

An Avowal of Stop-Press Correction in 1817

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Students of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century printing in France and the Low Countries know that errata lists occasionally provide the indication that changes are required in some copies only.¹ In other words stop-press corrections have been made and the unaltered formes have none the less been kept and bound up in part of the edition, as indeed was usually the case. The information is useful, not least in persuading Europeans confident in the belief that their printers did not resort to the practices documented by bibliographers on the other side of the English Channel to be wary of such unwarranted assumptions.

That things had not changed in the early decades of the nineteenth century is shown by an example encountered in the *Bibliographie de la France, ou Journal général de l'imprimerie et de la librairie* of 1817.² At the end of number 3 (18 January) on page 40 appears the note:

ERRATA, pour quelques Exemplaires.

Page 23, dans l'*Extrait du Jugement, etc.*, ligne 7: dont lisez dans

Ligne 14: inconstitutionnels, lisez et constitutionnels.

The text in question was published in number 2 (11 January) and set out the sentence pronounced by a court in Le Mans at the end of 1816 on a certain Jacques Rigomer Bazin, guilty of having suggested in the mildest possible manner that the government of Louis XVIII may not have been zealous in its promotion of freedom and of constitutional rights. The various penalties, including six months in prison, were no doubt detailed as a deterrent for other writers of pamphlets. In any event the fact that page 23 in the version seen has the readings “dont” and “*et constitutionnels*” demonstrates that the press was stopped more than once. The printer and editor Pierre-Augustin-Jacques-François Pillet had begun his professional career in 1808 during the reign of Napoleon I³ and would have been well aware of the need for accuracy in dealing with sensitive topics.

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¹ See Wallace Kirsop, *Bibliographie matérielle et critique textuelle: vers une collaboration* (Paris: *Lettres modernes*, 1970), 40–41, for two French examples. See also Johannes Smetius, *Antiquitates Neomagenses* (Noviomagi Batavorum [=Nijmegen]: R. Smetius, 1678, 4^o), sig. 2N2^v: “Menda emendanda, quae tamen omnia non erunt in singulis libri exemplaribus.”

² Edition consulted: Kraus Reprint Ltd, 1966. The set used for the facsimile is not specified, but the permission given by the Cercle de la Librairie is noted.

³ See the entry for him in Paul Delalain, *L'Imprimerie et la librairie à Paris de 1789 à 1813* (Paris: Librairie Delalain frères, [1900]), 169.