

La Tour, *L'abbé Pommyer*

NEIL JEFFARES



Maurice-Quentin de La Tour

L'abbé François-Emmanuel POMMYER (1713–1784)

Pastel on brown paper, 55x45 cm

c.1757

Private collection

PROVENANCE: The sitter; his nephew, Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont (?–1788), *directeur des fermes du roi*; his daughter, Mme Louis Theurier, née Geneviève Pommyer; her son, Charles Theurier-Pommyer (1800–1876); his widow, née Anne-Pierre de La Hupraye (1807–1883), *marquise romaine*; baron Alfred de Jacquier de Rosée (1871–1935), château de Schaltin, Namur, Belgium (the great-grandson of baronne Antoine-Laurent de Jacquier de Rosée, née Elisabeth d'Incourt de Fréchencourt, the daughter of the sitter's niece and sister of Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon, comtesse Pierre d'Incourt de Fréchencourt, née Marie-Françoise Pommyer de Rougemont); his widow, née Louise Anne-Marie Daly (1885–1967); their nephew, baron Emmanuel de Jacquier de Rosée (1906–1987); London, Christie's, 10 December 1993, Lot 53 repr.

EXHIBITIONS: Salon de 1763, no. 69 (“Autres portraits, sous le même numéro”); *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, le voleur d'âmes*, Versailles, 13 September – 10 December 2004, exhibition catalogue Xavier Salmon, no. 23 reproduced, colour; pp. 17, 42, 85, 88, 112, 183

LITERATURE: Anon., *Journal encyclopédique*, VII, pt. 1, 1 October 1763, p. 120 (“On a vû avec beaucoup de plaisir celui d'un Abbé musqué, frisé & paré avec toute l'élégance possible, & qui semble regarder cet Artiste avec un sourire assez malin, & se moquer de son ajustement : ces deux tableaux qui sont du même Maître, sont d'une force de couleur & d'une expression qui étonnent”); anon. [abbé de La Porte ou Bridard de La Garde], *Mercur de France*, September 1763 (“il est difficile d'exprimer avec quel plaisir tout le monde est frappé de l'étonnante vérité [du Portrait d']un Ecclésiastique connu du Public, & très-considéré dans la Magistrature”); Ernest Dréolle de Nodon, *Éloge biographique de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour*, Paris, 1856, p. 128 (“magnifique portrait en grand que fit De La Tour, et qui se trouve à Paris, très-bien conservé, chez un petit-neveu de l'abbé Pommyer”); Maurice Tourneux, *La Tour*, Paris, n.d., p. 71; Albert Besnard & Georges Wildenstein, *La Tour*, Paris, 1928, p. 66f; Christine Debric & Xavier Salmon, *Maurice Quentin de La Tour*, Paris, 2000, p. 84f, repr. p. 83 (“de toutes les versions, elle est assurément la plus belle”); Denis Diderot, *Salons*, éd. Jean Seznec & Jean Adhémar, Oxford, 1957–67, I, p. 172; Charles-Joseph Mathon de La Cour (“un Ecclésiastique respectable”); Marie-Catherine Sahut, notice in exhibition catalogue *Diderot & l'art de Boucher à David. Les Salons: 1759–1781*, Paris, Hôtel de la Monnaie, 1984–1985, p. 302; Comte de Luppé, ed., *Lettres de Geneviève de Malboissière à Adélaïde Méliand 1761–1766*, Paris, 1925, p. 121, n. 3 (“on a de [Pommyer] deux pastels par La Tour, l'un au musée de Saint-Quentin, l'autre dans la collection Theurier de Pommyer, à Paris”); Neil Jeffares, “L'abbé Pommyer, *honnoraire amateur de l'Académie royale de peinture*”, in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, May–June 2001, pp. 237–256,¹ fig. 3; Xavier Salmon, “La rançon de la gloire: pastels autographes, répliques et copies dans l'œuvre de Maurice Quentin de La Tour”, *L'Objet d'Art*, October 2004, pp. 42–55, fig. 2; Alastair Laing, “La Tour; Boucher. Versailles”, *Burlington Magazine*, January 2005, p. 57 commissioned; Marc Fumaroli, *Maurice Quentin de La Tour et le siècle de Louis XV*, Paris, 2005, p. 36 repr.; Jeffares 2006, p. 300, repr.

¹ This article, slightly expanded, is the basis of this essay.

RELATED WORKS: (A) pastel repetition, without chair, slightly reduced, 44.0x36.0 cm (Saint-Quentin LT 41). Lit.: Albert Besnard & Georges Wildenstein, *La Tour*, Paris, 1928, no. 382, fig. 190; Élie Fleury & Gaston Brière, *Collection Maurice Quentin de La Tour à Saint-Quentin*, Saint-Quentin, 1954, no. 43 (“pastel qui paraît avoir été retouché et altéré”); Christine Debrie, *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour 1704–1788*, Saint-Quentin, 1991, p. 156, repr., colour; Henry Lapauze, *Les pastels de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour du musée Lécuyer, à Saint-Quentin*, Paris, 1919, no. 23, repr. (“Les yeux ont une hardiesse spirituelle; les lèvres charnues et roulées avancent un peu, avec une expression de malice et de gourmandise. La Tour a plutôt exagéré qu’atténué l’amabilité presque galante et passablement profane de cette joyeuse figure”); Alfred Leroy, *Maurice Quentin de La Tour et la Société française du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1953, p. 69, repr. (Pommyer’s “physionomie fine et souriante demeure d’un admirable réalisme”); Pierre de Nolhac, *La Vie et l’œuvre de Maurice Quentin de La Tour*, Paris, 1930, repr. opp. p. 70. (B) copy, pastel, with chair, 55.5x45.8 cm (Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, Everard Studley Miller Bequest 1966, 1620/5. Pierre Decourcelle; Paris, Drouot, 29–30 May 1911, Lot 119. André Seligmann, Paris, in 1935; René Fribourg; London, Sotheby’s, 16 October 1963, Lot 611, £350, to Wardell). Exh.: *Exposition de Cent Pastels* 1908, no. 32, pl. 24; *Chefs d’œuvre de l’art français*, Palais National des Arts, Paris 1937, no. 179. Lit.: Besnard & Wildenstein, no. 383, fig. 78. (C) a drawing, also with chair, black and white chalk on blue paper, 44.0x35.5 cm (Bohler; sale, 1906. François Flameng; Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, 26–27 May 1919, Lot 134; Paris, Mme Thalmann in 1928. Private collection). Lit.: Besnard & Wildenstein, no. 384, fig. 191; *Les Arts*, 1918, repr.; Fleury & Brière, p. 65 (“douteux”). (D) Another version in a French private collection is a late eighteenth century copy (Salmon, private communication). (E) A later copy, pastel, 48.2x39.1 cm (with Christie’s, Paris, April 2004), repr. Versailles exhibition catalogue, 2004, p. 87f, fig. 3. (F) Possibly the same copy, pastel, 45x36 cm (Gabriel Cognacq; Paris, Galerie Charpentier, 11–13 June 1952, Lot 62 n.r., d’après La Tour). (G) copy, pastel, 46x38 cm (Entzheim, hôtel des ventes des Notaires, 1 July 2007, Lot 70 repr., suiveur de La Tour, portrait du curé d’Aix en Provence). (H) copy, pastel (Bar-le-Duc, Vaxelaire, 21 October 2007, Lot 1m repr.). Lit.: Fleury & Brière, p. 65, incorrectly described as same as Decourcelle version. (I) engraving by Auguste-Hilaire Lévillé (1840–1900), 11x7 cm, in reverse, inscr. “Gravure de A. Lévillé, d’après un pastel de La Tour. (Musée de Saint-Quentin.)”, for *L’Art*, 1875

ICONOGRAPHY: (I) oil painting, by Largillière, 55.5x45.5 cm, oval, sd 1722 (London, Christie’s, 10 December 1993, Lot 46, repr. in colour; London, private collection; New York, Sotheby’s, 26 January 2006, Lot 55, repr.). Lit.: M. N. Rosenfeld, *Largillière*, Montreal, 1982, p. 260 repr., incorrectly identified. (II) profile of Pommyer, engraving with etching, by C. N. Cochin finished by Augustin de Saint-Aubin, 19.6x14.6 cm (plate), 1769. Lit.: C. A. Jombert, *Catalogue de l’œuvre de Charles Nicolas Cochin fils*, Paris, 1770, p. 130, no. 104 among the “portraits en médaillons & autres, dessinés par C. N. Cochin fils”: “104. M. l’Abbé Pommyer, Conseiller en la grande Chambre du Parlement de Paris, Amateur honoraire de l’Académie Royale de Peinture & Sculpture, &c; gravé à l’eau-forte par Cochin fils, en 1768. Cette planche n’a point été achevée.”; Portalis & Béraldi, Cochin, no. 94; see also p. 544; Bocher, *Saint-Aubin*, 219. (III) red chalk drawing of the abbé Pommyer “en paysan de Gandeau”, by Cochin (University Museum of Art, Palo Alto), *18th century drawings from California collections*, Claremont and Sacramento, 1976, no 16 repr.. Engr., sanguine manner by Demarteau, no. 262, 1771, 24.5x19.1 cm; *Inventaire du fonds français* 262; Goncourt, “Cochin”, in *L’Art du XVIII^e siècle*, II, p. 59; Michel, *Charles-Nicolas Cochin et l’art des lumières*, Rome 1993, p. 129, pl. 17 repr.. A later engraving by Adolphe Varin, 1881. (IV) black chalk drawing by Cochin, 11.3x9 cm, signed “Dessiné par C. N. Cochin le fils a Gandeau 1772”; inscribed verso “l’Abbé Pommyer conseiller a la gde Chambre du Parlement” (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman collection. Mme Theurier de Pommyer; Mrs Hubert Chanler; London, Sotheby’s, 10 June 1959, Lot 10). Lit.: George Szabo, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century French Drawings from the Robert Lehman Collection*, New York 1980, no. 7, repr.. (V) marble bust by Étienne-Pierre-Adrien Gois, 79x60x33 cm, sd 1783 (Birmingham Museum & City Art Gallery, P.21375. Pommyer/Jacquier de Rosée collections; Heim in 1968; acquired 1975). Lit.: Evelyn Silber, *Sculpture in the Birmingham Museum and City Art Gallery – Summary Catalogue*. Birmingham, 1987, no. 150, repr. Exh.: Heim Gallery, London, *French Paintings & Sculptures of the 18th Century*, 10 January – 15 March 1968, repr.

GENEALOGY: [Pommyer](#)

WRITING AT THE TIME of the great Chardin exhibition in 1979, discussing notable eighteenth century collectors of Chardin, Pierre Rosenberg confessed² to being “fort mal renseigné sur...l’abbé Pommyer”. Twenty years later, with another Chardin exhibition (and a new catalogue raisonné, which even omits Pommyer from the index³), that situation can now be partly rectified. As an honorary member of the Académie royale de peinture, and through his friendships with the artists Jean-Siméon Chardin, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, Charles-Nicolas Cochin and Jean-Jacques Bachelier, Pommyer was at the heart of the French art world; his collection included a number of important works; and the half dozen portraits of him – spanning a period from the Régence to the reign of Louis XVI – constitute an iconography of extraordinary range for an individual outside the royal family.

* * *

The abbé François-Emmanuel Pommyer (1713–1784) was seigneur de La Guyonnière, abbé commendataire de l’Abbaye royale de Bonneval, chanoine de l’Église de Saint-Martin de Tours, doyen honoraire de l’Église métropolitaine de Reims, conseiller du roi en sa cour de parlement et grand’chambre, président de la chambre souveraine du clergé, honoraire amateur de l’Académie

² Pierre Rosenberg, exhibition catalogue *Chardin*, Paris, Grand Palais, 29 January – 30 April 1979; Cleveland, Museum of Art, 6 June – 12 August 1979; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 18 September – 19 November 1979, p. 73.

³ Pierre Rosenberg, exhibition catalogue *Chardin*, Paris, Grand Palais; Düsseldorf, Kunsthalle; London, Royal Academy of Arts; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 7 September 1999 – 17 September 2000; Pierre Rosenberg & Renaud Temperini, *Chardin – suivi du catalogue des œuvres*, Paris, 1999; passing references to Pommyer appear on pp. 183, 271 and 279.



Figure 1

royale de peinture and directeur de l'École royale gratuite de dessin. He was the seventh child of Yves-Joseph Pommyer (1665 – after 1739), trésorier général de France au bureau des finances d'Alençon, secrétaire du roi (from 1719), and Marie-Marguerite Lefèvre. The family, originally from Château-du-Loir, was well connected among the noblesse de robe, being related to the Voysin, Lamoignon, Bignon and Nicolaj families⁴.

The other children of the marriage were François (1703–1779), *seigneur de Rougemont*, who inherited his father's position as *trésorier général*; his brother, possibly twin, Yves-Joseph-Charles (1703/04 – before 1756), also *seigneur de Rougemont*; abbé Merry (1705/6 – after 1791), *seigneur de Sourche*; Marie-Thérèse (c.1705/6 – after 1744); Yves-Simon (1707–1756), *seigneur de Charmois*, who assumed his father's position as *secrétaire du roi* in 1739⁵; and Marie-Élisabeth

(c.1712–p.1744). The parents and all of the children were portrayed by Nicolas de Largillierre (1656–1746), in a series of eight paintings that descended through the family and finally came to light in a London sale in 1993⁶. The highlight of the series was undoubtedly the double portrait showing the eldest twin brothers, half-length, playing with their King Charles spaniel, now in an American private collection.⁷ Figure 1 is the portrait⁸ of the nine-year-old François-Emmanuel in a brown velvet coat with gold embroidered waistcoat and a lace cravat, fashionably knotted *à la Steinkerque*, captures the sitter's essential features in a manner which we recognise instantly in the later images.

There has been some confusion over the early provenance of the abbé's collection. Not all the pictures came down to the 1993 sale by the Jacquier de Rosée family⁹; a few may have left the collection soon after his death, while most of the collection must have been inherited by Pommyer's three surviving nephews and niece. The niece, comtesse Pierre d'Incourt de Fréchencourt (née Marie-Françoise Pommyer de Rougemont), had some of the pictures by about 1790. Her daughter Élisabeth (1767–1833) married the baron Antoine-Laurent de Jacquier de Rosée in 1788¹⁰; their great-grandson was baron Alfred de Jacquier de Rosée (1871–1935). Most of the pictures however seem to have followed a different route to the Jacquier de Rosée family, passing from nephews Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon Pommyer de Rougemont (1743–1790), *gouverneur des pages de la chambre du roi*, or Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont (c.1740–1786), *directeur des fermes du roi*, to the latter's daughter¹¹ Geneviève Pommyer, who married Louis

⁴ Most of this information derives from Borel d'Hauterive, Albert Révérend, *Annuaire de la Noblesse de France*, Paris, 1906, 1909, 1910; see also Christine Favre-Lejeune, *Dictionnaire biographique et généalogique des secrétaires du roi*, Paris, 1986, vol. 2, p. 1098f, and J. François BLUCHE, *L'origine des magistrats du parlement de Paris au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1956 (*Mémoires publiés par la fédération des sociétés historiques de Paris et de l'Île de France*, v-vi, 1953/54), p. 353f. Yves-Joseph Pommyer had the personal privileges of nobility from c. 1701, the date of his appointment as *trésorier de France*; the process of full ennoblement commenced in 1719 with his appointment as *secrétaire du roi*. François-Emmanuel was thus noble of the second degree.

⁵ Two years later, he sold his position as *substitut du procureur général du roi* to Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon (Archives nationales V¹ 330 (449), 9 September 1741), but retained an honorary rôle among the *gens du roi*.

⁶ London, Christie's, 10 December 1993, Lots 43 to 50; the catalogue entries drew on information from Dominique Brème.

⁷ It reemerged in a New York sale (Sotheby's, 23 May 2001), with the portrait of Marie-Élisabeth, and was included in the 2003 Largillierre exhibition (Paris, musée Jacquemart-André, no. 58).

⁸ Oil on canvas, by Nicolas de Largillierre, 0.555x0.455 oval, 1722. Location unknown (provenance: Pommyer; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée collections; London, Christie's, 10 December 1993, Lot 46). Literature: Myra Nan Rosenfeld, exhibition catalogue *Largillierre and the eighteenth-century portrait*, Montreal, 1982, p. 260, reproduced, incorrectly identified.

⁹ The catalogue entry for the 1993 Christie's sale reports that the pictures were thought to have been inherited c. 1911 from the marquise de Pommyer de Rougemont, but gives no explanation of the link with the d'Incourt de Fréchencourt or Jacquier de Rosée families.

¹⁰ Cécile Douxchamps-Lefèvre, Juliette Rouhart-Chabot & Marinette Bruwier, *Inventaire des archives de la famille de Jacquier de Rosée*, Bruxelles, 1962.

¹¹ This step in the story is not free from doubt. I am most grateful to the comte de Lorne d'Alincourt for information from his family archive showing that Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon did not leave posterity, from which I believe it follows that Geneviève Pommyer must have been the child of Yves-Joseph-Charles, assuming that abbé Nicolas-François-Bonaventure was celibate. The

Theurier,¹² and thence to their son Charles Theurier (1800–1876), *juge au tribunal de 1^{ère} instance de la Seine*. Theurier changed his name by decree to Charles Theurier-Pommyer in 1860.¹³ The pictures then passed to his widow, née Anne-Pierre de La Hupraye (1807–1883),¹⁴ who became a papal marquise in her own right; she had a large number of Cochin drawings in the 1870s. After her death (in Belgium), the collection passed to baron Alfred de Jacquier de Rosée, who owned the Largillierre portraits at the time of the 1928 exhibition in the Petit Palais (by then the identity of the family had been confused). Baron Alfred's widow, née Louise Anne-Marie Daly, died without issue in 1967;¹⁵ the pastels remained in the family until a further death led to the 1993 sale.

The territory of La Guyonnière is near La Roche-sur-Yon in the Vendée; Pommyer seems not to have used the surname.¹⁶ His title of abbé was initially an honorific, possibly indicating merely that he had been tonsured; it would have been the normal term to apply to any of the hundred or so *chanoines* at Reims, which Pommyer became as early as 30 April 1732 – a position carrying a salary in the range 2–3000 livres.¹⁷ For a younger son of a well-connected family of modest means,¹⁸ a judicial position as a clerical counsellor would have been a natural choice, and

existence, and marriage of, Geneviève Pommyer and Louis Theurier is referred to only in Charles Theurier-Pommyer's birth certificate (and that of his sister Brigitte) (documents listed by the Cercle Généalogique du Haut Berry). Since Yves-Joseph-Charles died in 1788, his pictures would have been split between his daughter and his sister without their having to pass to Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon; as Dominique Brême noted in the 1993 catalogue, the pictures are not clearly listed in the latter's *inventaire après décès* (AN MC LVIII 569, 8 January 1791), although there is a reference to a portrait of the widow Pommyer de Rougemont, which could be the 1772 Cochin drawing, and to a group of "trois tableaux peints...dans leurs différents bordures dorés" which might refer to some of the Largillierre paintings.

¹² A member of a family of merchants from Vierzon. A family portrait descended through the Luzarche family and is now in the musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours.

¹³ Charles Theurier-Pommyer was living in Paris (rue d'Antin, 9) in 1851 when he acquired an estate in Vierzon from a number of parties including Louis Theurier (AN MC LXXII 815). He was identified as a relative of the abbé in Charles Desmaze, *Le Reliquaire de M. Quentin de La Tour, peintre du roi Louis XV, sa correspondance et son oeuvre*, Paris, 1874; his widow's collection was described by baron Roger Portalis, *Les Dessinateurs d'illustrations au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris 1877, vol. I, pp. 100, 126. According to Jérôme's *Dictionnaire des changements de nom de 1803 à 1956*, Paris, 1957, Charles Theurier changed his name to Charles Theurier-Pommyer by official decree of 23 May 1860. In an unpublished note (London art market) which does not reveal its source, Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon's grandson is identified as the marquis Charles de Pommyer de Rougemont. The confusion perhaps arises from a reconstruction of Theurier-Pommyer's identity from information about his widow: she was created a papal countess in 1881, and elevated to marquise the following year, for Catholic works in her diocese (see Dominique Labarre de Raillcourt, *Les Comtes du Pape en France (XVI^e–XX^e siècles)*, Paris, 1965–67, II, p. 67). She died in Belgium without posterity, which suggests an explanation of how the pictures came to the Jacquier de Rosée family; although a nephew, Yves, inherited the title of *comte romain*.

¹⁴ Her father Antoine-Edmé de La Huproye (1765–1839) had been the magistrate entrusted with the inquiry into the death in 1830 of the prince de Condé in which his mistress, Sophie Dawes, baronne de Feuchères, was thought to have been involved. His excess of zeal led to his being forcibly retired, although his judicial position was allowed to be taken by his son-in-law, promoted from *juge suppléant* to full *juge*.

¹⁵ I am most grateful to Dermot Daly (private communication, 16 February 2012) for providing me with a copy of the Brussels sale of his aunt's effects (Galerie Moderne, 11 October 1967), including 14 Cochin drawings (among Lots 2203–2221) and a large collection of Pommyer family silver. This did not include the pastels which remained within the Jacquier de Rosée family. One of the Cochin drawings in that sale, Lot 2207, "Le chancelier Michel de L'hospital refuse de signer la mort du prince de Condé", reappeared at Christie's, Paris, 17 March 2005, Lot 362, with a number of inscriptions, including "Ce tableau est et appartient à Mlle Porotteaux Chabert", suggesting an intermediate step between the Theurier-Pommyer and Jacquier de Rosée owners. Mr Daly has also kindly provided me with a copy of the marriage contract between baron Alfred de Jacquier de Rosée and Louise Daly, 7 December 1912; in this the Largillierre paintings are listed, together with some Cochin drawings and the La Tour pastel of "la dame bleu". The pastels of Pommyer and Maupeou may appear as the "abbé de Pommyer", as a 9th picture by Largillierre (valued at Bfr1500), and an anonymous "Monsieur e Pommyer" (valued at Bfr500). Although it is not immediately clear what happened to the collection between the death of Mme Theurier-Pommyer and its acquisition by Alfred by 1912, it does not seem that the collection was first in the hands of Alfred's father Clément, nor that it was divided between Alfred and his brother Frédéric as confirmed by Mr Daly.

¹⁶ It seems to appear only in a document dated 28 January 1740 (Archives nationales, V¹ 323 (190)) recording Pommyer's appointment as *conseiller-clerc* to the *parlement*. The Decourcelle sale (Paris, 29–30 May 1911) included (as Lot 79), in addition to a number of portraits associated with the Pommyer family, a portrait by Cochin, signed and dated 1780, of the comtesse de la Guillonnière: presumably by that date Pommyer had assigned the *seigneurie* to a relative or sold it.

¹⁷ See *Almanach historique, civil, ecclésiastique et topographique de la ville et du diocèse de Reims...*, 1770; John McManners, *Church and society in eighteenth-century France*, Oxford, 1998, I, pp. 400ff.

¹⁸ For example, the fixed assets of Pommyer's brother Yves-Simon Pommyer de Charmoy, who died in 1756, were declared at 4959 livres in his estate inventory, one of the lowest sums of any Paris magistrate (Archives de la Seine, D. C⁶ 294, fol. 149 v^o, cited in J. François Bluche, *Les Magistrats du parlement de Paris au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1986, p. 305). Estimates of the cost of an office of *conseiller-clerc* are in the region of 35,000 livres, but the income produced by this investment might only be 2% per annum (Bluche, *op. cit.*, pp. 122ff).

would have made it easier to obtain potentially lucrative ecclesiastical benefices. Pommyer joined the *cinquième chambre des enquêtes* (concerned chiefly with appeals from minor civil and criminal cases) in the *parlement de Paris* on 23 February 1740,¹⁹ transferring to the *1^{ère} des enquêtes* in 1757 when two of the chambers were abolished by Machault; in 1766 he became²⁰ one of twelve *conseillers-clercs* of the *grand'chambre* (the most important chamber) before the Maupeou reforms of 1771 forced the resignation of all the members of the *parlement*, but he was reinstated in 1774 and remained in office until his death. On 5 February 1748, he was promoted to *doyen honoraire* of the Église métropolitaine de Reims, a level reached also by his brother Merry. At Tours, the church of Saint-Martin (where Pommyer was *chanoine*) eclipsed the cathedral, with the King as abbé and numerous aristocrats among its honorary positions sharing the substantial prebendal revenues. As far as we can tell, the income from all Pommyer's offices would have left him comfortably placed rather than enormously wealthy.²¹

The present portrait of Pommyer, with the same provenance as the Largillierre, is by the pre-eminent pastellist of the century, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour (1704–1788). La Tour's bold technique is evident throughout this *tour-de-force* of the pastellist's art, including his familiar use of ultramarine to the sitter's temple, upper lip and chin, as well as some light feathering on the *rabat*, or clerical bands (black bands with white borders replaced the white bands around 1750). The *soutane*, or cassock, was worn only in church or at home, and was not worn in town or when travelling; abbots received at court were considered to be travelling and therefore wore the *habit à la française* (rather than the *soutanelle*), with the *petit collet*, or tight cape in pleated black taffeta, the collar of which appears over his shoulder²². Pommyer is shown in the same chair as appears in a number of other La Tour portraits, presumably a studio prop. For Alfred Leroy, Pommyer's "physionomie fine et souriante demeure d'un admirable réalisme"²³. Henry Lapauze describes the image: "Les yeux ont une hardiesse spirituelle; les lèvres charnues et roulées avancement un peu, avec une expression de malice et de gourmandise. La Tour a plutôt exagéré qu'atténué l'amabilité presque galante et passablement profane de cette joyeuse figure."²⁴



Figure 2

Numerous repetitions of this pastel testify to its significance within the œuvre. Among them, that at the musée Lécuyer at Saint-Quentin²⁵ (fig. 2) was described by Fleury & Brière as a "pastel qui paraît avoir été retouché et altéré"; the work lacks the depth and variation of light of Pommyer's own picture, although its autograph status is evident from touches such as the zig-zag white highlights on the coat under the sitter's right cheek, while similar blue chalk touches on the *rabat* in the present version are not copied; the work not only shows less background and omits the chair, but is reduced in scale by about 15:16. A larger version was formerly with Pierre

¹⁹ Succeeding Michel-Marie-Noël Amelot; Pommyer is listed as "prêtre diocèse, Paris, avocat parlement" (Archives nationales V¹ 323 (190), 28 January 1740).

²⁰ Following the death of Pierre II Langlois. This promotion was not an automatic progression; three senior members of the *1^{ère} des enquêtes* were passed over.

²¹ Another source of income may have been from property – for example, Pommyer was party to a lease granted on 14 September 1751 (AN MC CXII 705a).

²² See Madeleine Delpierre, *Dress in France in the eighteenth century*, New Haven and London, 1997, p. 100f; Louis Trichet, *Le Costume du clergé*, Paris, 1986, p. 143.

²³ Alfred Leroy, *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour et la Société française du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1953, p. 69, describing the Saint-Quentin version.

²⁴ Henry Lapauze, *Les Pastels de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour du musée Lécuyer, à Saint-Quentin*, Paris, 1919, no. 23, also describing the Saint-Quentin version.

²⁵ Pastel, 0.44x0.36. Saint-Quentin, musée Lécuyer, inv. LT 41. Literature: Albert Besnard & Georges Wildenstein, *La Tour*, Paris, 1928, no. 382, fig. 190; Élie Fleury & Gaston Brière, *Collection Maurice-Quentin de La Tour à Saint-Quentin*, Saint-Quentin, 1954, no. 43; Christine Debrie, *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour 1704–1788*, Saint-Quentin, 1991, p. 156, reproduced, colour; Henry Lapauze, *op. cit.*, no. 23, reproduced; Alfred Leroy, *op. cit.*, p. 69, reproduced; Pierre de Nolhac, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour*, Paris, 1930, reproduced opposite p. 70.

Decourcelle²⁶; it includes the chair and is closer to the primary version in composition²⁷, differing only in small details. It has now come to light in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, but from a good photograph, does not appear to be autograph. The authenticity of a preparatory drawing in black and white chalk on blue paper, formerly in the collection of Mme Thalmann in Paris in 1928, also with the chair, is also improbable²⁸; other versions have also been reported.

As with many of La Tour's works, it is difficult to date on criteria such as the apparent age of the sitter: but a comparison of the face with the Cochin and Gois images discussed below would suggest a date in the 1750s. In terms of composition (La Tour chose almost exactly the same pose as Largillierre had used so many years earlier), there is perhaps an analogy with La Tour's grand portrait²⁹ of Mme de Pompadour (Musée du Louvre; the pastel was commenced around 1750, but not finished until 1755), which shares with the present composition the enigmatic smile and averted gaze rare in La Tour's œuvre. Xavier Salmon draws parallels with the "facture vibrante du visage" of the 1753 portrait of the abbé Nollet in Munich³⁰, and speculates that the picture was executed in the 1750s and exhibited subsequently – for it is now clear that this work was in the Salon of 1763, appearing under the *livret's* delphic "n° 69: Autres portraits, sous le même numéro"³¹. The critic Mathon de La Cour mentions merely "un Ecclésiastique respectable"³², but the abbé Philippe Bridard de La Garde, writing anonymously in the *Mercure de France* in September 1763, comments:

Il est difficile d'exprimer avec quel plaisir tout le monde est frappé de l'étonnante vérité des Portraits de M. le Moine, Sculpteur du Roi, & d'un Ecclésiastique connu du Public, & très-considéré dans la Magistrature³³.

The anonymous report in the *Journal encyclopédique*³⁴ removes any residual doubt about the identification. Discussing the portraits of the royal family, the report moves to that of Le Moyne, and then adds:

On a vû avec beaucoup de plaisir celui d'un Abbé musqué, frisé & paré avec toute l'élégance possible, & qui semble regarder cet Artiste avec un sourire assez malin, & se moquer de son ajustement : ces deux tableaux qui sont du même Maître, sont d'une force de couleur & d'une expression qui étonnent.

Two letters from Pommyer to La Tour have survived³⁵; their content and informality (we have preserved the abbé's somewhat erratic orthography) confirm the closeness of their friendship. In the first, written from Reims and dated 15 October 1762 (which may well be close to the time of execution of his portrait), he writes:

²⁶ Pastel, 0.55x0.45. Location unknown (Pierre Decourcelle; Paris, Drouot, 29–30 May 1911, Lot 119. André Seligmann, Paris, in 1935; René Fribourg; London, Sotheby's, 16 October 1963, Lot 611, to Wardell). Exhibited: *Exposition de cent pastels*, 1908, no. 32, pl. 24; Paris 1937, no. 179. Literature: Besnard & Wildenstein, *op. cit.*, no. 383, fig. 78; L. Roger-Milès, *Maîtres du XVIII^e siècle: Cent pastels*, Paris, 1908.

²⁷ "De toutes les versions, elle [Pommyer's] est assurément la plus belle" – Debie & Salmon, *La Tour*, Paris, 2000, p. 84f.

²⁸ Black and white chalk drawing on blue paper, 0.44x0.355. Private collection (F. Bohler; Paris, 23 February 1906. François Flameng; Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, 26–27 May 1919, Lot 134; Paris, Mme Thalmann in 1928). Literature: Besnard & Wildenstein, *op. cit.*, no. 384, fig. 191; *Les Arts*, 1918, reproduced; Fleury & Brière, *op. cit.*, p. 65 ("douteux"); Xavier Salmon, *op. cit.* Another version in a French private collection is a late eighteenth century copy.

²⁹ See, for example, Elise Goodman, *The portraits of Madame de Pompadour*, Berkeley, 2000; for a discussion of the date and relationship between La Tour's portrait and the series of portraits by Boucher which also show Mme de Pompadour's face at the same angle, see Alastair Laing, exhibition catalogue *François Boucher 1703–1770*, Paris, 1986, p. 253.

³⁰ Xavier Salmon, *op. cit.*

³¹ The date of 1783 inscribed later on the backing board initially seems simply to be wrong; however, it may be an erroneous transcription of a date from a lost label, a fragment of which (with the sitter's name) survives.

³² Anon. [Charles-Joseph Mathon de La Cour], *Lettres à Madame *** sur les peintures, les sculptures et les gravures exposées dans le Salon du Louvre en 1763*, Paris, 1763.

³³ "Description des tableaux exposés au Salon du Louvre, avec des remarques, par une Société d'amateurs", extraordinaire du *Mercure de France*, September 1763, pp. 197–206. I am most grateful to Xavier Salmon for drawing this to my attention. The identification with Pommyer was originally noted by Jean Seznec & Jean Adhémar, eds, Denis Diderot, *Salons*, Oxford, 1957–67, I, p. 172; see also Marie-Catherine Sahut, exhibition catalogue *Diderot & l'art de Boucher à David. Les Salons: 1759–1781*, Paris, Hôtel de la Monnaie, 1984–1985, p. 302.

³⁴ "Suite de l'exposition...", *Journal encyclopédique*, VII, pt. 1, 1 October 1763, p. 120.

³⁵ Charles Desmaze, *op. cit.*

Je suis gros, cher amy, d'avoir de vos nouvelles, et j'en ai bien besoin. J'aurais aussi gros besoin de vous, pour me distraire de tout le brouillamini dont je suis chargé, et qui n'est pas agreable, car depuis le matin jusqu'au soir avoir affaire à des prêtres et des moines qui cherchent souvent à vous attraper, n'est point amusant. Aussi, pour me dedomager de tout cela, je voudrais bien que vous me donniez des nouvelles de votre santé. Pour ce qui est de votre amitié, j'en connois trop le prix, pour ne pas croire que j'en suis bien en possession. Je la merite, cher amy, par celle que je vous ai voué, et par l'attachement sincère et inviolable avec lequel je serai toute ma vie.

Votre serviteur et amy de tout mon coeur,

L'ABBÉ POMMYER, doyen.

J'embrasse le cher frère, mille choses à Mr et Me Chardin. Faites memoire de moy à Mlle Navarre. Si vous pouvés employer ses petits doigts en faveur de mon frere Prieur, qui vous feroit des compliments de bon coeur, sil sçavoit que je vous ecris. Je serois bien aise de luy faire la petite niche de la caisse à son adresse : a M. L'abbé Pommyer chanoine de l'Eglise de Reims au bourg S. Denis, à Reims. La voiture est Ruë S. Martin, vis a vis celle de Monmorency, elle part le Samedy et arrive le Dimanche. Si cela est possible, je vous prierai de le faire. Adieu encore une fois, cher amy, et de tout mon coeur.

Sadly few pastels by La Tour's pupil Mlle Navarre³⁶ have survived, and none that we can identify as of the prior at Reims.

Pommyer was an enthusiastic collector of the other painter mentioned, Jean-Siméon Chardin (1699–1779), and owned a *Tableau de fruits* which was also shown at the 1763 Salon (fig. 3). As Pierre Rosenberg has shown,³⁷ this is most probably the *Bocal d'olives* now in the Louvre; it received the much quoted, but still striking, praise from Diderot:³⁸

C'est la nature même ; les objets sont hors de la toile et d'une vérité à tromper les yeux.... Pour regarder les tableaux des autres, il semble que j'aie besoin de me faire les yeux ; pour voir ceux de Chardin, je n'ai qu'à garder ceux que la nature m'a donnés et m'en bien servir.... Ô Chardin! Ce n'est pas du blanc, du rouge, du noir que tu broies sur ta palette : c'est la substance même des objets, c'est l'air et la lumière que tu prends à la pointe de ton pinceau et que tu attaches sur la toile....

Pommyer also owned a version of *Les Attributs des arts*, a painting with a rather complicated history. The original commission, ordered by Cochin for the château de Choisy, was based around a statuette by Bouchardon; the 1765 canvas is now in the Louvre. A second painting, which exists in several versions (one is in The Minneapolis Institute of Arts), replaced the Bouchardon statuette with Pigalle's *Mercur*, and includes the insignia of the order of Saint-Michel recently offered to Pigalle and reflected in the full title of *Les Attributs des arts et les récompenses qui leur sont accordés*. The primary version of this work was delivered by Falconet to Catherine the Great in 1766; the commission was probably instigated by Diderot³⁹. It was the Pommyer version that was shown in the Salon of 1769 (no. 31), and which Diderot⁴⁰ praised in his critique:



Figure 3

En regardant ses *Attributs des arts*, l'œil recréé

³⁶ See Jean Cailleux, "Three portraits in pastel and their history", *The Burlington Magazine*, 27, November 1971, pp. i–vi; exhibition catalogue *Le Dessin en couleurs*, Paris, Galerie Cailleux, 1984, no. 39.

³⁷ See Rosenberg, *op. cit.* 1979, p. 322ff.

³⁸ Diderot, I, p. 222f.

³⁹ Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 344ff; Rosenberg & Temperini, *op. cit.*, p. 143ff.

⁴⁰ Diderot, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 82f; the picture is now lost. The Saint-Aubin sketch in his *livret* of the Salon is reproduced in Rosenberg & Temperini, *op. cit.*, p. 279, no. 181b. See also Richard S. Davis, "Institute purchases a great still life by Chardin", *The Minneapolis Institute of Arts bulletin*, XLIII/7, October 1954, pp. 50–51; Clare Le Corbeiller, "Mercury, messenger of taste", *The Metropolitan Museum of Art bulletin*, new series, XXII/1, 1963, pp. 22–28, who suggests that the Pommyer version is that at Minneapolis.



Figure 5

seems most probable that Pommyer purchased the portrait at, or soon after, that sale.⁴⁶

The remarkable pastel⁴⁷ of the singer Marie Fel (1713–1794) remained, like the Nattier, unrecorded until its appearance in 1993. There the sitter was correctly identified, on the basis of the inscription on the sheet of music – “les yeux de l’Amour/un cantatille” is a reference to one of the short songs composed for Marie Fel by her brother Antoine. Two collections of his *cantatilles, airs et duos tendres et bacchiques* were published in Paris around 1748. The pose is remarkably similar to that of *Mlle Ferrand méditant sur Newton* (Munich), exhibited in the Salon of 1753, but, while that portrait invests its subject with all the seriousness that such a bluestocking would have demanded, La Tour here reinterprets the pose with humour: his mistress’s open smile – quite unlike the enigmatic *préparation* at Saint-Quentin by which we know her best – indicates that she is party to the joke in which the putto on the drawing echoes the title of

her brother’s song. The costume also provides fairly strong support for a date in the early 1750s for this portrait, which seems not to have been exhibited (a portrait of Marie Fel appeared in the 1757 Salon, but the descriptions do not permit a firm identification, suggesting that it was not the present work). La Tour’s attachment to the singer is well known: they lived together in her house in Chaillot, and La Tour left his furniture and personal belongings to her in his will of 1784. Pommyer’s possession of this work is further proof of his intimacy with La Tour.

Pommyer became *honoraire associé-libre de l’Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* on 31 October 1767⁴⁸. Two *associé-libre* positions had opened up, as a result of the deaths of the historian Gaspard-Moïse de Fontanieu and of the art critic, the abbé Gougenot (who, incidentally, wrote an encomium on Nattier’s portrait of Maupeou when it appeared at the 1748 Salon); the engraver and writer Jean-Philippe Mariette had also been promoted to *honoraire amateur*. The other candidates included Berthélémy-Augustin Blondel d’Azincourt (1719–1794), *intendant des menus plaisirs*; his claims to connoisseurship were not inconsiderable, and through his wife’s inheritance he was able to amass an enormous collection which included over 500 drawings by Boucher alone⁴⁹. The third candidate, Pierre-Victor, baron de Besenval, was being advanced by Boucher and Pierre; one of the outstanding figures of the period, he had distinguished himself as soldier, patron of the arts (his famous marble bathroom by Brongniart was commissioned for the hôtel de Chanac-Pompadour, which he bought in 1767), writer and *galant* (numbering among his conquests the marquise de Polignac, Mme de Ségur and la Clairon; his declaration to Marie-Antoinette in 1776 was however a step too far). A fourth, the financier Boutin, *trésorier de la Marine*, is perhaps remembered only as the creator of an English garden in his house in the rue de Clichy, for which he commissioned Houdon’s *Naiïade*.⁵⁰

Against these candidates, Charles-Nicolas Cochin (1715–1790), in his rôle as *secrétaire perpétuel de l’Académie*, set out the politics surrounding the choice of replacements and explained his support of Pommyer to Mme de Pompadour’s brother, the marquis de Marigny, *directeur des*

⁴⁶ The successful bidder was presumably not recognised by the German-born dealer Paul-Charles-Alexandre Helle whose annotated catalogue survives in the Bibliothèque d’Art et d’Archéologie (reprinted by Renard, *op. cit.*), and cites only the price, 37 livres.

⁴⁷ *Marie Fel* by Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, c.1753. Pastel, 0.79x0.635. Location unknown (Pommyer; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée; London, 10 December 1993, Lot 52).

⁴⁸ Anatole de Montaigon, *Procès-verbaux de l’Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture 1648–1793*, Paris, 1886, VII, pp. 370f.

⁴⁹ Colin B. Bailey, “*Toute seule elle peut remplir et satisfaire l’attention*: the early appreciation and marketing of Watteau’s drawings, with an introduction to the collecting of modern French drawings during the reign of Louis XV”, *Watteau and his world*, ed. Alan Wintermute, London, 1999.

⁵⁰ He was also the subject of a Cochin portrait, engraved by Watelet.

bâtiments et manufactures du roi, on 1 October 1767:⁵¹

D'autre part, j'avois formé un projet que je croyais assés bien raisonné. C'étoit de nous associer un homme de loy, pour en recevoir les conseils à une conduite légale ; m'étant souvent bien trouvé des conseils de M. l'abbé Gougenot, j'avois pour cet effet jeté les yeux sur M. l'abbé Pommyer, conseiller de la Grande Chambre du Parlement, homme très digne, dans la force de l'âge, qui est lié d'amitié avec plusieurs artistes, et qui est, de plus, amy particulier de M. le vice-chancelier [*i.e. the elder Maupeou*]. Je pensois en moy-même que, dans le cas où l'Académie auroit besoin du Parlement, soit pour l'enregistrement de la confirmation et extension de ses statuts et privilèges, soit même pour les nouvelles patentes que vous pourriés avoir à faire, j'avois pensé, dis-je, que nous aurions par ce moyen un amy dans cette cour qui solliciteroit pour nous et qui pourroit nous lever bien des obstacles. Je ne luy en ay cependant point parlé parce que je veux sçavoir auparavant vos intentions à cet égard.

Si M. le baron de Besenval se met en ligne, son rang semble écarter ses rivaux ; il ne reste donc plus qu'une place, et, si j'éveille M. l'abbé Pommyer, voilà M. d'Azincourt et M. Boutin écartés, ce qui me fait de la peine ; cependant, je prévois qu'il n'est guères possible que l'un des deux ne le soit.

J'attendray que j'aye reçu vos ordres pour savoir quel party je dois prendre ; j'ay cru cependant devoir vous en prévenir afin que vous ayés le temps d'y réfléchir.

Marigny's response was communicated to Cochin orally and recorded in his annotation of the letter: "Qu'il arrange celà à sa fantaisie, je m'en rapporte."⁵² The result of the election of 31 October was communicated to Marigny the following day: Pommyer and Blondel d'Azincourt each secured 27 votes, while Besenval secured only three. Two new candidates, the duc de Nivernois and M. de Billy, got one each; while Boutin was not mentioned. Apparently Watelet was furious with Cochin, who responded with admirable restraint. Besenval was to be elected *associé-libre* in 1769 (and in 1784 succeeded Pommyer as *honoraire amateur*). Pidanzat de Mairobert was particularly critical in his review of the members of the Académie; passing rapidly over others among the sixteen honorary amateurs and associates, mostly grand seigneurs or wealthy financiers, he singled out two:⁵³

Quant à M. de Boulogne, d'un nom illustre dans la peinture, il n'est point étranger à l'Académie; mais qu'y fait celui de l'abbé Pommyer, qui n'a point la manie d'être dupe, qui n'a point fait de voyage en Italie, personnage borné, sans illustration, sans lumieres? Sans doute, comme Conseiller de grand'Chambre, il est de ceux qu'admet la nouvelle loi, en qualité de gens utiles, & pourra solliciter les procès de la Compagnie, si elle en a.

Four days before his election to the Académie Pommyer wrote to La Tour the second letter which has survived⁵⁴:

Je serois bien flatté, Mon cher amy, d'apprendre de vous le résultat des bonnes vües et intentions que vous, Mrs Chardin et Cochin avés eus pour moy. Cela a si fort affecté mon coeur et ma reconnaissance, que je suis dans le plus grand empressement de sçavoir ce qui aura été conclu. Si vous avés l'amitié de m'écrire ce qui aura été fait, vous madresseres sous l'enveloppe de M. le p. President : à M. le Premier President, au chateau de Bryères, par Luzarches, votre lettre.

Receves d'avance tous mes remercimens, et les renouvellements d'amitié et des sentimens que je vous ai voué pour la vie.

L'ABBÉ POMMYER.

Au château de Bryères, ce 27 octobre 1767.

A M. de La Tour, peintre ordinaire du roy, aux galleries du Louvre.

Although Pommyer was present at Boucher's investiture as *premier peintre du roi* (30 July 1768), his subsequent attendance at proceedings of the Académie was very infrequent, perhaps as



Figure 6

⁵¹ Marc Furcy-Raynaud, "Correspondance de M. de Marigny avec Coypel, Lépicié et Cochin", *Nouvelles archives de l'art français*, xx, 1904, pp. 124–126. See also Charlotte Guichard, *Les Amateurs d'art à Paris au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 2006, p. 60f.

⁵² Cited in Christian Michel, *Charles-Nicolas Cochin et l'art des lumières*, Rome, 1993, p. 128f.

⁵³ *L'Espion anglois, ou correspondance secrète entre Milord All'Eye et Milord All'Ear*, London, 1785, VII, p. 80.

⁵⁴ Desmazes, *op. cit.*

a result of the attack on him by students unhappy at the award of the first prize for sculpture to the unpopular Jean-Guillaume Moitte. The incident was widely reported. Diderot mentioned the outrage to “le bel abbé Pommyer”:⁵⁵ it seems that Pommyer was the first academician to leave the meeting, and found his passage blocked by the students, who cried “Passe, foutu âne”. The unfortunate Moitte and the remaining academicians followed, and were hissed and cursed; Cochin, Vien and Pigalle were particularly blamed for supporting the successful candidate. Cochin described the incident to Marigny⁵⁶; this version involved several students drawing their swords and attacking Pommyer’s servant, who was riding on the back of his coach.

Pommyer did play a rôle in the row between the Académie royale and the Académie de Saint-Luc. Friction between the two academies had grown, perhaps as a result of the patronage by the Argenson family of the older, but humbler, institution; but, as the correspondence of Cochin again reveals, the royal academicians decided to confine their objections to the alleged use by their rivals of the term “Académie royale” to which they were not entitled; this was a battle in which Cochin was confident of victory. The parlement duly passed an arrêt, with which the Académie de Saint-Luc agreed to comply; but the premier peintre Pierre, reporting to Marigny, decided to establish a committee under Pommyer’s direction to decide if, despite the Académie de Saint-Luc’s submission, formal registration of the order was required.⁵⁷ Several years later the formal suppression nevertheless took place.

Of the various portraits Cochin made of his friend, the etched profile⁵⁸ of Pommyer, wearing the calotte, or skullcap, is the earliest: it was etched by Cochin in 1768 but finished by Augustin de Saint-Aubin and dated 1769 (fig. 5). It was a few years later that circumstances brought the friends together, leading to a remarkable collection of portraits of Pommyer and his

family. Pommyer was exiled to his country retreat at Gandelu (half-way between Paris and Reims, near Château-Thierry) in January 1771, ironically as a result of the infamous reforms of the parlement by Pommyer’s friend Maupeou le fils, now chancelier. Cochin had also fallen from power (he was dismissed from his position as chargé du détail des arts in 1770), and he accompanied his friend to Gandelu. Here Cochin made several drawings of Pommyer, including that⁵⁹ now in the Stanford



Figure 7

⁵⁵ Diderot wrote up the affair three times, in almost exactly the same language: first, in a letter to Falconet of 6 September 1768, which omits the epithet “bel” (Diderot, *Correspondance*, ed. Georges Roth & Jean Varloot, Paris, 1955–1970, VIII, p. 143); in a letter to Sophie Volland of 10 September 1768 (*ibid.*, p. 156); and in *Les Deux Académies*, a supplement to the Salon de 1767 (*Salons*, III, p. 342).

⁵⁶ *Procès-verbaux*, 27 August 1768, pp. 399ff.

⁵⁷ Letter of 10 November 1770; cited in Jules Guiffrey, “Histoire de l’Académie de Saint-Luc”, *Archives de l’art français*, IX, 1915, pp. 63f. The suppression in 1776 may have been influenced by Malesherbes’s financial reforms.

⁵⁸ Profile of Pommyer, engraving with etching, by Charles-Nicolas Cochin finished by Augustin de Saint-Aubin, 0.196x0.146 (plate), 1769; “M^r L’ABBÉ POMMYER./Conseiller en la Grande Chambre du Parlement.”; below the line, “C. N. Cochin filius delin. 1769.”; “Aug. de St. Aubin Sculp.”. Literature: C. A. Jombert, *Catalogue de l’oeuvre de Charles Nicolas Cochin fils*, Paris, 1770, p. 130, no. 104 among the “portraits en médaillons & autres, dessinés par C. N. Cochin fils”: “104. M. l’Abbé Pommyer, Conseiller en la grande Chambre du Parlement de Paris, Amateur honoraire de l’Académie Royale de Peinture & Sculpture, &c; gravé à l’eau-forte par Cochin fils, en 1768. Cette planche n’a point été achevée.”; Baron Roger Portalis & Henri Béraldi, *Les Graveurs du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1880–82, I, Cochin, no. 94; see also p. 544; Emmanuel Bocher, *Gravures françaises du XVIII^e siècle*, v, *L’Œuvre gravé d’Augustin de Saint-Aubin*, Paris, 1879, no. 219.

⁵⁹ Black chalk drawing on cream laid paper, of the abbé Pommyer “en paysan de Gandelu”, by Cochin, 0.235x0.187, signed “Dessiné par C. N. Cochin a Gandelu/le 29 mars 1771”; “Le Paysan de Gandelu”; “Vertueux, plein de sentiment,/patron de l’innocence:/l’honneur est son seul élément,/il est sa recompense”. Stanford University Museum of Art, Palo Alto, Mortimer C. Leventritt Fund, inv. 1972.48 (Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée; William H. Schab, New York, in 1969). Literature: Baron Roger Portalis, *Les dessinateurs d’illustrations au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris 1877, I, pp. 100,

University collection, which was engraved by Demarteau with the satirical title *paysan de Gandelu* (fig. 6): Pommyer is shown wearing his “costume de bienfaisance”, holding a cane, sitting on a rustic chair; a manuscript note on the Bibliothèque nationale copy of the engraving indicates that Pommyer dressed thus in his exile, and devoted himself to good works, including rescuing a grocer from bankruptcy. Cochin sent the drawing to his friend Montucla on 7 May 1771, explaining that it was a “plaisanterie”. Pommyer’s relaxed informality at Gandelu is captured⁶⁰ by Cochin in a sheet which is now in Berlin (fig. 7); a later annotation, by Charles Theurier-Pommyer, explains that Pommyer is talking to his servant at the door to his house on the left. A delightful picture of this idyll is offered by the unpublished journal of the bookseller Siméon-Prosper Hardy (1729–1806):⁶¹ the villagers put on a village fête for the abbé on the eve of his saint’s day in 1772 with songs in his honour. Pommyer then entertained the village to supper and further festivities into the night. Hardy adds his own observations on this description, with a somewhat puritanical note:

Monsieur l’abbé Pommyer est logé à *Gandela*, village renforcé, dans une maison assez étroite ; il s’est amusé à écrire en gros caractère sur la cheminée de la salle le mot prétieux *Liberté*, et de distance en distance sur mur et lambris ces autres mots, *Ne vous gênez pas*.

Exemple frappant de l’existence du vrai bonheur après lequel tout le monde court et auquel on ne croit plus dans les grandes villes. Ce digne citoyen, pendant que les ennemis des loix et de l’humanité l’éloignent, le poursuivent, veillent inutilement pour le surprendre, a sçu trouver au sein de cinquante familles secourues cette félicité qu’il ne trouvoit pas dans la place qu’il occupoit et qu’on a cru lui enlever en le dépouillant inutilement de son état : il a fait d’un village ignoré son Louvre et le théâtre de ses vertus patriotiques.

N. B. On n’étoit fâché que d’une seule chose en lisant l’extrait de la susdite fête, c’étoit de ne pouvoir se dispenser à juger qu’elle eût été beaucoup plus convenable pour un conseiller que pour un conseiller clerc.

Another Cochin drawing⁶² of 1772 (now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, fig. 8) belongs to the same group of drawings of members of the family which were in the possession of Theurier-Pommyer’s widow when seen by baron Roger Portalis⁶³ in 1877 and reported by the



Figure 8

126; exhibition catalogue, *18th century drawings from California collections*, Claremont and Sacramento, 1976, no. 16 reproduced; *Fifty Master Drawings*, New York, William H. Schab, no date [1969], no. 29a; Lorenz Eitner et al., *Stanford University Museum of Art: The Drawing Collection*, Seattle, 1993, no. 101, pp. 68f, 316. Engraved: sanguine manner by Demarteau, 1771, 0.245x0.191 (see Marcel Roux, *Inventaire du Fonds Français*, Paris, 1949, vol. 6, no. 262; Edmond & Jules de Goncourt, “Cochin”, in *L’Art du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1882, vol. 2, p. 59; Christian Michel, *op. cit.*, p. 129, pl. 17 reproduced).

⁶⁰ *Vue de Gandelu* by Cochin, 1771. Black chalk drawing, 0.237x0.388, signed “Dessiné par C. N. Cochin le fils, a Gandelu, en 1771.”; annotated “Vue de Gandelu près de la Ferté sous Jouarre et de Chateau-Thierry, où fit exilé M. l’abbé Pommyer en janvier 1771. Il parle à son domestique à la porte cochère de la principale maison où il habitait.” Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, KdZ 26335 (Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée; William H. Schab, New York, in 1969). Exhibited: *Fifty Master Drawings*, New York, William H. Schab, no date [1969], no. 29b; *Fifty Fine and Rare Drawings, Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts*, New York, William H. Schab, no date [1971], no. 64, fig. 69; *Vom späten Mittelalter bis zu Jacques Louis David. Neuervorbene und neubestimmte Zeichnungen im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett*, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, 1973, no. 182. Cochin continued to visit Pommyer’s country retreat for many years: in a letter to Desfriches of 18 May 1782 he mentions that he is about to spend a fortnight with his friend “à la campagne” (Paul Ratouis de Limay, *Aignan-Thomas Desfriches*, 1907, p. 83).

⁶¹ Entry for 13 January 1773; see Valérie Goutal Arnal, “« Mes Loisirs, ou Journal d’Evenemens Tels Qu’ils Parviennent à ma Connoissance », chronique (1753–1789). du libraire Siméon-Prosper Hardy”, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 46 (1999), pp. 457–477.

⁶² Black chalk drawing by Cochin, 0.115x0.089, signed “Dessiné par C. N. Cochin le fils, a Gandelu, 1772”; inscribed verso “l’abbé Pommier conseiller a la gde Chambre du Parlement”. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman collection, inv. 1975.1.584 (Mme Theurier-Pommyer. Gaston Le Breton in 1922; David David-Weill; Irwin Boyle Laughlin; Mrs Hubert Chanler; London, Sotheby’s, 10 June 1959, Lot 10; P. & D. Colnaghi; acquired Robert Lehman, February 1960). Literature: Portalis, *op. cit.*; George Szabo, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century French Drawings from the Robert Lehman Collection*, New York, 1980, no. 7, reproduced; Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann et al., *The Robert Lehman collection VII: fifteenth- to eighteenth-century European drawings*, Princeton, 1999, no. 124, pp. 344f.

⁶³ Portalis, *op. cit.*; see also Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 59, 92, 120, 122f.

Goncourts five years later. Dominique Brême (Christie’s 1993 catalogue) understandably thought that this drawing might be of Merry Pommyer, also an abbé, since there is little resemblance to the La Tour image, but a close inspection of the bone structure and eyebrows confirms that this drawing is of François-Emmanuel, as indeed is consistent with the inscription on the verso. Questions of identification extend to others in the series, not least because the twin eldest brothers both appear to have been “seigneurs de Rougemont”. However, in Portalis’s list, Mme Theurier-Pommyer’s black chalk portrait of the *trésorier* Pommyer (i.e. Pommyer’s eldest brother François, dated 1772) is distinguished from the portrait of M. Pommyer de Rougemont in sanguine, also signed and dated 1772; the latter could be of any of the three sons of François’s twin Yves-Joseph-Charles, who was dead in 1772⁶⁴. Mme Theurier-Pommyer also had a large (“in-4^o”) black chalk drawing of the abbé Pommyer de Sourches (i.e. Pommyer’s brother Merry), dated 1771, as well as a small (in-12^o) drawing of the same. In addition to the *paysan de Gandelu*, there was an in-12^o drawing of François-Emmanuel, signed and dated at Gandelu, 1772.

There are thus four small drawings in the collection which could be the 1772 Gandelu pictures: François-Emmanuel; Merry; François (black chalk) and Yves-Joseph-Charles (sanguine). Three such drawings are known: that at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (which can logically only be François-Emmanuel or Merry, and which I think is the former); a sanguine drawing in a private collection in Bremen⁶⁵ in 1976; and a third black chalk drawing with the Schab Gallery⁶⁶ in 1969. The last two are clearly of individuals of different ages; despite the medium (Portalis may have confused the red and black chalk drawings in his list, or it may simply have been incomplete), the Bremen sitter can only be François (of the brothers only Merry and François-Emmanuel were alive in 1772, and Merry would have worn clerical bands). The Schab sitter is identified as Yves-Joseph-Charles; this must be the son, despite his resemblance to the right-hand boy in the double portrait of the twins by Largillierre fifty years earlier, who must be his father.⁶⁷

Other members of the family drawn by Cochin were Pommyer’s niece Mme d’Incourt de Fréchencourt and her husband (black chalk medallions, dated 1771), both in Portalis’s list. A delightful Cochin drawing of a four-year-old child known as “Chou-Chou”, holding her doll, was not listed by Portalis but has survived in the family: dated 1771, it depicts Pommyer’s great-niece Élisabeth d’Incourt de Fréchencourt, the future baronne de Jacquier de Rosée, whose alliance represents a crucial link in the provenance of the entire collection. Mme Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont, née Marie-Élisabeth Huart (black chalk, signed and dated 1772; in Portalis), was herself clearly a close friend of Cochin, who dined every Wednesday with her, even after the abbé’s death⁶⁸. Four more Cochin drawings were in the Theurier-Pommyer collection in 1877: portraits of a M. Tribolet d’Auvillers, “à Gandelu 1772”; of the playwright Jean-Michel Sedaine,



Figure 9

⁶⁴ According to the comte de Lorne d’Alincourt’s archives.

⁶⁵ Sanguine drawing, 0.132x0.097, signed “Dessiné, a gandelu, par C. N. Cochin le fils, en 1772”. Location unknown (Mme Theurier-Pommyer; Bremen, private collection in 1976). Exhibited: *Zeichnungen alter Meister aus deutschem Privatbesitz*, Bremen, 1976, no. 167, fig. 81 reproduced.

⁶⁶ Black chalk drawing, 0.119x0.096, signed “Dessiné, a gandelu, par C. N. Cochin le fils, en 1772”. Location unknown (Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée; William H. Schab, New York, in 1969). Exhibited: *Fifty Master Drawings*, New York, William H. Schab, no date [1969], no. 29c.

⁶⁷ Of the Pommyer nephews, only Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon’s date of birth is known (1743): he would have been 29 in 1772. Although some sources describe him as the eldest, the apparent age of the sitter in the Schab portrait suggests that in fact Yves-Joseph-Charles was older.

⁶⁸ A letter in verse to Mme Pommyer de Rougemont, dated 12 March 1785, suggestively talking of a lost bet and of the consumption of oysters, is reproduced in *Nouvelles archives de l’art français*, II, 1880–81, p. 41.

1777; and of Mme de Moncrif,⁶⁹ 1780 (all three were no doubt friends of both Cochin and the abbé); and an illustration for Hénault's *Nouvel abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France*⁷⁰.

All of these drawings must surely once have belonged to Pommyer himself, and most appeared on the art market after the death of Mme Jacquier de Rosée in 1967. The New York drawing belonged to Gaston Le Breton in 1922 (subsequent owners included the distinguished collectors David David-Weill, Irwin Boyle Laughlin and Robert Lehman), and so must have emerged before the other group of Cochin figures. Possibly another drawing in the series, a black chalk "dessin par Ch. Cochin, à Gandelu, 1771" appeared in the Decourcelle sale in 1911⁷¹. Two more⁷² black chalk drawings also left the Theurier-Pommyer collection before the First World War: both are signed "dessiné par C. N. Cochin à Gandelu 1771"; they were in Paris sales, 10 June 1911 (Lot 30) and 31 March 1914 (Lot 24); the former is entitled *Le curé de Gandelu*, and shows the abbé Pommyer in profile, dressed in full clerical outfit (fig. 9).⁷³ The second may be the same as the *L'enfant de Gandelu*, in the Marius Paulme sale.⁷⁴

On 7 March 1770 Pommyer became forty-sixth abbé of the Cistercian abbey of Bonneval, near Laguiole in Aveyron in the diocese of Rodez⁷⁵. He succeeded Jean-Antoine d'Agoult, doyen of Notre-Dame, who had died on 4 October 1769. Pommyer took up his position as abbé commendataire – without attendance obligations – through his procureur, J.-B. Roy, doyen du chapitre de Mur-de-Barrez, and the affairs of the abbey were conducted by the prieur claustral dom Joseph-Aurélien de Preigney. When called to decide a matter concerning the abbey and the seminary at Laguiole in 1771, he declined to attend on the grounds of his "exile" at Gandelu⁷⁶. The abbey had the relatively large number of 22 monks. Pommyer would have enjoyed perhaps half the abbey's revenues of 20,000 livres⁷⁷. One of his first acts (30 April 1770) was to lease the whole of the abbey's estates to two farmers for nine years (such leases were uncommon: the last had been granted in 1679), at a rent of 25,000 livres plus large quantities of farm produce, ranging from wheat to cheese, and including 36 brace of red partridge. The tenant farmers themselves sublet the land: on the grant of one such sublease for 20,800 livres in 1777, Pommyer received a pot-de-vin of 6240 livres⁷⁸.

By 1774, he had become président de la Chambre souveraine du clergé de France, the supreme court for ecclesiastical law, ruling over eight lower courts. It was probably not a

⁶⁹ Possibly Mme Pierre-Louis-César de Moncrif, née Marie-Suzanne de Vaucourt, whose son was (in 1783) to marry Anne-Julie de Lorne, Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon Pommyer de Rougemont's sister-in-law.

⁷⁰ Paris, 1768; the illustration is entitled "Règne de François II. Le chancelier Michel de l'Hospital refuse de signer la mort du prince de Condé (1560)".

⁷¹ Paris, 29–30 May 1911, Lot 84: "en buste, de profil à gauche, assis sur une chaise, les cheveux relevés sur le front, bouclés et pendant sur la nuque", 0.13x0.11, not reproduced. This could be the small portrait of Merry Pommyer noted by Portalis. It is difficult not to imagine a Pommyer link with two other black chalk drawings by Cochin in the same sale: Lot 80 was a portrait of Marie-Nicolas-François de Bourgogne, *chanoine de l'église de Reims*, who became a *conseiller-clerc au parlement de Paris* in 1759, following Pommyer from the *1^{re} des enquêtes to the grand'chambre*, and joining him in the *Chambre souveraine du clergé* in the 1780s (signed and dated 1781, it was also engraved by Demarteau); while Lot 79 was the portrait, signed and dated 1780, of the comtesse de la Guillonnière discussed above.

⁷² I am grateful to Christian Michel for drawing my attention to these after the original publication of this article in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.

⁷³ 0.12x0.086.

⁷⁴ Paris, 13–15 May 1929, Lot 55, reproduced pl. 38, 0.12x0.108.

⁷⁵ The abbey is not to be confused with the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Florentin de Bonneval near Chartres, now a mental hospital. I am most grateful to Sister Joséphine of the Abbaye for drawing to my attention the information in P. A. VERLAGUET, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Bonneval en Rouergue*, Rodez, 1938.

⁷⁶ Archives départementales, H. Bonneval, pap. 2 fol.

⁷⁷ Revenues of 12–16,000 livres were published in the various *Almanachs royaux* for the period; the figure of 20,000 livres is based on the 1768 figures taken for the *Commission des Réguliers* (Bibliothèque nationale, Fr. 13.857, pp. 11ff; 13.858, pp. 162ff). The *taxe en Cour de Rome* was 700 florins.

⁷⁸ Verlaguet, *op. cit.*, p. 649, n. 1. Pommyer may also have been instrumental in the strange affair of dom Jean-Baptiste Miroudot du Bourg (1716–1798), a Cistercian monk who had been taken up by King Stanislas for promoting the cultivation of ryegrass, became a member of the académies of Nancy and Metz, and formed a large collection of antiquities. In 1770, he was sent to the abbé de Bonneval as *commissaire*, perhaps by Pommyer, but expelled after spreading disorder in 1771, according to five letters from the monks to the *abbé général* of the Cistercians (*op. cit.*, pp. 605ff). He was appointed Bishop of Babylon and consul to Baghdad in 1776; later he joined Talleyrand in the consecration of constitutional bishops on 24 February 1791, leading to his suspension by Rome; and he died after a long spell in prison in 1798 (see Michaud, *Biographie universelle*, Paris, 1843–).

coincidence that his nephew abbé Nicolas-François-Bonaventure Pommyer de Rougemont became a conseiller-commissaire to the same court in 1780⁷⁹; this nephew was already prédicateur de la reine, chanoine de Saint-Cloud, and had preached an oration at the funeral of the dauphine Marie-Josèphe de Saxe in 1766.⁸⁰

Friendship with the painter Jean-Jacques Bachelier (1724–1806) led to Pommyer's appointment in 1776 as a director of the École royale gratuite de dessin⁸¹. Following a number of smaller provincial free schools of drawing, such as that in Rouen founded by Descamps in 1749, this precursor to the École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs had been founded in 1766 by the lieutenant-général de police Antoine-Raymond-Gabriel de Sartine (1729–1801), with Bachelier as artistic director, under whose influence the school emphasised the teaching of geometry as the best means of rejecting the excesses of the rococo in favour of the simpler Louis XVI style. Bachelier obtained support from the King as well as forming a prestigious board of patrons and benefactors. Pommyer was elected along with the soldier and inventor Anne-Pierre, duc d'Harcourt⁸² (1701–1783), and the new président of the school, Jean-Charles-Pierre Lenoir (1732–1807), lieutenant-général de police, who had replaced Sartine in both his offices; Lenoir later resigned his administrative functions to become bibliothécaire du roi in 1785. Sartine, Lenoir, Harcourt and Pommyer were all witnesses at Bachelier's wedding on 7 June 1776⁸³. It is quite possible that Pommyer may have introduced Bachelier to La Tour, who opened an École royale gratuite de dessin in Saint-Quentin in 1782 and also left Bachelier his portrait in his 1784 will⁸⁴. By 1783 Pommyer owned Bachelier's painting *La Mort d'Abel*, which had been shown in the 1763 Salon (no 79) along with the La Tour and Chardin pictures discussed above⁸⁵. With this painting, Bachelier was reçu by the Académie in 1763 as a history painter (having previously been accepted as a flower painter), but a year later the artist substituted another painting, *La Charité romaine*, as his morceau de réception in the new genre. There were other additions to Pommyer's collection: two small pendants by François Guérin, of a Concert; and des Joueuses de domino, were lent by him to the Salon de 1777 (no. 75).

The architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel (1698–1782), honoraire amateur of the Académie, died on 4 January 1782, and Pommyer moved up to this rank by seniority. He was the obvious choice to be selected to inform the avocat-général du parlement de Paris, Jean-Baptiste-Paulin d'Aguesseau de Fresne, of his election several weeks later to take up the vacant position of honoraire associé-libre, following the suggestion from d'Angiviller⁸⁶. Pommyer's attendance at the Académie was now more frequent, and he was present at the admission of Mmes Vigée Le Brun and Labille-Guiard (31 May 1783).

The remarkable marble bust⁸⁷ of the abbé Pommyer by Étienne-Pierre-Adrien Gois

⁷⁹ *Almanach royal*, 1780: "Conseillers-commissaires... Députés des diocèses, Mrs les abbés... 1780 13 avril. Reims, Pommyer de Rougemont, Chanoine & écolâtre de l'église de Reims, Vicaire général du diocèse de Cambrai, rue de Bracq". He was already "prêtre, écolâtre du diocèse [responsible for regulating teachers] et chanoine de l'église métropolitaine de Reims" according to a certificate he issued in 1778 (archives d'Avançon, 2G402, p. 108: maître d'école, Pierre Treuvelat).

⁸⁰ Claude Pougin de Saint-Aubin & Jean-Louis Aubert, *Correspondance littéraire de Karlsruhe (12 juillet 1766 – 15 décembre 1768)*, ed. Jochen Schlobach, p. 197f.

⁸¹ *Almanach royal*, 1780: "Cette École est ouverte rue des Cordeliers, en faveur des Métiers, pour quinze cens Éleves, à qui l'on enseigne les principes élémentaires de la Géométrie-Pratique, de l'Architecture, de la Coupe des Pierres, de la Perspective, & des différentes parties du Dessain, comme figures, animaux, fleurs & ornements." For a discussion of the school and its significance, see Hélène Mouradian, Xavier Salmon, Tamara Préaud, Danielle Rice & Ulrich Leben, *Jean-Jacques Bachelier (1724–1806) peintre du roi et de Madame de Pompadour*, Paris, 1999. Cochin only became a director in 1779.

⁸² Not to be confused with his son François-Henri (1726–1802), the soldier, *gouverneur de Normandie*, tutor to the Dauphin, author and member of the *Académie française*.

⁸³ AN MC XXXIII 621, reprinted in Mouradian et al., *op. cit.*, p. 201f.

⁸⁴ See Mouradian et al., *op. cit.*, p. 22; Besnard & Wildenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

⁸⁵ Oil on canvas, 1.462x1.137; the picture is not recorded after 1783, but was mentioned in Mammès-Claude-Catherine Pahin Champlain de La Blancherie, *Essai d'un tableau historique des peintres de l'école française depuis Jean Cousin en 1500, jusqu'en 1783 inclusivement. Avec le catalogue des ouvrages des mêmes Maîtres qui sont offerts à présent à l'émulation & aux hommages du Public, dans la Salon de la Correspondance*, Paris, 1783, reprinting *Nouvelles de la République des lettres et des arts*, XXVII, 1 July 1783, p. 242 ("on voit de [Bachelier]... la mort d'Abel, chez M. l'Abbé Pommyer").

⁸⁶ *Procès-verbaux*, 1 February 1782, pp. 100f.

⁸⁷ Marble bust by Étienne-Pierre-Adrien Gois, 0.79x0.60x0.33, signed and dated 1783. Birmingham Museum & City Art Gallery, inv. P.21375 (d'Incourt de Fréchencourt; Jacquier de Rosée; Heim in 1968; acquired 1975). Literature: Evelyn Silber, *Sculpture in*

(1731–1823), signed and dated 1783, is now in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (fig. 10); it emerged from the Jacquier de Rosée family in the late 1960s. Compared with the previous images, it shows a much older sitter in magistrate’s robes, but still wearing clerical bands and a calotte. Gois, a pupil of Michel-Ange Slodtz, was reçu in 1770 and had just reached the rank of full professor at the Académie, an achievement celebrated by Mme Labille-Guiard’s portrait of the sculptor in the Salon of 1783 (no 127). Pommyer must have known his father, Edmé Gois, commis au greffe de la grand’chambre au parlement, although the father was dead by the time Gois’s widowed mother sued her son (unsuccessfully) in 1761 to prevent his marriage to an impoverished Mlle Périchon⁸⁸.

Of Pommyer’s career as a magistrate, little is known apart from a few observations by the somewhat partial author of the *Mémoires secrets*. In his 1770 note on the Paris parlement, he records the saying applied to Pommyer: “Les bavards sont toujours bonnes gens”⁸⁹. Some seven years later, his tone was different, as he records one of the many conflicts between the parlement and a Paris institution:

La faculté de médecine, avant de répandre son *précis* dans le public, a ARRÊTÉ une grande députation pour le porter au premier président & aux présidents à mortier ; elle a arrêté aussi que dans la douleur où elle étoit de se voir privée de son doyen, de voir plusieurs de ses membres inculpés, & elle-même traduite devant le parlement, elle s’abstiendroit de toute cérémonie & acte solomnel, & cesseroit même toute fonction qui ne seroit pas nécessaire au service public.

Le doyen Dessessarts a compatu la semaine dernière pardevant l’abbé Pommier, nommé commissaire pour l’interroger & l’entendre en vertu du décret d’ajournement personnel rendu contre lui. Sa compagnie a été très-satisfaite de la manière intelligente, sage & ferme dont ce chef a répandu aux questions captieuses, & dérisoires du magistrat, un peu calotin. Ce dernier a prétendu que bien loin d’être l’ennemi de la faculté, comme l’on en faisoit courir le bruit, il avoit empêché qu’on ne poussât les choses plus loin, & qu’on ne le décrétât de prise de corps⁹⁰.

In another incident a few years later, the grand’chambre issued a ruling suppressing a letter from a certain Mme Le Féron-Dubreuil, in which she protested about an inequitable judgement against her. The *Mémoires secrets* gave a full account:

Les jugements sots ou iniques rendus depuis quelque-temps ont enflammé tellement le zèle des avocats, qu’il en a résulté des mémoires où les juges ont été très maltraités. Ceux-ci, de leur côté sont fort mécontents de l’irrévérence qu’on témoigne pour leurs oracles ; & il en a résulté une ligue de la magistrature contre l’ordre généreux chargé de la défense des parties. On a déjà vu dans plusieurs affaires des effets de cette fermentation : elle vient d’éclater plus fortement par un arrêt rendu le 7 de ce mois à la grand’chambre. Le réquisitoire de l’avocat-général Seguier est remarquable.

The *Mémoires* go on to quote this closing speech in tedious detail; the advocate-general’s principal charge being that the defendant compounded her libel by publishing her letter of complaint to the magistrate, and thereby demonstrated the truth of the original complaints. In conclusion:



Figure 10

the Birmingham Museum and City Art Gallery – Summary Catalogue, Birmingham, 1987, no. 150, reproduced; *The Burlington magazine*, CXVII/872, November 1975, pp. 748–49. Exhibited: *French paintings & sculptures of the 18th century*, 10 January – 15 March 1968, Heim Gallery, London, reproduced. I am most grateful to John Register for drawing it to my attention.

⁸⁸ Stanislas Lami, *Dictionnaire des sculpteurs de l’école française au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1910. The bust may be the one in marble exhibited under “Plusieurs portraits” by Gois in the 1783 Salon, although no specific description has been found.

⁸⁹ Louis Petit de Bachaumont, Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert et al., *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l’histoire de la république des lettres en France depuis MDCCLXII jusqu’à nos jours*, London, 1777–89, additions for 17 May 1770.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19 April 1777.

En consequence la cour a supprimé cet imprimé comme scandaleux, téméraire, injurieux à la magistrature ; a donné acte au procureur général du roi de sa plainte contre les auteurs & distributeurs de cet imprimé & ordonné une information, même en temps de vacations, &c.

Le conseiller de grand'chambre dont il s'agit, est l'abbé Pommyer, magistrat fort ignorant, fort partial, et fort peu délicat, et le toutou du premier président, dont il est le compagnon de plaisir⁹¹.

The premier président referred to was the infamous Étienne-François d'Aligre (1727–1798), who Beugnot claimed had “aucune des qualités qui fondent un grand magistrat”⁹². He was rich and miserly, and was one of the main obstacles to the reforms of Calonne and Loménie. D'Aligre appeared as a witness (along with the prince de Conti and Cardinal Rohan) at the wedding of Pommyer's nephew Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon Pommyer de Rougemont to Elisabeth-Sophie de Lorne (1759–1797) in 1777. Commenting on the latest palace satire three years later, Bachaumont cites with evident relish a description of d'Aligre, who was painted as “un vilain, un avare, un homme sans moeurs, joignant à l'indécence l'incapacité”; while among other lesser figures “Messieurs...l'abbé Pommier, tiennent aussi leur rang dans ce tableau, & l'on révèle des anecdotes concernant chacun d'eux qui ne leur feroient pas honneur si elles étoient bien avérées”⁹³. In a satirical lampoon which appeared shortly after Pommyer's death, entitled *Le testament de M. l'abbé Pommier*, the theme was continued:

Item. Je donne à M. d'Aligre tous mes vins de Champagne, le priant de ne les verser qu'à Messieurs, pour qu'il ne soit plus taxé à l'avenir d'empoisonner la cour des Pairs : j'espère qu'il voudra bien être mon exécuteur testamentaire.

Another request in this apocryphal document was the following:

Je veux qu'après mon décès, ouverture de mon corps soit faite, pour en extraire les Epices, dont mon confrere l'Epicier du coin pourra s'arranger, à la charge de fournir, *gratis*, le luminaire de mon convoi & de faire dire six mille messes aux Grands Cordeliers pour le repos de mon ame.

This was a thinly veiled reference to the scandal over the épices des juges, a custom under which the premier président distributed bonuses to the most active members of the court, at the expense of the civil litigants; by 1783 the system had fallen into such disrepute that even d'Aligre wrote a memorandum agreeing to consult the bureau of the parlement before dividing out the spoils.⁹⁴ A false rumour concerning Pommyer was recorded by Hardy (4 May 1783):

Ce jour on répandoit faussement que le Sieur *abbé Pommyer* conseiller en la Grand-Chambre du Parlement étoit gardé à vue chez lui de l'ordre du Roi, avec défense d'en sortir, nonobstant les représentations faites en sa faveur par le *Premier président d'Aligre* à Sa Majesté, qui avoit été soidisant instruite, de prévarications énormes commises par ce magistrat dans l'exercice des fonctions de sa charge ; comme aussi qu'incessamment le Roi viendroit au Palais tenir son lit de justice et y faire enregistrer un nouvel édit de discipline intérieure par le Parlement concernant les épices, etc.

On 25 June 1783, La Tour made a codicil to his will nominating a replacement for Pommyer as executor to his will (the previous codicil appointing him does not seem to have survived) on the grounds that Pommyer's duties were “trop importantes au service public pour en être distrait par l'exécution de mon testament. Je le pris de vouloir bien en conserver le titre honoraire.”⁹⁵

Pommyer died in his hôtel in the rue de Braque⁹⁶, in the Marais, Paris, on 4 February 1784,

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 11 September 1780.

⁹² Nevertheless, d'Aligre countersigned with Pommyer the judgement of the Paris parlement given on 7 March 1778 (based on Pommyer's report) in favour of the 56 Protestant families from the Vermandois who had complained that their children's baptismal records showed them as illegitimate (Archives nationales X1b 4053). D'Aligre and Pommyer again signed the judgement upholding the marquise de Saint-Huruge's appeal against her husband (Henri Furgeot, *Le Marquis de Saint-Huruge, “généralissime des sans-culottes”* (1738-1801), Paris, 1908, p. 79).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 17 April 1783.

⁹⁴ See John Rogister, *Louis XV and the Parlement of Paris, 1737–1755*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 8, n. 10.

⁹⁵ Besnard & Wildenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁹⁶ His Paris addresses given in the *Almanachs royaux* are Paris, rue Beaubourg (1740–44); rue Pavée St Antoine, à l'hôtel d'Herbouville (1744–1750); rue des Francs-Bourgeois, au Marais, vis-à-vis la rue des trois Pavillons (1750–1755); rue d'Orléans [the present rue Charlot], au coin de la rue du Perche (1755–1758); rue de Paradis (1758–Easter 1776 – where his neighbour

aged 72. His death was reported in the Procès-verbaux of the Académie, together with a letter from his three nephews to Cochin apologising for the omission of his honorary membership of the Académie from their uncle's death certificate⁹⁷.

In the words of Maurice Tourneux, Pommyer was one of “ces abbés épicuriens, lettrés et savants qui n'ont guère du prêtre que le rabat et le petit collet”⁹⁸. After Pommyer's death, Cochin wrote: “Je me trouve dans l'univers comme un homme entouré de ruines, car il n'est plus en mon pouvoir de faire de nouvelles connoissances, et bientôt je seray réduit à vivre presque seul. Au reste ces amertumes disposent à quitter la vie avec moins de regret, comme le disoit feu notre ami Chardin.”⁹⁹ The author of the *Mémoires secrets* was predictably less charitable¹⁰⁰:

L'abbé Pommyer vient de mourir. Cet événement n'auroit fait aucune sensation, il y a un an, mais le rôle que ce Conseiller de Grand'Chambre a joué dans les assemblées au sujet de la réforme de la justice ; l'opiniâtreté qu'il a mise à ne point se départir des épices excessives auxquelles il avait porté les honoraires de sa charge ; le ridicule qu'ont versé sur lui les libelles répandus à cette occasion par des anecdotes scandaleuses & reconnues très vraies ; l'espèce d'exécration dans laquelle il étoit tombé; tout cela l'avoit rendu malheureusement trop fameux. On assure que la populace a suivi & honni son convoi.

Is this really the figure we see in these six images? Perhaps the truth of Pommyer's character lies somewhere between this vitriolic picture of pompous complacency and the rather mawkish portrayal of upright but endearing bonhomie in the verses inscribed by Cochin under the paysan de Gandelu:

Vertueux, plein de sentiment, patron de l'innocence
L'honneur est son seul élément, il est sa recompense.

Neil Jeffares

Geneviève de Malboissière, who lived in what is now 58, rue des Francs-Bourgeois records that Pommyer came to dinner on 10 July 1764; rue de Bracq [Braque], au Marais (1776 until his death).

⁹⁷ *Procès-verbaux*, 7 February 1784, pp. 186f. As we have seen, Besenval succeeded as *honoraire amateur*. The maréchal de Ségur became the new *associé-libre* of the Académie. Neither Pommyer nor the duc d'Harcourt was immediately replaced on the board of the École gratuite. The abbé's position in the *Chambre souveraine du clergé* was taken by the abbé Tandeau de Marsac of Notre-Dame. There was a gap of perhaps a year before the appointment of Elléon de Castellane Mazangues, évêque de Toulon, as abbé de Bonneval.

⁹⁸ Maurice Tourneux, *La Tour, biographie critique*, Paris, no date, p. 92.

⁹⁹ Goncourt, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

¹⁰⁰ *Mémoires secrets*, 6 February 1784.