

Zeitschrift:	SPELL : Swiss papers in English language and literature
Herausgeber:	Swiss Association of University Teachers of English
Band:	45 (2025)
Artikel:	"C'est ainsi que s'envole une âme vertueuse" : the 1747 Lausanne translation of Addison's Cato as an allegorical representation of Major Davel
Autor:	Reilly, Andy
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1090381

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 16.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

ANDY REILLY
(UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA)

“C’est ainsi que s’envole une âme vertueuse”: The 1747 Lausanne Translation of Addison’s *Cato* as an Allegorical Representation of Major Davel

This article examines a little-studied French translation of Joseph Addison’s *Cato*, which was published anonymously in Lausanne in 1747, and offers a new perspective on the play’s use as a political allegory beyond the Anglophone sphere. While *Cato* is widely recognised by Anglophone scholars for its allegorical use in eighteenth-century English-speaking contexts, its non-Anglophone reception remains underexplored. The article argues that the Lausanne translation, published clandestinely to avoid Bernese censorship, can be interpreted as an allegory of Major Davel, a Vaudois revolutionary who attempted to overthrow Bernese rule in 1723. By analysing the text of this edition alongside lesser-known poetic works that memorialised Davel and circulated in manuscript, the article demonstrates that the Lausanne translation’s modifications to Addison’s text and its covert distribution contributed to an allegorical discourse of commemoration and resistance. Thus, the 1747 Lausanne edition not only deepens our understanding of literary responses to Davel’s revolt but also offers a rare example of *Cato* being read as a political allegory outside the Anglophone context, suggesting a previously unexplored Swiss-British cultural exchange.

Keywords: Joseph Addison; *Cato*; Major Davel; book history; allegory

Joseph Addison’s 1713 Roman tragedy, *Cato*, was interpreted as a political allegory from its first performance. Its portrayal of a virtuous hero sacrificing himself in defence of liberty resonated with successive political groups, including British Whigs and Tories, and later, American Revolutionaries, who identified *Cato* with John Churchill, Robert Harley, and George Washington. While *Cato*’s political reception in the Anglophone world is frequently discussed, its influence outside English-speaking contexts remains underexamined. This is surprising, given that *Cato*

also appears to have been popular in mainland Europe. It was one of the first English-language plays to be published in a French translation, which was followed by translations into other European languages as well as subsequent French translations. This article focuses on the fourth French translation, which was clandestinely published in Lausanne in 1747, but appears not to have been discussed by Anglophone scholars of the play thus far. This translation not only demonstrates *Cato*'s adaptability as a political allegory but, intriguingly, also appears to engage with the memory of Major Jean Daniel Abraham Davel, a Vaudois hero executed in 1723 for resisting Bernese rule. Archival evidence shows that Davel was memorialised in mid-eighteenth-century manuscript miscellanies which included his manifesto, speeches, and poems that likened him to Cato's nephew, Brutus, who, like his uncle, was viewed as a symbol of republicanism during the period. Produced under the same climate of strict censorship as these manuscripts, the Lausanne edition of *Cato* offers rare evidence of the play's use as a political allegory outside the Anglophone world. Through its textual modifications to Addison's original and its surreptitious production and distribution, the Lausanne edition portrays the protagonist in ways that align both textually and materially with contemporary clandestine depictions of Davel as Brutus, and therefore suggest that its depiction of Cato may have been read as an allegorical depiction of the Vaudois hero during the period.

1. *Cato* as a Political Allegory in the Anglophone Sphere

One of the most celebrated tragedies of the eighteenth century, Addison's *Cato* owed its enduring popularity to its ability to serve as a political allegory for diverse groups in early eighteenth-century London and Revolutionary America. It did so through a glorification of the final hours of Cato the Younger's life, depicting him as a paragon of virtue and defender of liberty against Caesar's tyranny, and culminating in his noble suicide.

Cato (95 BCE - 46 BCE) and his nephew Brutus (c. 85 BCE - 42 BCE) were both viewed as champions of republicanism during the eighteenth century. Cato was a Stoic senator who formed part of Pompey's faction in Caesar's Civil War (49 BCE - 45 BCE), opposing Caesar, whom he believed wished to dismantle the Republic and crown himself king. After Caesar's decisive victory at the Battle of Thapsus, Cato committed suicide, preferring to die serving the Republic rather than accept Caesar as dictator. Following Cato's death, Brutus cemented ties with his

uncle by marrying his daughter, Porcia, and ultimately followed Cato's resistance to Caesar's perceived tyranny by acting as one of Caesar's most famous assassins. Like his uncle, he committed suicide following Octavian and Antony's victory at the Battle of Philippi. Cato's and Brutus' life stories were well known, at least partly due to their inclusion in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, which was frequently published in both English and French translations in the eighteenth century.

Addison's depiction of Cato had significant cross-party appeal in Britain from the start due to its stirring yet intentionally vague depiction of its main theme, the virtuous defence of liberty against tyranny. Alexander Pope's account of the first performance captures the play's bipartisan success, as he notes that the "numerous and violent claps of the Whig party on the one side of the theatre, were echoed back by the Tories on the other" (175). Similarly, Colley Cibber observed that the play's "sublime Sentiments of Liberty" and depiction of "a suffering Virtue" led the "two almost irreconcileable [sic] Parties to embrace, and join in their equal Applauses of it" (209). The play's broad appeal stems from the "enigma" of its political meaning (Loftis 57). Addison's defence of liberty and virtue, exemplified by Cato's emotive yet ambiguous apostrophe, "'O Liberty! O Virtue! O my Country!'" (sig. D9v), allowed audiences to interpret these ideals according to their own political leanings.¹ For the Whigs, "liberty" often symbolised support for the Hanoverian succession, but its lack of a specific definition in *Cato* allowed it to be read from a Tory perspective as well. Similarly, while "virtue" could broadly mean "goodness" or "chastity," in *Cato* it most often denotes "public spirit" and self-sacrifice for one's country, an ideal that was also appreciated by both sides (Kensall 158). The centrality of these productively ambiguous terms is suggested by their frequency: "liberty" is spoken fourteen times, while "virtue" (or its cognates) appears at least sixty times. The play's deliberate ambiguity appears to have been part of Addison's broader strategy of avoiding political offence. Among other calculated decisions, he met with prominent figures from both parties before the play's first performance and attempted to appeal to both by pairing a prologue by the Tory-leaning Alexander Pope with an epilogue by the Whig Samuel Garth (Loftis 59–60).

¹ Quotations from the English-language *Cato* are taken from the first duodecimo edition of 1713. As Luis R. Gámez notes, this edition was regarded by Addison and Jacob Tonson as definitive (Gamez 15). The text it contains, which features numerous authorial revisions, seems likely to have formed the basis for the subsequent French translations.

The text's ambiguity allowed readers to interpret it through their own political lenses, and a flurry of anonymous pamphlets offered competing allegorical readings. For the Whigs, Cato represented John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough, who was '*the Hero of the present Age*' in whom 'Cato's *Virtues*' will '*ever shine*' and whose fame is predicted to '*Excell*' even that of Cato himself (*The Unfortunate General*, sig. A2v). In contrast, for the Tories, Marlborough was instead read as the tyrannical Caesar, while Cato represented the Tory prime minister, Robert Harley (*Mr. Addison Turn'd Tory*, sig. C1r). In the context of the 1715 Jacobite rising, such readings were joined by more explicit Jacobite interpretations including, as Jorge Bastos da Silva notes, William Meston's poem "Cato's Ghost" (112). This text draws a direct parallel between Addison's Caesar and George I, and even claims that, were he alive, "Cato's Self had bled for [the Stuart] Monarchy". While it seems unlikely that the staunchly republican Cato would have supported any king, Stuart or otherwise, these widely differing interpretations demonstrate how the text's intentionally ambiguous depiction of liberty and virtue enabled readers and audiences to project their own political views onto the play.²

The play's aptness for allegorical reading was not only limited to the early-eighteenth-century British context, and it was once again interpreted from a political perspective prior to and during the American Revolution, with Cato now representing another virtuous defender of liberty: George Washington. *Cato* was Washington's favourite play, and he frequently quoted from it throughout his life. He was especially fond of Cato's aphoristic warning against serving in an immoral government: "When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway, the post of honour is a private station" (*Cato* 2004, viii). The play was also associated with the revolutionary cause more broadly and was performed for the Continental Army at the Valley Forge encampment in Pennsylvania during the Revolutionary War in May 1778 (Bryan 123–131). In a newly written epilogue that may have formed part of the Valley Forge performance, the poet Jonathan Michael Sewell explicitly equates Caesar's tyranny with Britain and, in his statement that the US Senate have '*for a Cato arm'd a Washington!*,' of

² While I have not found direct references to Cato in relation to the 1745 Jacobite rising and its aftermath, the play's depiction of an exiled political leader is also likely to have resonated for supporters of Charles Edward Stuart, also known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. For recent research uncovering his period of exile in Basel, Switzerland, from 1754 to 1756, see Stefanie Heeg and Ina Habermann.

fers evidence of allegorical readings far beyond the immediate political climate of Britain in 1713 (*Cato* 1782, sig. K2v).

By portraying virtue, liberty and tyranny in abstract terms, *Cato* transcended political and geographical divides, allowing audiences and readers to interpret the play and its protagonist from their own political perspectives. Such readings may also have been at play in the 1747 Lausanne translation, which could have been read as an allegorical depiction of the Vaudois hero, Major Davel.

2. Major Davel

Major Jean Daniel Abraham Davel (1670-1723), a local hero and attempted revolutionary, is largely unknown in the English-speaking world, yet his fame in Lausanne and the Canton of Vaud could be said to rival that of George Washington in the United States. His legacy is closely tied to the Pays de Vaud, as the region was known under Bernese rule from 1536 to 1798. On March 31st, 1723, Davel led 600 soldiers to Lausanne from Cully, a small town about ten kilometres to the east, in a bold but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Bernese authorities and secure Vaudois independence. However, Davel was unable to enforce his demands, since he lacked military support—he ordered his soldiers not to bring ammunition in order to avoid any bloodshed—and he was deceived by the city authorities. He was arrested and tortured, then executed at Vidy, near the modern campus of the University of Lausanne, on April 24th, 1723. His serene acceptance of his fate and his self-sacrifice for Vaudois liberty have made him a symbol of local patriotism, commemorated through statues, paintings, monuments and street names. The tercentenary of his revolt in 2023 was widely celebrated with publications and performances at the Opéra de Lausanne and in Cully.

Historical accounts often claim that Davel's revolt was largely forgotten between 1723 and the mid nineteenth century, but recent research questions this view, providing evidence that his memory was preserved through the covert distribution of manuscript documents during the period. Citing heavy censorship by the Bernese authorities, who sought to suppress any mention of Davel or his actions, historians have tended to claim that Davel was consigned to what Antonin Scherrer has called the “brumes de l'oubli” (“the mists of oblivion”; 1).³ According to this histor-

³ All translations are my own.

ical interpretation, Davel's story remained obscure until Juste Olivier's 1842 biography revived interest and prompted a wave of cultural celebrations through performances, art, and literature. However, Gilbert Coutaz, former director of the Vaudois Cantonal Archives (ACV), has questioned this interpretation, pointing to clandestine efforts to preserve Davel's memory through the distribution of manuscript materials related to the uprising. Coutaz notes that educated individuals carefully transcribed and distributed key documents, including Davel's revolutionary manifesto and speeches, despite the risk of Bernese reprisal. For example, the Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire de Lausanne (BCUL) holds a significant document, PTN-178514, an eighty-six-page manuscript miscellany dated January 2nd, 1741, which gathers at least fifteen speeches, letters, and other texts that were meticulously copied by Davel's supporters. Coutaz explains how documents like these were likely circulated: "que l'on devait se passer sous le manteau et lire lors de veillées" ("passed around in secret and read during evening gatherings"; 62), underscoring the dangers associated with possessing these manuscripts.

Davel's reputation as a selfless defender of liberty is based not only on his actions, but also on his own self-depiction, particularly in the speech he gave from the scaffold prior to his execution. In this still frequently quoted speech, he insists on his readiness to serve as a "Sacrifice" for the people of Vaud, stating that "C'est ici le plus beau jour de ma vie!" ("This is the most beautiful day of my life!"; Barnaud, sig. Dd5v).⁴ He underlines this willingness by stating, at the end of the speech and moments before his death, that "C'est pour moi un jour de Triomphe, qui couronne & qui surpassé tout ce qui a pû m'arriver jusques ici de plus brillant" ("For me, this is a day of triumph, which crowns and surpasses everything brilliant that has happened to me until now"; sig. Ee2r-v).⁵ While the accuracy of the speech as transcribed is not beyond question, its centrality to Davel's cultural depiction is supported by the frequent references made to it during the period, both as direct quotations and in paraphrases (Coutaz 62). One example of this kind of paraphrase occurs in PTN-178514, in which Davel is described as thanking "L'Être Suprême de ce qu'il luy avoit fait la Grace de luy sacrifier sa vie pour le Bonheur et la Tranquilité de sa Chere Patrie" ("the Supreme Being for having granted him the grace

⁴ This phrase has frequently been used in accounts of Davel's revolt and was notably cited in numerous articles in the local press commemorating the tercentenary in 2023.

⁵ All transcriptions follow the original spelling.

to sacrifice his life for the happiness and tranquillity of his dear homeland"; 28).

While Davel's speech was, and continues to be, often cited, a notable yet infrequently examined feature of these manuscript miscellanies is the evidence they provide for a clandestine literary memorialisation of Davel through poetry that critically engages with and debates his legacy.⁶ I have identified three anonymously written poems that directly engage with Davel and offer contrasting appraisals of his revolutionary actions. These poems imagine him as Brutus, whose opposition to Caesar (and Caesar's adopted son, Octavian) and ultimate suicide in defence of the Republic paralleled his uncle Cato's.

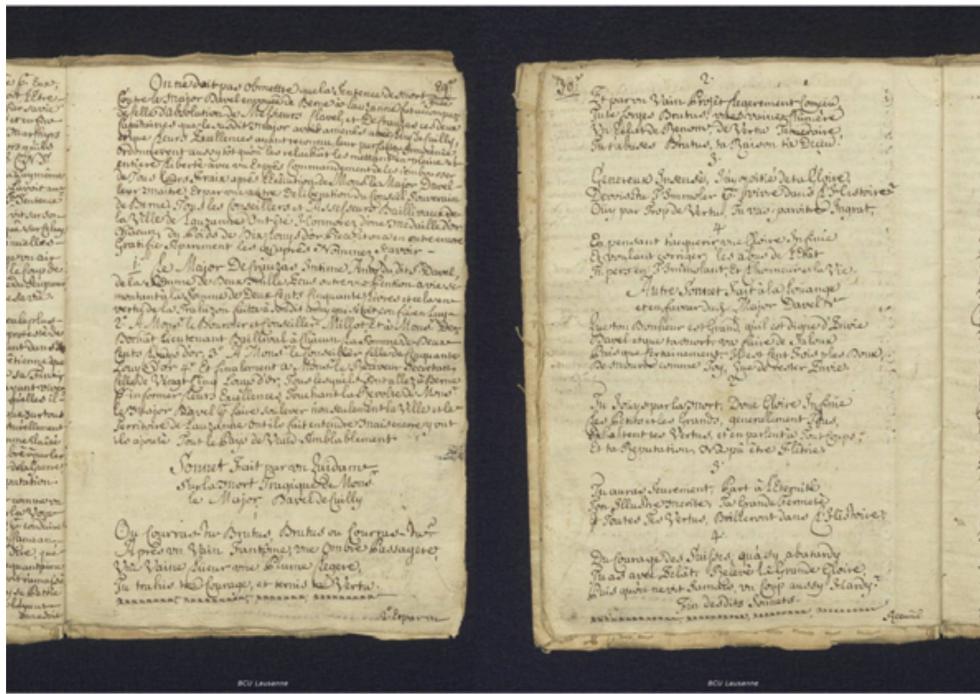


Figure 1. Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire de Lausanne, PTN-178514 (29–30).

The poems are included in two miscellanies: the aforementioned PTN-178514 (1741) and P. Wullyamoz 33, which is held at the ACV and dated circa 1767-1770. Images of the poems in these miscellanies are

⁶ Coutaz lists the sonnets collected in PTN-178514 in his summary of the collection's contents but does not comment upon them (63). I was alerted to the potential existence of the poems in P Wullyamoz 33 by Maxime Reymond's brief reference to them in his 1926 article (87). I have found no other references to the poems in the critical literature on Davel.

given in Figures 1 and 2 and the transcribed and translated texts are in Appendix 1.

PTN-178514 contains a pair of anonymous Petrarchan sonnets addressed to Davel, included directly after the above-cited paraphrase from his scaffold speech. The first sonnet, which calls Davel “Brutus” (line 1), critiques his revolt as futile, lamenting that his virtuous sacrifice was for “une Plume Legere” (“a light feather”; line 3), possibly symbolising the distant promise of Vaudois independence or the “Eclat de Renom” (“flash of fame”; line 7) that his actions would bring him. While it acknowledges Davel’s noble intentions, it views his actions as a wasted opportunity. The second sonnet presents a contrasting view, glorifying Davel’s self-sacrifice as an act of public spirit that, along with his other virtues, “Brilleront dans L’Histoire” (“will shine in history”; line 11) and will inspire the “Courage des Suisses” (“courage of the Swiss”; line 12). The two contrasting perspectives highlight a cultural effort to come to terms with and evaluate Davel’s legacy.

In the sonnets, “vertu” (“virtue”) acts as a thematic anchor, with three instances in the first poem and two in the second. Much like in *Cato*, where virtue signifies public spirit and self-sacrifice, the sonnets use the term to explore Davel’s character and make sense of his legacy. The first sonnet questions whether Davel’s virtue was misused in the pursuit of an ill-advised goal, stating that his actions “trahis ton courage, et ternis ta Vertu” (“betray your courage and tarnish your virtue”; line 4). In contrast, the second sonnet celebrates his virtuous death as an act of public service to the people, noting that “Les Petits et les Grands [...] Exhaltent tes Vertus et en parlent à Tous Coups” (“Young and old [...] exalt your virtues and speak of them at all times”; line 6-7). As with Addison’s hero, virtuous service to the community is a central element of Davel’s depiction as Brutus in the manuscript sonnets.

The sonnets seem to have circulated beyond the 1741 collection, since the more critical first sonnet reappears approximately three decades later in P. Wullyamoz 33, alongside a ten-line response poem attributed to “Brutus” himself. Titled “*Dialogue Poétique*,” this pairing gives Davel a voice to answer his critics and suggests that the debate over his actions continued throughout the period. While the document’s physical damage obscures parts of the text, its content nevertheless suggests that allegories of Brutus were used throughout the mid eighteenth century by educated Vaudois people to critically engage with Davel and his legacy through the composition of literary texts.

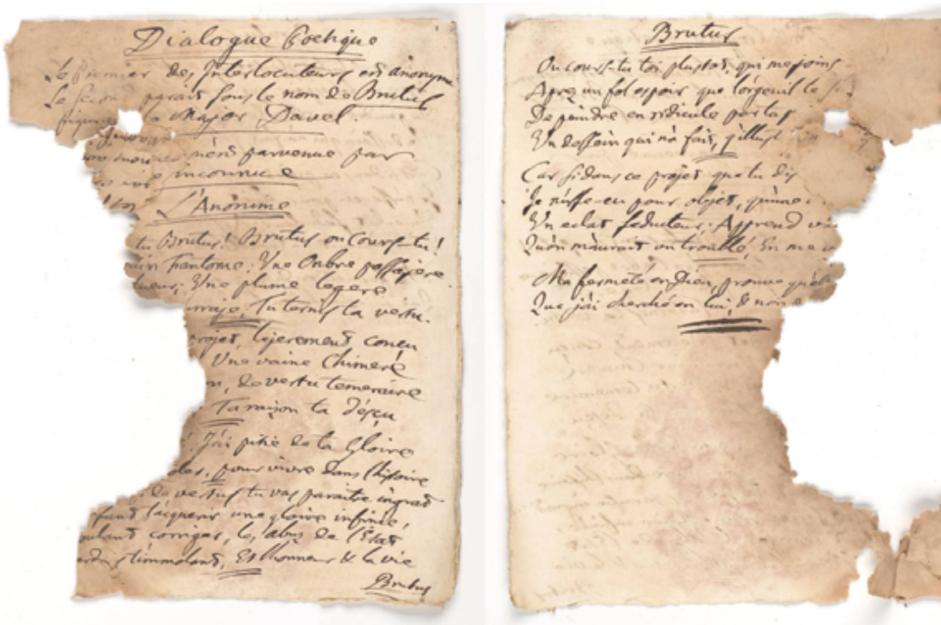


Figure 2. Archives cantonales vaudoises, P Wullyamoz 33.

The poems reflect a broader cultural discourse that sought not only to memorialise Davel's revolt under Bernese censorship, but also to critically examine his actions. This critical engagement is also seen in surviving letters from during and immediately after Davel's revolt in 1723, some of which describe him positively in terms such as "le plus parfaitement honnête homme du Monde" ("the most perfectly honest man in the world"; Lecoultr 33) while others dismiss him as delusional, saying he had "un cerveau un peu dérangé" ("a slightly deranged mind"; Mingard 279). As letters like this suggest, Davel's actions were the topic of debate and discussion from the start, and this appears to have continued in the literary depictions that circulated in manuscript. The letters frequently end with requests that the receivers of the letters burn them after reading, and therefore also foreshadow the clandestine distribution of materials related to Davel due to fears of official reprisal.

3. The 1747 Lausanne Translation of *Cato*

Similar elements are present in the fourth French translation of *Cato*, entitled *Caton, Tragédie* and published anonymously in Lausanne in 1747, which exhibits traits indicative of both covert production and meticulous craftsmanship. These features suggest that, much like the manuscript documents related to Major Davel, this edition not only contained a highly

valued text but was also carefully designed and distributed in order to circumvent Bernese censorship.

Four bibliographical features suggest that the Lausanne edition was produced and distributed clandestinely. Firstly, the edition is anonymous, omitting the names of the translator, publisher, and printer to obscure their identities. Secondly, although the imprint claims Paris as the place of publication, a distinctive printer's ornament suggests it was produced by Lausanne printer Jean Zimmerli, who often collaborated with Marc-Michel Bousquet, a prominent Lausanne publisher (Corsini, "Caton"; Corsini, "Bousquet"). False imprints were commonly used in Lausanne to avoid censorship, particularly for banned authors like Hobbes and Voltaire (Corsini, *Livre* 57, 315). While no evidence suggests the Lausanne edition was officially proscribed, its false imprint nonetheless implies caution on the part of its publishers. Thirdly, Béatrice Lovis notes that the edition had a limited print run and discreet distribution, even within Vaud (224). This is evidenced by its absence from notable catalogues, such as Paul Lacroix Jacob's *Bibliothèque dramatique de Monsieur Soleinne* and Marc-Michel Bousquet's list of "principales impressions" ("notable publications"; Leibniz sig. Cc11r-12v). Finally, the prefatory "Avertissement" ("Address to the Reader") falsely claims that the text of the Lausanne edition is identical to Louis de Bons's 1745 prose translation, differing only in the fact that it is in verse (sig. A2r). While the argument that the prose and verse editions contain the same text is not especially convincing, its inclusion may nonetheless have been intended to deflect the casual reader's attention from the edition's textual novelty.

Despite these apparent efforts to evade scrutiny, material analysis of the BCUL copy of the edition suggests that its publishers may have seen it as a quality publication that was worth their investment. Firstly, as an analysis of the chain lines in the BCUL copy shows, the majority of the book seems to have been printed on a single batch of paper, with at least five out of the book's eight sheets appearing to have been produced on the same two moulds.⁷ This implies that the publisher invested enough money to purchase a batch of often expensive paper in bulk prior to the edition's publication, unlike lower-quality publications that sometimes relied on mixed stocks (Gaskell 142). Secondly, the choice of octavo format and a large typeface prioritises readability and a pleasurable reading experience

⁷ Like many Lausanne publications of this period, the 1747 edition is printed on paper without watermarks (Corsini, *Livre*, 239). In such situations, chain line analysis offers a reliable method of identifying paper varieties (see Vander Meulen).

at the expense of paper efficiency. While a small-format edition of *Cato*, such as the 1713 Tonson duodecimo, needed only four sheets of paper per copy, the Lausanne edition required eight sheets, effectively doubling the production costs in comparison. However, the larger leaf size of the octavo format allowed the publishers of the Lausanne edition to use a larger and more readable typeface for approximately the same number of lines per page. Each leaf of the Lausanne edition measures around 105mm by 180mm, while each leaf of the duodecimo measures around 90mm by 152mm. As a result, while the duodecimo uses a smaller bourgeois typeface (approximately 9-point) to squeeze in a maximum of 30 lines per page, the Lausanne edition can use a pica typeface (approximately 12-point) for a maximum of 28 lines per page, leading to greater readability. Finally, the edition's list of errata, included on a cancel leaf, suggests that it was carefully proofread after printing but before distribution. The list, containing fourteen corrections, is printed on the verso of the final leaf (sig. H8v). However, as the cancel stub indicates, the errata page was likely added after the initial print run was completed (Gaskell 135). This suggests that the publishers were concerned with textual accuracy and took the time to review the printed text after it had been produced, further contributing to the impression that it was a quality publication.

While anonymously prepared and published, it is tempting to speculate that the person(s) responsible for the edition's publication may have formed part of the same groups who prepared and distributed the manuscript miscellanies. The introduction's explicit reference to Louis de Bons's 1745 edition may suggest that de Bons also prepared the text of the later edition. As Silvio Corsini speculates, it may even be the case that he or his family funded its publication ("Caton"). A member of the "élites intellectuelles" (62) whom Coutaz identifies as keeping Davel's legacy alive, de Bons was a Lausanne native who became, in 1747, a pastor in the city and who had been born, perhaps coincidentally, just one month before Davel's revolt (Lumières.Lausanne). As such, he may have been aware of, and perhaps even helped to distribute, the kinds of clandestine materials found in the manuscript miscellanies. This opens the possibility that the edition could have been distributed in the form of presentation copies and, perhaps, read aloud at the private theatrical gatherings that took place among the intellectual élite in Lausanne during the period (Loris 33–38). If so, this would further strengthen the book-historical links between the manuscripts and the Lausanne edition.

4. Echoes of Major Davel in the Lausanne Translation

The similarities between Cato's noble suicide and Davel's willing self-sacrifice in defence of liberty would already seem to offer ample scope for an allegorical reading along the lines of the Anglophone interpretations. However, the Lausanne version appears to take advantage of the freedom offered by the translation process to further push the text towards an allegorical depiction of Davel, chiefly through the amplification of the theme of "virtue" and what appears to be a targeted attempt to depict Cato in terms and imagery associated with Davel, especially those employed in the poetic depictions of him as Brutus.

While "virtue" is a key concept in every version of *Cato*, the Lausanne translation stresses it to an even greater degree. A quantitative survey reveals that the term "vertu" and its cognates is used eighty-five times in this version. This is a 40% increase over Addison's original and 26% more than the previous French translation, despite the Lausanne translation being the shortest version at just 1,826 lines (see Table 1).

Year	Translator	Publisher	Prose/Verses	Lines	"virtue"
1713	n/a	Jacob Tonson, London	Blank verse	1903	60
1713	Abel Boyer	Jacob Tonson, London	Prose	2070	55
1738	Anonymous	Etienne Neaulme, Utrecht	Alexandrine	2116	59
1745	Louis de Bons	Jean Martin Husson, The Hague	Prose	2363	67
1747	Anonymous	Anonymous, 'Paris' [Lausanne]	Alexandrine	1826	85

Table 1: *Cato* in English and in French translation, 1713-1747.

This increased emphasis on "virtue" is illustrated in Act 1 Scene 2. In the earlier versions, Sempronius, a Roman general, mentions Cato's virtue only once during his discussion with Portius, Cato's son. He underlines Cato's importance to the republican cause when he states, in reference to the senate-in-exile, that "His Virtues render our Assembly awful" or, as we might now say, "awe-inspiring" (sig. B3v). However, in the Lausanne version, the speech is expanded and includes three explicit references to Cato's virtue, all of which heighten his depiction as a public-spirited leader: "Je connois les vertus de Caton ce grand Homme" ("I know the virtues

of Cato, this great man”), “Du haut de ses vertus il agit sans contrainte” (“From the height of his virtues, he acts without constraint”) and “Cesar, même Cesar en son triomphe heureux, / Ne combat qu’en tremblant ce Romain vertueux” (“Caesar, even Caesar in his happy triumph, only fights trembling before this virtuous Roman”; sig. A6v). In these newly expanded passages, Cato is depicted as a towering figure whose virtue underpins his defence of liberty, and the extended references to “virtue” chime with its frequent use in the manuscript sonnets addressed to Davel.

Such additions occur throughout the text of the Lausanne edition, but are perhaps most present during Cato’s death scene, when Addison’s single mention of “virtue” is again expanded with three new references that explicitly associate the term with Cato’s death. In Addison’s version of Cato’s dying speech, “virtue” is connected only with Juba, a Numidian prince whom Cato decides to allow to marry his daughter, Marcia. Justifying his decision, Cato states that, during this time of war, “Whoe’er is Brave and Virtuous, is a *Roman*” (sig. E3v), thereby suggesting that public-spiritedness transcends racial and national divisions. While the preceding French translations follow Addison’s original, the Lausanne translation expands on this reference to virtue with three additional mentions, each explicitly linking the concept with Cato’s death. In the first example, Portius presents his dying father to his friends and family, stating that “Prêt à finir sa vie / Sa vertu le rassure & soutient son espoir” (“Ready to end his life, his virtue reassures him and supports his hope”; sig. H6r). The explicit depiction of his virtuous death continues at the climax of Cato’s final speech, when he describes himself as “Un Romain vertueux ébranlé par l’orage” (“A virtuous Roman shaken by the storm”; sig. H7v) and this is followed by Lucius’ statement that “C’est ainsi que s’envole une ame vertueuse” (“This is how a virtuous soul takes flight”; sig. H8r). Such an explicit amplification of Cato’s virtue during his death scene resonates strongly with Davel’s depiction in the sonnets, where his virtue is repeatedly cited in both the critical and laudatory poems, thereby strengthening parallels between the two figures.

However, in addition to this emphasis on Cato’s virtue, the play’s polyvocality also allows for critical perspectives on Cato’s actions whose lexis echoes contemporary critiques of Davel as represented in the first sonnet. This poem criticises Davel’s revolt as futile, repeatedly labelling it as “vain”: a “Vain projet” (“vain plan”; line 5) in search of a “Vain Fantôme” (“futile ghost”; line 2), a “Vaine Lueur” (“empty glow”; line 3) and resulting in a “vaine Chimère” (“hollow fantasy”; line 6). This rhetoric is mirrored in the Lausanne translation when Cato’s actions are ques-

tioned. For example, in Act 1, Scene 2, Syphax, a Numidian general, warns Juba to abandon Cato's faction, describing Cato's virtues as having a "vaine apparence" ("vain appearance"; sig. D3r). Similarly, Lucius, a loyal senator, exclaims, "O vaine résistance! O fermeté fatale!" ("Oh, vain resistance! Oh, fatal stubbornness!"; sig. G5v), underlining the perceived futility of Cato's decision to commit suicide rather than capitulate to Caesar. By using similar lexis that focuses on the futility of dying for one's country, Cato's and Davel's critics speak as one, and the play further reflects the debate about Davel as shown in the manuscript miscellanies.

Early readers may also have noticed further lexical parallels between the Lausanne translation's depiction of Cato and contemporary depictions of Davel. For example, while Addison's text depicts Cato as a militant defender of liberty, wielding his "Sword" against tyranny and enacting "Vengeance" on his enemies (sig. B1v), in the Lausanne translation he does not wield a sword, instead employing his "vertu" and "noble courage" in the struggle "pour la liberté de Rome sa Patrie" ("for the liberty of Rome, his homeland"; sig. A3v). Like Davel, who famously wanted to avoid bloodshed during his revolt and ordered his soldiers not to carry ammunition, the Lausanne version of Cato is explicitly non-violent. In addition, the text's association with his "virtue," "courage," and love for his "Patrie" makes use of imagery shared with the sonnets and his speech from the scaffold. These connections are reinforced in Act 4 Scene 4, with the Lausanne translation's newly introduced speech lauding those who die for their countries. Depicting such a death as "un triomphe heureux" ("a happy triumph") and promising that it will lead to "l'éternelle lumière" ("the eternal light"; sig. G7r), the speech echoes Davel's depictions, particularly with the second sonnet's depiction of him as someone who "Jouys par la Mort, D'une Gloire Infinie" ("enjoys infinite glory through death"; line 5) and Davel's own description of his execution day as "un jour de Triomphe" ("a day of triumph"; Barnaud sig. Ee2r).

It is impossible to say to what extent these consistent textual parallels with Davel were intentionally introduced into the Lausanne translation. However, given that the material features of the edition suggest that it may have been distributed in a similar manner to the manuscripts, and perhaps even prepared by someone who may have had a link to these kinds of documents, there is a likelihood that these books could have been owned by similar groups of people and potentially read side by side. If so, it is reasonable to suppose that Cato's close family connection with Brutus, their shared opposition to Caesar, and their similarly famous suicides in opposition to tyranny—all well-known to educated readers at this time

—would have facilitated an allegorical reading of Davel not only as Brutus but also as Cato. The Lausanne translation's distinctive depiction of Cato's virtuous self-sacrifice would have resonated with local patriots, thus forming part of Davel's broader memorialisation in mid-eighteenth-century Vaud.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, the Lausanne translation of *Cato* offers valuable insights into the nexus between English literature and Swiss political history. It appears to demonstrate the use of *Cato* for a non-Anglophone allegorical reading of a political figure and contributes to our understanding of how literature was used to memorialise Major Davel in mid-eighteenth-century Vaud. Such insights are possible due its nodal position with close connections to both cultural contexts: as a French translation of an English play published in Switzerland, the Lausanne *Cato* provides a missing link between English literature and Swiss history.

This edition deepens our understanding of one of the most significant English tragedies of the eighteenth century. While Addison's *Cato* is well-known as the first English-language play published in a French translation, the specific contexts and intertextual networks of these translations are often overlooked. Much like the Whig-Tory pamphlet debates, the Jacobite poem, and the American revolutionary use of the play, the Lausanne edition reflects *Cato*'s adaptability to local contexts. Addison's studied ambiguity enables Cato to represent a variety of political heroes who embody the themes of virtuous public service and the pursuit of liberty in different cultures. The Lausanne edition highlights this adaptability, and suggests that further research may uncover political readings of the play in the other French translations, as well as translations into other languages, such as Italian and Dutch.

From a Swiss perspective, the 1747 edition of *Caton, Tragédie* and the related manuscript poems suggest that Major Davel was actively memorialised in literary form in the mid eighteenth century, supporting Gilbert Coutaz's claim that this was a time in which Davel was remembered despite heavy censorship. These texts predate the nineteenth-century literary revival of Davel's image, marked by poems by authors like Frédéric Monneron and Juste Olivier and plays such as Félix Perrin's 1847 performance in Corcelles-près-Payerne (Coutaz 87–88, 106–112). While these later texts and performances solidified Davel's reputation as a Vau-

dois patriot, the earlier clandestine writings, produced by individuals who lived during or shortly after Davel's revolt, offer a variety of interpretations. These writings include letters, the contrasting sonnets depicting Davel as Brutus and, when read allegorically, the dramatic depiction of Davel as Cato. These sources thus provide key evidence of Davel's evolving legacy before his heroic status became firmly established. While further research may uncover additional instances of such allegorical depiction, the Lausanne edition stands as an important case of transnational literary exchange and the political application of literature.

References

Primary Sources

Addison, Joseph. *Cato*. ‘Seventh Edition’. Jacob Tonson, 1713.

---. *Caton Tragédie*. 1713. Translated by Abel Boyer. Jacob Tonson, 1713.

---. *Caton, Tragédie*. 1713. Translated by M. de *****. Etienne Neaulme, 1738.

---. *Caton, Tragédie*. 1713. Translated by Louis de Bons. Jean Mart. Husson, 1745.

---. *Caton, Tragédie*. 1713. Anonymous Translation. “Paris” [Lausanne], 1747.

---. *Cato*. 1713. N. Coverly, 1782.

---. *Cato*. 1713. Edited by Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin. Liberty Fund, 2004.

Anonymous. “Dialogue Poétique.” circa. 1767-1770. P. Wullyamoz 33. Archives Cantonales Vaudoises.

Anonymous. *Histoire tragique de la mort de Monsieur le major Davel*. January 2nd, 1741. BCU MS PTN-178514: <https://patrinum.ch/record/178514?ln=fr&v=uv#?xywh=-1%2C-20%2C5160%2C34-55&cv=36>. Accessed 26 Jan. 2025.

Anonymous [William Meston]. “Cato’s Ghost.” c. 1715. https://archive.org/details/bim_eighteenth-century_catost-ghost_meston-william_1715_0. Accessed 4 Feb. 2025.

Secondary Sources

Anonymous. (‘A Gentleman of Oxford’). *Mr Addison Turn’d Tory*. J. Baker, 1713.

Anonymous. *The Unfortunate General*. Edward Midwinter, 1713.

Barnaud, Barthélemy. *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire des troubles arrivés en Suisse*. J. Frederic Bernard, 1726.

Bryan, Mark Evans. “‘Slideing into Monarchical Extravagance’: *Cato* at Valley Forge and the Testimony of William Bradford Jr.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 67, no. 1, 2010, pp. 123–144.

Cibber, Colley. *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber*. 1740.

Corsini, Silvio. “*Caton*.” [https://web-bcul.unil.ch/RESSOURCE-BIB/fleuron/scripts/Edition.php?NoticeEdition=66&Notice=102&Opu-sOuvrage=addison-cat-47&modeofform="](https://web-bcul.unil.ch/RESSOURCE-BIB/fleuron/scripts/Edition.php?NoticeEdition=66&Notice=102&Opu-sOuvrage=addison-cat-47&modeofform=). Accessed 24 Jan. 2025.

Corsini, Silvio, editor. *Le Livre à Lausanne*. Payot Lausanne, 1993.

---. "Vingt-Cinq Ans d'Edition et d'Imprimerie à Lausanne au Siècle des Lumières : Le Libraire Marc-Michel Bousquet, 1736-1761." *Revue Historique Vaudoise*, vol. 120, 2012, pp. 23–53.

Coutaz, Gilbert. *Le Major Davel: Naissance du Premier Patriote Vaudois*. Château & Attinger, 2022.

Da Silva, Jorge Bastos. "Cato's Ghosts: Pope, Addison and Opposition Cultural Politics." *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2005, pp. 95–115.

Gamez, Luis R. "Histrionics and Authority: Colley Cibber and Performance-Influenced Variants in the 1713 *Cato Duodecimo*." *PBSA*, vol. 91, no. 1, 1997, pp. 5–29.

Gaskell, Philip. *A New Introduction to Bibliography*. Rev. ed., Clarendon, 1979.

Heeg, Stefanie and Ina Habermann. "Incognito – The 'Young Pretender' Charles Edward Stuart's Stay in Basel in the Mid-Eighteenth Century." <https://www.saute.ch/en/saute/75/incognito-the-young-pretender-charles-edward-stuarts-stay-in-basel-in-the-mid-eighteenth-century>. Accessed 4 Feb. 2025.

Jacob, Paul Lacroix. *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque Dramatique de M. de Soleinne*. Administration de l'Alliance des Arts, 1844.

Lecoultrre, Abel. "Un récit de l'entreprise de Davel." *Revue Historique Vaudoise*, vol. 50, 1942, pp. 31–33.

Loftis, John. *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England*. Clarendon, 1963.

Lovis, Béatrice. *La Vie Théâtrale et Lyrique à Lausanne et dans ses Environs dans la Seconde Moitié du XVIIIe siècle (1757-1798)*, PhD thesis. Lausanne, 2019.

Lumières.Lausanne, "Bons, François-Louis de (1723-1797)." <https://lumieres.unil.ch/fiches/bio/354/>. Accessed 25 Jan. 2025.

Mingard, J. D. "Ce que l'on sut à Genève de l'entreprise et de la mort du Major Davel." *Revue Historique Vaudoise*, vol. 38, 1930, pp. 273–285.

Pope, Alexander. *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, edited by George Sherburn. Clarendon, 1956.

Reymond, Maxime. "Les Lausannois et Davel jugés par un contemporain." *Revue Historique Vaudoise*, vol. 34, 1926, pp. 45–54, 76–87.

Scherrer, Antonin. *Davel: Des brumes de l'oubli aux feux de l'opéra*. Favre, 2020.

Appendix: Transcriptions and Translations of the Sonnets⁸

Transcription “Sonnet fait par un Quidame”

Sonnet fait par un Quidame
sur la Mort Tragique de Mons.r
le Major Davel de Cuilly

1.

Ou courras-tu Brutus, Brutus ou courras-tu?
Après un Vain Fantôme, une Ombre Passagerer,
Une Vaine Lüeur une Plume Legere,
Tu trahis ton courage, et ternis ta Vertu.

2.

Et par un Vain Projêt legerement Concüe
Tu te forges Brutus, une vaine Chimère
Un Eclat de Renom, de Vertu Temeraire
Tu t'abuses Brutus, ta Raison t'a Decüe

3.

Génereux Insensè, J'ay pitié de ta Gloire,
Devois-tu T'Immoler, & vivre dans l'Histoire?
Oüy par Trop de Vertu, Tu vas paroître Ingrat,

4.

En pensant t'acquerir une Gloire Infinie
Et voulant corriger, les abus de l'Etât
Tu pars en T'immolant, & L'honneur et la Vie.

⁸ Anonymous sonnets included in BCUL MS PTN-178514 (1741) pp. 29–30.

Modern English Translation⁹: “Sonnet fait par un Quidame”

An anonymous sonnet
On the tragic death of Monsieur
Major Davel of Cully

1.

Where will you run, Brutus? Brutus, where will you run?
After a futile ghost, a fleeting shadow,
An empty glow, a light feather.
You betray your courage and tarnish your virtue.

2.

And, by a vain and lightly conceived plan,
You forge for yourself, Brutus, a hollow fantasy,
A flash of fame, out of rash virtue.
You deceive yourself, Brutus. Your reason has disappointed you.

3.

Generous fool, I pity your glory,
Did you have to sacrifice yourself and live on in history?
Yes, with too much virtue, you will seem ungrateful

4.

In thinking that you will gain an infinite glory.
And, wishing to correct the abuses of the state,
You go and sacrifice yourself, honour and life.

⁹ My translation.

Transcription: “Autre Sonnet Fait à la Loüange”

Autre Sonnet Fait à la Loüange
et en faveur du Major Davel

1.

Que ton Bonheur est Grand, qu'il est digne d'Envie
Davel et que ta mort, va faire de Jaloux
Puisque certainement, Il est cent Fois plus Doux,
De mourir comme Toy, que de rester Envie.

2.

Tu Joüys par la Mort, D'une Gloire Infinie
Les Petits et les Grands, generalement Tous,
Exhaltent tes Vertus, et en parlent à Tous Coups
Et ta Reputation, N'a pû être Flêtrie.

3.

Tu auras seurement, Part à l'Eternité
Ton Illustré merite, Ta Grande Fermetè
Et Toutes Tes Vertus, Brilleront dans L'Histoire.

4.

Du Courage des Suisses, quàsy abasourdy
Tu as avec Eclât, Relevè la Grande Gloire,
Puis qu'on revit Jamais, un Coup aussy Hardy.

Modern English Translation¹⁰: “Autre Sonnet Fait à la Loüange”

Another sonnet in praise
And in favour of Major Davel

1.

How great is your happiness, how worthy of envy,
Davel, and how your death will make people jealous,
Since it is certainly a hundred times sweeter
To die like you than to stay alive.

2.

Through death, you enjoy infinite glory.
Young and old, generally everyone,
Exalt your virtues and speak of them at all times,
And your reputation has not faded.

3.

You will surely have a share in eternity.
Your illustrious merit, your great steadfastness,
And all your virtues, will shine in history.

4.

The courage of the Swiss, almost speechless
You have brilliantly lifted the great glory,
Since such a bold action will never be seen again.

¹⁰ My translation.

