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ADDENDUM TO A TRIBUTE TO JACQUELINE HECHT (1932–2020)

About the Printing in Versailles
of Quesnay's *Tableau économique*

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The question of the printing in Versailles of some of Quesnay's publications, and notably of two versions of his *Tableau économique*, has been debated for many years. The claim that the *Tableau* had been printed in Versailles, with the explicit or implicit approval of the king, was already published when Quesnay was alive and mainly concerned with political economy.² Quite recently, two papers discussed the topic: one, Sabbagh (2022), established that a rare paper of Quesnay was indeed printed in Versailles and conjectured that the second and third versions of the *Tableau* had also been printed there, another, Charles and Théré (2023), provided a proof that the third version of the *Tableau* had been printed there.

I will leave to others the task of scrutinizing these alleged or real proofs: the first one rests on a contemporary testimony which may be erroneous, the second one on an argument about a single printing ornament; this is an area unfamiliar to most historians, including myself. I intend here to call attention to a statement, probably written around 1760-1764, which apparently guarantees that the third version of the *Tableau* was printed in Versailles. This yields a proof similar to the first one.

1 I am grateful to Richard van den Berg for a number of improvements.

2 Cf. Du Pont and Quesnay (1768-1767, 104). The matter was so delicate that, as is well-known, a cancel leaf had to be printed to replace the original page 104 which boldly claimed that the king himself watched the printing.

I am indebted to Mr. Ian M. Smith and to the antiquarian firm Peter Harrington in London for having sent me some xeroxes of a copy of an interesting volume having belonged to Maynon d'Invault. Maynon d'Invault replaced L'Averdy as minister of finances in 1768,³ and had to resign in December 1769.⁴ The volume owned by Peter Harrington has the arms of Maynon on the spine and unites the quarto (first edition) printed edition of the *Philosophie rurale*, published in 1763, and a contemporary (handwritten) copy of the third version of the *Tableau*. What is remarkable is a note written at the time, on the title of the *Tableau*, and found at the end of this paper: 'Imprimé dans le chateau de Versailles avec des caractères de l'Imprimerie Roiale que l'on fit venir exprès'.⁵ This gives the information that the *Tableau* was indeed printed in Versailles *with type provided by the Royal Printing House*.⁶

The above argument has three remarkable features:

1. It could have been made in 1987: indeed the sale of the books of the economist Pierre Quesnay (1895-1937) who accumulated an outstanding Physiocratic collection took place on 25 June 1987. The copy now owned by Peter Harrington was lot 150 of the auction. All those who viewed the books of the auction could have noticed the handwritten note. Of course Pierre Quesnay himself had the opportunity of making the discovery here reported. It is very likely that Jacqueline Hecht had seen this copy, in 1987 or before.⁷ This is another reason to regret that her notes to her life of Quesnay were not published and are apparently lost, *cf.* Sabbagh (2022).
2. It confirms that Maynon d'Invault was so close to Quesnay that he had access to the third version of the *Tableau*. Of course, it is impossible to know whether the volume I have described was a gift from Quesnay to Maynon, specially composed for the latter,

3 The French title was: *Contrôleur général des finances*.

4 What is known of Maynon's ministerial tenure can be found in Félix (1999).

5 Printed in the Versailles castle with type specially brought from the Royal Printing Press. A photo of the note is found at the end of the present paper.

6 This precision about the type, which should allow experts in eighteenth century French printing to investigate the *Tableau économique*, is apparently not found in Charles and Théré (2023).

7 She mentioned to me in oral conversation a copy apparently similar to the one described here but could not recall the details.

or whether Maynon or his librarian assembled the volume. The physiocratic convictions of Maynon were previously known, but not, to the best of my knowledge, the fact that he owned a copy of the *Tableau*.

3. It confirms that manuscript copies of the third version of the *Tableau* circulated at the time. This is certainly not surprising, but I cannot remember having seen another contemporary manuscript copy. Maynon's copy probably survived because it was handsomely bound with a copy of *Philosophie rurale*, a thick work which was not discarded by its owners.

I will conclude with trying to answer an obvious question: when did Maynon obtain the volume? I would suggest that the likeliest date is 1763 or 1764, right after the publication of the quarto (first edition) of *Philosophie rurale*: either he purchased that book, and this probably took place right after its publication, or the volume was gifted to him. The physiocrats confessed themselves the printing (and computation) errors and misprints of the first edition which they disowned.⁸ Had Maynon been gifted the volume when he succeeded L'Averdy in 1768, he would have probably received the corrected 1764 edition and the present would have been more sumptuously bound.

8 Cf. Mirabeau (1767, XCIX): 'Une édition furtive a paru, chargée de mes fautes & de celles de l'impression', literally 'a clandestine edition was published, with my errors and the printing ones'. The word 'furtive' implies that the edition was not authorized, which is certainly a lie.

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Tableau Economique
Par M Quesnay
Premier Medecin consultant du Roi.

Imprimé dans le Chateau de Versailles ,
Avec des Caracteres de l'Imprimerie
Royale que l'on fit venir exprès.

FIG. 1 – The firm of Peter Harrington, antiquarian booksellers, London, UK.