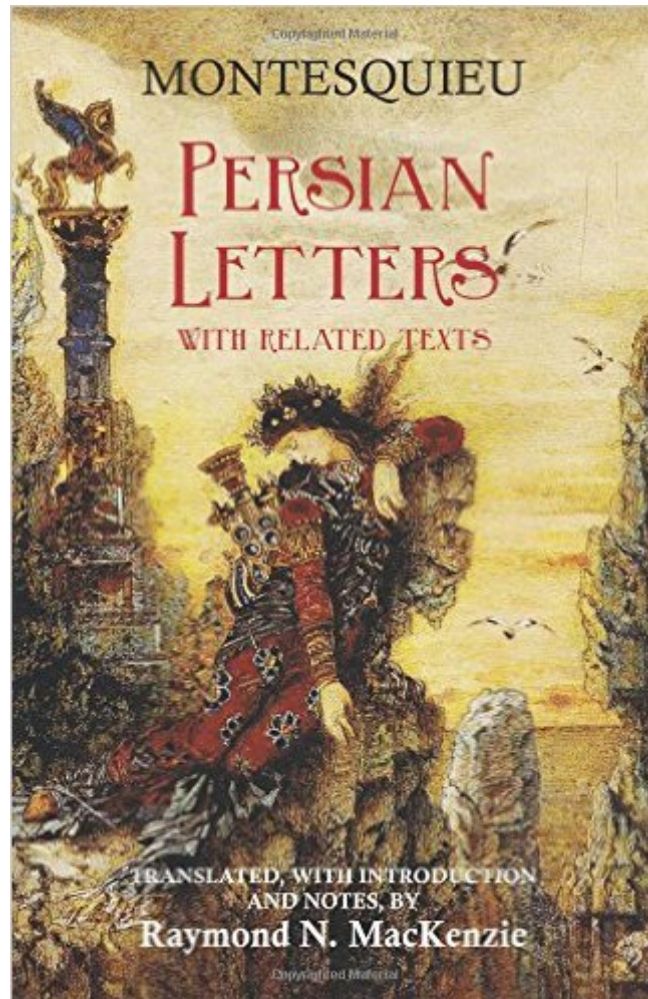


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Synopsis

A classic work of the European Enlightenment--and one of the most popular, if scandalous, in its day--the *Persian Letters* captures, in an engaging epistolary format, the transformational spirit of the era. Amid an ongoing tale rife with sex, violence, and wit, the work addresses a diverse range of topics from human nature and the origins of society, to the nature and role of religious belief, the role of women, statecraft, justice, morality, and human identity. With skill and artistry, Raymond MacKenzie's stunning new translation accurately reflects the mood and character of the work. In his richly conceived Introduction, MacKenzie seamlessly weaves together an overview of the period with details of Montesquieu's life, including the influences that inspired the *Persian Letters*, the character and power of the book, and its reception. This edition also includes a Calendar of the *Persian Letters*, a Bibliography of Works in English, and a Bibliography of Works in French. Related texts provide insight into the legacy of the *Persian Letters*. They include selections from works by George Lyttelton, Voltaire, Oliver Goldsmith, and Maria Edgeworth.

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Customer Reviews

Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Br  re et de Montesquieu (1689-1755) was a French lawyer, man of letters, and political philosopher during the Enlightenment. He is famous for his articulation of the theory of separation of powers in government, articulated in his *The Spirit of the Laws*. This book is a fictional exchange of correspondence between two Persian travelers in

Europe; but it provides Montesquieu ample opportunity to express his thoughts about a variety of topics. One of the travelers observes, "The Pope is the chief of the Christians; he is an ancient idol, worshipped now from habit. Once he was formidable even to princes, for he would depose them as easily as our magnificent sultans depose kings. But nobody fears him any longer. Bishops are men of the Law who are subordinate to him. When they are assembled together, they compose articles of belief, like him; when they are on their own, virtually their only function is to dispense people from obedience to the Christian Law. For you must know that this religion is burdened with an infinity of very difficult observances. [So] if you want to marry when the Christian Law forbids it, you go to a bishop or Pope, who immediately gives a dispensation. There is an infinite number of theologians, and they raise thousands of new questions about religion among themselves. They are left to argue for a long time, and the war goes on until a decision arrives to end it. So that I can assure you that no kingdom has ever had as many civil wars as the kingdom of Christ." (Pg.

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