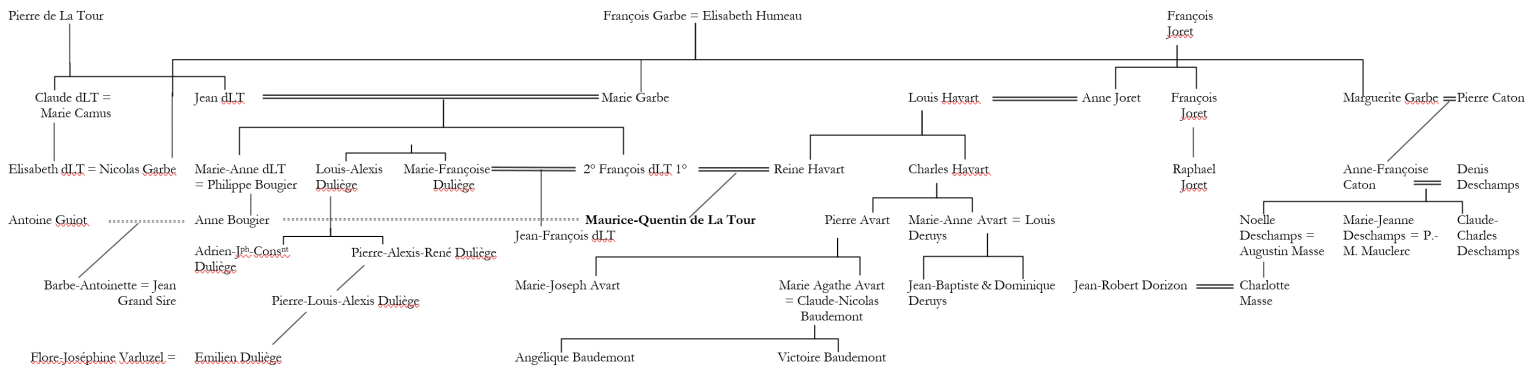


La Tour's cousin Anne Bougier

NEIL JEFFARES

THE SAD STORY OF LA TOUR'S COUSIN¹ has been told on numerous occasions, including by me, either erroneously or at least incompletely. For reasons that will be obvious, some parts of it will always remain unknowable, but a group of documents discovered in the last few weeks while researching a different matter merit revisiting the whole episode. As usual reference should be made to my [chronological table](#), where transcriptions (but not facsimiles) of the documents may be found in chronological sequence together with full references. There is also a useful genealogy for [La Tour](#), with this simplified [version](#):



Abbreviated pedigree of the La Tour and related families

The story which appears in every account of La Tour's life concerns his liaison with his cousin Anne Bougier, her pregnancy and the birth of her illegitimate child, for which as we know La Tour felt permanently guilty, and for which he made amends through his philanthropic donations many years later. The basic facts are found in the judicial interrogation of Anne, a document discovered by président Combier and published by him in *La Petite Revue* in 1874, and subsequently by Charles Desmaze in his *Reliquaire de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour* in 1874 (the original documents were presented to the musée at Saint-Quentin, but lost after being sent to Maubeuge during the First World War). This is his transcription:

Du novembre 1723. A comparu Anne Bougier, âgée de 22 ans, fille de Philippe Bougier, chantre en l'église métropolitaine de Sens, où il demeure à cause de son emploi, et d'Anne de La Tour, sa mère, avec laquelle elle demeurait en cette ville [Laon], depuis huit mois, et auparavant, demeurant l'une et l'autre, sa mère et elle en la ville de Saint-Quentin, n'ayant, non plus que sa mère, d'autre métier que celui de tricotter des bas.

A dit: qu'elle était née à La Fère, mais que sa famille était originaire de Laon. Feu Nicolas Bougier, Chantre en l'Église Collégiale de Laon, étoit son ayeul paternel, et feu Jean de La Tour, maître maçon à Laon, étoit son ayeul maternel.

A dit: qu'elle s'étoit bien comportée, n'avoit jamais eu d'habitudes criminelles avec aucun homme, ni garçon, à l'exception qu'elle s'est abandonnée trois fois au nommé *Quentin de La Tour*, garçon de dix-neuf

¹ This essay first appeared on 25.vi.2022 as an update of Jeffares 2016j, incorporating material from that and substantially extending it with a discussion of Barbe-Antoinette. It may be cited as Neil Jeffares, "La Tour's cousin Anne Bougier", *Pastels & pastellists*, http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTour_Bougier.pdf and is referred to within the *Dictionary* as Jeffares 2022c.

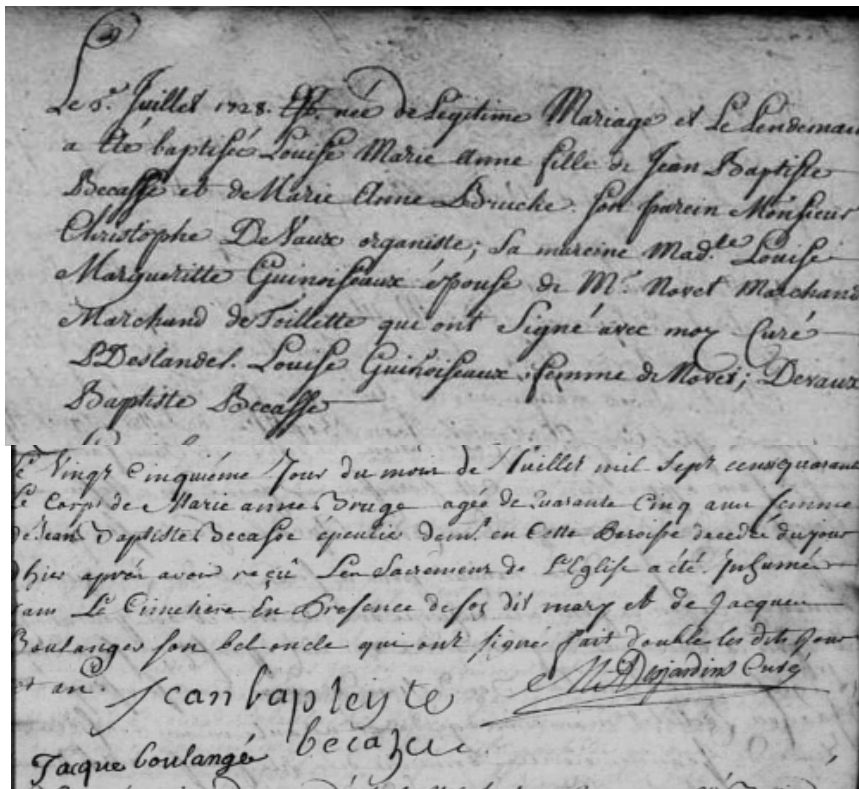
ans, peintre de son métier, demeurant à Saint-Quentin, son cousin germain, et cela, dans le temps qu'elle demeurait avec sa mère à Saint-Quentin.

Interrogée si c'est des œuvres dudit de La Tour, son cousin, qu'elle est devenue enceinte de l'enfant mort, dont elle est accouchée le 15 août 1723, après avoir cédé sa grossesse, a dit que oui, qu'elle s'est crue hydropique, parce qu'après avoir eu ses habitudes avec le dit de La Tour, elle a eu ses purgations ordinaires huit jours après et ne les a plus vues depuis.

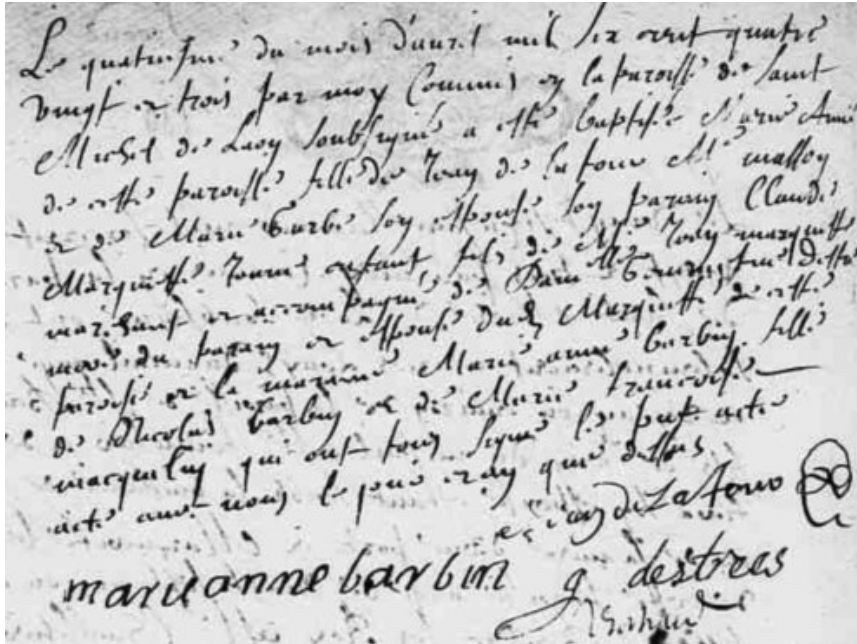
Anne Bougier, ne sachant signer, est déclarée atteinte et convaincue d'avoir tenu sa grossesse cédée jusqu'au jour de ses couches et, pour ce fait, condamnée à être admonestée en la chambre du Conseil à ne plus récidiver, et en 3 livres d'amende, applicables aux pauvres de l'Hôpital de Laon.

Lapauze (1919) went so far as to state that she was “faite prisonnière” by La Tour, and that evidently was the view of the tribunal reflected in her punishment (concealment of pregnancy was regarded as infanticide under an edict of 1566). According to her baptismal record (8 mars 1700), only located in 2019, she was in fact 23½, four and a half years older than La Tour: a difference in age making this defence somewhat less plausible than if he had been older.

No doubt the pathos of the story inspired genealogists to try to complete the picture, not always helpfully. The normally reliable Maurice Tourneux this time was responsible for repeating information he received from Jules Hachet in 1904, subsequently widely repeated by modern authors – including by Christine Debrie in 1991 (and of course still polluting genealogy websites). According to the story the unfortunate girl did marry, soon after the affair with her cousin, and settled down with her husband, a workman called Bécasse, in the parish of Saint-Thomas in Saint-Quentin where she died in 1740. I compounded this by finding an earlier register entry for the baptism of a child from this legitimate marriage, in 1728. But examining these entries carefully, they don't refer to a Marie-Anne Bougier at all, but to a Marie-Anne Bruge or Bruche: the writing in each case is quite clear. It's neither a likely phonetic mistranscription nor a likely pseudonym if she wanted to disguise her past; nor do the witnesses seem to have any connection with the pastellist's family. And the age given at her death was 45, so that she would have been born in 1695.

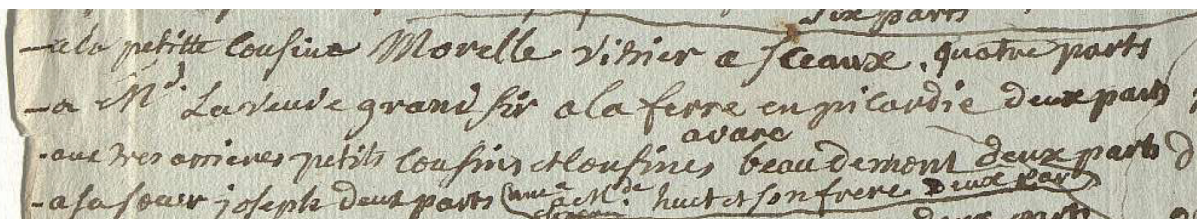


In 2016 I made one further discovery, which I find almost as disconcerting: as we know she was the daughter of the pastellist's aunt, Marie-Anne de La Tour, who married a Philippe Bougier, a fellow chante in the church. The marriage took place in Laon in 1695 (17 May) when Philippe, a widower, was 26 years old (which was one of the reasons I continued to believe Tourneux's identification). But I've since located Marie-Anne de La Tour's baptismal entry:



She married Bougier when she was barely twelve years old. This was no dynastic match in which contracts were entered between children to be consummated when they reached adulthood. There is likely to have been a pressing reason, but whether it was an unrecorded sibling of Anne Bougier the registers do not vouchsafe.

Ever since the publication of La Tour's wills, there has been something of a puzzle concerning the beneficiaries he describes as his "cousins", almost all of whom I identified in 2016. But one of beneficiaries named in his later (1784) will that remained stubbornly unexplained was a "Mme La veuve Grand Sir, a La Ferre en Picardie" (La Fère).



Despite spending a vast amount of time in numerous archives and websites trying to unravel this in 2016, I stumbled on the answer only in June 2022 – in the parish registers of Saint-Montain, La Fère, when I was researching something quite different. This was evidence that there was indeed a Mme Grand Sire, or Grandsir, in La Fère, of an age that meant she might well have been a widow still there in 1784. Her name was “Barbe-Antoine Dio—” when, on 23 December 1750, she gave birth to a boy called Jean after his father, also Jean Grandsir, a tisserand in La Fère:

Le vingt trois a été baptisé par moi chanoine Curé
 Doyen soussigné Jean fils de Jean Grand sire tisserand
 en cette ville et de barbe antoine dio — son épouse
 le parain Jean du Notion la maraine francoise
 cheval, ledit baptisé né le jour meme. De Nelle

Le vingt trois a été baptisé par moi chanoine Curé Doyen soussigné Jean fils de Jean Grand sire tisserand en cette ville et de barbe antoine dio — son épouse le parain Jean du Notion la maraine francoise cheval, ledit baptisé né le jour meme

signé: De Nelle

It was evident that the curate had not been able to get the mother's name correctly, but it was sufficient to make me return to the search for more details. This yielded the entry for the marriage of Barbe-Antoinette and her husband, Jean Grand Sire, tisserand, the previous year (1749), in Laon, Saint-Jean-au-Bourg:

Le vingt Janvier mil sept cent quarante Neuf après avoir
 publié les trois bans de mariage en deux Dimanches et une fête entre
 Jean Grand Sire ^{homme veuf} fils de Jean Grand Sire Maître Tisserand, et de Margte
 Guilbert dem' a Aubegast diocese de Roüen, d'une Part ^{age de 38 ans} et de Barbe
 Antoinette Guiot fille d'Anne Bougier dem' a Laon de cette Paroisse
 d'autre part ^{age de 24 ans} Sans qu'il soit venu a ma connoissance aucun empeschem'.
 qui puit retarder la celebration dudit mariage Je Soussigné Jean
 Antoine Huët prêtre licentié en Theologie de la faculté de Paris
 Curé de la Paroisse de St. Jean au Bourg de la Ville de Laon ay recüs
 de Jean Grand Sire et de Barbe Antoinette Guiot les promesses et
 Consentemens de Mariage et l'ay Celebré en l'Eglise de laditte
 Paroisse avec les Ceremonies accoutumés en presence de Jean Charles
 Marteau Clerc laïc de la paroisse de St. Michel, d'Antoine Larmois Clerc
 laïc de laditte paroisse de St. Jean au Bourg de Nicolas Taitet M. Cornetier
 et de Felix Bonbrion Vigneront dems tous en cette Ville sous signés avec
 l'epoux et l'epouse qui ont signés aussi le Jour et aux dits

Jean Grand sire barbe antoinette guiot Marteau
 Felix bon Larmois.
 Huët Curé

Le vingt Janvier mil sept cent quarante neuf après avoir publié les trois bans de mariage en deux Dimanches et une fête entre Jean Grand Sire <homme veuf> fils de Jean Grand Sire Maître Tisserand, et de Margte Guilbert dem' a Aubegast, diocese de Roüen, d'une Part <age de 38 ans> et de Barbe Antoinette Guiot fille d'Anne Bougier dem' a Laon de Cette Paroisse d'autre part <age de 24 ans> Sans qu'il soit venu a ma connoissance aucun empeschem' qui puit retarder la Celebration dudit mariage Je Soussigné Jean Antoine Huët prêtre licentié en Theologie de la faculté de Paris, Curé de la Paroisse de St Jean au Bourg de la Ville de Laon, ay recüs de Jean Grand Sire et de Barbe Antoinette Guiot les promesses et Consentemens de Mariage et l'ay Celebré en l'Eglise de laditte Paroisse avec les Ceremonies accoutumés en presence de Jean Charles Marteau clerc laïc de la paroisse de St Michel, d'Antoine Larmois Clerc laïc de laditte paroisse de St Jean au

Bourg de Nicolas Taitart M^e bonnetier et de Felix Bon bion Vigneront, dem^s tous en cette Ville soussigné avec L'Epoux et l'Epouse qui onts signés aussi le Jour et an Susdits

signé: jean grandsire barbe antoinette guiot Marteau
tetard felix bion Larmois
huet curé

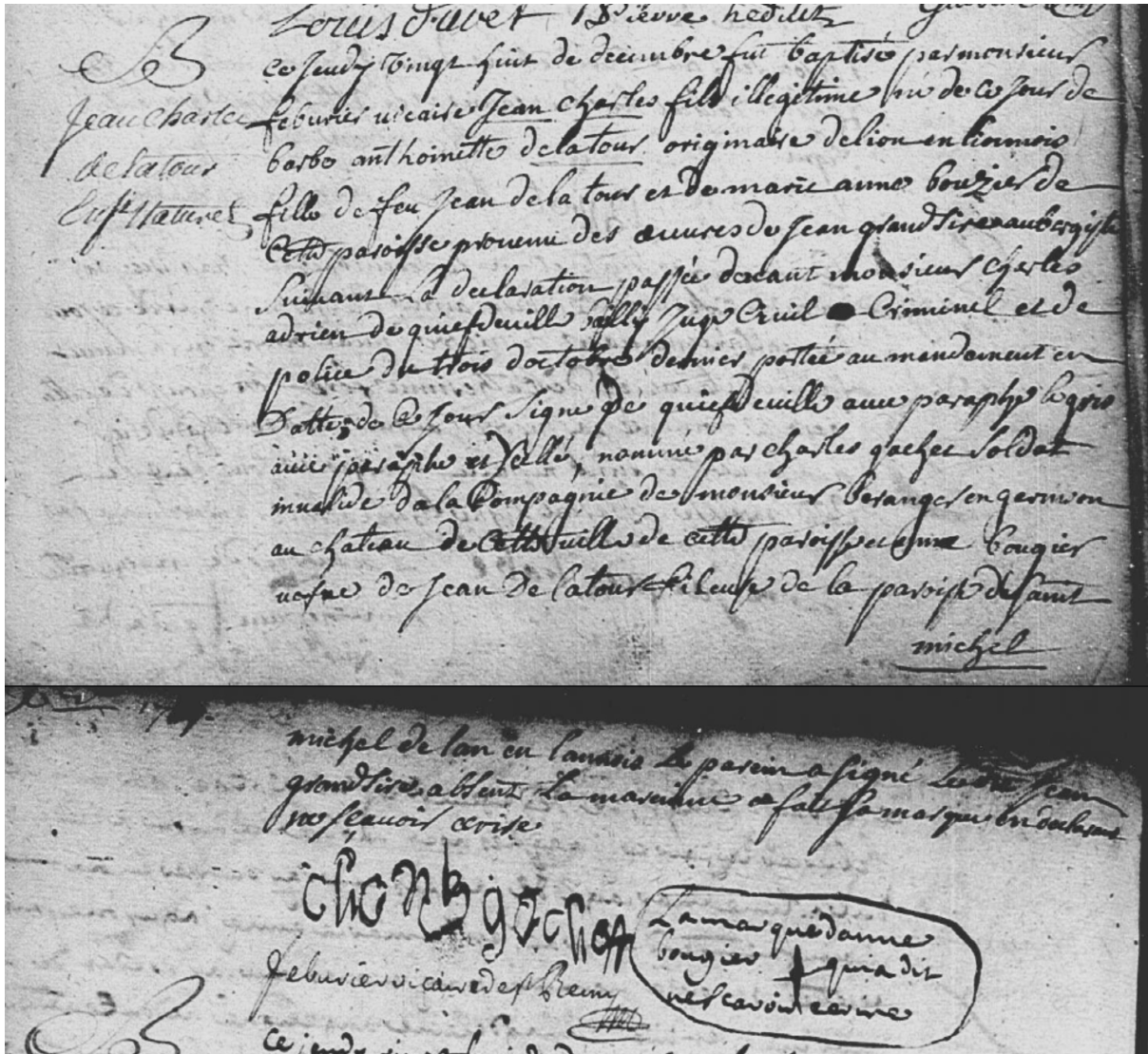
From which we can see that Mme veuve Grand Sire was in fact Anne Bougier's second child, born almost certainly in 1724, the year after the stillbirth of La Tour's child that caused the trial discussed above. But the format of the entry is far from standard, and the acte leaves open many questions. Minor children (any unmarried person under 25) could only marry with their parents' consent (and normally their presence at the wedding), so it is extraordinary that Barbe-Antoinette Guiot, aged 24, married without any father being named, nor it seems with her mother present (or identified as deceased). Evidently she was illegitimate, the father unknown. Was her mother dead by the date of the marriage? Could "Guiot" come from the name of a biological father, a stepfather or a protector? (It seems possible that this was Gérard Guiot or Diot (both names appear in the records), born 1680, a maître boulanger or pâtissier in Laon; on 23 November 1705 at Sainte-Benoîte, Laon he married a Barbe-Nicolle l'Eully.)

Further research in La Fère registers produced another baffling document: Barbe-Antoinette's acte de décès, in 1792, claiming to be aged 83 which would make her far too old as well as contradicting the 1750 acte de mariage.

Sur la déclaration a nous faite par la citoyenne Marie Auteffe, demeurant à l'hospital des pauvres de cette ville, en qualité de surveillante desdits pauvres, agée de cinquante trois ans; que la nommée Antoinette Diot, veuve de Jean Grand Sire, cavalier de maréchaussée du Soissonnais à la résidence de La Fère, agée de quatre vingt trois ans natif de Laon, chef-lieu du département était décédée du jour d'hier, à cinq heures et demie du soir audit hôpital...

Was this "veuve de Jean Grand Sire" a different woman? I don't think it can be as the name Diot had already appeared, she is described as from Laon and Jean Grand Sire is not a common name in La Fère.

I then uncovered yet another piece in the jigsaw, this time in the parish register of Saint-Rémy, Dieppe (surprisingly distant from the other towns we are concerned with: Saint-Quentin and Laon are within a 25 km radius of La Fère, while Dieppe is 200 km away), two years before Barbe-Antoinette and Jean Grand Sire's marriage of 1749, once again filled with inaccuracies, whether erroneous or deliberately intended at concealment, but with sufficient contiguity to the truth to tell its own story:



Ce jedy vingt-huit de decembre fut baptisé par monsieur Feburier vicair Jean Charles fils illegitime né de ce jour de barbe anthoinette de la tour originaire de Lion en Lionnois fille de feu Jean de la tour et de marie anne bouzier de cette paroisse provenu des œuvres de Jean grand sire aubergiste Suivant la declaration passée devant monsieur Charles adrien de quiefdeville baillly juge civil criminel et de police du trois d'octobre dernier portée au mandement et datte de ce jour signe de quiefdeville avec paraphe legris avec paraphe et scellé, nommé par Charles gachet soldat invalide de la compagnie de monsieur beranger en garnison au château de cette ville de cette paroisse, et Anne bougier veufve de Jean delatour fileuse de la paroisse de Saint michel de lon en lannois Le parein a signé Ledit Jean grandsire absent La marreine a fait sa marque en declarant ne sçavoir ecrire

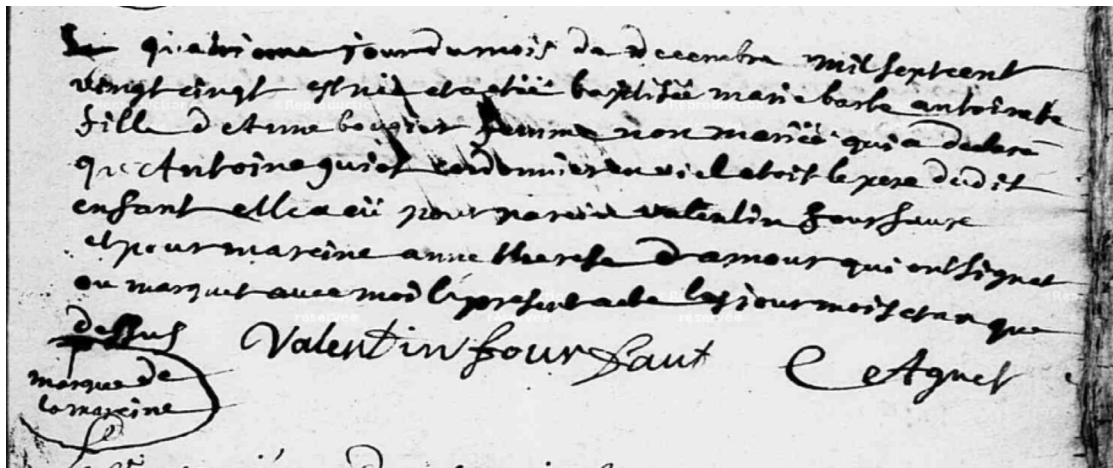
signé: Charles Gachet La marque d'anne bougier + qui a dit ne scavoit ecrire
Feburier vicair de St Remy

So Barbe-Antoinette herself had an illegitimate child before marriage, just as her mother had done. But the document sheds important new light: firstly that Anne Bougier was still alive, and present (and still unable to write): from tricoteuse de bas she had become a fileuse. Moreover while the infant's father was the Jean Grand Sire who would later marry the mother, our attention is engaged by the name Anne gives to Barbe-Antoinette's father: Jean de La Tour, claiming to be his widow, thus explaining his absence. Any other claim would easily have been exposed, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour being by then a name quite likely to be recognised by a vicar. "Jean de La Tour" is a name so common as to be untraceable, particularly before Google, but the only Jean in the pastellist's family was his grandfather, far too old to have fathered Barbe-Antoinette.

It seemed worth trying to investigate Jean Grand Sire's background. Evidently he had a portfolio career: an aubergiste (1747), maître tisserand (1749, 1750), and later cavalier de maréchaussée du

Soissonnais à la résidence de La Fère. According to the 1749 acte de mariage, he was the son of another Jean Grand Sire, another maître tisserand from Auppegard near Rouen, and his wife, Marguerite Guilbert, already a widower and born c.1710. Those people exist: Jean Grandsir (1685–1767), who married Marguerite Guilbert (–1758) in Colmesnil-Manneville (10 km south of Dieppe) on 25 November 1710 and died in Auppegard, a further 1 km south of Colmesnil (within the same parish). (I also came across Charles Gachet’s signature again as a witness in the Colmesnil parish register.) They had several children but none called Jean is recorded. It is quite possible that he was born before his parents’ marriage, which didn’t take place until near the end of the year, accounting for the absence of a baptismal entry. Confusingly a Nicolas Grandsire and Marie-Suzanne Guilbert also had children baptised in the same parish around the same time.²

While I was proof-reading this article I decided I’d better have another trawl through the Laon parish registers, just in case I, together with everyone from the président Combier, Maurice Tourneux, Charles Desmaze and everyone else had missed something. And we had. Here, almost exactly where you would expect it, is the acte de baptême of Marie-Barbe-Antoinette Guiot, in the parish register of Saint-Michel, Laon, dated 4 December 1725:



Le quatrième jour du mois de decembre mil sept cent vingt cinq est nee et a etee baptisee marie barbe antoinette fille d'Anne bougier femme non mariée qui a déclaré qu'Antoine guiot cordonnier en vie etoit le père dudit enfant elle a eü pour parein valentin fourfaux et pour mareine anne therese damour qui ont signet ou marquet avec moi le present acte les jour mois et an que dessus
+ marque de la mareine Valentin Fourfaux Agnet

So there was a Monsieur Guiot – a shoemaker, possibly dead (although Laon parish registers do not record such a death in the previous nine months) and possibly married (a Pierre-Antoine Guiot was married there in 1722; he signed Diot while his father signed Guiot: evidently the spelling caused his own family the same problems Barbe-Antoinette would later show).

One thing is clear. Anne Bougier’s transgression with La Tour was not an isolated incident. But why should she have (approximately) named La Tour as her second child’s father in 1747? Could it be that he was in fact the father of Barbe-Antoinette? Did she think the name a grander one for her daughter to bear? Or did she harbour some resentment at his conduct? I leave you to decide whether it affects your views of the artist’s moral character – and whether that has any relevance to his art.

Neil Jeffares

² Two homonyms lead to false trails: a Jean Grandsire had been born to Nicolas and his wife in 1714, but on 27 Nov 1736, still in Colmesnil, he married a Marguerite Sannier, was able to write – in a hand that does not match that on the 1749 acte de mariage, and so cannot be our Jean Grandsire but may have been a cousin. Another red herring is the Jean Grand Sire who married, in Dieppe, Saint-Rémy, on 18.I.1738, a Marie-Marguerite Baron; he was then described as a “pignère de profession” (a carder), aged 21, the son of Jacques Grand Sire and Hélène Le Coq, unable to write. The following year, on 21.V.1739 in the same parish he married Marie-Marguerite Maugendre, a dentellière aged 25, as Jean-Claude Grandsire. He was dead by 1749 when his second wife remarried.