

Labille-Guiard, *Mme Mitoire et ses enfants*

NEIL JEFFARES



[Adélaïde Labille-Guiard](#)

Mme Charles MITOIRE, née Christine-Geneviève Bron (1760–1842), avec ses deux fils, Alexandre-Laurent Mitoire (1780–1816) et Charles-Benoît Mitoire (1782–1832)

Pastel on three sheets of blue paper, 98.5x79 cm

Signed and dated, lower left “Labille f Guiard 1783”

Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum

PROVENANCE: by descent to Mme Albert Sanné (∞ 1862), née Sophie-Adrienne-Marie Barthez de Marmorières (1840–1923), arrière-petite-fille de Mme Mitoire; Kraemer; acqu. .vii.1901 Duveen Brothers, £1440; with payment to Carlhian & Beaumetz, £233/17/6; stock no. 21907; sold 3.vii.1901 Mrs T. H. Mason. [Colnaghi, not Lady Northcliffe], London, Christie's, 20.iv.1923, Lot 48, as self-portrait with her two children, 290 gns; [Percy Moore] Turner, for Cailleux; baron Eugène de Rothschild (1884–1976) by 1926; desc.: Paris, Christie's, 16.vi.2021, Lot 109 repr., €644,000

EXHIBITIONS: Salon de 1783, no. 131 (“Portrait de Mme Mitoire avec ses Enfants, & donnant à têter à l'un d'eux. 3 pieds 5 pouces de haut, sur 2 pieds de large”). Paris 1923c

LITERATURE: Anon. 1783c, p. 265; Anon. 1783d, p. 24; Portalis 1902, p. 18, repr. p. 19; *Connoisseur*, LXVI, 1923, p. 107; Lapauze 1923; Réau 1926; Ratouis de Limay 1946, pl. XLIII/64; Ratouis de Limay 1947, p. 109 repr.;

Passez 1973, no. 43, pl. XXXIII; DeLorme 1996, p. 290 n.r.; Cameron 1997; Kathryn Calley Galitz, “Nourishing the Body Politic: images of breast-feeding in the French salons, 1789–1814”, in *Farewell to the wet nurse: Etienne Aubry and images of breast-feeding in eighteenth-century France*, exh. cat., ed. Patricia R. Ivinski & al., Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, 1889–99, fig. 10; Chadwick 2007, fig. 81; Auricchio 2009, fig. 23; Havard de La Montagne 2011, p. 155 repr.; Cuzin 2013, pp. 130, 258 n.r.; Ronit Milano, *The portrait bust and French cultural politics in the eighteenth century*, 2015, p. 73 n.r.; [Jeffares 2018](#); Suzanne Conway, “Rousseau and the imagery of the *mère éducatrice* in late 18th century French art”, in E. J. Kendall & al., *The family in past perspective...*, 2021, pp. 86f; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [J.44.221](#)

RELATED WORKS: (I) An autograph replica in miniature (Louvre, RF 4301) (Passez 45; Jean-Richard 1994, no. 387 repr.; Auricchio 2009, fig. 24. (II) a later pastel copy, commissioned Duveen Bros 1901, later passing as autograph; Passez 44; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [J.44.224](#)

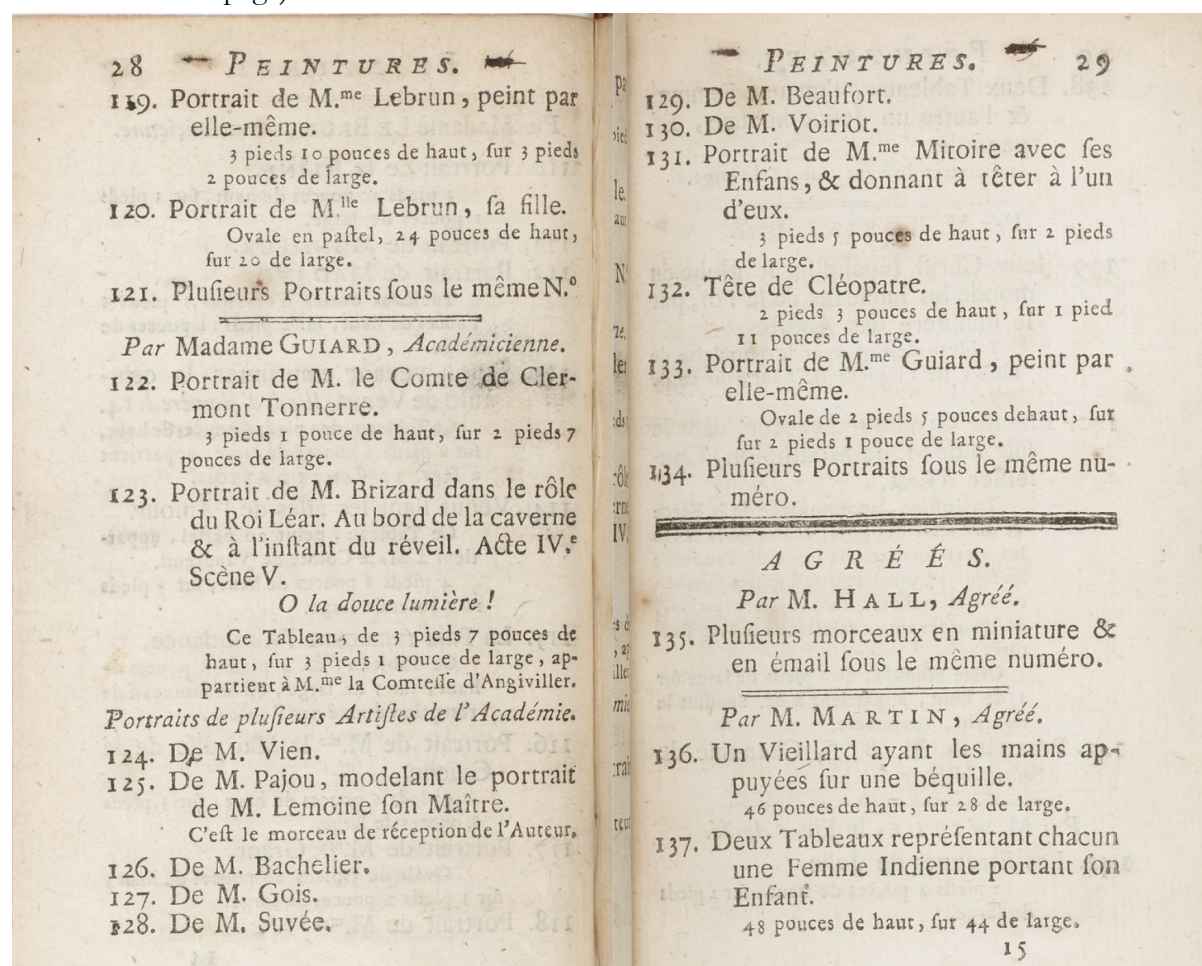
GENEALOGY: [Van Loo](#); [Mitoire](#); [Grimod](#)

BY SOME WAY THE MOST AMBITIOUS work in pastel by Mme Labille-Guiard,¹ *Mme Mitoire et ses enfants* has attracted a great deal of critical attention while a number of basic facts have remained unresearched or incorrect until now. It is hardly surprising that feminist art historians have taken it up as an emblem of the virtues of maternal breast-feeding and rousseauisme, a subject to which I can add nothing – except to point out that this was by no means “the first modern French painting of breast-feeding”, as Simon Schama describes the

¹ This essay first appeared simultaneously on my blog neiljeffares.wordpress.com on 29.iv.2021. This is the version of record, and may be cited as Neil Jeffares, “Labille-Guiard *Mme Mitoire et ses enfants*”, *Pastels & pastellists*, http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LabilleGuiard_MmeMitoire.pdf. It incorporates a number of changes resulting from documents about the Lardent and related families located in .ix.2021 by Thierry Depaulis to whom I am most grateful.

miniature version.² (In pastel³ alone one could mention Perronneau's Mme Poissonnier with the duc de Bourgogne, c.1751, [J.582.1684](#), while at the 1765 salon both Lagrenée and Bachelier had exhibited explicit depictions of Charité romaine. In the salon of 1781, David sent "Une Femme allaitant son enfant" (no. 316; lost⁴), as had Jollain in 1773 (no. 157; lost); Saint-Aubin showed one at the last Salon de l'Académie de Saint-Luc in 1774.⁵ Labille-Guiard had herself exhibited pastels with naked breasts in 1779 and 1782. One might note that Mme Labille-Guiard's partner, François-André Vincent, painted a woman holding an infant in 1782, for which he made a careful study: see Cuzin 2013, 407D and 408P.) Nor shall I analyse the striking visual accomplishment of this composition with complexities that are seldom required in the world of pastel. Even the still life of the table with its glass of liquid (wine or cordial?), so reminiscent of Liotard's *Belle Chocolatière*, replaces the Swiss clinical precision with the warmth and humanity that characterize Labille-Guiard's art.

The pastel was first exhibited in the salon of 1783. According to Anne-Marie Passez's monograph, it was shown anonymously, as "Madame *** avec ses enfants...", but in fact at least one further edition of the livret provided her name in full (we reproduce the whole context as it is important to see how Labille-Guiard saw it among her other submissions; this was the only alteration on the page):



² *Citizens*, 1989, p. 148. The miniature (now in the Louvre, legs Schlichting; formerly in the collection of C. H. T. Hawkins) was not the version exhibited in the Salon de 1783; because it is in a public collection, it has however been more widely reproduced than the primary version. The secondary literature citing it is too extended to list in full.

³ In oil one could cite Charles and Henri Beaubrun's depiction of Louis XIV at the breast of his nurse, Marie Longuet de La Giraudière, c.1639 (Versailles).

⁴ But not before Chénier had seen it, criticising its "tendance réaliste" (cited in Anatole de Montaiglon, *articles publiés dans le Moniteur des arts* 1846–47, 1847, p. 46).

⁵ Whether the National Gallery's *Maternal Affection* (NG 6663) by Lagrenée l'aîné was or was not shown in the 1775 salon is discussed in Wine 2018, p. 254, and in my review, Jeffares 2019a. The compositional similarities with the Labille-Guiard, notably the mother's engagement with the other child, is striking.

In any case no one was in doubt about the lady's identity at the time. The critic in *L'Année littéraire*, having praised her portraits of her fellow artists, said "Je ne suis pas aussi satisfait du Portrait de Madame Mitoire, qui est un peu gris" (he offered the same criticism of Vigée Le Brun's *Vénus liant les ailes de l'Amour* a few pages before), a sentiment not quite shared with the author of *Messieurs, Ami de tout le monde!*:

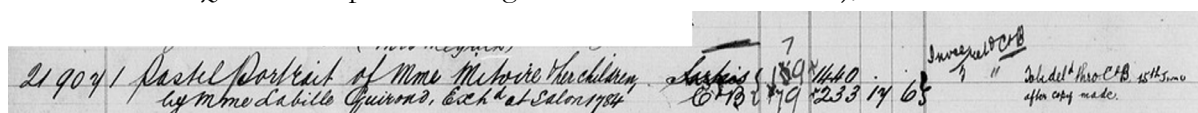
Pour celui de Mad. Mitoire, que je crois très-ressemblant, le coloris ne m'en a point paru si vrai, la carnation si naturelle, & le dessin aussi pur. La Figure est même un peu lourde & ronde, cela pourrait venir du modele.

Most of the other critics however, while enthusing over Labille-Guiard's other submissions, passed over this portrait in silence – and perhaps a little male embarrassment that one detects also in baron Portalis's account in 1902. He however is ready to dissociate himself from the criticism of the colouring:

L'ensemble forme un agréable tableau et la tonalité de ce pastel est blonde, argentine et non pas grisâtre, comme l'a osé dire un critique du temps.

By then the pastel belonged to "Mme veuve Sanné", a provenance Portalis leaves unexplained, and which has not been subsequently decoded in the modern literature (Anne-Marie Passez's flawed catalogue of 1973, updated by Laura Auricchio in 2009) – although this puzzle is easy enough to decipher. As my Van Loo [genealogy](#) reveals, Mme veuve Sanné was Mme Albert Sanné, née Sophie-Adrienne-Marie Barthez de Marmorières (1840–1923), Mme Mitoire's great-granddaughter by the younger child shown. We will return to his identity, and that of his brother, below.

We can complete the provenance with a few tools that may not have been available to Passez or Auricchio. By the time Portalis's monograph appeared, the pastel had already been sold, and in July 1901 passed out of the hands of Kraemer to Duveen Brothers for £1440 (with a commission of £233/17/6 paid to the agents Carlhian & Beaumetz), as their stockbooks reveal:



There it was also photographed in its neoclassical frame, which may well have been original, although it is no longer present.



It was sent on consignment soon after (on 3.VII.1901) to one of Duveen's favourite clients, Mrs T. Henry Mason, née Emma Jane Powley (1850–1918) (although as my blog post [Jeffares 2018r](#) shows, Mrs Mason didn't always like what she was sent, and much of it was returned unpaid). In any case, by 1923 it was back on the market, consigned anonymously (by Duveen?) to Christie's in a sale in which Viscountess Northcliffe was also a vendor (but not, *pace* Passez, of this lot). Cailleux bought it, apparently through Percy Moore Turner, and included it in a spectacular exhibition of French eighteenth century pastels in 1923. There it was singled out for praise by the anonymous "Curieux" (Henry Lapauze?) in *La Renaissance de l'art* who commented:

Le portrait de M^{me} Mitoire et de ses enfants par M^{me} Labille-Guiard est plein de grâce et d'une remarquable science de composition; il fut exposé au Salon de 1783; l'émule de M^{me} Vigée-Lebrun voit de plus en plus grandir sa réputation et ses somptueux portraits, à Versailles, des filles aînées de Louis XV, montrent une vigueur et un accent de vérité inoubliables. Le mari de cette M^{me} Mitoire était peintre lui-même et a travaillé en Russie. Fort bien conservé, ce pastel soutient le redoutable voisinage d'un *Jeune femme en robe bleue*, par Nattier⁶....

It's evidently time to turn our attention to the sitters in this portrait – particular since the painter in Russia was not Mme Mitoire's husband, but the infant she is suckling. Although Mme Mitoire herself has been correctly identified as Christine-Geneviève Bron, granddaughter of Carle Van Loo, to date the Labille-Guiard literature has said nothing about the children, and little about the husband. Several years ago I updated the *Dictionary* entry with details of the younger child, Charles-Benoît Mitoire, who indeed grew up to be a painter (see below). On 27 floréal an II (16 May 1794), he obtained a notarized "certificat de vie" stating that he was aged 12 and had been born in Clichy. His mother obtained a similar certificate a month later; it failed to mention her husband's name. (A week later her father obtained a third such certificate, for reasons⁷ which remain obscure; but a search through the index of the minutes of the notary do not reveal any such document for Charles Mitoire or for his elder son.) Charles-Benoît's document had no birth certificate attached, and the documents raised questions while at least allowing us to identify the infant shown in the salon of 1783 as likely to have been born just before 16 May 1782. But who was the elder child?

And how did this fit with a troubling "legend", alluded to obliquely by Portalis when discussing the "belle gorge de la mère", that Mme Mitoire's cousin, the gourmand Grimod de La Reynière, "n'avait pas eu trop mauvais goût"? The allusion is traced easily enough, since Desnoireterres's 1877 biography of Grimod discusses it at some length, and refers to the curious relationship the young and rather wayward boy had with his (third⁸) cousin Christine-Geneviève Bron, and which he apparently confided to his friend, the novelist Rétif de la Bretonne, who fictionalized the liaison, disguising the girl under the name Angélique de Bissi, but giving the game away by disclosing her real married name (Mitoire) once her parents had put the 17 year old out of harm's way.

I'm not the first person to decode this, although I did so before finding that Philippe Havard de La Montagne had published a detailed analysis of the novel and the reality (at least as far as it may be gleaned from Grimod's numerous letters which he continued to send to the girl for many years), appropriately in *Etudes rétiviennes* in 2011, to which I willingly refer you (it has so far escaped the attention of art historians and Labille-Guiard specialists). Havard de La Montagne was aware of a painter called Benoît-Charles Mitoire who had died in 1832 (age unknown to him), and guessed from the names he might be one of the children shown (but chose the wrong

⁶ This may be the portrait of Mme Royer [J.554.179](#).

⁷ Perhaps they related to an investment or annuity. Benoît Bron was appointed président du directoire des postes by royal proclamation on 13.V.1792 (see Paul Charbon, *De la fuite à Varennes à l'affaire du camp de Grenelle...*, 2005). As ancien administrateur des postes et messageries, he was awarded a very substantial pension of 9093 livres 15 sous by the Convention on 26.XI.1795. In a letter probably written in the summer of 1769 to Jeanne-Catherine de Maux, Diderot described a picnic at Saint-Cloud with Bron, Naigeon and d'Holbach. Naigeon recounted how dangerous manuscripts by d'Holbach were posted by his brother with the assistance of Bron (Philibert Damiron, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la philosophie au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1838, II, pp. 381f).

⁸ See my Grimod [genealogy](#).

one on the basis that the forenames were those of the father and maternal grandfather, most likely given to the first-born son).

Havard's logic might have been fruitfully applied to the name of the elder boy shown. A search of the parish register at Clichy (which, despite the notarial declaration, failed to reveal any baptismal entry for Charles-Benoît⁹) shows that, on 13 September 1780, a boy was baptized and given the names Alexandre-Laurent:

[illegible]

With these names, it will come as no surprise that his parrain was a Grimod de La Reynière: not Antoine-Laurent the son but his father, Laurent Grimod de La Reynière (1733–1793), fermier général 1753–80, administrateur des postes, who was also an amateur pastellist and later (1787) an honoraire associé libre de l'Académie royale de peinture. He was also seigneur de Clichy-la-Garenne. I doubt if we will ever know for certain whether the relationship was closer than that. We note too that the 76-year-old Christine Somis, Mme Van Loo was the marraine to her great-grandson.

We do know what happened to the boy, as he died in Martinique aged 36, his profession being described as marchand modiste:

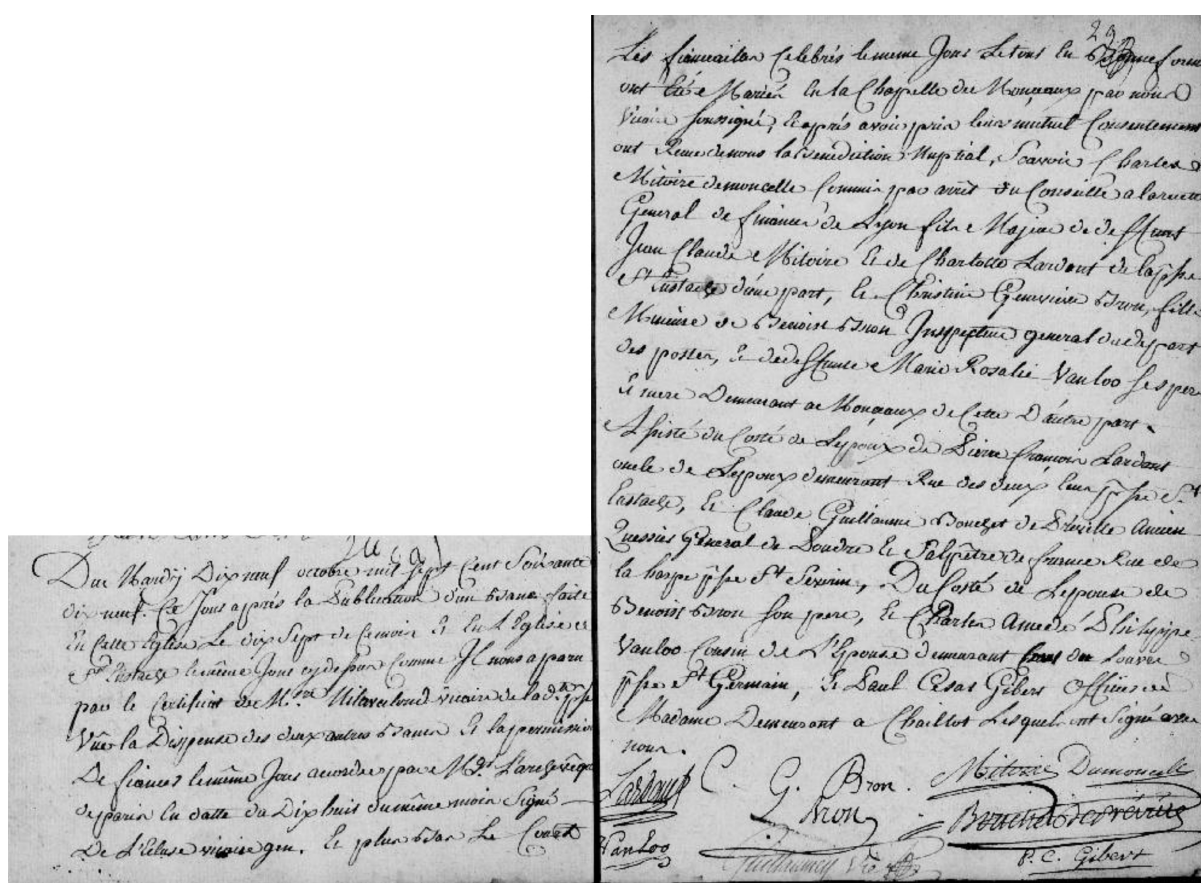
[illegible]

It is likely that the capital for this business was provided by his father, by then garde magasin des Menus plaisirs (see below) in the form of two payments amounting to 1000 francs recorded in a document of 28.X.1814 found in the latter's posthumous inventory, receipted by "Mitoire du Moncel".

⁹ One unverified source states that he was born on 6.1.1782. This seems improbable given the difference in age between the children in the portrait. In any case there is no such entry in the parish register for Saint-Médard, Clichy for several years around this date.

Much more is known about the younger brother, although it is easier to find it in Russian (where his name is transcribed as Бенуа-Парль Митурар). Despite exhibiting in the Paris salon in 1819 (from Paris, rue des Tournelles, during a temporary visit home) and in 1822 (from St Petersburg), he is omitted from most art reference works. Cuzin 2013 records him as a pupil of Vincent, enrolled during messidor and thermidor an IV (i.e. June–August 1796). The short entry in Bénézit notes that he was a member of the Academy in St Petersburg in 1813. He was in fact a prolific portraitist in oil and miniature (and is represented in the Hermitage and other Russian museums), having emigrated, obtained Russian citizenship and married a Russian – presumably the Annette-Marguerite Berg recorded in the Paris index cards for his death, which took place in Paris, rue Notre Dame des Champs, on 29.VI.1832; he had it seems returned there shortly before. An inventaire was taken on 3.IX.1832 (AN MC/RE/XX/14).

Returning to the parents, a search of the notarial archives in the Minutier central gives the date for their marriage contract as 14 October 1779 (AN MC/RE/LVI/13).¹⁰ We have also located the parish record of the marriage, which did take place at the church of Saint-Médard in Clichy on 19 October 1779:



The parish register provides us with a number of interesting details. There is probably no particular significance in the waiver of the customary three banns, nor is there any surprise in the appearance of Charles-Amédée Van Loo whose portrait (now in Versailles, MV 5874) Labille-Guiard would exhibit in 1785, one of her morceaux de réception set at her entry into the Académie royale in 1783. It is easy to pass over some of the less well-known names, but the Bron family were close friends with Paul-César Gibert (1717–1787), a music teacher who had studied in Italy (where he may well have known Christina Somis, Mme Carle Van Loo); he died

¹⁰ A certified copy of the acte de mariage was also deposited on 27.VII.1785 (AN MC/RE/XV/992), accompanied by one for Christine-Geneviève's sister, presumably relating to the death of their grandmother Mme Carle Van Loo which had occurred three months previously. Fifteen days before the deposit the same notary (étude XV) recorded five payments by "S^r et D^{me} Mitoire au Roy" amounting to some 35,000 livres, presumably to purchase annuities with Mme Mitoire's inheritance.

leaving children called Christine-Geneviève, aged 10 (so born in 1777) and Benoît-Charles-César, aged 8.¹¹

But perhaps the most interesting information is about Christine-Geneviève Bron's husband, the elusive Charles Mitoire (or Mitoire Dumoncel as he signs) of whom all that art history has hitherto reported is that he was connected with the finances de Lyon. The research set out below may seem somewhat remote from Labille-Guiard's family portrait, but the questions that emerge go to the nature of Mme Mitoire's marriage. Was Mitoire induced to marry a girl whose reputation was already in danger by the offer of a position¹² in her father's gift?

The marriage contract reveals that Mitoire brought assets up to 30,000 livres into the marriage, while Bron settled on his daughter the same sum – but made up in part by her share of her mother's estate. The contract followed reasonably standard terms, with one important reservation: the communauté des biens was limited, as to future acquisitions, to a value of 10,000 livres, so that any assets acquired by either party above that limit are not shared. However the terms don't clearly establish whether the marriage was just one of convenience.

It is perhaps worth noting that one rapidly comes up against surprising barriers in following Mitoire's career. He was probably the "Mitoire, bourgeois de Paris" recorded as a member of the masonic lodge *L'Amitié* in 1778.¹³ Havard de La Montagne notes that Mitoire was cited as a "commis à la Recette Générale du Lyonnais" in some documents, and wonders how this could have been combined with his position as "sous-visiteur" at the Direction générale des postes aux chevaux, relais et messageries de France shown in the *Almanach royal* for 1787. As is well known the Bron family (and the Grimods) were very closely connected with the French postal service.

At this stage it is worth asking how Mme Labille-Guiard came to be commissioned to make this portrait. The natural assumption (which may indeed be correct) was that it came through her contact with the Van Loo family at the Académie (as noted above). But an alternative explanation is possible. As demonstrated in [Jeffares 2019b](#), my piece with new facts about Labille-Guiard's family, her father Claude-Edme Labille had been, from 1764 on, one of the directeurs des Postes de Paris: this would surely have brought him into contact with Mme Mitoire's father, Benoît Bron, administrateur des postes et messageries and later président du directoire des postes.

The phrase "commis par arrêt du conseil à la recette générale des finances de Lyon" in the parish register again might excite suspicion of something not quite routine about the appointment. But in fact we can show that a Mitoire was in this position a year before the marriage, as he was implicated in a complex legal case relating to the acceptance of bills of exchange.¹⁴ The case involved bills sent by a M. de La Borde to an agent de change called Offmann which Mitoire (the legal reporter does not give a forename for "le sieur Mitoire, commis par arrêt du conseil, à la recette générale des finances du Lyonnais") had already endorsed as "pour acquit". Offmann disappeared, and the question was who should face the loss amounting, by December 1778, to some 153,000 livres; the case appears to have been decided (in February 1779) against Mitoire, making him personally liable for a sum he could not afford.

The 1780 *Almanach civil, politique et littéraire de Lyon...*, p. 119, gives the "Commis par Arrêt du Conseil" at the Recettes généraux des Finances de Lyon¹⁵ as "Paul-René Mitoire", a name for which I initially failed to find any genealogical data. He is indicated as based in Paris, carrying on the functions of Jacques-David Ollivier who had died on 3.V.1777, leaving a widow, née Anne-Marguerite Lamouroux. Their son François-Marie-David Ollivier de Montluçon (1743–1790), a soldier, was appointed in succession on 11.VI.1777; Paul-René Mitoire carried out the duties in

¹¹ Although the Chaillot parish registers were destroyed in the Commune (unlike those of Clichy), both entries are preserved in the reconstructed Paris archives. The future Mme Mitoire was indeed the girl's marraine.

¹² Bron's other daughter, Marie-Charlotte, married a Nicolas-Louis Gouin, whose papers in the Base Léonore include a declaration that he commenced his career in the Administration des postes on 1.III.1782, soon after his marriage (and just before his wife's death in childbirth).

¹³ Alain Le Bihan, *Francs-maçons parisiens du Grand Orient de France*, 1966, p. 359.

¹⁴ Denisart, *Collection de décisions Nouvelles...*, Paris, 1788, VII, pp. 593ff.

¹⁵ As confirmed in the accounts of the Ollivier estate (AN MC/XXXII, 23.II.1789), according to Claeys 2009, p. 566, n.5.

1778 and 1780. He is evidently the Mitoire in the law case – but the office is exactly that claimed by the Charles Mitoire in the 1778 marriage in the Clichy parish register. The identification is confirmed by the presence at the Mitoire–Bron marriage contract (although not the church ceremony at Clichy six days later) of “Mme Olivier et M. Olivier son fils receveur général des finances”: they signed respectively “Lamoureux Ollivier” and “Ollivier”. In fact, as revealed in the posthumous inventory¹⁶ of their mother, Paul-René and Charles were brothers. On the date of that inventory, 22.VI.1781, Paul-René was in Geneva: it appears that it was he who incurred the liability on the bill, fled the jurisdiction, but his office was assumed by his brother Charles.

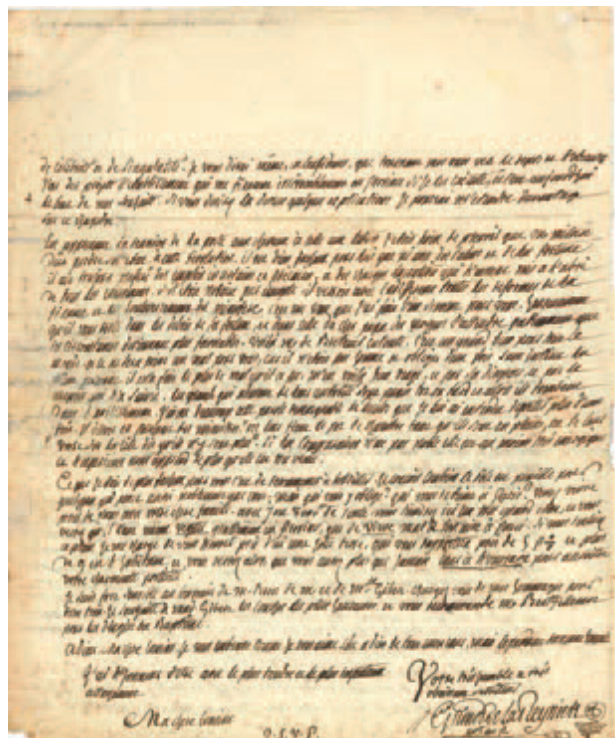
There is a curious further connection with the artist which has hitherto been overlooked: her father Claude-Edme Labille had been, in 1744, chargé d'affaires to the président de Sénozan – Jean-Antoine Olivier or Ollivier (1715–1778), son of a Lyon financier (François Olivier de Sénozan, who was also intendant général du clergé) and cousin of Jacques-David Ollivier. Indeed Sénozan and his father had been witnesses at Labille’s marriage in 1740.

If the Ollivier papers can be relied upon, Mitoire’s position in the finances de Lyon ended in 1780 – but that may relate to Paul-René. Charles still cited this position when he appeared as a witness to his sister-in-law’s marriage which again took place at Saint-Médard, Clichy, on 2.XII.1780, attended by the bride’s father, Benoît Bron “demeurant à Monceaux de cette paroisse son domicile de droit et de fait”, and Amédée Van Loo (again), while Mitoire is shown as living in the rue Thévenot in Paris. (This is curious because the certificat de vie obtained by Christine-Geneviève and the young Charles-Benoît Mitoire in 1794 indicate that they were still living in Monceaux.)

It was some time before Charles Mitoire formally received his commission¹⁷ of “sous-visiteur ordinaire des Postes aux chevaux, relais et messageries du royaume” (2.IV.1786), no doubt with support from the family he had married into. But that position too soon came into jeopardy, as we learn from a letter from Grimod de La Reynière, who had continued to write to Mme Mitoire long after his father terminated the relationship. His letter of 21.IX.1787¹⁸, addressed from the abbaye de Domèvre near Blamont (where his father had had him confined for errant behaviour) to Angélique [*sic*] Mitoire in Monceau, sympathized with the difficulties facing her husband:

En apprenant la reunion de la poste aux chevaux à celle aux lettres¹⁹ j'étois pris de peurs que M. Mitoire dût perdre son etat à cette révolution. Il est bien faisant pour lui qui né avec son talent et de la fortune il ait toujours préféré des emplois incertains et précaires à des charges decoratives qui l'eussent mis à l'abri de tous les événements. S'il étoit notaire par exemple, il verroit avec l'indifférence toutes les reformes de la finance.... Heureusement qu'il vous reste dans les debris de sa fortune ... [Il faut maintenant] attendre patiemment que les circonstances deviennent plus favorables.

What we also find from the marriage contract and parish register entry is that Charles’s



¹⁶ AN MC/XV/943, 22.VI.1781. I am most grateful to Thierry Depaulis for locating this (16.IX.2021).

¹⁷ AN O¹ 128, fol. 91.

¹⁸ Sold Paris, Ader Nordmann, 10–11.XII.2018, Lot 221. My transcription from a low resolution image. Other letters were sold c.1975 by the Librairie de l'Abbaye, cat. 242: among them, one of 22.II.1787, expressing desperation at her coolness towards him and threatening suicide.

¹⁹ This indeed was enacted by order of 12.VIII.1787.

parents were “deffunt Jean-Claude Mitoire et Charlotte Lardant de la paroisse de Saint-Eustache”, and his uncle, a witness, was Pierre-François Lardant. These facts, albeit spelled not quite consistently with other records, are sufficient to direct us to a clearer picture of M. Mitoire’s background. The widowed Charlotte Lardant, Lardent or Lardain died in 1781, rue d’Anjou, in the Marais; her brother was an architecte entrepreneur des bâtiments à Paris, and her husband was better known as Jean-Baptiste Mitoire (1718–1772), maître cartier in Paris.²⁰ They were married on 12.v.1746 in Paris, Saint-Paul, appearing in the Fonds Andriveau records as “Jean Baptiste Claude Mitouar, fils de Claude, et de Marie Bouliard”, aged 20 years 8 months; while “Charlotte Lardant”, aged 19 years 1 month, was the daughter of François Lardant and Catherine Rolland. Charles, Mme Mitoire’s husband, must have been born c.1750, so the Charles Mitoire who was reçu maître cartier in Paris in 1758²¹ (if correctly reported) was probably his uncle or cousin.

Mme Mitoire’s husband had two more brothers in addition to the Paul-René who fled to Geneva. The eldest, Jean-François Mitoire (1746–1794), was a musician; he was married in 1782, but died in a hospice at Troyes in 1794. There he had settled by 1790 when he published a *Chanson nouvelle à la goire de Sa Majesté Louis XVI...*, dedicated to the local mayor, “par son très-humble serviteur Mitoire, Musicien natif de Paris, domicilié en ladite ville de Troyes, rue des Bons Enfants, au magasin de Gaïeté.”

Jacques-Charles Mitoire (1749–1805), compagnon cartier de la ville de Paris, recorded in Clermont in 1769 when he alleged that a bill presented to him was a fake (the matter was referred to the duc de Choiseul before the Intendant de l’Auvergne declared the bill valid). Jacques-Charles later returned to Paris: “Le sieur Mitoire, marchand papetier, rue Phelippeaux” supplied paper to the value of 222 livres 7 sols, invoiced 23.XII.1792, to the commissaires du Conseil du Temple (where the royal family had been imprisoned).²² “Mitoire papetier” appears in the 1800 *Almanach du commerce de Paris* from a new address, 111 rue du Temple, the street where Jacques-Charles died in 1805.²³

The father, Jean-Baptiste Mitoire, specialized in the manufacture of playing cards. His early sets appear to have followed the standard Paris design which appear in a contemporary genre pictures of boys with châteaux de cartes by Chardin and others. But in 1761, as documents in the Archives de la Bastille²⁴ reveal, he was prosecuted for forgery (using cheaper, unofficial, materials, which facilitated the avoidance of duty), a crime treated very harshly in the eighteenth century. He was sentenced to “déchéance de maîtrise”, i.e. permanently banned from his trade, and fined 3000 livres. This does not seem to have deterred him from working with the engraver Nicolas Poilly on a series of geographical playing cards in Abbeville in 1763. There are further sightings, such as this advertisement in *L’Avant-Coureur* in 1770:

²⁰ There are numerous mentions of Mitoire père in the paper literature; see e.g. Henri Alibaux, “Mitoire, marchand-papetier parisien”, *Le Vieux Papier*, fasc. 137, .XII.1946, pp. 93-95; Thierry Depaulis, “Des « figures maussades & révoltantes » : Diderot et les cartes à jouer”, *Le Vieux Papier*, fasc. 414, .X.2014. Those that I have consulted shed no light on the identity of Charles Mitoire.

²¹ The standard text on the subject, Henry-René d’Allemagne, *Les Cartes à jouer du XIV^e au XX^e siècle*, 1906, II, p. 618.

²² *Répertoire général des sources manuscrites de l’histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution française*, 1900, V, p. 13.

²³ Jacques-Charles Mitoire, who was married to Marguerite Colon, died in Paris 28.X.1805, aged 56 (Tables de successions, Archives de Paris DQ8).

²⁴ François Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille, documents inédits...*, 1866, xviii, pp. 122ff.

Nouvelles Cartes à jouer.

On suivait pour les figures des Cartes à jouer un ancien patron où il n'y avait nul dessin, nulle proportion, & une confusion grossière d'objets & de couleurs qui choquaient la vue. Le S^r Mitoire a conservé les caractères consacrés par l'usage pour les figures, mais il leur a donné plus d'élégance, plus de dessin, & plus de netteté dans les traits de la figure & dans ses accessoires, avec plus de

vivacité & plus d'aménité dans les couleurs. On trouvera de ces nouvelles cartes, qui sont d'ailleurs conformes aux anciens modèles, mais perfectionnées, chez Mitoire, Marchand Papetier-Cartier, rue d'Anjou au Marais. Le fixain des jeux entiers est de 3 liv. celui du piquet 2 l. 8 s. celui du brelan 2 liv. 6 sols.

Was this Jean-Baptiste Mitoire, brazenly defying the order of déchéance – or perhaps his son, the future husband of Mlle Bron, had started on this career? When Christine-Geneviève Bron's third child, Henriette-Marie-Sophie Mitoire, was baptized (in Clichy, 7.I.1790 – Gibert's widow was marraine), Charles Mitoire signed the register, but was described as a “négociant” rather than as a commis des finances or sous-visiteur aux postes. We suggest that he had helped his parents in the paper business before these more impressive appointments, and had returned to it after he lost them.

The evidence discussed further below suggests that Jean-Baptiste Mitoire had indeed left Paris before 1770: his death certificate (burial 27.XII.1772, “maître cartier de la ville de Paris exerçant en cette ville”) shows him in Metz. It was presumably around this time that Charlotte, veuve Mitoire²⁵ issued the trade card of which the copy below is in the Waddesdon collection. It shows that she had taken over the business – as indeed was provided in the separation des biens listed among the papers in her estate inventory.



²⁵ Grand-Carteret 1913 notes that she appears in some contemporary reference books as “Veuve Mitouart”.

The business in the premises at the rue d'Anjou passed at veuve Mitoire's death in 1781 to a certain "La Chapelle", and in 1794 adopted the name La Chapelle et Auzou (Grand-Carteret 1913, who however offers no biographical information on the new proprietors). We here identify the new owner as Antoine-François Chapelle or Lachapelle, papetier. On 6.X.1790, in Paris, Saint-Jean-en-Grève, he married (as his second wife) a Jeanne-Marie-Victoire Desmarquest. They adopted and brought up her cousin Jeanne-Marie-Catherine Desmarquest (1775–1835); on 9.XII.1793 she married the papetier Charles-Marie Auzou and became known as the painter Pauline Auzou. Chapelle's first marriage, on 29.VII.1769, also at Paris, Saint-Jean-en-Grève, was to "Jeanne-Charlotte Lardent, fille majeure de François Lardent et de Catherine Rolland". This is the exact name given for Mme Mitoire in some documents: Jean-Baptiste Mitoire, her husband, still had three years to live; in the original edition of this paper, it was inferred that the marriage had taken place bigamously, perhaps by mistake, after the separation des biens and Mitoire's departure from Paris. However documents subsequently discovered²⁶ make it clear that Mme Mitoire and Mme Lachapelle were sisters, despite apparently sharing the same prénoms.

But while Charles Mitoire did not take over his mother's business, he²⁷ seems to have returned to an activity closely related to the sale of luxury goods, as garde-magasin de l'intendance des Menus-Plaisirs. (Contact might have come about through the patronage of Papillon de la Ferté, who had been one of the administrateurs généraux at the Postes – along with Grimod de La Reynière – while Mitoire was there.) The exact date of his appointment is not yet known, but he was in place by 1807, when Mitoire was accused of assisting one Thorel, portier des Menus-Plaisirs in fraudulently appropriating firewood intended for the Opéra.²⁸ The police were called in to investigate, and the report exonerated them:

Thorel et Mitoire ont été interrogés séparément. Thorel a prouvé qu'il avait fait ses provisions de bois au chantier de la Bastille. Mitoire a protesté qu'il n'avait livré aucuns bois du magasin confiés à sa garde que pour la consommation de l'administration; il a invoqué le suffrage de M. Mareuil, inspecteur général de l'Opéra, et de M. Vente, agent comptable. Il y a lieu de croire que les plaintes portées contre les sieurs Thorel et Mitoire ne sont point fondées...

More routinely, in a letter of 15.V.1809, he wrote to the directeur de l'Opéra concerning stage decorations for an opera by Spontini, *Fernand Cortez ou la conquête du Mexique* with costumes by Ménageot. Charles Mitoire continued to be recorded at the rue du Faubourg Poissonnière as garde magasin de l'intendance des Menus-Plaisirs du roi until his death there in 1822.

At his death no heir was found: he died "sans laisser d'heritiers connus ni aucun qui se soit presente pour recueillir ses biens". The inventaire après décès²⁹ indicates that he lived in a rented room on the second floor of a house in the rue du Faubourg Poissonnière with very few



²⁶ By Thierry Depaulis (16.IX.2021) – see note above.

²⁷ The signature "Mitoire du Moncel" on the receipt for the loan from father to son mentioned above and found in the garde magasin's inventaire après décès rules out any homonym (Charles Mitoire, maître cartier in 1758 and presumably a relative, was still alive; but the son, Charles-Benoît, was in Russia from c.1801 to c.1830 and cannot be the garde-magasin; nor can Jacques-Charles Mitoire, apparently his brother, who died in 1805. None of these was the father of a Mitoire du Moncel.)

²⁸ F.-A. Aulard, *Paris sous le premier Empire*, 1923, III, p. 374.

²⁹ AN MC/ET/XV/1690, 28.II.1823.

possessions – some clothing, of little value; two old hats, a pair of boots, two old pairs of shoes, two portraits on canvas and five “mauvaises gravures” were together valued at six francs, and an incomplete set of Voltaire among 88 books valued at 40. He did not have either version of the Labille-Guiard portrait. The total value of his possessions was 261 francs; against that he owed his landlady (a Mlle Nadine Chaubert) alone 1490 francs (including the costs of his “dernière maladie”). His widow (from whom he was clearly separated; she was not represented at the proceedings) had registered a claim of 120,000 francs which plainly could not be met, and the notary took the gold watch (80 francs) in lieu of fees. The most interesting document was the 1814 receipt from his son mentioned above.

When two years later Mme Mitoire appeared in the list of pensions sur le Trésor, for a modest 400 francs per annum, the “motif de la concession de la pension” was as “petite-fille de Vanloo, peintre de Louis XV” rather than as widow of the garde-magasin.

In any case, Mme Mitoire outlived her husband and died in 1842. Her posthumous inventory reveals that she lived in more comfort than Charles had (although her total effects were valued at a modest 1264.60 francs), and includes a number of pictures – some by her son Benoît-Charles, but nothing identifiable as the present pastel or its miniature reprise:

Sept cadres en bois doré, renfermant sept tableaux peints sur toile, en partie signés Mitoire, et représentant un vieillard endormi ayant près de lui un enfant, une scene de massacre, deux portraits d'homme, & trois tableaux de genre, prisés ensemble deux cents francs ci	200
Deux gravures dans leur cadres sous verres, représentant trois francs ci	3
Et à l'égard de sept portraits peints sur toile, et de dix petits cadres en forme de médaillon, contenant des portraits et des meches de cheveux, il n'en est par ici fait d'estimation attendu qu'ils sont portraits de famille	Ordre
A l'égard de deux tableaux en écaille, portant des miniatures d'homme, il n'en est par été fait d'estimation attendu que ce sont portraits de famille	Ordre

The 82-year old who had outlived all three of her children made a will in which she bequeathed her effects to her grandson, the doctor Antoine-Charles-Ernest Barthez de Marmorières (1811–1891), by her third child, a daughter born seven years after the salon: Henriette-Marie-Sophie (1790–1818). She married into a medical family in Fontainebleau in 1805 (was it significant that Charles Mitoire registered his consent at a notary in Paris, while Christine-Geneviève attended the wedding in Fontainebleau?). Mme Mitoire's will mentions only one specific picture: “le tableau original de mon grand père Carle Vanloo, représentant une petite fille tenant dans sa chemise de raisins” (above: the portrait of her mother Rosalie which remained in the family until 2012³⁰). Perhaps Labille-Guiard's pastel was misdescribed as “peint sur toile”, or perhaps it was given away before Mme Mitoire's death, but the portrait also passed down through the Barthez family to the doctor's daughter Sophie-Adrienne-Marie (1840–1923), who became Mme Albert Sanné in 1862.

Labille-Guiard's masterpiece shows a picture of conventional domestic tranquility that reveals nothing of the turbulent story unfolded in this essay.

Neil Jeffares

³⁰ Vente Tajan, 14.XII.2011, Lot 39; 20.VI.2012, Lot 102.