EVER SINCE THE APPEARANCE of his collection in the posthumous sale at the Hôtel de Bullion on 3 December 1781 and subsequent days, the Cabinet de M. de Sireul [sic] has been the object of veneration for old master drawings specialists. His special relationship with François Boucher – whose name appears in the first line of the avant-propos to the catalogue – ensured that Sireul not only received “une place entre les Amateurs passionnés & instruits” but would be forever associated with that artist, his cabinet being “le porte-feuille de M. Boucher”. While Boucher was working, Sireul “passoit des heures entieres à voir la toile s’animer sous les crayons heureux de l’Artiste”; after his death, the collector’s devotion became “une passion violante, qu’il satisfaisoit pour ainsi dire aux dépens de sa propre aisance.” His name is recorded as a purchaser in public sales of the time from 1767, and he was still buying until a few months before his death.

All of this is well known, and in almost every book on Boucher or on collecting in the Ancien Régime Sireul’s name will appear, albeit with various spellings. Alastair Laing’s article in Grove and his discussion of Sireul in his catalogue for the 2003 Boucher drawings exhibition have more recently been supplemented by an article by (the aptly christened) Jean-Claude Boyer entitled “Qui était Sireul?” This concentrated on his art criticism and other ephemera but made little advance on the basic biographical details that have been known since 1781: that he had died that year, and had been a valet de chambre du roi. Both articles mention a document acquired in 2002 by the

1 This essay was first published on this site on 11 November 2016, with a version appearing simultaneously as a post on my blog, neiljeffares.wordpress.com. This version has subsequently been expanded. It may be cited as Neil Jeffares, “Jean-Claude-Gaspard Sireul (1713–1781)”, Pastels & pastellists, http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/Sireul.pdf.

2 The collection was first noted in Le Brun’s Almanach historique et raisonné des architectes, peintres &c., 1777, p. 183, where it was described as small. His Largillierre was selected for particular praise, as well as the numerous Boucher drawings which were notably glazed.

3 This first purchase was of copies of Boucher by Marianne de Villebrune from the sale of her brother-in-law, Johann Anton de Peters (26 January 1767, Lot 91 [part]). He also owned a Liotard pastel which he bought at the Vassal de Saint-Hubert sale (29 March 1779 & seq., Lot 252).


Fondation Custodia which was effectively his inventaire après décès; technically it was the “Liquidation des reprises, droits et créances de la Dame Sireul contre la succession de son mari”, and is referred to below as the Liquidation.9

Since its appearance at auction in 1988 a fine pastel7 by Boucher of his friend has been known (reproduced above), but less attention has been given to the Carmontelle drawing of him (see below). All sources continue to print a variety of guesses for his date of birth, usually between 1720 and 1730, and all simply inferred from his appearance in the Boucher pastel (1761), signed on the mount.

The question of his age can be answered very easily, by reference to the État civil reconstitué: Jean-Claude-Gaspard Sireul was born in Paris (rue de l’Arbre-Sec) on 13 February 1713, and baptised at Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois.8 The remaining biographical facts in this note have been assembled from a wide variety of sources including inventaires après décès, registres de clôtures d’inventaires, registres de tutelles and other notarial documents in the Archives nationales as well as parish records for a number of towns.3 They have been found by following Sireul’s links with the network of families of marchand merciers and similar trades, many associated with royal service.

A widespread confusion should be cleared up immediately: the office of valet de chambre du roi did not of itself ennoble the holder – although notable families such as the Bontemps were noble, this was through specific royal warrants.10 Many of the valets de chambre du roi, and similar officers of the Maison du roi, were roturiers, although the valets enjoyed certain fiscal advantages – notably exemption from the droit de franc-fief, the tax that roturiers had to pay if they acquired land that normally belonged to nobles. They also enjoyed the courtesy title of “écuyer”, a suffix which in all other contexts is the clearest indication that the person was noble.11 In Sireul’s case the notarial documents unanimously give him bourgeois status; they are also unanimous in giving him no particle. Boileau’s title page “M. de Sireul” is simply mistaken. His confusion was not unique: in the 1777 Randon de Boisset catalogue, Pierre Rémy wrote “Les anecdotes suivantes nous ont été données par M. de Sireul, ami de M. Randon de Boisset pour server d’Avertissement”. The misspelling was widespread (“Sireul” was a seigneurie held by a noble family to whom Sireul was unrelated).12

8 6 September 1781, before Jean Maupas, notaire à Paris. The document has not been indexed online by the Archives nationales, so its existence was only known through the counterpart acquired by the Fondation Custodia (inv. 2002-A.1171). I am most grateful to Mariëlle de Jonge and Marie-Noëlle Grison of the Fondation Custodia for making it available to me. A transcription by Katie Scott (which I have not seen) is mentioned by Laing (Touraine) provided échevins of Angers in the 16th century and was ennobled in 1715; Cara D. Denison assumes that the sitter in the Carmontelle drawing is the same as the one Sireul drew (reproduced above), but less attention has been given to the Carmontelle drawing of him (see below). All sources continue to print a variety of guesses for his date of birth, usually between 1720 and 1730, and all simply inferred from his appearance in the Boucher pastel (1761), signed on the mount.

9 For details, see Dictionary of pastellists, online, J.173.214.

10 A useful account will be found in Joseph-Nicolas Guyot, Traité des droits…, Paris, 1786–88, t. i, pp. 521f; see also his Répertoire universel et raisonné de jurisprudence civil, Paris, 1784, t. VII, pp. 600f.

11 See Pierre Goubert & Daniel Roche, Les Français et l’Ancien Régime, Paris, 1984, I, p. 116. The phrase “noble homme” in documents had become heavily debased by the modern era, so that (for those nobles who were not chevaliers or held higher titles), “écuyer” was the magic indicator of noble status. As Arlette Jouanna put it (La Dernier de révolte, Paris, 1989, p. 26), to join the nobility required nothing more than “persuader les notaires chez qui on passait des actes d’y inscrire l’épithète écuyer.”

12 The frequency of the erroneous spelling, for example in Sireul’s own publications, suggests that at least be did not object to such a confusion. There is no connection with Jean Jarlan de Sireuil (1749– ), an officier in the garde du corps du roi (compagnie de Noailles) from 1768 (he came from a noble family in the Périgord); nor with the Breton family of Charbonnier de Sireul. The family de Sireuil de Montaudun from Anjou (Toursaine) provided échevins of Angers in the 16th century and was ennobled in 1715; Cara D. Denison assumes that the sitter in the Carmontelle
Sireul’s father was Jean-Baptiste Sireul, recorded in notarial documents as “officier de garde-robe du duc d’Orléans”. In fact he was tailor to the duc, as appears from an insertion in the *Nouveau Mercure galant* for February 1715 (pp. 298f) under the curious heading “Autre Avis, dont l’usage me paroist assez impracticable” –

Le Sieur Sireul, Valet de Chambre Tailleur de S. A R. Monseigneur le Duc d’Orléans & de Monseigneur le Duc de Chartres, juge à propos de vous apprendre qu’il est l’Auteur des habits éblouissants de richesses & de diamants que leurs Altesses Royales ont porté le jour de l’Audience de l’Ambassadeur de Perse à Versailles. Il devrait ajouter à cet avis, qu’il en fait de pareils à juste prix, & vous donner son adresse.

The spectacular reception of Mehmet Riza Beg by Louis XIV on 19 February is commemorated in pictures and in the writings of Montesquieu and Saint-Simon. The king’s outfit was covered in diamonds to a value of 12½ million livres, while the duc d’Orléans wore, according to Saint-Simon, “un habit de velours bleu brodé en mosaïque, tout chamarré de perles et de diamants, qui remporta le prix de la parure et du bon goût”. Saint-Simon also tells us that Coypel was placed near the throne to record the ceremony, but the picture of which there is a version at Versailles seems neither to confirm the description of the outfits nor to be by Coypel:

The ambassador stayed with Alexandre Bontemps, premier valet de chambre du roi, during his visit.

Jean-Baptiste Sireul died in 1720, survived by his widow, Jeanne-Françoise Landot (–1742). Her family were linked to marchands épiciers and marchands merciers such as the Cochin and Paris families (not to be confused with the homonyms in art and finance). (Thus, for example, Sireul was connected to another famous collector, Jean-Denis Lempereur, who married a Cochin.15) A tuteur, or guardian, was appointed to look after Jean-Claude-Gaspard’s interests: he was Martin Thieriot (1698–1770), marchand drapier, rue Vieille du Temple, another figure occupying the grey area of luxury goods. His younger brother Pierre Thieriot (1701–1777) was a conseiller du roi, contrôleur honoraire des rentes, while his elder brother Claude-Nicolas Thieriot (c.1697–1772) was the portrait discussed below (exhibition catalogue *Fantasy and reality: drawings from the Sunny Crawford von Bülow collection*, Pierpont Morgan Library, 1995–96) belonged to this family (did this suggestion come from Cailleux or de Bays er, from whom the Morgan acquired the portrait in 1978?), while acknowledging that she was “likely the wife of the collector” of Boucher. The unacknowledged source is Jougla de Morenas (t. VI, p. 229).

14 MV 5461; there are versions in Krakow and Saintes. It is rejected in Nicole Garnier’s catalogue raisonné.
15 Lempereur appeared among the relatives as witness at the marriage of Pierre Boulanger and Jeanne Paris, 10 June 1731 (AN Mc/XXXIX/342).
impecunious writer and friend of Voltaire. Voltaire’s lengthy correspondence\textsuperscript{16} in 1754 concerning the inadequacies of Sireul’s libretto (adapting a poem of Voltaire for the composer Pancrace Royer) is mentioned in Boyer’s 2010 article, but it seems that neither Boyer nor \textit{(in his 3 December 1754 letter to Thieriot)} Voltaire were aware of Sireul’s previous connection to Thieriot’s brother – although the change in tone in Voltaire’s 19 December 1754 letter suggests that Thieriot had revealed his acquaintance. By 25 January 1755, Royer’s death had resolved the impasse, and Voltaire was able to write more generously of Sireul: “C’est un honnête homme, doux et modeste; de quoi s’avise-t-il d’aller se fourrer dans cette bagare?”

The date of Sireul’s appointment as valet de chambre du roi remains unknown\textsuperscript{17} (Voltaire contemptuously called him a “porte-manteau du roi”, a somewhat lower rank in the royal household). It was the premier valet de chambre (confusingly there were four, serving by quarter) who slept at the foot of the king’s bed. Putting up foreign ambassadors was probably not a duty for the valets ordinaires (32 in all, eight serving at a time), but in addition to dressing the king they were expected to have a complete understanding of royal protocol such as who could sit where and on what type of chair: all the minutiae that any reader of Saint-Simon will relish. There were also a number of lesser officers of the Maison du roi, such as perruquiers, tapissiers and even horlogers, who could preface their trade with the phrase “valet de chambre” (as also in the d’Orléans household, where Sireul’s father had been “valet de chambre-tailleur”). A long tradition of royal valets de chambre included draughtsmen such as Jean Perréal, Pierre Dumonstier and Antoine Benoist.

Nor do we know when or why Sireul resigned his charge, except that it must have been after his marriage, in 1742 (see below), but before January 1749, when he published some (not very inspired) verses in the \textit{Mercure} addressed to the future Premier peintre, Jean-Baptise-Marie Pierre, under the signature (at least it was printed thus) “Par M. Sireüil, ancien Valet-de-Chambre du Roi.” The publication of a few more verses (describing Van Loo’s portrait of the king in armour) in the \textit{Mercure} for June 1749 was sufficient to merit his inclusion in the reports of authors by the police inspector Joseph d’Hémery\textsuperscript{18}, whose description of the former valet was “grand, brun et bien fait”, adding that he was the husband of Mme “Sireuil” for whom he had a separate file (see below).

As noted above, Sireul was married in 1742, the contract\textsuperscript{19} making the usual provisions under the Paris customs for communauté des biens for the respective dowries of 10,000 livres from each party, the surplus to remain the property of the party providing it. Sireul’s assets included his charge of valet de chambre du roi.\textsuperscript{20} His wife had the expectations of her own family inheritance and 1200 livres of rents. She was Gabrielle-Louise Hamart, born in Paris, where she was baptised at Saint-Eustache on 12 October 1715. Her name too was frequently misspelt: Louise took the curious step of issuing a notarial document\textsuperscript{21} confirming her correct names and attaching a certified copy of her baptismal entry.

Louise’s brother Gabriel Hamart (1708–1786) was receveur général des aides à Pontoise, while their parents were a marchand, also called Gabriel Hamart, and Marie Denos, daughter of a 

\textsuperscript{16} Most easily consulted on the Electronic Enlightenment website.

\textsuperscript{17} The copy of his baptismal record in the État civil reconstruit was prepared on 18 November 1731; it is possible that it was required in connection with his appointment. It in turn was annexed to a “notoriété justifiant les noms de Jean Claude Gaspard Sireul” passed before François-Pierre Fournier (AN MC/XLI), 26 April 1779.


\textsuperscript{19} Passed before Lecourt, 4 March 1742, as cited in the Léquation.

\textsuperscript{20} There is limited evidence for the value of this asset, but an indication may be the 21,500 livres paid for Jean-Philippe Rameau’s son Claude-François to acquire the charge from Louis Tréheux in 1754 (Lionel de La Laurencie, “Quelques documents sur Jean-Philippe Rameau et sa famille”, \textit{Le Mercure monumental}, iii, 15 June 1907, p. 594).

\textsuperscript{21} On 21 January 1783 (AN MC/LXV/461).
marchand maître tailleur d’habits à Paris. The Hamarts were surely related to the family of senior servants in the Orléans household. Louise’s great-great-grandfather was probably Jean Hamart, contrôleur général de la maison et argenterie de la duchesse d’Orléans, while his wife and sisters were femmes de chambre to Henriette d’Angleterre and to the subsequent duchesses d’Orléans. A footnote in the Correspondence de Bossuet\(^{22}\) relates how Marie-Madeleine Hamart married the baron de Busca, whom she had assisted to flee following a gaming dispute; but she died on 27 March 1711 not in Versailles as the editors have, but in Triel-sur-Seine. There her unmarried sister was supérieure de la communauté des orphelines established by the duchesse d’Orléans.

One of Louise’s uncles, Jacques Hamart (1681–1767), was for 45 years curé of Toussus-le-Noble. Sireul attended his funeral in 1767, signing the register (as Sireul) where he was recorded as “Jean Claude Gaspard Sireul ancien valet de chambre du roy, son neveu, bourgeois de Paris”.

Mme Sireul was the subject also of a portrait\(^{23}\) by Boucher which (unlike the pastel of her husband or the Carmontelles below) was included in the posthumous sale, where it was given an extensive description:\(^{24}\)

\[
47. \text{Le portrait de Madame de * * * en petit & vu de face. Elle est représentée coiffée en cheveux & en habit de Bergere, ayant le bras droit passé dans une corbeille de fleurs. Le fond du tableau offre un paysage.}
\]

\[
\text{Ce Morceau précieux & agréable réunit tous les charmes d’une composition heureuse & d’un pinceau le plus délicat. La plupart des Amateurs n’ignorent pas que ce fut un hommage de l’amitié de M. Boucher pour M. de Sireul. Hauteur 14 pouces, largeur 12 pouces}
\]

This was withdrawn at 215 livres (or noted pour mémoire).\(^{25}\) The description is sufficiently precise to leave no doubt that it relates to an oil, signed and dated 1754 (lower left) and subsequently in the collection of Gabriel Cognaq.\(^{26}\)


\(^{23}\) Because of the possibility that it was a pastel, there is an entry in the Dictionary, J.173.219.

\(^{24}\) The name Sireul is added to the * * * in an annotation to the copy of the sale catalogue in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

\(^{25}\) The copies in the Met and the INHA have slightly different annotations.

\(^{26}\) It was Lot 10 in his posthumous sale, Paris, Galerie Charpentier, 14 May 1952, described only as “la jolie jardinière”.
The photograph is too poor to judge whether it is the original, or whether it is a copy of Lot 47 (which, although placed in the pastels section among the Boucher drawings, is not specifically described as a pastel). Ananoff & Wildenstein\(^{27}\) (1976, no. 427) note a related sanguine counterproof (sold 8 November 1924, as of Mme de Pompadour), while a copy in miniature was offered in London, Phillips, 17 April 2000, Lot 48 (reproduced), accompanied by a free interpretation of the Boucher pastel of Sireul on the reverse (not reproduced).\(^{28}\) Alastair Laing discusses\(^{29}\) the matter at length, and concludes that lot 47 was probably a pastel of which the Cognacq painting was a version; in support of this he argues that the background of the canvas is too perfunctory to be described as a landscape. My view is that it would be very unusual to have a more developed landscape in a pastel than in an oil version (particularly in a work on this scale); there is no contemporary record of (or obvious explanation for) the existence of a second version; the word pastel is omitted in the specific description of this lot; and the very small size of the oil, 36x28 cm\(^{30}\) and its domestic character may simply have induced the auctioneer to include it in the “wrong” section. The description in the Liquidation introduces a further confusion:

A l’égard d’un portrait dessin du même F[rançois] Boucher représentant le portrait de lad. D[ame] Sireul et d’un tableau au pastel représentant celui dudit feu sieur son mari, il n’en est point fait de prise comme portrait de famille et le premier article est seulement tiré pour mémoire

The difference in the terminology reinforces the suggestion that Lot 47 was not in pastel (and also implies that the pastel of Sireul himself was not part of the estate at all). While it might logically be possible that the portrait of Mme Sireul was a “dessin” (in chalk? a study for the oil?) rather than an

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\(^{27}\) Alexandre Ananoff & Daniel Wildenstein, *Catalogue raisonné de l’œuvre peint de François Boucher*, Paris, 1976, with a poorer reproduction than the 1952 sale catalogue; it is also reproduced (as no. 448) in the same authors’ *L’opera completa di Boucher*, Milan, 1980.

\(^{28}\) I am most grateful to Alastair Laing for drawing this to my attention. The miniatures were not identified in the sale. Their coupling does not of course imply that the Boucher portraits were pendants, as the compositional differences and dates in any case exclude.

\(^{29}\) In *The drawings of François Boucher* exhibition catalogue, cited in note 2 above, p. 240.

\(^{30}\) A&W, close enough to the 14x12 (imperial) pouces size in the 1781 catalogue, equivalent to 38x32 cm.
oil, this is most likely an incorrect reading of the phrase which merely identifies the author as Boucher (consistent with Lot 47’s mention of “pinceau”, an equally treacherous term). But unless the date on the canvas is disputed, Lot 47 cannot have been a pendant to the pastel of Sireul, and was made some seven years before.

There is a further puzzle concerning the previous lot, no. 46. The copy of the Sireul catalogue in the Metropolitan Museum of Art has a manuscript annotation identifying the sitter as “Mlle Rivière de l’Opéra”, noting the sale price of 21 livres to Charlier; and identifying the source as “19 J” 1778 40# à Sireul”. (Marie Rivière, a dancer at Dresden, Parma and Paris, was known to Casanova, de Sade etc.) The pastel appeared as by Boucher in the Blondel de Gagny sale, 10 December 1776 & seq., Lot 375. (Hébert records it in 1766, again as by Boucher.) But another manuscript annotation (this time on the Bibliothèque d’INHA copy of the Blondel de Gagny catalogue) tells us that this is “une de ses [i.e. Blondel’s] maitresses peinte par Merelle et retouchée [par Boucher]”. The purchaser is given as Le Brun (other copies have Quésnel), and this pastel was probably that sold in Paris, Chariot, Lerouge, 19 janvier 1778 & seq., Lot 119, 40 livres. So the annotations are all consistent, and suggest that Merelle was the principal author of one of the more valuable pictures catalogued as by Boucher in the Sireul collection.

The Sireul couple’s only recorded child, Denis, was born in Paris, rue l’Eveque, on 12 August 1749. At his baptism the following day at Saint-Roeh, his father was described as “ecuier, ancient valet de chambre du roy”. The marrain was Louise’s mother, née Marie Dunos, while the parrain was Jean-Denis Paris (1701–1759), son of Denis Paris (1680–1761), marchand épicier, and Angélique Lando, Jean-Claude-Gaspard’s aunt.

Louise Sireul was evidently a lady of determined character, whether from the wording of her notarial documents, or from the description of her provided by the brilliant lawyer Louis-Eugène Hardouin de La Reynerie who represented the poet Lebrun-Pindare in his divorce action. Ponce-Denis Écouchard Lebrun, dit Lebrun-Pindare (1729–1807), was secrétaire des commandements du prince de Conti (a position not unlike Sireul’s), and in 1759 had married a Marie-Anne de Surcoût. She had an affair with a certain Justinien-Victor Grimod de La Loube, intéressé dans les affaires du roi, and the proceedings depended on how conflicting accounts of events in 1774 were to be weighed up. The Sireuls were on the poet’s side, and Hardouin (who had quite a difficult case, since Lebrun’s own mother and sister sided with the wife’s allegations of cruelty) drew on the testimony of Sireul and his wife (“mais celle-ci surtout”), arguing that—

La dame de Sireuil, par son âge, par ses qualités personnelles, par la considération générale dont elle jouit, est trop supérieure à des inculpations de ce genre pour qu’il soit besoin de l’en justifier.

A rather different picture of the younger Mme Sireul emerges however from the secret contemporary reports sent to the lieutenant of police Nicolas-René Berrry. Thus in a letter of 10 February 1751, we learn that the “dame Sireuil” was “environ 28 ans, assez jolie, de l’esprit, et fait des vers” and that she was the mistress of the chevalier Clément-Ignace de Rességuier (1724–1797), who had just been arrested: indeed “il avait même couché avec elle la veille.” He had met her at one of M. Titon’s dinners, through the abbé Raynal, “ami du chevalier et fort lié avec cette dame.” Rességuier was the target of police interest because of his libellous verses against Mme de

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31 État civil reconstitué.
32 See also the reference in the Liquidation cited in a footnote below recording the gratuity of 3000 livres for her success in an unexplained matter.
33 His lengthy speech, “Mémoire pour Lebrun…”, was included in the selection of famous pleadings Annales du barreau français, Paris, 1824, t. v: see pp. 518ff & passim.
34 Only the name Grimod is given in Hardouin’s speech; and as he was an amateur artist (his portrait, and those he commissioned from the miniaturist Pierre Le Sage, played a role in the proceedings), it is tempting to identify him as the amateur artist Laurent Grimod de La Reynière, but a closer reading of the text corrects this.
35 See François Ravaisson, Archives de la Bastille, Paris, 1881, pp. 356f, 413f. The report was evidently the source of the entry in Joseph d’Hémeny’s report immediately following that of her husband (v. supra).
Pompadour which resulted in his incarceration in the Bastille and then the château d’If. By 1754 he had been released to exile in Malta (he was a chevalier de Malte and would later become général des galères de l’ordre); agents reported on his efforts to recover certain letters he had written to Mme Sireul, “femme mariée qui fait des vers” (in the context this was not necessarily a compliment). “J’ai appris”, the agent continued, que M. Sireul son mari est gentilhomme ordinaire chez le Roi, fils d’un riche tailleur, et que Mme Sireul peut avoir 25 à 26 ans, qu’elle a été très jolie et très piquante. Elle est à présent affligée d’une dartre à la partie secrète.

This is perhaps more than we wanted to know (it is curious that the agent had such an intimate knowledge of her medical condition, but underestimated her age by 13 years), but her frequenting the famous salon of Évrard Titon du Tillet and her close connection to Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, editor of the Correspondance littéraire, provide fascinating clues to her social life. Titon’s personal conduct was notorious, and according to Barbier led to his resignation from the Grand’Chambre, since “il vit dans une petite maison sur le rempart dans une débauche publique avec des filles qui sont tous les jours à sa table, ce qui ne convient pas à un magistrat”.36

How well had Sireul himself known these major figures? Did Titon du Tillet, author of Le Parnasse français and himself the subject of a portrait by Largillierre, know Sireul’s Largillierre, of Jean de La Fontaine,37 the work in his collection singled out for praise in Lebrun’s Almanach of 1777? By the time of the liquidation, however, the attribution had been revised to Rigaud, and the valuation a mere 30 livres.38 Unlike most of the lots in the sale, however, this exceeded expectations, reaching 130 livres.

We can only speculate whether Louise’s behaviour caused, or was a response to, the long hours her husband spent in Boucher’s studio (the extremely pretty Mme Boucher was her almost exact contemporary), or whether a sense of guilt caused her to testify so clearly in favour of another cuckold, Lebrun-Pindare. Was the unusual commentary added to Lot 47 a hint that the portrait, made in 1754, marked some sort of rapprochement between the Sireuls?

With connections to the Orléans household through his own family as well as his wife’s, it is unsurprising that the Sireul couple were the subject of portraits39 by Carmontelle (shown below). His is inscribed40 “en voyant mon portrait, souvenez vous d’un Pere qui vous aime”; their son Denis must have been the dedicatee (the picture did not appear in the 1781 sale or liquidation, perhaps because it already have belonged to Denis). The second Carmontelle, of Mme Sireul, is now in the Morgan Library.41 Evidently it shows a much older lady than the Boucher portrait, but once again in a landscape setting.

37 Was it the picture from the collection of the comte et comtesse de Niel sold recently by Christie’s (Paris, 16 April 2012, Lot 46), now in a private collection, or that now in Versailles (MV 5749), both oval? The size in the 1781 catalogue, 65x54 cm, is significantly smaller than either.
38 Sireul’s picture is not mentioned in Ariane James-Sarazin’s Hyacinthe Rigaud: catalogue raisonné, 2016, nor in Stéphan Perreau’s concise catalogue (online version, consulted 21.1.2017); the identification of the “M. de La Fontaine” P.496 is uncertain, although three répliques are listed.
39 This was with the Galerie André Weil. It appeared at auction, Galerie Bassenge, Berlin-Grunewald, 27 May 2016, Lot 6586. It was with Galere André Weil in Paris, in the Carmontelle exhibition, 14–28 November 1933, no. 54, as “Monseur de Sireuil”, “Madame de Sireuil” being no. 31. It and its pendant were in the Collection Albert Meyer, nos. 19, 20 (Seymour de Ricci, 1935), and were sold as successive lots at Sotheby’s, 23 March 1972, Lot 73, 72. They do not appear in Gruyer’s comprehensive account of the collections at Chantilly, nor in Laurence Chatel de Brancion’s more recent monograph on Carmontelle.
40 Curiously Boyer cites this inscription as attached to the Boucher pastel, I think erroneously, and does not otherwise mention the Carmontelle.
41 Inv. 1992.3. Again it is identified in the catalogue simply as of “Mme de Sireuil in a landscape”. The drawing was not annotated, and it and its companion were identified only by apparently belonging to the Sireul family until the twentieth century. See the note above for the entry in the Morgan exhibition catalogue in 1995.
These portraits must date to around the same period when Sireul was involved with a *Compagnie pour la réception des rentes à Paris*. The original idea, floated by Silhouette in 1760, was to create some 60 new receveurs des rentes, but this was vigorously opposed by the Parlement de Paris. The story is confused by the existence of several rival operations and by a succession of royal decrees concerning the monopolies required. The purpose was to convert rental streams which were in arrears or in default into guaranteed payments. A certain Jean-Bernard Basset issued various notices, for example in *L’Année littéraire*, 1760, pp. 60ff, describing the project, which had a capital of 500,000 livres (the phrase “recette des rentes” replaced the “reception” of the printed prospectus). Although not one of the five founder syndics (among whom the most important seems to have been Jacques-Sébastien Prépaud, a Maltese financier supported by the Choiseul family and who died bankrupt after the fall of Choiseul), by 1767 Sireul was one of the eleven associates behind the short-lived enterprise which appeared for several years in the *Almanach royal*; the circumstances were described in a letter to “M. le Chancelier” written in 1769 by Mme Sireul, inexplicably described as the widow of Sireul.42 (One wonders whether this adventure was more inimical to “sa propre aisance” than his collecting habit.)

In fact Sireul died43 on 17 August 1781, in the rue l’Evêque, butte Saint-Roch, the same address as had appeared in the *Almanach historique*. It was probably the same house, and certainly very close to, that described in the 1751 police report: “rue des Moulins, la première porte cochère à droite, par la rue des Moineaux”. These directions can be followed in Lattré’s street plan of 1775:

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43 *Journal de Paris*, 19 August 1781, p. 932. The exact day is given in the 1781 partage des biens.
The locality, with its modest houses frequented by doctors, writers and other professionals, was probably not much changed from that depicted by Étienne Bouhot in a painting of “Le magasin de l’orfèvrerie de Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot” exhibited in the Salon de 1822, no. 146 (below), or from the photographs taken in the 1860s. (It was demolished later in the nineteenth century to make way for the Avenue de l’Opéra.) From the Liquidation we know that the Sireul’s apartment consisted only of several rooms: the salon, looking out over the rue l’Evêque (could this even be the room with a figure at the balcony over Odiot’s sign?), a dining room, kitchen and bedrooms (for M. and Mme Sireul and for her femme de chambre), all on the second floor of the building, while a domestique had a room on the fourth floor.

Immediately after Sireul’s death, no inventaire après décès was prepared, to save costs. But three weeks later a formal valuation did take place – as set out in the Liquidation (and as envisaged by the 1742 marriage contract) – enabling a division of assets between the parties, Louise and her son

44 Including writers from Voltaire to Piron: “Ce qui primait tout à la Butte, c’était la philosophie encyclopédique” according to Edouard Fournier, Histoire de la Butte des Moulins…, Paris, 1877, p. 132 & passim.

45 The picture appeared at auction on 8 June 2016 (Cheverny, Rouillac); it was with Galerie Neuse in 2016.
Denis. This included an inventory of the household goods (amounting to 5094 livres 8 sols 1 denier) as well as a list of his collection (valued at 14,128 livres) prepared by Boileau, which corresponds broadly with the sale catalogue. Louise exercised her right under the marriage contract to reclaim assets she had contributed (mainly from various legacies) amounting to some 70,600 livres; this she then waived in favour of her son against his undertaking to pay her a smaller capital sum of 40,000 livres and an annual amount of 1200 livres representing her dowry. The arrangements seem to have been amicable, as Denis waived the need for documentation of the sources of assets which Louise was unable to provide, “l’union intime qui a toujours régné entre elle, son mari et son fils, lui ayant fait négliger passer par devant notaires les actes au soutien de ces différentes reprises.”

Perhaps it should not surprise us that the inventaire listed Sireul’s clothing in some detail:

Quatre habits de velours doublés en satin, dont deux de couleurs et deux noirs, deux vestes et deux culottes de velours de couleur ciselé ; une veste de satin jaune brodée en argent, une autre de satin cramoisy brodé en or et soye, deux culottes de velours noir, un habit une veste et une culotte de drap noir, un habit, une veste et une culotte râtine d’Holland mordoré doublé de velours noir, un habit de velours mordoré de printems veste et culotte pareilles ornées de boutons d’or en fil, un vieux habit, la veste et la culotte de tricot de filosel, un habit, veste et culotte de drap gris de fer, usé avec un petit bord d’argent, un vieux habit de petits draps rayé bleu et gris, veste pareille, un habit, sa veste et sa culotte de gourgourea noisette doublé de soye blanche, un autre habit de soye pur, veste et culotte pareille, un habit veste et culotte de camelot gris usé, un habit de moire noisette, la veste et la culotte pareille, un habit, veste et culotte de voile noir, une robe et sa veste pour la chambre en vieux satin et fleures, une robe et veste d’Indienne pour l’été.

These alone were valued at 400 livres, with further amounts for his linen, shoes, hats, wigs etc. (It is curious that the two surviving portraits show him in relatively subdued outfits.) In contrast Louise’s dresses were worth only 120 livres. No books were noted.

After Sireul’s death Louise moved to Saint-Denis to be with their son Denis. By a curious irony the notarial document in which Louise so emphatically corrected the spelling of her own name referred to her recently deceased husband as a “bourgeois de Saint-Denis”, but that description applied to her son (and by then to herself). It was Denis, rather than Louise, who attended the rather lavish funeral in Pontoise of her brother Gabriel in 1786.

By the time of his death in 1799, Denis (described simply as a rentier) had moved back to Paris (where he died in the 9th arrondissement; his mother died the following year, also in Paris, but in the 12th). We can however confirm that he resided in Saint-Denis from the entry in the register of the church of Saint-Martin where, on 18 December 1781 (just a few days after his father’s sale), he married the 29-year-old Thérèse-Guillemette Kermorvant (1752–1830). Her story is as complicated and obscure as Sireul’s: she was the illegitimate daughter of a Jacobite soldier, Richard Fermor of Tusmore, capitaine au régiment de Lally, conceived while he was serving at Port-Louis in Brittany.48

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46 Some of the attributions were changed (for example a portrait of Largilliere by Tournieres in the Liquidation became a self-portrait of the former in the sale). The values however were rather optimistic compared with the prices realised in the sale: two landscapes by Van Goyen valued at 240 livres achieved 100, and others performed similarly.

47 Among these was 1000 livres from her uncle, Jacques Hamart, mentioned above; 6000 from her parents; and 11,400 livres from her aunt, Mlle Desnos. À M. Daubigny left her 2000 livres, while a M. Delafreté, of Montauban, left 3000 livres. “Trois mille livres pour le pot de vin donné à lad. De Sireul pour la réussite d’une affaire dont a connaissance lad. sieur Sireul” only invites speculation (were any of these payments the result of her amours?); as does an unexplained sum of 6000 livres was given to Mme Sireul by an unspecified person; with it she bought an annuity for her son. 9000 livres were with the prince de Guéméné, and presumably lost in his celebrated bankruptcy the year after the liquidation.

48 Richard Fermor (1721–1758) is omitted from most accounts of the Tusmore family, but his 1758 will (proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 11 March 1758; PROB 11/842) provides the necessary ingredients to reconstruct this lengthy story (it is helpful to know that the Breton letter-prefix K for Ker- has been misread as Ux- in the PCC register). He left the future Mme Sireul £400 in trust. She died in Saint-Denis, Grand rue Saint-Marcel, no. 3, and was described on her death certificate as a “rentière.”
Their son, Denis-Gabriel Sireul, was born a year later: his baptismal entry, while largely obliterated (Saint-Denis, église Saint-Martin, 22 December 1782), nevertheless has the clear instruction: “Sireul sans i à la fin”.

APPENDIX

The inventory of Sireul’s pictures extracted from the Liquidation of 6 September 1781.

Un autre dessin du même maitre au crayon de mine de plomb et pierre noire rehausssé de blanc, comprenant la représentation de l’adoration des Bergers, un autre petit dessin du même au Bistré, composition de deux fins aussi tous deux montés sous verre et bordure dorée, prisés ensemble la somme de Deux cent livres cy 200

Trois petits dessins études d’Adrien Van Ostave dont un de quatre figures, un petit paysage dessin de Paul Potter représentant une Vache, trois gouaches paysage de perignon et de Machy prisés ensemble Cent huit livres et aussi montés sous glace et Bordures dorées cy 96

Un tableau à l’huile et sur toile par F. Fragonard copie d’après F. Boucher représentant héraclès et Omphale prisé quinze livres cy 15

Un tableau à l’huile et sur toile par François Porbus représentant Henri quatre nud jusqu’à mi corps prisé douze livres cy 12

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49 He became a lieutenant in the douanes royales, and married, in 1827 in Cagnes-sur-Mer, an Eugénie-Apollonie Davin. Their son Joseph-Hippolyte was baptised there in 1828, and Paul-Victor elsewhere in 1835. The latter’s daughter Léontine-Appoline-Clara (1865– ) married twice, to MM. Renart and Desmonceau. But there are no records detailing the family member from whom André Weil acquired the Carmontelles, nor has it been possible to trace back the vendors of the Boucher portraits before they emerged on the art market in the early twentieth century.

50 See note 6 above. Original orthography is preserved as far as possible (capitalisation is sometimes indeterminate). Page breaks and subtotals omitted. <> delimit interpolations or illegible text where the document has been damaged. Prices are in livres.
À l'égard d'un portrait dessin du même fois Boucher représentant le portrait de lad. De Sireul et d'un tableau au pastel représentant celui dudit feu Sicur son mari, il n'en est point fait de prisée comme portrait de famille et le premier article est seulement tiré pour mémoire ci:

**Mémoire**

Dans un petit Cabinet entre la pièce cydevant dite et le Salon

Vingt Cinq autres dessins de différentes formes et grandeurs représentant différents sujets et composition d'histoire et de fable aux crayons blancs, noirs et rouges, tous montés sous glaces et bordures dorées, prisés ensemble quinze Cent Livres cy 1500

Trois autres dessins, têtes de femme dont une au Crayon Rouge, une autre plus petite au crayon noir et blanc, deux autres études pareilles, deux petites études de Bergers, une étude d'enfant, le tout par le même Maître, et aussi monté sous verre et Bordures dorées prisés ensemble cent quatre vingt livres cy 180

Un tableau dessus de porte peint à l'huile et sur toile représentant trois enfants, dans sa bordure de Bois doré, prisé douze livres cy 12

Dans le Salon de Compagnie ensuite ayant même vue

Neuf petit dessins à la mine de plomb dont six forme d'écran sujet de la Campagne, et trois petites compositions, deux études de têtes de femme aux crayons noirs et blancs et pastels, tous aussi par M. Boucher et montés comme cydevant, prisés ensemble Cent vingt huit livres cy 128

Deux Compositions sujet de pastorale au biste montées sous verre et bordures dorées prisées ensemble Deux Cent cinquante livres cy 200

Un Portrait au pastel représentant la tête de Madame De Pompadour aussi par le même maître et monté sous verre et bordure dorée, prisé deux cent Cinquante Livres cy 250

Deux tableaux esquisses de trois figures chacun sujet de fable peints à l'huile et sur toile par le même dans leurs bordures sculptées et dorées prisées 200

<Deux tableaux paysages sujets de pastorales aussi par le même maître dans leurs bordures sculptées et dorées, prisés>ensemble cinquante Cent Livres cy1500

Un autre tableau paysage richement composé par le même maître dans sa bordure dorée prisé six cent livres cy 600

Un autre tableau à l'huile et sur toile par le même maître représentant le sommeil des amours dans sa Bordure dorée prisé quatre cent livres cy 400

Une esquisse grisaille par le même maître représentant un Jeune peintre inspiré par la présence de Venus et de forme ovale, montée sous verre et bordure dorée, prisée Douze livres cy 12

Un grand tableau paysage avec figures et animaux par le même maître, peint en italie dans sa Bordure de Bois doré prisé trois cent livres cy 300

Un autre tableau à l'huile et sur toille représentant Renaud et armide, copie d'après M. Detry par M. Boucher quand il eut son élève dans sa Bordure dorée, prisé dix livres cy 10

Un autre tableau Camayeu dessus de porte esquisse du même maître sujet de femme, prisé dix livres cy 10

Un grand tableau à l'huile et sur toile peint par M. Pierre représentant une dée dans ses fureurs dans sa bordure dorée prisée cent livres cy 100

Un autre grand tableau à l'huile et sur toile par Raoux représentant le portrait de Madme Cartout en nayade dans sa Bordure de Bois sculptée et dorée prisée trois cent livres cy 310

Deux autres tableaux pendans par le même maître peints à l'huile et sur toile représentant l'un l'enlevement de Ganime, l'autre la Surprise de Leda, prisés ensemble douze cent Livres cy 1200

Un tableau à l'huile et sur toile représentant un amour à cheval sur le Sabre de Mars, copie d'après M. Le Brun, dans sa bordure dorée prisé 10

Un tableau à l'huile et sur toile par A. Vandick représentant un portrait de femme, une à mi corps et vetue de noir, dans sa bordure dorée prisé trois cent livres cy 300

Un tableau à l'huile et sur toile représentant l'intérieur de St Pierre de Rome par Bibiaune dans sa bordure dorée prisé cent livres cy 100

Un tableau à l'huile et sur toile représentant un groupe de deux enfants de l'école de Vandick dans sa bordure dorée prisé quarante huit livres cy 48

Deux tableaux pendans paysages au bord des eaux par J. Vangohien à l'huile et sur bois dans leurs Bordures dorées et sculptées, prisés ensemble deux cent quarante livres cy 240

Un tête de femme esquisse attribuée à Raphael à l'huile et sur toille dans sa bordure dorée prisées dix huit livres cy 18

Deux tableaux de Mignard à l'huile et sur toille l'une présentant Ste Cecile et l'autre une tête de Vierge dans leurs bordures dorées prisés ensemble soixante douze livres cy 72

Un tableau à l'huile et sur toile representant M. De Largilière peint par Tournieres dans sa bordure dorée prisé vingt quatre livres cy 24

Un autre tableau à l'huile et sur toile représentant le portrait de la fontaine par M. Rigaux dans sa bordure dorée et sculpté prisé trente livres cy 30

Un tableau à l'huile et sur toile représentant deux pigeons peints par Vanbouk dans sa bordure dorée prisé trente six livres cy 36

Un tableau esquisse à l'huile et sur toile peint par le Lefort représentant un evangeliste dans sa bordure dorée prisé trente six livres cy 36

Un tableau à l'huile et sur bois représentant des animaux par incef dans sa bordure dorée prisée 12
Un tableau esquisse par Carle Maratte représentant une creche à l’huile et sur toile dans sa bordure de bois sculpté et doré prisé trente six livres cy 36

Un petit tableau esquisse par M. Menageot à l’huile et sur toile représentant un sacrifice dans sa bordure dorée prisé six livres cy 6

Deux petits tableaux représentant des fleurs peints à l’huile et sur toile par un flamand dans leurs bordures dorées, prisés douze livres cy 12

Deux petits tableaux pendans à l’huile et sur cuivre représentant des paysages peints par un flamand dans leurs Bordures dorées prisés ensemble soixante douze livres cy 72

Un autre petit tableau à l’huile par M. Delafosse partie de plafond dans sa bordure dorée prisé avec un autre petit tableau esquisse de M. Boucher repitit un sacrifice à l’hymen, prisé ensemble trente six livres cy 36

Dans la piece ensuite servant d’antichambre éclairée sur la Cour

Un tableau à l’huile et sur bois représentant un paysage par Van Kessel avec figures par A. Teniers dans sa bordure dorée prisée neuf livres cy 9

Un tableau esquisse au trait par M. Vanloo représentant une revue des amours prisé vingt quatre livres cy 24

Un petit tableau paysage par M. Boucher à l’huile et sur toile représentant Diaune et calisto dans sa bordure dorée, prisé six livres cy 6

Un tableau à l’huile et sur toile etude de figure d’homme academie par M. Brenet dans sa bordure dorée, prisé six livres cy 6

Un tableau à l’huile et sur toile etude de figure d’homme academie par M. Brenet dans sa bordure dorée, prisé six livres cy 6

Un Buste de femme au pastel par M. Boucher sous verre et bordure dorée, prisé Cent vingt livres cy 200

Deux dessins pendans par Bouchardon au crayon rouge vingt huit etudes de femmes nues, bergers et bergeres, sujets de pastorales et autres têtes de femmes et d’enfans, le tout de différentes grandeurs et aux crayons noirs et blancs par le même peintre prisés ensemble Neuf cent livres et le tout aussi monté sous verre et bordures dorées cy 900

Vingt deux dessins tant grands que petit par le même maitre representant divers compositions, sujet de fable, d’histoire et autres sujets de pastorale et de bergers, le tout aussi monté sous verre et bordures dorées, prisés ensemble douze cent livres cy 1200

Un grand dessin représentant une academie d’homme par Deshayes aux crayons noirs et blancs sous verre et Bordure de Bois unies dorées, prisé dix huit livres cy 18

Deux tableaux grisailles à l’huile par M. Boucher dont deux têtes de femme, et un atelier d’enfans peintres allegoriée sous verre et bordure dorée, prisés dix huit livres cy 18

Deux autres dessins non montés dont un de M. Boucher représentant Mercure et l’autre de perignon représentant un bosquet prisés ensemble Six livres cy 6

Total 14,128#