

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BARAT, Pierre-Martin

Paris 1735/36 – Nîmes 11.IV.1787

Bara, Barat, Barrat, Berat etc. His dates have only recently been established, from the death certificate in Nîmes (Saint-Castor) published by Lassalle in 2005 (p. 52). The burial entry gives his age and describes him as a native of Paris. Little is known of the origins of this artist who worked in oil as well as pastel. He advertised in the *Affiches de Lyon* (13.VI.1759), stating that he had been a pupil in the cabinet du roi and at the Académie royale, under Portail and Boucher, and that he had worked for the court for the Dauphine and Mesdames de France, and had executed the portraits of various important personages. The same advertisement mentions his method of fixing pastel which “le rend aussi solide que la peinture à l’huile en conservant même le coloris brillant et la fraîcheur naturelle des couleurs”.

He was in Marseille also in 1759, and is probably the author of the lost pastel of a mother and child exhibited in Marseille in 1906 as by “Bara” (the reference in Masson 1931 to a pastellist active in Marseille in the eighteenth century has ended up in AKL as of a pastellist active in 1701), and described as evoking nature with “tant de fraîcheur et de grâce”. From about 1761 he worked in Lyon where he became professeur at the Académie des sciences, belles-lettres et arts de Lyon. There was a trip to Spain c.1771, followed by this advertisement in the *Affiches de Lyon* (no. 27, 3.VII.1771, p. 128) which appeared on his return to Lyon:

Le Sieur Barat, Peintre de Portrait en pastel & miniature, qui a eu l'honneur d'exercer ses talents avec succès dans cette Ville, il y a dix ans, maintenant de retour d'Espagne, ose espérer du Public la même confiance dont il a bien voulu l'honorer anciennement. Il prend des Elèves pour le Dessin. Il est logé dans la maison de M Orsel, quartier S. Clair, près de celle de M. Morant, rue Royale, au troisième étage, du côté de la même rue.

In 1773, in Lyon, Barat made a portrait of Lekain (of which there are numerous pastel versions); Voltaire obtained his through the comte d'Argental, and kept it over his bed. Barat's friendship with Lekain may have predated this, and he may be the artist referred to in an earlier letter from Voltaire to Lekain (30.VI.1764), although this is more likely to refer to Lenoir (*q.v.*).

In 1775, Barat went to Ferney where he made several portraits to the delight of Voltaire, who reported his protégé to Catherine the Great (28.VI.1775):

Un très bon peintre, nommé Barrat, arrive chez moi: il me trouve écrivant devant votre portrait; il me peint dans cette attitude, et il a l'audace de vouloir mettre cette fantaisie aux pieds de Votre Majesté Impériale. Il l'encadre et la fait partir. Je ne puis que vous supplier de pardonner à la témérité de ce peintre. C'est un homme qui d'ailleurs a le talent de faire en un quart d'heure ce que les autres ne feraient qu'en huit jours; il peindrait une galerie en moins de temps qu'on y donnerait le bal. Il a surtout l'art de faire parfaitement ressembler. Je ne lui connais de défaut que sa témérité de prendre Votre Majesté Impériale pour juge de ses talents. Peut-être aurez vous l'indulgence de faire placer ce tableau dans quelque coin, et vous direz en passant,

Voilà celui qui m'adore pour moi même, comme les quietistes adorent Dieu. Vos sujets sont plus heureux que moi, ils vous adorent et vous voient.

She replied from Moscow, 23.VII.1775 [3.VIII.1775 new style], promising to put Barat's portrait opposite Voltaire's bust provided it was “ressemblant”:

Monsieur, Votre portrait peint par Barrat ou tel autre sera le très bien venu, pourvu qu'il soit ressemblant, je le placerai non dans un coin mais dans mon palais de Tsarsko-Sélo, vis à vis de Votre buste. Je suis fâché que le peintre Barrat ayant fini Votre portrait n'aye pas eu le tems de tomber ici pendant les fêtes de la paix, la facilité de son pinceau auroit eu dequoi s'exercer, et particulièrement mardi passé l'occasion en étoit belle.

Voltaire repeated the same plea on 4.IX.1775 (perhaps crossing with her reply), and again apologised to the Empress in a mock-confession of 18.X.1775: “Je demande pardon d'avoir laissé partir le tableau d'un peintre de la ville de Lyon.” Voltaire also ordered a version for Johann Rudolf Sinner, who, Constant d'Hermandes had told him, was collecting portraits of authors for his library (“toile carrée, de 2½ pieds”; letter of 9.V.1775). Others were less enthused; while recognising that Voltaire's face was “full of vivacity and spirit”, Henry Matthews (*Diary of an invalid*, London, 1820, p. 359) thought Lekain “a wretched performance in crayons”. There are numerous versions of the Voltaire, some even being published as by Jean Huber (*q.v.*); it is unlikely that all are original, although the quality of the autograph repetitions must have been variable.

The originals of both Lekain and Voltaire seem to have remained with the artist; after his death, his widow advertised in the *Journal de Nîmes* (3.VII.1788),

Il y a actuellement à vendre à Nîmes, chez Mme veuve Barrat, deux tableaux originaux de feu son mari, de 31 pouces de hauteur sur 21 de largeur, dont l'un représente Voltaire et l'autre Lekain dans le rôle de Néron. Ces deux portraits faits d'après nature, sont au pastel, sur velin, sous glace avec de beaux cadres dorés. Plusieurs amateurs de la capitale et des provinces avaient toujours voulu les garder... M. Barrat avait été exprès à Ferney pour peindre Voltaire et il avait peint Lekain à Lyon.

By 1778 Barat was in Nîmes, where he became peintre de la ville. His wife, Antoinette-Madeleine Allard de Retel (1745–1826), was a native of Lyon where they may have been married; she remained in Nîmes until her death on 20.I.1826 aged 80. Several children are recorded in Nîmes parish records: a daughter, Marie-Anne-Magdeleine, baptised in Nîmes 18.X.1779, when Barat was described simply as “peintre”; their son Jean-Louis was born 11.X.1781 and baptised five days later, the godparents being Jean Feuillade and Louise Blazin; his father being described as “professeur de l'Académie de Lyon” (he was married in Nîmes in 1805); another son, François-Louis-Gaspard, was baptised in Nîmes 6.I.1783, his father then described as “professeur de l'Académie de Nîmes”. Barat made portraits of several local dignitaries, notably the secrétaire of the Académie de Nîmes, Jean-François Séguier (surely the pastel mentioned in the sitter's

posthumous inventory), as well as a commission from the town for a lifesize portrait en pied in oil of Louis XVI for the town hall (600 livres in 1784).

Ratouis de Limay described the portrait of Voltaire at the 1908 exhibition as “ne manquant pas d'expression et de vigueur”, while that of Lekain was “d'une facture plus lourde et d'un dessin moins sûr”. Barat's pastel technique is characterised by a somewhat broad style, with quite visible hatchings of a draughtsman rather than the blended work of a colourist. His palette tends to the warm oranges and light blues, and the shadows on folds of cloth seem to be exaggerated. His drawing is not always accurate, and there is a wide range of quality as well as approach in the few works we have – indeed it is difficult to detect the same hands in works so different as the portraits of M. Holland and of Mme Lacroix-Laval. One speculates from some of the compositions that Barat may have encountered Bernard in Marseille.

Bibliography

AKL; Auquier 1906; Bénézit; Clauzel 1904; Lassalle 2005, pp. 51ff; Masson 1931, p. 47; Ratouis de Limay 1929e; Ratouis de Limay 1946; Saur

Pastels

J.124.101 Pierre DARDALHION (1722–1770), architecte à Nîmes, ami de Séguier, pstl (Nîmes, musée du Vieux-Nîmes). Lit.: Lassalle 2005, p. 53 n.r.

Etienne DELESSERT (*Paris, Christie's, 15.XI.2006, Lot 156 repr., attr.*), v. *Éc. fr.*

J.124.103 Madeleine Gaussin [Mlle GAUSSIN, née Jeanne-Catherine Gossem (1711–1767), dite à tort Madeleine, tragédienne], pstl/ppr, 75x63, sd ← “P Barat/1760” (Bern, Dobiaschofsky, 11.V.1990, Lot ?12/?136 n.r., SwIf3500; PC; Paris, Artcurial, 23.IX.2024, Lot 135 repr., est. €4–6000; Paris, Artcurial, 12.II.2025, Lot 284 repr., est. €2–3000) pv



J.124.104 Mr HOLLAND, de Lyon, en habit bleu, avec son chien, pstl/ppr, 68.5x57, sd 1772 (Saint Jean; London, Christie's, 12.II.1954, Lot 57 repr.; Wengraf. Luzern, Fischer, 1988, Lot 2066 repr.; 7–10.XI.1989, Lot 26 repr., as of Holland, €3872). Lit.: Ingamells 2004, p. 259, s.n. Charles Holland (1733–1769), actor, ? Øδ



J.124.106 Mme de LACROIX-LAVAL [?née Catherine-Élisabeth Robin d'Orléans (– p.1814), ∞ 1770 Jean de Lacroix-Laval], pstl/ppr bl., 100x81, sd v “Barat pinxit 1775” (famille Lacroix-Laval, château de Charbonnières, Lyon; 1954. New York, Christie’s, 11.I.1979, Lot 123 repr., inconnue, \$820. Zanchi, Lausanne. Galerie Frédérick Chanoît, Paris, 2002; Paris, Bailly Pommeret-Planet, 25.VI.2007, Lot 61 repr., est. €2–3000, €3400). Lit.: Didier Bodart, *The Zanchi Collection*, Rome, 1985, no. 279 Φσ



J.124.111 Henri-Louis Cain, dit LEKAIN (1727–1778), dans le rôle de Néron de *Britannicus* ~grav. XIX^e Zéphérin Belliard; Delpech
J.124.112 ~version, pstl, 60x50, ns (Ferney). Lit.: Étienne de Jouy, *L’Ermite en province*, XCI, 30.XII.1819, p. 449 n.r.; Choudin 1994, fig. 12; Apgar 1999, pl. VII φβσ



J.124.114 ~version, pstl/pchm, 47x36 (Paris, Comédie-Française, I 0329) Φβ



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J.124.117 ~version, pstl (PC). Lit.: Paris, 23.II.2005 cat., n.r.

J.124.118 ~version, pstl/ppr, 65x54, sd v “P. Barat 1773” (André Jarry 1908. Orléans, Savot, 19.V.1988, with pendant of Voltaire. Vendôme, Rouillac, Turquin, 24.XI.1991, with pendant of Voltaire. Rambouillet, 2.IV.1995. Argenteuil, Régis-Thiollet, 6.II.2001, repr., est. ₣20–25,000, ₣31,000). Exh.: Paris 1908c, no. 558 [?] Φβ



=?LEKAIN, pstl (Moreau-Chaslon 1888). Exh.: Paris 1888b, no. 289 n.r. anon., v. J.9.20342

J.124.12 ~version, pstl, 62x51 (Paris, Beussant Lefèvre, 4.II.1998, Lot 33 repr., Éc. fr., est. ₣4–6000; Paris, Drouot, Artus Enchères, 23.II.2005, Lot 5 repr., est. €2–3000, €2500) φβ



J.124.122 ~cop., pstl, 63x52 (Issoudun, Antoine Aguttes, 22.XII.2015, Lot 47 repr., anon., inconnu, est. €200–300) φκ

J.124.125 Jean-François SÉGUIER (1703–1784), antiquaire et naturaliste, secrétaire perpétuel de l’Académie royale de Nîmes, pstl, s v “Barat”, 1778 (Nîmes, musée du vieux Nîmes; dep.: Muséum d’histoire naturelle. =?Ségurier; inv. p.m., “portrait de Segurier au pastel”. anonym). Exh.: Nîmes 1982, no. 60; Nîmes 2003. Lit.: Clauzel 1904, repr. opp. p. 560; Lassalle 2005, p. 56 repr; François Pugnère, “Inventaire du cabinet de Jean-François

Ségurier vers 1794”, *Liame*, 26, 2016; Michel 2026, fig. 48 Φ



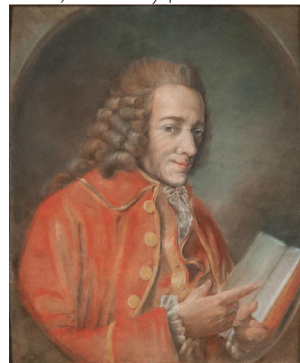
~cop., Numa Boucoiran pnt., 1852 (Nîmes, Académie, comm. académiciens)

J.124.128 François-Marie Arouet, dit VOLTAIRE (1694–1778), tenant de la main gauche un livre ouvert qu’il montre de la main droite, pstl, 85x55, inscr. verso “F.-M. ARROUËT DE VOLTAIRE âgé de 80 ans, peint d’après nature à Ferney” (André Jarry 1908. Vendôme, Rouillac, Turquin, 24.XI.1991, Lot 2 n.r., ₣50,000; with pendant of Lekain). Exh.: Paris 1908c, no. 558 Φα



J.124.129 =?pstl (Moreau-Chaslon 1888, with anon. pendant of Lekain). Paris 1888b, no. 13 n.r.

J.124.13 =?pstl, 85x55 (Nabon de Blois. Montbazon, château d’Artigny, Rouillac, 7.VI.2015, Lot 104 repr., as from Paris 1908 exh., est. €3000) φα



J.124.132 ~repl. (Johann Rudolf Sinner)

J.124.133 ~repl. (d’Argental)

~grav. B.-L. Henriquez (“d’après la copie appartenant à d’Argental”)

J.124.134 =?pstl (d’Argental; legs: Mme Vimeux; acqu. Jean Clogenson 1826)

J.124.135 ~repl. (Catherine the Great)

J.124.136 ~version, Voltaire, assise, tenant un volume de *L’Année littéraire*, habit rouge, 56x60 ov. [sic] (Hyacinthe-François-Joseph, comte d’Espinoy; Paris, 14.I.–9.II.1850, Lot 924). Lit.: B&W 531, ?attr. [new attr.]

J.124.137 ~version, Voltaire (peint vers 1775), vu a mi-corps, de $\frac{3}{4}$, tenant dans sa main g. *L'Année littéraire*, de Fréron, qu'il désigne avec l'index de la main dr. Vêtu d'un habit rouge à galons et boutons d'or, perruque poudrée, pstl, 63x52 ov. (Arsène Houssaye; vente p.m., Paris, Drouot, Chevallier, 22–23.V.1896, Lot 206, éc. fr., fr140)

J.124.138 ~?version, as Voltaire, in red dress (J. L. Rutley, 5 Great Newport Street, London; London, Christie's, 17.IV.1914, Lot 1 n.r., £1/14/-; Warner. London, Christie's, 31.VII.1916, Lot 115, 8 gns; Welton, both as by Coytel) [new attr., ?]

J.124.139 ~version, pstl, 65x53, inscr. *verso* "...peint d'après nature à Ferney/1774" (Orléans, Savot, 19.V.1988, with Lekain pendant) Φα



J.124.141 ~version, pstl (Paris, .VII.2001, as inconnu, anon., n.r.)

J.124.142 ~version, pstl/ppr, 63x52 (Geneva, mA, inv. 1938-1; dep.: Les Délices. Jean-Jacques de Sellon, Geneva?; de Loriol, Geneva? Antiquaire Laurent Rehfoos; acqu. 1938). Lit.: Geneva 1974, p. 190 (iconographie), no. 20 repr., as by Huber; Buysens 1988, no. 152, as by Huber, c.1765 [new attr.] φασ



J.124.144 ~version, Voltaire lisant Sophocle, pstl, 63x53 ov. (Paris, Drouot, Delorme, Collin du Bocage, 21.III.2007, Lot 53 repr., as by Huber, est. €12–18,000; Paris, Drouot, Delorme, Collin du Bocage, 23.XI.2007, Lot 10 repr., est. €10–15,000, b/i; Paris, Drouot, Delorme, Collin du Bocage, 12.XII.2008, Lot 584 repr., est. €5–8,000; Paris, Drouot, Delorme, Collin du Bocage, 16.XII.2009, Lot 5 repr., est. €3–4,000) [new attr.] φα



J.124.146 Jean-Louis WAGNIÈRE (1739–1802), secrétaire de Voltaire, pstl (Ferney) [?attr.] φασ



J.124.148 Mme Jean-Louis WAGNIÈRE (∞ 1763), née Rose-Françoise-Suzanne Corboz, pstl (Ferney) [cf. Éc. fr.]

J.124.149 Homme assis, pstl, 60x51, sd → "Barat. Pinx/1776" (Amsterdam, Sotheby's, 7.V.1993, Lot 50 repr., est. D/6–8000. Fontainebleau, Osenat, 26.XI.2017, Lot 180 repr., est. €1500–2500; Fontainebleau, Osenat, 28.I.2018, Lot 164 repr., est. €800–1200, €813; Galerie de Crécy) Φ



J.124.152 Dame de qualité, 59x48, sd "Barat f. 1758" (Paris, Drouot, Paris, Drouot, Ader, Picard, 6.VI.1966, Lot 1 n.r., fr1150)

J.124.1525 Dame, pstl (Messrs Dowdeswell 1903). Exh.: London 1903, no. 258 n.r.

J.124.153 Une mère et son enfant, pstl. Exh.: Marseille 1906. Lit.: Auquier 1906, p. 166 n.r., as by Bara