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Autore	Helvétius Claude Adrien
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Sommario/riassunto	This second volume of the Correspondance générale d'Helvétius covers the period of the publication and reception of Helvétius' controversial first work, De l'Esprit (1758). It begins with a letter of January 1757, in which Helvétius recounts the attempt by Damiens on the life of Louis XV, and ends in December 1760 when the author, having been attacked on the stage of the Théâtre-Français but eulogized in foreign journals, is contemplating voluntary exile. In the meantime De l'Esprit provoked an unprecedented outcry from the court and from the religious and civil authorities. Denigrated as the epitome of all dangerous philosophic trends of the age, condemned as atheistic, materialistic, sacrilegious, immoral, and subversive, it enjoyed an immense succès de scandale.

Rather than examining the puzzles and paradoxes which surround the affaire de l'Esprit, this volume presents the documents upon which solutions may be based. Helvétius' own letters, often written hastily, under stress, and in fear they might be opened by the Cabinet noir, are less revealing than the letters between other protagonists in the affaire: the Cardinal de Bernis and the Duke de Choiseul, Jean-Omer Joly de Fleury, Malesherbes, Saint-Florentin, Tercier, and Louis xv himself. It is these letters, together with the appendixes containing edicts, retractions, and condemnations that shed new light not only on the development of the affaire but also on the complex workings of the ancien regime
