867. — **Le Portier des Chartreux**. Amsterdam. 1867.

Two volumes, in-12, with 16 plates after the Cazin illustrations. Price: 16 francs. Cited by Gay.

24th edition. 1874. — **Le Portier des Chartreux**. Grenoble, imprimerie de la Grande-Chartreuse.

Two parts, in octavo, with 1 frontispiece and 21 plates. Vital-Puissant catalogue, 1874. Cited by Gay.

25th edition. 1875. — Édition complète, collationnée sur l'édition originale. **Le Portier des Chartreux ou Mémoires de Saturnin**, écrits par lui-même. Amsterdam. 1875.

Communicated by a bookseller. Plain wrapper. Title in red and black. One volume, in-24, of 4+231 pages, on tinted super-royal paper. Printed in 60 copies on super-royal and 15 on *Hollande*.

The wording of the title is not accurate, for this edition is no more complete than any of those of the nineteenth century.

26th édition. 1883. — **Le Portier des Chartreux ou Mémoires de Saturnin**, écrits par lui-même. Amsterdam. 1883.

Bibliothèque D. Plain wrapper. Title in black. One volume, in-16, of 207 pages, on fine laid paper.

27th edition. 1889. — **Le Portier des Chartreux ou Mémoires de Saturnin**, écrits par lui-même. Amsterdam. 1889.

Title in black. One volume, in-12, of 4+212 pages, on laid paper. Another copy, communicated by a bookseller, contained 2 frontispieces and 25 erotic plates, after several earlier suites.

28th edition. 1908. — J.-Ch. Gervaise de Latouche, avocat au Parlement de Paris. **Histoire de Saturnin, Portier des Chartreux**, écrite par lui-même (A. D. 1741). Version complète originale, collationnée sur le manuscrit no 412 B de la Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (Fonds de la Bastille), et purgée des addenda et variantes apocryphes contenues dans les éditions modernes. Paris, MIMVIII.

Bibliothèque D. Wrapper printed in red and black, as is the inner title. One octavo volume of 199 pages, on fine wove paper made on the mould. With 1 frontispiece and 9 modern erotic plates, in photogravure, printed in dark bistre.

The subtitle is nothing but a ruse. It is said that this reprint was prepared by Armand Silvestre. Be that as it may, there is no manuscript of *Le Portier des Chartreux* at the Arsenal, and the shelf mark is purely fanciful. This edition is reduced by a good third. As for addenda and apocryphal variants, moreover, modern editions have to their credit only numerous suppressions. Apart from that, this reprint is handsome, and the suite well drawn.

29th edition. 1915. — **Le Portier des Chartreux ou Histoire de Saturnin**. Écrite par lui-même. Paris. Chez tous les Libraires.

Bibl. L. P. Wrapper printed in black. One volume, in-16,

of 2 + 202 pages, on fine glazed wove paper. With 1 frontispiece and 9 erotic plates.

Reprint of the 1908 edition and its Suite. I believe there were other printings later on.

Two judgments on the "Portier."

Does one wish to know how contemporaries received *Le Portier des Chartreux* and what judgment they passed on this licentious novel? We are fortunate to possess a significant document on this subject. It is the letter inserted, in 1742, in the fifth edition of *Les Amusemens du cœur et de l'esprit*, of which we have spoken above. Here is the first part, which contains a severe critique of *Dom Bougre*:

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM PARIS, JUNE 1, 1741.

We are being threatened with a new Edition of a Book which surpasses all the horrors that the license of the press has spread over the past few years. You can well guess from this description that it is a question of *Le Portier des Chartreux*. Ought one even to name it; and, as a work of entertainment, does it deserve a place in our Literary annals? If this Book, with all its obscenities, were of mediocre merit in its genre (let me be allowed this qualification), it would no doubt have to be abandoned to the fate reserved for bad works: soon a profound oblivion would punish the Writer's temerity. But can the inconvenience of making it known to those who might be ignorant of it, and who ought never to read it, outweigh the interest of morals; and can one, in the end, allow a work of this nature to pass without at least branding it with infamy?

When one has read this filthy Novel, one is almost as indignant at the profanation of the talent it reveals in the Writer as at all the horrors with which it is filled. One would be tempted to pity a man who could abuse his wit in so criminal a manner, if such an abuse deserved sentiments so moderate. One must have little respect for men to have so little respect for their morals. To say that delicate and polished Writers paint for us love and voluptuousness under the most seductive traits, but covered with a light veil and a fine gauze; that it might

sometimes be permitted to sketch agreeable outlines of our pleasures, provided they conceal from the eyes what is presented to the imagination; such pictures will be dangerous only for those who are already disposed to danger: but the very sight of objects such as those offered by the *Portier*, and the nudities that animate its tableaux, shock and make the honest man blush. To compare this Book to the *Aretin*, the *Aloysia*, and similar filth would be to weaken the idea of it. Libertinage is there still more refined, and the most practiced debauchery has never displayed anything so lubricious. Natural love and unnatural love form a thousand different tableaux and are depicted in every possible form. Moreover, one perceives in it much wit and a great fire of imagination, but which everywhere appears kindled by the fire of debauchery that dictated it. It is lubricity itself distilled into a succession of images and reheated by the most libertine expressions.

The work is not equally sustained throughout; there are pitiable inventions, and the libertinage of the mind seems to have carried away that of the style; no art in the transitions. Beside marvelous passages one finds careless ones that disgust by the baseness and inequality of expression; one might say that these negligences are a stroke of art in such a subject; there is from time to time elevation, elegance, even Poetry; but most often it is only a bizarre alloy of the most refined language with that of the Brothels which inspired the Author. Finally, all the rules of the Novel are violated in this one: Religion, morals, decency, truth, verisimilitude—nothing is spared. Whoever the Author of this work may be, if in composing it he sought the glory which every man of wit seeks to draw from his productions, and which is their legitimate tribute, he deserves to be deprived of it and to be forever buried beneath the darkness with which he is covered. If it was to satisfy his own corruption, he is a monster in society and a public poisoner.

Such, Sir, is what I think both of the Author and of the Book in question. It remains to describe to you its course, and I shall have done so in two strokes of the pen.

There follows a long analysis of the novel, which shows at least that the severe censor had read and reread it with attention…

The Gay Bibliographie[11] for its part, reproduces a

[11] Deuxième édition, 1864

judgment whose source it does not indicate, and which is highly laudatory in its concision:

> The *Histoire de Dom B…* is as remarkable for its philosophical boldness, its ingenious composition, its rapid and correct style, as for its obscenity. In sum, the *Histoire de Dom B…* is, in prose, a work as remarkable as the *Ode to Priapus*, by Piron, is in verse. One finds in it a portrait of Abbé Desfontaines more daring than any that one reads in Petronius.

One could not put it better, in my opinion.

*
**

One last word, in conclusion.

The present reprint, which constitutes, save for errors or omissions, the thirtieth edition of *Le Portier des Chartreux*, has been carefully revised from the Rome edition, published by Philotanus, which must be the original edition and which is, in any case, the oldest known edition. If one compares the text we provide with that of 1908, for example, one will perceive that the work has been enlarged by a good third. I have been able to consult only a few nineteenth-century editions of *Le Portier*, but all those I have seen were more or less incomplete in comparison with the 1741 edition. In particular, the suppression of the philosophical passages has given the novel of the young Billard and Gervaise the air of a work that is solely and basely obscene.

Let it be read attentively, in its correct and complete text, and one will readily subscribe, I am convinced, to the judgment cited by the Gay *Bibliographie*.

In any case, and whatever opinion one may hold of erotic literature, if one considers the date at which it was written and the youth of its authors, one will at least not deny *Le Portier des Chartreux* the merit of originality and the glory of having, before *Candide* and *Zadig*, created the

prototype of a novelistic formula whose success is far from exhausted, nearly two centuries later.

HELPEY,
bibliographe poitevin.