

Liotardiana¹

NEIL JEFFARES

HERE ARE MISCELLANEOUS TRIVIA about Liotard that I've come across in the last few weeks. Some points are clarifications of matters that are discussed in the wonderful Roethlisberger & Loche catalogue raisonné (of which I can only say that my admiration



increases every time I consult it – a comment I couldn't really include in my *Burlington Magazine* review which was published immediately after it appeared); others are even more insignificant trouvailles of interest only to specialists (probably a little drier than the document perused by Liotard's *Liseuse*). But here they are, in vaguely chronological order. You'll need a copy of R&L to follow this post: if you don't have one, get one (whatever the expense).

Maria Theresia as Minerva

Among the most significant commissions for Liotard were the portraits of the Austrian imperial family which he made in Vienna c.1744, and in particular those of Maria Theresia herself. Despite several models and dozens of repetitions (and innumerable copies, authorised or not), almost all show her in three-quarters, and none in profile.

So this passage in the *Journal helvétique* (février 1745):

G E N E V E.

AU défaut de Nouvelles Littéraires, en voici quelques unes qui regardent les Beaux Arts. Mr. Jean Dassier célèbre Graveur de notre Ville, vient de faire la Médaille de la Reine de Hongrie. Il y a parfaitement réussi, & quoi qu'il ne soit plus à la fleur de l'âge, cette Médaille ne le cède à aucun de ses autres Ouvrages. Le Revers est une Minerve avec ces mots, ET MENTE ET ARMIS. La Tête est fort belle, & très ressemblante. Elle a été copiée sur un bon Portrait fait depuis peu d'après Nature. Il est de la main de Mr. Liotard, habile Peintre en Miniature de notre Ville.

raises an interesting question as to what source Dassier used for his medal:

¹ This essay first appeared as a series of posts on my blog, neiljeffares.wordpress.com, on 25 May, 15 June, 29 November 2015, 2 January, 6 January and 13 January 2016, as well as messages on Twitter (27 December 2015, 30 July 2024). It may be cited as Neil Jeffares, "Liotardiana", *Pastels & pastellists*, <http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/Liotardiana.pdf>.



(Perhaps some numismatist can explain why she points in the other direction on her coinage.) One recent authority has assumed that Dassier transformed one of Liotard's known imperial portraits into a profile, while R&L are sceptical, assuming rather that there must be a lost Liotard profile. Curiously however their discussion appears on p. 604 in the context of the much later *trompe-l'œil* of Maria Theresa (R&L 473, fig. 673) rather than under a new number for the missing 1744 pastel (for pastel it surely was). And when they revert to the only evidence of what that profile looked like, p. 652, it is to discuss Liotard's own engraving of his drawing (R&L 527) without tying these together. Liotard made this engraving for his *Traité* of 1778, and must have kept the original until then, although it is inexplicably absent from the inventories.

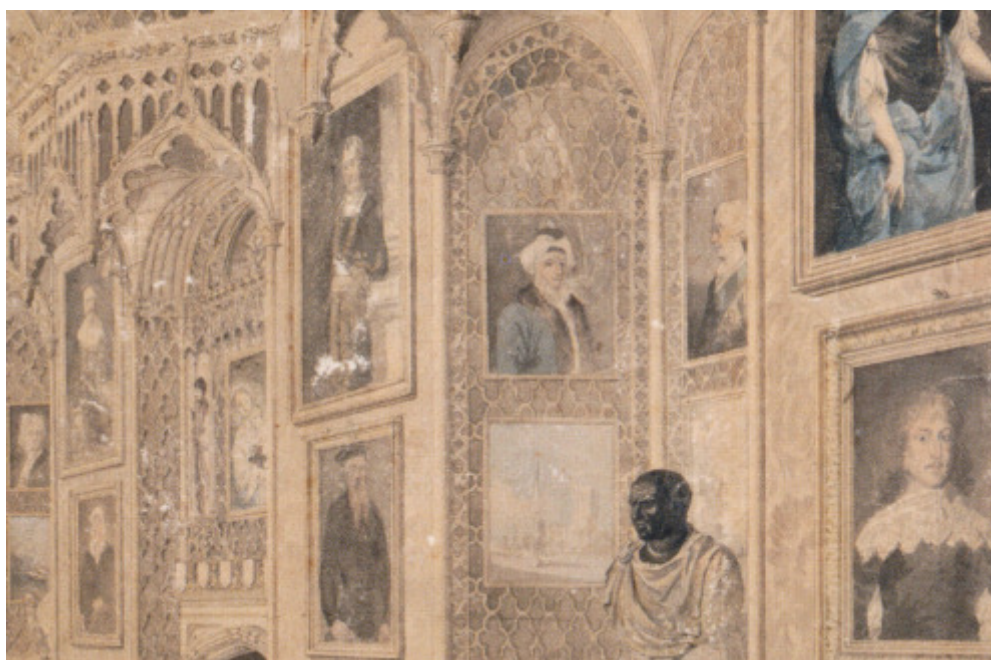


Another slightly curious twist to this is the Martin Tyroff engraving (R&L fig. 163), which seems to combine elements from the reverse of the Dassier medal:



The comte de Bonneval

Claude-Alexandre, comte de Bonneval (1675–1747), known as Ahmet Pacha from his adoption of Turkish clothing, was a natural subject for Liotard to paint, and it is unsurprising that his pastel, signed and dated “Acmet Pacha/Conte de Bonneval/peint à Constantinople/par J. E. Liotard 1741”, is to be found in Belvoir Castle. R&L conflate this with the version acquired by Liotard’s great patron Sir Everard Fawkener and which passed, after his death, into Walpole’s collection, where you can see it in a watercolour of the gallery at Strawberry Hill made c.1781 by Thomas and Paul Sandby and Edward Edwards.



It vanished a few years after the Strawberry Hill sale of 1842. But the Duke of Rutland’s version was recorded at Belvoir in 1792, and so must be a second version. A third has now come to light, somewhat smaller than Rutland’s, and noted somewhat later than Walpole’s: it was in the posthumous sale of Clemens August von Bayern (1700–1761) held in Bonn in 1764. It was accompanied by a pendant which is altogether unknown.

136. & 137. Le Portrait du fameux Bonnevall, avec celui d'une vieille en buste de grandeur naturelle, d'un pied sept pouces de hauteur, d'un pied trois pouces de largeur, peints par Liotard.

Liotard et L'Inconnue

Who can tell what really happened in the tale of a young woman known as L'Inconnue (or in England, the Maid of the Hay-stack) who may or may not have been the illegitimate daughter of the Emperor Franz Stefan? The story is far too complicated for me to summarise here: suffice it to say that she ended her days in a lunatic asylum, her fees paid by the celebrated philanthropist Hannah More. But a Liotard miniature of her alleged father, recognised by Prince Charles de Lorraine, played its part in [the story](#), and may have been real enough:

(10)

prioit de le bien regarder, & que peut-être, en l'examinant, il devineroit une partie de ce qu'elle avoit à lui dire. Elle le lui envoya en effet. M. de C...l n'y vit que le visage d'une jolie femme ; mais le Duc Ch...s de L...e trouva que ce portrait avoit beaucoup de ressemblance avec feu l'E.p.r son frere.

Le commerce épistolaire continuoit toujours ; M. de C...l répondoit à toutes les lettres avec politesse & avec intérêt, mais sans se hasarder jamais. Un jour elle lui manda qu'elle lui enverroit deux portraits,

(21)

à l'un desquels elle le prioit de comparer le sien. Ces portraits n'arrivant pas, M. de C...l insista sur l'effet de sa promesse: elle répondit qu'elle en avoit donné un au bijoutier, pour l'ôter d'une boîte entourée de brillants ; & que dès que l'ouvrier l'auroit rendu, elle l'enverroit. En effet, quinze jours après, elle lui envoya le portrait de l'E.p.r & de l'I.p...ce. S. A. R. reconnut le premier pour avoir été peint par Liotard.

Au mois de Décembre 1768, M. de C...l regut une lettre fort extraordinaire ; elle étoit datée: de mon lit, à deux heures du

Serre and Fontenelle

While we know that Liotard produced a (lost) colour print of Fontenelle in 1734, the Winterthur miniature (R&L 21) (watercolour and gouache rather than enamel) seems to show a face far older than the La Tour portrait of Fontenelle known from the Dupin engraving as that – assuming it was correctly attributed – can't be much earlier than 1734 itself. So I've always assumed it was later – more or less the same date as the enamel Serre made in 1752 (R&L fig. 30). But while R&L (p. 247) assume that Serre copied Liotard, a note in a letter from Fontenelle to Vernet of 16.VII.1750 reveals that Serre had just painted the author from life in Paris.

M. Serre qui est de votre Ville, & qui revient de Vienne, où il a peint en miniature l'Empereur & toute la Famille Impériale, est ici, & a voulu me peindre aussi, moi qui ne suis que le rien que vous savez. Il m'a peint, non pas pour moi, mais pour lui, ce qui a bien chatouillé ma vanité. Vous jugez bien que je n'ai pas manqué de me vanter à lui sur ce que j'étois une de vos plus anciennes connoissances!

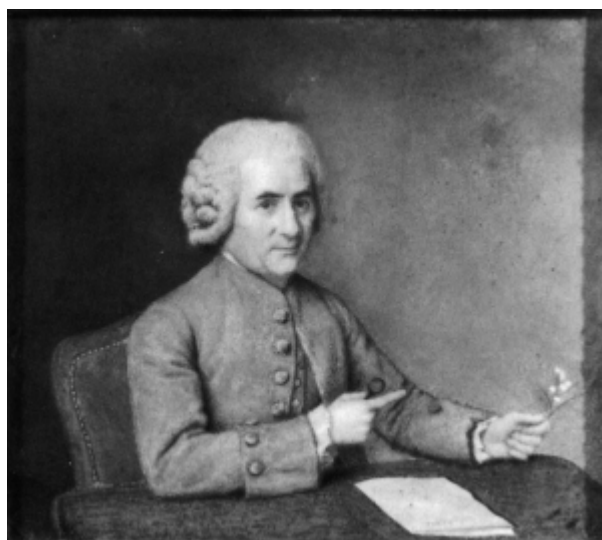
At the very least it makes one wonder if the 1752 enamel wasn't a repetition of Serre's own work – and that R&L 21 was actually made by Liotard after Serre?

Liotard, "peintre du roi"

Liotard's first documented use of the title "peintre du roi", a year before the Académie de Saint-Luc exhibitions, appears to be on 29.I.1750, when he was witness to the marriage contract of one Nicolas-Sylvain Petitjean, sieur d'Arzillières, and Marie Robert Mamielle (AN MC XXVIII/315). Of course he had already portrayed the king, but that isn't the significance of the title (e.g., as Dominique d'Arnoult points out, "Perronneau, peintre du roi, n'a pas peint le roi"), which was probably conferred by brevet. Very little is known about this M. Petitjean, except that he was an ancien directeur des Aides: the family included both soldiers and receveurs des tailles, and were on the borderline of nobility.

Liotard, Rousseau and Burney

The pastel which Liotard made of Rousseau in Lyon in 1770 must have been made before Rousseau left the town on 8.VI.1770 (as R&L deduce, pp. 591–93). But what has not so far been noticed is that Liotard must have continued on to Paris, where, on 22.VI.1770, Charles Burney records having dinner with him, Grétry and the abbé Arnaud. Unfortunately it seems to have been Grétry rather than Liotard that interested Burney. But the musicologist was a Rousseau fanatic: he later adapted Rousseau's music; his nephew and son-in-law was named Charles Rousseau Burney in honour of both musicians; and Burney's meeting with Rousseau, on his return from Italy, in a house belonging to an unnamed pastellist – perhaps Bréa? – in the rue de Grenelle, 13.XII.1770, was the high point of his Grand Tour. So it is extremely odd that he says nothing about Liotard's portrait. If Liotard had mentioned the portrait at the dinner, why wouldn't Burney have remarked upon what for him would have been a most exciting encounter? Did Liotard keep quite about it, embarrassed perhaps at how short and unsatisfactory the encounter had been? It has to be conceded that the portrait that survives is a rather disappointing affair.



Rousseau didn't take to it, maintaining that only La Tour had got him right. In fact I've always felt that it was Ramsay who produced the most accurate portrait of Rousseau, but you can see why the psychopathological eyes would only increase Rousseau's paranoid alarm as they followed him round the room. Ironically it was in a costume similar to that Ramsay used, that Liotard had to make a portrait of one of his English clients that year – "beautifully done in Crayons, Wm. Constable, in the dress of Rousseau" as it was later described. Technically it may not have been Armenian but there seems to have been little doubt in the Constable family's mind as to the iconographical significance of the outfit.



All rather intriguing and as yet inconclusive – perhaps the imaginative possibilities are more suited to a work of creative fiction.

Liotard, Rousseau and Wilkes

The earlier attempt to set up a meeting between Liotard and Rousseau (also explained in R&L), and involving John Wilkes – the prospect of the three of them getting together scared off Rousseau – is also intriguing. An unidentified "jeune pastelliste", apparently an unrecorded pupil of Liotard, was involved in attempts to have a pastel portrait made of Rousseau in 1764 but withdrew when his father died (this pastellist cannot have been Louis-Ami Arlaud, whose father

lived until 1806 and who was only 12½ when it was suggested that he visit Rousseau, “les pastels à la main”, to paint the great man): Liotard’s offer to step into his pupil’s shoes was deferred by Rousseau, possibly because John Wilkes was to come with him. This unidentified pastellist cannot be Charles-Ange Boily, sent by Rey to take Rousseau’s portrait in pastel at exactly the same time, and encountered by James Boswell on the way: Boily was a pupil of Lempereur, not Liotard. This leaves us with an as yet unidentified second pupil of Liotard. By another extraordinary coincidence, at the very time that Burney, Liotard and Grétry would have their dinner in Paris (in June 1770), Wilkes’s daughter Polly was there, as we know from his letter to her recommending that “you avail yourself as much as you can of your being at Paris to take lessons from” another mystery pastellist, a M. Cezeron.

François-Eugène, not Charles, Burney

As I was researching this I found this rather surprising [page](#) on the Geneva mAH website, suggesting that Charles Burney engraved Liotard’s most popular work. A simple error which you can easily resolve by turning to R&L, p. 713. Or you can pursue the reference on the mAH site: Tilanus, p. 194, no. 75, which in turn mentions Chennevières’s 1888 article in *L’Art*, p. 228, from which it is clear that we are talking of François-Eugène Burney (1845–1907), not Dr Charles Burney.

La Liseuse

After the artist’s death his pictures were divided among his heirs, resulting in much negotiation between them. R&L include several letters by Jacques Guigonnat, husband of Liotard’s great-niece Sara (see also under R&L 159, p. 363). But it doesn’t seem to have been noted that Guigonnat lent *La Liseuse*, one of Liotard’s most famous pastels now in the Rijksmuseum (shown above), to the second exhibition of the Société des arts in Geneva, in May 1792, no. 23: “La liseuse, par M. Liotard; à M. Guigonnat”.

NOTICE
DES TABLEAUX ;
MINIATURES ET DESSINS
FAITS PAR DES GENEVOIS ,
Exposés au Salon de l’Académie.

- N^o. 1. **DIOSGENE & ALEXANDRE**, tableau de M. Vaucher; à M. De Tournes.
2. Vue des Glaciers de M. Ackert; à M. Vanière
3. Payfage de M. De La Rive; à M. le syndic Theilluffon.
4. Vue du Château de Chillon, par M. Linck.
5. Payfage de M. De La Rive.
6. La mort de Phocion, tableau de M. Vaucher; à M. Jalabert.
7. Vue de la vallée de Chamouny, par M. Linck.
8. Payfage de M. De La Rive; à M. De Tournes.
9. Payfage de M. De La Rive.
10. Vue d’un lieu voisin d’Ermenonville, par M. Senet.
11. Vue de Tivoli, par Mr. Ducros; à Mr. De Tournes.
12. Vue du Collège, par Mr. Ducros; à Mr. De Tournes.

- N^o. 13. Tête au crayon de M. Chapponnier.
14. Payfage de M. Ackert; à M. Vanière.
15. Chafte, par M. Brun; à M. Chappuis.
16. Payfage, par M. Brun; à M. Turrettini-Sales.
17. Payfage de M. De La Rive; à M. le syndic Theilluffon.
18. Vue de l’arc de Sulpice Sévère, de M. Ducros; à M. Martin-Sales.
19. Cascades de Tivoli, par M. Ducros; à M. Tronchin-Calandrini.
20. Dessin en papier bleu, par M. Senet.
21. Tableau de ruines, par M. Ramu; à M. Turrettini-Sales.
22. Trois Tableaux en broderie, de Mad. Pasteur-Gardelle.
23. La liseuse, par M. Liotard; à M. Guigonnat.
24. Copie d’une tête d’Aralante, par Mad. Butini.
25. Portrait, par M. Maffot; appartenant à M. Pifet l’auditeur.
26. Deux miniatures de M. Bouvier.
27. Trois miniatures de M. Arlaud.
28. Miniature de M. Senet.
29. } Portraits de M. Topfer.
30. }
31. Portraits, par M. Topfer; à M. le professeur Picot.
32. Portrait, par M. Topfer; à M. Soiron.
33. Payfage de M. De La Rive; à M. le syndic Theilluffon.

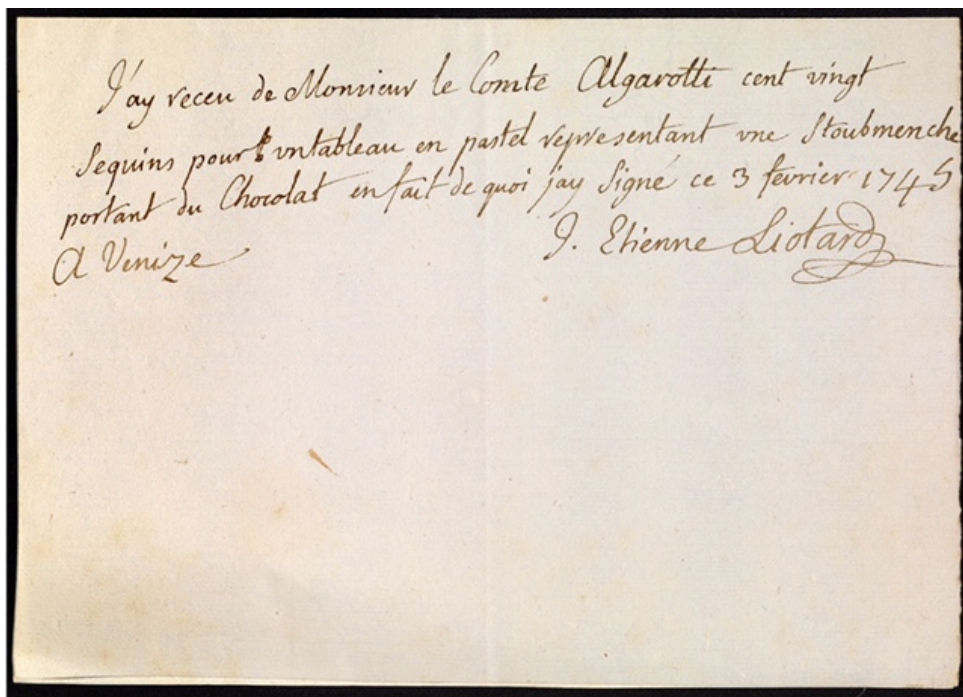
- N^o. 34. } Animaux, par M. Pellier.
35. }
36. Tête d’Ajax, de M. Ferrier.
37. Découpeure de M. Pellier.
38. Dessin de la Venus, par M. Reverdin.
39. Dessin du Laocoon, par M. Henri.
40. Numa & Egerie Aquarelle, composition, par M. Paillot.
41. Portrait, par M. Paillot.
42. Dessin du Laocoon, par M. Paillot.
43. Dessin du Torse antique, par M. Chevalier.
44. Cinq figures académiques qui ont eu les prix & les accessits depuis la dernière exposition.
45. Deux pièces d’écriture, par M. Viguet.
46. Portrait, par M. Maffot; à M. Callandrini.
47. Portrait, par M. Maffot; à M. Auriol.
48. Trois miniatures de Mlle. Maffot.
49. Miniature de M. Plotz.
50. } Trois portraits en miniature qui ont été
51. } faits par M. Plotz, à l’aide d’un procédé
52. } mécanique de son invention, en deux heures de séance chacun, outre dix minutes pour le dessin.
53. Deux Copies dont une est portrait.

*Les hommes qui voudront voir la salle des Antiques
y seront conduits par un des Huissiers de la porte du
salon.*

Postscript

You never know when you post a blog whether it will be read or be of interest, and so feedback is always a pleasure. But none more so than when a collector responds by generously sharing a rare and precious document that, as far as I am aware, has never been published. We know that Liotard’s *Chocolatière*, his most famous work now in Dresden (and engraved by the other Burney among many others), was bought by Algarotti in February 1745: the entry in his accounts is in R&L (along with an extremely thorough analysis, summarising an article published by Marcel

Roethlisberger in *Genava* in 2002). But Liotard's autograph receipt is new (private collection % Lowell Libson Ltd):



The maréchal de Saxe's coat

The yellow has faded to leave the green blue in Liotard's pastel of Maurice de Saxe as we can see from comparing this print of the uniform with the pastel in the Rijksmuseum (the fading in the Dresden version is even worse):



Liotardiana (2): Dispute pour des marrons



A group of genre pictures in pastel which come from the Habsburg collections in Vienna have caused considerable difficulties. They include half a dozen works with single figure works, as well as three pastel conversation pieces showing children at play. They were with Erzherzog Maximilian in the Castello di Miramare between 1860 and 1919 (as by Liotard), and are now in the Schönbrunn. Roethlisberger & Loche (R92, p. 693f; nine are reproduced in the 1978 edition) assign them to a single (unidentified) hand, and until now I grouped them together under the name of “the Schönbrunn pastellist”.



R&L thought that one of the pictures, a group of children playing with chess pieces (left), probably corresponded with the pastel described as children playing with chestnuts inventoried as by Liotard in the private apartments of Maria Theresa in 1772, no. 780: “eine Junge Manns-Person mit 3 Mägden, so mit Kastanien spielen vom Liotard.”

In fact there is a further pastel in the Miniaturkabinett that fits this description perfectly (see above, from this [website](#), where the pastel is attributed to Kaiser Franz I. Stephan and his children). The chestnuts are indeed chestnuts, not chess pieces. The costumes are a little earlier, and the technique corresponds far more closely to that of Liotard, although the subject matter is extremely unusual in his œuvre. I propose to identify this as Liotard's lost portrait exhibited in the Salon de Saint-Luc in 1752:

Par M. LIOTARD, Peintre du Roi,
Conseiller de l'Academie.
73 Un petit Tableau qui représente une
Dispute pour des Marons.

The remaining pastels, evidently by a different hand (and correctly rejected by R&L), apparently Austrian and described as the “Schönbrunn pastelist” in the online *Dictionary* until 2015, show the influence of Liotard, particularly in the three conversation pieces R&L knew. The suggestion that they are all (including the Liotard) by the Emperor is rather implausible: although members of the imperial family (including Marie-Antoinette, later to become queen of France) were amateur pastellists, these works are well beyond their skills.

I can now attribute this group of pastels (other than the Liotard) to [Gabrielle Bertrand-Beyer](#), daughter of the concierge of the Schloß Schönbrunn and drawings teacher to the imperial princesses. She has hitherto been known only from a handful of works which nevertheless show certain similarities, for example in the colouring and folds in the drapery. The attribution is confirmed by the description by Fortia de Piles of his trip in 1790–92 when he saw in the second room of the Aile droite of the Petit Belvédère, among 52 pictures,

Quatre portraits au pastel, dont un Tirolien et une Tirolienne, par madame Beyer, fort bons.
Enfans qui soufflent des boules de savon, en pastel, par la même, très-joli.

The first two of these evidently correspond to two pastels in von Mechel's catalogue “peints d'après nature [qui] se distinguent sur-tout parmi plusieurs autres de cette habile main [de Mme Beyer], qui se trouvent dans ce Cabinet”; two pastels in the group fit well. Here is the third:



Liotardiana (3): Graf Zinzendorf, the barbouilleur and the energumen



Or is it (4)? There seems to be no end to the stream of trivia and minutiae that can be unearthed about this fascinating artist (you can search with the box on the right the numerous posts here, at least ten since May, and many more have been silently incorporated into the online [Dictionary articles](#)) – the hunt no doubt stimulated by the current Royal Academy exhibition which runs to the end of January (so no excuse for not going, or returning often). One of the more striking pastels there is the portrait of the future Mme Necker, on loan from the Schönbrunn in Vienna (above).

The exhibition catalogue entry (no. 73) tells us that Liotard took it to Vienna in 1762 “and showed it to Maria Theresa, who convinced Liotard to sell it to her after he had made a copy for himself.” This isn’t I think quite accurate; and as the subject of Liotard’s copies and why (and when) he made them is of some interest, and as it is illuminated by a text which has not so far been noticed by art historians (as far as I am aware), I thought I would explore this in more detail. Confusingly the exhibition catalogue goes on to say “Perhaps because Liotard parted with this earlier portrait...he decided or was commissioned to paint another, probably in Paris.” The Schönbrunn pastel is dated “c.1761”; the second, “c.1772”, where the sitter is “about 12 years older”. (The chronology, p. 214, tells us that Liotard had left Paris for the Netherlands by July 1771.) This is the pastel in the château de Coppet:



It appears in the catalogue as no. 84, to be shown in London only – although in fact it didn't make it to either London or Edinburgh.

There is evidently a little work to do to sort this out. Although we can do so by a careful reading of the documents already published in Roethlisberger & Loche's 2008 monograph, "R&L" (indeed the key documents were summarised in the earlier, 1978 edition; and the date for the replica of the larger Mme Necker is given in my 2006 *Dictionary*), the story can now be illuminated by the diaries of Graf Zinzendorf. I draw the new material from the first four tomes



of the new edition of Zinzendorf's 56 manuscript volumes of diaries, edited by Grete Klingenstein & al., *Europäische Aufklärung zwischen Wien und Triest. Die Tagebücher des Gouverneurs Karl Graf von Zinzendorf 1776-1782*, Vienna, 2009. This is part of a major [project](#): hitherto only parts have been printed (they are a mine of information about Vienna in the time of Mozart). I make no apology for interspersing this with extracts from Liotard's correspondence that you can find in R&L, as many visitors to the RA exhibition may not have seen them.

The diarist was Joseph Karl Reichsgraf und Herr von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf (1739–1813), counsellor at the Treasury (Kommerzienrat) in Vienna 1762–66, Gouverneur of Trieste 1776–82, and later Staatsminister. Unmarried, he was a member of the Teutonic Order as you can see from the cross in this engraving.

A version of this portrait is reproduced in Robbins Landon's *Mozart* (1989 ed.) optimistically as by Füger (it is not in Keil's catalogue raisonné); it is probably too late to be given to the unidentified pastellist from Ljubljana whom Zinzendorf records making his portrait in 1777.

Zinzendorf first met Liotard in Vienna in 1762: this entry for 12 July 1762, "Promené sur le rempart. J'y rencontrais Liotard avec Neker", suggests that Zinzendorf had already met Liotard – and informs us that Liotard already knew Necker. Two years later, when he travelled to Geneva, Zinzendorf visited Liotard – as well as Voltaire, Cramer, Moulton, Deluc and others, all within the first fortnight of October 1764. (The full entries for this year will appear in the forthcoming volume edited by Grete Klingenstein with Helmut Watzlawick.) So when Liotard went to Vienna in 1777 it was unsurprising that their paths crossed again.

The scene is set almost completely in R&L: the Schönbrunn pastel (RA no. 73) is R&L 380, with a lengthy entry on pp. 532–34. The Coppet pastel (RA no. 74) is R&L 479, entry on p. 608, and, in the absence of documentation, is dated by R&L to the Paris trip 1770/71 (noting the possibility of an earlier passage to Geneva by the sitter). That must be right. But the entry that concerns us is for the copy that Maria Theresia permitted Liotard to make, which happened, not when she first purchased R&L 380 in 1762, but much later, when Liotard returned to Vienna in 1777/78. It has a separate entry, R&L 518, discussed in detail on pp. 643–44.

The reason for this later trip is perhaps not immediately obvious. Tronchin had warned him of the potential difficulties, and when Liotard got there (with his 19-year old son, Jean-Étienne fils), the 70-year old artist did indeed find it more difficult to obtain business: rivalry with Roslin (see my [essay](#)) was a particular concern. This ran both ways: on 22 December 1777 Roslin told Zinzendorf that "[il] regrette beaucoup de ne pas pouvoir faire le portrait de l'Empereur et de l'Impératrice Reine pour la reine de France, tandis que le barbouilleur Liotard va peindre toute la famille impériale et est logé à la Cour."

But why did Liotard spend his time copying an old picture? It is easy to accept the analysis set out by the Empress Maria Theresia in a letter to Mercy-Argenteau in Paris (3 March 1780) in which she says that he can tell Mme Necker about her purchase of the pastel, and how, when Liotard was last [i.e. 1777/8, not 1762] in Vienna, “il a fait voir de la peine de n’être plus possesseur de ce tableau, et m’a demandé de pouvoir en tirer copie. Je le lui ai accordé, mais j’ai gardé l’original.” So, one might infer that Liotard wanted to make a copy of one of his earlier masterpieces, perhaps even as evidence or admission of failing powers (of imagination if not of technique). But as we shall see the reason was quite different.

Let us pick up the story in epistolary form. Liotard to his wife, from Vienna, 9bre [i.e. November] 1777: “...je retournerai chez la Comtesse de Guttemberg [one of the Empress’s private secretaries] pour la prier de demander à l’Impératrice la permission de copier le portrait de Me Necker...” [letter resumes later:] “Je viens de visiter le Baron Putcher [also a private secretary] qui nous a reçue avec toute l’amitié me remerciant de lui procurer la vue de mon fils nous avons resté pres d’une heure avec lui il parlera Lundy à l’Impératrice et lui demandera pour moi la permission de copier Me Neker.”

Liotard to François Tronchin, 19 November 1777: “j’ay dans ma chambre le portrait de Mme Necker je le trouve admirable pour la figure et surtout les accessoires mais je ne suis pas aussi content de la tête elle n’est pas assez belle les ombres du visage sont un peu trop fortes, en un mot je ferai tout ce que pourrai pour l’embellir sans altérer la ressemblance.”

To his wife, 29 November 1777: “Joye excessive, nous avons été présentés à l’Impératrice qui nous a reçue mon fils et moy avec une bonté extraordinaire jusques à me faire assoir le voulant afin dit elle que je fusse plus pres d’elle, qu’elle avoit un très grand Plaisir à me voir comme ancienne connoissance et comme j’avois fait demander à copier de mes tableaux elle m’a fait conduire pour voir celui que je voulois et qu’on me l’enverroit quand je voudrois.” And to her again, 10 December 1777: “dans mes heures perdues je copie Me Neker qui me prendra bien du tems.”

To Tronchin, 6 January 1778: “la mort de l’Electeur de Baviere et le Carnaval je crois retarderont mes operations j’ay a peu pres fait la moitié de la copie de Me Nekers.”

To his wife, 7 February 1778: “Le portrait copie de Me Necker s’avance, mais il y a encore bien à le finir. J’ay fini le haut de la figure, les fruits, la soucoupe, le verre et le vin, la table est presque faite, j’aurai encore à finir le bas de l’habit, la main et le livre.”

Liotard to Tronchin, 14 February 1778, complaining about the lack of business: “je conte bien envoyer ma copie de Me Neker purement et simplement mais comment Mr Neker peut il etre informé que mon fils veut etre Negotiant Il faudroit qu’il seut indirectement que j’ay un fils de 19 ans et que je le destine au Commerce, ma coppie est au $\frac{3}{4}$ et il se passera plus d’un mois avant qu’elle soit finie.”

At this stage Zinzendorf comes in. On 18 February 1778 Liotard calls on the new Governor of Trieste (still in Vienna) and explains his purpose with complete clarity: “Le peintre Liotard m’amena son fils et me remit un billet de Sa Maj. L’Impératrice qui [m’ordonne] de l’écouter et desire de le consoler. Le fils, un grand garçon qui porta l’uniforme de Genève, a passé trois années dans une maison de commerce à Genève et voudroit, associé à M. Vial à Nice, commencer un petit établissement à Triest. Je lui parlois longtems sur ce sujet.”

A week later, on 25 February, Zinzendorf calls on Prince Waldek who is out, and then on Liotard, who is also out. We know from his son’s diary that Liotard went to dinner with General Bechard that day.

The next day, 26 February, Zinzendorf – and we – are in luck:

Chez le peintre Liotard. Il me fit voir en enthousiaste le portrait de Mme Necker qu'il a peinte encore fille, il y a vint ans, paroissant réfléchir sur ce qu'elle lit dans un livre relié en veau, qui a pour titre: L'Amour de la Vertu, appuyée du [coude] droit sur une table, où il y a une corbeille remplie de pêches, de raisins etc., un couteau, un petit pain, une caraffe de vin et un verre d'eau. De la main droite elle dérange son fichu blanc, parsemé de fleurs bleues et fait voir un peu de gorge. Elle porte un pet en l'air de satin bleu, et a selon moi l'air d'une énergumène. Liotard, logé à la Cour sous le duc Albert, me fit voir encore des portraits commencés de l'Empereur et des archiducs, qui sont horribles, un croquis de ce noble abominable. La seule bonne chose, c'étoit des essais de peinture sur le verre à l'ancienne.

The picture Zinzendorf was shown must I think have been the original version; the copy was not yet finished, as we learn from another letter from Liotard to his wife, 11 March 1778: “J’ay encore le quart du tableau de Me Neker a finir”. Nearing completion, a new problem arises (to his wife, 2 May 1778): “Je ne sai comment traiter Mr Neker dans la lettre que je lui ecrirai. Sil faut lui donner du Monseigneur ou non, je m’en informerai chez l’Ambassadeur de france ou chez le baron de fries.”

Finally, to Tronchin, 9 May 1778: “J’ay enfin fini le portrait de Me Neker, et je conte de l’envoyer incessamment la Caisse etant prette je lui ecrirai que je le prie de recevoir cette copie du portrait de son Epouze pensant quelle pourroit lui ester agreeable l’Imperatrice a été bien aize quand je lui ay dit quel portrait cetoit.” Presumably the original was by now to be returned: Liotard suggested that a group of his best pictures, including Mme Necker and *L’Écriture* (also shown in the Royal Academy exhibition, no. 76), be placed with the best of the Imperial Collection in the Belvedere, but his proposal was rejected by Joseph Roos, directeur de la galerie impériale, who evidently thought they were not good enough.

The copy of Mme Necker was duly dispatched to her husband in Paris. Liotard was prevented from travelling with it by the build-up of military tensions between Prussia and Austria. What one wonders was her husband expecting? He presumably knew the Coppet pastel, but he cannot have seen the Schönbrunn portrait. We must infer his response from his conduct. The picture (on which Liotard had lavished six months’ work) is not at Coppet, and indeed was never seen again. Necker did not arrange a preferment for Liotard fils; instead he sent a polite letter and a payment of 25 louis, much to the son’s disgust (he thought the picture worth 60 louis; 25 louis was in line with ordinary small portrait prices, but about one-tenth the 200 guineas which Lord Bessborough had paid for *Le Petit Déjeuner des Mlles Lavergne* in 1755). The scheme in short had failed.

What do we learn from this new document, apart from this very clear explanation of Liotard’s strategy? One small detail immediately: the title of the book remains today quite difficult to decipher (although the pastel has been extensively restored in the past, I don’t think this area was altered). R&L interpolated “LAM[OUR] DE [LA] VERTU”, and (once again) they are proved right: the title of the book, or at least what Liotard said it was, was *L’Amour de la Vertu*. Note both the subject and the duodecimo format of the book.

But there is also a fascinating reaction from a visually literate, if non-specialist, contemporary witness. For him it was the new things Liotard was doing that were “abominable”. He doesn’t share Liotard’s own enthusiasm for *Mme Necker*, but nor does he particularly disparage it. He comments specifically on her flirtatious rearrangement of her fichu. Liotard’s only criticism of his picture when he sees it so many years later is that the shadows on the face are too heavy: that is not what strikes us. But Zinzendorf does make one specific observation which I think gets to the heart of the issue: as he sees it (he does not suggest that Liotard does so), the sitter has the “air d’une énergumène”. The word isn’t particularly common in English either, but an energumen is a fanatical devotee: devilish possession is the key ingredient. It’s a more interesting

suggestion than what may be our immediate response: both this and, to a certain extent, the later pastel seem to show a rather unintelligent, almost bovine face that could hardly contrast more severely with the wonderfully elegant and sophisticated depiction by Duplessis:



Was this type of portrait what Necker was expecting? If he had been told that his wife was shown with a book, would his sophisticated eye not have imagined something more like [Mlle Ferrand](#) whom La Tour shows pondering over her in-folio Newton:



“La belle Curchod” we must remember was one of the most brilliant women of her age, one who had captivated two of the most intelligent men in Europe – Edward Gibbon and then Jacques Necker, and she would be the mother of the formidable Mme de Staël. Gibbon, who was forced by parental opposition to break off their engagement in 1758, tells us that her “personal attractions ...were embellished by the ... talents of the mind”; he found her “learned without pedantry”; her beauty “was adorned with science and virtue.” (As we learn from his diaries, Zinzendorf was actually reading Gibbon at the time of his visit to Liotard; he doesn’t tell us if he was aware of the girl’s past.)

But perhaps we should return to the first version. The pastel must have been made between the sitter's move to Geneva (some time after the death of her father, 17 February 1760) and Liotard's departure for Vienna in April 1762. In Geneva she lodged with Pastor Moulton where she later met Mme de Vermenoux, visiting Dr Tronchin in the city (despite numerous biographical studies, there seems to be no agreement on the exact date of their meeting; it may even be that Curchod introduced Liotard to Vermenoux rather than the other way round as normally assumed). Gibbon tells us that the Duchess of Grafton had nearly hired her as governess, but it was in that role that she would accompany Mme de Vermenoux to Paris in early 1764 (missing Zinzendorf when he dined with Moulton later that year). But at the time of the pastel, we know that she still entertained hopes that Gibbon would relent. (Suzanne was born on 2 June 1737, so marriage was becoming an urgent issue for her: but she would not have had the funds to commission this as an advertisement even had she regarded herself as available.) On his return to Switzerland in 1763, Gibbon was not alone in detecting an element of insincerity in her "false, affected character." A taste for the theatre, and for theatricality, had taken hold; and when she was about to go to Paris with Mme de Vermenoux, her supporter, the duchesse d'Enville, wrote to Moulton from Paris (17 February 1764), to warn him that these characteristics might not go down too well in Paris:

Je suis bien aise que Mlle Curchod ait trouvé une place, en doutant cependant qu'elle soit aussi heureuse ici qu'elle était à Genève. Simplifiez-la pour son arrivée; elle ne réussira ni avec sa métaphysique ni avec sa coiffure; au nom de ciel, simplifiez-la!

The precise circumstances of Liotard's first portrait remain unclear. For Liotard it was probably (and would be seen by Maria Theresa as) essentially a genre picture rather than a portrait: a showpiece exhibition of his skills. But it is clear that Liotard captured – without the recommended simplification – just this element of provincial histrionics that she was advised to leave behind in Geneva. This Dorothea Brooke narrowly avoided being crushed by a damn'd thick square book. But in sending his repetition to her husband, did not Liotard attempt to strangle her with another damn'd thin light one?

Liotard's early years in Paris



Liotard, Jean Dassier (Geneva, mAH)

In two articles in the *Burlington Magazine*, in 2002 and 2003, François Marandet radically transformed our knowledge of the early years of the two best-known pastellists of the eighteenth

century, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour and Jean-Étienne Liotard, with the publication of their apprenticeship contracts. As it happens, they were born just 20 months apart, and both came to Paris for their training. But while La Tour followed the conventional path of a Parisian artist starting with apprenticeship at the age of 15, leading to eventual membership of the Académie royale, Liotard's formation was anything but conventional.

A comparison between the La Tour (1719) and Liotard (1723) contracts, with Claude Dupouch and Jean-Baptiste Massé respectively, at first sight suggests they describe the same legal relationship, albeit La Tour's is for a term of six years (Liotard's three), and La Tour has to pay a premium (Liotard did not). The wording is of course a standard form, and large parts are essentially identical, so that, for example, the master "promet montrer [the pupil] tout ce dont il se mêle et entremêle dans l'art de la peinture, le nourrir, loger, coucher, blanchir, chauffer et le traiter humainement comme il appartient". But there is one crucial distinction in the wording which Marandet did not notice (nor anyone else as far as I am aware, although R&L noted the absence of the word *apprentissage*), and which means that Liotard's contract was not one of apprenticeship at all. Unlike the La Tour contract, Liotard is described as an "alloué". The word is used four times in the document; there is no mistake. The legal arrangement it describes is not one of *apprentissage*, but of *allouage*.

Since the terms are otherwise similar, you might think this was a distinction without a difference. But that is not the case. An *allouage* was an arrangement (quite common in Paris at the time, among many trades) in which a worker, often (but not always) a *compagnon* or journeyman who had completed an apprenticeship already, was hired for a term. (So the scope for differences of opinion as to the role of the pupil was considerable, and may partly explain Liotard's famous indignation with Massé's teaching.) They could be older, like Liotard (who was then six years older than La Tour had been), or not. In about half the examples studied by historians who specialise in such things, no premium was involved; but in others the premium might be similar to that in an apprenticeship. But the crucial difference was that the arrangement did not lead to *maîtrise*, i.e. the right to practise independently.

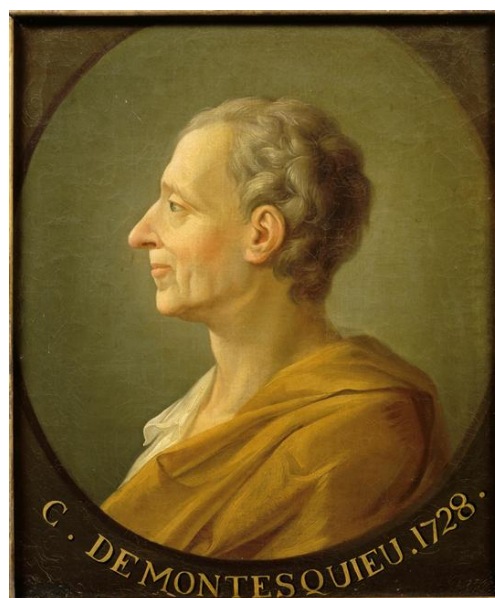
How much of a problem was this? Massé was a member of the Académie royale. Under a little known *arrêt du parlement de Paris* of 14 May 1664, pupils of academicians who had completed three years as an "élève" were permitted to claim *maîtrise* in any town in France, including Paris. But the *Procès-Verbaux* of the Académie royale show that early cases of use of the 1664 decree were minuted, to authorise the grant of the necessary certificate; no such minute appears for Liotard, and the practice may simply have been abandoned. There is no record as to exactly when Liotard joined the Académie de Saint-Luc (as is so often the case – although of course we know he exhibited there much later), an alternative route to having the right to paint professionally. So we do not know on what basis he was able to set up in business after leaving Massé. We still know less about such things than we would like.

One of the revelations in the *contrat d'allouage* is in the attached letter of authority from Liotard's father. In it he mentions two men, "Ledouble" and "Geurain", from whom he had learned about his son's proposed engagement with Massé; Marandet speculates that the introduction to Massé was facilitated by them, but does not further identify either.

"Geurain", I suggest here, is surely a misreading of Pierre Gevray (1679–1759), a *graveur* from Geneva who established himself as a marchand in Paris where he would have retailed the watches that he had engraved. In 1729 he married, at Coppet, Jeanne de La Roche, possibly related by marriage to Liotard's teacher Daniel Gardelle. (Gardelle was born in 1679, not 1673, an error that continues to appear frequently in the literature.)

Roethlisberger & Loche do mention Le Double, on p. 239 (omitted from the index), as a Genevan and an associate of Dassier. Jacques Le Double (1675–1733), *graveur du roi privilégie suivant la cour*, had in fact sublet an apartment from Massé, place Dauphine, just six months before Liotard's contrat d'allouage; he did so with another engraver, Antoine-Charles Robineau (his son Charles-Jean Robineau was a portraitist and engraver who worked in England). Le Double's association with Dassier was important, as we can see from a notice in the *Journal historique et littéraire* for June 1724 (p. 397), advertising the suite of 70 medals of famous Frenchmen in science and the arts engraved by Dassier and sold in Paris by Le Double. A permanent resident in Paris, Le Double nevertheless continued to pay taxes in Geneva. He married a Catherine Fradin in 1721, and she and four minor children were alive when he died in 1733. All four returned to Geneva, where they married into the Tremblay, Michaud, Pasteur and Bouvier families; the son, Jean-François Le Double (1729–1788), was a watchmaker in Geneva.

Liotard's own connection with Dassier is of course well known (even on this [blog](#)), principally through the wonderful pastel of him now in Geneva (R&L 10, reproduced above) whose exact date remains uncertain. Its achievement is all the more remarkable when one investigates what other pastellists were doing at the time: the demand had been created by Vivien and Rosalba Carriera, both of whom had left Paris by the time Liotard arrived; Lundberg was the main practitioner before the emergence of La Tour, but that is another story. (So is the response of the French establishment to Liotard's later work, the focus of my essay in the Liotard 2015 exhibition catalogue.) Less is known about Liotard's possible relations with Dassier's son, the medallist Jacques-Antoine (1715–1759). Born in Geneva, he trained in Paris from 1732, and must have overlapped with Liotard. Both artists went to Rome in 1736. Dassier fils worked in London 1741–45; the series of English profile medallions he made (many were copied by other artists) may have been among the influences for Liotard's curious cameo profiles in which the images seem to display more life than a medal should. Among these was the famous medal of Montesquieu produced in 1753 of which the painted copy for the Académie française (now in Versailles) demonstrates the transformation:



It is quite probable that Fawkener and Bessborough were aware of this medal before Liotard made their cameo portraits in pastel the following year, although the more direct influence was the Natter cameo of Bessborough now in the Met.

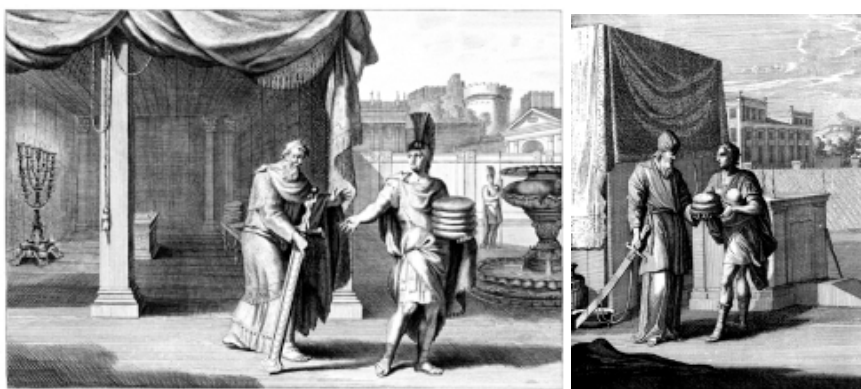
A puzzle surrounding Liotard's aspiration to join the Académie royale concerns his Protestantism. Massé himself was a Protestant (in a somewhat cryptic passage in his nécrologie, it

is suggested that he was not particularly devout – “sans aucun fanatisme”), and this served as no barrier to his full membership: but there is no record of any special dispensation in the Procès-Verbaux, and it may be that he abjured for these purposes (Jal however states that “le Régent permit qu’on ne tînt pas compte des ordonnances de Louis XIV, et l’Académie passa outre”). And perhaps Liotard would have done the same. Otherwise, as the records of the Académie make clear, the Protestant artists – Boit, Lundberg, Schmidt, Rouquet and Roslin – were all admitted by specific royal command. As Vaillat noted, when Liotard was working for the court on his return to Paris in the late 1740s, there would have been no difficulty in obtaining the same consent had the establishment wanted him. But in the early 1730s the hurdle may have seemed higher to the artist.

In fact it was in 1732 (not 1735 as appears in all sources to 2015) that Liotard submitted a history painting (known only from an old photograph, below) for the prize competition at the Académie royale, the topic that year being *Le grand prêtre Achimelech remet à David l’épée de Goliath* (bafflingly no one seems to have spotted this until now: R&L conclude that he must have submitted this work to for the Académie de Saint-Luc, selecting the topic himself since they thought there was no record of the subject being set by the Académie royale, but the matter is easily discovered with the Procès-Verbaux). He was already far older than most competitors: Boucher, Natoire, Pierre, Carle and Louis-Michel Van Loo all won under the age of 21).



R&L also note that the composition is a long way from the [Aert de Gelder picture](#) of this subject in the Getty. But other illustrations of the story were available as prints at the time, and might perhaps have provided Liotard with a visual vocabulary. One is from David Martin’s 1700 work, *Historie des Ouden en Nieuwen Testaments*, in two volumes with 285 illustrations, many by Bernard Picart (left). The other was from Caspar Luiken’s engraving for *Historiae celebriores Veteris Testamenti Iconibus representatae...*, issued in 1712, with a similar number of plates (right).



Liotard did not secure a prize with his rather wooden religious piece: the Académie (Procès-Verbaux, 31 août 1732) “n’a jugé aucun tableau digne du premier prix”, and awarded only a second prize, to Parrocel:

Aujourd’hui, samedi trentième d’Août, l’Académie s’est assemblée par convocation générale pour le jugement des grands Prix de Peinture et de Sculpture faits par ses Élèves sur deux sujets tirés de la Bible : dont l’un est le Grand-Prêtre Achimelech, qui donne à David du pain sanctifié et lui remet l’épée de Goliath, 1^{er} Liv. des Rois, ch. 21, v. 6 et 7, et l’autre Berzellaï qui, ne pouvant se résoudre à quitter son pays pour aller demeurer à Jérusalem avec David, lui présente son fils Chanaam pour l’emmener et en disposer ; liv. II des Rois, ch. 19, v. 36 et 37.

Comme la Compagnie n’a jugé aucun tableau digne du premier Prix, les voix comptées à l’ordinaire, le Sr Parrocel, qui a fait le tableau marqué C, s’est trouvé mériter le second,

Trivas, one of the last authors to have seen the Liotard painting, commented that “La composition est théâtrale, les gestes affectés, l’ensemble vide.” To judge from the surviving old photograph; it is unnecessary to postulate Massé’s enmity for the Académie’s reaction, as Marandet has suggested; as the Procès-Verbaux reveal, Massé did not even attend the session in which the prizewinners were selected. It should also be noted that Massé kept a work by Liotard (R&L 8, now in the musée Patek Philippe, below) at the time of his will, many years later. This will is extremely long, and while Marandet mentions the work, he omits the context. The Liotard



was one of a number of miniatures owned by Massé’s sister-in-law in London (Mme Jacques Massé, née Marie-Madeleine Berchère), and sent to him “pour les raccommoder”, being all “en très mauvais état”. Massé’s will goes on: “Il y a bien longtemps que ces divers ouvrages sont entre mes mains et que non content de les avoir rétablis...”. No. 8 was “mon portrait en émail copié par le sieur Liotard, d’après un original peint par moy-même.” It is then referred to several times as to be sent to his niece Elizabeth, Mrs Jones, as R&L note. The group of miniatures must have been in a fire at some stage, as the damage to the Liotard suggests. When it was in the collection of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Dacres Olivier (1850-1935), Massé’s great-great-great-great-nephew, a description said to have been written by Massé was reported as being on the back (not mentioned in R&L):

Jean Baptiste Massé. Il n'a plus actuellement qu'un ombre obscur et fletri de ce portrait qu'il n'a peine se faire peindre sous ses yeux que pour compléter la collection de son aimable belle soeur d'après son Portrait fait en son jeune age que l'on trouvoit ressemblable, Tel est le sort de notre hu(manite).

Reading all of these references together makes it very hard to find hostility to his former pupil. (There is an anonymous pastel copy of another Massé's self-portrait – see the Massé [article](#) – but the technique is not Liotard's).

None of these trouvailles fundamentally changes our picture of Liotard, but I hope they serve to flesh out some of the sketchier areas of his life and work and situate him in the artistic world in which he developed.

Postscript (19 January 2016): Jean-Michel Liotard in Paris

It is all too easy to overlook the achievements of Liotard's prodigiously talented twin brother Jean-Michel (1702–1796). R&L devote a separate section to him, and include a catalogue of his engravings and drawings (44 numbers). Jean-Michel followed his brother to Paris in 1725; ten years later he moved to Venice. During that period he worked for the engraver Audran (as to which one, see R&L), and engraved six plates after Watteau for Jullienne. Few documents are known (we do not know what form of contract he had with Audran, but it may well be one of allouage), but I found this account of his earnings over four years in the V&A archives (where it is filed under Jean-Michel Liotard 1836-1911). It indicates how much a talented alloué could receive: some 600 livres per annum for four years. The addressee is unknown, and the “4 desseins contrepreuves” is the only indication of the nature of the work.

Sais les sommes que j'ay reçues LIOTARD

Date	Description	Montant
1730 Juin 17 ^e	plus pour 4 desseins contrepreuves	3
Juillet 17 ^e	reçu	48
8 ^e	reçu encore	24.6
août	reçu encore	120
8 ^e	reçu encore	96
1731 mars	reçu encore	144
may 12 ^e	reçu encore	96
9 ^e 13 ^e	reçu encore	192
1732 Janvier	reçu encore	192
février	reçu encore	100
Juin 1 ^e	reçu encore	200
Juillet 27 ^e	reçu encore	192
8 ^e	reçu encore	96
1733 mars 29 ^e	reçu encore	288
Juin 6 ^e	reçu encore	288
Juin 29 ^e	reçu encore	371.17
le solde de tous comptes jusqu'à ce jour fait à Paris ce jour 29 ^e Juin 1733		2457.3

la quelle somme fait

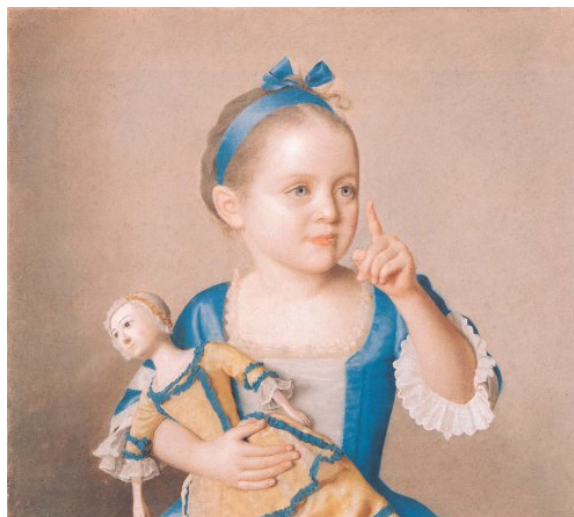
Michel Liotard

Sources and notes

For full references, go to R&L and the Liotard articles on [pastellists.com](#). Full publication details for Marandet 2002, Marandet 2003b &c. are in the [Bibliography](#), while the [Prolegomena](#) has more (with literature) on the in the Paris institutions (for allouage, see Thillay 2002) and on the demand for pastel created by Vivien and Carriera. William Eisler, *The Dassiars of Geneva*, i, 2002 and Campardon is useful. The Le Double lease is in the Archives nationales, MC, CXVIII/337,

26 octobre 1722: “Bail pour neuf ans, en sous-location, par Jacques Ledouble et par Antoine-Charles Robineau, maîtres graveurs, à Jean-Baptiste Massé, peintre de l’Académie royale, du premier appartement de deux maisons contiguës sises place Dauphine, appartenant au sieur de Creil, dont l’une a pour locataire principal ledit Ledouble, l’autre ledit Robineau, moyennant 300 livres de loyer annuel à chacun des bailleurs”. His association with Dassier: *Journal historique et littéraire*, .vi.1724, p. 397. The Massé description when in the Olivier collection is in Lart’s *Huguenot Pedigrees*, London, 1928, ii, p. 64. Lowell Libson’s 2017 catalogue of British Art includes the Natter cameo of Bessborough.

Mlle Liotard playing with her doll: some puzzles



The pastel on the cover of the current Liotard exhibition catalogue, and one which has understandably drawn a great deal of attention, is a delightful picture of a little girl with her doll lent by the Schönbrunn in Vienna. The catalogue entry (suffering from space limitations) tells us that the sitter is Marianne Liotard (1767–1830), the artist’s youngest child, and notes that the identification is based on an entry in her brother’s missing diary; it quotes the description from this diary: “De son doigt elle fait signe de garder le silence, sa poupée étant endormie.” This is said to come from a madrigal: strictly I think it is supposed to be the brother’s commentary on the madrigal, but that too is missing. The catalogue correctly goes on to highlight the problem with the picture: the girl appears to be about five, but Liotard left Geneva at the end of 1770 (age 3) and didn’t return until October 1774 (age 7). Noting the difficulty, the catalogue opts for “c.1775” as the date. After a short discussion of the nature of genre *à la* portraiture and a brief mention of Chardin as a possible source, the entry concludes with another mystery: how did the pastel enter the Austrian imperial collection (where its entry was unrecorded), speculating that it was a gift from the artist to Maria Theresia.



That in a nutshell is the conundrum. Roethlisberger & Loche have a much longer discussion of these issues (R&L 506, p. 629, also opting for the later date by placing the work in the chapter on “Genève 1774–1777”) – and of course more similar pictures of children with dolls. The lost Chardin picture was surely in oil, not pastel; it is known from the Surugue engraving entitled *L’Inclination de l’âge* (misprinted elsewhere: note that inclination and inclinaison do not mean the same, nor does the title translate into English as readily as some think), which may encourage the idea that this was a genre piece; but the 1738 salon livret makes it perfectly clear that the original was a portrait, of “la fille de M. Mahon, marchand, s’amusant avec sa poupée”. R&L note that the “pose de la tête est semblable”, although Chardin’s sitter looks at us directly, while the innovation in Liotard’s pastel is the lost look. The Chardin picture is also extremely complicated in ways this blog is too short to explore; but perhaps a more relevant parallel is with a virtually contemporary drawing by Liotard’s arch enemy, Charles-Nicolas Cochin, which I published some years ago (in my 2001 GBA article on the abbé Pommyer). The charming Chou-Chou, dated 1771, depicts Pommyer’s great-niece Élisabeth d’Incourt de Fréchencourt, later baronne de Jacquier de Rosée, so we know the girl was four; while technically not as ambitious as the Liotard, the drawing displays a freedom and informality which underlines the mutual incomprehension between the two artists.

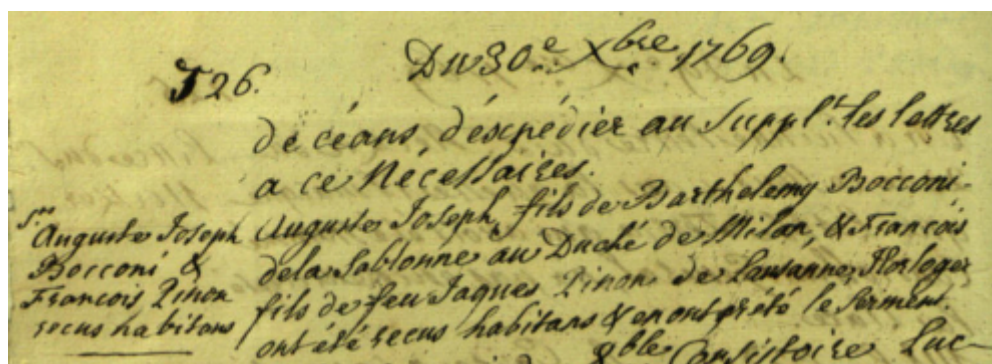


Anyway, to return to the puzzle. R&L explain that Liotard fils's diary was reported by Numa Trivas in his unpublished 1936 manuscript, and never seen again. Based on this diary, Trivas reported that the girl was (plausibly, but surely at most) “donc 6 ans” (but without the context the premise for this deduction is unclear); and he provided further details from the same source, including the brother's description: “elle était jeune...” (note the past tense, as though the diary entry was written possibly far later than the time of the portrait – as seems highly likely, since Liotard fils was only a child at whichever date the pastel was made), and this passage:

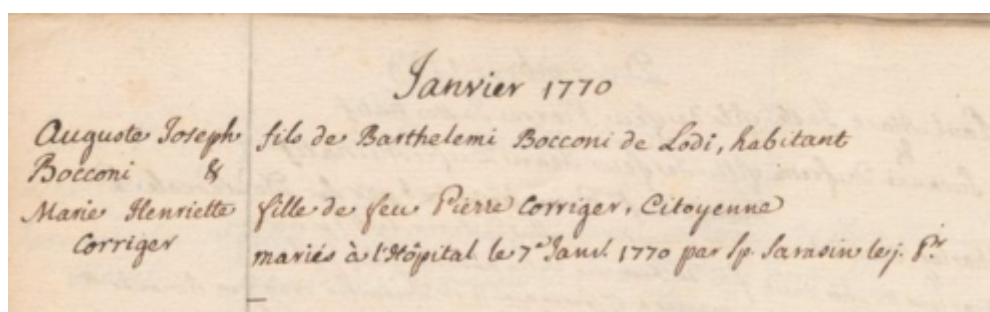
Un “Madrigal adressé à Monsieur Liotard à l'occasion du Portrait de sa Fille Cadette, par M. Bocconi” fait allusion à ce tableau. Dans un notice explicative, l'auteur précise: “De son doigt...[etc.]” Bocconi, Italien catholique, avait changé de religion à Genève; avait beaucoup d'éducation.

R&L then add that, while knowing neither the madrigal nor Bocconi, one should trust the text, which offers the sole basis for identifying the girl. (She grew up to marry M. de Fernex, so you will find her under F in the Liotard articles in the *Dictionary of pastelists*: lexicographers have to follow rules.)

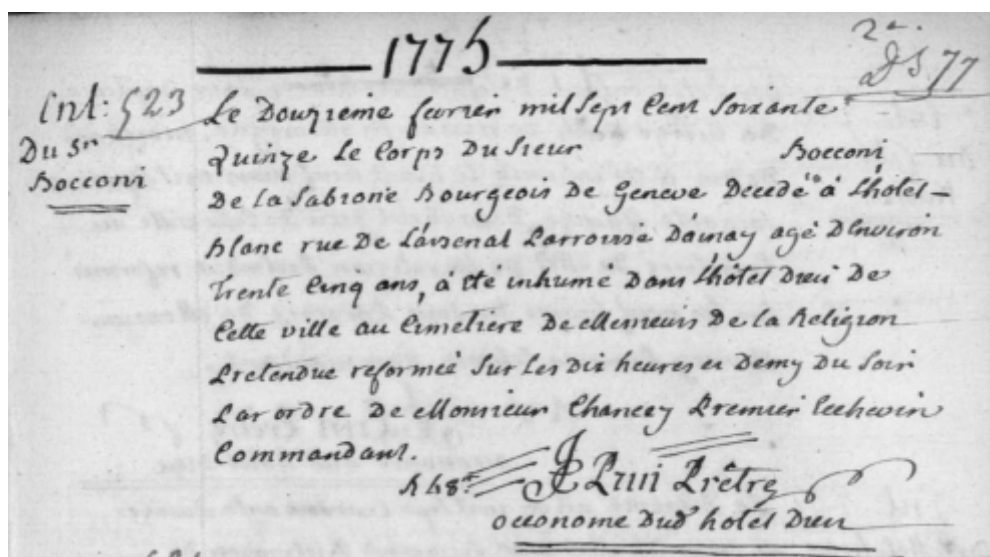
But we do know M. Bocconi, and he does fit the description. He was August-Joseph Bocconi (1739–1775), from Todi, in the duchy of Milan. On 30 December 1769 (having converted) he was given “habitation” in Geneva:



And a week later he married Marie-Henriette Corriger, daughter of a bourgeois of the city.



All this is in the city archives (registres du Conseil and État civil). We know a good deal more from his correspondence with various luminaries of the day, Charles Bonnet, Francis Kinloch and, most important (because his letters have been edited with Teutonic thoroughness) Karl Viktor von Bonstetten. From this we know that Bocconi translated erudite religious treatises (“le morceau de la Palingénésie relatif à la Révélation”) into Italian (well, apparently: “Un Connoisseur, bon Juge de son travail, en est très satisfait”), and that he travelled a good deal. He was ill in London 1771–72. In June 1772 he was living in the house of Gédéon Turretini; a year later in the rue des Chaudronniers. He also knew comte Diodati and Jean-Edme Romilly (pastor in the French church in London whom ill health forced to return to Geneva; his father wrote the article on Horlogerie for the *Encyclopédie* and was close to Rousseau). But Bocconi seems to have spent the winter of 1774–75 in Montpellier. And he was certainly dead by early February 1775, in Lyon, where he was buried in the Protestant church:



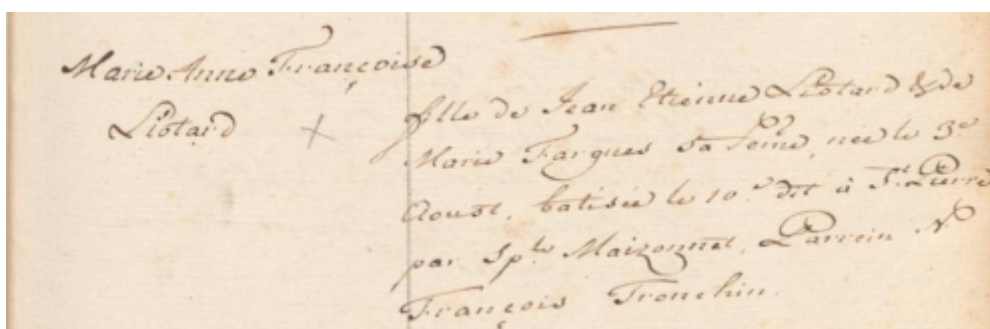
So what does this mean? Liotard returned to Geneva on 12 October 1774. It is scarcely credible that he could have finished this pastel (see my earlier [blog](#) for how long he took to do a repetition of Mme Necker) in time for Bocconi to see the finished work and write a cheery madrigal (or was it perhaps a poem designed to be placed under the image, as Surugue engraved verses from Chardin’s friend Pesselier?) before going off to Montpellier and then getting to Lyon in time to die (there is no need to speculate about the possible progression of the illness he had in London, perhaps consumption, as he was only 35, or whether he travelled to Montpellier for its renowned medical school).

The alternative, bearing in mind that Marianne was born in August 1767, is that she was only three. Both R&L and the 2015 exhibition catalogue decide against this, although it is my marginal

preference. Before you disagree, look at the two English princesses and guess their ages (answers below):



Note also the relative size of Marianne's head to her body, suggesting that she might be younger than she looks. Whichever way you look at it, however, this is problematic. Incidentally there is no doubt about Marianne's age, and this baptismal entry also tells us (not I believe previously reported in the literature) that her godfather was François Tronchin:



But isn't there a much simpler explanation? Without the diary entry in front of us, how do we know that it specifically identifies Marianne rather than her elder sister Marie-Thérèse? No other pastel of her is known, so the eye colour cannot be compared; there is nothing in the other portraits that would rule her out (or in). Her dates (1763–1793) work perfectly: Bocconi was in Geneva in 1768–69 when the pastel could easily have been made. Bocconi's madrigal merely identifies the girl as of the "fille cadette", but he might simply have meant to distinguish her from the eldest girl Mariette (1761–1813) [see postscript below]. Maybe Trivas simply read too much into the title.

What seems to me the most important point is that Maria Theresia was godmother to Marie-Thérèse Liotard: surely it would have been the most natural thing to send the empress the portrait of her godchild – and, conversely, rather bizarre to send her a portrait of one of the children who was not? Of course it is possible that Liotard sold it to her as a genre piece (that after all was why she bought Suzanne Necker à la livre, although she certainly knew the sitter's identity), but there is no record of a purchase, and for me the idea of a gift, and of the right daughter, feels more plausible. As for a gift of the wrong one, what was Liotard planning to say to the Empress had she asked: is that my goddaughter?

Arguments based on determining age from visual appearance in portraits are seldom as reliable as documentation; but without the missing diary we may never get to the bottom of this, and whether Trivas made an unwarranted inference from it (or even if, since he seems to have been writing later, Liotard fils himself was confused). But I think it highly probable that the pastel belongs to an earlier chronological chapter; and it seems plausible that we have also got the wrong daughter.

Postscript

I am most grateful to Catriona Seth for pointing out that “cadette” strictly speaking refers to the second daughter; Marianne was in fact the “benjamine”. Whether each of Bocconi, Liotard fils and Trivas followed such niceties is less certain.

Answer

Princess Caroline, on the left, is 3; Louisa Anne, on the right, is 5 (according to R&L; the RA catalogue unaccountably states that she is 6, which only makes the problem worse).

Sources and notes

As usual R&L should be the starting point. The *Livres des habitants de Genève 1684–1794* was published in 1985 by the Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Genève, edited by Alfred Perrenoud with Geneviève Perret; but you can also find the documents reproduced above directly through the Base Adhémar. *Bonstettiana: historisch-kritische Ausgabe der Briefkorrespondenzen Karl Viktor von Bonstettens und seines Kreises 1753 – 1832* is part of the monumental series edited by Doris and Peter Walser-Wilhelm published in Bern (not technically German, but admirably thorough). I have also quoted from Gisela Luginbühl-Weber's *Johann Kaspar Lavater, Charles Bonnet, Jacob Bennelle: Briefe 1768-1790; ein Forschungsbeitrag zur Aufklärung in der Schweiz*, I, 1997, p. 37; see also *Biologia e religione nel Settecento europeo: la corrispondenza tra Alfonso Bonfioli Malvezzi e Charles Bonnet, 1773-1788*, ed. Sandro Cardinali, 1998. My article on Pommyer, La Tour and Cochin was « L'abbé Pommyer, *honoraire amateur* de l'Académie royale de peinture », *Gazette des beaux-arts*, mai–juin 2001, CXXXVII, n° 1588–89, pp. 237–56; parts of it can be found in my [essay](#).



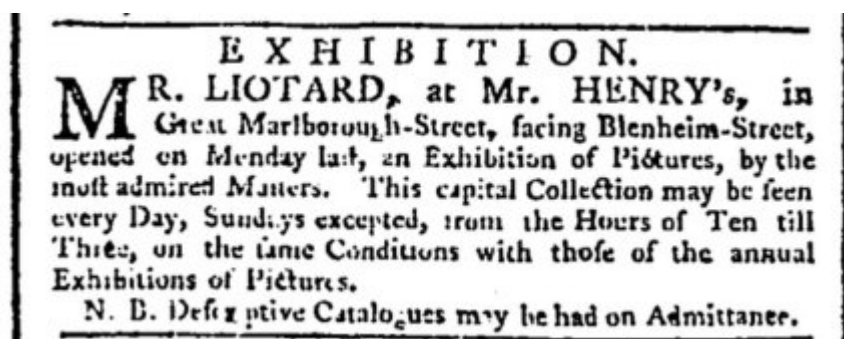
Liotard's houses in London

A puzzle concerning “Mlle Thomasset”, which I shall discuss in a forthcoming post, has prompted me to look a bit more carefully into Liotard's addresses during his two trips to London. There are no surviving leases, nor any entries with his name in the Westminster rate books, so the matter is not so simple as you might think.

On the second trip, Liotard arrived not in 1773, as appears in all published sources to date, but a few months earlier. This is evident from the minutes of the Society of Arts in November 1772 when he was approached to provide an opinion on Mr Pache's crayons. You may have seen photocopies of the first few pages which were displayed in the Royal Academy exhibition (but found too late to appear in the catalogue; the subsequent pages are also worth reading

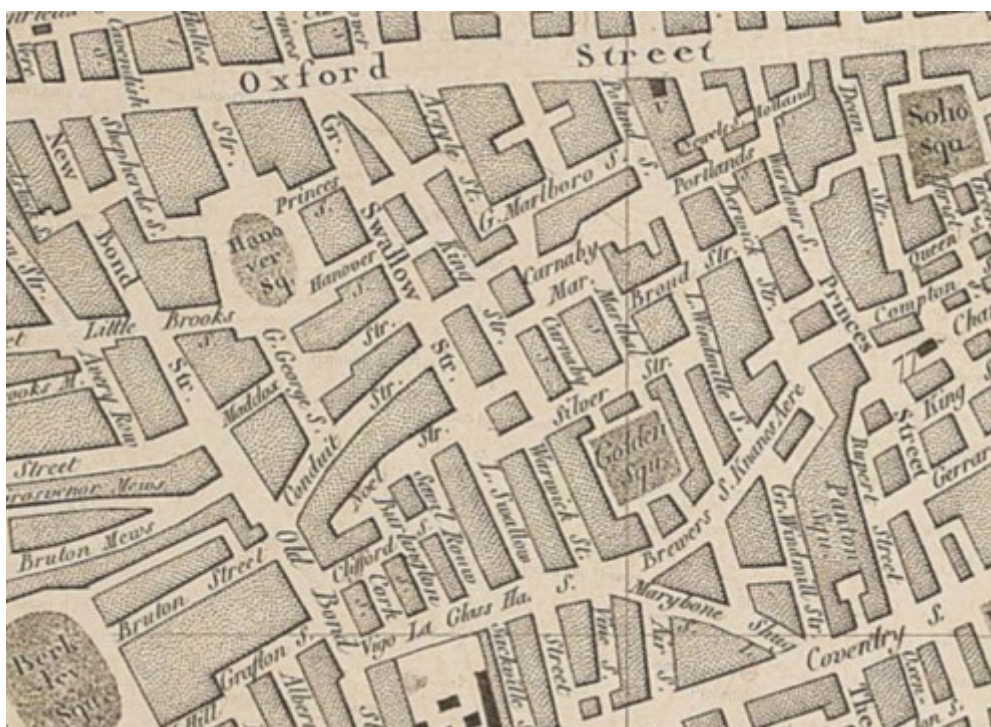
as they contain interesting information about mildew and oxidation of Stoupan's pastels: see [treatises](#) for the full text, currently at p. 31 of the pdf).

We also know – from the catalogue of his London exhibition in 1773, which is part of the standard corpus of Liotardiana – that he lived at Great Marlborough Street, facing Blenheim Street. But we haven't until now known which house. There were two versions of the catalogue, one in French, in which the address was given as *Great Marlborough-street, facing Blenheim-street; le nom de Liotard est sur la porte*; in the English version, this is just as *Great Marlborough Street, facing Blenheim Street, at Mr Liotard's*. The Royal Academy catalogue adds nothing, repeating the same formula. But from the advertisement in the *St James's Chronicle* for 6–9 February 1773 (which I published in 2013), we get Mr Liotard, *at Mr Henry's*, in Great Marlborough Street, facing Blenheim Street:



6 February 1773 being a Saturday, the exhibition opened 1 February 1773. The advertisement (identically worded) was repeated in the *Public Advertiser* between 25 and 27 March, and again on Tuesday 30 March; the exact date of closure is unknown, but presumably very soon after.

Some care is required in reading this. Londoners will be surprised at the mention of Blenheim Street at all, since that is not proximate to Great Marlborough Street today: but in 1773 the street now known as Ramillies Street was so called (of course none of these names would have been comfortable for French visitors). But so too was the short alley at the south west corner of Great Marlborough Street, leading down to Carnaby Market. Here is J. G. Bonnisselle's map showing the streets as at 1772 for you to situate the geography:



So how do we know even if he lived on the north or south side? This is where Mr Henry comes in. By a careful examination of the Westminster rate books (noting the complexities of the hierarchies of tenure etc.) we find him between two properties owned by Walter Farquhar – later to become physician to the Prince of Wales and a baronet – and also between properties taken on by the pastellist-turned-property developer calling himself Calze ([Edward Francis Cunningham](#)), unsuccessfully trying to evade his creditors. Mr Henry's property, on the south side of the street, must have been at no. 50, directly opposite Ramillies Street. Subsequently the street numbers were changed, the buildings demolished, a church erected and it too demolished to make this properly confusing (I'm not sure if I can persuade English Heritage to erect a blue plaque, as one of the conditions is that "the building must survive in a form that the commemorated person would have recognised": that knocks out Perronneau as well). Little is known about John Henry, but he evidently kept lodgers (another put a notice in the *Daily Advertiser* in 1772 using his address).

Great Marlborough Street, as described by John Macky in his *Journey thro' England* of 1722, "though not a Square, surpasses any thing that is called a street in the Magnificence of its Buildings and Gardens, and inhabited all by prime Quality." No contemporary image is available, but it had obviously gone off a bit by Liotard's day (it had further to fall before Dickens described it as "one of the squares that have been"). There were noble lords Onslow and Byron (William, the wicked 5th Baron notorious for murdering a neighbour), as well as Lord Charles Cavendish, uncle of the Countess of Bessborough. But neighbours also included Mrs Jane Godby, better known as Mrs Goadby, the brothel keeper whose most famous alumna was Mrs Armistead (aged 22 when Liotard arrived, she had already been painted by Reynolds). Among the Swiss community were Anthony Girardot, a relative of Mme de Vermeux. And the Thomasset family – to whom I shall return in that separate post. Shortly.

The English Liotards

Something about both Liotard's London visits has always struck me as odd. He seems to have had no contact with his two nephews (see the Liotard [pedigree](#) for the connection) who had settled there and become merchants. Both John and Mark Liotard were naturalized by Act of Parliament – the former, who was born in 1713, by 24 Geo. II, no. 7 [1751], the latter, born 1717, by 20 Geo. II, no. 83 [1747]. Both were mentioned in the 1750 will of the legendary Anglo-Dutch merchant Gerard Van Neck, who was connected socially and commercially with the Walpoles, Thellussons and Neckers. They were involved in international trade, and their names appear in various partnerships. John's fate is obscure (his partnership with Giles Godin, in New Broad Street, involving the importation of animal furs from North America, was dissolved in 1773, and he seems to have been made bankrupt in 1781, although this may be a confusion with John Jr, *see below*); by 1784 he was a tenant in Booth Court, Spitalfields (near Brick Lane, and a great descent from New Broad Street).

Mark, who was financially successful, lived for a number of years near the French Church in St Martin Orgar (just off modern Cannon Street in the City). His partnership with Samuel Mestrezat (presumably from Geneva) and Peter Aubertin (from Neuchâtel) was known in particular for the sale of mousselines and indiennes, some imported from Lyon. The firm was London agent for Rey, Magneval & Cie. According to a recent publication, the portraitist Louis-Michel Van Loo, who also had connections with Lyon fabric manufacture, went straight to Liotard & Aubertin when he arrived in London in 1764. The partnership of Mark Liotard, Cazenove & Co was recorded still at 3 Martin's Lane, Cannon Street as late as 1790, although Mark had returned to Geneva by 1768, where he married Marianne Sarasin-Rilliet (her father was the owner of the property La Servette which was then appended to Marc's name); the pair were portrayed by Liotard in Geneva, so there cannot have been a family feud. His partner, James

Cazenove (1744–1827), was from another Genevan family (although he was born in Naples); he was naturalized in 1778, and left a fortune of £50,000 when he died (but four years later the firm collapsed). Jean-Michel Liotard drew his sister, later Mme Fazy (R&L JML37), but this was in Geneva.

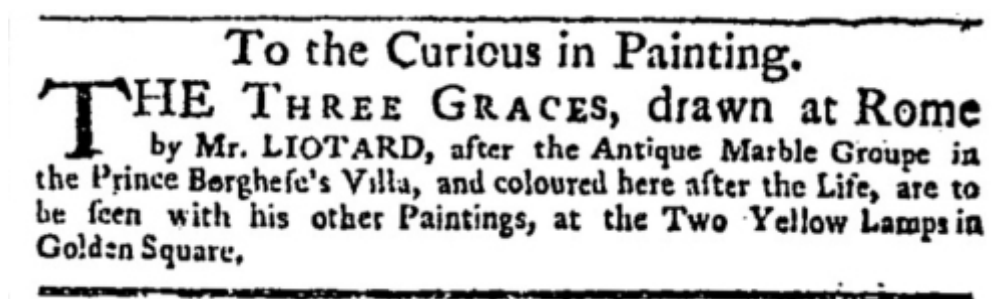
In the next generation, another John (born c.1741) is reported in R&L as Mark's son, although there is no record of an earlier marriage. This may be a confusion with Mark's brother. During the artist's second trip, John Jr was married in May 1773 (although Jean-Étienne does not seem to have attended):



Perhaps even in those days the social gap between struggling merchants in the City and artists and their wealthy clients in the West End was unbridgeable. John Mark Liotard, apparently John Jr's son, was a lieutenant in the Marines from February 1797.

The first London trip

As for Liotard's address in Golden Square during the first London trip, although he advertised in the *Public Advertiser*, 28 February 1754 as from the "Two Yellow Lamps", the exact house remains uncertain:



An additional clue appeared in an earlier, anonymous advertisement, no doubt of Liotard's stock, which was advertised in the *Public advertiser*, 21 November 1753:

To be Seen, at Two Shillings a-piece.
At the House next Door to Monsieur Liotard's, the
Golden Head, in Golden-square.
A Collection of PORTRAITS in
Crayons, most of them Originals.

This notice is a little ambiguous: was “Liotard’s” the Golden Head, or was that the house next door? Oddly, although there were numerous “Golden Heads” in London of the time, a number associated with artists (Liotard’s engraver MacArdell was at the Golden Head in Covent Garden; Thomas Major, who retailed his prints and may have done more, was at the Golden Head in Chandos Street; while Hogarth’s house in Leicester Fields was famously decorated with a gilt bust of Van Dyck), none seems to be known in Golden Square. The possibility cannot be excluded that Liotard’s house was actually in an adjacent street; it was not uncommon to give the more fashionable address for such properties, but one would expect a more helpful description in an advertisement.

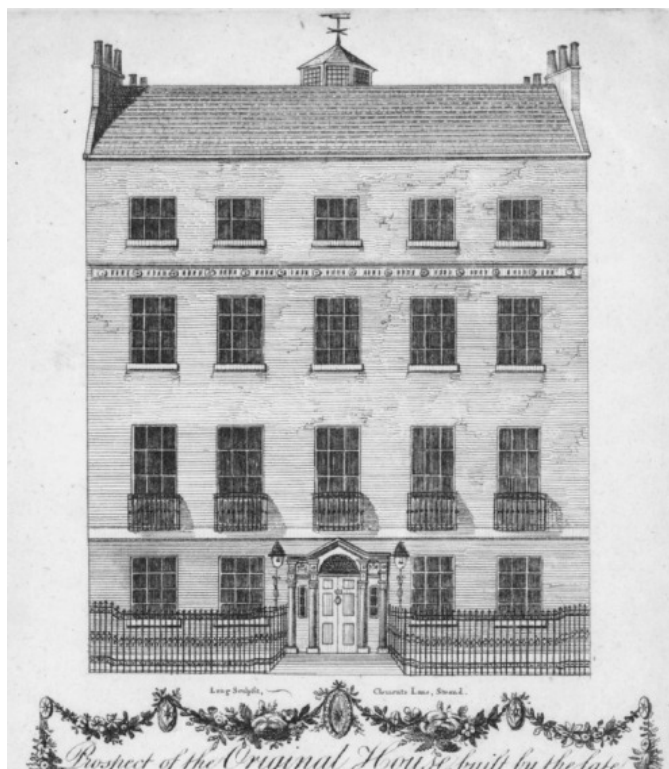
The only other reference which I have been able to trace to “Two Yellow Lamps” in Golden Square is in an advertisement from Liotard’s associate, the enamelist Jean-Adam Serre (1704–1788), also in the *Public Advertiser*, on 15 December 1753 and the two following weeks. The text makes clear the very close relations he had with Liotard (but see also my previous [post](#)), so it is unsurprising that they lodged together:

Lately brought over from PARIS,
By Mr. SERRE, Portrait Painter to the Empress Queen.
 A few COPIES of his
Litterary Attempt on the Theory of Music, intituled
ESSAIS sur les PRINCIPES de l'HARMONIE,
 ou l'on traite de la Theorie de l'Harmonie en general, de la
 Basse Fondamentale, de l'Origine du Mon en neur, &c. Paris 1753,
 in one Volume, Octavo, Price 3 s. few'd.
 To be had at the Author's, at the Two Yellow Lamps in Golden
 Square; and at Mr. Vaillant's, facing Southampton-street, in the
 Strand; or Mr. Nourse, opposite Catherine-street, in the Strand.
 Mr. SERRE having had the Honour, during his Stay at
 Vienna, to paint from the Life the Empress Queen, and the whole
 Imperial Family, takes this Opportunity, before his Return thither,
 to inform the Curious, that he has brought over and intends to dispose
 of, a few Pictures of them, enamell'd or in Water Colours, and
 likewise several Portraits of the most illustrious Persons in France, as
 the King, the Dauphin and Dauphiness, the Marshal de Saxe, Ma-
 dame de Pompadour, Mr. de Fontenelle, Mr. Crebillon, and others.

After Liotard’s departure to the Netherlands, Serre stayed on in London, and was married to a Judith Keheo (of whom I know nothing) on 9 August 1756.

The house seems most likely to have been on the south side: although less fashionable, artists preferred the north light, and the other houses in the square seem to have had owners unlikely to sublet. “Two Yellow Lamps” seems not to have been a tradesman’s sign but rather a physical description of the property: from Sutton Nicholls’s engraving for *Stowe’s Survey* (1754 state), showing the houses on the west, north and east sides, these were all plain, with the exception of No. 23, the Bavarian envoy’s house (none seems to show a Golden Head). Of those on the south side, images of only no. 17 are known, from a later trade card, which purports to show the

house in an earlier state (the British Museum and Phillips 1964 don't agree about the date shown). It has two prominent lamps.



Perhaps others on this side had them too, but the views of the other three sides suggests that lamps were the exception. No. 16, later occupied by Angelica Kauffman, was probably already tenanted at this period, while the other houses in this short stretch, nos. 13, 14, 15 and 18, all seem to have had owner-occupiers. I have been unable to confirm if No. 16 displayed a Golden Head, nor whether it would have been available in November 1753 for the crayon portrait exhibition.

No. 17 was originally a single house, owned by Joseph Lycett from 1743, when he divided it into two properties, 17A (east) and 17B (west). They were recombined in 1776. 17B was occupied by John Gordon from 1744 until 1775. But 17A was occupied by Lycett or “unnamed tenants 1753–75” (according to Phillips 1964). This at the moment appears to be the best candidate for Liotard's house.

Joseph Lycett was an upholsterer but described as a gentleman in contemporary documents. We know that he was a determined landlord from an information he laid against one of his tenants in the Middlesex Sessions in March 1764. He left his “unworthy son Thomas” 52 guineas a year in his will proved 1775.

Sources and notes

R&L. Survey of London (but note that the sides of Golden Square are wrongly labelled, so north and south are transposed, very confusingly). Hugh Phillips's *Mid-Georgian London*, 1964 is invaluable for Golden Square (but has very little on Great Marlborough Street). One must also consult the Westminster rate books. The British Museum's collections database is a wonderful resource for topographical prints. The minute concerning Pache's crayons was first identified by Sarah Lowengard in 2008 but its significance not noticed until the Liotard exhibition. For Van Loo, see Christine Rolland, ed., *Autour des Van Loo: peinture, commerce des tissus et espionnage en Europe*, 2012, p. 34; the author didn't know if Mark Liotard was related to the pastellist. Any

further information on any of this will be most gratefully received, particularly if anyone can identify adjacent Two Yellow Lamps and Golden Head in or immediately near Golden Square.

Lost in Paris

Apparently not noticed until now (this addition, 29.VII.2024), on 18.III.1771 while in Paris, Liotard lost a portfolio containing important documents, as well as a miniature of the Dauphine. He advertised in the *Annonces, affiches et avis divers* a week later (25.III.1771):



Neil Jeffares