Rivière, Marc Serge (1980) A study of Voltaire's Le siècle de Louis XIV. PhD thesis

http://theses.gla.ac.uk/5999/

Copyright and moral rights for this thesis are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

Glasgow Theses Service
http://theses.gla.ac.uk/
theses@gla.ac.uk

A STUDY OF VOLTAIRE'S LE SIÈCLE DE LOUIS XIV

A Study of Voltaire's Le Siècle de Louis XIV

Marc Serge Rivière.

Thesis presented for the degree of Ph.D. to the Arts Faculty, French Department, Glasgow University, October, 1980.

To Dorothy, Janine, Natalie,

to my mother, and to the memory of my father.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to Professor H.T. Barnwell for his invaluable help as my supervisor and to record my thanks to Professor J.H. Brumfitt of St. Andrews University, Dr. A. Brown of Aberdeen University, and Professor S.S.B. Taylor of St. Andrews University, for their assistance in the past. I should also like to express my indebtedness to Mrs. Margaret Fergus for the admirable way in which she typed the thesis. Finally, this thesis would not have been completed without the understanding and forbearance of my wife. To her and to others who have given me all the support I needed, I am particularly indebted.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
Introduction	1-17
Chapter I: Composition	18-69
Chapter II: Contemporary reactions to Le Siècle de Louis XIV	70-168
Chapter III: Voltaire's handling of sources	169-344
Chapter IV: Form and expression	345-497
Chapter V: Voltaire's aims in Le Siècle de Louis XIV	498-570
Bibliography	571-586

Summary

The prime object of this study is to define and ascertain Voltaire's historical method and conception of history in Le Siècle de Louis XIV. In chapter I, the composition of the work is traced by means of the Correspondence, the Notebooks, the text itself and other documents, from its conception in the 1720's to the publication of the first edition in 1751. It is demonstrated that the original manuscript was drafted during two periods of intense intellectual activity, from 1735 to 1737 and from 1750 to 1751. Whilst other literary activities and other occupations distracted Voltaire from his cherished ambition of erecting a monument to the glory of Louis XIV, he never ceased to document himself, and due consideration is given to his method of gathering relevant information through a network of correspondents, the use of public and private libraries and his own journalistic search for material.

Contemporary reactions to the early editions of Le Siècle are assessed in chapter II with a view to establishing the impact made by the work in its day. Both the individual responses of Voltaire's correspondents and the verdict of European periodicals are surveyed. It emerges that whilst the work got a mixed reception, it clearly caught the imagination of the reading public of Europe and that its very controversial nature helped to publicise it further. Special attention is also paid to Voltaire's method of work, as he set out to gauge public opinion and modify, augment and improve the existing text in the light of comments passed on to him and new evidence.

In order to understand further Voltaire's historical method in Le Siècle, the role of oral documentation and his handling of a large sample of published and manuscript sources of various kinds-(e.g. general histories, biographies and autobiographies of generals, plenipotentiaries' writings, courtiers' memoirs and other documents)- are analysed closely in chapter III. Voltaire's version is put alongside the original and his notes in the Notebooks to illustrate the transformations which the material has undergone. Voltaire's

Summary

The prime object of this study is to define and ascertain Voltaire's historical method and conception of history in Le Siècle de Louis XIV. In chapter I, the composition of the work is traced by means of the Correspondence, the Notebooks, the text itself and other documents, from its conception in the 1720's to the publication of the first edition in 1751. It is demonstrated that the original manuscript was drafted during two periods of intense intellectual activity, from 1735 to 1737 and from 1750 to 1751. Whilst other literary activities and other occupations distracted Voltaire from his cherished ambition of erecting a monument to the glory of Louis XIV, he never ceased to document himself, and due consideration is given to his method of gathering relevant information through a network of correspondents, the use of public and private libraries and his own journalistic search for material.

Contemporary reactions to the early editions of Le Siècle are assessed in chapter II with a view to establishing the impact made by the work in its day. Both the individual responses of Voltaire's correspondents and the verdict of European periodicals are surveyed. It emerges that whilst the work got a mixed reception, it clearly caught the imagination of the reading public of Europe and that its very controversial nature helped to publicise it further. Special attention is also paid to Voltaire's method of work, as he set out to gauge public opinion and modify, augment and improve the existing text in the light of comments passed on to him and new evidence.

In order to understand further Voltaire's historical method in Le Siècle, the role of oral documentation and his handling of a large sample of published and manuscript sources of various kinds-(e.g. general histories, biographies and autobiographies of generals, plenipotentiaries' writings, courtiers' memoirs and other documents)- are analysed closely in chapter III. Voltaire's version is put alongside the original and his notes in the Notebooks to illustrate the transformations which the material has undergone. Voltaire's

assiduous,systematic and altogether impressive documentation reveals that he aimed to write 'scientific' history.The use of notes muettes and marginalia in his copies of sources,which have been carefully established and examined, confirms that he adopted a positive and methodical approach to the problems of historical documentation.Although his method falls short of modern standards of scholarship in some respects,his endless quest for the truth and his accuracy in giving the main facts cannot be denied.Voltaire's practice in Le Siècle is measured against his theoretical pronouncements on the use of sources and a high degree of correlation is observed between the two.His originality is seen to reside in his highly individualistic selection, interpretation and presentation of the material gleaned from sources.He gives as sound a basis to history as was possible in his day and his work marks a considerable advance on humanist history.

If history has a 'scientific' basis in terms of its rigid documentation,the end product in Le Siècle bears the mark of the literary artist who adds to the dramatic elements,exploits a good narrative and generally endows the material with the necessary imaginative quality to arouse the interest of the reader.To Voltaire therefore history remains as much a branch of the arts as it was to humanist historians.Le Siècle is shown in chapter IV to be a remarkable and fascinating compendium of the various styles of Voltaire and one is faced with diverse facets of the historian:the objective chronicler of events,the journalist,the conteur,the raconteur or bel esprit, and the propagandist.These manners are fully discussed and illustrated,and Voltaire's historical manner which belongs exclusively to his histories, is defined.In the end it is the perfect fusion between the form and the content and Voltaire's attempt to write both informative and imaginative history which account largely for the lasting success of Le Siècle.

Finally,this study opens out on a consideration of Voltaire's aims in Le Siècle,for all along these are seen to dictate the selection,manipulation

and presentation of the material. Chapter V examines: a. Voltaire's historical aims-both strictly historical ones and the concept of social history; b. Voltaire's wish to write philosophic history, his attempts to understand and account for historical phenomena in terms of certain theories of causation, of a fixed concept of human nature and his commitment to the philosophic cause as well as his approach as a moralist intent on teaching by examples; c. his literary and aesthetic aims. Moreover, Voltaire's achievements in Le Siècle are measured against his professed aims and hidden intentions.

Thus it becomes apparent in this study that Voltaire viewed history as a science, an art and a philosophy. His originality lies in the way he fuses the best features of these three branches of knowledge in Le Siècle which stands half-way between traditionalist and modern history and as such amounts to a unique historical and literary achievement by its nature and for its time.

NOTA BENE

The footnotes in this thesis provide only the minimum data, and when works are referred to by their short titles in the notes, full bibliographical details are to be found in the bibliography at the end.

Introduction

Introduction

Le Siècle de Louis XIV is rightly regarded as one of the masterpieces of historical writing. In his Voltaire's Politics, Peter Gay remarks: "Voltaire's history of this age was, of course, far more than a political document; it was, above all, history, and brilliant history."[1] It remains a unique historical and literary achievement for its time, standing half-way between the type of traditionalist history that prevailed towards the end of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth, and modern 'scientific' history, as E. Bourgeois has observed in his introduction: "Le Siècle de Louis XIV est par sa date et par sa nature une œuvre unique entre toutes les œuvres historiques."[2] It is by far the most widely read of Voltaire's histories, and with L'Essai sur les mœurs, the historical work on which Voltaire's reputation as an historian chiefly rests nowadays. The Histoire de Charles XII (1731), his first strictly historical venture if one excludes La Henriade, displays many fine stylistic qualities, with its thrilling narrative, its lively presentation where Voltaire's mastery of story-telling techniques is seen at its best. But the historian has not yet broken free of humanist history in this work; he clearly invents a lot of details; he fails to make a clear-cut distinction between essential facts and trivia, and he indulges in the romanesque for its own sake. Moreover, the concept of social history is not yet fully developed in Charles XII. Voltaire's attitude is frequently no less cavalier to the problem of historical documentation and accuracy than that of such

humanist historians as Saint-Réal. As will be shown in this study, Le Siècle de Louis XIV (1751) marked a considerable step forward towards a more mature and sober approach to history and to giving it a sounder and a more scientific basis, without ever sacrificing the stylistic excellence which was already the trademark of the historian in Charles XII. Voltaire's conception of history in L'Essai sur les mœurs (1756) was far more grandiose than in Le Siècle de Louis XIV, for he aimed to write the history of human civilization. H. Mason has judiciously commented on the fine literary qualities of L'Essai, and he rightly deems Voltaire's attempt to show "how a civilization can become the object of a study" to be praiseworthy.[3] But although one can appreciate the real difficulties which confronted Voltaire in this ambitious project and his remarkable efforts to surmount them, the fact remains that he was by his temperament and by his background, ill equipped to deal with distant epochs. For he was not one to turn over monkish documents and he despised the working habits and compilations of facts of scholars in his day. He also lacked the required understanding and sympathy to do justice to the achievements of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Above all in L'Essai, his documentation is both less impressive and less rigorous than when he deals with more recent history in Le Siècle de Louis XIV, for as J.H. Brumfitt has indicated, he has a tendency to rely in his histories far more on second-hand sources than on primary ones: "His reliance on second-hand sources, only partial in the Siècle, became almost total in the Essai. He had no knowledge of the technical disciplines of the medieval historian, and was, moreover, exiled

from the main sources of information. Again, he was not, as in the case of the Siècle, undertaking a labour of love."[4] It will be seen below that despite his contempt for scholarly methods, Voltaire's documentation for Le Siècle de Louis XIV won the admiration of other famous practitioners of the trade, such as Gibbon and Hume, that his passion for the work remained unabated throughout his career and that he made a genuine effort to combine literary excellence with rigorous documentation. The Histoire de l'Empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand (1760-1763) clearly benefited from the more serious and rigid approach of the mature historian in Le Siècle, in terms of greater control over the form, greater restraint and less indulgence in potins and picturesque details for their own sake, as well as showing a greater concern with social history, but it lacks the stylistic qualities and narrative skill of Charles XII and Le Siècle. Voltaire's other historical works never come near to matching the excellence of his history of Louis XIV's reign, although the Précis du Siècle de Louis XV and the Histoire du Parlement de Paris indicate a similar preoccupation with social history.

It is therefore in Le Siècle that Voltaire went a long way towards developing history as a branch of science and of the arts, for whilst giving the work as solid a foundation as one would have wished, he remains a great populariser; he takes his task as an historian far more seriously than in Charles XII without foregoing any of the literary brilliance apparent in his first historical work. More than in L'Essai, he successfully fuses historical and aesthetic considerations, so much so that history becomes in his hands, in Mason's words, "as much a

literary art as it was a science."[5] In his introduction to the Oeuvres Historiques, René Pomeau declares in this connexion: "Voltaire ne cessera jamais de traiter l'histoire en homme de lettres. Il cherche la vérité, comme Bayle. Mais en outre il se soucie de plaire."[6] It is also fair to say that despite its impressive range, and because of its nature and Voltaire's method, L'Essai is rightly deemed to be far more dated nowadays than Le Siècle; Brailsford makes this very point:

> The Essay is incomparably the more original and powerful book of the two, as it is also by far the longer. It is franker and bolder, and contains much more of the author's uncensored thinking on dangerous topics... Unfortunately the science of history has advanced so notably since it was written, that it is now a dated document, valuable chiefly as a vehicle for Voltaire's reflections. Louis XIV, on the other hand, is still an indispensable source for the study of a great epoch, and it is also one of the recognized classics of French literature.[7]

Le Siècle remains to this day essential reading for historians of Louis XIV and students of history, proof enough of its lasting qualities as an historical document, whilst it will be demonstrated below that as a compendium of Voltaire's various modes of presentation, it deserves the attention of students of French literature and admirers of Voltaire's style. Moreover, as Raymond Naves has observed, Le Siècle provides a fascinating insight into different facets of its author's personality:

> Une telle présentation est admirablement claire et résume presque tout Voltaire: l'écrivain d'apparat et le tragique, l'homme de salon ou de boudoir, le croyant qui a foi dans la civilisation et le moderne qui aime les

> délices de son 'siècle de fer', le polémiste enfin, l'ennemi irréconciliable des dogmes et des enthousiasmes fanatiques.[8]

Because of the vast number of topics which Voltaire broaches in Le Siècle, it is little wonder that the work has often been looked upon as a bank of material from which critics draw readily when dealing with various aspects of Voltaire's thought, whether it be his political,[9] religious,[10] aesthetic[11] or economic views.[12] Le Siècle emerges, accordingly, not just as a unique historical production, but also as an interesting synthesis of Voltaire's thought and style.

Yet despite those qualities which make Le Siècle a historical and literary masterpiece, it has not been the subject of a detailed study up to now. It has, of course, figured prominently in general works on Voltaire's literary career, where the historian is discussed at some length.[13] The content of Le Siècle and Voltaire's thought and philosophy as expressed in this work, have received a lot of attention, as we have stated above. The historian's attitude to Louis XIV and to the seventeenth century has recently been examined in detail by N.R. Johnson in Louis XIV and the age of the Enlightenment.[14] And Le Siècle has been commented upon in a number of articles on Voltaire's concept of historiography and historical method which will be referred to below.[15] For all that, the work has been sadly neglected by critics and has not aroused the same interest as Voltaire's other masterpieces, such as the Lettres Philosophiques, the Contes, or the Dictionnaire Philosophique. It has been left to Emile Bourgeois in his excellent introduction to study closely various

aspects of Le Siècle: its composition, its historical merits and Voltaire's utilisation of sources.[16] Bourgeois's analysis has been complemented by René Pomeau's introduction to the Oeuvres Historiques which contains a number of valid and interesting remarks.[17] Above all, mention must be made of J.H. Brumfitt's admirable section on Le Siècle and countless references to the work in Voltaire Historian[18] which has been a constant source of inspiration to us in this study. Gustave Lanson has meticulously examined the sources utilised by Voltaire for the last five chapters of Le Siècle,[19] and has drawn some sound and illuminating general conclusions on Voltaire's approach to the problems of historical documentation. Furio Diaz in Voltaire Storico[20] has done much to draw attention to the merits of the historian and of Le Siècle in particular. Other articles and publications concerned with the work will be quoted and mentioned in the main body of this thesis. However, it is clear that there is still ample room for a detailed appreciation of Le Siècle de Louis XIV, both as history and as a literary work, and we have endeavoured to fill in this gap by focusing attention on some aspects of the work which have not previously been analysed adequately. In view of the fact that Voltaire's ideas and thought in Le Siècle have been discussed by a number of eminent scholars in their general works, we have thought it best to pay less attention to this aspect of the work and be content to recall Voltaire's polemical and philosophical views in Le Siècle only when necessary. Instead, Voltaire's historical method and conception of history in Le Siècle will be our prime object in this study.

With the help of the Correspondence, the Notebooks, the text itself and other documents, it has been possible to trace the composition and development of Le Siècle over the twenty years or so which led to its publication in 1751. Conceived during Voltaire's stay in England in the twenties, Le Siècle did not occupy its author exclusively during this period, and it is important to note the reasons for these interruptions. Special consideration will be given to the ways in which Voltaire made effective use of a network of correspondents and friends to gather information, to his endless search for relevant material through personal investigations and private interviews with eyewitnesses and Louis XIV's contemporaries, and to his borrowings from private and public libraries. All along, the emphasis will be on Voltaire's historical method and his positive approach to the problems of historical documentation. Our discussion of the composition of Le Siècle amplifies, to a certain degree, Bourgeois's survey, for it will be far more detailed, and in some important respects, our findings differ from his and those of other critics, such as Wade.[21]

The impact of the first edition of Le Siècle in its day will be studied next, and the reactions of Voltaire's contemporaries and of a wide range of journals and periodicals ascertained. These have not as yet been examined in any detail, to our knowledge; not only will this enable us to measure the interest aroused by what was, in effect, a controversial work when it first appeared, but it is hoped that Voltaire's method of work will become clearer. For the historian looked upon Le Siècle as a life-long task, and had already decided, long before the first

edition was published, to set about gathering new information through correspondents and acquaintances. He proceeded to exploit new evidence that came to light by incorporating it into his existing draft, and he did not shun positive criticisms, amending and improving his text in the light of contemporaries' comments. For the most part, we have confined ourselves to immediate responses to the early editions of Le Siècle, although reference will be made to later eighteenth century views on the work. More up to date judgements on Voltaire's history, which in many respects differed from the responses of the eighteenth century reading public, will be quoted in the later chapters. The quarrel with La Beaumelle will be dealt with at length in an appendix to chapter II, for not only was the author of Mes Pensées Voltaire's most virulent and outspoken critic, but he published a controversial edition of Le Siècle in 1753, containing critical remarks which led to the publication of the Supplément au Siècle de Louis XIV. In spite of Voltaire's justified indignation, it will be seen that many of La Beaumelle's fair criticisms forced the author of Le Siècle to review his position on points of detail and to take the necessary steps to modify his text accordingly.

In order to understand fully Voltaire's historical method in Le Siècle, the role of oral documentation and a relatively large sample of written sources employed by the historian, will be analysed in chapter III. It soon became clear to us that to try and establish an exhaustive list of all the sources utilised by Voltaire would be a herculean task, and that a close study of a selection of sources in various categories, such as general histories, biographies of generals, plenipotentiaries' writings,

memoirs of courtiers, would yield much the same results. Most of Voltaire's principal sources for Le Siècle are fairly well-known, and a number have been identified by Bourgeois[22] who deals particularly well with oral documentation, by René Pomeau in his introduction,[23] and by J.H. Brumfitt,[24] but apart from Gustave Lanson who restricted himself to the last five chapters of Le Siècle,[25] scholars have not attempted to examine systematically the ways in which Voltaire adapts, transforms and modifies the material which he extracts from his sources, to suit his specific purposes, whether historical, polemical, philosophical or literary. By putting the original passages alongside Voltaire's final text, by taking into account his entries in the Notebooks, and by comparing his notes both to the original and to the final version, it becomes possible to observe the transformations which the material has undergone, and to determine Voltaire's claims to originality. Moreover, we shall also measure his practice against his theoretical pronouncements on the utilisation of sources and assess the degree of correlation that exists between the two. Voltaire's principles on the use of sources will also be compared to those of other eighteenth century theoreticians in order to ascertain the extent to which his theories concurred with or diverged from the general consensus. It is also evident that what Voltaire consciously leaves out is just as vital to an understanding of his method of work as an historian, as what he borrows. This study will also shed some light on the more practical aspects of the historian's day to day method of work, on Voltaire's positive and systematic use of notes, both with regard to summaries in his Notebooks or

on loose sheets, and to his reliance on notes muettes in his own copies of sources, and marginalia. The degree to which Voltaire's parti-pris and predetermined objectives dictate the choice and manipulation of the material, his generally earnest wish to arrive at a reliable and accurate account of events, his highly individualistic selection and interpretation of the information borrowed will also be considered in detail in chapter III.

If this rigid documentation points to an effort to make history more scientific, the end product in Le Siècle bears the mark of the literary artist as much as that of the historian striving after the truth. This will form the basis of chapter IV, where Le Siècle will be assessed as a work of art, with its emphasis on thrilling narrative, literary excellence, on form and expression, although its weaknesses will not be passed over in silence. When looking at Voltaire's presentation of the material sifted from sources, it is important to ask to what extent his mode of expression sets Le Siècle apart from and above the works of his predecessors. That there are more than one 'manners' or 'styles' in the work will become apparent; the 'manner' of the chronicler of events, of the journalist, the dramaturge, the bel esprit and raconteur, the conteur and the propagandist will be discussed. Yet all these various 'manners' reflect the unique personality of the author. In the end, it is fair to ask what constitutes the fundamental historical 'manner' which belongs exclusively to Voltaire's histories and to Le Siècle in particular. We shall endeavour to answer this question, whilst giving due importance to the great diversity of style which makes Le Siècle perhaps unique amongst Voltaire's works. It is true to say

that Voltaire's style in general and in specific works, has been the subject of lengthy discussions by critics, as will be indicated in the état présent at the beginning of chapter IV. But Voltaire's style in Le Siècle has inexplicably been ignored by scholars. By examining closely the various 'manners' through a selection of passages and tableaux, one can appreciate fully the degree of conformity between the form and the content at given points and measure Voltaire's achievements according to his aims in different sections of the work. In brief, we shall see Voltaire's creative mind at work, as he seeks to stamp his mark on the information borrowed and successfully combines aesthetic qualities with historical data.

Finally, this study will open out on a consideration of Voltaire's goals in Le Siècle, for these dictate the selection, manipulation, adaptation and presentation of the material. Throughout this thesis, it will be repeatedly observed that Voltaire never loses sight of his objectives, that his method of gathering information, his use of oral, manuscript and printed sources, his manner of writing history are all geared to achieving fixed and predetermined aims. Consequently, an analysis of the author's intentions in Le Siècle will enable us to sum up our findings. This aspect of Le Siècle has been fully debated by critics whose views will be recalled in chapter V and quoted alongside our own conclusions. Voltaire's conception of history as a science, an art and a philosophy will be summarised, after having been fully illustrated in chapters III and IV.

The historian who sought to give a sound factual basis to history and viewed his task with a high degree of seriousness was

not yet fully in evidence in Charles XII. By the time he came to publish L'Essai sur les mœurs in 1756, Voltaire was already a mature historian conscious of his responsibilities as a chronicler of events, as a social historian and as a committed philosopher intent on writing history with an ideological purpose, desirous of giving a reliable, yet accessible and aesthetically satisfying account of events aimed at a non-specialist audience and likely to further the cause of the Enlightenment. Between the two works stands Le Siècle, a vital link in the transition from humanist history in which Charles XII remains firmly entrenched, to a more developed conception of social, philosophic and modern scientific history. As such, Le Siècle fully deserves to come under close scrutiny, and it is hoped that this study will go some way towards promoting a better understanding of its historical merits and its fine literary qualities.

It is not our purpose in this thesis to examine or quote all the variants in the numerous editions which occupied Voltaire from 1751 until the end of his literary career. These have been on the whole carefully noted by René Pomeau in his edition,[26] and painstakingly recorded and commented upon by Jacques Quignard in his article: 'Un établissement de texte: Le Siècle de Louis XIV de Voltaire'.[27] They will be considered and quoted where the need arises, for instance in our discussion of Voltaire's additions to, and excisions from the early editions as a result of contemporary reactions, or in connexion with his utilisation of new sources published after the first and second editions of Le Siècle. It is worth pointing out that a new critical edition of Le Siècle, soon to be published in the framework of Voltaire's

Complete Works, is being prepared by Professor S.S.B. Taylor of St. Andrews University and a team of which I am a member, and will contain an exhaustive list of all the variants. Nor is it my intention to enumerate all the editions of Le Siècle which have been carefully and meticulously established by G. Bengesco,[28] Th. Besterman,[29] and H.B. Evans.[30] The various editions will be alluded to wherever necessary. All the references to Le Siècle de Louis XIV in this study will be to Pomeau's edition of Voltaire's Oeuvres Historiques (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1957), except where otherwise stated. The same edition will be used for the Histoire de Charles XII, the Histoire de l'Empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand, the Précis du Siècle de Louis XV, and other miscellaneous writings on Le Siècle de Louis XIV, as well as for Voltaire's prefaces to his historical works and some of his theoretical writings on history, etc. Whenever a reference to Pomeau's edition is given, the page number will be preceded by (P); e.g. (P 657). Except where otherwise stated, references to other works of Voltaire are to the edition by L. Moland (Paris, Garnier, 1877-1885, 52 vols.). References to Voltaire's Correspondence are to the edition by Th. Besterman (Geneva, 1968-), and will be given thus: e.g. D 875. In this study, Le Siècle de Louis XIV will frequently be referred to in its shortened form as Le Siècle; the Histoire de Charles XII as Charles XII; L'Essai sur les mœurs as L'Essai; the Histoire de l'Empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand as Pierre le Grand. When quoting from Voltaire's Correspondence, from sources, early editions of Le Siècle or the Notebooks, I have adhered strictly to the original form, as regards the spelling, syntax, punctuation,

and other things. When works are referred to in the notes by their short titles, fuller information will be found in the bibliography.

Introduction: Notes

1. Princeton University Press, 1959, p.114.
2. Le Siècle de Louis XIV, ed. E. Bourgeois, p.xlv.
3. Voltaire, p.47.
4. Voltaire Historian, p.62.
5. Voltaire, p.40.
6. Oeuvres Historiques, pp.9-10.
7. Voltaire, p.54.
8. Voltaire, p.136.
9. see Peter Gay, Voltaire's Politics, pp.109-114.
10. see René Pomeau, La Religion de Voltaire, pp.280, 356, 384.
11. see R. Naves, Le Goût de Voltaire, pp.307-311; D. Williams, 'Voltaire: Literary critic', Studies, vol. XLVIII, pp.76, 77, 88, 89, 91, 93 etc.
12. see R. Charbonnaud, Les Idées économiques de Voltaire, e.g. pp.41, 60, 85, 103.
13. see I.O. Wade, The Intellectual development of Voltaire, pp.479-510; Brailsford, op.cit., pp.47-74; G. Lanson, Voltaire, p.110 ff.
14. Studies, vol. CLXXII, 1978.
15. e.g. see S. Gearhart, 'Rationality and the text: a study of Voltaire's historiography', Studies, vol. CXL , pp.21-43; G. Pflug, 'The Development of historical method in the 18th century', in Enlightenment Historiography, 1971.
16. op.cit.
17. op.cit.
18. see especially, pp.48-61.
19. 'Notes pour servir à l'étude des chapitres 35-39 du Siècle de Louis XIV de Voltaire', in Mélanges offerts à M. Charles Andler.
20. Voltaire Storico, 1958, pp.110-150 in particular.

21. The Intellectual development of Voltaire, pp.479-480.

22. op.cit., p.xxii ff.

23. op.cit., p.14.

24. Voltaire Historian, pp.130-131.

25. 'Notes pour servir à l'étude des chapitres 35-39 du Siècle de Louis XIV de Voltaire', op.cit.

26. Oeuvres Historiques.

27. Lettres Romanes, vol. 5, 1951, pp.305-338.

28. Voltaire: Bibliographie de ses œuvres, vol. I, pp.340-363.

29. see 'Some eighteenth-century Voltaire editions unknown to Bengesco', Studies, vol. VIII, 1959, pp.123-239; and Studies, vol. LXIV, 1968, pp.7-150.

30. 'A Provisional bibliography of English editions and translations of Voltaire', Studies, vol. VIII, 1959, pp.9-121.

Chapter I: Composition

Chapter I

Composition

When Voltaire started work on Le Siècle in the 1730's, he already enjoyed a certain reputation as a historian. La Henriade, initially published as La Ligue, might have more in common with poetry than history, but it introduced the future historian to the problems of documentation. In 1727, while in England, Voltaire published the Essay upon the Civil Wars of France, a short work which combines anecdotes and historical facts and might have paved the way for his tableau of the Fronde in chapters IV and V of Le Siècle. Voltaire's stay in England, however, was to have a much more decisive effect on the career of the historian, for it was as a result of a meeting with Baron Fabrice, the former Holstein envoy to Charles XII, that Voltaire undertook to write the Histoire de Charles XII, for which he relied mostly on the reports of such eyewitnesses as Fabrice and Schulenbourg. Charles XII was first published in 1731, bearing the false indications 'Christophe Revis, Basle.'[1] Its popularity, no doubt, encouraged Voltaire to have high hopes as a historian but he had also learnt a great deal from composing this work and from writing history in a lively and entertaining manner. That his historical method and manner were to show far greater maturity in Le Siècle, will be shown in chapters III and IV. Dealing as he does with the adventures and exploits of one hero in Charles XII, or possibly two if one includes Peter the Great, Voltaire does not feel the need to display the same rigid control and self-

imposed discipline as in Le Siècle. He gives free rein to his imagination and includes a mass of anecdotal and picturesque details, whilst he opts for a looser and more diffuse structure than he was to do in Le Siècle. As J.H. Brumfitt declares in Voltaire Historian:[2] "In essence it belongs to the humanist tradition. Voltaire has not yet come to reject this tradition and to elaborate a new view of his own." Charles XII comes into the category of an 'Histoire particulière', constructed around the rise and fall of the protagonist and has many affinities with the novel of adventure. As such it differs from Le Siècle, but it points the way to the same reliance on oral testimonies, to the attempts to fuse aesthetic and historical considerations as well as to the racy, dramatic and lively mode of presentation which will be in evidence in Voltaire's second major historical work.[3] Yet if the notion of philosophic history had already been partly evolved in Charles XII, that of social history was still in its infancy, and it was left to Le Siècle to become the major landmark in the development of the social historian.

Right from the start, when he first conceived of writing a history of Louis XIV's reign, Voltaire was aware that such a work would require an immense documentation and a long period of gestation. As early as 1733, he predicted that a tableau of 'le siècle le plus éclairé qui fut jamais' (P 616), would not be completed through less than ten years of hard work. To the Marquis de Caumont, he confessed on October 25, 1733: "Pour cette 'Histoire du Siècle de Louis XIV', c'est une entreprise qui sera l'occupation et la consolation de ma vieillesse; il faudra peut-être dix ans pour la faire. Heureux qui peut se faire un plan d'occupation pour dix années!"[4] At the very outset, the

historian was conscious of the need for patient research, the purist of the necessity to polish his style in a work which was to be a monument to the age of classicism and to a glorious era. The composition of Le Siècle, as we shall see, was, in fact, to be spread over some twenty years, ten more than was forecast by its author, although it did not occupy him solely during that period. In this chapter, we shall attempt to trace the development of the work from its conception to its publication in 1751, noting the interruptions and seeking their causes. The Correspondence is vital to this end and sheds considerable light on Voltaire's passion for Le Siècle between 1732 and 1737, his subsequent indifference following the suppression of the Recueil de pièces fugitives in 1739, and Voltaire's renewed enthusiasm for his 'sultane favorite' at the court of Frederick II in Prussia in 1750, when he put the finishing touches to the work. In addition to the Correspondence, the Notebooks point to Voltaire's main periods of activity during which he collected information relating to certain sections of the work. The text itself, finally, provides additional evidence as to when certain chapters were written.

It was on May 13, 1732, that Voltaire first mentioned a history of Louis XIV in a letter to his friend Thiériot: "I have nothing at heart but the pleasure of study, and the desire of yr return. I never go out of doors, I see no body but at home. I hope to employ such studious leisure with Eriphile, the english letters, and the age of Lewis the 14th."[5] Although this is the first clear reference to Le Siècle in the Correspondence, it is more than likely that Voltaire had started collecting material for

the work long before that date, most probably during his stay in England and perhaps even before. The author of the Commentaire Historique, probably Voltaire himself according to Beuchot in his avertissement,[6] claims that Voltaire had gathered information both for La Henriade and Le Siècle during his stay at the home of Louis François Lefèvre de Caumartin, a friend and client of the author's father:

> M. de Voltaire recueillit dès lors une partie des matériaux qu'il a employés depuis dans l'histoire du 'Siècle de Louis XIV'. L'évêque de Blois, Caumartin, avait passé une grande partie de sa vie à s'amuser de ces petites intrigues qui sont pour le commun des courtisans une occupation si grave et si triste. Il en connaissait les plus petits détails, et les racontait avec beaucoup de gaieté.[7]

Another Caumartin, Louis Urbain Lefèvre de Caumartin, who held high office under Louis XIV as 'conseiller d'état' and whose memoirs constituted an important source for La Henriade, provided a number of anecdotes. Voltaire wrote to d'Argental in 1751: "M. de Caumartin, j'entends, le vieux conseiller d'état, m'assura que le roy avait assisté deux fois au conseil des parties. C'est une anecdote qu'il faudrait aprofondir et dont vous êtes à portée de vous instruire."[8] It was at his residence that the first draft of La Henriade got under way. As early as 1714, Voltaire had been a loyal member of the Caumartin circle, and his presence at the 'Société du Temple' also allowed him to become acquainted with a number of Louis XIV's contemporaries who may have passed on to him anecdotes concerning the great king.

During his stay in England, Voltaire continued to collect information pertaining to the age of Louis XIV and the history of

England in the 17th century. The Small Leningrad Notebooks which date from 1726, according to Besterman, and which are described by Fernand Caussy as "un cahier de notes rédigées en anglais datant du séjour de Voltaire à Londres en 1726,"[9] show a marked interest in the great figures of the period of the Sun King, such as Marlborough and Cromwell. Of the former, Voltaire writes: "Marlbourg despised French because he had conquerd em. Law dispisd em also because he had cheated them."[10] We know that during his stay Voltaire had a profitable interview with the Duchess about the military career of her husband, and it is fair to assume that he did so in the first place to clarify certain points relating to Charles XII, in which the English general plays an important role.[11] However, Le Siècle was also to benefit from this meeting with the Duchess, for Voltaire learnt of the quarrel with Milady Masham and Queen Anne, to which he wrongly ascribes the Marlboroughs' downfall (P 871). In the Supplément, in answer to La Beaumelle's accusation that the anecdote was untrue, Voltaire reiterates the authenticity of the facts and declares: "Ce conte est une vérité reconnue de toute l'Angleterre, que Madame la duchesse de Marlborough avoua elle-même plusieurs fois à M. de Voltaire et qu'elle a confirmée depuis dans ses mémoires."[12]

Besides entries pertaining to English generals and politicians, the Small Leningrad Notebooks contain anecdotes which are more directly relevant to Le Siècle; one finds here an anecdote recounted in English on the Huguenots' claims that they would resuscitate the dead in England: "One of the french prophets having boasted that at any appointed Day, he would raise a dead

body from his grave, the government sent guards to the place apointed, to keep of the rabble, and to keep all things in quiet that the play could be acted without disturbance."[13] The anecdote was to be recalled and used later in chapter XXXVI of Le Siècle (P 1063).

The Cambridge Notebooks, written over a period of several years from 1726 or 1727, seem to confirm Voltaire's preoccupation with Louis XIV during and just after his sojourn in England. While it is difficult to date the individual entries with any degree of accuracy, it seems logical to assume that the notes written in English go back to the author's trip to England. Amongst these are to be found a number of references to Louis XIV; an anecdote, for instance, recounting Louis's present to Viviani: "Viviani bred to the study of mathematics by the great Galileo, rewarded by Lewis the 14 or rather by the mr Colbert, built a house at Florence, and inscribed over the door, this motto 'Aedes a deo datae'"[14] which was integrated into Le Siècle (P 911). Similarly, the comments of Eno, the Venetian ambassador, on Louis's generosity: "Lewis the fourteenth by his politeness, inslaves us, but his ministers restore us to our liberty"[15] are quoted, in a slightly altered version, in the text of Le Siècle (P 756).[16] If for the most part, the Cambridge Notebooks contain material used for the Lettres Philosophiques, such as extracts of English masterpieces in translation and references to English Literature, there are indications that the age of Louis XIV was never far from Voltaire's mind during his stay in England and that he had hit quite firmly on the notion of composing a history of the reign.

Moreover, Fernand Caussy is right to argue that the Lettres Philosophiques, with its main theme of relativism, must have suggested to Voltaire a similar parallel between the golden age of Louis XIV and the France of his own day:

> En face de cette France rétrograde et diminuée, Voltaire allait montrer la puissance donnée par le commerce à un pays voisin, les faveurs dont y jouissaient les savants et les philosophes, et aussi l'éclat dont il rayonnait par eux dans le monde. En même temps, il voulait faire voir que pareille richesse, et une gloire plus grande, la France les avait dues, cinquante ans auparavant, moins au succès des hommes de guerre, qu'à la protection accordée par son roi aux grands hommes dans tous les genres.[17]

Accordingly, whilst in England, Voltaire questioned important statesmen of the great age, Bolingbroke, Methuen, Peterborough, with a view to collecting useful information and anecdotes. His research towards Charles XII also helped to strengthen the idea of a history of Louis XIV's age, and the work itself provides evidence of this growing interest; e.g. we find on P. 241 a first draft of the survey of Europe in 1709 which was to find a place in chapter XXIV of Le Siècle. By the time Voltaire left England, the notion of a history of Louis XIV was firmly entrenched in his mind, as the Discours sur Charles XII, published in 1731, testifies; Louis XIV is mentioned twice,[18] as are the Mémoires of de Retz, an important source for chapters IV and V of Le Siècle.[19]

The other contemporary work, Les Lettres Philosophiques, provides evidence that by 1733, Voltaire had begun to think seriously about his second historical work, for there are references to Louis XIV in letter 8 on the English parliament,[20] and to the civil wars in France, in particular to the Fronde in a passage

which betrays the same sarcasm as in chapters IV and V:

> Pour la dernière guerre de Paris, elle ne mérite que des sifflets; il me semble que je vois des écoliers qui se mutinent contre le préfet d'un collège, et qui finissent par être fouettés. Le cardinal de Retz, avec beaucoup d'esprit et de courage mal employés, rebelle sans aucun sujet, factieux sans dessein, chef de parti sans armée, cabalait pour cabaler, et semblait faire la guerre civile pour son plaisir. Le Parlement ne savait ce qu'il voulait, ni ce qu'il ne voulait pas; il levait des troupes par arrêt, il les cassait; il menaçait, il demandait pardon, il mettait à prix la tête du cardinal Mazarin, et ensuite venait le complimenter en cérémonie.[21]

We have here in essence the gist of the chapters on the Fronde in Le Siècle. Letter 10 on commerce includes an anecdote of the English merchants coming to the rescue of Prince Eugène,[22] which was to find its way into chapter XX of Le Siècle (P 843). At the beginning of letter 12, Voltaire explains his theory of the great man and gives precedence to scientists like Newton over generals, and declares: "Puis donc que vous exigez que je vous parle des hommes célèbres qu'a portés l'Angleterre, je commencerai par les Bacons, les Lockes, les Newtons, etc. Les généraux et les ministres viendront à leur tour."[23] In his recent article, 'Les Lettres Philosophiques: Le projet de Voltaire',[24] René Pomeau argues that it was as a result of Charles XII that the new philosophy of history was born and he concludes: "Les Lettres Philosophiques affirment la primauté des valeurs intellectuelles: une telle philosophie se fortifie chez Voltaire dans l'intervalle de 1729-31," as a result of Charles XII. Rather than see Voltaire's intention as being to write other Lettres, would it not be possible to see in this statement a reference to a survey

of generals' and politicians' achievements in a work which Voltaire had already resolved to write in 1731? Perhaps he saw the Lettres in the context of the new project. For by 1732, the idea of Voltaire's major attempt to write social history had clearly taken shape in the author's mind and some of the foundations, in terms of gathering material, had already been laid. It remained for Voltaire to declare openly his intention to write such a work.

This he was to do for the first time in 1732. For this year marked undoubtedly the real launching of the project which was to come to fruition in 1751 with the publication of the first edition of Le Siècle.[25] In September Voltaire reiterated his intention to write a history of the reign of Louis XIV; to Formont, he declared: "Quand je me serai dépêtré de ce travail ingrat (i.e. his refutation of La Mottraye's criticisms), j'achèverai ces lettres anglaises que vous connaissez; ce sera tout au plus le travail d'un mois, après quoi, il faudra bien revenir au théâtre, et finir enfin par l'histoire du siècle de Louis XIV. Voilà, mon cher Formont, tout le plan de ma vie."[26] Meanwhile, he revised Eriphyle and La Mort de César; he published his Remarques historiques et critiques sur l'histoire de Charles XII, while in August 1732, in the preface to Zaïre, he lavished praise on Louis XIV as the patron of the arts. Emile Bourgeois sees this comparison of Voltaire's own age and that of Louis XIV as the main polemical intention of the author: "Il a formé dans l'exil le projet de critiquer ceux qui l'y ont envoyé: la critique sera habilement déguisée dans un éloge de la libre Angleterre et de ses philosophes, du gouvernement de Louis XIV, si absolu et si

propice pourtant à la littérature."[27] It is true that the two works, the Lettres Philosophiques and Le Siècle, are similar in many respects, but one should not jump to the conclusion that Voltaire's only aim was to criticise his own age and Louis XV's administration. Because of his own taste and background, Voltaire belonged to the classical school; his goal was, above all, to pay homage to the golden era of literature and the arts, as he had done in Le Temple du Goût (1733). He did, however, try to find solace for the literary sterility of his own age in the preceding one; to glorify the monarch who had made it all possible superseded, it would seem, initially any other consideration. The polemical undertones are, in effect, present, but remain secondary to this primary objective.

In 1732, despite his good intentions, Voltaire did not have the leisure to work on the project. He was actively engaged in preparing a French edition of the Lettres Philosophiques and there are no indications that he had begun work on Le Siècle, contrary to what René Pomeau asserts.[28] At this stage, only the intention of doing so had been vaguely formulated. Le Temple du Goût was published in 1733 and contemporary reaction was hardly favourable. On January 20, 177 copies of the Epître dédicatoire of Zaïre were seized, because Louis XV was outraged by the praise lavished on his predecessor.[29] Voltaire left for Saint-Gervais in May to escape any backlash, but returned to Paris in the same month. For the moment, his plans for Le Siècle were temporarily shelved. In addition to writing the Remarques sur Pascal which bring the Lettres Philosophiques to a close, Voltaire assiduously set about collecting material for the coming history of Louis

XIV throughout the rest of 1733. In March, he sought information from Jean Jacques Dortous de Mairan concerning the drawings for Le Louvre: "Je suis assez embarrassé entre Perraut et Le Vau. J'ay consulté Mariette qui est aussi indécis que moy malgré l'inscription de son estampe. Je prendray le party de ne point décider."[30] In chapter XXIX of Le Siècle, he wrote subsequently: "Claude Perrault avait donné ce dessin, exécuté par Louis Levau et Dorbay" (P 970). Between September 1732 and March 1733, Voltaire was thus doing the necessary research pertaining to Louis XIV; the importance of the arts was uppermost in his mind from the outset. On April 1st, he wrote to Thiériot: "J'ay donc achevé Adélaïde; je refais Eriphile et j'assemble des matériaux pour ma grande histoire de Louis 14."[31] But although he continued to document himself fully and in a systematic manner, he had not yet outlined a plan of the work. He devoted most of his energies to the Lettres Philosophiques, to such operatic works as Tanis et Zélide and Samson, while revising Adélaïde and Eriphyle. Already his method is becoming clear: the need for patient research, both by consulting as many written sources as possible and by establishing a network of correspondents to do the ferreting for him. The preparatory stage lasted until 1735, when Voltaire felt confident enough to start writing in earnest. I.O. Wade is, therefore, right to assert in this connexion: "It is thus evident that, although Voltaire persisted in looking forward to a time when he would undertake a history of Louis's reign, he was rather inactive throughout the whole of 1734."[32]

For a letter to the Marquis de Caumont of April 2, 1734,

confirms this fact: "Je suis toujours dans la résolution de faire quelque chose sur ce beau siècle de Louis XIV; mais j'ai bien peur de n'en avoir ni le loisir, ni la santé, ni le talent. J'assemble toujours quelques matériaux en attendant que je puisse commencer cet ouvrage, qui me paraît également long et dangereux à achever."[33] 1734 proved to be a hectic year in Voltaire's life, and consequently, he did not have the peace of mind to begin composing Le Siècle; in January, Adélaïde was first performed; the wedding of the Duc de Richelieu and Mlle de Guise, which Voltaire had arranged, took place in April and required Voltaire's presence. On April 24th, he learnt that the Lettres Philosophiques were on sale in Paris, and anxious to avoid any possible persecutions, he left for Lorraine on May 6th; rightly so, for the work was condemned on June 10th. Following the duel of the Duc de Richelieu, Voltaire went to the camp at Philipsbourg on July 1st, and on his return to Cirey, he spent the rest of the year renovating the mansion.[34] During this period of relative peace, according to Wade,[35] Voltaire augmented his knowledge of science, philosophy and history. It would seem, therefore, that Voltaire did much reading which was to prove invaluable when he applied himself wholeheartedly to the composition of Le Siècle in the following year, but he did so in a rather haphazard manner. Meanwhile, towards the end of 1734, he composed eight chants of La Pucelle and Alzire. Thus during 1734, he pushed his research further, but neither had the time nor the required tranquillity, nor by his very high standards, enough material with which to begin the history of Louis XIV. Bourgeois concludes that the condemnation of the Lettres Philosophiques, far from discouraging

Voltaire, in fact egged him on to proceed with Le Siècle.[36] This is very likely, but there is no evidence that in this turbulent year Voltaire set pen to paper. Ostensibly, 1734 was a somewhat unproductive year as far as Le Siècle is concerned.

The following year, on the other hand, proved to be decisive for the composition of the work through a burst of literary activity. It is indeed in that year that Le Siècle began to see the light of day in manuscript form. During the first few months, Voltaire persisted with his research; on January 26th, he informed Formont that the process of composition was about to start, provided the necessary material came his way: "Si jamais je suis assez heureux pour avoir sous ma main les secours nécessaires, je ne mourrai pas avant que je n'aie mis fin à cette entreprise."[37] Wade's findings about Voltaire's borrowings from the Bibliothèque du Roi[38] point conclusively to a growing preoccupation with the age of Louis XIV, not just with the military history, but also with aspects relating to the chapters on Louis's private life and even the religious disputes around Quietism and Jansenism. He is able to conclude forcefully: "It is evident that Voltaire was utilizing his privilege at the Bibliothèque du Roi during the year 1735 to document himself upon the Siècle de Louis XIV... One is impressed by the fact that all these items were borrowed during the course of one month in 1735 (May). Voltaire was in the full flush of his historical enterprise in 1735, and with characteristic vigor was tapping every conceivable source for material."[39] Indeed, the Correspondence bears witness to this period of intense activity; in addition to consulting written primary and secondary sources, Voltaire was all

the keener to use his correspondents for relevant anecdotes which might shed light on the spirit of the age; to Thiériot, he expressed the need to obtain any petits faits with important repercussions: "Je pourrai vous demander de temps en temps des anecdotes concernant le siècle de Louis XIV. Comptez qu'un jour cela peut vous être utile, et que cet ouvrage vous vaudrait vingt volumes de Lettres philosophiques."[40] Similarly, he entreated his friend d'Olivet to make a few enquiries on his behalf and to pass on to him whatever might be characteristic of the age:

> Si vous déterriez jamais dans votre chemin quelque chose qui pût servir à faire connaître le progrès des arts dans le siècle de Louis 14, vous me feriez la plus grande faveur du monde de m'en faire part. Tout me sera bon, anecdotes sur la littérature, sur la philosophie, histoire de l'esprit humain, c'est à dire de la sottise humaine, poésie, peinture, musique. Je feray comme La Flèche qui faisoit son profit de tout. Je sçai que vous êtes harum nugarum exquisitissimus detector. Je vous demande grâce de me faire part de ce que vous pouriez déterrer de singulier sur ces matières ou du moins de m'indiquer les sources un peu détournées.[41]

One cannot help feeling that at this stage, Voltaire was well satisfied with the documentation he possessed on general history and that he was looking forward to a time when he would compose the second and, in his view, the most important part of the history - the tableau des mœurs. He seemed also aware that the anecdotal details would add spice to the history, and of the importance of finding new and original material. The new concept of social history, relatively absent from Charles XII, was beginning to emerge, as from the start, Voltaire was conscious of

la bêtise humaine, a notion which would assume greater importance in L'Essai sur les mœurs (1756). This concept, moreover, is already visible in the early Notebooks, where Voltaire jots down contradictions in human behaviour and absurd examples of man's folly and cruelty to his fellows.[42]

Up to June 1735, Voltaire carried out the preliminary work and was patiently engaged in a self-imposed fact-finding mission. A letter to Cideville of June 26, 1735, indicates that at last the writing had begun: "Mon principal employ à présent est ce siècle de Louis 14, dont je vous ay parlé il y a quelques années: c'est là, la sultane favorite, les autres études sont des passades. J'ay apporté avec moy baucoup (sic) de matériaux et j'ay déjà commencé l'édifice, mais il ne sera pas achevé de longtemps. C'est l'ouvrage de toutte ma vie."[43] The passades in question are La Pucelle, "la métaphysique, un peu de géométrie et de physique." From then on, Voltaire's passion for Le Siècle was unbridled and he launched himself into the project with all the fervour that he was capable of. On August 3rd, he was in a position to impart to Cideville that "le siècle de Louis 14 est entamé", and that he did not know "comment nommer cet ouvrage. Ce n'est point un tableau des guerres, c'est la peinture d'un siècle admirable."[44] From the very beginning, Voltaire viewed the work as going beyond pure chronological history; it was to be a social document and he planned to pass quickly over the chapters on Louis's campaigns before focusing attention on the more rewarding and philosophically more stimulating chapters on l'esprit humain, the second section of the work. He worked daily on Le Siècle during that period,[45]

and in his letters to his correspondents, he never failed to requisition more anecdotes and information. Once absorbed in this enterprise, very little else mattered that year and Voltaire worked with vigour and enthusiasm. Far from being painful, this initial period of composition appears to have given him considerable satisfaction. Such are the implications of his letter to d'Olivet on August 24th:

> Si donc mon cher abbé, vous savez quelque source où je doive puiser, quelques anecdotes, touchant à nos arts et nos artistes, de quelque genre que ce puisse être, indiquez le moy. Tout peut trouver sa place. J'ay déjà des matériaux pour ce grand édifice. Les mémoires du père Niceron, et du père Desmolets sont mes moindres recueils. J'ay le plaisir même à préparer les instruments dont je dois me servir. La manière dont je recueille mes matériaux est un amusement agréable.[46]

The continuing research for the chapters on the arts - Niceron and Desmolets were to be useful for these chapters - was pursued, seemingly, alongside the day-to-day business of writing the section devoted to the survey of Louis's campaigns. Consequently, when Voltaire went back to Le Siècle in Prussia, after a break of twelve years, he had at his disposal a considerable amount of material. His numerous references to the édifice are not without significance; in a sense, Voltaire sees his work as being to erect a monument to the glory of Louis XIV at this stage, hence the generally eulogistic tone of Le Siècle, with the possible exception of the last five chapters. His statements also shed light on his utilisation of sources, for he sees these as the bricks and mortar, the raw materials with which to build the édifice. The historian thereafter orchestrates the material

into a creation of his own through the imaginative process at work, as we shall see in chapter IV. But the solidity implied in the metaphor is no less dear to Voltaire's heart, hence the importance he attributes to documentation. Just as he renovated Cirey, Voltaire, the master-builder, set about this task with equal energy and zest.

On September 11, 1735, Voltaire gleefully and proudly declared to Thiériot that he had already covered some thirty years of military history, i.e. the first ten chapters of the 1751 edition or the first eleven of the final one: "J'attends cette cargaison sans impatience entre Emilie, et le siècle de Louis 14 dont j'ay fait trente années."[47] And whilst he was drafting these chapters, Voltaire was still busy collecting further information for the later chapters; to this end he requested a book on commerce from Thiériot and added: "Faites moy connaître aussi tous les livres où l'on peut trouver quelques instructions touchant l'histoire du dernier siècle, et le progrès des baux (sic) arts."[48] In November, during Algarotti's visit to Cirey, Voltaire took great pride in reading aloud to him a chapter of Le Siècle, and by December, he had worked so assiduously that he had reached the battle of Hochstedt.[49] Accordingly, for sevenmonths, between June and December 1735, Voltaire had given his undivided attention to Le Siècle, and by the end of the year, he had composed eighteen chapters of the 1751 edition, i.e. eighteen of the twenty-three chapters which he planned to devote to the chronological history of the campaigns of Louis XIV. His staying power is all the more admirable in that he stuck to the task in spite of serious problems arising from his reading in public

of sections of La Pucelle, as a result of which he was forced to take refuge in Lorraine. The work, to no small extent, had become for him a means of escape from la bêtise contemporaine and the literary desert of his own age. To Cideville, he lamented: "Le pays de la littérature me paroît actuellement inondé de brochures. Nous sommes dans l'automne du bon goust, et au temps de la chutte des feuilles... Je me console avec le siècle de Louis 14 de touttes les sottises du siècle présent."[50] This eulogistic appraisal of the artistic supremacy of the classical era returns in the chapters on the arts in Le Siècle, as does the nostalgia for an age where literary artists were rewarded.

In the early part of 1736, the historian continued to make significant progress. Emilie's letter to an anonymous correspondent, is proof enough: "Voltaire fait l'histoire de Louis 14 et moi je neutonise tant bien que mal."[51] There follows, however, a prolonged silence about the progress of the work. The composition of Le Siècle seems to have been interrupted soon after Emilie's letter; Voltaire was engrossed in the first performance of Alzire on January 27th and preoccupied with his quarrel with Le Franc de Pompignan. At the age of 25, Le Franc had written Zoraïde which he read to the Comédie Française at the end of 1735; they asked him to modify it slightly and present it again. Meanwhile, Voltaire made his play Alzire known to a few friends, some of whom proved indiscreet and showed it to Le Franc. Voltaire claimed that Le Franc had stolen the subject from him; to Cideville, he wrote on January 8, 1736: "J'avois fait ma pièce des Américains, mais je ne savois pas qu'il m'avoit

volé, et je ne croiois pas que la rage d'être joué le premier pût le porter à ourdir une aussi vilaine trame que celle dont on l'accuse."[52] Voltaire is here referring to the Comédie Française's decision to perform his own Alzire and reports rumours that Le Franc had circulated some stolen copies of La Pucelle in order to disgrace its author so that his own play might be put on before Voltaire's.[53]

Moreover, Voltaire was forced to go to Paris in 1736 in connexion with a law-suit brought by Jore who demanded 1400 livres for printing the Lettres Philosophiques, and accused Voltaire of having been the instigator of the French edition. In the event, the writer was condemned to pay 500 livres.[54] Back at Cirey in July, he was converted to science by Madame du Châtelet, and in the second half of the year, Newton had the better of Louis XIV. Voltaire began work on Les Eléments de la philosophie de Newton, and as the querelle du Mondain broke out, he travelled to Holland taking with him a manuscript not of the Siècle, but of the Eléments. The historical work seems, to all intents and purposes, to have been shelved at that time. History had given way to physics.

In January 1737, while still in Holland, Voltaire kept an eye on the printing of the first edition of the Eléments, but at the instigation of Emilie, he returned to Cirey. Frederick sent Kaezerling in April to collect La Pucelle, La philosophie de Newton and the already drafted chapters of Le Siècle.[55] The rest of that year, Voltaire published nothing and finished Mérope in December. In his letters to the king of Prussia, he admitted that he needed Frederick's encouragement to resume work

on Le Siècle and awaited the king's verdict on the manuscript sent through Kaeserling.[56] Having been urged to finish the work, he took steps to gather new material, notably concerning Louvois through the good-will of Berger. He also sought the help of the Académiciens, Levesque de Burigny and l'abbé Dubos. He asked Frederick for details concerning the Memoirs of Torci and Villars, both vital sources for chapters I-XXIV, as we shall see in chapter III. It would appear that he began writing again in December, as the letter to Cideville testifies: "Quant aux autres ouvrages, j'ay donc fait Mérope dont vous jugerez incessamment. J'ay corrigé toutes mes autres tragédies, entre autres, les 3 premiers actes d'Oedipe. J'ay retouché baucoup jusqu'aux petites pièces détachées que vous avez entre les mains. J'ay poussé l'histoire de Louis 14 jusqu'à la bataille de Turin."[57] This fact is confirmed by Voltaire in the Supplément, where he repudiates La Beaumelle's accusation that the quarrel of the Duchess of Marlborough was copied from Frederick's Anti-Machiavel; he goes on to add: "Ce conte n'est point tiré de l'Anti-Machiavel, que son illustre auteur ne composa qu'en 1739. M. de Voltaire avait déjà quelques années auparavant poussé Le Siècle de Louis XIV jusqu'à la bataille de Turin, et son manuscrit était entre les mains du roi de Prusse dès l'année 1737."[58] This fact is borne out by the Correspondence, as has been pointed out.

Voltaire would, therefore, have written a single chapter in 1737. In a footnote to the letter to Cideville quoted above, Besterman remarks: "Voltaire had therefore reached chapter XX, about half-way of the Siècle de Louis XIV."[59] However, the

progress achieved must be assessed in terms of the plan revealed to l'abbé Dubos in 1738: 20 chapters on military history, one on Louis's private life, two on internal reforms and finance, two on religious affairs and five or six on the arts. In this respect, more than half, in effect two-thirds of the work, were by now complete. Of the thirty-five chapters which made up the 1751 edition, and of the 23 on military history, Voltaire had in effect drafted nineteen. Wade's conclusion that he "now felt he had a satisfactory draft of his work"[60] is rather misleading, for not only is it difficult to assess the condition of the manuscript in 1737,[61] but he would certainly have felt that the crucial part of the work, that relating to 'les mœurs', remained to be done. It would be foolhardy to conclude with Wade that "his manuscript was relatively complete"; only two-thirds of the first section had in 1737 been composed.

On April 25, 1738, Voltaire confessed to Frederick that Le Siècle was once again abandoned, and that he would not take it up again unless expressly asked to do so by his friend: "Je ne continuerai l'histoire de Louis 14 ou plutôt de son siècle, que quand vous le commanderez."[62] In January 1738, he had written the Discours sur l'homme, and had been involved in experiments with Emilie; science clearly had the better of history, with the publication of the Eléments in March 1738. Voltaire, moreover, joined Madame du Châtelet in taking part in a competition organised by the Académie des Sciences, but both failed to win prizes. Nevertheless, Le Siècle was not forgotten, and Voltaire was still anxious to receive Frederick's comments on the existing manuscript of the work: "Je m'imagine que mr. le baron de

Kaezerling est enfin revenu vers son étoile polaire et que Louis 14 et Newton ont subi leur arrest... J'attends cet arrest pour continuer ou pour suspendre l'histoire du siècle de Louis 14."[63] In his reply, Frederick procrastinated and promised to send his comments, but offered little encouragement.[64] Nor did he keep his promise at once. Voltaire, for his part, revealed to Prault on June 28, 1738, his intention to proceed further with the history of Louis XIV, and to this end he ordered books relevant to the arts: "Je demande les mémoires de l'Académie 1735, le Ménagiana, le recueil de pièces d'histoire et de littérature, chez Chaubert, les mémoires alphabétiques d'Amelot de la Houssaye, la charlatanerie des gens de lettres, l'histoire des journaux par Camurat."[65] All the indications are that Voltaire planned to complete the chapters on military history in the near future and apply himself to the second and most important section. Emilie, too, had gathered from him a similar impression: "Je crois qu'il va se remettre à l'histoire de Louis quatorze. C'est l'ouvrage qui convient le plus à sa santé," she wrote to d'Argental on July 1, 1738.[66] It is clear from this letter that the historian remained inactive until July at least, despite his avowed desire to take up where he left off the previous year. Yet the research was pushed further, hence his request to Berger for letters written by Louvois.[67] Furthermore, in the often quoted letter to l'abbé Dubos of October 30, 1738, Voltaire drew up a definite and detailed plan for the first time,[68] although it is probable that he had conceived Le Siècle in its entirety long before, possibly as early as 1732.

This letter has led critics such as Emile Bourgeois to conclude that 1738 was a vital year for the composition of Le Siècle. According to Bourgeois, Voltaire had by then completed the first twenty-three chapters of the 1751 edition and had started on the tableau des mœurs: "C'est alors que Voltaire met la main à la partie essentielle de l'ouvrage, l'histoire des beaux-arts et de l'esprit humain."[69] As evidence, Bourgeois quotes the letter to Dubos. However, while this shows that Voltaire had firmly arrived at a definite plan and a division of the work into chapters, it would be wrong to assume that he had at this stage begun to write the chapters on Louis's private life and the arts. Caussy thinks along the same lines as Bourgeois, when in his Notice to his Oeuvres Inédites, he declares: "En 1738, il met la main à la seconde partie de l'ouvrage 'la plus importante' à ses yeux, l'histoire des mœurs, des institutions, des sciences et des arts."[70] It is true that Voltaire was always on the look-out for material which might prove useful for the later chapters, but it would appear from the Correspondence that far from moving on to the chapters on 'les mœurs', Voltaire remained virtually inactive in 1738 and Le Siècle ignored. There is no proof that he pushed it further than the battle of Turin, the point reached in 1737.

When Madame de Graffigny visited Cirey on December 5, 1738, she revealed to her 'cher Pampan' that Emilie had the manuscript under lock and key to prevent Voltaire finishing it: "Voici ce que je dois avoir ce soir à lire: Mérope, l'histoire de Louis 14, que cette bégueule ne veut pas qu'il achève, elle la tient sous la clef. Il a fallu qu'il prie bien pour qu'elle permette de

me la donner. Je démêlerai ce petit tripôt là."[71] Once she starts to peruse the manuscript, the lady is full of praise for the historian, and her comments are particularly useful in establishing the contents and nature of the text at this stage. Nor can we doubt her sincerity when she affirms that Emilie had taken steps to protect Voltaire against any possible repercussions, but it is also likely that she was intent on winning the writer over to science and was using this as a pretext. In another letter to Pampan of December 9, 1738, she refers to the Crossing of the Rhine (chapter X of Pomeau's edition and of the 1751 edition), and to the Peace of Ryswick (chapter XVI of the 1751 edition and XVII of Pomeau's).[72] In the same letter of December 14th, she informs Pampan that she has finished reading the manuscript and regrets that it is incomplete: "J'ai fini Louis XIV hier; il est aussi impatientant de le laisser là qu'un roman qui n'est point achevé." It is worth noting that at this stage Voltaire has decided on the title, for Madame de Graffigny in her letters comments: "Il y a un abrégé de la Fronde, qui est divin; mais comme il se propose moins Louis XIV que l'histoire de l'esprit de son siècle, il vous rapporte alors légèrement quelques traits qui y ont rapport, tels que le caractère de la reine de Suède, en lui faisant rendre une visite à Ninon (this fact was to be omitted from the later editions)... Le titre est Essai sur le Siècle de Louis XIV."[73] No mention is made of the section on the arts, which Bourgeois and Caussy claim had been written. The work was still a long way from nearing completion, contrary to Bourgeois's assertion: "On répète communément que Voltaire mit vingt ans à

composer cette œuvre capitale: il employa en réalité huit mois en 1735, neuf mois en 1737, dix mois en 1738, en tout un peu plus de deux ans à lui donner la première forme."[74]

Throughout, Voltaire's method of documentation, via the grapevine, does not change radically. Thus on January 9, 1739, he thanked an anonymous correspondent, probably Berger, for the anecdotes dispatched, and urged him to be on the look-out for others: "Grand merci de vos anecdotes. Rassemblez tout ce que vous pourrez, et si vous voulez un jour conduire l'impression du beau 'Siècle de Louis XIV' ce sera pour vous fortune et gloire."[75] But does this prove that Voltaire had resumed work on Le Siècle? It is characteristic of the historian's method that he never ceased to look ahead to a time when he would be in a position to set pen to paper; the period of gestation was a long one and Voltaire only attempted to compose when he felt he was in possession of enough authenticated material. Furthermore, the success of Le Siècle depended, to his way of thinking, on those added ingredients in the form of picturesque anecdotes which would both entertain and instruct by shedding light on the spirit of the age.[76] The main facts, he knew, were in the written sources, but what interested Voltaire most was the hitherto little-known details which could be exploited by the raconteur in him - as indeed we shall show in chapter IV. All along, he behaved very much as a modern editor in charge of a group of roving reporters whom he motivated by the promise of financial gain and a share in the glory. To no small extent, Le Siècle owes its liveliness to this 'happy throng' of correspondents - Thiériot, Cideville, d'Argental, d'Olivet, Berger etc. Their

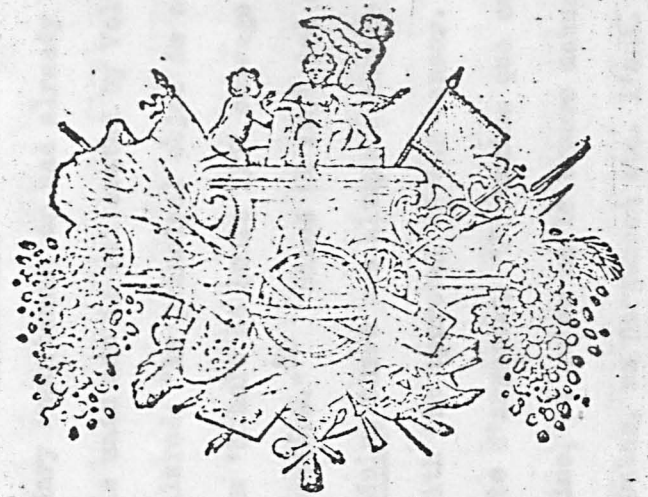
contribution in real terms cannot be underestimated, although it is impossible to ascertain with any degree of accuracy what information they passed on to Voltaire. They often provided the raw material which the Conteur transformed and integrated into the work.

Early in 1739, Voltaire took a decision which proved to be ill-advised, namely to publish the introduction of Le Siècle and the first chapter in order to test public opinion. On March 6th, he explained his reasons to Berger,[77] and promised to send him the opening section of the work which he was in the process of revising. In February, he had let d'Argental into the secret of the coming publication of the Recueil de pièces fugitives, to be supervised by Thiériot: "Je voulois le faire imprimer (i.e. mémoire justificatif) avec les épîtres, le commencement de l'histoire de Louis 14 etc. Il y a près d'un mois que Tiriot ou l'abbé d'Olivet avoient dû vous remettre ce commencement d'histoire."[78] Once the manuscript was corrected and the style polished, Voltaire had to find a publisher and he looked to Prault, to whom he proposed the "petit recueil contenant mes épîtres, quelques odes, le commencement de l'histoire de Louis 14, une lettre sur Neuton etc."[79] The Recueil de pièces fugitives was to contain the following items:

Essai sur le Siècle de Louis XIV
Six Discours sur l'homme
Fragment d'une lettre sur un usage très utile établi en Hollande
De la gloire ou entretien avec un Chinois
Du suicide
Odes sur 'le fanatisme'

RECUEIL
DE PIECES
FUGITIVES
EN PROSE ET EN VERS.

Par Mr. DE VOLTAIRE.



A PARIS.

MDCCXL.

Le Mondain
Lettre à l'abbé Melon sur Le Mondain
Défense du Mondain
Epître sur la calomnie
Le Temple de l'amitié
L'Anti-Giton
Le Cadenat
A Madame la Marquise du Châtelet sur la physique de Newton
Aux manes de Monsieur de Grenonville
La mort de Mademoiselle Lecouvreur
Lettres et autres pièces
Le Temple du Goût.

A close analysis of the Recueil points inevitably to its main purpose, which was to assess contemporary reaction to the beginning of Le Siècle, for the other items were either of secondary importance, or had already been published. That this was his main aim is reiterated by Voltaire himself; to d'Argenson he declared: "Le principal objet de ce recueil était le commencement du 'Siècle de Louis XIV' ouvrage d'un bon citoyen et d'un homme modéré."[80] Since it included such controversial works as Le Mondain, there was always a chance that the Recueil might not meet with the approval of the censor. Emilie expressed her fears to d'Argental: "Je crains que ce commencemt de Louis 14 ne s'imprime, et qu'on ne le trouve mauuais (sic). Tiriot, l'abé (sic) Dubos, ms Dargenson etc. l'ont. Que faire?"[81]

As for Voltaire himself, he did not seem at first to have had any apprehension about the possible repercussions of the Recueil, which was in print by April, in spite of rumours circulating that it was on sale in Paris: "On me mande," he wrote to Berger on April 26, 1739, "qu'on fait courir dans ce vilain

Paris le commencement de mon histoire de Louis XIV et deux épîtres morales très incorrectes. Je vous enverrais tout cela et vous auriez la bonne leçon, si le port n'était pas effrayant. Je crois que vous verriez dans l'Essai sur le siècle de Louis XIV un bon citoyen plutôt qu'un bon écrivain."[82] At the same time, Voltaire was anxious to receive the comments of his friends on the fragment of Le Siècle being published, which he had sent to d'Argenson,[83] and to d'Argental.[84] On May 8th, he left with Emilie for Belgium on the occasion of a law-suit regarding the principality between Trêves and Juliers which the Marquise had inherited from a cousin. We have pointed out that it was Voltaire himself who contacted Prault in the first place about the publication of the Recueil. It was published in 1739, although it bears the date 1740.[85] Because it included remarks pertaining to religion - the first chapter of Le Siècle being entitled 'Des états chrétiens de l'Europe avant Louis XIV', and other items such as 'Du suicide' - the law demanded that the work be submitted to the censor for a 'privilège'.[86] However, Voltaire decided to disregard this procedure, for he knew that the volume had little chance of meeting with the censor's approval. The Recueil was, as a result, published clandestinely; hence Voltaire's growing fears: "Je reçois votre lettre du 25. Vous ne pouvez ajouter, monsieur, au plaisir que me font vos lettres, qu'en détruisant le bruit qui se répand, que j'ai envoyé mon siècle de Louis quatorze à Prault. Je sais qu'on n'en fait que des copies très infidèles et je serais fâché que les copies ou l'original fussent imprimés," he declared to Berger on June 28, 1739.[87] As usual, Voltaire was here engaged in a 'cover-up' operation,

denying that he was the instigator of the publication. He even went as far as to urge Prault to send him all the copies of the work, if indeed 'it was true' that it was being published.[88]

Published it was and the reactions of the authorities were hardly favourable, for in November, the copies were seized and the volume suppressed on December 4, 1739.[89] In Voltaire et la police, L. Léouzon Le Duc quotes an extract from the procès-verbal of commissaire Lespinay's account to the Conseil d'état of how he went to the house of the jeweller, Desfrères, where in a room he found "un grand nombre d'exemplaires d'un ouvrage intitulé: Recueil de pièces fugitives, en prose et en vers par M. de Voltaire. Et le dit sieur Commissaire ayant requis le dit Desfrères, de déclarer à qui il avait loué la dite chambre, il avait dit que c'était le nommé Prault, libraire, son genre, qui l'avait prié de la luy prester, pour y mettre différens imprimez et livres qu'il luy avait assuré être permis. Et sa Majesté voulant réprimer une contravention qui blesse également l'ordre public et les bonnes mœurs, soit par la témérité du dit Prault fils, libraire, qui au préjudice de réglements de la librairie, a fait imprimer sans privilège ni permission, l'ouvrage dont il s'agit, et a entreposé clandestinement l'édition dans un magasin non déclaré aux officiers de la librairie; à quoi voulant pourvoir: oüy le rapport, le Roy étant en son conseil, de l'avis de M. le Chancelier, a ordonné et ordonne que les exemplaires du dit livre intitulé: 'Recueil des pièces fugitives en prose et en vers', par M. de Voltaire, seront et demeureront supprimez et mis en présence de la Communauté des Libraires qui sera à cet effet extraordinairement assemblée....."[90] Prault's printing shop

was closed for three months and he was condemned to pay a fine of 500 livres. As for Voltaire, he was ordered to leave Paris and not to return. The bad news was conveyed to him at Rhetel in the Ardennes, and he was understandably very depressed. In a moving letter of January 8, 1740, he confided in d'Argenson:

> Touttes ces pièces fugitives que vous avez de moy fort informes, et fort incorrectes, m'avoient fait naître l'envie de vous les donner un peu plus dignes de vous. Prault les avoit aussi manuscrittes. Je me donnay la peine d'en faire un choix et de corriger avec un très grand soin tout ce qui devoit paraître. J'avois mis mes complaisances dans ce petit livre. Je ne croyois pas qu'on dût traitté (sic) des choses aussi innocentes plus sévèrement qu'on n'a traitté les Chapelles, les Chauxlieux, les La Fontaine, les Rabelais et même les épigrammes de Roussau.[91]

His mood soon changed, however, from depression to grim determination to stand up and be counted, and to carry on the fight; to Cideville he wrote on January 9, 1740: "J'ose dire que le frontispice de cet ouvrage était l'entrée d'un temple bâti à l'honneur de la vertu et des arts. Les premières pierres de ce temple sont tombées sur moy. La main des sots et des bigots a apparemment voulu m'écraser sous cet édifice; mais ils n'y ont pas réussi, et l'ouvrage et moy subsisterons."[92]

But in spite of this bravado, the suppression of the Recueil had well and truly disenchanted Voltaire and put him off completing Le Siècle. The public itself had not been sounded, but the hostile reaction of the authorities had had such a shattering effect that Voltaire decided to proceed no further. He was deeply hurt and he alleged various excuses for not taking up the challenge; to d'Argenson he wrote:

> Je vous avoue que si je suivois entièrement mon goust, je me livrerois tout entier à l'histoire du siècle de Louis 14, puisque le commencement ne vous en a pas déplu. Mais je n'y travailleray point tant que je seray à Bruxelles. Il faut être à la source pour puiser ce dont j'ay besoin; il faut vous consulter souvent. Je n'ay point assez de matériaux pour bâtir mon édifice hors de la France.[93]

To Frederick, he declared that he was prevented by ill-health from finishing Le Siècle and that he would resume work as soon as he felt better.[94] Frederick tried in vain to exhort him to do so.[95] And when at last Voltaire condescended, Frederick applauded his decision.[96] But Voltaire was not to keep his promise and the project was shelved, at least for the time being. The publication of the Recueil de pièces fugitives thus marks an important point in the history of the work; had it not been for the authorities' firm stand against him, Voltaire might well have completed the task much earlier. From then on, he felt that it would be unwise to publish a work in praise of Louis XIV in his fatherland.

In the early 1740's, Voltaire tried to win favour at court, by offering his services to Fleury as an envoy to the court of Frederick. Having put Le Siècle aside, he became engrossed in his research for L'histoire générale. While in Brussels in 1740, he used the library of the grandson of de Witt, and in this connexion he remarks in his Mémoires: "Il avait une des plus belles bibliothèques de l'Europe, qui me servit beaucoup pour L'histoire générale."[97] It is possible that Voltaire might have found useful information about the career of Jean de Witt during his stay in Belgium, but his main aim was to prepare what was to become the Essai sur les mœurs. In the midst of his military

campaigns, Frederick never failed to urge his friend to return to Le Siècle,[98] and Voltaire replied by promising to send a number of papers, but these could only refer to the Histoire générale: "J'ai jugé que la sphère du monde n'était pas trop grande."[99] There is nothing here to suggest that Voltaire had made any tangible progress with Le Siècle in 1742, and the work remained at the same stage where he left off in 1738. On March 22, 1742, Frederick reminded the writer of his promise and invited him to send the rest of Le Siècle;[100] a plea which he reiterated from his camp at Kuttenberg on June 18,[101] but to no avail. For if Voltaire failed to comply with the king's wishes, it was because he had added nothing significant to the chapters which Frederick had already read. His political missions, his travels, L'histoire générale, and other projects demanded his undivided attention, and Le Siècle was low on the list of priorities. He had no inclination to go back to the work which had caused him so much heartbreak in 1739.

1743 nevertheless marked a resurgence of interest in the history of Louis XIV, as Voltaire was again documenting himself. A letter to Odet Joseph de Vaux de Giry in February seems to indicate this: "J'ai passé mon temps dans l'obscurité à étudier un peu de physique, à rassembler des mémoires pour l'histoire de l'esprit humain, et surtout pour celle d'un siècle dans lequel l'esprit humain s'est perfectionné; j'y travaille tous les jours, sinon avec succès, du moins avec une assiduité que m'inspire l'amour de ma patrie."[102] Should one conclude from this that Voltaire was adding to the text? He could possibly be collecting anecdotes on Louis XIV, since on December 18, 1746, Frederick

expressed his gratitude to Voltaire for the anecdotes dispatched: "Les anecdotes sur La vie privée de Louis 14 m'ont faites (sic) bien plaisir quoiqu'à la Vérité je n'y aye pas trouvé des choses Nouvelles."[103] Some of these petits faits were later to find their place in the chapters of anecdotes of Le Siècle, but were also probably the first draft of Les Anecdotes sur Louis XIV, published in an edition of Voltaire's works by Walther in 1748, as described by Francis Crowley in his article 'The Walther Edition of Voltaire' (1748),[104] and by Bengesco (2129). Voltaire himself sheds some light on the edition in a letter to Madame Denis of December 24, 1748: "Je vous suis bien obligé d'avoir parlé à ce Richmond. L'édition de Dresde vaut un peu mieux que la sienne. Je compte la mettre incessamment dans votre bibliothèque, mais commence à être las de mes ouvrages."[105] The second volume of this edition contains, amongst other things, five chapters of l'Essai sur le siècle de Louis XIV and the Anecdotes sur Louis XIV. The same anecdotes form part of the Mélanges in Moland's edition,[106] and comprise many historiettes in their original form which are simply reproduced by Voltaire in Le Siècle.[107] The text at times hardly undergoes any transformation; e.g. the anecdote of Madame la Dauphine,[108] and of the Comte de Marivaux.[109] It would also appear that before 1750, Voltaire had drafted the main lines of chapter XXIX on internal reforms which are present in these anecdotes.[110] There is no doubt that the anecdotes in question constitute an important first draft of chapters XXV-XXVIII of Le Siècle; they were probably the same ones sent to Frederick and seem to have been written, in part at least, as early as 1743, when Voltaire showed renewed enthusiasm for the

work. We know that he had been actively collecting a pot-pourri of such petits faits from 1720 onwards, and if he published them in 1748, it was yet another attempt to test public opinion. In a letter to Richelieu on August 31, 1751, he confirmed this fact: "Mais je me flatte de ne point déplaire, surtout après avoir sondé les esprits et préparé l'opinion publique par le commencement de cet essay sur Louis 14, et par les anecdotes, où je dis des choses très fortes..."[111] In 1743, it is likely that Voltaire had made up his mind to proceed further with Le Siècle, but apart from the anecdotes, he did little to implement this decision.

Between 1743 and 1750, Voltaire had neither the time nor the incentive to complete Le Siècle. The courtier, trying to curry favour with the court, could not run the risk of offending Louis XV by praising his predecessor. Instead, he devoted all his energies to glorifying the ruling monarch in such works as La Princesse de Navarre and Les Evénements de 1744. On April 1st, 1745, Voltaire was appointed 'Historiographe du roi'; it was neither the time nor the place to erect a monument to the glory of Louis XIV. Moreover, he took it upon himself to write a history of Louis XV's campaigns.[112] By November 1745, he was completely absorbed in L'Histoire de la guerre de 1741. The author of the Commentaire Historique remarks that in 1745, Voltaire resumed work on Le Siècle, but that he was distracted by other historical projects dedicated to Louis XV: "L'histoire étant devenue un de ses devoirs, il commença quelque chose du 'Siècle de Louis XIV'; mais il différa de le continuer; il écrivit la campagne de 1744, et la mémorable bataille de Fontenoy."[113]

Up to 1749, Voltaire was almost entirely engrossed in the history of Louis XV; at Versailles he worked, in his own words, as hard as a "commis de bureau". To Cideville on January 7, 1746, he described his painstaking research: "Je n'étais point à La cour, je n'étais qu'à Versailles où je travaillais à extraire dans les bureaux de la guerre, les mémoires qui peuvent servir à l'histoire dont je suis chargé."[114] He spent the whole year delving into archives at Versailles, examining letters, documents, and although he appeared to have put Le Siècle out of his mind, some benefit might have accrued from this assiduous documentation. Longchamp informs us that at Lunéville towards the end of 1748, and at the start of 1749, Voltaire was still working on the history of Louis XV's campaigns: "Il continua l'ouvrage qu'il avait commencé sur les événements du règne de Louis XV; il en était à la guerre de 1741."[115] Thus during his short career as the 'historiographe du roi', Voltaire mustered all his strength to celebrate the reigning monarch. Frederick never failed to remind him of Le Siècle, but in vain. It is noticeable that only when he felt disillusioned with the present age did Voltaire turn with nostalgia to the previous one - after the tribulations of the Lettres Philosophiques in the 1730's and after his disappointing exit from the court in the 1750's.

The death of Emilie precipitated his departure from France, and Voltaire made his way to the court of Frederick, where his first task was to put the finishing touches to the historical work he had planned some twenty years before. It would not be unreasonable to conclude that the period 1738-1750, with the possible exception of 1743, was an entirely fruitless one as regards

Le Siècle. When he set off for Berlin on June 28, 1750, Voltaire took with him in his luggage nineteen chapters of military history and the first draft of the chapters of anecdotes - a shorter version of this part of the text. But he must also have had a considerable amount of material pertaining to the later chapters, notably to the arts. How much by way of notes was lost during the constant travels of the writer is of course pure speculation.

Visiting on the way the battlefields of Fontenoy, Raucoux and Laufeld, Voltaire finally reached Potsdam on July 21,1750. There followed a honeymoon period, for Frederick and other members of the royal family offered the writer a royal welcome.[116] He read the Dictionnaire of Bayle aloud to Queen Christine, won the affection of the queen mother and had his plays performed by members of the royal family. He was given the apartment of the Maréchal de Saxe, was made 'chambellan', and was awarded a pension of 20,000 livres. But in addition to financial security, Prussia provided the ideal atmosphere for him to have the peace of mind to complete his 'sultane favorite'. This newly found enthusiasm for Le Siècle seems to have been due partly, at least, to his reading of Pellisson's Histoire de Louis XIV, according to d'Argenson's Mémoires: "La lecture de Pellisson (Histoire de Louis XIV, April, 1749, 3 vols. in-12) vient de rendre à Voltaire tout son enthousiasme pour Louis XIV; il va reprendre, avec un nouveau feu, l'histoire des arts sous ce règne qu'il a déjà fort avancée."[117] Although there are echoes of this source in Le Siècle, Voltaire does not seem to have made extensive use of it in the end.[118] After the suppression of the Recueil de pièces

fugitives, he had vowed never to finish the work in France, and several of his letters from Potsdam stressed that a historian should only attempt to compose a history of his nation abroad. To Madame Denis, Voltaire explained: "C'est précisément parce que je suis en pays étranger que je suis plus propre à être historien, j'aurais moins l'air de la flatterie, la liberté dont je jouis, donnerait plus de poids à la vérité. Ma chère enfant, pour écrire l'histoire de son pays, il faut être hors de son pays."[119] Voltaire had taken with him a number of extracts and notes which he had collected over the years; to Madame Denis, he went on to say: "J'ai apporté ici heureusement tous mes extraits sur Louis XIV. Je ferai venir de Leipsick les livres dont j'aurai besoin, et je finirai ici ce Siècle de Louis XIV, que peut-être je n'aurai jamais fini à Paris."[120] In Potsdam, his official duties were limited; he helped Frederick to correct his works and had the leisure to conclude Le Siècle.

Without wasting any time, Voltaire went to work; he read and wrote all day and a good part of the night. On November 8, 1750, he ordered a number of works pertaining to the 'histoire des mœurs' from Georg Conrad Walther, the king's librarian:

"Les révolutions de France de La Hode. 3 vol.
Du sistème, avec la vie du régent. 6 vol.
Négociations de Destrades, Colbert, Davaux. 9 volumes,"

works which allowed him to revise the existing chapters of Le Siècle and to complete the survey of Louis XIV's campaigns. And he added: "Tout cela m'est nécessaire pr. l'histoire du siècle de Louis 14."[121] On December 12th, he had made enormous progress, and all his waking hours were devoted to Le Siècle.[122] Despite a

great deal of stomach pain - although one has to take Voltaire's complaints with a pinch of salt -, the composition gathered greater momentum, and on December 26, 1750, he informed his niece that he had moved to Berlin to work in peace.[123] It would appear that Voltaire's first task in Prussia was to revise the chapters already drafted; to Madame Denis he described his schedule: "Je continuerai paisiblement à travailler à mon Siècle de Louis XIV, et je donnerai à mon aise les batailles de Nervinde et d'Hocsted."[124] These are included in chapter XVIII of the 1751 edition, which we know to have been already written in 1735. Before moving on to the later chapters, Voltaire seems to have first consolidated and corrected the existing manuscript.

The year 1751 marked the culmination of years of hard work for the historian, despite a law-suit brought by the Jew Hirsch or Hirschell, which began on January 4th, and which made relations between Frederick and Voltaire cooler, and caused the latter much disquiet. However, his ardour for Le Siècle did not abate, and on January 18, 1751, he was in a position to announce to Darget that he had completed the 'tableau des affaires générales', i.e. the first 23 chapters of the 1751 edition: "J'ai déjà achevé ici l'histoire de Louis XIV pour ce qui regarde les affaires générales. J'ai assez de matériaux pour faire au Marquisat la partie de la religion. J'achèverai d'ailleurs d'y corriger une nouvelle édition à Dresde. Aussi j'aurai la plus grande consolation dans les malheurs, c'est le travail."[125] For, in Voltaire's own words in Zadig, 'la lune de miel' had been followed by 'la lune de l'absinthe'.[126] He sought solace from Frederick's coolness in his work and now lived in the Marquisat, a villa

acquired by the king of Prussia in 1748. The philosopher was half-thinking of leaving Prussia, so that it became imperative to finish Le Siècle as quickly as possible. He stuck to his task with grim determination, and each day pushed the work further, i.e. the chapters on 'les mœurs'.[127] The difficulty of obtaining the required sources did not prove to be insurmountable, thanks to Walther, while Wade has indicated that Voltaire received a number of volumes from the Bibliothèque du Roi in Paris.[128] This is confirmed by his letter to Walther in March 1751: "Je suis fort occupé de l'histoire de Louis 14. Mais cet ouvrage ne sera pas si tôt près (sic). J'attends des manuscrits de Paris. J'ai encore besoin de quelques livres mais surtout j'ai besoin de temps pour rendre l'ouvrage moins indigne de l'impression."[129]

It is not easy to determine whether the chapters on religion were written before those on the arts. According to Voltaire's letter to Darget already quoted,[130] he had the relevant material to deal with the religious disputes, and in the original plan, these were to precede the chapters on the arts and follow the chapters of anecdotes, while according to the Recueil de pièces fugitives, they were to follow immediately on the chronological survey of military history. The sources ordered by Voltaire concerned the arts, and it is not inconceivable that he would have waited for these before attempting this section.

In the meantime, it seems likely that he would have devoted his attention to the religious disputes. On April 13, 1751, he asked Walther to send the following works: "J'ay besoin des quatre tomes des 'Superstitions du Père Lebrun.' Si vous avez ce livre à Dresde ou à Leipsik, envoyez le moy

incessamment. Voyez aussi je vous prie si vous n'auriez point quelque livre qui ait raport au siècle de Louis 14, soit pour la guerre, la marine, soit pour le commerce, les finances, la relligion et les arts, et ayez la bonté de m'en donner avis car il me faut tout consulter."[131] The work of Lebrun was used for chapter XXIX of the 1751 edition, while the other sources were intended for chapter XXVIII of the first edition on internal reforms, and chapter XXIX of the final edition. It is probable that Voltaire composed the chapters on Louis's private life first,[132] for, as we saw, he had already published a first draft of the anecdotes in 1748. Then he would have gone on to write the chapters on religion, on internal reforms and finance, before finally addressing himself to those on the arts and sciences. But it must be said that no conclusive evidence exists that the chapters were composed in any fixed order, for Voltaire had a remarkable ability for working on several things at once.

On May 4, 1751, he proudly proclaimed to d'Argental that the 'magnum opus' was almost complete.[133] The same day, he announced to Walther that the end was in sight and that he awaited the volumes promised to him by the librarian to finish Le Siècle.[134] He was forced to interrupt work several times because the requested volumes did not arrive.[135] The beginning of 1751 was thus of vital importance in the history of the text, and had it not been for the difficulty in obtaining sources, one feels that Le Siècle would have been completed even sooner. Bourgeois's assertion that the work was almost complete in 1738, and all that remained to do in 1750, was to reshape and revise it, is consequently unfounded.

At last, in July 1751, Voltaire was able to invite Henning, the king's printer, to take charge of the publication. The name of the author was to be omitted and the work published under the name of Francheville, a fellow Frenchman who had settled in Berlin in 1742 at Frederick's invitation, although the ruse failed in the event to deceive the reading public of Europe. During the months that followed, Voltaire took great pains to supervise the printing of the first edition closely and to proof-read the printed sheets sent by Henning.

Moreover, once the edition was well under way, Voltaire did not remain idle; he constantly asked for his friends' and correspondents' impressions and did not shun positive criticisms, as our next chapter will show. This forms an essential part of his method of work as a historian, for long before the text was ready, he had decided that this would be by no means the end of the road for Le Siècle. From July 1751 till the end of the year, he dispatched sections of the printed text to many of his loyal correspondents; to d'Argental he declared on September 22nd that he would not hesitate to correct the work, if necessary.[136] And Collini, his secretary at the time, indicates that Voltaire was at work simultaneously on the first and second editions.[137] For no sooner was the first edition printed than the historian was planning a second one enriched with new material passed on to him by devoted correspondents and acquaintances, and duly revised in the light of their criticisms.[138] The first edition was quickly printed and corrected, so much so that on September 7, 1751, Voltaire was in a position to inform Hénault of its imminent sale.[139] P. Conlon has published two letters from Madame de

Graffigny to Maupertuis which make it possible to ascertain with a certain degree of accuracy the approximate date of its publication.[140] In the first letter of November 25, 1751, Madame de Graffigny asks Maupertuis to send her a copy of Le Siècle for l'abbé Perault. According to the second letter, Maupertuis has replied that the edition would not be ready until December. It is thus only in the last month of 1751 that the first edition was ready to be put on the market. Voltaire offered the 2,400 copies to Walther for retailing at the reasonable price of 2000 écus, as an expression of gratitude to the librarian who had so often come to his rescue by providing the necessary sources. Le Siècle, conceived twenty years earlier, was available to the public in the early months of 1752, and had on its title-page: 'Le Siècle de Louis XIV, publié par M. de Francheville, etc. Berlin, Henning, 1751, 2 vols in-12.'

From the preceding remarks, one may conclude that Le Siècle was most probably planned in England in the 1720's, although it was first clearly alluded to in 1732, that between 1735 and 1737, nineteen chapters of military history in the first edition were composed, that between 1738 and 1750, with the exception of a few anecdotes, Voltaire achieved very little. Only in Prussia, in 1750, did he assiduously and seriously set himself the task of completing the work, by drafting the remaining chapters of the chronological survey and the 'tableau des mœurs'. The list of works borrowed from the Bibliothèque du Roi, published by Wade, confirms our findings. It becomes clear that Voltaire documented himself fully and systematically for Le Siècle between 1735 and 1738, the volumes borrowed between 1744 and 1750 being relevant

BENGESCO 1178

SIECLE, 1st Edn.

BERLIN (Henning)

2 vols in-12

1751

LE SIECLE DE LOUIS XIV.

PUBLIÉ

Par M. DE FRANCHEVILLE *conseiller aulique de sa Majesté, & membre de l'académie roiale des sciences & belles lettres de prusse.*

TOME PREMIER.

A BERLIN,
Chez C. F. HENNING, Imprimeur du Roi.

M. DCC. LI.

to the Histoire générale. It was only around 1750 that Voltaire displayed renewed interest in Louis XIV.[141] There is, moreover, some internal evidence in the text itself to suggest that by 1740, Voltaire had gone no further than the battle of Turin, as we have claimed. For in chapter XIX of the 1751 edition (XX of Pomeau's edition), Voltaire writes concerning Gibraltar: "Elle est encore aux Anglais dans le temps que j'écris" (P 836). A note appended in the 1756 edition, gives the date as 1740. Voltaire's memory is slightly faulty here, since the chapter was written in 1737.[142] That he made no further progress after 1737, is also evident from a reference in the next chapter (i.e. XX of the 1751 edition and XXI of Pomeau's edition), to the Queen of Hungary's failure to capture Dauphiné: "De nos jours, les troupes de la reine de Hongrie y échouèrent encore" (P 850). Voltaire is alluding here to the war of Austrian Succession which started in 1746, during which time the queen of Hungary was Maria Teresa. This would seem to indicate that this chapter was drafted in Prussia, as indeed we have maintained. Further evidence is provided by an allusion in the same chapter to France's attempts to put James II's grandson, Charles Stuart, back on the English throne in 1744: "Cette entreprise fut entièrement semblable à celle que nous avons vue, en 1744, en faveur du petit-fils de Jacques II" (P 852). It is, of course, possible that Voltaire added the references in 1751 when he was revising the chapters already written, but taken in conjunction with the author's statements in the Correspondence and Madame de Graffigny's letters,[143] these allusions help to confirm the claim that by 1737, Voltaire had only reached the

battle of Turin, after which Le Siècle remained virtually at a standstill until 1750.

The Notebooks, besides, provide additional proof of Voltaire's lack of interest in Louis XIV between 1740 and 1750. So it is that the first Paris Notebooks dating from about 1740 to 1750,[144] bear little relevance to Le Siècle. The vast majority of entries, with few exceptions,[145] show clearly Voltaire's preoccupation with L'Histoire générale, i.e. L'Essai sur les mœurs, in this decade, and relate, amongst other things, to luxury through the ages, monetary values under various predecessors of Louis XIV, commerce, the history of the theatre in the Middle Ages, the Inquisition and so on. On the other hand, the Piccini Notebooks, which, according to Besterman, go back for the most part to the period 1750-55, indicate a revival of interest in the history of Louis XIV. Voltaire refers to the Mémoires de Mademoiselle,[146] and to those of Madame de Motteville.[147] Both memoirs were consulted by the historian before 1750; Voltaire's copy of the Memoirs of Mademoiselle (BV 2507) is the 1730 edition by Bernard, and his copy in his private library, now in Leningrad, of Madame de Motteville's Memoirs (BV 2530) dates from 1739. But it is very probable that Voltaire re-read both sources in Prussia.[148] One also finds in these Notebooks an allusion to de Retz and a remark on William III's character,[149] as well as the first draft of Voltaire's pronouncement in Le Siècle (P 685) on the qualities of a great minister: "Ce n'est pas la supériorité du génie qui fait le grand ministre; c'est le caractère et le tempérament; c'est un corps infatigable, et du courage dans l'esprit."[150]

Thus it is that Voltaire's notes lend some weight to the view that the original manuscript of the first edition of Le Siècle was composed during two intense periods of intellectual activity, from 1735 to 1737, and from 1750 to 1751, i.e. over some five or six years altogether, if one includes the anecdotes drafted in 1743. Voltaire never ceased documenting himself and searching for new material, even when other literary activities and occupations during the intervening period, distracted him from his cherished ambition of erecting a lasting monument to the glory of Louis XIV's age. But Le Siècle was to remain a life-long task for him; following the publication of the first edition, he never stopped revising, improving, and adding to the work in new editions which occupied the historian of Louis XIV at regular intervals during the rest of his literary career.

Chapter I: Notes

1. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.9.
2. Ibid., p.10.
3. see chapter III.
4. D 669.
5. D 488.
6. Geoffroy Murray in 'Voltaire, The Protean Gardener', Studies, vol. LXIX, p.85, states that it was Voltaire assuming the persona of his secretary to write his autobiography.
7. M, I, p.74.
8. D 4595.
9. Notebooks, p.17.
10. Ibid., p.55.
11. see e.g.(P 141) Marlborough's meeting with Charles XII.
12. P 1239. See also(P 1255) where Voltaire claims to have read the said Mémoires.
13. Notebooks, pp.67-68.
14. Ibid., p.72.
15. Ibid., p.73.
16. see also (ibid., p.78) the anecdote on Vivonne; P 919.
17. Voltaire, Oeuvres Inédites, Paris, Champion, 1914, I, p.273.
18. P 56.
19. see chapter III.
20. Taylor edition, p.23.
21. Ibid., p.23.
22. Ibid., p.29.
23. Ibid., p.35.
24. In Voltaire and the English, Studies, 1979, p.14.

25. see Voltaire's letter to Thiériot, D 488.

26. D 526.

27. Introduction to Le Siècle, p.v.

28. Oeuvres Historiques, chronology, p.26.

29. see P. Conlon,'Voltaire's Literary Career from 1728 to 1750', Studies, vol. XIV, p.40; and N.R. Johnson,'Louis XIV and the age of the Enlightenment', Studies, vol. CLXXII, p.320: "The authorities detected immediately a thinly disguised criticism of Louis XV."

30. D 576.

31. D 584.

32. The Intellectual Development of Voltaire, Princeton, 1969, p.348.

33. D 716.

34. see Orieux, Jean, Voltaire, Paris, 1966, p.209.

35. The Intellectual Development of Voltaire, p.267.

36. op.cit., p.vii.

37. D 837.

38. The Search for a new Voltaire, p.64 ff.

39. Ibid., p.67.

40. D 875.

41. D 887.

42. see the Cambridge Notebooks, Besterman, p.110.

43. D 885.

44. D 895.

45. see Voltaire to Thiériot, August 15, 1735, D 889.

46. D 906.

47. D 911.

48. September 24, 1735, D 918.

49. see Voltaire to Thiériot, December 19, 1735, D 966.

50. September 20, 1735, D 915. See also Voltaire to Formont, D 916.

51. D 978.

52. D 984.

53. On this quarrel, see Conlon, op.cit., p.180.

54. see Desnoiresterres, Voltaire à Cirey, p.93.

55. see D 1311.

56. D 1376.

57. D 1409.

58. P 1239.

59. Note to D 1409.

60. The Intellectual Development of Voltaire, p.351.

61. see Caussy, op.cit., I, p.277.

62. D 1484.

63. February 15, 1738, D 1452.

64. D 1482.

65. D 1535.

66. D 1536.

67. D 1552.

68. D 1642.

69. op.cit., p.xii.

70. op.cit., I, p.276.

71. D 1677.

72. D 1686.

73. D 1681.

74. op.cit., p.xiii.

75. D 1756.

76. see chapter IV.

77. D 1923.

78. D 1910.

79. D 1956.

80. D 2135.

81. D 1987.

82. D 1933.

83. D 1952.

84. D 1962.

85. Bengesco, 2193.

86. see Conlon, op.cit., p.50.

87. D 2038.

88. D 2049.

89. see Desnoiresterres, Voltaire à Cirey, p.263.

90. Paris, Bray, 1867, p.149.

91. D 2135.

92. D 2137.

93. D 2148.

94. D 2177.

95. D 2138, D 2159.

96. D 2182.

97. M, I, p.9.

98. D 2591.

99. D 2596.

100. D 2600.

101. D 2619.

102. D 2724.

103. D 3448.

104. Modern Language Notes, vol. 69, May 1954, pp.331-334.

105. Lettres d'amour à Mme Denis, ed. Besterman, 1957, letter 124, p.165.

106. M, XXIII, p.233 ff.

107. see Mélanges, M, XXIII, p.236: Comédies à la cour / P 908; Mélanges, p.237 / P 958: Louis's parody of Quinault; Mélanges, p.237 / P 962: Créqui's remarks about Versailles.

108. Mélanges, p.239 / P 957.

109. Mélanges, p.239 / P 958.

110. Mélanges, p.243.

111. D 4561.

112. see D 3191.

113. M, I, p.89.

114. D 3306.

115. Longchamp and Wagnière, Mémoires, vol. II, p.224.

116. see Orieux, op.cit., p.392.

117. Paris, Baudoin frères, 1825, p.445.

118. see chapter III.

119. D 4251, Potsdam, October 28, 1750.

120. Ibid.

121. D 4273.

122. Voltaire to the Margrave of Bayreuth, D 4295.

123. D 4307.

124. Ibid.

125. D 4354.

126. Voltaire, Contes, ed. Green, p.28.

127. D 4374.

128. The Search for a new Voltaire, p.68.

129. D 4430.

130. D 4354.

131. D 4441.

132. see D 4438, which contains references to La Vallière and Mme de Montespan.

133. D 4458.

134. D 4459.

135. see D 4481, Voltaire to Walther, May 29, 1751.

136. D 4577.

137. Relation de mon séjour auprès de Voltaire, Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, pp.31-32.

138. see chapter II.

139. D 4566.

140. Studies, vol. II, 1956, pp.279-283.

141. see Wade, The Search for a new Voltaire, pp.64-69.

142. see D 1409.

143. see e.g. D 1686.

144. see Besterman's introduction, p.29.

145. e.g.(p.468) a reference to Colbert's importation of lace to Paris; Le Père Labat's claim that the façade of the Louvre was by Bernini;(p.473) an allusion to Sir William Temple.

146. Besterman, p.554.

147. Ibid., p.560.

148. see chapter III for a discussion of both sources.

149. p.553 and p.562 respectively.

150. p.507.

Chapter II

Contemporary Reactions to Le Siècle de Louis XIV

Chapter II

Contemporary Reactions to Le Siècle de Louis XIV

No sooner was the first edition ready than Voltaire set out eagerly to prepare a new one, for he firmly believed that the Berlin edition of 1751 could be adequately revised and improved in the light of new material and contemporary reactions to it. To Thibouville, on April 15, [1752],[1] he asserted that the first edition was an "essai informe", although one must not take such comments entirely at their face value, as it is more than likely that Voltaire was deliberately exaggerating its tentative nature, so as to forestall any possible ensuing criticisms. The second edition was, like the first, offered to Walther on January 15, [1752] for 1500 écus;[2] in the same letter, Voltaire advised the king's librarian to dispatch copies of the first edition to Silesia, Poland, Geneva and Holland, to prevent any possible pirate editions. There were, in all, 3000 copies of the 1751 edition, and of these, not one, at least officially, was intended to be reprinted and put on sale in France. In a previous letter to Walther, Voltaire wrote in this respect:

> J'ay donc pris le party de ne point envoyer d'exemplaires en France. Ce n'est pas moy qui ay le privilège impérial, et celuy de Prusse, tout est sous le nom de mr de Francheville. Il y a, comme je vous l'ay mandé, trois mille exemplaires de tirez dont quatrevingt ou à peu près peuvent être ou gâtez ou incomplets.[3]

At this stage, Voltaire seemed intent on distributing copies amongst his correspondents, acquaintances and friends to gauge their impressions of the work.

Even prior to the publication of Le Siècle, this machinery had been set into motion; twelve sheets of the printed text had been sent to Mme Denis on September 20, [1751],[4] with the instruction that they should be passed on to Malesherbes; the first volume had been dispatched to d'Argental in October 1751, and Voltaire added: "Je vous supplieray d'examiner un peu scrupuleusement le premier tome de Louis 14 que vous aurez probablement bientôt."[5] Likewise, he had asked the Duc de Richelieu to peruse what had been entrusted to Mme Denis.[6] On December 25, 1751, Voltaire informed d'Argental that the latter was to receive "deux volumes tout farcis de corrections... Vous ferez, vous et messieurs de Choiseul et de Chauvelin, comme vous pourrez. Mais je vous conjure de lire fort vite."[7] In the process of forwarding selected copies of Le Siècle, it would appear that some were lost, as a letter of January 8, 1752 to d'Argental indicates: "Il s'est certainement perdu un paquet qui contenait des exemplaires du Siècle de Louis XIV, corrigés à la main."[8] On the whole, however, printed copies arrived safely; Baron Johann Hartwigg Ernst von Bernstoff was to receive two copies "corrigez à la main;"[9] recipients included Ulrica of Sweden,[10] the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha,[11] and Mme de Pompadour.[12] This well-orchestrated publicity campaign extended across the Channel; thus 500 copies were dispatched to Falkener: "J'en envoye cinq cent à un de mes amis de Londres, ce débit ne passera point par les mains des libraires, c'est une affaire particulière," Voltaire declared to Walther.[13] Voltaire saw to it that one hundred copies were distributed amongst a close circle of friends, and the remaining 2,400 were put on the market at the cost of two richdalers each, i.e. 3 francs, 15 sols, or at

least two florins each. Six copies, in the event, were addressed to Mme Denis on December 24, 1751.[14] Amongst others, Darget, the Président Hénault, d'Argental, Thibouville, the Countess of Bentinck, Choiseul, Richelieu,[15] Formont, Malesherbes, Roques,[16] La Condamine, Frederick,[17] Cardinal de Noailles,[18] d'Argenson,[19] Mme du Deffand, the Margrave Sophia Frederika Wilhema of Bayreuth, Charles Bordes,[20] the Duchess of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel,[21] were duly provided with their own copies of the 1751 edition. Consequently, the first edition was fairly widely distributed in various countries of Europe, and even found its way into France, when Voltaire's acquaintances and friends took it upon themselves to circulate the work among a restricted number of readers in the early months of 1752.

But the author remained conscious at all times of the enormous problems of ever publishing Le Siècle in France. Louis XV would not have looked kindly on a eulogy of his predecessor, as the Recueil de pièces fugitives had shown in 1739; Voltaire was out of favour at court, and he was fully aware, too, of the inflexible attitude of the censor Daguesseau. That he remained clearly distressed by those obstacles, is shown by his letter to Richelieu of August 31, 1751:

> Dites moy je vous prie monseigneur si je me trompe. J'ay pensé qu'il était fort difficile de faire imprimer dans son pays l'histoire de son pays. Mr Daguesseau tirannisait la littérature quand je quittay Paris, et vous sentez bien qu'il n'y avait pas un petit censeur de livres qui ne se fût fait un mérite et un devoir de mutiler mon ouvrage, ou de le supprimer.[22]

The danger, Voltaire went on to declare, lay in the historian's duty to judge kings, generals, the Parlements and even the Church:

> Je me suis constitué de mon autorité privée juge des rois, des généraux, des parlements, de l'église, des sectes qui la partageaient. Voylà ma charge. Tout barbouilleur de papier, qui se fait historien en use ainsi. Ajoutez à ce fardau, celuy d'être obligé de rapporter des anecdotes très délicates, qu'on ne peut pas supprimer.[23]

He is perhaps referring, in this last sentence, to such anecdotes as those pertaining to the secret marriage of Mme de Maintenon to Louis XIV. Moreover, clearly such controversial subjects as the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the religious disputes, the unwise conduct of the French government during the war of 1701, were unlikely to meet with the censor's approval. Yet, the same letter to Richelieu betrays Voltaire's earnest desire to win Louis XV's good-will: "Mais je me flatte que si le roy avait le temps de lire cet ouvrage, il n'en serait pas mécontent. Je crois surtout que Madame de Pompadour pourrait ne pas désaprouver la manière dont je parle de mesdames de la Valière, de Montespan, de Maintenon dont tant d'historiens ont parlé avec une grossièreté révoltante, et avec des préjugez outrageants."[24]

Despite these obvious difficulties, Voltaire never ceased to hope that his friends and acquaintances might be able to sway the authorities in his favour. There was never any question of obtaining a <u>privilège</u>, and the historian entreated Mme Denis not to seek one:

> Point de privilège, s'il vous plaît, on se moquerait de moi. Un privilège n'est qu'une permission de flatter, scellée en cire jaune. Il ne faudrait qu'un privilège et une approbation pour décrier mon ouvrage. Je n'ai fait ma cour qu'à la vérité, je ne dédie le livre qu'à elle. L'approbation qu'il me faut est celle des honnêtes gens, et des lecteurs désintéressés.[25]

But it is doubtful whether Voltaire really believed this; while he would have been only too glad to obtain official permission, he showed himself to be a pragmatist and a realist, who hoped that, in the first place, the authorities might turn a blind eye to the clandestine publication of Le Siècle in France, which he was probably planning. Those protestations to Madame Denis should be viewed in the light of Voltaire's repeated attempts to enlist the help of such important figures as the Président Hénault, as Lion remarks in his book: "Voltaire qui ne songe qu'à obtenir l'autorisation d'imprimer le Siècle en France et aussi à revenir à Paris, Voltaire qui a besoin du président et de ses amis, ne sait comment le remercier..."[26] For to Hénault, on January 28, 1752, Voltaire clearly expressed the hope that he would obtain permission in the end to publish Le Siècle in France:

> J'ai envoyé à Paris le premier tome corrigé selon vos vues. Je me flatte qu'on ne s'opposera pas à l'impression d'un ouvrage qui est, autant que je l'ai pu, l'éloge de la patrie, et qui va inonder l'Europe.[27]

This is, indeed, confirmed by a letter to d'Argental on February 6, [1752]:

> Je ne sçai si les exemplaires qui vous sont enfin parvenus sont corrigez ou non, mais il y en a quatre entre les mains de Madame Denis, où il y a plus de corrections que de feuillets. C'est celuy-là qui est destiné pour l'impression, en cas que le président Hénault ait, comme je l'espère, la vertu et le courage de dire à M. Dargenson qu'une histoire n'est point un panégirique.[28]

Voltaire's coquetteries to Hénault were of no avail, since it was not in the power of the Président to obtain a privilège for Le Siècle.[29] However, Voltaire did not give up all hope, and

all the indications are that he was actively engaged in making arrangements for an edition to be published in France; he contacted the publisher Lambert on February 7, 1752, to propose such an edition:

> Ce serait pour moi une consolation si vous pouviez faire une jolie édition du Siècle de Louis XIV, que l'on commence à débiter en Allemagne... Je ne doute que vous n'alliez trouver madame de Nise et que vous ne fassiez les démarches les plus vives de tout côté pour obtenir au moins une permission tacite qu'il serait bien étrange qu'on vous refusât.[30]

Voltaire was, by now, evidently resigned to the fact that he would not obtain official permission for such an edition. His fears were to prove justified, as even a tacit permission was refused, in spite of Hénault's and Malesherbes's endeavours. On March 11, 1752, Voltaire expressed his profound disillusionment to d'Argental:

> Pourquoi diable arrêter le Siècle de Louis 14 dans le temps qu'on imprime chez Granger les lettres juives? Il est assez bizarre que l'empereur comme je l'aye dit,[31] me donne un privilège pour dire que Léopold était un poltron, et que je n'aye pas en France la permission tacite de prouver que Louis 14 était un grand homme. Franchement cela est indigne.[32]

He was then obviously in a very depressed state of mind and deeply hurt by the attitude of the French authorities. While the reading public of Europe had a chance to assess his work, Voltaire could not be content with this; the real test would come when Frenchmen, whom he still considered to be the leaders in taste and his most informed critics, would applaud his history of Louis XIV. His desire to return covered in glory to his native land

remained unabated throughout his stay in Prussia.

However, resentment soon gave way to a stronger urge to correct and improve the first edition which he felt would do his reputation more harm than good, if published in its imperfect form in France, especially in pirate editions. He frequently pleaded with acquaintances and friends[33] to stop, if at all possible, any pirate reprints of an edition that was full of errors, for he was at the time fully occupied by the preparation of a second edition: "Je fais une nouvelle édition qui sera plus ample d'un quart, et plus curieuse de moitié; et je tâcherai d'empêcher, autant qu'il sera en moi, que la première édition, qui est trop fautive, n'entre en France," he wrote to Formont on April 25, 1752.[34] This smacks of sour grapes, but having failed to obtain even tacit permission, Voltaire geared all his efforts to preventing printers in France from disfiguring his work, and he was looking forward to some future time when the corrected version of Le Siècle would have the blessing of the authorities.

It would appear that the number of copies circulating in France was limited; in his Nouvelles Littéraires de la France of 1752, Pierre Clément declares:

> Il n'y a eu ici que quarante exemplaires et quatre seulement de 'L'Histoire du Siècle de Louis XIV,' par mr de Voltaire... Ils ont couru, et sur les critiques recueillies, l'Auteur fait une nouvelle édition; car c'est son fort que la nouvelle édition, tant à la presse qu'au théâtre; c'est ce qui fait que ses ouvrages sont si corrects.[35]

Furthermore, a letter of Suard to Dussert of August 13, 1752, published by Boiteux, confirms the fact that there were only a small number of copies available in Paris:

> Tu dois avoir ouï parler de son Histoire du Siècle de Louis XIV, ouvrage publié tout récemment. Il y en a fort peu d'exemplaires à Paris; je ne l'ai pas encore vu. L'édition est à Berlin et il faut l'en faire venir; on en dit tout le bien possible.[36]

André Michel Rousseau in L'Angleterre et Voltaire comments on the fact that reactions to Voltaire's second historical work appeared to have been cool in Paris, and quotes John Jeffreys's letter to Philip Yorke, dated May 31, 1752: "The French here speak very slightingly of it and say he /Voltaire/ is wrong in many of his facts, but I look upon those reflections as arising chiefly of pique (sic) and anger at his quitting France."[37] The scarcity of copies circulating in Paris, added to this coolness, would explain the relative silence of French journals and periodicals on the merits and demerits of Le Siècle, following the first edition, as we shall see later.

Nevertheless, Voltaire's repeated pleas to important figures in France and their endeavours could not prevent pirate editions from infiltrating France; there were sixteen of them, stemming either from the copies of the 1751 edition entrusted to Voltaire's correspondents, or from copies smuggled secretly into the France. The text, for example, was printed clandestinely by a libraire of Rouen.[38] Publishers in Europe, moreover, had wasted no time in taking advantage of the new work. As early as December 1751, while Voltaire was busy proof-reading the first edition, rumours were rife that pirate editions were in print in Frankfurt and Breslau. The author himself appears to have had word of these; in a letter to Darget of December 1751, he confessed his dissatisfaction with this state of affairs:

> Mon cher ami, il est bon de connaître la foi germanique. Il y a trois mois que, malgré ses protestations, Henning donna au docteur Houl, professeur à Francfort sur l'Oder, toutes les feuilles imprimées; Houl en a fait la traduction. Depuis ce temps là, un libraire de Breslau, nommé Corn, ami de Henning, fit mettre dans les gazettes allemandes, qu'on devait s'adresser à lui pour avoir mon livre en français et en allemand. Ainsi on me perçait mon tonneau des deux côtés. Houl est arrivé à Berlin; Henning intimidé prétend que ce docteur lui remit hier l'exemplaire et la traduction. Mais si cela est, il faut que Henning me rende, en mains propres, cet exemplaire et cette traduction, avec un certificat, par lequel il doit se rendre garant de l'événement; il faut aussi qu'il fasse ses diligences pour arrêter la vente de l'édition de Corn, auquel il a vendu le même livre.[39]

Voltaire must have had good cause to suspect Henning and Johann Ludwig Uhl of being responsible for the pirate edition, although it is impossible to verify his accusations. He was right to be apprehensive, since in December 1751, the Breslau and Frankfurt editions were put on sale. Voltaire was justifiably angry that these editions were on the market before his own Berlin edition. To Darget, in December 1751, he revealed that he was indifferent to the financial loss and was more perturbed by the fact that the said editions incorporated all the errors which he was trying to eradicate: "Je regrette peu les deux mille écus que cette impression de Berlin peut m'avoir coûtés; mais il est bien triste qu'on ait imprimé l'ouvrage avec toutes les fautes que je m'occupe, jour et nuit, à corriger malgré les maladies dont je suis accablé."[40] It is, of course, difficult to believe Voltaire in this respect, for everyone knows that money mattered a great deal to him. Bengesco

has been unable to trace this pirate edition: "Nous ne reconnaissons qu'une seule édition avec le millésime 1751; c'est l'édition de Berlin."[41] But it did exist, and it seems that Frederick, at the instigation of Voltaire, intervened subsequently to put a stop to it.

After revising the original edition, Voltaire had a second one published by Henning, which bore the date 1752: 'Le Siècle de Louis XIV, publié par M. de Francheville, Etc. Berlin, C.F. Henning, 1752, 2 vols. in-12.' (Ben. 1179). There followed several pirate editions of the text; in Holland at the Hague, an edition bore the name of Benjamin Gibert (Ben. 1181), which conformed to the Berlin edition of 1752. In Paris, an edition, similarly based on the 1752 edition of Berlin (i.e. Ben. 1179), was published with the inscription on its title-page: 'Le Siècle de Louis XIV, publié par M. De Francheville, Etc. Seconde édition (sic) Leipsic (Paris), 4 parties en 2 tomes in-12' (Ben. 1185); it probably originated from copies sent to Mme Denis on December 24, 1751, who may have passed one of these on to a publisher. When Voltaire published the second edition, the Paris edition included the additions he had made to his text. A reprint of the Berlin edition of 1752 was also published at Lyon or Trévoux (Ben. 1183), to which Voltaire alludes in a letter to Hénault of July 25, 1752: "Je suis aussi charmé de votre lettre, mon cher et illustre confrère, que je suis affligé de cette édition de Lyon. Je souhaitais qu'on imprimât Le Siècle de Louis XIV, mais corrigé, mais digne de la nation et de vous."[42] From Leipsig came various other pirate editions, one by Jean Frédéric Gleiditsch (Ben. 1182), and two others unknown to

BERGESCO 1179

SIECLE. BERLN

(HENNING) 2 vols in-12

1752.

(Reprint of 1751 + errata corrected)

vol 1

vol 2 466 p.

THB

LE

SIÉCLE

DE

LOUIS XIV.

PUBLIÉ

Par M. DE FRANCHEVILLE *conseiller aulique de sa Majesté, & membre de l'académie roiale des sciences & belles lettres de prusse.*

TOME PREMIER.

A BERLIN,

Chez C. F. HENNING, Imprimeur du Roi.

M. DCC. LII.

Bengesco and listed by Besterman, bearing the date 1752.[43] Other editions are known to have been published in Britain; e.g. one by Hamilton, Balfour and Neill (Edinburgh, 1752), based on the Berlin edition of 1752 (Ben. 1184).

At the instigation of Voltaire himself, Falkener was to contact a publisher for an English and a French edition to be printed in England. In Dodsley, he found one, as he reported to Voltaire on August 13, 1751: "He proposes having your work translated here and which cannot be avoided as soon as it gets abroad, but by having it first and by the property which will appear in Him from the title page, He would have printed, He says He shall have some advantage in point of time and his brethren of the trade will be kept in some bounds with regard to a new Edition."[44] André Michel Rousseau, in L'Angleterre et Voltaire,[45] has shed further light on this English edition, which was based on one of the 500 copies dispatched to Falkener and is said to have earned Voltaire 94 livres. Moreover, H.B. Evans in his list of Voltaire editions published in England, includes two from Dodsley; the first with the title: 'Le Siècle de Louis XIV etc. Tome premier et second, chez R. Dodsley, à la Tête de Tully en Pallmall, M.DCC.LII.'[46] Voltaire expressed his reservations to Falkener on August 22, 1752, about this reprint of what he considered to be the faulty 1751 edition.[47] Dodsley also printed a de luxe edition of Le Siècle in quarto, based on the same 1751 edition,[48] which was sold by subscription on June 11, 1752, for 16 shillings.[49] Voltaire remained apprehensive about this edition for the reasons given above.[50] As for the English translation of Le Siècle, published by Dodsley, there were two editions, one on

LE

SIECLE

DE

LOUIS XIV.

PUBLIÉ

Par M. DE FRANCHEVILLE

Conseiller aulique de sa Majesté, & membre de l'académie roiale des sciences & belles lettres de Prusse.

TOME PREMIER.

À LONDRES:

Chez R. Dodsley, à la Tête de Tully en Pallmall.

M.DCC.LII.

July 12, 1752;[51] the other on 31 October.[52] The translation was duly announced in the Gentleman's Magazine of July 1752. Another translation is known to have been published in Dublin by George Falkener in 1752, probably based on a copy sent to Sir Everard Falkener by Voltaire.[53]

Our purpose in this chapter is not to list all the pirate editions which followed the publication of the Berlin edition of 1751, but only to show the widespread interest aroused by Le Siècle in Europe. For in spite of Voltaire's assertion in the Supplément - "Les éditions nombreuses d'un livre dans sa nouveauté ne prouvent jamais que la curiosité du public, et non le mérite de l'ouvrage" (P 1230) - one cannot help feeling that he is guilty here of false modesty, and that he was fully aware of the fact that Le Siècle had caught the imagination of the reading public in Europe. Although it is fair to say that various publishers were basically motivated by the lure of financial gain, Le Siècle was widely read and quickly bought. Was Voltaire satisfied with this general acknowledgement of the work's importance? To d'Argental, he admitted that he was not at all surprised that the history of Louis XIV had aroused the curiosity of the European public at large.[54] For all that, he remained apprehensive about the fact that the pirate editions were all reprints of 51 which he was in the process of revising. He made a point of seeking additional and new material from all quarters for the second edition; to d'Argental, he declared on May 3, [1752]: "Je quête des critiques de toutte l'Europe. Je vous assure que j'ay déjà une bonne provision de faits singuliers et intéressants."[55] From January 1752 onwards, his main

occupation was to get in touch with as many correspondents as possible to request their comments, and ask for little-known details which might be incorporated into the second and subsequent editions. The Correspondence, once again, provides an insight into Voltaire's method of work and sheds light on the sources of numerous details and anecdotes which came Voltaire's way, via his acquaintances. Whilst his correspondents try, in the main, not to offend him, they offer a number of constructive and detailed remarks which Voltaire, for the most part, humbly accepts and in the light of which he modifies his text. This humility contrasts sharply with his arrogance and indignation in his dealings with La Beaumelle.[56]

Correspondents' Reactions

In his letters, Voltaire repeatedly insisted on the fact that the first edition of Le Siècle was little more than a galop d'essai which would enable him to gauge the reactions of the knowledgeable reading public of Europe, and discover new facts. To Thibouville, he made this very point: "Elle ne me sert qu'à me procurer de tous côtez des remarques et des instructions; je ne les aurais jamais eues si je n'avais publié le livre."[57] That he set out in earnest to make full use of any positive criticisms voiced by his correspondents will be discussed here. As early as October 16, 1751, before the whole text of the first edition had been printed, he had forwarded the first volume of Le Siècle to d'Argental with the express purpose of knowing his reactions: "Je vous supplieray d'examiner un peu scrupuleusement le premier tome de Louis 14 que vous aurez probablement bientôt.

Je mettray icy tant de cartons qu'on voudra. Vous savez que je ne plains pas ma peine, et j'aime à me corriger."[58] He made a similar request to the Duc de Richelieu on November 13, 1751.[59] In December, he used d'Argental as an intermediary to circulate two copies of the now printed first edition: "Ne connaissez-vous personne au fait de l'histoire moderne qui pût aussi fort vite m'instruire des fautes que je n'auray pas aperçues? M. de Foncemagne serait-il homme à prendre cette peine?"[60] As in the early years of the composition of Le Siècle, a network of information was thus being carefully established to relay useful material and comments to the author in Potsdam. Voltaire's aim, without doubt, was to test public opinion - however limited - in France, with a view to the next edition which he had already planned, and perhaps also, in the hope that sooner or later, the authorities would soften their attitude to the work.

In January 1752, Voltaire called for Choiseul's and Chauvelin's help, as the diffusion of Le Siècle progressed in a systematic manner among a 'public de goût' in Paris who might be expected to be favourable. Such influential men as Malesherbes might well be able to sway public opinion in Voltaire's favour. He was himself actively organising a public relations campaign. To Malesherbes, he remarked on January 18, 1752:

> Si malgré tous les soins que j'ay pris et après tant d'histoires dans lesquelles on a voulu flétrir Louis 14, et la nation, un ouvrage consacré à la gloire de l'un et de l'autre ne peut trouver grâce devant mes compatriotes, j'attendray du temps la justice qu'on n'obtient guère que de luy, et votre suffrage me tiendra lieu de la plus part des hommes.[61]

All along, Voltaire continued to lay emphasis on the fact that it is the historian's duty to document himself as fully as possible; he wrote to Formont:

> Cette première édition n'est qu'un essai encore informe. Le fruit que j'en retire, c'est de recevoir de tous côtés des remarques, des instructions de la part des Français et de quelques étrangers, qui m'aideront à faire une bonne histoire.[62]

His correspondents responded eagerly to his challenge, and Voltaire received many comments on the first edition. On the one hand, there were those like d'Alembert who lavished praise indiscriminately: "J'ay lu trois fois consécutives avec Délices votre Louis XIV: j'envie le sort de ceux qui ne l'ont pas encore lu; et je voudrais perdre la mémoire pour avoir le plaisir de le relire."[63] On the other hand, many correspondents offered well-informed comments and positive criticisms which led to Voltaire modifying some sections of the text. Chauvelin did not hide his enthusiasm for Le Siècle which he found fascinating: "Je lis le Siècle de Louis 14, dont je suis enchanté; je le dévore avec l'avidité qu'inspirent la curiosité et l'intérêt réunis."[64] He declared having been particularly struck by the "composition, l'expression la plus vraye et la force du plus beau coloris". Like many other correspondents, Chauvelin took the opportunity to remind Voltaire of the role played by one of his relatives, the Maréchal du Plessis-Praslin, at the battle of Rethel, a fact which Voltaire duly incorporated in the Dresden edition of 1753 to please this important figure (P 653). Such requests seem to have been fairly numerous; d'Argental pleaded with Voltaire, in a letter of September 8, 1752,[65] to mention an uncle of his who

had had the distinction of entering the palace of the Turkish sultan with his sword. A second letter from Chauvelin, meanwhile, had reached Voltaire who expressed his gratitude through Mme Denis, for the specific comments which it contained; to his niece he wrote on August 19, 1752: "Mille remerciements je vous prie à m. Chauvelin, des bons avis qu'il m'a donnés pour la nouvelle édition du siècle de Louis XIV, mais je lui demande très humblement pardon pour la dîme royale et chimérique du maréchal de Vauban. Elle n'est bonne que pour les curés dont parle M. Chauvelin."[66]

On the whole, the small elite who had read the first edition of Le Siècle in Paris, seems to have been suitably impressed, at least according to Mme d'Argental in a letter of February 28, 1752: "Vous venés au secours de votre patrie avec le siècle de Louis 14, et Rome sauvée, et heureusement l'effet prodigieux qu'ils font l'un et l'autre, vous prouvent que votre patrie n'estoit pas encore indigne que vous travaillassiés à sa conversion."[67] But this attempt to praise Voltaire and to boost his self-confidence does not, altogether, reflect the reality, for we have already indicated that, beyond the limited circle of close friends, Le Siècle received a generally cool reception in Paris. Most letters addressed to Voltaire, however, contained a balance of praise and criticisms, and those from Hénault are not untypical in this respect.

That Voltaire was indebted to the Président for many details is apparent from the exchange of letters between the two men in 1751 and 1752. Hénault's greatest contribution to Le Siècle was, without doubt, the idea of the Catalogue which Voltaire borrowed

from his Abrégé, a debt that he was the first to acknowledge.[68] Following his reading of the first edition, Hénault was to suggest various additions to the Catalogue, the details of which have unfortunately been lost, but which clearly enabled Voltaire to modify and augment this important appendix to Le Siècle. To Hénault on December 31, 1751, Voltaire wrote obligingly: "Je profite de vos remarques et je corrige."[69] On February 1, 1752, he expressed anew his gratitude to the Président: "J'ai envoyé à ma nièce deux volumes où j'ai réformé, autant que je l'ai pu, tout ce que vous avez eu la bonté de remarquer dans le siècle de Louis XIV,"[70] but he took exception to the charge that his treatment of Louis XIV was ironic and unfair: "Je vous avoue que j'ai peine à comprendre cet air d'ironie que vous me reprochez sur Louis XIV. Daignez relire seulement cette page imprimée, et voyez si on peut faire Louis XIV plus grand." But on the question of Turenne's conversion, Voltaire could never bring himself to overcome his antireligious prejudices, in spite of Hénault's repeated assertions that this conversion was sincere: "J'ai traité, je crois, comme je le devais l'article de la conversion de Turenne. J'ai adouci les teintes, autant que le peut un homme aussi fermement persuadé que moi, qu'un vieux général, un vieux politique et un vieux galant ne change point de religion par un coup de grâce."[71] Voltaire was never to alter his text, nor did he try to "adoucir les teintes" in the numerous editions of Le Siècle; his opinion that Turenne's conversion was motivated by political ambition remained constant, as will be discussed in chapter III.[72]

Unlike many other contemporaries, such as Grimm,[73]

Hénault stated openly his preference for the second volume, not because it was, in his opinion, better written, but because it showed Louis XIV in a more favourable light, a fact to which Voltaire referred in a letter of August 26, 1752, to the Président.[74] This is confirmed by Hénault's letter to d'Argenson of December 31, 1751: "Le défaut de ce premier tome en général, et qui en est un grand, c'est, comme vous l'avez remarqué vous-même, que Louis XIV n'y est pas traité à beaucoup près comme il doit l'être. Mais le second tome, dont j'ai lu les deux tiers, répare bien tout cela; c'est un autre climat. Louis XIV y reparaît dans toute sa grandeur."[75] Volume two, one must remember, contained in 1751 the chapters of anecdotes (XXIV-XXVI), those dealing with internal reforms (XXVII), finance (XXVIII), science and the arts (XXIX, XXX), and with the religious disputes (XXXI-XXXV). If Hénault had perused two-thirds of this volume, he would obviously have been impressed by the eulogistic treatment of the Sun King in the chapters of anecdotes, on internal reforms and the arts. Whether Louis XIV is portrayed in such a favourable light in Voltaire's discussion of the petty quarrels that divided the Church in France is highly debatable. It is interesting to note, too, that modern critics, like N.R. Johnson in Louis XIV and the age of the Enlightenment,[76] view Voltaire's assessment of Louis XIV as a more balanced one: "Never therefore an uncritical apologist of the king, Voltaire was wise to claim that he was the first to have produced a balanced historical judgement." But Johnson does not share Hénault's opinion that Louis XIV fares less well in the chronological survey of military history in Le Siècle: "Voltaire appears as a faithful subject of his king defending

the main features of French policy. It was not only in the field of literature that Voltaire's pride in things French is evident."[77] Hénault had some reservations about the second volume and took Voltaire to task over his handling of such a serious topic as the religious disputes: "Les hommes sensés n'approuveront jamais que cet article [i.e. religion] soit traité avec indifférence ou avec légèreté..."[78] - a criticism which, one feels, is entirely justified, as will be shown in chapter IV.

Other unfavourable comments of Hénault pertained to points of detail; e.g. to Condé's retirement: "Pourquoi en voulez-vous aux grands hommes? Voilà encore le grand Condé que vous dégradez parce qu'il vint mourir à Fontainebleau."[79] But this charge that Voltaire had vilified Condé, the courtier, is neither fair nor justified, and was rejected out of hand by Voltaire who refused to change the relevant passage: "Au reste," he replied to Hénault on January 8, 1752, "je jetterais mon ouvrage au feu si je croyais qu'il fût regardé comme l'ouvrage d'un homme d'esprit." Nor was he to change his mind about the false reports that the queen of Spain had been poisoned by "de la tourte d'anguille" (P 927) - a fact which he had documented carefully, and claimed he had read in Dangeau's Mémoires.[80] Hénault pointed out that the anecdote was not in Dangeau,[81] but Voltaire remained convinced that he had come across it in this source: "Je me souviens bien que je les ai lus en manuscrit il y a plus de vingt ans. Je pris une note de la mort de la reine d'Espagne et de la tourte d'anguille."[82] This fact is, indeed, borne out by the Notebooks and is to be found among the notes from Dangeau: "La reine d'Espagne mourut après avoir mangé un pâté d'anguilles."[83]

Similarly, despite Hénault's objections, Voltaire remained firm in his belief that Fouquet had died in prison, and put his faith instead in his original source, Gourville.[84]

But on the whole, Voltaire was prepared to listen to the Président's advice in some matters. Having written in the 1751 edition that the bodies of the Duc de Bourgogne, the Duchesse de Bourgogne and their eldest son had been carried to their vaults "dans le même char", he subsequently altered his text to "portés dans le même tombeau" (P 876), at Hénault's instigation: "C'est une erreur où tout le monde a donné. Mme de Bourgogne est morte le 12 février, son mari le 18. Tous deux furent portés dans le même char à Saint-Denis; mais le duc de Bretagne qui ne mourut que le 8 mars y fut porté séparément."[85] Voltaire was not loth to admit that he had made a mistake: "Je ne sais de quoi je me suis avisé d'aller parler de 'char', mais j'ai corrigé tombeau à la main. Voyez ce que c'est que les préjugés de l'enfance. Je me souviens d'avoir vu passer le convoi. Tout le peuple disait: 'Voilà le père, et la mère, et l'enfant.'"[86] In his reply to Hénault's letter of August 1, 1752, Voltaire stated his intention to include Hardouin Mansard in the Catalogue (P 1219-1220).[87] He also responded to Hénault's request to read the Mémoires of Boindin, in which the latter accuses La Motte of having been the author of the couplets that led to J.-B. Rousseau's condemnation and exile in 1712; as a result, Voltaire decided to refute the accusations against La Motte (P 1174). Furthermore, Voltaire was quite prepared to confess to Hénault that he had erred in his first estimate of the width of the Rhine at the point where the French troops crossed over: "Que je vous demande

pardon d'avoir dit qu'il y avait quarante à cinquante pas à nager au passage du Rhin, il n'y en a que douze...,"[88] although he changed this to "vingt pas" in 1753 (P 716). Thus the subsequent editions were to benefit, albeit to a lesser extent than Hénault would have wanted, from the numerous remarks communicated by the Président; most of these, as Lion has pointed out, had "une médiocre importance".[89] The relations between the two men remained cordial, in spite of disagreements on points of detail, and Voltaire never failed to invite comments from his important acquaintance in a deferential and flattering manner, even though he did not always take this advice. The alterations to the text, however limited, which resulted from their correspondence, do indicate the historian's preoccupation with the truth in minor details, whilst his inflexibility on some issues sheds light on the strength of his prejudices, especially his religious scepticism.

When he was not in a position to test public reaction himself, Voltaire delegated this work to others. Thus d'Argental was entrusted with the task of assessing the response of a limited circle of friends, and of transmitting their views to Voltaire in Potsdam. On March 19, 1752, he reported to the writer the main criticisms levelled at Le Siècle; the Catalogue, so warmly praised by Hénault, but which Voltaire himself was far from happy with,[90] bore the brunt of the charges. D'Argental's letter indicates that the consensus was that the Catalogue could be improved:

> Tous ceux qui l'ont lu /i.e. Le Siècle/ en sont enchantés et Mr de Meinières et mr de Foncemagne ont été saisis d'admiration. Je ne me suis pas contenté de leurs éloges, je leur ai demandé des critiques, sachant qu'ils pouvaient être en état d'en faire de bonnes. Ils ont déférés (sic) à ma prière. Je joins icy leur travail. Celles de mr de Foncemagne tombent principalement sur le catalogue des écrivains. Je vous avoue qu'en effet cette partie m'a fait toujours beaucoup de peine, elle est faite un peu vite, elle n'est ny assez méditée, ny assez exacte, elle preste à la critique et peut vous attirer beaucoup d'ennemis et n'ajoute pas assez de mérite à votre ouvrage pour que vous passiés par dessus les inconvénients qu'elle entraîne.[91]

Unfortunately, Meinières' and Foncemagne's personal comments have not come down to us, but in his reply to these, on April 1, 1752, while humbly submitting to Meinières' criticisms, Voltaire justified the inclusion of writers born under Louis XIII, whom Foncemagne had urged him to exclude from the Catalogue; these writers are mentioned, remarked Voltaire, because they heralded the age of Louis XIV.[92] He nevertheless took the hint, and augmented the Catalogue considerably in the 1753 edition,[93] although it is not at all certain that in so doing he improved it greatly.

Opinions on Le Siècle naturally varied from correspondent to correspondent, as Voltaire himself was aware: "Mais vous voyez comme les sentimens (sic) sont différens (sic)!" he wrote to d'Argental.[94] Like Hénault, several acquaintances and correspondents preferred the second volume to the first; e.g. Frederick shared the Président's views: "Mon impatience m'a fait lire le second volume en même temps; et à vous dire le vrai, je le trouve

supérieur au premier, tant par la nature des choses que par le style, et cette noble hardiesse avec laquelle vous dites des vérités jusqu'aux rois. C'est un très beau morceau et qui doit vous combler d'honneur," he remarked on February 25, 1752.[95] It is not difficult to discern the reasons for this personal assessment; the second volume appealed to Frederick mainly for its philosophical content, with its attack on fanaticism, on religious intransigence, and Voltaire's criticism of Louis XIV's passive behaviour during the persecutions of the Huguenots. The second volume had been drafted in haste in Prussia, and to a large extent from memory, according to Voltaire's letter to Hénault of January 8, /1752/: "Savez-vous bien que j'ai écrit de mémoire une grande partie du second volume?"[96] But this must be taken with a pinch of salt, as Voltaire tried to answer some charges brought against him. Moreover, we have seen that he did obtain from Walther several sources pertaining to the last chapters, and had others dispatched to him from Paris. Yet it must have been reassuring to Voltaire to hear of the overall success of the second volume. It was greatly admired by Duclos, Voltaire's successor as Historiographer Royal, whose views were transmitted to Voltaire by La Condamine, the well-known mathematician, who had no real cause to distort the truth, although we must make allowances for the fact that he might have tried not to hurt the historian's feelings: "/Duclos/ a surtout appuyé dans ses louanges sur le second volume que je n'ai pas encore lû et nommément sur l'article du Jansénisme qu'il dit fait à merveille indépendament (sic) de l'agrément du style. Je vois que c'est le morceau qui a le plus universellement plû."[97] Not surprisingly perhaps, since Duclos

was well-known for his antireligious views; it was he who thought the comments on religion in L'Encyclopédie too moderate, and declared in this connexion: "Ils en feront autant qu'ils finiront par m'envoyer à confesse."[98]

All the guests present at the dinner, in the course of which, according to the same letter from La Condamine, the merits of Le Siècle were discussed, did not share entirely Duclos's enthusiasm. However, one must wonder whether La Condamine was not merely putting his own criticisms forward in this way. Voltaire, he reported, was accused of system building, of major omissions, of not having mentioned Vigo, a point with which La Condamine agreed: "Cela est peut-être vrai. Il y a peut-être d'autres faits qui méritoient une place dans votre histoire. Vous y penserez à la nouvelle édition."[99] He went on to deplore the fact that Voltaire did not do justice to Philip V of Spain and ignored Alberoni. There were moreover errors, especially in the account of the siege of Turin (Pomeau chapter XX), in particular concerning La Feuillade's love for the Dauphine:

> Il me semble que vous vous êtes très habilement tiré des conjectures si fort autorisées sur le siège de Turin. Tout le monde ne pensera pas de même, mais je n'ai entendu faire de cet endroit que de mauvaises critiques si ce n'est qu'on assure qu'il est faux que M. de la Feuillade ait été ou joué l'amoureux de feu Me la Dauphine. On n'attribue qu'à la crainte de déplaire comme courtisan et de perdre sa fortune ce que vous supposés qu'on a attribué à sa passion.[100]

For all that, La Condamine paid homage to Voltaire's impartiality in the work as a whole. In his reply of April 24, 1752, Voltaire acknowledged the validity of some of the criticisms,

namely on the subject of omissions: "Il y a bien plus de fautes que vous n'en avez remarqué. J'ai bien fait des péchés d'omission et de commission."[101] But on one point, he refused to budge, stating that he had heard the anecdote concerning the siege of Turin from La Feuillade in person. In the Dresden edition of 1753, he was to be more cautious in attributing the anecdote to "presque tous les historiens", and in placing it amongst "ces bruits populaires qui décréditent le jugement des nouvellistes, et qui déshonorent les histoires" (P 842). La Condamine's point was consequently taken; although at the time Voltaire refused to admit defeat, he changed his mind after researching the subject further.

Perhaps the best known reactions to the first edition of Le Siècle are those of Lord Chesterfield in the often quoted letter of April 13, 1752, in which he deals, amongst other things, with Voltaire's innovation in spelling.[102] It was Voltaire himself who had sent the Englishman a copy of his work. Chesterfield seems to have grasped fully the aims of the historian in Le Siècle:

> It is the history of the human understanding, written by a man of parts, for the use of men of parts. Weak minds will not like it, even though they do not understand it; which is commonly the measure of their admiration. Dull ones will want those minute, and uninteresting details, with which most other histories are incumbered. He tells me all I want to know and nothing more.[103]

He paid tribute to the philosophical reflections, to Voltaire's impartiality, to his moderation, which is perhaps more debatable in the chapters dealing with religious disputes. His eulogistic

comments are sometimes far from the truth; one would not entirely agree with Chesterfield's view that Voltaire is "free from religious, philosophical, political and natural prejudices, beyond any historian I ever met with, he relates all those matters as truly and as impartially, as certain regards, which must always be to some degree observed, will allow him: for one sees plainly, that he often says much less than he would say, if he might."[104] As N.R. Johnson has indicated in Louis XIV and the age of the Enlightenment, Chesterfield's response to Le Siècle is a rather naïve one: "Chesterfield, when praising Voltaire's Siècle de Louis XIV, seems to be judging the work which he believes Voltaire would have liked to write rather than the one which he actually wrote."[105] He was certainly not discriminating enough in his praise; that Voltaire had no propagandist intentions in the chapters on religion is a distortion of the truth.

From Chesterfield's letter to Mme Bocage of May 20, 1752, we learn that the response to Le Siècle in Paris and London had not been altogether enthusiastic: "Elle est critiquée ici et encore plus à Paris... Il y manque, dit-on, la dignité de l'histoire. Elle est, il est vrai, en deux petits volumes in-12 au lieu de deux grands volumes in-4."[106] This cool reception to the history of Louis XIV in England will be commented upon more fully, when we consider the reactions of English periodicals. Being used to lengthier works on all aspects of history, contemporaries appear to have found Le Siècle too sketchy and perhaps too anecdotal for their liking. To Voltaire himself, Chesterfield was more than ready to applaud the ironic mode of presentation, especially in the handling of religious disputes, where he approved of

reductionism as the most effective weapon to combat sectarianism.[107] The contradiction between this statement, and his earlier pronouncements on Voltaire's alleged objectivity, points clearly to an attempt here to flatter the author of Le Siècle, and amounts to a blatant inconsistency.

Using the information he received from many corners of Europe, Voltaire set out to revise and add to the first edition. Throughout 1752, he was actively engaged in remoulding the text, as he declared in the Supplément: "Il /l'auteur/ a reçu des instructions de toutes parts, et il s'est trouvé en état, dans l'espace d'une année, de donner une meilleure forme à son ouvrage. Il a tout retouché, jusqu'au style" (P 1230). To d'Argental, he remarked on May 3, 1752, that he had received "de nouveaux mémoires de tous côtés," and added: "j'ai eu un trésor, ce sont deux morceaux de la main de Louis XIV, bien collationés à l'original."[108] These he had obtained through the good-will of Cardinal de Noailles to whom he expressed his gratitude on July 25, 1752, and he went on to say:

> Mon dessein est d'insérer dans le chapitre de la vie privée de Louis XIV, tout le morceau détaché où ce monarque se rend compte à lui-même de sa conduite. Cet écrit me paraît un des plus beaux monuments de sa gloire; il est bien pensé, bien fait; et montre un esprit et une grande âme.[109]

Voltaire is here referring to the manuscript memoirs of Louis XIV, which were inserted in the 1753 edition (P 951 ff.), the original of which, he claimed in a note, was to be found in the Bibliothèque du Roi. As for the second of the 'morceaux précieux', the instructions to Philip V of Spain (P 954 ff.), Voltaire was of the opinion that only a selection would enhance Louis XIV's reputation,

since some sections were unworthy of the great king: "Je vous avoue que je serais d'avis de ne donner au public qu'une partie des instructions de Louis XIV au roi d'Espagne."[110] Accordingly, Voltaire had no scruples in selecting only what fitted in with his preconceived notions of the Sun King, leaving out important material which might have helped to restore the balance further.

Ostensibly, he also received documents relevant to the story of l'homme au masque de fer,[111] as well as a letter of Condé which he hoped to insert in the new edition,[112] but which, in fact, never found a place in Le Siècle. In August 1752, he was in a position to list the most important additions in the 1753 edition for the benefit of the Queen of Sweden:

> J'aurai soin de marquer avec un sinet les nouveaux articles qui pouront (sic) mériter d'Elle un coup d'œuil (sic), comme l'homme au masque de fer, la paix de Riswick, le testament de Charles II, roi d'Espagne, le mariage clandestin du fameux Bossuet, évêque de Meaux, et enfin des pièces fort singulières, écrites de la main de Louis XIV, dont j'ai eu des Copies autentiques.[113]

Of these, the anecdote of the fisherman discovering a plate at the foot of the tower where the man in the iron mask was imprisoned had been learnt from the Marquis d'Argens;[114] the details about the peace of Ryswick came from Torci's manuscript Memoirs,[115] as did the testament of Charles II of Spain, whilst the secret marriage of Bossuet was suggested by Secousse,[116] and of course, the manuscript memoirs of Louis XIV were passed on to Voltaire by Noailles. The contribution of correspondents to the new edition of Le Siècle was therefore invaluable, and Voltaire's efficient network for gathering information had paid ample dividends.

Throughout 1752, Voltaire was, in addition, busy combatting the numerous pirate editions, by placing advertisements in journals and periodicals to announce the coming edition. So it was that in May 1752, he urged Walther to inform the public, in the gazettes, of the revised edition of Le Siècle, and to warn against others that were faulty.[117] He himself inserted articles, at regular intervals, in journals to this end - e.g. in the Mercure de France of 1752 and in the Bibliothèque Impartiale of June 1752, where he extolled the virtues of a more complete edition to be published, "augmenté d'un tiers": "Je m'étais trompé d'ailleurs sur quelques faits. Je n'étais pas entré dans d'assez grands détails dans le catalogue raisonné des gens de lettres et des artistes. J'avais omis plus de quarante articles; je n'avais pas pensé à faire une liste raisonnée des généraux; enfin l'ouvrage est augmenté d'un tiers."[118] He openly admitted his debt to individuals who had come to his rescue by providing a large number of hitherto unknown anecdotes and facts: "Voici ce qui arrive: le fils, le petit-fils d'un ambassadeur, d'un général, lisent votre livre. Ils vont consulter les mémoires manuscrits de leur grand-père; ils y trouvent des particularités intéressantes; ils vous en font part..."[119] A similar advertisement was placed in the Gazette de Cologne to counteract another inserted by Benjamin Gibert concerning the sale of the pirate edition by Knoch and Eslinger which contained the controversial notes of La Beaumelle.[120] Voltaire took great pains to reiterate his appeal to the public to seek out the correct and revised edition to be published by Walther in Dresden, and to ignore other editions which abounded in inaccuracies. Other journals

gave the gist of Voltaire's announcement; e.g. the Bibliothèque Raisonnée des Savants de l'Europe, in its Nouvelles Littéraires for July, August and September 1752, no doubt as a result of an active publicity campaign on Voltaire's part.

The new edition was ready to be put on the market on December 4, 1752, although the title-page bears the date 1753 (Ben. 1186): 'Le Siècle de Louis XIV, publié par M. de Francheville, etc. Nouvelle édition revue par l'auteur et considérablement augmentée. Dresde, George-Conrad Walther, 1753. 2 vol. in 8.' It contained numerous stylistic corrections, together with addenda stemming from new information which had come Voltaire's way.[121] It is not our purpose here to study the variants in detail, but to note that the addenda far outnumber the excisions, as a result of the vital role played by Voltaire's network of correspondents. New items included the acquisition of Alsace by Mazarin (P 686), the treaty of Ryswick (P 788, the source being Torci's manuscript memoirs), James III recognised as king of England by Louis XIV (Pomeau, chapter XVII, the source being Bolingbroke), the story of the man in the iron mask (Pomeau, chapter XXV), the manuscript memoirs of Louis XIV (Pomeau, chapter XXVIII), Louvois's purchase of arms from the Dutch (Pomeau, chapter X), Voltaire's defence of Dupas (Pomeau, chapter XI). And as Quignard remarks,"le gros effort de Voltaire dans cette édition a porté sur la 'Liste des écrivains qui ont illustré le Siècle,'"[122] and he lists the new and amended articles,[123] twenty new items in all, and fifteen revised ones. Most of the new material inserted marks a change of emphasis from the 1753 edition to the later 1756 edition, as is noted by

Quignard. In 1753, the addenda indicate a greater need for factual and historical accuracy and less preoccupation with philosophical issues; in 1756, the reverse is true, for the tone becomes more philosophical, undoubtedly as a result of Voltaire's studies for L'Essai sur les mœurs. In the 1753 edition, concludes Quignard, "sur 12 additions importantes ..., 10 apportaient des faits nouveaux (additions historiques); 2 joignaient un commentaire philosophique à un renseignement historique; aucune addition n'était purement philosophique. En 1756, par contre, sur 13 additions, 3 étaient historiques, 2 mêlaient l'histoire à la philosophie et 8 n'étaient que philosophiques."[124] Voltaire's first priority in 1753 seems, clearly, to have been to reinforce the historical framework and content of the first edition in the light of the comments he had received; for this he relied heavily on the contributions of acquaintances and a well-informed reading public. Indeed this aspect of Le Siècle had borne the brunt of most criticisms levelled at the work by such men as Hénault, d'Argental, La Condamine, and others, amongst them Voltaire's most virulent critic, La Beaumelle, to whom we shall return in Appendix A.

Reactions of periodicals and journals

Leaving aside the later editions, which are listed by Bengesco in his bibliography, we shall turn our attention to the reactions of contemporary journalists to Le Siècle. To arrive at a more objective assessment of the impact of Le Siècle in Europe in its day, one must search through a number of periodicals which reflect, to a lesser or greater extent, the responses of

contemporaries to Voltaire's historical work. There is little doubt that Le Siècle made a considerable impact, whether it met with adverse criticisms or approval. Even the silence of periodicals is significant here and betrays a certain measure of irrational hostility towards whatever came from Voltaire's pen. Such is the case with semi-official journals like the Journal des Savants, which, as a rule, announced coming publications, but remained strangely quiet about the first edition of Le Siècle. One is led to conclude that those journalists who received subsidies from the authorities, had no intention of offending the government in this instance, by hailing the new publication. Likewise, the Mercure de France which was at least indifferent to the activities of the philosophes, and with which Voltaire was on relatively cordial terms, since it had published the anecdotes on Louis XIV and subsequently advertised the 1753 edition of Le Siècle, made no mention of the first edition. It is all the more striking, since l'abbé Raynal, a future collaborator in the Encyclopédie, was its editor from July 1750 to December 1754, and was only too glad to praise warmly the first volumes of Diderot's brainchild.[125] The only possible explanation for this silence is that, being semi-official, the Mercure had no wish to incur the wrath of the court, with which Voltaire was out of favour, at a time when Le Siècle was still an unknown quantity. Once the general consensus was that the work was not overtly offensive to Louis XV, the Mercure was able to adopt a less cautious attitude.

Voltaire had already published extracts of L'histoire générale in the journal in 1747 under the title of Nouveau plan

d'une histoire de l'esprit humain, but on the whole, the editor of the Mercure preserved a certain distance in his dealings with the philosophe, and was content to publish synopses and vague laudatory remarks about his works.[126] We have to wait until 1757 for an assessment of Voltaire the historian in the journal. The then editor, Louis de Boissy, was more favourably disposed towards the philosophe, as indeed the article of January 1757 testifies. Voltaire, it is argued, "aide ses contemporains à surmonter le dégoût que leur cause l'histoire moderne depuis la décadence de l'Empire romain, et à prendre une idée générale des nations qui habitent et désolent la terre."[127] Nothing here relates specifically to Le Siècle, although the journal draws its readers' attention to the merits of the 1756 edition of L'Essai, of which Le Siècle was part.[128] Throughout, the editors, while trying to flatter and please Voltaire, affect the same detached courtesy and lack of real commitment, so as not to cross swords with the authorities.

Similarly, and perhaps not surprisingly, the Journal de Trévoux preserved a dignified silence on the first edition of Le Siècle. Under the direction of Berthier who edited it from 1745, the Journal tried to be fair to the philosophes, as its comments on the Encyclopédie, which comprised both praise and criticisms, showed. In accordance with an avertissement in the January edition of 1746 which read: "Nos Mémoires reconnaissent toujours plus volontiers les perfections d'un livre que ses défauts. Cela ne doit pas en exclure une critique saine, modérée, honnête et instructive,"[129] Berthier tried to adopt a more moderate policy towards current literature. Around 1750, his relations

with Voltaire remained cordial, but in one respect, he remained inflexible: in matters pertaining to religion. Whenever he attacked the philosophes, it was for their irreverence to the Church and its doctrines. Thus the journal attacked Micromégas in April 1752 on the grounds that the work might have a pernicious effect on the public, because of the remarks it contained on the soul. Berthier also decried the irreligious spirit which pervaded L'Abrégé de L'histoire universelle in January 1754.[130] In view of this, it is highly likely that the chapters of Le Siècle dealing with the religious disputes would not have been to his taste. As it was, the Journal de Trévoux only discussed the work in 1757 in a review of the Lettres critiques ou analyse et réfutation des divers écrits modernes contre la religion. While content to summarise the arguments of its anonymous author, Berthier showed openly his approval of the hostile remarks on L'histoire universelle and Le Siècle: "Ces lettres, fruit d'un zèle éclairé, feront connaître au lecteur de bonne foi que le vrai, de quelque manière qu'on le présente, dissipe toujours les ténèbres de l'erreur."[131] Letter XXXVIII focuses on what its author considers to be two serious faults in Le Siècle; the first concerns the Pope's abuse of power and his desire to dictate to monarchs. On these points, Berthier declares enthusiastically: "Notre critique les réfute avec la même facilité."[132] The second pertains to the persecution of the Huguenots, and Berthier is in complete sympathy with the author's vindication of Louis XIV's actions against the Protestants. If Berthier makes room for this unimportant work in his journal, it is less for itself, than because of his own dissatisfaction with the irreligious

spirit of the chapters devoted to religious disputes in Le Siècle. One may conclude that to devoted Catholics, the work seemed to pose a real threat, because of Voltaire's ironic and irreverent treatment of sectarian quarrels and religious dogmatism.

Voltaire could not have expected any favours from Elie Fréron who did more harm to the writer's reputation than La Beaumelle himself, since he could use his Année Littéraire to publicise his hostile remarks. The popularity of this periodical, first known as the Lettres de la comtesse (1745-46), then as Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps (1749-54) and finally as L'Année Littéraire (1754-90), in its own day is beyond question since Daniel Mornet published statistics demonstrating that in private libraries at least, it ranked fourth on the list of the most widely read periodicals in the eighteenth century.[133] Mornet concludes that La Harpe was right to claim that "L'Année Littéraire eut un succès prodigieux et Fréron y gagna plus de vingt mille livres par an."[134] In Fréron, Voltaire had, accordingly, a dangerous enemy, but the journalist was prepared to make a truce in 1750. It was Voltaire who rejected the olive branch offered to him; having convinced Frederick not to correspond with the critic, he openly declared his intention to force Fréron to leave Paris in disgrace.[135] Indignant, Fréron launched a violent attack on Voltaire in his Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps.[136] Mme Denis pleaded with Malesherbes on behalf of Voltaire and the periodical was suppressed. However, subsequently the philosophe had a change of heart and personally interceded on Fréron's behalf, asking Malesherbes to revoke his decision.[137] In spite of his well-known hostility towards Voltaire, Fréron

chose - not to mention the first edition of Le Siècle, but in October 1752 he implicitly condemned Voltaire's historical works in an article devoted to Bolingbroke's Letters on the study and use of history:

> Dans tout ceci M. de Bolinbroke suppose sans doute qu'on ne lit que des Histoires vrayes et fidèles; car si elles étoient toutes dans le goût de celle d'un bel esprit de nos jours, qui ne peint les hommes que d'imagination, qui ne place les événements que sous un jour faux, qui cherche le merveilleux et non la vérité, qui veut être peintre et non historien, qui préfère les figures de l'art oratoire à la simplicité historique, l'antithèse à la narration, si, dis-je, toutes les Histoires ressembloient à celles de ce brillant discoureur, il est constant que, loin d'en recommander la lecture, il faudrait s'en préserver comme d'une source d'erreurs, aussi préjudiciable pour la conduite, que funeste pour le bon goût.[138]

In the Index, begun and left unfinished by Fréron, to be found at the Bibliothèque des Jésuites de Chantilly,[139] the journalist refers to this extract as "Voltaire faux et infidèle," leaving us in no doubt that he was hinting not just at Charles XII, but also at Le Siècle. In effect, Fréron's criticisms in this passage bear a strong resemblance to those of La Beaumelle, as will be shown in Appendix A; it is not surprising, therefore, to find Fréron defending La Beaumelle in his journal. In 1752, however, it seems very likely that Fréron had only a vague knowledge of Le Siècle and based his assessment of Voltaire historian mostly on Charles XII. The charges that Voltaire gave free rein to his imagination, that he strove after fine writing, that he tried to show his esprit and invented facts, might be said to be true of Charles XII,[140] but, on the whole, appear unfounded when applied to Le Siècle.

Above all, Fréron displays the full extent of his personal bias and makes no attempt to substantiate his criticisms, although it is fair to say that his views were shared by other contemporaries, and recall the charges levelled at Charles XII by La Mottraye in his Historical and Critical Remarks which appeared both in English and French in 1732.[141]

Fréron's hatred for Voltaire was to intensify with the passing of time, undoubtedly because of the philosopher's constant attempts to ridicule him. The journalist's criticisms of Voltaire's works became more blatant and were often unjust. Thus, he made a point of siding with any critics who condemned Voltaire's histories, giving his approval, for example, to a letter of Mallet de Méziaires of August 15, 1760, which was published in L'Année Littéraire of 1760.[142] In his analysis of L'Essai sur les mœurs, which included Le Siècle, Méziaires attacks Voltaire's use of satire in history and even charges the historian with ignorance: "Dans ses Histoires sans liaison et sans intérêt, on n'aperçoit que l'auteur est un auteur qui décide de tout avec autant de confiance que d'ignorance,"[143] a grossly oversimplified and unsubstantiated assessment which Fréron was only too glad to applaud. In a letter of November 18, 1760, when discussing the merits of Pierre le Grand, and comparing Voltaire's histories, Fréron, surprisingly, gave first place to Charles XII and described L'Essai and Le Siècle as "deux productions informes qu'on peut comparer à ces édifices où la main du grand-maître se montre dans quelques parties, mais dont l'ensemble est d'une petite manière et d'un mauvais goût."[144] Whilst expressing his admiration for Voltaire's genius, and describing the writer as

"un aigle immense, qui étend ses deux ailes sur le vaste horizon littéraire," Fréron, after paying lip-service to the philosophe's reputation, shows all his venom in attempting to discredit Voltaire's histories as abounding in 'les fables'.[145]

Similarly, Elie Fréron wasted no time in 1759 in applauding l'Abbé Guyon's L'Oracle des nouveaux philosophes, which will be discussed later, and obviously derived considerable pleasure from reprinting the author's bitter and at times unjust criticisms of Voltaire with which he associated himself fully: "L'auteur suit pas à pas M. de Voltaire et l'arrête pour le combattre. Il a une adresse singulière à se servir des paroles mêmes de son adversaire et à l'attaquer par ses propres armes."[146] Fréron also lavished praise on Nonnotte's Les Erreurs de Voltaire, published in 1762,[147] quoting gleefully lengthy extracts on Voltaire's histories and sharing Nonnotte's views on several faulty aspects of Le Siècle, for instance the parallel between Louis XIV and William III: "Il blâme, et tout le monde sera de son sentiment, le parallèle que nous offre M. de Voltaire de Louis XIV avec le prince d'Orange. En effet, y a-t-il quelque comparaison entre ces deux Princes? Il n'est peut-être rien de plus opposé."[148] There was, however, general dissatisfaction with this parallel as early as 1752; the Comte d'Argenson had found it too favourable towards William and urged Voltaire to alter his text. As a result, he added the last paragraph of chapter XVII (in Pomeau's edition, P 809), so as to restore the balance in favour of Louis XIV.[149] Voltaire's partiality, too, came in for a large measure of criticism from various quarters including Nonnotte and Fréron who commented: "L'anonyme /Nonnotte/ trouve avec raison de

l'injustice et de la partialité dans les jugements de M. de Voltaire sur nos gens de lettres. Il s'élève en faveur du célèbre Rousseau."[150] Whilst there is some truth in this remark, Voltaire goes out of his way to give a remarkably moderate assessment of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau's literary achievements in Le Siècle (P 1014). Like Hénault, Fréron also justifiably deplored Voltaire's attitude to Turenne's conversion;[151] the historian's bias in this respect is clear for all to see. Yet one cannot help feeling that Fréron's enthusiastic response to Nonnotte's critical remarks, is inspired less by genuine appreciation than by his hostility towards Voltaire:

> Il y a des connaissances profondes dans cet ouvrage qui mérite d'être lu et conservé. L'auteur célèbre de l'Histoire Universelle et du Siècle de Louis XIV y est combattu avec cette supériorité de sens, de logique et de sçavoir qui ne laisse lieu à d'autres réponses que quelques gambades d'esprit ou de grosses injures. On y prouve évidemment que M. de Voltaire est incapable de tenir la plume de l'Histoire; que ses passions, ses préjugés, son érudition très superficielle et son extrême vivacité ont corrompu sa raison, et l'ont empêché de comparer et de tirer des résultats sages et judicieux.[152]

The fact that Fréron went on to decry Nonnotte's own fanaticism and bile, should not obscure his wish to use any work critical of Voltaire's writings, in order to tarnish the philosophe's reputation.

Whilst making allowances for Fréron's personal bias against Voltaire, his pronouncements on the latter's histories should not be dismissed out of hand, as they did, to a certain extent at least, reflect the views of a section of the reading public in France who took Voltaire to task for writing history in an

undignified manner and resented the author's satirical and often too light-hearted manner. But the author of Le Siècle could not have expected much support from the semi-official publications discussed above, nor from Fréron. He might, on the other hand, reasonably have hoped for some praise from Grimm's Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique, which enjoyed the privilege of not being subject to censorship, and circulated freely in manuscript form among a large number of scholars and philosophers in Europe. Grimm was responsible for editing the sheets from 1753 to 1773, when Meister took over. He should, in theory, have proved to be an important ally of Voltaire, but his judgements on Le Siècle, though well thought out, were not devoid of partiality and displayed certain preconceptions against its author. In June 1753, Grimm mentioned the work for the first time in connexion with the La Beaumelle controversy; he launched a virulent attack on such an "insecte malfaisant" as La Beaumelle whose remarks he declared to be "presque toutes triviales, souvent fausses et écrites avec une impudence qui ne peut convenir qu'à la plume de l'impertinent auteur du Qu'en dira-t-on?..."[153] Subsequently, Grimm followed the quarrel with great interest; Voltaire, in his view, was wrong to try and answer La Beaumelle's criticisms, and it was inconceivable, wrote Grimm, "que M. de Voltaire ait pu s'avilir jusqu'à répondre à La Beaumelle; c'est pourtant ce qu'il a fait dans un Supplément au Siècle de Louis XIV..."[154] As for La Beaumelle's Réponse, which will be discussed below,[155] it is little more than "un tissu de vérités mortifiantes pour M. de Voltaire, d'insolences et d'injures opposées aux injures," proclaimed Grimm on May 15, 1754.[156]

What was Grimm's reaction to Le Siècle? He viewed Voltaire's eulogy of Louis XIV as a betrayal of the philosophic cause, since, to his way of thinking, a philosopher-historian should at all times denounce vice and weaknesses everywhere for the benefit of mankind. Voltaire was not objective enough, and remained too intent on showing the greatness of the Sun King. As early as 1753, Grimm also criticised the plan of the work, showing himself to be a harsh but honest judge; in this respect, he shared La Beaumelle's reservations:

> L'objection la plus grave et la mieux fondée est celle que le commentateur du Siècle de Louis XIV (i.e. La Beaumelle) fait sur le plan de l'ouvrage. Malgré le grand succès que Le Siècle de Louis XIV a eu à Paris et partout ailleurs, et malgré l'enthousiasme que le coloris brillant de M. de Voltaire est toujours sûr d'exciter, on a de la peine à se cacher que l'auteur n'a pas rempli son objet, ni satisfait du titre qu'il a donné à son livre; même en adoptant le plan de M. de Voltaire, il faut avouer que la première partie n'est qu'un abrégé de l'histoire du règne de Louis XIV et non de son siècle, et le second volume, qui est le plus important, paraît fait à la hâte et sans soin, et n'est qu'une ébauche très légère du génie de ce siècle.[157]

La Beaumelle, too, had questioned the validity of the title in his third introductory letter.[158] Unlike Hénault and Frederick, Grimm rated the second volume lower than the first and echoed La Beaumelle's and Fréron's attacks on the satirical and light-hearted manner, as well as the ironic mode decried by Hénault. That the second volume appeared to have been drafted in haste, is a valid comment, in view of the fact that it was composed in less than a

year at Potsdam. The style, furthermore, so highly praised by Voltaire's correspondents,[159] does not meet Grimm's high standards and leaves much to be desired: "Les négligences du style, qui sont souvent des grâces dans Charles XII, ne sont pas du ton d'un ouvrage aussi grave et aussi important que l'eût été Le Siècle de Louis XIV."[160] La Beaumelle had also underlined those stylistic blemishes, though in a far more hostile manner. Grimm's frank criticisms are certainly nearer to the truth than the unreserved praise lavished on Voltaire by acquaintances and friends; Frederick had admired the style of the second volume.[161]

Grimm came back to the subject of Voltaire's histories in his Réflexions sur la manière d'écrire l'histoire of May 1755. Voltaire's success in writing history is here attributed to the captivating charm of his prose, and to nothing else: "C'est le charme séducteur de sa prose, ce coloris heureux qui n'est qu'à lui, qui ont établi dans le public la grande opinion qu'on a de son talent pour un art dont on entrevoit à peine les difficultés."[162] But Grimm goes on to add that it is this very literary brilliance - so rightly applauded in Voltaire's other works and the mark of le bel esprit - which is out of place in his histories: "Sa négligence, souvent si heureuse même dans ses tragédies, sa légèreté, sa hardiesse, le peu de soin qu'il prend, ou l'impossibilité où il est de finir et de perfectionner ses ouvrages..." become essential defects in history which demands "une gravité, une sagesse, une beauté mâle et toujours également soutenue."[163] Thus the wit of the raconteur, which will be seen to have been perfected in Le Siècle,[164] the anecdotal presentation, the esprit, did not meet with the approval of the more serious-minded readers in Voltaire's

day, a criticism which echoed La Beaumelle's,[165] Fréron's,[166] and was shared by a number of Voltaire's readers. For as late as 1781, in Les Trois Siècles de la littérature française, l'abbé Sébastien de Castres was to make a similar reproach to Voltaire, only in a more hostile fashion:

> Dans l'histoire, que s'est-il proposé? Que d'amuser son lecteur, au lieu de l'instruire; que de prêter au mensonge des amorces pour la faible crédulité; que de faire triompher la fiction à l'aide d'une tournure insidieuse ou du sel de l'épigramme.[167]

And he added: "La manière de raconter, quoique piquante, ne saurait suppléer au fond des choses..."[168] Furthermore, according to Grimm, there is a lack of consistency within Le Siècle, for the rest of the work does not fulfil the promise of the introduction: "M. de Voltaire, trop rapide dans ses commencements, se ralentit bientôt, et si, d'inégalités en inégalités, il retrouve quelquefois sa première beauté, c'est pour la reperdre un instant après."[169]

The editor of the Correspondance Littéraire returned to the charge in his Remarques sur Le Siècle de Louis XIV of April 1757. Le Siècle, he observed, could not be counted among Voltaire's 'monuments'; he took exception to Voltaire's panegyrics of Louis XIV, and his lack of objectivity, and reiterated the criticism that the author was too concerned with being a 'bel esprit' to be a philosopher in the true sense of the word: "L'esprit et la finesse prennent la place de la vérité et n'en dédommagent point."[170] He denounced Voltaire for excusing in Louis XIV the faults which he condemned outright in Francis I, the excessive love of splendour, his haughtiness towards conquered nations, his

oppression of the Genoese people. How could Voltaire be called a historian, when he betrayed the truth so blatantly? "Notre historien porte sa fatale indulgence depuis les affaires les plus importantes jusque dans les détails les plus minces."[171] Grimm makes the point that perhaps Voltaire was writing too soon after the reign of Louis XIV to overcome his own prejudices, and repeats his accusation that the historian has betrayed the philosophic cause:

> C'est un mauvais métier que celui d'un panégyriste; il est incompatible avec les devoirs d'un philosophe, qui doit toujours exposer la vérité dans toute sa pureté et dans toute sa force, et qui ne peut la dérober au public sans se déshonorer.[172]

Modern scholars have seen Voltaire's assessment of Louis XIV as a more balanced one; N.R. Johnson, rightly, remarks: "Voltaire's portrait of the king is an admiring one...,"[173] but goes on to say: "While Voltaire is prepared to excuse Louis for his lack of proper instruction and for the adulation of which he was the object, he does not hesitate to condemn several examples of his harshness."[174] Indeed one can think of Voltaire's account of Louis's destruction of the Palatinate, of his severity towards Fouquet, his harsh treatment of Lauzun and Mademoiselle, his imprisonment of Saint-Evremond, and his persecutions of the Huguenots. It is a striking example of the contradictory nature of contemporaries' responses to Le Siècle and of the obvious subjectivity of readers' reactions, that whilst a royalist like Hénault clearly took Voltaire to task for having treated Louis XIV harshly, Grimm, the philosopher, accused Voltaire of having done the exact opposite in the work. He was giving expression

to the opinions of the more militant and committed section of the reading public, of a thinking elite who could be satisfied with nothing short of total commitment to the cause.

Other journalists were to give a more favourable account of Le Siècle in their publications. One such was Pierre Clément in his Nouvelles Littéraires de la France published in Paris in 1752, and thereafter at the Hague under the title of Cinq Années Littéraires in 1754. His remarks, written between 1748 and 1752, constitute less a regular journal than a compilation of useful notes on interesting events taking place in France at the time. Clément set out his aims as follows: "Ce n'est point ici un journal dans les formes, une suite d'extraits réguliers et faits pour les gens de lettres; mais il n'aura rien paru de nouveau, d'agréable et d'un peu intéressant dans la république de lettres ou sur le théâtre de la France dont je ne rende compte suffisamment..."[175] This flippant tone should not, however, detract from the value of Clément's critical observations which the journalist promised would be devoid of partiality, "sans arborer de drapeau". His comments are often astute, fair and enlightening. On February 15, 1752, Clément informed his fictitious correspondent that some forty copies of Le Siècle had been circulating in Paris.[176] After perusing the work, he proclaimed:

> Je le tiens enfin, Monsieur, ce bienheureux Siècle de Louis XIV de Mr de Voltaire, et c'est dans le plus vif de l'enchantement que j'aime à interrompre ma lecture pour vous faire part de mon plaisir. Voilà comment il faut écrire l'histoire: c'est avec cette rapidité, cette simplicité, cette noblesse, cette impartialité hardie, cette variété de vues et ces réunions de traits, qu'il faut parler à l'esprit, aux yeux et à la mémoire.[177]

Taking the opposite view to Grimm, Clément applauds the brilliance of Voltaire's esprit, as well as his imaginative style, one which "m'instruit promptement, qui me donne à penser, à imaginer, et qui me charme."[178] He was particularly struck by the portraits of the Duc de Lorraine, of Vendôme, Feuquières, Cardinal de Retz. And Clément waxes lyrical on the merits of Le Siècle: "Combien de points éclaircis, de préjugés réfutés, de traits curieux démêlés du faux ou tirés de l'incertitude, et quel choix d'anecdotes!"[179] Not only did Voltaire, the historian in the strict sense of the word, find favour with Clément, but the raconteur, whose talent Grimm failed to appreciate, won the heart of at least one reader. Nor did Clément share Grimm's criticism of Voltaire's partiality towards Louis XIV; whereas Nonnotte and Fréron were to come down heavily on the parallel between Louis XIV and William of Orange, Clément hailed this as an irrefutable proof of Voltaire's objectivity.[180] But the journalist reflected the views of many readers when he noted that there were "bien d'autres petites négligences", which showed that "divers morceaux de cette nouvelle histoire ont été faits au premier coup", a fact of which, as we saw, Voltaire was himself fully aware with regard to the first edition. The anecdotal presentation, though, and the general merits of the work, in Clément's opinion, amply compensated for these minor defects.

But whereas the first volume of Le Siècle met with such praise, the second Clément found disappointing. Here his assessment concurred with Grimm's and was contrary to those of Hénault and Frederick. Clément's harshest comments were reserved for the plan of the work, including the Catalogue; his observations almost

echo those of Grimm and La Beaumelle: "D'abord, tous ces articles à part, cette distribution en chapitres a commencé à me paroitre d'une petite manière."[181] His choice of language inevitably recalls La Beaumelle's criticisms in Letter III of his pirate edition:[182]

> Vous conviendrés qu'il eût été plus beau de jeter sa statue en fonte d'un seul jet; je sais qu'il y avoit ici de petites parties qui auroient gâté la figure (on les eût retranchées) mais tous les détails principaux, habilement fondus dans la premiere narration, en eussent fait un monument bien autrement digne d'un grand maître...

It is more than likely that La Beaumelle unscrupulously copied those observations in his introductory letters which were published one year later. But both Clément and Grimm voiced the opinions of a considerable number of readers who would have preferred the traditional approach adopted by Larrey and Limiers in their histories, not based on a thematic division of chapters, but purely on a chronological description of events. Voltaire's innovation in this respect, far from winning universal acclaim, as it tends to do nowadays, seems to have somewhat disconcerted his contemporaries.

Moreover, Voltaire's impartiality, of which Clément thought so highly in the first volume, became subsequently a bone of contention, especially with regard to some articles in the Catalogue: "Celui /le morceau/ des 'Ecrivains' a modéré l'opinion qu'il m'avoit donnée de son impartialité... L'article 'Rousseau' fait pitié." Nor was the critic happy with the chapters on the arts and sciences which he saw as being lacking in substance and documentation. On the other hand, his favourite section of the second volume is the chapter devoted to Jansenism: "Imaginés-vous

Les Provinciales à deux tranchans; une plaisanterie distribuée à droite et à gauche avec une légèreté, une finesse et une naïveté charmantes. Il faut toujours finir par admirer Mr de Voltaire." This controversial chapter, by all accounts, divided contemporary readers; some like Clément and La Condamine[183] acclaimed it; others like l'abbé Guyon and Nonnotte thought it offensive. For, as usually happens, Voltaire's readers responded according to their personal prejudices, and the last two critics could not bring themselves to appreciate the art of the propagandist who uses reductionism as his main weapon.

Le Siècle de Louis XIV was destined to make an impact on other European countries besides France. It is well-known that as a result of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Holland became a fertile source of controversial pamphlets and journals from the pens of French Protestant refugees. Those journals circulated in France and their modest prices made them accessible to a growing reading public.[184] On the whole, Voltaire's Le Siècle was, as one would expect, favourably received by French journalists based in Holland. La Bibliothèque raisonnée des savants de l'Europe of Armand de la Chapelle, Barbeyrac, Desmaizeaux etc., Amsterdam, 1728-53, claimed to be the sequel of Le Clerc's Bibliothèques, with its authors remaining anonymous. Their aim was, allegedly, to produce unbiased reviews of new publications. In the edition of April, May and June 1752, readers are heartily encouraged to peruse Le Siècle and to overcome their prejudices: "Pour se former une juste idée de cet ouvrage, il faut être sans préjugé de Nation et de Parti, n'avoir en vue que

le bonheur du Genre-humain, aimer les Sciences, les Beaux-Arts et surtout la vérité."[185] This, the authors argued, was an essential prerequisite if one were to benefit from the work which attacked superstitions, intolerance and religious disputes. Whilst the journalists shared clearly in Voltaire's philosophic crusade, they were not blind to the defects of Le Siècle, but there is an obvious attempt to attenuate them: "Il s'en trouve dans tout ce qui sort de la main des hommes." Besides, the qualities far outnumber the defects: "L'amour de la vérité, l'impartialité la plus parfaite et qui s'étend absolument à tout, voilà ce qui fait le caractère distinctif de notre illustre historien." Voltaire's objectivity, which had been called into question by Grimm and Fréron, is here warmly praised. As is the plan of Le Siècle, criticised by Grimm, Clément and La Beaumelle: "Le plan de cet ouvrage, la manière dont il est exécuté, fait une partie de son mérite."[186] So it is that responses to the work varied greatly, but as an appraisal of the literary value of Le Siècle, this review smacks of flattery and is woefully lacking in concrete details.

The Journal Britannique, published at the Hague by M. Maty, a member of the Society of London, took as its target freedom of thought. It was most popular with the reading public of Europe, and figured prominently, according to Daniel Mornet,[187] in a large number of private libraries in the eighteenth century. Pierre Clément held the author in high esteem, and was particularly impressed by his taste and impartiality. In July 1752, the Journal testified to the universal interest shown in Le Siècle in England, although it had been received with mixed feelings:

> Le Siècle de Louis 14, si brillant et peut-être si défectueux, a été reçu en Angleterre comme tout ce qui part de la plume de son auteur doit l'être d'une nation de philosophes. Si la critique de même que l'éloge est le fruit que les grands hommes ont lieu d'attendre de leurs travaux, que peut-il manquer à la gloire de M. de Voltaire?[188]

In 1753, Maty compared Voltaire's work to Bolingbroke's Letters on the study and use of history, and found in both works:

> tout l'accord qu'on devoit se promettre de deux grands hommes, longtemps amis et accoutumés à envisager certains objets de la même manière. Il y a cependant plus de descriptions dans l'un (i.e. in Le Siècle) et de réflexions dans l'autre; celui-ci paroit avoir fait sa principale étude des hommes (i.e. Bolingbroke); celui-là des états; le poète raconte les événements qui lui ont été rapportés, en historien éclairé et aussi impartial que le peut être un François; l'Anglois est un Philosophe profond, un Politique adroit...[189]

Maty was thus suitably impressed by Voltaire's objectivity, his presentation and the notion of writing a social history.

Several Dutch gazettes also gave lengthy extracts of Le Siècle which in themselves tend to show the importance attached to this work by reviewers at the time. Such are those published by La Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique of Samuel Formey at Amsterdam.[190] The identity of the author of Le Siècle, declared the journalist, poses no real difficulty, for it is impossible "d'attribuer à quelque autre plume ce qui sort de celle d'un Ecrivain aussi consommé dans l'art d'écrire."[191] The tone of the article which announces the 1753 edition, is nothing short of eulogistic:

> Si Le Siècle de Louis XIV a été reçu avec empressement dès la première édition qui en a paru, cet empressement ne peut que redoubler à présent que l'Auteur l'a si considérablement

> perfectionné. Il serait difficile d'indiquer un autre livre où tant de beaux objets se trouvent réunis sous un point de vue aussi frappant.[192]

In particular, Voltaire's objective handling of Calvinism wins the highest accolade from Formey, who applauds the historian's attack on Louis's persecution of the Huguenots:

> De tous les Ecrivains qui tiennent à la Communion Romaine, il n'y en a point qui se soit exprimé avec plus d'impartialité au sujet du Calvinisme que notre Auteur. Il a trop de lumières pour ne pas apercevoir, et trop de vivacité pour ne pas dire, que les persécutions excitées contre les Réformés de France répugnaient également à l'Humanité et à la saine politique.[193]

In Holland, Voltaire's treatment of Catholic intolerance, as exemplified in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, was bound to be appreciated. Le Siècle, accordingly, found more well-wishers there than it possibly did in France, and reviewers, as a rule, came out in support of Voltaire against La Beaumelle and his other enemies. The Bibliothèque Impartiale's reactions to La Beaumelle's pirate edition were not, in this respect, untypical; it went out of its way to underline that La Beaumelle's remarks were both petty and insubstantial: "Outre bien des petits faits qui ne sont précieux qu'aux petits esprits, que Mr de La Beaumelle croit trouver dans l'ouvrage qu'il examine, il relève en plusieurs endroits le style de Mr de Voltaire."[194] It is not altogether surprising that Voltaire found more allies in Holland amongst those who shared his philosophic commitment, but what is perhaps more striking is the strength of this support. The more guarded reactions amongst journalists in France were inevitably due to the adverse conditions which prevailed there, in so far as the authorities had

little sympathy for Voltaire's works.

But this support which Voltaire enjoyed on the continent was by no means unanimous. One particularly vicious attack on Le Siècle was launched by the Gazette de Gottingue, which instigated a counter-attack by Voltaire in his Avis à l'auteur du journal de Gottingue, first published separately and subsequently inserted in the Bibliothèque Impartiale of 1753.[195] As is so often the case, Voltaire's favourite means of defence is to attack and he does this with consummate skill in his Avis: "Quand un journaliste veut rendre compte d'un ouvrage, il doit d'abord en saisir l'esprit; quand il le critique il doit avoir raison. Le journaliste de Gottingue a oublié entièrement ces deux devoirs, et il se trompe sans exception sur tout ce qu'il dit."[196] He goes on to justify his exclusion of Tillotson from the Catalogue on the grounds that he is only concerned with French writers. He rejects the criticism that he sided with the Jesuits against the Jansenists, and he defends La Fontaine's Contes as being "pleins de gaieté". One can conclude from Voltaire's reply that the Gazette de Gottingue pronounced itself to be less than satisfied with the second volume of Le Siècle in particular.

In Great Britain, it is fair to say that the reaction to Le Siècle was a mixed one. Indeed, as early as 1739, the English public reacted coolly to the introduction and the first chapter of the Essai sur le siècle de Louis XIV, printed in the Recueil de pièces fugitives. André Michel Rousseau mentions a translation of the opening section of Le Siècle by Lockman in 1739 and several reprints in Ireland.[197] The response of the public to Voltaire's claim that the age of Louis XIV constituted the

fourth golden age, was hostile in England, and in 1749, the historian was accused by John Gwynn of having ignored the contributions of such Englishmen as Locke and Newton. Of course, the critic had no way of knowing then that Voltaire was to pay homage to those great scientists in the chapter on science and the arts (XXIX of the 1751 edition). Following the first edition, English periodicals launched an intensive publicity campaign in favour of Le Siècle, perhaps at the instigation of Voltaire's friend, Sir Everard Falkener. Several journals published lengthy extracts; e.g. the Monthly Review or Literary Journal.[198] If anything, these testify to the general interest aroused by the work which is reported by the Journal Britannique.[199] In the Monthly Review of 1752 (vol. VII, pp.116-131, 161-183),[200] Le Siècle is praised as an "elegant, masterly and entertaining performance." But the main charge brought against Voltaire in England was that of chauvinism. The Letters on the English Nation of Shebbeare asked in 1756: "What truth is there in what m. de Voltaire says, in respect of the English having derived science from the reign of Lewis XIV, when these writers were dead before he was born, and the English state at the perfection it is at present?"[201] And André Michel Rousseau concludes: "Personne n'a su apprécier la remarquable synthèse d'un passé encore si proche, la sûreté d'un jugement que la postérité a le plus souvent confirmé, l'effort d'objectivité et l'étendue de l'information."[202]

Only Warburton paid tribute to the originality of the historian in the first volume of Le Siècle, but he went on to say: "The anecdotes in the second are too trifling, and the political theological dissertations on Calvinism, jansenism, quietism, etc.

below all criticism."[203] The letters to the editors, moreover, deserve mention, as they are fairly typical of certain groups of readers. Thus the London Magazine contained a letter from an English Protestant which betrayed all the prejudices of the sect, claiming that Voltaire's aim was to "revive the languishing, dying cause of Jacobitism; and render the crown precarious on the head of the royal family."[204] That Voltaire, the scourge of Catholic fanaticism, should be accused of Catholic propaganda, in turn, is almost laughable, but the English Protestants were quite clearly offended by his personal campaign in favour of the exiled Stuarts. Indeed, the historian seemed aware of such accusations, when he proclaimed his objectivity once again in the Supplément:

> J'apprends que plusieurs protestants me reprochent d'avoir trop peu respecté leur secte; j'apprends que quelques catholiques crient que j'ai beaucoup trop ménagé, trop plaint, trop loué les protestants. Cela ne prouve-t-il pas que j'ai gardé mon caractère, que je suis impartial? (P 1274)

Yet the charge that Voltaire was a partisan Frenchman was still being levelled in 1757, amongst others, by Percival Stockdale: "I was pleased with Voltaire's Age of Lewis XIV. It is scandalously partial, as all the writings, words and actions of Frenchmen ARE (sic); yet it is certainly on the whole one of his best productions."[205] In addition, Voltaire was often seen by the English as a typical Frenchman seeking to show his esprit to the detriment of the truth,[206] a criticism which echoed those of Grimm. It was only in the last twenty years or so of the century that Voltaire's style and wit, which have become his trademark nowadays, were fully appreciated, seemingly, by the English reading public. The serious-minded English critics could not, at first, become

reconciled to the mélange des genres in history which, in their view, demanded greater dignity.

The reactions to Le Siècle were, therefore, as varied as there were critics and readers who responded according to their prejudices and beliefs. These are, not surprisingly, often contradictory, but a few general conclusions can be drawn from our survey here. Voltaire's enemies clearly joined forces in a virulent attack on the work, and this was to be expected. But he also received a vote of confidence from various quarters, notably from the Dutch critics. The Church's cause was defended by the Journal de Trévoux, although the remarks of its editor, Berthier, were remarkably moderate, and far more zealously by l'abbé Guyon in L'Oracle des nouveaux philosophes, Berne, 1759. The author took as his aim, to "défendre la relligion et la divinité du christianisme", and as his main target Voltaire, the mouthpiece of the new philosophy, what he calls the "poison subtil et mortel."[207] And he exclaimed:

> Décelons en particulier les Erreurs monstrueuses, établies dans le plus insidieux et le plus répandu de tous les livres; dans Celui qui a donné le ton à une infinité d'autres venus à sa suite...[208]

The book referred to here was L'Essai sur les mœurs, which, of course, included Le Siècle. In the ninth conversation, clearly a fictitious one between Guyon and Voltaire, one finds an ironic and often ruthless attack on Le Siècle. Under the guise of politely transmitting to Voltaire the responses of other critics to his work, Guyon accuses Le Siècle of abounding in errors: "On se récria contre les faussetés, dont Le Livre étoit rempli,

sur la foi des personnes les plus respectables."[209] The plan promises much, but this promise is never fulfilled: "Mais il /l'auteur/ s'est négligé dans l'exécution; il a oublié son propre plan, il l'a perdu de vûe. Au lieu de s'attacher uniquement à son sujet, il semble avoir fait son capital d'embellir les ornements postiches, qu'il y ajoute."[210] This criticism bears a strong similarity to that of La Beaumelle who, like Guyon, had said in 1753 that Voltaire had lost sight of his declared aim, i.e. to give a tableau of 'les mœurs'.[211] The introduction to Le Siècle, Guyon finds "d'une maigreur extrême",[212] the depiction of the Fronde not worth three pages of the Memoirs of de Retz,[213] and there is nothing interesting in Voltaire's account of Louis XIV's campaigns - a remarkable charge in view of Voltaire's skill in adding to the liveliness of the tableaux in the first section, as will be shown in chapter IV.

But above all, l'abbé Guyon takes exception to the anecdotal presentation in Le Siècle, following in the footsteps of Grimm and others. The anecdotes he dismisses as being inadequate and unworthy of the history of a great age:

> Personne n'a jamais compris, comment vous aviez pu vous flatter de donner, avec quelques anecdotes, une idée suffisante et convenable du Siècle de Louis XIV, que vous entrepreniez de faire connoître.[214]

Furthermore, the anecdotes, especially those in the chapters on Louis's private life, are often based on hearsay evidence, "sur des Oui dire, qui se détruisent presque toûjours eux-mêmes, qui sont combattus par la notoriété publique, qui n'apprennent rien, qui n'ont d'autre autorité que les grands noms de ceux

dont on les fait venir...,"[215] another echo of La Beaumelle. That Guyon is justified to some extent in these criticisms, especially of the unreliability of Voltaire's sources for the anecdotes and of the large number of minutiae present in Le Siècle, is undeniable. Likewise, his objection to the time spent on such petits faits as Louis's love-affairs, the carrousels, the bons mots scattered indiscriminately and without cohesion, is a valid one. The portrayal of Louis XIV as preoccupied solely with pleasures and spectacles in the chapters of anecdotes, adds Guyon, is only one side of the coin, the less creditable one; the other should not be ignored: "Le médaillon avoit deux faces: vous en avez choisi celle qui devoit être cachée, et vous avez caché celle qu'il falloit exposer aux yeux de l'Univers,"[216] such as Louis XIV's devotion to religion. At the end of this exposé on the weaknesses of Le Siècle, comes the real sting in the tail: Voltaire's call for 'la bonne philosophie' has led many into error and has fostered irreligion, a charge which Guyon had previously levelled at L'Essai as a whole, which, instead of carrying on where Bossuet left off, becomes "une satire violente de la religion."[217]

Guyon's judgements on Le Siècle recall those of other contemporaries like Grimm; e.g. he decries the plan of the work, the frivolous approach of Voltaire, the excessively anecdotal presentation. Like Nonnotte in Les Erreurs de Voltaire,[218] he sets himself up, in the first place, as a defender of the faith. In his critical remarks, written in 1760, a year after Guyon's, Nonnotte follows suit; for Voltaire's antireligious propaganda in L'Essai, he has nothing but contempt: "Entraîné par cette malignité anti-chrétienne,

il vous présente une longue suite de tableaux historiques; et ces tableaux sont toujours infidèles."[219] And in his specific criticisms of Le Siècle,[220] Nonnotte goes out of his way to undermine the authenticity of the work, decrying the fact that Voltaire, far too often, gives free rein to his imagination,[221] deploring the innumerable anecdotes unworthy of history,[222] attacking Voltaire's prejudices, e.g. in his handling of Turenne's conversion,[223] and in his articles on writers in the Catalogue:

> Parmi les jugements que porte M. de Voltaire sur la plupart de nos écrivains, il y en a qui sont justes, il y en a dont on doit se défier; les uns montrent un goût sûr, les autres une basse jalousie.[224]

Moreover, Nonnotte declares himself to be unhappy with the chapter on finance which, in his view, shows Voltaire's lack of knowledge,[225] and with the satirical tone of Le Siècle, especially in matters of religion.[226] For this is the real bone of contention, and Nonnotte, like Guyon, represents the views of a bigoted establishment; on this point of Voltaire's anti-clericalism, Nonnotte does not mince words: "Les réflexions de Voltaire se sentent souvent bien plus de l'anti-catholicisme que de la vérité."[227] He sees Voltaire's primary objective in the chapters on religious disputes as an all-out attempt to destroy catholicism. There is more than a hint of truth in this, of course, but Voltaire's real attempts to remain moderate and objective should not be ignored either. Nonnotte's pronouncements are, however, entirely one-sided and smack of his own parti-pris; in connexion with Voltaire's handling of Calvinism, he displays his own venom, while drawing attention to the philosopher's:

> Jamais les plus furieux ennemis de la catholicité n'ont fait couler de leur plume un fiel si amer, que celui qui coule de la sienne; et jamais ils ne sont tombés dans des contradictions plus évidentes.[228]

To be fair to Nonnotte, his charge that Voltaire changes his views according to his intentions is not one which modern critics would argue with - not even the most fervent admirers of Voltaire.

Lord Chesterfield had rightly predicted that the author of Le Siècle would make enemies because of his frankness in matters of religion. There are some obvious paradoxical elements present in contemporary responses to the work; Voltaire is both praised for his objectivity,[229] and condemned for his partiality. Some underline the extent to which his likes and dislikes transpire in Le Siècle, whilst others applaud his moderation and neutrality. His style, according to correspondents and journalists, accounts in large measure for the success of Le Siècle, but there are those like Grimm, Fréron, Clément, La Beaumelle, who remain unimpressed. The second volume is hailed as a masterpiece by Hénault and Duclos, whereas Grimm and Clément pronounce it to be inferior to the first. In the end, it all boils down to a matter of taste and personal beliefs. This is particularly brought home by the fact that Voltaire is, at one and the same time, accused of pro-Catholic and anti-Catholic bias. Voltaire himself seems to have been prepared for the mixed reactions to his work, and the enthusiasm of his admirers did perhaps less than the hostile remarks of his critics, like La Beaumelle, to egg him on to revise and improve his text. If Le Siècle did not always please everybody, at least it never left its readers indifferent and made

a considerable impact. Its very controversial nature helped, in no small measure, to publicise it and boost the sales.

All in all, Voltaire might have expected venom from Fréron, La Beaumelle, Nonnotte and Guyon; he might have been disappointed by Grimm's sometimes excessively harsh, albeit judicious, pronouncements. But he would have been more than satisfied with the responses of more perspicacious readers, especially practitioners of the trade in their own right, of historians like Gibbon and Hume. The former readily acknowledged the decisive influence which Le Siècle had on his own historical compcsitions. Having left Cambridge, he felt a strong inclination to write history, and declared having been inspired by Le Siècle in 1752: "The Age of Sesostris was perhaps suggested by Voltaire's Age of Lewis XIV which was new and popular," he wrote in his Memoirs.[230] In 1762, Gibbon's views about Le Siècle had not changed radically, and he deemed it superior to L'Essai in terms of the immense documentation undertaken by Voltaire:

> When he treats of a distant period, he is not a man to turn over musty monkish writers to instruct himself. He follows some compilation, varnishes it over with the magic of his style, and produces a most agreeable, superficial, inaccurate performance. But there [i.e. in Le Siècle] the information, both written and oral, lay within his reach, and he seems to have taken great pains to consult it.[231]

To Gibbon, Voltaire always remained a model to be imitated in some respects, a historian who "casts a keen and lively glance over the surface of history",[232] although he had some harsh things to say about Voltaire's hypocrisy in religious matters: "In his way, Voltaire was a bigot, an intolerable bigot."[233]

Another great historian, David Hume, writing to Abbé Le Blanc from Edinburgh on November 5, 1755, declared: "In this Country, they call me his Pupil [i.e. Voltaire's]... This opinion flatters very much my vanity; but the truth is that my history was plan'd and in a great measure compos'd, before the appearance of that agreeable work [i.e. Le Siècle]."[234] Though he defended his originality, Hume was not loth to confess his admiration for Voltaire, and his own countrymen could detect traces of the latter's influence in Hume's history. Horace Walpole, in a letter to Bentley on May 27, 1755, said of the style in the first volume of Hume's History: "His style which is the best we have in history and his manner imitated from Voltaire, are all very pleasing."[235]

Finally, the popularity of Le Siècle in the eighteenth century can be measured somewhat more objectively by Daniel Mornet's findings to which we have already referred. Significantly, he places it amongst the first eight books which figure most prominently in private libraries. It was to be found in 161 of 500 private libraries which he surveyed. It would appear that it was more widely read than the works of Diderot, Rousseau and Locke's Essay on Human Understanding.[236] Even if statistics do not always convey the whole truth, one can at least conclude from these findings that Le Siècle had a large measure of influence in its day and made a considerable impact. This Voltaire's enemies could not take away from him; not only did they have to read the work themselves to refute it, but in attacking Le Siècle, they created more interest in the work and whetted the appetite of the public for what was, ostensibly, a controversial publication. Perhaps in the end, those who, like La Beaumelle,

Fréron, Nonnotte and l'abbé Guyon, aimed to do as much damage as possible to Voltaire's reputation, ironically helped to enhance it. Voltaire had the last laugh after all, for nowadays we remember their critical remarks, not because of their intrinsic merit, but because of the lasting qualities of the work they set out to discredit.

Appendix A

Voltaire and La Beaumelle

Of all the critics of Le Siècle, La Beaumelle was by far the most hostile and notorious. Born at Villeraugne on January 28, 1726, of a Catholic mother and a Protestant father, he completed his studies at the Jesuit college of Alais and started a career in commerce. Passing quickly over his early life and his adventures in Geneva which have been described in detail by Michel Nicolas[237] and Charles Nisard,[238] we pick up the story in Copenhagen. It must be noted here that Voltaire's portrayal of La Beaumelle's youth and his supposedly dishonest actions which caused his expulsion from college in an addition to the article 'Quis quis' of the Dictionnaire Philosophique, is mere fabrication.[239] As a result of Mes Pensées which offended some important figures, La Beaumelle was forced to leave Denmark in 1751, and made his way to Potsdam where he contacted Voltaire at once. He had already taken the liberty of writing to the philosopher from Copenhagen about a project of his, namely to publish annotated editions of the French classics, including La Henriade.[240] At the critic's request, Voltaire had willingly entrusted to him a copy of the work. For what took place between Frederick's protégé and La Beaumelle, on the latter's arrival in Potsdam, we have only La Beaumelle's testimony.[241] Voltaire was at the time preoccupied with Le Siècle and had enough problems of his own, but he seems to have done his best for the author of Mes Pensées or Qu'en dira-t-on?

Although made welcome by Voltaire, La Beaumelle was soon filled with jealousy and envy, and sided with an enemy of the philosophe, the scientist Maupertuis. An incident which is alleged by La Beaumelle to have taken place at a dinner organised by Frederick was to a certain extent responsible for this. Voltaire, to whom La Beaumelle had shown Mes Pensées, was deeply hurt by a passage which directly concerned him:

> Qu'on parcoure l'histoire ancienne et moderne, on ne trouvera point d'exemple de prince qui ait donné sept mille écus de pension à un homme de lettres, à titre d'homme de lettres. Il y a eu de plus grands poètes que Voltaire; il n'y en eut jamais de si récompensés, parce que le goût ne met jamais de bornes à ses récompenses. Le roi de Prusse comble de bienfaits les hommes à talents, précisément pour les mêmes raisons qui engagent un petit prince d'Allemagne à combler de bienfaits un bouffon ou un nain.[242]

Feeling unfairly attacked and indignant at La Beaumelle's impudence, Voltaire is said by the latter in his Lettre à M. sur mes démêlés avec Voltaire,[243] addressed to Roques in 1753 after the quarrel had broken out and thus tinged with prejudice, to have been offended especially by the sentence: "Il y a eu de plus grands poètes que Voltaire." During the dinner, Voltaire attacked La Beaumelle openly; the critic claims that he sent the book to Frederick to counteract Voltaire's criticisms, but argues that Mes Pensées never reached the king as a result of Voltaire's machinations. La Beaumelle also accuses Voltaire of having done his utmost to have him expelled from Prussia, whereas the philosopher's version seems nearer to the truth, as it is supported by the Mémoires of the Marquis d'Argens. In his Supplément,

Voltaire declares:

> Il est faux que j'eusse averti Sa Majesté prussienne de la manière dont La Beaumelle avait osé parler de ce monarque et de sa cour, dans son livre intitulé le Qu'en dira-t-on?, ou Mes pensées; je l'aurais pu et je l'aurais dû, en qualité de son chambellan. Ce ne fut pas moi, ce fut un de mes camarades qui remplit ce devoir. J'ose en attester Sa Majesté elle-même. Elle me doit cette justice, elle ne peut refuser de me la rendre. Le chambellan qui l'en avertit est M. le marquis d'Argens: il l'avoue, et il en fait gloire (P 1225).

Whatever the truth, the incident during this dinner put paid to La Beaumelle's hopes of gaining favour with Frederick, and he swore to avenge himself. It is more than likely that in his account of those events, Maupertuis, filled as he was with hatred for Voltaire, added all the venom he was capable of, and the author of Le Siècle was convinced that it was the scientist who encouraged La Beaumelle to avenge himself by publishing the pirate edition of the work.[244] La Beaumelle constantly denied this;[245] it could well be that Voltaire was here a victim of an interesting persecution complex, since La Beaumelle certainly needed no outside help to seek means of getting his own back on Voltaire. The hostility which existed already between the two men came to a head after La Beaumelle's incarceration at Spandau.[246] From what he was told, the critic firmly believed that Voltaire had rejoiced in public of his imprisonment, whilst Voltaire, for his part, claimed that he intervened on his enemy's behalf.[247] From that point onwards, war was openly declared, and La Beaumelle defiantly stated his intention of taking his revenge; to Roques he wrote: "S'il continue à m'outrager, s'il ne met fin à ses

impostures, je lui tiendrai la parole que je lui ai donnée la dernière fois que je l'ai vu, de le poursuivre jusqu'aux enfers."[248] The occasion was to be the publication of Le Siècle, and his instrument of vengeance was to be his remarks in the pirate edition by the Veuve Knoch and Eslinger (Ben. 1188). Not only was it a useful source of revenue for La Beaumelle, but having taken the decision to publish the Mémoires de Madame de Maintenon, and her letters, a large number of which were apocryphal,[249] the embittered critic wished, above all, to discredit Voltaire's history of Louis XIV and promote the value of his own coming publication. It was, in the first place, a means of vengeance, although, as will be shown, some of La Beaumelle's criticisms were more than justified, and he did not, at times, hesitate to lavish praise on Voltaire. In his letter to Roques on his démêlés with the author of Le Siècle, La Beaumelle declared that he aimed to underline Voltaire's errors in the name of truth.[250] In any event, he drafted his notes and comments in less than six months, following the publication of the first edition of Le Siècle.

Voltaire, who was afraid that La Beaumelle, whom he knew to be in possession of the letters of Madame de Maintenon, might be in a position to contradict much of his material, asked Roques to intervene and even to offer money to the publishers, so as to stop the pirate edition, but in vain. In his letter to Roques, he waxed indignant at the spiteful actions of a man whom he had helped in the past: "Comment peut-il donc monsieur dans de pareilles circonstances, non seulement contrefaire l'édition de mon libraire, mais charger cette édition de notes contre moi qui

ne l'ai jamais offensé, qui même lui ai rendu service!"[251] The pirate edition was soon ready to be put on sale, despite Roques's intervention, and bore the date 1753 (Ben. 1188). Perhaps because it appealed to the curiosity of the public on account of its controversial nature, it was avidly read and quickly bought. Voltaire himself had to acknowledge its popularity in a letter to Roques of February 3, 1753: "Je vous dirai, monsieur, que cette édition n'a pas laissé d'avoir quelque cours à Berlin."[252]

In his Réponse au Supplément, La Beaumelle denied that he was the author of the remarks contained in volumes II and III of the pirate edition: "Je n'ai fait que le premier volume de l'édition de Francfort: vous n'attaquez que le second et le troisième."[253] Nicolas takes the same view and attributes the said remarks to the Chevalier de Mainvilliers.[254] But there seems little doubt that La Beaumelle was responsible for them, as Lenel argues.[255] For it was only after his incarceration in the Bastille for a note in volume II, which accused the Duc d'Orléans of having poisoned members of the royal family, that La Beaumelle disclaimed responsibility for these. Furthermore, a letter, quoted by Lenel, from La Beaumelle to Maupertuis, provides additional evidence: "Je vais dire dans la Bibliothèque Raisonnée, dans le Journal des Savants, et dans la Gazette de Hollande que les lettres et les remarques sont également de moi."[256] Since the letter was dated February 22, 1752, and was prior to his imprisonment, there is no reason to disbelieve La Beaumelle here. In addition, the tone, manner and style of the remarks in volumes II and III betray the pen from which they flowed; e.g. his note on Voltaire's sentence, "Il est bien rare qu'un homme puissant,

quand il est lui-même artiste, protège sincèrement les bons artistes" (P 1010, chapter XXVIII of 51), smacks of the same jealousy and hostility evident in the first volume: "Cela n'est point vrai à Potsdam; M. de Voltaire très bon poète, est sincèrement protégé par le roi de Prusse très bon poète."[257]

As an introduction to the text, La Beaumelle sets out to offer advice to Voltaire in three ironic letters entitled 'Conseils à l'auteur du Siècle de Louis XIV'. In spite of several ironic compliments to the historian, which the reader easily sees through, La Beaumelle's venom is clearly visible:

> Je viens enfin de lire, Monsieur, votre 'Siècle de Louis XIV'. Je l'ai trouvé, comme tout ce que vous faites, admirable, plein de feu, plein de sens. A la vivacité de votre style, on ne le croirait pas l'ouvrage de vingt années: l'esprit s'appesantit sur les matières à force de les manier; mais le vôtre ne se ressent ni du poids ni de l'âge ni de la longueur du travail: vous êtes même plus antithétique, plus saillant, plus décousu que jamais...[258]

One has to wait until the ironic reference to the long period of gestation and to the "style décousu" to see La Beaumelle's real purpose. From this ironic approach to abuse, there is only one step: "Quelle leçon pour notre patrie, pour notre siècle! Quelle leçon pour la postérité, si votre livre y va!"[259] As an expression of his gratitude to Voltaire, La Beaumelle promises to tell the writer the whole truth about his work: "Je vais donc vous dire avec franchise mon sentiment sur votre Siècle: j'en ferai un examen détaillé, je vous proposerai mes doutes: peut-être quelques unes de mes remarques mériteront-elles votre attention; du moins vous prouveront-elles toutes, mon zèle pour votre gloire

et pour la perfection de votre livre."[260] This is obviously the last thing he has in mind, for the first letter discredits not just Voltaire the artist, but also the man, as La Beaumelle's references to Voltaire's exile from France testify.[261]

In his second introductory letter, the critic passes to a general survey of Le Siècle and voices a number of general criticisms; the title is too rhetorical, too ostentatious, promises too much;[262] it is too vague and is lacking in clarity:

> Ce titre n'est-il pas trop vague? La clarté n'y est-elle pas sacrifiée au laconisme? Il ne présente aucune idée précise; il n'arrête l'esprit à aucun objet déterminé. On croit d'abord qu'il dit beaucoup; mais quand on le voit à la tête de deux petits volumes, on voit bien qu'il ne dit rien.[263]

By choosing to call the previous age 'the age of Louis XIV', Voltaire is, according to La Beaumelle, guilty of partiality - a valid point perhaps - , for he has ignored the contributions of others like William of Orange and in so doing, he runs the risk of offending other nations.[264] That this was the case, particularly as regards the English, has already been discussed.

La Beaumelle chooses one of his anonymous friends as his mouthpiece in the third letter, whilst being careful to state that he was indignant at the criticisms expressed. The plan of Le Siècle comes under scrutiny here and the fictitious friend alleges that the 'tableau de l'esprit humain' proves to be beyond Voltaire's capabilities,[265] that the author should have confined himself to three points: the arts, politics and 'les mœurs'. Under the heading of the arts, the historian should have paid attention to the origins and decadence of the arts, the art of

warfare, philosophy, music, mathematics, eloquence, the theatre - all of which, to be fair to him, Voltaire does deal with. There should have followed, claims La Beaumelle, a survey of the political revolutions which transformed Europe. In the last instance, the historian should have examined the tableau des mœurs, the social characteristics of the age, the character and private life of Louis XIV. It is obvious that La Beaumelle's aim was to show that he could have composed a better history of the age of Louis XIV, and that he was looking forward to a time when he would publish the Memoirs of Madame de Maintenon. That the plan of Le Siècle had not entirely satisfied Voltaire's contemporaries we have seen; others shared La Beaumelle's views, e.g. Grimm and Clément. But La Beaumelle's alternative plan amounts to little more than a re-shuffling of the chapters of Le Siècle, and is not altogether satisfactory at that. Some of his criticisms are justified; it is fair to say that Voltaire did not adequately confine himself to 'les mœurs' which he claimed to be his prime object. Modern critics have echoed La Beaumelle's views; Suzanne Gearhart, in 'Rationality and the text: A Study of Voltaire's Historiography', rightly points out that while Voltaire laments the fact that "la plupart des historiens n'ont décrit que des batailles", nothing distinguishes the first twenty-four chapters of Le Siècle from what he excludes from rational history.[266] Likewise, the charge levelled by La Beaumelle at the style as being too "rapide" in the first volume and "lâche et diffus",[267] concurs with the views of others like Grimm. Yet La Beaumelle's pretentiousness and malice remain unsurpassed amongst critics of Le Siècle, even though he does not stand alone in some respects.

As for his footnotes and individual remarks, they range from mere insults and attacks on Voltaire's personality, to more thought-provoking comments on the style and content of Le Siècle. To give the devil his due, he is not just content to criticise, but also praises Voltaire on numerous occasions; he is full of praise for the portrait of Catinat (P 776): "Tout ce portrait de Catinat est admirable;"[268] for chapter XVI in Pomeau's edition: "Tout ce chapitre est admirable. Rapidité de stile, variété de faits, agrément dans la narration, vérité historique, réflexions courtes et solides, rien n'y manque."[269] Chapter XVII (XVI of 51), too, is "très beau, d'une clarté, d'une précision admirables."[270] La Beaumelle was also struck by Voltaire's portrait of Churchill (P 821-22),[271] by chapters XXIX (XXVII of 51), XXXVI on Calvinism (XXXII of 51),[272] and chapter X (X of 51), which he deemed to be the best one of the book. It is therefore essential to keep the more deprecatory remarks in perspective, for La Beaumelle shows a certain measure of appreciation of the merits of Le Siècle.

His attacks on Voltaire's person, however, remain indefensible; one of the most repeated slights is his allusion to Voltaire's love of money, however true it might be. Thus commenting on Voltaire's allusion to the portrait "enrichi de diamants, estimé plus de douze mille francs" (P 715), given by Louis XIV to the envoy of the Dutch governor, the critic is quick to capitalise on this: "Mr de Voltaire a un tendre tout particulier pour ces sortes de faits et surtout pour les évaluations. Ce sont en effet de belles leçons pour les princes, qui ont auprès d'eux de beaux esprits avides."[273]

While some of the remarks which fall into this category are petty and aim at discrediting the man rather than assessing the work, others shed considerable light on the text itself. It is here that La Beaumelle comes across as a shrewd and often well-informed critic. His criticisms of the content are frequently judicious. When reading Voltaire's overtly biased references to pre-seventeenth century literature - e.g. "Rabelais était notre seul livre de prose à la mode, du temps de Henri II" (P 617) - , La Beaumelle justifiably highlights the parti-pris, indicating that Voltaire had ignored the contributions of Amyot, Joinville, Commines and du Bellay. Similarly, one cannot help agreeing with La Beaumelle when he deplores Voltaire's low opinion of France before Louis XIV (P 618). The inclusion of a large number of petits faits in Le Siècle also lends itself easily to attacks which, on the whole, are well-founded, for Voltaire could not resist the urge to insert anecdotes, which, while being entertaining, detract from the serious issues at stake or digress from the chronological account of events. La Beaumelle is quite right in taking the historian to task for such minutiae as Condé asleep on the battle-field on the eve of the battle of Rocroi (P 637), and Condé's words on the occasion of the death of Fuentès (P 638), to which La Beaumelle objects: "Cette historiette ne devait point entrer dans un livre où l'auteur n'avait promis que de grands événements."[274] The numerous trivialities in chapter IV on the Fronde do not escape his attention either, especially the anecdote pertaining to Dame Anne (P 649), which he deems unworthy of a serious historian: "On dira à Mr de Voltaire que cette multitude de petits faits n'est guère précieuse qu'aux petits

esprits, comme il l'avoue lui-même."[275] La Beaumelle does not share Voltaire's enthusiasm for the theory of 'petites causes', such as the mistake of the messenger sent to Condé who goes to Augerville instead of Angerville[276] (P 657). Everywhere, the advice is the same: "Evitez toutes ces minuties,"[277] and one must conclude that Le Siècle would have benefited from this advice, had Voltaire deigned to heed it.

Nor is La Beaumelle wrong in deploring the fact that Voltaire repeatedly loses sight of his avowed intention of describing 'les mœurs'. With regard to chapter II, which was the opening chapter of 51, 'Des Etats de l'Europe avant Louis XIV', he is less than happy with the fact that Voltaire paid insufficient attention to "la constitution de l'Empire" (P 623) and omitted to discuss the government of England, and declares that the tableau of France before Louis XIV does not amount to a tableau des mœurs. Significantly enough, this section had been entitled 'Mœurs du temps' in 51, and conscious of the validity of La Beaumelle's criticism, Voltaire altered it subsequently to 'Forces de la France après la mort de Louis XIII et mœurs du temps'. When the historian remarks at the beginning of chapter XI in Pomeau's edition (chapter X of 51) that his history is not "une simple relation de campagnes, mais plutôt une histoire des mœurs des hommes" (P 723), La Beaumelle quite rightly points out that so far Voltaire's survey does not differ radically from the purely chronological approach of his predecessors: "L'avis est bon et vient fort à propos. Mr de Voltaire ramène le lecteur au principal objet qu'il semblait avoir perdu de vue dans les chapitres précédents. Il n'y parle que de guerres, conquêtes etc;

il détaille les malheurs des hommes, et ne dit pas un mot de leurs mœurs."[278]

Other criticisms of La Beaumelle's undoubtedly come near the truth; he was not the only one to note the irreligious tone of some of Voltaire's pronouncements; e.g. the anecdote pertaining to Leopold's visit to the front with a crucifix (P 725) arouses mock indignation in the critic: "Il faut parler avec respect des choses saintes et laisser aux petits esprits et aux jeunes gens le plaisir dangereux de s'égarer sur la religion et sur les cérémonies qu'elle consacre."[279] At the same time, La Beaumelle does not fail to notice what constitutes a major weakness in Voltaire's historical method, namely the lack of evidence; e.g. when Voltaire denies rumours that Harcourt had bribed Spanish ministers, as Charles II of Spain lay dying (P 802): "L'auteur nie avec trop de hauteur des faits généralement crus; il ne fallait les rejeter avec ce mépris qu'après les avoir détruits par des preuves incontestables. Mr de Voltaire donne sans cesse son ton décisif pour preuve, son autorité pour raison."[280] Following the publication of Torci's Memoirs in 1756, a major source for Voltaire, he was able to produce the necessary evidence in the 1756 edition, thus taking account of La Beaumelle's fair criticism. The absence of references to sources and of precise information are other faults justifiably underlined by the critic; e.g. about Queen Anne, Voltaire had written in 51: "Quelques historiens ont supposé que la reine Anne était d'intelligence avec son frère" (P 852). La Beaumelle, one feels, was quite entitled to ask as he did: "Quels sont ces historiens qui ont prétendu cette absurdité fantôme?"[281] In response to this question, Voltaire

was to append a note in 1756, giving a precise reference to Reboulet, thereby acknowledging the validity of La Beaumelle's remark.

One interesting and controversial point arising from La Beaumelle's remarks concerns a possible source of the story of 'L'Homme au masque de fer'. The critic had proclaimed on the subject: "Les Mémoires de Perse en ont parlé."[282] Voltaire was particularly annoyed by the accusation of plagiarism and did his utmost in the Supplément to defend his originality (P 1240-41), whilst in his Réponse, La Beaumelle was to reiterate that the author of Le Siècle was wrong to claim that no other historian had mentioned the incident before.[283] That the Mémoires Secrets pour servir à l'histoire de Perse[284] had dealt with the story in an indirect manner as early as 1745, cannot be denied. But although a comparison of the two texts reveals some similarities as far as the facts are concerned there are no indications of textual borrowings. The story was well-known to many contemporaries and Toussaint, the author of the Mémoires secrets, merely beat Voltaire to the finishing line. There is no question of plagiarism, and all the signs are that Voltaire sincerely believed that he was the first to mention the details. Only his obstinacy and pride prevented him from admitting defeat. In any event, the Mémoires, if they had indeed been seen by Voltaire, merely provide the backbone to the story and the handling of the incident is very sketchy; fictitious Oriental names are used; e.g. the prisoner is Prince Giafer, a natural son of Louis XIV, or the Comte de Vermandois, an interpretation which Voltaire rejects. But La Beaumelle succeeded in bringing to light a little-known

work which does at least invalidate Voltaire's claim to originality.

'Errata' due to La Beaumelle

In spite of Voltaire's somewhat harsh treatment of La Beaumelle in the Supplément, it would appear that he was not reluctant to take advantage of some advice proffered in the pirate edition and of some information it contained. La Beaumelle himself was conscious of the fact that Voltaire had, in several instances, modified or reshaped his text in the light of the 'remarques'; in the Réponse, the critic commented: "Pourquoi avez-vous si souvent profité de mes remarques dans votre nouvelle édition, où vous annoncés (sic) des augmentations que vous n'y avez pas mises et où vous avez mis des corrections que vous n'annoncés pas?"[285] It is likely that Voltaire saw the pirate edition for the first time at the beginning of 1753,[286] and since his own Dresden edition was published in November 1752, La Beaumelle's accusations appear unfounded, at least as far as that particular edition was concerned. But there is no denying the fact that Voltaire reaped some benefit from the critical remarks, and did alter his text in the 1756 edition of his Complete Works which included Le Siècle. Sometimes, following what La Beaumelle had to say, he deliberately omitted material on which the critic had cast doubt. Thus on page 622 of Pomeau's edition, after 'village', the 1751 and 1753 editions had added: "La ville de Bamberg lui [l'empereur] est assignée seulement pour sa résidence, quand il n'en a pas d'autre." This was omitted from the text in 1756, as a direct result of La Beaumelle's assertion: "Un Allemand

m'a dit que c'était une rêverie de quelque vieux jurisconsulte Bambergeois. L'Empereur a pour résidence toutes les villes impériales." There is little doubt that the critical remarks at times made Voltaire feel sufficiently uneasy about the authenticity of some facts, for him to leave them out altogether; e.g. concerning the dam which Richelieu had had built near La Rochelle, Voltaire had written in 1751 and 1753 after 'Tyr' (P 1047): "Elle fut commencée par un Français nommé Tiriot et achevée par Pompée Targon." La Beaumelle had taken Voltaire to task over this: "Elle fut commencée par Pompée Targon en 1622."[287] Voltaire responded to this by leaving out the sentence in 1756.

Voltaire also amended his text in response to La Beaumelle's criticisms in other respects. A few examples will suffice to show that he took those criticisms seriously enough. In the section of chapter II entitled 'De l'Allemagne', Voltaire had written: "On peut compter aujourd'hui trois rois;" La Beaumelle drew Voltaire's attention to the fact that there were four kings, and the author of Le Siècle took note of this (P 621), substituting 'quatre rois' in 1756. In the chapter on Jansenism (chapter XXXIII of the 1751 edition), he wrote, in the 1751 and 1753 editions, of Port-Royal: "C'est de cette école qu'est sorti Racine, le plus pur et le plus éloquent des poètes." La Beaumelle questioned the validity of this statement: "Le plus pur des Poëtes, c'est Racine; le plus éloquent, c'est sans contredit Corneille."[288] In 1756, the text was altered to: "C'est de cette école qu'est sorti Racine, le poète de l'univers qui a le mieux connu le cœur humain" (P 1070). Likewise, when recounting the anecdote of Fénelon throwing himself at Louis XIV's feet, to ask him to

reconsider his decision to marry Madame de Maintenon (P 1095), Voltaire added in the 1751 and 1753 editions: "Ceux qui ont approché de ce monarque et de Mme de Maintenon savent à quel point tout cela est absurde." La Beaumelle took exception to this last epithet: "Ce conte est faux, mais il n'est point absurde."[289] Transferring the material to a footnote in 1756, Voltaire substituted "tout cela est éloigné de la vérité," showing that he recognised the validity of La Beaumelle's comment.

In other ways, La Beaumelle's critical remarks seem to have had important repercussions for Le Siècle; firstly with regard to some stylistic weaknesses. Whilst some of his criticisms were grossly unfair, others were duly noted by Voltaire who attempted to improve his presentation. Following La Beaumelle's condemnation of the word éclipsait in the 1751 and 1753 text, Voltaire redrafted the sentence in 1756: "Tout cela donnait à la cour de Louis XIV un air de grandeur qui effaçait toutes les autres cours de l'Europe" (P 909). The critical remarks also forced Voltaire to try and authenticate his material by quoting his sources and searching for additional evidence, thereby adopting a more erudite and precise approach. La Beaumelle's question regarding Louis's bons mots about Villeroi: "On se déchaîne contre lui parce qu'il est mon favori" (P 819), was fully justified in the circumstances, because of the absence of any reference: "Qui a tenu regître de toutes les paroles qui sont échappées à Louis XIV?"[290] Voltaire felt obliged in 1756 to append a note referring the reader to the Mémoires de Dangeau. Similarly, because of the critic's scepticism concerning the existence of the doctor said by Voltaire to have cared for the

man in the iron mask - "Le nom de ce médecin?"[291] - , Voltaire added the note which gave further details and quoted the testimony of M. de Bernaville (P 896). It is obvious that being on the defensive, the historian made a genuine effort to validate some of his pronouncements, in answer to La Beaumelle's often justified queries. In the example, already quoted, relating to the secret intelligence between Anne and her brother (P 852), in 1756 he inserted the footnote which included a precise reference to Reboulet's history of Louis XIV. There are also indications that La Beaumelle provided additional information which Voltaire was only too glad to profit by in the later editions. One example of this occurs in the Catalogue under 'Bossuet', where he did not hesitate to make full use of material provided by the critic in his remarks, namely the conversation between Mlle Desvieux and Father La Chaise: "On raconte qu'ayant dit au jésuite La Chaise, confesseur de Louis XIV: 'On sait que je ne suis pas janséniste,' La Chaise répondit: 'On sait que vous n'êtes que mauléoniste'" (P 1141), which is almost a verbatim transposition of La Beaumelle's account.[292]

Thus whilst Voltaire might have reacted emotionally to some of La Beaumelle's criticisms on the spur of the moment, he was also capable of evaluating rationally some of the remarks, and he took the necessary measures to modify his text subsequently, even in points of detail. In some respects, at least, the pirate edition had a beneficial effect on Le Siècle, in making Voltaire reconsider some lapses in his text, and above all, in drawing his attention to his rather cavalier attitude to sources and references.

Subsequent 'démêlés': the Supplément and the Réponse au Supplément

The Frankfurt pirate edition was bought in large numbers and did some damage to Voltaire's reputation. Despite his obvious irritation and indignation, the author of Le Siècle was to wait until the Supplément to answer his enemy's criticisms. In his Relation de mon séjour auprès de Voltaire, Collini tells of his vain efforts to plead with Voltaire not to take on such an unworthy opponent as La Beaumelle.[293] Having perused the pirate edition at the beginning of 1753, Voltaire first tried to win the support of influential men in France to prevent the edition from filtering into the country.[294] However, it was not as a result of the philosophe's pleas that the author of Mes Pensées was imprisoned in the Bastille, but because of his accusations against the Duc d'Orléans and abusive remarks directed at Mme de Pompadour in the book. During La Beaumelle's incarceration, Voltaire drafted his Supplément in the course of a few months, publishing it while still unaware of his enemy's captivity. A raid was organised by the police on the premises of the publisher Lambert on May 15, 1753, when several copies of the work were seized, but the Supplément was finally allowed to go on sale, and was widely read by a public fond of literary duels of this kind. One cannot help deploring, with Grimm, Voltaire's lack of moderation and decorum in this work. It is true that La Beaumelle had ruthlessly sought to do irreparable damage to his reputation as a literary artist and as a man, but should Voltaire have resorted to the same mud-slinging tactics as his opponent? He does justify the Supplément on the grounds that it aimed to shed light on some important aspects of Le

Siècle,[295] but by renewing this petty quarrel he was in fact drawing attention to and helping to immortalise a small mind which would have been best forgotten.

For all that Voltaire's reply to La Beaumelle is cast in his own inimitable manner, he nevertheless has to resort to abusive language, thus giving grounds to La Beaumelle to complain about the numerous offensive remarks on his person in the Réponse: "Eh! ce misérable livre du Siècle, valait-il la peine que vous ne fissiez depuis un an que de l'écume?"[296] La Beaumelle is accused of theft (P 1232), of hypocrisy and plagiarism (P 1234), of telling lies (P 1248); he is 'un audacieux ignorant' (P 1250), guilty of blaspheming against the royal family (P 1258), 'un scélérat absurde' (P 1260) to be classed amongst 'les écumeurs de la littérature' (P 1261), 'un jaloux' (P 1262), and so on. The insults flow from Voltaire's pen in a rather undignified manner, as he proceeds to give La Beaumelle a dose of his own medicine, by having recourse to the critic's own brand of vituperation.

But those insults apart, Voltaire's counter-attack is an admirable piece of polemical writing by its marked eloquence, its forcefulness, its clarity of presentation, while his remarks often explain his method of work when preparing Le Siècle and shed light on his sources of information.[297] He declares himself to be particularly indignant at La Beaumelle's attack on his style: "C'est La Beaumelle qui daigne enseigner la langue française à Voltaire. C'est La Beaumelle qui décide sur les auteurs... C'est La Beaumelle qui dit qu' 'on se gâte à Potsdam '" (P 1235). However, it is clear that he does not do justice to some of the critic's pronouncements on the style which, after all,

Voltaire was later to bear in mind when revising the text. Responding to La Beaumelle's criticisms, he seems anxious to provide additional proofs and references to sources; e.g. when he attempts to give greater veracity to the story of Louis XIV's motives for recognising James II's son as king of England, by referring to Bolingbroke's Letters on the study and use of history (P 1238), or when he alludes to Torci's manuscript memoirs (P 1236).

The historian, moreover, does not satisfactorily answer all of La Beaumelle's charges; the critic had questioned the importance of the quarrel of Lady Churchill and Queen Anne.[298] Modern historians[299] have sided with La Beaumelle in this, showing that Voltaire's treatment of the incident amounts to an over-simplification and that the situation was far more complex, since Marlborough fell victim to political manœuvres, the quarrel being merely a pretext for his removal from office instigated by the Tories. La Beaumelle's charge that Voltaire is inconsistent in his method, that he makes up the rules as he goes along, is also a valid one. Returning to Voltaire's statement in the Supplément: "Il faut distinguer les erreurs dans les historiens. Une fausse date, un nom pour un autre, ne sont que des matières pour un errata" (P 1237), La Beaumelle declares quite rightly in the Réponse that "les inexactitudes dans les petits faits rendent la fidélité de l'Historien suspecte sur les grands"[300] - a claim which Voltaire himself repeatedly makes in his writings on history. That the author of Le Siècle indulged in poetic licence, especially when it comes to anecdotes and even in his treatment of important historical events, is certainly true, as will be shown in chapter III, although this is more apparent in Charles XII. Voltaire's

attitude to 'ouï dire', decried by La Beaumelle in connexion with La Feuillade's version of his attempt to persuade Chamillart to reveal the secret of the man in the iron mask,[301] also varies according to the occasion. In the Supplément, he underlines the value of 'ouï dire' (P 1241); yet he is prepared to condemn the way La Fare or Choisy rely frequently on hearsay evidence. The same inconsistency, noted by La Beaumelle in his Réponse, in relation to Dangeau's Mémoires -"Ils sont faux quand ils contredisent Voltaire et vrais quand ils lui plaisent"[302] - will become apparent in our later discussion of this source,[303] and is true of other sources too.

In spite of these weaknesses, the Supplément amounts to a pretty formidable polemical onslaught. But it by no means marks the end of the dispute, as La Beaumelle was not prepared to admit defeat, even though it was only in May 1754 upon his release from prison that he could cross swords again with Voltaire. On January 3, 1754, the critic wrote to Maupertuis: "Elle est faite cette réponse et depuis longtemps; mais quelque modérée qu'elle soit, je doute que M. de Malesherbes, qui a voulu en être lui-même le censeur, m'en permette l'impression."[304] After some modifications demanded by Malesherbes, it was duly published. Charles Nisard postulates that La Beaumelle's stay in prison had a moderating effect on him,[305] but this is only partly true. The abuses, abundant in the pirate edition, are certainly played down in the Réponse and are fewer in number, but they are still present. La Beaumelle's declaration in the Préface that he pities and forgives Voltaire,[306] is hardly borne out by the tone in the main body of the work. His claim that he intends answering Voltaire

"sans fiel... sans déclamations... sans invectives,"[307] should not mask his obvious hostility in the work itself. Most of the criticisms merely reiterate the objections voiced in the pirate edition, namely Voltaire's partiality, the plan of the work, the fact that the historian had lost sight of the tableau des mœurs, the overabundance of anecdotes. There is also the usual invective against Voltaire's passion for money. While the Réponse has been deemed by Charles Nisard to be "le meilleur écrit de La Beaumelle,"[308] it nevertheless lacks the stylistic qualities and punch of the Supplément, thereby succeeding only in confirming Voltaire's superior talent. It is not surprising, therefore, that the public accorded the work a cool reception in 1754, whereas the Supplément had been avidly read. Voltaire, for his part, was not even to take the trouble to read the Réponse until 1759,[309] when he came back to the fray in the preface to Pierre le Grand (P 346-47). Weary of the quarrel in 1754, he decided, too late perhaps, that contempt was the best policy, although allusions to the Frankfurt edition crop up regularly in the correspondence thereafter.[310] Voltaire's hatred for La Beaumelle never abated until his death, and he returned to the charge in the article 'Histoire' of the Dictionnaire,[311] whilst La Beaumelle started work in the 1760's on annotated editions of Voltaire's works, only one of which, that of the Henriade, was published.

Without the quarrel, it is unlikely that La Beaumelle would have been remembered, for as a writer in his own right, he had only a modicum of talent and was capable of limited scholarship. Both Lenel[312] and Nisard[313] come to the same conclusion. But he did grasp and highlight some of the inconsistencies of

Voltaire's method, and he gave expression to a number of criticisms echoed by other contemporaries. Finally, as has been indicated, some benefits did accrue to Le Siècle as a result of the Frankfurt pirate edition of 1753, and Voltaire was certainly indebted, in a certain measure, to La Beaumelle's critical remarks.

Appendix on La Beaumelle:postscript

This part of my thesis was completed before the publication of Claude Lauriol's La Beaumelle.Un Protestant cévenol entre Montesquieu et Voltaire (Droz:Genève-Paris,1978.602pp.).It is by far the most authoritative work on La Beaumelle,drawing extensively on family papers,and it deals fully with La Beaumelle's life and works.Some of our conclusions should therefore be modified in the light of this excellent study.

Chapter II: Notes

1. D 4868; see also D 4879, Voltaire to Formont, April 28, 1752.
2. D 4763.
3. D 4632.
4. D 4575.
5. D 4595.
6. D 4605, November 15, 1751.
7. D 4630.
8. D 4760.
9. D 4789.
10. D 4791.
11. D 4792.
12. D 4754.
13. D 4632.
14. D 4628.
15. see D 4907, Voltaire to Richelieu, June 10, [1752].
16. D 5079.
17. D 4778.
18. see D 4885, Voltaire to d'Argental, May 3, 1752.
19. D 4797.
20. D 4809, Charles Bordes to Voltaire, February 1752.
21. D 4810.
22. D 4561.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. D 4628, December 24, 1751.
26. Le Président Hénault, Paris, Plon, p.70.

27. D 4780.

28. D 4787.

29. see Lion, op.cit., p.71.

30. D 4788.

31. see D 4787.

32. D 4828.

33. see e.g. D 4863, Voltaire to Malesherbes, April 1752; see also D 4868; D 4870.

34. D 4879.

35. Letter II, February 15, 1752, vol. II, p.307.

36. Studies, vol. I, 1955, p.21.

37. Studies, vol. CXLVII, 1976, p.715.

38. Bengesco 1180: "Contrefaçon de l'édition précédente", i.e. [517.

39. D 4622.

40. D 4624; see also D 4631, Voltaire to the Countess of Bentinck.

41. Voltaire: Bibliographie de ses œuvres, vol. I, p.344.

42. D 4958.

43. Studies, vol. LXIV, 1968, p.74.

44. D 4552.

45. op.cit., p.717.

46. 'A Provisional bibliography of English editions and translations of Voltaire', Studies, vol. VIII, 1959, p.104.

47. see D 4988.

48. Evans, no. 493, Studies, vol. VIII, p.104.

49. Rousseau, op.cit., p.718.

50. see D 4989.

51. Rousseau, op.cit., p.718. Evans, no. 502, Studies, vol. VIII, p.105.

52. Ibid.

53. 'The Age of Lewis XIV / Translated from the French of / M. de Voltaire / vol. I (vol. II). Dublin: / Printed by George Faulkener, in Essex-Street. / MDCCLII.' Evans, no. 503, op.cit., p.105.

54. D 5113.

55. D 4885.

56. see Appendix A.

57. D 4868; see also D 4879, Voltaire to Formont, April 28, 1752.

58. D 4595.

59. D 4605.

60. D 4630.

61. D 4771.

62. D 4879.

63. D 4990.

64. D 4814.

65. D 5011.

66. D 4984.

67. D 4820.

68. see our discussion in chapter III of the Abrégé Chronologique, a major source for Le Siècle, and Henri Lion, op.cit., p.420, for Voltaire's letter to Hénault of December 8, 1751: "J'ai pris la liberté de vous voler la liste des maréchaux de France et des ministres que j'ai mise à la suite de l'ouvrage. Elle est suivie d'un catalogue de presque tous les artistes qui ont immortalisé ce siècle en tant de différents genres."

69. D 4641.

70. D 4784.

71. Ibid.

72. see our discussion in chapter III of Voltaire's marginalia on Hénault's Abrégé Chronologique.

73. see below.

74. D 4997.

75. D 4641.

76. Studies, vol. CLXXII, 1978, p.316.

77. Ibid., p.324.

78. Lion, op.cit., p.67.

79. Ibid., p.68.

80. see chapter III.

81. see Lion, op.cit., pp.423-24.

82. February 25, 1752; Lion, op.cit., p.423.

83. Besterman, p.223.

84. see Lion, op.cit., p.423; P 902, and for a full discussion of Gourville's Mémoires, see chapter III.

85. Lion, op.cit., p.424.

86. Lion, op.cit., p.423.

87. D 4997.

88. D 4787, February 1, 1752.

89. op.cit., p.70.

90. see D 4761: "La liste raisonnée des écrivains, etc., que vous daignez approuver, serait plus ample et plus détaillée, si j'avais pu travailler à Paris."

91. D 4843.

92. D 4855.

93. see Supplément (P 1231) where Voltaire claims that there are fifty-six additions to the Catalogue and adds that he has read the authors' works carefully before summing up their literary achievements. See also Jacques Quignard, 'Un établissement de texte: Le Siècle de Louis XIV de Voltaire,' Lettres Romanes, vol. V, 1951, p.314.

94. D 4855.

95. D 4819.

96. D 4761.

97. D 4869, April 15, 1752.

98. R. Niklaus, A Literary History of France, The Eighteenth Century, p.237.

99. D 4869.

100. Ibid.

101. D 4881.

102. D 4876.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

105. Studies, vol. CLXXII, 1978, p.22.

106. D 4876.

107. D 5010, September 7, 1752.

108. D 4885.

109. D 4960.

110. Ibid.

111. D 4997.

112. D 4993.

113. Ibid.

114. see Supplément, P 1241.

115. see chapter III.

116. D 5002.

117. D 4899.

118. Leyden, Luzac, 1752, vol. V, article IX.

119. Ibid.

120. see Appendix A.

121. For a detailed study of these addenda, see J. Quignard, op.cit., pp.312-315.

122. Ibid., p.313.

123. Ibid., pp.314-315.

124. Ibid., p.325.

125. see John Lough, Essays on the Encyclopédie, p.365.

126. see M. Fields, 'Voltaire et le Mercure de France', Studies, vol. XX, 1962, pp.175-215.

127. Mercure de France, January 1757, p.127.

128. Ibid., p.124.

129. Journal de Trévoux, January 1746, p.187.

130. Ibid., vol. I, p.281.

131. April-June 1757, p.1076.

132. Ibid., p.1094.

133. 'Les Enseignements des bibliothèques privées, 1750-1780', R.H.L., vol. XVII, pp.449-496.

134. Ibid., p.479.

135. see F. Cornou, Elie Fréron, p.91.

136. Letter VI, March 25, 1752.

137. see D 4911, June 13, 1752.

138. vol. VI, p.151, October 1752; Slatkine Reprints, p.502.

139. see J. Dehergne, 'Une table des matières de L'Année Littéraire de Fréron', R.H.L., vol. LXV, 1965, pp.269-273.

140. see chapter IV.

141. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, pp.20-21.

142. vol. VI, 1760, p.11; Slatkine Reprints, vol. VII, p.459.

143. Ibid.

144. L'Année Littéraire, vol. VII, 1760, Letter XII; Slatkine Reprints, vol. VII, p.619.

145. Ibid.

146. vol. III, 1759, p.242; Slatkine Reprints, vol. VI, p.247.

147. see our discussion of Nonnotte below.

148. L'Année Littéraire, vol. VI, 1762, p.217; Slatkine Reprints, vol. IX, p.237.

149. see Pomeau, P 1713, note.

150. vol. VI, p.217; Slatkine Reprints, vol. IX, p.237.

151. Ibid.

152. Ibid., vol. VI, p.248.

153. Paris, Garnier frères, 1877, vol. II, 1747-1755; June 15, 1753, p.254.

154. Ibid.

155. see Appendix A.

156. vol. II, p.359.

157. Ibid.

158. see Appendix A.

159. e.g. Chauvelin, see D 4814.

160. vol. II, p.254.

161. D 4215.

162. Correspondance Littéraire, vol. III, p.21.

163. Ibid.

164. see chapter IV.

165. see Appendix A.

166. see above.

167. The Hague, 1781, p.480.

168. Ibid., p.483.

169. vol. III, p.22.

170. vol. III, p.364.

171. Ibid., p.365.

172. Ibid., p.366.

173. Louis XIV and the Age of the Enlightenment, op.cit., p.318.

174. Ibid., p.319.

175. E. Hatin, Bibliographie historique de la presse périodique française, p.44.

176. Cinq Années Littéraires, vol. II, p.307.

177. Ibid., vol. II, p.48.

178. Ibid.

179. Ibid., p.51.

180. Ibid.

181. Ibid.

182. see Appendix A.

183. D 4869.

184. see E. Hatin, Les gazettes de Hollande et la presse clandestine aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, Paris, 1865, p.42.

185. Amsterdam, J. Wetstein, vol. 48, p.317.

186. Ibid.

187. op.cit.

188. 1752, vol. II, p.450.

189. 1753, vol. I, p.38.

190. Pierre Mortier, April, May, June 1752, vol. X.

191. Ibid., p.287.

192. vol. XII, April, May, June 1753.

193. vol. XI, July, August, September 1752, p.53.

194. Leyden,vol. VII, January and February 1753, p.149.

195. vol. VII, p.316.

196. M, XXIV, p.7.

197. L'Angleterre et Voltaire, op.cit., p.713.

198. R. Griffiths, London, 1753, vols. VI and VII, pp.161-183.

199. see above.

200. see Rousseau, op.cit., p.718.

201. Quoted by Rousseau, op.cit., p.720.

202. Ibid., p.720.

203. Quoted by Rousseau, op.cit., p.720.

204. London Magazine, vol. XXI, p.600.

205. Rousseau, op.cit., p.722.

206. Ibid., p.750.

207. Avertissement.

208. Ibid.

209. Berne, 1759, p.305.

210. Ibid., p.306.

211. see Appendix A.

212. p.306.

213. p.307.

214. p.311.

215. p.312.

216. p.330.

217. p.269.

218. Paris, Brunot, 1823, Discours préliminaire.

219. Ibid., p.xix.

220. chapters XLVI-LX.

221. pp.333, 339.

222. p.340.

223. p.355.

224. p.365.

225. p.368.

226. p.371.

227. p.358.

228. p.379.

229. see La Porte, Observations sur la littérature moderne, London, vol. VIII (1752), p.213: he praises "le grand nombre de vérités, dont cet Essai est plein et l'impartialité assez reconnue avec laquelle elles sont énoncées."

230. The Memoirs of the life of Edward Gibbon by himself, edited by George Birkbeck, Methuen, London, 1900, p.63.

231. Gibbon, Miscellaneous works, vol. V, p.247.

232. Gibbon, Ibid., The Decline and Fall, vol. V, p.419.

233. Ibid., vol. VII, p.139.

234. Letters of David Hume, edited by J.Y.T. Greig, Oxford, Clarendon Press, vol. I, p.225.

235. Letters, vol. III, p.294, quoted by Greig, ibid., vol. I, p.225.

236. op.cit., p.460.

Appendix A

237. Notice sur la vie et les écrits de Laurent Angliviel de La Beaumelle, Paris, Cherbuliez, 1852.

238. Ch. Nisard, Les ennemis de Voltaire, Desfontaines, Fréron, La Beaumelle, Paris, Amyot, 1853.

239. see Nisard, op.cit., p.325.

240. S. Lenel, 'Un ennemi de Voltaire: La Beaumelle', R.H.L., vol. XX, 1913, p.113.

241. Ibid.

242. Quoted by G. Desnoiresterres, Voltaire et Frédéric, p.229.

243. In Le Siècle politique de Louis XIV, Siéclopolie, 1753.

244. Supplément, P 1228.

245. e.g. in his Réponse, p.18.

246. see Lenel, op.cit., vol. XX, p.127.

247. D 5077, Voltaire to Roques, November 17, 1752.

248. Letter of December 6, 1752, quoted by Lenel, op.cit., vol. XX, p.116.

249. Lenel claims that La Beaumelle bought the manuscript from Louis Racine, op.cit., vol. XX, p.107; Nisard argues that La Beaumelle stole it, op.cit., p.389.

250. Saint-John, Viscount of Bolingbroke, Nouveau volume du Siècle de Louis XIV, Siéclopolie, 1753, p.33.

251. D 5077.

252. D 5189.

253. Colmar, 1754, p.74.

254. op.cit., p.12.

255. op.cit., vol. XXI, p.650.

256. Ibid.

257. vol. III, p.77.

258. vol. I, pp.ii-iii.

259. vol. I, p.iii.

260. Ibid., p.xv.

261. Ibid., p.xvi.

262. Ibid., p.xviii.

263. Ibid.

264. Ibid., p.xix.

265. Ibid., p.xxi.

266. Studies, vol. CXL, 1975, p.35.

267. vol. I, p.xxii.

268. vol. II, p.32.

269. vol. II, p.49.

270. vol. II, p.88.

271. vol. II, p.104: "Tout ce morceau est enlevant."

272. vol. III, p.149: "Ce chapitre est assez bon: c'est tout ce qu'il y a de meilleur sur le sujet."

273. vol. I, p.203. See also vol. I, pp.223, 228: "Trop de comptes."

274. vol. I, p.74.

275. vol. I, p.77. See also his attack on the 'portes cochères' and the 'régiment de Corinthe': "Ce n'est là que du remplissage. L'auteur abrège les grands faits et étend les petits" (vol. I, p.79).

276. vol. I, p.88.

277. vol. I, p.239, with reference to the Te Deum after the battle of Seneffe. See also vol. I, p.279: La Beaumelle's criticism of the anecdote of d'Amfreville (P 754).

278. vol. I, p.218.

279. vol. I, p.224.

280. vol. II, p.73.

281. vol. II, p.164.

282. vol. II, p.260.

283. p.48.

284. Amsterdam, 1745.

285. op.cit., p.39.

286. see D 5192, Voltaire to Roques: "J'ai lu enfin l'édition du Siècle de Louis XIV que votre ami a fait en trois volumes avec ses remarques et des lettres."

287. vol. III, p.124.

288. vol. III, p.166.

289. vol. III, p.207.

290. vol. II, p.98.

291. vol. II, p.261.

292. vol. III, p.68.

293. Slatkine Reprints, pp.58-59.

294. see Nisard, op.cit., p.363.

295. see Voltaire's letter to Roques, P 1223.

296. op.cit., p.65.

297. see chapter III.

298. vol. II, p.195.

299. e.g. Erlanger, Louis XIV, p.320.

300. op.cit., p.42.

301. Frankfurt edition of Le Siècle, vol. II, p.62.

302. op.cit., p.89.

303. see chapter III.

304. see Lenel, R.H.L., vol. XXI, p.664.

305. op.cit., p.382.

306. Réponse, p.6.

307. Ibid., p.12.

308. op.cit., p.384.

309. see D 6304, Voltaire to Darget, June 11, 1755: "Premièrement je vous jure, mon ami, que je n'ai pas lu les réponses de La Beaumelle."

310. see D 6643, Voltaire to l'Académie Française, December 21, 1755.

311. M, XIX, p.364, in a paragraph added in 1771.

312. op.cit., R.H.L., vol. XXIII, p.209: "La Beaumelle avait de l'esprit par intermittence mais assez peu de connaissances précises, encore moins de jugement, aucune conviction à l'appui de ce mince talent."

313. op.cit., p.399: "Comme écrivain original et durable, il mérite à peine qu'on s'occupe de lui; mais sa célébrité est inhérente à celle d'un grand homme."

Chapter III

Voltaire's handling of sources

The immense documentation undertaken by Voltaire the historian, both in Le Siècle and elsewhere, has been unanimously applauded by critics. André Bellessort, in his chapter 'Voltaire Historien', remarks: "Et cependant, le premier historien qui ait recherché la vérité plus evidemment que lui, ni qui fût mieux disposé à l'atteindre."[1] This view is echoed by Charles Rihs: "Voltaire s'est livré avec ardeur à une vaste enquête sur la base d'une observation directe des faits ou sur une documentation qu'il a soumise à la plus sévère critique,"[2] and he goes further than Bellessort, calling Voltaire "le premier historien scientifique," for the "ouvrages de Voltaire témoignent d'une exceptionnelle érudition, d'un prodigieux souci d'enquête, d'une moisson de faits innombrables pour son temps."[2] Morley, too, has defined Voltaire's documentation as "scientific."[3] Other critics have commented on the use of sources in Le Siècle, amongst them Emile Henriot who considers the quest for contemporary testimonies to be "ce que Voltaire ajoute de précieux et /ce/ par quoi il est vivant,"[4] whilst Brailsford underlines, similarly, the vital role of oral documentation in the search for the truth: "The greater part of this book /Le Siècle/ and its continuation /Précis du Siècle de Louis XV/ rests undoubtedly on the contemporary evidence of well-placed actors and observers, sifted and collected with

Chapter III

Voltaire's handling of sources

The immense documentation undertaken by Voltaire the historian, both in Le Siècle and elsewhere, has been unanimously applauded by critics. André Bellessort, in his chapter 'Voltaire Historien', remarks: "Et cependant, le préjugé anti-religieux mis à part, je ne vois guère d'historien qui ait recherché la vérité plus avidement qui lui, ni qui fût mieux disposé à l'atteindre."[1] This view is echoed by Charles Rihs: "Voltaire s'est livré avec ardeur à une vaste enquête sur la base d'une observation directe des faits ou sur une documentation qu'il a soumise à la plus sévère critique," and he goes further than Bellessort, calling Voltaire "le premier historien scientifique," for the "ouvrages de Voltaire témoignent d'une exceptionnelle érudition, d'un prodigieux souci d'enquête, d'une moisson de faits innombrables pour son temps."[2] Morley, too, has defined Voltaire's documentation as "scientific."[3] Other critics have commented on the use of sources in Le Siècle, amongst them Emile Henriot who considers the quest for contemporary testimonies to be "ce que Voltaire ajoute de précieux et /ce/ par quoi il est vivant,"[4] whilst Brailsford underlines, similarly, the vital role of oral documentation in the search for the truth: "The greater part of this book /Le Siècle/ and its continuation /Précis du Siècle de Louis XV/ rests undoubtedly on the contemporary evidence of well-placed actors and observers, sifted and collected with

equal industry and insight."[5] More recently, H.T. Mason has stressed the degree of accuracy with which Voltaire uses his sources in L'Essai sur les mœurs,[6] and N.R. Johnson in Louis XIV and the age of the Enlightenment, while admiring Voltaire's "impressive documentation", decries the fact that in Le Siècle, "the sources are not identified."[7] To say that they are not always identified would have been nearer to the truth. J.H. Brumfitt, in Voltaire Historian, has drawn attention to and examined a number of main and secondary sources consulted by Voltaire for Le Siècle, and made a number of valid general remarks on the historian's method of documentation.[8]

Moreover, the interesting article of Reverend Mother Thomas Aquinas O'Connor deserves mention here.[9] Taking as her starting-point a few examples from chapter XVII of Le Siècle, and looking closely at L'Essai in particular, she concludes that Voltaire's prejudices often lead to deliberate distortion of the facts, and that the historian remains faithful to his sources so long as they do not contradict his personal views. The critic also draws attention to the fact that Voltaire infringes the truth, either by deliberately erroneous interpretations, by omissions or by his presentation of the material: "Hence it can be concluded that while he knew how to appraise the data he accumulated, Voltaire through deliberate misinterpretations, omissions, or interpolations has falsified history in favour of his preconceived thesis which served to bring discredit on established authority and particularly on the Church."[10] To these studies must be added René Pomeau's introduction to L'Essai sur les mœurs, wherein the critic underlines the relatively impressive documentation,[11]

Voltaire's scorn for the erudite's working habits,[12] displayed in the absence of specific references to the sources on the whole, but he notes that the errors in references diminish as Voltaire deals with more recent history.[13] Owen Taylor for his part has pointed out the large number of sources employed for La Henriade,[14] and concludes that Voltaire "adapte avec originalité et indépendance" what he borrows, that he often relies on his memory and makes mistakes.[15] The picture which emerges from these analyses of Voltaire's historical method of documentation is that of an assiduous and tireless researcher, of a partial judge who does not always strive after the truth, but often selects what concurs with his point of view, who is capable of the highest degree of precision, but who adopts a cavalier attitude to scholarly practices and erudite habits.[16]

Despite the obvious importance of studying the use of sources to arrive at an understanding of Voltaire's historical method in Le Siècle, this aspect has received relatively little attention from critics. The limits of an article prevent the R.M. O'Connor from examining a large sample of sources and with the exception of Torci's Mémoires, she confines herself to sources of L'Essai. J.H. Brumfitt has shown the way, whilst in his excellent introduction, E. Bourgeois names a number of sources, both oral and written. In his footnotes to the text, parallels with others are brought out. But Bourgeois is not concerned either with Voltaire's adaptation of his sources, or with general and fundamental principles which underlie the utilisation of sources. In his 'Notes pour servir à l'étude

des chapitres 35-39 du Siècle de Louis XIV,'[17] Gustave Lanson has painstakingly and meticulously listed the details which Voltaire has borrowed from a number of primary and secondary sources in these chapters. Not only does he examine the variants in the said chapters, pin-pointing the additional information which came Voltaire's way after the 1751 edition, but he draws a number of important conclusions on Voltaire's attitude to his sources and on his method of work. Our own conclusions, to some extent, will be seen to concur with Lanson's, whilst it is hoped that others will complement his invaluable article. Lanson's research was subsequently supported by Emile Bouvier's discovery of the source of the Saint-Nombril anecdote (P 1040), unknown to his predecessor. In his short article 'Contributions à l'étude des sources du Siècle de Louis XIV,' Bouvier reiterates and confirms Lanson's general points on Voltaire's historical method.[18]

So as not to cover the same ground as Lanson, we have excluded from our discussion in this chapter the last five chapters of Le Siècle, having verified that Lanson's references were correct, which they are with very few exceptions due no doubt to typing errors. In chapter IV, it will be shown that Voltaire's ironic mode of presentation constitutes his major claim to originality in the last five chapters. We have paid special attention to the first twenty-four chapters, to the chapters of anecdotes and chapters XXIX and XXX. As for the chapters on the arts and sciences (XXXI-XXXIV), it is clear that a discussion of sources would yield very few positive

results, for Voltaire relied mostly on his own reading and interpretation of classical writers and on his general knowledge of the literature of the period. Whilst Lanson has little choice but to give references to sources, we have attempted to juxtapose Voltaire's rendering and the original in order to spotlight the transformations which the relevant information has undergone and to assess the degree to which the original passage has been adapted and bears the stamp of the literary artist's aims and preoccupations or the propagandist's mode of presentation. In addition to the similarities between the source and the text, omissions often shed as much light on Voltaire's method of work and these will be considered. Furthermore, by taking into account Voltaire's own pronouncements on the general principles governing the use of sources and historical documentation, it is possible to assess the degree of correlation that exists between his theories and practice, a vital aspect of the question overlooked by Lanson. It must be stated at the outset that to try and trace all the borrowings would be a herculean task. Far more useful is the analysis of a sample of primary and secondary sources in the form of general histories, the letters and writings of plenipotentiaries, courtiers' memoirs and other publications which have been employed by Voltaire. From this study will emerge certain general points which will enable us to appraise Voltaire's historical method.

We have indicated in chapter I that Voltaire had probably hit upon the idea of writing a history of Louis XIV long before he unequivocably declared his intention to Thiériot to

do so in 1732, and that he was busy collecting information in the late twenties and perhaps even before, certainly during his stay in England. His research, whether through interviewing eyewitnesses or through his reading, was certainly carried out over a period of time prior to his setting pen to paper in 1735. In order to arrive at a provisional list of main and secondary sources utilised for Le Siècle, we have first turned to the Correspondence where Voltaire referred to or requested a number of works, as has been pointed out in chapters I and II. By consulting the Correspondence, it is thus possible to identify some sources used, but perhaps more significantly still, Voltaire's letters sometimes give a clear indication of the dates when these were being perused. However, caution must be the watch-word here, since Voltaire sometimes ordered a work to check what he had already found in it during a previous reading, or he might well be consulting the source for the second or third time. This is the case with the Lettres Historiques by Pellisson which were read for the second time in 1751. It must be borne in mind that an allusion in the Correspondence does not in itself amount to irrefutable proof that the source was being read for the first time at a given moment. In addition to borrowing books from correspondents' and acquaintances' private libraries,[19] Voltaire arranged for other publications to be dispatched to him from the Bibliothèque du Roi. I.O. Wade has published a useful list of Voltaire's emprunts from 1732 onwards, when he obtained l'abbé Bignon's permission to use the library.[20] Wade's findings provide an invaluable guide to Voltaire's readings at given moments in time and have supplemented information derived

from the Correspondence. The works borrowed in 1735 indicate Voltaire's interest in anecdotes,[21] in the arts[22] and even in the religious disputes.[23] Wade has pointed out that Voltaire continued to rely on the Bibliothèque du Roi during his stay in Prussia in 1750-1751.[24] Wade's admirable study not only proves Voltaire's impressive documentation, but more interestingly still, underlines the fact that in 1750, Voltaire was by no means confident that he had enough material at his disposal to put the finishing touches to the work and considered it to be an essential part of his task to check and recheck his material and add to it. To Wade's findings must be added the 'Chronological list of books borrowed and ordered by Voltaire in Berlin,' published by Martin Fontius in Voltaire In Berlin, and based on Voltaire's Correspondence.[25] Voltaire's letters to Conrad Walther, the king's librarian, provide additional evidence that with the historian, documentation and composition were often carried out simultaneously; i.e. he did not always gather his material first before drafting sections of the work, but was prepared to supplement the information he had at his disposal by constantly searching for new material.

The Notebooks, drafted at various stages of Voltaire's career, also provide an insight into the way he employed sources and enable us to draw up a list of publications and works consulted for Le Siècle. If at times it is difficult to discover the origins of certain notes, there are indications, such as the name of the author or an allusion, which help to determine the source of information.[26] In the course of our own reading of the sources, an incident summarised in the Notebooks or a

quotation has cropped up in the source. What is striking in the Notebooks is the ever growing interest in the age of Louis XIV and Voltaire's passion for bons mots and anecdotes, or what is out of the ordinary. The notes relevant to Le Siècle often constitute a first draft of the relevant sentence, or even of a paragraph in the text, as will be shown. Thus a reasonably long list of authors used by Voltaire comes to light; e.g. Gourville (pp.210, 248), Dangeau (p.227), Temple (p.248), Le Brun (p.412), Francheville (p.412), Niceron (p.452), Perrault (p.452), Mme de Motteville (p.209). By comparing the remarks in the Notebooks and the final version in Le Siècle, it is possible to see the creative mind at work, transforming the original, adapting it, expanding or telescoping as well as polishing the notes and the first draft. It is particularly interesting to compare the source, the notes and the final text in a three-way juxtaposition, for it would appear that Voltaire often has recourse to the notes and omits to check the material in the source, which occasionally leads to inaccuracies and misconceptions. The historian, on the whole, comes across as a tireless worker who read a great deal, but did so fairly carefully, pen in hand, with a precise aim in mind. The pages inédites of Caussy, already referred to,[27] confirm these conclusions; whereas some passages are reproduced in the Notebooks, others are not and point to additional sources.[28] Here too the notes act as an intermediate stage between the source and the final rendering, and it is observed that the original frequently recedes into the background, as Voltaire appears

content to amplify his summaries and first drafts.

If we add to this already extensive list the authors and works alluded to in the text itself, we have a useful selected bibliography of sources. By looking through such general bibliographies as Les Sources de l'histoire de France by Bourgeois and André[29] and the Bibliographie de l'histoire de France by G. Monod,[30] it is possible to compile an initial list of possible sources, of which a number have been examined and discussed.

However, there was a need for additional and positive proofs to determine the full extent of Voltaire's borrowings, and to choose between various equally likely sources. If we are in possession of such evidence, it is due to the laborious and meticulous work carried out by Professor S.S.B. Taylor during his recent visit to Leningrad. Having provided him with a list of selected sources, he has been kind enough to check the copies of the said sources in Voltaire's private library. Professor Taylor's visit, coming after those of Torrey and Havens,[31] has proved most beneficial to Voltaire studies, as his 'établissement de texte' of the definitive 'encadrée' edition of Leningrad has shown.[32] Our research into the sources used for Le Siècle has been considerably consolidated by the information gathered by Professor Taylor who has patiently recorded the marginal notes in Voltaire's hand, the pages and paragraphs marked by notes muettes, sinets or signets, i.e. pieces of paper serving as markers which often bear inscriptions in Voltaire's hand, as well as papillons or pieces of paper stuck to important passages, and pages cornées, a method frequently employed by Voltaire in

place of sinets.[33] By verifying the marked passages in an edition of the source at our disposal, we have been in a position to compare them to corresponding ones in Le Siècle, either to confirm Voltaire's borrowings or to assess Voltaire's reactions to a given source and to draw interpretative conclusions about Voltaire's method of work. At times the markers have helped to determine precisely the date when Voltaire was reading the source, since the sinets occasionally consist of fragments of letters bearing a date or an obvious allusion, although this evidence has to be taken in conjunction with other pointers; e.g. a reference to the source in the Correspondence. The whole process of reading the source, annotating it, transposing the selected passages, adapting them, thus becomes clearer.

A proviso is necessary here, for there are dangers which Professor Taylor has warned against.[34] In the first place, the works which bear no sign of notes muettes, sinets or papillons are not always the ones least used; on the contrary: "Some of the works Voltaire used most heavily bear relatively little trace of reading except for a well-worked book spine and a foxed or rubbed binding."[35] We shall see that Limiers' history of Louis XIV comes into this category. Furthermore, instead of using notes muettes, Voltaire often wrote notes on sheets of paper glued to the back of the volumes in question: "Inside the covers, however," remarks Professor Taylor, "the end-papers bear a number of blobs of red sealing wax to which still adhere, in some cases, the torn corner of a sheet of notes that he once placed there."[36] The fact that those sheets which appear to

have been vital for the drafting of Le Siècle have been lost, adds to the difficulties. There are others, for we cannot be sure that the editions in Voltaire's library are the ones first consulted by the historian.[37] In this respect, an allusion to the source in the Correspondence or a sinet bearing a date or addenda in later editions of Le Siècle, can go some way towards helping to establish the date of the first reading. It is also possible that the copies in Voltaire's private library might have been purchased to replace the original editions used, which perhaps had been misplaced during the author's travels; this would explain the lack of evidence in the form of notes muettes in some instances; e.g. the Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du XVIIIe siècle, by Lamberti in Voltaire's library, are made up of volumes from different editions, and it is impossible to ascertain which of these was first perused by the historian, as no one volume contains any markers, although this is not, as has been indicated, significant in itself.

But despite these reservations, the notes muettes in Voltaire's copies of the sources constitute important guidelines, and a textual comparison of the sources and Le Siècle reveals that when Voltaire borrowed from a source, he employed such methods to mark important passages for later use. In most cases, these notes muettes have confirmed our conclusions; in others new borrowings have come to light, and the notes muettes and marginalia have proved invaluable when it was a question of opting for one of several likely sources. When discussing the notes muettes in Voltaire's copy of the source, reference will be made in the notes to the copy in Voltaire's library

(e.g. BV 1842, La Fare, Mémoires, 1716), and to an edition at our disposal (e.g. La Fare, Petitot, vol. 65), for it has not always proved easy for us to obtain the same edition in all cases. It has to be said that the works checked in Voltaire's private library in Leningrad do not by any account add up to an exhaustive list of sources. We have selected a wide range of different types of sources; it soon became clear that a sample of sources would yield the same results as an exhaustive list. Nor would the general conclusions arrived at differ radically in any event. Voltaire's major sources of information have been examined closely. It will be seen that the problem of selection was a particularly acute one for the historian and that he solved it successfully by adapting the material to suit his purposes. Moreover, Voltaire relied far more on secondary than on primary sources, if by these one understands material from archives and manuscript documents. If, as Arthur Marwick has pointed out in The Nature of History, "a historical work is deemed scholarly and reliable according to the extent to which it is based on 'primary' sources, the basic, raw, imperfect evidence,"[38] then Le Siècle lacks a solid foundation in this respect. But working as he does from secondary sources and an impressive oral documentation, Voltaire's success lies primarily in having transformed the existing secondary material into a meaningful, interesting and aesthetically satisfying work. Above all, he shows a high degree of competence in interpreting the past for his readers' benefit, and proves to be capable of fulfilling an important task of the historian, defined by Marwick as "the labour of organising facts and ideas so that the reader takes from

it exactly the meaning which the writer intended to put in it."[39] Therein lies Voltaire's original contribution to the history of France under Louis XIV, whilst we shall examine in the next chapter the vital role played by Voltaire's mode of expression in communicating this experience to the reading public of Europe in an imaginative and captivating manner.

Voltaire's theories and general principles on the use of sources

Voltaire's pronouncements on historical documentation are scattered here and there in his writings, in his prefaces,[40] in his histories themselves, in miscellaneous writings on history, such as the Remarques sur l'histoire (1742), the Nouvelles Considérations sur l'histoire (1744), the articles 'Histoire',[41] 'Historiographe',[42] the Mélanges,[43] and in his Correspondence.[44] Voltaire speaks as a practitioner who has evolved a number of principles from his own first-hand experience of writing history or as a judge of other historians' achievements. His remarks on history in no way amount to a method as such; they are rather, as J.H. Brumfitt has declared, "a series of almost spontaneous and instinctive critical flashes."[45] Nor are Voltaire's ideas on history markedly different from those of his predecessors.[46] As for his theories on the use of sources, we shall see that they belong to a main stream of ideas common to many of his contemporaries. Without going into a lot of detail, it suffices here to present a synthesis of his main principles enunciated at one time or other, and pertaining to historical documentation, so as to measure Voltaire's practice against his theories. Whilst summing up Voltaire's general principles, reference will be made

in the notes to his predecessors and contemporaries whenever his pronouncements echoed theirs and vice versa, in order to bring out the lack of originality of his theories and the general consensus of opinion that prevailed in his day regarding historical documentation.

That theoreticians of the last part of the seventeenth century and Voltaire's own generation demanded a high degree of authenticity and exactitude, previously neglected by humanist historians, is commonplace. The search for the truth was to be achieved mainly through rigorous documentation, as Rapin postulated in his Réflexions sur l'histoire of 1709.[47] The golden rule remained that of Fontenelle in L'Histoire des oracles: "Assurons nous bien du fait, avant de nous inquiéter de la cause."[48] The surest way of arriving at the truth was to find authentic documents and primary sources, irrefutable testimonies, using as a starting-point a moderate form of pyrrhonism. Others have sufficiently discussed the role of historical pyrrhonism in the 17th and 18th centuries for this to be passed over here.[49] In addition to advocating a moderate form of pyrrhomism, Voltaire saw the historian's duty as being to examine the authenticity of testimonies and documents with the highest degree of objectivity.[50] For him pyrrhonism led to a safe and positive method of documentation, and the historian should not scorn any kind of information, if authenticated. Above all, Voltaire proclaimed the value of archives: "Il est bon qu'il y ait des archives de tout, afin qu'on puisse les consulter dans le besoin," he wrote in the Nouvelles Considérations sur l'histoire.[51] That he was to make little use of archives for

Le Siècle, we shall see, although he claims that he has dug into the public records for La guerre de 1741 and the Précis du siècle de Louis XV during his stay at Versailles. Some benefits might have accrued to Le Siècle as a result, but there is little evidence of this. Even after the completion of his work, declared Voltaire, the historian should continually hunt around for additional material; in this connexion, he wrote to the Journal des Savants on February 15, 1742: "Un poème exige une étude continuelle à chercher de nouveaux embellissements, une histoire demande une recherche assidue de nouvelles vérités..."[52] Voltaire certainly put this into practice after the 1751 edition of Le Siècle, as has been indicated in chapter II. These notions of the importance of documentation, the use of archives and the quest for primary source material and authenticated documents, were widespread amongst theoreticians and practitioners alike in the eighteenth century.[53]

Two major questions occurred to Voltaire and to his contemporaries: (a) What are the best proofs in history? (b) What criteria should the historian apply in trying to weigh documents and testimonies, in order to assess their authenticity? Voltaire's answer to the first question once again does not differ radically from that of his generation. Besides documents, the most acceptable proofs in history are the reports of eye-witnesses and trustworthy contemporaries. Only what they have seen for themselves is irrefutable; this is true not just of more recent history, but also of ancient history. Of Herodotus, Voltaire wrote in Le Pyrrhonisme de l'histoire: "Presque tout ce qu'il raconte sur la foi des étrangers est fabuleux, mais

tout ce qu'il a vu est vrai..."[54] It is well-known that Voltaire had made extensive use of contemporaries' reports in Charles XII,[55] and the pattern was not to change in Le Siècle. This confidence in eyewitnesses' reports was shared by Voltaire's contemporaries.[56] When those reports agree unanimously, they can be considered to be irrefutable, remarks Voltaire in the Supplément: "Le rapport d'un témoin considérable donne de la probabilité, le rapport de plusieurs peut faire la certitude historique" (P 1253-4).[57] Yet the historian must be on his guard against the partiality of witnesses, as Voltaire was fully aware: "Les mémoires secrets des courtisans sont suspects de partialité; ceux qui écrivent une ou deux générations après doivent user de la plus grande circonspection, écarter le frivole, réduire l'exagéré, et combattre la satire."[58] If the reports of contemporaries contradict one another, Voltaire advises the historian to be cautious: "Quand des contemporains comme le cardinal de Retz et le duc de La Rochefoucauld, ennemis l'un de l'autre, confirment le même fait dans leurs mémoires, ce fait est indubitable; quand ils se contredisent, il faut douter," he postulates in Le Siècle (P 889).[59]

For all the avowed usefulness of eye witnesses' reports, the eighteenth century was unanimous in giving documents pride of place in history. There is little doubt that the Académie des Inscriptions, founded by Colbert, and officially recognised in 1701, had a major role to play in this respect. By documents, theoreticians meant any official papers preserved in archives - i.e. what we would call primary sources nowadays - , but also the letters, manuscript memoirs of ministers, statesmen and

generals. The further one goes back in the past, says Voltaire in the article 'Histoire', the greater the need for documents which can be authenticated: "Pour connaître avec un peu de certitude quelque chose de l'histoire ancienne, il n'est qu'un seul moyen, c'est de voir s'il reste quelques monuments incontestables."[60] This is hardly borne out by L'Essai sur les mœurs, where the use of primary sources is limited, as Gibbon observed in 1762[61] and as Pomeau has indicated in his introduction.[62] Voltaire is far from claiming that documents have no place in recent history; on the contrary, they constitute, in his view, its very basis.[63] This value attributed to documents in history was by no means a novel idea; it formed the basis of Bayle's theories on the writing of history[64] and of Fontenelle's ideas,[65] but only in the eighteenth century did this plea for a more 'scientific' method of writing history gain general support, as Voltaire joined his contemporaries[66] in calling for indisputable proofs.

Yet when it comes to assessing the authenticity of documents, one is struck by a remarkable lack of objective and scientific criteria. Theoreticians and practitioners of the art of history alike express a naïvely overwhelming confidence in common sense and reason, which they saw as the mark of a sound historian; Boulainvilliers expected the historian to possess "cette finesse et cette droiture de jugement qui aperçoit et qui saisit d'abord la vérité."[67] This faith in reason[68] left little room for objective criteria,[69] and amounts to little more than the application of the Cartesian method in history, which seems to

indicate that historiography had, in this respect at least, made very little headway since Bayle and Fontenelle. Thus Voltaire maintains quite optimistically: "Si on voulait faire usage de sa raison au lieu de sa mémoire, et examiner plus que transcrire, on ne multiplierait pas à l'infini les livres et les erreurs..."[70] Nor does the doctrine of vraisemblance, on which Voltaire constantly relies, provide a satisfactory answer; the concept is vague and subjective, a fact which H.T. Mason has recently drawn attention to: "The criteria for this examination, however, are unreliable, since they are based on a rationalist view of what is likely to have happened. The dangers are manifest; Voltaire can so easily conclude that what is accurate is what supports his own outlook."[71] What Voltaire meant by vraisemblable is simply that which was in keeping with his views of human nature or with the general laws of the universe, a tendentious and dangerous interpretation which reflected the fixed views of the Enlightenment.[72] The lack of relativism is apparent in this definition, and precursors of Voltaire[73] and contemporaries[74] did not offer less subjective criteria for evaluating the authenticity of documents.

Other criteria of Voltaire's such as anachronisms, internal contradictions, the lack of additional evidence, geographical errors,[75] did not belong to him exclusively. Daniel had already insisted on the need for historians to acquire an active knowledge of geography;[76] Lenglet commented on the importance of internal contradictions,[77] and Juvenel considered anachronisms to be "une marque de suspicion."[78] All in all, Voltaire's criteria

appear even less defined than those of his contemporaries; unlike Juvenel[79] and Lenglet,[80] he does not advocate, for instance, that the style of the document should be seen to be typical of its alleged author and of the age to which he might have belonged.

Finally, mention must be made here of the question of citing sources, which seems to have preoccupied a number of theoreticians in the eighteenth century and before. The majority proclaimed that the historian had a lot to gain by adopting the methods of the erudite; the need to quote one's sources is argued strongly by Fleury in his Discours on the Histoire Ecclésiastique as early as 1691, and by Daniel who saw this as "une obligation indispensable pour l'historien."[81] As for Voltaire, he deemed it to be unnecessary when writing contemporary history, but "une précaution absolument nécessaire quand on n'écrit pas l'histoire de son temps, à moins qu'on ne s'en tienne aux faits connus."[82] In the Preface to L'Histoire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand, he explains the reasons for the lack of references to and quotations from sources in Le Siècle: "Il y a peu de citations dans Le Siècle, parce que les événements des premières années, connus de tout le monde, n'avaient besoin que d'être mis dans leur jour, et que l'auteur a été témoin des derniers."[83] And yet, as R. Pomeau has shown, even when writing L'Essai, Voltaire adopts no less a cavalier attitude.[84] That he was averse to applying erudite methods is further demonstrated by his refusal to incorporate into his historical works long quotations from documents and sources, claiming that it is enough to refer the reader to these, and that "les mémoires, les dupliques, et les répliques sont des monuments à conserver dans des archives

ou dans des recueils des Lamberti, des Dumont, ou même des Rousset, mais rien n'est plus insipide dans une histoire."[85]

With the exception of this obvious contempt for erudite habits, it is apparent that Voltaire's theories on the use of sources do not amount to a radical departure from the general consensus of opinion at the time. He was certainly acquainted with the views of Rapin, Boulainvilliers, Juvenel, Lenglet du Fresnoy or Bolingbroke. In turn, he might have influenced Griffet whose Traité, published in 1769, seems to offer a synthesis of his precursors' theories, including Voltaire's, for Le Siècle is referred to in the work.[86] On the one hand, therefore, there is no question of originality on Voltaire's part; on the other hand, it is fair to say that he evolved a lot of his principles from his own experience as a historian. Even if these coincided with the general body of theories current at the time, he could at least argue that he was writing 'en connaissance de cause'. Finally, one must not forget that his general principles were formulated in many cases after he had published his histories, with the exception of the texts relating to Charles XII. The article 'Histoire' is posterior to his major historical writings. It now remains for us to ascertain whether the use of sources in Le Siècle complies with those general principles, and whether Voltaire as a historian practises what he preaches.

A. Oral documentation

It is a well-known fact that Voltaire made extensive use of oral testimonies in his histories, as much as in other works, such as the Lettres Philosophiques. He is often depicted as a journalist interviewing prominent people, collecting numerous anecdotes handed down through an oral tradition, in order to enliven his narrative, searching at the same time for serious information, and making full use of his travels throughout Europe to verify facts and discover little-known details pertaining to the age of Louis XIV. André Bellessort sums up succinctly the full import of those oral testimonies in Voltaire's histories: "Son Charles XII, son Siècle de Louis XIV, son Histoire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand, lui ont été inspirés par les récits et les confidences que lui ont faits des acteurs ou des témoins de ces grands événements."[87] In his Voltaire, Gustave Lanson makes a similar point,[88] and J.H. Brumfitt has named a number of witnesses interviewed by Voltaire, whose contributions were vital to the composition of Le Siècle.[89] But it is above all Emile Bourgeois in his admirable introduction, who has discussed in detail the role of oral documentation in the work.[90] A few examples will suffice to show that in this respect Voltaire undoubtedly adhered to one of his most important principles regarding the validity of eye-witnesses' and contemporaries' reports, even if he was not always prepared to question their reliability and failed to be on his guard against the parti-pris of his witnesses.

We have pointed out in chapter I that he was in a position to meet many who had had first-hand experience of events during

the reign of Louis XIV. To Dubos, he imparted on October 30, 1738: "J'ai pour la vie privée de Louis XIV les mémoires de Dangeau... J'ai ce que j'ai entendu dire à de vieux courtisans, valets, grands seigneurs, et autres; et je rapporte les faits dans lesquels ils s'accordent" (P 606). His father was a friend of the Duc de Saint-Simon, and whilst it is not at all sure that Voltaire had read the latter's manuscript memoirs, he was assuredly able to consult the Duc in person. Although the Mémoires were composed between 1739 and 1749 and Voltaire might have consulted them during his stay at Versailles,[91] there is no textual evidence that he did. Louis Urbain Lefèvre de Caumartin (1653-1720), the former 'intendant de finances' and 'conseiller d'état', had been a friend of de Retz, and Voltaire learned from him the anecdote of the wardrobe full of the gold left by Mazarin (P 901). It was he, too, who made Voltaire visit a convent where there lived a nun said to be the illegitimate daughter of Louis XIV (p 963).

The de Rohan conspiracy, to which Caumartin had been a witness, also finds a place in Le Siècle (P 980). Voltaire was on cordial terms with, amongst others, the Duc de Vendôme, the Duc du Maine; he was a frequent visitor to the Société du Temple where he met the Duc de Villeroy, Polignac, M. de Malézieu who was well-informed on matters pertaining to the Duc de Bourgogne. Voltaire had also visited the home of the Maréchal de Villars from whom he claims to have heard the details of the battle of Mons (P 863). Richelieu, a friend of Mme de Maintenon, and her niece, Mme Vilette, were particularly useful

to Voltaire for the chapters of anecdotes. The Marquis de Fénelon, the nephew of the archbishop of Cambrai, assured Voltaire that the verses quoted in the chapter on Quietism had been composed in his uncle's youth (P 1097), and that the Télémaque was not intended for the education of the Duc de Bourgogne (P 1007).

During his stay in England, we have seen that he turned the conversations which he had with acquaintances, such as Bolingbroke, Lord Pulteney and the Duchess of Marlborough, to advantage. Once he returned to France and decided to start work on Le Siècle, he made countless enquiries; the Cardinal de Fleury provided several anecdotes and informative details; it was he who informed Voltaire that M. de Bâville had been the main instigator of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (P 1242), and showed Voltaire the very spot at Versailles where Louis XIV had wed Mme de Maintenon (P 1242). The historian also sought Fleury's advice on the subject of Louis XIV's faith and his relations with the Jesuits. Nor would Voltaire have discovered little-known details about the story of the man in the iron mask without the help of contemporary witnesses (P 1241). We have indicated in chapter II that despite La Beaumelle's claims to the contrary, Voltaire, in all likelihood, relied less on the Mémoires secrets de Perse published in 1745, than on eyewitnesses' reports, as he declared to Dubos in 1738: "Je suis assez instruit de l'aventure de l'homme au masque de fer, mort à la Bastille. J'ai parlé à des gens qui l'ont servi."[92] The importance which he attributed to the testimonies of contemporaries is further demonstrated by his endeavours to find out the exact width of the Rhine at the point where Louis's army crossed over (P 716). To Hénault, he

confidently declared: "J'ai vu une femme qui a passé vingt fois le Rhin sur son cheval en cet endroit, ce qui prouve qu'il n'y avait que douze pas à nager,"[93] even though he alters his text to 'vingt pas' in 1753 to be more in line with Pellisson's account in the Lettres Historiques.

Voltaire also moved in elitist circles of such 'académiciens' as Dubos and Lévesque de Burigny from whom he learned of Bossuet's marriage, the details of which were inserted in the 1753 edition.[94] In accordance with his high regard for the testimonies of observers, he did not hesitate to quote them when he defended himself against the hostile attacks of La Beaumelle, or in answer to his correspondents' criticisms; he asserted in his reply to La Condamine that La Feuillade himself had openly admitted to being in love with the Dauphine.[95] In the text itself, he forestalls future criticisms by giving his sources of information; it was Villars himself who had guaranteed Eugène's speech at the battle of Rastadt (P 881), and Fleury who certified that Louis XIV gave a pension to Mme Scarron (P 935). The Marquis de Canillac had shed considerable light on the death of members of the royal family and proved, in Voltaire's opinion, the Duc d'Orléans' innocence (P 945). To Voltaire, the affirmations of such a trustworthy witness as the Maréchal de Berwick is sufficient proof of the courage displayed by Cavalier at the battle of Almanza (P 1061), as are those of Fleury concerning Louis's judgement on Fénelon (P 1095).

In all these cases, of course, one must take Voltaire's word for the reliability of this evidence, but it is highly

unlikely that he would have dared to call to the bar prominent men and women and proceed to invent part of their testimony. He remains faithful to his principles as a rule, and takes great care to quote only trustworthy witnesses who were present at, or closely involved in the events concerned; e.g. Torci, Fleury, Bolingbroke, Villars, Berwick, La Feuillade. But what he fails to do is to recognise that these witnesses might have been swayed by their own prejudices and might have, either purposely or unconsciously, distorted the truth. He makes no allowances for the Duchess of Marlborough's partiality in her assessment of the importance of the quarrel with Queen Anne, and is led into error, as will be shown in chapter IV. Nor does he show any consistency in his attitude to domestics and servants. At one point in Le Siècle, he pronounces their testimonies to be invaluable, in view of the fact that they had first-hand experience of matters at court: "Les subalternes, témoins de tout l'intérieur d'une cour, savent des choses que les parlements et les chefs de parti mêmes ignorent ou ne font que soupçonner" (P 642). Elsewhere Voltaire discredits the Journal of Dangeau on the grounds that it was "des 'nouvelles à la main', écrites quelquefois par un de ses domestiques; et je puis en répondre qu'on s'en aperçoit au style, aux inutilités, et aux faussetés dont ce recueil est rempli" (P 928).

Moreover, because he puts implicit faith in the reliability of witnesses' reports, or wishes to please an acquaintance, he makes no attempt on several occasions to verify the facts and strays from the truth. As late as 1768, Voltaire was intent on adding to his text information obtained from relatives of important

figures who lived in the previous age. Thus he consults the Duc de Bouillon on the role played by the Cardinal de Bouillon in the Quietist affair. The Cardinal is accordingly portrayed as a victim of Quietism and a loyal friend to Fénelon. The generally laudatory tone of Voltaire's appraisal (P 1098-P 1101), the inclusion of the lengthy digression itself which is tenuously linked to the rest of the chapter, can only be explained by Voltaire's wish to please the Duc de Bouillon. This information, in point of fact, was largely erroneous,[96] and Voltaire's portrayal of Bouillon as being worthy of the reader's sympathy, constitutes a serious misrepresentation of the facts; he was a political schemer who took full advantage of France's difficult military situation to further his own political career and cover himself with glory.

Finally, from a consideration of Voltaire's impressive oral documentation, one can conclude that he addressed himself to contemporaries of Louis XIV or relatives and acquaintances of witnesses to secure information of a particular kind. He found a corpus of essential historical facts, as will be seen, in the general histories of Louis XIV's age and in memoirs of courtiers as well as in other written sources. What he sought to secure from his private sources, therefore, was anecdotal details or hitherto little-known faits curieux which would add spice to his account of events and were likely to interest and satisfy the curiosity of the layman and the idly inquisitive reading public. In as much as he collected many such historiettes passed on through an oral tradition, Voltaire could rightly claim a certain measure of originality. Whilst contributing to the piquancy of

Voltaire's tableaux, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, these petits faits constitute the extra ingredients which can be said to be lacking in the histories of his predecessors. It is, of course, impossible to verify the extent to which the historian has embroidered upon the reports he received; he obviously told the anecdotes in his own inimitable manner and merely borrowed the gist of contemporaries' accounts. Nor did he consider it vitally important in this area to remain faithful to his oral sources in points of detail, since the witnesses had already presented the facts in their own way. Enjoying a certain leeway, it is only fair to assume that he took every opportunity to display his wit, without running the risk of being taken to task. But Voltaire was not one to be content with such limited, albeit novel, information; it was on secondary written sources that he relied most of all to endow his history with the necessary authenticity and precision which any competent historian would pride himself on.

B. Written sources

(I) General Histories

From the start Voltaire was conscious that his history would be judged by his contemporaries on the strength of its reliability and veracity and on the basis of the essential core of historical information which he would have succeeded in securing. Even if he repeatedly denied that a purely chronological survey of events was not his prime objective, he could not leave himself open to attack by ignoring vital historical facts. Indeed we have shown that his critics declared themselves to be less than

satisfied, in some respects, with the lack of reliability in specific passages. It has been seen that Voltaire did his utmost to research his subject before he started writing. In his letter to Dubos of 1738, we have a provisional list of general historical works consulted by the historian:

> Je n'ai d'autres mémoires, pour l'histoire générale, qu'environ deux cents volumes de mémoires imprimés que tout le monde connaît. Il ne s'agit que de former un corps bien proportionné à tous ces membres épars, et de peindre avec des couleurs vraies, mais d'un trait, ce que Larrey, Limiers, Lamberti, Roussel, etc., etc., falsifient et délayent dans des volumes.[97]

But when trying to assess Voltaire's debt to those sources, we are confronted with a number of difficulties.[98] In the first place, the main facts, as is to be expected, are present in most of the general histories of Louis XIV, in Larrey, Limiers, Reboulet etc. Furthermore, the copies which Voltaire possessed in his private library bear little evidence of specific borrowings and present a limited number of notes muettes which are by no means conclusive. The Correspondence would be of help here if Voltaire made mention of particular events in relation to specific sources, but this is not the case, with a few exceptions. Moreover, the historians whose works Voltaire uses, are themselves indebted to others; it is clear that Larrey has followed Limiers's account of events closely, for the latter's history was published in 1717, a year before Larrey's, and both these writers have borrowed extensively from others. Limiers quotes and copies whole sections of La Fare[99] and Sir William Temple[100] amongst others. Voltaire had at his disposal the memoirs of courtiers

consulted by his predecessors, and he may easily have found the material for himself in the originals. Textual echoes do, nevertheless, provide evidence of utilisation of specific sources at given points, but Voltaire's habit of summarising the main facts and presenting them in his own manner makes it harder to ascertain which sources he employed for his historical survey of events.

Larrey's Histoire de France sous le règne de Louis XIV

When all this is said, it would appear that one major source provided the backbone to Le Siècle, as far as the corpus of historical facts is concerned. An analysis of many textual echoes points to Larrey's Histoire de France sous le règne de Louis XIV, published in Rotterdam in 1718; this first edition is to be found in Voltaire's private library.[101] Once he had secured the main information in Larrey, it is probable that Voltaire proceeded to complement this by delving into other sources. Born in 1638 at Montvilliers, the son of a Protestant nobleman, Larrey left France following the edicts passed by Louis XIV against the Huguenots, and settled down in Berlin at the court of the Elector of Brandenburg, where he composed an Histoire d'Angleterre, d'Ecosse et d'Irlande (1707-13, 4 vols.), L'Histoire des sept sages de la Grèce (1713-1716, 2 vols.), and the history of Louis XIV. The Protestant bias which shows through in this last work, did not seemingly deter Voltaire who simply excluded any partial interpretation on Larrey's part, and confined himself to the facts that were objectively reported. O. Taylor has indicated that Voltaire deliberately ignored Protestant historians

who were influenced by their religious background, when he was preparing La Henriade.[102] This is certainly not the case with Le Siècle. Voltaire's copy, being the 1718 edition, and the letter to Dubos leave no doubt that he had read this work at the start of the composition, possibly in the early thirties when he was actively engaged in compiling facts for Le Siècle. In addition, a letter serving as sinet in Voltaire's hand, is to be found in his copy and reads: "Contre les Chanoines... N'ay jamais... émilie, vous... mon aimable Emilie mais... voit avec vous..." The address given is 'en champ/agne/, i.e. at Cirey, where, as indicated, the foundation for the 'histoire générale', i.e. the chronological survey of events in Le Siècle, was laid. Whilst Voltaire's copy of the source contains few notes muettes and no marginalia, seven blobs of wax are to be found inside the cover of volume I, to which at one time were attached sheets containing notes extracted from the text. Volume III has four blobs inside the front cover and six at the back. Voltaire would have jotted down summaries of important passages or references to the text, which once used, were discarded. As for the sinets, they are few in number, and only one denotes a borrowing, but this does not in itself exclude the possibility of extensive use of the source by Voltaire.

A selected list of probable borrowings from Larrey is given in Appendix A. Some general conclusions can, however, be drawn from a textual comparison of Le Siècle and this source. Firstly, whilst Larrey describes events in great detail, Voltaire is on the whole content to enumerate and summarise the essential facts, so much so that one has the impression that he merely

copies out the shoulder-notes in the source on more than one occasion.[103] Voltaire clearly has no wish to dally long on the main facts known to most historians, and since these were well-established, he felt that they did not have to be authenticated, so that he makes no attempt to give precise references to his source. On the other hand, when he does come across extraordinary or dramatic details, he is prepared to capitalise on them in order to enliven his narrative of events. Thus Larrey recounts how a spy of the Duc de Luxembourg was discovered and forced to pass on false information to the French: "On l'obligea de donner un faux avis au Duc de Luxembourg."[104] This is echoed in Voltaire's text: "On le force, avant de le faire mourir, d'écrire un faux avis au maréchal de Luxembourg" (P 777). Nor does the author of Le Siècle follow less closely Larrey's account of the council assembled by the Duc d'Orléans at the siege of Turin, a potentially dramatic scene which he exploits fully, as will be seen in chapter IV. Larrey wrote in this connexion: "Le Maréchal de Marsin tira de sa poche l'ordre secret par lequel on devait déférer à son avis en cas d'action..."[105] And Voltaire makes few alterations to this sentence in his text: "Alors le Maréchal de Marsin tire de sa poche un ordre du roi, par lequel on devait déférer à son avis en cas d'action..." (P 844). The main criteria for selecting such details in the first place appear to be their singularité and their usefulness in making history more interesting for the reader. That Voltaire had an eye for such striking details is clear on a number of occasions, when less important details are given priority over other historically more vital ones; the bombardment of Genoa,[106] the

battle of Luzara and the Te Deum ceremony held in both camps[107] are cases in point.

Perhaps more indicative still of the way Voltaire seeks out incidents that are out of the ordinary, is the transcription of Larrey's récit of the siege of Limerick (1691), which is marked by the one conclusive sinet in Voltaire's copy of the source. We have here an example of how Voltaire adapts and transforms his source in points of detail, whilst remaining faithful to it for the essential facts. Larrey describes the reliefs sent by Louis XIV to Limerick in the following manner:

> Trois mille soldats(A) s'embarquèrent sur les vaisseaux de la flotte... Il y avait vingt-quatre chirurgiens, cent quatre-vingt maçons,(B) vingt-six charpentiers, deux bombardiers, dix-huit canoniers et trois ingénieurs.(C) Quarante bâtiments(D) suivaient, chargés de toute sorte de provisions de guerre et de bouche(E) et deux mille chevaux.(F) On avait pourvu jusqu'aux équipages des chevaux et des hommes, et on avait embarqué douze mille fers de cheval,(G) six mille selles, et autant de brides(H) et de souliers pour vingt-six mille hommes.(I) On n'avait pas oublié le canon, dont il y avait dix-neuf pièces(J) qu'on devait débarquer. Ce convoi était escorté par douze vaisseaux de guerre.(K) 108

The unusual nature of these details seems to have caught Voltaire's imagination, and fully justifies, in his opinion, their inclusion in Le Siècle, although he is intent on stamping his own mark on the narrative:

> Le roi de France, soutenant toujours la fortune de Jacques, fit passer encore trois mille hommes de troupes réglées(A) dans Limerick. Pour surcroît de libéralité, il envoya tout ce qui peut servir aux besoins d'un grand peuple et à

ceux des soldats. Quarante vaisseaux de transport,(D) escortés de douze vaisseaux de guerre,(K) apportèrent tous les secours possibles en hommes, en ustensiles, en équipages;(E) des ingénieurs, des canonniers, des bombardiers,(C) deux cents maçons;(B) des selles, des brides,(H) des housses pour plus de vingt mille chevaux;(F), (G) des canons avec leurs affûts,(J) des fusils, des pistolets, des épées pour armer vingt-six mille hommes; des vivres, des habits, et jusqu'à vingt-six mille paires de souliers(I) (P 768).

One observes here the attempt to give precise statistical details (A), when Voltaire thinks these necessary, whilst elsewhere he goes out of his way to omit details of this sort which burden the narrative; e.g. (H), where an approximate number is substituted. Furthermore, Voltaire transforms the original so as to make his text more precise; thus "quarante vaisseaux de transport" replaces Larrey's "quarante bâtiments" (D). Above all, Voltaire seeks to make his récit clearer and more logical; Larrey had placed the important detail "douze vaisseaux de guerre" at the end of a long paragraph, whereas Voltaire chooses to make this detail follow "vaisseaux de transport" (see (K)), where it is in its logical place. He also takes a certain amount of liberty with the manner of presenting the material; the style is considerably polished; e.g. the banal expression in the source - "toute sorte de provisions de guerre et de bouche" - makes way for the more elegant ternary formula "tous les secours possibles en hommes, en ustensiles, en équipages" (E), which adds piquancy to an otherwise dull enumeration. On the negative side, Voltaire is guilty of carelessness; he confuses "housses" and "fers" (G). Other interpolations and alterations are deliberate;

he amends the number of horses, given by Larrey as "deux mille" (F), in the name of logic and verisimilitude. Since there were "vingt six mille hommes", it follows that there would have been more than two thousand horses - a misrepresentation of the facts. Similarly common sense dictates the addition "des canons avec leurs affûts" (J). Finally, Voltaire writes history as a conteur who strives after dramatic effects by amplifying Larrey's narrative; he appends "des fusils, des pistolets, des épées", to make the picture more complete and more striking. Similarly, he alters the sequence of details, in order to make the tableau end on a high note with the picturesque detail "vingt-six mille paires de souliers" (I). The whole paragraph in Voltaire's text seems to be building up to this detail which adequately sums up the care with which the whole expedition had been planned. We can, therefore, see in this transposition Voltaire's esprit at work, in the selection of striking details, in the omission of others which might be burdensome, in the adaptation of the source and in the attempt to dramatise and enliven the incident borrowed from the source. He transforms the material in his own fashion into a more unified, dramatic and aesthetically pleasing tableau, whilst preserving the gist of Larrey's account.

But if in the preceding example, Voltaire makes a conscious effort to avoid copying his source, in other instances he is less reluctant to do so, without ever naming Larrey. With regard to the rumours circulating in Paris about William III's death, Larrey recounts how "les commissaires des quartiers allèrent frapper à la porte des bourgeois pour les éveiller et les exhorter

à faire des illuminations."[109] It is not difficult to see more than an echo of this in Voltaire's narrative: "Quelques magistrats subalternes encouragèrent les bourgeois et le peuple à faire des illuminations" (P 767). Larrey goes on to say: "On sonne les cloches dans plusieurs églises, on tire le canon de la Bastille...," and Voltaire adds: "On sonna des cloches... on tira le canon de la Bastille." But Voltaire's talent for incorporating such details and integrating them fully into his narrative, is never in doubt. He certainly succeeds in doing what he sets out to do, namely to orchestrate the material borrowed from sources into "un corps bien proportionné."[110] The geographical description of Namur is basically taken from Larrey: "Namur située au confluent de la Sambre et de la Meuse, était considérable par sa situation sur les deux Rivières et forte par sa citadelle bâtie sur des Rochers;"[111] but Voltaire's version bears the stamp of his individuality: "Le roi reparut encore au siège de Namur, la plus forte place des Pays-Bas par sa situation au confluent de la Sambre et de la Meuse, et par une citadelle bâtie sur des rochers" (P 777). The structure of the sentence is far more elegant and the point made far more forcefully than in the original.

In Voltaire's handling of this source, it becomes clear that he abides by his general principle regarding the use of documents. Thus whilst Larrey quotes the whole text of Tallard's letter to Louis XIV after the battle of Spire (1703),[112] Voltaire extracts the most salient sentence from an otherwise uninteresting text: "Sire, votre armée a pris plus d'étendards et de drapeaux qu'elle n'a perdu de simples soldats" (P 827), in

order to bring his dramatic narrative of events to a memorable conclusion. The quote is used here, not as part of an authentic document, but almost as bons mots or as an epilogue to a dramatic scene. Nevertheless, he adopts a cavalier attitude towards what is, after all, a well-known historical document, the full text of which was available; for his version departs somewhat from the original: "Nous avons pris plus de drapeaux et d'étendards que votre Majesté n'y a perdu de simples soldats."[113] Voltaire's lack of accuracy, whilst inexcusable, could be due to the fact that he relied on his memory, instead of checking the source, but he repeatedly shows a tendency to be content with the 'spirit' rather than the 'letter' of official documents. He might well have adapted the sentence on purpose to make it more intelligible when quoted out of context, but his pre-occupations as a literary artist frequently override those of the historian, and he scorns the working habits of the erudite rather too flagrantly.

In addition to the main facts, Larrey provided a number of anecdotes which Voltaire was constantly on the look-out for. Thus one of these is inserted in chapter XVII on the Spanish succession, for which Voltaire uses Torci's Mémoires as his main source.[114] In so doing, he remains faithful to one of his precepts, namely that the historian should not be satisfied with one source, but by consulting as many as possible, he should arrive at a full and comprehensive picture of events. Larrey tells of Charles II's opening of his wife's vault,[115] and ascribes the King's action to his affection for his dead wife. Not content with this explanation, Voltaire imposes his own

personal interpretation on the facts which he borrows, thereby giving more originality to his récit: "Il baisa ce qui restait de ces cadavres... soit qu'il voulût s'accoutumer aux horreurs de la mort, soit qu'une secrète superstition lui fît croire que l'ouverture de ces tombes retarderait l'heure où il devait être porté dans la sienne" (P 802). His explanation is based on logic and a universal conception of human nature typical of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, acting on the material collected by the historian, the philosopher gives greater universal significance to the anecdote by quoting it as an example of "l'esprit humain" (P 802). Voltaire's philosophical preoccupations also dictate the choice and handling of another anecdote pertaining to James II's conduct at Galloway which comes directly from Larrey: "Le roi Jacques, au contraire, donna dans sa fuite des marques de sa cruauté mal propres à le rétablir, ayant fait mourir à Galloway, par où il passait, ceux qui n'avaient pas été d'avis de le recevoir."[116] Voltaire sticks to the main facts, but presents his own view of the events in question:

> Ceux qui aiment à voir dans la conduite des hommes les causes des événements remarqueront que le roi Guillaume, après sa victoire, fit publier un pardon général, et que le roi Jacques, vaincu, en passant par une petite ville, nommée Galloway, fit pendre quelques citoyens qui avaient été d'avis de lui fermer les portes. De deux hommes qui se conduisaient ainsi, il était bien aisé de voir qui devait l'emporter (P 768).

The incident provides for Voltaire further insight into man's behaviour, so that history becomes in his hands, not a bare account of events as in Larrey's work, but far more interpretative

and philosophical. He successfully combines a chronological survey of the main facts with analysis, enlivens his narrative by incorporating historiettes, whilst going out of his way to justify their inclusion on philosophical grounds. In this way, history becomes a study of Man, although within a restrictive and preconceived framework based on the eighteenth century view of human nature that was far from being relativistic.

Voltaire's use of Larrey, therefore, points to his diverse preoccupations, ranging from the literary and artistic to the polemical and philosophical. The propagandist makes effective use of the destruction of the Palatinate (P 731)[117] and of Bodegrave and Svammerdam (P 724),[118] to bring home the serious and intolerable injustices of war; the literary artist never loses sight of the need to make history more readable and captivating, whilst the philosopher seeks in past events ways of illustrating man's folly and behaviour.

Limiers's Histoire du règne de Louis XIV

Conscious of the need to address himself to as many sources as possible for the chronological tableau of events, Voltaire tried to supplement the facts borrowed from Larrey with material he found in Limiers. The latter's contribution appears to have been less significant, though by no means negligible. Philippe de Limiers, like Larrey, was born of Protestant parents in Holland, and few details are known about his life, except that he died in 1725.[119] In addition to the Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, Amsterdam, 1717, 7 vols. in-12, he published an Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France sous les règnes de Louis XIII

et de Louis XIV, Amsterdam, 1720, 2 vols. in-12, which Voltaire seemingly did not use for Le Siècle, and an Histoire de Charles XII, roi de Suède, Amsterdam, 1721, 6 vols. in-12, which, according to Brumfitt, was a vital source for Voltaire's Charles XII.[120] As was the case with Larrey's history, Limiers's work was undoubtedly consulted before 1735, and here too, the author's obvious Protestant convictions did not in any way dissuade Voltaire from seeking factual information, whilst he consciously excluded any opinions imbued with bias; e.g. Limiers's partial responses to the persecution of Protestants in France, especially after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Nor did Voltaire's professed lack of esteem for the general histories of Larrey and Limiers[121] prevent him from having recourse to these works, both for essential historical facts and for the chapters on religious disputes, as has been pointed out by Gustave Lanson.[122] Voltaire's copy of the text is a second edition in ten volumes, published in Amsterdam in 1718,[123] and S.S.B. Taylor notes that it "is stiff in its binding and has practically no visible signs of use... The book has been rebound and the pages retrimmed, with the result that all traces have disappeared at the bindery."[124] Only two notes muettes have survived; a page cornée marks the abdication of Christina of Sweden,[125] although Voltaire's text bears no resemblance to Limiers's, and a signet relating to the death of the Amirante of Castille,[126] which does not find a place in Le Siècle.

Since Larrey reproduces most of the information present in Limiers, it is not surprising that Voltaire sought in the latter anecdotal and extraordinary details, whilst he seems to

pay little attention to accounts of battles, treaties and documents. The battle of Hochstedt can serve as an example of his method and the differences between Limiers's approach and his own. The Protestant historian describes tediously and meticulously the strategy of both armies, the deployment of the armies, the number of deaths[127] - 4485 in the allied camp - , whereas Voltaire is content to give an approximate figure, 'près de cinq mille morts' (P 833), and telescopes the narrative. On the other hand, he notes and exploits anecdotal details elsewhere, such as the quarrel of Baron de Vatteville, the Spanish ambassador, with the comte d'Estrade in London (P 689).[128] In this connexion, Limiers has, almost certainly, himself copied Choisy extensively, and there are indications that Voltaire used both Choisy and Limiers here. It was Choisy who provided the name Vatteville,[129] which Limiers transcribed as Batteville.[130] There are textual echoes of Choisy's <u>récit</u> in Limiers's text; Choisy wrote: "Les Espagnols, fiers de leur escorte, voulurent précéder les Français dans leur marche, tuèrent d'abord les chevaux du comte d'Estrade et plusieurs de ses domestiques, et, triomphants, l'épée nue à la main, accompagnèrent seuls l'ambassadeur de Suède."[131] Limiers follows Choisy closely: "Cependant les Espagnols, comme en triomphe, accompagnèrent seuls l'ambassadeur de Suède l'épée nue à la main,"[132] and Voltaire even more closely still: "Bientôt les gens du comte d'Estrade, blessés et dispersés, laissèrent les Espagnols marcher l'épée nue, comme en triomphe" (P 689). However, for a lot of details concerning the repercussions of the quarrel, the compensations

demanded by Louis XIV (P 690), missing in Choisy, Voltaire turned to Limiers. We have here a good example of the author of Le Siècle, borrowing from two sources and integrating the material into a unified, lively and highly dramatic tableau which, as will be discussed in chapter IV, bears the trademark of the conteur. Neither Limiers's nor Choisy's narrative displays the same vitality and pungency as Voltaire's rendering. Compare, for example, Voltaire's handling of the backlash of the quarrel and of the Comte de Fuentès's mission; Voltaire's fast moving narrative (P 689) is far more impressive than Limiers's detailed and laborious account.[133] The former judiciously selects the most crucial sentence from Limiers's transposition of the long speech delivered by the Spanish ambassador, and incorporates it successfully into the narrative: "Il /Philippe IV/ envoya le comte de Fuentès déclarer au roi, à Fontainebleau, en présence de tous les ministres étrangers qui étaient en France (24 mars 1662), 'que les ministres espagnols ne concourraient plus dorénavant avec ceux de France.'" (P 690)

Similarly Voltaire's récit of the incident in Rome between the domestics of the Duc de Créqui and the Corsican guards of the Pope (P 690) might owe a lot to Limiers,[134] as far as the essential facts are concerned; e.g. the general hostility towards the French in Rome,[135] and the main details of the quarrel itself, described by Limiers thus: "Deux ou trois François de la suite de l'Ambassadeur prirent querelle dans les rues avec une Brigade de Corses... Ils mirent hardiment l'épée à la main..."[136] Voltaire simplifies and telescopes the original: "Quelques laquais du duc de Créqui s'avisèrent de charger l'épée à la main une escouade

de Corses..." (P 690), but the textual echoes are clear for all to see. Limiers recounts in full how the Corsicans marched towards the palace of the Duc de Créqui and attacked the Duchess on her way back from Church:

> La Duchesse de Créqui, qui pour lors étoit occupée à visiter les Eglises, n'en fut pas quitte à meilleur marché. Elle fut rencontrée par quelques-uns de ces Corses qui s'étoient séparez des autres pour battre l'estrade et attaquée avec la dernière fureur et la dernière insolence. Plusieurs coups de Mousquet furent tirez dans son carosse, un de ses pages qui tenoit la main sur la portière fut tué à ses yeux et tout le reste de ses gens fut extrêmement maltraité.[137]

Voltaire cuts out the intervening stages between important events, moving swiftly from crisis to crisis, and leaves a lot to the reader's imagination. Through the terseness of his style, the scene has far more impact, whilst through the selection of picturesque details - e.g. visual ones, 'l'épée à la main', and imaginative ones: "Il /le Pape/ fit pendre un Corse et un sbire au bout de quatre mois" (P 691) - , he transforms Limiers's flat narrative into a lively little conte which will be studied in greater detail in the next chapter.

On the one hand, Limiers contributed a certain amount of purely historical information; Voltaire's account of the conquest of Flanders, for instance, is inspired by that of his precursor,[138] and details about Charleroi, Ath and Tournai, in particular, come from Limiers's narrative of events.[139] Several textual echoes bear this out; e.g. Limiers had written: 'On dit qu'il /Louis XIV/ descendit dans la tranchée où il demeura quelque

temps,"[140] and Voltaire makes no attempt to alter the original significantly: "Il /Louis XIV/ descendit dans la tranchée devant Douai, qui se rendit le lendemain (6 juillet 1667)" (P 698). On the other hand, Voltaire's quest for less-known details about what went on behind the scenes or what might shed light on the spirit of the age, is a never-ending one. He finds in Limiers's work observations on the "lenteur" of don Louis de Haro[141] and the "art de dissimuler"[142] of Mazarin which protracted the negotiations on the isle of pheasants (1659) (P 681). His propagandist intentions likewise often dictate the choice of petits faits; the remonstrances of the papal nuncio, Ramuzzi, thus enable him to show the Pope's lack of authority. Limiers gives a slightly lengthier version of Louis's answer to the nuncio: "Mais le Roi, bien loin d'y faire attention, répondit avec fièreté qu'il 'ne s'étoit jamais réglé sur l'exemple d'autrui et que Dieu l'avoit établi pour servir d'exemple aux autres.'"[143] In transcribing these anecdotal details, Voltaire amends Louis's declaration, either out of carelessness, or because he is quoting from memory: "Louis, très mécontent du pape, répondit 'qu'il ne s'était jamais réglé sur l'exemple d'autrui, et que c'était à lui de servir d'exemple'" (P 757). Limiers, it would appear, proved to be a relatively rich source of anecdotes; the statue of Louis XIV erected by La Feuillade at the Place des Victoires,[144] Louis's permission to individual house owners in Paris to keep their properties,[145] are cases in point.

But in many ways, Voltaire's omissions are just as indicative of his historical method. A few examples of anecdotes which he

came across in Limiers and rejected, will show that he at least tried to abide by his criteria of utility and verisimilitude. Such trivia as the young Louis XIV carrying a stick in a mock-procession while singing litanies,[146] are ignored, although this particular detail must have appealed to Voltaire's irreverent spirit, because they add little to our understanding of the king's character, or perhaps, what is more to the point, because they could only detract from the eulogistic portrayal of Louis XIV in Le Siècle. Other details are excluded because they are burdensome and insignificant; there are countless descriptions of ceremonies, costumes and procedures on grand occasions, such as the crowning of Louis XIV,[147] the Dauphin's baptism[148] or the wedding of the Queen of Spain.[149] Speeches, which are given in full by Limiers, are, as a matter of course, left out,[150] as are portraits.[151] In all these respects, Voltaire's practice concurs with his general principles. Above all, he purposely either extracts from documents vital clauses, or gives the essence of treaties, where Limiers, in a truly erudite manner, takes great pains to quote the whole document; e.g. the treaties of the Pyrenees,[152] of Nimwegen,[153] of Ryswick.[154] Nor does Voltaire see any point in including letters of generals, ministers and even of Louis XIV, transcribed in full in the source.[155] In keeping with his pronouncements, whilst obviously recognising the value of documents as raw materials, Voltaire worked on the assumption that their inclusion would only slow down the narrative and bore his readers. Literary considerations, far more than historical ones, demanded that quotations from documents, which historians would nowadays probably regard as proof of their

scholarship and competence, be kept to a minimum.

Reboulet

Amongst other general histories published before Le Siècle, the Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du XVIIIe siècle of Lamberti, Paris, Mortier, 1735, do not seem to have been drawn upon by Voltaire, largely because they contain long extracts of treaties and documents often quoted in Latin. On the contrary, Simon Reboulet's L'Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, published in 1742-44, 3 vols. in-4, or 9 vols. in-12, provided some basic information both for the first twenty-four chapters, and the discussion of religious disputes.[156] The edition in Voltaire's library bears the date 1746,[157] and shows evidence of careful reading, for in it are to be found some significant notes muettes. It is, therefore, fair to say that although Voltaire saw this work after the first eighteen chapters of the 1751 edition had been drafted in their initial form, he modified the existing manuscript and added to his text inthe light of new information which he may have deemed useful in this source.

Reboulet had himself made extensive use of the works of Larrey and Limiers, which are frequently referred to in the margin, as well as those of Choisy, La Fare and others which Voltaire had read for himself. Where the author of Le Siècle alludes to Reboulet's history, it is, more often than not, to refute it; e.g. in a note appended in 1756, he objects to Reboulet's claim that "la duchesse de Bouillon fut décrétée de prise de corps, et qu'elle parut devant les juges avec tant d'amis qu'elle n'avait rien à craindre quand même elle eût été coupable,"

and Voltaire adds: "Tout cela est très faux; il n'y eut point de décret de prise de corps contre elle..." (P 924). Here Voltaire unjustly maligns his precursor, since there is no trace of the alleged pronouncement in Reboulet's work. Elsewhere, when Voltaire refers to the pyramid erected by Leopold after Blenheim (P 834, note), he at least gets his facts right,[158] but fails to give a precise reference, and significantly, he chooses to take Villars's word for the fact that the pyramid never existed. An eye witness report is preferred to a written source.

But Reboulet has not served simply as a target for Voltaire's attacks; if the main corpus of facts came from Larrey and Limiers, others were discovered in this source, as the sinets in Voltaire's copy would seem to indicate, although some markers relate to events which Voltaire could equally well have found in Larrey and Limiers.[159] The author of Le Siècle is, however, clearly indebted to Reboulet for Mazarin's offensive treatment of the Prince de Condé; Reboulet had remarked: "Il /Mazarin/ vouloit bien par une grâce spéciale lui donner la main chez lui; mais il prétendoit que le Prince lui cédât partout ailleurs, s'appuyant sur l'exemple du Cardinal de Richelieu, qui, même dans son propre palais, ne donnoit pas la main aux Princes de sang."[160] Voltaire, who was always interested in anecdotes which gave an insight into the character of prominent men, makes no bones about utilising these details in Le Siècle: "Il /Mazarin/ ne donna plus la main aux princes de sang, en lieu tiers, comme autrefois. Celui qui avait traité don Louis de Haro en égal voulut traiter le grand Condé en inférieur " (P 684). The facts are borrowed from Reboulet, but the tone of contempt is Voltaire's and betrays

his parti-pris against Mazarin, a representative of the Church.

At times, a borrowed anecdote might have little value, apart from its picturesqueness; e.g. the conduct of Bois-Jourdain at the siege of Trèves which is described by Reboulet in the following manner: "Boisjourdan, suivi de quelques autres, sortit de la Place par la brèche et alla capituler avec le Duc de Holstein et les autres chefs des confédérés," an incident which is underlined by a signet in Voltaire's copy.[161] The latter gives a more succinct version of this episode: "Le capitaine Bois-Jourdain, à la tête des séditieux, va capituler sur la brèche" (P 736), altering the name in keeping with another source, notably Hénault's Abrégé, which he quotes in a footnote. He opts here for what he considers to be the more reliable source of information, and selects in Reboulet the most dramatic and striking details: "Il menace le maréchal de le tuer s'il ne signe..." (P 736), displaying his usual talent for putting his epigrammatic style to good effect and for giving more pungency to the narrative. Compared to Voltaire's rendering, Reboulet's narrative appears more than a little long-winded: "Boisjourdan mit l'épée à la main contre lui et lui reprocha sa dureté, le menaçant de le tuer s'il persistoit à rejetter des conditions qui en rendant la liberté à tant de braves gens, les conservoient à la France."[162] The fact that Voltaire is prepared to follow his source closely in some details, does not prevent him from rejecting others as being untrue; siding with Hénault, he refutes Reboulet's claim that Créqui signed (P 736, note). Thus when two sources contradict each other, Voltaire does not remain in doubt; he tends to put his faith in the source which he deems to

be the more dependable of the two.

Reboulet has accordingly served to consolidate the material which Voltaire already had at his disposal, whether it be in terms of historical facts - he appears to have utilised other details mentioned by Reboulet, such as Turenne's indiscretion in revealing the state secrets to Madame de Coëtquen,[163] Corneille de Witt reciting Horace's Ode,[164] and Louis XIV's purchase of Casal[165] for example - , or of anecdotes concerning the main actors of the drama - two sinets in his copy relate to Condé; the first to his retirement and to his discussions with a number of savants[166] (P 737), and the second to Condé being found guilty of the crime of lèse-majesté by the parlement[167] (P 666). The transposition and adaptation of the material borrowed from this source point to a quest for potentially dramatic incidents, picturesque details, a genuine effort on Voltaire's part to distinguish truth from falsehood, a desire for economy, the rejection of what Voltaire rather subjectively regarded as implausible, and a lack of specific references to the source.

Hénault's Abrégé

The Nouvel abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France of Président Hénault,[168] of which eight editions were published during the author's lifetime, constitutes an interesting case because of Voltaire's ambiguous and changing attitude towards this source. He had read the work immediately after its publication in 1744, and subsequently consulted it several times. In a letter to Hénault of June 1, 1744, Voltaire declared that he was in the process of reading the Abrégé which he found captivating.[169]

Having seemingly left his original copy in France, Voltaire felt the need to consult the source again in 1751 when he was putting the finishing touches to Le Siècle, and asked for a loan of it from Baron von Marschal.[170] To the Marquise du Deffant, he imparted on July 20, 1751, that he was actively perusing this vital source: "Il m'a bien servi pour le Siècle de Louis XIV. Il y a un ou deux endroits où je lui demande la permission de n'être pas de son avis, mais c'est avec tout le respect qu'il mérite."[171] Yet, as will be seen, Voltaire did not always express his criticisms so politely in his own marginal notes where he gave free expression to his private thoughts on the work in question. The Abrégé was extremely well received by the French reading public, as Lion points out: "Peu de livres, même parmi les frivoles, ont joui d'un succès plus vif et plus soutenu, ont obtenu une plus brillante fortune, et plus longue aussi."[172] Contemporaries lavished praise on the quality of presentation[173] and echoed Desfontaines's remark that the book was written "avec autant de précision et d'élégance," and displayed "plus de savoir et de recherches que dans beaucoup de gros livres..."[174]

That Voltaire felt genuine admiration for some aspects of the Abrégé, there is little doubt. In his discours à l'Académie on April 20, 1746, he proclaimed:

> Ces dernières années n'ont-elles pas produit le seul livre de chronologie dans lequel on ait jamais peint les mœurs des hommes, le caractère des cours et des siècles? Ouvrage qui, s'il était sèchement instructif, comme tant d'autres, serait le meilleur de tous, et dans lequel l'auteur a encore trouvé le moyen de plaire...[175]

But Hénault was an important ally whom Voltaire had no wish to offend, and whose advice he eagerly sought, as we saw in chapter II. It was only in his marginalia on the text that he gave vent to his real reservations about the work. Since he read the Abrégé for the first time in 1744, there is no question of his being indebted to Hénault for the plan and the general framework of Le Siècle. It is, of course, possible that he discussed this with the Président, but he relied mostly on Larrey for the main corpus of facts. Two editions of the Abrégé figure in his private library, one of 1756 which bears few notes muettes,[176] the other of 1768 which contains a large number of notes marginales and markers.[177] It is obvious that, with the exception of addenda in the 1768 edition of Le Siècle, this last copy is not particularly significant where Voltaire's borrowings are concerned. However, the markers do tend to confirm these, and above all, the marginalia shed considerable light on Voltaire's real opinions of the Abrégé, at least in 1768. Hostile remarks abound in the marginalia, such as "pauvre homme;"[178] "vous ne savez pas ce que vous dites;"[179] "historien téméraire."[180] Voltaire criticises Hénault's style at one point: "Mal expliqué, mal exprimé,"[181] and proceeds to refute Hénault on several occasions; where the Président mentions the children whom William had of his mistress, Voltaire exclaims: "Jamais il n'eut de maîtresse."[182] Voltaire's hypocrisy in his dealings with Hénault becomes even more apparent when we compare the notes marginales to his letters addressed to the Président between 1756-1764,[183] in which he never ceases to flatter the latter; he was to criticise virulently the article 'Servet' in the Abrégé, but at the same time continued to

profess his esteem for Hénault.[184] But one explanation for Voltaire's greater venom in the marginalia of 1768 and his hostility, could be that around that time, Hénault had become increasingly more religious.[185]

Voltaire's paradoxical attitude towards Hénault is shown by the fact that he is disinclined to criticise the Président publicly and in Le Siècle. An anecdote which he rejects in the last work and in the marginalia, will illustrate this point. Beside the relevant paragraph devoted to Montecuculli's decision to retire from the army after Turenne's death,[186] Voltaire wrote in the margin: "Il ne dit jamais cette sottise." Yet when he added a paragraph in the 1768 edition of Le Siècle, after reading over the Abrégé, the criticism became far more muted and the name of Hénault was left out: "C'est un conte bien répandu et bien méprisable que Montecuculli renonça au commandement des armées après la mort de Turenne, parce qu'il n'avait, disait-il, plus d'émule digne de lui. Il aurait dit une sottise, quand même il ne fût pas resté un Condé. Loin de dire cette sottise dont on lui fait honneur, il combattit contre les Français, et leur fit repasser le Rhin cette année" (P 738). The marginalia have ostensibly served as a first draft for the remark here, as the word sottise indicates, but the apparent contradiction between the contemptuous tone of the note marginale and Voltaire's desire not to involve Hénault directly, underlines his reluctance to offend the Président, or rather his attempt to keep in with this prominent man. Furthermore, he repeatedly displays considerable restraint in his treatment of

Hénault in Le Siècle; in connexion with Louis's alleged answer to Lord Stair, Voltaire remarked in the margin of his copy: "Cela est très faux, l'auteur me l'a avoué,"[187] but toned down his criticism in Le Siècle (P 883).

Despite the virulence of some marginalia, Voltaire made extensive use of the Abrégé for Le Siècle. As is the case with other sources, the historian went to great lengths to set what he thought to be reliable apart from dubious material. He was the first to acknowledge that the idea of a catalogue was originally inspired by Hénault who also encouraged him to append other lists. Often Voltaire does little more than copy Hénault's text, as regards the list of members of the royal family; e.g. "Louis XIV n'eut qu'une femme, Marie Thérèse..." (P 1111) comes directly from the Abrégé,[188] as does the list of Louis XIV's offspring to which Voltaire merely adds a few details.[189] Hénault had also drawn up a list of 'souverains et pontifes', giving the dates of their deaths.[190] Voltaire complements this initial list with a brief account of their reigns based on his own extensive readings and vast knowledge of history, although in some cases, he blatantly copies Hénault's text.[191] In general, Voltaire gives the complete name, unlike Hénault; he adds to the biographical details, and introduces extraneous material; e.g. for the Ottoman emperors, under 'Bajazet', he quotes Racine's play of that name (P 1115). He copies Hénault's chronological list of German emperors,[192] but he is in a better position to summarise the careers of Frederick II and Casimir (P 1117), through first-hand experience. Voltaire seems content to follow Hénault's table of marshals, magistrates and ministers in the main, whilst

giving supplementary details and adding a list of admirals (P 1125) and of 'généraux des galères' (P 1126). In the case of the Catalogue de la plupart des écrivains français, Hénault also served as a starting-point, but Voltaire has considerably expanded the original list by summing up the artists' achievements, either with the help of Niceron's Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres, which will be discussed in Appendix B, or by drawing upon his own reading of literature. Consequently, if Hénault provided the original plan for the Catalogue, together with a sound basis for Voltaire to work on, the author of Le Siècle went far beyond his precursor's limited and sketchy lists. His debt to Hénault, nevertheless, is undeniable, as he himself graciously admits in his Correspondence on several occasions.[193]

Together with this first draft of the Catalogue, Voltaire gleaned from the Abrégé both factual information and anecdotes. Mazarin's letter written during the negotiations at Munster and quoted by Voltaire - "Si le Roi Très-Chrétien pouvait avoir les Pays-Bas et la Franche-Comté en dot, en épousant l'infante, alors nous pourrons aspirer à la succession d'Espagne..." (P 682) - , is borrowed from Hénault.[194] Some facts about the conspiracy of the Chevalier de Rohan (P 980),[195] and an interesting detail concerning the invention of hand-signals at sea by James II (P 725),[196] also came Voltaire's way via this source. Hénault had recounted, too, how after the siege of Vienna had been raised, a preacher took as his text: "Fuit homo missus a deo, cui nomen erat Joannes." In his copy of the 1768 edition, Voltaire

noted in the margin: "Cela est copié d'après la victoire de dom juan d'autr/u/che."[197] It is significant that in Le Siècle we find a similar comment: "Le prédicateur avait pris pour son texte: 'Il fut un homme envoyé de Dieu nommé Jean.' Vous avez déjà vu /i.e. in L'Essai/ que le pape Pie V avait appliqué ces paroles à don Juan d'Autriche après la victoire de Lépante" (P 753-754). The original information came from Hénault but was supplemented by Voltaire's own research for L'Essai. It therefore emerges that the Abrégé, which was an important historical tract in its own right,[198] was a vital source for Voltaire, not just as far as the Catalogue was concerned. His attitude to Hénault, if somewhat hypocritical, proves that he did not always allow his personal acquaintance with an author to cloud his judgement as a historian, and is ultimately an indication of his impartiality and of the seriousness with which he viewed his task.

(II) Histoires particulières

Pellisson

In Pellisson, Voltaire found an eyewitness who had accompanied Louis XIV during his military campaigns as royal historiographer, and had written a history of the king's achievements. In spite of the excessive praise lavished by the historian on his patron, which Voltaire took objection to,[199] the author of Le Siècle did not fail to appreciate the value of his predecessor's account, based as it was on first-hand experience. It is highly likely that he consulted the Lettres Historiques before 1735. The first edition of 1729 in 3 volumes is to be found

in his private library[200] and offers an impressive number of notes muettes. Most of the markers are cuttings of a letter addressed to Voltaire and bearing the signature 'Servin à /Waffsee/ le 17 aoust 173/5/[201]. Written as a diary of the king's campaigns in the 1670's, these Lettres proved particularly useful to Voltaire for the account of the conquest of Flanders and the war in Holland. He owes to Pellisson the notion of the splendour of the expedition and of Louis XIV's liberality,[202] statistics on the king's forces,[203] as well as details of specific battles; e.g. Rhinberg, Orsoy, Vesel, Buryck.[204] Above all, Voltaire turned to Pellisson to discover the truth about the crossing of the Rhine, on which there were many contradictory reports. One could even go as far as to say that this is a case of a source being consulted for a specific incident and that other benefits accrued subsequently. The author of Le Siècle must have been particularly impressed by such striking and potentially dramatic details as the drowning of the Comte de Nogent and other horsemen,[205] and the adventures of the Duc de Longueville.[206] How Voltaire fully exploited and integrated these details into a dramatic tableau which illustrates all the facets of his historical manner, will be studied in the next chapter. However, one cannot help but be surprised by a certain nonchalance on Voltaire's part, in connexion with the width of the Rhine at the point where the crossing took place. According to the first edition, "il n'y avait que quarante à cinquante pas à nager." We saw that Hénault had drawn Voltaire's attention to this inaccuracy. Having checked the facts in Pellisson who

judged the distance to be "douze à quinze pas,"[207] as Voltaire himself readily acknowledged,[208] he altered the text in 1753 to: "Il n'y avait qu'environ vingt pas à nager..." (P 716). With all the information available, Voltaire is guilty of gross negligence. At the same time, he shows real appreciation of the importance of eyewitnesses; not only does he quote Pellisson, a 'témoin oculaire', but adds in 1753 that the distance was confirmed by "les habitants" (P 716), whom he interviewed personally. The written source is complemented by oral documentation which adds an air of irrefutability to the material.

In the Lettres Historiques, moreover, Voltaire came across other interesting material; the anecdote of Mazel's letter to Louis XIV is told by Pellisson in the following manner: "La lettre de Mazel qu'on a envoyée en original au roi finissait plaisamment par ces mots: 'Si vous voulez m'envoyer cinquante chevaux de plus, je pourrai encore prendre deux ou trois places."[209] Voltaire sees here a chance to add some colour to his enumeration of Louis's conquests, but copies his source incorrectly, omitting a detail, albeit an insignificant one: "Un officier, nommé Mazel, mandait à M. de Turenne: 'Si vous voulez m'envoyer cinquante chevaux, je pourrai prendre avec cela deux ou trois places'" (P 717). The letter, according to Pellisson, was sent to Louis XIV, not to Turenne, and Voltaire treats the extract less as a document than as bons mots to enliven an otherwise dull survey of events. The notes muettes confirm this interest in what is out of the ordinary; Voltaire borrows from Pellisson the anecdote of Dupas's condemnation to life imprisonment.[210] But

his handling of the petit fait is rather perverse and displays the full extent of his polemical tactics against an opponent. Having clearly read in the source that Dupas was imprisoned for life, Voltaire sets out in Le Siècle to attack La Beaumelle for making this very claim: "La Beaumelle dit qu'il fut condamné à une prison perpétuelle. Comment cela pourrait-il être, puisque l'année suivante il fut tué au siège de Grave?" (P 72 7). Either he had forgotten that Pellisson stated that Dupas obtained permission to serve under Chamillì at the siege of Grave "quoiqu'il fût tenu prisonnier suivant sa condamnation,"[211] or what is more probable is that he was being downright dishonest in his eagerness to cross swords with La Beaumelle and to prove his enemy's unreliability as a critic.

The three volumes of Voltaire's copy of the Lettres Historiques also bear remnants of wax at the front and back, and one is led to conclude that such important borrowings as the material relevant to the crossing of the Rhine which is not marked by sinets, had been noted on loose sheets attached to the volumes. In any event, there is no doubt that this source was consulted carefully and systematically by Voltaire, mainly to clarify a particularly controversial incident, but also to add to the historical information he already had at his disposal. Selecting what suits his purpose at all times, and omitting what does not, he moulds the information into a captivating and terse narrative of events.

Pellisson-Fontanier's other work, Histoire de Louis XIV depuis la mort du Cardinal Mazarin en 1661 jusqu'à la paix de Nimègue en 1678, Paris, Rollin, 1749,[212] was the work which,

according to d'Argenson's Mémoires, rekindled Voltaire's interest in Le Siècle.[213] Yet the latter does not appear to have made great use of this source; he might well have drawn from it details about Louis's decisions to give back to the nation three millions in tailles,[214] and geographical details about Flanders.[215] Once again, Voltaire pays particular attention to extraordinary anecdotal details; e.g. the conditions laid down for the surrender of Besançon by the inhabitants, namely that they should keep the Saint-Suaire,[216] or Leopold carrying a crucifix at Egra in 1673 which works into the hands of the propagandist intent on denouncing religious hypocrisy.[217] Voltaire gladly seizes this opportunity to insert a particularly pointed remark which smacks of his anticlericalism: "Cette action eût été à sa place du temps des croisades, et la prière de Léopold n'empêcha point le progrès des armes du roi de France" (P 725) - a comment which, as we saw, brought him a rebuke from La Beaumelle,[218] and rightly so. An examination of this work reveals that Voltaire often extracted from a source a small number of facts and anecdotes, that the benefits he derived from his vast reading were, as with many historians, frequently negligible compared to the amount of energy expended. For all that, he would still have considered his efforts duly rewarded by the discovery of a few salacious and unusual anecdotes. He had, of course, in 1750 when he read this source, a compendium of the main historical facts in his possession, and was concerned with seeking added ingredients which would make his history more palatable for his public.

Ramsey

To add to his already vast bank of material, Voltaire turned to biographies of great generals like Turenne or to their memoirs, such as those of Villars, as well as to the writings and letters of plenipotentiaries. Having arrived at some sort of general framework, he aimed, in this way, to define the main actors in the drama, by seeking out specific details which would give them more substance - even if, in the end, his characters do still lack psychological depth as a result of the anecdotal rather than the analytical approach he chooses to adopt. Any information acquired in this way, Voltaire saw as likely to increase the veracity of his history, while making his récit more enthralling for a public brought up on the adventures and prowess of glorious heroes like Condé, Turenne and others. To this end, the Histoire de Henri de La Tour, vicomte de Turenne by Andrew Michael Ramsey, published anonymously in France as early as 1735 and almost simultaneously in London in English, proved an important asset. The French edition came to Voltaire's attention soon after its publication, and his first impressions were hardly favourable. To Thiériot, he commented on June 12, 1735: "J'ai lu le Turenne; le bonhomme a copié des phrases entières du cardinal de Retz, des phrases de Fénelon; je le lui pardonne, il est coupable du fait; mais il n'a point rendu son héros intéressant."[219] These scathing remarks should not, however, lead us to believe that Voltaire was reluctant to make use of the source; as with Larrey's, Limiers's, Reboulet's, La Fare's, Choisy's works, he was prepared to tread carefully and

borrow judiciously, extracting what he thought was useful and authentic from Ramsey's publication.[220]

From it Voltaire obtained information on important historical events, notably the battles of Rocroi[221] and Fribourg[222] amongst others. And if he accuses Ramsey of plagiarism, he is not, himself, entirely innocent of the same charge; e.g. Turenne's biographer had written in connexion with Fribourg: "/Il/ observa que sa premiere ligne ralentissait sans reculer ni avancer: alors il descend de cheval, se met à la tête du régiment de Conti, et marche aux ennemis l'épée à la main."[223] There is more than an echo of the original in Voltaire's text: "On dit que le duc d'Enghien jeta son bâton de commandement dans les retranchements des ennemis, et marcha pour le reprendre, l'épée à la main, à la tête du régiment de Conti" (P 639). Passing over a mass of details about various battles, Voltaire, as is his habit, only selects what is most likely to satisfy the curiosity of his readers; e.g. the elector of Bavaria being forced to leave his capital city at the age of eighty.[224] But his main purpose is to learn new facts about Turenne's career; Louvois's jealousy which prompted him to send Condé to Franche-Comté in place of Turenne,[225] no doubt appealed to Voltaire because of his own prejudices against the minister, but constitutes a <u>détail inédit</u> which he readily inserts into his work. Nor does he hesitate to take such tendentious details at their face value, for they concur with his own <u>parti-pris</u>; his hostility towards Mazarin is visible in the choice of an anecdote illustrating the Cardinal's ambition as recounted by Ramsey. Explaining how Mazarin planned to take all the credit for the victory at the Dunes (1658),

Ramsey adds: "Moret avoit ordre d'engager ce Général [Turenne] à écrire une lettre, par laquelle il témoigneroit que le Cardinal avoit conçu le dessein du siège et dressé le plan de la bataille."[226] Voltaire was by no means certain of the authenticity of the anecdote and went out of his way to guard himself against any ensuing criticism: "Plusieurs personnes ont assuré que le cardinal, qui s'était attribué l'événement d'Arras, voulut engager Turenne à lui céder encore l'honneur de la bataille des Dunes " (P 674). But the fact is that he did decide to include such unfounded rumours, merely because of his own preconceptions, and the unreliability of his source did not deter him from launching into a strongly worded attack on Mazarin: "Turenne reçut avec mépris ces insinuations, et ne voulut point donner un aveu qui eût produit la honte d'un général d'armée et le ridicule d'un homme d'Eglise" (P 675). The last phrase provides an important clue as to Voltaire's real purpose in selecting the incident.

Voltaire's controversial stance on Turenne's conversion has already been discussed in chapter II. Despite Hénault's indignation, he remained convinced of the general's hypocrisy. In so doing, he was not just going against the consensus of opinion, but also against all the evidence. Thus he ignored Ramsey's assurance that the conversion was sincere:[227] "Aucun protestant, et même aucun philosophe, ne pensa que la persuasion seule eût fait ce changement dans un homme de guerre, dans un politique âgé de cinquante années, qui avait encore des maîtresses," writes Voltaire (P 735). The propagandist uses

false logic, for the fact that Turenne might have had mistresses proves very little. Flying in the face of written evidence, he deliberately omits material relevant to this question, not just in Ramsey, but also in Hénault's Abrégé, where in his copy alongside the sentence: "Il commençait depuis longtemps à voir la vérité,"[228] Voltaire wrote: "Lespérance d'être connétable." As early as 1735, he had formed his opinion and had predecided the issue,[229] and nothing in the sources could convince him of the contrary. We can see here a flagrant example of personal bias, where historical preoccupations were clearly superseded by polemical ones, resulting in the total exclusion of the opposite point of view.

Mémoires de Villars

Voltaire's use of such sources as the Mémoires de Villars is in keeping with an important principle of his already mentioned, that first-hand experience in history, especially in the form of the testimonies of main actors in the drama, is preferable to secondary sources of information. Biographies of men like Turenne might have their usefulness, but nothing can adequately replace the writings of the generals themselves. The memoirs in question were only partly written by Villars himself and published at The Hague in 1734-36.[230] Voltaire was fully aware of the fact that only the first volume had been drafted by the general - i.e. the récit up to 1700 - , and that for the second one, the editor probably sought the help of l'abbé Maigon who relied on gazettes and vague recollections to write the general's biography from 1701 to 1736. In a note to Le Siècle, Voltaire asserted: "Le premier

tome de ces Mémoires est absolument de lui, les deux autres sont d'une main étrangère et un peu différente" (P 826). Voltaire's copy in his private library is the first edition of 1734-1736,[231] but all the indications are that he only used the first volume which contains several lines in pencil. It is, of course, impossible to establish that they were drawn by Voltaire himself, but there is a degree of correlation between the passages marked and borrowings for Le Siècle, as will be shown. One can conclude that the historian actively discriminated against what was reported by l'abbé Maigon on the basis of hearsay evidence. The first volume had been dispatched to Voltaire by Villars himself in 1735, a year before his death: "Je crois que m. le duc de Villars a eu la bonté de me l'envoyer dans un paquet qu'il a fait adresser vis-à-vis Saint-Gervais, mais que je n'ai point reçu," Voltaire wrote to Formont on January 26, 1735.[232] And he went on: "Je connaissais les Mémoires du maréchal de Villars. Il m'en avait lu quelquechose depuis plusieurs années." Thus, in addition to Voltaire's private interviews with the general from whom he learnt numerous anecdotes, the historian also knew of the existence of the manuscript memoirs and had been told of their contents long before 1735. The fact that Voltaire paid little attention to the second volume is borne out by the text of Le Siècle itself, where there is no sign of borrowings from it. For the last part of Villars's career, Voltaire, significantly enough, preferred to rely on his own recollections of the conversations he had with the eminent general, rather than depend on his biographer. Oral documentation is given a vote of confidence to the detriment of a written source which Voltaire

judged to be unreliable.

When he came to deal with Villars's campaigns, Voltaire found the first volume of the Mémoires particularly useful.[233] The pencil marks in his copy of this source indicate that he was on the look-out for biographical details; he uses Villars's information about his eagerness and determination at the start of his career which won him Louis XIV's displeasure,[234] and the general's claim that Louvois's hatred and jealousy caused his initial lack of promotion.[235] Here too, Voltaire displays a certain naïveness and does not show himself to be on his guard against Villars's own partiality, despite his own warnings that this is a major source of danger for historians where contemporaries' accounts are concerned. On the whole, Voltaire seems to have trusted his memory far more than the written source; he reports innocently many anecdotes he heard from Villars in person (e.g. see P 881), irrespective of whether the general had any reasons of his own to embellish the anecdotes or distort the truth. Furthermore, what is even less easy to condone is that Voltaire does not take the trouble to check the written source. In Le Siècle, he writes: "J'ai ouï conter au maréchal de Villars qu'un des premiers discours qu'il tint au prince Eugène fut celui-ci: 'Monsieur, nous ne sommes point ennemis; vos ennemis sont à Vienne, et les miens à Versailles'"(P 881). Yet the written source recounts the anecdote differently; this speech, as Villars himself states, was addressed not to Eugène, but to the courtiers who questioned him about his friendship with the prince: "Mais voulez-vous que je vous dise où sont les véritables ennemis du prince Eugène? C'est à Vienne et les miens sont à Versailles."[236]

Nor does Voltaire even attempt to ascertain whether the information he gives concerning the battle of Hochstedt was in fact in the second volume of the memoirs; he nonchalantly refers the reader to the work in a note: "Tout ceci doit se trouver dans les Mémoires du maréchal de Villars manuscrits; j'y ai lu ces détails" (P 826). But the circumstances he describes are nowhere to be found, nor the speech supposedly delivered by Villars to the Prince de Bade (P 826). These details had probably been passed on to Voltaire by Villars himself, and the historian incorrectly assumed that they would also be present in the written source; hence the vague and inaccurate reference which, paradoxically, is one of the relatively few occasions when Voltaire attempts to authenticate the material he uses. This cavalier attitude in a serious historian constitutes a major weakness, as does his less than scholarly approach to the use of references.

III. Plenipotentiaries' writings

The value of the writings of plenipotentiaries for Voltaire resided in the fact that they had personally witnessed the events which they set out to describe. The memoirs of Sir William Temple, published in London in 1692 in English, and at The Hague the same year in French,[237] were consulted probably before 1735. The relevance of this source is confirmed by the Notebooks where Voltaire transcribed a few remarks borrowed from Temple,[238] while his own copy of the work shows some evidence of use.[239] The close bond of friendship between Jean de Witt and Temple himself (P 703) and part of the account of negotiations at Nimwegen (P 745)[240] may well have been suggested by Temple's memoirs,

although the latter goes into a lot of details, whereas Voltaire deals with the material in his usual concise manner. Similarly, when he comes across numerous documents in the Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations du Comte Godefroy d'Estrades,[241] he takes no notice of lengthy extracts of negotiations and treaties, but instead, shows particular interest in less known details; e.g. a page cornée draws attention to d'Estrades's letter to Louis XIV of September 8, 1662, which relates to the purchase of Dunkirk. D'Estrades offers the English four millions, but is forced to accede to the demand for five millions,[242] a detail duly transposed by Voltaire in Le Siècle (P 692).

The Négociations de Monsieur le Comte d'Avaux en Hollande,[243] referred to on more than one occasion in the Correspondence,[244] likewise contributed in a vague manner to the discussion of negotiations and treaties. Here too, only striking anecdotal details caught Voltaire's imagination; e.g. in a note (P 1055), he quotes d'Avaux in connexion with the gold allegedly transported out of France by the Huguenots. It appears that Voltaire was in a position to use the letters and private writings of important ambassadors, which he himself declared to be essential primary sources for the historian, but that he deliberately chose not to reproduce such documents. Although he notes by means of a sinet a letter from d'Avaux to Lionne on April 29, 1665, pertaining to the corrupt practices of the Dutch in their dealings with the English,[245] he subsequently failed to turn this to advantage. As in the case of Lamberti, Voltaire generally stuck to his task of describing what he deemed to be characteristic of 'l'esprit

humain' and excluded what would turn his history into a mere compilation of documents. He is content to give a general picture of the causes and results of negotiations without attempting to trace step by step the protracted comings and goings at Nimwegen and Ryswick. Nor does he seek out primary sources such as manuscript letters and memoirs in archives; such work ostensibly held no attraction for him, and he remained, on the whole, satisfied with secondary sources, with the exception of Louis XIV's instructions and memoirs which were drawn to his attention by accident, through the goodwill of Noailles.[246]

Mémoires de Torci

Voltaire's use of the Mémoires de Torci illustrates clearly the importance he attached to the writings of plenipotentiaries, as well as his intention to go on researching after the publication of the 1751 edition and to amend his original text in the light of new information at his disposal. It is not known when Torci composed his memoirs, but they were published for the first and only time in 1756. Voltaire had been privileged to consult Torci's manuscript memoirs long before, and he had had lengthy conversations with Louis XIV's former minister,[247] certainly before 1738, as a letter to Frederick of August 5, 1738 testifies: "M. de Torcy m'a juré qu'il ne savait rien du testament du roy d'Espagne, Charles second, que quand la chose fut faitte, on assembla un conseil extraordinaire à Versailles pour savoir si on accepterait le testament..."[248] - a point made in Le Siècle (P 801). Voltaire was the first to admit his debt to the manuscript memoirs (P 788, note), and as soon as he heard of their

publication in 1756, he asked Cramer to dispatch this vital source: "Je prie instamment Monsieur Cramer de bien vouloir faire venir les Mémoires de La Porte et ceux de Torcy, qui paraissent à Paris dans le moment. On dit que ce sont des morceaux très curieux et qu'il est absolument nécessaire que je les consulte avant que j'achève le Siècle de Louis XIV."[249] In July 1756, Voltaire repeated his request,[250] and in all probability perused the printed memoirs between July and December 1756 for the new edition of Le Siècle published in the Complete Works of 1756. The numerous sinets, papillons and other notes muettes in his copy[251] correspond, to a large extent, to additions to the text or to precise references appended in footnotes in the 1756 edition of Le Siècle. Torci's memoirs constitute an interesting case, for Voltaire found himself in a position to verify in the written source what he had learnt from the former minister in person or what he remembered from the manuscript memoirs. That he was prepared to trust this influential man for events that took place in Spain, will be shown. Voltaire, moreover, took great pains to give precise references to authenticate little-known details which were missing from the works of his predecessors; this in itself amounts to a departure from his usual code of practice. His desire to bring the information up to date is an essential aspect of his method as a historian.

(I) Negotiations for the Spanish succession

The basic facts relating to the Spanish succession were already present in the 1751 edition of Le Siècle, but in a far more concise form. When he set out to draft chapter XVI of the

first edition of Le Siècle, Voltaire relied clearly on some new and vital information gathered from Torci's manuscript memoirs and from private interviews with the former minister. His first task, upon reading the published memoirs, was consequently to verify and consolidate what he already knew. Not surprisingly, a number of notes muettes in his personal copy merely confirm the material included in the 1751 edition. For example, one finds a line in the margin next to a paragraph dealing with the decision taken by Cardinal Portocarrero and other powerful Spaniards to prevent the division of their country by supporting the candidature of the Duc d'Anjou.[252] Similarly, as regards the second treaty of partition of 1700 (P 797), Voltaire uses a sinet in his copy of the source,[253] without making any alterations to the text. Other markers have the same function; Voltaire noted the dangers facing France following Louis's decision to accept Charles II's nomination of the Duc d'Anjou,[254] as well as the death of the Prince of Bavaria who was reputed to have been poisoned.[255] Voltaire had already in 1751 adopted Torci's view that these rumours were unfounded, either because he had consulted the latter personally, or because he was following closely the manuscript memoirs. He looked upon the passage in the published memoirs as proof of what he had already asserted and perhaps intended including a reference in the later editions, which, in the event, he failed to do.

But while reading this source anew, Voltaire must have been conscious of important omissions in his text, and he was determined to make amends. Perhaps he had read the manuscript memoirs in haste, or he had forgotten a number of details when he came to

draft the original account of events at the court of Charles II. The absence of notes in the Notebooks might account for this. It is obvious that he was merely content to give the essential facts in 1751 and aimed at filling in the lacunae in 1756. The addenda in the 1756 edition usually come directly from the published source and are signalled by notes muettes which Voltaire relied upon, either to trace the relevant paragraphs and details which he decided to transpose, or to refer the reader to the precise page in the source. Thus the published memoirs enabled Voltaire to provide additional information concerning the treaty of partition of 1698 which was only briefly alluded to in 51:

> Le roi de France y consentit; il se donnait à lui-même par ce partage la sicile, naples, la province de guipuscoa et beaucoup de villes. L'archiduc devait avoir milan. Tout le reste de la monarchie était abandonné à ce jeune prince de bavière, qui de longtemps ne serait à craindre.[256]

The Prince of Bavaria's share of the spoils becomes far more precisely defined in the 1756 edition, thanks to the printed source:[257] "On donnait au jeune prince de Bavière l'Espagne et les Indes occidentales..." (P 796). The published memoirs provided a wide range of supplementary details and allowed Voltaire to aim at greater accuracy; so it is that Torci had said of Harcourt's departure from the Spanish court and of Blécourt's appointment: "Blécourt, ancien officier d'infanterie, plus capable de commander un bataillon et de le mener à la charge, fut chargé des affaires..."[258] Voltaire followed suit in 1756: "Il ne resta à Madrid qu'un officier d'infanterie, [51 had said only "le secrétaire d'ambassade"] qui avait servi de secrétaire

d'ambassade et qui fut chargé des affaires" (P 800). Above all, feeling that he was in possession of the main facts in 1751, the author of Le Siècle set out to exploit new anecdotal details; in the middle of a paragraph added in 1756, he inserted the anecdote of the Queen of Spain forcing her husband to destroy his will which called the Prince of Bavaria to the throne after Charles II's death[259] (P 795). Yet Voltaire did not hesitate to alter the original in points of detail; Torci had said that the King burnt the will and Voltaire asserted that he tore it up. It is also worth noting that despite this second reading of the source, the historian did not always correct errors which had crept into the 1751 and 1753 editions; thus in the previous example, Torci expressly stated that Harcourt had left the Spanish court at his own request upon Blécourt's arrival, whilst in Le Siècle, Voltaire persisted in claiming that Harcourt had been recalled by Louis XIV and had left before his replacement had been named (P 800). If on the whole, the published memoirs led to a re-appraisal of some facts, and the integration of others that were unknown to Voltaire, he did not always study this source as carefully as one might have expected, and he did not feel obliged to correct what he considered to be unimportant errors in the existing text.

Even after 1756, Voltaire continued to incorporate in Le Siècle information found in Torci's published memoirs. Several addenda date from 1768 and two explanations are possible here; either Voltaire noted the new facts as early as 1756, but decided not to include them at the time, or he simply forgot to do so.

In any case, the 1768 edition of Le Siècle was in turn to benefit from Torci's account, and it is possible that Voltaire read the source again for the purpose of extracting additional material or clarifying certain points. The absurd claims of Peter II of Portugal to the throne of Spain are mentioned for the first time in 1768:

> Ce qu'il y eut de plus étrange, c'est que le roi du Portugal, Pierre II, se mit au rang des prétendants. Cela était absurde: il ne pouvait tirer son droit que d'un Jean 1er, fils naturel de Pierre le Justicier, au XVe siècle; mais cette prétention chimérique était soutenue par le comte d'Oropesa, de la maison de Bragance; il était membre du conseil (P 796).

The facts themselves - Peter's claims, the role of Oropeza - are borrowed from the source: "Le roi du Portugal osa se faire l'honneur de se mettre de ce nombre. On dit alors qu'il y fut excité par le comte d'Oropeza, descendant de la maison de Bragance."[260] But, needless to say, the comment on the absurdity of such claims is Voltaire's own, and he supplements Torci's information by drawing upon his own knowledge of history and his research for L'Essai. Coming as it does after the serious discussion of the pretensions of Louis XIV and others to the throne of Spain, the anecdote helps to make the tone more light-hearted and comes to life through Voltaire's lively mode of presentation and talent as a raconteur: "Il [Oropeza] osa en parler: il fut disgracié et renvoyé " (P 796).

An important criterion which determines the inclusion of anecdotes in 1768, remains their picturesque character. Torci had narrated how Charles II's wife convinced the king of the need

to reject the help offered by Louis XIV on the occasion of the siege of Ceuta:

> Les Maures d'Afrique assiégeaient Ceuta. Le roi d'Espagne manquait non seulement de troupes, mais de vaisseaux pour transporter le peu de secours qu'il pouvait y envoyer: Louis XIV lui fit offrir les troupes et les vaisseaux dont il avait besoin... Le bon roi catholique, touché de la générosité de sa Majesté, voulait accepter une offre applaudie de toute l'Europe... Cette princesse, soutenant de son autorité les instances des deux ministres de l'empereur, obligea le roi son mari à refuser sous de vains prétextes les secours que la France lui proposait libéralement.[261]

Voltaire tells the anecdote in a far more concise manner by selecting the most salient details: "Les Maures assiégeaient Ceuta: aussitôt le marquis d'Harcourt offre des vaisseaux et des troupes à Charles, qui en fut sensiblement touché; mais la reine sa femme en fut effrayée, elle craignit que son mari n'eût trop de reconnaissance et refusa sèchement ce secours " (P 800). A sinet on the same page in Voltaire's copy draws attention to other details previously omitted, such as the arrival of Harcourt in Spain; Torci says that Harcourt "y demeura longtemps sans être admis à l'audience du roi d'Espagne,"[262] whilst in a sentence added in 1768, Voltaire gives a more precise indication of the time that elapsed before the ambassador's first interview with the King, a detail which he obtained from the dates provided by Torci in his text: "Reçu d'abord fort mal à la cour de Madrid, il souffrit tous les dégoûts sans se plaindre: trois mois entiers s'écoulèrent sans qu'il pût avoir audience du roi " (P 799). What is particularly striking in these additions is Voltaire's

remarkable ability to integrate the information fully into his text without ever detracting from the main flow of ideas or slowing down the existing narrative.

A further example of Voltaire's search for new and interesting material in 1768, is the anecdote of the Queen's anger on hearing of the second treaty of partition. Torci reported the incident in his usual factual and sober manner: "La reine, transportée de colère, avait marqué son extrême agitation aux dépens des meubles de son appartement."[263] Voltaire transforms and embellishes the anecdote to add to its piquancy: "La reine, sa femme, fut transportée d'une si vive colère qu'elle brisa les meubles de son appartement et surtout les glaces qui venaient de la France" (P 798). The language has become far more forceful: "d'une si vive colère," and Voltaire adds a detail which he might well have learnt from Torci in person - the breaking of mirrors. But one should not discard the possibility that he invented this particular detail to create greater interest; he was certainly capable of such poetic licence. In 1768, too, one observes that the historian is more conscious of the need to justify the inclusion of such petits faits, for the emphasis is less on their singularité than on their philosophical implications; e.g. the above-mentioned anecdote leads to a general statement about human nature: "tant les passions sont les mêmes dans tous les rangs" (P 798). Voltaire's originality lies in the attempt to underline the universal significance of such incidents.

The additions in 1768 are by no means confined to anecdotal details; they often consist of historical facts previously omitted.

A paragraph in chapter VIII (in Pomeau's edition) pertaining to the treaty of partition of 1688 (P 696), is based on material marked by a sinet and a papillon in Voltaire's copy of the source.[264] The historian takes care here to refer his reader to Torci's memoirs in order to authenticate what was an important historical event which had not been previously fully researched. As it happens, the reference is incorrect - the page given being p.16 instead of p.36 - , probably because Voltaire jotted it down quickly. However, this is a rare occasion when the reference to Torci is inexact, and the value of the notes muettes which acted as important guides to Voltaire cannot be underestimated in this respect.

However, not all the borrowings are signalled by markers in Voltaire's private copy of the source; in most cases, this is because the manuscript memoirs were the primary source of information for such details as Charles II's letter to Innocent XII and the Pope's reply (P 800-1). Voltaire shows his anti-religious[265] bias here by deliberately ignoring the King's motive - his religious zeal - in order to ridicule this consultation. The historian likewise seems to have drawn upon the manuscript memoirs for the rejection of the false rumours circulating at the time, that Harcourt had bribed Spanish officials in order to swing the pendulum in favour of the Duc d'Anjou (P 802). Yet, Voltaire never questions Torci's sincerity in these matters, for one wonders whether the former minister would, in any case, have admitted to having been a party to such dishonest practices. Other facts added after 1756 do not correspond to notes muettes in Voltaire's copy; e.g. Charles II's weakness which the historian

illustrates by means of one humorous detail: "Telle était la profonde ignorance dans laquelle Charles II avait été élevé que, quand les Français assiégèrent Mons, il crut que cette place appartenait au roi de France" (P 802). Voltaire had probably noted such additional details on loose sheets of paper, for the anecdote was present in the source,[266] but whereas Torci was concerned solely with the king's character, the author of Le Siècle enhances the philosophical implications by examining the effect which a king's weakness might have on his nation: "C'est le sort des monarchies que leur prospérité dépende du caractère d'un seul homme" (P 802) - an indication that in 1756 Voltaire, the author of L'Essai, increasingly viewed history as a study of Man, whilst previously he was inclined to be swayed mainly by the entertaining value of such petits faits.

Torci's contribution to the chapter on the Spanish succession was thus considerable. Nowhere else does Voltaire show the same degree of confidence in one source; this is confirmed by the fact that he did not think it important to compare Torci's récit to other accounts. He readily quotes his source and gives a number of precise references, more frequently than he does for any other source. He saw in the fact that Torci had been particularly well placed to observe events at first hand, a complete vindication of his principle concerning the reliability of eyewitnesses' reports.

(II) Other negotiations

Torci's memoirs do not deal exclusively with the Spanish succession; they are divided into four parts, of which only the

first refers to the intrigues in Spain. In the second part, Torci describes in detail the negotiations of Moërdick, Bodegrave, The Hague and Gertruidenberg (1709-1710). There follows a section relating to the negotiations with England (1710-1711), and the final part traces the developments which led to the treaty of Utrecht and the peace of Rastadt (1712-1713). As Torci had been France's main plenipotentiary at these negotiations, his testimony was invaluable, and it would appear that Voltaire relied mostly on his interviews with the former minister or on the manuscript memoirs for important details. Most of the material was, indeed, already present in 51 and Voltaire effected few changes after consulting the published memoirs. Although a number of notes muettes in his copy pertain to these historical events, they merely confirmed, in Voltaire's view, what he had written; e.g. the allies' demand at Gertruidenberg that Louis XIV should assist in ousting his grandson from the Spanish throne[267] (P 860). Nor does Voltaire's attitude towards documents change; despite numerous letters which are quoted at length by Torci and noted by the historian by means of sinets, the author of Le Siècle chooses to ignore them.[268] Furthermore, the notes muettes show a marked interest for new facts which are not, for all that, incorporated after 1756.[269] What Voltaire sought to do, was to use the source to provide evidence of details given in the 1751 edition; he took care to note the precise page in Torci's memoirs where Louis XIV's letter to the governors in 1709 is quoted, in case he should need to refer to the source to authenticate the material.[270] As it turned out, he chose not to insert a reference.

The full text of the letter which Voltaire had summed up in 1751, was thus available to him, but he remained content with a synopsis and adhered to his principle of not copying official documents. The notes muettes acted as precautions, ways of having proofs readily at hand, even though Voltaire did not always produce these.[271]

But when he is intent on defending himself against La Beaumelle's unfair criticisms, or on forestalling possible attacks on his work, Voltaire is more than willing to use Torci's account as ammunition. The anecdote of Heinsius's visit to France is a case in point, and was included after the historian had read Torci's memoirs in 1756. The latter reports how the Pensionnaire Heinsius was sent to France in connexion with the principality of Orange and that "dans l'exercice de cette commission, Heinsius avait essuyé la mauvaise humeur d'un ministre /i.e. Louvois/ plus accoutumé à parler durement aux officiers qu'à traiter avec les étrangers; il n'avait pas oublié que le ministère l'avait menacé de le mettre à la Bastille."[272] Voltaire bases his narrative of events on the source, but presents Louvois's threat in his own way: "Croirait-on que Louvois lui répondit 'qu'il le ferait mettre à la Bastille'?" (P 860) And as proof of the veracity of the anecdote, he includes a precise reference to Torci: "Voyez les Mémoires de Torci, tome III, page 2; ils ont confirmé tout ce qui est avancé ici." The reference is clearly wrong, despite the marker in Voltaire's copy, an example of carelessness on his part. His personal bias against Louvois determines the choice of the anecdote, as well as the direct condemnation that follows and is Voltaire's personal

contribution: "Un tel discours tenu à un sujet eût été odieux; tenu à un ministre étranger, c'était un insolent outrage aux droits des nations " (P 860).

Other anecdotal details were added in 1768, such as the visit of l'abbé Gaultier to France in 1711, marked by a sinet and a page cornée in Voltaire's copy. The anecdotes in 1768 are given greater philosophical significance, as has been seen, but some like this one are selected for their historical value, although the manner of presentation remains essentially lively. Torci had written:

> Voulez-vous, lui dit-il, la paix?
> Je viens vous apporter les moyens de la traiter et de conclure indépendamment des Hollandais... Interroger alors un ministre de sa majesté, s'il souhaitait la paix, c'était demander à un malade attaqué d'une longue et dangereuse maladie s'il veut guérir.[273]

Voltaire abbreviates the original by omitting some details and simplifying others: "Cet inconnu se rend chez le marquis de Torci, et lui dit sans préambule: 'Voulez-vous faire la paix, Monsieur? je viens vous apporter les moyens de la traiter.' C'était, dit M. de Torci, demander à un mourant s'il voulait guérir " (P 872). He improves on the syntax and paraphrases Torci's comments so as to add to the impact, whilst he seeks to guarantee the authenticity of the petits faits by quoting the relevant page of the source, correctly this time.

Voltaire's handling of Torci's memoirs, in general, is characteristic of his method of work; he is eager to verify what he has earlier postulated in the first edition and to supplement his first draft. The markers in his copy, moreover, indicate a

genuine desire to give greater precision to his text, as well as to enliven it. The written source is complemented by what Voltaire has privately learnt from Louis XIV's former minister; e.g. it was during one of those tête-à-tête that he heard the anecdote of James II's widow imploring Louis to recognise her son as king of England (P 806). Where he refers to the source in his footnotes, Voltaire can be both accurate and careless, but at least this practice shows a more scholarly approach than is often the case with other sources. When he quotes Torci's statements themselves, he is both capable of the highest degree of accuracy (e.g. P 859) and of nonchalance (e.g. P 872). What sets this source apart from others in the end, is the supreme but rather naive confidence which Voltaire has in the author, for he fails to make allowances for Torci's personal bias which might well have coloured his account of events.

IV. Memoirs of courtiers

The high esteem in which Voltaire held contemporaries' accounts of events, is observed above all in the attention he pays to the memoirs of countless courtiers which were freely available to him and turned out to be a particularly rewarding hunting ground. By comparing those writings and extracting from them what he deemed reliable, Voltaire was able to shed new light on many important historical events and give further insight into the motivation, character and behaviour of prominent actors in the drama. Having amassed a great deal of material for the purely historical aspects of Le Siècle, his main task was, it would seem, to use such publications to characterise the spirit

of the times and enliven his narrative, although the amount of purely factual information which he discovered should not be underestimated, as will be seen in the case of chapter IV which will be studied in depth in Appendix C. It must be said that the author of Le Siècle was by no means the first historian to utilise the memoirs of courtiers; these sources had largely formed the basic reading of his predecessors, Larrey, Limiers, Reboulet and Hénault, amongst others, but Voltaire's handling of these sources is original in so far as other historians had merely sought to secure factual information, whilst he selected material in accordance with his predetermined aim of understanding 'l'esprit du temps', hence his predilection for revealing anecdotes. Moreover, because of his talent as raconteur, he was admirably equipped to exploit fully historiettes which his predecessors had largely ignored.

La Fare

The Mémoires et Réflexions de M.D.L.F. (Le Marquis de la Fare) were published for the first time in 1716,[274] and had been hastily written during the last few years of the author's life, despite La Fare's proverbial laziness. A large part of the memoirs consist in trivial gossip and a series of anecdotes which Voltaire deemed unreliable and implausible; e.g. he refutes La Fare's allegations about the poisoning of Louvois (P 938), and the conclusions the courtier draws from rumours that Madame Scarron and Ninon de Lenclos shared the same bed (P 934). But La Fare had served in Louis XIV's army during the campaigns in Holland and Voltaire was seemingly reasonably impressed by the

courtier's account of events based on observation, as we shall see. On the one hand, he was not reluctant to express repeatedly his contempt for this author; this is borne out by an inscription in Voltaire's hand on a sinet in his copy which relates to biographical details about Mme de Maintenon: "Fausse histoire de Mme de Maintenon."[275] Voltaire is here objecting to certain errors of La Fare's which he claims to have put right in his own description of Mme Scarron's youth; e.g. that she was born in Canada[276] whilst Voltaire confidently asserts that she was born in the prison of Niort (P 934), or that she had returned to France at the age of seventeen,[277] instead of twelve (Ibid.). On the other hand, the author of Le Siècle does not hesitate to draw upon La Fare's memoirs for the main biographical details about Louis XIV's wife; in the Notebooks, he writes "Fautes de La /Fare/," but he also sums up the courtier's sketch of Mme de Maintenon, and we have here the first draft of the final version in Le Siècle: "Son origine, son voiage /sic/ en Amérique à deux ans, son mariage avec Scarron..."[278] He is indebted to La Fare for such details as Mme Scarron's father's incarceration in Niort prison, his marriage to the gaoler's daughter (P 934),[279] Mlle's d'Aubigné's marriage to the poet Scarron described by La Fare as "homme de bonne maison de robe de Paris... mais pauvre et devenu cul-de-jatte,"[280] whereas Voltaire opts for a less crude qualification "disgracié de la nature" (P 934). There are marked similarities between the two accounts; according to La Fare, Mme Scarron "avait de la beauté, de la vivacité d'esprit,"[281] and Voltaire says of her youth: "Sa beauté et son esprit la

firent bientôt distinguer" (P 934). His low opinion of this source did not prevent him from copying it either; La Fare commented on Mme de Montespan's choice of Mme Scarron as governess to the Duc de Maine in the following manner: "Lorsque le Duc de Maine fut né, ayant songé à le faire élever en secret, elle commit son éducation à Mme Scarron."[282] Voltaire for his part follows the source closely: "On se ressouvint d'elle quelques années après lorsqu'il fallut élever en secret le duc de Maine..." (P 935). The historian, therefore, makes a clear distinction between what he considered to be malicious gossip or improbable trivia, and valid and well-founded information which he incorporates into his text, without ever going out of his way to acknowledge his debt to the source or to do justice to it.

Nor does his lack of faith in these memoirs deter him from using salacious anecdotes recounted by La Fare; e.g. a sinet in his copy draws attention to Louvois's love-affair with Mme du Fresnoy: "Louvois avait aimé éperdument Madame du Fresnoy, femme d'un de ses commis(a)... et parce que Louvois fit part de cela au roi, on fit une charge nouvelle de dame du lit de la Reine pour cette dame(b)... charge qui donnait à Mme du Fresnoy toutes les entrées(c)..."[283] The anecdote finds its way into Le Siècle without undergoing any major transformations: "Parmi plusieurs maîtresses qu'eut ce ministre dont le caractère dur semblait si peu fait pour l'amour, il y eut une Mme Dufresnoi, femme d'un de ses commis,(a) pour laquelle il eut depuis le crédit de faire ériger une charge chez la reine: on la fit dame du lit;(b) elle eut les grandes entrées "(c) (P 915). Voltaire's parti-pris against Louvois undoubtedly explains the choice of this anecdote

and dictates the harsh assessment of the minister's character - "dont le caractère dur semblait si peu fait pour l'amour." But basically, he is on the look-out for any new angle on prominent men who served under Louis XIV, as well as for titillating details which he knew would appeal to his readers' taste for galanteries.

Besides such anecdotes, Voltaire found in La Fare's memoirs invaluable information on Louis XIV's campaign in Holland. Two sinets in his copy of the source prove the point; the first[284] underlines La Fare's comments on the hatred of the Dutch nation for the French: "La crainte et la haine dans le cœur des gens qui par leur intérêt propre étaient naturellement nos alliés." There are obvious echoes of the original in Voltaire's text: "/Louis XIV/ avait tellement changé le cours des choses, que les Hollandais, ses alliés naturels, étaient devenus les amis de la maison d'Autriche" (P 725). The second sinet relates to the devastation of Lorraine by Turenne's forces: "L'intendant se plaignit souvent à M. de Turenne que le pays était au pillage; il ne répondit autrechose, si ce n'est qu'il 'le ferait dire à l'ordre.'"[285] One reads in Le Siècle how Turenne's cavalry "y fit tant de désordre, que l'intendant, qui, de son côté, désolait la Lorraine avec sa plume, lui écrivit et lui parla souvent pour arrêter ces excès. Il répondit froidement: 'Je le ferai dire à l'ordre.'" (P 732). The humorous note - "désolait la Lorraine avec sa plume" - is entirely Voltaire's, as he attempts to add to the piquancy of the historiette. But the anecdote is above all used by the propagandist intent on showing the useless destruction caused by war. It also becomes yet another example of Turenne's ruthlessness, thus giving an

insight into the psychological make-up of the great man. Voltaire, moreover, transforms Turenne's answer into direct speech to heighten its value and give it more dramatic impact. He therefore uses the anecdote both to enliven his récit and to give more weight to his central theme of the misery caused by war; he organises the material according to his preconceived polemical intentions, by putting the anecdote alongside other better known devastations, like that of the Palatinate (P 730). By inserting his own ironic comment - "Tout le mal qu'il faisait paraissait nécessaire" (P 732) - , he is able to put his own slanted interpretation on the episode.

In his treatment of this source, Voltaire generally abides by his principle of verisimilitude, however subjective this criterion might be. He painstakingly attempts to separate what La Fare had witnessed personally from what is based on hearsay evidence and gossip. He selects what he judges to be vivid and dramatic details; e.g. (P 716) he supplements Pellisson's account of the crossing of the Rhine by transcribing one striking detail from La Fare which concerns M. de Longueville's death: "Quelqu'un cria: 'Poin' de quartier.' Ils firent une décharge si à propos que M. de Longueville fut tué..."[286] But Voltaire never gives credit to his source, nor does he acknowledge the borrowings, a familiar pattern which emerges from an examination of his use of sources. Finally, he is guided, as always, by his preconceived aims, whether they be polemical, literary, aesthetic, or strictly historical; to these ends, he modifies and adapts the source as it suits him.

Gourville

The Mémoires de Gourville, almost entirely written in 1702 from memory by the ex-intendant who was then 70 years old, were published in 1724. It is not easy to establish, with any degree of certainty, at what point Voltaire first read them, but all the evidence points to a date prior to 1735. The memoirs are mentioned in the Leningrad Notebooks[287] amongst notes which appear to date from that time. When he perused this source, of which he possessed the first edition,[288] Voltaire was not content to use notes muettes, but he also jotted down important details on loose sheets;[289] examples of facts noted twice in this way include the reasons suggested by Gourville to Lionne for the prosperity of the Dutch[290] and Louis XIV's decision to have the nation's silver treasures melted.[291] Voltaire seemingly used the sinets in his copy to be in a position to trace the relevant page references, whilst he summarised the extracts on loose sheets or in his Notebooks. That he did not, as a rule, go back to the source afterwards is indicated by his lack of precise references and errors when he does allude to the source. He draws upon Gourville's memoirs for a number of extraordinary and colourful details; e.g. the ex-intendant's confession that he had kidnapped a director of post during the Fronde[292] (P 663), or the anecdote of the Jews of Amsterdam offering money to Gourville[293] (P 717) which is indicative of Voltaire's anti-Semitic bias and was noted more than once by the latter.[294]

When he set out to compose Le Siècle, the Notebooks were his prime source of reference, and he probably confined himself to his notes without checking the material in the original.

Thus the following anecdote is marked with a sinet in Voltaire's copy of the memoirs:

> Ayant supputé qu'il y avait un fonds plus grand que la dépense n'avait encore été, il [Colbert] avait rendu un arrêt, je ne sais pourquoi, par lequel il était défendu aux gens d'affaires de faire des prêts au Roi sur peine de vie; et s'étant trouvé ensuite dans la nécessité de faire des emprunts, il s'en ouvrit à moi et me demanda si je croyais qu'il fallût donner un arrêt contraire au premier.[295]

It is retold thus in the Notebooks: "Colbert fit rendre un arrest [sic] par le quel [sic] il étoit deffendu [sic] aux gens d'afaire [sic] de prêter au roy sur peine de mort. L'année d'après il emprunta d'eux."[296] And using these notes as a reminder of Gourville's account of events, Voltaire transcribed the anecdote in Le Siècle: "Il fit rendre un arrêt du conseil qui établissait la peine de mort contre ceux qui avanceraient de l'argent sur de nouveaux impôts. Il voulait par cet arrêt comminatoire, qui ne fut jamais imprimé, effrayer la cupidité des gens d'affaires. Mais bientôt après il fut obligé de se servir d'eux, sans même révoquer l'arrêt..." (P 987). A comparison of the three texts reveals that Voltaire was content to follow his own synopsis in the Notebooks and ignored the source. He transformed certain details, albeit unimportant ones; e.g. "faire des prêts au Roi" becomes in the Notebooks "prêter au roi" and is subsequently amplified in Le Siècle to give more accurate information: "avanceraient de l'argent sur de nouveaux impôts." As he was redrafting his text, Voltaire expanded his notes to insert the motives that lay behind Louis's decree: Colbert wished to "effrayer la cupidité des gens d'affaires." Moreover, Voltaire supple-

mented the material in the source with details which he had discovered in the course of his own research, namely that the decree was never printed nor revoked. One may conclude from this that Voltaire made a genuine effort to seek out the document in archives but failed to find it. The notes serve as a first draft, but using logic, the author of Le Siècle offers a rational explanation of Colbert's actions and develops his synopsis to clarify the material and make it more accessible to the reader. Yet on one important point, his rendering is less precise than either the original or the notes: "l'année suivante" becomes in Le Siècle "bientôt après", presumably because Voltaire could not recall the exact date, and the notes were rather vague in this respect. Gourville had in fact given the precise date of Colbert's change of heart, and Voltaire showed no inclination to verify the material in the original.

Mme de Motteville

A wide range of sources relating to the minority of Louis XIV and the Fronde were readily accessible to Voltaire, and their contributions to the tableau of the civil war will be examined in detail in Appendix C. Of these, the Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire d'Anne d'Autriche, by Françoise Bertaut, dame de Motteville, published in Amsterdam in 1723 by Changuion, thirty years after their author's death, were a vital source of information on the early part of Louis XIV's reign. Voltaire's copy contains no fewer than 74 notes muettes of one sort or another,[297] which testify to the marked interest he showed in Mme de Motteville's account of events. Nor does he have any

reservations about their usefulness and merits; in Le Siècle he willingly expresses his admiration for their "noble et sincère naïveté" (P 649). Voltaire may have read the memoirs before 1739, or he may have revised his original draft in the light of information collected from this source, i.e. after inserting the notes muettes. Either way, there is little doubt that these memoirs constitute a source which was consulted in a systematic way and with great care, without the scepticism apparent in the historian's handling of the writings of La Fare or Choisy. We shall be returning to Voltaire's debt to Mme de Motteville for the chapters on the Fronde in Appendix C. Her contribution elsewhere is equally impressive both as regards facts and anecdotes. This is not confined to Le Siècle; L'Essai also benefited from Voltaire's reading of the source and some borrowings are clearly marked in Voltaire's copy; e.g. details about the character of Anne of Austria[298] or the queen's plot against Richelieu.[299] In all probability Voltaire consulted the source anew in 1764, since a letter from Deplace bearing that date serves as marker.[300] Addenda to the 1768 edition of Le Siècle confirm this conclusion,[301] although many notes muettes were undoubtedly placed earlier and correspond to passages present in the 1751 edition.

With his usual assiduity and insight, Voltaire sifted and collected anecdotes from Mme de Motteville's memoirs; some enable him to ridicule the intransigence of the clergy. Thus Mme de Motteville referred at length to the objections of the curé of St. Germain to plays being performed at court:

> /Le curé dit à la reine que la comédie/ ne se devait plus souffrir, et que c'était un péché mortel. Il apporta son avis signé de sept docteurs de Sorbonne qui étaient du même sentiment... /La reine décida/ d'envoyer l'abbé de Beaumont, précepteur du Roi, consulter dans la même Sorbonne l'opinion contraire. Il fut prouvé par dix ou douze docteurs que, présupposé que dans la comédie il ne se dise rien qui pût apporter du scandale, ni qui fût contraire aux honnêtes mœurs, elle était de soi indifférente, et qu'on pouvait l'entendre sans scrupule. Par cette voie la conscience de la Reine fut en repos.[302]

Voltaire sees here a chance to defend the theatre against the Jansenists and denounce the blind fanaticism of the clergy:

> Un curé de Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, qui penchait vers les idées rigoureuses des jansénistes, avait écrit souvent à la reine contre ces spectacles, dès les premières années de la régence. Il prétendit que l'on était damné pour y assister; il fit même signer cet anathème par sept docteurs de Sorbonne. Mais l'abbé de Beaumont, précepteur du roi, se munit de plus d'approbations de docteurs que le rigoureux curé n'avait apporté de condamnations. Il calma ainsi les scrupules de la reine; et, quand il fut archevêque de Paris, il autorisa le sentiment qu'il avait défendu étant abbé (P 892-893).

Contrary to his normal practice, Voltaire readily acknowledges his debt to his source here, for the polemical undertones are strengthened by the proof that the facts were indeed authentic. The propagandist sums up the circumstances in his own words and adapts the original to suit his polemical aims. Not only is his attitude to the curé far more hostile than Mme de Motteville's, as the epithet "rigoureux" indicates, but he deliberately exaggerates the inflexibility of the cleric through the use of

the more forceful phrase "que l'on était damné" which is substituted for Mme de Motteville's more subdued expression "c'était un péché mortel". Voltaire, moreover, purposely omits to mention the reservations of the doctors who in the source added an essential proviso to their approval of the theatre: "présupposé que dans la comédie il ne se dise rien qui pût apporter du scandale, ni qui fût contraire aux honnêtes mœurs..." He does so in order to emphasise the irrationality of the Jansenists' objections. Both in the choice and manipulation of the anecdote, Voltaire responds as a partisan guided by his polemical objectives, rather than as a man of truth.

Other unusual details are noted in his copy of the source and utilised in Le Siècle for a diversity of reasons: (a) because they are likely to appeal to the reader's imagination and add spice to the narrative; e.g. Bitaut's capture in 1651 recounted thus by Mme de Motteville: "Deux conseillers du parlement allèrent faire rompre les ponts qui se trouvèrent sur son passage [i.e. Mazarin's]. L'un d'eux nommé Bitaut fut pris prisonnier..."[303] Voltaire inserts the anecdote into his récit at a point where it is most likely to relieve the boredom: "Deux conseillers furent assez imprudents pour aller avec quelques paysans faire rompre les ponts par où le cardinal devait passer: l'un d'eux, nommé Bitaut, fut fait prisonnier par les troupes du roi, relâché par indulgence, et moqué de tous les partis." (P 659). (b) Elsewhere, he transcribes an anecdote which enables him to attack superstitions; e.g. the procession of Sainte-Geneviève which showed Condé's hypocrisy at its worst[304] (P 662). (c) Few anecdotes which help to characterise prominent men escape his notice;

e.g. the harshness and ruthlessness of Cromwell are brought home by the story of how he rejected the request of the Queen of England; namely that she should keep her dowry in exile[305] (P 672). Voltaire's indignation is made plain by his personal comment on the sad plight of the queen: "C'était le comble des humiliations les plus douloureuses de demander une subsistance à celui qui avait versé le sang de son mari sur un échafaud" (P 672).

(d) The anecdotes borrowed betray, on more than one occasion, his personal bias against the parlements; the deputation sent to Mazarin in 1660 as a mark of gratitude for the peace of the Pyrenees, is referred to dispassionately by Mme de Motteville who simply remarks that such a step "n'avait point d'exemple."[306] Voltaire is not one to let the opportunity pass by without giving vent to his own personal hatred of the magistrates; he adroitly draws attention to the fact that Mazarin had the last laugh after the indignities he suffered at the hands of the Paris parlement: "C'était une chose sans exemple dans la monarchie; mais ce n'était pas une trop grande réparation du mal que le parlement lui avait fait" (P 684). Working on the raw material collected from the source, Voltaire allows himself to be influenced by his likes and dislikes, although he could reasonably have claimed to have fulfilled in the first place his role as a historian, for in the majority of cases the tendentious interpretation is almost presented as an after-thought.

Mlle de Montpensier and Mme de La Fayette

Like Mme de Motteville, other ladies had lived close enough to the court to be in a position to give an inside view of what went on there. Voltaire had consulted their memoirs in the first

place for the tableau of the Fronde, but in so doing, he gleaned quite a number of priceless stories and authenticated details that enabled him to unravel mysterious or doubtful incidents. Mlle de Montpensier, or la grande Mademoiselle, always remained for Voltaire a romantic heroine who was prepared to endanger her status by forming an attachment with the Comte de Lauzun. Their passionate love-affair and tragic story appealed to Voltaire's sensibility and, as he was fully aware, was even more likely to arouse the curiosity of a public mondain fond of such sentimental stories. How Voltaire makes the most of this enthralling love story will be discussed in chapter IV. Several sinets in his copy of the source indicate the particular fascination that this episode held for him.[307] Perhaps Voltaire intended to give a fuller version of the liaison to begin with; some notes extracted from the memoirs in the Notebooks seem to confirm this, but he chose not to use these; e.g. "Mademoiselle exilée pour ne pas avoir épousé le roy du Portugal."[308] Being in possession of a detailed account of the hopes and disillusionments of the two protagonists, he opts for a fast-moving and highly charged narrative which is endowed with universal significance and has affinities with a conte moral: "C'est un grand exemple du pouvoir des préjugés et de la coutume, qu'il fût permis à toutes les femmes mariées d'avoir des amants, qu'il ne le fût pas à la petite fille de Henri IV d'avoir un mari" (P 916). He can then proceed to recount the incident in the manner of a novelist, using the source to define the characters briefly and including just enough biographical material to make his protagonists come

to life. Details are selected because of their quaintness; e.g. "Mademoiselle donnait tous ses biens, estimés vingt millions, au comté de Lauzun, quatre duchés, la souveraineté de Dombes, le comté d'Eu, le palais d'Orléans, qu'on nomme le Luxembourg " (P 916).[309] Mlle de Montpensier's lengthier account of her interview with Louis XIV[310] lacks punch; not so Voltaire's ironic treatment of it: "Il /Louis XIV/ pleura de rendre Mademoiselle malheureuse; mais ce même prince, qui s'était attendri en lui manquant de parole, fit enfermer Lauzun..." (P 916). Voltaire's point of view is never far from the surface as he espouses the cause of the lovers and ironically draws attention to the volatile courtiers: "On le /Louis XIV/ blâma de l'avoir permis, on le blâma de l'avoir défendu " (P 916). The philosophical implications are not lost sight of, as Voltaire invites the reader to put the blame squarely on Louis's shoulders: "Un roi doit-il traiter un homme plus durement que la loi ne le traiterait?" (P 917). The polemical tone, as Voltaire launches an attack on injustice, shows the degree of commitment to the philosophic crusade against the violation of human rights: "Qu'on pardonne ces réflexions; les droits de l'humanité les arrachent " (P 917). The material from the source becomes consequently the basis for a conte philosophique; Voltaire exaggerates the nobility of both protagonists, especially Lauzun who was not as worthy of pity as he makes out,[311] in order to increase the pathos and give greater force to the polemical undertones. In the end, his version bears little resemblance to the original, because from a purely historical point of view, the facts take second place to Voltaire's subjective inter-

pretation. For if Mlle de Montpensier furnished the canvas, the tragic scenes painted on it by the author of Le Siècle reflect his own literary and propagandist preoccupations.

Mme de La Fayette

The author of the Princesse de Clèves began drafting the memoirs of Madame Henriette d'Angleterre at the latter's instigation in 1664. A good part of the Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre deals with the lady's passionate love-affair with the Comte de Guiche to which Voltaire pays no attention. Instead he found in this source valuable information on the mysterious death of Madame which had puzzled historians. In the Notebooks, after a paragraph extracted from the Mémoires de Mademoiselle and more specifically, following a remark concerning Madame "/qui/ avoit été très malade avant son passage en Angleterre," Voltaire wrote: "Consultez me de La Fayette."[312] As with Pellisson's Lettres Historiques, we have here a source which served in the first instance to unravel one particular controversial incident, further proof of Voltaire's genuine and rigorous attempts to arrive at the truth, even in small details. In chapter XXVI, he goes out of his way to give a precise reference to the source, since in view of the contradictory testimonies on the episode, he thought that he held irrefutable evidence that Madame's death in no way resulted from her being poisoned, but was caused by a long illness; the glass of chicory, the last moments of Madame, as well as the fact that Madame Desbordes partook of the same water, come from Mme de La Fayette's account[313] (P 921). Voltaire could rightly claim to have been

the first historian to solve the mystery, having made good use of the source published in part in 1731, hence his confident assertion that "la malignité humaine et l'amour de l'extraordinaire furent les seules raisons de cette persuasion générale" (P 921). Whilst we have seen that he is not himself reluctant to exploit extraordinary anecdotes, he clearly felt that his competence as a historian rested on the reliability of his information. In this particular instance, he has the best of both worlds, in so far as he quotes the salacious rumours and drives home the fact that he has weighed all the evidence carefully and arrived at the truth.

Other benefits were derived from his reading of the source; the details relevant to James II's flight from England come directly from Mme de La Fayette[314] (P 763), as does the ironic comment of the Archbishop of Reims on James II: "L'archevêque de Reims," Mme de La Fayette wrote, "frère de Louvois, le voyant sortir de la messe, dit avec un ton ironique: 'Voilà un fort bonhomme, il a quitté trois royaumes pour une messe.'"[315] Voltaire, of course, is always more than willing to entertain his readers with such irreligious tit-bits, but the anecdote, in Le Siècle, becomes a particularly pointed comment on the futility of James's excessive devotion to the Catholic faith and his lack of common sense: "On ne lui savait nul gré d'être catholique: l'archevêque de Reims, frère de Louvois, dit tout haut à Saint-Germain, dans son antichambre: 'Voilà un bon homme qui a quitté trois royaumes pour une messe.'" (P 764). Nor does Voltaire the partisan at any point question the plausibility of the anecdote, for it serves a useful polemical purpose. Elsewhere, he shows

himself to be more sceptical and cautious; he was not at all sure that Mme de La Fayette was right in claiming that Charles II's wife, the queen of Spain, "mourut empoisonnée. Elle en avait toujours eu du soupçon, et le mandait presque tous les ordinaires à Monsieur. Enfin Monsieur lui avait envoyé du contre-poison, qui arriva le lendemain de sa mort..."[316] While incorporating these interesting details into his text, the historian wants to convince his readers that he repeats nothing without concrete evidence, hence his more cautious approach: "Il passa pour constant que le conseil autrichien de Charles II voulait se défaire d'elle, parce qu'elle aimait son pays, et qu'elle pouvait empêcher le roi son mari de se déclarer pour les alliés contre la France. On lui envoya même de Versailles de ce qu'on croit du contre-poison..." (P 927). Voltaire applies the laws of probability as he pleases, and has no hesitation in including far less credible anecdotes at other points. He wants to have his cake and eat it by exploiting such titillating stories, whilst at the same time disclaiming responsibility for them.

Mémoires de Dangeau

The courtiers' memoirs already discussed and those used for the chapters on the Fronde quoted in Appendix C, yielded a rich harvest of quaint and entertaining anecdotes which Voltaire planned to insert in the chapters on Louis's private life. Since these figured in the original plan, he set about amassing a large number of priceless bons mots and historiettes right from the start. But one source, more than any other, provided the

basis for these chapters, namely the memoirs of Dangeau, read by Voltaire in manuscript form early on, certainly before 1738.[317] Paradoxically, he declared repeatedly that he had a low opinion of this source; to the Président Hénault, he imparted on February 25, [1752]:

> Je ne sais si les Mémoires de Dangeau sont imprimés, mais je me souviens bien que je les ai lus en manuscrit, il y a plus de vingt ans... Je ne sais quel est l'imbécile qui a fait ces Mémoires, si c'est un valet de chambre ou le secrétaire, ou le maître, mais l'auteur, quel qu'il soit, est un pauvre homme.[318]

This sentiment is echoed by the statement which brings to a close the section of the Notebooks devoted to this source: "Fin des sots mémoires de Dangeau."[319] Despite such hostile pronouncements, in the Correspondence and in Le Siècle (P 928), Voltaire's debt to Dangeau should not be underestimated. He even considered the source, or at least sections of it, to be worthy of publication and proceeded to edit extracts in his Journal de la cour de Louis XIV depuis 1684 jusqu'à 1715, published in 1770.[320] His editorial comments, moreover, indicate a change of heart on his part: "On ne peut reprocher à notre auteur d'avoir inventé ce qu'il dit; rien ne serait plus injuste que de lui attribuer de l'imagination... Ce petit livre fait voir au moins quel était l'esprit du temps et quel éclat Louis XIV avait su jeter sur tout ce qui avait rapport à sa personne."[321] This is in direct opposition to Voltaire's accusations against Dangeau in Le Siècle: "Enfin je sus que ces mémoires du marquis de Dangeau, qu'on regarde comme un monument précieux, n'étaient que des nouvelles à la main, écrites quelquefois par un de ses

domestiques; et je puis répondre qu'on s'en aperçoit souvent au style, aux inutilités, et aux faussetés dont ce recueil est rempli " (P 928). One is led to believe that Voltaire attempted to minimise Dangeau's contribution, as he did that of Larrey, Limiers and others, to promote the value of his own history in the 1750's, whilst he felt more secure in the 1770's when his reputation as a historian was well established. It is, of course, possible that he seriously revised his opinion of Dangeau, and perhaps more likely still that he decided to cash in on the memoirs known only in manuscript form, despite his doubts about their authenticity and reliability.

Voltaire's charge that Dangeau was not the author of the entire memoirs is difficult to assess. As a member of the Académie Française from 1704 onwards, Dangeau was certainly capable of writing the 500 manuscript volumes which contain many facts witnessed at first hand during the author's residence at Versailles. They are not entirely written in one hand,[322] but Dangeau may have employed a secretary. We have used for our purpose here the selected extracts published by Mme de Genlis[323] who herself had no doubt that the memoirs were the work of the Marquis de Dangeau,[324] and who pledged not to alter the original in any way.[325] The borrowings discussed do not by any means exclude the possibility of others; they will only serve as examples of the way Voltaire follows, adapts and transforms the source to suit his various purposes.

The anecdotes which the historian collected are not exclusively utilised in the chapters of anecdotes; on the contrary,

they are inserted wherever and whenever the author of Le Siècle judges them to be appropriate and likely to rekindle the interest of his readers. Thus Voltaire judiciously includes the picturesque details relating to the Marquis d'Amfreville's dealings with the Algerians in chapter XIV. It is recounted by Dangeau in the following manner:

> On eut la nouvelle que les Algériens avaient rendu à M. d'Aufreville,(a) chef d'escadre,(f) beaucoup d'esclaves chrétiens de toutes les nations, à qui ils donnent la liberté en considération du roi.(b) Parmi ces esclaves, il y avait quelques Anglais,(e) qui soutenaient qu'on ne leur laissait la liberté que par crainte que les Algériens avaient du roi leur maître, et qu'ils ne voulaient pas reconnaître en avoir l'obligation à la France. D'Aufreville, qui était dans son bord, les a fait remettre à terre,(c) et les Algériens les ont mis sur l'heure aux galères.(g)326

The anecdote is duly summed up in the Notebooks thus:

> Les algériens ayant rendu à mr d'Amfreville(a) baucoup /sic/ d'/anglais/(e) qui dirent à mr d'Amfr. qu'on ne rendoit tous les esclaves qu'en considération du R. d'Angleterre.(b) Damfreville(a) les fit remettre à terre(c) et les algériens les renchaînèrent de plus belle,(c) sauf le respect du roy leur maître.(d)327

From this first draft, it then passes into Le Siècle, whilst undergoing several transformations:

> Il n'est pas inutile de dire que, lorsque Damfreville,(a) capitaine de vaisseau,(f) vint délivrer dans Alger tous les esclaves chrétiens au nom du roi de France, il se trouva parmi eux beaucoup d'Anglais(e) qui, étant déjà à bord, soutinrent à Damfreville que c'était en considération du roi d'Angleterre(b) qu'ils étaient mis en liberté. Alors le capitaine français fit appeler les Algériens, et, remettant les Anglais à terre:(c) 'Ces gens-ci, dit-il,

> prétendent n'être délivrés qu'au nom de leur roi; le mien ne prend pas la liberté de leur offrir sa protection, je vous les remets; c'est à vous de montrer ce que vous devez au roi d'Angleterre.(d), Tous les Anglais furent remis aux fers (g) (P 754).

From the original to the Notebooks, the anecdote is both telescoped and embellished, and Voltaire indulges in poetic licence without scruple. The name d'Aufreville (a) in the source becomes d'Amfreville and Damfreville in the notes, of which Voltaire selects the latter which is not the correct spelling.[328] (b) "En considération du roi" which in the source applies to Louis XIV, is made to refer to the King of England in the notes and in Le Siècle, an indication that Voltaire did not endeavour to check the manuscript memoirs and relied on his notes which happened to be misleading on this particular point. (c) In Dangeau, d'Amfreville merely forced the prisoners to disembark, as is the case too in the Notebooks; in Le Siècle, on the other hand, Voltaire invents a speech to add to the impact of the anecdote, quite a common practice of his in Le Siècle (e.g. P 844). Other modifications and inaccuracies arise because Voltaire trusts his notes implicitly; e.g. "Il y avait quelques anglais" in the source, is transformed into "il se trouva parmy eux baucoup d'anglais" in the notes - a phrase reproduced in Le Siècle (e). It is evident, too, that Voltaire tries to recall certain details absent from his notes; this would explain d'Amfreville's demotion from "chef d'escadre" to "capitaine de vaisseau" in his text (f). In other respects, the historian proceeds to amplify his notes; e.g. "sauf le respect du roy leur maître" (d) gives rise to a more tongue-in-cheek detail in the invented speech: "C'est à vous de

montrer ce que vous devez au roi d'Angleterre." A textual comparison of the three stages through which the extract goes, is very revealing of Voltaire's method of adapting his material; the literary artist embroiders upon the anecdote to make it livelier and in the process, he sacrifices accuracy of details. It is fair to say, however, that in respect of such petits faits, his reading public would not have expected the same degree of precision as in the handling of historical data. Finally, in addition to Voltaire's talent as a raconteur, which will be examined in detail in chapter IV, such anecdotes illustrate his quest for exotic material, as well as a genuine attempt on his part to emphasise the philosophical implications of what is at first sight a petit fait. Thus he draws from the anecdote a serious conclusion - "La fièreté anglaise, la faiblesse du gouvernement de Charles II, et le respect des nations pour Louis XIV, se font connaître par ce trait" (P 754) - , which not only justifies the inclusion of the anecdote, but establishes the links with the main theme of the chapter, notably Louis's supremacy in Europe.

Another anecdote sifted from Dangeau's voluminous memoirs - that of the visit of the doge of Genoa in 1685 to the French court - demonstrates further Voltaire's preference for colourful and romanesque incidents. His account of the interview which the ambassador had with Louis XIV becomes particularly vivid thanks to a careful selection of striking details; Dangeau describes the ambassador as "habillé de velours rouge avec un bonnet de même... Il parla au Roi couvert, mais il ôtait son bonnet souvent."[329]

The lively scene is recalled in the Notebooks: the envoy is depicted as "habillé de velours rouge, les 4 sénateurs de velours noir. Il parla couvert, et ôtoit souvent son bonnet de velours rouge."[330] When he came to write Le Siècle, Voltaire was able to make full use of this first draft and of the visual details to evoke the pomp and splendour of the occasion with consummate skill: "Le doge en habit de cérémonie, parla, couvert d'un bonnet de velours rouge qu'il ôtait souvent..." (P 755). The syntax has become more polished and the story is retold at greater length, but the amusing character sketch depends as much for its success on the initial selection of quaint details, as on Voltaire's ability as a story-teller. Much of the appeal of Le Siècle depends on Voltaire's foresight and keen eye for potentially entertaining historiettes of this kind.

Besides indulging us with charming sketches, Voltaire had a more serious objective, for he endeavoured to shed light on Louis XIV's character. In chapter XXIX, to illustrate Louis's generosity, he recounts the anecdote of Roupli, the Persian: "Il /Louis XIV/ opina que tout lui fût rendu /i.e. his merchandise/, et y ajouta un présent de trois mille écus. Roupli porta dans sa patrie son admiration et sa reconnaissance." (P 972). The intention to eulogise is more than apparent, as it was in Dangeau's récit: "Le Roi a donné à Rouph, Persan, une pension de mille écus et quarante mille écus comptant... C'est le Persan à qui le Roi a fait gagner un procès il y a quelques années, et qui par reconnaissance est revenu en France."[331] Mme de Genlis has probably copied the name wrongly here. What is more interesting is that Voltaire confuses the circumstances of the law-suit and

the present; in the source, the gift has nothing to do with the law-suit, but because the historian followed the notes which he extracted from Dangeau's memoirs closely, he was led into error. Indeed, in the Notebooks, he had written: "Roupli, persan, a un procez au conseil. Le roy l'examine et le fait gagner, et luy donne 4 mille écus."[332] More serious still is the fact that despite his notes, where the sum is accurately quoted, Voltaire assesses the value of the gift to be "trois mille écus" in Le Siècle. On the one hand, therefore, the notes are responsible for a misconception; on the other, they do not prevent an inaccuracy from creeping into the final text.

In his excellent study, Louis XIV and the age of Enlightenment, N.R. Johnson has commented on the active campaign by publicists in Louis XIV's reign to promote the image of a witty and kindly monarch. This official state propaganda was geared to directing public opinion and was initiated by Louis XIV himself.[333] Some of the anecdotes used by Voltaire undoubtedly originated from this attempt to create the myth of the king's paternal authority and benevolence. What is obvious is that Voltaire willingly lends a hand to the campaign and makes no allowances for Dangeau's participation in the creation of the myth, by taking the anecdotes at their face value. Voltaire's generally eulogistic portrayal of the Sun King stems from his personal admiration for him and his age; as a result he has no wish to question the authenticity of the details he borrows. The gift of Louis XIV to his doctor, Félix, who cured him of an abscess, emphasises in Dangeau the king's paternalism: "Le roi a

donné à M. Félix, son premier chirurgien, sa vie durant, la terre de Moulinaux, qui est dans le parc de Versailles..."[334] The fact is recorded in the Notebooks, together with the value of the land, "50 mille écus."[335] This last detail is in fact incorrect and Voltaire confuses two separate incidents reported by Dangeau, for the sum of 50,000 écus was given, not to Félix, but to Monsieur for the improvement of his residence at St. Cloud. Because the historian works from the notes rather than the original when drafting Le Siècle, he makes the same mistake in this last work (P 941).

It was, however, by publicising the remarks and repartees of Louis XIV, that the organisers of the official campaign hoped to create the legend of an intelligent and considerate monarch. Johnson has drawn attention to the fact that Louis's bons mots were common knowledge: "All monarchs have had attributed to them by their courtiers a certain number of clever and witty sayings which can become legendary; Louis XIV was known for the fairness and appropriateness of his remarks, rather than his sparkling repartees. La Beaumelle warns us of the way in which witticisms are embellished with repetition."[336] For his part, Voltaire paid no heed to the possibility of an officially sponsored operation, and he was intent on accumulating as many pronouncements of the late king as possible. For these, he turned to Dangeau's memoirs and other sources. His attitude to the king's remarks betrays the same nonchalance as in the case of other anecdotes. He shows himself capable of copying his source accurately; e.g. with reference to Monseigneur's departure to the front in Germany, Louis XIV's words, quoted by Dangeau[337]

and recorded in the Notebooks,[338] are only slightly altered by Voltaire: "En vous envoyant commander mon armée" in the source becomes in Voltaire's text "en vous envoyant commander mes armées..." (P 772). Yet, he attempts on other occasions to transform Louis's speeches as he sees fit; e.g. he complements Mme de La Fayette's account of James II's exile to France with a speech addressed by Louis XIV to the deposed king, which the historian has extracted from Dangeau's memoirs: "Le roi lui répondit qu'il leur rendait un triste service en cette occasion mais qu'il espérait être en état de leur rendre de plus utiles dans la suite."[339] The Notebooks once again serve as an intermediate stage between this version in the source and the final rendering in Le Siècle: "Madame je vous rends en cette occasion un triste service mais j'espère vous en rendre dans la suitte de plus utiles."[340] In the historical work, Voltaire redrafts the bons mots according to his notes: "Je vous rends, madame, lui dit-il, un triste service; mais j'espère vous en rendre bientôt de plus grands et de plus heureux" (P 763). The use of reported speech in Dangeau makes way in the notes for direct speech which is also the form adopted in Le Siècle for more dramatic impact. The original, moreover, is subject to certain alterations; "en cette occasion" in the source and in the notes is left out in the final text; "être en état" is omitted in both the notes and Le Siècle and a simpler version substituted, whilst "bientôt" in the text replaces "dans la suite" in the source and in the notes. Voltaire also expands the speech in the final version, by interpolating "de plus grands et de plus heureux." One may conclude that if the notes acted as guidelines, Voltaire

did not confine himself entirely to them, that he developed and embroidered on the speech to make it wittier and more memorable. One is bound to ask if in so doing, he was not going against his own precept of accuracy in the minutest details. However, not only were Louis's remarks handed down through an oral tradition and were, therefore, subject to transformations along the way, but the eighteenth century reading public would not have looked for the same degree of accuracy from historians that we do nowadays when it is a question of quoting our most celebrated statesmen. Precision took second place to the need to be entertained, as far as anecdotes were concerned; as R.J. White has observed, for the sake of the public attending the salons and who would also have been typical of Voltaire's readers, "everything had to be reduced to the lightness of puff-pastry... An idea might not be amusing in itself, but it had to be made amusing."[341]

It is tempting to conclude that Dangeau, the patient and ever watchful diarist who lived at court, furnished Voltaire with a large number of relatively little-known anecdotes about Louis XIV, as well as repartees and remarks which were not to be found in other sources. But we now know that these anecdotes were not as novel as Voltaire made them out to be; many had been circulating as a result of the official publicity campaign to promote the image of Louis XIV as a benevolent, witty and divine ruler. For example, Louis's words to his domestics on his death-bed might have come from Dangeau's memoirs: "Il aperçut dans le miroir deux garçons de la chambre qui pleuraient au pied de son lit, il leur dit 'Pourquoi pleurez-vous? Est-ce que vous m'avez cru immortel?'"[342] Voltaire's version does not differ

radically from Dangeau's: "/Il dit/ à ses domestiques: 'Pourquoi pleurez-vous? m'avez-vous cru immortel?'" (P 948) This speech was not only well-known, but was, according to N.R. Johnson, the result of Louis's own attempt to spread further the myth of a fearless king: "The last word of the king provides an excellent example of the way in which the legend of Louis XIV was created by the king himself. Until the very moment of his death, no king was ever more conscious of the role he had to play, and none played it more skilfully... The exit was a scene played with the same mastery as all the others..."[343] Similarly the king's advice to his successor, as he lay dying, should be viewed in the light of a well-engineered legend-building enterprise; hence it was given all the publicity that was required. Dangeau, whose presence in the king's chamber has been questioned,[344] probably relied on the version circulated by those close to the monarch, as did Saint-Simon.[345] Voltaire claims to have copied the framed copy of the admonition hanging at the bedside of Louis XIV,[346] while he was at Versailles in the 1740's; he might also have read the official version printed in 1718, "being the first item produced by the royal press newly installed in the Tuileries", according to Johnson.[347] What is significant is that the historian willingly followed the official document closely without ever questioning the validity and accuracy of this text. He was more than eager, it would seem, to help in diffusing the image of Louis XIV as a repentant and admirable monarch. This is borne out by his generally favourable portrayal of Louis XIV in chapters XXV-XXVIII.

Moreover, Voltaire does not display the degree of scepticism towards the king's remarks, which his declarations of principle, referred to earlier, might have led us to expect. The king's speeches addressed to courtiers - e.g. Louis's witty remarks to an officer who felt that he had been unfairly treated (P 958) - , as well as the courtiers' repartees - e.g. the duc d'Antin's justifications for felling a number of trees at Petit Bourg which offended Louis (P 960)[348] - are accepted without reservation, and Louis XIV who was not known for his sparkling wit, is transformed into a bel esprit. Voltaire goes out of his way to use his skill as raconteur to make the king's bons mots appear even more startling and humorous than they are in the original. He also constantly endeavours to give greater impact to such pronouncements; e.g. Dangeau reported Louis's remarks about Villeroi thus: "Il marqua qu'il était fort étonné et indigné même contre les gens qui insultaient au malheur du maréchal de Villeroy; il ajouta qu'il croyait que l'amitié dont il l'honorait lui attirait une partie de la haine que l'on a contre lui. Il se servit même du mot de 'favori', terme qui ne lui était jamais sorti de la bouche pour personne."[349] Voltaire's first task in the Notebooks appears to have been to simplify and water down the original text, whilst enlivening some aspects of the anecdote: "Après la prise du maréchal de Villeroy, le roy dit, on le hait parce qu'il est mon 'favori', terme dont il ne s'étoit jamais servi auparavan[350] [sic]." As he had no way of checking the original, Voltaire based his final version on this synopsis: "Le roi, qui le plaignait sans le condamner, irrité qu'on blâmât si hautement son choix, s'échappa à dire: 'On se déchaîne contre lui, parce

qu'il est mon favori', terme dont il ne se servit jamais pour personne que cette seule fois en sa vie." (P 818-819). "On le hait" sums up in the Notebooks Dangeau's clumsier sentence, before making way for the more pungent expression "On se déchaîne contre lui." Furthermore, in the last phrase of the final version, Voltaire is able with hindsight to underline the significance of Louis's statement and its extraordinary character; "terme dont il ne s'était jamais servi auparavant" in the notes becomes "terme dont il ne se servit jamais pour personne que cette seule fois en sa vie." One can observe in these interpolations the creative mind at work, as Voltaire consolidates the anecdote and adds to its dramatic impact.

From what has been said of Voltaire's treatment of anecdotes, we can conclude that he felt under no obligation to show here the same degree of precision as in his handling of historical facts. Nor does he seek the truth with the same eagerness and assiduity, for he is, more often than not, content to follow one source without checking the material in others. Furthermore, he is not always guided by his own estimation of the trustworthiness of the author, since he proceeds to borrow extensively from Dangeau despite his grave doubts on the question of authorship. If Voltaire gives the impression of upholding the classical rule of bienséances, by rejecting such anecdotes as told by La Fare concerning Ninon de Lenclos and Mme Scarron, he chooses, on the other hand, to include far more shocking details; e.g. when he claims to be indignant at La Porte's accusations against Mazarin's homosexual tendencies (P 891).[351] Voltaire puts on the mask of the man of good taste, but the fact that he

refers to Louis's amorous exploits at such length or alludes to scandalous gossip, shows his preference for piquant details and risqué material. As for the criterion of verisimilitude, he applies it haphazardly and inconsistently; he comes to the conclusion that Louis XIV could not have written to La Rochefoucauld, as Choisy claims:[352] "Je vous fais mon compliment, comme votre ami, sur la charge de grand-maître de la garde-robe, que je vous donne comme votre roi" (P 950). He refuses to believe that Louvois would have thrown himself at Louis XIV's feet to beg him not to marry Mme de Maintenon (P 938). And yet, Louvois's action is not less in character or more implausible than Villiers-Vendôme's overt declaration to Louis XIV that he disliked his gardens and fountains (P 960), which Voltaire readily accepts as being authentic. It seems, therefore, that he adopts or rejects anecdotes, not systematically or according to fixed principles, but rather instinctively and in an irrational manner.

V. Chapters XXIX and XXX

These two chapters on Louis XIV's internal reforms and on finance deserve to be studied separately, for Voltaire's sources comprise not just general histories such as those of Larrey, Limiers and Reboulet, but also writings of a more theoretical kind, such as Mélon's Essai politique sur le commerce, as well as compilations of statistics like Boulainvilliers' Etat de la France. For the corpus of purely factual information on Louis's reforms, Voltaire did not have to look far. He collected the basic facts from general histories; he might have found in Larrey

details on the creation of a police force and the founding of hospitals (P 964),[353] on the commercial innovations of Colbert (P 967),[354] the Code Louis (P 972),[355] the hôtel des Invalides (P 971),[356] to quote but a few examples. Limiers for his part could have contributed such details as the face-lift of Paris and Versailles (P 969),[357] the setting up of the Gobelins (P 968),[358] the creation of academies (P 971).[359] Reboulet's history was also put to good use by Voltaire in this connexion, and the sinets in his copy of the source indicate some borrowings which are confirmed by textual echoes; e.g. the abolition of the rank of colonel general of the infantry (P 973),[360] the use of uniforms for the army (P 973),[361] the abolition of duels (P 972),[362] the placets which Louis XIV received (P 964).[363] Chapters XXIX and XXX are consequently in essence a synthesis of material gleaned from various quarters and adapted, in most cases, to Voltaire's general ideas on economics and commerce. Whereas Larrey, Limiers and Reboulet incorporate the material into the main body of their chronological surveys, Voltaire works from general theories and organises the facts along thematic lines, combining information with analysis.

His attitude towards documents does not change in these chapters either. We know that he had read Henri de Boulainvilliers' Etat de la France,[364] which includes the memoirs of the intendants of all the provinces requisitioned by Louis XIV in 1698. Voltaire refers to these in Le Siècle (P 977), and in a letter to Thiériot of June 1735, he declares that he has asked M. Bernard to dispatch "les généralités de M. de Boulainvilliers".[365] In his private library is to be found the 1737 edition with

several sinets,[366] although the letter to Thiériot shows that he had probably read the source before that date. From his reading, he extracted lengthy notes on the population of each province, the revenues of the Church, and on the taxes levied. These notes were discovered and published by I.O. Wade in The Search for a New Voltaire.[367] On close examination, the notes appear to have been of little use for Le Siècle, with the exception of a few details concerning the general hospital (P 964)[368] and the manufacture of silk in Lyons (P 968).[369] Wade is, therefore, right to conclude: "It is probably true that they never entered into the composition of the Siècle de Louis XIV as statistics, but they doubtless contributed to the creation of a background for Voltaire's description of events."[370]

The notes muettes in Voltaire's copy which in all probability served to verify the material already collected, indicate few important borrowings. Only two sinets are conclusive; one pertains to the factories in Lyons (P 968)[371] and the other to the canal de Languedoc which was of particular interest to Voltaire as one of the most resounding engineering successes in Louis XIV's reign (P 971).[372] Other borrowings, though not marked by notes muettes, include the manufacture of cloth at Abbeville (P 967),[373] the development of the wine industry in Champagne (P 995),[374] and of the silk industry in Tours (P 968).[375] On the whole, however, although Voltaire had at his disposal a mass of statistics on population, taxation, finance, he made a conscious effort to omit such details which would in effect have given more substance to his general conclusions. He only quotes

statistics when they are absolutely necessary, or are likely to sway public opinion to his point of view; e.g. to prove Colbert's achievements (P 990). From his reading, he forms a general impression of the movement in population, such as the mass exodus of Huguenots after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and its serious economic repercussions for France (P 982). He comes to understand why Colbert felt the need to improve the economic policies of the nation, to increase the population and modify as well as simplify the taxation system in France. This desire to confine himself to generalities rather than give an abundance of statistical evidence, is a consequence of his lack of economic training, just as much as it reflects Voltaire's pre-occupations. He is not writing as an economist, but as a man of letters intent on showing, in a way that would appeal to his public, the good done by Louis XIV: "Louis XIV fit plus de bien à sa nation que vingt de ses prédécesseurs ensemble" (P 978).

Voltaire also consulted Don Ustariz's book on commerce, La théorie et la pratique du commerce,[376] although after 1753. But while this source was to prove particularly useful for L'Essai,[377] it too merely helped the historian to arrive at a broader understanding of economic trends during the reign of Louis XIV. Voltaire could have extracted vital data and documents from this book if he wished to; e.g. Louis's decrees on commerce and important information on tariffs. Instead, he ignored these and was content to borrow one phrase which adds to his eulogistic portrayal of Louis XIV, called "un homme prodigieux" (P 979) by Don Ustariz, and a few selected details, such as the bonuses offered to the manufacturers of Abbeville (P 967),[378] the personal

efforts of Louis XIV to encourage the nobility to take an active role in commerce (P 965),[379] and the creation of a council of commerce (P 965).[380] The documentation is thus dictated by the case in hand. If Voltaire spurns documents in the main, they can become powerful weapons when he attempts to prove his point; e.g. he quotes the edict of 1664 to drive home Colbert's admirable efforts to revitalise the French economy (P 964). But he remains conscious at all times of the real dangers of boring and confusing the non-specialist reader, and as a result, he purposely makes sparing use of official texts of decrees and statistical evidence. The main emphasis throughout is on analysis and interpretation, not on data alone.

Nor does Voltaire allow himself to be side-tracked by economic controversies raging at the time and involving the physiocrats. Charbonnaud has shown Voltaire's growing interest in economic matters in the 1750's and has examined the philosopher's debt to Mélon's Essai politique sur le commerce of 1734.[381] The ideas which Voltaire expounds in Le Siècle generally concur with those of Mélon; e.g. that a nation's wealth is its main strength but not its only one;[382] that commerce and industry should be actively encouraged,[383] but Voltaire adds, not to the detriment of agriculture. Like Mélon, he decried the fact that Colbert did not encourage free trade and prevented products from circulating freely from province to province.[384] He follows Mélon likewise in asserting the crucial role played by population and the need for it to grow; the more inhabitants a country can boast of, the greater the benefits it will derive from them. For this reason,

Voltaire praises Colbert's measures aimed at exempting any father of ten children from taxation: "Ce réglement aurait dû demeurer à jamais sans atteinte" (P 967). And Voltaire concludes: "Enfin, de quelque manière que les finances de l'Etat soient administrées, la France possède dans le travail d'environ vingt millions d'habitants un trésor inestimable." (P 997). But the author of Le Siècle did not adhere blindly to Mélon's teachings; he rejected some of his predecessor's beliefs and came out strongly in support of some of Colbert's mercantilist views. He remains clearly intent on expressing his personal views within the appraisal of Louis XIV's achievements. It is in the interpretation of the personal role of the king and Colbert, in the adaptation of the material to this central and unifying thesis that Voltaire's originality lies. He cuts the cloth accordingly and his admiration for Colbert was not shared by Mélon; in his defence of the former minister, Voltaire uses a wide range of persuasive techniques to drive home his point of view: "Si l'on compare l'administration de Colbert à toutes les administrations précédentes, la postérité chérira cet homme dont le peuple insensé voulut déchirer le corps après sa mort. Les Français lui doivent certainement leur industrie et leur commerce, et par conséquent cette opulence dont les sources diminuent quelquefois dans la guerre, mais qui se rouvrent toujours avec abondance dans la paix." (P 983). The material and even the ideas borrowed are given an original cachet through Voltaire's highly effective and individualistic mode of presentation which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that Voltaire documented himself both assiduously and systematically,[385] either by borrowing the required sources from private and public libraries, or by purchasing publications for his own collection, or again by interviewing witnesses and contemporaries in a manner reminiscent of a journalist. The use of notes muettes in his copies of the sources confirms the view that he adopted a methodical and positive approach; Voltaire read the sources pen in hand, and making notes constituted the first vital stage in the preparation of Le Siècle. In numerous instances, the original selection of material during the first reading of a source, was just as crucial as the final drafting of the text. The passages underlined by sinets, papillons and other markers, find their way for the most part into Le Siècle, albeit in a briefer form and after undergoing some modifications, and as such, they often amount to first drafts of corresponding paragraphs or phrases and sentences in the work. Furthermore, we have shown that a number of facts and anecdotes were noted twice, first in the source itself and then in the Notebooks or on loose sheets. Voltaire frequently relied on these notes without checking the original, especially when he had read the source in manuscript form, as in the case of Dangeau. The degree of correlation between Voltaire's text and the source, as well as the accuracy of his rendering, depend largely on the care with which he compiled the notes. It becomes clear too that he did not always utilise everything that he first deemed important and that a second process of selection occurred

at the time of composition, when the historian reviewed and weighed the material at his disposal in the light of his specific objectives. After the publication of the first edition, it has been seen that the collecting and sifting of information did not come to an end, since Voltaire attempted to keep up to date with new and important sources that were brought to his attention, with a view both to authenticating what he had already postulated, and to supplementing his existing text and making it at once more precise and more complete. This is the case with Torci and sources employed for the tableau of the Fronde, as will be demonstrated in Appendix C. The historian also made a point of perusing several times the same source, whenever specific points needed to be clarified and in order to amend his existing draft as a result of contemporary reactions; the memoirs of Motteville, Torci, the Abrégé of Hénault are cases in point.

Voltaire's method of work becomes consequently easier to grasp thanks to the notes muettes in his copies of sources. So far it would appear that his documentation did not differ significantly from that of modern scholars. But if the author of Le Siècle employs an impressive range of secondary sources, most of which were available to his predecessors, and if he benefits from others unknown to Larrey and Limiers, his reliance on primary sources falls short of modern expectations. Twentieth century critics assess the competence and reliability of historians in terms of the raw material and primary documents they employ; by these high standards, Le Siècle cannot be called scholarly as such. True, Voltaire obtains the manuscript memoirs of Louis XIV and verifies some edicts in official

archives, but he scorns manuscript documents, letters, texts of edicts and treaties and statistical evidence as a matter of course. His method differs from that of modern scholars in so far as he lacks scientific criteria for assessing the validity and authenticity of the material he discovers. His criteria of verisimilitude and common sense are applied in an erratic and irrational manner. Moreover, in his presentation of the material, he purposely omits to provide precise references to sources, with a few exceptions, and refuses to include lengthy quotations from edicts, documents and from the sources themselves. But Voltaire did not set out to write history as an erudite; he had no time for compilations of data and facts, and aimed at producing a thrilling and aesthetically pleasing, yet fairly accurate, account of events.

What constitutes his originality is his highly individualistic selection and interpretation of the material; from a mass of information he seeks to extract what would best serve his purpose, be it philosophical, historical, literary or polemical. He strives to condense the assembled facts and never loses sight of his professed aim of making history interesting and informative at the same time. Once the main facts had been collected from a few basic sources - Larrey for chapters I-XXIV, Dangeau for chapters XXV-XXVIII, d'Avrigny for chapters XXXV-XXXIX - , he saw his main task as being to consolidate and embellish this basic framework. He could not in all honesty claim to have unravelled many major mysteries, for the main facts were widely known, but what he did do, was to search for rare and curious anecdotes, little-known details, either of a biographical nature concerning the main actors of the drama, Condé, Turenne, Villars, Mazarin,

Louis XIV amongst others, or most likely to convey and illustrate the spirit of the age. This quest for what would give added spice to the work, was undertaken for the public of the salons, a public de goût, who wanted to be entertained as well as instructed. As with his other works, Voltaire's keen eye for the quaint, picturesque and dramatic details sets Le Siècle apart from the more pedestrian and dull, if more complete, histories of Larrey and Limiers. But historical accuracy is not entirely sacrificed to the need to entertain; as Paul Sakmann has indicated, Voltaire made a genuine effort to combine the required precision expected of a reliable historian, with aesthetic considerations, despite his apparent dislike for erudition: "One should not take Voltaire literally when he affects a careless disdain for exact detail in order to differentiate himself as much as possible from the scholarly pedant. He frequently does greater justice to the problem of historical detail..."[386] Moreover, what Voltaire omits betrays his literary preoccupations; e.g. long and detailed accounts of battles, interminable extracts of treaties. He transforms and adapts the material borrowed to add to the dramatic impact. If he takes advantage of the fact that most of the anecdotes had been handed down through an oral tradition, if he changes the circumstances and if he modifies Louis's speeches, unscrupulously inventing details at times, we have shown that as regards purely historical facts, he is capable of the highest degree of accuracy and rarely alters the essential data.

At one and the same time Voltaire can be accused of plagiarism when he does not hesitate to copy his source, and he

takes liberties with the original which might appear inexcusable to a modern public. Above all, he organises and manipulates the material borrowed according to his thesis. In many instances, he selects only what agrees with his point of view and according to the case in hand;[387] his anticlerical bias dictates the choice of anecdotes which are irreverent[illegible], and his parti-pris against representatives of the Church such as Mazarin, Louvois and Le Tellier, shows through in the use and presentation of anecdotal details. He purposely omits what would weaken his propagandist message on several occasions. His personal prejudices lead him to reject the unanimous verdict that Turenne's conversion was sincere (P 735). He is guilty of inconsistency when it comes to using witnesses' reports to his own ends; while accusing authors of distortions and falsehood, he is not loth to quote them in support of his arguments elsewhere. But when all this is said, Voltaire does, at least, make a conscious effort to give the main facts as objectively as possible. R.M. O'Connor's conclusion that "his prejudices did not permit him to present with any degree of consistent objectivity the results of his investigations"[388] is, therefore, not entirely justified.

The question remains whether Voltaire's practice concurs with his theoretical pronouncements discussed earlier. He looked upon contemporaries' accounts of events as essential raw material for the writing of history, and he did exploit successfully a large number of courtiers' memoirs. The share of oral documentation is impressive, and in this respect at least, he adequately fulfilled one of the requirements of history as

envisaged by 18th century theoreticians, namely the quest for relatively new material. He takes great pains, on the whole, to compare various accounts of events, as is fully illustrated in his treatment of the Fronde,[389] and his endeavours to discover the truth on such controversial incidents as the crossing of the Rhine and the death of Madame are highly commendable. Yet he is not reluctant to trust implicitly one witness, when the latter is Torci, a man he held in high esteem and one whom he knew had observed the intrigues in Spain at close range. Contrary to what he declared in his theoretical writings, Voltaire does not always appear to be on his guard against the prejudices and preconceptions of courtiers and contemporaries of Louis XIV. If he treats La Fare and de Retz with the degree of scepticism they no doubt deserved, he does not make allowances for Mme de Motteville's royalist feelings, nor does he take account of Villars's eagerness to give himself a lot more credit than he was entitled to. He fails to recognise that there was an official campaign to promote the myth of Louis XIV, and if he repudiates Pellisson's panegyrics, he has no wish to question Dangeau's catalogue of witty and sparkling repartees attributed to Louis XIV. Nor does Voltaire consistently abide by his own principle of historical pyrrhonism. Paul Sakmann has commented on his tendency to respond instinctively and spontaneously to what he reads or hears from contemporaries: "Nothing can demonstrate more clearly how seriously an indiscriminate criticism, guided by instinct rather than method, can go astray than the fact that every now and then even this suspicious mind falls victim to the faith in what is handed down, in an almost ludicrous manner."[390] The most notable

example of this is the importance he attaches to the quarrel between Queen Anne and the Duchess of Marlborough. And when his sources disagree on specific events, Voltaire allows himself to be guided by what he judges to be the most reliable account, as in the case of the anecdote concerning Bois-Jourdain (P 736), instead of remaining in doubt, according to his own rule. Documents which he deemed to be the most infallible proofs in history, figure less than prominently in Le Siècle, even though he had many to choose from; e.g. the letters of Louis XIV, of ministers, of ambassadors, texts of treaties, of decrees, and so on. Furthermore, Voltaire had no wish to make extensive use of archives, although he did ask Choiseul to obtain official permission for Taulès to consult state papers relevant to the secret treaty between Louis XIV and William regarding the division of Spain.[391] Where the principle of verisimilitude is concerned, it has been demonstrated that it is applied haphazardly; sometimes Voltaire deliberately ignores it to include an anecdote which is likely to entertain his reader; at other times, he declares anecdotal details reported by La Fare, La Porte and La Beaumelle to be implausible. His own anecdotes frequently fall short of the high standard he sets for others. He remains convinced, moreover, that quoting a large number of sources in a work dealing with recent history is unnecessary, and references to the works he has consulted are few and far between. They are, as a rule, given when Voltaire wishes to authenticate little-known facts or to prove his point and refute allegations and rumours from the pens of La Fare or La Beaumelle. Where he

does give references in footnotes, these are largely accurate, but he is guilty in places of gross negligence, either when he incorrectly quotes a specific passage in Torci, or assumes that a detail is to be found in Villars when it is not (P 826). He does not always check what he claims to be in the source - e.g. Reboulet (P 834) - , but relying instead on his memory, he makes mistakes. In brief, his attitude is rather cavalier and Le Siècle would have benefited in some respects from a more rigorous and scrupulous approach. If Voltaire fails at times to put into practice what he preaches, it is essentially because he responds spontaneously to each particular case, and has no wish to work according to a system or a fixed body of principles. All the same, there is a noticeable degree of correlation between his theories and his histories, if only because his principles were derived from his experience of writing history and formulated after the publication of Le Siècle.

In What is history?, E.H. Carr has remarked: "The historian is neither the humble slave nor the tyrannical master of his facts. The relation between the historian and his facts is one of equality, of give-and-take... The historian is engaged on a continuous process of moulding his facts to his interpretation and his interpretation to his facts."[392] This statement probably best sums up Voltaire's approach to documentation in Le Siècle, although the pendulum swings slightly more towards interpretation in his case. What ultimately accounts for his originality is his personal vision of the age of Louis XIV. Moreover, in his Remarques sur l'histoire, he proclaimed that

memory alone was insufficient in the writing of history and that reason had a vital part to play: "Si on voulait faire usage de sa raison au lieu de sa mémoire, et examiner plus que transcrire, on ne multiplierait pas à l'infini les livres et les erreurs; il faudrait n'écrire que des choses neuves et vraies. Ce qui manque d'ordinaire à ceux qui compilent l'histoire, c'est l'esprit philosophique..." (P 43). Voltaire cannot be said to have brought to light a vast amount of new material about Louis XIV - except perhaps through oral documentation - , but what he did was to view the facts from a new angle, his own, and in this respect 'the philosophic spirit' has stamped its mark on the material borrowed. To this must be added the imaginative process at work which gives Voltaire's work its special flavour. Perhaps the best comment on his own handling of sources, comes from Voltaire himself in an alinéa on Pope in the Kehl edition of the Lettres Philosophiques: "Il en est des livres comme du feu dans nos foyers: on va prendre ce feu chez son voisin, on l'allume chez soi."[393] How Voltaire's imagination and mode of presentation provided this vital spark will be studied in the next chapter.

Appendix A

Voltaire and Larrey: Selected list of probable borrowings

Larrey, II,457/P 669, Arras.
Larrey, II,519/P 677, Abdication of Christina of Sweden.
Larrey, II,519/P 681, Lionne sent to Madrid.
Larrey, II,524/P 673, Valenciennes freed.
Larrey, II,535/P 964, P 969, Creation of a police force and hospitals built.
Larrey, III,37/P 674, Falconbridge sent to France.
Larrey, III,40/P 674, Battle of the Dunes.
Larrey, III,51/P 675, Louis XIV's illness.
Larrey, III,98/P 681, Treaty of the Pyrenees.
Larrey, III,198/P 894, Louis's wedding.
Larrey, III,260/P 897, Fouquet's trial.
Larrey, III,386/P 967, Manufactures set up by Colbert.
Larrey, III,534/P 972, Legal reforms.
Larrey, III,439ff./P 701ff., Conquest of Franche-Comté.
Larrey, IV,5/P 705, Don Pedro marries his sister-in-law.
Larrey, IV,21/P 711, Van Beuning's medal.
Larrey, IV,55/P 706, Casimir's abdication.
Larrey, IV,35-55/P 707, Candia besieged.
Larrey, IV,97ff./P 713, War in Holland.
Larrey, IV,126/P 724, Leyden and The Hague attacked.
Larrey, IV,160/P 726, Mastricht besieged.
Larrey, IV,225/P 731, Palatinate destroyed.
Larrey, IV,236/P 732, Seneffe.
Larrey, IV,368/P 739, Valenciennes besieged.
Larrey, IV,411/P 747, Battle of St. Denis.
Larrey, IV,423-7/P 745, Treaty of Nimwegen.
Larrey, V,128/P 752, Siege of Vienna.
Larrey, V,153/P 755, Genoa bombarded.
Larrey, V,277/P 772, Philippsburg, Heidelberg, Mayence.
Larrey, V,309/P 774, Valcour.
Larrey, V,373/P 766, Battle of the Boyne.
Larrey, V,381/P 768, James II at Galloway.
Larrey, VI,9/P 777, Namur.

Larrey, VI,21/P 777, Steenkerque.
Larrey, VI,191-2/P 782, Dieppe and Le Havre.
Larrey, VI,497/P 787, Peace of Ryswick.
Larrey, VII,137/P 1096, Quietism.
Larrey, VII,259/P 1105, Chinese rites.
Larrey, VIII,117/P 817, Cremona.
Larrey, VIII,151/P 820, Luzara.
Larrey, VIII,236/P 828, Bonn.
Larrey, VIII,240/P 828, Eckeren.
Larrey, VIII,255/P 827, Spire.
Larrey, VIII,401/P 835, Landau.
Larrey, VIII,571/P 843, Siege of Turin.
Larrey, IX,9/P 840, Ostend.
Larrey, IX,12/P 840, Menin.
Larrey, IX,140/P 851, James II's son's expedition.
Larrey, IX,169/P 853, Lille.
Larrey, IX,289/P 863, Malplaquet.
Larrey, IX,356-8/P 866, Saragossa.
Larrey, IX,370/P 869, Villa Viciosa.
Larrey, IX,503ff./P 878ff., Treaty of Utrecht.

Appendix B

Catalogue de la plupart des écrivains français: Voltaire and Niceron

As indicated earlier, the Catalogue was inspired in the first place by Hénault's list of 'Savants illustres',[394] but Voltaire discovered vital information in Niceron's Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres.[395] That he attached a great deal of importance to this source is shown by his repeated efforts to obtain it in 1751, for he intended to use it not just for the Catalogue, but also to some extent for chapter XXXII. To Walther, Voltaire wrote on March 13, 1751: "Mais il me faut absolument tous les tomes illustres du père Niceron avec la continuation de Desmollets. Si vous les avez, je vous prie de me les envoyer sur le champ, sinon je vous prie d'écrire à vos correspondants de Hollande qu'on les envoye sur le champ à mon adresse à Potsdam."[396] Whilst frequently extolling the virtues of this source, Voltaire was aware of the need for selection from the start; in the Notebooks, he commented: "500 hoes illustres dans Niceron. Cela se réduit à dix ou douze."[397] And in Le Siècle, he declared that a limited number of authors listed by Niceron deserved to be remembered: "Tous ne sont pas illustres, mais il parle de chacun convenablement; il n'appelle point un orfèvre 'grand homme '" (P 1190). As it was, he proceeded to include a good proportion of the authors present in Niceron's work, but added as many again to his Catalogue. Indeed, more than Hénault, Niceron provided the raw material for the entries, although Voltaire is often content to borrow a few biographical details such as the artists' dates of birth and death; e.g. in the case of Baluze,[398]

Naudé,[399] Bergier,[400] Malebranche.[401] On several occasions, the author of Le Siècle does little more than copy his source, without adding anything of his own; e.g. as regards Herbelot[402] and Fléchier.[403]

But for the most part, Voltaire uses Niceron merely as a starting-point and appends his personal appreciation of the authors' works, putting to good use his impressive knowledge of classical authors and his own readings of various texts. Sometimes Niceron's remarks are expanded by Voltaire; e.g. Rapin de Thoyras's Histoire is assessed by the historian who has definite views on the merits of the work: "L'Angleterre lui fut longtemps redevable de la seule bonne histoire complète qu'on eût faite de ce royaume, et de la seule impartiale qu'on eût d'un pays où l'on n'écrivait que par esprit de parti; c'était même la seule histoire qu'on pût citer en Europe comme approchante de la perfection qu'on exige de ces ouvrages..." (P 1197). His remarks are mostly of a highly personal nature; e.g. Niceron might have provided basic information about Courtilz de Sandras's literary achievements,[404] but Voltaire lets it be known that he has no respect for this writer: "Il inonda l'Europe de fictions sous le nom d'histoires " (P 1151). Voltaire's judgements on Mézerai likewise betray the same bias (P 1186), whilst he is indebted to Niceron for such biographical details as the creation of the Eudist movement by the historian's elder brother.[405] Nor does Niceron's contribution to the article Bayle go beyond a few details,[406] for Voltaire hardly needed outside help to comment on the works of a philosopher who furnished him with so many of his basic ideas (P 1137).

The historian is also capable of extracting from his source

those remarks which concur with his own pro-classical views; e.g. he echoes Niceron's assertion that Patru was the first to refine the language of the law-courts (P 1192).[407] Anecdotal details which held a fascination for Voltaire are rarely passed over, and here too his approach does not differ significantly from his treatment of other sources; striking and picturesque details are duly selected and transcribed; e.g. that Mabillon was in charge of exhibiting the treasures of St. Denis (P 1182),[408] and that he asked to be relieved of that duty because he did not like deception and falsehood. Niceron had written in this connection: "Il demandoit d'être déchargé d'un emploi, qui l'engageoit souvent à dire des choses qu'il ne croyoit pas."[409] And Voltaire follows his source closely: "/Il/ demande à quitter cet emploi, 'parce qu'il n'aimait pas à mêler la fable avec la vérité.'" (P 1182). The article on St. Evremond consists of a series of personal comments on the man and the literary artist, but Voltaire finds it particularly admirable that the philosopher had refused the last rites and cannot resist the temptation of quoting Niceron's version of St. Evremond's witty remark on his death-bed: "De tout mon cœur, je voudrais me réconcilier avec l'appétit."[410] (P 1203).

It would be futile to enumerate here all the artists who figure both in Niceron and in Voltaire, for they are numerous. It is obvious that if the author of Le Siècle owes a lot to his predecessor, he supplements what he borrows with his own responses to the authors under discussion, as a literary critic, as a philosopher and as a historian. He draws upon Niceron for biographical information, a list of the authors' works and even

anecdotes at times, but when he deals with writers whom he knows well through his own readings, his debt to Niceron is reduced accordingly. On the whole, if the Catalogue was based on Hénault's and Niceron's lists, Voltaire could rightly claim to have put into it much more of his own than he borrowed. Furthermore, a study of the writers added after 1751 shows that of those appended in the 1753 edition, only five can be traced back to Niceron, only two in 1756, and none in 1768. Once Voltaire had consulted this source, he did not go back to it. Instead he relied on correspondents' suggestions, but above all on his increasing knowledge of the classical period. Finally, the main difference between Niceron's approach and Voltaire's is that the former is an erudite concerned with factual and biographical material, whereas the latter responds as a literary artist and a classicist. The Catalogue constitutes a Temple du Goût and Voltaire's taste evaluates and determines the merits and demerits of those literary artists who graced the reign of Louis XIV.

Appendix C

Use of sources in chapter IV: Guerre civile

The chapters on the Fronde, composed early on and constantly revised by Voltaire, deserve to be studied separately, for there existed a large number of writings on the subject which posed special problems for the historian. Whilst in some respects the information which was readily available in memoirs made his task easier, he was himself aware of the difficulty of reconciling the testimonies of so many witnesses which were often contradictory (P 646). He set out to give a corpus of objective and factual information, but clearly selected details which served to reinforce his main polemical purpose, namely to underline the absurdity and futility of civil wars. In the end, the chapter under discussion constitutes less an accurate and impartial survey of the civil war, than a satirical tableau, based on Voltaire's personal views and mostly dependent on a collection of anecdotes which show the Frondeurs in an unfavourable light. The object of this appendix is, therefore, to study the ways in which Voltaire sought to integrate the diverse material gleaned from a number of sources into a unified and obviously slanted portrayal of the civil war; that his handling of sources in this particular chapter is indicative of his method of work as a whole will also become clear.

For the main body of purely historical facts, Voltaire in this chapter, as in the rest of Le Siècle, relied on one or two principal sources, namely the memoirs of Mme de Motteville and de Retz. The additional facts and anecdotes are sifted and collected from a variety of memoirs by courtiers and observers,

those of Guy Joli, Omer Talon, Mme de Nemours, Pierre Lenet, Mademoiselle, Gourville, La Porte amongst others. It would be futile to trace all the borrowings here, but we shall take into account Voltaire's intentions and examine the manner in which his main thesis predetermines the selection and adaptation of the material. Only in the case of the most important and informative examples will Voltaire's text be put alongside the source; in other instances, the relevant passages in the source will be referred to in the notes.

In his discussion of the appointment of Potier as prime minister (P 642 para. 2), Voltaire alludes vaguely to the memoirs of de Retz as his source.[411] He was conscious of the fact that the former coadjuteur frequently allowed himself to be swayed by his personal bias in his récit of events leading to the civil war. In the Préface historique et critique to Pierre le Grand of 1759, whilst acknowledging the lively portraits given by de Retz, Voltaire expressed the following reservations: "Mais était-il un peintre fidèle? La passion, le goût de la singularité, n'égaraient-ils pas son pinceau?" (P 348). That Voltaire treads carefully in using de Retz's memoirs is obvious in this chapter, for he only reports the facts which were confirmed by other sources. To de Retz's account of Potier's election, he adds his own personal explanation; in the name of logic, he attempts to guess what Queen Anne of Austria's motives might have been. Moreover, where Voltaire refutes what de Retz had written concerning Potier's declaration, he fails to name the source under attack: "Mais ce qu'on ne doit pas croire, c'est que

Potier eût commencé son ministère par déclarer aux Hollandais 'qu'il fallait qu'ils se fissent catholiques s'ils voulaient demeurer dans l'alliance de la France'" (P 642). This is a reference to the following passage in de Retz: "Il [Potier] demanda, dès le premier jour, aux Hollandais qu'ils se convertissent à la religion catholique, s'ils voulaient demeurer dans l'alliance de la France."[412] Voltaire does not quote de Retz correctly, and in his assessment of the facts, he relies on verisimilitude without attempting to verify the facts in other sources or producing evidence in support of his views.

This is not always the case, for having been content to declare in 1751 and 1753 that "il est très vraisemblable que le cardinal Mazarin était ministre désigné depuis longtemps dans l'esprit de la reine" (P 642), Voltaire endeavoured to produce concrete evidence, and in 1756 he consulted the memoirs of Pierre La Porte, the former valet of Louis XIV: "On ne peut en douter quand on a lu les Mémoires de La Porte..." (P 642). Indeed La Porte confirms these conclusions, and the relevant page is clearly marked in Voltaire's copy of the source.[413] The historian's ambiguous and contradictory attitude towards La Porte should be noted here; he criticises the same man for alleging that Mazarin was guilty of making indecent advances to the young Louis XIV (P 891), whilst in this instance, he is keen to underline the trustworthiness of an observer who had actually lived in the household of the king and had thus ample opportunity to witness events at close quarters. Yet we have already pointed out that Voltaire casts doubt on the validity and authenticity of Dangeau's memoirs precisely because they might have been written

by one of his domestics (P 928). Consequently it would seem that Voltaire's attitude to witnesses fluctuates according to whether he needs them to support his case or not, and shows a regrettable lack of consistency.

The information pertaining to Mazarin's character (P 643, "Il affecta... modeste") is extracted from de Retz's memoirs,[414] but Voltaire adds the parallel between Mazarin and Richelieu which is his own contribution. Similarly the survey of the state of the nation's finances from Henry IV to Louis XV (P 643, "Les finances en France... de gages aux magistrats")is the result of Voltaire's own research for L'Essai, the paragraph having been inserted in 1768. The overt polemical references to his own epoch - "mais ce brigandage ne s'étendait pas sur des objets aussi considérables qu'aujourd'hui" (P 643) - and to Louis XV's wars as well as to the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), to the disastrous defeats of the French navy, explain largely the inclusion of this paragraph. Voltaire's polemical preoccupation with the ill effects of war have become more pronounced in 1768.

The causes of the civil war (P 643-644) come directly from a number of sources; e.g. Emeri's corrupt practices from de Retz[415] (P 643); the creation of "quelques charges de maîtres des requêtes" (P 643) from Joli;[416] the rebellion of "les maîtres des requêtes, les autres cours, les rentiers" (P 643) from Mme de Motteville,[417] and Mazarin's dismissal of Emeri (P 644) from de Retz.[418] Voltaire's bias against Mazarin is evident from the personal comments which accompany the factual account of events, as he draws attention to the justified grievances of the French people: "Il est aisé de juger combien les esprits furent soulevés

contre deux Italiens, venus tous deux en France sans fortune, enrichis aux dépens de la nation, et qui donnaient tant de prise sur eux " (P 643). The comparison drawn between the civil wars in France and in England is original, as are Voltaire's philosophical reflections on the real cause of the Fronde: "Les guerres civiles commencèrent à Paris, comme elles avaient commencé à Londres, pour un peu d'argent " (P 644). Such personal remarks, which in this case were absent from the editions anterior to 1768, indicate a greater emphasis on interpretation in the later editions than on the data themselves.

So it is too that in the paragraph (P 644, "On ne commença pas d'abord"... "l'esprit de parti peut le permettre") which was added in 1768, Voltaire tries to seek an explanation of the motives that lay behind the parlement's actions, by having recourse to a fixed and universal view of human nature. The tone in 1768 has become more philosophical and the wider implications of events are brought home.

The details about the paulette (P 644 para. 3), appended in 1768, were provided by the memoirs of Mme de Motteville which Voltaire had consulted anew at the time. Compare Voltaire's text - "Il retranchait quatre années de gages à toutes les cours supérieures, en leur remettant la paulette, c'est-à-dire en les exemptant de payer la taxe inventée par Paulet, sous Henri IV, pour s'assurer la propriété de leurs charges. Ce retranchement n'était pas une lésion, mais il conservait les quatre années au parlement, pensant le désarmer par cette faveur" (P 644) - to Mme de Motteville's version: "On avait redonné la paulette à toutes les compagnies souveraines, à condition de leur retrancher

quatre années de gages; et pour contenter le parlement en son particulier, comme le corps du royaume le plus à craindre, on la leur avait redonnée sans leur rien retrancher."[419] The definition of the paulette too comes from Mme de Motteville: "Le nom de paulette vient de Charles Paulet, secrétaire de la chambre du roi, qui fut l'inventeur et le premier fermier de ce droit, établi par un édit de 1604."[420] Voltaire's renewed interest in the parlements at a time when he was busy preparing L'Histoire du parlement of 1769 where such details are reiterated, explains the inclusion of these details. But he fully exploits the material for his own personal campaign against these institutions, by stressing the magistrates' inflexibility: "Le parlement méprisa cette grâce " (P 644).

Throughout this chapter, Voltaire abides by his principle of reconciling various sources wherever possible, in order to give as complete and as diversified a picture of the Fronde as he can. To the above information from Mme de Motteville, he adds an anecdote from Mme de Nemours's memoirs, whose sole purpose seems to be to ridicule Mazarin further, that of "l'arrêt d'ognon"[421] (P 644). He had read this source before 1761, since the anecdote of the dwarf (P 651) had found its way into Le Siècle at the time. Subsequently Voltaire went back to this source for supplementary details concerning the Fronde, as the above anecdote indicates. His ability to integrate material from more than one source is demonstrated in the way he incorporates the circumstances giving rise to the "arrêt d'union", for which he drew upon Mme de Motteville's memoirs,[422] into his text and then proceeds to tell the satirical anecdote itself.

The demands made by the parlement (P 644-645) are described in some detail by Mme de Motteville and underlined in Voltaire's copy by a marker and a papillon.[423] But whilst the source gives the facts dispassionately, Voltaire's prejudices against the parlement dictate the manner of presentation: "Il demanda hautement qu'on révoquât tous les intendants...", and Voltaire the propagandist and the partisan goes out of his way to ascribe less than noble motives to the magistrates: "C'était plaire à la nation autant qu'irriter la cour..." (P 644). The same hostility towards the parlement explains the inclusion of another anecdote from Motteville; the lady reports that on the occasion of the battle of Lens, Louis XIV had rejoiced about this setback for the magistrates: "Le roi sachant qu'il avait gagné une bataille, s'écria tout haut et avec une grande animation que le parlement serait bien fâché de cette nouvelle."[424] Without taking account of Mme de Motteville's royalist tendencies, Voltaire gladly transcribes the king's remarks: "Le roi, qui n'avait alors que dix ans, s'écria: 'Le parlement sera bien fâché !'" (P 645). He selects what gives him greater ammunition for his attack on the magistrates and attempts to make the bons mots even quainter by inserting the detail about the king's age. Furthermore, he leaves the reader in no doubt as to his personal views of the role played by the magistrates in the civil war, by drawing a very tendentious conclusion from the anecdote: "Ces paroles faisaient voir assez que la cour ne regardait alors le parlement de Paris que comme une assemblée de rebelles." (P 645).

In addition to underlining such increased polemical undertones,

the addenda of 1768 point to a conscious desire to consolidate and make more precise the chronology of events during the Fronde. Thus the 1751, 1753, 1756 and 1761 editions contained a few lines on the imprisonment of Broussel which sparked off public outrage. In 1768, Voltaire developed this incident further, basing his account on that of Mme de Motteville; from her memoirs he obtains supplementary details about the arrest of Novion, Charton and Blancménil[425] (P 645). On the other hand, Voltaire found the amusing detail which characterises Charton - "Je dis ça" (P 645) - in Guy Joli's memoirs.[426] The historian shows a certain self-consciousness about copying his sources at times; in 51, he had said of Broussel: "Broussel n'avait d'autre mérite que d'ouvrir toujours les avis de la cour...," which followed Mme de Motteville's text too closely for Voltaire's liking: "Il avait ouvert tous les avis qui allaient à la destruction de l'autorité royale."[427] In the 1761 edition, Voltaire deliberately endeavours to avoid plagiarism by substituting: "Broussel n'avait de recommendable que ses cheveux blancs, sa haine contre le ministère, et la réputation d'élever toujours la voix contre la cour sur quelque sujet que ce fût " (P 645).

Broussel's arrest (P 645, "Au lieu de les enlever"... P 646, "'Liberté et Broussel'") is a good example of Voltaire's success in evolving a unified, lively and dramatic narrative from information gathered in various sources. The time of the arrest - when the Te Deum is being held - is furnished by Mme de Motteville,[428] whilst the account of the entry of the Swiss into the church with "soixante et treize drapeaux pris sur les ennemis"

(P 645), is based on Omer Talon's récit.[429] The prompt action of Broussel's servant who rallies the crowd (P 646), the attack on the carriage in which Broussel is being transported, the closure of shops and the use of chains (P 646), are inspired by Mme de Motteville[430] and de Retz.[431] Voltaire's only claim to originality here seems to lie in his endeavours to simplify, condense and recount events with all the narrative skill that he is capable of.

In his account of the journée des barricades (P 646), Voltaire shows complete impartiality and there is a total absence of polemical intentions. Moreover, he does his utmost to sift the main facts on which all witnesses agree, and in so doing, he abides by his introductory statement: "Il est difficile de concilier tous les détails rapportés par le cardinal de Retz, Mme de Motteville, l'avocat général Talon, et tant d'autres; mais tous conviennent des principaux points." (P 646). The details of the chancellor's visit to the parlement to overrule its decrees, probably come from Talon,[432] but are also mentioned by Mme de Motteville and Joli. The information concerning the injury to the Duchess of Sully (P 646) is provided by Mme de Motteville.[433] And the protest march organised by the parlement (P 646) is in all likelihood extracted from de Retz's memoirs.[434]

Whilst in the previous récit Voltaire does little more than collate information from various sources, he can definitely claim as his own the subsequent remarks on de Retz's character (P 646-647) and especially those pertaining to the parlement (P 647-648). The paragraph devoted to de Retz amounts less to a portrait as such - portraits being in Voltaire's estimation

unacceptable in history - , than an insight into the psychological make-up of one of the main protagonists in the drama. The lack of real depth is apparent and so is the increasing hostility shown by Voltaire towards the Cardinal in the 1768 edition; the word infâmes in "c'était un homme qui, du sein de la débauche, et languissant encore des suites infâmes qu'elle entraîne, prêchait le peuple..." (P 647), bears witness to this. And the sentence - "son extrême vanité lui faisait entreprendre des crimes téméraires afin qu'on en parlât," added in the Kehl edition - , underlines the fact that Voltaire's bias against de Retz persisted to the very end, for in ascribing to the Cardinal such unworthy motives, the historian presents a distorted and oversimplified view of the cleric's conduct during the Fronde. Despite the fact that de Retz's haughtiness is clearly visible in his memoirs,[435] Voltaire makes no attempt to do justice to the then coadjuteur's efforts to bring both factions together after his initial deplorable conduct. The reading of the source led here to an unbalanced and partisan view of its author, mainly, one feels, because of Voltaire's anticlericalism which gathered strength in the 1760's and later.

The polemical onslaught against the parlement (P 647-648) smacks of the same partiality; the facts postulated stem from Voltaire's own research into the history of this institution and are fairly accurate, but his assessment of the role and legal rights of the bodies of magistrates is both one-sided and unfair. The propagandist wants to appear to be presenting two points of view, that of the allies of the parlement and that of its enemies. Yet the reader is left in no doubt as to Voltaire's

own feelings in the matter: "Cette seule erreur de nom était le prétexte des prétentions ambitieuses d'une compagnie d'hommes de loi, qui tous, pour avoir acheté leurs offices de robe, pensaient tenir la place des conquérants des Gaules et des seigneurs des fiefs de la couronne " (P 647-648). The historical documentation which follows in the text is derived from Voltaire's preparation of L'Histoire du parlement and was added in 1768, but even here the examples chosen are meant to illustrate the magistrates' abuse of power: "Il avait osé donner un arrêt contre Charles VII, et le bannir du royaume; il avait commencé un procès criminel contre Henri III; il avait en tous les temps résisté, autant qu'il l'avait pu, à ses souverains..." (P 648). Whatever claims to originality there might be, belong not to the historian, but to the propagandist.

Even in the first edition, Voltaire seems to have decided half-way through this chapter, that by giving a purely chronological survey of the civil war, he was on well-trodden ground and ran the risk of losing his reader's attention. There is accordingly a marked change of direction after the initial factual account: "On ne veut point répéter ici tout ce qui a été écrit sur ces troubles et copier des livres pour remettre sous les yeux tant de détails alors si chers et si importants et aujourd'hui presque oubliés; mais on doit dire ce qui caractérise l'esprit de la nation, et moins ce qui appartient à toutes les guerres civiles que ce qui distingue celle de la Fronde " (P 648-649). The means which the social historian chose to use to achieve these aims, amount to a collection of often trivial anecdotes which help to ridicule the civil war.

Voltaire's assertion would appear to be a mere pretext for expressing his own predetermined and totally subjective views of the Fronde; he is able to present what he personally considers to be examples of the French nation's frivolous and unworthy conduct. What he claims he wants to avoid - i.e. "copier des livres pour remettre sous les yeux tant de détails alors si chers et si importants et aujourd'hui presque oubliés" - , is precisely what he proceeds to include and one cannot help but agree with La Beaumelle that "cette multitude de petits faits n'est guère précieuse qu'aux petits esprits, comme il l'avoue lui-même."[436]

The rest of chapter IV certainly gives substance to this criticism, as historical facts recede into the background to make room for an increasing number of historiettes and trivia added over a number of years. Thus Voltaire makes a meal of the contempt of the masses for Anne of Austria; in Joli's memoirs he found the ignominious appellation "dame Anne"[437] used by the populace and if this is indicative of the loss of prestige of the crown, it hardly deserves a place in a serious history of the civil war. The vaudevilles and the improper songs are mentioned by Mme de Motteville[438] whom Voltaire goes to the trouble of quoting in 1768: "Mme de Motteville dit, avec sa noble et sincère naïveté, que 'ces insolences faisaient horreur à la reine et que les Parisiens trompés lui faisaient pitié '" (P 649). However, the quotation is far from being correct, for Mme de Motteville had in effect written: "L'iniquité de ceux qui abusaient de la crédulité du peuple lui faisait horreur et les Parisiens trompés lui faisaient pitié." An important

change of emphasis is observed in Le Siècle where Voltaire attributes the insults, not to political schemers, but to 'la canaille' for whom he is always prepared to express his contempt. His attitude to quotations remains woefully cavalier, nor does he insert a precise reference to the source, although he has the means to do so.

The flight of the queen's household from Paris is recounted by Mme de Motteville too, and here one has an example of Voltaire's keen eye for striking details. "La cour," says Voltaire, "coucha sur la paille" (P 649), a particularly picturesque detail which is based on Mme de Motteville's récit: "Madame la duchesse d'Orléans coucha une nuit sur la paille, et Mademoiselle aussi. Tous ceux qui avaient suivi la cour eurent la même destinée."[439] An inscription in Voltaire's hand in his copy of the source - "Madelle sur la paille" - almost constitutes the first draft of the final text and shows the importance he attached to this detail. He also found in the same source further references to the sad plight of the royal family; e.g. Mme de Motteville reported that "on fut obligé de mettre les pierreries de la couronne en gage,"[440] and Voltaire followed suit, having summed up the fact in the Notebooks.[441] If he exaggerates the desperate situation in which the royal party found itself at the time, as Bourgeois indicates,[442] it is partly because he wants to overdramatise the incident for literary reasons, partly because he allows himself to be swayed by his own royalist feelings and his indignation, and partly also because he makes no allowances for Mme de Motteville's own partiality in the matter and her tendentious portrayal of

events. Other details come from the same source; e.g. "le roi manqua souvent du nécessaire"[443] (P 649). From de Retz, Voltaire learnt that Louis's aunt "était réduite aux extrêmités" (P 649), and that her daughter had to remain in bed for lack of fuel.[444] Admittedly such anecdotal details serve to convey the atmosphere and the spirit of the Fronde, but Voltaire is obviously intent on using them as a basis for an attack on the fickle and dangerous populace capable of inflicting real hardships on the young Louis and his relatives.

Voltaire could rightly claim to have sought in his sources a large number of essential facts about the Fronde; e.g. the list of Frondeurs (P 650) was furnished by de Retz;[445] the decision of the parlement to raise an army (P 650) comes from Mme de Motteville;[446] the personal contribution made by twenty councillors, to the value of 15,000 livres (P 650), was reported by Joli.[447] Yet throughout, the tone remains satirical and the main thesis is developed through carefully selected anecdotes; that of the "régiment de Corinthe" (P 651), borrowed from Joli,[448] adds very little of note and simply plays into the hands of the propagandist determined to denigrate the Frondeurs. Joli's treatment of Condé's attack on the bourgeois "avec huit mille soldats" (P 651) is both serious and impartial.[449] By inserting a tongue-in-cheek remark at the beginning of the paragraph - "Sans les noms de roi de France, de grand Condé, de capitale du royaume, cette guerre de la Fronde eût été aussi ridicule que celle des Barberins; on ne savait pourquoi on était en armes" (P 651) - , Voltaire puts the borrowed information in

a given perspective. Furthermore, by omitting the circumstances and by substituting "assiégea cent mille bourgeois" for Joli's "attaque la ville," he discredits the whole episode through the reductio ad absurdum technique. Finally, he makes full use of Joli's reference to the defeat of the régiment de Corinthe; he read in the source: "Le chevalier de Sévigné... ayant rencontré un parti des ennemis, il fut battu, et n'en fit que rire, cet échec ayant été appelé par raillerie 'la première aux Corinthiens.'"[450] In his text, Voltaire sets out to augment the ridicule: "Tout se tournait en raillerie; le régiment de Corinthe ayant été battu par un petit parti, on appela cet échec 'la première aux Corinthiens '" (P 651). In order to trivialise the episode, the propagandist adapts the material by stressing the fact that the defeat was at the hands of "un petit parti", and presents the anecdote as yet another example of the uncalled for frivolity which characterised the mood of the nation in such a serious crisis. No doubt the appellation also appealed to him because of the irreverent allusion to St. Paul's writings.

The caricature of the Frondeurs and the satirical portrayal of the Fronde are achieved, from that point onwards, through an accumulation of trivial details and anecdotes which should hardly enter into a discussion of what was in fact a vital moment in French history. The anecdote of the "quinze-vingts" (P 651) is derived from Joli;[451] that concerning Beaufort, known as the "roi des halles", from Mme de Motteville[452] and that of the dwarf (P 651) from Mme de Nemours's memoirs, as Voltaire himself readily admits: "La duchesse de Nemours rapporte, dans ses Mémoires, que le prince de Condé présenta à la reine un petit nain bossu, armé

de pied en cap: 'Voilà, dit-il, le généralissime de l'armée parisienne '" (P 651). The paragraph was appended in 1761 after a second reading of the source which states: "Il revint... tenant par la main un petit bossu qu'il lui menait paré d'une casaque dorée. Voilà, lui dit-il, Madame, en faisant de grands éclats de rire, le Généralissime de Paris."[453] To make the anecdote more titillating, Voltaire alters some unimportant details; e.g. "un petit bossu" becomes "un petit nain bossu". But he also has no hesitation in modifying Condé's speech to the queen. What is more reprehensible still is that Voltaire misquotes his source; Mme de Nemours, he assures us, "ajoute qu'il disait que cette guerre ne méritait d'être écrite qu'en vers burlesques" (P 651); in fact the lady had written: "Ce qui fit dire à M. le Prince que cette guerre ne pouvait être bien décrite qu'en vers burlesques."[454] One must clearly question the validity of such minutiae which, albeit amusing, in the end are of interest to Voltaire only in so far as they reinforce his totally distorted and one-sided vision of the civil war. Confronted with this catalogue of petits faits, the reader is encouraged to lose sight of the serious issues at stake and is invited to remember the Fronde as the "guerre des pots de chambre", as Condé called it (P 651), to Voltaire's obvious delight.

This quest for light-hearted and satirical anecdotes persists even after 1761, though perhaps to a lesser extent. Voltaire's presentation of the incident where the herald is sent by the king to address the parlement (P 652) was probably inspired by de Retz's memoirs,[455] but by omitting the serious and lengthy debates that the herald's arrival provoked amongst the magistrates

to determine their position vis-à-vis the king, and by leaving out the circumstances, the historian unfairly reduces the whole episode to the same level of absurdity as the other minutiae. This is also true of the affaire des tabourets (P 652), which Mme de Motteville discusses in a sober and serious manner, while giving an insight into the intrigues which went on in the background.[456] Voltaire turns the spotlight on the disproportion between the cause - "c'était pour un tabouret que la reine avait accordé à Mme de Pons" (P 652) - and the effect - the assembly of nobles, in order to give a deliberately distorted view of the political climate at the time and make the incident fit in better with his main thesis which he never grows tired of reiterating: "peut-être n'y a-t-il jamais eu une preuve plus sensible de la légèreté d'esprit qu'on reprochait aux Français " (P 652).

The author's polemical intentions consequently dictate the inclusion of a variety of material from different sources; to demonstrate how "les femmes étaient à la tête des factions" (P 652), Voltaire readily adapts what he comes across. This statement in itself amounts, of course, to a gross over-simplification, since Voltaire himself focuses attention on the leadership of de Retz, Condé, the Duc de Longueville. An anecdote which he found in the Mémoires de Mademoiselle[457] served his purpose well and was accordingly inserted in 1768: "On voit dans les Mémoires de Mademoiselle, une lettre de Gaston d'Orléans, son père, dont l'adresse est: 'A mesdames les comtesses, maréchales de camp dans l'armée de ma fille contre le Mazarin '" (P 653). Whilst the quotation is exact, these trivia

contribute nothing significant to the social history of the Fronde. Due to Voltaire's tendency to use anecdotal details out of context, what is a mere boutade is blown up out of all proportion to become part of the caricature of the civil war. Nor could the historian justify such inane details as the words written by Condé to Mazarin - "All' illustrissimo signor Faquino" - , for which Voltaire was indebted to Joli,[458] or Condé's address to the Cardinal - "Adieu Mars."[459] They might exemplify the spirit of frivolity in which the Fronde was fought, but it is difficult to defend Voltaire against La Beaumelle's charge that by giving such importance to trivialities, he has ignored other more important facts.[460]

His approach does not differ radically in 1768, when he is still on the look-out for material which can be turned to advantage in his polemical onslaught on the Frondeurs. He draws upon Joli's memoirs for additional examples of their absurd conduct; Joli's decision to fake an injury and his claim that an attempt was made on his life,[461] as well as the attack on Condé[462] (P 654), are fully exploited to these ends. The neologism 'Joliade renforcée', which intensifies the ridicule, comes not from Joli, but from Nemours.[463] Voltaire is mistaken in applying the terms to the attempt on Condé's life; Mme de Nemours states quite categorically that it was the death of a valet which gave rise to this witticism. Moreover, in order to be in a better position to impose his own slanted interpretation on these events, Voltaire deliberately ignores Joli's sincere repentance and admission of guilt. By giving the details out of context, he adapts them according to his preconceived thesis, hardly what one

would expect from the man of truth.

In addition to the attack on the Frondeurs, the anti-religious propaganda comes very much to the fore in the 1768 edition, as Voltaire the partisan is eager to provide evidence of the clergy's hypocrisy during the civil war. From Gourville,[464] he learnt that the plan to free the Princes de Condé and Conti was foiled because of the abuse of the confessional (P 656). Lenet[465] furnished him with the anecdote about the endeavours of the "doyen de la Sainte-Chapelle" to rally preachers under Condé's banner (P 656), which, to Voltaire, illustrates "combien, dans ces temps de licence effrénée, de troubles, d'iniquités, et même d'impiétés, les prêtres avaient encore de pouvoir sur les esprits" (P 656). He implies that the clergy was at least partly to blame for the instability and the decadence of the times. Nor does the anti-religious campaign relent in the 1775 edition, where the propagandist includes a paragraph, based on Villefore's Vie de la duchesse de Longueville (1739), which describes, with Voltaire's special brand of irony, how the queen mother and Louis XIV "prièrent Dieu dévotement ensemble pour l'heureux succès de cette expédition", i.e. the unlawful arrest of Condé and Conti (P 655).

Polemical considerations do not, however, account for all the addenda in the later editions; there was also a genuine attempt on Voltaire's part to supplement the existing historical data and make the tableau more authentic and complete. Thus towards the end of the chapter, he provided additional information in 1768 on the imprisonment of Condé and Conti (P 655), which in all likelihood stems from de Retz's memoirs.[466] The account of

Mazarin's trip to Le Havre to release the princes (P 656) becomes much fuller in the 1768 edition, following Voltaire's second reading of Mme de Motteville's memoirs.[467] Consequently, not only does the continuing documentation lend more weight to the satirical portrayal of the Fronde, it also adds precision and accuracy to the historical survey of events.

From what precedes, one may conclude that Voltaire's method in this chapter does not differ radically from his approach elsewhere in the work. He starts off with one or two basic sources, the memoirs of de Retz and of Madame de Motteville, which he then supplements by seeking out unusual details in other writings. He proves himself capable of the highest degree of objectivity; e.g. when he is content to give the facts about the journée des barricades (P 646). But more often than not, his personal bias against the parlement, the rebels and the populace is clearly visible, either when he presents events in such a way as to give a deliberately false perspective, or through slanted comments, or again by relying on various polemical techniques. Mostly it is in the selection of anecdotal details, given out of context and adapted to reinforce his main thesis, that the propagandist is in evidence; the suppression of circumstances and the blurring of important issues at stake achieve the required effect of caricaturing the main opponents of the court. Despite the essential historical framework, what we have in this chapter is less an historical tableau, than a satirical one, although Voltaire seems to be aware, as late as 1768, of the need to consolidate the purely historical aspects.

For all the anecdotes and minutiae, Voltaire is indebted to written sources and mainly to courtiers' memoirs, and oral documentation plays very little part in this chapter. He adapts the amassed details to give more sting to the anecdotes, to enliven and embellish them. He does quote his sources at times, notably Nemours (P 651), Motteville (P 649), Lenet (P 656), without ever giving precise references, but as a rule, he integrates the facts and details into his narrative and does not acknowledge his debt to the authors whose works he consults. When he deems it useful, he has recourse to eyewitnesses' writings to prove his point (e.g. P 649), but his inconsistent attitude is shown by the confidence he expresses in La Porte whom he accuses elsewhere of telling lies. The impression one gathers from his handling of eyewitnesses' reports is that he chooses to believe witnesses when it is in his interest to do so. When he quotes from sources, he is guilty of carelessness (e.g. P 649) and indulges in poetic licence (P 652). Above all, Voltaire responds in this chapter, first and foremost, as a partisan and a propagandist, as a royalist, a lover of stability, a staunch opponent of the parlements, and a critic of the populace. He fails to heed his own warning about the dangers of personal bias in numerous accounts of the civil war: "Il n'y a que trop de traits, dans ces mémoires, ou falsifiés par la passion, ou rapportés sur des bruits populaires " (P 642). He shows himself to be on his guard against the prejudices of some, like de Retz, but not his own, and he takes no account of Mme de Motteville's royalist parti-pris because he shares her views.

Finally, it remains to determine Voltaire's original and

personal contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the Fronde. In view of the considerable literature that was devoted to the civil war before Le Siècle, it is perhaps not surprising that strictly in terms of historical facts, he uncovers little that is relatively new. What is novel is his own subjective, albeit unfair, assessment of those events, his polemical and philosophical pronouncements. His case for originality rests chiefly on such passages as those dealing with the economic causes of the civil war (P 644), the character of de Retz (P 646-647), his tendentious explanations of the popularity of the parlement (P 647-648), the parallel he draws between the civil war in France and England (P 652) - that is, not in the work of the historian, but of the propagandist and the philosopher. With such a vast amount of material at his disposal, Voltaire's greatest merit in the end consists in having sifted through contradictory reports and in having integrated what he borrows into a unified and exciting narrative, a good example of this being his account of Broussel's arrest (P 645-646). He judiciously selects vivid details and omits cumbersome ones, such as the lengthy debates of the parlement,[468] the constant comings and goings between the parlement and the court,[469] and between the magistrates and Mazarin,[470] which he had come across in Motteville's memoirs and noted carefully, but which he ostensibly judged likely to slow down his narrative. If originality in history lies in discovering new and vital information, then Voltaire cannot claim to have achieved this. But if, as most historians would agree, it amounts to putting well-known events in a new and enriched perspective, then Voltaire's effort should

be applauded. For interpretation enters into history at every stage, as E.H. Carr has asserted: "The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a fallacy..."[471] And he rightly adds: "The historian and the facts of history are necessary to one another. The historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without the historian are dead and meaningless."[472] Voltaire's tableau of the Fronde is by no means complete, nor always accurate and precise enough, but it is essentially his own.

Chapter III: Notes

1. Voltaire, p.206.
2. Recherches sur les origines du matérialisme historique, p.109.
3. Voltaire, p.303.
4. 'Voltaire et Le Siècle de Louis XIV,' Temps, 30 September, 1930.
5. Voltaire, p.54.
6. Voltaire, p.46.
7. Studies, vol. CLXXII, 1978, p.318.
8. see chapter VI.
9. 'Voltaire's use of sources in writing history,' Historical Bulletin, vol. 29, 1951, pp.183-197.
10. Ibid., p.197.
11. Classiques Garnier edition, p.xxv.
12. Ibid., p.xxii.
13. Ibid., p.xxiv.
14. Introduction, La Henriade, Voltaire, Oeuvres Complètes, Geneva, 1970, vol. 2, p.162 ff.
15. Ibid., p.172.
16. Pomeau comments in his introduction to L'Essai: "Voltaire a trop méprisé les habitudes minutieuses de l'érudition. Il rompt avec la tradition pédante des références marginales. Il lui substitue une pratique décevante: des références évasives, ou pas de référence du tout." op.cit., p.xxii.
17. In Mélanges offerts à M. Charles Andler, Strasbourg University, pp.171-195.
18. R.H.L., vol. 45, 1938, pp.346-71.
19. This was also Voltaire's practice for La Henriade; see Owen Taylor, op.cit., p.168. Voltaire was also to do the same for L'Essai; see Pomeau's introduction, p.iv.

20. The Search for a new Voltaire, pp.64-70.

21. e.g. /Récits/ des fêtes galantes tenues à Versailles; Le grand carrousel, used for chapters XXV-XXVIII, Wade, op.cit., p.66.

22. Les Mémoires de littérature du P. Desmolets, Ibid.

23. L'Histoire des cinq propositions de Jansénius (1699); La Paix de Clément IX (P. Quesnel, 1700); Relation du Quiétisme; Ibid.

24. Ibid., pp.68-69.

25. Rütten and Loening, Berlin, 1966, pp.95-102.

26. e.g. Gourville (Besterman, p.210); La F /La Fare/ (Ibid., p.227); Turenne /Ramsey/ (Ibid., p.250).

27. see chapter I.

28. e.g. Choisy (Caussy, op.cit., I, p.297); Hénault (Ibid., p.299); Omer Talon (Ibid., p.301); Torci (Ibid., p.311).

29. Paris, Picard, 1913, vols. 1-8.

30. Paris, Hachette, 1888.

31. see P.M.L.A., vol. XLIII, 1928, p.996 ff.

32. Studies, vol.CXXIV, 1974, pp.7-132.

33. see S.S.B. Taylor, 'Voltaire's Marginalia: a preview of the forthcoming edition,' Studies, vol. CXXV, 1975, p.173.

34. Ibid., p.174.

35. Ibid., p.173.

36. Ibid., p.174.

37. This danger has been noted by O. Taylor in his introduction to La Henriade, op.cit., p.168, and by S.S.B. Taylor, 'Voltaire's Marginalia', op.cit., p.176.

38. Macmillan, 1973, p.131.

39. Ibid., p.143.

40. e.g. Discours sur l'Histoire de Charles XII (1731); 'Préface Historique et critique à l'Histoire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand' (1759).

41. M, XIX, pp.346-370.

42. M, XIX, pp.370-373.

43. e.g. Le Pyrrhonisme de l'histoire (1769), M, XXVII, p.244.

44. see D 1638, D 3306.

45. Voltaire Historian, p.141.

46. see Brumfitt (Ibid., p.33) on the influence of Bayle, Fontenelle (p.35), Daniel (p.28), Rapin de Thoyras (p.29), Fénelon (p.37), Bolingbroke (p.41), Saint-Réal (p.30) etc.

47. Oeuvres, vol. II, p.287.

48. Pierre Droz, 1934, p.30.

49. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, pp.33, 36; 'Historical Pyrrhonism and Enlightenment Historiography in France', in Literature and History in the age of ideas, p.15 ff.; Sakmann, Paul, 'The problems of historical method and of philosophy of history in Voltaire ' (1906), p.29.

50. A view shared by his contemporaries; e.g. Lenglet du Fresnoy in his Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, first published in 1713 and reprinted many times; see Paris, Debure, 1772, vol. I, p.128.

51. P 47. See also Voltaire's letter to Shuvalov of May 14, 1760: "Il faut surtout que l'histoire puisse fouiller dans le cabinet sans pourtant abuser de cette permission" (D 8907).

52. D 2593.

53. e.g. (a) Rapin, op.cit., p.244; (b) Boulainvilliers, in Considérations sur les difficultés d'écrire une histoire de France exacte, Etat de la France, 1727, vol. 3, p.5; (c) Griffet, Traité des différentes sortes, de preuves qui servent à établir la vérité de l'histoire, Liège, 1759, p.1.

54. M, XXVII, p.246.

55. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.18; Discours sur Charles XII, P 55; Préface à Charles XII, P 340-1.

56. Juvenel, Principes de l'histoire, Paris, 1733, p.165; Rapin, op.cit., p.244; Griffet, op.cit., p.90.

57. A view echoed by Griffet, op.cit., p.146.

58. Le Siècle, P 890. See Charles XII, P 55. Lenglet makes a similar claim, op.cit., vol. I, p.139, as does Griffet, op.cit., I, p.2.

59. see Griffet, op.cit., p.151.

60. M, XIX, p.348.

61. see chapter II.

62. see above.

63. Préface historique et critique to Pierre Le Grand: "Jamais l'histoire n'eut plus besoin de preuves authentiques que dans nos jours, où l'on trafique si insolemment du mensonge" (P 340).

64. see the article 'Cassius', Dictionnaire Historique, Rotterdam, 1720, vol. I, p.786, note (a).

65. In his Histoire des oracles.

66. e.g. Boulainvilliers, op.cit., vol. III, p.5; Griffet, op.cit., p.7.

67. op.cit., vol. III, p.6; see also Rapin, op.cit., p.232 and Griffet, op.cit., p.3.

68. see Günter Pflug, 'The Development of historical method in the 18th century' (1954), in Enlightenment Historiography, pp.1-23.

69. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.139.

70. Remarques sur l'histoire, P 43.

71. Voltaire, p.46. See also Suzanne Gearhart, 'Rationality and the text: a study of Voltaire's historiography,' Studies, vol. CXL, 1975, pp.21-43.

72. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.100; Sakmann, op.cit., p.58; and R. Pomeau's introduction to L'Essai, p.xxi.

73. Daniel, op.cit., p.xcviii.

74. Lenglet, op.cit., p.180.

75. see J.B. Black, The Art of history, p.52; Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.140; Sakmann, op.cit., p.35.

76. op.cit., p.lxxii.

77. op.cit., vol. I, p.178.

78. op.cit., p.165.

79. op.cit., p.165.

80. op.cit., chapter XX.

81. op.cit., p.lxxxviii.

82. Article 'Dupleix', Catalogue des écrivains, Le Siècle, P 1160.

83. P 341.

84. op.cit., p.xxiv.

85. Letter to Shuvalov, November 14, 1761, D 10154.

86. p.77.

87. op.cit., p.204.

88. Voltaire, p.211.

89. Voltaire Historian, p.131. See also Brailsford, op.cit., p.53.

90. p.xxxvii ff.

91. N.R. Johnson thinks he did: "Voltaire and Marmontel were also able to consult Saint-Simon who in turn had been able to use the Journal de Dangeau," Studies, vol. CLXXII, p.36.

92. D 1642.

93. D 4784.

94. see chapter II and D 4993.

95. D 4881.

96. see Bourgeois, op.cit., p.780, note 2.

97. D 1642.

98. Also noted by Lanson, 'Notes pour servir' etc., op.cit., p.180.

99. e.g. vol. II, pp.314, 324, 330, 351, 362.

100. e.g. vol. III, p.46.

101. BV 1930, vols. 1-3, 1718, chez Michel Bohm. Edition used: Bohm, 1722.

102. op.cit., p.177.

103. see Bonn (P 774 / Larrey, vol. V, p.279); Eckeren (P 828 / Larrey, vol. VIII, p.240); Landau (P 835 / Larrey, vol. VIII, p.252); Trarbach (P 835 / Larrey, vol. VIII, p.407) etc.

104. Larrey, vol. VI, p.21.

105. Vol. VIII, p.571.

106. Larrey, vol. V, p.153; Le Siècle, P 755.

107. Larrey, vol. VIII, p.151; Le Siècle, P 820.

108. Larrey, vol. V, p.445. Sinet in Voltaire's copy (vol. II, pp.152-153).

109. Vol. V, p.379.

110. see Voltaire's letter to Dubos (P 606).

111. Vol. VI, pp.9-10.

112. Vol. VIII, p.225.

113. Vol. VIII, p.225.

114. see below.

115. Vol. VII, p.137.

116. Vol. V, p.381.

117. Larrey, vol. IV, p.225.

118. Ibid., vol. IV, p.128.

119. Michaud, Biographie Universelle, vol. 24, p.542.

120. Voltaire Historian, p.19.

121. see Voltaire's letter to d'Argental, Berlin, 1752: "Quand le mensonge paraît à Paris sous les noms de Limiers, de La Martinière, de Larrey et de tant d'autres, la vérité peut paraître sous le mien" (D 4787), and Voltaire to Hénault, D 4761.

122. 'Notes pour servir à l'étude des chapitres 35-39', p.184.

123. BV 2119.

124. 'Voltaire's Marginalia', op.cit., p.175.

125. BV 2119, vol. II, pp.379-380.

126. Vol. VIII, pp.50-51.

127. Amsterdam, 1717, vol. V, p.582.

128. Limiers, vol. II, p.369.

129. Petitot, vol. 63, p.272.

130. Vol. II, p.369.

131. Petitot, vol. 63, p.272.

132. Limiers, vol. II, p.369.

133. Ibid.

134. Vol. II, p.394.

135. Limiers, vol. II, p.395 / P 690.

136. Limiers, vol. II, p.395.

137. Ibid.

138. Statistics are borrowed; e.g. the size of Louis XIV's army (Limiers, vol. II, p.558 / P 697).

139. Limiers, vol. II, p.558 / P 698.

140. Vol. II, p.559.

141. Limiers, vol. II, p.220 / P 681.

142. Ibid.

143. Limiers, vol. IV, p.223.

144. Limiers, vol. IV, p.201 / P 961.

145. Limiers, vol. IV, p.82 / P 972.

146. Limiers, vol. I, p.338.

147. Limiers, vol. II, p.1.

148. Limiers, vol. III, pp.1-2.

149. Limiers, vol. IV, pp.12-17.

150. e.g. the speech of the Doge of Genoa to Louis XIV (vol. IV, p.126).

151. e.g. the detailed physical portrait of Louis XIV (vol. II, p.317).

152. Limiers, vol. II, pp.224-234.

153. Limiers, vol. III, pp.536-562.

154. Limiers, vol. V, pp.119-169.

155. e.g. Limiers, vol. II, p.134; vol. III, pp.86-93; vol. V, pp.506, 584, 590-594; vol. VII, pp.229-230.

156. see Lanson, 'Notes pour servir...,' op.cit., p.180.

157. BV 2882: 1746 edition. Edition used: Avignon, 1742, 3 vols.

158. Reboulet, vol. III, p.206.

159. e.g. the treaty of the Emperor and the Protestants (BV 2882, vol. I, pp.14-15; 1742 edition, vol. I, p.10 / P 636).

160. Sinet (BV, vol. III, p.158 / 1742 edition, vol. I, p.522).

161. BV, vol. IV, p.292; 1742 edition, vol. II, p.166.

162. Ibid.

163. Reboulet, vol. II, p.23 / P 921.

164. Reboulet, vol. II, p.60 / P 720.

165. Reboulet, vol. II, p.287 / P 750.

166. This sinet bears the inscription in Voltaire's hand: '/Retrait/e /d/e prince de condé' (BV, vol. V, p.294 / 1742 edition, vol. II, p.354).

167. BV, vol. II, pp.322-3 / 1742 edition, vol. I, p.445.

168. Charles Jean François Hénault, Président au Parlement de Paris (1685-1770), also wrote the Histoire de l'établissement des Français dans les Gaules, published in Paris in 1801, based on the original manuscript.

169. D 2983.

170. D 4419.

171. D 4525.

172. Le Président Hénault, op.cit., p.268.

173. Ibid., p.269.

174. Ibid., p.270.

175. Ibid., p.272.

176. Paris, 5e édition, 2 vols. in-8, BV 1618.

177. Paris, Prault, 3 vols. in-4, BV 1619.

178. Ibid., vol. I, p.23.

179. Ibid., vol. I, p.95.

180. Ibid., vol. I, p.301.

181. Ibid., vol. I, p.497.

182. Ibid., vol. II, p.718.

183. see Lion, op.cit., p.126.

184. Ibid., p.148.

185. Ibid., p.150.

186. 1768 edition, vol. III, p.654.

187. Vol. III, p.760.

188. Prault, 1749, p.457.

189. e.g. in the case of Louis Dauphin (P 1110-1111), Voltaire simply appends the date of his birth; similarly with La Vallière's children (Hénault, p.457 / P 1111).

190. Ibid., p.457.

191. e.g. Concerning Urbain VII, Hénault wrote, like Voltaire: "Ce fut lui qui donna aux cardinaux le titre d'éminence." (Hénault, p.457 / P 1115)

192. Hénault, p.457 / P 1116.

193. e.g. see D 4525.

194. 1749 edition, vol. I, pp.496-7.

195. Ibid., vol. I, p.523.

196. Ibid., vol. I, p.545.

197. BV, vol. II, p.675 / 1744 edition, vol. III, p.833.

198. see Lion, op.cit., p.321: "Sous sa forme commode, claire, limpide, avec son récit rapide et d'une lecture facile à tous, grands et petits, c'est encore un livre suggestif. Il ouvre des aperçus sur toutes choses. Il fait penser."

199. Of Pellisson, Voltaire writes in Le Siècle that he is "plus capable de bien écrire que de ne pas flatter " (P 713).

200. BV 2682.

201. Ibid., vol. I, pp.26-27.

202. Ibid., vol. I, p.48 / P 709.

203. Ibid., vol. I, p.77 / P 715.

204. Ibid., vol. I, p.89 / P 715.

205. Ibid., vol. I, p.140 / P 716. The name of Nogent was added in 1753, following a second perusal of the Lettres Historiques to check the width of the Rhine at the point where the French army crossed.

206. Ibid., vol. I, p.143 / P 716.

207. Ibid., vol. I, p.137.

208. see D 4784.

209. Vol. I, p.180.

210. Sinet in Voltaire's copy (BV 2682, vol. II, p.90).

211. Vol. I, p.153.

212. This edition is to be found in Voltaire's private library (BV 2681).

213. see chapter I.

214. Pellisson, vol. I, pp.26-27 /P 964.

215. Pellisson, vol. II, p.261 / P 701.

216. Pellisson, vol. II, p.334 / P 702.

217. Pellisson, vol. III, p.226 / P 725.

218. op.cit., vol. I, p.224. See chapter II.

219. D 875. In another letter (D 882), he accuses Ramsey of being too intent on panegyrics.

220. see Notebooks (Besterman, p.250): "Faits tirez /sic/ de l'histoire de Turenne."

221. Paris, Mazières, 1735, vol. I, p.95 / P 693.

222. Ibid., vol. I, pp.96-97 / P 639.

223. Ibid., vol. I, p.99.

224. Ramsey, vol. I, p.172 / P 641.

225. Ramsey, vol. I, p.419 / P 701.

226. Ramsey, vol. I, p.376.

227. Ramsey, vol. I, p.423.

228. op.cit., vol. II, p.636.

229. see Voltaire to Caumont, D 905.

230. Chez Pierre Gosse, 2 vols. Edition used: Société d'Histoire de France, vol. 218, parts I, II, III.

231. BV 3443.

232. D 837.

233. e.g. see Siege of Oudenarde (S.H.F., I, p.23 / P 733); Trèves (S.H.F., I, p.29 / P 736); Courtrai (S.H.F., I, p.60 / P 754); Spirebach (S.H.F., I, p.152 / P 781).

234. BV 3443, vol. I, p.21; S.H.F., I, p.12; P 823.

235. BV 3443, vol. I, p.89; S.H.F., I, p.53; P 823.

236. S.H.F., I, p.349.

237. Voltaire possessed the second French edition of La Haye, 1693 (BV 3255).

238. Besterman, p.473.

239. It bears only one marker (BV 3255, pp.182-3).

240. Petitot, vol. 64, p.264.

241. In Voltaire's copy (the 1743 edition, London, Nourse, BV 1239) are to be found three notes muettes of which only one indicates a borrowing.

242. Vol. I, p.363.

243. Voltaire's copy (Paris, Durand, 1753, BV 230) contains three sinets, of which not one marks a borrowing.

244. see chapter I.

245. Vol. III, pp.382-3; sinet inscribed in Voltaire's hand: "Lettre sur la corruption des Hollandais."

246. see chapter II.

247. Born in Paris on September 14, 1665, Jean Baptiste Colbert, marquis de Torci, Croissy etc., was the nephew of the illustrious Colbert and the son of the ambassador of Louis XIV at Aix-La-Chapelle. Torci became Secretary of State and the king's plenipotentiary in Spain and at Bodegrave, Gertruidenberg and Utrecht. He became a member of the regency council after Louis XIV's death, and died in 1746.

248. D 1574.

249. 23 /May 1756/, D 6871.

250. D 6952.

251. BV 807, La Haye, 1756.

252. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.63; Petitot, vol. 67, p.49. These facts were present in 51 (vol. I, p.320 / P 800).

253. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.128; Petitot, vol. 67, p.84.

254. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.152; Petitot, vol. 67, p.96; P 803.

255. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.82; Petitot, vol. 67, p.60; P 797.

256. 1751 edition, vol. I, p.316.

257. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.68 (papillon and sinet); Petitot, vol. 67, p.52.

258. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.130 (papillon); Petitot, vol. 67, p.85.

259. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.74 (papillon and sinet); Petitot, vol. 67, p.55.

260. 1756 edition, vol. I, pp.26-27 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 67, p.31.

261. 1756 edition, vol. I, pp.56-57 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 67, p.46.

262. Ibid.

263. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.134 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 67, p.87.

264. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.36; Petitot, vol. 67, p.35.

265. On this point, see O'Connor, op.cit., pp.187-8.

266. Petitot, vol. 67, p.19.

267. 1756 edition, vol. I, pp.242-3 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 67, p.371.

268. e.g. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.372 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 67, p.408.

269. e.g. (1756 edition, vol. II, pp.152-3 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 67, p.286) Eugène's request to Louis XIV that his army should pass through France.

270. 1756 edition, vol. I, p.263 (sinet inscribed in Voltaire's hand: "Lettre circulaire de Louis XIV"); Petitot, vol. 67, p.349.

271. e.g. He notes on several occasions the bribes offered by Torci to Marlborough: (a) 1756 edition, Vol. I, p.99 (sinet and papillon); Petitot, vol. 67, p.259; (b) 1756 edition, vol. I, p.100 (sinet and papillon); Petitot, vol. 67, p.260; (c) 1756 edition, vol. I, p.238 (sinet inscribed: "Louis XIV offre 3 mons à Marlborough"); Petitot, vol. 67, p.286.

272. 1756 edition, vol. II, p.2 (sinet and papillon); Petitot, vol. 67, p.210.

273. 1756 edition, vol. III, pp.32-33; Petitot, vol. 68, p.17.

274. Rotterdam, G. Fritsch; reprinted in 1745 and 1749 in Amsterdam by Bernard.

275. BV 1842, Rotterdam, 1716, pp.188-189; Petitot, vol. 65, p.236. Similarly one finds in Voltaire's copy of Reboulet's history at the point where the latter quotes La Fare: "Sottises sur Me [Maintenon]" (vol. V, pp.212-213).

276. La Fare, Petitot, vol. 65, p.236.

277. Ibid.

278. Besterman, p.227.

279. Petitot, vol. 65, p.237.

280. Petitot, vol. 65, p.237.

281. Ibid.

282. Petitot, vol. 65, p.238.

283. 1716 edition, pp.166-167; Petitot, vol. 65, p.224.

284. 1716 edition, p.74; Petitot, vol. 65, p.173.

285. 1716 edition, pp.132-3; Petitot, vol. 65, p.206.

286. Petitot, vol. 65, p.170 / P 716.

287. Besterman, p.210.

288. Paris, E. Ganeau, 1724, 2 vols. in-12 (BV 1507).

289. see Caussy, op.cit., I, p.307.

290. 1724 edition, vol. II, p.62; Caussy, I, p.308.

291. 1724 edition, vol. II, p.274; Caussy, I, p.308.

292. S.H.F., I, p.38.

293. S.H.F., II, p.57.

294. Notebooks, Besterman, p.210; Caussy, I, p.310.

295. 1724 edition, vol. II, pp.320-1; S.H.F., II, p.165.

296. Besterman, p.210.

297. Amsterdam, Changuion, 1739, 6 vols. (BV 2530).

298. Ibid., vol. I, p.13 (papillon) / Pomeau's edition of L'Essai, vol. II, p.610.

299. Ibid., vol. I, p.66 (page cornée and papillon); L'Essai, vol. II, p.611.

300. Ibid., vol. I, pp.392-3.

301. e.g. the execution of a nobleman in Bordeaux (P 663; 1739 edition, vol. IV, p.214 (sinet and papillon); Petitot, vol. 39, p.70).

302. 1739 edition, vol. I, pp.400-401 (two papillons); Petitot, vol. 37, p.208.

303. 1739 edition, vol. V, pp.124-125 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 39, p.308.

304. 1739 edition, vol. V, pp.158-159 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 39,

p.333. Voltaire also included a relevant note in his Notebooks (p.209).

305. 1739 edition, vol. V, p.270 (sinet and papillon); Petitot, vol. 39, p.415.

306. 1739 edition, vol. VI, p.58 (papillon); Petitot, vol. 40, p.80.

307. BV 2507, Amsterdam, Bernard, 1730; e.g. (a) vol. V, pp.140-1; Petitot, vol. 43, p.122; (b) vol. V, pp.172-3; Petitot, vol. 43, p.157; (c) vol. V, p.184; Petitot, vol. 43, p.170.

308. Besterman, p.443.

309. Petitot, vol. 43, p.284.

310. Petitot, vol. 43, p.275.

311. see Bourgeois, p.489, note 1.

312. Besterman, p.443.

313. Petitot, vol. 64, p.449.

314. Petitot, vol. 65, p.59.

315. Voltaire's copy (BV 1846): Amsterdam, 1742, vol. II, pp.120-121 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 65, p.63.

316. 1742 edition, vol. II, pp.144-5 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 65, p.76.

317. see Voltaire's letter to Dubos (P 606).

318. D 4817. See also (D6935) Voltaire to d'Argental: "Un huissier y trouverait beaucoup à apprendre; un historien n'y aurait pas grand profit à faire. Je ne veux que des vérités utiles."

319. Besterman, p.227.

320. M, XXVIII.

321. Ibid., p.252.

322. see Biographie Universelle, op.cit., vol. 10, p.98.

323. Paris, Treuttel, 1817, 3 vols.

324. Ibid., vol. I, p.17.

325. Ibid., vol. I, p.27.

326. Ibid., vol. I, p.49.

327. Besterman, p.214.

328. see Biographie Universelle, vol. I, p.584.

329. Vol. I, p.62.

330. Besterman, p.212.

331. Vol. I, p.130.

332. Besterman, p.216.

333. Studies, vol. CLXXII, p.42.

334. Vol. I, p.146.

335. Besterman, p.216.

336. see Johnson, op.cit., p.179.

337. Vol. I, p.150.

338. Besterman, p.217.

339. Dangeau, Vol. I, p.173.

340. Besterman, p.218.

341. The Anti-philosophers, Macmillan, 1970, p.25.

342. Dangeau, vol. III, p.113.

343. op.cit., p.87.

344. Ibid., p.88.

345. La Cour de Louis XIV, Nelson, p.289.

346. N.R. Johnson, op.cit., p.89.

347. Ibid., p.89.

348. Dangeau, vol. II, p.286.

349. Dangeau, vol. II, p.161.

350. Besterman, p.226.

351. La Porte, Mémoires, Petitot, vol. 59, p.433.

352. Mémoires, Petitot, vol. 63, p.160.

353. Vol. II, p.535.

354. Vol. III, p.386.

355. Vol. III, p.534.

356. Vol. IV, p.198.

357. Vol. II, p.317.

358. Vol. II, p.427.

359. Vol. II, p.427.

360. Vol. I, pp.212-3.

361. Vol. I, p.556.

362. Vol. I, p.557.

363. Vol. I, p.559.

364. London, T. Wood, 1727.

365. D 879.

366. BV 504.

367. op.cit., pp.61-63.

368. Wade, op.cit., p.61.

369. Ibid., p.62.

370. Ibid., p.63.

371. 1737 edition, vol. V, p.490.

372. Ibid., vol. VI, p.423.

373. 1727 edition, London, Wood, vol. I, p.59.

374. Ibid., vol. I, pp.205-6.

375. Ibid., vol. II, p.155.

376. London, 1751, translated by Forbonnais in 1753.

377. Quoted by Voltaire, vol. II, pp.631, 937.

378. Ustariz, vol. I, p.110.

379. Ibid., vol. I, p.125.

380. Ibid., vol. I, p.114.

381. Les Idées économiques de Voltaire, pp.69-89.

382. Ibid., p.75.

383. Ibid., p.74.

384. Ibid., p.85.

385. see Lanson, 'Notes pour servir...', op.cit., p.191; O'Connor, op.cit., p.183.

386. op.cit., p.27.

387. see J.B. Black, The Art of history, p.67.

388. op.cit., p.197.

389. see Appendix C.

390. op.cit., p.58.

391. see D 14686.

392. p.29.

393. Quoted by H.T. Patterson in the introduction to the Traité de Métaphysique, Manchester University Press, pp.xii-xiii.

394. op.cit.

395. Paris, Briasson, 1727, vols. 1-43.

396. D 4376.

397. Besterman, p.452.

398. Niceron, vol. I, p.190 / P 1135.

399. Niceron, vol. IX, p.76 / P 1189.

400. Niceron, vol. VI, p.397 / P 1138.

401. Niceron, vol. II, p.128 / P 1183.

402. Niceron, vol. IV, p.410 / P 1168.

403. Niceron, vol. I, p.359 / P 1162.

404. Vol. II, p.165.

405. Vol. V, p.295.

406. Vol. VI, p.251.

407. Niceron, vol. VI, p.209.

408. Niceron, vol. VII, p.336.

409. Niceron, vol. VII, p.339.

410. Niceron, vol. VII, p.187.

411. Livre de poche, 1965, vol. I, p.66.

412. Ibid., vol. I, p.66.

413. BV 1922, Geneva, 1756, pp.219-220 (page cornée); Petitot, vol. 69, p.396.

414. op.cit., vol. I, p.77.

415. Vol. I, p.99.

416. Petitot, vol. 47, p.10.

417. Petitot, vol. 37, p.315. A sinet is to be found in Voltaire's copy (vol. II, p.128).

418. Vol. I, p.108.

419. Sinet in Voltaire's copy (vol. II, p.188; Petitot, vol. 37, p.357).

420. Ibid.

421. Bernard, 1718, p.6.

422. Petitot, vol. 37, p.357.

423. 1739 edition, vol. II, pp.246-247; Petitot, vol. 37, p.398.

424. 1739 edition, vol. II, p.322 (sinet and papillon); Petitot, vol. 38, p.3.

425. Petitot, vol. 38, p.5.

426. Petitot, vol. 47, p.84.

427. Petitot, vol. 38, p.5.

428. Petitot, vol. 38, p.5.

429. Mémoires, Petitot, vol. 41, p.243.

430. Petitot, vol. 38, p.9; e.g. "Ils tendent toutes les chaînes des rues et en peu d'heures, ils mirent des barricades."

431. Vol. I, p.115.

432. Petitot, vol. 61, p.246.

433. Petitot, vol. 38, pp.14-16.

434. Vol. I, p.131.

435. e.g. vol. I, p.22.

436. op.cit., vol. I, p.77.

437. Petitot, vol. 47, p.53.

438. 1739 edition, vol. III, pp.66-67 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 38, p.123.

439. 1739 edition, vol. III, pp.90-91; Petitot, vol. 38, p.142.

440. 1739 edition, vol. II, pp.256-257 (marker); Petitot, vol. 37, p.407.

441. Besterman, p.209.

442. op.cit., p.59.

443. Motteville's memoirs, Petitot, vol. 38, p.141.

444. op.cit., vol. I, p.195.

445. op.cit., vol. I, p.180.

446. Petitot, vol. 38, p.170.

447. Petitot, vol. 47, p.49.

448. Petitot, vol. 47, p.51.

449. Ibid.

450. Petitot, vol. 47, p.52.

451. Petitot, vol. 47, p.49. One finds a sinet and papillon in Voltaire's copy at this point (BV 2967, Amsterdam, 1738, vol. I, p.46).

452. Petitot, vol. 38, p.164.

453. Bernard, 1718, p.34.

454. Ibid.

455. Amsterdam, 1731, vol. I, pp.248-9 (sinet); Livre de poche edition, vol. I, p.203.

456. Petitot, vol. 38, p.372.

457. BV 2507, vol. II, pp.42-43 (marker); Petitot, vol. 41, pp.220-221.

458. Petitot, vol. 47, p.73.

459. The source of the anecdote is Mme de Motteville's memoirs (1739 edition, vol. III, p.358 (sinet); Petitot, vol. 38, p.346).

460. op.cit., vol. I, p.79.

461. Petitot, vol. 47, p.83.

462. Ibid., p.466.

463. op.cit., pp.84-85 (sinet in Voltaire's copy).

464. op.cit., vol. I, p.23.

465. Mémoires, Petitot, vol. 53, p.83.

466. op.cit., vol. I, p.383.

467. e.g. The plea made by Condé's mother to the parlement (op.cit., Petitot, vol. 39, p.33).

468. See Motteville, 1739 edition, vol. II, pp.238-239 (sinet).

469. Ibid., vol. II, pp.288-9 (sinet).

470. Ibid., vol. II, pp.236-7 (sinet).

471. What is history?, p.12.

472. Ibid., p.30.

Chapter IV: Form and Expression

Chapter IV

Form and Expression

"Presque toujours les choses qu'on dit frappent moins que la manière dont on les dit; car les hommes ont tous à peu près les mêmes idées de ce qui est à la portée de tout le monde. L'expression, le style fait toute la différence."[1]

Thus did Voltaire himself underline the vital role style plays in any literary work. Having examined in the previous chapter the immense documentation undertaken by the historian and his use of primary and secondary sources, it is appropriate to ask at this point what sets Voltaire's historical work apart from, and, to a considerable degree, above the works of his precursors. There are two possible answers to this question: his own individual manner of presentation, which will form the subject of this chapter, and the specific ends to which Voltaire borrows and digests the material found in sources, i.e. Voltaire's aims as a social historian or philosopher and propagandist, which will be dealt with in the concluding chapter. That Voltaire's 'manners' are diverse and that there is more than one 'style' or mode of expression in Le Siècle, is clear for all to see, even though ultimately those 'manners' express the unique individual personality of the author. One is confronted with various facets of Voltaire the historian - whether it be the strictly objective chronicler of events intent on imparting essential information to his readers, or the journalist amassing quaint, extraordinary or topical material, or the conteur showing

the same mastery of techniques as in Candide or Zadig, or indeed the propagandist attacking his bug-bears and riding his hobby-horses of anticlericalism, war and injustice, or finally Voltaire the 'bel esprit', 'raconteur', humorist. All those varied aspects of the same personality find expression in Le Siècle and will emerge in our study. But in the end, one must ask if they amount to a constant and fundamental 'historical manner', a historical style which belongs exclusively to Voltaire's histories, although a marked development will be noted from Charles XII (1731), where Voltaire tried his hand at writing history, to the more mature approach of Le Siècle de Louis XIV (1751). That this historical manner is more easily visible in the chronological first section explains why it will be studied in more detail than the rest of the book. However, attention will also be paid to other facets of the historian present in the remaining sections; the raconteur in chapters XXV-XXVIII, the literary critic's style in chapters XXXI-XXXIV and finally the ironic mode of presentation which is the mark of the propagandist in the last five chapters.

Style or manner of presentation will, therefore, for our purpose here, be taken in its broadest sense, best summed up by E. Herzog in a definition quoted by Marouzeau: "Le terme de style nous sert à désigner l'attitude que prend l'écrivain vis-à-vis du matériel que la langue lui fournit."[2] The style becomes, in addition to the personal and individualised utilisation of language, in Voltaire's case especially, the expression of the author's personality, of his point of view. According to

the case in hand, the manner will differ; Voltaire himself wrote in this respect: "Il est bon que chaque chose soit à sa place."[3] One must, accordingly, measure Voltaire's achievements in Le Siècle in relation to his aims at given points, in particular 'tableaux', in terms of the degree of conformity that exists between the form and the content. Voltaire was fully aware of the difficulties confronting an author in this respect: "Rien n'est donc plus difficile et plus rare que le style convenable à la matière que l'on traite," he wrote in the article 'Style'.[4] This general pronouncement is based on his own experience; how much greater the task was for a historian aiming to give as complete and detailed a picture of an age, in as interesting a way as possible! Yet Voltaire's success is all the more appreciable because of the wide range of material he deals with and the variety of approaches he sets out to adopt. What Dorothy McGhee has said of Voltaire's originality in the Contes - namely that it rests not on the exposition of fact, but on the manner of presenting it - remains true for Le Siècle.[5] The problems inherent in writing history are perhaps greater than those facing a novelist, as Arthur Marwick has pointed out in The Nature of History: "The historian must achieve a balance between narrative and analysis, between a chronological approach and an approach by topic, and, it should be added, a balance between both of these..."[6] Furthermore, there is the original problem of selection of material, already discussed in chapter III, and added to this, is the need to be able to communicate the significance of the material borrowed: "If the historian," Marwick declares, "discover the most revealing of private source

collections, what shall it profit him if he fail to communicate the significance of his find to his fellows? Not much. The historian at work, as Professor W.H. Walsh has noted, has 'a double task': 'He must do justice to his evidence and at the same time do his duty by his readers.'"[7] That Voltaire 'does his duty' by his readers, is due largely to his presentation, which we shall examine in this chapter.

Voltaire's style, in its strict sense, has been carefully examined by a number of critics, notably Gustave Lanson in his Art de la Prose,[8] where he draws attention to 'la phrase courte, sèche, nerveuse, hachée, sautillante qui ne semble parler qu'à l'esprit', to Voltaire's awareness of the sonorous quality of words, to the raciness and conciseness of this narrative style characteristic of the eighteenth century as a whole. Julien Amato[9] has, for his part, drawn up a list of syntactical and lexical examples which shed light on 'la langue de Voltaire'. Individual works have formed the subject of several excellent stylistic studies, in particular Jeanne Monty's remarkable analysis of Voltaire's polemical devices in the Dictionnaire Philosophique.[10] In a systematic manner, Miss Monty discusses and illustrates a large number of devices and techniques employed for propagandist purposes; the judicious selection of examples and the enlightened conclusions make this an essential source of information for students of Voltaire's polemical style. The Contes have likewise received much attention; Dorothy McGhee[11] is mostly concerned with form and structure, but the last section of her study sheds light on Voltaire's use of irony and satire which pertain to many of the author's works. William Bottiglia's

analysis of Candide,[12] Ruth Flowers' comparative study of Voltaire and Rabelais,[13] complement adequately Miss McGhee's thesis. Pierre Haffter's article 'L'Usage satirique des causales dans les contes de Voltaire'[14] has drawn attention to one further source of irony in the Contes, hitherto unnoticed, the use of implicit and explicit causal subordinates to ridicule such characters as Pangloss.

Nor have other works been neglected; the Lettres Philosophiques has been closely examined and discussed, from a stylistic point of view, by T.J. Barling in his article 'The Literary Art of the Lettres Philosophiques'[15] which contains a number of excellent observations on the devices employed in this work. Voltaire's debt to Racine in his tragedies has been explored, though somewhat superficially, by Edmond Lefèvre,[16] with regard to vocabulary, conscious or unconscious echoes, préciosité and the general elegance of language. The Correspondance itself has not been ignored, as Maurice Souriau has attempted to examine striking examples of Voltaire's vocabulary and syntax therein.[17] He concludes that Voltaire was a passionate 'grammairien', that his letters show a lack of images and that the style is as varied as the temperament of the author. To these works, must be added general articles on certain aspects of Voltaire's presentation, the latest, and a most stimulating one at that, being Professor S.S.B. Taylor's article on 'Voltaire's Humour'.[18]

Two important facts emerge from this short état présent: firstly, Voltaire's style in his historical works has been sadly neglected by critics; but for an excellent section in J.H. Brumfitt's book Voltaire Historian,[19] devoted to the form and style

in Voltaire's histories, this aspect seems to have escaped the attention of most critics. Secondly, it is equally clear that a survey of the style in Le Siècle, in its strict sense, would overlap to a greater or lesser degree, with some of the critical works quoted above, for if Voltaire's intentions are varied in this work, the stylistic devices used remain comparable to those employed elsewhere. Stylistic affinities with other works will be pointed out whenever possible, but a far more rewarding approach is to explore the range of manners of Voltaire the historian, for he writes history at times as an objective recorder of facts, as a conteur, as a journalist, as a dramaturge, as a propagandist, and last but not least, as a man of letters and an artist. Whilst the stylistic devices observed in other works have their role to play in the presentation, they provide only part of the answer; the form and structure of individual chapters and tableaux will be examined, the attempts to add to the dramatic impact of incidents and scenes, the affinities with the theatre, the journalistic search for and use of details out of the ordinary to enliven the récit, or make the material more topical, the art of the raconteur in the large number of anecdotes, the evocative and imaginative qualities of Voltaire's presentation and the often marked similarities between his tableaux and painting, as he sees himself as, and repeatedly claims to be, 'le peintre' of the age of Louis XIV, the ability to create a mood or atmosphere, the importance of pathos and the involvement of the reader, the elegance of the presentation as Voltaire assumes the role of the literary critic or of the social historian, as well as the ironic mode of presentation we normally associate with the propagandist:

- all this forms an intrinsic part of Voltaire's manner of presentation in Le Siècle. As he tries to instruct and please, the balance between the essential historical data and the search for a thrilling narrative, the blend of information and entertainment, determine the measure of Le Siècle's success.

Furthermore, when discussing presentation, we shall be conscious of the extent to which the various manners help to give an original cachet to the material borrowed and digested from sources, for as Arthur Marwick has so admirably pointed out: "Simplifying slightly, one could say that the historian at work is engaged in converting the scattered, difficult primary sources into a coherent, intelligible secondary source."[20] It is the role of the creative mind at work that we examine here, as Voltaire uses his inventiveness to produce an artistically satisfying piece of literature. His awareness of his reader cannot be denied, for the latter's involvement, Voltaire saw as an essential ingredient of success; whether it be when sharing a joke at the expense of a historical character with the reader, persuading him of the serious issues at stake or imparting accessible information, he is forever playing to a 'public de goût' and all 'honnêtes gens'. In the end, it is perhaps because, more than his precursors, he combines aesthetic qualities with historical data so expertly, that Voltaire creates a surviving monument to the glory of Louis XIV. As J.H. Brumfitt puts it: "/Voltaire/ can still envisage history... as being first and foremost a work of art."[21]

(I) Chapters I-XXIV: classical structure

Voltaire's admiration for the classical elegance and the search for symmetry of the seventeenth century is well-known; it is, therefore, fitting that a history of that age should display the same qualities. Nowhere is this partiality for symmetry, order, and clarity better observed than in the first section: the chronological survey of Louis XIV's military campaigns. Voltaire had already shown the same preference for twenty-four as a sound classical structure in the Lettres Philosophiques (1733),[22] a work published at the time when Le Siècle was conceived. Compared with Charles XII, Le Siècle is clearly neo-classical; it has a tighter structure, and as will be demonstrated, Voltaire shows greater discipline and control over his material in his second and more mature historical work. If Charles XII is constructed around the adventures and fortunes of a tragic hero, and can be said to be built on the classical pattern of an exposition (Charles's childhood), a nœud (his campaigns), and a dénouement (his tragic death),[23] that is as far as the structure resembles that of classical tragedy. There are a large number of digressions which appear superfluous, and are included for the sole purpose of entertaining the reader through the use of exotic and romanesque adventures.[24] Nor does Voltaire impose the same rigid limits on individual tableaux as in Le Siècle. In his first history, Voltaire allows himself greater freedom and spontaneity; when dealing with the adventures of one hero, this is not amiss and the diffuseness of the récit which takes in anecdotal and personal details in abundance, does not detract

significantly from the exciting narrative in a work with limited scope.

However, in Le Siècle, the historian is faced with a more demanding task, that of portraying an age, and not just the life of the protagonist;[25] the sheer amount of material demands greater self-restraint, if the essay is to be at once relatively complete and accessible to the average reader. Order, clarity and a tighter classical structure make the work both comprehensive and comprehensible. Thus chapters I-XXIV have an intrinsic unity and a classical symmetry of their own, whether one looks at this section from the point of view of Louis XIV's career, or of the rise and decline of the French nation. The division of the chapters involved lends itself readily to this: the general introduction (chapter I) and the survey of Europe before Louis XIV (chapter II), lead to events during the king's minority. The main body of the historical section is followed by a synthesis in chapter XXIV, where Voltaire economically recapitulates the main events, and includes a mise au point of the state of individual nations at the close of the reign. Some of the general themes introduced in chapter II are recalled in this concluding chapter; e.g. the fundamental idea that most wars in Europe were civil wars (P 620, P 885); similarly the shifts in the balance of power (P 621, P 889). In chapter XXIV, too, Voltaire tries to evolve general conclusions from events previously described; on the vanity of politics (P 886), or the vicissitudes of life (P 886) and the role of chance (P 887). His approach is not dissimilar from that of the conteur here, as the adventures of Candide or Zadig lead to general philosophical interpretations,

wherein lies the true value of history. The two general surveys (chapters II and XXIV), furthermore, serve as a necessary framework for the detailed account of events, thus allowing Voltaire to take stock of the situation and gauge the progress achieved by various nations in Europe - since one of his main aims, as we shall see in our next chapter, is to underline in human affairs the revolutions worthy of the attention of posterity.

Whether they are envisaged as relating to the rise and fall of the apparent protagonist - Louis XIV conqueror - or the real one - France - , events follow the classical pattern set in L'Histoire de Charles XII and the classical formula of exposition, nœud and dénouement. The period of Louis's minority (chapters III-VI), ending with the death of Mazarin (P 686), can be said to constitute the exposition; chapters VII-XXII, the nœud, and here as in Charles XII, the rise and fall of the hero are clearly marked. Louis XIV is at the height of his glory in chapter XIII: "Le roi fut en ce temps au comble de la grandeur" (P 747), whereas the decline in the king's power and prestige abroad is indicated by Voltaire on page 811: "Quant à la cour de Louis XIV et à son royaume, les esprits fins y apercevaient déjà un changement que les grossiers ne voient que quand la décadence est arrivée." The downward movement accelerates with the losses in Spain, at Ramillies and Turin (chapter XX), with a last glimmer of hope for Louis XIV at the battle of Malaga, "dernière époque de la puissance de Louis XIV " (P 837). The distress of the French nation is at its worst during the winter of 1709 (P 857), with morale at its lowest ebb, and the final

humiliations come during the negotiations at Gertruidenberg (P 860), and the loss of the battle of Malplaquet (P 863). The dénouement can be said to consist in the unhappy negotiations of Utrecht (chapter XXIII).

In addition to the section as a whole, each chapter has its varying degree of unity, and more or less, as the case may be, displays Voltaire's predilection for the same classical structure and symmetry. Thus chapter III is constructed along classical lines; the general exposition reveals the pretensions of Anne of Austria (P 635-6), the circumstances leading to the war in Spain (P 636), the Dutch victories in Flanders (P 636-7), which make Condé's intervention necessary (P 637), and introduces the protagonist. The nœud consists in Condé's victories, which could be envisaged as a series of acts in a play; Rocroi - second act - (P 638); Condé's return to Paris (P 639) - third act - , leaving the stage free for Turenne who is defeated, quickly followed by Merci's defeat, whilst Condé re-emerges in Catalonia (P 640); the fourth act sees Condé recalled to Flanders (P 640), whilst in the fifth act, Turenne occupies the stage once more (P 640), and the spotlight turns on his victories and defeats, leading to the general dénouement to the chapter (P 641) - the repercussions for Spain and Voltaire's philosophical reflections on the futility of war (P 641). There is a linear development as Condé's and Turenne's victories are recounted; the stage is occupied in turn by Condé and Turenne, and the presence of the hero gives unity to each tableau. It is not without cause, as we shall see when we explore further the dramatic qualities of Voltaire's tableaux, that the historian uses the metaphor:

"On le tira du théâtre de ses conquêtes" (P 640), for the parallels with a classical play, in terms of structure, are clearly apparent here.

Chapter VIII, 'Conquête de la Flandre', provides a further example of this tight, though not rigid, classical structure.[26] Here the exposition (P 695-698) consists of a general introduction which sheds light on the historical circumstances giving rise to Louis's attack on Flanders. Whilst having an informative value, the exposition puts events in perspective, by presenting Voltaire's point of view on the injustice of Louis's claims (P 695-6). Besides, it has a narrative function, as it emphasises the magnitude of French preparations for this campaign (P 697), creating a mood of expectancy and of tension. The stage is now set for the narrative of events that follows: "Le roi de France avait tout ce qui manquait à l'Espagne" (P 698). The nœud (P 698-700) amounts to an enumeration of Louis XIV's victories, as there is an air of inevitability about this campaign from the start. Although Voltaire can claim to be fulfilling his primary task as a historian - that of recording the main facts - , it is obvious that the narrator is less concerned with well-known facts than with philosophical implications, the injustice of war. It is also typical of Voltaire's method that he should skim over battles, to focus attention on the more extraordinary aspects of the campaign, the fairly long digression on luxury (P 698, para. 3). But the inclusion of such curious details, as well as those concerning Louis's measures to improve discipline (P 699), is made possible by the tight control that Voltaire keeps on the structure of each

tableau and of the chapter as a whole. The dénouement (P 699) is factual, providing the necessary framework within which anecdotal details, such as the short tableau on mœurs, can find their place. For once again Voltaire goes back to historical facts: "La rapidité de ces conquêtes remplit d'alarmes Bruxelles..." (P 699), highlighting the consequences of Louis's victories and the atmosphere in Brussels through the selection of telling details: "Les citoyens transportaient déjà leurs effets dans Anvers" (P 699). The chapter comes to an end with Louis's sudden departure for Versailles, given abruptly for more dramatic impact, and the curtain falls on a possible conquest of Flanders (P 700). Within the linear development of Louis's inevitable victories, the structure remains flexible enough to allow for interesting 'asides' on luxury, but the unity of the tableau is never endangered, because of Voltaire's control over the material and the historical framework provided. Classical restraint combines happily with narrative intensity and colourful details.

Besides the intrinsic unity of individual chapters, there are carefully contrived links between chapters to provide unity within the first section. This is achieved not just by chronological developments, but by clearly marked transitions from one chapter to the next. At the beginning of chapter VI, for example, Voltaire sums up events described in the two previous chapters dealing with the Fronde: "Pendant que l'État avait été ainsi déchiré au dedans, il avait été attaqué et affaibli au dehors (i.e. described in chapter V, P 661): tout le fruit des batailles de Rocroi, de Lens et de Nordlingue fut perdu" (described in chapter III, P 667). Similarly, the death of Mazarin is recounted

at the end of chapter VI, and the consequences of his death both for the nation and for Louis XIV weighed at the start of chapter VII. Chapter VII ends with the words: "Il /Loui◦ XIV/... marquait l'impatience de se signaler et d'être conquérant" (P 695), and chapter VIII is entitled Conquête de la Flandre, whilst there is hardly a pause between the two chapters: "L'occasion se présenta bientôt à un roi qui la cherchait" (P 695). There are numerous examples[27] of this effort to knit together the first twenty-four chapters into a well-integrated and well-orchestrated whole, progressing towards the general dénouement of the peace of Utrecht. Voltaire takes care to bring each chapter to a close before moving on; in a paragraph added in 1768 (P 667), he includes information which fills a gap which he had unconsciously left, concerning the disbanded parlements of Paris and Pontoise at the end of chapter V.

The division of chapters on a thematic basis (e.g. chapter XV deals exclusively with the fall of James II), instead of the chronological method adopted by such predecessors as Limiers and Larrey, might have put in jeopardy the unity of chapters I-XXIV, as a section, were it not for the fact that Voltaire keeps a firm grip on the subject-matter. He takes chapter XV to its logical conclusion, before bringing the reader up to date with other events that have taken place during the period covered by the chapter: "N'ayant pas voulu rompre le fil des affaires d'Angleterre, je me ramène à ce qui se passait dans le continent" (P 771), he writes at the beginning of chapter XVI. This thematic division becomes in his hands an asset and makes the

material more accessible to the reader. He achieves the right balance between a chronological approach and an approach by topic, lacking in Larrey and Limiers. To this end, the general surveys to which he has recourse every now and then are invaluable, as they quickly put the reader in the picture. Such a tableau is used at the start of chapter XVI (P 771), where Voltaire carefully selects the most salient points and leaves out what is of little consequence. In addition to being informative, those paliers in the action give the historian the chance to pass quickly over well-known facts or unexciting details in order to focus attention on dramatic or extraordinary events.[28] Furthermore, Voltaire sometimes purposely uses them to slow down his récit and by contrast to intensify dramatic crises; e.g. the summary of events in Italy delays intentionally the lively narrative of events at the battle of Ramillies (P 839). In this way, the narrator varies the pace, spotlights dramatic events, without incurring the charge of having omitted vital information.

The classical and dramatic structure of individual tableaux

On July 17th, 1758, Voltaire wrote to Shuvalov: "J'ai toujours pensé que l'histoire demande le même art que la Tragédie, une exposition, un nœud, un dénouement..."[29] The need in history for self-imposed classical discipline, already observed in individual chapters, is also reflected in the structure imposed on individual tableaux by Voltaire. That he has in this respect come a long way since Charles XII can best be measured if we compare two tableaux from these works; the battle of Bléneau in Le Siècle (P 660 ff.) and that of Pultava in Charles XII (P 159-165). In

his account of the battle of Bléneau, Voltaire uses an exposition to bring events up to date (P 660, para. 1). Condé's alliance with Spain, and Turenne's peace with the king are both relevant to and prepare the reader for what ensues. The main actors in the drama are thus introduced and a modicum of essential information given. In addition, the exposition aims at whetting the appetite for what is to come; the anecdote of Condé's arrival in disguise is recounted in as dramatic a manner as possible, having the air of a deus ex machina or an unexpected péripétie. By the end of the exposition, the essential background has thus been provided, the atmosphere of tension created, the protagonists introduced and the reader's curiosity aroused; the build-up to the battle itself is now complete.

The nœud consists of Hocquincourt's defeat, its consequences for the French court (P 661, para. 1); e.g. Mazarin's hasty departure for Gien to awaken the king conveys the growing panic and the consternation amongst the royal party, which leads to Turenne's timely intervention - a second péripétie in the action. The action, here as so often elsewhere, is made up of successive crises which never allow the pace to slacken. The terseness, characteristic of Voltaire's style, preserves the required degree of intensity: "Turenne par sa fermeté rassura les esprits, et sauva la cour par son habileté" (P 661). Finally, the dénouement follows so closely on the nœud, that it is hardly noticeable, as the narrative moves swiftly to its climax through the omission of cumbersome details and the selection of the most critical stages only.[30]

Voltaire's depiction of the battle of Pultava in Charles XII,

on the other hand, lacks this tight structure and rigid classical symmetry. The exposition, if there is one, is diffuse, to say the least, and deals almost exclusively with the picturesque details about the extraordinary mœurs of Charles's new allies, the Zaporavians (P 159). Exotic details, which are neither relevant nor significant, are included for their own sake; e.g. "Ils ne souffrent point de femmes chez eux, mais ils vont enlever tous les enfants à vingt et trente lieues à la ronde, et les élèvent dans leurs mœurs" (P 159), or the fact that Zaporavians are drunk early in the morning. There is no attempt on the narrator's part to prepare the reader for the major event, no fine balance here between the informative and dramatic function of the exposition as in Le Siècle, as the conteur takes over to the detriment of the historian. The action itself centres around the protagonist, as in the previous case, but a mass of anecdotal and personal details - e.g. Charles being shot in his foot while reconnoitring the enemy lines (P 160), or a dialogue between Piper and Rehnsköld (P 161) - , confuse the issue and give to the récit the tone of a novel of adventure. The clear-cut division between exposition, nœud and dénouement is consequently blurred, the linear development lost, and the intensity of the narrative absent through the lack of pungency. Charles XII is basically rococo in structure; Le Siècle neo-classical.

The greater discipline acquired by Voltaire through the composition of Le Siècle is further illustrated by his approach to the same incident in L'Histoire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand (1763)[31]. Voltaire seems clearly to have realised the necessity

for a more rigid structure and greater restraint; he quickly gets down to describing the battle itself, summing up the events leading up to it (P 469). The exposition, less diffuse altogether, underlines the importance of the battle: "Cette bataille allait décider du destin de la Russie, de la Pologne, de la Suède, et des deux monarques sur qui l'Europe avait les yeux " (P 469). The facts are here envisaged less as an occasion for a good narrative, than for their serious historical implications, so that the interpretation becomes the prime object; e.g. the grave repercussions Peter's death would have for Russia and humanity are pointed out (P 469). There is, moreover, a finer balance between the manners of the historian, the conteur and the philosopher, as in Le Siècle, the tone being more sober, the anecdotes sparser and hardly embellished; e.g. the anecdote of Charles's injury which is melodramatic in Charles XII (P 160), is told in a more factual manner here (P 469). If the spotlight is still turned on the protagonists - e.g. Charles is carried away on a stretcher (P 470), and Peter is shot through his hat (P 470) - , Voltaire leaves much more to the reader's imagination, with such general statements as "Enfin, après deux heures de combat, les Suédois furent partout enfoncés" (P 470), which replaces a lengthier, more confused description in Charles XII (P 161-3). The dénouement, the outcome of the battle and Charles's flight (P 470-71), is given succinctly and more effectively. There is, all in all, a conscious attempt to impose some sense of order, lacking in the same tableau in the earlier historical work, a greater balance between anecdotes and historical data. The absence of such lengthy digressions as

the discussion of the two monarchs' careers, a parallel in the humanist tradition (Charles XII, P 161), further indicates the need felt by Voltaire for greater control and symmetry. For he had learnt, by dealing with a mass of material in Le Siècle, the benefits of imposing strict limits on individual tableaux and of giving them a unity of their own.

In Charles XII, such long digressions as that on the life of Catherine, Peter's wife, are inserted in the middle of the narrative - e.g. the digression referred to interrupts the flow of the récit of the confrontation between the Turks and the Russians (P 193-4). This would have been totally unacceptable to the author of Le Siècle. Such biographical details find their proper place in chapters XXV-XXVIII; e.g. the life of Mme de Maintenon (P 933-4). Digressions, when they are present in Le Siècle, are fully integrated into the exposition or the main body of the narrative. The technique of exposition had, clearly, not been fully mastered in Charles XII; the preparation of the confrontation between Auguste and Charles (P 107) is long-winded and lacks bite, and Voltaire is less concerned with leading quickly to the crisis itself, devoting five pages to the tableau of Poland (P 94-98), whilst in chapter IX of Le Siècle, that of the Franche-Comté is disposed of in one paragraph (P 701). The slow build-up detracts from the tempo of the narrative in Charles XII, and the large number of trivia leave the crises so far apart that the narrative loses its dramatic impact. Not so in Le Siècle, where the narrative moves swiftly from one crisis to another. The author's intentions account for this basic difference; Voltaire's aim in Charles XII is to tell an exciting adventure

story at a leisurely pace; in Le Siècle, he has to select what are historically the most crucial and compelling events for analysis. He must give a complete survey of the age within limits, whilst making history popular and readable. To this end, the rigid classical structure helps to keep his imagination in check - though this is not always the case, for to Voltaire both memory and imagination have an equal part to play in the field of history. The balance between its informative and imaginative appeal is a much finer one in Le Siècle than in Charles XII.

(II) Voltaire's narrative skill

There exist some general and fundamental characteristics of Voltaire's narrative style which should be briefly recalled and illustrated here before we go any further. First and foremost, its simplicity, which, according to Lanson, was the mark of the age;[32] this simplicity of sentence structure is the hall-mark of all of Voltaire's writings, especially the Contes,[33] and remains true of Le Siècle. The verb becomes the essential element in this simple sentence, since Voltaire deals with actions and battles in chapters I-XXIV: "Dans le même temps, les mousquetaires gris y abordent par un autre endroit; les bataillons des gardes les suivent. On tue et on poursuit les assiégés. Les mousquetaires baissent le pont-levis qui joint cet ouvrage aux autres; ils suivent l'ennemi de retranchement en retranchement sur le petit bras de l'Escaut et sur le grand "[34] (P 740). In this sentence, participial clauses play a vital role, allowing for chronological continuity which is essential in a historical

account of events, whilst making for greater economy.[35] Voltaire's typically epigrammatic style is particularly useful when he passes quickly over battles, which he is often content to enumerate (e.g. P 737), or when he gives a general tableau of Europe in chapters II and XXIV.[36] It also becomes an indispensable asset when, instead of quoting clauses of treaties at length, as his predecessors, Larrey and Limiers, had done, he merely sets out to summarise the most important ones in the manner of journalistic reportage - e.g. his handling of the treaty of Nimwegen (P 745), and of Utrecht (P 879). The same economy of words proves to be invaluable in chapters XXIX and XXX, where Voltaire is in a position to deal succinctly with a wide range of reforms of Louis XIV, making the chapters abound in information (e.g. P 968).

An important consequence of this great conciseness and simplicity of style is the raciness which has been identified by all critics as the most typical aspect of Voltaire's narrative style. William Bottiglia has noted that the tempo of Candide is that of a scherzo,[37] and Auerbach remarks: "It is in this tempo that a good part of his wit lies;"[38] as indeed we shall see when we consider Voltaire's manner in the anecdotes of Le Siècle. In the narrations, the simple structure, the use of juxtaposed sentences rather than subordinates, the omission of unnecessary words - be it verb,[39] auxiliary,[40] the conjunction,[41] - the absence of cumbersome details, all give the distinct impression of images being projected on the screen quickly, in the manner of the modern camera techniques. Intervening stages between crises are frequently ignored or blurred, a technique typical of

Voltaire's presentation of events in his histories and already visible in Charles XII, where references to time are purposely left out,[42] as well as in Pierre le Grand.[43] The reader is made to pass quickly from one action to another without losing interest in the chronology of events - a particularly effective way of making history more exciting to read. For as he indicated in his Notes sur les Remarques de La Mottraye concerning Charles XII, Voltaire's aim is to keep the reader interested: "Les nerfs et la force dépendent du style, et non de la vérité. On peut mentir avec force et dire la vérité ennuyeusement." (P 282). This is precisely what he was determined not to do in his histories. And in his letter to Nordberg, he reiterates the view that the historian has two duties: "celui de ne point calomnier, et celui de ne point ennuyer" (P 310). The desire to experiment with the basic sentence structure, to find the form that will convey events and his thoughts effectively, the variety of style, but above all the raciness and epigrammatic quality of his narrative style, have an essential role to play in this respect. His account of events, while becoming more palatable, never lacks precision and clarity, e.g. when giving a quick survey of Louis XIV's campaigns, or when telling a dramatic incident, as will be seen in the examples that follow. This is due to Voltaire's efforts to arrive at a form which is the most suitable vehicle for the contents, and it is in the harmony between the form and the contents that Voltaire's greatest merit lies.

Already visible in Charles XII, Voltaire's narrative skill had been perfected when he came to write Le Siècle. Within the rigid structure already discussed, which gave the récit greater

dramatic intensity, the racy and terse style, as well as other aspects, such as the ability to create the required atmosphere, the construction of plots around péripéties, the use of the element of surprise, the selection of telling details, the dramatic quality of the presentation, all contribute to making history more enjoyable for the reader. Voltaire's narrative skill will, therefore, be taken here in its broadest sense and illustrated by a close examination of individual tableaux.

Selection of details is a vital part of Voltaire's success in his narrations; that he was himself fully aware of the need to leave out unnecessary and cumbersome material is indicated by his repeated pronouncements on the subject; e.g. in the Preface to L'Essai sur l'histoire universelle, he declares: "Les détails qui ne mènent à rien sont dans l'histoire ce que sont les bagages dans une armée, impedimenta."[44] Passing rapidly over unexciting material, Voltaire focuses attention on critical points; thus in Luxembourg's campaign in Holland, the narrative consists of a succession of péripéties (P 724), to which are added journalistic details on the new type of guerrilla warfare being fought. The atmosphere of tension and the mood of expectancy are present from the start: "Luxembourg, qui commandait dans Utrecht, fit un nouveau genre de guerre inconnu aux Français, et mit la Hollande dans un nouveau danger aussi terrible que les précédents" (P 724). Omitting details of manœuvres and unnecessary paliers, Voltaire plunges straight into the action, giving only the most dramatic details: "Il assemble, une nuit, près de douze mille fantassins tirés des garnisons voisines. On arme leurs souliers de crampons..." (Ibid.) The speed of the short juxtaposed sentences,

the selection of visual and picturesque details are all characteristic of Voltaire's narrative technique. His presentation of events, above all, remains lively through unexpected changes of direction: "Un dégel survint: La Haye fut sauvée." Furthermore, the evocative presentation lends its imaginative appeal to the tableau, as the reader is called upon to participate actively, by providing the missing links and visualising the ensuing panic amongst the French army: "Son armée, entourée d'eau, n'ayant plus de chemins ni de vivres, était prête à périr " (P 724). Voltaire's narrative is told in the manner of the short conte, with the emphasis on the dramatic elements rather than historical data. By emphasising the difficulties confronting Luxembourg's army - "Quand ce fort n'eût arrêté l'armée qu'un seul jour, elle serait morte de faim et de fatigue" (P 724) - , the narrator sustains the mood of danger and prevents the reader's interest from sagging. Through his style, he achieves the same effect as the writer of modern thrillers, exploiting vital moments in a given situation, as once again a sudden péripétie follows closely on the account of the distress in the French camp: "Luxembourg était sans ressource; mais la fortune, qui avait sauvé La Haye, sauva son armée par la lâcheté du commandant du fort, qui abandonna son poste sans aucune raison " (P 724). Thus in this tableau, Voltaire, the journalist, selects unusual material, but it is the conteur who lends a helping hand in making the events described acquire a more exciting and dramatic character, by means of an abrupt and racy mode of presentation.

Voltaire's rendering of the battle of Blenheim in chapter XIX

is another striking example of his mastery of narrative technique. The classical framework is here employed to great effect: the exposition (P 829, para. 3 to P. 831, para. 2), the nœud (P 831, para. 3 to P 833, para. 1) and the dénouement (P 833, para. 1 and 2) form a rigid pattern within which Voltaire uses his narrative style to good effect. The exposition has, in the first place, a strictly historical function, that of giving the necessary information - e.g. the geographical details serving as backcloth, statistical information about the two armies (P 830, para. 1), which also help to enhance the importance of the battle to come and its magnitude. The protagonists are also introduced, Tallard, Marlborough, Eugène (P 829, para. 3). Moreover, the exposition has a dramatic function in that it succeeds in arousing the reader's interest through anecdotal details, such as the letter sent by Villars to his brother-in-law, Président de Maisons, predicting the outcome of the battle. In brief, the exposition contains in Corneille's words "les semences de tout ce qui doit arriver."[45] Tallard's short-sightedness is to have a profound effect on the outcome of the battle (P 832).

The nœud, for its part (P 831, para. 3 ff.), brings events quickly to a head and leads to the crisis itself. Voltaire achieves a sense of urgency by deliberately telescoping the time scale - e.g. "Marlborough et ses Anglais, ayant passé un ruisseau, chargeaient déjà la cavalerie de Tallard. Ce général, un peu avant ce temps-là, venait de passer à la gauche pour voir comment elle était disposée..." (P 831). Here too, the reader is invited to imagine the intervening stages between major crises: "Sitôt que le maréchal de Tallard apprend que Marlborough attaque son aile,

il y court: il trouve une action furieuse engagée..." (P 831). This selection of peaks in the action to the exclusion of paliers makes for a consistently dramatic tone, and when less dramatic details are included, they serve to heighten, by contrast, the péripéties, such as Tallard's capture (P 832), and its effect on the army so graphically described by Voltaire through carefully chosen visual details: "La consternation et l'aveuglement de toute cette droite était au point qu'officiers et soldats se jetaient dans le Danube, sans savoir où ils allaient." (P 832). The inclusion of a vivid scene - Milord Orkney's arrival and his demand for a general surrender (P 832-3), which brings the mœud to a close, shows Voltaire's predilection for dramatic scenes. The main point of the scene - the dialogue - is reached with the optimum speed as a minimum of details are given to introduce the protagonists, and whilst the conversation has, in itself, little historical value, and Voltaire cannot vouch for its exactness, it does add to the impact of the scene. The author is less concerned here with historical accuracy, for though Voltaire states that he heard of this from Orkney in person, the general could hardly remember the conversation verbatim. His method of presentation, in this respect at least, does not differ radically from that in Charles XII, where such dialogues are even more frequent.[46] But at least the dialogue is here fully integrated into the narrative, contrary to his approach in the earlier historical work, nor does it slow it down, whilst it clearly adds to the interest.

Finally, Voltaire's evocative style, added to the dramatic presentation, accounts largely for the success of this tableau

as a whole. The French troops' reactions to the demands of Orkney, are thus conveyed: "Toutes ces vieilles bandes frémirent; Navarre déchira et enterra ses drapeaux; mais enfin il fallut plier sous la nécessité, et cette armée se rendit sans combattre" (P 833). Voltaire's narrative skill can be further measured when set alongside Larrey's dull, factual and detailed account of the battle,[47] which is devoid of the same intensity and liveliness. It is ultimately Voltaire's talent as a conteur which transforms a well-known incident, gleaned from this source, into an enthralling narrative; compare for example the two historians' rendering of Clérembault's drowning:

Larrey: "Clérembault effraié de tout ce désordre, crut qu'il n'y avoit plus d'autre parti à prendre que la fuite. Il se jetta pour cet effet dans le Danube, où il se noia."[48]

Voltaire: "[Clérembault] courut pour demander des ordres au maréchal de Tallard. Il apprend qu'il est pris; il ne voit que des fuyards; il fuit avec eux, et va se noyer dans le Danube" (P 832).

The quick tempo, due to the short and juxtaposed phrases, the progressive structure of the narrative, the spotlighting of crises, the inclusion of dramatic scenes, of striking anecdotal details - both Orkney's demands (P 833) and Tallard's short-sightedness being absent from Larrey's récit - , the sustained mood of danger and expectancy, all testify to the superiority of Voltaire's tableau. Larrey's approach is strictly that of the historian, and Voltaire's that of the artist trying to popularise history, although historical accuracy is by no means sacrificed to artistic considerations.

It is indeed typical of Voltaire's method in the first twenty-four chapters that he pays as much attention to the artist's

need to entertain as to the historian's preoccupations with accuracy. This is fully illustrated in the tableau of the battle of Hochstedt (P 825), where historical data combine with a thrilling narrative, dependent on anecdotal details, quick tempo, dramatic elements, such as direct speech. Whilst opting for a quick pace, Voltaire knows the value of slowing down the narrative to emphasise, by contrast, the critical moments; thus Villars's march to meet the Elector of Bavaria (P 825, para. 4) provides a momentary pause in the action after the battle of Friedlingen (P 825). Thereafter, Voltaire plunges straight into a lively and dramatic scene including exchanges between Villars and the Elector. That the historian is relying on his memory for the gist of the conversation has already been discussed in chapter III. What is striking is the ability to choose the right tone for each character: the haughtiness, self-centredness of Villars, and the humility of the Elector. Whilst Voltaire's cavalier attitude to historical accuracy can only be deplored, the dialogue is well-engineered and fits adequately into the narrative, serving to introduce the account of the battle.

This occupies, in itself, far less space than the preceding conversation, and Voltaire's concern with spotlighting heroes' glorious deeds [49] recalls his approach in Charles XII, and is an inheritance from the humanist tradition.[50] But it makes good reading: "Villars se vit presque seul quelques minutes sur le champ de bataille: il rallia les troupes, les ramena au combat, et remporta la victoire." (P 826). Once again, Voltaire's crisp and energetic style plays no small part in making the narrative move swiftly along. And even when imparting information of a more factual nature, the style preserves its raciness and sonorous

qualities: "On tua trois mille Impériaux; on en prit quatre mille; ils perdirent leur canon et leur bagage" (P 826).

Voltaire's ability to captivate his public depends, on more than one occasion, on timing. Thus he often takes the action at its most critical point, as is the case with the battle of Friedlingen (P 825, para. 1), or that of Nervinde: "Le même général, avec ces mêmes princes et ces mêmes troupes surprises et victorieuses à Steinkerque, alla surprendre, la campagne suivante, le roi Guillaume, par une marche de sept lieues, et l'atteignit à Nervinde" (P 780). But it is in his manipulation of the element of surprise that his sense of timing is so much more in evidence. The siege of Toulon reveals to its full extent his talent as a story-teller, as Voltaire plunges straight 'in medias res': "Toulon était assiégé et pressé" (P 850), for to Voltaire, as we have already indicated, it is vitally important to bring the reader to the main events with the greatest possible speed. The action itself subsequently consists entirely of unexpected twists, with the result that the mood of tension never abates. Thus Voltaire cleverly points out what would have ensued, had Toulon been captured: "Marseille, sans défense, n'aurait pas tenu; et il était vraisemblable que la France allait perdre deux provinces" (P 850), while in the next sentence there occurs a reversal of the situation: "Mais le vraisemblable n'arrive pas toujours. On eut le temps d'envoyer des secours." The unpredictability of history plays here into the hands of the omniscient narrator; the hypothesis amounts to a delaying tactic to give greater impact to the péripétie, for which Voltaire's pungent style is the perfect vehicle. The omission of time

references, furthermore, compresses the narrative which becomes a succession of crises: "Les maladies, qui désolèrent l'armée ennemie, combattirent pour Louis XIV. Le siège de Toulon fut levé..." (P 850).

(III) Dramatic qualities: History and drama

Voltaire's historical mode of presentation depends, to a large measure, on dramatic techniques for its effect. That the author of Zaïre was aware of the affinities between history and drama is made clear in a letter to d'Argenson of January 26th, 1746: "J'ai une drôle d'idée dans la tête, c'est qu'il n'y a que des gens qui ont fait des tragédies qui puissent jetter quelque intérest dans notre histoire sèche et barbare."[51] The use of innumerable speeches and pieces of dialogue, the resemblance between history and melodrama in Charles XII already pointed to this in the 1730's. When describing Charles's death, Voltaire had significantly written: "A ce spectacle, Mégret, homme singulier et indifférent, ne dit autre chose, sinon: 'Voilà la pièce finie, allons souper'" (P 271). While the choice of 'spectacle' is appropriate to the melodramatic scene in Charles XII, the speech quoted is by no means irrelevant to Voltaire's conception of history, as the narrative in the early history follows the fortunes of the protagonist on stage or the rise and fall of a tragic hero. Charles XII offers a spectacle of epic proportions. In Le Siècle, history is still a 'spectacle', for we are in the presence of glorious deeds achieved by such giants as Louis XIV, Turenne, Condé, William III, Marlborough. While the melodramatic tone is considerably lessened in this work, the similarities with drama persist. It is not without cause that one of Voltaire's favourite

images in Le Siècle is 'le théâtre de la guerre' (P 727) - a metaphor he had used already in Charles XII (P 79, P 181), and was to employ in L'Histoire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand.[52] Of Condé, Voltaire writes in Le Siècle: "On le tira du théâtre de ses conquêtes et de sa gloire..." (P 640) - for to Voltaire, heroes are acting out their individual parts on the stage of history for the wider audience of posterity, and the historian views events in terms of conflicts between great men. But in a more restricted sense, too, Voltaire's narrative is endowed with certain dramatic qualities, as the story-teller attempts to make history more thrilling.

The récit of the siege of Cremona (P 817 ff.) is a case in point. Not only does Voltaire insert a particularly vivid detail at the start to whet our appetite - Villeroi is asleep when Cremona is besieged (P 817) - but he launches the action with a dramatic incident: "Il /Villeroi/ est réveillé au bruit des décharges de mousqueterie." There follows a quick succession of events: "Il se lève en hâte, monte à cheval; la première chose qu'il rencontre, c'est un escadron ennemi " (P 817). The abruptness of the presentation guarantees that the element of surprise is fully exploited; Voltaire's ability, moreover, to recapture the mood of panic in the French camp through the breathless tone, adds to the interest. The anecdote of the treachery of the priest, Bozzoli, allows Voltaire to ride his hobby-horse of anticlericalism, but also provides variety, and through a method akin to the modern 'flash-back' technique, it enables the narrator to recapitulate events without slowing down the récit at the outset. Soon the narrative gathers fresh impetus from an

unexpected turn of events or péripétie - "le hasard confondit la prudence du prince Eugène" (P 817) - , leading as it does to the next stage of the action. As elsewhere, the deliberate compression of the time-scale gives the impression of crisis following upon crisis; d'Entragues's action of gathering his troops and Eugène's arrival are presented purposely as almost simultaneous: "Et déjà les soldats s'assemblaient à quatre heures du matin à une extrémité de la ville, précisément dans le temps que le prince Eugène entrait par l'autre" (P 817). Whereas elsewhere Voltaire omits time references to telescope the narrative, here they contribute to giving the récit greater intensity. Such is the effect, too, of visual details - e.g. "Les uns /soldats/ mal armés, les autres presque nus" (P 818), and the growing panic in the French camp is admirably evoked by the rhythm and disjointed nature of the sentence: "Les officiers, les soldats, pêle-mêle, les uns mal armés, les autres presque nus, sans commandement, sans ordre, remplissent les rues, les places publiques..." (P 818). The use of rhythm in "On combat en confusion, on se retranche de rue en rue, de place en place..." (P 818), conjures up a picture of frenzied activity. Voltaire's imaginative presentation is seen at its best here, in the evocation of the crowded stage and of the general picture of confusion and chaos.

Any pause in the action is only temporary and the mood of tension is not allowed to relax through constant inclusion of sudden reversals: "Un gros détachement de son armée devait arriver par le pont du Pô: les mesures étaient bien prises; un autre hasard les dérangea toutes" (P 818). Voltaire is a

master at using paliers to reinforce the crises when they do occur; the slow build-up - "Ce pont du Pô, mal gardé par environ cent soldats français, devait d'abord être saisi par les cuirassiers allemands, qui, dans l'instant que le prince Eugène entra dans la ville, furent commandés pour aller s'en emparer" (P 818) - only serves to heighten the more dramatic moments, where a greater sense of urgency is observed: "Dans ce petit intervalle de temps, les Irlandais se jettent à la porte du Pô..." (P 818). The racy style helps the action along at a quickening pace until the dénouement is reached: "et la ville est sauvée."

There is little doubt that Voltaire chooses to deal at length with the siege of Cremona because of its potentially dramatic qualities. From his sources, Larrey[53] and Limiers,[54] he extracts those details which can be moulded into a highly enthralling narrative, as well as unusual anecdotes such as Bozzoli's treachery. But Voltaire's dramatic mode of presentation sets his account far above that of his predecessors; Limiers's habit of giving a mass of details results in the blurring of the main crises, to such an extent that the dramatic impact is lost. Voltaire's eye for potentially exciting scenes is illustrated by the fact that he develops the incident at the Po bridge which is briefly summarised by his predecessor; he imposes a progressive and tight structure, omitting numerous details of manœuvres, whilst adding to the visual aspects through the selection of telling details. Historical data are Limiers's primary concern, whilst Voltaire combines aesthetic preoccupations with exactitude. For Limiers merely records events in an erudite manner; Voltaire,

the literary artist, actualises and dramatises them.

The similarities between history and drama are further brought home by Voltaire's handling of Louis XIV's decision to recognise James II's son as King of England (P 805). The tableau is divided adroitly into two equally well-balanced scenes, each leading to an unexpected twist: a change of heart on Louis's part. The problem facing the King is concisely and crisply presented and the alternatives explained (P 805, para. 2). This exposition culminates in Louis XIV's decision to recognise James II's son: "Un pur sentiment de générosité le porta d'abord à donner au fils du roi Jacques la consolation d'un honneur et d'un titre que son malheureux père avait eus jusqu'à sa mort..." (P 805). For the scene at the council, Voltaire adopts the detached tone of a reporter, summarising the speeches. However, he succeeds in making the characters come to life by choosing the right tone for each one: the highflown language of Beauvilliers - "Le duc de Beauvilliers, surtout, fit voir avec une éloquence forte tous les fléaux de la guerre qui devaient être le fruit de cette magnanimité dangereuse" (P 805) - contrasts with the more sober and restrained tone of Torci, a realist and a practical man. In addition to abiding by the laws of verisimilitude, since it was impossible to know the exact words utilised by the ministers, Voltaire, by reporting the gist of the speeches, is in a position to stress the seriousness of the situation: the possible repercussions of Louis's decision. This scene quickly leads to the second péripétie: "Louis se rendit à l'avis unanime de son conseil, et il fut résolu de ne point reconnaître le fils de Jacques II pour roi " (P 805) .

Louis's meeting with James II's widow follows instantly, and there is no pause in the action thanks to the precise reference to time: "Le jour même..." (P 805). The stage is set for this major scene, and for the conversation between the queen and Louis Voltaire again resorts to indirect speech, but his motive is less to be objective, than to intensify the pathos of the situation by stressing those aspects he chooses to: "Elle le conjure en larmes de ne point faire à son fils, à elle, à la mémoire d'un roi qu'il a protégé, l'outrage de refuser un simple titre, seul reste de tant de grandeur" (P 806). Here, too, visual details help the reader to imagine the scene - e.g. "en larmes" - , and the apparent objectivity enables the narrator to keep in the background and turn the spotlight on the character, so as to make the scene more moving. The language chosen is eloquent, persuasive and the tone emotive. The conclusion is, almost inevitably, another change of heart: "Le roi revint à son premier sentiment..." (P 806). The whole tableau illustrates Voltaire's predilection for potentially dramatic episodes, in which the reader is likely to be closely involved; the pictorial quality gives this particular tableau the air of a tableau vivant which preserves a nobility we normally associate with Racine and classical tragedy.

If Voltaire chooses to employ reported speech in the preceding anecdote, his favourite method of dramatising an incident or a tableau remains the insertion of a lively conversation or direct speech or even a harangue, however short. Starting with the latter, his position with regard to transcribing orations is rather ambiguous. In Charles XII, there are numerous examples

of direct speech and quite a few harangues which are at times superfluous.[55] Nor is there any guarantee of the authenticity of the text, as Voltaire's cavalier attitude smacks of the manner of former humanist historians.[56] It would seem that when he came to write Le Siècle, Voltaire had realised the need for greater caution when incorporating longer speeches, which could not be guaranteed unless a verbatim transcription existed in documents. In the Supplément, he remarks:

> Si les héros qu'on fait parler ne les /harangues/ ont pas prononcées, l'histoire alors est romanesque en ce point. Il n'y a que deux discours directs dans toute l'histoire du 'Siècle de Louis XIV'. Ils furent tous deux prononcés en effet, l'un par le maréchal de Vauban au Siège de Valenciennes, l'autre par le duc d'Orléans avant la bataille de Turin. On n'examine point ici les raisons qu'ont eues quelques anciens de prendre une plus grande liberté; mais on croit que dans un siècle aussi philosophe que le nôtre et au milieu de tant de nations éclairées l'on doit au public ce respect de ne dire que l'exacte vérité, de faire toujours disparaître l'auteur pour ne laisser voir que le héros, et de ne mettre jamais son imagination à la place des réalités (P 1257).

One cannot help feeling that this is precisely what Voltaire had done in Charles XII; he must clearly have invented part or the whole of such unverifiable speeches as Baltagi Mehemet's to the Sultan (P 187), even if the gist of the speech might have been passed on to him. Yet Voltaire's ambiguous attitude towards harangues remains even after Le Siècle, as his statement in the article 'Histoire' reveals:

> Si dans une occasion importante un général d'armée, un homme d'Etat a parlé d'une manière singulière et forte,

> qui caractérise son génie et celui de son siècle, il faut sans doute rapporter son discours mot pour mot: de telles harangues sont peut-être la partie de l'histoire la plus utile.[57]

That is, provided, implies Voltaire, one is sure of the accuracy of the transcription. Voltaire's principles governing the use of *discours* seem to be: (1) that the historian should possess guarantees of their authenticity; (2) the speech must be an important one, either because of the circumstances in which it was delivered, or because it characterises the great man and his age; (3) added to these criteria is the *singularité* of the *harangue*. That strict historical preoccupations combine with literary ones, is borne out by a study of the two *harangues* in *Le Siècle*: that of Vauban and that of the Duc d'Orléans.

While Voltaire does not give his reasons for the inclusion of the two longer *discours*, these become more evident in the context of the individual *tableaux*. The siege of Valenciennes (P 739-40) is justified on the grounds of its extraordinary character or *singularité*: "Elle fut prise d'assaut par un de ces événements singuliers qui caractérisent le courage impétueux de la nation" (P 739), i.e. on journalistic grounds and because it sheds light on the nation's character. Vauban's speech might have impressed Voltaire by its forcefulness and rhetoric, but the *tirade* serves above all to enhance the dramatic qualities of the *tableau*. The similarities with such classical historians as Livy or Caesar persist, nor does Voltaire give precise indications of his source or any guarantee of the authenticity of the text. Precision clearly matters less to him than the aesthetic and narrative function of the speech. The circum-

stances, briefly summarised, serve as backcloth (P 739), as the stage is set for Vauban's dramatic intervention. The reactions of the generals to Vauban's initial proposals make the scene come to life: "Tous les maréchaux de France se récrièrent contre cette proposition" (P 739); i.e. to attack in broad day-light. The speech itself, given without comment, serves a basic purpose: to trigger off the action that follows and as such, it is well-integrated within the narrative. Although one cannot but admire Voltaire's sense of timing and skill in utilising the speech for maximum effect, his attitude to sources remains cavalier and far from that of the erudite historian. He responds to and employs the harangue as a literary artist rather than a historian proper.

The other harangue occurs at the council of war before the siege of Turin (P 843),[58] and does not point to a major shift in Voltaire's attitude. The narrative skill of leading up to the scene through a succession of crises and of highlighting the crucial importance of the speech, is observed here, as the problem under discussion is succinctly exposed: "Il y avait alors deux partis à prendre: celui d'attendre le prince Eugène dans les lignes de circonvallation, ou celui de marcher à lui, lorsqu'il était encore auprès de Veillane " (P 843). Thereafter, Voltaire moves speedily to the main point of the narrative: the speech itself, which reinforces the dramatic qualities of the tableau by highlighting the critical situation for France. He might have heard of the speech from La Feuillade, present at the council, but it is more likely that he transforms the arguments reported indirectly by Larrey[59] into a harangue. To make the speech more vivid, he paraphrases and adds to it; e.g. a fact

stated by Larrey: "Ces lignes étoient bordées de six vingt pièces de canon... en quelques endroits elles avoient un double retranchement"[60] - finds its way into the speech itself. Thus when Voltaire claims in the Supplément that a historian should not take liberties with speeches, this should be taken with a pinch of salt, as here he uses his own mastery of rhetoric to embellish the material borrowed. The use of this speech, its integration within the narrative itself, the masterly story-telling in the rest of the récit; e.g. the response of the lieutenants: "Tous les lieutenants généraux répondirent: 'Il faut marcher'," or the use of the element of surprise as Marsin intervenes with the king's written orders - "Alors le maréchal de Marsin tire de sa poche un ordre du roi..." (P 844) - all this is hardly matched by Larrey's flat account:[61] "Tous les Avis se joignoient à celui de son Altesse roiale, lors que le Maréchal de Marsin tira de sa poche l'ordre secret de la cour par lequel on devoit déférer à son avis en cas d'action." Not only does Voltaire make the most of anecdotal details, absent from Larrey's text - e.g. the chorus of lieutenants "Il faut marcher" - , but he also develops other anecdotal details; e.g. Voltaire transforms the anecdote of the Duc d'Orléans in the main body of the narrative (P 844) into an exciting incident, as he turns the spotlight on the hero and insists on the unexpectedness of the French débâcle: "Le duc d'Orléans, blessé, s'était retiré pour se faire panser: à peine était-il entre les mains des chirurgiens, qu'on lui apprend que tout est perdu, que les ennemis sont maîtres du camp, et que la déroute est générale." What is in Larrey a factual account -

"Il y avoit déjà trois heures qu'une bravoure égale des deux côtés balançoit encore le succès de cette journée, lorsque le retranchement fut forcé dans le temps que l'on pansoit le duc d'Orléans"[62] - becomes in Voltaire's hands a thrilling narrative, a livelier and more vivid tableau of events, thanks to the organisation, the timing, the use of the harangue itself, the sense of urgency and Voltaire's mastery of narrative techniques.

More often, though, Voltaire resorts to short direct speeches to dramatise events; there are numerous examples of these in Le Siècle. Although fewer than in Charles XII and Pierre le Grand, they serve essentially to give a certain lustre to the narrative or to add to the dramatic impact. In Voltaire's tableau of the battle of Ramillies, Gassion's speech increases the tension, taking the form of an ultimatum to Villeroi: "Vous êtes perdu si vous ne changez votre ordre de bataille: dégarnissez votre gauche pour vous opposer à l'ennemi à nombre égal. Faites rapprocher vos lignes davantage. Si vous tardez un moment, il n'y a plus de ressource " (P 840) . As part of the exposition, the speech crystallises the danger for France, foreshadows the eventual defeat and is thus given a specific narrative function. Whilst no source is quoted, as is often the case in Charles XII, this speech has at least the merit of being fully relevant to the situation and well-integrated into the main body of the narrative. Elsewhere, direct speech can be used in the narration of the battle itself, making the scene more theatrical and striking; e.g. in the récit of the battle of Friedlingen (P 825).[63] Voltaire here uses the anecdote which he had learnt from Villars himself, and the short abrupt speeches

to good effect: "Une voix cria: 'Nous sommes coupés.' A ce mot, tous ses régiments s'enfuirent. Il court à eux, et leur crie: 'Allons, mes amis, la victoire est à nous: vive le roi!' Les soldats répondirent 'Vive le roi!' en tremblant et recommencent à fuir." (P 825). Far from slowing down the action, as they often do in Charles XII, such speeches contribute greatly to the sense of urgency and the atmosphere of panic. There is in Le Siècle a finer balance between historical facts and petits faits; although the tone often borders on that of an adventure story, as in Charles XII, Voltaire has learnt to select what does not diminish the immediate impact of his narrative, while preserving a certain theatricality in the tableaux.

In his attempts to transform historical events into dramatic scenes, Voltaire does not confine himself to the inclusion of discours or direct speech; the conteur often goes further and incorporates short pieces of dialogue, as has already been observed in the tableaux of Hochstedt (P 826), and Blenheim (P 833).[64] One can also observe Voltaire's effort to transform his source, Mme de Motteville's Mémoires,[65] in his rendering of the conversation between Mazarin and Anne of Austria concerning Louis's love for Marie Mancini (P 680). Voltaire, here, has no hesitation in including a speech from Mazarin which he clearly invents: "Il pressentit adroitement la reine-mère: 'Je crains bien, lui dit-il, que le roi ne veuille trop fortement épouser ma nièce.'" (P 680). This he does to make the scene come to life; the insertion of notes scéniques, so that the reader can almost hear the two protagonists - "elle lui répondit avec la hauteur d'une princesse du sang d'Autriche... et avec l'aigreur que lui

inspirait depuis quelque temps un ministre qui affectait de ne plus dépendre d'elle" (P 680) - , further brings history close to drama. He shortens the queen's speech to give it more bite, setting it apart from the narrative as the climax of the episode. Voltaire's success resides largely in his ability to characterise the two speakers; the humility of Mazarin is in sharp contrast to the queen's haughtiness and directness. In brief, Voltaire modifies the source to bring the scene to life.

The same aptitude for using dialogue when and where it is most effective, which came to light in Charles XII,[66] transforms episodes which would otherwise be unexciting in themselves into vivid and entertaining ones. The siege of Barcelona (P 837, para. 2) is a particularly good example of this; the historical facts having been quickly disposed of, Voltaire can focus attention on the more unusual details: "Une bombe crève dans le fort sur le magasin des poudres, et le fait sauter; le fort est pris, la ville capitule" (P 838). The conversation between the Viceroy and Peterborough - which was most certainly reported to Voltaire by the latter - is embroidered upon to allow the two men to speak 'in character': the indignation of the Viceroy being matched by the supreme confidence and nobility of Peterborough. By incorporating this piece of dialogue into the factual account of the siege, Voltaire seeks to diversify the narrative and to rekindle the reader's interest. If verisimilitude rather than historical evidence guides him in the utilisation of such dialogue, it remains true that such conversations fit in well with the rest of the narrative so that the pace is hardly slowed down, unlike similar conversations in Charles XII,[67] which interrupt

the narrative without adding anything significant. Here, Voltaire contrives to give fresh impetus to the récit through the use of dialogue and the subsequent racy account of the rescue of the Duchess of Popoli by Peterborough from the hands of German soldiers - a salacious and piquant incident which belongs to the novel of adventure rather than serious history, but which, nevertheless, in the hands of Voltaire the master story-teller, becomes an exciting episode.[68]

History also resembles drama in Le Siècle in the tragic emotions it aims to arouse in the reader, so that pathos becomes an important consequence of Voltaire's dramatic art in the work. The reader's involvement is required at all times and he is called upon to share the author's admiration for such heroes as Condé and Turenne, or to pity the fate of such tragic figures as James II or the de Witts, or even to fear for the safety of characters he has learnt to identify himself with, such as Villars or Villeroi. In L'Ingénu, Voltaire was to write of history: "Il semble que l'histoire ne plaise que comme la tragédie, qui languit si elle n'est animée par les passions, les forfaits, et les grandes infortunes."[69] The response called for by Voltaire is not dissimilar, therefore, to that expected of a spectator in tragedy; he would not have agreed with Aristotle's claim that "poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history, for poetry deals more with things in a universal way, but history with each thing for itself,"[70] for the division is more blurred in Voltaire's scheme of things. The murder of the de Witts (P 719-20), for instance, comes close to a tragic scene of classical tragedy. Once the historical facts, which explain the

assassination and make up the backcloth, are presented, events move irretrievably to their tragic conclusion, as the narrative conveys a mood of inevitability: "On attente d'abord à la vie du grand pensionnaire Jean de Witt; ensuite on accuse Corneille, son frère, d'avoir attenté à celle du prince" (P 719-20). The Ode of Horace,[71] spoken by Corneille de Witt, replaces here the harangue or tirade; it gives the scene a more dramatic tone and is imbued with pathos, bestowing a measure of tragic dignity on the character. Voltaire's transformations help to make the French text more moving, through the highly poetic image: "La mer qui gronde et s'élance." The result is that the reader is asked to admire the stoic courage of the hero and pity further his sad plight.

In the final scene of the atrocities perpetrated against the bodies of the de Witts (P 720), the language becomes concrete but is never in bad taste: "Enfin la populace effrénée massacra dans La Haye les deux frères de Witt... On exerça sur leurs corps sanglants toutes les fureurs dont le peuple est capable..." The tableau becomes more realistic, but tragic dignity is preserved by means of circumlocutions. Although the tableau opens out on a general attack on the populace, for which Voltaire has little but contempt, his main aim is to depict a moving scene and to guarantee the emotional involvement of the reader. The tableau assumes tragic proportions mostly because of Voltaire's restraint and the absence of melodrama.[72] The author of Zaïre has stamped his own influence on a historical incident borrowed from Reboulet.[73]

That history comes close to tragedy in the emotions it is meant to arouse is further illustrated in Voltaire's treatment of

James II as a tragic figure. While decrying his fanaticism (P 760), Voltaire attenuates his guilt to some extent by ascribing his intolerance to his Jesuit confessors. In this way, the reader never loses all esteem for the monarch. James, the lonely figure abandoned by his family (P 762), retains accordingly a certain tragic nobility and by the use of emotive language, Voltaire succeeds in winning our sympathy for the forlorn man on the beach after his naval defeat of 1692: "Le roi Jacques, qui du rivage avait vu ce désastre, perdit toutes ses espérances" (P 769). And when he comes to summarise James's career, Voltaire's sensibility comes to the fore again: "Peu de princes furent plus malheureux que lui" (P 770) - a tragic fate which he shares with the whole of the Stuart family.

The same emotionalism permeates the tableau of misfortunes which befell this family: "Il n'y a aucun exemple dans l'histoire d'une maison si longtemps infortunée." (P 770). Voltaire's sympathy for the Stuarts was always particularly strong; Longchamp describes how the author of La Guerre de 1741, when reading extracts pertaining to the fate of the Stuarts to an audience, was profoundly moved himself and made his public burst into tears: "Ce morceau était extrêmement pathétique et touchant. M. de Voltaire le lut avec une profonde sensibilité; et quand il en vint aux détails relatifs à l'infortune du Prétendant, il arracha des larmes à toute l'assemblée."[74] Similarly, when read aloud and with all the dignity required, the long digression on the Stuart family (P 770) assumes the full intensity and pathos intended, through the rhythm and the accumulation of tragic events, as the succession of tragic blows is dealt with in a deliberately emotive

manner. The whole tableau leads to the fatalistic conclusion: "Si quelque chose justifie ceux qui croient une fatalité à laquelle rien ne peut se soustraire, c'est cette suite continuelle de malheurs qui a persécuté la maison de Stuart pendant plus de trois cents années " (P 770). Having moved the reader deeply by the long list of misfortunes, Voltaire is in a position to conclude strongly and positively, the final lines resembling the last sombre chords of the orchestra at the end of a 'pathetic' symphony.[75]

Pathos without melodrama seems, therefore, to be an essential ingredient in Voltaire's conception of history - a mark of its real 'eloquence'. The death of Turenne (P 734), handled soberly by Voltaire, acquires all the more pathos for this very reason; e.g. St. Hilaire's words are given without hyperbolic comments and the reader is left to draw his own conclusions (P 734). When compared to the death of Charles XII (P 271), where Voltaire revels in such gory details as "Sa tête était renversée sur le parapet, l'œil gauche était enfoncé" (P 271), or to the duke of Holstein's death and Charles's reactions: "Quelques larmes tombèrent de ses yeux; il se cacha un moment le visage avec les mains" (P 107) - the full measure of Voltaire's restraint can be appreciated. In Le Siècle, Voltaire merely sums up the soldiers' reactions to Turenne's death: "Cependant Turenne fut pleuré des soldats et des peuples" (P 734), and much is left unsaid. He has come to recognise that the dignity of history would be enhanced by greater control; this sobriety recalls less Voltaire's own melodramas, Zaïre or Mahomet, than Racine's tragedies.

(IV) Pictorial qualities: Voltaire 'Peintre'

Pathos often results from Voltaire's evocative presentation and its pictorial qualities. Voltaire himself repeatedly referred to his historical works as tableaux or peinture; e.g. "On veut essayer de peindre à la postérité, non les actions d'un seul homme, mais l'esprit des hommes dans le siècle le plus éclairé qui fût jamais" (P 616). On August 2nd, 1740, in connexion with a French edition of Nordberg's L'Histoire de Charles XII, he wrote to Schulenbourg: "Ce sera pour moi une nouvelle palette, dans laquelle je tremperai les pinceaux dont il me faudra repeindre mon tableau" (P 300). The metaphor is not fortuitous, for throughout the composition of Le Siècle, as we have indicated in our first chapter, he refers to himself as "le peintre des mœurs" and his work as "une peinture du siècle de Louis XIV." In a letter to the Journal des Savants, concerning Charles XII, he declares that details are unimportant, and goes on to say: "Pourvu que les grandes figures du tableau soient dessinées avec vérité et fortement prononcées, il importe peu que les autres soient vues tout entières" (P 303). Leaving aside for the moment the 'tableau des mœurs' - e.g. in chapters XXV-XXVIII or chapters XXXI-XXXIX, to which we shall be returning, one must ask, in the light of such statements, to what extent Voltaire's narrative or historical style relies on this pictorial or imaginative quality for its effect. The comparison of individual incidents portrayed to tableaux is a valid one, in view of the use of concrete and visual details.

In Voltaire's description of the destruction of the Palatinate by Louis XIV (P 773) can be seen this evocative and

pictorial quality at its very best. The careful selection of concrete details brings home the full horror of the situation. The subject is introduced in as dramatic a manner as one could expect: "Le roi avait résolu de faire un désert du Palatinat..." (P 772). To convey the violence about to be done to the region, Voltaire adroitly draws a parallel between its previous prosperity and its imminent destruction: "Les généraux français, qui ne pouvaient qu'obéir, firent donc signifier, dans le cœur de l'hiver, aux citoyens de toutes ces villes si florissantes et si bien réparées, aux habitants des villages, aux maîtres de plus de cinquante châteaux, qu'il fallait quitter leurs demeures, et qu'on allait les détruire par le fer et par les flammes." (P 773). As the picture darkens, the pathos increases, for the narrator turns the spotlight on individual cases of misery: "Hommes, femmes, vieillards, enfants, sortirent en hâte." The use of visual examples, given progressively and leading to the most barbaric actions, conveys the full extent of the violence: "Une partie fut errante dans les campagnes; une autre se réfugia dans les pays voisins... On commença par Manheim et Heidelberg, séjour des électeurs: leurs palais furent détruits comme les maisons des citoyens; leurs tombeaux furent ouverts par la rapacité du soldat, qui croyait y trouver des trésors; leurs cendres furent dispersées." (P 773). Voltaire has passed from a general survey to specific examples of violence, the whole incident being captured on a canvas of some magnitude, as the eye passes from the general scene of destruction to focus attention on individual figures and objects. The emotional response of the reader depends largely on the author's own sympathy for the victims;

that Voltaire felt deeply for "ce beau pays... désolé" is evident from the emotive quality of the language and the painstaking way in which he selects striking examples of barbarism. It amounts to a purposely gruesome picture which is meant to stir the reader's imagination.[76]

Voltaire's depiction of the rigorous winter of 1709 is likewise both evocative and endowed with remarkable visual quality. The narrator sets out to paint a sombre picture of the distress of the French nation, when morale is at its lowest. The introductory statement: "Le cruel hiver de 1709 acheva de désespérer la nation" (P 857), sets the mood, whilst in the lines that follow, the picture darkens with each stroke of the brush: "Les oliviers, qui sont une grande ressource dans le midi de la France, périrent. Presque tous les arbres fruitiers gelèrent. Il n'y eut point d'espérance de récolte" (P 857). Only the negative aspects of the situation are stressed to intensify the mood of gloom, as Voltaire accumulates concrete examples of the economic crisis facing the nation: "On avait très peu de magasins..." The paragraph progresses through these examples to the gloomiest note struck at the end: "Les troupes de France, diminuées et découragées, semblaient devoir périr de misère." The circular movement of the <u>tableau</u> makes it possible for Voltaire to reiterate the initial theme of despair. His success here is due to his ability to create a mood of depression, to involve the reader, to make the <u>tableau</u> both realistic and vivid, whilst leaving a lot to the reader's imagination. Restraint combines with the forceful, yet suggestive, language to make this particular <u>tableau</u> a striking and a moving one.

When he takes up the theme of national distress two pages later, in connexion with the council called by Louis XIV to consider peace (P 859), he makes a further appeal to his readers' emotions. The terms used by Voltaire to describe the desperate situation France finds herself in are consequently as forceful as possible; here, too, the tone of the picture becomes increasingly more sombre: "Les dépêches désespérantes du président Rouillé arrivaient coup sur coup au conseil, dans le temps de la plus déplorable misère où le royaume eût été réduit dans les temps les plus funestes. L'hiver de 1709 laissait des traces affreuses; le peuple dépérissait de famine; les troupes n'étaient point payées; la désolation était partout. Les gémissements et les terreurs du public augmentaient encore le mal " (P 859). As an evocation of the mood of the nation in 1709, this passage is far superior to Larrey's treatment[77] of the same theme. The focus in Voltaire, once again, moves from the general scene on the canvas to specific examples and back to the general mood of despair. The pungency of Voltaire's style, his sense of drama and the imaginative appeal of his presentation compare more than favourably with Larrey's leisurely account which explores the economic causes of the nation's downfall. The sense of impending doom in Voltaire's text is sustained throughout, as he draws attention to what is likely to have an effect on his reader: the real human suffering. Nor does he exaggerate the ill-effects of this winter, for Martin in his Histoire de France[78] writes: "Les troncs les plus robustes éclataient comme de la poudre; les pierres se fondaient; les liqueurs les plus spiritueuses se figeaient au coin du feu; les blés furent gelés dans le sillon."

The expressive quality of Voltaire's style, the sober yet emotionally charged language in this paragraph are rarely surpassed in the rest of the work.

The council of ministers called by Louis XIV, for which Voltaire relies exclusively on one source, Torci,[79] has likewise affinities with a painting, this time a tableau vivant. The objective tone of the opening: "Le conseil était composé du dauphin, du duc de Bourgogne, son fils, ..." (P 859), soon makes way for a more emotional one, as Voltaire gives the reactions of those present to the nation's sufferings: "Le duc de Beauvilliers fit une peinture si touchante de l'état où la France était réduite, que le duc de Bourgogne en versa des larmes, et tout le conseil y mêla les siennes." Une peinture si touchante might well be said to summarise Voltaire's aims here; by emphasising such visual aspects as "en versa des larmes", he appeals directly to the reader's emotions. Through Voltaire's pictorial art, a historic meeting is turned into "une scène si triste", in Torci's words (P 859).

This ability to conjure up with a stroke a whole scene, is not amiss when it is a question of narrating major military confrontations; the whole setting is recaptured in a few words, as we follow Turenne on the march to Alsace in 1674: "Alors il traverse, par Tanne et par Béfort, des montagnes de neige..." (P 730). Similarly at Nervinde, the reader is asked to form a mental picture of the Duc de Chartres "dans un terrain creux, environné de tous côtés d'hommes et de chevaux tués ou blessés." (P 780). Already present in Charles XII - e.g. Charles "traverse la rivière et les marais, ayant souvent de l'eau au-dessus des épaules" (P 150) -

the pictorial quality of Voltaire's narrative style has been perfected in Le Siècle to bring to life what might otherwise have been impersonal and unimaginative incidents. And it was to remain an essential ingredient of his historical presentation, as La Russie sous Pierre le Grand (1763) testifies; e.g. "Il /Charles/ s'élance dans la rivière, suivi de son régiment des gardes. Cette foule rompait l'impétuosité du flot; mais on avait de l'eau jusqu'aux épaules, et on ne pouvait se servir de ses armes" (P 460).

(V) Voltaire's Journalistic Manner

In a letter to Nordberg, quoted in full by René Pomeau, Voltaire sets the historian apart from the journalist, in the eighteenth century sense of the word:

> Vous nous avez donné une partie du journal militaire de M. Adlerfelt; mais, Monsieur, un journal n'est pas plus une histoire que des matériaux ne sont une maison. Souffrez qu'on vous dise que l'histoire ne consiste point ainsi à détailler de petits faits, à produire des manifestes, des répliques, des dupliques... Il y a mille journalistes; à peine avons-nous deux ou trois historiens modernes. Nous souhaiterions que tous ceux qui broient les couleurs les donnassent à quelque peintre pour en faire un tableau (P 306).

The equation of the historian with the painter of tableaux is brought home once again here. But to pass to another 'manner' of Voltaire in Le Siècle, whilst a journalist to him remains a compiler of facts, often petits faits, without ulterior motive, his approach and presentation do not, on many occasions, differ radically from that of the journalist, whether in the eighteenth century sense of the word, or more significantly,

that of the modern reporter. Such journaux as Dangeau's Mémoires, dealt with in the previous chapter, provide in Voltaire's view the essential material from which the historian derives information which is then integrated into a work of art. Voltaire's contempt for the 'journalistes' or 'gazetiers', as he also refers to them in Le Siècle and elsewhere, who are concerned with trivia and scandal, should not, however, obscure the fact that his own method in his histories does not, to a large extent, appear opposed to theirs, either in the journalistic search for original and extraordinary details, or in their utilisation and presentation in Le Siècle. It is true that this is never taken to such extremes as in Charles XII, where colourful and exotic trivia are included in abundance for their own sake, but his quest for picturesque and quaint material persists in Le Siècle.

Thus he pays particular attention to intrigues and secret negotiations in the main body of the narrative in chapters I-XXIV - e.g. P 709, P 787 - , which hold greater appeal for his reading public, making full use of the testimonies of such eye-witnesses as Torci.[80] Such details as the colour of Mazarin's soldiers' scarves in chapter V (P 658), Mazarin throwing money to the populace on his return to Paris after the Fronde (P 666), serve little historical purpose, but add colour to the narrative. Voltaire takes great pains, moreover, to draw attention to unusual aspects of battles; e.g. at the battle of Valenciennes, he notes: "C'était peut-être la première fois qu'une armée battue avait osé faire un siège" (P 673). Of the negotiations between Mazarin and Don Louis de Haro, he recalls and emphasises the most curious feature: that the discussions hinged on the question of préséance,

while he quickly passes over other more important details (P 681). He is aware, as a modern reporter would be, of his public's taste for fashion, for in quite a lengthy discussion he deals with the new fashion resulting from the French victory at Steinkerque (P 779); as well as for romantic adventures - e.g. Eugène's love for the Italian lady, whom Voltaire claims to have seen at The Hague and who is said to have influenced the general's choice of Denain as his headquarters in 1712 (P 876). As a populariser of history, furthermore, Voltaire makes a point of explaining past events in contemporary terms to make the past more accessible to his reading public; he remarks of Louis XIV's preparations to conquer Holland: "Cinquante millions, qui en feraient aujourd'hui quatre-vingt-sept, furent consommés à cet appareil " (P 712).

Biographical details, besides, are frequently given to characterise great men and to make them slightly more than cardboard figures, especially when those details are likely to stir the reader's imagination. There is, however, a greater balance in Le Siècle between such romanesque details and historical facts than in Charles XII.[81] Voltaire's greater sobriety does not, for all that, exclude considerations of his heroes as men; e.g. de Witt is envisaged first as the 'grand pensionnaire', but Voltaire insists also on his frugality: "Il n'avait qu'un laquais et une servante, et allait à pied à La Haye" (P 703). His manner, here, is no different from that of the journalist reporting on the English nation in the Lettres Philosophiques, where, in Letter 1, he gives an insight into the way of life of the Quaker, William Pitt. Luxembourg is viewed as a general, the historian being concerned above all with his accomplishments,

but the journalist finds time to comment on his love-affairs: "/Il était/ toujours amoureux, et même souvent aimé, quoique contrefait et d'un visage peu agréable" (P 775). Eugène's previous membership of a religious order is likewise underlined: "Il prit ensuite le petit collet: on l'appelait l'abbé de Savoie" (P 813). Condé's retirement, spent amongst "des hommes de génie en tout genre" (P 737), should, strictly speaking, belong to the chapters of anecdotes, but at the end of this brilliant military career, Voltaire knows the interest he has already aroused for the hero and cashes in on this. Peterborough's exotic adventures, which set him apart from other men, help to enliven the narrative of the siege of Barcelona: "A quinze ans il était parti de Londres pour aller faire la guerre aux Maures, en Afrique; il avait à vingt ans commencé la révolution d'Angleterre..." (P 837). History, as we have seen, must, in Voltaire's eyes, have enough imaginative appeal to please the reader, and such a man as Peterborough "qui ressemblait en tout à ces héros dont l'imagination des Espagnols a rempli tant de livres" (P 837), becomes an important asset to this end. In the chronological survey of Louis XIV's reign, a gallery of similar colourful personalities find their proper place, whether they be self-made men like Duquesne (P 743), or Ruyter, who started as a 'valet' and a 'mousse' (P 743), or the homosexual and effeminate Monsieur (P 742), or the revoltingly untidy Vendôme (P 819), or the short-sighted Tallard (P 830). History, here, does seem to share the enthralling qualities of La Bruyère's Caractères and comes close to the historical Mémoires of Saint-Simon, without the calumnies and the satirical tone rejected, in the main, by Voltaire as

unworthy of its dignity,[82] though this is not always the case.[83]

It is in such tableaux as the digression on the luxury and comfort prevalent during Louis XIV's campaign in Flanders (P 698), that Voltaire's journalistic manner is most apparent. The progress achieved through the ages in this respect, from the days prior to Louis XIV's reign to the eighteenth century, is indicated by carefully selected examples, such as the "assiettes de fer" used by Turenne, the "vaisselle d'argent" utilised for the first time by the maréchal d'Humières at the siege of Arras in 1658, the pomp and circumstance of Louis XIV in Flanders, the use of horses by Louis XIV as opposed to the "chaise de poste avec des glaces et des ressorts" in Voltaire's day (P 699). Such details belong to those very gazettes which Voltaire is quick to attack, but they were of interest to a 'public de goût' and they do relieve the monotony of a récit of battles. Other tableaux, like the description of Franche-Comté, written in the manner of modern reporting (P 701), the journey of Madame to try and win Charles II over to the French cause (P 709), serve a similar purpose, whilst the account of public joy that greeted the news of William III's alleged death (P 767), shows Voltaire's ability to recapture the mood of the moment, as a modern reporter would: "On sonna des cloches; on brûla dans plusieurs quartiers des figures d'osier qui représentaient le prince d'Orange, on tira le canon de la Bastille..."[84] (P 767). The correspondent is in a position to conjure up realistically the climate of wild rejoicings, through carefully selected visual details. This attempt to recreate the mood of the nation, as we have already indicated, forms an essential part of Voltaire's narrative technique; he would also have argued that it constituted an

essential ingredient of the 'tableau des mœurs'. The journalist devotes as much time to the reactions of the French nation and of other European nations, as to the events themselves; e.g. the universal condemnation of the French generals after the battle of Blenheim (P 830), the general revulsion in Europe following the destruction of the Palatinate (P 733).

The tableau of the age owes accordingly much to Voltaire's journalistic talent, and would by no means be complete without his attempts to go behind the scenes, as he did in the Lettres Philosophiques, in search of clues to the general spirit of the nation; e.g. in connexion with the siege of Turin, Voltaire makes use of a journalistic piece of information he had collected during his stay in England, the fact that English merchants came to the rescue of Prince Eugene with six million 'livres'[85] (P 845). The war correspondent has, furthermore, an important contribution to make to 'l'histoire des mœurs', and in this respect Voltaire comes closest to the modern roving reporter, with an eye for modern innovations in the art of warfare. During the conquest of Flanders, he remarks: "L'art d'attaquer les places n'était pas encore perfectionné comme aujourd'hui, parce que celui de les bien fortifier et de les bien défendre était plus ignoré" (P 698). He draws attention likewise to the novelty of Vauban's fortifications during the same campaign: "Il les fit suivant sa nouvelle méthode, devenue aujourd'hui la règle de tous les bons ingénieurs" (P 699), thus putting the innovation in the broader context of future developments, as a good journalist should. The digressions on the use of baïonnettes (P 713), James II's invention of signals by means of flags (P 725), the use of 'lignes parallèles'

for the first time by Turks (P 708), Renaud's creation of 'floating bombs' (P 751), testify to the same basic need to respond to the public's taste for what is out of the ordinary, a public very much involved in the politics of war and the art of warfare. It is perhaps a measure of Voltaire's contradictory moods that, whilst he is such a staunch critic of wars, he can still appreciate the genius of great men like Vauban, Condé and Turenne, and the significance of progress in warfare. But above all, he takes account of his public's demand for such material, for his readers would comprise many who had made a career in the army, or who took an active interest in the subject.

Voltaire's journalistic approach undoubtedly makes history more than just a collection of facts, as his own original research often shed new light on events; e.g. after the account of the battle of Blenheim, he is in a position to refer to tapestries which he had seen for himself at Blenheim Palace and which commemorated the victory (P 834). He includes many other facts which he had witnessed in person; e.g. in his eulogy of Leopold of Lorraine, he uses his own first-hand experience: "J'ai vu longtemps après sa mort, ses sujets verser des larmes en prononçant son nom" (P 791). But this method has its limitations, if not supplemented by a more serious historical approach. Never more so than in Voltaire's handling of the quarrel of the Duchess of Marlborough and Queen Anne (P 870). Carried away by new details which he has learnt personally from the Duchess of Marlborough, Voltaire distorts the truth by giving more credit to his original theory of 'petites causes', and is unconsciously led into error by his investigations: "Quelques paires de gants

d'une façon singulière qu'elle refusa à la reine, une jatte d'eau qu'elle laissa tomber en sa présence, par une méprise affectée, sur la robe de Mme Masham, changèrent la face de l'Europe" (P 871). This, of course, is a gross oversimplification of the fall from power of the Marlboroughs and ignores the main cause thereof, the political intrigues of the Tories.[86] In his desire to exaggerate the quaintness of the episode, the journalist transforms a complex political situation into a lighthearted 'conte'; he clearly wants to overemphasise the importance of information which he has collected at first hand. His approach is too literary and not historical enough. In the end, Voltaire's oversimplified version of the incident falls short of the truth, precisely because of his excessive faith in his journalistic method of investigation.

This journalistic approach and manner of presentation persist throughout Le Siècle, and remain a fundamental aspect of Voltaire's historical 'manner'. Never more so than in the chapters on Louis's private life (XXV-XXVIII), where the social historian attempts to evoke the splendour of a past age.[87] The journalistic selection of picturesque and unusual details has a vital role to play in the recreation of the particular atmosphere of the age. A few examples will suffice to show the importance ascribed by Voltaire to the 'détails singuliers', and the similarities between his method and that of the modern reporter. He is able to recapture the atmosphere at court and in Paris in 1662 through his allusions to the carrousel opposite the Tuileries "dans une vaste enceinte... Il y eut cinq quadrilles: le roi était à la tête des Romains; son frère, des Persans; le prince de Condé, des Turcs; le duc d'Enghien, son fils, des Indiens; le duc de

Guise, des Américains" (P 905) - the picture evokes the popularity of exotic costumes at the time. The fashion of the times never fails to escape Voltaire's notice; the new trends started by Louis XIV are duly commented on: "Pour distinguer ses principaux courtisans, il avait inventé des casaques bleues, brodées d'or et d'argent... On peut remarquer, puisqu'il est ici question de petits détails, qu'on portait alors des casaques par-dessus un pourpoint orné de rubans, et sur cette casaque passait un baudrier auquel pendait l'épée" (P 909-10). Whilst forming an integral part of the tableau des mœurs, such details, as Voltaire was fully aware, would appeal to a fashion-conscious reading public. Numerous details testify to the journalistic interest in unusual material - such as the 'arc de triomphe' which graced the allée de Vincennes (P 894), the improvements made by Fouquet to his palace at Vaux and which infuriated Louis XIV (P 897), the craving for mottoes in the early part of Louis XIV's reign (P 905), the evocation of the spectacles which characterised the court of the young Louis XIV: "Les courses de bagues, qu'on faisait quelquefois, et où l'on étalait déjà une grande magnificence, faisaient paraître avec éclat son adresse à tous les exercices" (P 894). The entrance of the new queen and of Louis XIV after their wedding is observed and described by Voltaire in the manner of the reporter (P 894). Without labouring the point, Voltaire's evocation of a glorious age owes much to his keen eye for telling details, as well as his ability to select interesting and entertaining journalistic material. That he has researched the subject in a journalistic manner, by interviewing witnesses and relatives of witnesses, has already been discussed in chapter III.

To what was widely known about Louis XIV, he is able to contribute consequently a considerable amount of original material collected at first hand.

In chapters XXIX and XXX, similarly, Voltaire reports on the progress achieved by Louis XIV in the style of the journalist. The huge step forward taken under the guiding hand of Colbert is illustrated by an impressive number of concrete details, but economic history is written here in an entertaining manner. Voltaire remains at all times conscious of what is likely to interest his public; progress in industry is brought home through references to the manufacture of luxury commodities, such as 'draps fins' (P 967), silk (P 967), belles glaces which even surpassed those of Venice: "Et bientôt on en fit dont la grandeur et la beauté n'ont pu jamais être imitées ailleurs. Les tapis de Turquie et de Perse furent surpassés à la Savonnerie. Les tapisseries de Flandres cédèrent à celles des Gobelins " (P 967-8). And as a good reporter should, Voltaire gives the impression of having gone behind the scenes to observe closely the workshops where such luxury items were produced: "Le vaste enclos des Gobelins était rempli alors de plus de huit cents ouvriers; il y en avait trois cents qu'on y logeait. Les meilleurs peintres dirigeaient l'ouvrage, ou sur leurs propres dessins, ou sur ceux des anciens maîtres d'Italie" (P 968). Voltaire is quick, too, whenever the opportunity arises, to appeal to the personal experience of his readers, some of whom could still remember such events at the end of Louis XIV's reign, as the visit of the Persian ambassador, Mehemet Rizabeg, at Versailles on February 19th,

1715 - a fact witnessed by Voltaire himself (P 972). This is good journalistic technique. The war correspondent is in evidence in chapter XXIX, too, insisting on the military reforms and innovations of Louis XIV; e.g. the introduction of the baïonnettes (P 973), the novelty of distinguishing each regiment "par la couleur des habits ou par différentes marques, réglement adopté par toutes les nations" (P 973). The mood of refinement and the increasing desire for comfort, which spread to the whole nation, as a result of Louis's personal leadership in these matters, are recaptured through carefully selected details, such as architectural developments (P 980), whilst Voltaire draws his readers' attention to the repercussions this has had for their own society: "On s'aperçoit aujourd'hui, jusque dans le fond d'une boutique, que la politesse a gagné toutes les conditions" (P 981). As a journalist, too, Voltaire has observed in his own day practices which exemplify this refinement in the mœurs due to Louis XIV: "On est parvenu enfin à ne plus mettre le luxe que dans le goût et dans la commodité. La foule de pages et de domestiques de livrée a disparu, pour mettre de l'aisance dans l'intérieur des maisons" (P 981). To bring up to date the progress achieved, largely through Louis XIV, is to emphasise the relevance of these social developments to contemporary society, and this guarantees the involvement of the contemporary reader. The admirable portrayal of a past age depends to a considerable extent on Voltaire's ability to evoke the climate of the times through an astute selection and use of relevant details, either gleaned from sources like Larrey and Limiers,[88] or through his personal contacts and interviews with men and women who could remember the past or who knew someone who did.

Nor has this journalistic manner lost its usefulness when Voltaire deals with literature and the arts. Amidst his personal evaluation of and observations on the great classical authors, he is more than willing to find a place for biographical details or 'information inédite' which he has acquired. His own journalistic research sheds light on Fénelon's Télémaque, which he learnt from the great man's nephew was not composed for the Duc de Bourgogne (P 1007), and in his discussion of the merits of the work, he includes a picturesque and little-known detail about the manuscript being stolen by a servant (Ibid.). As a journalist, he pays special attention to the allusions to Louis XIV in this work (P 1007), and its success is proved by original information Voltaire has discovered at first hand: "Les éditions en furent innombrables; j'en ai vu quatorze en langue anglaise" (P 1008), presumably whilst he was in England. He is concerned not just with the lasting quality of literary works, but with the success and reputation of men like Bourdaloue (P 1004) in their own day, as well as such titillating details as Bossuet's engagement to Mlle Desvieux (P 1005). To prove the increased popularity of French paintings in the eighteenth century, he recalls having personally seen galleries and apartments adorned with them at the court of Frederick (P 1019). He makes a point, even here, of dealing with what is of direct interest to a 'public mondain'; progress in the arts in France is brought home by details about medals (P 1020) and "l'art de graver les pierres précieuses" (Ibid.). And in his discussion of science, he is not reluctant to dwell at length on his personal meeting with the surgeon Cheselden in London: "Non seulement il n'y

avait guère d'excellents chirurgiens qu'en France, mais c'était dans ce seul pays qu'on fabriquait parfaitement les instruments nécessaires: il en fournissait tous ses voisins, et je tiens du célèbre Cheselden, le plus grand chirurgien de Londres, que ce fut lui qui commença à faire fabriquer à Londres, en 1715, les instruments de son art" (P 1021). The constant attempt to preserve a certain human interest, and to move away from the abstract, to reduce potentially complex subjects to material accessible to the lay public, makes Voltaire a populariser in the true sense of the word. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in chapter XXXIV, where he deliberately passes quickly over the scientific problems scientists were grappling with, to focus attention on the challenges they sent one another: "C'était alors le bel âge de la géométrie. Les mathématiciens s'envoyaient souvent des défis, c'est-à-dire des problèmes à résoudre, à peu près comme on dit que les anciens rois de l'Egypte et de l'Asie s'envoyaient réciproquement des énigmes à deviner" (P 1027). Thus even heavy-going sections of Le Siècle benefit from Voltaire's journalistic approach which, combined with his narrative skill, his talent as raconteur, to which we shall turn next, revive the reader's interest, when there is a chance that it might begin to sag.

(VI) Voltaire conteur and raconteur

I. Conteur

There is little doubt that Voltaire's talent as a conteur gives many pages of Le Siècle their particular cachet and their scintillating quality. Irrespective of whether Voltaire's aim is

purely to entertain or to recount an important historical incident with serious repercussions, his manner of presentation, which is already in evidence in Charles XII and which will become his trademark in the Contes, is fully developed and very much a vital ingredient throughout Le Siècle. To examine this further, we shall be looking at a selected number of examples from chapters I-XXIV, as well as the chapters of anecdotes (XXV-XXVIII). The narrative skill of the conteur is seen at its best in Voltaire's handling of two incidents which are thematically linked: the attack of the Spaniards on the Comte d'Estrade, the French ambassador, in London in 1661 (P 689), and the escapades of the Duc de Créqui's laquais in Rome in 1662 (P 690-91). In both cases, Voltaire's underlying intentions are serious enough: he wants to show Louis XIV's superiority and might in Europe, whilst in the second instance, Voltaire's aim is also to discredit the Pope (P 691). But what is particularly striking is the entertaining narrative where Voltaire shows all the technical skill apparent in the Contes.

The first episode, significantly, is conducted in the manner of a short story, and is introduced in the same way as a short conte: "Il arriva qu'à l'entrée d'un ambassadeur de Suède à Londres, le comte d'Estrade, ambassadeur de France, et le baron de Vatteville, ambassadeur d'Espagne, se disputèrent le pas" (P 689). The choice of significant details and of curious ones - e.g. that the Spaniards had bribed the populace - , the racy narrative: "Il fait d'abord tuer les chevaux des carrosses français, et bientôt les gens du comte d'Estrade, blessés et dispersés, laissèrent les Espagnols marcher l'épée nue, comme en triomphe"

(P 689), the reliance on visual and evocative details - 'l'épée nue' - are all traits we normally associate with the conteur. So is the chain of events - here the reactions of Louis XIV to this incident expressed in a quick succession of events - which forms the basis for the rest of the tableau. Louis's letter to his father-in-law, Philip of Spain, is summarised, whilst the more important speech of Fuentes is quoted. Thus the whole episode leads to and ends with a dramatic scene incorporating direct speech. Voltaire's selection of the most crucial sentence in a long speech quoted by Larrey[89] and his sense of timing, give this scene its full impact, as the punch-line is reached as quickly as possible and is emphasised by the necessary information being given beforehand.

In the second example, Voltaire's hidden intention is a propagandist one, to show the real weakness of Rome, in spite of its apparent authority (P 691). But he is also out to tell an exciting incident. The essential information about Créqui, the protagonist, is quickly imparted: "Le duc de Créqui, ambassadeur auprès du pape, avait révolté les Romains par sa hauteur..." (P 690), and the climate of opinion in Rome at the time is evoked: "Les jeunes Français... avaient donné aux Italiens, circonspects et jaloux, l'idée d'une nation impétueuse." Voltaire's willingness to reach the crisis with the greatest possible haste, is again apparent here, as is the series of crises which form the plot - a structure so common in the Contes, e.g. Zadig: "Quelques laquais du duc de Créqui s'avisèrent de charger, l'épée à la main, une escouade de Corses... Tout le corps de Corses offensé, et secrètement animé par don Mario Chigi, frère du pape Alexandre

VII, qui haïssait le duc de Créqui, vint en armes assiéger la maison de l'ambassadeur" (P 690). The use of short, verbal and juxtaposed sentences to convey the actions and reactions of both parties, adds to the liveliness of the tableau. It is adroitly divided into smaller dramatic scenes, each with its own unity, whilst there is linear progression: (1) the action of Créqui's servants; (2) the Corsican attack on the ambassador's house; (3) Créqui's departure; (4) the Pope's procrastination; (5) Louis XIV's actions; (6) the Pope's intention to comply with the king's demands. The anecdotal episode owes much of its success to the journalist's selection of unusual details - e.g. Louis's condition that a pyramid should be erected, and the visit of the Nuncio (P 691). But in the end it is the presentation of the conteur - e.g. the expert use of the element of surprise in "Il /Le Pape/ fit pendre un Corse et un sbire au bout de quatre mois, et il fit sortir de Rome le gouverneur, soupçonné d'avoir autorisé l'attentat; mais il fut consterné d'apprendre que le roi menaçait de faire assiéger Rome..." (P 691), allied to the satirical tone,[90] as Voltaire obviously finds great pleasure in seeing the Pope humiliated, which gives the tableau its lively and entertaining quality.

Still amply visible in chapters XXV-XXVIII, though perhaps to a lesser extent, is the skill of the conteur which gives a colourful cachet to historical facts. Sometimes, as in the case of the story of the man in the iron mask, which, as we saw,[91] Voltaire wrongly claims to have been the first one to recount, the material itself is such as to appeal to the reader's taste for the exotic or the picturesque. Yet in Voltaire's hands,

the incident becomes an exciting conte. He is quick to capitalise on the extraordinary nature of the episode from the start: "Quelques mois après la mort de ce ministre, il arriva un événement qui n'a point d'exemple..." (P 895). Voltaire's use of visual details - e.g. "Ce prisonnier, dans la route, portait un masque dont la mentonnière avait des ressorts d'acier qui lui laissaient la liberté de manger avec le masque sur son visage" (P 895) - , lends greater imaginative appeal to the narrative. Whilst preserving enough mystery as to the prisoner's identity, the narrator builds up a picture of a character with whom the reader can readily identify himself, as the nobility, the refinement and dignity of the man are stressed: "Il intéressait par le seul ton de sa voix, ne se plaignant jamais de son état..." (P 896). Whilst he makes an effort to remain within the bounds of verisimilitude, quoting as he does the testimony of a doctor who had known the prisoner, it is obvious that Voltaire has embroidered largely on the material. However, his literary skill, in his handling of the anecdote of the fisherman for example, cannot be denied. Voltaire could clearly not have known all the details, and undoubtedly invented some. He seems more concerned with the literary potential of the incident than with historical accuracy. The tempo vivace of the Contes, the selection of picturesque details - e.g. "Un jour le prisonnier écrivit avec un couteau sur une assiette d'argent, et jeta l'assiette par la fenêtre vers un bateau qui était au rivage, presque au pied de la tour..." (P 896) - , the general air of an adventure story, the use of dialogue, in which Voltaire captures the authoritative and educated tone of the governor, and the timorous, down-to-earth speech of the fisherman[92] - , go a long way towards making

this incident comparable to those in Zadig or Candide. Voltaire's gamut of narrative techniques is even more impressive when compared to the dull version of the same incident in the Mémoires Secrets, which we have shown to be a possible, though unlikely, source of this récit.[93]

Voltaire's account of the early part of Mme de Maintenon's life likewise bears witness to this conteur manner. It takes the form of an 'histoire particulière', as history comes near to the memoir novel here, and Voltaire is particularly intent on highlighting the most romanesque adventures in the young Mlle d'Aubigné's tragic destiny. Although there is a creditable balance between facts and adventures, Voltaire soon falls back on his approach as conteur: "Son père, Constant d'Aubigné, ayant voulu faire un établissement à la Caroline, et s'étant adressé aux Anglais, fut mis en prison au château Trompette, et en fut délivré par la fille du gouverneur, nommé Cardillac..." (P 933). Such romantic adventures, he well knew, would please his public and were commonplace in memoir novels. The tone soon changes from being restrained to being more melodramatic, as pathos becomes the object: "Ce fut dans cette prison de Niort que nacquit en 1635, Françoise d'Aubigné, destinée à éprouver toutes les rigueurs et toutes les faveurs de la fortune " (P 934). The young Mlle d'Aubigné is cast in the role of the tragic and romantic heroine, as the language becomes lyrical; the philosophic tone is reminiscent of the moral approach in the Contes. And historical accuracy takes second place to colourful details, as Voltaire exploits the adventures of the young girl in America, "menée à l'âge de trois ans en Amérique, laissée par la négligence d'un

domestique sur le rivage, prête à y être dévorée par un serpent..." (P 934). It is noticeable too how Voltaire omits less exciting details so as not to detract from the moving narrative, and there is progression in the series of misfortunes which end with Mlle d'Aubigné being "trop heureuse d'épouser, en 1651, Paul Scarron, qui logeait auprès d'elle dans la rue d'Enfer" (P 934), after her return from America and a hard life with Mme de Neuillant. The same mélange des genres as in the Contes, is also observed, as Scarron is described as "cet homme disgracié de la nature, impotent, et qui n'avait qu'un bien médiocre" (P 934).

Voltaire's approach here, as elsewhere in Le Siècle, is dictated by the case in hand. Wanting to write a tragic story, he tries not to detract from the reader's admiration and pity for the heroine. In this connexion, it is worth noting that his portrayal of the young Mme Scarron is nothing short of being eulogistic: "Sa beauté et son esprit la firent bientôt distinguer..." (P 934). He purposely leaves out less savoury details such as Mme Scarron's liaison with Villarceaux, which he had inserted in his Notebooks.[94] One reads in his notes: "Son mariage avec Scarron, ses amours avec Villarceau, dont elle eux /sic/ un fils, particularitez inutiles pour les sages, mais dont le peuple est avide." One cannot help feeling that some of the details Voltaire gives - e.g. the incident with the serpent - amount to little more than pandering to public taste for sensationalism. His efforts to romanticise Mme Scarron can best be measured alongside a sonnet in the Notebooks, which is his own. That he was less concerned with revealing his true opinion of the lady than with depicting a tragic figure, worthy of pity,

is clear when one reads such lines ascribed by Voltaire to Mme de Maintenon:

> Que l'éternel est grand! que [sa?] bonté puissante
> A comblé mes désirs, a payé mes travaux.
> Je naquis demoiselle et je devins servante,
> Je lavay la vaiselle, et frotay les bureaux.
> J'eus bientôt des amants, je ne fus point ingratte.
> De Villarceaux longtems j'amusay les transports,
> Il me fit épouser ce fameux cu de jatte
> Qui vivoit de ses vers comme moy de mon corps. Etc.[95]

It is a far cry from his portrayal in Le Siècle, where he sets out to achieve a predetermined effect: to write a moving and exciting narrative, to depict a pitiful figure and to guarantee the reader's involvement.

The skill in handling the narrative which has guaranteed the fame of Voltaire as a conteur can also be seen in his transcription of the Marquis de Canillac's account of how he tried to save the Duc d'Orléans from ignominy and imprisonment, following rumours that the latter had poisoned members of the royal family (P 945). Whilst Voltaire's main purpose is, admittedly, to refute those unfounded rumours by using the testimony of a trustworthy witness, he cannot resist the temptation of narrating a lively little conte and embellishing it in his own inimitable manner, employing his narrative mastery both to entertain and give greater conviction to his witness's récit: "Le marquis de Canillac, au milieu de cette clameur publique, va le voir dans son palais. Il le trouve étendu à terre, versant des larmes, aliéné par le désespoir. Son chimiste, Homberg, court se rendre à la Bastille, pour se constituer prisonnier; mais on n'avait point d'ordre de le recevoir; on le refuse" (P 945). The narrator's predilection

for the visual, the deliberately contrived melodramatic tone, the raciness of style allied to the sudden change of direction, are all devices to keep the narrative moving, whilst fostering sympathy for the victim. The mood of crisis is preserved throughout leading to the *péripétie*: "La lettre de cachet s'expédie; mais elle n'est point signée..." (P 945). Voltaire subtly combines here the aims of the historian - to discover the truth about a controversial issue through patient research: "J'ose dire que frappé de tout temps de l'injustice des hommes, j'ai fait bien des recherches pour savoir la vérité" (P 945) - and those of the literary artist intent on giving an enthralling narrative. Nor does he stop, in his eagerness to do so, to consider whether Canillac might have exaggerated his role in the matter.[96] It is obvious that not only does the historian show a certain credulity here, but that the artist, seizing the chance to tell a lively *conte*, is swayed by the literary and dramatic potential of Canillac's alleged intervention without verifying the essential facts.[97]

II. *Voltaire Raconteur: Anecdotes*

One aspect of Voltaire's presentation which adds spice to the most serious *tableaux* or chapters is his unmistakable skill as a *raconteur*. Whilst this is already visible in the narrative passages we have examined closely, it is in the shorter anecdotes inserted at regular intervals in all parts of the book to revive the reader's interest, that we can observe Voltaire's delight in and mastery of the art. The importance which he attached to anecdotes is brought home, not just in the number he employs, but in his pronouncements on the subject at the beginning of chapter XXV:

"Les anecdotes sont un champ resserré où l'on glane après la vaste moisson de l'histoire" (P 889). In assessing the petits faits, he claims to apply certain criteria; firstly they should relate to the career of great men; secondly they must be authenticated: "Nous n'admettons pour vérités historiques que celles qui sont garanties" (P 889); thirdly they must do more than merely satisfy the public and should instruct: "Les détails domestiques amusent seulement la curiosité; les faiblesses qu'on met au grand jour ne plaisent qu'à la malignité, à moins que ces mêmes faiblesses n'instruisent ou par les malheurs qui les ont suivies, ou par les vertus qui les ont réparées" (P 890); and finally, history is not satire and to indulge in mudslinging for its own sake is unworthy of the historian. But when all this is said, the use of anecdotes in Le Siècle shows a certain inconsistency, as Voltaire strays on occasions from these principles. He is not reluctant either to include implausible anecdotes, nor can all the anecdotes be said to be historically, morally or philosophically significant. It is the literary artist, more than the historian or the moralist, and as much as the propagandist, who selects, presents and modifies the petits faits, fully aware of the fact, as he himself admits, that "ils /les petits détails/ intéressent le public quand ils concernent des personnages illustres" (P 889). After all, this is the motive behind the large number of anecdotes on Louis XIV's love life - e.g. P 929. Literary preoccupations, whether in chapters I-XXIV, or in chapters XXV-XXVIII, prevail over historical ones; it is, as we have seen in chapter III, Voltaire's natural talent as a raconteur, which delighted so many of his visitors, that sets

the pot-pourri of anecdotal details apart from those of his predecessors like Dangeau.

In chapters I-XXIV, anecdotes have various functions; they might have a narrative function or a dramatic one in a tableau, either by shedding light on the character of great men - e.g. Cromwell's decision to execute Pantaléon Sâ's brother (P 670), which shows his rigid sense of justice. James II's actions at Galloway (P 768) illustrate his cruelty and fanaticism. Likewise, anecdotes in the historical chapters can help to create an atmosphere of tension, urgency or a mood of expectancy, either at the start of the narrative, or within the main body of the narrative - e.g. after Hocquincourt's defeat at Blêneau, the French court's panic is conveyed by Mazarin's haste to awaken the king (P 661). The distress of the Dutch people during Louis XIV's campaign in Holland in 1672 is brought home by an anecdotal detail about the cost of fresh water (P 721). Moreover, as has already been pointed out, anecdotes often dramatise and enliven a tableau either by the inclusion of dialogue, direct speech or reported speech, or simply by the use of unexpected reversals of events; such is the anecdote of Condé's arrival in his camp disguised (P 660), or Mazel's letter to Turenne in 1672 to ask for fifty horsemen in order to capture two or three strongholds (P 717). Voltaire, besides, often uses anecdotes at the beginning of a chapter to arouse interest; e.g. Louis's answer to the courtiers at the start of chapter VII raises our expectations: "Ils lui demandèrent tous: 'A qui nous adresserons-nous?' et Louis XIV leur répondit: 'A moi.'" (P 687). Whilst forming an integral part of the exposition, such anecdotal details allow Voltaire to whet

our appetite for what follows; e.g. the alleged pretexts put forward by France for waging war against the Dutch (P 711-12). His approach in all these cases is that of the raconteur, but rarely does he forget that anecdotes ought to be fully integrated in, or to be shown to be relevant to the tableaux - unlike his more cavalier attitude in Charles XII, to which we shall be returning. Such anecdotes as are used in chapters I-XXIV of Le Siècle, are shown either to have a dramatic function or serious implications. Here Voltaire rarely, on the whole, departs from his principle explained to Shuvalov in a letter of August 7th, 1757: "Je ne crois pas, Monsieur, qu'il faille toujours s'étendre sur les détails des guerres à moins que ces détails ne servent à caractériser quelquechose de grand et d'utile. Les anecdotes de la vie privée ne me paraissent mériter d'attention qu'autant qu'elles font connaître les mœurs générales."[98]

However, it is fair to say that some anecdotes are more historical than others. In these cases, there is little effort on Voltaire's part to embellish them, as the tone remains sober and factual. They merely recount an incident which had serious historical repercussions; e.g. the messenger sent to Condé who goes to Augerville instead of Angerville (P 657); Charles of Lorraine selling his services to both parties during the Fronde (P 662); La Feuillade's enterprising actions against the Turks (P 707). In all these instances, Voltaire makes use of journalistic material, but neither does he try to dramatise them, nor does he put to good effect his talent as raconteur. He is more concerned with recording historiettes which have had a bearing on the course of events or shed light on major historical episodes. In the later

chapters of the first section, the tone becomes increasingly sober, and the light-hearted approach of chapters IV and V makes way for greater seriousness and a sense of urgency. Chapters XXI-XXIV, composed in Prussia, thus include more historical anecdotes than entertaining ones, and markedly fewer anecdotes altogether, as Voltaire tried to finish this section as quickly as possible and reserved his petits faits for the chapters of anecdotes. He also relies more clearly on oral sources than written ones, being able for more recent events to collect anecdotes through his correspondence, whilst he was not in a position to consult as many written sources. All in all, the anecdotes become more significant from a historical point of view; e.g. in their desire to fight, French soldiers throwing bread away at the battle of Malplaquet (P 863); l'Abbé Gautier proposing peace to Torci (P 872); a priest suggesting an attack on Denain (P 877).

But to say that all anecdotes in this section of Le Siècle are relevant or fulfil a definite function within the narrative, would be an oversimplification. While it remains true that when he came to write Le Siècle, Voltaire had developed a more acute critical sense than in Charles XII, this does not exclude altogether details which have the sole function of entertaining and can be justified only on the grounds of their singularité. Thus the presents made by Louis XIV to the Dutch envoy (P 714-15), Condé's retirement (P 737-8), Louis's numerous bons mots about various historical figures, such as Ruyter (P 743), Eugène (P 814), Vendôme (P 819), add nothing of vital importance to the chronology of events. Voltaire's attitude remains, at times, as frivolous

as in Charles XII, and the need to entertain or to insert trivia which he prides himself on having discovered, has, albeit infrequently, the better of his judgement as a historian. The lack of discrimination between petits faits, more suitable for the gazettes, and essential facts, remains painfully obvious; such details as Monsieur's effeminate behaviour and homosexuality (P 742), give Voltaire an opportunity to include a salacious anecdote about a well-known figure and comes near to violating the rule of bienséances. Similarly, Voltaire deals at length with Don Alfonso's wife's attempts to depose the ruler of Portugal on the grounds that he was impotent (P 705). There can be no justification for this digression, even though it gives Voltaire a chance to launch an attack on Rome. The rule of bienséances is here sacrificed to the attempt to amuse a public 'amateur de grivoiseries'. The elements of caricature, Don Alfonso being "furieux et imbécile", the salacious details - "Il avait eu publiquement d'une courtisane un enfant qu'il avait reconnu; enfin il avait couché très longtemps avec la reine" (P 706) - the mélange des genres, as the humorous tone combines with an effort to underline the seriousness of the situation, are unworthy of the dignity of history, as understood in Voltaire's own estimation.

And yet, when compared with the abundance of anecdotes in Charles XII, such petits faits in chapters I-XXIV are few and far between. Leaving aside the chapters of anecdotes in Le Siècle, it is a sound basis for comparison, since in both cases anecdotes occur in the main body of the narrative. In Charles XII, Voltaire is prepared to deal at length with personal details

about the king,[99] as the narrative often consists of a succession of anecdotes, and in this mass of trivia, essential facts are lost sight of. Voltaire had matured as a historian by the time he composed Le Siècle. In form, technique and manner of presentation, Charles XII is close to humanist histories; romanesque and picturesque details are included for their own sake and Voltaire shows no scruples in omitting historical data to make room for Charles's speeches which are remarkably numerous.[100] He hardly ever gives references to sources to authenticate those speeches, nor does he ask himself whether certain anecdotes are within the bounds of probability. If there are still traces of this cavalier attitude in Le Siècle and if the same attitude as regards speeches persists here - e.g. when Voltaire quotes Louis XIV's words about Eugène (P 814), or Villars's speeches to the Regent and to Louis XIV (P 824) - , there is greater control. One anecdote will show the difference between the two works: the challenge sent by the Elector Palatine to Turenne (P 731). The unusual and 'out of the ordinary' nature of this detail first caught Voltaire's eye, but his attempts to discover the truth about the 'cartel' sent by the Elector to Turenne illustrate a more serious attitude as a historian. He would have had no scruples in giving the fact in the previous work, whereas he takes great pains to discover the truth here. He had read Collini's work on the subject, as the notes make clear (P 731). In a letter to Collini (D 14495) of October 21, 1767, he states that he had read the author's dissertation on the quarrel and intends using this information in his 1768 edition - which he did. He follows Collini's example in doubting the authenticity of the letters quoted by Ramsey.

Such reservations are rarely apparent in Charles XII, as he quotes at length a letter of Sultan Achmet to Charles (P 202). Although Voltaire could well have seen a translation of this letter, this is most unlikely. Voltaire's handling of the challenge in Le Siècle points also to greater critical awareness; since he could not be sure of the contents of any letters which had passed between the Elector and Turenne, he sticks to the main fact - that there was a challenge - and does not attempt to give details. In Charles XII, he would have had no hesitation in transforming the incident into a dramatic episode. Similarly when dealing with the Duc de Lorraine's letter to Turenne on the occasion of the destruction of Lorraine (P 732), Voltaire simply declares that a letter was sent and includes Turenne's answer: "Je le ferai dire à l'ordre" (P 732), which was well-known.[101]

In Le Siècle, Voltaire also discriminates on the grounds of verisimilitude, whilst in Charles XII anecdotes are used irrespective of whether they were supported by evidence or seemed to be in accordance with the law of probability. Thus in the earlier work Voltaire reports a private conversation between the Sultan and his vizir (P 186), although there is no way he could have known the exact nature of this interview.[102] He takes the liberty of giving a lengthy account of Marlborough's meeting with Charles held in private (P 141), and goes so far as to guess what Marlborough's private thoughts were. Baltagi Mehemet's speech to the Sultan is reported at length and is obviously based on hearsay evidence (P 187). In Le Siècle, on the other hand, Voltaire shows greater respect for verisimilitude;

he rejects Hénault's anecdote about Montecuculli's reasons for retiring early, on the grounds of probability and of known facts (P 738). He refutes historians' claim that La Feuillade did not take Turin because he had sworn to the Duchess of Bourgogne to spare her father's capital city as implausible (P 842).[103]

Another major difference between the anecdotes in Charles XII and those in chapters I-XXIV of Le Siècle is the greater restraint and sobriety shown by Voltaire in the telling of such anecdotes. The tone, in general, is far less melodramatic than in the previous work. Such anecdotes as the operation on Charles's leg (P 160), are romanticised in Charles XII and blown up out of all proportion; Charles's speech to the surgeons is quoted for the sole purpose of adding to the romanesque elements: "Travaillez donc tout à l'heure, lui dit le roi, taillez hardiment, ne craignez rien" (P 160). In a similar episode in Le Siècle, when the surgeons operate on Marsin's leg, one notices a total absence of melodrama: "Un chirurgien du duc de Savoie lui coupa la cuisse, et le maréchal mourut quelques moments après l'opération" (P 844). The same sobriety is in evidence in Voltaire's handling of potentially exotic anecdotes in Le Siècle. In Charles XII, he gives free rein to his imagination and the episode at Bender, in particular, depends largely on the colourful and picturesque elements, so much so that it earned Voltaire a rebuke from La Mottraye in his Historical and Critical Remarks of 1732.[104] Such indulgence in the romanesque as the attempt on Poniatowski's life (P 179), the intrigues of Baltagi Mehemet's wife (P 186), Poniatowski's letters to the Sultana (P 172), combine to make the

tone of Charles XII resemble that of the nouvelles galantes or an adventure novel.

Compared to these anecdotes, the account of how envoys were sent to Siam and the rise to power of Phalk Constance in Le Siècle, which is summarised in one factual sentence (P 756), display Voltaire's greater discipline. There is no cheap exoticism here, as the narrator selects the most salient and relevant point. In Charles XII, the careers of the Vizirs - e.g. that of the young favourite of Achmet III, Coumourgi - , are given ample coverage and numerous details about political intrigues are inserted for the sake of sensationalism. It appears, therefore, that a comparison between the anecdotes in Charles XII and those in the first twenty-four chapters of Le Siècle confirms the view that there is a finer balance in the latter work between colourful details and historical data, and that Voltaire is trying to discriminate between relevant, significant and probable details and superfluous and trivial ones. This coming of age as a historian was to be further emphasised by his handling of anecdotes in Pierre le Grand, where Voltaire often dealt with the same material as in Charles XII, but in a far more subtle, sophisticated and serious manner.[105] There is little doubt that the later historical work has benefited immensely from the greater historical awareness and the more consistent method already visible in the historical section of Le Siècle.

But greater sobriety does not exclude piquancy, and where anecdotes do occur in the first twenty-four chapters, Voltaire's talent as a raconteur can only be admired. In the shorter

anecdotes, the economical and terse style is vital to Voltaire's success, as the game consists in reaching the punch-line with the greatest possible haste. The light-hearted manner of the author of the Facéties, and his reliance on an ironic twist at the close of the anecdotes, on pithy statements, add spice to the petits faits. In the anecdote of the Duc de Lorraine's departure with the money of both parties during the Fronde (P 662), the ironic twist is a delight: "Le duc de Lorraine quitta bientôt la France, après l'avoir désolée sur son passage, emportant l'argent des deux partis." In the dialogue between Van Beuning and Lyonne during the negotiations at Aix-La-Chapelle (P 704), Voltaire's ability to lead quickly to the punch-line guarantees his success; the question by Lyonne is inserted for the sole purpose of leading to Van Beuning's reply, the climax of the anecdote: "J'ignore ce que veut le roi, dit Van Beuning, je considère ce qu'il peut" (P 704). The structure of shorter anecdotes remains invariably the same; Voltaire gives the necessary information as quickly as possible before moving on to the dialogue or to direct speech without allowing the pace to slacken. He leaves it to the reader to decipher the real significance of the bons mots, thus inviting an active participation from his audience; there are numerous examples of this in chapters I-XXIV - e.g. Louis's words to James II (P 765), about Monseigneur (P 772), Vendôme (P 819), Louvois (P 812). Finally wit and humour are essential factors in Voltaire's success, as any reader of his works is well aware. This often depends on jeux-de-mots or qui-pro-quos; e.g. such as the one resulting from the mistranslation of 'abusive pictures' by the Dutch (P 712). The full extent of

Voltaire's wit and his light-hearted approach are at their best in the chapters of anecdotes (XXV-XXVIII), but give many anecdotes in the earlier chapters their own peculiar flavour - e.g. in chapter V, when he enjoys a joke with his reader at the expense of Mazarin and reports humorously on his proscription: "Les Blot et les Marigny, beaux-esprits, qui portaient la gaieté dans les tumultes de ces troubles, firent afficher dans Paris une répartition de cent cinquante mille livres: tant pour qui couperait le nez au cardinal, tant pour une oreille, tant pour un œil, tant pour le faire eunuque" (P 658). Irony is often allied to humour: "On se donna des gourmades dans le sanctuaire de la justice" (P 664), says Voltaire about a mudslinging match between Condé and a magistrate.

But it is in chapters XXV-XXVIII that Voltaire's art as a raconteur is most striking. Whilst there is little doubt that one of Voltaire's main aims in these chapters is to characterise the age of Louis XIV and the spirit of the times, the need to entertain remains foremost in his mind. Literary skill and preoccupations prevail over strictly historical methods. Voltaire had written a first draft of many of the anecdotes concerned before 1748. A comparison of the Anecdotes sur Louis XIV of 1748 with the final text we have, reveals greater concern in Le Siècle with the form, as Voltaire tries to group various anecdotes around one unifying theme - the majesty and grandeur of Louis XIV as a monarch and in his private life. He also tries to justify the inclusion of petits faits by drawing serious and valid conclusions from them. For instance, when he includes Louis's parody of Quinault's verses in the Anecdotes of 1748,[106]

he does so without any other aim but to entertain, whereas in Le Siècle, he goes out of his way to consider their implications for the monarch, the age and its mœurs: "Ces bagatelles servent au moins à faire voir que les agréments de l'esprit faisaient un des plaisirs de sa cour, qu'il entrait dans ces plaisirs, et qu'il savait, dans le particulier, vivre en homme, aussi bien que représenter en monarque sur le théâtre du monde" (P 958), although one cannot help feeling that he is clutching at straws.

An analysis of a few anecdotes in chapters XXV-XXVIII shows, above all, the consummate skill with which Voltaire is capable of enlivening and embellishing those minor details. His preference for bons mots and direct speech, as well as dialogue, is an essential ingredient of success here.[107] When relating Villiers-Vendôme's blatant criticisms of Louis XIV's taste in architecture and gardens, Voltaire's art in transforming the character into a caricature and a Poccocurante figure compares favourably with similar portrayals in the Contes: "Le duc de Vendôme avait auprès de lui Villiers, un de ces hommes de plaisir qui se font un mérite d'une liberté cynique... On l'appelait Villiers-Vendôme. Cet homme condamnait hautement tous les goûts de Louis XIV, en musique, en peinture, en architecture, en jardins" (P 960). But it is the dialogue that makes the anecdote come to life. Both Louis and Villiers speak in character; Louis adopts an elegant and ironic tone: "Eh! bien... cela n'a donc pas le bonheur de vous plaire?" And Villiers is direct, abrupt and cynical: "Non... Cela peut être, répartit Villiers, chacun a son avis" (P 960). Voltaire's favourite device of the punch-line effect is put to good use here, as Louis has the final word:

"On ne peut pas plaire à tout le monde" - a statement which points to Louis's good nature and adds piquancy to the anecdote.

Similarly in the scene where Grammont is called upon to referee a game of backgammon (P 960), Voltaire's ability to give us a small scenario and to develop the tableau mainly through dialogue, transforms the material borrowed from Dangeau's Mémoires. The Notebooks provide a first draft of the anecdote on this occasion: "Jugez ce coup de piquet, dit le roy au comte de Grammont qui entroit. Vous avez tort sire, dit le comte. Mais vous ne savez pas encor ce dont il s'agit, dit le roy. Ah sire si vous aviez raison ces messieurs ne vous l'auroient ils pas dit?"[108] The final version is far more humorous because of the pungency of style, as the anecdote moves swiftly to its conclusion. René Gaultier has noted this quality of the eighteenth century esprit: "L'esprit que le 18e siècle a élevé à la hauteur d'une vertu s'accomode mal de la période. Plus elle jaillira, plus ses effets seront sentis, et Voltaire le sait bien. Il pratique en toutes circonstances le comique qui résulte d'un contraste imprévu, d'une soudaine alliance des mots, d'une brusque juxtaposition d'un terme trivial et d'un terme noble."[109] In Le Siècle, not only does Grammont speak more in character, as his language shows respect for the king and the tone is more elevated - "Eh! sire, ne voyez-vous pas que, pour peu que la chose eût été seulement douteuse, tous ces messieurs vous auraient donné gain de cause?" (P 960) - but the raciness of the style preserves and exploits the element of surprise in this explanation. The reader's involvement is guaranteed not only by the tempo vivace, but by the fact that Voltaire leaves it

to him to draw the relevant conclusions. His approach remains constant in all anecdotes, as he abides by a principle he once enunciated in the Lettres Philosophiques: "Il faudrait à tout moment un commentaire et la plaisanterie expliquée cesse d'être plaisanterie: tout commentateur de bons mots est un sot."[110]

The technique in anecdotes consists, too, in ending on a high note, and to this end, Voltaire often transforms his source, Dangeau, and adds to it. Thus the paragraph dealing with d'Antin felling trees at the Petit-Bourg to please Louis XIV, comes directly from Dangeau,[111] but if Voltaire sticks to the facts borrowed, he inserts d'Antin's explanation which he has heard from some other quarters, to add to the humour and to give greater impact to the anecdote: "'C'est parce que Votre Majesté les a condamnés qu'elle ne les voit plus,' répondit le duc" (P 960). Likewise in his own version of the Comte de Marivaux's complaints to Louis XIV about his lack of rewards, we can observe the transformations which the anecdote has undergone from the Notebooks to Le Siècle; in the former, Voltaire had written amongst the notes taken from Dangeau: "Marivau dit au roy, Sire je voudrois avoir perdu ce bras là lorsque je me suis mis à votre service. Marivau j'y aurois plus perdu que vous."[112] The anecdote was also inscribed a few pages earlier in the following manner: "Je voudrois avoir perdu l'autre bras, et ne plus servir disoit le brutal comte de Marivaux. J'en serois trop faché pour vous et pour moy répondit L. 14."[113] It is this second version which constitutes the first draft of the corresponding passage in Le Siècle, but it is clear that Voltaire was unsure of the exact words and modified

them, as he wished, to ensure the piquancy of the scene. The introductory remarks in Le Siècle (P 958) set the scene and make the dialogue comprehensible, but also guarantee that the "officier général, homme un peu brusque" speaks 'in character'. Ultimately, however, it is the dialogue and the bons mots that catch the eye, as the anecdote gravitates towards them. Voltaire's wit depends on the crispness of the presentation for its effect; "'J'en serais bien fâché pour vous et pour moi,' lui répondit le roi" acts as the punch-line. In all the anecdotes, Voltaire is clearly playing to an audience; this essential aspect of his humour has recently been discussed by Professor S.S.B. Taylor in his admirable article, 'Voltaire's Humour': "In the same way in which we sense the presence of the author behind his puppet creations in the conte, and the writer behind the epistolary roles he plays, we perceive ourselves less as passive readers than as active, responding members of an intimate listening circle, a privileged and intimate circle of chosen friends, in dialogue with the author-narrator-actor-puppeteer."[114] The complicity between the readers and the author who shares a joke with us, is as vital an ingredient of the anecdotes in Le Siècle, as it is in the Contes or the Facéties. Hence Voltaire's reluctance to comment on or explain the punch-line, which, as a rule, is left for the reader to appreciate on his own.[115]

Entertainment is the key-note in these chapters. To say that a great many anecdotes have little or no historical significance would not be far from the truth. While it is admissible that some of Louis XIV's statements - e.g. on his death-bed (P 948) - shed light on the king's character, it is difficult to

imagine how Voltaire could possibly justify such trivia as the song allegedly composed by Bussy (P 913), which infringes the law of bienséances, or Vivonne's pert answer to Louis XIV (P 919), for which Voltaire seems to have had a special affection, as he inscribes it on more than one occasion in his Notebooks.[116] And when Voltaire himself openly admits that the pot-pourri of bons mots in chapter XXVIII "se réduisent à très peu de chose" (P 951), one is more than tempted to agree with him and question the wisdom of devoting so much time to such petits faits. No one can condone, moreover, his rather nonchalant attitude to those speeches he reports; in the Anecdotes of 1748, Louis's words to Mme Scarron had been: "Madame, je vous ai bien fait attendre, mais j'ai été jaloux de vos amis, et j'ai voulu que vous n'eussiez d'obligation qu'à moi."[117] In Le Siècle, a different version is given of the same speech: "Madame, je vous ai fait attendre longtemps; mais vous avez tant d'amis, que j'ai voulu avoir seul ce mérite auprès de vous" (P 935). If this speech was passed on to Voltaire by Fleury, as he claims, then he could not be certain of the exact words spoken, but his handling of historical pronouncements remains, for all that, unworthy of a serious historian. The literary artist sees no reason in these chapters for not using poetic licence, as he opts for a more polished version which is more striking and aesthetically more pleasing. After the more serious section in which Voltaire owed it to his public to give an accurate and more precise chronological tableau of events, his readers would not have taken him to task for a certain nonchalance and levity in chapters XXV-XXVIII, before he moved on to the serious business of Louis's

internal reforms and the artistic achievements of the age. The generally light-hearted mood of these chapters can be seen as a calculated attempt to rekindle the readers' interest and provide a moment of relief from more serious issues. To this end, Voltaire's mastery of the art of the raconteur is an invaluable asset, and remains so throughout the work, even in the more serious chapters.[118]

(VII) Elegance of language and elevated tone

We have said in the introduction that one of Voltaire's aesthetic aims in Le Siècle was to find at all costs "le style convenable à la matière". Nowhere is this better illustrated than in those chapters where he strives to recreate the splendour and ornate grandeur of Louis XIV's age (chapters XXV-XXVIII), or when he surveys the artistic achievements of the classical era (chapters XXXI-XXXIV). Here Voltaire resorts to high-flown language, a more polished and figurative style and a far more elevated tone. As in Letters 18-24 of the Lettres Philosophiques, Voltaire, the literary artist, is much more at ease when dealing with culture and literature; as a practising artist, he is able to appreciate, and to make his readers appreciate, the classical masterpieces; to this end, he deliberately sets out to make the style match the subject. Moreover, in chapters XXV-XXVIII, he could claim that he was fulfilling one of the aims of the social historian - that of capturing the spirit of the age. The refinement of the age, he seemingly decided, would best be conveyed in the 'style noble' which often borders on préciosité. If he can be accused of giving a eulogistic and unbalanced view of Louis XIV and his court in these chapters - though the

monarch's faults are not passed over in silence altogether[119] - the ability to recapture the mood of universal refinement and of the magnificence of the court, can only be applauded. The main emphasis is on splendour: "Tout respirait les plaisirs et la magnificence qu'on connaissait alors" (P 894), and the presentation preserves a remarkable degree of decorum and elegance.[120]

Voltaire's deliberate attempt to heighten the style in chapters XXV-XXVIII is shown by his treatment of the same anecdote dealt with in chapter VI in a different mode. The account of Chigi's mission at the court of Louis XIV in 1664, had betrayed in the earlier chapter Voltaire's propagandist aims: "Dans d'autres temps les excommunications de Rome auraient suivi ces outrages; mais c'étaient des armes usées et devenues ridicules" (P 691). The approach here is also that of the historian intent on giving a modicum of facts in a sober manner: "Il /the Pope/ fut forcé d'exiler de Rome son propre frère; d'envoyer son neveu, le cardinal Chigi, en qualité de légat a latere, faire satisfaction au roi..." (P 691). In chapter XXV, the presentation not only becomes more anecdotal and journalistic, but there is a conscious desire to underline the pomp and circumstance of the occasion: "Ces grandes cérémonies sont des fêtes pour le public. Les honneurs qu'on lui fit rendaient la satisfaction plus éclatante. Il reçut, sous un dais, les respects des cours supérieures, du corps de ville, du clergé; il entra dans Paris au bruit du canon, ayant le grand Condé à sa droite et le fils de ce prince à sa gauche, et vint dans cet appareil s'humilier, lui, Rome et le Pape, devant un roi qui n'avait pas encore tiré l'épée. Il dîna avec Louis XIV après l'audience, et on ne fut occupé que

de le traiter avec magnificence et de lui procurer des plaisirs" (P 909). In this description, the polemical undertones are played down; the vivid details are selected to turn the spotlight on the singularité of the ceremony and the historical significance of the event matters less than the magnificence of the spectacle. It all points to Voltaire's ability to select, organise and present the material according to the case in hand, with the style befitting the subject.

Voltaire's effort to evoke the lavishness and grandiose politeness of the court is, above all, demonstrated by the long and striking list of abstract nouns and 'noble' adjectives employed to this end. A quick analysis of the vocabulary used in chapter XXV (P 889-913) reveals the leitmotiv of magnificence and splendour being almost over-utilised; the terms magnificence, magnifique, applied strictly to Louis XIV recur ten times,[121] splendeur four times,[122] éclat, éclatant four times;[123] grandeur four times;[124] goût five times;[125] politesse three times;[126] noble, noblesse three times;[127] grâces three times.[128] In addition, Voltaire uses the terms galanterie (P 891), douceur (P 891), majesté (P 893), esprit (P 891), décence (P 903), superbe (P 893), enchantements (P 906), merveille (P 906), gloire (P 908), luxe (P 910), profusion (P 910), libéralité (P 912), magnanimité (P 912), générosité (P 910), and so on. The polished and hyperbolic language, where superlatives abound (P 894), comes close to the préciosité of the 17th century, although it is often endowed with a high poetic charge - e.g. of Louis's early years, Voltaire writes: "La conversation de sa mère et des dames de sa cour ne contribua pas peu à lui faire goûter cette fleur de l'esprit..." (P 891).

With reference to Trianon, Voltaire comments on "la nature forcée dans tous ces lieux de délices, et des jardins où l'art était épuisé" (P 930-1). He waxes lyrical about the court of Louis XIV where could be seen the flower of France: "Il semblait que la nature prît plaisir alors à produire en France les plus grands hommes dans tous les arts, et à rassembler à la cour ce qu'il y avait jamais eu de plus beau et de mieux fait en hommes et en femmes..." (P 903). In his awareness that he is writing for a polite audience, he shows considerable good taste when dealing with Louis's love affairs; e.g. when discussing Louis's flirtations with Madame, he never infringes the law of bienséances and preserves the necessary decorum: "Il y eut d'abord entre Madame et le roi beaucoup de ces coquetteries d'esprit et de cette intelligence secrète qui se remarquèrent dans de petites fêtes..." (P 904). When describing Louis's liaison with Mlle de La Vallière, there is not a hint of vulgarity, but instead the style takes on a lyrical quality reminiscent of his tragédies romanesques such as Zaïre: "Il goûta avec elle le bonheur même d'être aimé uniquement pour lui-même" (P 904). The same nobility of style is apparent when Voltaire tackles the delicate subject of Mme de Montespan's fall from power and that of Mme de Maintenon's meteoric rise: "Dans ce temps où sa faveur croissait, où Mme de Montespan touchait à sa chute, ces deux rivales se voyaient tous les jours, tantôt avec une aigreur secrète, tantôt avec une confiance passagère..." (P 930). It is a far cry from La Beaumelle's tasteless and scandalous treatment of the petty jealousy of the former mistress in the Lettres de Mme de Maintenon,[129] and indeed of Voltaire's cynical and vulgar sonnet on Mme de

Maintenon in the Notebooks quoted earlier.

But it is mainly in Voltaire's partisan and inflated portrayal of the Sun King himself, that the style noble is fully exploited to create an aura of divine glory and splendour. He sets about the task of erecting a veritable Temple du goût to the memory of Louis XIV, with great assiduity - though not always without certain reservations, as we have indicated. These, however, never apply to the inherent majesty and nobility of the monarch, nor to the lead given to the nation in matters of taste by Louis XIV: "C'était entre lui et sa cour, un commerce continuel de tout ce que la majesté peut avoir de grâces, sans jamais se dégrader, et de tout ce que l'empressement de servir et de plaire peut avoir de finesse, sans l'air de la bassesse" (P 957). Voltaire's repeated attempts to resort to panegyrics might have deserved the harsh criticisms of Grimm and La Beaumelle, referred to in chapter II, but there is no denying the elegance and forcefulness of such portraits: "Le roi l'emportait sur tous ses courtisans par la richesse de sa taille et la beauté majestueuse de ses traits; le son de sa voix, noble et touchant, gagnait les cœurs qu'intimidait sa présence" (P 903). For to Voltaire, the physical appearance of Louis XIV becomes an embodiment of the glorious age. Allied to the high decorum are the evocative qualities of the style noble, as Voltaire co. jures up the sense of spectacle in his sketch of Louis's wedding:

> Tout prit au mariage de Louis XIV un caractère plus grand de magnificence et de goût qui augmenta toujours depuis. Quand il fit son entrée avec la reine son épouse, Paris vit avec une admiration respectueuse et tendre cette jeune reine, qui avait de la beauté,

> portée dans un char superbe, d'une invention nouvelle; le roi à cheval à côté d'elle, paré de tout ce qui avait pu ajouter à sa beauté mâle et héroïque qui arrêtait tous les regards (P 894).

The pomp and circumstance which, on the whole, Voltaire had judiciously excluded from chapters I-XXIV and reserved for the chapters of anecdotes, owe a lot to the mixture of visual details and imaginative vocabulary. Despite the obvious high-flown language, a certain measure of control is still exercised in this passage, as Voltaire clearly refrains from describing in detail Louis's garments on this important occasion. The 'historien des mœurs' selects journalistic details to define the spirit of the age, whilst the classicist elevates the tone, piles up noble terms and adds to the lyricism of the tableaux to do justice to this splendid era. But self-discipline plays a part in lending greater imaginative appeal to such descriptions as that of the lavish 'fête de Versailles' of 1664, which "surpassa celle du carrousel par sa singularité, par sa magnificence et les plaisirs de l'esprit, qui, se mêlant à la splendeur de ces divertissements, y ajoutaient un goût et des grâces dont aucune fête n'avait encore été embellie" (P 906).

The nostalgia which Voltaire, a classicist at heart, a lover of luxury, comfort, taste in all things, displays in these chapters is unmistakable. For Voltaire who considered his own epoch as an age of artistic sterility, this constitutes an escape to the age of supreme architecture and art. Nor is the attempt to eulogise confined to chapters XXV-XXVIII; in chapter XXIX, the language is likewise heightened when Voltaire reflects on the social and architectural innovations in Paris under Louis XIV:

"Les particuliers, à son exemple, élevèrent dans Paris mille édifices superbes et commodes... Ce fut en ce temps-là qu'on inventa la commodité magnifique de ces carrosses ornés de glaces, et suspendus par des ressorts..." (P 969). To the remarkable evocation of a glorious age, he returns constantly and gives free rein to his eloquence, as he emphasises the cultural progress achieved in Louis XIV's age; of Paris he has this to say in chapter XXIX: "L'extrême facilité introduite dans le commerce du monde, l'affabilité, la simplicité, la culture de l'esprit ont fait de Paris une ville qui, pour la douceur de la vie, l'emporte probablement de beaucoup sur Rome et sur Athènes dans le temps de leur splendeur" (P 981). The dignity of the subject demands a greater dignity of style.

The preference for abstractions and a more polished style is as much in evidence in chapters XXXI-XXXIV, for here Voltaire is very much on his own ground, writing about literature and the arts to great effect, adapting his style to suit the subject-matter. Good taste prevails throughout, as Voltaire raises a monument to the memory of the great artists who lived during the reign of Louis XIV, a period in literature which Voltaire, the classicist, held to be the pinnacle of artistic achievements. Of the Royal Society in London, he writes: "C'est de son sein que sortirent de nos jours les découvertes sur la lumière" (P 998). The language becomes considerably more figurative and imaginative - though images are not altogether absent from the first twenty-four chapters.[130] Bourdaloue is presented rather hyperbolically as "une lumière nouvelle" (P 1004), and the dearth of great artists after the death of Louis XIV, is conveyed by an effective image:

"A peu près vers le temps de la mort de Louis XIV, la nature sembla se reposer" (P 1015). Voltaire, who showed no patience with the préciosité of Fontenelle, often comes close to it in these chapters, but as R. Naves has indicated in Le Goût de Voltaire,[131] what he found unacceptable was high-flown and hyperbolic language which was out of place and uncalled for. Here the occasion calls for a style which, in his view, should have all the qualities he admires in the classicists. In his attempt to match classical eloquence and elegance, he sometimes goes too far, but the evocative quality of his prose, his correctness and clarity are worthy of classical literature at its best; e.g. he describes Fénelon in the following manner: "Plein de la lecture des Anciens, et né avec une imagination douce et brillante, il s'était fait un style qui n'était qu'à lui, et qui coulait de source avec abondance" (P 1007).

For Voltaire taste amounts to exercising one's critical sense,[132] as the man of good taste becomes aware that each thing should be in its rightful place. This is shown by his use of images; Voltaire remains, in this respect, faithful to his pronouncement in the Lettres Philosophiques: "Une comparaison n'est preuve ni en poésie, ni en prose; elle sert en poésie d'embellissement et en prose elle sert à rendre les choses plus sensibles."[133] Whether in chapters I-XXIV,[134] or in chapters XXXI-XXXIV,[135] images serve to make Voltaire's points more accessible to the reader and more concrete. They remain functional throughout the work, though Voltaire does use them at times to brighten up what would otherwise be uninspiring material; e.g. in chapter XXIX, to convey Louis's policy of centralisation,

Voltaire resorts to an evocative image: "L'Etat devint un tout régulier dont chaque ligne aboutit au centre" (P 980), thus summing up the theme of the paragraph in a striking manner. The use of images becomes, moreover, an important asset when Voltaire seeks to convince his readers, and they take their place amongst an impressive array of persuasive techniques. In his defence of Colbert's records as Finance Minister at the start of chapter XXX, Voltaire launches an attack on the ungrateful populace and employs two images which add more weight to his central argument that Colbert revitalised the French economy: "Les Français lui doivent certainement leur industrie et leur commerce, et par conséquent cette opulence dont les sources diminuent quelquefois dans la guerre, mais qui se rouvrent toujours avec abondance dans la paix" (P 983). This is reinforced by another effective, though by no means original, metaphor: "La France n'avait jamais été si florissante que depuis la mort du cardinal Mazarin jusqu'à la guerre de 1689; et même dans cette guerre, le corps de l'Etat, commençant à être malade, se soutint par la vigueur que Colbert avait répandue dans tous ses membres" (P 983). But basically, when dealing with a mass of factual material, as in chapters XXIX and XXX, Voltaire felt that there was obvious need to make the text more palatable, and never lost sight of artistic considerations. Thus Desmarets's failure as a Finance Minister is brought home both forcefully and succinctly by an expressive metaphor: "[Desmarets]... ne put guérir un mal que tout rendait incurable" (P 991). And as a populariser of the science of economics, Voltaire was aware of the difficulties the non-specialist reader would experience; amongst statistics

known to his public, are turned to advantage, as he aims to make his general points more accessible; thus images in the chapters on the arts come from the world of architecture (P 998), horticulture (P 1015), painting (P 1016) and everyday life: "La musique était au berceau" (P 1018). It is not so much in the novelty of images that Voltaire's merit lies, as in the skilful manipulation of those likely to appeal to his readers' taste and everyday experience. His attempts to popularise empiricism in chapter XXXI are all the more successful because he is in a position to resort to a concrete and familiar image: "On sentait déjà dans cette patrie des arts /in Italy/, qu'on ne pouvait comprendre quelque chose du grand édifice de la nature qu'en l'examinant pièce à pièce" (P 998).

In spite of this practical approach to metaphors and images, Voltaire's presentation in chapters XXXI-XXXIV remains endowed with a certain grace and lyricism unsurpassed in the rest of the book, as he heightens his style on purpose to match the nobility of the subject-matter. His own eloquence compares favourably to that of the great classical artists; of Bourdaloue, he says: "Il s'était donné aux oraisons funèbres, genre d'éloquence qui demande de l'imagination et une grandeur majestueuse qui tient un peu à la poésie..." (P 1005). Following a rhetorical tradition which he had learnt about from his Jesuit teachers, he imitates, to great effect, the 'goût sublime' exemplified by Bossuet: "Ses discours, soutenus d'une action noble et touchante, les premiers qu'on eût encore entendus à la cour qui approchassent du sublime, eurent un si grand succès, que le roi fit écrire en son nom à son père, intendant de Soissons, pour le féliciter d'avoir un tel

fils" (P 1005). His lyricism of style, his clarity of expression and his nobility of presentation are in themselves a tribute to the classical era, as he would willingly have classed himself amongst the disciples of classicism: "Le grand Corneille faisant pleurer le grand Condé d'admiration est une époque bien célèbre dans l'histoire de l'esprit humain" (P 1011). Allied to those qualities of his own style - ones which he applauds in Olivier Patru: "On lui dut néanmoins l'ordre, la clarté, la bienséance, l'élégance du discours" (P 1004) - , is the remarkable crispness and concision which allow him to survey such a large number of great artists and summarise in a brief, though striking, manner, their most salient qualities and weaknesses; for instance Racine's enduring merits: "/il/ est toujours élégant, toujours correct, toujours vrai; /il/ parle au cœur..." (P 1011); La Fontaine's naïveté: "La Fontaine, bien moins châtié dans son style, bien moins correct dans son langage, mais unique dans sa naïveté et dans les grâces qui lui sont propres, se mit, par les choses les plus simples, presque à côté de ces hommes sublimes" (P 1013); La Bruyère's vitality and correctness: "Un style rapide, concis, nerveux, des expressions pittoresques, un usage tout nouveau de la langue qui n'en blesse pas les règles..." (P 1008). In Voltaire's own manner of presentation as a literary critic, those qualities fuse to make his survey of the arts a remarkable personal tribute to classicism, where 'le goût simple' and 'le goût sublime' combine happily.

(VIII) Voltaire propagandist: chapters XXXV-XXXIX

Voltaire's final 'visage', which we have to consider now, is that of the propagandist who uses an impressive array of shots in his polemical armoury to attack his favourite target of sectarianism, fanaticism, Christianity and established religion. To do so, we shall be looking closely at the last five chapters of Le Siècle, for if anticlerical remarks and persistent innuendos are present throughout the work, it is fair to say, on the whole, that there is a clear shift of emphasis from the generally objective and factual approach of chapters I-XXIV, or XXIX-XXX, to the more satirical and ironic mode of the last five chapters. On December 28th, 1739, Voltaire wrote to Frederick, explaining why he had interrupted work on Le Siècle, and added: "J'en suis un peu dégoûté quoique je me sois proposé de l'écrire toute entière dans le style modéré dont votre altesse royale a pu voir l'échantillon."[139] But this relatively moderate tone referred to here and this alleged self-effacement do not altogether mean a total absence of anticlericalism or of polemical techniques in the first twenty-four chapters. The brand of satire and irony which will be observed in chapters XXXV-XXXIX, is already very much in evidence in the more factual chapters. A few examples will suffice to show that Voltaire's polemical style within Le Siècle has not changed radically since the early days of its composition.

Chapter II, which gives a general tableau of Europe before Louis XIV, had been published in 1739 in the Recueil de pièces fugitives,[140] and contains more than a few échantillons of the ironic mode of presentation prevalent in the last five chapters,

especially in the section dealing with Rome (P 626-29). So much so that at the time, d'Argental had expressed his apprehension about possible repercussions to Voltaire.[141] The first draft of 1735, published by Gaussy in the Oeuvres Inédites and quoted by Pomeau, was, if anything, even more virulent and derisive. The degree of commitment against Rome's abuses of political power and interventions in the internal affairs of other nations, shows more than a degree of affinity with the last overtly polemical section of the work. Voltaire is just as prepared to join in the fray in the early chapter: "Son autorité spirituelle, toujours un peu mêlée du temporel, est détruite et abhorrée dans la moitié de la chrétienté; et si dans l'autre il est regardé comme un père, il a des enfants qui lui résistent quelquefois avec raison et avec succès" (P 626). Nor does the ironic presentation differ radically from that in the last chapters; e.g. "la maxime de la France est de le regarder comme une personne sacrée, mais entreprenante, à laquelle il faut baiser les pieds, et lier quelquefois les mains" (P 626). No account is taken of the spiritual benefits which individuals or nations might derive from Rome, and by reducing the Church of France purely to a political institution, Voltaire is in a better position to show ironically the internal divisions which resulted from its allegiance to Rome: "Prêter serment à un autre qu'à son souverain est un crime de lèse-majesté dans un laïque; c'est dans le cloître un acte de religion" (P 627). Although Voltaire does try to redress the balance slightly by expressing his admiration for Rome's political astuteness,[142] the general manner of the tableau looks ahead to the propagandist tone of chapters XXXV-XXXIX and provides evidence

that Voltaire's polemical presentation, due partly to the Lettres Philosophiques, was fully fledged in the 1730's and at this early stage of composition.

It remains true, however, that there is evidence of greater control and sobriety in the first twenty-four chapters, as polemical anecdotes which are present solely for the sake of anti-religious propaganda are few and far between.[143] If amidst salacious details concerning the Queen's attempt to depose her husband in Portugal (P 706), Voltaire inserts an ironic condemnation of the European princes' subservience to Rome - "Il n'est pas étonnant que Rome ait accordé cette bulle; mais il l'est que des personnes toutes-puissantes en aient besoin" (P 706) - one cannot help feeling that Voltaire's main preoccupation is to provide comic or light relief in what is, otherwise, a factual and dry account of events in the early part of chapter X. Other anecdotes show Voltaire's irreverent spirit; e.g. Leopold taking communion at Egra in 1673 (P 725), but quite apart from the added bonus of providing a chance to show religious hypocrisy at its worst, this petit fait diversifies the chronological survey of events. Voltaire's greater sobriety in the factual section remains clear for all to see; e.g. in chapter XV, he does not feel justified in dwelling at length on James II's so-called miracles and the fact is merely recorded, albeit in an ironic manner: "Quelques jésuites irlandais prétendirent qu'il se faisait des miracles à son tombeau. On parla même de faire canoniser à Rome, après sa mort, ce roi que Rome avait abandonné pendant sa vie" (P 770). Only a footnote added after the 1751 edition gives more ironic details: "On a poussé le ridicule jusqu'à dire

que ses reliques avaient guéri un évêque d'Autun de la fistule" (Ibid.). In the last five chapters, on the other hand, such material plays into the hands of the propagandist who exploits it to the full.[144] Similarly in the account of William III's death, such irreligious details as the king's refusal to confess on his death-bed, are given almost as an aside: "Il mourut ne répondant rien à ce que des prêtres anglais, qui étaient auprès de son lit, lui dirent sur leur religion, et ne marquant d'autre inquiétude que celle dont le tourmentaient les affaires de l'Europe" (P 808). Voltaire simply notes the fact and allows the reader to draw his own conclusions; only the selection and inclusion of the details betray his polemical aims.

Perhaps even more significant is the fact that those anecdotes showing a greater degree of irreverence, appear to have been drafted in 1751 or thereafter; e.g. the Duc de Vendôme's irreligious remarks on the futility of going to mass (P 855) are to be found in chapter XXI written at Potsdam; and the anecdote of Condé's hypocritical behaviour during the procession in honour of Sainte Geneviève (P 663-4) was added in 1768. There is, therefore, less evidence of Voltaire's commitment to an anti-clerical campaign in the first section of the book where the historian seems conscious of the importance and seriousness of his task as a chronicler of facts and events. He is aware that everything should be in its proper place, as the Second Epître Dédicatoire of Zaïre, 1736, indicates: "Le style doit être conforme au sujet," and Voltaire adds that the literary artist has a duty "/de/ ne dire que ce qu'il faut, et de la manière dont il le faut."[145]

Clearly in the factual chapters, then, historical considerations supersede polemical ones, as the propagandist leaves the floor to the chronicler, and the irreligious petits faits are quickly passed over.

Such is not the case in chapters XXXV-XXXIX; the full force of Voltaire's polemical manner is amply demonstrated here. That he was aware of the daring of these chapters on religious disputes, is shown by his letter to Mme Denis of October 25th, 1750: "Je finirai ici /i.e. at Potsdam/ ce Siècle de Louis XIV, que peut-être je n'aurais jamais fini à Paris. Les pierres dont j'élevais ce monument à l'honneur de ma patrie, auraient servi à m'écraser. Un mot hardi eût paru une licence effrénée..."[146] Feeling freer at Potsdam, Voltaire was to adopt a more overtly critical manner when dealing with 'la sottise humaine' - an aspect of the work which, as we have shown in chapter I, he envisaged dealing with as early as 1735.[147] Yet despite his total commitment to anticlericalism in these chapters, we shall also see that he remains capable of achieving a remarkable degree of objectivity in places, as Gustave Lanson has indicated in his notes on Le Siècle de Louis XIV: "Le caractère satirique et polémique de ces chapitres n'en détruit pas l'impartialité relative. Cette impartialité, sous le ton d'ironie et de sarcasme, est plus réelle, même à l'égard du pape qu'on ne croyait d'abord."[148] But in the end, it is the ironic and satirical mode of presentation, which has so often been associated with the propagandist, that dominates in these last chapters and sets them apart from any others in the book.

To go through the various polemical techniques employed by

Voltaire in chapters XXXV-XXXIX and to enumerate the means of irony put to good use by the propagandist, would be to tread on the same ground so admirably covered by such critics as Jeanne Monty, in her excellent study of the Dictionnaire Philosophique, Dorothy McGhee, William Bottiglia, T.J. Barling, and many others.[149] For it is fair to say that Voltaire's polemical style in Le Siècle does not differ radically from that which he employs in his other works. We find in these chapters the same mode of direct attack, when Voltaire relies on forceful language and invectives, as well as a full range of ironic devices and his usual satirical mode of presentation which has been defined recently by Professor S.S.B. Taylor in his article on Voltaire's humour.[150] Much more rewarding than listing those devices, and much more useful for our purpose here, is to try and examine the ways in which Voltaire's ironic mode either transforms or adds lustre to the material borrowed from the sources. For this is ultimately what gives their own colour to the last five chapters. Although in his study of Voltaire's sources for those chapters, Gustave Lanson makes a number of sound general observations on the presentation - e.g. "Voltaire filtre ses sources, abrège, simplifie, condense; en deux lignes il dépouille une grande page"[151] - the critic is less concerned with Voltaire's manner and style than with additions, omissions of detail and accuracy. By taking as our starting point some of the sources mentioned in Lanson's study and by looking closely at selected passages, it is possible to see Voltaire's polemical techniques at work within the framework of his propagandist intentions.

Despite the fact that Voltaire shows himself capable of a high degree of objectivity on occasion, when reporting the main historical events,[152] it soon becomes clear that to Voltaire, the reading of the source constitutes only the first stage of composition, which leads inevitably to the second - that of adapting the material to suit his philosophical or propagandist aims. The general pattern which emerges clearly from putting Voltaire's version alongside the original in his sources, is that by adding his personal comments, by imposing his own tendentious interpretation and by the use of satire and irony, he is in a position to integrate the material he has collected within a preconceived thesis - that of waging war against sectarianism and fanaticism. Voltaire responds subjectively, as he usually does, to ecclesiastical history and wears blinkers. Thus often in his handling of sources for the last five chapters, he transforms what is in effect a factual account into a polemical onslaught, where his partisan approach is clearly visible. He goes so far as to distort the truth, omitting important facts, ignoring the motives of the main actors in the drama so as to cast doubt on their sincerity, or ascribing ignoble ones to them, resorting constantly to oversimplification and reductionism to heap ridicule on religious disputes, whilst using evocative language, at times, as in chapter XXXVI, to bring home the reality of religious persecutions. But Voltaire's wit also improves the material; humour often combines with his crisp style to stamp its mark on the material, and his literary and artistic preoccupations also influence the presentation, transforming a dull account of events in the sources into lively and dramatic tableaux. A

number of examples will show those various features of Voltaire's mode of presentation, but the main emphasis must be put on his ironic transcription of objective and factual passages in the sources, in accordance with his aims as a propagandist.

Whilst there are numerous examples of factual and historical presentation in chapter XXXV,[153] Voltaire shows himself to be a partisan of the Gallican church and opposed to Rome's interference. The rebellion of the Bishops of Aleth and Pamiers who refused to conform to the edict of 1673, imposed on the whole nation, is a good example of the way Voltaire puts his own interpretation on facts derived from a source and presents these in an ironic manner. D'Avrigny, Voltaire's source, had been content to give the facts dispassionately:

> Cependant le Roy ayant donné un Second Edit au mois d'Avril 1675, la plûpart firent enregistrer leur serment de fidélité; mais ceux d'Alet et de Pamiers s'opposèrent à son exécution jusqu'à défendre à leurs chapitres de recevoir les Régalistes et même à les déclarer excommuniés.[154]

What is a statement of fact in the source becomes a value judgement in Voltaire's version which is imbued with irony, as he deplores the conduct of the two clerics: "Deux évêques, qui étaient malheureusement les deux plus vertueux hommes du royaume, refusèrent opiniâtrement de se soumettre" (P 1035). He goes on to show the whole dispute to be absurd, this being in keeping with the unifying theme of the last five chapters, by introducing a sardonic comment of his own: "Quand des hommes éclairés disputent longtemps, il y a grande apparence que la question n'est pas claire: elle était très obscure..." (P 1035). Whilst his ability to be objective cannot be disputed,[155] he cannot refrain from ironic

comments for long. Thus compare d'Avrigny's factual statement: "Louis XIV exila les principaux officiers du Chapitre d'Alet,"[156] to the more biting sarcasm of Voltaire's transcription: "Le roi se contenta d'abord d'exiler les principaux officiers de ces évêques. Il montra plus de modération que deux hommes qui se piquaient de sainteté" (P 1036). Here he is less concerned with the truth, for as Bourgeois points out,[157] Louis XIV did not behave as moderately as Voltaire claims; instead being intent on castigating religious intransigence in the persons of the two bishops, Voltaire allows his polemical aims to override historical considerations.

Moreover, Voltaire the propagandist is a master at ascribing the wrong motives to clerics in order to discredit their actions and cast doubt on their sincerity. Using the letter sent to the Pope by French bishops to ask for forgiveness in 1693,[158] Voltaire chooses to include the most striking points, and whereas d'Avrigny gives the full text, he deliberately opts for reported speech which allows for a greater degree of irony: "Chacun déclare dans sa lettre qu'il ne reçoit point comme décidé ce qu'on y a décidé, ni comme ordonné ce qu'on y a ordonné" (P 1039). In so doing, he purposely oversimplifies, telescopes the original text for greater accessibility, but his crisper style and ironic mode highlight the contradictory conduct of the bishops without trying to convey the spirit of the original text or the sincerity of the bishops. This fact is never in doubt in the French translation of the letter, as given by d'Avrigny:

> Prosternes [sic] aux pieds de Votre Béatitude, nous professons et nous déclarons que nous sommes extrêmement fâchés et plus qu'on ne sauroit dire, de ce qui s'est fait dans les dites Assemblées... Ainsi, tout ce qui a pu être censé ordonné dans ces Assemblées, au regard de la puissance Ecclésiastique, et de l'Autorité Pontificale, nous le regardons comme n'ayant point été ordonné, et déclarons qu'il doit être regardé sur ce pied là.[159]

In his rendering, Voltaire uses deliberate ironic exaggeration: "Chacun d'eux écrivit séparément qu'il était 'douloureusement affligé des procédés de l'assemblée'..." (P 1039), to underline the bishops' subservience and insincerity. He omits censé, a vital word which indicates that the bishops did not accept the Assemblies' proceedings as legal and binding, in order to show the bishops as fickle and motivated by self-interest, whereas d'Avrigny is at pains to show their action as a genuine mark of their humility and repentance. Thus whilst the facts may be accurate, the explanation is tinged with Voltaire's bias against the sincerity of the clergy. Such ironic comments on the whole dispute, which follow the bishops' disavowal - "Les quatre propositions n'en furent pas moins enseignées en France de temps en temps. Mais ces armes se rouillèrent quand on ne combattit plus..." (P 1039) - which are Voltaire's own, stress by the ironic juxtaposition, the fruitlessness of such disputes and the ineptitude of the bishops' action.

Voltaire's favourite technique in the last five chapters, however, is reductionism, which often depends on the omission of vital details.[160] The incident at the Prieuré of Charonne is a case in point. It is narrated by d'Avrigny in a factual manner[161] to explain the events leading up to the decision of the

clergy to extend the Régale to the whole country. To Voltaire, this incident becomes part of "une autre petite querelle devenue importante" (P 1037), an attempt to trivialise the incident through ironic antithesis. This introductory remark puts the account of events into a fixed perspective and transforms the incident into an illustration of a preconceived thesis. Furthermore, by reducing details to a minimum and omitting important ones - such as the genuine grievances of the nuns who objected to not having been given a say in the choice of their superior - , Voltaire increases the irrational aspects of the episode and plays down the complexities and gravity of the situation. He is, accordingly, in a position to present the actions and counteractions of both sides as being unreasonable, through a 'tit for tat' pattern: "Le parlement avait jugé la procédure de Rome abusive. Le pape avait ordonné par une bulle que l'inquisition fît brûler l'arrêt du parlement, et le parlement avait ordonné la suppression de la bulle" (P 1037). The links between cause and effect are here purposely blurred and only the ridicule remains. Though one can appreciate Voltaire's skill in trivialising such incidents, such inaccuracies in a historical work cannot be condoned altogether.

In his notes on Le Siècle de Louis XIV,[162] Gustave Lanson points to Elie Benoist's Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes as one of Voltaire's major sources for chapter XXXVI, and rightly so. In his handling and manipulation of material borrowed from this source, Voltaire shows himself to be on his guard against the author's own parti-pris, for as a Protestant himself, Benoist inevitably condemns the persecutions of the Huguenots.[163] Yet

Voltaire shows less scruple where his own biased views are concerned. The facetious tone which pervades the remaining chapters on religion (XXXVII-XXXIX) is not visible to the same extent here, as Voltaire adopts a more serious and sober approach both to the history of Protestantism and to the violent acts against the Huguenots. But the ironic mode of presentation persists; for instance, after describing the attempts of Louis XIV and his ministers to undermine Protestantism, he adds to the factual account in the source,[164] a particularly pointed tongue-in-cheek comment: "Le roi, en les tenant ainsi sous le joug, ne l'appesantissait pas toujours" (P 1049). Likewise, his rendering of the conversions bought by Pellisson with the king's money is tinged with his own special brand of sarcasm. Benoist had said: "On s'avisa donc de mettre les 'conversions' à prix, et d'inviter le menu peuple par l'espérance de quelques profits à se réunir à l'Eglise Catholique... On faisoit extrêmement valoir au Roi ces glorieuses conquêtes."[165] Through the use of ironic antithesis, Voltaire goes further and shows the conversions in an even less favourable light: "De petites sommes distribuées à des indigents enflaient la liste que Pellisson présentait au roi tous les mois, en lui persuadant que tout cédait dans le monde à sa puissance ou à ses bienfaits" (P 1050).

But in addition to this ironic mode of presentation, Voltaire also transforms his source by putting to good use both his narrative skill and his talent for evoking a dramatic tableau which lends weight to his propagandist aims. Such is the case with his evocative description of the physical violence endured by Huguenot families in the Vivarais and the Dauphiné. Voltaire's

lively presentation holds the reader's attention so much more than Benoist's more leisurely and laborious account which reads:

> Dès le quinzième d'Août, le Roi avoit commis le Bret Intendant du Dauphiné, pour informer contre les auteurs et les complices de ces mouvements. Il s'en acquitta en homme qui vouloit faire sa cour. Il fit condamner Chamier, jeune homme de vingt-huit ans, Avocat à Montelimar, à être roué tout vif. Il s'étoit trouvé au combat de Bordeaux, mais il étoit arrière petit-fils du célèbre Chamier.[166]

For his part, Voltaire leaves out the biographical details which would slow down the narrative and sums up the incident in one economical sentence which has greater impact: "L'Intendant du Dauphiné fit rouer vif le petit-fils du pasteur Chamier qui avait dressé l'Edit de Nantes" (P 1051). Whereas Benoist describes at great length the attacks on the Protestants, Voltaire leaves much to the reader's imagination and presents a dramatic picture: "On les attaqua; ils se défendirent", and he adds to the evocative quality of the tableau through his more figurative style: "Ce n'était qu'une très légère étincelle du feu des anciennes guerres civiles" (P 1051). Greater pathos also results from his narrative, as he goes on to describe the Protestants as "deux ou trois cents malheureux, sans chefs, sans places, et même sans desseins..." (P 1051), thus guaranteeing greater involvement on the part of the reader. Nor does he mince words, when his aim is to drive home the full horror of the situation: "L'intendant du Languedoc fit rouer vif le prédicant Chomel. On en condamna trois autres au même supplice, et dix à être pendus" (P 1052). On the one hand, therefore, Voltaire adds to the dramatic impact of the tableau; on the other, his main purpose remains a

propagandist one, as the realistic description enhances his philosophical pronouncements on the futility of persecutions: "On sait trop que les hommes s'attachent à leur religion à mesure qu'ils souffrent pour elle" (P 1052). Thus the able narrator lends a hand to the propagandist as the tableau opens out on polemical considerations. In so far as the final message depends for its effect on the emotional involvement of the reader, the narrative skill becomes a means to an end.

Voltaire's handling of the edicts which forced the Huguenots to leave their offices is likewise considerably more slanted and sarcastic than Benoist's version. Witness the ironic understatement which follows the factual account of Louis XIV's prohibitions: "Il était enjoint à tout le clergé de faire des prosélytes, et il était défendu aux pasteurs réformés d'en faire, sous peine de bannissement perpétuel. Tous ces arrêts étaient publiquement sollicités par le clergé de France. C'était, après tout, les enfants de la maison, qui ne voulaient point de partage avec des étrangers introduits par force" (P 1051).[167] The main facts might come from Benoist, but the ironic comments are entirely Voltaire's; e.g. the absurdity of such repressive edicts as that forbidding the Huguenots from having Catholic servants,[168] is driven home by the sardonic remark: "Il n'y avait rien de stable dans la manière de les persécuter, que le dessein de les opprimer pour les convertir" (P 1056). Similarly, the absence of 'dragons' in Paris during this violent period is reported dispassionately by Benoist: "On n'osa hasarder de les faire entrer dans un lieu où elles [les troupes] pouvoient causer plus de désordres qu'on ne voudroit."[169] This presents

Voltaire with an occasion to draw attention to the ironic contrast between the callousness and apparent detachment of the court, and the harsh reality of the Huguenots' sufferings: "Paris ne fut point exposé à ces vexations; les cris se seraient fait entendre au trône de trop près. On veut bien faire des malheureux, mais on souffre d'entendre leurs clameurs" (P 1054). Voltaire's statement is far less accurate than Benoist's, for the dragoons were sent to villages near Paris,[170] but accuracy matters less to him at this point than polemical considerations. In all these cases, events which are reported factually in the source, take on a new dimension as they are coloured by Voltaire's viewpoint. His intelligence is constantly at work, sifting out details which might be of use in his crusade against fanaticism; sometimes these are minor ones, sometimes they might be of major significance, such as the peace ratified between the Duc de Rohan and Louis XIV, simply recorded by Benoist[171] in a detached manner, to which Voltaire adds his overt condemnation: "Et le duc de Rohan, coupable du crime de lèse-majesté, traita de la paix avec son roi, presque de couronne à couronne" (P 1046). Events are presented from a firm standpoint and in accordance with a pre-conceived thesis. By means of irony and his own mode of presentation, Voltaire heightens considerably their polemical significance.

However, such polemical preoccupations never exclude aesthetic ones; in general, they coexist as is the case in the remarkably evocative and dramatic tableau of the dragonnades of 1685, inspired by Benoist's récit.[172] By briefly introducing the full horror of the situation in one image: "C'était une

espèce de chasse qu'on faisait dans une grande enceinte" (P 1053), Voltaire arrests the attention of his reader through shock tactics. The imaginative presentation, thereafter, lends greater weight to the unsavoury details, as the focus shifts from this general vista to individual cases of suffering. The main actors in the drama are also cast in their roles of villains: "Un évêque, un intendant, un subdélégué, ou un curé, ou quelqu'un d'autorisé marchait à la tête des soldats" (P 1053), a far more crisp and effective rendering than Benoist's.[173] The short, sharp sentences, the use of forceful language, deliberately realistic throughout - e.g. "Elles /les familles/ renonçaient à leur religion au nom des autres, et les obstinées étaient livrées aux soldats, qui eurent toute licence, excepté celle de tuer" (P 1053) - the appeal to the reader's imagination, turn this into a powerfully dramatic tableau. Perhaps because Benoist aims at accuracy and at a detailed account, his version lacks the biting quality of Voltaire's, which is imbued with pathos through the selection of telling details: "Il y eut pourtant plusieurs personnes si cruellement maltraitées qu'elles en moururent..."[174] (P 1053). Pathos and the reader's feeling of indignation become in Voltaire's hands a polemical weapon, as the horror of persecutions is given expression by the later generations of Huguenots: "Les enfants des réfugiés dans les pays étrangers jettent encore des cris sur cette persécution de leurs pères..." (P 1053).

But what perhaps gives its own cachet to this tableau, is its strong visual quality, absent from Benoist's account. There are marked similarities with a neo-classical painting here,

as the eye surveys a canvas depicting in stark lines and in a sombre tone, the soldiers, the victims as well as the future generations of Huguenot onlookers deploring those atrocities. The general tone is emotional but never in bad taste, as Voltaire does enough to stir the reader's imagination but remains within the bounds of the bienséances. The final ironic contrast between the comfort of Versailles and those atrocities - "C'était un étrange contraste, que, du sein d'une cour voluptueuse où régnaient la douceur des mœurs, les grâces, les charmes de la société, il partît des ordres si durs et si impitoyables" (P 1053) - is Voltaire's own and further highlights the injustice of such actions. At one end of the canvas, we have the aggrieved descendants of the Protestants and at the other, the Sun King and his courtiers looking on merrily. The irony could not be more pointed, and Voltaire has digested the material from Benoist and presented it in his own inimitable manner to a polemical end.

That Voltaire is often intent on omitting vital facts to achieve a required ironic effect is further illustrated in chapter XXXVII, where he shows himself to be blinded by his parti-pris and preconceptions. In his discussion of Rome's condemnation of the one hundred and one propositions in Father Quesnel's book (P 1081), Voltaire deliberately ignores the reasons behind such a serious action and simply states: "Le jésuite Le Tellier et son parti envoyèrent à Rome cent trois propositions à condamner. Le Saint-Office en proscrivit cent et une" (P 1081). Those reasons are expounded by d'Avrigny:[175] that Rome regarded Quesnel's book as dangerous because of its "venin caché", that the Pope was acting at the request of a large

number of French bishops, that he had had the book carefully examined. All this is left out to make the Pope's decision appear quite arbitrary and irrational. Nor is Voltaire reluctant to resort to oversimplification and misrepresentation, when he declares that "la clameur fut générale, parce que, parmi ces cent et une propositions, il y en avait qui paraissaient à tout le monde contenir le sens le plus innocent et la plus pure morale" (P 1081). For the opposition to the Bull, as Voltaire well knew, was widespread but by no means universal,[176] and by opting for the strongest possible terms, Voltaire shows himself to be less concerned with the truth than with the point he wants to make, i.e. to defend Quesnel as forcefully as possible.

Nor can he hide his hostility towards the clergy, in this case the Bishops who accepted the Bull: "Quarante acceptèrent la bulle pour le bien de la paix..." (P 1081) - an explanation which is his own and fails to do justice to the bishops' sincerity. This interpretation is more in accord with Voltaire's personal view of the clergy than with the facts, for d'Avrigny takes the opposite view and declares that the Bishops demonstrated in a Mandement "qu'il n'y a pas une Proposition qui ne soit erronée, captieuse ou hérétique..."[177] But Voltaire goes further and purposely distorts the truth through irony; he had read in his source: "Les Evêques écrivirent au Pape le 5 de Février pour lui marquer qu'animés de l'esprit de leurs Prédécesseurs... ils avoient arrêté un modèle uniforme d'Instruction Pastorale, pour ôter aux esprits remuans et avides de nouveautés toute occasion de dispute et de chicane sur les Propositions qui contiennent les erreurs."[178] This factual account becomes in Voltaire's text:

> Quarante acceptèrent la bulle pour le bien de la paix; mais ils en donnèrent en même temps des explications, pour calmer les scrupules du public. L'acceptation pure et simple fut envoyée au pape, et les modifications furent pour les peuples: ils prétendaient par là satisfaire à la fois le pontife, le roi, et la multitude. (P 1081).

Explications, a more ironic term, is hardly suggested by Instruction Pastorale in the source, whilst the ironic tone of "l'acceptation... les peuples" makes the bishops appear, unfairly, hypocritical, even though the source had stressed their sincere belief that the Bull was the right course of action.[179] The presentation smacks of bias against the Jesuits. In the same paragraph, Voltaire's irony is directed at Rome; when discussing the letter sent by Noailles and seven Bishops to the Pope, Voltaire telescopes the narrative on purpose, for the Bishops condemned the Bull squarely in an Instruction Pastorale of 1714, whilst the letter of explanation to the Pope was only sent in 1716.[180] In order to give more importance to the feeling of intense anger and the sense of indignation of the Bishops, Voltaire deliberately blurs the chronological details and presents the two events as almost simultaneous: "Mais le Cardinal de Noailles, et sept autres évêques de l'assemblée qui se joignirent à lui, ne voulurent ni de la bulle ni de ses correctifs. Ils écrivirent au pape pour demander ces correctifs mêmes à sa Sainteté" (P 1081). It soon becomes clear that this lack of historical precision allows Voltaire to have an ironic dig at the Pope in the witty remark which follows: "C'était un affront qu'ils lui faisaient respectueusement." Whilst adding spice to the indifferent material from d'Avrigny, such tongue-in-cheek comments betray the propagandist's

prejudices against Rome.

Moreover, Voltaire's contempt for such petty squabbles as the one which opposed Jansenists and Jesuits is never far from the surface. In denouncing those 'querelles de plume' (P 1063), his approach is that of the satirist who relies heavily on reductio ad absurdum techniques.[181] His manner is often that of the amused onlooker who, by facetious and witty remarks,[182] attempts to trivialise the dispute by undermining the serious issues at stake; e.g. in his treatment of the Council of Trent's decisions, he adopts the pose of a naïve observer to exaggerate the impression of total confusion and leaves the theological terms unexplained: "Mais ils soutenaient une grâce suffisante à laquelle la volonté peut consentir, et ne consent jamais; une grâce efficace à laquelle on peut résister, et à laquelle on ne résiste pas..." (P 1069). Feigning to be totally in the dark, he implies constantly that the theologians themselves were unable to grasp the issues at stake.

The same facetious and ironic mode of presentation is visible in his approach both to the "illustres et dangereux solitaires" (P 1070), and to the Jesuits, as both become Voltaire's butts. Believing that the best way to discredit their petty quarrel is to reduce it, Voltaire relies on satire, as it is dismissed as "/une de/ ces controverses, dans lesquelles on ne s'entend point" (P 1073) - surely a gross oversimplification. Even such prominent figures as Arnauld do not escape Voltaire's pointed irony. Turning to Gerberon's Histoire Générale du Jansénisme for ammunition, he finds there useful information concerning Arnauld's defence of Jansenism. But Gerberon's

praise of the Jansenists' leader's occupations after his return from exile - "Cependant ce repos tel qu'avoient Mr Arnauld et ses amis, ne fut pas stérile. Ils consacrèrent leur loisir à défendre l'Eglise, en écrivant plusieurs volumes contre les Calvinistes, et à édifier les fidèles par des ouvrages de piété"[183] - makes way for a more scathing and ironic attack from Voltaire's pen: "Il s'engagea dès lors à ne combattre que les calvinistes; car il fallait qu'il fît la guerre" (P 1073). If Gerberon's pro-Jansenistic tendencies are quite obvious, so is Voltaire's hatred of religious disputes and of Jansenism. The material is digested and integrated within the general polemical plan.

His efforts to ascribe unscrupulous motives to Jansenists persist too. When describing Quesnel's attempts to be included in the truce offered to other powers at Ratisbonne in 1684, d'Avrigny had been content to give the facts:

> Cependant Louis XIV qui avoit obtenu une partie de ce qu'il vouloit envoya le Comte d'Avaux à Ratisbonne avec plein pouvoir d'admettre dans une Trêve de vingt ans toutes les Puissances qui voudroient y entrer... Les Jansénistes songèrent à s'y faire comprendre. Pour cela ils dressèrent une lettre adressée à M. d'Avaux, qu'on trouve dans le procès du Père Quesnel, que l'Archevêque de Malines fit imprimer en 1704... Elle est signée 'Vos très humbles et très obéissants serviteurs, les Disciples de Saint-Augustin'.[184]

Whilst following the source closely as to the facts, Voltaire seizes the chance to castigate the Jansenist 'canaille', in his usual ironic manner: "Les jansénistes, sous le nom des 'disciples de saint-Augustin', avaient imaginé de se faire comprendre dans

cette trêve, comme s'ils avaient été en effet un parti formidable... Cette idée chimérique était demeurée sans exécution..." (P 1077). D'Avrigny had left it to the reader to decide;[185] Voltaire not only preempts the issue, but attributes to the Jansenists less than noble motives: "Il y avait eu certainement dans ce projet une envie de se rendre trop considérables; et c'en était assez pour être criminels" (P 1077) - a conclusion which he could only have arrived at subjectively and without any real evidence to base it on.

Voltaire's frivolous and satirical approach to the whole dispute, finally, could not be better illustrated than in the way he discredits what has been, and is still considered to be a major accomplishment of Rome in ecclesiastical history: the Peace of Clement IX or 'la paix de l'Eglise', a serious attempt and a successful one at that, to bridge the gap between the rival sects and give stability back to France. Voltaire's source, d'Avrigny, treats this major event, as it deserved, with due respect: "Clément IX se relâcha sur la rétraction des Mandements, et se borna à exiger une souscription sincère."[186] The last word becomes a source of amusement to Voltaire who sees here a chance to display his wit: "Il engagea les quatre évêques à signer sincèrement le formulaire, au lieu de purement et simplement..." (P 1072). Not only does he draw attention in this way to the triviality of such distinctions, but he also underlines the hypocrisy of the clergy: "Ainsi il sembla permis de croire, en condamnant les cinq propositions, qu'elles n'étaient point extraites de Jansénius" (P 1072). The general tongue-in-cheek presentation is in-keeping with the satirical approach and with

the attempt to ignore the serious issues at stake, as Voltaire demystifies, through reductionism, what was a major success of Rome, by underplaying the real obstacles which were overcome: "Un mot substitué à un autre opéra cette paix, qu'on appela 'la paix de Clément IX', et même 'la paix de l'Eglise', quoiqu'il ne s'agît que d'une dispute ignorée ou méprisée dans le reste du monde" (P 1073). The last clause must surely rank as one of the most daring oversimplifications and a historically inaccurate statement at that!

Polemical anecdotes in chapters XXXV-XXXIX

The selection and handling of anecdotes point equally to a partisan approach by Voltaire in these last chapters. It is not without cause, for example, that he chooses to include the anecdote from Benoist[187] of Huguenots spitting out the Holy Bread which they were forced to take. In order to give greater significance to this detail, Voltaire presents the practice as more general than was the case, for his source had only mentioned one instance of it: "Quelques uns, qui rejetèrent l'hostie après l'avoir reçue, furent condamnés à être brûlés vifs" (P 1056). In Voltaire's hands, this petit fait becomes an additional proof of the pointlessness of forced conversions which lead to further violence. Nor does he state, like Benoist, that the Protestants categorically rejected the accusation, this in order to add to the irreligious tone. Typical too of Voltaire's manner as a propagandist is the movement from an individual incident of this kind to general philosophical considerations, as he broadens the perspective: "Toute persécution fait des prosélytes quand elle frappe pendant la chaleur de l'enthousiasme" (P 1057).

D'Avrigny's objective account of Antoinette Bourignon's endeavour to establish a retreat for the persecuted Jansenists on the island of Noordstrandt provides the starting-point in chapter XXXVII for Voltaire's text: "Dieu ne lui avoit inspiré de dessécher le Noordstrandt, que pour y ménager une retraite à une troupe de saints persécutés en France."[188] Although, once again here, Voltaire shows an ability to give the essential facts in a detached, yet lively, manner, this relatively objective tone soon makes way for a more ironic one, as the propagandist adds his own original information which not only discredits Bourignon, but also shows the absurdity of proselytising: "Cette Bourignon avait imprimé à ses frais dix-neuf gros volumes de pieuses rêveries, et dépensé la moitié de son bien à faire des prosélytes" (P 1077) - the ironic juxtaposition "pieuses rêveries" being one of Voltaire's favourite polemical techniques, whilst the antithesis "dépensé la moitié de son bien à faire des prosélytes" contains the tongue-in-cheek element so common in these last five chapters. Wit and irony go hand in hand in many of the anecdotes which show Voltaire's talent as a raconteur and his expertise in turning petits faits to advantage in his propagandist campaign against clericalism - e.g. in chapter XXXVII, when recounting how Mailly's writings had been burnt by the parlement, he goes on to say: "L'archevêque, l'ayant su, fit chanter un 'Te Deum' pour remercier Dieu d'avoir été outragé par des schismatiques. Dieu le récompensa: il fut cardinal" (P 1083). The lasting impression is one of irreverence; this is particularly obvious in the anecdotes which give Voltaire ammunition against Christian beliefs. Thus whilst he found in d'Avrigny[189] the comparison between the

imprisoned Mme Guyon and the canonised Marie d'Agréda, he purposely goes out of his way to heap ridicule on the idea of sainthood: "On sollicitait à Rome la canonisation de Marie d'Agréda, qui avait eu plus de visions et de révélations que tous les mystiques ensemble..." (P 1092). Irony through antithesis and repetition becomes here the main polemical weapon, as Voltaire stresses the contradictory attitude to the saint: "Et pour mettre le comble aux contradictions dont ce monde est plein, on poursuivait en Sorbonne cette même d'Agréda, qu'on voulait faire sainte en Espagne" (P 1092).

Nowhere is this irreverence more marked than in those anecdotes where Voltaire tackles the question of miracles. From Racine, he learnt of Mlle Perrier's miraculous recovery,[190] but his presentation betrays the full extent of his scepticism and the brilliance of his wit. In the Abrégé de Port-Royal, Racine had given a serious account of the circumstances surrounding Pascal's niece's illness and recovery. As one would expect from a disciple of the Jansenists who had renewed his old allegiances in 1677, Racine's language is elevated and respectful: "[Mlle Perrier] a depuis déclaré qu'elle ne douta point sur la parole de sa maîtresse que la sainte épine la guérît."[191] The tone remains dignified and reverent throughout: "Elle était affligée depuis trois ans et demi d'une fistule lacrymale au coin de l'œil gauche."[192] Voltaire, for his part, expresses, in no uncertain fashion, his scepticism from the start and tries to cast doubts on the seriousness of Mlle Perrier's illness: "Mlle Perrier, pensionnaire de Port-Royal de Paris, nièce du célèbre Pascal, avait mal à un œil" (P 1070), whereas according to Racine, she had

cancer. Furthermore, his irreverent comment on the removal of the relic to Paris contrasts sharply with Racine's respect for it, for Voltaire adopts his usual pose of the pragmatist, who, as in the Dictionnaire,[193] raises practical and irrelevant difficulties: "Il n'est pas trop aisé de prouver comment elle a été sauvée et transportée de Jérusalem au faubourg Saint-Jacques" (P 1070). Whilst Racine puts forward a number of firm testimonies from doctors, guaranteeing that medicine could not have cured Mlle Perrier, Voltaire's scepticism is clear for all to see: "La malade la baisa: elle parut guérie plusieurs jours après" (P 1070). Yet, as we saw in chapter III, he himself was not reluctant to rely on oral testimony as sufficient proof of the veracity of certain facts, although he does so only when it suits him. Disregarding the impressive testimonies, he produces very flimsy evidence which he has personally collected: "Des personnes qui ont longtemps vécu avec elle m'ont assuré que sa guérison avait été fort longue..." (P 1070). He relies, furthermore, on irony and persuasive techniques to prove the unreliability of the Jansenists' claims:

> Mais ce qui ne l'est guère [i.e. vraisemblable], c'est que Dieu, qui ne fait point de miracles pour amener à notre religion les dix-neuf vingtièmes de la terre, à qui cette religion est ou inconnue ou en horreur, eût en effet interrompu l'ordre de la nature en faveur d'une petite fille, pour justifier une douzaine de religieuses qui prétendaient que Cornélius Jansénius n'avait point écrit une douzaine de lignes qu'on lui attribue, ou qu'il les avait écrites dans une autre intention que celle qui lui est imputée... (P 1070-71).

All this implies a case of charlatanism; the mock exaggeration in "interrompu l'ordre de la nature", the disproportion between cause and effect "en faveur d'une petite fille", the ironic opposition between the miracle God might have been expected to perform and the one He is said to have done, are a triumph of inventive art. But for all that, Voltaire's willingness to fly in the face of convincing evidence does him little credit as a historian, as does his reluctance to overcome his personal bias and scepticism.[194] Hiding behind the mask of the raconteur is a propagandist and a militant one, indeed, whose major weapon remains reductionism.

In Mme Guyon, Voltaire the satirist finds the ideal material to display his wit; an extravagant and burlesque figure who believes blindly in her own wild fantasies and provides the propagandist with the added bonus of discrediting religious mysticism and divine inspiration. As indeed Fox had done in Letter 3 of the Lettres Philosophiques; both are self-deluding zealots, although Voltaire's admiration for Fox's high principles partly restores the balance. In his portrayal of Mme Guyon in chapter XXXVIII, there is no such equilibrium, for Voltaire casts the lady in the role of a farcical and grotesque figure through the brilliance of his ironic style. The comparison of Mme Guyon to Ste Thérèse comes from d'Avrigny: "Comme elle se croyoit favorisée de toutes les grâces qui ont si fort distingué Sainte Thérèse, elle voulut bien à l'exemple de cette sainte écrire sa vie par obéissance pour son directeur."[195] Voltaire clearly revels in this parallel and as the tone becomes more mocking, the attack is given a broader perspective to undermine the ideals of

sainthood and religious mysticism: "L'envie d'être une sainte Thérèse en France ne lui permit pas de voir combien le génie français est opposé au génie espagnol, et la fit aller beaucoup plus loin que sainte Thérèse" (P 1089). The logical explanation of the saint's influence - the Spanish temperament - devalues her real claims to sainthood by implication.

From that point onwards in the portrayal of Mme Guyon, Voltaire's brilliant wit becomes his major polemical weapon. D'Avrigny had declared: "Elle en étoit venue à un point de perfection qu'elle ne pouvoit plus prier les Saints et la Sainte Vierge; et la raison de cette impuissance, 'c'étoit que ce n'est pas à l'Epouse, mais aux domestiques de prier les autres pour eux.'"[196] Voltaire sees here a chance to entertain and discredit the character, as irony combines with humour: "Tandis qu'on tenait en prison Mme Guyon, qui avait épousé Jésus-Christ dans une de ses extases, et qui depuis ce temps-là ne priait plus les saints, disant que la maîtresse de maison ne devait pas s'adresser aux domestiques..."(P 1092). The substitution of the more humorous expression 'maîtresse de maison' makes the lady's claims all the more extravagant and the burlesque elements are considerably strengthened. Voltaire's mocking spirit and witty style are further illustrated when he describes Mme Guyon in ecstasy; his brilliant caricature overshadows at this point the rather sedate portrait by d'Avrigny: "Elle en étoit en danger. Il falloit promptement la délacer et la mettre sur son lit, encore son corps en crevoit-il en plusieurs endroits."[197] Compare this to Voltaire's far more humorous sketch:

> Il était étrange qu'il /Fénelon/ fût séduit par une femme à révélations, à prophéties et à galimatias,(a) qui suffoquait(b) de la grâce intérieure, qu'on était obligé de délacer, et qui se vidait (à ce qu'elle disait) de la surabondance(c) de grâce pour en faire enfler le corps de l'élu qui était assis auprès d'elle. (P 1091).

The use of the incongruous enumeration (a), which ironically groups the Christian notions and galimatias, the ironic exaggeration suffoquait (b), so much more in keeping with Mme Guyon's character, the irreverent pun, 'se vidait de la surabondance de grâce' (c), make this a delightful caricatural tableau.

But it is perhaps in chapter XXXIX, that the full flavour of Voltaire's wit and a high degree of artistry in satire are more in evidence. Both direct ridicule or satire and artistry are present here, as defined and distinguished by S.S.B. Taylor in 'Voltaire's Humour': "If we have to distinguish between mere techniques of satire and artistry in satire, then parody and irony introduce an entirely new process of refraction of emotion through a narrative framework or allegory, or through dramatis personae and narrator."[198] Not only does Voltaire launch a direct attack on Christians' meddling in Chinese affairs and traditions of worship, so alien to Europeans,[199] but this last chapter shows considerable affinities with the Contes, as within a narrative framework, Voltaire is often content to keep in the background and allow his naïve observers, the Chinese, in the manner of the Persians in Montesquieu's Lettres Persanes, to take over and pass judgement on the Europeans. So much so that it can be said that Voltaire is hiding behind the Chinese mask. See, for example, the naïve

pronouncements of the Chinese on the Christians' constant squabbling and divisions: "La cour /de Pékin/, ayant apporté plus d'attention à connaître les Européens, sut que non seulement les missionnaires étaient ainsi divisés, mais que parmi les négociants qui abordaient à Canton il y avait plusieurs sectes, ennemies jurées l'une de l'autre" (P 1106). Similarly the irrational contradictions to which sectarianism gives rise are constantly brought home to the reader through the refracting mirror of the Chinese consciousness: "Enfin on apprit qu'à Canton il y avait des Hollandais, des Suédois, des Danois, des Anglais, qui, quoique chrétiens, ne passaient pas pour être de la religion des chrétiens de Macao" (P 1108).

The interview between the Chinese emperor Cam-Hi and the Bishop of Conon betrays the subtle use of naïve observers, as in the Contes, e.g. Babouc, and a high degree of polemical skill. Though Voltaire attempts to convey the main facts objectively - e.g. the arrival in Pekin of Maillard de Tournon in 1715 (P 1105)[200] - both satire and irony pervade this dramatic little tableau. To the material borrowed from d'Avrigny, Voltaire adds the spice which transforms the rather dull and uninspired, though detailed, narrative into a far more lively and vivid scene cast typically in a dramatic mode. Voltaire borrows the gist of the conversation between Maillard de Tournon and the Emperor[201] which sets the scene for the exchanges between the Bishop of Conon and Cam-Hi, but he has clearly invented a large part of it, including the feigned and naïve surprise of the Emperor: "Mais on peut juger quelle fut sa surprise quand les interprètes de ce légat lui apprirent que les Chrétiens qui prêchaient leur religion dans

son empire ne s'accordaient point entre eux, et que ce prélat venait pour terminer une querelle dont la cour de Pékin n'avait jamais entendu parler" (P 1105). The reaction of the naïve observer is meant to inspire a similar one in the reader through the clever use of ironic juxtaposition. As for the scene between Cam-Hi and the Bishop of Conon, Voltaire not only enhances its dramatic possibilities considerably by giving greater prominence to the conversation and doing away with the interpreter mentioned in the source, but his usual terse style makes for a vivid little scene:

> Il savait très peu de chinois. L'empereur lui demanda d'abord l'explication de quatre caractères peints en or au-dessus de son trône. Maigrot n'en put lire que deux; mais il soutint que les mots 'king-tien', que l'empereur avait écrits lui-même sur des tablettes, ne signifiaient pas 'Adorez le Seigneur du ciel'. (P 1106).[202]

By pointing out the linguistic incompetence of the Bishop, Voltaire is in a position to underline his pretentiousness through ironic contrast. The ironic negative formula 'ne signifiaient pas' conveys successfully the bishop's intransigence and dogmatism. Above all as in the theatre, Voltaire is aware of the necessary presence of an audience with whom he maintains a certain complicity: "La surprise du monarque redoubla, en apprenant qu'il y avait des évêques dans son empire; mais celle du lecteur ne doit pas être moindre en voyant que ce prince indulgent poussa la bonté jusqu'à permettre à l'évêque de Conon de venir lui parler de la religion, contre les usages de son pays et contre lui-même" (P 1105). Whether he is sharing a joke with his public, or launching an ironic attack on Christian intolerance, Voltaire's

presentation depends essentially for its effect, for pathos, humour or satire, on a fictitious audience, to whom he insists on playing.

One final example will suffice to illustrate this vital aspect of Voltaire's presentation: his burlesque portrayal of l'abbé Boileau whose speech is reported by d'Avrigny in the following detached manner: "Le Docteur dit que ces Propositions lui avoient ébranlé le cerveau, qui est un cerveau chrétien, 'cerebrum meum, cerebrum christianum commoverant,' qu'elles étoient téméraires, erronées, impies, fausses, scandaleuses, hérétiques."[203] It is well-known that there was no love lost between Voltaire and the docteurs de Sorbonne, whom he seizes the chance to caricature here. He therefore intensifies the ridicule by parodying the hyperbolic and dogmatic language of the doctors: "L'abbé Boileau dénonça... cet éloge des Chinois /by Lecomte/ comme un blasphème..." (P 1104); the disproportion between the cause and the effect, the use of ironic exaggeration, underline the pretentiousness and fanaticism of the Sorbonnard. In transposing l'abbé Boileau's speech, furthermore, Voltaire modifies it slightly, not only to enhance its burlesque character, but to show the abbé's instability: "Il commença par dire que 'l'éloge de ces peuples avait ébranlé son cerveau chrétien.'" (P 1105). The emphasis is different here, for in the source, the Latin text suggests that he is outraged as a Christian, whereas Voltaire ignores the subtle distinction and stresses ébranlé, with chrétien almost unnoticed at the end of the sentence. Moreover, this leads directly to the punch-line and the witty play on words: "Les autres cerveaux de l'assemblée furent ébranlés aussi." The

ironic and comic repetition of *ébranlés* reinforces the point that the good *docteurs* were, in any case, deranged to be debating such irrelevant matters. Voltaire's sense of timing, his ability to share a joke with his reader at the expense of a grotesque character, his wit which makes the *Contes* and *Facéties* so delightful, are all apparent in this sketch. But in the end, the anecdote is being retold by the partisan intent on ridicule through caricature and has the function of reducing to absurdity the Sorbonne's condemnation of Chinese rites, for satire always has a hard and serious core to it: "La scène fut violente; mais enfin la Sorbonne déclara les louanges des Chinois fausses, scandaleuses, téméraires, impies, et hérétiques" (P 1105) - an enumeration of charges which might have come from d'Avrigny, but which Voltaire reshuffles to end with a well-contrived crescendo, which conveys the intolerance and dogmatism of theologians.

After considering to what extent Voltaire's polemical style transforms the material borrowed for propagandist ends, it is worth reiterating that this polemical manner does not altogether preclude a desire to impart the main facts dispassionately. For what is characteristic of these last chapters is a mixture of the historical manner observed in chapters I-XXIV, and the ironic mode of presentation discussed above. True, the chapters are organised, not in chronological order, but according to the author's aim to trivialise religious disputes; Voltaire takes the quarrel over the Gallican Church and the dangerous repercussions of the religious persecutions perpetrated against the Huguenots seriously, whilst his treatment of Jansenism, Quietism and the Christians' preoccupations with Chinese affairs, denotes an increasingly

ironic manner and constant reliance upon reductionism. But his ability to give a core of essential information partly restores the balance; he is prepared to extract from Bossuet's Relation sur le Quiétisme, for example, details about the confrontation between the author and Fénelon over Mme Guyon, and present this in a sober manner: "L'Evêque de Meaux, avec l'agrément du roi, s'associa pour cet examen l'évêque de Châlons, qui fut depuis le cardinal de Noailles, et l'abbé Tronson, supérieur de Saint-Sulpice" (P 1091).[204] Yet within this fixed and vital historical framework, it is the propagandist who is in the foreground and Voltaire's point of view is never far from the surface. The facts might be correctly reported - e.g. Bossuet's demand that Fénelon should condemn Mme Guyon (P 1093)[205] - but Voltaire cannot help siding with Fénelon and interpreting Bossuet's actions in his own fashion, depicting him as blinded by personal jealousy: "Bossuet, qui s'était longtemps regardé comme le père et le maître de Fénelon, devenu jaloux de la réputation et du crédit de son disciple, et voulant toujours conserver cet ascendant qu'il avait pris sur tous ses confrères, exigea que le nouvel archevêque de Cambrai condamnât Mme Guyon avec lui..." (P 1093). In Dangeau's Mémoires, Voltaire had found a reference to the role of Cardinal d'Estrées in the condemnation of Molinos by Rome: "C'est le Roi qui en fit parler l'année passée au Pape, par le Cardinal d'Estrées et qui, par ses remontrances, obligea sa sainteté à faire le procès à Molinos,"[206] a fact recorded in the Notebooks.[207] Whilst fully integrating the information into his narration of the fate of Quietism, Voltaire is eager to prove the dishonesty and political schemings of the clergy, alluding to

d'Estrées's motives, as he saw them, in an ironic aside: "Ce Cardinal d'Estrées... avait persécuté Molinos pour plaire aux ennemis de ce malheureux prêtre" (P 1094). Ignoring the evidence produced by Dangeau and d'Avrigny[208] who held Louis XIV solely responsible for the condemnation of Molinos, and blinded by his own partiality, Voltaire makes d'Estrées the villain of the piece, which amounts to a gross distortion of the truth. Clearly, therefore, historical considerations take second place to polemical intentions, and the anticlerical campaign feeds on the factual information.

Conclusion

It has been seen that Voltaire's varying intentions in Le Siècle dictate the diverse manners of presentation discussed above. The work accordingly becomes a fascinating compendium of Voltaire's different styles observed in other compositions; for we have here a racy, satirical and often light-hearted manner reminiscent of the Contes, the polemical techniques present in propagandist writings from the Lettres Philosophiques (1733) to the Dictionnaire (1764), the elegance and polished style of the literary critic, the wit and humour of the Facéties. This great diversity, moreover, is a consequence of the author's ever changing and Protean personality; we are in the presence of the calm and impartial observer, the reasonable man who assesses objectively the merits and flaws of Louis XIV (P 950), the impatient, choleric man (P 1041, para. 2), the committed and biased campaigner (P 626), the pessimist and fatalist (P 769-70), the humorist and 'bel esprit' (P 960), the classicist and the

'homme de goût' (chapters XXXI-XXXIV), and so on. The diverse roles Voltaire adopts also influence his presentation, whether it be the chronicler of events, the journalist or reporter, the literary critic, the social historian, the propagandist or the raconteur. Ultimately, it is the perfect fusion between the content and the form that guarantees the success of the work, together with the balance between the chronological survey of events and analysis, theory and detail. Voltaire's ability to select, organise and present the material in as lively a manner as possible and according to the case in hand, his willingness to write both an informative and an entertaining history, are additional ingredients of success. On the need to instruct and please, he never wavered in his pronouncements; thus in the article 'Histoire', he commented: "On sait assez qu'il faut un style grave, pur, varié, agréable;"[209] the intentions of pleasing and instructing are conveyed by the use of the adjectives 'grave', on the one hand, and 'pur, varié, agréable' on the other. If the historian's task is viewed as making the material gathered from sources, primary or otherwise, accessible in a well-orchestrated and interesting secondary source, then no one would deny that Voltaire has achieved this.

But the question remains as to what constitutes the true historical manner of Voltaire in Le Siècle. It is possible to argue that the various visages of Voltaire historian which we have examined closely, taken together, do provide the answer. Yet they do not belong exclusively to this work or to any other. That Voltaire himself was conscious of a 'historical style' becomes evident from his article 'Histoire' and his other statements

on the subject. He makes it clear in a letter to d'Argental of October 9, [1756],[210] that there is a style suited to a general history like L'Essai, a particular one like Charles XII and to Mémoires; concerning the article 'Histoire', he declares: "Je suis bien mécontent de l'article histoire. J'avais envie de faire voir quel est le stile convenable à une histoire générale, celuy que demande une histoire particulière, celuy que des mémoires exigent." All three styles are in effect apparent in Le Siècle; the style of an 'histoire particulière' recurs in the chapters of anecdotes and in Voltaire's account of great generals' achievements, such as those of Condé and Turenne in chapter III; his portrait of Mme de Maintenon (P 933-35) and his récit of Mademoiselle's liaison with Lauzun (P 916) have many affinities with the Mémoires. But all in all, the style of Le Siècle is that of an 'histoire générale', especially in chapters I-XXIV and XXIX-XXXIX. The distinction made by Voltaire sheds considerable light on the differences between Charles XII and Le Siècle, as indeed between L'Histoire de Russie and L'Essai sur les mœurs. When dealing with the life of great men such as Charles and Peter the Great, the historian can allow himself greater freedom. An 'histoire générale', on the other hand, demands stricter control, greater methodical organisation, a finer balance between historical facts and anecdotal details, less diffuseness and more symmetry, an equilibrium between a chronological approach and analysis, theory and detail.

Yet despite Voltaire's different goals in Charles XII and Le Siècle, we have shown that he has achieved greater maturity as a historian and a considerable step forward has been taken. He

displays greater critical sense, greater restraint, sobriety and awareness of the serious task confronting the historian. When he had finished Le Siècle, his historical method and manner were fully fledged, as indeed L'Essai sur les mœurs and Pierre le Grand were to show. Elegance, clarity, order, precision all have their part to play in this; Voltaire's economical and epigrammatic style allows him to survey a vast amount of material in as concise a way as possible. Correctness and taste are other factors at work. If history, in terms of documentation, has a scientific basis, the final product should bear the mark of the literary artist who adds to the dramatic elements, exploits a good narrative without doing so to the detriment of accuracy and clarity. Eloquence is likewise an attribute of good history, but to Voltaire, it means something quite specific: "On demande si l'éloquence est permise aux historiens; celle qui leur est propre consiste dans l'art de préparer les événements, dans leur exposition toujours élégante, tantôt vive et pressée, tantôt étendue et fleurie; dans la peinture vraie et forte des mœurs générales et des principaux personnages; dans les réflexions incorporées naturellement au récit, et qui n'y paraissent point ajoutées," he wrote in the article 'Eloquence'.[211] As has been indicated earlier, the art of exposition is used with consummate skill by Voltaire; the presentation of events displays all his narrative mastery in Le Siècle; the 'tableau des mœurs' depends as much for its effect on journalistic details as on forceful and elevated language. Whilst it is not always true that Voltaire's réflexions are unobtrusive - especially in the last five chapters - they do, as a rule, appear to be well-integrated

into and to flow naturally from the narrative itself. His characters are little more than cardboard figures, but it is not the historian's prerogative to transform them into 'real people'; he at least tries to give adequate biographical information to explain their roles in the drama, and in the anecdotes he does strive to make them act and even speak 'in character'. Eloquence, in this sense, does contribute a great deal to Voltaire's fine evocation of a past age.

To discover Voltaire's true historical manner, one has to examine closely, as we have done, the first twenty-four chapters, for here lies the answer to what gives Voltaire's histories their own special flavour. Nowhere is this more tangible than in his account of the Crossing of the Rhine (P 715-16), which will help to sum up his artistic skill in writing history. The techniques of exposition are here seen at their best; not only is the necessary information imparted, but the general atmosphere of panic in Holland is created, and the crisis is reached with the greatest possible speed: "Toute la Hollande s'attendait à passer sous le joug, dès que le roi serait au-delà du Rhin" (P 715). Details such as the ford created by the drought, the length of the crossing (P 716), which Voltaire had personally investigated at first hand, underline his journalistic approach. The narrative skill of the conteur is amply demonstrated by the lively and dramatic narrative: "A peine quelques cavaliers hollandais entrèrent dans la rivière pour faire semblant de combattre: ils s'enfuirent l'instant d'après devant la multitude qui venait à eux" (P 716). Unusual anecdotes are judiciously utilised to diversify the

narrative, but romanesque elements are kept under strict control; e.g. the anecdote of the Duc de Longueville's death recalls similar picturesque details in Charles XII,[212] but unlike these, it is presented in a matter-of-fact manner. Voltaire goes to great lengths to reduce the Crossing to realistic proportions and to demystify what had been hailed previously as a 'prodige' (P 717), whilst Charles XII's crossing of the Hollosin smacks of melodrama (P 150). The racy style and the narrative skill might have changed little since Charles XII, but Voltaire's greater critical sense is visible in the control exercised over such potentially melodramatic incidents as Ossembroek's attack on Condé (P 716). In brief, this tableau illustrates the essential qualities of Voltaire's historical manner; the expert handling of exposition, the narrative artistry, the emphasis on crises to the exclusion of less dramatic details, the journalistic search for extraordinary anecdotes, the balance between data and imaginative details. In the end, this historical manner is arrived at through the combined effort of the chronicler of events, the conteur, the raconteur, the 'dramaturge'. Above all, it points to Voltaire's attempt to write history as a literary artist, conscious of the prime task of the historian, as he himself saw it, i.e. "jetter quelque intérest dans notre histoire sèche et barbare."[213] It is the artistry of the man of letters which has allowed Le Siècle to overshadow and survive the works of such predecessors as Larrey or Limiers. For in Le Siècle, the material borrowed from sources has been fused into an aesthetically pleasing work of art.

Chapter IV: Notes

1. Article 'Style', Dictionnaire Philosophique, M, XX, p.439.
2. Précis de stylistique française, Paris, 1959, p.10.
3. Article 'Style', op.cit., p.436.
4. Ibid., p.437.
5. Voltairian narrative devices as considered in the author's Contes Philosophiques, p.7.
6. Macmillan, 1970, p.144.
7. Ibid., p.142.
8. Paris, 1908; see chapter XII, 'Le réalisme de Voltaire', p.164 ff..
9. La Grammaire et le lexique de Voltaire, Palermo.
10. 'Etude sur le style polémique de Voltaire: Le Dictionnaire Philosophique,' Studies, vol. XLIV, 1966.
11. op.cit., p.65 ff.
12. Studies, vol. VIIA, 1964, pp.243-283.
13. Voltaire's stylistic transformation of Rabelaisian satirical devices, 1951.
14. Studies, vol. LIII, 1967, pp.7-28.
15. Studies, vol. XLI, 1966, pp.7-69.
16. 'Le Style des tragédies de Voltaire', Revue Latine, vol. 25, 1905, pp.433-448.
17. 'La Langue de Voltaire d'après sa correspondance', Revue d'Histoire Littéraire, vol. 27, 1921, pp.105-131, 279-288, 423-449.
18. In Voltaire and the English, Studies, 1979, pp.101-116.
19. op.cit., p.160 ff.
20. The Nature of History, p.131.

21. Voltaire Historian, p.160.

22. see H. Mason, Voltaire, p.110.

23. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.11.

24. see e.g. the digression on Coumourgi-Ali-Bacha (P 178) and the long portrait of Peter's wife, Catherine (P 193).

25. see (P 616): "On veut essayer de peindre à la postérité, non les actions d'un seul homme, mais l'esprit des hommes dans le siècle le plus éclairé qui fut jamais."

26. Other examples: chapters IX and X.

27. see also the transitions from chapter IX to chapter X (P 705); between chapters XII and XIII (P 738); XIII and XIV (P 748); XVII and XVIII (P 809), XIX and XX (P 836).

28. see P 679, 692.

29. D 7792.

30. Other examples of the classical structure of individual tableaux will be considered in conjunction with Voltaire's narrative skill later, but see (P 669) Arras: exposition (P 669, paras. 1 and 2); nœud (P 669, para. 2); dénouement (P 669, para. 2).

31. P 468-469.

32. L'Art de la prose, op.cit., p.155.

33. see Bottiglia, Candide, op.cit., p.257.

34. Other examples: P 636, 638, 740, 780, 787.

35. e.g. P 669, 673, 847, 883, 934.

36. see, in particular, his concise tableau of Holland (P 625); other examples: P 623, 624, 688.

37. op.cit., p.253.

38. Mimesis, p.405.

39. e.g. "Sous lui, plus de connétable; et, après la mort du duc d'Epernon, plus de colonel général d'infanterie" (P 973).

40. e.g. (P 785) "Leur île de la Jamaïque fut insultée par les escadres françaises, leurs vaisseaux pris et brûlés, leurs côtes saccagées."

41. P 815.

42. e.g. P 108, 125.

43. e.g. P 400.

44. M, XXIV, p.47.

45. Discours de l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique, Oeuvres, Seuil, p.828.

46. see P 114, 117, 133.

47. Vol. VIII, pp.349-53.

48. Ibid., p.351.

49. see also the battles of Rocroi (P 637, para. 3), Fribourg (P 638-9), Seneffe (P 733).

50. Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.22.

51. D 2148.

52. e.g. P 438, 441, 443.

53. Vol. VIII, p.119 ff.

54. Vol. V, p.421 ff.

55. e.g. the Sultan's long speech to the Divan (P 210), which is essentially there to add to the romanesque elements.

56. Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.14.

57. M, XIX, pp.361-362.

58. Voltaire's source is probably Larrey (vol. VII, p.571).

59. Ibid., vol. VII, pp.570-571.

60. Ibid., vol. VII, p.571.

61. Ibid.

62. Vol. VIII, p.575.

63. Similar uses of direct speech: Seneffe (P 733), Chiari (P 816).

64. see above.

65. Petitot, vol. 40, p.2.

66. see the scene where Charles censures the Vizir for not overcoming the Russians, which includes stage directions (P 197).

67. e.g. (P 169) the conversation between Peter and Rehnsköld.

68. "Il /Peterborough/ rencontre la duchesse de Popoli entre les mains des soldats, prête à être déshonorée; il la rend à son mari" (P 838).

69. M, XXI, p.275.

70. Poetics, chapter IX in Literary Criticism: from Plato to Dryden, Detroit, Gilbert, 1962, p.81.

71. Odes, Book 3, Ode 3, ed. T.E. Page, Macmillan, 1963, pp.4-5.

72. In Charles XII, on the other hand, such an incident as Patkul's execution smacks of melodrama, though it is not devoid of pathos: "Quand on l'eut conduit au lieu du supplice, et qu'il vit les roues et les pieux dressés, il tomba dans des convulsions de frayeur, et se rejeta dans les bras du ministre, qui l'embrassa en le couvrant de son manteau et en pleurant" (P 135).

73. Vol. II, p.60. See chapter III.

74. Quoted by Pomeau, P 1747.

75. For other scenes endowed with pathos, see (P 649) the flight of Anne of Austria from Paris; (P 916) Mademoiselle and Lauzun; (P 1053) the persecution of the Huguenots, which will be discussed below.

76. see below for our discussion of the attack on the Huguenots by the dragoons (P 1053).

77. Vol. IX, p.233.

78. Vol. XIV, p.507.

79. op.cit., vol. I, pp.193-194. See also chapter III.

80. see chapter III.

81. see (P 178) where the colourful life-story of the young Sultan's favourite, Coumourgi-Ali-Bacha, is told at great length; or (P 230-231) the abuse of power by the Vizir Soliman.

82. see (P 783) where Feuquières is criticised by Voltaire for his satirical portraits of such generals as Boufflers, and for being, as Voltaire puts it, "un esprit non moins chagrin qu'éclairé, l'Aristarque et quelquefois le Zoïle des généraux." See also (P 797) where Voltaire attacks La Beaumelle's calumnies.

83. e.g. in his treatment of Louvois and Mazarin; see also chapter III.

84. see chapter III for Voltaire's use of Larrey's account here (Larrey, vol. V, p.379).

85. A detail included in the Lettres Philosophiques, see Taylor edition, p.29.

86. see Erlanger, Louis XIV, p.320; Bourgeois, op.cit., p.412, note 1.

87. For a discussion of Voltaire's elegance of language in this section, see below.

88. see chapter III.

89. Vol. III, p.256. See also chapter III.

90. e.g. "Dans d'autres temps les excommunications de Rome auraient suivi ces outrages; mais c'étaient des armes usées et devenues ridicules" (P 691).

91. see chapter II.

92. "Je ne sais pas lire, répondit le pêcheur: je viens de la trouver, personne ne l'a vue" (P 896).

93. see chapter II.

94. Besterman, p.227.

95. Besterman, p.338.

96. see Bourgeois, op.cit., p.531, note 1: "Il est clair que Canillac a trompé Voltaire, pour se donner le mérite d'un grand service rendu."

97. For other examples of Voltaire's use of his talent as conteur, see (P 922) Mme de Coëtquen's attempts to obtain

forgiveness of the dying Madame; (P 947) Louis's illness which led to his death, and the whole tableau of "l'affaire des poisons" (P 923 ff.), an episode which has all the qualities of a moral tale and the added ingredient of sensationalism.

98. D 7336.

99. e.g. Charles's manner of hunting bears (P 80); Charles finding Turks under his bed (P 219).

100. e.g. P 62, 78, 82, 92, 94, 107, 186, 187.

101. see chapter III for Voltaire's use of the source here.

102. see too (P 186) and the dialogue between the Sultana and her son (P 173).

103. For a discussion of verisimilitude, see chapter III.

104. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.20.

105. see e.g. the more sober treatment of the battle of Pultava in Pierre (P 467; Charles XII, P 159 ff.); Peter's triumphant return to his capital (Pierre, P 415; Charles XII, P 182-3); the battle of Narva (Pierre, P 435; Charles XII, P 85). Verisimilitude is applied more rigidly as a criterion in Pierre le Grand; e.g. (P 447) the episode of the Turkish ambassador sent to Peter. In Pierre le Grand, Voltaire rejects on these grounds a letter allegedly written by Peter to Charles after Pultava (P 472), whereas he quotes numerous letters without proof in Charles XII (e.g. P 202).

106. M, XXIII, p.237.

107. e.g. see (P 927) the use of dialogue in Louis's conversation with Marie Louise of Spain; (P 940) Mme de Maintenon's exchanges with her brother. Voltaire clearly appreciates the irreverent tone of the final remark: "Vous avez donc parole d'épouser Dieu le père?"

108. Besterman, p.398.

109. op.cit., p.40.

110. Taylor edition, p.35.

111. op.cit., vol. II, p.286.

112. Besterman, p.226.

113. Ibid., p.221.

114. In Voltaire and the English, Studies, 1979, p.115.

115. see (P 957) Louis's reply to Madame de Bourgogne, of which there is a first draft in the Notebooks (Besterman, p.221).

116. Besterman, p.78.

117. M, XXIII, p.245.

118. e.g. in chapter XXX (P 988), Louis's conversation with Le Tellier on the question of Le Pelletier's appointment as superintendent of Finance, which Voltaire borrowed from Choisy's Mémoires, Petitot, vol. 63, p.306. See also (P 972) the anecdote of Roupli, the Persian, discussed in chapter III; (P 984) the anecdote concerning Colbert's brother; (P 1004) a literary anecdote to illustrate the value of the Lettres Provinciales; (P 1008) Malézieu's words to La Bruyère; (P 1010) Condé's tears during the first performance of Cinna; (P 1011) Mme de Sévigné's amusing assessment of Racine, etc. Voltaire's use of anecdotes in chapters XXXV-XXXIX will be discussed below.

119. e.g. Louis's harsh treatment of Fouquet (P 897-902); of Mademoiselle and Lauzun (P 916-917).

120. Elegance is not entirely absent from chapters I-XXIV; e.g. (P 738) where Voltaire says of Condé: "Ce feu dévorant qui en avait fait dans sa jeunesse un héros impétueux et plein de passions, ayant consumé les forces de son corps né plus agile que robuste, il éprouva la caducité avant le temps..."

121. e.g. P 890, P 893, P 898, P 906, P 908 etc.

122. e.g. P 893, P 906.

123. e.g. P 893, P 909.

124. e.g. P 906, P 909.

125. e.g. P 906, P 912.

126. e.g. P 891, P 903, P 908.

127. e.g. P 892, P 903.

128. e.g. P 891, P 903.

129. Vol. VII, p.76.

130. see e.g. P 673, P 685 para. 1, P 704 para. 2; P 714 para. 2; P 727 para. 3; P 742 para. 3; P 775 para. 2.

131. pp.209-210.

132. Naves, Le Goût de Voltaire, p.198.

133. Taylor edition, p.120.

134. e.g. P 704, 714, 727, 742, 775.

135. e.g. P 997, 998, 1015, 1016, 1027.

136. see too (P 992) the problems confronting France after Louis XIV's death: "Mais il s'en fallait beaucoup que la France eût alors assez de ressorts pour faire mouvoir une machine si vaste et si compliquée, dont le poids l'écrasait."

137. L'Art de la prose, op.cit., p.164.

138. Taylor edition, p.36.

139. D 2125.

140. see chapter II.

141. see Pomeau's notes, Oeuvres Historiques, P 1701.

142. see Bourgeois, op.cit., p.22, note 1: "C'est un mélange habile et juste de critiques et d'éloges impartiaux."

143. e.g. (P 701) the anecdote about l'abbé de Vatteville.

144. see Voltaire's treatment of miracles; Mlle Perrier (P 1070) and the Jesuit miracles (P 1071).

145. M, II, pp.551, 553.

146. D 4251.

147. see Voltaire to d'Olivet, June 30, 1735, D 887.

148. op.cit., p.193.

149. see the introduction to this chapter.

150. op.cit.

151. op.cit., p.192.

152. e.g. P 1028; P 1032 para. 2, where his source is d'Avrigny's Mémoires chronologiques et dogmatiques (vol. III, pp.112-3); see also P 1038.

153. e.g. P 1034-1035.

154. op.cit., vol. III, pp.112-113.

155. e.g. "Les deux prélats excommunièrent les pourvus en régale..." (P 1035).

156. op.cit., p.112.

157. p.676, note 5.

158. Voltaire's source here is d'Avrigny (op.cit., vol. III, p.407).

159. Vol. III, p.407.

160. e.g. (P 1037) when discussing the decision of the clergy to accept the Régale, Voltaire omits to say that they were not united in their stance against Rome, thus giving the impression that Rome's authority was universally repudiated.

161. Vol. III, pp.180, 182.

162. op.cit., p.182.

163. Dreft, Beman, vol. IV, p.619.

164. Benoist, vol. IV, P.460.

165. Ibid., vol. IV, pp.351-352.

166. Ibid., vol. V, P.651.

167. Voltaire's source here is Benoist (vol. IV, p.460).

168. Benoist, vol. V, pp.806, 876.

169. Ibid., vol. V, p.903.

170. see Bourgeois, op.cit., p.705, note 3.

171. Vol. II, p.405.

172. Vol. V, pp.844-850.

173. Vol. V, p.845.

174. see Benoist's verbose rendering (vol. V, p.850) which lacks the same imaginative appeal: "Il n'étoit défendu aux soldats que de tuer et de voler. Toutes les autres cruautez leur étoient non seulement permises mais commandées..."

175. op.cit., vol. IV, p.226.

176. d'Avrigny, vol. IV, p.227.

177. Ibid., vol. IV, p.330.

178. Ibid., vol. IV, p.331.

179. As Bourgeois points out: "Ce ne fut donc pas un acte d'hypocrisie des jésuites, comme le croit Voltaire" (op.cit., p.751, note 3).

180. d'Avrigny, vol. IV, p.329.

181. see e.g. (P 1065) the ironic repetition of "virgule".

182. e.g. (P 1071) "Annat n'était ni docteur ni docte."

183. Amsterdam, Lorme, 1700, vol. III, p.241.

184. op.cit., vol. III, p.255.

185. Vol. III, p.259: "On laisse au lecteur à faire telle réflexion qu'il plaira sur une pièce de cette nature qui en fournit de toutes sortes."

186. Vol. III, pp.74-75.

187. op.cit., vol. V, p.981: "Guizard... ayant été contraint de communier, fut accusé d'avoir rejeté l'Hostie. Il nia le fait constamment: mais cela n'empêcha pas que les Juges le condamnassent à être brûlé vif."

188. op.cit., vol. III, p.145.

189. op.cit., vol. III, p.437.

190. see Lanson, 'Notes pour servir...', op.cit., p.186.

191. Oeuvres complètes, Seuil, p.334.

192. Ibid., p.335.

193. see Monty, op.cit., p.189.

194. see also (P 1086) for a similar ironic treatment of miracles: "Le pauvre parti janséniste eut recours à des miracles; mais les miracles ne faisaient plus fortune. Un vieux prêtre de Reims, nommé Rousse, mort, comme on dit, en odeur de sainteté, eut beau guérir les maux de dents et les entorses; le Saint-Sacrement... guérit en vain la femme Lafosse d'une perte de sang, au bout de trois mois, en la rendant aveugle."

195. op.cit., vol. III, p.437.

196. Ibid., vol. III, p.437.

197. Vol. III, p.437.

198. op.cit., p.110.

199. e.g. P 1101.

200. Voltaire's source here is d'Avrigny (op.cit., vol. IV, p.213).

201. Ibid., vol. IV, pp.270-271.

202. Compare d'Avrigny's version: "M. Maigrot... parut devant le Monarque, mais si ignorant que de quatre caractères qui étoient peints au-dessus de la tête du Prince, il n'en put lire que deux fort communs, encore ne les entendoit-il pas... L'Empereur lui dit inutilement que Tien signifie précisément la même chose que Tienchu; deux heures consacrées à son instruction ne servirent qu'à convaincre le Prince que tous les hommes sont capables de prévention" (vol. IV, pp.276-7).

203. Vol. IV, p.168.

204. Voltaire's source here is Bossuet (Oeuvres, vol. XXIX, p.547).

205. Ibid., pp.562-563.

206. op.cit., vol. I, p.98.

207. Besterman, p.216.

208. op.cit., vol. III, p.322.

209. M, XIX, p.367.

210. D 7018.

211. Dictionnaire Philosophique, M, XVIII, p.518.

212. e.g. Compare Schulenbourg's crossing of the Oder (P 122).

213. D 2148.

Chapter V

Voltaire's aims in Le Siècle de Louis XIV

Chapter V

Voltaire's aims in Le Siècle de Louis XIV

In the preceding chapters, we have examined closely Voltaire's method of work during two periods of intense literary activity which gave birth to Le Siècle, from 1732 to 1738, and from 1750 to 1751. We have commented upon his earnest efforts to document himself fully through a network of correspondents whom he urged to seek out what was characteristic of the age of Louis XIV by way of anecdotes and little-known details, his borrowings from private and public libraries, his endeavours to make effective use of the material that came his way after the first edition and his genuine desire to gather supplementary information as a result of contemporaries' reactions. We have seen how he modifies, augments and corrects his text in the light of new evidence. Voltaire's impressive documentation, the role of oral testimonies and of written sources, the manner in which Voltaire adapts and transforms the material borrowed, the successful attempt to fuse the evidence and the facts collected into a generally well-orchestrated and aesthetically pleasing work of art have been studied. All along it has been argued that the author of Le Siècle never loses sight of his objectives, that he responds according to the case in hand, that he selects and presents the material for specific purposes, whether these be historical, polemical, philosophical or literary, that he often chooses what gives greater weight to his thesis and omits what would weaken his case, and that he rarely forgets that one of the historian's prime tasks is to make history at once more accessible and more captivating

for the reading public. It has therefore become clear that the author's intentions dictate both the selection and the presentation of the material. Accordingly, any study of Le Siècle should open out on a consideration of Voltaire's goals as an historian, a philosopher, a propagandist and a literary artist. Having shown how Voltaire collected his material and discussed the manner in which he uses and presents it, it is appropriate to ask to what ends he does so.

However, it is not our purpose here to deal with all the ideas expressed in Le Siècle on a wide range of topics. As with other genres, history obviously becomes in Voltaire's hands a basis for discussing topics dear to his heart, such as the injustice of war (e.g. P 730), the importance of the laws (e.g. P 972, P 978), the benefits to be derived from commerce (P 983, P 987), luxury and material comfort (P 978, P 989). Moreover, the work enables him to voice his views on absolutism, and it has been shown by Peter Gay to contain a 'thèse royale'.[1] In addition, the classical ideals of the seventeenth century are upheld and openly advocated by Voltaire in chapters XXXI-XXXIV, and his anti-clerical campaign has been discussed at some length in chapter IV. Voltaire's thought and philosophy in Le Siècle have frequently been studied in depth by critics in general works.[2] Rather than cover the same ground and give a catalogue of his ideas, this synthesis of Voltaire's intentions in Le Siècle will enable us to measure his professed aims against his achievements, to uncover his undivulged intentions where these exist, to summarise our findings in this study. This is best done by looking closely at those aims under three broad headings:

(a) Voltaire's historical aims, both strictly historical ones and the concept of social history in Le Siècle; (b) Voltaire's philosophical intentions, including his attempts to interpret, understand and account for historical phenomena in his own personal and highly original fashion, in terms of certain theories of causation, of a fixed conception of human nature, as well as his commitment to the philosophic cause, and his approach as a moralist who views history as a means of teaching by examples; (c) his literary and aesthetic aims will finally be briefly recalled, as defined and discussed in chapter IV. These aspects of Le Siècle have been examined closely by scholars whose views will be referred to below; consequently it suffices to sum them up succinctly. It will be seen that Le Siècle has a scientific basis, by virtue of its rigid documentation, but that the end product is as much the work of the philosopher and the artist, as of the chronicler of events. In assessing Voltaire's purpose in the work, one should bear in mind that his professed aims, as revealed in the correspondence, in his prefaces and in the text itself, may not always coincide with his real motives, that what he set out to do and what he eventually accomplished do not always correspond, for as in his other works, one has to read between the lines and be on the alert to apprehend Voltaire's hidden intentions. Thus it will be seen that in his remarks on Le Siècle, he puts little emphasis on his propagandist message and takes great pains to try and persuade the authorities and the public at large that Le Siècle is the work of a devoted patriot, of a man of truth, an impartial observer, whereas his point of view, as has already been demonstrated, is never far from the surface, and

his bias shows through clearly on a number of occasions, even though he did his utmost to present the main facts objectively and to be as unprejudiced as he could be.

(1) Historical aims

(a) Strictly historical objectives

However much Voltaire might have scorned the erudite's working habits, in that he failed to give precise references to sources, excluded from his work cumbersome details and long extracts of documents, decrees and treaties, as shown in chapter III, he was fully aware of the fact that any competent historian in the eighteenth century would be judged first and foremost on the reliability of his evidence and the degree of accuracy which he could achieve in his chronicle of events. Thus in his comments on Le Siècle in his historical writings and in the Correspondence, Voltaire takes a great deal of trouble to stress that he has adhered to the truth in all things. In the preface to the 1751 edition, the editor, most probably Voltaire himself, declares: "J'y remarquai un amour extrême de la vérité et une impartialité entière sur toutes les matières qui y sont traitées" (P 613). And in his letters to correspondents and acquaintances, the historian repeatedly asserts that he has devoted all his energies to this quest for the truth; to Hénault on February 1, 1752, he writes: "Enfin, j'ai tâché en tout de respecter la vérité, de rendre ma patrie respectable aux yeux de l'Europe..."[3] He makes a similar point to Malesherbes on January 18, 1752.[4] More often than not, of course, Voltaire is on the defensive, in trying to convince his critics and the French authorities that he

has carefully weighed all the evidence and arrived at a balanced and dispassionate view of Louis XIV's reign. Thus in the Supplément, he goes to great lengths to answer La Beaumelle's petty accusations of falsehood and inaccuracy in the text, by insisting on the painstaking documentation which he has undertaken and by repeatedly stressing that he was motivated by love of the truth: "L'amour seul de la patrie et de la vérité l'a soutenu dans un travail d'autant plus pénible qu'il paraît moins l'être" (P 1231). A view which he reiterates later: "Je n'ai eu nulle affection particulière et la vérité a été mon seul objet" (P 1274). In Le Siècle itself, Voltaire advocates accuracy in the mimutest details: "Il faut de la vérité dans les plus petites choses" (P 878). The question of whether Voltaire is objective enough in the work will have to be deferred until our discussion of Le Siècle as propagandist history later. As far as the main facts are concerned, we have demonstrated in chapter III that Voltaire tries very hard to present them as impartially and as accurately as possible. He takes liberties with details, alters the circumstances of anecdotes and of his predecessors' récits, adds to them as he sees fit; he modifies Louis's speeches and even invents details in the case of historiettes where he enjoys much more lee-way, since they were often handed down through an oral tradition. He is frequently guilty of poetic licence and his attitude is no less cavalier than in Charles XII on a number of occasions.

Yet his endless pursuit of the truth cannot be denied, as indicated in chapter III. His documentation is impressive and

over twenty years, whilst the composition of Le Siècle did not occupy him continuously, he constantly sought to add to the material at his disposal. His attempts to enlist the help of correspondents, the fact that he personally interviewed a considerable number of eyewitnesses, that he made effective use of his travels in Europe, notably in England and Holland, his reading of as many published and manuscript sources as possible and his systematic and positive approach to the problems of historical documentation, all testify to a genuine desire to establish the truth beyond any possible doubt. It has been observed that he often consulted a particular source in order to clarify one controversial incident (e.g he read Pellisson's Lettres Historiques to shed light on the crossing of the Rhine, Mme de La Fayette's memoirs to unravel the mystery of Madame's death and the memoirs of Mademoiselle to establish the facts about her liaison with Lauzun). Voltaire also went to the trouble of perusing newly published sources; although he had read Torci's memoirs in manuscript form, he carefully consulted the printed version and in the 1756 edition of Le Siècle, he added to his text in the light of new information which he extracted from this source. Moreover, Voltaire made a point of reading anew the same sources whenever a detail needed clarifying. The use of notes muettes indicates a deliberate effort to have the relevant material readily at hand and allows for greater accuracy, as does Voltaire's habit of making extensive notes whenever he read a source.

If Voltaire is prone to a certain nonchalance when it is a question of checking the source, if he frequently relies on his notes

and fails to give page references, the essential groundwork proves his earnest quest for the truth. In the case of the chapters on the Fronde, he had read most of the sources available. For its time, Le Siècle shows a far greater emphasis on giving history a sound foundation and a more 'scientific' basis than was the case with humanist histories. Voltaire's method might not appear scholarly enough by modern standards, for he uses few primary sources and generally ignores archives, whilst he lacks scientific criteria for assessing the relevant material, but his work shows a vital departure from traditionalist history. As J.H. Brumfitt has remarked in his introduction to the English edition of Le Siècle: "In the field of contemporary history, where he is really at home, he excels in the thoroughness of his documentation,"[5] a view which echoes the assessment of the great historian Gibbon. And in his Voltaire, Gustave Lanson concludes: "Il est superflu de dire que la méthode de Voltaire ne suffit plus aujourd'hui. Mais elle marque une étape dans le passage de l'histoire traditionaliste à l'histoire scientifique."[6] The care with which Voltaire researched his subject continues to win the admiration of modern critics, and the historical merit of Le Siècle lies in the fact that no one would dare write a historical tract on the reign of Louis XIV in this day and age without paying due attention to Voltaire's work.[7] Le Siècle is more compact than Limiers's or Larrey's histories, and some contemporaries for that reason deemed it to be lacking in dignity, as we saw in chapter II, but for all that, it presents a fairly accurate and comprehensive survey of historical events, especially in chapters I-XXIV, through Voltaire's judicious method of selection and his

keen eye for the most vital information. Thus in purely historical terms, Le Siècle has stood the test of time because of its solid foundation, as Gustave Lanson has pointed out: "Il /Voltaire/ a fait aussi une œuvre de premier ordre, aussi solide et exacte qu'il était possible de la faire alors..."[8]

(b) Social history

The concept of social history, as embodied in Le Siècle, was not new. In Voltaire Historian, Brumfitt has indicated that it had been put forward by Fontenelle who in Sur l'Histoire advocated the "sweeping away of the 'histoire des révolutions, des Etats, des guerres' and its replacement by 'celle des erreurs et des passions humaines,'"[9] and by Boulainvilliers.[10] But before Montesquieu's De l'esprit des lois, Voltaire was one of the first historians to move the spotlight from the ruler to the ruled, and to seek out the social, political and economic causes of historical events. Charles XII did contain comments on the characteristics and 'les mœurs' of European and other nations, but these were few and far between; it was essentially an 'histoire particulière' dealing with the life and adventures of the protagonist, and as such remained firmly entrenched in the humanist tradition. With Le Siècle, from the outset Voltaire viewed his project in an entirely new light; as observed in chapter I, his early pronouncements in the Correspondence leave no doubt that he set out to portray an age, and not just to write the personal history of Louis XIV. To Thiériot he declared his intention of being "le peintre et non l'historien" of the age of Louis XIV.[11] To d'Olivet Voltaire explained on August 24, 1735,

at a time when he had just started drafting Le Siècle, that it was not to be a history of battles but a tableau of the "arts et progrès de l'esprit".[12] The humanist historians' obsession with minute military details is thus rejected in favour of a history of civilisation and of the progress of the human mind, a fact reiterated in Voltaire's letter to Jean Lévesque de Burigny on October 19, 1738:

> Il y a quelques années, monsieur, que j'ai commencé une espèce d'histoire philosophique du Siècle de Louis XIV: tout ce qui peut paraître important à la postérité doit y trouver sa place; tout ce qui n'a été important qu'en passant, y sera omis. Les progrès des arts et de l'esprit humain tiendront dans cet ouvrage la place la plus honorable.[13]

It emerges from Voltaire's frequent statements of intent that the progress of the human mind is his major preoccupation and that it is synonymous with the progress of the arts; to Berger, for instance, he writes on April 26, 1739: "C'est le progrès des arts et de l'esprit humain que je veux faire voir, et non l'histoire des intrigues de cour et des méchancetés des hommes."[14] The point that Voltaire confuses 'l'histoire de l'esprit humain' with literary history has been made by I.O. Wade[15] and Raymond Naves in Le Goût de Voltaire.[16] In his letters and writings on Le Siècle, Voltaire never grows tired of repeating that he is not concerned with giving a mere compilation of historical data, but with underlining major revolutions in history and with human progress; to Hervey he expresses his dissatisfaction with erudite chronicles of events and the histories of kings: "Je suis las des histoires où il n'est question que des aventures d'un roi, comme

s'il existait seul, ou que rien n'existât que par rapport à lui; en un mot, c'est encore plus d'un grand siècle que d'un grand roi que j'écris l'histoire" (P 611). The historian, as Voltaire explained to Dubos, should extract from a mass of details the most significant social, political and artistic developments worthy of the attention of posterity and ignore the rest: "Malheur aux détails: la postérité les néglige tous; c'est une vermine qui tue les grands ouvrages. Ce qui caractérise le siècle, ce qui a causé des révolutions, ce qui sera important dans cent années, c'est là ce que je veux écrire aujourd'hui" (P 605).[17]

To exclude trivial and cumbersome details of battles, to focus attention on important revolutions that took place in the course of history, to select what is characteristic of a great age, to trace the progress of the arts and the development of the human mind, those are Voltaire's alleged aims as a social historian. These objectives are recalled intermittently in Le Siècle itself and are clearly defined in the introduction:

> Il ne faut pas qu'on s'attende à trouver ici, plus que dans le tableau des siècles précédents, les détails immenses des guerres, des attaques de villes prises et reprises par les armes, données et rendues par des traités. Mille circonstances intéressantes pour les contemporains se perdent aux yeux de la postérité, et disparaissent pour ne laisser voir que les grands événements qui ont fixé la destinée des empires. Tout ce qui s'est fait ne mérite pas d'être écrit. On ne s'attachera, dans cette histoire, qu'à ce qui mérite l'attention de tous les temps, à ce qui peut peindre le génie et les mœurs des hommes, à ce qui peut servir d'instruction et conseiller l'amour de la vertu, des arts et de la patrie[18] (P 619-620).

From the very beginning, too, Voltaire is eager to emphasise that Le Siècle will differ from Charles XII in so far as the historian will not restrict himself to the fortunes of a central hero: "Ce n'est pas seulement la vie de Louis XIV qu'on prétend écrire; on se propose un plus grand objet. On veut essayer de peindre à la postérité, non les actions d'un seul homme, mais l'esprit des hommes dans le siècle le plus éclairé qui fut jamais" (P 616). The project was an ambitious one; the innovation of transferring the main role from the king to the nation, an imaginative one, and the intention of omitting insignificant military details so abundant in humanist histories, a sensible one. But has Voltaire fulfilled this promise?

His attempt at writing social history has been judged to be unsuccessful by modern critics; according to Sister Aquinas O'Connor, Le Siècle is disappointing in this respect.[19] Suzanne Gearhart has remarked that chapters I-XXIV do not differ radically from the récits of battles which Voltaire meant to exclude from rational history,[20] and J.B. Black has this to say about Le Siècle as social history:

> If this is the true angle from which to approach it, there never was a more grandiose conception: it is colossal, awe-inspiring, overpowering, and if it had been carried out with anything like the completeness due to it, the Siècle would have been one of the great books of the world. Unfortunately it cannot be so regarded; in spite of the brilliance of the conception and the penetration displayed in the execution it remains a torso. Readers will always find, when they peruse it, that the pleasure to be derived from its pages is mixed with considerable disappointment.[21]

J.H. Brumfitt has remarked on the fact that Le Siècle is not as revolutionary as Voltaire's theory of social history implies: "The amount of new material he introduces is small, and the changes he effects in the nature of historical writing result almost as much from his exclusion of lengthy accounts of battles, genealogies, etc., as from his inclusion of new material on the arts, sciences, and economic and social matters."[22] Voltaire did in fact gather a certain amount of new material through oral documentation, but as a rule he treats anecdotes more as potins or as a source of entertainment than as indicative of 'les mœurs' and 'l'esprit du temps'.

Nor did Voltaire's endeavours to write social history appear to have won the approval of all his contemporaries. We have seen in chapter II that La Beaumelle rightly took him to task for having lost sight of his professed aims in chapters I-XXIV, for having included too many minutiae and for having ignored important issues. Despite the critic's deplorable animosity, one feels that he has a point here. Grimm, from whom Voltaire might have expected more support, declared himself unhappy with Voltaire's inability to fulfil the promise of the title: "L'auteur n'a pas rempli son objet."[23] This criticism was echoed by others, for instance l'abbé Guyon in L'Oracle des nouveaux philosophes.[24] Grimm, Clément and La Beaumelle amongst others expressed their dissatisfaction with the division of chapters along thematic lines, an innovation which Voltaire decided upon to give greater prominence to the tableau des mœurs in the second and most vital section of the work (i.e. chapters XXV-XXXIX).

It is true that the reader has to wait until chapter XXIX to see social history at its best and most convincing, for the first twenty-four chapters do not in essence differ markedly from the récits of battles which formed the basis of humanist histories - a valid criticism voiced by La Beaumelle in his remarks. However, even in these chapters, Voltaire makes a genuine effort to spotlight important revolutions which have changed the course of history. One of the main themes of these chapters is the shift in the balance of power, first introduced in chapter II (P 621) and recalled in chapter XXIV (P 889), a theme which gives considerable unity to the whole section. Furthermore, Voltaire traces the rise and decline of France under Louis XIV (e.g. P 787, 789, 811, 846), as well as the increasing might of her enemies, England and Holland. Remarks pertaining to 'les mœurs' are admittedly not as frequent as one would have wished, but they are present; the general spirit of the nation during the Fronde is Voltaire's prime subject in chapters IV and V (e.g. P 652). National traits are illustrated by historical events; thus Voltaire writes of the siege of Valenciennes: "Elle fut prise d'assaut par un de ces événements singuliers qui caractérisent le courage impétueux de la nation" (P 739). Similarly the social historian makes a point of drawing the reader's attention to the differences in the temperament of the French and Germans (P 623); he uses the anecdote of d'Amfreville, discussed in chapter III, to comment on the English character (P 754). Likewise he reflects on the 'génie' of the Sicilians (P 742), of the Swiss (P 629), and the battle of the Boyne provides the occasion for an astute observation on the reasons for the

supremacy of the English over the Irish: "Il y a des nations dont l'une semble faite pour être soumise à l'autre. Les Anglais ont toujours eu sur les Irlandais la supériorité du génie, des richesses et des armes" (P 766).

Voltaire's approach is often a sociological one, for instance when he describes Franche-Comté (P 701), and pays special attention to the country's system of government, its economic situation and its inhabitants' love of freedom. In the tableau of Catalonia, he describes and discusses the customs of the people (P 884), the country's economic resources (P 884), its history (P 885) and a number of national characteristics (P 885). The social historian shows an interest in the economic causes of the Fronde (P 644) and highlights the financial difficulties which forced Louis XIV's hand at the negotiations of Gertruidenberg (P 859). The disastrous economic consequences of Louis XIV's wars are on more than one occasion stressed, both as regards France herself (P 857) and the nations that bore the brunt of the monarch's wars of aggression, e.g. the Dutch (P 721). It has been noted in chapter IV that Voltaire's journalistic manner frequently consists in going behind the scenes and in including such observations as those on the luxury that prevailed during Louis's campaign in Flanders (P 698-699), but the social historian is no less in evidence in such tableaux where Voltaire considers the material progress of the nation. It is clear that to him progress often means a greater degree of comfort enjoyed by the nation, which he illustrates through carefully chosen examples, such as the means of transport to the front (P 699). The social historian is also concerned with the progress achieved in the art of warfare

(P 698, 699, 827), and with the creation of a powerful fleet by Louis XIV (P 705, 725). Such comments are, of course, often lost in the mass of military details, but they do testify to Voltaire's practice of seeking out the social and economic causes of events. The exclusion of endless details about manœuvres which the historian found in Larrey or Limiers, the omission of endless clauses of treaties in favour of a consideration of their causes and repercussions, are just as indicative of the way Voltaire views his task as an historian. Analysis plays as great a part as data in his chronicle of events. Compared to his predecessors' works, the opening section of Le Siècle, though it falls short of our expectations as social history, does go some way towards underlining the major historical revolutions, characterising the spirit of the age and explaining in social, political and economic terms the success and failure of Louis's foreign policy.

But it is in the second part of Le Siècle that Voltaire's concept of social history comes mainly to the fore. When he wrote to Frederick on January 18, [1739]: "Mon grand but, après tout, n'est pas l'histoire politique et militaire, c'est celle des arts, du commerce, de la police, en un mot, de l'esprit humain,"[25] Voltaire clearly had in mind the chapters on Louis's private life, on the arts and sciences and on internal reforms. Here lies the real glorification of French achievements under Louis XIV, which, together with the portrayal of human folly in the chapters devoted to the religious disputes, constitute, according to Gustave Lanson, "les deux idées sous lesquelles se rangent tous les faits du XVIIe siècle."[26] That Voltaire was intent on writing, not the history

of Louis XIV, but that of the French nation, is already evident in chapters I-XXIV, where credit is given to other architects of French success in foreign affairs, such as Condé, Turenne, Villars, Vauban and Torci. When we reach the chapters on Louis's private life, the monarch occupies the stage almost solely, but Voltaire is also interested in the social progress achieved by the nation as a result of Louis's influence, in terms of taste, refinement and culture. In addition to satisfying the curiosity of the reader, countless details characterise 'les mœurs' of the nation; e.g. the manner of dress at court which set the trend for the rest of Europe (P 910), the growing luxury at Versailles (P 910), the general refinement which was the direct result of Louis's leadership (P 957). On the other hand, the 'affaire des poisons' shows that philosophy had not yet entirely overcome superstition and ignorance (P 922 ff.). True, Voltaire is more concerned here with Louis's love affairs, his majesty and grandeur, his character, his bons mots, but that is because the social historian sees the king as the embodiment of the great age, and he is at pains to describe the general climate of refinement. The splendour and magnificence illustrated by the carrousels (P 906) and the spectacles at court (P 908) are indicative of the new role of France as the arbiter of taste in Europe. For the culture prevalent at court filtered through to the whole nation: "La principale gloire de ces amusements, qui perfectionnaient en France le goût, la politesse et les talents, venait de ce qu'ils ne dérobaient rien aux travaux continuels du monarque" (P 908).

Voltaire's patriotic fervour, conveyed by his repeated declarations in his Correspondence that he wanted to erect a

monument to the glory of Louis XIV[27] - what he calls an *édifice*[28] - , as indicated in chapter I, can be observed in these chapters and in those on internal reforms and the arts. It is worth recalling at this point that the original plan revealed to l'abbé Dubos in 1738 (P 605) put far greater emphasis on the artistic achievements of the age. As Brumfitt has stated, the structure which Voltaire first envisaged for *Le Siècle* reinforced the notion of an *édifice* or a lasting monument to the great age: "At the base of the pyramid came the ordinary narrative of political and military events which occupies the first part of the work. In the centre came the description of society - the chapters analysing social, economic, legal, and ecclesiastical affairs. Finally, at the apex, came the artistic achievements of the age..."[29] Twenty chapters or so were to be devoted to general history, one to Louis's private life, two to internal administration, commerce and finance, two to religious affairs and five or six to the arts. Consequently in the original plan, the work was to open out on the artistic supremacy of Louis XIV's age, and this was in keeping with Voltaire's intention of writing the history of the nation, not of the king. As it happens, there was a definite change of direction in the 1751 edition; the notion of a monument to the glory of the age lost ground to an increased desire to wage war on *l'Infâme*. Instead of ending on a high note with the artistic achievements of the seventeenth century, the 1751 edition closed with five chapters on religious disputes in place of the two as first planned. Voltaire's attitude to the preceding age had altered, from being almost entirely favourable, to a more balanced view of an epoch with its darker side. As Bourgeois maintains,[30]

Voltaire now clearly wished to present the other side of the coin and his purpose had changed over the years. But in giving more importance to the fight against sectarianism, he has endangered, to some extent, the overall unity of the work, and as we saw in chapter II, contemporaries like Grimm, Clément, La Beaumelle, l'abbé Guyon, pronounced the form of Le Siècle to be defective.[31] These criticisms were levelled at the plan in 1751, which is less satisfactory than the original one.[32] In the end, it is a great pity that Voltaire changed his mind about the structure of Le Siècle. J.B. Black finds the overall structure of the work unsatisfactory[33] and René Pomeau draws attention to the fact that "l'œuvre avait d'abord été conçue comme une oraison célèbre du grand siècle. Elle convergeait vers le chapitre final des beaux-arts. Mais en Prusse, Voltaire rédige les chapitres des querelles religieuses qui sont 'l'histoire des fous'. Triste fin d'un beau siècle!... Les gens d'Eglise ont donc gâté le plus beau des siècles!"[34] In the same way, it could be argued that the last five chapters have done some damage to the intrinsic unity of Le Siècle, even though the section itself is well-engineered and the transitions within it well-established. With this exception, the work is well-orchestrated, but Voltaire, the philosopher, could not present one side of the coin only, for despite what Grimm said, the man of truth was not given to panegyrics. Once the reader has reached the summit of the pyramid or monument in the chapters on the arts and sciences, he may find it disconcerting to be taken along a downward path in 'l'histoire des fous', without warning. But in terms of Le Siècle's position

within L'Essai sur les mœurs, these last five chapters act as an essential link, and Voltaire had made up his mind in the 1740's to integrate fully the two works.

However, in chapters XXIX-XXXIV, Voltaire's attitude to the previous age remains entirely favourable. He has come to recognise the serious defects of the king and the more unsavoury aspects of his age, but in these chapters he goes out of his way to pay homage to the lasting achievements of the monarch which are recorded for the sake of posterity. Here lies the true value of social history, as Voltaire himself postulates in Le Siècle: "Les détails et les ressorts de la politique tombent dans l'oubli. Les bonnes lois, les instituts, les monuments produits par les sciences et par les arts subsistent à jamais" (P 1022). Similarly in the preface to L'Essai sur l'Histoire Universelle published in 1754, Voltaire sums up his main aim in Le Siècle: "Les lois, les arts, les mœurs, ont été mon principal objet."[35] Most of the credit for the progress achieved is, of course, given to Louis XIV in Le Siècle:

> Il est certain que les magistrats n'eussent pas réformé les lois, que l'ordre n'eût pas été remis dans les finances, la discipline introduite dans les armées, la police générale dans le royaume, qu'on n'eût point eu de flottes, que les arts n'eussent point été encouragés, tout cela de concert, et en même temps, et avec persévérance, et sous différents ministres, s'il ne se fût trouvé un maître qui eût en général toutes ces grandes vues avec une volonté ferme de les remplir (P 977).

In trying to show that an absolute monarch who is inspired by the desire to promote the welfare of his subjects, can achieve a great deal, Voltaire is inclined to minimise the role of Louis's

ministers, except for Colbert (e.g. P 983). On the whole, it is Louis XIV who is celebrated in the chapter on internal reforms (chapter XXIX), and the tone is more eulogistic here than anywhere else, with the exception perhaps of the chapters of anecdotes. The commercial innovations ascribed to Colbert, but mainly to Louis XIV (P 965), the material progress achieved in terms of comfort, luxury and taste (P 964 ff.), the abolition of duels which constituted in Voltaire's view a major revolution in 'les mœurs' (P 972), the founding of academies (P 971), the creation of a strong fleet (P 975-76), of a police force (P 968), the military reforms engineered by Louis XIV (P 973), the embellishment of Paris (P 968), the legal reforms (P 972), all meet with Voltaire's total approval. Moreover, Louis's measures are shown to have had far-reaching consequences for 'les mœurs' of the nation: "Les mœurs s'adoucirent sans faire tort au courage" (P 980). Louis's example led to a general refinement: "L'extrême facilité introduite dans le commerce du monde, l'affabilité, la simplicité, la culture de l'esprit ont fait de Paris une ville qui, pour la douceur de la vie, l'emporte probablement de beaucoup sur Rome et sur Athènes dans le temps de leur splendeur" (P 981-82). Needless to say, to Voltaire the bourgeois, progress becomes synonymous with greater luxury and material comfort for the middle-class (P 981), with "plus d'aisance dans l'intérieur des maisons" (P 981), rather than the "faste extérieur" of the aristocracy, and with greater equality between the middle-class and the nobility and greater status for the former (P 981). Finally, progress for the 'homme de goût' signifies the development of taste; Louis XIV is highly praised because "il voulut réformer son

royaume, embellir sa cour, et perfectionner les arts" (P 963).

Progress in the arts becomes consequently the main yardstick by which the social historian measures the merits of epochs. Voltaire's theory of the four golden ages in history, those of Philip and Alexander, of Caesar and Augustus, of the Medicis and of Louis XIV, is based on the notion of artistic and literary achieverents: "Mais quiconque pense, et, ce qui est encore plus rare, quiconque a du goût, ne compte que quatre siècles dans l'histoire du monde. Ces quatre âges heureux sont ceux où les arts ont été perfectionnés, et qui, servant d'époque à la grandeur de l'esprit humain, sont l'exemple de la postérité" (P 616). The chapters on the arts and sciences (XXXI-XXXIV) are therefore vital to Voltaire's design of glorifying an entire society for the excellence of its culture, as N.R. Johnson has indicated.[36] But for all their literary excellence, these chapters as social history are, on the whole, disappointing; they merely consist of sketchy and personal observations on the great artists and thinkers who lived during the reign of Louis XIV. J.H. Brumfitt is fully justified in his claim that "the idea of introducing artistic and cultural achievements into the narrative of history was excellent. But its successful accomplishment demanded greater insight and broader sympathies than Voltaire himself possessed."[37] Wade too expresses his dissatisfaction with these chapters: "Indeed, the chapters on the sciences and the arts are the weakest in the book. For one who had promised to make them the center of his history, the result would seem to be a glorious failure."[38] Nor were these chapters singled out for special praise by Voltaire's contemporaries; the second volume of the 1751 edition aroused

little enthusiasm and Grimm declared it to be "fait à la hâte et sans soin et /ce/ n'est qu'une ébauche très légère du génie de ce siècle."[39] Pierre Clément justifiably decried the fact that the chapters were lacking in substance and documentation.[40] It is not that Voltaire is guilty of partiality towards those writers whom he does not like, such as J.-B. Rousseau, as Fréron alleges; in effect, the author of Le Siècle makes a genuine effort to do justice to Rousseau's literary achievements (P 1014), but because Voltaire sets himself the task of covering so many artists and scientists in such restricted space, inevitably his comments fall short of our expectations and are lacking in depth. Yet we have shown in chapter IV that from a purely stylistic point of view, Voltaire's mode of expression, so polished and aesthetically satisfying, is at its best in these chapters where he is very much on his own ground. He succeeds in making the presentation match the subject-matter, as he opts for an eloquent, elegant and metaphorical style worthy of the great classical writers whom he reviews.

But Voltaire's main deficiency as a social historian in these chapters and elsewhere, is his lack of historical relativism and his inability to appreciate anything that preceded the classical era. His view of history has been rightly adjudged by Brumfitt to be similar to the position he adopts in the physical sciences, for it is essentially a static one, and his conception of human nature is, to all intents and purposes, Newtonian.[41] In order to achieve satisfactorily his aims as a social historian and to draw attention to changes in 'les mœurs',

a more open-minded attitude was an important prerequisite. Yet Voltaire lacks any sympathy whatsoever for pre-classical eras. His theory of social, economic and political revolutions in history excludes the notion of evolution. Nor does he make any effort to see the artistic achievements of classicism in the context of what previous generations had accomplished; instead he has nothing but contempt for the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The latter he describes as an age of barbarism; e.g. the opposition of the Church to the theatre in the seventeenth century, he deems to be an inheritance from the dark ages: "C'était en France un reste de l'ancienne barbarie de s'opposer à l'établissement des arts" (P 893). Thus Voltaire fails to appreciate how much the seventeenth century owed to the development of taste in the Renaissance, and the works of classical writers are unequivocally hailed as the first masterpieces of their kind; e.g. Vaugelas's "traduction de Quinte-Curce, qui parut en 1646, fut le premier bon livre écrit purement..." (P 1003); the Lettres Provinciales are hailed as "le premier livre de génie qu'on vit en prose" (P 1004); Fontenelle's Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes was "le premier exemple" of "l'art délicat de répandre des grâces jusque sur la philosophie" (P 1008), and Corneille's merit lies in the fact that "il n'était environné que de très mauvais modèles quand il commença à donner des tragédies" (P 1010). Voltaire's classical ideals against which he measures literary productions of past generations, leave little room for impartiality, a fact duly noted by La Beaumelle, as we saw in chapter II, and more recently by Raymond Naves who comments: "Il ne faut donc pas s'attendre à une relativité du jugement; toute la critique

voltairienne est orientée vers un idéal."[42] The relativistic attitude which Voltaire was willing to recommend in the Lettres Philosophiques with regard to each nation's literature and taste, does not extend to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. And in Le Siècle, taste is not looked upon as the result of an evolutionary process; it has only one era: "Ainsi donc le génie n'a qu'un siècle, après quoi il faut qu'il dégénère" (P 1017). When in his letters Voltaire confesses that he finds consolation in the age of Louis XIV for the artistic sterility of his own - e.g. "Nous sommes dans l'automne du bon goust, et au temps de la chutte des feuilles... Je me console avec le siècle de Louis 14 de touttes les sottises du siècle présent"[43] - , he appears to be suffering from an interesting inferiority complex like many other eighteenth century writers, as N.R. Johnson has argued.[44] But this lack of objectivity towards anything that does not match up to his classical principles, already apparent in letters 18-24 of the Lettres Philosophiques, considerably weakens his contribution as a social historian, since the artistic achievements of the age of Louis XIV seem to exist in limbo and are not considered in the broader perspective of the historical evolution of taste.

This lack of relativism is regrettably also true of Voltaire's approach to Louis's reforms and social and military innovations. In order to enhance the merit of the monarch and his glorious age, Voltaire has no hesitation in minimising the achievements of Louis's predecessors and past developments. He is openly disparaging towards pre-seventeenth century France:

> La saine philosophie n'a été connue que dans ce temps, et il est vrai de dire qu'à commencer depuis les dernières années du cardinal de Richelieu jusqu'à celles qui ont suivi la mort de Louis XIV, il s'est fait dans nos arts, dans nos esprits, dans nos mœurs, comme dans notre gouvernement, une révolution générale qui doit servir de marque éternelle à la véritable gloire de notre patrie (P 617).

This contemptuous attitude recurs frequently in Le siècle (e.g. P 618, 619, 631); chaos reigned before Louis XIV, and duels, for instance, were symptomatic of the 'barbarie' that prevailed previously (P 633). Moreover, Voltaire deliberately exaggerates the importance of the creation of a strong fleet by Louis XIV and unfairly gives the impression that none existed before: "C'était une chose véritablement admirable de voir les ports de mer, auparavant déserts, ruinés, maintenant entourés d'ouvrages qui faisaient leur ornement et leur défense, couverts de navires et de matelots..." (P 705). His statement about the French navy under previous monarchs - that it was "anéantie depuis des siècles" (P 632) - amounts to a gross oversimplification of the facts. He purposely paints a totally unfair and one-sided picture of France under Richelieu: "Les grands chemins n'étaient ni réparés, ni gardés; les brigands les infestaient; les rues de Paris, étroites, mal pavées, et couvertes d'immondices dégoûtantes, étaient remplies de voleurs" (P 633), this in order to highlight Louis's reforms as described later in chapter XXIX. To emphasise Colbert's contribution to the French economy, Voltaire ignores previous developments in commerce and industry, and he proclaims: "Les Français lui doivent certainement leur industrie et leur commerce..." (P 983). The charge that Voltaire was to

some extent blinded by the glitter of the great age, by his classical parti-pris, that he was writing too soon after the Sun King had departed from the scene - a point forcefully made by Grimm[45] - is accordingly a valid one, even if we can admire, with N.R. Johnson,[46] his profound patriotism. The absence of a broader perspective and of an evolutionary view of history remains a major weakness in what purports to be a tableau des mœurs, for one would have wanted to know what the age of Louis XIV inherited from the previous ones. As it is, one has to be content with Voltaire's theory of a sudden revolution in the arts instead of a developing view of French society and its culture.

The concept of social history might not have been as novel as Voltaire claimed, but there is much to admire in the way he moves the spotlight from mere chronicles of events to a history of human progress, from the ruler to the nation. Voltaire might in the end have uncovered little that was relatively new on the nation's spirit and its 'mœurs', but compared to the histories of his predecessors, his work shows remarkable insight and a willingness to explore the social and economic causes of events. Indeed, even in the last five chapters, Voltaire takes great pains to define the causes of religious disputes; at the start of chapter XXXVI, he attributes religious wars to "[le] combat naturel de l'esprit républicain, qui anima les premières Eglises, contre l'autorité, qui hait la résistance en tout genre" (P 1041). He attempts to explain why Protestantism had serious repercussions, whilst Jansenism resulted in a "guerre de plume" (P 1041); he focuses attention on the political aspects of the Régale and sees the cause of the quarrel in the divided loyalties of the clergy

and its allegiance to a foreign power, i.e. Rome (P 1037). Voltaire also discusses at length the limited wealth and revenues of the Catholic church in France (P 1030). Above all, he sticks to his task of characterising the spirit of the nation; the 'esprit querelleur' of the French is brought home by the Jansenist dispute, in the course of which "on a disputé sur tout ce qu'on connaît et sur tout ce qu'on ne connaît pas" (P 1064), by the Quietist dispute which illustrates French theologians' unwillingness to recognise their limitations (P 1088). The dispute around the Chinese rites, finally, "caractérisa plus qu'aucune autre cet esprit actif, contentieux et querelleur qui règne dans nos climats" (P 1101). Voltaire may not have achieved his aims to everyone's satisfaction, and his readers are often disappointed - e.g. in the chapters on the arts and sciences - , but he does his utmost to glorify French civilisation and artistic achievements, and he selects what he deems, rightly or wrongly, to have been the accomplishments most worthy of the attention of posterity. His vision of the age lacks relativism and is static; he confuses the history of civilisation with literary history; he states that he has no wish to write the history of Louis XIV, yet the monarch clearly dominates the book. For all that, Le Siècle, as social history, marks a tangible advance on humanist history, and J.H. Brumfitt sums up Voltaire's merit as a social historian remarkably well: "As an historian of different aspects of society, Voltaire, in the Siècle, appears to have both his triumphs and his failures. But if instead of criticizing his work in the light of our own ideals, we compare it with that of

some of his predecessors, its originality is more strikingly revealed."[47]

(2) Philosophic history

It has been shown in chapter III that Voltaire's originality in Le Siècle lies primarily in his highly individualistic selection of material from the sources, in his presentation and in the personal interpretation he puts on the facts sifted and collected. He did not bring to light a vast amount of new information but succeeded in making the facts at once more accessible and more meaningful to his readers. In this respect, the philosophic spirit has left its mark on the history of Louis XIV's reign, for as E.H. Carr has rightly observed, history amounts to a dialogue between the present and the past: "My first answer therefore to the question 'what is history?' is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past."[48] It is accordingly important to sum up here Voltaire's philosophic intentions in Le Siècle and to define the interpretation or interpretations of events which the philosopher offers his readers. The main facts might have been well-known and were present in most general histories of the reign, but Voltaire's philosophical explanations of those events are mostly his own. Whilst Le Siècle provides entertainment in the thrilling narratives of the first section, as indicated in chapter IV, and in the witty and sparkling anecdotes where Voltaire's talent as raconteur is so much in evidence, it is also endowed with certain philosophical qualities and becomes instructive. Voltaire himself declared

that history should make man think; to Elie Bertrand he wrote on July 7, [1756], concerning L'Essai of which Le Siècle formed an integral part: "Je n'ay point songé dans cet ouvrage à avoir de l'esprit mais à donner à ceux qui en ont de fréquentes occasions de réfléchir. Ce seront les lecteurs sages qui feront mon livre..."[49] And to Charles Duclos, he offered encouragement in April 1745, stressing that the historian had to be a philosopher as well as a chronicler of events: "Courage, il n'appartient qu'aux philosophes d'écrire l'histoire."[50] Philosophic history will be taken in three different, though related, senses for our purpose here: firstly the attempt to understand and explain events, to seek out the causes of historical phenomena, revolutions and trends in history, both by means of various theories of causation and in terms of Enlightenment beliefs, as well as its rigid, unchanging and static conception of human nature. J.H. Brumfitt has provided an excellent definition of what 'philosophic' history meant to Voltaire: "'Philosophic' history... is not merely liberal or anti-clerical propaganda, but is an attempt to understand and interpret human societies and customs in terms of Enlightenment beliefs about the nature of man and the universe."[51] This involves looking at Voltaire's philosophy of history which was hardly developed in Charles XII and will be seen to be still muddled in Le Siècle. Secondly, one must bear in mind that to Voltaire history becomes, like other genres, a means of propaganda, a way of enlightening others, of attacking his particular bugbears and of spreading further those humanitarian principles dear to his heart, in brief of working for the philosophic cause. Voltaire's commitment in Le Siècle to the crusade against

sectarianism, religious dogmatism, fanaticism and social injustices cannot be denied. Thirdly, Voltaire views history as a record of man's follies and achievements from which moral lessons can be drawn for the benefit of his own contemporaries and future generations. In this way, history becomes didactic, though not overtly so, for it teaches by examples.

(a) Philosophy of history

Throughout Le Siècle, albeit to a lesser degree than in L'Essai sur les mœurs, history provides food for thought for the philosopher who cannot be content merely to compile data as his predecessors, Larrey and Limiers, had done. Voltaire's alert and ever active intelligence endeavours to see a pattern emerging from historical events, as he sets out to interpret and explain these in a number of ways. His theories of causation have been discussed at length by critics, namely Brumfitt,[52] Wade[53] and Günter Pflug.[54] All three come to the conclusion that those theories are confused and ill-defined and have not been clearly thought out by Voltaire. Brumfitt remarks in this connexion: "From the point of view of a coherent theory of causation and development, however, the Siècle is the least satisfactory of Voltaire's works. If he is seeking a theory of his own, he has not yet found it."[55] It will suffice here to summarise the conflicting theories which Voltaire resorts to in Le Siècle and which are manifestly unsatisfactory and haphazard. The philosopher is torn, in the main, between the role of the great man in history and the part played by fate or accident. That he attributes much of the credit for the literary, artistic, social and political achievements of the age to Louis XIV has already been

discussed and is self-evident. Thus the French nation, we are told, was "formée, en quelque sorte, par Louis XIV" (P 983), and Louis "fit plus de bien à sa nation que vingt de ses prédécesseurs ensemble" (P 978). The 'great man theory' is based on the notion that an absolute monarch, a legislator, statesman or great general, with the necessary will-power and qualities, can change the course of history (P 705). This is borne out in Le Siècle, not just by the essential role played by Louis XIV, but also by Voltaire's references to the genius of Condé, Turenne and Marlborough, and to the foresight of Colbert. Human responsibility in history is constantly emphasised in chapters I-XXIV; the outcome of battles depends as much on the knowledge and military prowess of generals as on other factors; e.g. in Voltaire's account of the battles of Rocroi (P 638) and Seneffe (P 732). Man's genius and weaknesses have a decisive influence, and this does not apply merely to military events; the failure of James II in Ireland and William's ascendancy are put down to the intrinsic differences in their character: "Les caractères de Guillaume et de Jacques firent tout. Ceux qui aiment à voir dans la conduite des hommes les causes des événements remarqueront que le roi Guillaume, après sa victoire, fit publier un pardon général, et que le roi Jacques, vaincu, en passant par une petite ville, nommée Galloway, fit pendre quelques citoyens..." (P 768). The weakness of England in 1665 is explained partly by the prodigality and extravagance of Charles II (P 695), whilst her military power under Queen Anne is largely attributed to Marlborough's military genius. The temperament of statesmen is shown to be a vital factor in history: "Ce n'est point une pénétration supérieure qui fait les hommes

d'Etat, c'est leur caractère," declares Voltaire (P 685). The share of human responsibility goes beyond the character of individuals; national traits also determine the fate of nations. Of the Turks, Voltaire has this to say: "Il est certain que des vainqueurs tels que les Turcs, avec de l'expérience, du courage, des richesses, et cette constance dans le travail qui faisait alors leur caractère, devaient conquérir l'Italie et prendre Rome en bien peu de temps..." (P 708). As we saw, the character of the Irish is a determining factor in their failure to cast off the English yoke (P 766), and the weakness of the Dutch in the 1670's is explained by their proneness to factions (P 718).

It is in his discussion of human responsibility in history that Voltaire's fixed conception of human nature is most discernible. As J.B. Black has noted, Voltaire and the Enlightenment judged the past by the present and applied their values to all people of all ages.[56] This is never more so than in the application of a static and Newtonian conception of man to past actions. In L'Essai, the historian was to conclude that human nature was fundamentally the same everywhere and in all ages: "Il résulte de ce tableau que tout ce qui tient intimement à la nature humaine se ressemble d'un bout de l'univers à l'autre..."[57] In chapter III, we have commented on the fact that Voltaire often puts forward his own personal explanations of events based on an unchanging and subjective view of human nature; thus he interprets the nomination of Potier as prime minister in his own fashion (P 642), by trying to guess what the motives of Queen Anne of Austria might have been. He is indebted to Torci for the details about Charles II's obsessive desire to open the vaults of his

dead wife and parents (P 802), but Voltaire attempts to explain the king's extraordinary conduct in the name of logic and according to his own appreciation of the man's character. These predetermined notions about human nature frequently lead to an unfair assessment of the situation, as Voltaire ascribes unworthy motives to Mazarin, Louvois and others.[58] His observations on Turenne's conversion betray his prejudices (P 735), as indicated, but stem at the same time from his unwillingness to make allowances for anything that deviates from what he considers to be normal human behaviour.

This unchanging conception of human nature also accounts partly for Voltaire's cyclic view of history, for it repeats itself not merely by accident, but because man in all ages being essentially the same, similar actions and follies will recur with remarkable frequency, especially as man does not learn from his past mistakes. This notion is central to L'Essai, but also permeates Le Siècle; Voltaire draws attention to parallels in history. The totally unjustified attack on Holland by her enemies in 1670 recalls the League under Louis XIII (P 710-711); the futility of war is driven home by the propagandist who underlines the disastrous consequences which, throughout the ages, have far outweighed the benefits: "Cette guerre était semblable à toutes celles qui se font depuis tant de siècles entre les princes chrétiens, dans lesquelles des millions d'hommes sont sacrifiés et des provinces ravagées pour obtenir enfin quelques petites villes frontières dont la possession vaut rarement ce qu'a coûté la conquête" (P 631).

However, the share of human responsibility and the role of the great man do not provide all the answers. Voltaire further confuses the issues by his frequent references to fate in order to explain events which he is unable to understand fully and interpret rationally. This determinism, which is neither consistent nor convincing, appears to be a pis-aller whenever logical explanations fail him, and it limits the role of generals, statesmen and monarchs alike. By insisting on the vicissitudes of life, Voltaire is in a position, as we saw in chapter IV, to capitalise on potentially dramatic incidents; history becomes accordingly more thrilling and the able narrator exploits fully the element of surprise. But as a theory of causation, the role of chance and the notion of petites causes are not entirely satisfactory; history is reduced to the level of the contes, for accident plays as much a part in Le Siècle as in Zadig.[59] Man is seen to be the plaything of fate, and however accomplished generals might be, other external factors come into play. Of the battle of Hochstedt, Voltaire writes: "Après la première charge, on vit encore un effet de ce que peut la fortune dans les combats. L'armée ennemie et la française, saisies d'une terreur panique, prirent la fuite toutes deux en même temps, et le maréchal de Villars se vit presque seul quelques minutes sur le champ de bataille..." (P 826). In chapter IV, we have already discussed Voltaire's handling of the stroke of luck that saved the army of the Maréchal de Luxembourg: "La fortune, qui avait sauvé la Haye, sauva son armée..." (P 724). Human genius and man's determination only count for so much, for revolutions in history often depend on unforeseen circumstances: "Il y a des temps où cent mille

hommes en campagne peuvent à peine prendre deux villes; il y en a d'autres où une bataille entre sept ou huit mille hommes peut renverser un trône ou l'affermir" (P 660). The same action at two moments in time can have vastly different results depending on the particular circumstances and on chance; thus, claims Voltaire, both Charles I and Louis XIV gave in to public opinion and abandoned their prime ministers, but Charles was executed and Louis XIV won the support of the nation at the end of the Fronde (P 665), so unpredictable is life. This vague concept of fate, similar to the Greek idea of fatum, replaces in Voltaire's histories the role which Bossuet had reserved for providence in L'Histoire Universelle, and is a particularly useful theory to fall back on. There are, however, clear indications of a growing determinism in Le Siècle; the moving tableau of the fate of the Stuarts, discussed in chapter IV, illustrates Voltaire's ability to endow history with pathos, but heralds also the pessimistic tone of Candide: "Si quelque chose justifie ceux qui croient une fatalité à laquelle rien ne peut se soustraire, c'est cette suite continuelle de malheurs qui a persécuté la maison de Stuart pendant plus de trois cents années" (P 770).

The unpredictability of history is further illustrated in Le Siècle by Voltaire's reliance on the petites causes theory, i.e. that important events often result from trivial causes. This theory of causation has been adequately discussed by Brumfitt[60] and Wade.[61] The disparity between causes and effects is brought home in Le Siècle in such anecdotes as that of the messenger sent to Condé, who goes to Augerville instead of Angerville (P 657), a mistake which prdongs the war and has serious repercussions.

The successful attack on Denain and Marchiennes is ascribed to a piece of good fortune:

> Ceux qui savent qu'un curé, et un conseiller de Douai, nommé Le Fèvre d'Orval, se promenant ensemble vers ces quartiers, imaginèrent les premiers qu'on pouvait aisément attaquer Denain et Marchiennes, serviront mieux à prouver par quels secrets et faibles ressorts les grandes affaires de ce monde sont souvent dirigées (P 877).

The best known example of the petites causes theory is, of course, the quarrel of Queen Anne and Lady Churchill (P 877), which changed the fortunes of France, and to which Voltaire attaches far too much importance, as we have argued. His passion for this theory frequently leads, as in this case, to a misrepresentation of the facts and a distortion of the truth.

All in all, Voltaire's theories of causation do not appear to have been carefully worked out in Le Siècle. He responds spontaneously to each case in hand, and what he cannot account for rationally and logically, he ascribes to external forces beyond man's control. Whilst he never achieves the success of Montesquieu in De l'esprit des lois, and whilst it is fair to say that his theories are not as fully fledged as they will become in L'Essai, he does at least show some awareness of the complexities involved in interpreting history for the benefit of his readers, and more than his predecessors, he strives to combine data and analysis. Brailsford has paid tribute to Voltaire's effort to make the past more meaningful: "His chief contribution... was that he brought to history the modern conception of causation."[62] And Wade notes that Voltaire was not "lacking in notions concerning the fundamental aspects of history, such as the purpose and

nature of history, causation, determinism, progress, and decline."[63] What is lacking in Le Siècle is a more consistent philosophy of history, greater insight and depth. But then, Voltaire was always opposed to system-building as such, and most historians would agree that it is in the nature of history that it cannot be fully explained by means of one theory alone, and that, indeed, historical events cannot always be explained rationally. A more serious flaw in Voltaire's method of interpreting the past has been noticed by Pflug; it is that Voltaire set out to see how events arose out of the spirit of the times and instead, he could only derive the general spirit of the age from events.[64]

(b) Propagandist history

In an interesting article entitled 'History and propaganda in Voltaire',[65] J.H. Brumfitt has examined the various ways in which history served as a source of propaganda for the cause of the Enlightenment. In keeping with Bolingbroke's precept, "History is philosophy teaching by examples," Voltaire selects examples from the past to spread the beliefs of the Enlightenment.[66] Yet, Brumfitt argues, despite his propagandist aims in his histories, Voltaire genuinely seeks to be as impartial as possible, although there is a marked conflict between the propagandist element and the need for objectivity: "Yet, especially in his major works, he is constantly restrained not only by the need for caution forced on him by an intolerant society, but by a high ideal of objectivity and impartiality and by a genuine concern for the truth for its own sake."[67] It is important to determine

here the extent to which Le Siècle can be called an 'histoire engagée', in Brumfitt's words. As one would expect, Voltaire played down, as much as he possibly could, the propagandist elements in his work; he was at pains to convince the reading public at large and, more especially, the French authorities, that he was guided in all things by respect for the truth. In his Correspondence, he repeatedly asserts that love of his fatherland inspired him to write Le Siècle; to Frederick he declared: "Ma voix et ma plume ont été consacrées à ma patrie, comme elles le sont à vos ordres."[68] After the first edition, Voltaire tried to rally support from such influential men as Hénault and Malesherbes, in the hope that the French authorities might turn a blind eye to the publication of Le Siècle in France; hence his insistence on the fact that the changes brought to his text in the second edition were "dictés par l'amour de la vérité et de la patrie."[69] Nor did Voltaire see any contradiction between this professed patriotism and respect for the truth. Yet the conflict was inevitable, for the philosopher or the man of truth had a duty to underline the weaknesses as well as the glorious achievements of Louis XIV's age. All along, too, Voltaire went to great lengths to stress that any historian should be impartial; to d'Argenson on January 8, 1740, he described Le Siècle as the "ouvrage d'un bon citoyen et d'un homme très modéré."[70] And to Michel Lambert on June 25, 1751, he declared that in the work "l'auteur disparait absolument pour ne laisser voir qu'un siècle illustre dans tous les genres..."[71] For all that, Voltaire was fully aware that in the name of the truth, as an historian, he

was, as a matter of course, called upon to judge the contributions of kings, generals, the practices of the Church and the behaviour of sects: "Je me suis constitué de mon autorité privée juge des rois, des généraux, des parlements, de l'église, des sectes qui la partagent."[72] But in assessing man's past conduct, Voltaire makes it clear that the historian should strike the right balance between flattery and satire; in the Défense de Louis XIV, he remarks: "On sait assez que l'histoire ne doit être ni un panégyrique, ni une satire, ni un ouvrage de parti, ni un sermon" (P 1293).

When looking at Le Siècle as propagandist history, one should take Voltaire's pronouncements with a pinch of salt, for it is obvious that he was not likely to publicise his polemical intentions, in view of the hostile reactions of the authorities to whatever flowed from his pen; as the suppression of the Recueil de pièces fugitives had taught him, the authorities were not inclined to look kindly on Le Siècle. As with other genres, history served the philosophic cause in an indirect rather than an overt manner, and one has to be conscious of Voltaire's hidden motives in the work. We must first turn to the question of whether one of Voltaire's main aims was to use the age of Louis XIV as a basis for an attack on that of Louis XV; this has frequently been seen as the central idea behind Le Siècle when it was first conceived by Voltaire. E. Bourgeois has argued that the comparison of the two ages was uppermost in Voltaire's mind in the 1730's.[73] Wade sees Le Siècle as a counterpart of the Lettres Philosophiques: "He /Voltaire/ was also deep in the final

composition of the Lettres Philosophiques, and it is very plausible that he was conceiving of his new interest as a counterpart of those letters."[74] Gustave Lanson likewise draws attention to the lesson addressed to Louis XV in Le Siècle: "Une leçon au gouvernement de Louis XV devait sortir de l'histoire de Louis XIV."[75] And N.R. Johnson echoed some of these statements in asserting that "the desire to encourage Louis XV to imitate his predecessor is not absent from the Siècle."[76] There is little doubt that Voltaire hit upon the idea of composing Le Siècle in England at a time when he was preparing the Lettres Philosophiques, and a comparison between the two works is to some extent justified. Yet we have indicated in chapter I that the parallel between the two ages in the Correspondence is expressed mainly in terms of the splendid literary achievements of Louis XIV's age as opposed to the sterility of Voltaire's own.[77] At the outset at least, Voltaire was mainly concerned with paying tribute to the golden era of classicism to which he belonged by his taste and background. Later his polemical intentions and the campaign for greater liberalism and reforms gathered more momentum, especially in the 1750's. But rather than see Voltaire's aim as being to attack the government of Louis XV, one should perhaps conclude that he is content to proffer advice, and in an indirect manner at that.

For in Le Siècle, Voltaire does not portray the previous age as an ideal to be aimed at in all respects. Critics tend to agree that this is not the case with England in the Lettres Philosophiques; Raymond Naves remarks: "Bref, si les Lettres

Philosophiques passent avec raison pour une satire des mœurs et des institutions françaises, il ne faut pas croire que l'Angleterre, dont le portrait souvent favorable alimente cette satire, soit présentée comme l'Eldorado de Candide."[78] This is even less so as regards the age of Louis XIV, for as we have frequently argued in the previous chapters, Voltaire ended up having serious reservations about Louis XIV himself, and his decision to devote five chapters to religious disputes is indicative of a more balanced view of the age. Voltaire's attitude to Louis XIV has been examined at great length by N.R. Johnson[79] who makes the point that one of Voltaire's prime objectives was to rehabilitate the image of the Sun King; his enthusiasm for the seventeenth century cannot be denied, asserts Johnson:

> It has been claimed that Voltaire conceived his eulogy of the age of Louis XIV as a satire of the shortcomings of his successor, and particularly of the treatment of men of letters. The sincerity of Voltaire's enthusiasm for the age of Louis XIV cannot be doubted, however, and his praise for it cannot be ascribed to self-interest or spite. He firmly believed that the critics of Louis XIV were misguided, and that only a 'modern' history of the period, impartial and carefully documented, could establish the truth.[80]

Voltaire's eulogistic treatment of Louis XIV as the patron of the arts, his approval of the king's internal reforms have already been discussed.[81] He tries to minimise Louis's responsibility in matters which discredited the monarch's reign; he blames the king's advisers, notably Louvois (P 1053-1054) for the persecution of the Protestants rather than the king himself, and whilst he

condemns Louis's excessive lavishness and magnificence at one point (P 978), he is quick to point out that it created employment for the nation (P 994). Weighing the pros and cons, Voltaire concludes: "Enfin la postérité, qui juge les rois, et dont ils doivent avoir toujours le jugement devant les yeux, avouera, en pesant les vertus et les faiblesses de ce monarque, que, quoiqu'il eût été trop loué pendant sa vie, il mérita de l'être à jamais..." (P 979). This kind of over-enthusiastic response earned Voltaire a rebuke from Grimm who accused him of not adopting a philosophical attitude to Louis XIV.

Yet the judgement quoted implies that Voltaire could see the other side of the coin.[82] He condemns Louis's actions on several occasions in Le Siècle; thus he deplores the king's treatment of Lauzun and Mademoiselle (P 916), his harshness towards Fouquet (P 899), his casual attitude to the dragonnade (P 1053), the fact that Louis saw himself to be above the law (P 696). His role in the religious disputes was far from commendable; Voltaire blames him for not intervening in the Jansenist quarrel (P 1081), and he took Quietism too seriously (P 1095), whilst he acted unfairly towards Fénelon (P 1095). Furthermore, his extravagant wars left the French economy in tatters and resulted in unnecessary bloodshed (P 730, 733), and the propagandist pays special attention to the destruction of the Palatinate (P 773), of Bodegrave and Svammerdam (P 724). Consequently, all is not as rosy about Louis's reign as one would expect if Voltaire wanted to present him as a model for Louis XV to strive after. As Peter Gay maintains, Voltaire's praise is balanced by serious criticisms:

> The Siècle de Louis XIV is generally considered a panegyric to a despot, uncritical, adulatory, courtier-like. But Voltaire is no more indulgent to Louis XIV than is, say, Lord Acton; his praise is often hedged by serious reservations. Moreover, Voltaire's admiration of Louis XIV should be read as a political preference for the king over his opponents, a reasoned and reasonable judgement that with all its dangers a strong monarchy is preferable to a strong nobility.[83]

Contemporaries, like the royalist Hénault, had been particularly sensitive to Voltaire's ironic attitude to Louis XIV in some passages of Le Siècle,[84] and we can conclude from this that to some eighteenth century readers, the portrayal of the Sun King appeared far from totally eulogistic and one-sided. Grimm, on the other hand, had taken Voltaire to task for being blinded by the glitter of the king's reputation. The truth lies between Hénault's and Grimm's positions, and although Voltaire, as we saw in chapter III, took little or no account of the official publicity campaign to promote the king's image, although he deliberately excluded on occasion what would have tarnished the king's reputation, Louis XIV is not presented as a moral exemplum or as the philosopher on the throne. Rather, this ideal is embodied in the portrayal of Yontching in chapter XXXIX (P 1107); Louis's weaknesses, already apparent in the rest of Le Siècle, are emphasised even more when put alongside the qualities of the Chinese emperors, Cam-Hi and Yontching; e.g. their respect for the laws and their devotion to their subjects (P 1107), their attempts to encourage agriculture (P 1107), so sadly neglected by Louis XIV, their respect of human life, their modesty and humility (P 1107), their tolerance (P 1105). It therefore becomes

evident that Louis XIV fell short of Voltaire's ideal.

Taken in conjunction with the greater emphasis on 'l'histoire des fous' in chapters XXXV-XXXIX, this balanced assessment of Louis XIV would seem to indicate that if Voltaire genuinely wished Louis XV to follow the example of his predecessor as a protector of the arts, he did not paint a utopian picture of the seventeenth century. True, he did lament the artistic desert that existed in his day, but he was more than willing to advocate the superiority of the eighteenth century in philosophy (P 1063). In the Défense de Louis XIV, he was to declare: "J'envisage encore le siècle de Louis XIV comme celui du génie, le siècle présent comme celui qui raisonne sur le génie" (P 1294). All in all, if Voltaire's original intention was to raise a monument to the artistic achievements of the previous age, this is still the case in the final product. But his initial one-sided view of the age makes way for a more objective assessment. To see his main polemical aim as being to attack the society of his own day would be an oversimplification of the facts. His purpose in this respect is not to launch a polemical onslaught against the government of Louis XV, but to encourage the monarch to offer greater protection to artists; his object is perhaps best summed up by Besterman: "There is no doubt that he wanted to stimulate rather than to criticise, even by indirection."[85] That his intention was misunderstood by the French authorities which were so sensitive to any criticisms directed at Louis XV should not detract from this view. The hostile reaction to the Recueil de pièces fugitives in 1739, which induced Voltaire not to return to Le Siècle when he was 'historiographe du roi', his apprehensions

about finishing the work in France and his eventual acceptance of the fact that it would not be published with the blessing of the French authorities in his country,[86] indicate that he was well aware of the dangers of being misjudged. But he remained at heart a sincere patriot and was deeply hurt by the stance of the authorities. He might have been bitter about the treatment of artists under Louis XV and turned with nostalgia to the protectionist attitude of Louis XIV towards writers, but his aim was less to attack than to imply that there was room for improvement, to suggest that Louis XV had much to learn from his predecessor. As he himself puts it: "Les louanges que je donne à Louis XIV avec toute l'Europe, ne deviendront la satire de Louis XV que si Louis XV ne l'imite point."[87] But Voltaire remained on the whole faithful to his principle of not turning history into satire; he left it to his readers to draw the necessary conclusions about the failings of their society and the shortcomings of the government of the day.

In other respects, Voltaire's commitment to the philosophic cause is beyond question. It has been demonstrated in chapter III that the propagandist selects facts and anecdotes which serve the cause of the Enlightenment and which are in keeping with his polemical aims, whether these be to underline the futility and injustices of war or to illustrate religious fanaticism, ignorance or superstition and the trivial disputes to which sectarianism gave rise. The material is manipulated according to the case in hand, and Voltaire's parti-pris against representatives of the Church, such as Mazarin, Louvois and Le Tellier, shows through. He purposely omits what would weaken his case on several occasions

and ignores written evidence which contradicts his polemical arguments. Voltaire's persistent innuendoes against revealed religion and religious dogmatism, his use of irony and satire as polemical weapons in chapters XXXV-XXXIX, the tendentious interpretation he puts on the facts extracted from his sources used for these chapters, d'Avrigny, Benoist and others, as well as his attempts to integrate the material fully within his preconceived thesis of waging war against sectarianism, have been studied at length in chapter IV. It has been seen that there is a clear shift of emphasis from the generally factual approach in chapters I-XXIV to the far more satirical tone of the last five chapters. Voltaire frequently transforms what is in the source a dispassionate and factual account into a polemical onslaught by ascribing the wrong motives to clerics, by omitting vital details, by oversimplifying the issues and by using reductionism to ridicule the 'guerres de plumes'. His commitment is equal to that displayed in other works like the Dictionnaire philosophique, although he makes a greater effort to show moderation in places. History played particularly well into the hands of the propagandist, since Voltaire could argue that it provided well-authenticated examples of blind fanaticism, of the intransigence of the Church and of atrocities perpetrated in the name of religion. In this respect, chapter XXXIX which may seem slightly out of place in a history of Louis XIV's reign becomes vital, for there is a marked progression in the examples of man's folly, as the whole section gravitates towards this supreme example of Christian intolerance and dogmatism (P 1101). It has also been observed that Voltaire's targets extend beyond the disputes themselves, in so far as he

casts doubt on the ideals of sainthood in the parallel between Mme Guyon and Sainte Thérèse (P 1089), and uses the emergence of Quietism to show that sects are often founded on frauds, charlatanism and false miracles (P 1091). Religious mysticism (P 1092), prophecies (P 1089) and miracles (P 1089) are attacked by implication.

Yet despite the firm stance which Voltaire takes against intolerance and fanaticism in these chapters, despite the slanted view of events which he presents, he is capable of achieving a highly commendable degree of objectivity when it comes to giving the essential facts. Whilst his commitment to the cause of the Enlightenment cannot be questioned, for he goes out of his way to uphold the humanitarian and liberal views of the philosophes, he endeavours to be as unprejudiced as he can bring himself to be. As we saw in chapter II, his readers' responses to the degree of objectivity he achieves, varied a great deal; in his day, he was both praised for his impartiality and criticised for his bias. La Condamine applauded his objectivity,[88] as did Lord Chesterfield, although the latter's claim that "Voltaire was free from religious, philosophical, political and natural prejudices,"[89] appears to be more than a little naïve. Clément praised Voltaire's impartiality in volume I of the 1751 edition, but deplored the historian's bias in volume II, especially in his pronouncements on literary artists. In the Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique, Formey expressed his admiration for Voltaire's objective handling of Calvinism, whilst the historian was accused of Catholic bigotry by English Protestants. Moreover, the author of Le Siècle, as indicated in chapter II,

was condemned by defenders of the faith, like l'abbé Guyon and Nonnotte, for his treatment of religion, and official publications, such as the Mercure de France and the Journal de Trévoux, adopted a noticeably cool attitude towards Le Siècle for the same reason.

Modern critics have been as divided on this issue as were Voltaire's contemporaries. J.H. Brumfitt adjudges the last five chapters of Le Siècle to be "amongst the best examples of Voltaire's historical writing,"[90] and concludes that the historian "is determined to appear as unprejudiced as possible, and these chapters show a far greater concern for impartial and measured comment than do his judgements on many other subjects."[91] H.N. Brailsford takes a similar view: "Violent partisan as he was, he made a creditable effort to be fair, even to the enemy, even to Rome, when he sat down to write history."[92] In his 'Notes pour servir à l'étude des chapitres 35-39 du Siècle de Louis XIV de Voltaire', Lanson comes to the same conclusion.[93] Others have been less inclined to do justice to Voltaire's relative impartiality in his histories; J.B. Black remarks: "The judgements expressed are sometimes so full of personal bias as to be virtually grotesque."[94] Sister Thomas Aquinas O'Connor similarly decries Voltaire's prejudices which "did not permit him to present with any degree of consistent objectivity the results of his investigations."[95] It has already been argued that Voltaire shows a deplorable lack of historical relativism and objectivity when it is a question of evaluating the achievements of pre-seventeenth century France. It has been shown, at the same time, that he endeavours to establish the truth even in points of detail, and

mainly succeeds as far as the main facts are concerned. His polemical intentions certainly dictate the choice and presentation of the material. But even in chapters XXXV-XXXIX, he displays far more moderation than one might have expected, e.g. in his handling of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He lays the blame as much at the door of the Catholic Church as of the Protestants whose insurrections in the Cévennes he squarely attacks and ridicules: "Son école de prophétie [i.e. Jurieu's] s'était établie dans les montagnes du Dauphiné, du Vivarais et des Cévennes, pays tout propre aux prédictions, peuplé d'ignorants et de cervelles chaudes, échauffées par la chaleur du climat et plus encore par leurs prédicants" (P 1057). Nor does Voltaire take sides between the Jesuits and Jansenists, although he is inclined to condemn both in the name of reason and common sense. He takes an objective view of Louis XIV and his age, as has been stated, and however patriotic he might be, his cosmopolitan attitude is illustrated by his endeavours to stress the achievements of other nations; e.g. the English in philosophy and science (P 1024). In spite of his total commitment to the Enlightenment views on war, he can still appreciate the genius of great generals like Condé, Turenne and Marlborough, and he openly expresses his admiration for Louis XIV's foreign policies and military prowess at times, whilst he appreciates the progress achieved in the art of warfare. Moreover, even Rome fares much better than one might think, for Voltaire can still admire the diplomacy and political astuteness of popes, whilst deprecating their worldly ambition (P 628). And he was prepared to argue strongly that the Church of France did not possess the wealth generally attributed

to her: "Il est incontestable que l'Eglise de France est de toutes les Eglises catholiques celle qui a le moins accumulé de richesses" (P 1030). He is also willing to give credit where credit is due; the decision of the 'Assemblée du clergé' to extend the Régale to the whole kingdom meets with Voltaire's total approval: "L'assemblée du clergé prit un parti qui montre que des hommes sages peuvent céder avec dignité à leur souverain sans l'intervention d'un autre pouvoir" (P 1037).

Overall, therefore, Voltaire seems fully aware of his responsibilities as an historian, and tries, perhaps more than in his handling of other genres, to achieve a reasonably high degree of objectivity. For all that, his history does not cease to be propagandist; as he puts the achievements of the previous age in perspective, he cannot fail to notice how much progress in philosophic terms has been made since. The fact that the great age was marred by ignorance and trivial disputes gives him an opportunity to put in a plea for the vital contribution made by philosophers to society, and to preach the cause of the Enlightenment:

> Cette raison, si lente à s'introduire chez les doctes, pouvait à peine encore percer chez les docteurs, encore moins dans le commun des citoyens. Il faut d'abord qu'elle soit établie dans les principales têtes; elle descend aux autres de proche en proche, et gouverne enfin le peuple même qui ne la connaît pas, mais qui, voyant que ses supérieurs sont modérés, apprend aussi à l'être. C'est un des grands ouvrages du temps, et ce temps n'était pas encore venu (P 1063).

By implication, the time had come in Voltaire's day, for if the classicist in him wished to celebrate the golden era of literature,

the philosopher committed to the philosophic crusade, had to give first place to his own epoch in philosophy. History leads to open propaganda for the philosophic côterie, as Voltaire draws attention to the essential role played by the thinking elite in society: "Si on a dit que les peuples seraient heureux quand ils auraient des philosophes pour rois, il est très vrai de dire que les rois en sont plus heureux quand il y a beaucoup de leurs sujets philosophes" (P 1001). In the main, Voltaire remained in the writing of history, as in all else, in René Pomeau's words, "/un/ homme de passion; il n'écrit pas en savant, mais en apôtre... c'est la passion encore, la même passion, qui fait vibrer sa plume."[96]

(c) Moral history

More briefly, there is a third sense in which Voltaire can be said to have written philosophic history in Le Siècle, that is in so far as he uses history as a record of man's achievements and follies from which some lessons can be drawn for posterity's sake. Taking historical facts as his starting-point, the moralist presents to his readers and to future generations a number of examples to be imitated or shunned. For above all else, Voltaire remained throughout his literary career a great moralist,[97] and history was particularly useful to him in fostering a more humane, enlightened and reasonable attitude. In his Pensées, Remarques et Observations, Voltaire stressed the practical benefits to be derived from a study of history: "Tous les faits principaux de l'histoire doivent être appliqués à la morale et à l'étude du monde, sans cela la lecture est inutile."[98] In an attempt to better

man's lot and to improve present conditions by contemplating man's past errors and accomplishments, Voltaire appears both pragmatic and optimistic. To Hervey he imparted that his aim in Le Siècle was to "élever à sa gloire [Louis XIV's] un monument que je consacre à l'utilité du genre humain" (P 611); and if it should so happen that his generation were reluctant to benefit directly from a history of the previous age, Voltaire, seemingly, found some consolation in the thought that in the long run, a record of man's follies would enable future generations to avoid the same mistakes.

The notion that "l'histoire... n'est guère qu'un tableau des misères humaines"[99] did not, as is generally believed, emerge from Voltaire's preparation of L'Histoire générale in the 1740's, although it gained greater strength as a result of his research for what became L'Essai sur les mœurs. We have already seen in chapter I that as early as 1735, Voltaire was concerned with 'la sottise humaine' in the age of Louis XIV.[100] From a consideration of concrete examples of man's folly, the moralist at the outset intended to draw practical conclusions. Yet there was never any doubt in Voltaire's mind that if history ought to be didactic, it should be indirectly; in the article 'Histoire', he remarks: "Quelle serait l'histoire utile? Celle qui nous apprendrait nos devoirs et nos droits, sans paraître prétendre à nous les enseigner."[101] Such lessons as are drawn from history, moreover, are addressed equally to princes, rulers and to a wider reading public, since the fate of nations rests in the first place with statesmen; in the article 'Histoire', Voltaire asserts: "Les exemples font un grand effet sur l'esprit d'un prince qui

lit avec attention."[102] In Charles XII, Voltaire had already tried to educate princes, by insisting on the disastrous consequences of war and the superiority of the legislator over the conqueror.[103] In its overt moral purpose, Charles XII belonged clearly to the humanist tradition. Le Siècle, though less directly didactic, still betrays the same desire to use history as a source of moral lessons. Voltaire might wish to avoid overt moralizing, but he still writes about anecdotes: "Les faiblesses qu'on met au grand jour ne plaisent qu'à la malignité, à moins que ces mêmes faiblesses n'instruisent ou par les malheurs qui les ont suivies, ou par les vertus qui les ont réparées" (P 890). And of the examples given by such legislators as Louis XIV, he says: "La postérité leur doit une éternelle reconnaissance des exemples qu'ils ont donnés, lors même qu'ils sont surpassés" (P 963). From Louis's endeavours to improve the lot of his subjects, Voltaire is quick to draw a moral lesson: "Il me semble qu'on ne peut guère voir tous ces travaux et tous ces efforts sans quelque reconnaissance, et sans être animé de l'amour du bien public qui les inspira" (P 978).

When Voltaire wrote in the article 'Histoire': "Les grandes fautes passées servent beaucoup en tout genre; on ne saurait trop remettre devant les yeux les crimes et les malheurs,"[104] he was thinking above all of the 'tableau des vices' in L'Essai, but in its own way, Le Siècle shows the same preoccupation with 'la bêtise humaine', especially in chapters XXXV-XXXIX, as discussed above. What the moralist goes on to say in the article about man's follies in the past, applies as much to the last five chapters of Le Siècle as to the whole of L'Essai: "Il est

nécessaire de remettre souvent sous les yeux les usurpations des papes, les scandaleuses discordes de leurs schismes, la démence des disputes de controverse, les persécutions, les guerres enfantées par cette démence, et les horreurs qu'elles ont produites."[105] From the dispute around the Régale is drawn a moral lesson that the Church, as a powerful institution within the State, endangers the stability and tranquillity of the nation (P 1032), and that divided allegiance to the monarch and to Rome inevitably leads to strife and internal disruptions (P 1037). The persecution of the Huguenots becomes in Voltaire's hands a concrete example of fanaticism, intolerance and the futility of such atrocities: "Toute persécution fait des prosélytes quand elle frappe pendant la chaleur de l'enthousiasme" (P 1057). The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the dragonnade are decried in the name of humanity, as the moralist offers a plea for tolerance (P 1063), and the pragmatist emphasises the disastrous effect on the French economy of the Huguenots' exile from France: "Ainsi la France perdit environ cinq cent mille habitants, une quantité prodigieuse d'espèces, et surtout des arts dont ses ennemis s'enrichirent" (P 1055). The social historian might be concerned with the differences between Calvinism and Jansenism, as shown above, but the moralist seizes on the Jansenist dispute to illustrate man's cantankerous nature and to underline the fact that this trivial quarrel could have grave consequences, if renewed: "On n'entendrait plus parler de ces querelles qui déshonorent la raison, et font tort à la religion, s'il ne se trouvait de temps en temps quelques esprits remuants qui cherchent, dans ces cendres éteintes, quelques restes de feu dont ils

essayent de faire un incendie... Les hommes ne manquent pas de prétextes pour se nuire quand ils n'en ont plus de cause" (P 1087). The utility of history resides in the chance it offers to the moralist to suggest what should be the right attitude to such disputes; Louis XIV was partly to blame for the Jansenist controversy because he did not take a firm enough stance against it:

> Au lieu d'imiter Rome, qui avait plusieurs fois imposé silence aux deux partis; au lieu de réprimer un religieux et de conduire le cardinal; au lieu de défendre ces combats comme les duels, et de réduire tous les prêtres, comme tous les seigneurs, à être utiles sans être dangereux; au lieu d'accabler enfin les deux partis sous le poids de la puissance suprême, soutenue par la raison et par tous les magistrats, Louis XIV crut bien faire de solliciter lui-même à Rome une déclaration de guerre, et de faire venir la fameuse constitution 'Unigenitus', qui remplit le reste de sa vie d'amertume (P 1080-1081).

In the case of the Quietist dispute, Voltaire clearly feels that contempt would have been the best policy; where Louis went wrong was in taking it too seriously (P 1095). As for the attitude monarchs should adopt towards all sects and the Church, it is exemplified by the answer given by the Chinese prince to the Jesuits: "Si vous avez su tromper mon père, n'espérez pas me tromper de même" (P 1109).

Thus it is that Voltaire aims to instruct the human race through a tableau of vices and follies. That he was still preoccupied in Le Siècle with the role of the philosopher on the throne also becomes evident. In his letter to Schulenbourg concerning Charles XII, he proceeds to define his ideal prince;

it is not Charles XII himself, for the Swedish monarch preferred war to peace and did not promote the arts in his kingdom, and he was a conqueror, not a legislator (P 299). Peter the Great came close to being a philosopher, but he was cruel. And Voltaire goes on to say:

> Je préfère infiniment à l'un et à l'autre un prince qui regarde l'humanité comme la première des vertus, qui ne se prépare à la guerre que par nécessité, qui aime la paix parce qu'il aime les hommes, qui encourage tous les arts, et qui les connaît tous, en un mot un philosophe sur le trône; voilà mon héros, Monsieur (P 299).

This ideal of the philosopher on the throne has been discussed in some detail by Merle Perkins in 'Voltaire's concept of international order'.[106] Miss Perkins argues that between 1736 and 1740 Voltaire looked upon Frederick as his model prince, one who should work for humanity, respect the laws and foster the arts; that after his disillusionment with Frederick's conduct and especially his invasion of Silesia in the 1740's, Voltaire adopted a more pragmatic attitude and became reconciled to the fact that in the complex world of politics, such an ideal could not exist, for it was necessary for a prince or monarch to be a great diplomat as well as a great legislator. According to Miss Perkins, there is no allusion to the theme of the philosopher on the throne in the 1750's until Voltaire took it up again in Pierre le Grand.

However, this study ignores the role of the philosopher-king in Le Siècle and in L'Essai. There are indications that when Voltaire began writing the former work, he still had high hopes of finding his ideal prince in Louis XIV, that he genuinely wished to offer a lesson in the art of kingship to Frederick and

other princes. In his letter to Schulenbourg, he wrote: "Si l'on peut rendre l'histoire utile, c'est, ce me semble, en faisant remarquer le bien et le mal que les rois ont fait aux hommes" (P 299). Whilst this statement applies strictly to Charles XII, it is no less relevant to Le Siècle. In the end, as we saw, Voltaire's portrayal of Louis XIV changed over the years; if the monarch came close to the ideal as a patron of the arts, he failed in other respects. However, there is still much to learn from Louis's flaws: his unjust wars, his lack of respect for the laws, for human life, his extravagance. Future princes are invited to ponder these and avoid the same mistakes. Moreover, the moralist presents other examples of social virtues in monarchs and legislators to be imitated; Christina of Sweden, for all her cruelty, "avait cultivé tous les arts dans un climat où ils étaient alors inconnus" (P 677-678); "elle avait attiré en Suède tous ceux qui pouvaient l'éclairer" (P 677). Jean-Casimir of Poland, like Christina, renounced the throne to live as a philosopher, an action which wins Voltaire's admiration (P 706), and Leopold is portrayed as a model of kingship, since he encouraged artists (P 791), and "pendant tout son règne, il ne s'est occupé que du soin de procurer à sa nation de la tranquillité, des richesses, des connaissances et des plaisirs" (P 791). It is therefore not surprising that his reward was the loyalty and love of his people: "Aussi a-t-il goûté le bonheur d'être aimé" (P 791). Similarly in L'Essai, Voltaire sought examples of monarchs who protected the arts; e.g. St. Louis and Alfonsus X,[107] Alfred the Great,[108] and Henry IV.[109] One of the greatest merits of Peter

the Great was that he brought his nation out of the chaos and ignorance that prevailed beforehand: "Il y a grande apparence," Voltaire declares in the Anecdotes sur le czar Pierre le Grand, "que toutes les nations sont demeurées grossières pendant des milliers de siècles, jusqu'à ce qu'il soit venu des hommes tels que le czar Pierre, précisément dans le temps qu'il fallait qu'ils vinssent" (P 323). On the other hand, in Le Siècle, as in Charles XII and L'Essai, Voltaire warns princes against vices and excesses; James II's fanaticism (P 760), his lack of consideration for human life (P 768), Charles II's extravagance which ruined his country (P 720), Christina's cruelty (P 677), and of course Louis's more deplorable actions are unworthy of a self-respecting monarch.

Accordingly, Voltaire draws up a catalogue of virtues to be imitated and of vices to be eschewed for the benefit of Louis XV, Frederick and future monarchs. In this sense, history becomes a means for the moralist to proffer advice, and he sets about reforming the human race by drawing moral lessons. To d'Argental on July 16, 1756, he reiterated his intention to capitalise on well-authenticated examples of man's glorious achievements and reprehensible conduct: "Je ne veux que des vérités utiles."[110] The moralist thus transforms history into a study of man, and his motto remains throughout: 'Homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto,' as enunciated in the Nouvelles considérations sur l'histoire (P 48). Voltaire's pedagogical method does not differ radically from the biblical tradition of learning from the errors of one's forefathers; in this respect, he is as much of a moralist as humanist historians and as

Fénelon in Les Aventures de Télémaque. For if in the main he steers clear of overt moralizing, he is not reluctant, where the need arises, to intervene and pass judgement. He openly condemns William's usurpation of his father-in-law's throne (P 786); he draws a moral lesson from the Duc de Savoie's actions: "Si le duc de Savoie consulta peu les lois des nations et celles de la nature, c'est une question de morale, laquelle se mêle peu de la conduite des souverains" (P 820). Mme de Maintenon's disillusionment with power, as revealed in her letter to Mme de La Maisonfort, is likewise noted by the moralist who remarks: "Si quelque chose pouvait détromper de l'ambition, ce serait assurément cette lettre" (P 940). In the same way that he had adopted a moral stance on the injustices of war in Charles XII, Voltaire has no hesitation in intervening to make his point forcefully in Le Siècle: "Le peuple vainqueur ne profite jamais des dépouilles du vaincu; il paye tout; il souffre dans la prospérité des armes comme dans l'adversité..." (P 680). When all this is said, Voltaire tries hard to let the reader draw his own moral conclusions from the facts of history. His faith in its practical application remained undiminished throughout his career; his optimism can be observed in his belief that man will in the end come to terms with his past errors and amend his ways. In Le Siècle, therefore, Voltaire wishes to write moral and liberal history, as Brailsford has pointed out: "So from the raw material of history did Voltaire shape the liberal tradition, a humane, a positive, a cosmopolitan attitude."[111] To the moralist, history becomes, like anything else, a basis for action, a way of teaching man to know both himself and the world he lives in, and a means of improving

the present by studying the past.

(3) Aesthetic aims

In addition to wanting to write as accurate and as authentic a history as possible and to interpreting the past and instructing, Voltaire aimed to make history more accessible and captivating for his reading public. "Jetter quelque intérest dans notre histoire sèche et barbare"[112] became his watchword when composing Le Siècle. Voltaire's efforts to make his work as aesthetically pleasing as possible have been studied closely in chapter IV. It has been shown that his originality as a historian resides to a large extent in his highly individualistic mode of presentation, in the conformity between the form and the content, in his desire to arrive at a reliable, yet interesting, portrayal of events. We have examined the rigid limits imposed on individual tableaux, the greater control exercised over the material and its presentation, Voltaire's attempts to add to the dramatic impact, the resemblance between history and drama, the journalistic quest for extraordinary and picturesque details with a view to embellishing the récit, the evocative and imaginative quality of Voltaire's prose, as well as his mastery of narrative techniques and his obvious talent as conteur and raconteur. He succeeds in involving the reader, in finding the right tone in each case, in achieving the degree of elegance demanded by the subject-matter, especially in the chapters on the arts. Voltaire's success in Le Siècle is due, in no small measure, to his ability to combine aesthetic qualities with historical accuracy. For if his history, in terms of documentation, has a solid scientific basis, the end-product clearly bears the mark of the literary artist, and it is

partly this literary excellence which sets his work above those of his predecessors. In his introduction to the English edition of Le Siècle, Brumfitt rightly asserts: "It is above all in The History of Charles XII and The Age of Louis XIV that he took pains to ensure that the literary excellence of the work should equal its historical merit."[113] Voltaire's admiration for the literary merits of humanist history is well-known; he had the greatest respect for Saint-Réal's Conjuration des Espagnols contre la république de Venise of 1674 because of its exciting narrative and its stylistic excellence, and in spite of its factual inaccuracies.[114] With its emphasis on thrilling narrative and its literary qualities, Charles XII bears a strong resemblance to Saint-Réal's work. And although, as has been demonstrated in chapter IV, Le Siècle marks a definite step forward towards a more mature approach to history, there are indications that the literary artist had no wish to break completely from the humanist tradition which viewed history as a branch of letters, for Voltaire achieves a fine balance between the informative nature of history and its imaginative appeal.

Indeed one of the reasons for the popularity and success of history in the eighteenth century is precisely that it remained a branch of literature and required no specialised knowledge from the reader. Form and vigilance in composition, as J.B. Black has observed,[115] mattered just as much as historical competence and authenticity. That Voltaire paid a great deal of attention to the classical form and symmetry of his work and to the mode of expression, will have become clear in chapter IV. He was at all times conscious that a history purporting to be a monument

raised to the glory of the classical age, should embody some of the finest qualities of the literature of that glorious epoch: elegance, decorum, nobility, and eloquence. Yet, despite modern critics' favourable response to Voltaire's style and manner of presentation in Le Siècle and elsewhere, we have seen that some of his contemporaries reacted less than favourably to this aspect of the work. Voltaire, the wit, the talented raconteur, did not impress Grimm who criticised his light-hearted manner in Le Siècle and the 'négligences du style'. Nor did Fréron and Nonnotte take kindly to Voltaire's anecdotal presentation. English readers did not appreciate Voltaire's wit and style until the end of the century. If some, like Clément, applauded the brilliance of his presentation, many deemed his approach to be unworthy of the dignity expected in history. Voltaire no doubt took history further along the road to popularisation and literary excellence than some of his contemporaries would have wished, but this was because he had no patience with mere compilations of data by scholars who did little to keep their readers interested and who only succeeded, to his way of thinking, in conveying "la vérité ennuyeusement" (P 282). Thus he took exception to Daniel's history because "sa diction n'est pas toujours pure,... son style est très faible,... il n'intéresse pas..." (P 1154).

This Voltaire tried to avoid in Le Siècle. History appealed to him as suitable material which the man of letters could exploit for the benefit of non-specialist readers and a wider public. Raymond Naves sums up well the literary artist's view of history: "Voltaire a conçu l'histoire beaucoup plus comme une œuvre

littéraire destinée à intéresser ses contemporains que comme une recherche du passé intégral..."[116] Whilst giving a body of essential facts, Voltaire set about selecting the most compelling and potentially dramatic incidents on which to focus attention. The raconteur might at times be deemed to have indulged in potins for their own sake, but Voltaire did his utmost to add spice to the narrative. The conteur in him and the master story-teller never allow the reader's interest to sag. Surprisingly, though, Voltaire himself tried to play down the literary merits of his work; to Michel Lambert he wrote on June 25, 1752: "Ce n'est point là dieu mercy un ouvrage de bel esprit..."[117] And in the Supplément, he stresses the fact that in a historical work, wit should never be allowed to dislodge the truth: "Pour l'historien qui ne veut peindre que de fantaisie, qui ne veut que montrer de l'esprit, il n'est pas digne du nom d'historien. Un fait vrai vaut mieux que cent antithèses" (P 1257). But Voltaire appears to be on the defensive here, because he was acutely aware of some of the criticisms levelled at his light-hearted approach in Le Siècle, and his publicity campaign at the time was geared to convincing the public at large of his competence as a historian and of the solid historical basis he had given to his work. He never ceased to regard history as a work of art and the historian as an entertainer as well as a man of truth. Despite the charge that the plan of Le Siècle is to some extent defective, and that some sections are less satisfactory than others, Le Siècle has survived and is still widely read because of its literary merits. Theodore Besterman's assessment might be somewhat over-enthusiastic, but it contains more than a grain of truth: "The Siècle is a

remarkable combination of insight, humanity and style: in its grasp and graceful presentation of a complex historical subject it has never been surpassed."[118]

From what precedes one may conclude that Voltaire viewed history at one and the same time as a science, a philosophy and a branch of letters. His documentation is certainly most commendable in as much as he endeavoured to read as many existing sources as possible; he carried out an impressive journalistic investigation by interviewing the greatest possible number of eyewitnesses. If his method would not be considered to be altogether scholarly or academic nowadays, for he generally ignores archives and documents, he fails to give precise references to his sources with any consistency, he does not quite succeed in substituting scientific criteria for unscientific ones in the assessment of the material he collects and he frequently adopts a cavalier attitude to what he transcribes, Le Siècle still marks an appreciable step forward towards 'scientific' history. Voltaire succeeded in giving both a comprehensive and accurate survey of the main events of Louis XIV's reign, and he did his utmost to clarify certain controversial points which had puzzled historians before him. He showed a praiseworthy respect for the truth, in so far, for instance, as he compared and confronted the testimonies of witnesses, accepting only what they agreed on, in order to arrive at a reliable account of the main events. If some sections of Le Siècle, especially the chapters on the arts, are lacking in substance, the work has as solid a foundation as one would have wished for. Thus Le Siècle can be said to have moved nearer to modern 'scientific' history than the works of humanist historians

with their factual inaccuracies and their overriding concern for stylistic merit.

Moreover, Voltaire was aware that history should be philosophic, that the historian and his facts could not, and indeed should not, exist independently of each other, that it was not enough to record facts, but that, within the limits of his capabilities, the historian had to interpret the past for his readers. His theories of causation might be lacking in consistency and appear confused, and he borrowed the two theories generally accepted in his day. But he could at least claim some credit for showing a certain awareness of the complexities involved in explaining historical phenomena. Furthermore, he remained totally committed to the philosophic cause, as history became a means of spreading the beliefs of the Enlightenment with all the passion that Voltaire was capable of. His sincere wish to write liberal history cannot be doubted and is to be admired. The moralist was clearly intent on improving man himself and the conditions in which he lived through a contemplation of the past. Voltaire never ceased to believe in the utility of history and in the practical benefits to be derived from a study of past events. So that history emerges in Le Siècle as a study of man and a basis for moral and social progress.

Finally, history remained for Voltaire a branch of the arts, as it had been within the humanist tradition. Form and expression mattered as much to him as historical documentation. History, in his handling of it, is endowed with the necessary stylistic and literary qualities to keep the reader interested. Through his mastery of narrative techniques, his control over form, the degree

of conformity between the presentation and the subject-matter, Voltaire transforms what is frequently a long-winded and dry account of events in his sources into a lively and captivating, whilst accurate, récit. His history, as a result, ends up being both informative and imaginative, and Voltaire's individualistic mode of presentation accounts as much for the lasting quality of Le Siècle as his documentation.

N.R. Johnson has remarked on the fact that in Voltaire's day there were three broad types of histories:[119] erudite compilations of facts, histories with literary pretensions and histories used for ideological purposes. Voltaire repeatedly expressed his dissatisfaction with the first kind, but this should not lead us to believe that he paid no attention to accuracy in details. He admired the literary excellence of humanist histories, and clearly wished to make history serve the philosophic cause. Consequently, although Le Siècle does not belong exclusively to any of the three categories defined above, it incorporates some aspects of all three, as we have tried to show in this study. I.O. Wade sums up Voltaire's conception of history as an art, a science and a philosophy particularly well:

> For the historian Voltaire, history is an art, a science, and a philosophy. As an art, it resembles drama in structure: that is, it has an introduction, a development to a climax, and a denouement. It is like drama in tone also: that is, it is full of tension and produces a dramatic effect. As a science, it resembles the natural sciences, in that one can penetrate the phenomena only by observation, a judicious selection of the material, and a right method of analysis. As a philosophy, it is capable of passing from structure to form to meaning...[120]

Voltaire cannot be adjudged to have uncovered much that was relatively new about the reign of Louis XIV, except perhaps through oral documentation. Compared to his predecessors, his originality lies in the way he fuses the better features of these three branches of knowledge into history, by making it easily accessible to his readers, more enthralling and aesthetically satisfying, by giving his work a sound historical basis, and by endowing it with the necessary intellectual and philosophic quality to make his readers think, by shifting the focus from what happened to why things happened, ultimately by instructing whilst pleasing. Some of these features indicate that Voltaire had not entirely broken free of traditionalist history; others mark a tangible advance towards modern history. In effect, Voltaire stood half-way between the two; yet it is precisely because of these combined features that Le Siècle is a unique historical and literary achievement by its nature and for its time, and remains the best-known and most widely read of Voltaire's histories.

Chapter V: Notes

1. Voltaire's Politics, Princeton, 1959, p.110.
2. e.g. see Gay, op.cit., pp.76, 88, 109-114, 166-167, 220, 255, 329; René Pomeau, La Religion de Voltaire, pp.57, 61, 75, 76, 96, 172, 177; Raymond Naves, Le Goût de Voltaire, pp.307-311.
3. D 4784.
4. D 4771.
5. The Age of Louis XIV, Twayne publishers, Inc., 1963, p.29.
6. Voltaire, p.151.
7. see Bourgeois' introduction, p.xli: "Mais il /Le Siècle/ est, en outre, une véritable histoire, digne de ce nom, par l'exactitude, la critique et l'abondance des renseignements, la méthode et la composition."
8. Voltaire, p.113.
9. op.cit., p.36.
10. Ibid., p.38.
11. D 899.
12. D 906. See also D 905, Voltaire to Caumont.
13. D 1630.
14. D 1993. See also D 1793, Voltaire to Frederick.
15. The Intellectual Development of Voltaire, p.479.
16. p.310.
17. see also the Préface historique et critique to Pierre le Grand, P 345; D 4966, Voltaire to the Duc de Belleisle; D 4295, Voltaire to the Margravine of Bayreuth.
18. see also P 722, P 1021-22.
19. op.cit., p.195.

20. op.cit., p.34.

21. op.cit., p.66.

22. Voltaire Historian, p.47.

23. Correspondance Littéraire, vol. II, p.359.

24. see chapter II.

25. D 1793.

26. Voltaire, p.116.

27. see e.g. D 4771, Voltaire to Malesherbes.

28. see e.g. D 906, Voltaire to d'Olivet.

29. Voltaire Historian, p.48.

30. Introduction to Le Siècle, p.xxxi.

31. see chapter II.

32. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.49.

33. The Art of history, p.69.

34. La Religion de Voltaire, p.280.

35. M, XXIV, p.46.

36. op.cit., p.326.

37. Voltaire Historian, p.57.

38. The Intellectual Development of Voltaire, p.482.

39. Correspondance Littéraire, vol. II, p.254.

40. see chapter II.

41. Voltaire Historian, p.103.

42. Le Goût de Voltaire, p.311.

43. D 915, Voltaire to Cideville.

44. op.cit., p.323.

45. see chapter II.

46. op.cit., p.325.

47. Voltaire Historian, p.59.

48. What is history?, p.30.

49. D 6924.

50. D 3102.

51. Voltaire Historian, p.16.

52. Ibid., pp.105-109.

53. The Intellectual Development of Voltaire, pp.443-509.

54. 'The Development of historical method in the 18th century', op.cit., pp.1-23.

55. Voltaire Historian, p.106.

56. The Art of history, p.3.

57. L'Essai, vol. II, p.810.

58. see chapter III.

59. see Wade, op.cit., p.496.

60. op.cit., p.107.

61. op.cit., p.496.

62. Voltaire, p.47.

63. op.cit., p.490.

64. op.cit., p.12.

65. Studies, vol. XXIV, 1963, pp.271-287.

66. Ibid., p.271.

67. Ibid., p.287.

68. D 5085.

69. D 4771, Voltaire to Malesherbes. See also D 4787.

70. D 2135.

71. D 4494.

72. D 4561, Voltaire to Richelieu, August 1751.

73. op.cit., p.v.

74. op.cit., p.479.

75. Voltaire, p.115.

76. Louis XIV and the age of the Enlightenment, op.cit., pp.320-321.

77. see D 863.

78. Introduction to Classiques Garnier edition, p.iii.

79. op.cit., p.309.

80. Ibid., p.314.

81. see above and Johnson, op.cit., pp.321, 332.

82. see Bourgeois, op.cit., p.xxxi.

83. Voltaire's Politics, p.110.

84. see chapter II.

85. Voltaire, p.321.

86. see chapters I and II.

87. D 549.

88. D 4869.

89. D 4876.

90. Voltaire Historian, p.57.

91. Ibid., p.58.

92. Voltaire, p.48.

93. op.cit., p.193.

94. The Art of history, p.67.

95. op.cit., p.197.

96. La Religion de Voltaire, p.384.

97. On this question, see Brailsford, op.cit., p.64.

98. M, XXXI, p.119.

99. D 5385, Voltaire to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, July 3, [1753].

100. see D 887.

101. M, XIX, p.354.

102. Ibid., p.357.

103. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.15.

104. M, XIX, p.357.

105. M, XIX, pp.357-358.

106. Studies, vol. XXXVI, 1965.

107. L'Essai, vol. I, p.645.

108. Ibid., vol. I, p.392.

109. Ibid., vol. II, p.545.

110. D 6935.

111. Voltaire, p.74.

112. D 2148.

113. op.cit., p.30.

114. see Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p.30; Johnson, op.cit., p.317; Wade, op.cit., p.475.

115. op.cit., p.16.

116. Le Goût de Voltaire, p.308.

117. D 4494.

118. Voltaire, p.319.

119. op.cit., p.317.

120. op.cit., p.491.

Bibliography

In this bibliography, I have restricted myself to books or articles which have been quoted and referred to in this thesis, or were of direct relevance to this study. (BV) indicates a reference to Voltaire's copy in his private library at Leningrad. (Bibliothèque de Voltaire, Catalogue des livres, Moscow, 1961.)

(A) Voltaire's Works

Voltaire, Oeuvres Historiques, ed. R. Pomeau. 1957.

———, Le Siècle de Louis XIV, ed. E. Bourgeois. Paris, 1906.

———, Le Siècle de Louis XIV, publié par M. de Francheville. Berlin, Henning, 1751. 2 vols. in-12.

———, Le Siècle de Louis XIV, publié par M. de Francheville. Dresden, Walther, 1753. 2 vols. in-8.

———, Le Siècle de Louis XIV. Nouvelle édition augmentée d'un très grand nombre de remarques par M. de La B. Francfort, Veuve Knoch et Eslinger, 1753. 3 vols. in-8.

———, The Age of Louis XIV, ed. J.H. Brumfitt. Twayne. Inc., 1963.

———, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. L. Moland. 52 vols. Paris, 1877-85.

———, Choix de Contes, ed. F.C. Green. Cambridge University Press, 1951.

———, Correspondence, ed. Th. Besterman. In The Complete Works of Voltaire. Geneva, 1968- .

———, Essai sur les mœurs, ed. R. Pomeau. 2 vols. Paris, Garnier, 1963.

———, La Guerre de 1741. London, Jean Nourse, 1756.

———, La Henriade, ed. O.R. Taylor. Geneva, 1970.

———, Lettres d'amour à Mme Denis, ed. Th. Besterman. Paris, 1957.

———, Lettres Philosophiques, ed. R. Naves. Paris, 1964.

———, Lettres Philosophiques, ed. F.A. Taylor. Oxford, 1965.

———, Notebooks, ed. Th. Besterman. 2 vols. Geneva, 1968.

———, Recueil de pièces fugitives. Paris, 1740. [1739]

———, Supplément aux œuvres de Voltaire: Oeuvres inédites: Tome I, Mélanges historiques, ed. F. Caussy. Paris, 1914.

———, Traité de métaphysique, ed. H.T. Patterson. Manchester University Press, 1937.

(B) General Bibliography

Alembert, J. le R. de, Réflexions sur l'histoire. Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire et de philosophie. vol. V. Amsterdam, Chatelain, 1773.

Amato, J., La Grammaire et le lexique de Voltaire. Palermo, Trimarchi, n.d.

Argenson, R.-L.V., marquis de, Mémoires. Paris, 1825.

Argental, R. de, Histoire complète de la vie de Voltaire. Paris, 1878.

Ascoli, G., 'Voltaire: l'art du conteur', Revue des cours et conférences, vol. XXVI, part 2 (1925), pp.619-626.

Auerbach, E., Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in western Literature. Princeton, 1953.

Avaux, J.A., comte de, Négociations en Hollande depuis 1679 jusqu'à 1684. 6 vols. Paris, Mallet, 1752.

———, Ibid. Paris, Durand, 1753. (BV 230)

Avrigny, R. de, Mémoires chronologiques et dogmatiques pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique depuis 1600 jusqu'à 1716, avec des réflexions et des remarques critiques. 4 vols. 1739.

Bachman, A., Censorship in France from 1715 to 1750. New York, 1934.

Bailly, Ch., Traité de stylistique française. Paris, 1951.

Barling, T.J., 'The Literary art of the Lettres Philosophiques', Studies on Voltaire, vol. XLI (1966), pp.7-70.

Bayle, P., Dictionnaire historique et critique. Rotterdam, Bohm, 1740.

————, Pensées diverses sur la comète, ed. A. Prat. 2 vols. Paris, Droz, 1939.

Bellessort, A., Essai sur Voltaire. Paris, Perrin, 1926.

Bengesco, G., Voltaire: Bibliographie de ses œuvres. 4 vols. Paris, 1882-1890.

Benoist, E., Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes. 5 vols. Delft, Beman, 1693.

Berwick, J.F.-J., duke of, Mémoires. 2 vols. The Hague, 1737.

————, Ibid. (BV 2749)

Besterman, Th., 'Some eighteenth century Voltaire editions unknown to Bengesco', Studies on Voltaire, vol. VIII (1959), pp.123-239.

————, 'Some eighteenth century Voltaire editions unknown to Bengesco', Studies on Voltaire, vol. LXIV (1968), pp.7-150.

————, Voltaire. London, 1969.

Bibliothèque des sciences et des arts. vol. I. The Hague, Gosse, 1754-1758.

Bibliothèque Impartiale. vol. V (1752), vol. VII (1753). Leyden, Luzac.

Bibliothèque raisonnée des savants de l'Europe. vol. 48 (1752), vol. 49 (1752), vol. 50 (1753). Amsterdam, Wetstein.

Black, J.B., The Art of history. New York, 1926.

Boisguillebert, P. le P. de, Le Détail de la France. London, Wood, 1707.

————, Ibid. (BV 448)

Boiteux, L.-A., 'Voltaire et le ménage Suard', Studies on Voltaire, vol. I (1955), pp.19-105.

Bolingbroke, H. St. J., Letters on the study and use of history. London, Miller, 1752.

———, Nouveau volume du Siècle de Louis XIV. Siéclopolie, 1753.

Bonno, G., 'Liste chronologique des périodiques de langue française du 18e siècle', Modern Language Quarterly (1944), pp.3-63.

Bossuet, J.-B., Relation sur le quiétisme. Oeuvres Complètes. vols. XXIX, XXX. Versailles, 1817.

Bottiglia, W.F., 'Voltaire's Candide: Analysis of a classic', Studies on Voltaire, vol. VIIA (1964).

Boulainvilliers, H. de, Etat de la France. 3 vols. London, Wood, 1727.

———, Ibid. London, Wood, 1737. (BV 504)

Bourgeois, E., and André, L., Les Sources de l'histoire de France. XVIIe siècle. 8 vols. Paris, Picard, 1913.

Bouvier, E., 'Contribution à l'étude des sources du Siècle de Louis XIV,' Revue d'histoire littéraire, vol. 45 (1938), pp.364-371.

Brailsford, H.N., Voltaire. Oxford, 1935.

Brin, R.F., 'Pierre Rousseau and the philosophes of Bouillon', Studies on Voltaire, vol. XXIX (1964), pp.11-203.

Brumfitt, J.H., 'History and propaganda in Voltaire', Studies on Voltaire, vol. XXIV (1963), pp.271-287.

———, 'Historical pyrrhonism and Enlightenment historiography in France,' Literature and history in the age of ideas, pp.15-28.

———, Voltaire Historian. Oxford, 1958.

Brunetière, F., 'Voltaire: Cirey, Versailles, Berlin,' Revue des deux mondes, vol. LX (1910), pp.606-637.

Bury, R. de, Lettre sur quelques ouvrages de M. de Voltaire. Amsterdam, 1769.

Cabeen, D.C., A Critical bibliography of French Literature. vol. IV. Syracuse University Press, 1951.

Caramaschi, E., 'Du Bos et Voltaire,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. X (1959), pp.113-236.

Carr, E.H., What is history? London, 1964.

Castres, S. de, Les Trois siècles de la littérature française. 4 vols. The Hague, 1781.

Caussy, F., 'Monsieur de Voltaire, gentilhomme ordinaire,' Mercure de France, vol. CVII (1914), pp.133-140.

Charbonnaud, R., Les Idées économiques de Voltaire. New York, 1970.

Choisy, abbé de, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV. Petitot, Mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de la France, IIe série. vol. 63. Paris, 1828.

Choix Littéraire. Geneva, Philipert, 1755.

Clément, P., Nouvelles littéraires de France et d'Angleterre. Paris, 1752, 1753.

———, Les Cinq années littéraires. 2 vols. The Hague, Gosse, 1754.

Collini, C.A., Relation de mon séjour auprès de Voltaire. Geneva, Slatkine reprints, 1970.

Conlon, P.M., 'Two letters of Mme de Graffigny to Maupertuis,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. II (1956), pp.279-283.

———, 'Voltaire's literary career from 1728 to 1750,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. XIV (1961).

Corneille, P., Oeuvres Complètes, ed. R. Lebègue. Paris, Seuil, 1963.

Cornou, F., Elie Fréron (1718-1776). Paris, 1922.

Crane, R.S., 'A Census of British newspapers and periodicals from 1620-1800,' Studies in Philology, vol. XXIV (Jan. 1927), pp.1-205.

Crowley, F.J., 'Corrections and additions to Bengesco's Bibliographie,' Modern Language Notes, vol. L (1935), pp.440-441.

————, 'Voltaire and the printer Walther,' Modern Language Notes, vol. LXX (1955), pp.351-353.

————, 'The Walther edition of Voltaire (1748),' Modern Language Notes, vol. LXIX (1954), pp.331-334.

Dangeau, P. de C., marquis de, Mémoires, ed. Genlis. 3 vols. Paris, Treutell, 1818.

Daniel, G., Histoire de France depuis l'établissement de la monarchie française dans les Gaules. vol. I. Paris, 1756.

Dehergne, J., 'Une table des matières de L'année littéraire de Fréron,' Revue d'histoire littéraire, vol. 65 (1965), pp.269-273.

Desnoiresterres, G., Voltaire à Cirey. Paris, Didier, 1871.

————, Voltaire et Frédéric. Paris, Didier, 1870.

Deville, E., Index du Mercure de France de 1672-1832. Paris, Schemit, 1910.

Diaz, F., Voltaire Storico. Studi e Ricerche, 1958.

Erlanger, P., Louis XIV. New York, n.d.

Escholier, R., 'Le Premier de nos historiens: Voltaire,' Europe, vol. 37 (1959), pp.19-33.

Estrades, G., comte de, Lettres, mémoires et négociations. 9 vols. London, Nourse, 1743.

————, Ibid. (BV 1239)

Evans, H.B., 'A Provisional bibliography of English editions and translations of Voltaire,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. VIII (1959), pp.9-121.

Feuquière, marquis de, Mémoires du Marquis de Feuquière, lieutenant général des armées du roi. London, Dunoyer, 1736.

Fields, M., 'Voltaire et Le Mercure de France,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. XX (1962), pp.175-215.

Flowers, R.C., Voltaire's stylistic transformation of Rabelaisian satirical devices. Washington, 1951.

Fontenelle, B. Le B. de, Histoire des oracles, éd. L. Maigron. Paris, Droz, 1934.

———, Sur l'histoire. Oeuvres. Paris, Brunet, 1761.

Fontius, M., Voltaire in Berlin. Berlin, 1966.

Formey, S., Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique. vol. X (1752), vol. XII (1753). Amsterdam, Mortier.

Fréron, E., Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps. Geneva, Slatkine reprints, 1966.

Gaultier, R., Deux aspects du style classique: Bossuet et Voltaire. La Rochelle, 1936.

Gay, P., Voltaire's Politics. The Poet as Realist. New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1959.

Gearhart, S., 'Rationality and the text: a study of Voltaire's historiography,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. CXL (1975), pp.21-43.

Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle. vol. XXII (1752). London, Cave.

Gerberon, abbé, Histoire générale du Jansénisme. 3 vols. Amsterdam, Lorme, 1700.

Gibbon, E., The Memoirs of the life of Edward Gibbon by himself, ed. G. Birkbeck. London, 1900.

———, Miscellaneous Works. vol. V. London, 1814.

Gilbert, A.H., Literary Criticism: from Plato to Dryden. Detroit, 1962.

Gohin, F., Les Transformations de la langue française pendant la deuxième moitié du XVIIIe siècle (1740-1789). Paris, Belin, n.d.

Gourville, J.H. de, Mémoires. 2 vols. Société d'histoire de France. vol. 267, parts 1, 2. Paris, 1894.

———, Ibid. Paris, 1724. (BV 1507)

Griffet, H., Traité des différentes sortes de preuves qui servent à établir la vérité de l'histoire. Liège, 1769.

Grimm, F.M., Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique. vol. II (1747-1755), vol. III (1755-1758). Paris, Garnier.

Groos, R., 'Le Siècle de Louis XIV de Voltaire,' Mercure de France, vol. 212 (June 15, 1929), pp.587-594.

Guyon, C.-M., L'Oracle des nouveaux philosophes pour servir de suite et d'éclaircissement aux œuvres de M. de Voltaire. Berne, 1759.

Haffter, P., 'L'Usage satirique des causales dans les contes de Voltaire,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. LIII (1967), pp.7-28.

Hatin, E., Bibliographie historique de la presse périodique française. Paris, n.d.

————, Les Gazettes de Hollande et la presse clandestine aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. Paris, 1865.

Havens, G.R., Voltaire's marginalia on the pages of Rousseau. New York, 1966.

Hénault, C.J.F., Nouvel abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France. Paris, 1744.

————, Ibid. Paris, 1768. (BV 1619)

Henriot, E., 'Voltaire et Le Siècle de Louis XIV,' Temps, September 30, 1930.

Horace, Odes III, ed. T.E. Page. London, 1963.

Howard, A.K., 'Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau in 18th century Scotland; a check list of editions and translations published in Scotland before 1801,' Bibliotheck, vol. B 2$^{(2)}$ (1959), pp.40-63.

Hume, D., Letters, ed. J. Greig. Oxford, Clarendon Press, n.d.

Johnson, N.R., 'Louis XIV and the age of the Enlightenment: the myth of the Sun King from 1715 to 1789,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. CLXXII (1978).

Joli, G., Mémoires. Petitot, Mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de la France. IIe série. vol. 57.

———, Ibid. Amsterdam, Bernard, 1738. (BV 2967)

Journal des Savants. Paris, 1752, 1753, 1754.

Journal de Trévoux ou Mémoires pour l'histoire des sciences et des beaux-arts. January 1754, April-June 1757.

Juvenel, F. de, Principes de l'histoire. Paris, Alix, 1733.

La Beaumelle, L.A. de, Mémoires de Madame de Maintenon. 16 vols. Maestricht, 1778.

———, Réponse au Supplément du Siècle de Louis XIV. Colmar, 1754.

La Fare, C.A., marquis de, Mémoires. Petitot, Mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de la France. IIe série. vol. 65.

———, Ibid. Rotterdam, Fritsch, 1716. (BV 1842)

La Fayette, M.M.P. de la V., comtesse de, Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre. Petitot, op.cit. vols. 44, 45.

———, Ibid. Amsterdam, 1742. (BV 1846)

Lamberti, G. de, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du XVIIIe siècle. 3 vols. The Hague, 1724.

———, Ibid. The Hague, 1735, 1738. (BV 1889)

Lanson, G., L'Art de la prose. Paris, 1908.

———, 'Notes pour servir à l'étude des chapitres 35-39 du Siècle de Louis XIV de Voltaire,' Mélanges offerts à M. Charles Andler. Strasbourg, 1924.

———, Voltaire. Paris, 1906.

La Porte, P. de, Mémoires. Petitot, op.cit. vol. 59.

———, Ibid. Geneva, 1756. (BV 1922)

La Porte, Observations sur la littérature moderne. 9 vols. London, Clément, 1746-1752.

Larrey, I. de, Histoire de France sous le règne de Louis XIV. 9 vols. Rotterdam, 1718.

———, Ibid. 3 vols. Rotterdam, 1718-1722. (BV 1930)

Lefèvre, E., 'Le Style des tragédies de Voltaire,' Revue Latine, vol. XXV (1905), pp.433-448.

Lenel, S., 'Un Ennemi de Voltaire: La Beaumelle,' Revue d'histoire littéraire, vol. XX (1913), pp.101-132; vol. XXI (1914), pp.641-675; vol. XXIII (1916), pp.163-210.

Lenet, P., Mémoires. Petitot, op.cit. vols. 53, 54.

———, Ibid. Paris, 1729. (BV 2036)

Lenglet du Fresnoy, N., Méthode pour étudier l'histoire. Paris, 1772.

Léouzon Le Duc, L., Voltaire et la police. Paris, Bray, 1867.

Limiers, H.P. de, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV. 7 vols. Amsterdam, 1717.

———, Ibid. 10 vols. Amsterdam, 1718. (BV 2119)

Lion, H., Un Magistrat homme de lettres au 18e siècle: le président Hénault. Paris, Plon, 1903.

London Magazine or Gentleman's Intelligencer. vol. XXI (1752).

Longchamp, S.G., and Wagnière, J.L., Mémoires sur Voltaire et sur ses ouvrages, ed. L. Decroix. 2 vols. Paris, 1826.

Lough, J., Essays on the Encyclopédie of Diderot and D'Alembert. London, 1968.

Mably, G.B. de, De l'étude de l'histoire. Cours d'études. Parma, 1775.

Marmontel, J.F., Mémoires. 4 vols. Paris, 1806.

Marouzeau, J., Précis de stylistique française. Paris, Masson, 1959.

Martin, H., Histoire de France depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'en 1789. 17 vols. Paris, 1878.

Marwick, A., The Nature of history. Macmillan, 1970.

Mason, H.T., Pierre Bayle and Voltaire. Oxford University Press, 1963.

———, Voltaire. London, 1975.

Maty, M., Journal Britannique. vol. VIII (May-June 1752), vol. IX (July-August 1752), vol. XV (1754). The Hague, 1752- .

Maurois, A., 'Le Style de Voltaire,' Europe, vol. 37 (May-June 1959).

McGhee, D., Voltairian narrative devices as considered in the author's Contes Philosophiques. Menasha, 1933.

Mercure de France. Paris, January 1757, November 1756.

Michaud, M., Biographie universelle ancienne et nouvelle. 45 vols. Paris, Desplaces, 1843-1865.

Momigliano, A., 'Ancient history and the antiquarians,' Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, vol. 13 (1950), pp.285-313.

Monod, G., Bibliographie de l'histoire de France. Paris, 1888.

Montesquieu, C.L. de S. de, Lettres Persanes, ed. P. Vernière. Paris, 1960.

Monthly Review or Literary Journal. vols. 6, 7 (1753). London, Griffiths, 1753.

Montpensier, A.M.L.H., duchesse de, Mémoires de Mlle. de Montpensier. Petitot, op.cit. vols. 40-43.

———, Ibid. Amsterdam, Bernard, 1730. (BV 2507)

Monty, J.R., 'Etude sur le style polémique de Voltaire: Le Dictionnaire Philosophique,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. XLIV (1966).

Morley, J., Voltaire. London, 1826.

Mornet, D., 'Les Enseignements des bibliothèques privées, 1750-1780,' Revue d'histoire littéraire, vol. XVII (1910), pp.449-496.

Motteville, F.B.L., madame de, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire d'Anne d'Autriche. Petitot, op.cit. vols. 36-40.

————, Ibid. Amsterdam, Changuion, 1739. (BV 2530)

Moureaux, J.M., 'Voltaire et Larcher,' Revue d'histoire littéraire, vol. LXXIV, pp.600-626.

Murray, G., 'Voltaire's Candide: the Protean gardener, 1755-1762,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. LXIX (1970).

Naves, R., Le Goût de Voltaire. Geneva, 1967.

————, Voltaire. Paris, Boivin, 1942.

Nemours, M. d'O.-L., duchesse de, Mémoires de Madame la duchesse de Nemours. Amsterdam, Bernard, 1738.

————, Ibid. (BV 2564)

Niceron, J.P., Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres. 44 vols. Paris, Briasson, 1741.

————, Ibid. Paris, Briasson, 1728-1737. (BV 2568)

Nicolas, M., Notice sur la vie et les écrits de Laurent Angliviel de La Beaumelle. Paris, Cherbuliez, 1852.

Niklaus, R., A Literary History of France. vol. III. The Eighteenth Century (1715-1789). London, Benn, 1967.

Nisard, Ch., Les Ennemis de Voltaire: Desfontaines, Fréron, La Beaumelle. Paris, Amyot, 1853.

Nonnotte, C.F., abbé, Erreurs de Voltaire. 3 vols. Paris, 1823.

Oake, R.B., 'An Edition of Voltaire's Siècle de Louis XIV,' Princeton University Library Chronicle, vol. 4 (1943), pp.135-136.

O'Connor, T.A., 'Voltaire's use of sources in writing history,' Historical Bulletin, vol. 29 (1951), pp.183-197.

Orieux, J., Voltaire. Paris, 1966.

Pappas, J.N., 'Berthier's Journal de Trévoux and the philosophes,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. III (1957).

Pellisson-Fontanier, P., Histoire de Louis XIV. 3 vols. Paris, Rollin, 1749.

———, Ibid. (BV 2681)

———, Lettres Historiques. 3 vols. Paris, Didot, 1729.

———, Ibid. Paris, 1729. (BV 2682)

Perkins, M.L., 'Voltaire's concept of international order,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. XXXVI (1965).

Pflug, G., 'The Development of historical method in the 18th century,' Enlightenment Historiography: 3 German studies. Wesleyan University Press, 1971.

Pomeau, R., La Religion de Voltaire. Paris, 1956.

———, Voltaire par lui-même. Paris, n.d.

———, 'Les Lettres Philosophiques: Le projet de Voltaire,' in Voltaire and the English, Studies, Oxford, 1979.

Quignard, J., 'Un Etablissement de texte: Le Siècle de Louis XIV de Voltaire,' Lettres Romanes, vol. 5 (1951), pp.305-338.

Racine J., Abrégé de Port-Royal. Oeuvres Complètes, ed. P. Clarac. Paris, Seuil, 1962.

Ramsey, A.M., Histoire de Henri de la Tour, vicomte de Turenne. 2 vols. Paris, Mazières, 1735.

Rapin de Thoyras, P., Oeuvres. Amsterdam, 1709.

Reboulet, S., Histoire du règne de Louis XIV. 3 vols. Avignon, 1742.

———, Ibid. 7 vols. Avignon, 1746. (BV 2882)

Retz, J.F.P. de G. de, Mémoires du cardinal de Retz, ed. P. Morand. 2 vols. Paris, 1965.

———, Ibid. 4 vols. Amsterdam, Bernard, 1731. (BV 2967)

Ridgeway, R.S., Voltaire and sensibility. Montreal, 1973.

Rihs, Ch., Voltaire: Recherches sur les origines du matérialisme historique. Geneva, Droz, 1962.

Rousseau, A.M., 'L'Angleterre et Voltaire,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. CXLVII (1976).

Rowe, C., Voltaire and the state. New York, 1955.

Saint-Simon, L. de R., duc de, La Cour de Louis XIV, ed. Ch. Saréola. Paris, Nelson, n.d.

Sakmann, P., 'The problems of historical method and of philosophy of history in Voltaire,' Enlightenment Historiography. Wesleyan University Press, 1971.

Sayce, R.A., Style in French prose. A Method of analysis. Oxford, 1965.

Segal, L.A., 'Nicolas Lenglet Du Fresnoy: tradition and change in French historiographical thought of the early eighteenth century,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. XCVIII (1972), pp.69-117.

Seguin, J.P., La Langue française au XVIIIe siècle. Paris, Bordas, 1972.

Seznec, J., 'Falconet, Voltaire et Diderot,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. II (1956), pp.43-59.

Souriau, M., 'La Langue de Voltaire d'après sa correspondance,' Revue d'histoire littéraire, vol. XXVII (1921), pp.105-131, 279-288, 423-449.

Tallentyre, S.G., The Life of Voltaire. 2 vols. London, 1903.

Talon, O., Mémoires. Petitot, op.cit. vols. 60-63.

————, Ibid. The Hague, Gosse, 1732. (BV 3247)

Taylor, S.S.B., 'Voltaire's humour,' in Voltaire and the English. Studies on Voltaire (1979), pp.101-116.

————, 'Voltaire's marginalia: a preview of the forthcoming edition,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. CXXXV (1975), pp.167-180.

————, 'The Definitive text of Voltaire's works: the Leningrad encadrée,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. CXXIV (1974), pp.7-132.

Temple, W., Mémoires. Petitot, op.cit. vol. 64.

————, Ibid. The Hague, Moetjens, 1693. (BV 3225)

Torci, J.B.C., marquis de, Mémoires de M. de ... pour servir à l'histoire des négociations depuis le traité de Riswick jusqu'à la paix d'Utrecht. Petitot, op.cit. vols. 67, 68.

————, Ibid. 3 vols. The Hague, 1756. (BV 807)

Torrey, N.L., and Havens, G.R., 'The Private Library of Voltaire at Leningrad,' P.M.L.A., vol. XLIII (1928), p.996 ff.

Toussaint, F.V., Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de Perse. Amsterdam, 1745.

Trenard, L., 'L'Historiographie française d'après les manuels scolaires, de Bossuet à Voltaire,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. CLV (1976), pp.2083-2111.

Ustariz, G.D., The Theory and practice of commerce. 2 vols. London, Rivington, 1751.

————, Ibid. (French edition). Paris, 1753. (BV 3882)

Vercruysse, J., 'Bibliographie des écrits français relatifs à Voltaire, 1719-1830,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. LX (1968), pp.7-71.

Villars, L.H., duc de, Mémoires. 3 vols. Société d'histoire de France, vol. 218 (3 parts). Paris, Renouard, 1884.

————, Ibid. 2 vols. The Hague, Gosse, 1734. (BV 3443)

Wade, I.O., The Clandestine organisation and diffusion of philosophic ideas in France from 1700-1750. New York, 1967.

————, The Intellectual development of Voltaire. Princeton, 1969.

————, The Search for a new Voltaire. Philadelphia, 1958.

Waldinger, R., Voltaire and reform in the light of the French Revolution. Geneva, 1959.

Wartburg, W.V., Evolution et structure de la langue française. Berne, 1946.

White, R.J., The Anti-Philosophers. Macmillan, 1970.

Williams, D., 'Voltaire: Literary critic,' Studies on Voltaire, vol. XLVIII (1966).

Worcester, D., The Art of satire. New York, 1960.

Additions to bibliography

Complete list of 18th.century editions of Le Siècle de Louis XIV

Except where otherwise indicated, the following refer to Le Siècle de Louis XIV. Beng. denotes the relevant number in G.Bengesco's Voltaire:Bibliographie de ses oeuvres,1882-90,4 vols. BN refers to the number in the Catalogue général des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale (Tome CCXIV, 'Voltaire',vols 1 & 2,Paris,1978).Evans indicates the reference number in H.B.Evans's 'A Provisional bibliography of English editions and translations of Voltaire',Studies,vol. VIII,1959,pp.9-121.

Essay sur l'histoire du siècle de Louis XIV,par M.de Voltaire,Amsterdam, H.du Sauzet,1739,in-8.

Essay sur l'histoire du siècle de Louis XIV,par M.de Voltaire,Amsterdam, H.du Sauzet,1739,in-8.

Ibid.,in Recueil de pièces fugitives en prose et en vers par M.de Voltaire, Paris,Prault,1739.(BN 3361).

The Essay on the age of Lewis XIV,London, Dodsley,1739,in-4 (Evans 500).

Berlin,Henning,1751,2 vol. in-12.(First edition).(Beng.1178/BN 3361).

Berlin,Henning(Lyon/Trévoux),1752,2 vol. in-12(Beng.1179/BN3364-6).

Berlin,Henning (Rouen),1752,2 vol. in-12 (Beng.1180/BN3367).

La Haye,J.Neaulme,1752,2 vol. in-8 (Beng.1181/BN3370).

La Haye,Gibert,1752,2 vol. in-8 (Beng.1181/BN3371).

Londres,Dodsley,1752, in-4 (Beng.1184/Evans 493).

Londres,Dodsley,1752,2 vol. in-12.Nouvelle édition corrigée (Evans 494).

Londre(sic),Dodsley,1752,2 vol. in-12.La seconde édition (BN3369).

The age of Lewis XIV,London,Dodsley,1752,in-8 (Evans 502).

The age of Lewis XIV,London,Dodsley,1752,in-8.The second edition.

Edimbourg,Hamilton,Balfour et Neill,1752,2 vol. in-12.Suivant la copie de Berlin (Beng.1184/BN3373).

Dresde,Walther (Lyon ou Trévoux),1752,2 vol. in-12.Troisième édition (Beng.1183/BN.3374).

Leypsick,(Paris),1752,4 parties en 1 vol.Seconde édition (Beng.1185/BN3380,84).

Leypsic,(Paris),1752, 2 parties en 1 vol.Seconde édition (BN 3383,3385).

Leypsick,(Paris),1752.Seconde édition (BN 3381).

Leypsick,(Paris),1752.Seconde édition.

Leypsig(sic),Gleiditsch,1752,2 vol. in-12 (Beng.1182/BN 3372).

The age of Lewis XIV,Dublin,Faulkener,1752 (Evans 503).

Dresde,Walther,1753,2 vol. in-8.Nouvelle édition revue par l'auteur et considérablement augmentée (Beng.1186/BN 3390).

Dresde,Walther,(Lyon ou Trévoux),1752, 2 vol. in-12.Troisième édition (Beng.1183/BN 3376).

Dresde,Walther,(Lyon),1752,3 vol. in-12.Troisième édition (Beng.1183/BN3376).

Berlin,Henning,1753,2 vol. in-12.Nouvelle édition(Beng.1187/BN 3378).

Leypsic(sic),1753,(Paris), 2t. en 4 vol. in-12.Seconde édition(BN 3388).

Londres,Dodsley,1753,2 vol. in-12.Nouvelle édition (BN 3522).

The age of Lewis XIV,London,Dodsley,1753,2 vol. in-12.A new edition revised and considerably augmented by the author (BN 3522).

Francfort,Veuve Knoch et Eslinger,1753,3 vol. in-8.Nouvelle édition augmentée d'un très grand nombre de Remarques,par M.de la B.(La Beaumelle), (Beng.1188/BN 3393).

La Haye,Gibert,1753(Remarques de La Beaumelle).

Metz,Bauchard,1753,3 vol. in-12(Remarques de La Beaumelle),(Beng.1188n./ BN 3395).

Leypsic(sic),(Paris),1754.Troisième édition.

Dresde,Walther,1755,in-12.Nouvelle édition(BN 3377).

Geneva,Cramer,in Collection Complète,1756,vol. XV-XVII (Beng.3351/BN3351,5).

Leypsic(sic),(Rouen),1756,4t. rel. en 2 vol.in-12(BN 3396).

Geneva,Cramer,1757,in Collection Complète,vol. XV-XVII (BN 67).

An Essay on the age of Lewis XIV,Dublin,Faulkener,1760.

Geneva,Cramer,1761,in Collection Complète,vol.XVI-XVIII (BN 3071).

The age of Lewis XIV,Glasgow, Urie,1763,2 vol.in-12 (Evans 505/BN 3523).

Amsterdam,1764,Nouvelle édition considérablement augmentée,3 vol. in-12 (Beng.1189/BN 3397).

Amsterdam,1765,Nouvelle édition considérablement augmentée,3 vol. in-12' (Beng.1190/BN 3398).

Geneva,Cramer,1768,Nouvelle édition revue et augmentée à laquelle on a ajouté un Précis du Siècle de Louis XV,4 vol. in-8(Beng.1191/BN3400).

Geneva,Cramer,1768,in-4 (Beng.,p.353).

Geneva,1770(1754),2t. en 4 vol. in-12.Troisième édition(Beng.1192/BN 3389).

Geneva,Cramer,1771,4 vol. in-8 (Beng.1193).

Neuchâtel,1773,Nouvelle édition.

Amsterdam,1774,3 vol. in-12,Nouvelle édition,etc. (Beng.1194/BN 3404).

Geneva,Cramer,Encadrée,1775,vol.XVIII-XX (Beng.1194 bis./BN 158).

Dresde,Walther,1777,2 vol. in-8 (Beng.1195).

The age of Lewis XIV,London,Fielding and Walker,1779.

Geneva,(Lausanne),Pott,1780,3 vol. in-12 (Beng.1196).

Lausanne,Collection Complète,1780,in-12 (Beng.1196 bis/BN 3405).

Neuchâtel,1783,in-12.

Kehl,1784-89,in Oeuvres Complètes,vol.XX-XXI,in-8 (Beng.2142/BN 167,173).