

Perronneau's trip to Lyon in 1759

NEIL JEFFARES

A MAN IS SHOWN half length, in profile to the left, the head at three-quarters (fig. 1; [Zoomify](#)). He wears a pearl grey coat opening on a pink brocade waistcoat and a lace jabot. He holds his black tricorne hat under his left arm. The head, with a powdered wig, has character: the mouth is fine, the chin strong, and the blue eyes have a mordant expression under the half-closed eyelids; the face is painted in Naples yellow and yellow ochre, while a bold use of viridian on the neck just above the stock is typical of the artist's deconstructionist approach to colour. The background is grey, edging into copper red at the top corners.

Exhibited as an unknown man in the famous Exposition de Cent pastels in 1908, the portrait made a profound impression on Armand Fourreau, who discussed it in his review:

Dans l'inoubliable portrait d'homme de la collection Sortais c'était la même grandeur de style, la même forte simplicité, la même exécution magistrale avec une pénétration psychologique peut être encore plus profonde; l'observateur aigu qu'est Perronneau est parvenu en effet à traduire sur ce personnage enveloppé dans une lumière très douce très grise un contraste des plus caractéristiques et des plus émouvants, contraste d'ailleurs purement moral, entre la douceur apparente des formes arrondies, des traits moelleux et délicats du visage et l'inquiétante dureté des yeux bleus pâles sur lesquels semble se lire la possibilité des rancunes froides et durables et des colères terribles.



Figure 1

For many years the subject of this pastel languished under the false identification given by Roger-Milès in the commemorative catalogue. Charles Pinot Duclos (1704–1772) was an important Enlightenment figure, a protégé of Mme de Pompadour, permanent secretary to the Académie française in 1746 from 1755. No doubt it was Duclos's characteristic Breton stubbornness which Roger-Milès found echoed in the features of this apparently ill-tempered, imperious figure; but the identification ignored the extensive iconography of Duclos which include portraits by La Tour (Saint-Quentin), Carmontelle (Chantilly) and Cochin (engraved 1763) as well as a pastel by Nattier, which show a man with altogether more

genial features than the “despotic, cutting and traitorously brusque” man described by Rousseau.

It took some hundred years for Roger-Milès’s fantasy to be corrected. During the research undertaken by the Perronneau specialist Dominique d’Arnoult, the descendants of Perronneau’s subject, Jacques-Charles Dutilleu, were contacted, and M. Olivier Charbon was able, after some delay, to locate an old chest of family papers. Among the family photographs in Lyon were two nineteenth century photographs¹ of this pastel (fig. 2) and its pendant, each cropped to an oval, with inscriptions naming the subjects. On a copy of the *Cent pastels* catalogue (donated by Seymour de Ricci to the bibliothèque Jacques Doucet), an informed amateur independently annotated this entry: “Mr Heimard, md de soie à Lyon/acheté par Brame à la famille de Lyon/Vendu, avec un portrait de femme, faisant pendant, à Cronier 45,000 francs/Vte Cronier 20,000 francs.”²

Gabriel Eymard³ (1715–1795) was the son of François Eymard and Catherine Izérable. The Eymard family came from Saint-Hilaire-du-Rosier, and then moved to Saint-Antoine-en-Dauphiné (where his father was a bourgeois) before settling in Lyon. Gabriel was a maître-fabricant d’étoffes d’or, d’argent et de soie, in Lyon. On 11 July 1753, he was married to Madeleine Sacquin (fig. 3), 15 years his junior: although her father Pierre Sacquin, bourgeois de Lyon, was a commerçant des grains, her mother was the daughter of Pierre David, another silk manufacturer in Lyon. Six months later Madeleine’s sister Benoîte (fig. 4) married Jacques-Charles Dutilleu (fig. 5). The son of a decorative artist in Paris, Dutilleu had been trained in Paris as a designer but (after a visit, 1736–38) settled in Lyon in the 1742 and practised as a flower painter and designer for the silk weaving business. By 1752 he was a maître et marchand fabricant in the silk-weaving guild. By 1767 Dutilleu was able to retire comfortably,⁴ with a fortune estimated in 1777 at 144,000 livres of which 53,000 had come from his wife’s estate (33,000 in cash and 20,000 in property; presumably a similar portion fell to Madeleine).



Figure 2

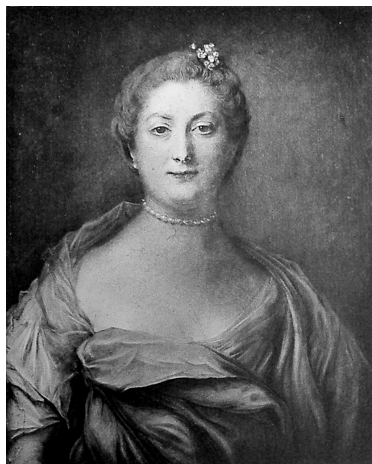


Figure 2



Figure 3

All four were portrayed by Perronneau in pastel during his 1759 trip, about which

¹ Taken by Alexandre Fatalot of Lyon from an address, 49 rue de l’Impératrice, in use in 1870, the approximate date of the images.

² Cited Arnoult, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

³ F. Bréghot du Lut, ed., *Le Livre de raison de Jacques-Charles Dutilleu*, Lyon, 1886 is virtually the only published source on Eymard. It erroneously gives his father as Antoine Eymard, but the correct name is found in Gabriel’s marriage certificate, état civil, Lyon, paroisse Saint-Vincent, 11.VII.1753. I am also grateful to Olivier Charbon for details about the family and its archives and to Dominique d’Arnoult (private communications, 2005–13). Miller 1998 offers an excellent account of Dutilleu and his position in the Lyon silk industry.

⁴ Miller 1998, p. 28.

relatively little is known (in contrast to Perronneau's trips to Bordeaux); however it is probable that Dutillieu was responsible for the invitation, as he had remained in contact with the Paris artistic community and had spent some time in the studio of Oudry, the subject of one of Perronneau's *morceaux de réception*.⁵ We know that Perronneau was in Lyon from the beginning of the year as the Académie recorded, in its 14 January 1759 session, the receipt of "une lettre de compliment à l'occasion de renouvellement de l'année" from "M. Peronneau, académicien, présentement à Lion." Perronneau wrote to Dutillieu a lengthy letter, dated apparently 6^{bre} 1759 (for septembre or perhaps 8^{bre}, octobre?), after his return to Paris, in which he talks most frankly about his own business difficulties in Champagne, and reiterates his gratitude for Dutillieu's hospitality in Lyon. He adds "Ditte bien des choses pour moy, a Monsieur hémard; je ne puis assé le remercies des marques d'amitiés qu'il m'a témoigne; j'assure aussi de mes respects Madame hémard."

bonne santé. Ditte bien des choses pour moy, a Monsieur
 hémard je ne puis assé le remercies des marques d'amitiés
 qu'il ma témoigne, j'assure aussi de mes respects Madame
 hémard, j'ay l'honneur d'estre Monsieur avec bien de la
 reconnaissance.
 à Paris le 6bre 1759.
 mon adresse est. a l'empereur. libere quays
 de la meçifferie
 Votre tres humble et tres obéissant
 serviteur
 Perronneau

It has been suggested that the pendants of Dutillieu and his wife may have been among the "quatre autres têtes sous le même numéro" [64] at the Salon de 1759; if so it is quite possible that their companions made up the other two têtes. It is odd however that no mention is made of them in the letter to Dutillieu, although he does say "vous auray une teste de moy que je vous priroy d'accepter", which could be an additional work (and may suggest that the primary works were still in Paris, as would be the case if they had been exhibited). Unfortunately none of the



Figure 5

descriptions in the salon critiques is sufficiently precise to resolve this: "M. Perronneau, dans ses pastels, joint, à une exécution spirituellement détaillée, une couleur vraie et séduisante", according to the critic in *L'Année littéraire*, while *La Feuille nécessaire* vouchsafed only that "cet Artiste a donné à ses Pastels toute la vie & toute la grâce dont ce genre est susceptible." A third could refer to the tonality of the present work when he wrote: "M. Perronneau donne dans un autre excès; ses Portraits quoique dessinés avec esprit, sont d'un ton gris qui ôte une partie de leur mérite."⁶

The families were extremely close, with alternately Gabriel and Madeleine being godparents to Dutillieu's children, one of whom, Gabriel Dutillieu, married his cousin Victoire Eymard. Gabriel Eymard was one of the senior members of the family who took administration of Dutillieu's affairs when he became paralysed in 1780 shortly before his death.

⁵ Moreover Dutillieu was active in the Lyon society known as the Concert, an académie des beaux-arts of which he was secretary from 1751: v. Bregnot du Lut, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁶ Anon., *Lettre critique à un ami sur les ouvrages de MM. de l'Académie exposés au Sallon du Louvre*, s.l., 1759.

All the family seem to have been involved in the fabric business. Gabriel's grandson Paul Eymard wrote extensively about the history of silk weaving, noting⁷ one of the major developments as Vaucanson's mechanical loom exhibited at Lyon in 1745; this was later enhanced by Gabriel Dutilleu and used by Jacquard. No doubt the pink waistcoat is one of his own brocaded silks; it is certainly in keeping with the fabrics being produced in Lyon at the time.⁸ Eymard's wealth was evident from his prestigious address in the place de la Comédie in Lyon. A *Mémoire pour le sieur Gabriel Eymard, négociant à Lyon: contre la Demoiselle Dolbeau, femme du sieur Niel, se disant Marchande publique...*, prepared in 1775 by Choignard, avocat, no doubt evidences Eymard's determination to protect his business.

Perronneau returned to Lyon in 1773, as we know from a rather sad letter to his friend Desfriches (10 April 1773) in which he describes his wife's and his own illnesses. This time he made only a profile drawing of Dutilleu, which though lost is known from an etching made by a descendent, Maurice Willermoz (fig. 6).

By the time of his death, 16 ventôse, an III (6 March 1795), the 80-year-old Gabriel Eymard was living as a rentier at 28 rue Neyret. His death was registered by his son Albert (a pupil of Berjon), as was that of his widow three years later.

The pendants of Eymard and his wife descended through successive generations of the family. Paul Eymard (1802–1878), Gabriel's grandson, was a member of the Commission des soies de Lyon, as well as being a man of letters, botanist and historian (writing under the partially anagrammatic pseudonym Isabine de Myra). Valéry Eymard, a notary in Lyon, was the owner towards the end of the nineteenth century, at the time of the photographs. It does not seem however that they were well cared for; when Maurice Tourneux published his study on Perronneau in the *Gazette des beaux-arts* in 1896, he noted that the portraits, by then in the possession of Valéry's son-in-law, the archivist Francisque Bregnot du Lut, and that "un long abandon dans un grenier leur a été par malheur fort préjudiciable."⁹ The pastels were then sold to the Paris dealer Hector Brame, on 2 July 1903.¹⁰ The following day they were resold, to "Bardac", presumably the banker and collector Sigismond Bardac, on behalf of the



Figure 6

sugar magnate Ernest Cronier. They were separated at the sale after Cronier's suicide, in 1905. (The sale contained important pictures by Fragonard and Chardin, and attracted much attention at the time: "Exposition Cronier où tout Paris se rue", according to Marguerite de Saint-Marceau in her *Journal*, although Gide noted in his *Journal* "Toute cette collection sent un peu le *mignonnaire*.") Gabriel Eymard was acquired by the celebrated expert and dealer Georges Sortais before being acquired by the Dreyfus family. It was then seized by the Germans and only recuperated after the war. Dutilleu is now the property of a Swiss collector. But the pastel of his wife, in her costume de bal, has been lost without trace – for the time being.

Neil Jeffares

⁷ See "Historique du métier Jacquard", *Société impériale d'agriculture de Lyon, Annales*, 1863, VII, pp. 34–56.

⁸ I am grateful to Dr Lesley Miller (private communication, 9 October 2013) for confirming this. Unfortunately no samples manufactured by Eymard are known today. As d'Arnoult notes (*op. cit.*, p. 270), "la qualité de la soie de sa veste rose rebrodée de fleurs bleus, sous un habit gris-bleu, semble emblématique de sa profession."

⁹ However the Fatalot photograph confirms that the pastel of M. Eymard remained undamaged except for some rubbing at the outer edges, while the pendant appears to have had some repainting or retouching in the 1905 photograph (e.g. to the flowers in hair). D'Arnoult suspects that écoinçons similar to those in Dutilleu were removed; but the compositions do not match.

¹⁰ Private communication, Sylvie Brame, 2 July 2007.