

La Tour – supplementary essays

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Maurice-Quentin de La Tour

Supplementary essays

A compilation of essays supplementary to the catalogue raisonné of
Maurice-Quentin de La Tour

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Introduction

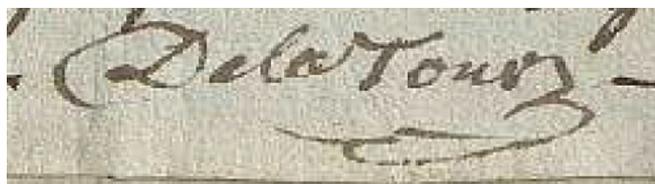
This volume collects together a number of essays I have written about Maurice-Quentin de La Tour which supplement the material integrated more formally into my monograph and catalogue raisonné, *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour*, of which the third complete pdf was issued in August 2022. It and the index page for the La Tour project <http://www.pastellists.com/LaTour.htm> contain links to the online versions of the essays in this volume, but some readers will find a practical convenience in having those articles collected together. The essays are grouped into biographical material, studies of specific La Tour works (arranged in broadly chronological order) and a few articles about associated artists (copyists or suppliers).

To avoid the confusion of yet more editions of the material, these essays have been printed exactly as found in the online sources, apart from minor reformatting and relocation of footnotes. That means that I have not updated older essays consistently, although footnotes and postscripts will usually highlight older material which has been superseded. (The essays have been written over a period of more than twenty years during which a good many discoveries have been made.) Dates of first appearance are indicated under the title of each article. Essays which appear only as posts on my blog have been (where possible) reformatted in double columns; those that appear as essays on the *Pastels & pastellists* website www.pastellists.com retain their original format. In some cases parts of articles are included where the remainder is not relevant to La Tour (e.g. the article on Voltaire's iconography or the errata from the Louvre pastel catalogue). While the essential points in the essays on individual works are précised in the catalogue, the treatment here is more discursive, and space and layout permits the inclusion of comparative illustrations which the catalogue format could not accommodate. Inevitably there is considerable duplication of content with the catalogue raisonné.

Once again, as the volume is made available online in searchable portable document format, no general index has been prepared.

How do you solve a problem like Maurice-Quentin de La Tour?

24 May 2017



Warning: unless you are a lexicographer, copy editor or bibliographer, don't read this post. It has nothing to do with art history (nor for that matter with musical theatre). It may be the most boring post I have ever written. And the answer is given away in the title.

In fact there are two problems – although both have the same solution. They are, in inverse order, how to print the artist's family name; and whether to hyphenate his forenames.

Just to confuse you further, it is the hyphenation problem that is of more general interest, so let me take it first after all. For general purposes, French publishers employ any of the three possible hyphenation conventions: (a) don't hyphenate any forenames (e.g. Jean Baptiste or Maurice Quentin); (b) hyphenate only compound names (Jean-Baptiste, Maurice Quentin); or (c) hyphenate all forenames (Jean-Baptiste, Maurice-Quentin). But which is best?

I'm assuming you all realise (although many older writers seem not to have known) that Quentin is a forename, not the family name (but see below): i.e. his siblings were not called Quentin. It was in fact quite a common forename in Saint-Quentin. Maurice was the name of his parrain at baptism. Thus the names came from different sources; there is no saint Maurice Quentin (well, there is for some of us, but not in the established church). And (although this is the tricky bit) if you knew him intimately, you probably wouldn't have called him Maurice-Quentin at every turn (although we don't in fact have any idea whether his friends called him Maurice or Quentin, as such oral uses were not recorded; and people in those days didn't use forenames the way we do now).

So put simply, he had two forenames, Maurice and Quentin, rather than a compound name (or "prénom composé") of the kind borne by his rival, Jean-Baptiste Perronneau (saint Jean Baptiste was one saint). But what of the third pastellist, Jean-Étienne Liotard? Authorities are split down the middle. When he signs he does so in full, or abbreviates to "J. Etienne" or "J. E.", suggesting that he did not see his names as severable. His twin was "Jean-Michel", and an older brother was simply Jean. Another case is that of the pastellist Jean Pillement, who signs thus, but was actually baptised Jean-Baptiste. While one would never now separate Marie-Antoinette, she was of course baptised Maria Antonia Josefa Johanna.

The fact is that there is no way of determining now which apparently compound eighteenth-century forenames are "composés" or just a series of simple forenames. You can't appeal (as many people assume) to documents in which people signed their name, as this simply reveals how aleatory eighteenth century orthography was: people often signed with just their family name, they almost never used accents; spacing and capitalisation were random, and hyphens never appear even in names like Jean Baptiste or Marie Antoinette. Notaries sometimes did separate names, often with ambiguous marks which look like commas or strokes: e.g. Jacques/Antoine/Marie. But in contemporary printed material, the broad (but not universal) consensus among genealogical tomes (the only area where forenames habitually appear) was to hyphenate all forenames.

What confuses the matter is that France is a country with legislation that we in England would regard as bizarre. In 1803 Napoléon brought in a law restricting parents' choices of names to those of calendar days and those from ancient history (that of course is why prénoms composés became popular), relaxed finally in 1993 (although you still can't have silly names or ones with foreign diacriticals such as ñ). But for prénoms composés laws remain in place that govern their punctuation in legal documents: the parents can choose whether to separate them with a hyphen or a space – but all other forenames are separated by a comma. So for example "Jean-Baptiste, Marie" or "Jean Baptiste, Marie". (But outside these legal documents, the commas are never used, thus undermining the case for following these styles more widely.) Further, prénoms composés can only have two components. So to a modern French person a name like "Jean-Claude-Gaspard Sireul" needs to lose a hyphen (the second invariably chosen because "Jean-Claude" "sounds right", even though [as we have seen](#) Jean and Claude came from different sources). And Marie Antoinette needs one, even though she never had one when she was alive.

These modern rules simply didn't apply in the ancien régime, although there is a growing trend to try to impose them retrospectively. This is in effect the result of one or another category confusion; neither autograph signatures nor modern legislation are of any help here, in what properly is simply a question of a publisher's choice of printing convention.

One would have thought that the matter was settled by bibliographers and lexicographers in the nineteenth century when convention (c) above was almost universally adopted. The *Lexique des règles typographiques en usage à l'Imprimerie nationale* is categorical (3e éd., p. 151):

Les prénoms français ou francisés se lient par des traits d'union.

That, for example, is what you will find in the BnF [Catalogue general](#). The benefits of the rule are obvious: you only have to know which is the family name (which you need to know anyhow – as in Jean-Claude Richard de Saint-Non, where, without the policy, you might think that Richard was a forename; it is not) and there is no further ambiguity.

I can see that convention (a) can at least claim to match holographic evidence, and is just as easy to use as (c). But the continued encroachment of convention (b) is to be deplored, not only because its intellectual justification is based on error, but because it is almost impossible to apply consistently. Any book (not only multi-author exhibition catalogues) that tries to follow it seems invariably to end up with dozens of errors. It requires an iron discipline for copy editors to achieve consistency, and I have rarely seen the task succeed. It cannot in short be recommended for books relating to the eighteenth century.

* * *

Let me now turn to the similarly pointless debate over the proper spelling of La Tour's family name (de La Tour, de Latour, Delatour etc.). You'll all be aware of the basic rules for French proper names: if the particle is separated, you capitalise and alphabetise from the bit containing the definite article (La or Du, but not de). The "de" normally introduces a territory or estate which at some stage has been acquired by a member of the family, and (if noble) is usually assumed as the name, with the family name dropped when their ascent is sufficiently clear (something only peers do in England, although Scotland makes more use of estates, without driving out the family name); this gives rise to some flexibility and a great deal of aspiration which I've discussed before. Thus for example a M. Legendre becomes Legendre de Villemorien, and then signs (as a witness to Perronneau's marriage in this example) simply "De Villemorien". But that doesn't mean that anyone would index him under D. He remains under L until he (or his descendants) might move to V (but never D) if they became really grand. (This all reverses after 1789, with many former aristocrats rapidly closing up the spaces to conceal their status: but that's another story.)

But some names beginning De aren't noble and should be spelled solid (and filed under D) – although the owners may like to pretend. And when roturiers have names that come from places (that they didn't own, but by which they have always been known), there's no right or wrong answer: just convention and usage.

Working out just what contemporary usage was is of course tricky, and raises the same ambiguities as discussed above re hyphenation of forenames. People didn't often write their names in full, nor did their family names normally start sentences: you would write to "M. de Villemorien" without dreaming of a capital D, which only appears when he signs. For the same reason, dozens of examples of La Tour's signature (almost all of which take the form shown above, Dela_Tour, although there are also a few cursive De_la_tour examples) tell you nothing about whether the D should be capitalised or be the point of alphabetisation when the name is given in full or set in twenty-first century type. The

flexibilities of handwriting allowed subtleties such as the linked but discernable gaps between the components, as well as internal capitals which no modern copy editor would tolerate.

And in print (e.g. almanachs or annuaires of the Académie), La Tour appears as "De la Tour" (alongside "De Lagrenée", "De la Joue" and "De Larmessin" although no one is threatening to file them under D), or, as in the salons livrets, as "de la Tour":

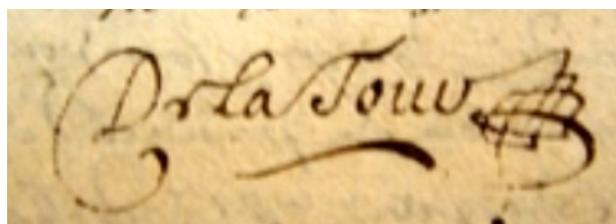
**Par M. DE LA TOUR, Conseiller
de l'Académie.**
**48. Plusieurs Têtes au Pastel sous
le même N^o.**

Among contemporary critics, the overwhelming preponderance was for "de La Tour" or "de la Tour". Even that ultimate snob, La Font de Saint-Yenne, who had a nose for imposture and pretension, consistently uses that form, as in this famous passage:

Je viens aux Pastels, espèce de Peinture excessivement à la mode, & à laquelle le Sieur de la Tour a donné une vogue & un crédit qui semble ne pouvoir pas augmenter, par les prodiges qu'il a enfanté en ce genre. Il est

Indeed he refers in places to "l'ingénieux la Tour", which defeats the idea that the "de" was considered integral at the time. I personally find that "les pastels de La Tour" "sounds right", while "les pastels de Delatour" does not.

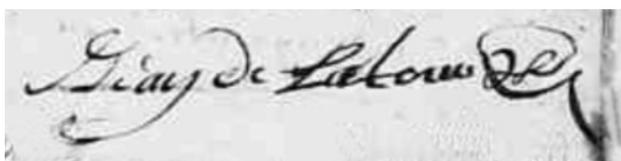
The hunt for the family name in previous generations also fails to justify putting La Tour in his place as peasant. He was of course the son of a writing master, and a progression may be seen in his father's increasingly elaborate penmanship: whether on La Tour's own baptismal entry



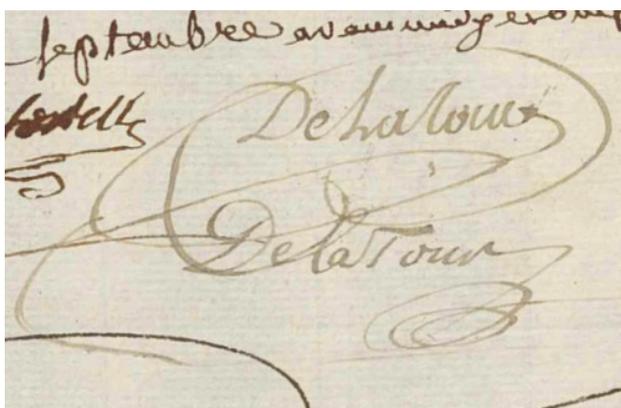
or by the time (1726) of the baptism of the pastellist's half-brother Jean-François:



his father was clearly separating the particle from “La Tour”, as did his own father Jean de La Tour, a maître maçon. Jean’s signature is found in numerous parish registers, usually accompanied by his monogram (which may also be his mason’s mark), JLT in a circle:



The invariant in all of this was some separation (by space or capitalisation) of the Tour or La Tour element; never does the form Delatour appear. This clearly was the view not only of the artist himself, but of his elder brother Charles, whose signature appears above Maurice-Quentin’s in this 1761 document:



But whatever the arguments, they were conducted in full in the nineteenth century when a clear consensus was established in favour of “de La Tour”, indexed under L. That is where you will find him almost everywhere: in the last great catalogue raisonné, B&W (1928), in more recent monographs such as Debie 1991 and Debie & Salmon 2000, as well as the major retrospective La Tour 2004, and in all standard art historical dictionaries, the BnF and Getty ULAN. There would have to be a very good reason to try to overturn such weight.

But I wouldn’t have written this post if there were not some who disagree. A former head of the drawings department at the Louvre felt strongly about the issue, and insisted on labelling his work “Delatour”. At Saint-Quentin the formulation “De La Tour” is in use, the form adopted by Élie Fleury for his 1904 catalogue, but changed to Delatour in the later version co-authored with Gaston Brière. In a footnote they explain that this is to follow the spelling in official documents, while recognising that the artist used a

capital T. Hervé Cabezas followed this too, explaining in a *Revue du Louvre* article (2006) that “De La Tour” allowed him to keep the capital D found in every example of the artist’s signature (but this is the “De Villemerien” argument above).

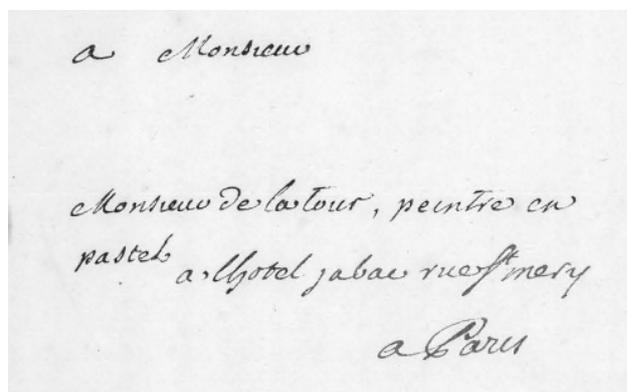
The idea that the commonly accepted form is “wrong” and should be “corrected” springs I think from a similar category error as the hyphenation confusion. It frankly doesn’t matter whether La Tour was or was not entitled to something that might be confused with a noble particle, even if we could work out any basis on which such a debate could be decided. It *does* matter that when you go to a library you get out on the right floor to consult all the books on this artist together, and that you need only take out one volume of the reference works in which he appears. We should challenge authorities when they are wrong factually – to root out error and confusion – not when they have adopted conventions which are now well established when we might have preferred the other choice: that merely sows confusion.

Postscript (February 2018)

This debate was revived by the new introductory note to Christian Michel’s *Académie royale* (2018): see the note at the end of my blog [post](#).

Postscript (November 2018)

Perhaps we should seek Enlightenment from the source. In a 1753 letter to Mme Du Deffand, d’Alembert began a sentence “*Latour a voulu absolument faire mon portrait*”, which excludes “*Delatour*”; while Voltaire sent the artist a letter in 1735 with this envelope (now in the New York Public Library, who kindly provided this scan):



Postscript (January 2020)

One further piece of contemporary evidence: in 1762 La Tour’s friend Jacques-Charles Roettiers, graveur général des Monnaies de France, made a medallion [portrait](#) of the pastellist with his name inscribed around the circumference: MAURICE QUENTIN DE LA TOUR.

Postscript (May 2021)

There is even an article by Elie Fleury in the *Journal de Saint-Quentin*, 27.VII.1897 complaining about the rue Latour on a street sign in Amiens and rehearsing the usual discussion. I should perhaps have added La Tour’s earliest signature, on his 1719 apprenticeship contract, in the form Q. DeLaTour.

Maurice-Quentin de La Tour's family¹

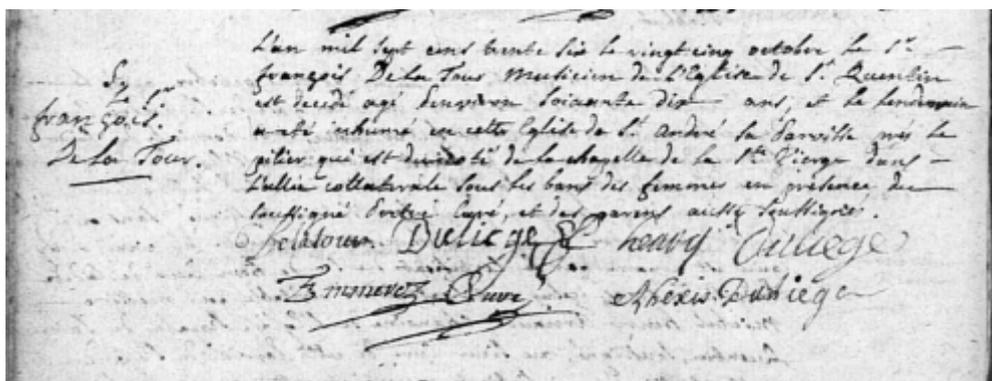
2014

ONE OF THE JOYS OF RESEARCHING a neglected field is how easy it can be to find things that are not already known. But the converse is that we are all inclined to think that the scholars before us have explored to the full the available biographical information about the big names – something which isn't always true.

La Tour, for example, who is so “big” in pastel that the published literature on him alone probably exceeds that on all the other French eighteenth-century pastellists put together, nevertheless has left quite a number of biographical puzzles despite the intensive industry from the early twentieth century pioneers to today. But the assumption that something has already been done always needs to be questioned.

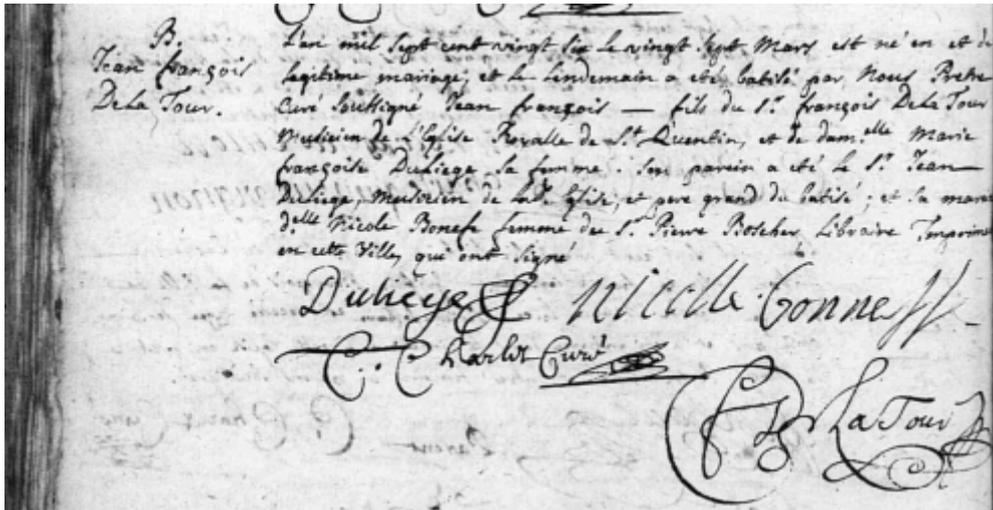
You will find quite a number of new documents on my [chronological table](#), expanding significantly and correcting occasionally the standard work of Georges Wildenstein (“B&W”, 1928). To take a handful surrounding the pastellist's father, François de La Tour, first recorded (in 1694) as a “trompette au régiment des carabiniers de Mgr le duc du Maine”, but later employed as a musician in the Église royale de Saint-Quentin (now the Basilica), a church that preserved a very high musical standard. The celebrated Pierre du Mage, almost François's exact contemporary, was organist there at the time of the pastellist's birth: his [Livre d'orgue](#) gives you some idea of what music must have sounded like in Saint-Quentin.

An error in Maurice Tourneux's 1904 monograph implied that François died in 1731. This got into B&W and has persisted to this day, even appearing in the chronology to Xavier Salmon's 2004 exhibition catalogue. Yet in fact he died five years later (as Christine Debrie knew):



(You'll find transcriptions of all of these documents in my [chronological table](#)) Of more interest perhaps is some detail about his second marriage. Early sources tell us the correct date of birth for La Tour's half-brother Jean-François (although a different year continues to persist), but since the parish is omitted, few have bothered to check the document:

¹ This essay first appeared as four posts on my blog, “Minutiae about Maurice-Quentin de La Tour”, “Maurice-Quentin de La Tour's parents”, “Less about La Tour” and “Maurice-Quentin de La Tour's cousins”, neiljeffares.wordpress.com, the first on 31 December 2014 and the others between 19 and 28 September 2016. It may be cited as Neil Jeffares, “Maurice-Quentin de La Tour's family”, *Pastels & pastellists*, http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTour_Family.pdf and is referred to within the Dictionary as Jeffares 2016j. An important update was issued in 2022.

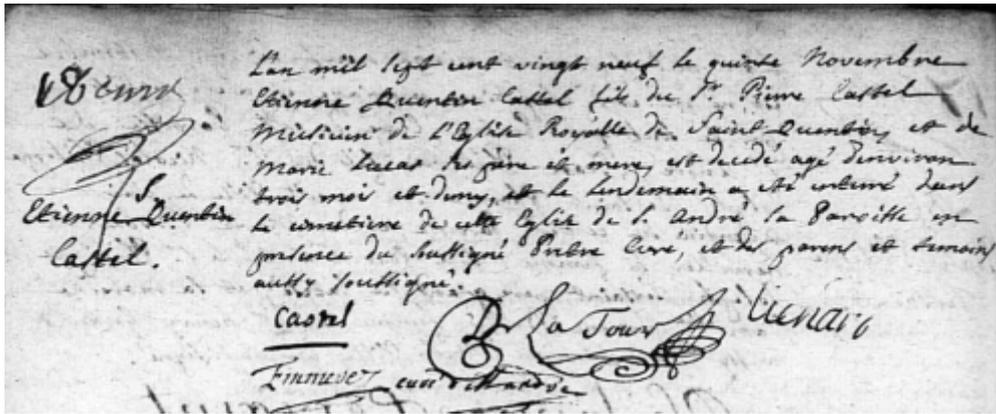


This provides us with an interesting fact which I believe has hitherto lain unreported, namely that Maurice's stepmother was the daughter of one of François's colleagues, another musician at the Église royale de Saint-Quentin. And similarly, although it may have seemed unimportant to previous scholars, there is an unreported third half-brother, Henry-François, who died five days after his birth (1728), as the immediately succeeding entry tells us.



Again details of the choice of godparents all help complete the picture of the household in which the pastellist grew up.

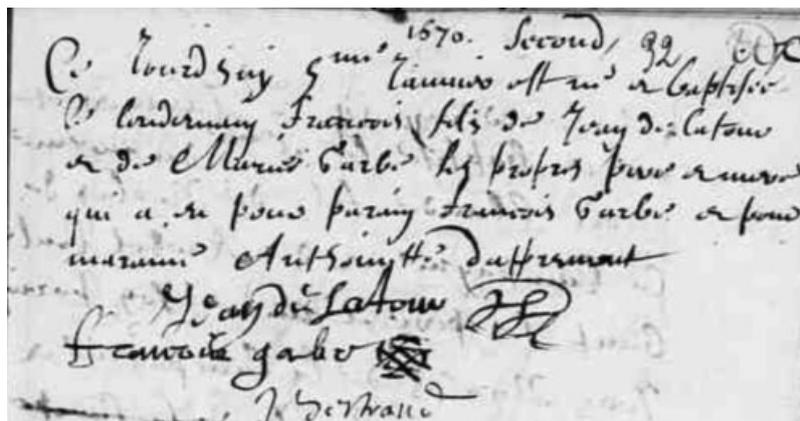
Of course infant mortality was a common problem. Here again is François, signing the register as witness to the death of the son of yet another colleague:



These brutal, apparently unimpassioned documents somehow manage to convey remarkably some of the emotions of those involved, and are tempered by the delight in seeing François's penmanship, and the evolution from the "Delatour" seen in some of the earlier documents to the aspirational "de La Tour" of his final years (not, we note, Maurice's invention, but his father's ambition) – decorated with the flourishes and arabesques that no doubt embellished his musical voluntaries.

NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO I posted the [piece](#) above with some *trouvailles* concerning Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, introducing the [Chronological Table](#) on my website in which I am updating the table that was originally published by Georges Wildenstein and which forms the main structure of the text of Besnard & Wildenstein's 1928 monograph (apart from the catalogue). The format has always struck me as a particularly useful way to present complex, untidy information so that readers can find what they want. I have tried to show the extent of additions to the 1928 edition by printing the original text in Times New Roman and new material in Garamond (you can ignore the typeface quite easily if the progress of scholarship is of no interest).

Several important documents were still missing in 2014. Firstly, although we knew the dates of the birth of La Tour's father François and of his grandfather Jean's marriage to Marie Garbé, these came from Georges Grandin, former conservateur du musée de Laon, who omitted to tell us the parish for these documents or to provide transcriptions with the details that (occasionally) make such research illuminating. As it happens the parish was Saint-Michel, Laon, and you can find these recent additions in my revised table (which also has the dates, document codes etc.). François's baptism (Laon, Saint-Michel, 5 janvier 1670):



Jean de La Tour's marriage to Marie Garbé (Laon, Saint-Michel, 2 février 1669):

marriage of Reine's parents, Louis Havart and Anne Joret, in 1669 (11 novembre), this time in Saint-Martin de Noyon:

Le onzième novembre furent mariés Louis Havart aagé de trente
ans natif de cette ville ayant son père, et Anne Joret
aagée de vingt deux ans natif de la ditte ville ayant père et
mère paroisses Saint martin et ledit Havart de la
paroisse et vicure dudit Noyon ayent un banc proclamé et
dispence de deux autors a. d. die. fr. s. martin. Juy. Gall. s. d.
patroni tr. moingre francois Havart xvi. de la mairie tapissier
Charles Havart frere dudit mari tapissier dit a. s. Quentin.
francois Joret tailleur d'habite xvi. de la mairie et m.
francois Joret xvi. grand de la mairie lesquels ont signé
avec Nour au minut dit present

And for Reine's baptism, in 1673 (5 janvier) at Noyon, Saint-Hilaire:

19
Le dix septiesme Janvier fut baptisé
Reine fille de Louis Havart
et Anne Joret sa femme laquelle
est née le même jour son père
francois Joret la mariee de saum
Le Maire francois Juy
Juzanne de Noyon

From these we can establish a clear picture of Reine's background. Her father's family were tapissiers, while that of her mother, Anne Joret, were tailors. Hence we can see, for example, how Maurice-Quentin was related to the Raphaël Joret, tailleur, described as a cousin in his will, a statement which had mystified us until now (Anne's brother François Joret moved to Beaune and, despite having raised himself to the level of "grammarien, écrivain et arithméticien" married into another family of tailors called Terrion; their son Raphaël stuck to the trade). From Reine's parents' marriage we see that she had an uncle, also a tapissier, who lived in Saint-Quentin. While barely legible, his name is Charles; and he was evidently the godfather of the pastellist's brother Charles, baptised at Saint-Quentin (Saint-Jacques) 14 avril 1702.

All three towns were not far apart (about 50 km) by today's standards, but distant enough for the connection to be possibly significant. Noyon also perhaps provides a clue to another puzzle. The pastellist's own baptismal entry is well known (the Goncourts printed the transcription first provided by

Desmaze; it was reprinted in B&W, and so is in Times Roman print in my table; there is a facsimile in Debrie), but nothing is said about his godparents:

son parrain, M^e Maurice Mégniol; la marraine, Dam^{elle} Marie Meniolle, épouse de noble homme M^r Jean Boutillier l'aîné, ancien mayeur de [Saint-Quentin]

I provided a gloss on Boutillier, a marchand drapier, mayeur en 1682, anobli par lettres patentes de juin 1696; but did not until now make the link with the Maurice Méniolle (c.1685-1761), bourgeois de Noyon who was a member of an influential family with links in both towns.

Another document shows that Reine's sister Anne married just a few months later in 1699; her husband, Joseph Callais, from Aumale, near Rouen, was greffier et receveur de l'évêché et comté de Noyon; their son became receveur général des aides au département de Charly, thus illustrating a pattern of ascension which was not uncommon in the ancien régime.

None of these documents has the significance of say the apprenticeship deed published by François Marandet in 2002, but cumulatively they contribute to a picture of the artist's social situation – and reveal just how far his extraordinary genius took him. But it is I think of interest to learn just how deeply La Tour was connected with the world of tapissiers and tailleurs (just as, [you will recall](#), Perronneau and other pastellists were brought up among perruquiers; the greatest French portraitist of the previous century, Hyacinthe Rigaud, was the son of a tailor): he was surrounded from birth by textiles and patterns in an age when people spent a vast percentage of their means on clothing (and wardrobe items were listed in detail in estate inventories), and this must have influenced his eye.

Some of my transcriptions contain errors for reasons which will be obvious from the images above: I shall of course be grateful for corrections, and also for any further documents which relate to La Tour or his pictures. Actually let me rephrase that: I shall be genuinely pleased to be told of the mistakes in my clumsy attempts to render these documents into something a computer can cope with, and I shall be thrilled if anyone can direct me to what I've missed. There must be invoices and bills and other material out there which I'm not going to come across without your help, and I hope the sight of these examples will make you share my enthusiasm for gathering them together.

* * *

In my last [piece](#) I added a little about La Tour's mother and her background which I hope was of interest. But sometimes it is the duty of the researcher to call into question parts of a story which have been repeated so widely as to seem beyond doubt. Several niggles while I was revising my chronological table seem to fall into that bracket, each perhaps because they seem so plausible but also because you find them in printed books that are nearly a century old – and then in more recent ones by scholars whose thoroughness is otherwise exemplary. And as so often it turns out to be harder to prove a negative, I put these out in the hopes that one of you can provide the missing evidence that will allow me to restore these parts of the conventional narrative. You may however remember my earlier [analysis](#) of how the mythology around La Tour spread from even earlier sources, and I fear we have more trips to London here.

The first point is a very small one about La Tour's father François. In Besnard & Wildenstein's chronology, the section on the first page (B&W p. 27) headed 1596-1704 appears to reprint Georges Grandin's 1894 notice. But silently and unsourced they introduce this sentence, after the correct statement that François was chantre at Saint-Quentin:

L'extrait baptistaire de son fils François le qualifie d'ingénieur-géographe (corps créé en 1696)

Three of his sons were called François, and perhaps there were others (although I have been through most of the parish registers without finding another); but none of these entries indicates his profession as “ingénieur-géographe”. One wonders if there is a confusion with the unrelated Louis Brion de La Tour. This sentence has however been universally repeated, possibly because an interest in cartography demonstrated in his aerial view of Saint-Quentin and his military background would seem plausibly to support the idea.

But what about this military background, even more widely repeated? And no less plausibly given my recent discovery of the fact that he was living in Noyon in 1699 when he married the pastellist’s mother; soldiers were so often stationed in such places. But as far as I can see no document mentions this apart from the evidence first published by Grandin (in the same 1896 article where he misidentifies La Tour’s mother, as discussed in my last post). This document is the record of a law suit taken in the Tribunal civil de Laon in 1694 by one “*Jean-François De La Tour, trompette de la compagnie de Monseigneur le duc du Maine, au régiment des carabiniers*”.

It does not seem to have troubled Grandin (or any subsequent authors who have republished this without question that while de La Tour is rather a common name, nowhere else is the pastellist’s father given the forename Jean: he is everywhere simply François – including on his 5 January 1670 baptismal register entry. (You will of course find this and the 1694 transcript in the [chronological table](#) I mentioned before.)

Further the social question arises of how the son of a humble mason could enter this élite regiment, founded by Louis XIV personally and entrusted to the command of his favourite son, the duc du Maine. You might say that perhaps a musician was allowed in on the basis of skill, the social rank overlooked; but in 1694 people of such quality did not sue officers. Further nowhere does François de La Tour cite his former rank in any document. In the absence of more evidence I’m inclined to think that La Tour’s father was not in the army at all.

Finally I turn to the sad story which appears in every account of La Tour’s life, and which isn’t in dispute. This concerns his liaison with his cousin Anne Bougier, her pregnancy and the birth of her illegitimate child (details again in my table), for which as we all know La Tour felt permanently guilty, and for which he made amends through his philanthropic donations many years later.

But one aspect of this does seem to be another myth. Tourneux this time was responsible, although it again is widely repeated by modern authors – including by me (though not by B&W). And again it makes us feel better to be told that the unfortunate girl did marry, soon after the affair with her cousin, and settled down with her husband, a workman called Bécasse, in the parish of Saint-Thomas in Saint-Quentin where she died in 1740. I compounded this by finding an earlier register entry for the baptism of a child from this legitimate marriage, in 1728. But examining these entries carefully, they don’t refer to a Marie-Anne Bougier at all, but to a Marie-Anne Bruge or Bruche: the writing in each case is quite clear. It’s neither a likely phonetic mistranscription nor a likely pseudonym if she wanted to disguise her past; nor do the witnesses seem to have any connection with the pastellist’s family. And the age given at her death (unlikely to be exaggerated) was 45, so that she would have been born in 1695.

likely to have been a pressing reason, but whether it was Anne Bougier or an unrecorded sibling the registers do not vouchsafe.

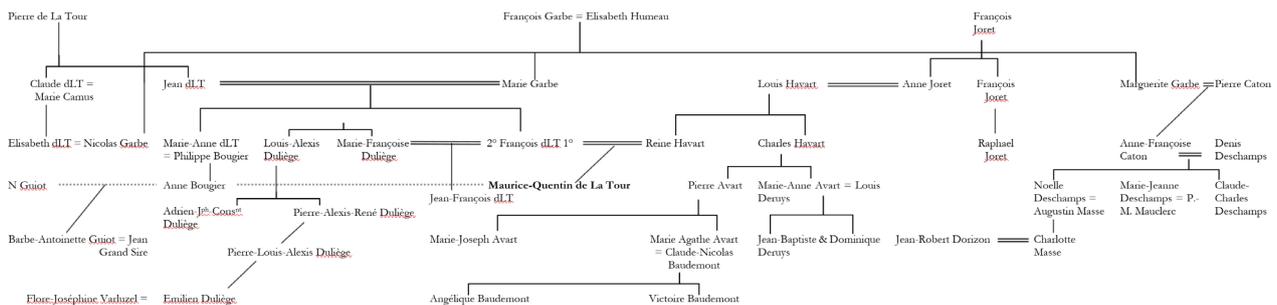
* * *

Ever since the publication of La Tour's wills, there has been something of a puzzle concerning the beneficiaries he describes as his "cousins", among them the tailor Raphael Joret whom I mentioned before, but also (from the 1768 will, as transcribed by Maurice Tourneux):

A mon cousin Deschamps, chanoine de Laon, à la fille de son frère, à ses sœurs Masse et Mauclair, mes cousines, à chacun cent pistoles; deux mille livres à mes arrières petites cousines Beaudemont, qu'elles partageront, et [à] sa sœur Joseph, rue du Petit-Pont, à Saint-Quentin, et à leurs cousins Dominique et Jean Baptiste Devrin

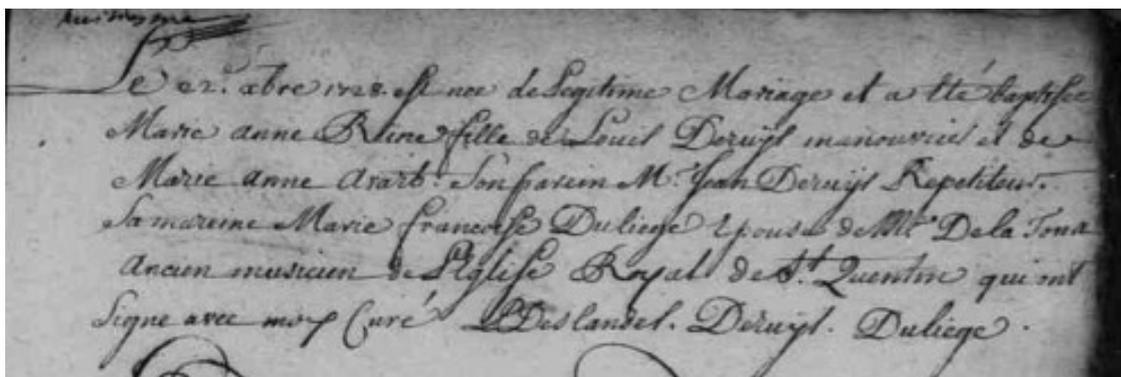
The fact that La Tour leaves money to these relatives suggests that the exact relationships are worth exploring. As you will be aware from my last two posts ([more](#) or [less](#) about his parents), I have been spending time in the parish registers of Noyon, Laon and Saint-Quentin looking into his family, and I think I have unravelled the connections that previously eluded my research.

You can find the key documents once again set out in the chronological [table](#), with a number of further dates of actes for individuals in the genealogies for [La Tour](#), [Deschamps](#), [Garbe](#), [Havart](#), [Joret](#), [Masse](#). I wish there were a simple visual to present all these connections, but the genealogy software on the market is tedious to use and childishly simplistic in the graphical output; and my patience doesn't stretch to drawing an old-fashioned pedigree on a very large sheet of paper. But here's a terribly oversimplified [version](#):



Abbreviated pedigree of the La Tour and related families

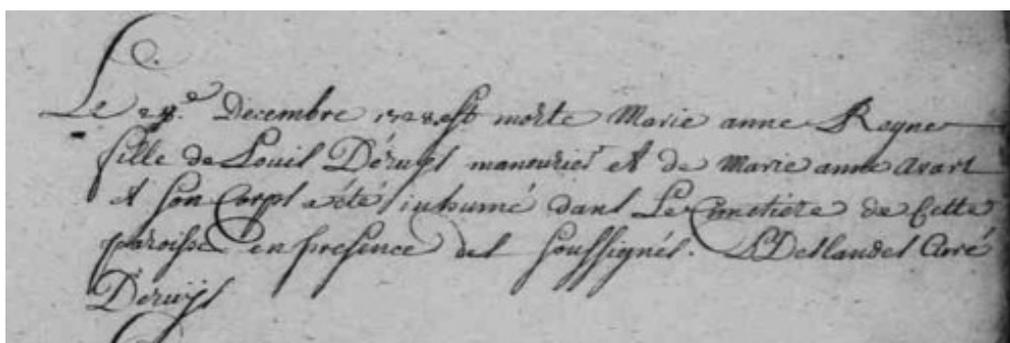
Armed with the dates in these genealogies you can find the deeds online (in the Archives départementales de l'Aisne ou de l'Oise), with my transcriptions in my table. I will only burden this post with what turned out to be the hardest to find (since I didn't have the dates or parishes for any of these documents), but which is touching in its way.



It is the baptism of the daughter of the niece of La Tour's mother, who you will recall was named Reine Havart or Avart (curiously in Laon the spelling Havart is standard; in Saint-Quentin, Avart is used). Reine's niece married Louis Deruys (sometimes Deruis or Deruis; but previous scholars have settled for Dervet or Devrin), who was, it turns out, the son of a Latin tutor ("répétiteur de Latin" in another document). Louis himself was a humble manouvrier or labourer, but later became a jardinier; his son Jean-Baptiste (who appears in La Tour's will), remained a mulquinier, or weaver. So some of these families went down as well as up.

Anyway: you can see that little Marie-Anne-Reine Duruys, who was given the name of the pastellist's mother, could not be held over the font by her, as Reine Havart was dead; but La Tour's stepmother, Marie Françoise Duliège, was in effect step-god-mother to the girl.

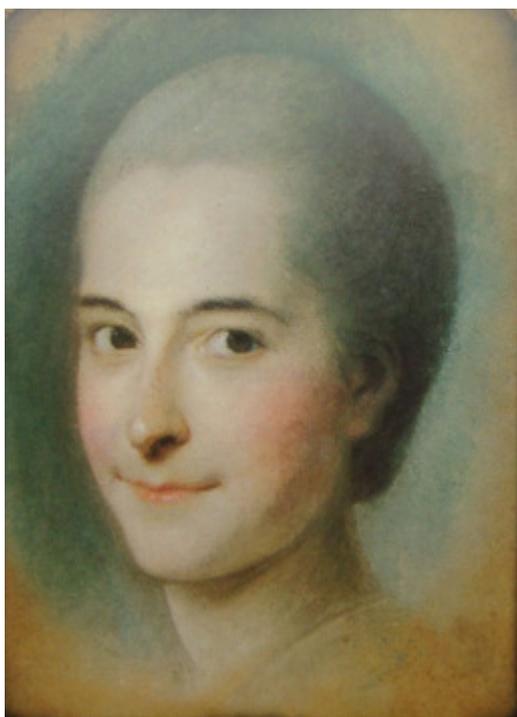
Further down the same page there is another event, which unlike the baptism was attended as was normal only by father and curate, its sadness only partly dimmed by the passage of nearly three hundred years and the knowledge of the frequency of infant mortality:



Here however is a summary of the key relationships as they emerge from dozens of similar documents (the majority far less legible than these two).

La Tour's mother was the niece of Charles Havart, a tapissier from Noyon who settled in Saint-Quentin. As we have seen his daughter married Louis Deruys, while her brother Pierre Avart was also a manouvrier; Pierre's daughter Agathe married Claude-Nicolas Baudemont, a mulquinier: they were the parents of the young girls Angélique and Victoire Baudemont who were mentioned in La Tour's will, as also was Agathe's twin sister Joseph [*sic*, both in the registers and in La Tour's will].

On his father's side there were several connections with the Garbe family of blacksmiths. La Tour's paternal grandmother Marie was the daughter of François Garbe (1610–1678), maréchal ferrant in Laon; her brother Nicolas married Elisabeth, Jean de La Tour's niece (La Tour's father was parrain to one of her numerous children), while Marie's sister Marguerite married Pierre Caton, a tapissier in Laon; their



daughter Anne-Françoise married écrivain Denis Deschamps, father of La Tour's subject chanoine Claude-Charles Deschamps; one of the canon's half-sisters, Noëlle, married an Augustin Masse, marchand de tabac à Paris: their daughter Charlotte Masse (pictured) married Jean-Robert Dorison, the son of a tailor. Finally, "la petite-cousine Morelli, vitrier, à Sceaux" is Louise-Catherine, daughter of the chanoine's brother Pierre-Denis Deschamps; she married Pierre Morel, vitrier-peintre at Verrières-le-Buisson.

Confusingly (although this has been known for some time) Augustin Masse was not related to the marchand orfèvre, Grégoire Masse, who, in 1752, married the sister of Dufloquet, comte de Réals, a senior cavalry officer (from an altogether different level of the social hierarchy): that Mme Masse was another La Tour subject, but not a relative.

The family circumstances, on both sides, were clearly artisanal, not even bourgeois. What is remarkable is that La Tour – an artist who chose his clientele with a close eye on their ability to pay, if not with outright snobbery – retained contact with so many of these people who worked with their hands and owned little. It is not that they were simply mentioned in the 1784 will, made when he was senile, had returned to his native town, and may have been in contact with them; but they mostly appear in the 1768 will, alongside calculations of his annual income (a formidable 19,975 livres). One might cynically conjecture that his impoverished relatives badgered him for money, to which he developed a standard reply: I'll mention you in my will. Or one may guess that he felt a real sense of family loyalty, akin to the motives that led to his charitable foundations. Documents can only take us as far as they go.

* * *

One further piece in the jigsaw slotted into place in June 2022. I remembered that one of the unexplained beneficiaries named in his later (1784) will was a "Mme veuve Grand Sire, a La Ferre en Picardie" (La Fère). Despite spending a vast amount of time in numerous archives and websites trying to unravel this in 2016, I stumbled on the answer – in the parish registers of Saint-Montain, La Fère when I was researching something quite different. This was evidence that there was indeed a Mme Grand Sire, or Grandsir, in La Fère, of an age that meant she might well have been a widow still there in 1784:

L'année de la mort de... et de...
 le vingt trois a été baptisé par moi chanoine Cure
 doyen soussigné Jean fils de Jean Grandsir habitant
 la ville de La Fère de la paroisse de Saint-Montain
 le parcin Jean du Pothon la maraine Françoise
 cheval, le dit baptême a été fait même de Mlle

It was evident that the curate had not been able to get the mother's name correctly, but it was sufficient to make me return to the search for details. This yielded the entry for the marriage of Barbe-Antoinette and her husband, Jean Grand Sire, a tisserand, the previous year, in Laon, Saint-Jean-au-Bourg:

Le vingt Janvier mil sept cent quarante Neuf a presavoir
 publie les trois bans de mariage en deux Dimanches et une fete entre
 Jean Grand Sire ^{24 ans} fils de Jean Grand Sire Maître Tisserand et de Margte
 Guilbert dem^r a Aubegant diocese de Reims d'une part et de Barbe
 Antoinette Guiot ^{24 ans} fille d'Anne Bougier dem^r a Laon de l'autre Paroisse
 d'aube part sans qu'il soit venu a ma connaissance aucun empêchement
 qui puisse retarder la celebration dudit mariage. Je soussigné Jean
 Antoine Pruet prêtre licencie en Theologie de la faculté de Paris,
 Curé de la Paroisse de St. Jean au Bourg de la Ville de Laon ay recis
 de Jean Grand Sire et de Barbe Antoinette Guiot les promesses et
 consentemens de mariage et l'ay celebre en l'Eglise de ladicte
 Paroisse avec les Ceremonies accoutumees en presence de Jean Charles
 Hureau fleur laie de la paroisse de St. Michel d'Antoine Lammes fleur
 laie de ladicte paroisse de St. Jean au Bourg de Nicolas Taitart M. Cornetier
 et de Felix Bembion Vigneront dem^r tous en l'ville sous signés Ayse
 Lypolux et Lypolux qui ont signés aussi le Jour et aux luidits.

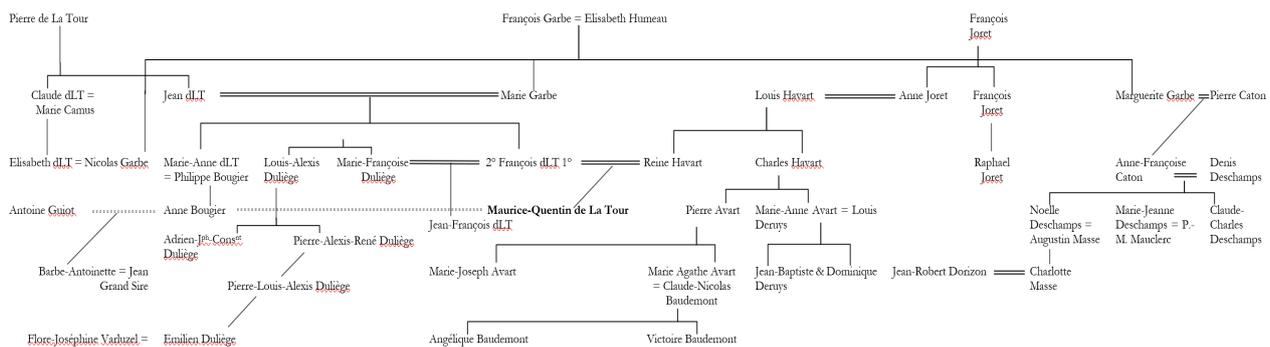
Jean Grand Sire Barbe Antoinette Guiot M. Matheu
 Felix Bion Lammes.
 Nost Curé

From which we can see that Mme veuve Grand Sire was in fact Anne Bougier's second child, born almost certainly in 1724, the year after the stillbirth of La Tour's child that caused the trial discussed above. But the format of the entry is far from standard. Minor children (any unmarried person under 25) could only marry with their parents' consent (and normally their presence at the wedding), so it is extraordinary that Barbe-Antoinette Guiot, aged 24, married without any father being named, nor it seems with her mother present (or identified as deceased). Evidently she was illegitimate, the father unknown (possibly called Guiot, and there is nothing to suggest this was La Tour again). It seems likely that the trial would have made it extremely difficult for Anne to follow a conventional married life.

La Tour's cousin Anne Bougier

2022

THE SAD STORY OF LA TOUR'S COUSIN² has been told on numerous occasions, including by me, either erroneously or at least incompletely. For reasons that will be obvious, some parts of it will always remain unknowable, but a group of documents discovered in the last few weeks while researching a different matter merit revisiting the whole episode. As usual reference should be made to my [chronological table](#), where transcriptions (but not facsimiles) of the documents may be found in chronological sequence together with full references. There is also a useful genealogy for [La Tour](#), with this simplified [version](#):



Abbreviated pedigree of the La Tour and related families

The story which appears in every account of La Tour's life concerns his liaison with his cousin Anne Bougier, her pregnancy and the birth of her illegitimate child, for which as we know La Tour felt permanently guilty, and for which he made amends through his philanthropic donations many years later. The basic facts are found in the judicial interrogation of Anne, a document discovered by président Combiere and published by him in *La Petite Revue* in 1874, and subsequently by Charles Desmazes in his *Reliquaire de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour* in 1874 (the original documents were presented to the musée at Saint-Quentin, but lost after being sent to Maubeuge during the First World War). This is his transcription:

Du novembre 1723. A comparu Anne Bougier, âgée de 22 ans, fille de Philippe Bougier, chantre en l'église métropolitaine de Sens, où il demeure à cause de son emploi, et d'Anne de La Tour, sa mère, avec laquelle elle demeurait en cette ville [Laon], depuis huit mois, et auparavant, demeurant l'une et l'autre, sa mère et elle en la ville de Saint-Quentin, n'ayant, non plus que sa mère, d'autre métier que celui de tricoter des bas.

A dit: qu'elle était née à La Fère, mais que sa famille était originaire de Laon. Feu Nicolas Bougier, Chantre en l'Église Collégiale de Laon, étoit son ayeul paternel, et feu Jean de La Tour, maître maçon à Laon, étoit son ayeul maternel.

A dit: qu'elle s'étoit bien comportée, n'avoit jamais eu d'habitudes criminelles avec aucun homme, ni garçon, à l'exception qu'elle s'est abandonnée trois fois au nommé *Quentin de La Tour*, garçon de dix-neuf ans, peintre de son métier, demeurant à Saint-Quentin, son cousin germain, et cela, dans le temps qu'elle demouroit avec sa mere à Saint-Quentin.

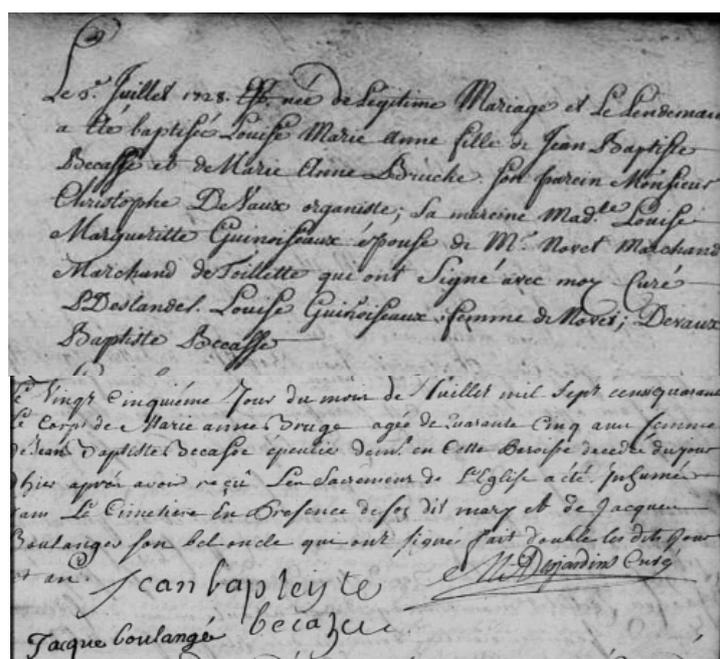
² This essay first appeared on 25.VI.2022 as an update of Jeffares 2016j, incorporating material from that and substantially extending it with a discussion of Barbe-Antoinette. It may be cited as Neil Jeffares, "La Tour's cousin Anne Bougier", *Pastels & pastellists*, http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTour_Bougier.pdf and is referred to within the *Dictionary* as Jeffares 2022c.

Interrogée si c'est des œuvres dudit de La Tour, son cousin, qu'elle est devenue enceinte de l'enfant mort, dont elle est accouchée le 15 août 1723, après avoir cédé sa grossesse, a dit que oui, qu'elle s'est crue hydropique, parce qu'après avoir eu ses habitudes avec le dit de La Tour, elle a eu ses purgations ordinaires huit jours après et ne les a plus vues depuis.

Anne Bougier, ne sachant signer, est déclarée atteinte et convaincue d'avoir tenu sa grossesse cédée jusqu'au jour de ses couches et, pour ce fait, condamnée à être admonestée en la chambre du Conseil à ne plus récidiver, et en 3 livres d'amende, applicables aux pauvres de l'Hôpital de Laon.

Lapauze (1919) went so far as to state that she was “faite prisonnière” by La Tour, and that evidently was the view of the tribunal reflected in her punishment (concealment of pregnancy was regarded as infanticide under an edict of 1566). According to her baptismal record (8 mars 1700), only located in 2019, she was in fact 23½, four and a half years older than La Tour: a difference in age making this defence somewhat less plausible than if he had been older.

No doubt the pathos of the story inspired genealogists to try to complete the picture, not always helpfully. The normally reliable Maurice Tourneux this time was responsible for repeating information he received from Jules Hachet in 1904, subsequently widely repeated by modern authors – including by Christine Debric in 1991 (and of course still polluting genealogy websites). According to the story the unfortunate girl did marry, soon after the affair with her cousin, and settled down with her husband, a workman called Bécasse, in the parish of Saint-Thomas in Saint-Quentin where she died in 1740. I compounded this by finding an earlier register entry for the baptism of a child from this legitimate marriage, in 1728. But examining these entries carefully, they don't refer to a Marie-Anne Bougier at all, but to a Marie-Anne Bruge or Bruche: the writing in each case is quite clear. It's neither a likely phonetic mistranscription nor a likely pseudonym if she wanted to disguise her past; nor do the witnesses seem to have any connection with the pastellist's family. And the age given at her death was 45, so that she would have been born in 1695.



In 2016 I made one further discovery, which I find almost as disconcerting: as we know she was the daughter of the pastellist's aunt, Marie-Anne de La Tour, who married a Philippe Bougier, a fellow chanter in the church. The marriage took place in Laon in 1695 (17 May) when Philippe, a widower, was 26 years old (which was one of the reasons I continued to believe Tourneux's identification). But I've since located Marie-Anne de La Tour's baptismal entry:

Le vingt trois a été baptisé par moi chanoine Curé Doyen soussigné Jean fils de Jean grandsir tisserand en cette ville et de barbe antoine dio— son épouse le parein Jean du Notion la mareine francoise cheval, ledit baptisé né le jour meme

signé: De Nelle

It was evident that the curate had not been able to get the mother's name correctly, but it was sufficient to make me return to the search for more details. This yielded the entry for the marriage of Barbe-Antoinette and her husband, Jean Grand Sire, tisserand, the previous year (1749), in Laon, Saint-Jean-au-Bourg:

Le vingt Janvier mil sept cent quarante Neuf après avoir
publié les trois bans de mariage en deux Dimanches et une fête entre
Jean Grand Sire ^{homme veuf} fils de Jean Grand Sire Maitre Tisserand, et de Margte
Guilbert dem^t a Aubegast diocese de Roüen, d'une Part ^{age de 38 ans} et de Barbe
Antoinette Guiot fille d'Anne Bougier dem^t a Laon de cette Paroisse
d'autre part ^{agee de 24 ans} Sans qu'il soit venu a ma connoissance aucun empeschem^t
qui puit retarder la celebration dudit mariage Je Soussigné Jean
Antoine Huët pretre licencié en Theologie de la faculté de Paris,
Curé de la Paroisse de St. Jean au Bourg de la Ville de Laon ay recüs
de Jean Grand Sire et de Barbe Antoinette Guiot les promesses et
Consentemens de mariage et l'ay Celebré en l'Eglise de laditte
Paroisse avec les Ceremonies accoutumés en presence de Jean Charles
Marteau Clerc laïc de la paroisse de St. Michel, d'Antoine Larmois Clerc
laïc de laditte paroisse de St. Jean au Bourg de Nicolas Taïtart M^e Bonnetier
et de Felix Bon bion Vigneront dem^s tous en cette Ville soussigné avec
L'Epoux et l'Epouse qui ont signés aussi le Jour et an susdits.

Jean grand sire barbe antoinette guiot Marteau
Felix bion Larmois.
Huet Curé

Le vingt Janvier mil sept cent quarante neuf après avoir publié les trois bans de mariage en deux Dimanches et vue fête entre Jean Grand Sire <homme veuf> fils de Jean Grand Sire Maitre Tisserand, et de Marg^{te} Guilbert dem^t a Aubegast, diocese de Roüen, d'une Part <age de 38 ans> et de Barbe Antoinette Guiot fille d'Anne Bougier dem^t a Laon de Cette Paroisse d'autre part <agee de 24 ans> Sans qu'il soit venu a ma connoissance aucun empeschem^t qui puit retarder la Celebration dudit mariage Je Soussigné Jean Antoine Huët pretre licencié en Theologie de la faculté de Paris, Curé de la Paroisse de St Jean au Bourg de la Ville de Laon, ay recüs de Jean Grand Sire et de Barbe Antoinette Guiot les promesses et Consentemens de Mariage et l'ay Celebré en l'Eglise de laditte Paroisse avec les Ceremonies accoutumés en presence de Jean Charles Marteau cleric laïc de la paroisse de S^t Michel, d'Antoine Larmois Clerc laïc de laditte paroisse de S^t Jean au Bourg de Nicolas Taïtart M^e bonnetier et de Felix Bon bion Vigneront, dem^s tous en cette Ville soussigné avec L'Epoux et l'Epouse qui ont signés aussi le Jour et an Susdits

signé: Jean grandsire barbe antoinette guiot Marteau
tetard felix bion Larmois
huet curé

From which we can see that Mme veuve Grand Sire was in fact Anne Bougier's second child, born almost certainly in 1724, the year after the stillbirth of La Tour's child that caused the trial discussed above. But the format of the entry is far from standard, and the acte leaves open many questions. Minor children (any unmarried person under 25) could only marry with their parents' consent (and normally their presence at the wedding), so it is extraordinary that Barbe-Antoinette Guiot, aged 24, married without any father being named, nor it seems with her mother present (or identified as deceased). Evidently she was illegitimate, the father unknown. Was her mother dead by the date of the marriage?

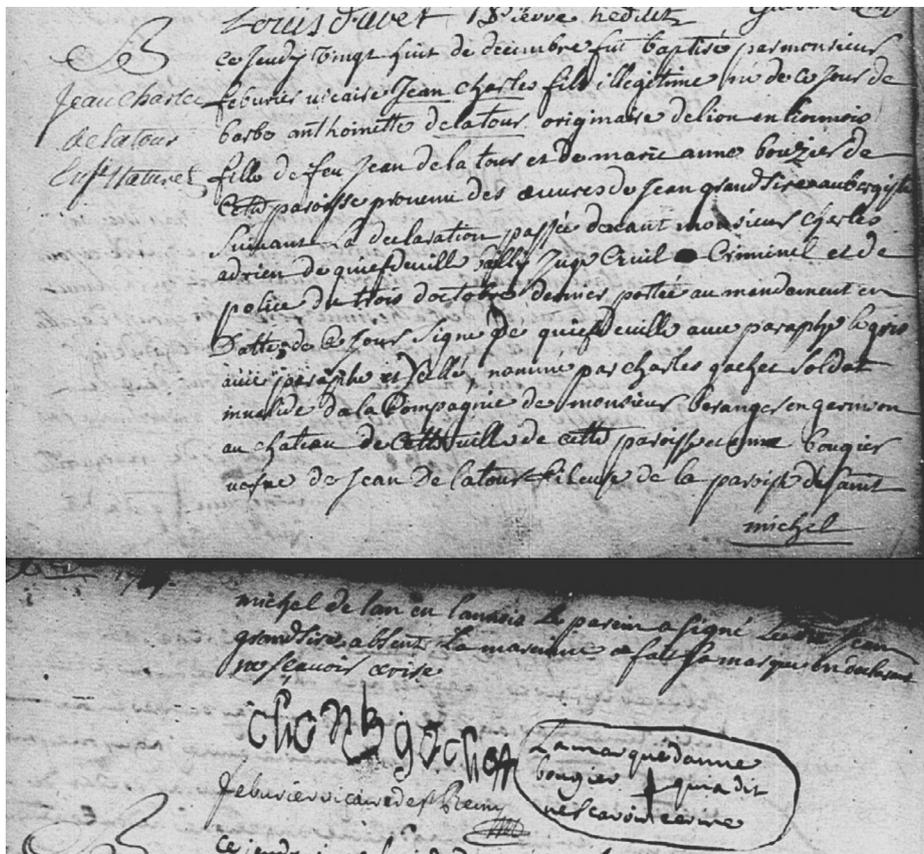
Could “Guiot” come from the name of a biological father, a stepfather or a protector? (It seems possible that this was Gérard Guiot or Diot (both names appear in the records), born 1680, a maître boulanger or pâtissier in Laon; on 23 November 1705 at Sainte-Benoîte, Laon he married a Barbe-Nicolle l’Eully.)

Further research in La Fère registers produced another baffling document: Barbe-Antoinette’s acte de décès, in 1792, claiming to be aged 83 which would make her far too old as well as contradicting the 1750 acte de mariage.

Sur la déclaration a nous faite par la citoyenne Marie Auteffe, demeurant à l’hôpital des pauvres de cette ville, en qualité de surveillante desdits pauvres, âgée de cinquante trois ans; que la nommée Antoinette Diot, veuve de Jean Grand Sire, cavalier de maréchaussée du Soissonnais à la résidence de La Fère, âgée de quatre vingt trois ans natif de Laon, chef-lieu du département était décédée du jour d’hier, à cinq heures et demie du soir audit hôpital...

Was this “veuve de Jean Grand Sire” a different woman? I don’t think it can be as the name Diot had already appeared, she is described as from Laon and Jean Grand Sire is not a common name in La Fère.

I then uncovered yet another piece in the jigsaw, this time in the parish register of Saint-Rémy, Dieppe (surprisingly distant from the other towns we are concerned with: Saint-Quentin and Laon are within a 25 km radius of La Fère, while Dieppe is 200 km away), two years before Barbe-Antoinette and Jean Grand Sire’s marriage of 1749, once again filled with inaccuracies, whether erroneous or deliberately intended at concealment, but with sufficient contiguity to the truth to tell its own story:



Ce jedy vingt-huit de decembre fut baptisé par monsieur Feburier vicaire Jean Charles fils illegitime né de ce jour de barbe anthoinette de Latour originaire de Lion en Lionnois fille de feu Jean de la tour et de marie anne bouzier de cette paroisse provenu des œuvres de jean grand sire aubergiste Suivant la declaration passée devant monsieur charles adrien de quiefdeville baillly juge civil criminel et de police du trois d’octobre dernier portée au mandement et datte de ce jour signe de quiefdeville avec paraphe legris avec paraphe et scellé, nommé par charles gachet soldat invalide de la compagnie de monsieur beranger en garnison au château de cette ville de cette paroisse, et Anne bougier veufve de jean delatour fileuse

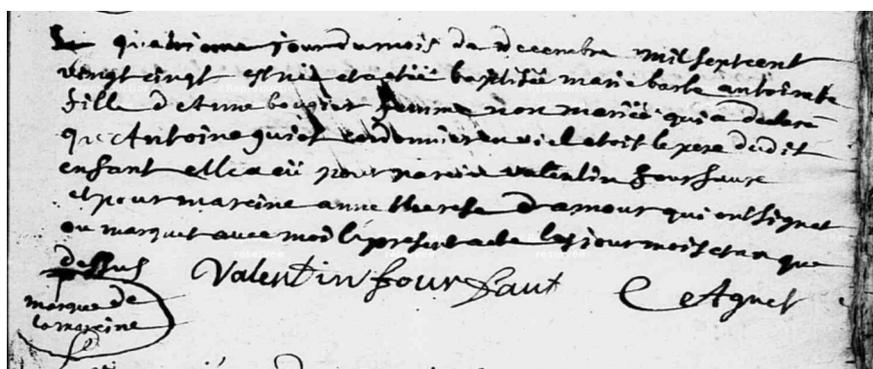
de la paroisse de Saint michel de lon en lannois Le parein a signé Ledit jean grandsire absent La marreine a fait sa marque en declarant ne sçavoir ecrire

signé: Charles Gachet La marque d'anne bougier + qui a dit ne scavoit ecrire
feburier vicaire de St Remy

So Barbe-Antoinette herself had an illegitimate child before marriage, just as her mother had done. But the document sheds important new light: firstly that Anne Bougier was still alive, and present (and still unable to write): from tricoteuse de bas she had become a fileuse. Moreover while the infant's father was the Jean Grand Sire who would later marry the mother, our attention is engaged by the name Anne gives to Barbe-Antoinette's father: Jean de La Tour, claiming to be his widow, thus explaining his absence. Any other claim would easily have been exposed, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour being by then a name quite likely to be recognised by a vicar. "Jean de La Tour" is a name so common as to be untraceable, particularly before Google, but the only Jean in the pastellist's family was his grandfather, far too old to have fathered Barbe-Antoinette.

It seemed worth trying to investigate Jean Grand Sire's background. Evidently he had a portfolio career: an aubergiste (1747), maître tisserand (1749, 1750), and later cavalier de maréchaussée du Soissonnais à la résidence de La Fère. According to the 1749 acte de mariage, he was the son of another Jean Grand Sire, another maître tisserand from Auppegard near Rouen, and his wife, Marguerite Guilbert, already a widower and born c.1710. Those people exist: Jean Grandsir (1685–1767), who married Marguerite Guilbert (–1758) in Colmesnil-Manneville (10 km south of Dieppe) on 25 November 1710 and died in Auppegard, a further 1 km south of Colmesnil (within the same parish). (I also came across Charles Gachet's signature again as a witness in the Colmesnil parish register.) They had several children but none called Jean is recorded. It is quite possible that he was born before his parents' marriage, which didn't take place until near the end of the year, accounting for the absence of a baptismal entry. Confusingly a Nicolas Grandsire and Marie-Suzanne Guilbert also had children baptised in the same parish around the same time.³

While I was proof-reading this article I decided I'd better have another trawl through the Laon parish registers, just in case I, together with everyone from the président Combier, Maurice Tourneux, Charles Desmaze and everyone else had missed something. And we had. Here, almost exactly where you would expect it, is the acte de baptême of Marie-Barbe-Antoinette Guiot, in the parish register of Saint-Michel, Laon, dated 4 December 1725:



³ Two homonyms lead to false trails: a Jean Grandsire had been born to Nicolas and his wife in 1714, but on 27 Nov 1736, still in Colmesnil, he married a Marguerite Sannier, was able to write – in a hand that does not match that on the 1749 acte de mariage, and so cannot be our Jean Grandsire but may have been a cousin. Another red herring is the Jean Grand Sire who married, in Dieppe, Saint-Rémy, on 18.1.1738, a Marie-Marguerite Baron; he was then described as a “pignère de profession” (a carder), aged 21, the son of Jacques Grand Sire and Hélène Le Coq, unable to write. The following year, on 21.V.1739 in the same parish he married Marie-Marguerite Maugendre, a dentellière aged 25, as Jean-Claude Grandsire. He was dead by 1749 when his second wife remarried.

Le quatrieme jour du mois de decembre mil sept cent vingt cinq est nee et a etee baptisee marie barbe antoinette fille d'Anne bougier femme non mariée qui a declaré qu'Antoine guiot cordonnier en vie etoit le père dudit enfant elle a eü pour parein valentin fourfaux et pour mareine anne therese damour qui ont signet ou marquet avec moi le present acte les jour mois et an que dessus

+ marque de la mareine Valentin Fourfaut Agnet

So there was a Monsieur Guiot – a shoemaker, possibly dead (although Laon parish registers do not record such a death in the previous nine months) and possibly married (a Pierre-Antoine Guiot was married there in 1722; he signed Diot while his father signed Guiot: evidently the spelling caused his own family the same problems Barbe-Antoinette would later show).

One thing is clear. Anne Bougier's transgression with La Tour was not an isolated incident. But why should she have (approximately) named La Tour as her second child's father in 1747? Could it be that he was in fact the father of Barbe-Antoinette? Did she think the name a grander one for her daughter to bear? Or did she harbour some resentment at his conduct? I leave you to decide whether it affects your views of the artist's moral character – and whether that has any relevance to his art.

La Tour and Mme de Graffigny

19 March 2017



For anyone reading this blog, the name of Mme de Graffigny will immediately suggest an image of an Enlightenment blue-stocking – a woman writer with connections to Rousseau, Voltaire and other such figures. Perhaps you conjure up a portrait of a lady with a book – rather like [Mademoiselle Ferrand](#). You might recall that Graffigny was the author of the fictional *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* (1747), but have you ever read it – or indeed any of the 2518 real letters which have, over the course of more than 30 years, been published by team of scholars in a project between the Voltaire Foundation and the University of Toronto? The final volume of the letters appeared last year, while a comprehensive index is planned for next year. There is in the meantime an extremely useful working index [online](#), as well as a wealth of explanatory material about the [project](#) which obviates the need for me to explain its overall aims or scope. These are freely available: the books themselves however are understandably rather pricey, and perhaps – with library cutbacks and so on – less available, and less consulted, than they should be.

You will of course have read the extract from her letter about Mme Supiot which I included in my last [post](#). But while I was trying to find a copy of the volume that contained it, I noticed that the British Library (which had a copyright copy) hadn't got round to cataloguing it (that has now been rectified), while the London Library only had some earlier volumes in the set (that too has now been rectified). However the reason for this post is my

astonishment at discovering some key passages about one of my favourite subjects – Maurice-Quentin de La Tour – which have been (please do correct me if I'm wrong – I welcome any opportunity to update my bibliographies) completely overlooked by art historians.



Mme de Graffigny wasn't perhaps as intensely interested in art as say Diderot, but she attended the Louvre salons and usually had something of interest to say in her letters (albeit they do not appear in standard bibliographies of salon criticism). But the artist who interested her most – and whom she knew personally – was La Tour. I've included their encounters in my chronological table of La Tour documents, and won't repeat all of this here (just search Graffigny in the linked pdf). There are of course several references to Graffigny's own projected portrait, possibly to be engraved to enhance her publications, and those have set off many fantasies. The pastel from the Marcille collection ([J.46.1855](#); above), once thought to be of the dancer Mlle Sallé, was reidentified by André Michel in 1884 with no logic beyond enthusiasm, and subsequently included without qualification as of her in B&W, Adrian Bury's monograph and the Paris 1927 exhibition (even the reference to that in the 2004 La Tour exhibition expresses no reservation).

It was however judiciously rejected by Colin Harrison in his 2004 *SVEC* article on the iconography of Mme de Graffigny. Excellent though that article was at debunking the ridiculous claims of a number of similar inconnues, it fell into exactly the same trap of wishful thinking by promoting, to the much wanted position of the lost La Tour, a rather

modest pastel connected with a minor artist called [Garand](#) which it was suggested was a copy after the great master. In fact (as you can see in vol. XIV of the *Correspondance*, reproduced above, at the top of this post) the source of this image is the signed oval oil in Lunéville by the actor/painter Augustin Clavareau. (He was not only a protégé of Mme de Graffigny, but the father of the pastellist [Victoire Clavareau](#).)

But it's time to turn to a couple of extracts from the correspondence which are of far greater interest, and which illustrate just how significant Graffigny's testimony is. Remember that, unlike the other biographies of La Tour (see [here](#)), these passages are immediate reportage, not the repetition of others' stories with the propagation of error that I set out in my [analysis](#).

The first comes in a letter to her friend Devaux (as almost all the letters are) of 14 September 1742. She has been two days before to the salon, noting that there was nothing there so extraordinary as the La Tour pastels, all masterpieces,

surtout le sien, peint avec un chapeau a point d'Espagne, detroussé d'un coté, qui lui fait un ombre sur le visage. C'est un morceau parfait: je ne pouvois m'en arracher.



We'll come back to that: it's the famous autoportrait au chapeau clabaud, now known only from the Schmidt print (above).

Three years later, she again reports to Devaux after a visit to the salon, in a letter of 7 September 1745. She is disappointed, particularly as the artists have had two years since the last salon (they had previously been held annually). Once again however it is the La Tour portraits that captivate her: "La Tour empeche de regarder les autres." She picks out two in particular: one the famous, and much written about, Duval de l'Épinoy ([here is my essay](#) on this masterpiece of Western art, now in the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon), of which she thinks "rien n'est si admirable".



But she then picks out another:

Disenteuil y est de sa façon, si singulièrement ressemblant que je pensai lui aler parler.

"Disenteuil" is her pet name for Henri-Ignace de Chaumont, abbé de La Galaizière (1706–1784), a particular friend, and brother of the intendant who was, as it happens, married to the sister of Philibert Orry, whose portrait La Tour also exhibited that year (no. 166; below).



As far as I am aware, art history has not yet recorded this mention of a new, if lost, La Tour portrait, evidently one of the "Plusieurs autres portraits, sous le même numéro" [168] at the salon. But it may also unsolve another mystery: when the abbé's nephew (and Orry's) emigrated, his goods were seized by the state in 1798 including "un grand portrait d'Argenson, fait au pastel par Latour, monté sous glace, hauteur 3 pieds 6 pouces sur 2 pieds 7 pouces environ." It

was apparently deposited in the Muséum central, and it has for long been regarded as the portrait of Orry now in the Louvre (the known La Tour portraits of d'Argenson are smaller, and done when he had abandoned the larger format): the Orry pastel measures 116.7×89.5, near enough to the 114×84 of the *saisie de l'émigré*; but could the latter not equally well be of the abbé (unless we believe that its entry to the Muséum central was definitive)?

We must now move on to the most important encounter between Graffigny and La Tour, which took place on 7 July 1748 at Passy in the home of the famous *fermier général* La Pouplinière, in the company of Rameau and Vaucanson. The next day she wrote a second letter about this to Devaux, in which she included “deux anecdotes toute fraîche de ce maître peintre et plus, maître fol.”

The first goes back to the *autoportrait au chapeau clabaud* which she wrote about above. (The editors helpfully cite Trévoux's *Dictionnaire* to explain that “on dit qu'un homme secoue les oreilles, quand il se moque, quand il ne soucie pas de ce qu'on lui dit”.)

Tu m'as peut-être entendu parler d'un portrait qu'il avoit fait de lui, qui réellement me ravit en admiration quand il l'exposa au Louvre il y a quelques années. Je lui en demandai hier des nouvelles. Il secoua l'oreille et me dit qu'il étoit perdu. Je voulus en savoir l'histoire. La voici. Il avoit d'abord fait cette tête pour la galerie de Florence, où sa place est marquée. Il trouva qu'il avoit si bien réussi qu'un sentiment de patricien l'engagea à faire voir cette pièce au roi, comptant comme il le dit, que son excellence le fraperoit et qu'il le mettroit dans sa chambre. Le roi dit : « Cela est beau, » et le rendit. Ce fou, ce archifou, le mit en pièce. Il s'en repend mais le mal est fait. Je l'ai bien flatée en ne lui parlant presque de cette pièce, ou du moins en lui donnant la préférence sur ses autres ouvrages. Il ne l'a pas moins été de mon enthousiasme pour elle, que je rendois comme je l'ai sentie, car jamais rien ne m'a fait une plus vive impression ; mais il a bien flaté mon dissèrnement en m'avouant qu'il n'avoit jamais rien fait d'aussi bon, et qu'avec ce morceau il ne craignoit ny la postérité antécédente ny la subsequente. Aussi étoit-ce en vérité un chef-d'œuvre. Il n'y avoit que la tête, coiffée d'une peruque et d'un chapeau clabot avec un vieuxpoint d'Espagne. C'étoit une espèce de prix. Ah, la belle chose !

The lost pastel has been discussed many times, including in the La Tour 2004 exhibition catalogue, but this fascinating story has never (as far as I am aware) been cited in the art historical literature. It provides I think the only evidence that he was asked to send his portrait to the grand-ducal collection at the Uffizi (the pastel there purporting to be La Tour's self-portrait seems in my opinion neither to be of nor by him). It again reinforces his proximity to the king and his patriotism (“patricien” has however been correctly read; Mme de Graffigny used it to mean “haughty”) that are picked up in other stories in his hagiography. Of course it reinforces the trope of the fastidious artist willing to destroy anything which was less than perfect.

So does this final story, continuing the same letter. Having extracted an invitation to dinner from the painter (a rare privilege), she continued:

Je lui dis que j'étois fort curieuse de voir un portrait de Mde de Pompadour, dont j'ai beaucoup entendu parler, comme d'une merveille non achevée. Le boudoir secoua encore l'oreille, baissa les yeux, et dit : « Il n'est plus. » Il l'a encore brûlé parce qu'il avoit donné un faux trait. Il étoit en grand. C'étoit un tableau de la taille de ceux dont il prend jusqu'à dix mille francs.

Il est brûlé. Avez-vous une idée d'une tête aussi folle ? Je lui chantai pouille. Il me dit que j'avois bien aisé de peindre à l'ancre, que j'en étois quitte pour une feuille de papier quand il me falloit retoucher une phrase, mais qu'il lui falloit des mois pour raccommoder un faux trait, et qu'il aimoit mieux recommencer. Voilà l'homme; au demeurant, de l'esprit et des sentimens.

Indeed. Again this passage is not mentioned in Jean-François Méjanès's monograph devoted entirely to the portrait of Mme de Pompadour, which was finally exhibited in 1755 and is now in the Louvre. As you can see if you look closely, the head has been done on a new sheet of paper pasted over the rest of the work.



Apart from the claim to have destroyed the picture (which we can neither prove nor disprove, although it is more likely that he relented and effected the correction on the new sheet), we find what La Tour had in mind for its price (his later demand for 48,000 livres, nearly five times as much, was famously rejected). And we have evidence that the work was not merely well under way, but already destroyed before the date when we thought it had been commenced – even to the point that Mme de Graffigny had already heard so much about it.

Brava Mme de Graffigny for telling us so much. Bravi Oxford, Toronto and all those involved in this important project.

The progression of tropes in the La Tour biographies

2014

Set out in the table below are some of the key ideas and phrases taken from the early biographies of La Tour. The presentation allows us to follow the transmission of ideas from one biographer to the next, and demonstrates a high degree of interdependence, propagation of error and inflation of spurious detail which should be fully understood before use.

Even trivial errors are illuminating in this textual approach. For example, La Tour was born in 1704, but Duplaquet's periphrasis puts this (correctly) as "5^e année du siècle"; this is picked up erroneously as 1705 by the journalists who follow. Duplaquet, expanding the limited material available to him, also embellishes: in Diderot's version of the story of La Tour's confrontation with Perronneau, the La Tour self-portraits is that with the chapeau rabattu, but Duplaquet substitutes the *autoportrait à l'index*, so as to add ridicule to Perronneau's inadequacy. Mariette tells us of La Tour's intellectual pretensions, and how he studied Bayle's dictionary before presenting half-digested ideas in intellectual gatherings. Duplaquet has him as "le Peintre Philosophe; avide de tout savoir", and adds that he studied mathematics and geometry during the two years he devoted to mastering drawing, while for Bucelly d'Estrées he had "vastes connaissances en littérature, il était bon mathématicien et bon géomètre".

The conclusion from a detailed examination of these tropes is that all the biographers after Duplaquet relied heavily on him, or on the anonymous review which appeared in the *Année littéraire* in 1789 on which *The Times* obituary was closely based, although it does seem that the author of the piece in *Almanach littéraire* also went back to Duplaquet directly. None of these three interesting documents seems to have been known to B&W, and while the third was referred to by Méjanès 2002, he quoted only from the shortened version that appeared in Michaud's *Biographie universelle* in 1824, the signatory to which was too young to have been the author of the original article.

In contrast there is no linguistic evidence of direct influence from Mariette's text, which was not published until the 1850s and was probably not seen directly by Duplaquet – although naturally some of the stories, which were probably freely in circulation, reappear in some form.

Perhaps the most puzzling story comes from three of the earliest, and (one would imagine) most reliable, sources: Diderot's comments from his *Salon de 1763*; Mariette's biography, written in 1772; and Marie Fel's letter to the chevalier de La Tour, written at the time of the artist's death. Diderot and Mariette both mention the reported conversation between La Tour and Louis XV in which the artist criticised the state of France's navy "nous n'avons point de marine &c.": it is impossible to imagine that this occurred twice, nor that it was not related to a specific naval engagement. Diderot reports this exchange as occurring "en 1756" (he is quite specific, and is writing only a few years later), and while "faisant le portrait du roi" (the known examples are from 1745 and 1748). Mariette, however, relates the incident as occurring while La Tour was working on the portrait of Mme de Pompadour when the king was present: "C'étoit dans le temps que les Anglois avoient détruit notre marine et que nous n'avions aucun navire à leur opposer." Since the portrait of Mme de Pompadour was exhibited in 1755, this cannot refer to naval engagements during the Seven Years' War, but almost certainly situates the incident to the War of the Austrian Succession, probably to the second of the two engagements at Cape Finisterre in 1747. In Marie Fel's version, based on a story La Tour himself told her and which omits any reference to the navy (but which may nevertheless derive from that discussion), La Tour was painting Mme de Pompadour when the king arrived, "fort triste", following the battle of Rossbach. Since that battle took place in 1757, two years after the portrait was finished, the story cannot be trusted. But it suggests that La Tour himself was the source of these three (and no doubt many other anecdotes), and that he retold them repeatedly, embellishing and updating – if not completely inventing them – them with great freedom.

The remaining mystery is the work of the connoisseur and author Antoine-Nicolas Dezallier d'Argenville (1723–1796), son of the author of the *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres*, 1745–52; Antoine-Nicolas himself published a *Vie des fameux architectes et sculpteurs* in 1787, and seems to have been planning a life of La Tour for the purposes of which he was gathering stories from those who knew him, according to Marie Fel. No sign of d'Argenville's life of La Tour remains, although it is not impossible that he contributed the review of Duplaquet to the *Année littéraire*. It seems likely that this and the other derivatives were written by one of the administrators of the École gratuite who had asked Duplaquet's consent to reuse his material, as he reveals in his preface. This Saint-Quentino bias naturally focuses on La Tour's local philanthropy and affection for his native town, to which he only returned when forced by senility.

I Diderot, 1763–67	II Mariette, 1772	IV Fel, c.1788	V <i>Aff. Piarde</i> , 26.IV.1788	VI Duplaquet, 2.V.1788	VII <i>Année littéraire</i> , 1789	VIII <i>The Times</i> , 7.VIII.1790	IX <i>Almanach lit.</i> , 1792	X Bucelly d'Estrées, 1834
	né 5 septembre 1704			5 ^e année du siècle	en 1705	in 1705	en 1705	né 5 septembre 1704
	n'a pas dans sa couleur la fraîcheur de la Rosalba, mais il dessine mieux			crayons de Rosalba ne peignent que les grâces ; ceux de Latour montrent la Nature sous toutes ses formes				supériorité dans un genre qui n'avait eu de renommée que par les ouvrages de Rose Alba
	gâter le beau portrait de Restout			déchirer sans pitié la peinture que lui seul n'approuve pas				
	sa vue trop courte pour devenir ingénieur							

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	copiât à la plume toutes les estampes ; académies de l'élève de Vernansal; son père avait une mauvaise opinion de la peinture			figure du Professeur, dans le cahier, peines Magistrales; son père unit ses ordres aux défenses du Régent; un Peintre de cette Ville, chargé de lui enseigner l'art	caricature pédantesque, ce qui ne manquait pas d'attirer au jeune de La Tour la correction ordinaire. Son père le place chez un maître qui lui donne les premières leçons de son art	caricatures of teacher in margins of schoolbooks; frequent floggings; father suffered him to pursue art, placed with local master	pédantesque caricature; ce Régent imbécile, le faisait châtier; son père le mit chez un Peintre que l'élève surpassa en bien peu de temps	suivait les études sous Nicolas Desjardins [source: <i>Hondret</i>]; premiers éléments du dessin d'un professeur de cette ville
	à 15 ans, quitta la maison paternelle et alla se réfugier à Paris			fortune bornée ne lui permet pas d'aller au-delà des Alpes; voyage à Reims				N'ayant pas les moyens d'aller en Italie pour y étudier les grands maîtres, il se rendit à Reims
	sur des estampes le nom de Tardieu ; veut être peintre, non graveur ; refusé par Tardieu et Vernansal; apprentis chez Spœide							
	résola de voir ensuite [après Londres - <i>r. infra</i>] la Hollande, mais son compagnon mourut			Cambrai le théâtre d'une négociation ; portrait de l'Ambassadeur espagnole	voyage dans les Pays-Bas. Cambrai étoit alors le théâtre des négociations	journey to the Netherlands; Cambrai seat of a negotiation	voyage aux Pays-bas; Plusieurs Ministres de Cours Etrangères furent peints par lui	Cambrai étoit le centre de grandes négociations diplomatiques
								Cambrai : aventure galante, dans le parler à jour [source: <i>Boccaccio</i>];
	passa à Londres			English ambassador takes him to London [after Cambrai]	L'Ambassadeur d'Angleterre l'engagea à passer à Londres	English Ambassador prevailed on him to accompany him to London	L'Ambassadeur d'Angleterre l'engagea à passer à Londres	l'ambassadeur de la Grande-Bretagne, qui lui offre un logement dans son hôtel, à Londres
	revient à Paris après quelques mois			arrive à Paris à l'âge de 23 ans				
				Larivière & Rigaud				Larivière & Rigaud
	portraits au pastel, ne faisoit ses modèles; ressemblants; pas cher			excessive mobilité des nerfs interdit l'emploi des couleurs à l'huile ; pastel	excessive irritabilité de nerfs lui interdit l'emploi des couleurs à l'huile	extreme irritability of the nervous system forbade him use of oil-colours, confined to crayons	abandonna la peinture à l'huile. L'irritabilité de ses nerfs l'y contraignit. Il se voua au pastel	nerveux très-irritable, ce qui a décidé le choix qu'il fit du pastel, les émanations des couleurs à l'huile l'incommodant
	La presse étoit grande; il devint le peintre banal			les Riches et les Grands cherchent une immortalité : quelle foule autour de lui				le peintre à la mode
	vus par Louis de Boullongne, « un talent qui peut vous mener loin »	same story mentioned as told to d'Argenville, "va t'en dessiner"		<i>dessinez, long-tems</i>				
	après mort de Boullongne 1733, il ne chercha plus de ressources que dans lui-même			2 ans il cesse de Peindre & ne s'occupe que du Dessin & études des mathématiques, Géométrie, Physique, lecture des Poètes ; sentiment exquise pour les ouvrages d'esprit	étude constante de la science du dessin; il y joint celle de la géométrie, de la physique et de la philosophie	constant study of design, added to profound study of geometry, physics and philosophy	Plein de la science du dessin, il osa plus. La géométrie, la physique, la philosophie	vastes connaissances en littérature, il étoit bon mathématicien et bon géomètre
	il se mêle de poésie, de morale, de théologie, de métaphysique et de politique			le Peintre Philosophe; avide de tout savoir				
	admis 1744			la mort d'un Académicien lui en ouvre l'entrée à 33 ans	Admis à l'Académie Royale de peinture, à l'âge de trente-trois ans	Admitted into the Royal Academy of Painting at the age of thirty-three		33 ans lorsqu'il fut nommé membre de l'Académie royale
	Duval, son ami						le visage serein et gai du Financier: Duval-de-Tripnoy	
	païement, jusqu'aux genoux; juste de payer ses caprices?							
	en 1756, faisant le portrait du roi, Sa Majesté cherchoit à s'entretenir avec lui sur son art pendant les séances et que La Tour répondit à toutes les observations du monarque: « Vous avez raison, Sire, mais nous n'avons point de marine. »	Il peignoit le portrait de M ^{me} de Pompadour; le roi étoit présent, et dans la conversation il fut question des bâtimens que le roi avoit fait construire; La Tour, qu'on n'interrogeoit pas, prit la parole et eut l'impudence de dire que cela étoit fort beau, mais que des vaisseaux vaudroient beaucoup mieux. C'étoit dans le temps que les Anglois avoient détruit notre manne et que nous n'avions aucun navire à leur opposer.	peignant M ^{me} de Pompadour, le roi, après l'affaire de Rosbach, arriva fort triste, elle lui dit qu'il ne falloit point qu'il s'affligeât, qu'il tomberoit malade, qu'au reste, après eux le déluge					
				Louis XV et le Donjon éclairé de tous les côtés : le roi ne fut pas le Maître chez lui	Louis XV et le Donjon éclairé de tous les côtés : le roi ne fut pas le Maître chez lui	repeated exactly: Tower for Donjon	Louis XV et le Donjon éclairé de tous les côtés : le roi ne fut pas le Maître chez lui	
				Louis XV; le vous croyois François ; non, Picard, et de Saint-Quentin				s'annonça comme peintre anglais ; Français et Picard
				offre du Saint-Michel 2 fois	deux fois il eut la modestie ou la fierté de refuser le cordon de St. Michel	the modesty twice to refuse the Order of St. Michael	refuser le cordon de Saint-Michel	le cordon de Saint-Michel, il refuse
Dauphin mal instruit – tromper par des frçons [cf. Grimm, Dauphin et « Patrie »]		Les enfans du dauphin mal élevés						
				la nécessité d'attendre l'instant qu'il a présent, pour la jouissance. L'heure passée, la place est occupée			La Tour arrive au moment indiqué; on le fait attendre; il disparaît	
	La dauphine, Fontainebleau ou Versailles?				« dites à Madame que je ne vais pas peindre en ville ».	possibly origin of "Tell Madam the Marchioness that I do not run about the town to paint"	« dites à Madame que je ne vais pas peindre en ville ».	

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					« je n'aime point à être interrompu ».	Mme de Pompadour interrupted by king La Tour collects wig &c refusing to continue: will return when Marchioness alone	« je n'aime point à être interrompu ».	
il ne va à la cour que pour leur dire leurs vérités ; à Versailles il passe pour un fou				empressé d'aller produire ses talens à la Cour, où les récompenses sont si magnifiques. Il fait parler l'histoire, la maîtresse & le juge des Rois; & les faits sont présentés de manière à ne pas laisser de sujet de méprise sur l'application	il ne tarde pas à être appelé à la cour; mais son caractère libre, indépendant, lui fait refuser cette faveur avec la même constance qu'on en met ordinairement à l'obtenir: il obéit enfin aux ordres du monarque.	long resisted call to court, but finally yielded	On l'appella à la Cour; il refuse avec une constance héroïque.	
Perronneau portrait Salon, confronted with autoportrait au chapeau rabattu				même histoire, mais avec autoportrait à l'index indiquant le portrait de Perronneau				
	le peintre son critique							
	impossibilité de perfection							
	La Reynière non payés: 10,000 à 4800 livres; Silvestre	2000 écus, les riches doivent payer pour les pauvres						
	ne plus connoître d'amis, lorsqu'il est question de ses portraits							
	Mme de Mondonville, 25 louis							
	portrait de l'inconnu, miroir de toilette							
			pastel la rivale de la peinture à l'huile	une telle variété de crayons, qu'il n'a plus à regretter la palette du plus fécond coloniste				
			Vandick & Titien					
	talent de faire parfaitement ressembler		la parfaite ressemblance de la figure, mais l'âme tout entière de ses personnages	aperçoit les modifications de l'âme sur le visage				
			caractères de Théophraste et de la Bruyère	il peint le caractère				
	une assez honnête fortune		fortune assez considérable	fortune déjà honnête accrue par la succession d'un frère				
			tous les infortunés avoient un droit acquis sur les fruits					
				Portraits des grands froids et sévères ; des amis, la chaleur du génie	on discerne aisément ceux qui sont le fruit de la complaisance, de ceux que l'amitié ou l'estime ont fait choisir	those which are the fruits of esteem or friendship are easily distinguishable		
				utilise son esprit, fait tirer parti d'un sujet stérile de présenter un côté intéressant &c				Ses crayons se refusaient à retracer les traits d'un sot
				cabinet du chevalier de la Tour la reine				
				Mondonville: musicien sans violon			Mondonville sensible au son qu'il tire de son violon	Dans son salon
				Manelli gai sans costume				
				Crébillon – tête d'un Sénèque			La coupe d'Atrée paraît se répandre sur la physionomie de Crébillon	Dans son salon
				La Condamine: sa surdité	Lacondamine, que ce savant était privé de l'ouïe	la Condamine; in which it is apparent that the philosopher was deaf	Condamine, que ce Philosophe était sourd	Dans son salon
				Rousseau philosophe				Ami de J.-J. Rousseau
							Voltaire, tout son génie et sa pétillante activité sont dans ses yeux étincelans comme deux astres	Dans son salon
				portrait du P Emmanuel procure des aumônes				
				Dachery 3 fois				
				Silvestre le plus parfait abbé Hubert				Dans son salon
				Nollet son ami				Dans son salon
				Orry, Ministres des Finances, se faisait un plaisir de l'admettre dans sa familiarité				Dans son salon ; ami du ministre des Finances
				maréchal de Saxe				La Tour lui obtient une pension de 200,000 francs
				Franklin				
				le convive admis à sa table		house was resorted to by the most distinguished artists, philosophers, and literati		sa table était toujours bien servie et ouverte à ses nombreux amis
						continual acts of benevolence		
				une foule de solliciteurs, qui fondent sur sa bonne volonté, sur son crédit ou sur sa fortune diverses espérances	il aime mieux donner à celui qui abusait de sa confiance, que de manquer l'occasion de secourir l'indigent	door was continually surrounded by the needy; would rather give to those who abused unsuspected charity, than hazard the refusing succour to the	il aime mieux donner à celui qui abusait de sa confiance, que de manquer l'occasion de secourir l'indigent	

TROPES

				10,000 livres pour fonder un prix annuel, ... ouvrage de Perspective & de Paysage	10,000 livres pour fonder un prix annuel pour le perspective	really deserving 400 guineas to found an annual prize for perspective	10,000 livres pour fonder un prix annuel pour le perspective	prix pour la perspective et le paysage
			prix de 500 fr. à l'Académie d'Amiens	prix de 500 livres, l'Académie d'Amiens	prix de 500 livres, l'Académie d'Amiens	prize of 20 guineas, Academy of Amiens	prix de 500 livres, l'Académie d'Amiens	médaille de 500 francs à Amiens
			plusieurs établissements précieux qu'il a faits à Saint-Quentin	ce Bienfaiteur universel tendre ses bras secourables à la foiblesse des deux extrêmes de la vie humaine; l'Ecole Royale gratuite de Dessin, qu'il a fondée parmi nous avec une munificence sans exemple	Ecole gratuite de Dessin	establishments for support of indigent children; asylum for distressed age; and at St. Quentin, a free school for drawing	Ecole gratuite de Dessin	A l'enfant qui vient de naître ; l'artisan infirme ; l'école royale de dessin
				son entrée triomphale	son entrée ressemblait à un triomphe	entrance into St. Quentin resembled a triumph	son entrée ressemblait à un triomphe	
					Aucun Peintre n'eut plus d'esprit que la Tour		Aucun Peintre n'eut plus d'esprit que la Tour	
					son portrait en Démocrite repassant, dans son imagination, toutes les sottises dont il avait été témoin		son portrait en Démocrite repassant, dans son imagination, toutes les sottises dont il avait été témoin	

Matchmaking in Ancien Régime France

17 June 2019

This exchange of letters has been published – but in an obscure journal which has hitherto been completely overlooked. I won't at this stage name the participants as it spoils the story, but I haven't changed anything else. Suffice it to say that the fate of a major picture collection depends on the outcome.

An undated (evidently some time in 1788) letter from a lady, Mme R, to Monsieur X, an unmarried 62-year-old retired soldier living in a town in Northern France, concerning Mme D.:

C'est uniquement, Monsieur, par reconnaissance de la conversation que nous avons eue ensemble quand j'ai eu l'honneur de vous voir, que je me suis permis de parler à M. le chevalier de B*** d'une demoiselle qui me paraît réunir tout ce que vous m'avez paru désirer dans une compagne, et que je connais assez pour être persuadé qu'elle ferait votre bonheur. M. le chevalier de B*** ne vous a sûrement pas laissé ignorer qu'il s'agissait d'une personne de 40 à 48 ans, parfaitement bien élevée, laborieuse, accoutumée aux soins du ménage et aussi recommandable par les qualités du cœur que par les agréments de l'esprit. Je ne vous parle point de sa figure: vous êtes sûrement, Monsieur, au-dessus de cette considération: tout ce que je vous en dirai c'est qu'elle est grande, bien faite, qu'elle a de belles dents, de beaux yeux et de superbes cheveux noirs; c'est à tort, Monsieur, que vous vous effrayés de ce qu'elle est née Demoiselle. Sa sœur n'en a pas moins épousé un simple particulier, revêtu d'une charge honnête, qui n'a pas comme vous, Monsieur, l'avantage d'avoir servi et d'être décoré de la Croix de Saint Louis; et cette union n'en a pas moins été constamment heureuse et paisible depuis plus de douze ans, malgré les revers qui ont diminués la fortune du mari, épreuve délicate, comme vous savez, Monsieur, et à laquelle ne tiennent pas beaucoup d'hommes mêmes, quoique très recommandables d'ailleurs. Mon amie qui a toujours vécu avec son beau-frère et sa sœur depuis leur mariage, a peut être encore plus de cette bonhomie si désirable dans le commerce de l'intime amitié; et bien loin de se prévaloir du hazard de sa naissance, je lui ai toujours trouvé plus de franchise dans l'expression de ses sentiments, plus de simplicité dans les manières que n'en ont certaines femmes, de ce qu'on appelle l'honnête bourgeoisie.

Quelle que soit cependant, Monsieur, ma prédilection et mon attachement sincère pour cette demoiselle, je suis fort éloignée de vouloir employer vis-à-vis de vous aucun genre de séduction. Je vois en elle du côté du personnel tout ce qui peut vous convenir; du côté de la fortune, un peu plus même que vous ne m'aviez paru exiger, car vous m'avez paru souhaiter seulement qu'une femme eut assés de quoi pourvoir à son entretien, et je crois que mon amie auroit encore quelque chose de reste, cette clause remplie. L'occasion me paraît donc telle que vous la désiriés; et si vous n'êtes arrêté que par la considération de sa naissance, j'ose vous répondre que, gentilhomme ou non, vous lui serés toujours très cher si vous savés d'ailleurs la rendre heureuse, et que son caractère vous y fera trouver autant de facilité que de plaisir.

Je ne consulte pas moins, Monsieur, dans cette explication l'intérêt de votre bonheur que celui d'assurer un sort tranquille à une amie véritablement estimable et méritante à tous égards. Je me serais reprochée de vous laisser des craintes que sa façon de penser ne justifiera jamais. Je n'irai pas plus loin, Monsieur, et contente d'avoir fait ce que je croyais devoir à la vérité autant qu'à l'amitié, je me bornerai maintenant à vous prier de croire à la sincérité des sentiments avec lesquels j'ai l'honneur d'être, Monsieur, votre très humble et très obéissante servante.

R.

J'ai oublié de vous observer que tout séjour, à Paris, rue ***, en province et même à la campagne, serait parfaitement égal à la personne en question.

What follows appears to be an enclosure to a lost letter from X to an unnamed friend (in my 19th century source it is printed in a completely incorrect location, attached to a much later letter), while the second and third paragraphs are presumably transcribed from a letter X has received from a very close friend:

Je n'ai pas cru devoir insérer dans ma lettre la réponse que l'on a faite à mon amy. La voicy mot pour mot:

Au reçu de ta lettre, mon cher ami, je n'ai eu rien de plus pressé que d'aller à R*** pour y prendre les informations concernant Madame *** quoique je la connoisse depuis longtems, je n'ai pas voulu m'en rapporter à moy seul, et j'ai consulté quelqu'un dont je suis sur, pour avoir les renseignements que tu désire, et tu peux compter sur ce que tu va dire.

Madame D*** a 33 ou 34 ans au plus, et non 40 comme tu me le mandes, elle est grande, assez bien de figure, mais elle est rien moins que saine, elle est d'une laiderie dont rien n'approche. La crainte de brûler quelques bouts de chandelles l'a concentrée chez elle, et elle est femme à proposer à des amies, qui viennent la voir le soir, de les éteindre, parce que l'on peut bien s'entretenir sans se voir. On dit qu'elle pleure continuellement son premier mary; note bien cecy, paraport aux risques que l'on court. Tu dois m'entendre. Quant à sa fortune, on ne sçait pas au juste ce qu'elle a; cependant on lui croit mille écus de rente; et après la mort de M^{me} sa mère, qui est infirme, elle pourra jouir de 4,500 fr.

Mon amy vient d'écrire au sien pour sçavoir au juste ce qu'il entend: par-elle est rien moins que saine. Je vous avoüe, Monsieur, que cette phrase m'a fort inquiété. Je jouis de la meilleure santé, je n'ai jamais fait aucune maladie, exceptée la petite vérole; il seroit bien facheux pour moi d'être uni à une personne, dont la mauvaise santé me feroit passer le reste de mes jours dans des inquiétudes continuelles. Je compte assés sur vôtre honnêteté, et sur votre véracité pour espérer que vous voudrés bien me dire ce qui en est; ainsi que de la ladrerie dont on l'accuse. Le défaut de santé est un malheur, mais l'avarice est un vice qui fait le malheur, non de l'avare, mais de ceux qui sont obligés de vivre avec lui. La franchise avec laquelle j'ai l'honneur de vous écrire doit vous prouver combine je suis incapable de tromper personne, mais aussi combien je serois fâché de l'être.

23 novembre 1788 — A letter from X, to an unnamed friend:

Je te remercie bien sincèrement, mon cher et ancien camarade, des informations que tu as fait prendre; mais je trouve qu'il y a bien à rabattre de ce que tu m'as dit de l'âge et de la fortune de la personne en question. Monsieur ton parent te mande qu'elle n'a que 36 ans, au lieu de 40 ou 45 ans que j'aurois désiré, et 2,400 fr. de rentes, au lieu de 4 à 5,000 fr. que tu lui croyois. Ce dernier article, le plus important et le plus essentiel pour bien des personnes, ne l'est pas pour moi. La trop grande disproportion d'âge est tout ce que je redoute de plus. Quoiqu'ordinairement une femme à 36 ans ne soit plus dans l'âge d'inspirer une grande passion, elle n'en a pas moins les prétentions; et, comme elle est dans la force du tempérament, elle n'en est que plus exigeante; et à 63 ans, un homme est peu propre à inspirer du goût et à satisfaire et remplir ses désirs: alors, la jalousie et la mauvaise humeur se mettent dans le ménage, et l'on fait réciproquement son malheur. D'ailleurs, dans le compte que te rend M. ton parent, il n'est pas question du caractère, et de la manière qu'elle a vécu avec son premier mary, non plus que de la conduite actuelle. Quoique d'après tout ce que tu m'en a dis, je doive la croire très honnête, on ne saurait trop prendre d'informations sur ces trois objets,

puisqu'ils sont et doivent être la base de l'estime, ou du mépris que l'on a l'un pour l'autre, lorsque l'on est obligé de vivre ensemble.

Je te prie, au reçu de ma lettre, d'engager M. ton parent de te mander ce qui en est, et d'après sa réponse, j'aurai l'honneur de l'aller voir et de le remercier des peines que je lui occasionne. Pour éviter les longueurs qui sont toujours désagréables en pareil cas, je crois qu'il pourroit m'adresser directement sa réponse. Surtout prie-le bien instamment de ne point me nommer que je n'ai sçu à quoi m'en tenir, et que je n'ai vu la personne. Si après cela, elle me convient, et que de son côté elle se décide à former un second engagement, alors je me ferai connoître et lui donnerai tous les moyens, pour prendre des renseignements les plus certains sur ma conduite, mon âge, mes mœurs et ma fortune, dont tu auras sans doute parlé à M. ton parent, à qui je te prie de faire agréer les assurances de ma sincère reconnaissance. Sois persuadé de celle que j'aurais toujours pour l'intérêt que tu prends à ce qui me regard, ainsi que du parfait attachement, avec lequel je suis ton sincère et véritable ami,

X.

Je compte sur ce que tu m'as dit que la dame est veuve sans enfants, car autrement il ne faudrait pas faire de démarches. Je ne veux pas avoir les embarras ny les inquiétudes, qui en sont les suites.

23 janvier 1789 — *Letter from X to Mme D:*

Madame

Je me suis fait une loy d'être franc et sincère. Si j'ai le bonheur de vous être uni, j'ose me flatter que vous reconnoîtrez de plus en plus que je m'en écarterai jamais. Je dois donc vous avouer que l'impression que m'a laissé notre entrevue, m'a fait douter quelques instants si j'avais eu raison de vous montrer la fermeté qui vous a étonnée. Plus je me livrois à ma sensibilité, plus mon doute augmentoit; mais aussi vous confesserai-je avec la même franchise que, plus j'ai senti l'obstacle, plus j'ai vu la nécessité de me vaincre, de réfléchir et de me juger. Rendu à moi-même, j'ai dû peser scrupuleusement ce que je vous devois et la suite d'un engagement aussi important pour votre bonheur et le mien. J'ai reconnu, Madame, que ce bonheur mutuel ne peut vraiment exister, sans se dépouiller respectivement, des affections qui lui sont étrangères. Vous conviendrez, j'ose l'espérer, que ce bonheur dépend absolument d'une union sans partage. Il exige entièrement le sacrifice de tout ce qui pouroit y porter le moindre mélange. Je vais plus loin, et dès que ce sacrifice doit même cesser de l'être, dès lors que la raison le prescrit. Je n'en voudrois d'autre témoignage que celui de Mme la marquise de L, qui paroît avoir pour vous la plus tendre amitié. Aussi suis-je toujours persuadé que ce sacrifice, si c'en est un pour le moment, doit non-seulement s'étendre sur le gage que vous aviez pris d'un souvenir qui vous est cher, mais encore sur le portrait qui ne paroît que trop l'entretenir. Je me trouve donc confirmé plus que jamais dans cette nécessité absolue.

Ecartons, je vous prie, Madame, ces ombres, ces nuages, dont on couvre trop souvent le flambeau de l'hymen. Là où est la raison, ces idées d'illusion, si fatales à l'union conjugale, ne peuvent se rencontrer. Cette tendre union ne présente qu'un tout de deux parties: et cet heureux assemblage, si propre à ses douceurs et à ces charmes, ne peut certainement former une unité parfaite, qu'autant que chacun se livre tout entier à l'autre. Telle est l'image que je me fais, et me suis fait du mariage, et à laquelle je sens que je dois absolument m'attacher. Puissent ces réflexions être assez persuasives pour vous y fixer de même. Si vous m'en donnez l'assurance, la noblesse de vos sentimens m'en sera votre garant: mon âme s'y confiera pleinement, et j'en prévois déjà d'avance la plus heureuse augure. Permettez-moi de compter assez sur moi-même pour la réaliser. Puissé-je jurer une foy inviolable en recevant la vôtre: et vous convaincre du respectueux dévouement avec lequel je suis et ne cesse d'être, Mme, V. S.

D.

30 janvier 1789 — *Response to X from Mme D:*

J'ai lu avec beaucoup d'attention, Monsieur, la lettre que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire. Je vois clair comme le jour que vous craignés que le petit être qui fait l'objet de votre discussion ne soit un obstacle à l'attachement que je dois avoir pour vous. Vous ne connoissés pas mon cœur, ni l'honnêteté de mes sentimens. Soyez-bien persuadé que si je n'avois pas l'espérance que vos procédés feroient naître dans mon cœur un attachement sincère, je n'aurois jamais pensé à former un second engagement, parce que je sens qu'il est impossible de pouvoir être heureux, qu'autant que l'on a l'un pour l'autre la plus tendre et la plus sincère amitié. J'ai connu ce bonheur, et c'est dans l'espérance que j'ai eu de le voir renaître, que j'ai consenti aux propositions qui m'ont été faites de vôtre part. Ce n'est cependant qu'après avoir eu la certitude que je trouverois aussi dans l'honnêteté de vos sentimens tout ce qui pouvoit faire le bonheur d'une femme honnête et raisonnable. Mais comme il faut prononcer sur l'article qui tient au cœur, et moi aussy, et qu'il faut se décider d'une manière ou d'autre; je vais vous dire tout naturellement mes intentions à cet égard, et vous dirés à M. de F si cela vous convient ou non. Je désire ne jamais abandonner l'enfant dont je me suis chargé. Son père ne l'a accordé qu'à mes sollicitations réitérées, et parce que sa mère n'avait pas pour cette enfant la tendresse qu'elle avoit pour les autres, quoique cette petite créature soit d'un caractère tout à fait aimable. D'après cela, en me chargeant de cette petite, je lui ai jurée, dans mon cœur, amitié et protection; et je sens que je ne puis me détacher de l'une et lui refuser l'autre. Je vous avois proposé un accommodement sur cela: c'était de la mettre dans une petite pension de cette ville ou des environs; vous avés eu l'air d'abord d'y acquiescer, et par une réflexion qui a été défavorable à l'honnêteté de mes sentimens, vous avés mis, dans votre refus, une fermeté qui, je vous l'avoue, m'a étonnée, et je vous dirai même plus, qui m'a effrayée. Vous avez fait sur cet objet beaucoup de réflexions; j'en a fait aussi beaucoup de mon côté; j'en sondé mon cœur, et j'ai trouvé que cet espèce d'attachement ne pouvoit avoir aucun rapport, ni être mis en comparaison à celui qu'un mary et une femme doivent avoir l'un pour l'autre. Voilà, Monsieur, mes sentimens; vous voudrés bien dire à M. de F qui doit aller à [***] dans la semaine prochaine, si vous les adoptés ou si vous les refusés, il m'en fera part à son retour. Soyés, je vous prie, persuadé, Monsieur, de toute la sincérité de mes sentimens, et de ceux avec lesquels j'ai l'honneur d'être

D.

5 février 1789 — *Response from X to Mme D:*

Madame,

Aussi flatté qu'ému de la réponse dont vous m'avez honoré, que de réflexions ne m'a-t-il pas fallu faire pour ramener au vrai principe les raisons que vous avés eu le talent de si bien faire valoir? Je l'ai lue et relue plusieurs fois, et ne peux vous rendre et le plaisir et la peine qu'elle m'a faite. Ici une âme honnête et sensible se développe avec toute l'énergie qui lui est propre; là les obligations qu'elle croit avoir contractées semble devoir prépondérer sur toute autre; ou du moins, elle en est si remplie qu'elle ne voit pas qu'il est impossible de les allier, que ne puis-je avoir l'art de vous persuader! Je ne dois au moins rien négliger pour y parvenir. A ne considérer, Madame, l'attachement qui nous divise, abstraction de toute circonstances, sans doute ce pur effet de l'humanité n'auroit rien de contraire à un attachement, dont les causes et les vues sont si différentes; mais m'est-il possible de juger du vôtre sous ce seul rapport? C'est ce que je vous prie de bien peser. Cette innocente créature qui vous fixe, n'a pu tant vous fixer par ce seul sentiment. Il est noble, il est louable sans doute, mais il faut y voir nécessairement d'autres causes; et ces causes peuvent-elles m'être indifférentes. Plus elles peuvent servir à augmenter ou entretenir le degré de sensibilité qui vous y attache, plus je dois envisager les dangers qui peuvent en naître. Je ne m'arrêterai pas à la nécessité où est une veuve de se détacher absolument et pleinement de toutes les

impressions, que son premier mary a pu lui laisser: une seconde union, pour être pure et parfaite ne souffre pas de partage. Votre silence fera cette vérité me convaincre de toute sa force. Je parlerai encore moins de l'effet de l'amour propre qu'il ne m'est pas permis de faire valoir. Il est plus naturel de tenir à cet instant à l'amitié, qui vous occupe qu'à celle que j'ai fait naître. J'ai donc à vous démontrer la juste crainte que j'ai à concevoir.

Vous désirez, Madame, de jouir du bonheur que vous avés eu dans votre premier engagement; c'est ce que je cherche, et qui fait mon unique veu. Mais vous faut-il plus que votre expérience pour convenir que ce bonheur ne peut être pur et durable, si l'on névite pas tout ce qui peut en troubler et en altérer la source. Il ne peut exister, très certainement qu'autant que les deux cœurs ont les mêmes affections, et les mêmes sentimens. Pour entretenir cette unité si essentielle, il faut nécessairement que les impressions de l'un deviennent celles de l'autre. Appliquons ces principes: il faut donc que votre attachement devienne le mien; car nous ne devons pas seulement aimer pour nous-mêmes, nous devons encore mieux aimer tout ce qui flatte la personne que nous aimons.

Or, permettez-moy, Madame, de vous demander s'il serait raisonnable d'exiger de moi le même attachement qui vous tient tant à cœur, en ce moment. En supposant que l'habitude de voir ce qui vous seroit cher pût me faire naître le même sentiment, ne dois-je pas craindre le contraire! L'intérêt que j'aurais à vous faire perdre entièrement le souvenir que vous m'avés tant montré pour la mémoire de M. votre mary, ne seroit-il pas un obstacle? et même ne doit-il pas l'être? si je ne puis prendre ce sentiment; si même je ne le dois pas, je serais donc au moins indifférent à un objet qui loin de vous l'être, vous affectera plus vivement. Hé quoy! je vous verrois affectée, et loin de trouver des raisons pour vous complaire, j'en aurois au contraire pour n'y pas condescendre. C'est là positivement le trouble et la diversité de sentimens que j'ai si grand intérêt de prévenir. C'est la pomme de discorde, que je dois éloigner de chez moy. Plus nous paroissions sensible l'un et l'autre, moins nous devons admettre ce qui peut devenir un sujet et une source de chagrins et de peines.

Telles sont, Madame, les nouvelles réflexions que j'ai cru propres à détruire les vôtres. Puissent-elles être assés convaincantes pour vous déterminer à ce qui m'est si important d'obtenir; c'est-à-dire de renvoyer la petite dans sa famille, à qui je consens que vous fassiez du bien, et à laisser dans le sein de la vôtre le portrait de M. votre mary, que je ne peux recevoir, chez moy, sans risque. Si vous me refusés ces deux sacrifices, auxquels sont attachés le bonheur ou le malheur de ma vie; je suis forcé de voir cet évènement et cette fatalité dans les décrets de la providence. Je n'en conserverais pas moins pour vous, Madame, l'estime que vous m'avés inspirée; et ne m'étant plus permis d'y joindre des sentimens plus tendres, je me borne à vous assurer dans toutes les occasions et dans tous les instants de ma vie, du profond respect avec lequel je suis

X

10 février 1789 — *Response to X from Mme D.*

J'ai bien tardé, Monsieur de répondre à la dernière lettre que vous m'avés fait l'honneur de m'écrire; je vais le faire avec toute la franchise qui fait le fond de mon caractère. Je conviens que, d'après votre manière d'envisager les objets qui nous divisent, il est tout naturel que vous cherchiés à éloigner tous les obstacles que vous croyés devoir troubler votre bonheur; et tous les argumens que vous employés pour me convaincre seroient bien faits pour me persuader. J'avois aussi cédé en partie à vos désirs, puisque je vous avois proposé de mettre cet enfant en pension, c'étoit l'éloigner de chez vous, permettés moy de vous rappeler encore que vous étiez au moment d'y consentir; mais une réflexion désavantageuse à mes sentimens vous a fait revenir sur cet article: je dis désavantageux: parce que, persuadée comme je le suis de la pureté de mes intentions, je n'avois pas voulu apporter chés vous aucun sujet de discorde. Seroit-il possible d'imaginer que j'ai pu consentir à former un second engagement, si je n'avois été dans la ferme résolution de

contribuer de tout mon pouvoir au bonheur de celui à qui je me serois unie! et ce seroit être ennemie du mien si j'avois crüe y apporter volontairement des obstacles: car il est dans ma manière de penser de ne pouvoir être heureux, si je n'ai pas un véritable attachement pour la personne avec laquelle je serois destinée à passer ma vie.

D'après cela je n'ai pas imaginé qu'un enfant que j'avois pris auprès de moy pour me distraire et m'occuper, et qui m'a inspiré de l'intérêt et de l'amitié, put jamais être un obstacle à un attachement qui doit être de beaucoup au-dessus de celui que j'ai pour elle. Je suis si persuadé de la sincérité de mes sentimens sur cet article que cela me fait persister dans la résolution que j'ai prise de ne point renvoyer cette enfant à ses parents, et de m'intéresser toujours à son sort. Je lui dois ce tendre intérêt, et je dois aussi beaucoup à ses parents pour la marque de confiance et d'amitié qu'ils m'ont donnée. Voilà, Monsieur, mes intentions sur cet article, et je ne me permettrés jamais de prononcer et d'agir différemment. Quant à celui du portrait de l'homme estimable que j'ai perdu, il m'est encore dur d'avoir à discuter cet objet; mais puisque vous désirez que je vous parle avec franchise, je vous dirai que je ne veux point laisser à ma famille cette image: ils n'ont pas assés accordé à sa mémoire pour croire qu'ils en fassent grand cas, et d'ailleurs le public seroit instruit de cela, et ce seroit un ridicule que je me donnerois, et qu'à coup sûr je ne mériterois pas: mais il auroit été une manière d'arranger cet article à votre gré et au mien.

Je regrette beaucoup de n'avoir pas prévu toutes ces difficultés: je vous aurois épargné, Monsieur, et à moy aussi, la peine de les discuter; mais j'en suis dédomagée par l'avantage que j'ai de vous connoître, et de vous assurer des sentimens avec lesquels j'ai l'honneur d'être

D.

17 février 1789 — *Letter from X to M. de F.*

Sensible à tous vos bons offices, et vos honnêtetés, c'est moy qui doit vous témoigner la plus vive reconnaissance. Je verrai toujours naître, avec intérêt, les occasions qui pourront me venger.

Mme D m'a bien honoré de sa réponse. J'en suis affecté. La naïveté de ses impressions, le charme qu'elle sait y répandre, tout, en elle, me pénètre délicieusement, et m'auroit entraîné, si mes raisons ne m'avoient pas paru devoir prépondérer.

Chacun a droit à son opinion: la nôtre, quoique différente, est peut être admissible de part et d'autre, il n'en résulte pas moins une discordance de vües, dont l'idée seule doit m'effrayer et m'arrêter.

Que nous étions bien éloignés de cette unité de sentimens que je recherchois, et dont je me faisois, d'après notre existence, une si gracieuse image! si nous n'avons pu nous accorder dès le premier pas, quelle crainte cette circonstance ne doit-elle pas m'inspirer!

Je suis trop jaloux de son bonheur, et de ma tranquillité pour rien hazarder qui puisse y porter le moindre trouble. Je vois donc l'impossibilité de notre union. Par quelle fatalité faut-il que celle, dont les qualités extérieures avoient fait sur moy une si douce impression, ne puisse faire son bonheur avec moy par la diversité de nos manières de penser. J'en ai tous les regrets possibles.

Je vous prie, Monsieur, de les lui rendre avec cette énergie dont vous êtes capable; vous ne pouvés jamais excéder la vérité.

J'aurois eu l'honneur de vous écrire plustôt, si je n'avois compté avoir un entretien avec M. M., ainsi que vous me l'avés annoncé. Je ne l'ai pas vu. Sans doute que ses affaires ne lui auront pas permis de venir icy. Permettés que Mme votre épouse trouve icy les assurances de mon profond respect, et soyés persuadé des sentimens sincères et distingués avec lesquels j'ai l'honneur d'être, Monsieur, votre très humble et très obéissante serviteur,

X

Jean-François, chevalier de La Tour...

19 June 2019



...is the answer to Monday's [puzzle](#). Half-brother of the pastellist, he owned the collection of Maurice-Quentin's works that are now to be found in the musée Antoine-Lécuyer at Saint-Quentin (where you can also find his portrait, left – anonymous French school – which may also inform your reaction to his letters). Had he married the lady in question, whose identity remains unknown (apart from the initials Ad. D. with which one of her letters is signed), who knows what might have happened to the collection which he bequeathed to his native city in his will? That story has been told repeatedly, and of course can be followed in my annotated table of La Tour [documents](#) which I have now updated to include the correspondence which was published by Charles Desmaze in *Travaux de la Société académique de Saint-Quentin* (xii, 1875, pp. 310–38), but subsequently overlooked by everyone. Desmaze left these letters to the museum, but they are thought to have been destroyed in the war. We have only therefore his printed text (unfortunately he arranged the documents in no order, and attached some sheets to the wrong letters, which is why I had to update my first blog when I found another description of the young widow before the chevalier wrote to her).

There (or I hope better arranged in my [table](#)) you can find the few names I have suppressed: the initial letter came from a person Desmaze identifies only as Mme Durosoy de Lépidor: she was in fact Marie-Thérèse Du Rozoi, third wife of Michel-Julien Mathieu dit Lépidor (1740–p.1799); they had married in 1784. A juge de paix, and former secrétaire du chevalier de Luxembourg, Lépidor was the younger son of the composer and musicien du roi Michel Mathieu, and himself composed several operas and some chamber music: very much the world the pastellist loved.

But perhaps the trickiest puzzle (apart from Ad. D.) concerns how Desmaze obtained the letters. They included a number, such as these, that B&W did print. But all Desmaze reveals was that he was given the letters by “Madame Sarrazin-Varluzel-de-Cessières” [sic]; in another reference Desmaze refers to her as “M^{me} Sarazin V.

Varluzel, 10, rue de Chabrol, à Paris” (does the V. mean veuve?), while in a third Desmaze tells us that “Mme Sarazin Varluzel, légataire de l'abbé Duliège, a recueilli, dans cette succession, des tableaux venant de La Tour”; finally, in his 1874 *Reliquaire*, Desmaze states that Mme Sarazin was the heir of the abbé Duliège, “exécuteur testamentaire du chevalier de La Tour”. Later sources have gone no further, although embellishments occur: the Goncourts called Mme Sarazin Varluzel “une descendante de La Tour”.

Those of you addicted to puzzles may want to try your hand at unravelling this now. But as I have put the details into my documentation file, the answer is already, or will very shortly be, googleable. So I shall explain, after first disposing of the red herring that the link relates to a Pierre-Antoine Du Liège, sgr de Warluzel (1714–1789), who was président-trésorier de France et général des finances en la généralité d'Amiens.

The answer is quite different. The chevalier de La Tour's executor, the abbé Duliège, has been known for some time, as Adrien-Joseph-Constant Duliège, chapelain de l'église de Saint-Quentin et vicaire de la paroisse de Notre-Dame, although I have only recently tracked his baptismal and burial records which require patient trawling through parish records. He was born in 1749 to a tailor whose sister was the pastellist's step-mother and the chevalier's mother. It is the abbé's death which would seem most relevant in tracking Desmaze's source: he died in 1817.

As it turns out Desmaze is wrong. Flore-Joséphine Warluzèle, as her name appeared at her baptism in 1820, was not related to La Tour, and, born three years after the abbé Duliège's death, cannot have been his heir (didn't Desmaze realize this when he met the 52-year-old lady?). She married, apparently for the second time, Henry-Léopold Sarrazin (from a Bordeaux family), at Cessières (Aisne) in 1872: he was very much alive, and lived at 11 [not 10] rue de Chabrol at the time. Her origins were humble, her father being a carpenter, and the name was variously spelt (names beginning with W were hardly popular in France in the 1870s). Consulting her previous marriage entry in 1866, however, we find that she was then described as the widow of an Emilien Duliège, a claim not documented anywhere else. Indeed Duliège's death certificate, which describes him as a marchand de bois in Paris, rue de Charenton-Saint-Antoine, has him as a bachelor. The plot thickens however when we discover the name of one of the witnesses on Duliège's death certificate: Joseph-Florimond Warluzel, ébéniste. To jump to the answer, Warluzel was Flore's half-brother; he had obviously gone to Paris to practise his trade; the Duliège family included numerous members active in the carpentry and wood business in Paris, and the ébéniste presumably introduced his sister to Emilien, leading to a relationship of some level of irregularity. Emilien was born in Paris 10^e on 26 janvier 1819, but the Paris archives where the Etat civil reconstitué is held do not provide copies of documents for remote scholarship, so the final link between Emilien and the abbé will have to remain open until I next have time...unless some kind reader of this blog would be kind enough to consult the microfiche. (My guess is that Emilien was the grandson of Pierre-Alexis-René Duliège, tailleur d'habits, brother of the abbé who married him to an Eusèbe-Adélaïde Lescot at Notre-Dame de Saint-Quentin in 1787: the chevalier de La Tour was a witness.)

[Post script, 9 October 2019: The Etat civil reconstitué has now revealed that Emilien was indeed Pierre-Alexis-René's grandson.]

Genealogies of La Tour and allied families

LA TOUR

Pierre de La Tour [Latour, Delatour], sonneur de Saint-Jean, Laon

- ⇒ Pierre de Latour (1629–p.1690) ∞ 1° Laon, St-Michel 1.III.1677 Marie [?La Vuarnée] (c.1657–1690) [bride, groom etc. illiterate; only brother Jean signs]; 2° Laon, St-Jean-au-Bourg 7.XI.1690 Marie Fourquin
- ⇒ Claude de La Tour (1637–Laon, St Michel 27.X.1685), maître tisserand ∞ Marie Camus (1645–Laon, St Michel 20.VIII.1686, tém. Jean de La Tour)
- ⇒ Elisabeth (1660–) ∞ Laon, St-Michel 22.XI.1678 Nicolas Garbe (1648–), maréchal ferrant, fils de Francois [Garbe](#) & de Jeanne Baudé *q.v.*
- ⇒ Jean de La Tour (1639–p.1695), reçu maître maçon à Laon 1671, witnesses 1695 marriage of daughter ∞ Laon, St-Michel 2.II.1669 Marie [Garbe](#) (1643–), fille de François Garbe (1610–16.IX.1678) *q.v.*
- ⇒ François de La Tour (Laon, St-Michel 5.I.1670 – Saint-Quentin, 25.X.1736), chantre, maître écrivain à Saint-Quentin ∞ 1° Noyon, Saint-Germain 20.III.1699 Reine [Havart](#) (Noyon, Saint-Hilaire 17.VII.1673– Saint-Quentin 6.VII.1723), *q.v.*; 2° 21.VI.1725 Marie-Françoise Duliège (1695– [?]Montmartre 17.X.1775), fille de Jean Duliège, musicien à l'église de Saint-Quentin *q.v.*
- ⇒ Adrien-François de La Tour (Saint-Quentin, St-Jacques 21.VI.1700 – Saint-Quentin, St-André 20.II.1760)
- ⇒ Charles de La Tour (Saint-Quentin, St-Jacques 13.IV.1702–1766sa), bourgeois de Paris, directeur des vivres d'Italie {[La Tour](#)}
- ⇒ Maurice-Quentin de la Tour (Saint-Quentin, St-Jacques 5.IX.1704 – Saint-Quentin, St-André 18.II.1788sa), pastelliste {[Cobin](#); [La Tour](#); [Lemoyné](#); [Mugnerot](#); [Perronneau](#); [Roetiers](#)}
- ⇒ Jean-Edme de La Tour (1706 – 1714)
- ⇒ Marie-Madeleine (Saint-Quentin, St-André 1–3.III.1708)
- ⇒ Louis-Joseph-Ambroise de La Tour (Saint-Quentin, St-André 7.VI.1712 – Saint-Quentin, St-André 26.XII.1717)
- ⇒ Jean-François de La Tour (Saint-Quentin, St-André 27.III.1726 – Saint-Quentin 14.III.1807sa), chev. Saint-Louis [1768x84], gendarme en 1746, lieutenant de cavalerie, gendarmerie bourguignon a.1768 {[La Tour](#)}
- ⇒ Henry-François de La Tour (Saint-Quentin, St-André 30.I.1728–3.II.1728)
- ⇒ Adrien-Honoré de La Tour (Saint-Quentin, St-André 31.III.1729 – Saint-Quentin, St-André 7.IX.1760sa)
- ⇒ Anne de La Tour (Laon, St-Michel 12/14.II.1672 – Laon, Hôtel-Dieu 8.XI.1749sa)
- ⇒ Pierre de La Tour (Laon, St-Michel 15.VII.1674 –)
- ⇒ Guillaume de La Tour (Laon, St-Michel 25.III.1678 –)
- ⇒ Alexandre (Laon, St-Michel 28.XII.1680–)
- ⇒ Marie-Anne (Laon, St-Michel 4.IV.1683–) 2° ∞ Laon, St Jean 17.V.1695 Philippe Bougier (1669–), chantre de l'église de Saint-Jean au Bourg en 1689, à l'église de Sens 1695, fils de Nicolas Bougier (–a.1723), chantre en l'église collégiale de Laon [∞ 1° 1689 Jeanne Weliner]
- ⇒ Françoise Bougier (La Fère 17.VIII.1697–)
- ⇒ Anne Bougier (La Fère 7.III.1700–p.1747) ∞ 1° son cousin Maurice-Quentin de la Tour; 2° Antoine Guiot ou Diot
- ⇒ Barbe Antoine de La Tour, Guiot ou Diot (Laon, St-Michel 4.XII.1725–1792) 3° ∞ Laon, St Jean 20.I.1749 Jean Grand Sire (Colmesnil c.1710–p.1750), tisserand &c.
- ⇒ Jean-Charles Grand Sire (Dieppe 28.XII.1747–)
- ⇒ Jean Grand Sire (La Fère 23.XII.1750 –)

n.g. [Deschamps](#), [Garbe](#), [Havart](#), [Joret](#), [Masse](#) B&W; Debric 1991; <http://www.lemarois.com/jlm/data/n13veron.html>; Archives de l'Aisne : <http://archives.aisne.fr/archive/recherche/etatcivil/n:11> etc.

GARBE

- François Garbe (1610–16.IX.1678), maréchal ferrant à Laon, Ardon ∞ 1° a.1643 Jeanne Baudé; 2° p.1648 Elisabeth Humuau (1619–1682)
- ⇒ Nicolas Garbe (1648–), maréchal ferrant ∞ Laon, St-Michel 22.XI.1678 Elisabeth de La Tour (1660–), *q.v.*
- ⇒ Marie (Laon, St-Michel 22.IX.1680–)
- ⇒ Noëlle (Laon, St-Michel 23.V.1683–)
- ⇒ Pierre (Laon, St-Michel 21.VIII.1684–) parrain: Pierre de La Tour
- ⇒ Marguerite (Laon, St-Michel 25.IX.1685–)
- ⇒ Nicolas (Laon, St-Michel 6.I.1687–)
- ⇒ Marie (Laon, St-Michel 19.XI.1690–)
- ⇒ César-François (Laon, St-Michel 3.III.1692–) parrain: César-François Caton; marraine: Anne La Tour
- ⇒ Anne-Françoise (Laon, St-Michel 9.IX.1693–) marraine: Anne-Françoise Caton, fille de Pierre Caton
- ⇒ François (Laon, St-Michel 6.II.1695–) parrain: François de La Tour

Jean Garbe ∞ Jeanne Gardel

- ⇒ Noëlle Garbe (1638–Laon, Ardon 30.IX.1708) ∞ 1° c.1650 Claude Honoré; 2° c.1660 François Grosjean (1638–1687)
- ⇒ Marie (1670–1703) ∞ 25.X.1685 François Deschamps (1670–1714)
- ⇒ Marie Garbe (1643–) ∞ Laon, St-Michel 2.II.1669 Jean de [La Tour](#) (1639–p.1695) *q.v.*
- ⇒ Marguerite Garbe (1647–) ∞ Laon, St-Michel 28.IV.1671 Pierre Caton (1653–), marchand tapissier à Laon
- ⇒ François Caton (Laon, St-Jean-au-Bourg 7.II.1672–): parrain François Garbe
- ⇒ Claude Caton (Laon, St-Remy-Place 18.III.1674–)
- ⇒ Noëlle Caton (–1730) ∞ Pierre Messenger, marchand vitrier fayencier à Paris
- ⇒ Henry-Pierre Messenger (1718–p.1730)
- ⇒ Jeanne-Marguerite (1717–p.1730)
- ⇒ Anne-Françoise Caton (Laon, St-Remy-Place 2.II.1678– 1720x30) 2° ∞ Laon, St-Remy-Place 19.II.1703 Denis [Deschamps](#), maître écrivain à Laon *q.v.*
- ⇒ Samuel-Jean-Pierre Caton (Laon, St Remy Place 5.I.1681–)

DESCHAMPS

- Louis Deschamps (–a.1703), de Vailly-sur-Aisne, maître d'école de Vailly 1679–97 ∞ Madeleine Avesin (–a.1703)
- ⇒ Pierre Deschamps, maître écrivain à Vailly, maître d'école de Vailly 1697–1709
- ⇒ Denis Deschamps, maître écrivain à Laon, commis au bureau des Aides 1711 ∞ 1° Laon, St Remy Place 19.II.1703 Anne-Françoise Caton (Laon, St-Remy-Place 2.II.1678– 1720x30), fille de Pierre Caton, marchand tapissier à Laon & Marguerite [Garbe](#), sœur de Mme Jean de [La Tour](#), nièce de Jean Caton; 2° Laon, St Jean au Bourg, 24.VIII.1739 Marie-Louise Cronille, fille de François Cronille & de Marie Aubert
- ⇒ Claude-Charles Deschamps ([?]1699–18.XII.1779), chanoine de Laon {[La Tour](#)}
- ⇒ Claude-Charlotte Deschamps (Laon, St Jean 17.XI.1703–), parrain Claude Marquette de Marly

⇒⇒Pierre-Denis Deschamps (Laon, St Jean 16.XI.1704 – p.1775), perruquier à Verriere près Longjumeau, frère ∞ ?Élisabeth Campoin
 ⇒⇒⇒Jean-Pierre Deschamps (Chilly-Mazarin 7.X.1736 –), perruquier à Verrières ∞ Verrieres 7.XI.1774 Marie-Marguerite Plet, fille de Félix Plet & de Jeanne-Charlotte Courtin
 ⇒⇒⇒Cosme-Damien Deschamps (Chilly-Mazarin 3.XI.1737–1739)
 ⇒⇒⇒Denis-Bernard Deschamps (1740–1740)
 ⇒⇒⇒Anne Elisabeth (1742–1746)
 ⇒⇒⇒Louise-Catherine-Élisabeth (Chilly-Mazarin 10.VII.1746 –p.1786) ∞ Pierre Morel (a.1743–a.1813), vitrier à Verrières-le-Buisson, Essonne
 ⇒⇒⇒⇒Joséphine-Antoinette [= ?fille, nommé par La Tour en 1768] ∞ Paris 22.IV.1813 Jean-Baptiste Favreux
 ⇒⇒⇒⇒Louis-Pierre-Nicolas Morel (?1767–p..1823), vitrier-peintre
 ⇒⇒⇒⇒François-Etienne Morel (Verrieres 26.XII.1768–1835) ∞ 1823 Catherine-Madeleine Denus (1787–1823)
 ⇒⇒⇒⇒Louis-Auguste Morel (1779–1823) ∞ Marie-Antoinette Gendron (1792–1823)
 ⇒⇒Noëlle (Laon, St Jean 15.XII.1705–p.1775) ∞ Augustin Masse, marchand de tabac à Paris, paroisse Saint-Louis-en-l'Île, demeurant en 1775 à Montpellier *q.n.*
 ⇒⇒⇒Charlotte (1741–p.1803) {*La Tour*} ∞ 1761 Jean-Robert Dorison (1731–1803) *n. s.n. Masse*
 ⇒⇒Marie-Marguerite (Laon, St Cyr 1711–)
 ⇒⇒Marie-Jeanne (Laon, St Cyr 24.XII.1716 – Laon Ste Geneviève 22.IX.1774), inv. p.m. 10.I.1775 (MC L.XV/386) ∞ Paris 13.II.1745 Pierre-Marie Mauclerc [Mauclair, Mauclere, Machaire] (–1785), bourgeois de Paris, rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre
 ⇒⇒Marie-Louise (Laon, St Cyr 22.VIII.1720–)
 ⇒⇒Marie-Claude (Laon, St Jean 12.X.1739–)
 ⇒⇒Marie-Jeanne-Elisabeth (Laon, St Jean 28.II.1743–p.1802), sœur consanguine de Mme Mauclair ∞ Paris, St Sulpice 12.IX.1769 Louis-Noël Berthelot (1733–1802), bourgeois de Paris, rue Mazarine 1609, menuisier, frère de Louis-Ange Berthelot, sculpteur

Denis Deschamps ∞ Aude Plouguay
 ⇒Pierre Deschamps (Laon, Ste Benoitte 17.III.1658 –)

Charles Deschamps (Vailly-sur-Aisne 1708 – Moussy-Verneuil 17.X.1708) mort jeune en nourrisson

Jean Deschamps (–a.1764), aubergiste à La Fère ∞ Françoise Moutier
 ⇒Michel Deschamps (1728–), perruquier à Saint-Denis ∞ 1764 Marie-Charlotte Dorison (1732–p.1764), sœur de Jean-Robert Dorison
 AN MCLXV/386, 10.I.1775; archives paroissiales de Saint-Jean, Laon &c. ; Notoriété héritiers de Deschamps, 20.IV.1786

BÉRY

Marc-Philippe de Béry ou Berry, sgr d'Essertaux (–1702) ∞ 1664 Madeleine Ancelin, fille de Perrette du Four, nourrice du roi
 ⇒Christophe de Béry (1676–1743) ∞ Catherine-Marguerite-François Moret de Bournonville
 ⇒⇒Henri-Gabriel de Béry, marquis d'Essertaux (1718–1791), capitaine des gendarmes de Bretagne, mestre de camp de cavalerie 2° ∞ 1744 Anne-Marie-Claude Berbier du Metz (1710–1784), fille d'un président aux comptes de Paris [∞ 1° 1736 François-Joseph, marquis d'Hautefort d'Ajac, mestre-de-camp du régiment de Toulouse, cavalerie]
 ⇒⇒⇒Anne-Marie-Madeline de Béry (1745–1777) {*Pougin de Saint-Aubin*} ∞ 1761 François-Charles du Floquet de Réal (–1784)
 ⇒⇒⇒Claude-Louis-Gabriel de Béry, comte d'Essertaux (1749–) {*Pougin de Saint-Aubin*} ∞ 1779 Robertine de Surmont
 ⇒⇒⇒Anne-Thérèse-Perpetué-Claude {*Pougin de Saint-Aubin*} ∞ 1775 Pierre Roussel, chevalier de Belloy, sgr de Dromesnil (1727–), maréchal de camp, parent de 4 présidents trésoriers de France à Amiens
 ⇒⇒⇒Anne-Gabrielle-Joséphine Roussel de Belloy

DUFLOQUET

Pierre du Floquet ou Dufloquet, comte de Réals, sgr de Domery (–1750), chevalier, régiment du Maine, infanterie 1716–29 ∞ Anne-Martine Legal (1695–), fille de Charles Legal & Jeanne Robin
 ⇒Agnès-Marguerite (1716–?1826) ∞ Flat (Auvergne) 3.XII.1752 Pierre-François de Réal (1704–a.1774), ancien lieutenant de dragons, fils de David de Réal & de N, dame de la Chassignol
 ⇒François-Charles du Floquet de Réal (–1784), capitaine de cavalerie, régiment de Lusignan 1756 (de Berry après 1761), lieutenant-colonel de cavalerie 1761, chev. Saint-Louis, château de Dommercy, paroisse de Flat ∞ Paris 28.III.1761 Anne-Marie-Madeline de Béry (1745–1777), fille d'Henri Gabriel de Béry ou Berry, marquis d'Essertaux (1718–1791), mestre de camp de cavalerie, ancien officier de gendarmerie 1762 & Anne-Marie-Claude Berbier du Metz (1710–1784)
 ⇒⇒Anne-Éléonore-Eulalie (–1803) ∞ 1787–1803 Charles Marie Le Clerc de Juigné (1764–1826), capitaine au régiment de Berry, cavalerie *q.n.*
 ⇒Marie-Thérèse-Catherine (1724–1793) {*La Tour; Vestier*} ∞ 1752 Grégoire-Nicolas-René Masse (1686–1766) *q.n.*
 ⇒Charlotte ∞ 27.XII.1756 Claude du Luc, chevalier

Registre paroissial de Flat; AN

JORET

François Joret, tailleur d'habits à Noyon
 ⇒Anne Joret (1647–p.1699) ∞ Noyon, Saint Martin 11.XI.1669 Louis Havart (1639–a.1696) *q.n.*
 ⇒François Joret (1658– Beaune, ND, 20.II.1740), grammairien, écrivain et arithméticien à Beaune ∞ a.1710 Anne Terrion, fille de Vivant Terrion & de Claudine Cottin, sœur de Philibert Terrion, tailleur à Beaune
 ⇒⇒Raphaël Joret, marchand-tailleur à Beaune-en-Bourgogne ∞ 1° Marguerite Huguenet ; 2° Seurre, Côte-d'Or, 22.XI.1763 Anne Poirier

HAVART

François Havart (1601 – Noyon, St Maurice .I.1675), négociant [in most Laon records; spelt Avart more often in Saint-Quentin]
 ⇒Louis Havart (1639–a.1696) ∞ Noyon, Saint Martin 11.XI.1669 Anne [Joret](#) (1647–p.1699), tante de Raphaël Joret, marchand-tailleur à Beaune-en-Bourgogne [∞ 1° Marguerite Huguenet ; 2° Seurre, Côte-d'Or, 22.XI.1763 Anne Poirier]
 ⇒⇒Reine (Noyon, St-Hilaire 17.VII.1673 – Saint-Quentin 6.VII.1723) 1° ∞ Noyon, St-Germain 20.III.1699 François de [La Tour](#) (5.I.1670–1736) *q.n.*
 ⇒⇒Anne (1677–) ∞ Noyon, Ste-Madeleine 2.X.1696 Joseph Callais (1673–), d'Aumale, diocèse de Rouen, greffier et receveur de l'évêché de Noyon
 ⇒⇒⇒Louis-Joseph Callais, receveur général des aides au département de Charly, parrain de Joseph-Quentin-Gamaliel Frémont 1738 ∞ Bohain, 18.II.1738 Marie-Caroline-Reine Lamelain
 ⇒Marie ∞ Francois Pailleset
 ⇒⇒André Pailleset, maître tailleur ∞ 1704 Catherine Duflo
 ⇒Charles Havart, tapissier à Saint-Quentin

⇒⇒Marie-Anne ∞ Louis Deruys [later Deruy ; misread as Dervin, Dervet, Derruis etc.], manouvrier –1735; jardinier 1736–, beau-frère de Pierre Avart, fils de Jean Deruys, répétiteur de Latin & de Marguerite Delahaye
 ⇒⇒Marie-Anne-Reyne (Saint-Quentin, St-Thomas 22–28.XII.1728) marreine: Marie-Françoise Duiège, Mme de La Tour
 ⇒⇒Pierre-Louis Desruy [Deruys] (Saint-Quentin, St-Thomas 13.XI.1730) parrein: Pierre Avart, manouvrier
 ⇒⇒Jean-Baptiste Deruys (Saint-Quentin, St-Thomas 22.VIII.1732–p.1784), mulquinier
 ⇒⇒Marie-Anne-Therese (Saint-Quentin, St-Thomas 6.I.1735– Saint-Quentin, St-Thomas 7.X.1736)
 ⇒⇒Etienne-Louis Deruys (Saint-Quentin, St-Thomas 4.V.1737–3.VI.1737), parrain : Jeanne Etienne-Hyacinthe Renard ; marreine : Marguerite Delahaye épouse de Jean Deruy répétiteur de Latin ; witness at death : Pierre Avart, oncle
 ⇒⇒Dominique Deruys
 ⇒⇒Pierre Avart (1709– Saint-Quentin, ND 6.XI.1760), manouvrier ∞ 1^o Marie Vignon (–a.1731) ; 2^o Saint-Quentin, ND 5.II.1731 Marie-Marguerite Pepin, fille de Jean Pepin & d'Angélique Picard ; 2^o N ; 3^o Marie Morgue (–a.1760)
 ⇒⇒Marie-Joseph Avart (Saint-Quentin, ND 15.XI.1731–)
 ⇒⇒Marie-Agathe Avart (Saint-Quentin, ND 15.XI.1731–) ∞ Saint-Quentin, ND 23.V.1757 Claude-Nicolas Baudemont (1736–), mulquinier, fils de Claude Baudemont, charpentier & de Marie Martin; temoins: Quentin Baudemont, mulquinier, frere; Quentin Buchelet, maître maçon ⇒⇒⇒Elisabeth-Marie (Saint-Quentin, ND 16.XII.1760–)
 ⇒⇒⇒Angélique-Victoire (5.IX.1764–1847sa)
 ⇒⇒⇒Marie-Josèphe-Victoire (23.V.1768–1849sa)
 ⇒⇒⇒Jean-Louis Baudemont (25.VIII.1772–1837) ∞ Reine-Marie Faucher
 ⇒⇒⇒Angélique-Désiré (30.VI.1798–) ∞ 1818 Jean-Légalité-Félix Ozenfant
 ⇒⇒⇒Élisa-Clémentine (4.VII.1804–) ∞ 1833 Félix-Louis Marchandier
 ⇒⇒⇒Sidonie-Clémence-Louise (15.VIII.1806–) ∞ 7.VI.1826 Louis-Hubert Boitelle

Henry Havart (1630–), marchand orphèvre ∞ 1^o N ; 2^o Noyon, St Martin 10.VII.1690 Marie Wiart (1658–)

Jean Havart (Saint-Quentin ? – Noyon 3.X.1685), tapissier, de Saint-Quentin 2^o ∞ Noyon, St-Martin 13.V.1684 Marie Pinchon [∞ 1^o Louis Brasseur]

François Havart, avocat au parlement, gouverneur, maire perpétuel de Bus ∞ Marie Cressonnier
 ⇒Marie Julienne Havart (1638–1705)

Étienne Havart (c.1640–1692) ∞ Madeleine Hindret
 ⇒Joseph Havart (c.1670–p.1733), conseiller du roi, receveur des tailles en l'élection de Laon ∞ Laon, St Pierre-au-Marché 1696 Elisabeth Philippe
 ⇒Joseph Havart
 ⇒Marguerite Havart (c.1705–1779) ∞ Laon .IX.1731 Marc-Antoine de La Haye, sr de Bazinville (1702–), conseiller secrétaire du roi 1747
 ⇒Antoinette-Marguerite-Josèphe ∞ Alexandre-Jean Boula de Mareuil, conseiller du roi, avocat général au cour des Aides *q.v.*

BAUDEMONT

Claude Baudemont, charpentier ou boucher ∞ Marie de Marey ou Marie Marly
 ⇒Marie-Joseph-Fidelle (13.IX.1735 – Saint-Quentin, Ste Pécine 27.X.1736)
 ⇒Claude-Nicolas Baudemont (Saint-Quentin, Ste Pécine 3.IX.1737–), mulquinier ∞ Saint-Quentin, ND 23.V.1757 Marie-Agathe Avart (Saint-Quentin, ND 15.XI.1731–); temoins: Quentin Baudemont, mulquinier, frere; Quentin Buchelet, maître maçon

MENIOLLE

Valentin Méniolle (1606–1675), échevin de Noyon, marchand ∞ Madeleine Heaume (–1681)
 ⇒Charles Méniolle (1639–1703), marchand de grains, échevin de Noyon ∞ 1666 Marie Desmay (1645–1707)
 ⇒⇒Valentin Méniolle d'Armancourt, sgr de Misery (Noyon, Ste Gadeberthe 14.I.1667 – Noyon, St Martin 17.viii.1736), receveur des tailles, valet de chambre de la dauphine, conseiller du roi ∞ 1^o Noyon, St Hilaire, 1.X.1686 Antoinette Sézille (1668–1693) ; 2^o Saint-Quentin, St André 28.II.1696 Marie-Anne Caignart (1675–1716) [?related to André Nicolas C., lieut-col au bailliage de SA, PaulC, chanoine écolatre de l'église royale de SQ)
 ⇒⇒Marie-Anne Méniolle (1699–1761) ∞ Misery 1720 Charles Mathieu d'Ablaincourt, fourrier des cheveu-légers de la garde du roi
 ⇒⇒⇒François-Honoré-Valentin Mathieu (–1773), chev. Saint-Louis, officier d'artillerie ∞ Saint-Quentin 22.I.1760 Marie-Madeleine-Rosalie Dorigny de Rethueil, fille de Nicolas & de Marie-Charlotte Gobinet
 ⇒⇒⇒Charles-Honoré Mathieu (1762–p.1802)
 ⇒⇒⇒Charles-Furcy Mathieu, sgr de Gomiécourt (1767–1825), chev. Saint-Louis, préfet ∞ Saint-Quentin 14.II.1802 Anne-Alexandrine-Henriette Margerin (1780–), fille de Pierre-Alexandre-François & de Jeanne-Louise Dorigny
 ⇒⇒Claude-Charles-Valentin Méniolle d'Armancourt, sgr d'Epinoy (Noyon 24.IX.1707 – Noyon 15.IX.1752), valet de chambre ordinaire de la reine et de la dauphine ∞ Marie-Ursule Berthault (1703–1782)
 ⇒Simon Meniolle (1646–p.1710), cure de Saint-Jacques de Noyon, chanoine de Noyon

Simon-Maurice Meniolle (c.1685–1761), parrain de La Tour, bourgeois de Noyon ∞ Barbe-Marguerite de Mory (1691–1721), sœur de Charles de Mori
 ⇒Éloi-Vincent Meniolle, marchand à Genlis ∞ Genlis, St Martin, 21.VIII.1748 Marie-Françoise Thierriat, fille de Claude-Joseph Thierriat, intendant du marquis de Genlis
 ⇒Marie-Barbe
 ⇒Louise-Françoise

Marie Meniolle ∞ Saint-Quentin 1687 Jean Boutillier l'ainé, marchand drapier, maire de Saint-Quentin en 1682

DACHERY

Francois Dachery (1582–1645) ∞ Madeleine Watier (–1681)
 ⇒Francois Dachery (1628–), échevin de Saint-Quentin ∞ 1654 Florimonde Defrance (1638–1724)
 ⇒Michel Dachery (1657–1736) ∞ 1690 Magdeleine Ferot
 ⇒⇒Adrien Dachery (1701–1771)
 ⇒⇒Pierre-Adrien Dachery (1734–1807), marchand orfèvre
 ⇒Claude Dachery (1673–1753), marchand de toile ∞ Saint-Quentin, St-André 1.VIII.1701 Marie-Louise Boutillier (Saint-Quentin, St-André 27.IX.1679 – 2.VII.1745), fille de François Boutillier, échevin de Saint-Quentin & de Louise Lucas
 ⇒⇒Louis-Claude Dachery dit d'Hercourt (14.VI.1699–11.II.1754), négociant, marchand de toile, maire, juge consulaire de Saint-Quentin 1750–51 ∞ Jeanne d'Hercourt

⇒⇒⇒Luc-Antoine-Louis Dachery (1728–), prêtre, religieux de Ste Geneviève, chanoine régulier du couvent de Ham
 ⇒⇒François Dachery (Saint-Quentin, St-André 23.II.1704– Saint-Quentin, St-Martin 12.VIII. 1776), commis et préposé pour l'inspection des ourdoirs &c., bourgeois de Saint-Quentin, ami et camarade d'école de La Tour {*La Tour*} ∞ Noyon 5.IX.1759 Marie-Henriette-Francois-Antoinette Guibert (1735–)
 ⇒Michel Dachery (1619–), maître apothicaire ∞ 1642 Marie Gault
 ⇒Jeanne (St Quentin 28.XII.1647–) ∞ 1° 1671 Pierre-Bon Boutillier; 2° St Quentin, St André 27.I.1678 Isaye d'Hebourg, garde de l'artillerie à Saint-Quentin
 ⇒⇒Marie-Madeleine Boutillier (1672–)
 ⇒⇒Louis-Michel d'Hebourg (1683–), commissaire d'artillerie, conseiller du roi et maire de La Fère 2° ∞ La Fère 21.VIII.1713 Marie-Madeleine Péchon (1681–p.1720) [∞ 1° La Fère 7.II.1708 Charles Galonde ou Gallonde (c.1676–1710)]
 ⇒⇒⇒Philippe-Charles Gallonde (1710–1787), chanoine régulier à Sainte-Genève, calligraphe
 ⇒⇒⇒Louis-Charles Gallonde (La Fère 4.IV.1711 – Paris 1770), mécanicien du roy 2° ∞ 1° Paris 17.VIII.1745 Anne Renée Guy [∞ 1° Pierre-François Caylla, ∞ Marie-Anne et Marie-Madeleine]; 2° 1745 la fille de sa première femme Marie-Anne Caylla (–1794), cousine de l'abbé Nollet *q.v.* {*La Tour*} [∞ 2° 1774 Charles-François Jupin (1736–1825)]
 ⇒⇒⇒Marie-Isaïe-Louise-Françoise d'Hebourg (1715–1783sa) {*La Tour* ?} compagnon et légataire universelle de l'abbé Nollet {*La Tour*}

Ambroise Dachery ∞ Françoise Debonnaire

⇒Eustache Dachery (1601–), apothicaire

⇒Maurist Benedictine monk and scholar Dom Luc d'Achery (1609–1685), of Saint-Germain-des-Près

MASSE

Pierre Masse ou Massé (c.1618–c.1702), marchand orfèvre, rue des Lavandières, Îles du Palais ∞ 1642 Marie Bulot
 ⇒Pierre Masse du Plessix (1644–1678), marchand orfèvre, puis cavalier aux cheveu-légers ∞ Françoise Aubry
 ⇒Grégoire Masse l'aîné (1648–1708), marchand orfèvre joaillier, bourgeois de Paris, quai des Orfèvres ∞ 1° Paris st Barthelemy 18.V.1681 Edmee Germaine Verien (1660–); 2° Paris 23.VII.1687 Marie-Magdeleine Petit (–p.1719), fille de Guillaume Petit, juré mesureur de grain, marché Saint-Germain-des-Prés ; 3° 14.IX.1699 Marie-Angélique Meslier, fille de François-Joseph Meslier, md boucher [Fichier Laborde ; témoins : Chrls Masse frère]
 ⇒⇒Grégoire-Nicolas-René Masse (1686–1766), marchand orfèvre, bourgeois de Paris –1730, SR 1732, château des Ternes ∞ 1752 Marie-Thérèse-Catherine Dufloquet de Réals (1724–Écuelles 4.X.1793) {*La Tour*; ?*Vestier*} *q.v.*
 ⇒⇒Marie-Madeleine (c.1700–1776) ∞ 1718 Louis-Henry Véron (1686–a.1776), marchand drapier, premier échevin de Paris 1737, fils de Jean Véron, marchand bourgeois de Paris & Marie-Catherine Dupont
 ⇒⇒⇒Louis-Grégoire Véron (1721–1780), receveur général des finances de Franche-Comté, secrétaire du roi ∞ Jeanne-Marguerite de Niguet, fille du premier président au parlement de Toulouse
 ⇒⇒⇒Antoinette-Josèphe-Gabrielle (–1824) ∞ 1804 Charles-Joseph-René Duplex de Mézy (1766–1835)
 ⇒⇒Louis-Jean Véron (–1755sp)
 ⇒Charles Masse le jeune (–c.1711), marchand orfèvre ∞ Catherine Malmert
 ⇒⇒Noël-Jean-Baptiste Masse (1681–), filleul de Noël Jouvenet, sculpteur du roi
 ⇒⇒Madeleine-Charlotte Masse ∞ 1° Louis Quentin de Loranger ou Lorangère (c.1678–a.1743), bourgeois de Paris, principal commis au greffe en chef au Châtelet, fils de Julien Q. de L. & Barbe-Elisabeth Meusnier; 2° a.1759 Nicolas Pinsot, avocat au parlement
 ⇒⇒Charles-Louis Quentin de Loranger, avocat au parlement
 ⇒⇒Louis Quentin de Loranger, employé dans les fermes du Roi, contrôleur général des rentes ∞ Marie Charles
 ⇒⇒Marie-Anne-Julie ∞ Nicolas Joseph Thirion de Chanlay, receveur des tailles à Vendosme
 ⇒⇒Edmée-Lucile
 ⇒⇒⇒Adélaïde ∞ 1758 François, comte de Lyonne

Unrelated or relationship unclear:

Augustin Masse (–p.1775), marchand de tabac et de fil à Paris, pont Marie, paroisse Saint-Louis-en-l'Île, demeurant à Montpellier en 1775 ∞ Noëlle Deschamps (1705–1775x86) *q.v.*
 ⇒Pierre Masse (1736–p.1786), reçu élève en chirurgie au Bicêtre 1755 “eu égard à son père, qui est le marchand de fil de la maison”, valet de chambre du comte de Perigord
 ⇒Etienne Masse, tapissier à Bordeaux
 ⇒Charlotte (1741–p.1803) {*La Tour*} ∞ Paris 4.I.1761 Jean-Robert Dorison [Dorizon ou d'Orison] (Saint-Denis 5.IV.1731–Paris 31.V.1803), bourgeois de Paris, rue du Champ-Fleury 1783, puis (1803) 251 rue des Fossés Saint Germain, employé au bureau des huissiers de la Grande Chancellerie, fils de François-Antoine Dorison, tailleur d'habits, Saint-Denis (Seine-Saint-Denis), & de Marie-Françoise Avenel, frère de Marie-Charlotte (1732–p.1764) [∞ 1764 Michel Deschamps (1728–), peruquier à Saint-Denis, fils d'un aubergiste à La Fère]
 ⇒Elisabeth (–p.1786) ∞ Bernard-Laurent Gantin (–a.1786)
 ⇒Marie-Jeanne-Jacqueline Masse

Voltaire in pastel

2016 – extract

Les portraits sont une chimère, comme tout le reste.
Voltaire to d'Argental, 16 June 1758

ONE MIGHT EASILY IMAGINE⁴ that Voltaire and the medium of pastel were ideally suited: the embodiment of the Enlightenment embodied in the material which reflected more light than any other painting medium,⁵ and whose ability to represent human faces with unequalled verisimilitude sparked a popularity that coincided with Voltaire's own career. Within two years of François-Marie Arouet becoming "Voltaire", [Rosalba Carriera](#) had arrived in Paris; by the Revolution the vogue she inspired had come to an abrupt end. But iconography is never quite so neat, as we shall see. As Francis Haskell pointed out, although we owe to the author of *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, the belief that, in principle, the visual arts, as much as literature and the sciences, constitute a gauge for testing the quality of a civilization, nevertheless "his actual treatment of them during the course of his historical studies shows that the issue was for him of purely theoretical interest. He had no real feeling for paintings and sculpture...."⁶

The earliest pastel portrait of Voltaire is also the most important, and it has been the subject of an immensely thorough study by Hervé Cabezas.⁷ Although the original pastel by [Maurice-Quentin de La Tour](#) is lost, some idea of its appearance may be formed from the numerous prints and copies, among them the pastel copy now in Ferney:⁸



While it is tempting to posit some historical inevitability to the circumstances which led Voltaire to commission his portrait from the then virtually unknown artist, a far more mundane explanation is more likely: Voltaire's agent in Paris, the abbé Moussinot, was a neighbour of La Tour, then based in the hôtel Jabach. The sittings took place in April 1735; the portrait and its engravings transformed La Tour's reputation. The autograph *préparation* today in the musée Antoine-Lécuyer, Saint-Quentin, conveys with some immediacy the vigour of the encounter between these two personalities:



⁴ This is an extract from an essay which first appeared on my blog, neiljeffares.wordpress.com, on 16 May 2016. It may be cited as Neil Jeffares, "Voltaire in pastel", *Pastels & pastellists*, <http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/VoltaireInPastel.pdf>.

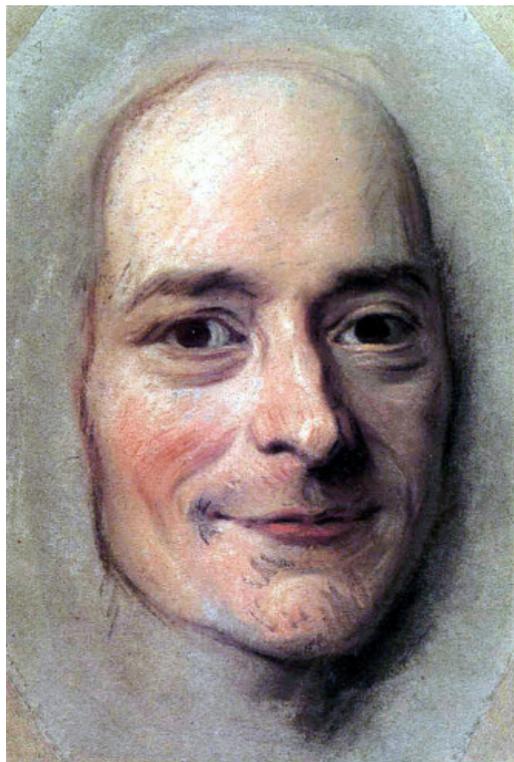
⁵ On the optical properties of pastel and its superior "pigment volume concentration", see the short discussion and references cited in my *Prolegomena to Pastels & pastellists*, p. 20. There too (chapter IX) will be found a discussion of the vogue for pastel and the various social reasons for the phenomenon. Hyperlinks in the online *Dictionary of pastellists* provide further details for each artist and the pastels mentioned in this post. "Voltaire" entered in the *Dictionary's* [search box](#), yielded 106 results (8 May 2016), indicating just how significant the writer is in any project connected with the eighteenth century.

⁶ Haskell 1993, pp. 202, 205.

⁷ "Voltaire, ses portraits, par Maurice-Quentin de La Tour et Joseph Rosset...", *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français*, 2009, pp. 175–202. The literature on Voltairean iconography is vast, but Jacques van den Heuvel's pocket-sized *Pléiade* album (1983) is often useful, despite the tiny images.

⁸ This was not among Voltaire's possessions, but rather acquired after the auction in Paris, 22–23 December 1834, Lot 71.

A rather different *préparation*, now in Stockholm, has a less direct relationship with the final portrait and may have been an early exploration of the face:



As Cabezas has noted, a letter from Voltaire (24 August 1735) describes a portrait of his friend Thiériot holding the *Henriade*, so the book in Voltaire's hand may have been the writer's suggestion. But if so La Tour was happy to re-use the idea in quite a number of his later pastels.

La Tour remained in communication with Voltaire for many years, but no subsequent portrait was made. The prince de Ligne evidently exaggerated his powers of persuasion when he wrote to Voltaire on 1 June 1766 "J'ai persuadé, il y a quelques jours à M. de Lattour, Le grand maître en pastel, d'aller vous faire sa Cour, et de nous la faire, par un portrait meilleur que tous les autres."

But from the correspondence in the months and years immediately after the portrait was made, we can trace more about how Voltaire viewed the function of the image as well as the mechanics of a successful portraitist's practice. Voltaire repeatedly commissioned repetitions, and inevitably complained about the price: "Aujourd'hui, La Tour, peintre en pastel, demande 4800 livres pour deux copies qui valent 10 écus."⁹ Possibly this was why so many (and all the surviving) versions were not autograph.¹⁰ From the letter of

12 April 1736 to Bonaventure Moussinot, we learn that Voltaire knew that "la copiste" was to be a female artist, and since La Tour was to "retouch" it, Cabezas reasonably inferred that the copy was to be in pastel (but Voltaire may simply have assumed that La Tour too could work in oil). In July 1738, when the portrait was to be lent to an engraver, Voltaire wrote to Berger: "On ne veut point envoyer mon portrait en pastel; mais M. de La Tour en a un double; il n'y a qu'à y faire mettre une bordure et une glace. Je mande à M. l'abbé Moussinot qu'il en fasse les frais." From this we learn that La Tour not only kept a studio version at the ready (a common practice among portraitists) but that it was unframed (a hazardous state for a pastel, however carefully it was handled).

⁹ Voltaire, *Sottisier, Œuvres complètes*, Paris, 1880, xxxii, p. 597, as 1800 livres; *Œuvres complètes*, Oxford, 1968–, lxxxii–lxxxiii, p. 450, as 4800 livres.

¹⁰ The *Dictionary* lists some three dozen copies in various media, as well as numerous engravings. Among those that are not widely known let us cite the [oil copy](#) acquired by the British Museum in 1760, as of "Voltaire drawn by Mr Gardel, a young painter of

Geneva". Théodore Gardelle (1722–1761) was an enamellist whose sensational trial for the murder of his landlady the following year involved the testimony of Jean-Baptiste Perronneau, whose trip to England was not the high point of his career.

La Tour and Lundberg's portraits of *la princesse de Rohan*

2013



[Maurice-Quentin de La Tour](#)

Marie-Sophie de Courcillon, princesse de ROHAN (1713–1756)

Pastel on paper, 59 x 48 cm

c.1740

Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, inv. NMB 2650

PROVENANCE: Maurice Fenaille 1908–32. Desc.: PC 2013; Paris, Christie's, 26.III.2014, Lot 82 repr.**EXHIBITIONS:** *Exposition François Boucher (1705–1770)*, Paris, hôtel Jean Charpentier, 9.VI.–10.VII.1932, no. 104, as inconnue**LITERATURE:** Mme V[an Loo], “Vers sur le portrait de Mme la princesse de Rohan”, *Mercur de France*, .II.1745, p.51; Albert Besnard & Georges Wildenstein, *La Tour*, Paris, 1928, no. 432, records the La Tour pastel whose existence is inferred from Mme Tessin's copy; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [J.46.273](#)**RELATED WORK:**[Gustaf Lundberg](#)

Marie-Sophie de Courcillon, princesse de ROHAN (1713–1756)

Pastel on paper, 63 x 50 cm

c.1740

Swedish private collection in 2008

PROVENANCE: Greve Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695–1770); listed in the *Catalogue général de tous les objets qui ont été expédiés à Stockholm*, août 1741, no. 24: “Portrait de la Princesse de Rohan, au Pastel, copié d'après La Tour, cadre doré et glace, 350 livres”; Tessin's estate sale, held in the Grande Salle d'assemblée de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture Stockholm, 8.V.1786, Lot 6, “Madame la Princesse de Rohan Soubise en mantelet de velours bleu. Demie figure peinte au pastel par LA TOUR. Même cadre qu'au précédent”; [acquired by [?Greve Fredrik Sparre (1731–1803), the nephew and adopted son of Tessin and his wife/or by his cousin,] the art collector Greve Gustaf Adolf Sparre (1745–1794), who acquired Kulla Gunarstorps slott, Skåne in 1775, with which the pastel descended as follows: friherrinnan Elisabeth Amalia Beata, född Ramel; her daughter Christina Amalia, who married greve Jakob Gustaf De la Gardie; Gustaf Adolf Fredrik De la Gardie; sold in 1837 to greve Carl De Geer af Leufsta (–1861); his daughter, who married greve Baltzar von Platen (1804–1875); his daughter friherrinnan Elisabeth von Platen, who married greve Axel Wachtmeister på Vanås; by descent]**LITERATURE:** Pierre Lespinasse, “Catalogue général de tous les objets qui ont été expédiés à Stockholm”, *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français*, 1911, p. 320 n.r.; Sigrid Leijonhufvud, *Omkring Carl Gustaf Tessin*, Stockholm, 1917, p. 113; Albert Besnard & Georges Wildenstein, *La Tour*, Paris, 1928 at no. 432, records the La Tour pastel whose existence is inferred from Mme Tessin's copy; Gunnar W. Lundberg, “Pastellmalaren Gustaf Lundbergs Parisperiod”, *Nationalmusei årsbok*, Stockholm, 1929, pp. 23–50, p. 40; Gunnar W. Lundberg, “Carl Gustaf Tessins konstsamling på Åkerö”, in Per Bjurström, *Carl Gustaf Tessin och konsten*, Stockholm, 1970, p. 82, 84 reproduced; Merit Laine & Carolina Brown, *Gustaf Lundberg 1695–1786. En porträttmålare och hans tid*, Stockholm, 2006, pp. 74, 188, 250, 258; Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*, London, 2006, p. 512Aiii, incorrectly as by Mme Tessin; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [J.503.1567](#)**OTHER RELATED WORKS:** the Åkerö inventory of 1757 refers to “Princesse Rohans porträtt af La Tour, en pastel, copié de Mme de Tessin, sous la direction de M. de Lundberg et retouché par lui”. This is possibly the second pastel of this subject recorded by Gunnar Lundberg in 1929 as at Övedsklosters slott.**GENEALOGY:** [Rohan](#)

BELLE COMME LE JOUR” wrote greve Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695–1770) to his wife after his visit that morning to the princesse de Rohan “à sa toilette” (1 November 1739). The celebrated connoisseur was Swedish ambassador in Paris from 1739 to 1742; his wife Ulrika Lovisa (1711–1768) was the daughter of greve Erik Sparre, formerly Charles XII's ambassador to Louis XIV, and her culture and sophistication had in particular impressed the ladies at the French court. Mme Tessin and the princesse de Rohan established a firm friendship (17 letters from the princesse survive), and Ulla's admiration



for her friend was recorded in her letter¹¹ to her sister-in-law Augusta Törnflycht written a few days earlier:

Elle rassemble toutes les perfections avec la grande beauté qu'elle a. Elle est bien faite. Les plus beaux yeux du monde La taille grande et majestueuse, avec cela polie affable gaie chantant bien dansant parfaitement aimant à rire beaucoup et Badine. Vous ne doutez point avec ces Talents la combien tout le monde la trouve charmante pour moy j'ay ladessus La voye du peuple.

She goes on to refer to Lundberg's portrait of the princesse which would show her to be this seductive, beautiful woman. According to a recent source,¹² this was never executed. But it seems clear that the portrait of the princesse which surfaced on the art market in 2008 was that commissioned from Lundberg by his great patrons, the Tessins, and that it was copied after a pastel by La Tour which in turn was only discovered five years later.¹³

The princesse de Rohan was the granddaughter of the marquis de Dangeau (1638–1720) whose memoirs of the court of Louis XIV had so infuriated the duc de Saint-Simon that he devoted the rest of his life to correcting them. Dangeau's social ascent was marked by his daughter's marriage in 1694 to the duc de Montfort, creating an alliance with the important d'Albert de Luynes family. His son, Philippe-Égon de Courcillon, marquis de Dangeau (1687–1719) married Françoise de Pompadour, from whom Marie-Sophie de Courcillon inherited the title of dame du duché de La Valette as well as her beauty: *matre pulchra filia pulchrior*.¹⁴ At the age of 16, she married her cousin Charles-François d'Albert d'Ailly, duc de Picquigny, pair de France (1707–1731), son of the maréchal-duc de Chaulnes.¹⁵ He was dead within two years; a daughter¹⁶ died in infancy, and the title passed to his brother.

His widow was again in search of a husband, and on 2 September 1732 she married a more distant relative, the elderly prince de Rohan. Their independent wealth was protected by a contract under the “séparation des biens” régime, signed by Louis XV at Marly, listing the “etat des meubles meublans, bijoux, diamans, pierreries, toilette et argenterie indépendante appartenans à Madame la Duchesse de Picquigny”.

Her husband was a member of one of the most illustrious houses in France, whose origins as the ancient sovereigns of Brittany entitled the family to the quasi-royal status enshrined in the princely titles they were allowed to use in parallel with their French honours. Hercule-Mériadec de Rohan (1669–1749) had been destined for the church until the death of his elder brother in 1689, whereupon he assumed the title of prince de Rohan and pursued a career in the army. He rose to become lieutenant général des armées du roi in 1704, and served with honour in the campaigns against Marlborough. He was appointed gouverneur of Champagne in 1704. After the death of his father in 1712, he became prince de Soubise et de Maubuisson. Two years later, in recognition of his distinguished military service, he was created duc de Rohan-Rohan (the title of duc de Rohan was already in use by the Rohan-Chabot branch of the family) and made a pair de France. No doubt some of his influence at court was derived from his first marriage, in 1694, to Anne-Geneviève de Lévis Ventadour (1673–1727), daughter of the much-loved

¹¹ Letters to Mme Wrede-Sparre, née Augusta Törnflycht, 21 September 1739, 3 October 1740, RA Börstorpssamlingen vol. E3082, cited in Laine & Brown 2006 and partly quoted in Gunnar von Proschwitz, *Tableaux de Paris et de la cour de France 1739–1742*, Paris, 1983.

¹² Laine & Brown 2006: “Detta porträtt kom inte till utförande”.

¹³ The Lundberg was known as of the princesse de Rohan; the attribution to Lundberg was suggested by me in 2008. The La Tour was presented to me as an anonyme inconnue in 2013. This essay is subject to the important note at the foot of the index page of this website: it represents no more than a personal opinion and should not be confused with an assessment of any of the works discussed from a market perspective.

¹⁴ In the words of the editor of the *Lettres de Madame de Maintenon*, Amsterdam, 1757, VII, p. 58.

¹⁵ See for example Christophe Levantal, *Ducs et pairs et duchés-pairies laïques à l'époque moderne (1519–1790)*, Paris, 1996.

¹⁶ Omitted from the standard works since infant girls had no genealogical significance; recorded in André René Le Paige, *Dictionnaire topographique, historique, généalogique et bibliographique de la province et du diocèse du Maine*, Le Mans & Paris, 1777, tome I, p. 116.

gouvernante des Enfants de France, whom Louis XV called his “chère maman”. Numerous children from this first marriage ensured the succession of his title, which passed to his grandson, a maréchal de France and a minister of state.

The couple were installed in hôtel de Soubise (now the Archives de France), triumphantly redecored by the architect Germain Boffrand as a gift from the sexagenarian prince to a bride less than one-third of his age. Paintings by Carle Van Loo, Trémolières and others culminated in the spectacular mythological paintings of the *Histoire de Psyché* by Charles-Joseph Natoire (1738), a cycle that has been analysed both as a metaphor of male political ambition as well as an iconography of the female subject of desire.¹⁷ But the geometry of Boffrand’s new oval pavilion, with the prince’s apartments on the ground floor, while those of the princesse occupied the first floor, testifies to the reality of this marriage, and it was perhaps inevitable that infidelity occurred. The abbé de Bernis (1715–1794), then a mere provincial chanoine and versifier, came to Paris in search of advancement around 1740. Mme de Pompadour fell under his influence, but was not yet in a position to obtain for him the prizes his ambition demanded. Instead he turned to the princesse de Rohan, and he shortly became “l’amant en titre et déclaré de la belle princesse de Rohan” in Marmontel’s phrase. (The police inspector d’Hémery’s report put it rather more coarsely,¹⁸ while Bernis’s own *Mémoires* are naturally more discreet.) However a seat in the Académie française, an embassy to Venice and a cardinal’s hat all followed with the help of one or other of his admirers. The princesse lavished a fortune on the Mlles Pelet de Narbonne, said to be the nieces of the abbé de Bernis.

That Bernis was not the only admirer is also evident from the scandal sheets of the day. Typical of these is one from 1734, intended to be sung to the tune of *Servantes, quittez vos paniers*; the first stanza will suffice:¹⁹

Princesse avec votre beauté
Comment voulez-vous plaire,
Si bêtise et méchanceté
Sont votre caractère?
Coquette sans habileté,
Rusée avec grossièreté,
Priez Dieu que par charité
Il daigne vous refaire.

And indeed, as the duc de Luynes,²⁰ writing at the time of her death, noted, her will directed that no fewer than 12,000 masses be said for the repose of her soul, in addition to a substantial bequest to the poor. He observed that she died after a long illness despite the ministrations of Dr Tronchin (whom she consulted only four days before her death, from what may have been tuberculosis). “C’étoit en effet une femme bien faite et d’une figure agréable; elle étoit grande et avoit l’air fort noble; elle dansoit très bien”, he wrote (he had previously noted her skill in presenting a new dance, consisting of a menuet and tambourin, with M. de Clermont d’Amboise at a ball at Versailles in January 1739). However she had a regrettable tendency to find double entendres in inappropriate places: the duchesse de Caumont quipped that when she attended mass “elle rioit à l’Introit et entendoit finesse au *Kyrie eleison*.”

Evidence that the princesse was at the centre of the artistic and literary circle from which La Tour drew his clientèle (in addition to Dr Tronchin, Rousseau, who refers to her in his *Confessions*, and Voltaire, who

¹⁷ See Katie Scott, *The Rococo interior*, New Haven & London, 1995, and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, review in *The art bulletin*, December 1997.

¹⁸ Translated as “he is a lecher who has had Madame la princesse de Rohan” in Robert Darnton, “Policing writers in Paris circa 1750”, *Representations*, 5, Winter 1984, pp. 14f.

¹⁹ The full text, and several others, can be found at <http://satir18.univ-st-etienne.fr>.

²⁰ *Mémoires du duc de Luynes sur la cour de Louis XV*, Paris, 1860–65, xv, pp. 7–10.

mentions her in his 1734 verse *Discours de l'Envie*) comes from a letter²¹ written to the Jacobite Colonel Daniel O'Brien, "Lord Lismore" in Rome about a reception that his wife had attended one evening in St Ouen at Prince Charles de Rohan's residence. Margaret Josepha O'Brien, herself a rather formidable lady and reputedly the mistress of Fénelon, archevêque de Cambrai, mentions that among the guests were the celebrated Marie Fel (who according to the Nuncio sang more beautifully than the finest performers of Rome), the poet Paradis de Moncrif, and "La belle ou la Courcillon", as Mrs O'Brien called her to distinguish her from the other princesse de Rohan (of a sufficiently similar age for easy confusion) – Marie-Louise-Henriette-Jeanne de La Tour d'Auvergne (1725–1793), wife of Jules-Hercule-Mériadec, prince de Rohan-Guéméné, mistress of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Sophie de Courcillon was godmother to Louise's short-lived illegitimate son by that liaison, prince Charles de Rohan (1748–1748).

The princesse was the subject of portraits other than the present pastels. A bust by Lemoyne was completed in 1737 for the hôtel de Soubise, but is now lost. Gobert's portrait of her in a blue *habit de masque*, still hanging in the grand salon of the Rohan family's château de Josselin, was until recently attributed to Nattier. This most fashionable of portraitists was the author of the most celebrated image of the princesse, of which the primary version, exhibited at the Salon of 1741 (no. 58), is now in Toledo, Ohio (fig. 1).²² It excited much praise from the usual critics as well as more unusual tributes such as the *Fable sur un portrait de la princesse de Rohan* by Paradis de Moncrif.²³ Among the numerous repetitions and copies, one was given (without a frame) by the subject to Mme Tessin, and was recorded among the Tessin works sent back to Sweden in 1741 and, sold at auction on 8 May 1786, lot 5. The Lundberg pastel was the following lot, in a similar frame bought by the Tessins for their Nattier.

The Tessins waited impatiently for their copy of the Nattier, but the artist would not permit it to be released before the Salon. Lundberg was a natural artist for the Tessins to turn to for a portrait of someone they so dearly loved. The Swedish artist had been in Paris since 1717, and was able to build an important reputation as a pastellist in the wake of the fashion created by Rosalba Carriera on her trip to Paris in 1720. However Lundberg's Protestantism presented an obstacle to his admission by the Académie. Tessin was able to influence the king to make an exception, and Lundberg was eventually *reçu* in 1741 by royal command. Their relationship remained close after Tessin returned to Sweden, with Lundberg following a few years later. Lundberg made innumerable portraits of Tessin, his wife and members of their family.



Figure 1

The Lundberg pastel shows all the characteristics of the finest work the artist produced during his Paris period. It is technically similar to another Tessin Lundberg, the portrait of Élisabeth-Alexandrine de Bourbon-Condé, Mademoiselle de Sens (now in the Nationalmuseum).²⁴ Characteristics include the

²¹ Mrs O'Brien to Colonel Daniel O'Brien, 20.v.1752, RA SP 331/119A, cited Laurence Bongie, *The love of a prince*, Vancouver, 1986, pp. 281f. For Mrs O'Brien, see Frank McLynn, *Bonnie Prince Charlie*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 107, 316, and *The Jacobite peerage*, 1904, p. 76.

²² See *Jean-Marc Nattier*, Versailles, 261999 – 30 janvier 2000, cat. Xavier Salmon, p. 136.

²³ *Œuvres de Moncrif*, tome II, Paris, 1791, p. 151.

²⁴ See Jeffares 2006 for further details of this and other pastels mentioned in this article.

splendidly rich colours (Lundberg’s deep blue is a particular trademark), the handling of the hair and the beautifully smooth flesh.

Tradition dating back to the 1786 sale (and the old backing board) has it that the Lundberg pastel was itself by Maurice-Quentin de La Tour. This arose from a confusion with the lost source. The 1741 Tessin inventory refers only to a pastel copied after La Tour (without specifying by whom), while the Åkerö inventory of 1757 refers to “Princesse Rohans porträtt af La Tour, en pastel, copié de Mme de Tessin, sous la direction de M. de Lundberg et retouché par lui”. We know that Mme Tessin made some pastel copies (for example, one after Aved’s portrait of the actress Mme Quinault Dufresne appuyée sur un balcon, tenant un chien) under the direction of her teacher, Lundberg, whose portrait of her husband she also copied. It seems likely that the 1757 inventory refers not to the Lundberg pastel (whose quality excludes any possible involvement by an amateur), but, as it says, to a copy by Mme Tessin after the Lundberg; this further derivative may be the version recorded in 1929 as at Övedsklosters slott (and may have descended from Tessin’s friend, the architect Carl Hårleman, 1700–1753). By the 1786 sale, the “original”, that is the one from which Mme Tessin worked, was inferred to be the La Tour rather than the intermediate version by Lundberg.

In 2008 it was necessary to ask if there ever was an original by La Tour on which Lundberg based his portrait. There was no record of La Tour having exhibited a portrait of the princesse, but the identification of the source as La Tour went back to 1741 and could not be dismissed. Even established artists like Lundberg worked from models by other artists. I have written elsewhere²⁵ of the particularly confusing subject of the royal princesses Madame de Clermont and Madame de Charolais, two pendants by Rosalba Carriera of which Lundberg made copies – one of which is also recorded in Tessin’s 1741 inventory, no. 84, valued at 250 livres.²⁶ Those were direct copies with no compositional alterations, although Lundberg’s personal style is immediately evident from his handling.

Any doubts about whether La Tour made a pastel of the princesse were dispelled with the discovery²⁷ of these verses appear in the *Mercur de France* in February 1745 (p. 51), apparently by Mme Van Loo:²⁸

VERS sur le portrait de Madame la Princesse de ROHAN, par Mde. V.

Latour, dans ce Pastel dont l’éclat nous enchante,
La divine Rohan à nos yeux est parlante.
Que d’amours malheureux naissent de son regard,
Qui cacheront toujours leur charmante blessure!
Son portrait nous paroît le chef-d’œuvre de l’Art,
Comme cette beauté celui de la Nature.

These confirm that the La Tour pastel was made, and almost certainly in Paris – quite probably in the hôtel de Soubise for which Mme Van Loo’s husband had provided important dessus-de-porte. La Tour and Carle Van Loo’s connections go far beyond merely being colleagues at the Académie: Van Loo had been present at his *agrément* (when a portrait of his brother, Jean-Baptiste Van Loo, had been set for La Tour); Van Loo used La Tour’s head of the queen for his own full length portrait of her; and the 1810 sale of La Tour’s studio revealed that he had owned a sketch by Van Loo for *La Clairon dans le rôle de Médée*. Mme Van Loo, née Christina Antonia Somis (1704–1785), was Marie Fel’s teacher.

²⁵ Neil Jeffares, “Les portraits des princesses de Bourbon-Condé par Rosalba Carriera”, *Le Musée Condé*, décembre 2004, n° 61, pp. 14–19.

²⁶ The present pastel was valued at 350 livres, the same as Tocqué’s arresting portrait of Tessin now in the Nationalmuseum.

²⁷ I am most grateful to Ólafur Þorvaldsson for drawing my attention to this on 1.II.2020.

²⁸ The author, Mde V, is given as Madame V in the index (p. 214); she may be the addressee of a “Lettre sur les tableaux, 1750” published in the same journal in .XII.1750, identified by Georges Duplessis (*Catalogue de la collection... Deloymes*, 1881) as Mme Van Loo, the writer, Porcien, being a pupil of Coytel.

It is entirely natural for the princesse de Rohan to commission a portrait from the up and coming La Tour. Not only had the artist already made a strong impression at the salons, but it is even possible to speculate about another connection: La Tour's great friend was the abbé Jean-Jacques-Clément Huber, a member of the Swiss banking family who had converted to Catholicism and become, from 1725, a member of the retinue of Sophie's brother-in-law, the bishop of Strasbourg and grand aumônier de France, cardinal Armand-Gaston-Maximilien de Rohan (1674–1749). La Tour's portraits of his friend were before and after the present work, and when Huber died in 1744 he made the artist his heir (although this apparently valuable estate was disclaimed as it was heavily encumbered and embroiled in disputes).

La Tour often portrayed young women holding books or music (his portrait of Marie Fel at a table with a volume of music is another example). A close parallel would be La Tour's portrait of Mme Rouillé, in a similar *mantelet à la polonoise*, shown in the 1738 Salon, which shows a markedly different concept of space – as of course do La Tour's celebrated images of the princesse's rival Mme de Pompadour.

The words of the song in the music she holds are legible only in incomplete phrases, among them:

“...veut passer soudain je le.../je ne veux point desesperer ne.../... ne veux qu'il m'en couste qui veut.../fierte je l'ecoute quand à la preuve il... engager...”

It has not been possible to identify a particular composition from which this simple C major melody comes, but it would appear to be a love song whose *galanterie* is in keeping with her reputation. Was this the reason why the words were later erased in the La Tour version? The writing however is not that of the princesse herself, which we know from a number of samples that have come down to us²⁹ (fig. 2): these share a consistent forward slope, and what a graphologist would recognise as a high form level.

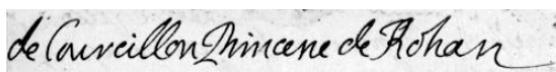


Figure 2

The music provides also a useful area in which to analyse the sequence of the versions (fig. 3). The simplifications introduced into the Lundberg (below) would allow one to conclude that the piece was written in 2/4 time, while the La Tour (above) is evidently in 6/8 and includes more precisely located slur marks. It is interesting to follow the line of the staves across the centre fold in the music: the Lundberg appears to lose a line, while the control of light and shade in the La Tour accomplishes the illusion of a much deeper fold, so that the displacement is of a whole staff. Similar comparisons, e.g. between the handling of the bow, oppose the spontaneity of the La Tour to the controlled finesse of the Lundberg.



Figure 3

²⁹ For example, the letter of 28.VIII.1750 to M. de Clairambault, généaloiguste du roi (BnF, *volumes consacrés à l'histoire de l'Ordre du Saint-Esprit*, I. Cxx, f.18) from which the signature above is taken; or the delightful letter of 21 juin, c.1745, inviting the comte d'Argenson, ministre de la guerre to the country (on the French manuscript market in 2013).

There is an intriguing footnote in the form of a letter from another bluestocking, Belle de Zuylen, Mme de Charrière, whose difficult features La Tour struggled to capture in repeated sessions during 1766 as she recorded in a series of letters, in one of which³⁰ she noted with pride that “La Tour voit souvent Mme d’Étioules dans mon visage et la belle princesse de Rohan dans mon portrait”. A face remembered after a quarter of a century by a master who had portrayed the greatest beauties of the era.

The La Tour pastel was acquired by Maurice Fenaille before 1908, when it was submitted to the Cent pastels exhibition: but, without identification or attribution, there was no room for its inclusion. By 1932, no doubt based on the parallels with the Boucher *Dame au manchon* from the David-Weill collection, it was submitted to the Boucher exhibition in the Galerie Charpentier presented by the Fondation Foch. The organisers, who preferred to exhibit and illustrate the Louvre oil copy of the David-Weill pastel to the original, did include the Fenaille pastel as of an unknown sitter, by Boucher (no. 104). My personal copy of the catalogue of that exhibition has been heavily annotated by an unknown French connoisseur, and this item bears a penciled note relating it tentatively to La Tour, reinforced by an additional “à certain”, a comment which was either not communicated or forgotten until now.

Although lost after 1912 (when it was in the von Platen collection in Stockholm), the Tessin copy of the Nattier portrait of the princesse also provides an additional footnote and further source of confusion. In 1757 – some sixteen years after the original was executed, and long after the La Tour pastel and Lundberg copy of it, Tessin recorded in his diary that he had executed a copy “en buste” of it under the supervision of Lundberg.³¹ That copy may well be the pastel in Helsinki,³² hitherto catalogued as anonymous but evidently in the later style of Lundberg and his studio (fig. 4). It has the same lock of hair falling over the sitter’s proper right shoulder found in other oil copies of the Nattier (e.g. that offered in New York, Sotheby’s, 19.v.1995, Lot 110) which could well be a detail found in the version of the Nattier owned by Tessin.



Figure 4

While Nattier’s deified princesse holds a book (inscribed *Histoire Universelle*), the subject of the earlier La Tour/Lundberg pastel holds instead a sheet of music with the words of a love song. The dramatic outdoor setting is replaced by nothing more elaborate than the cornflowers in her hair (*Centaurea cyanis* is the emblem of délicatesse, or “un sentiment tendre et délicat qui se nourrit d’espérance”³³). Beautiful as the Toledo painting is, the averted eyes, contrived pose and mythological garb all contribute to a certain frigidity which the Helsinki pastel copy does nothing to relieve. In contrast there is a directness and immediacy in the earlier pastels which embody the seductiveness of “la Divine Princesse” that captivated both Tessin and his wife. What is perhaps most fascinating is to observe the partnership between La Tour and Lundberg on these two versions of the pastel: the spark of La Tour’s original creation is replaced by a finesse in the Swedish artist’s hand. Neither of these works, which on one level are so similar, could be by the other artist.

³⁰ Letter to Constant d’Hermanches, 7 October 1766.

³¹ Salmon, *loc. cit.*, without citation; the passage has not been located in Gustaf Montgomery’s 1824 edition of *Tessins Dagbok 1757*.

³² Finnish National Gallery, inv. S24. Legs Sinebrychoff 1921.

³³ Charlotte de Latour, *Le Langage des fleurs*, Paris, 1825, p. 264; it is also said to represent contentment in the unmarried state.

La Tour, *Le président de Rieux*

2010



[Maurice-Quentin de La Tour](#)

Le président Gabriel Bernard de RIEUX (1687–1745) [Zoomify](#)

Pastel on 16 sheets of paper, 200.7x149.9 cm

c.1741

Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. [94.PC.39](#)

PROVENANCE: Le sujet; son fils, Anne-Gabriel-Henri Bernard de Rieux; desc.: duc de Clermont-Tonnerre, château de Glisolles, Eure, – .XII.1918; René Gimpel/Nathan Wildenstein; acqu. Nicolas Ambatielos 1919, £48,000; reclaimed on his bankruptcy; acqu. Maurice de Rothschild 1931; Rosenberg-Bernstein; seized ERR c.1940, ERR card BoR4; Führermuseum, Linz-Nr 1493; restituted 1946, Mü-Nr 7558, Edmond de Rothschild 1971; acqu. 1994

EXHIBITIONS: Salon de 1741, no. 118; Paris 1927a, no. 34, pl. xxvii-37; Paris 1934, no. 69; Los Angeles 2011, no. 90, fig. 48; Los Angeles 2018

LITERATURE: Mariette 1851–60, III, pp. 66–78; Desmaze 1854, p. 34; Champfleury 1855, p. 95; Dréolle de Nodon 1856, pp. 59, 123; E. & J. de Goncourt 1867, pp. 165, 171, 176; Desmaze 1874, p. 65; Régner 1888, n.r.; Harduin de Grosville 1892, n.r.; Dilke 1899, p. 165; Fleury 1904, p. 52, “le plus grand effort pictural de De La Tour”; Tourneux 1904a, p. 40; Thiébaud-Sisson 1905; Fourcaud 1908, pp. 222f; Keim 1911, p. 29; Alfassa 1919, pp. 131, 136ff, repr.; Gillet 1919; Wildenstein 1919a; Wildenstein 1919b; Archives des musées nationaux, sér. D 5, cabinet des dessins; Réau 1925, pp. 75f, pl. 56; Heywood 1927, p. 248; Ratouis de Limay 1927; Vitry 1927; B&W 427, fig. 35, 37, 40; Ratouis de Limay 1946, pl. xi/15; Florisoone 1948, p. 77; Francastel 1955, I, p. 139; Gimpel 1963, pp. 90, 99, 126, 169, 341; Hargreaves-Mawdsley 1963, pl. 8; Thuillier & Châtelet 1964, p. 193 repr.; Bury 1971, pl. 14; Walker 1983, p. 190; Monnier 1984, repr.; Richards 1984; Wakefield 1984; Pons 1987, fig. 2; Allen 1988; Debrie 1991, pp. 30, 61, 76; Châtelet 1992, repr. cl. p. 66; Monnier 1992, p. 165; Nancy Yocco, acquisition condition report for the Getty, 17.IV.1994 (unpublished); “Acquisitions 1994”, *J. Paul Getty Museum journal*, xxiii, 1995, pp. 6, 94 repr.; Wilson & al. 1996, pp. 53ff, fig. 7H; Fredericksen & al. 1997, no. 45 repr.; Hudson 1997, p. 82f; Hudson 1997, p. 82f; Debrie 1998; Debrie & Salmon 2000, p. 111, ill. 48, 49, 50; Shelley 2002; Brunel 2004b, p. 53 repr., p. 52, detail repr.; La Tour 2004a, p. 122, fig. 1; Salmon 2004a, fig. 3; Fumaroli 2005, p. 30 repr.; New York 2005, pp. 55 repr., 72, 220; Перова 2006, p. 14 repr., as in Louvre; Rosenberg 2006, p. 130 repr.; Simon 2007, p. 35 repr.; Cabezas & al. 2008, p. 36, detail repr.; Tarabra 2008, p. 101 repr.; Aurcchio 2009, fig. 5; Gimpel 2011, pp. 115, 127, 163, 223, 264, 494; Humphrey Wine, review of Los Angeles 2011, *Burlington magazine*, CLIV, .IX.2012, pp. 644f n.r.; Burns & Saunier 2014, p. 73 repr.; Prat 2017, fig. 396; Washington 2017, p. 2 repr.; Prenant 2017, p. 7 repr.; Jeffares 2017s, fig. 1; Jeffares 2018m; Hoisington 2019, fig. 1; *Dictionary of pastellists online*, [1.46.2722](#)

GENEALOGY: [Bernard](#)

NO MORE SPECTACULAR work exists in the history of pastel than this monumental portrait of the président de Rieux, exhibited by La Tour at the Salon de 1741, no. 118, where the livret recorded “Un Tableau en pastel de 6 pieds 2 pouces d’hauteur, sur 4 pieds 8 pouces de large, représentant M. le Président de Rieu, en Robe rouge, assis dans un Fauteuil, tenant un Livre dont il va tourner le feuillet, avec les attributs qui composent un Cabinet, comme Bibliothèque, Par-à-vent, Table, & un Tapis de Turquie sous les pieds.”

An anonymous contemporary critic³⁴ immediately recognised the extraordinary significance of this work:

Dans l’enfoncement qu’on trouve ensuite est placé un grand Pastel qui est le Portrait en pié de M. le President de Rieux dans son Cabinet. Il est assis dans un Fauteuil de Velours Cramoisi, adossé à un Paravent, et ayant sur sa droite une Table couverte d’un Tapis de Velours bleu, enrichi d’une Crépine d’or. Entre les objets qui chargent cette Table, on remarque comme inimitables une Tabatiere de ces Maubois entrelassés et une Plume un peu jaspée d’encre sur ses barbes.

Quant à la figure, elle est d’un ressemblance qui passe toute expression, toute imagination même, et d’une Etude qui tient du Prodige. Elle est terminée avec le dernier soin, et a cependant un air de liberté qui en déguise le travail. Elle est vêtue d’une Simarre noire et d’une Robe rouge; l’un se recrie: la Peruque; l’autre: le Rabat; les plus somptueux sont jaloux des Manchetes. On sent la legereté du Cheveu, la finesse de la Trame du Linge et l’Aprêt de l’Ouvrière, la délicatesse et le détail immense de la Dentele. C’est un ouvrage miraculeux, c’est de la Saxe même, il n’est pas possible que ce ne soit que du crayon. Ce M. La Tour a les secrets de toutes les Manufactures.

Tout ce que les gens les plus difficiles trouvent à reduire dans ce grand morceau roule sur les accidens. C’est que le Paravent est trop près du Fauteuil: il ne fait pas bien son effet. Une Table couverte les choque: ils disent qu’un Bureau à pié de Biche doneroit plus de dégagement, et n’auroit pas mis tant d’étofe l’une sur l’autre. Enfin, malgré ces legeres circonstances, ce Tableau sera toujours un chef-d’œuvre en son espèce; et pour vous donner une idée de son Prix, on prétend que la Glace et le Cadre coutent seuls cinquante loüis.

³⁴ Anon., *Lettre à Monsieur de Poiresson-Chamarande, lieutenant général au baillage et siège présidial de Chaumont en Bassigny, au sujet des tableaux exposés au Salon du Louvre*, s.l., s.d. [1741], also in *Nouveaux Amusemens du cœur et de l’esprit*, XI, pp. 1–28. The original orthography is preserved.



Figure 1

The frame (fig. 1) is indeed spectacular, thought to be from a design by Caffieri.³⁵ Above all it adds to the sense that in this work La Tour has taken pastel to a new level. Described by Mariette as “ouvrage de la plus longue haleine et qu’on n’en avoit point vu au pastel de pareille taille” (an observation which may not have been strictly correct, as Vivien’s 1706 pastel of *Max Emanuel devant la ville de Mons* is marginally taller), the sheer scale remains breathtaking today, not least because of the practical considerations imposed by the size on the manufacture of glass and the joining of the sheets of paper (which La Tour ingeniously cut to follow the outline of the robes).³⁶ This is not a work that can be dismissed as dainty frivolity – the pejorative connotation still borne by the word “pastel”. While La Tour uses colours of the greatest subtlety, arranged in a spectrum from the celadon vases on top of the bookcase and the delicate tones of the screen to the Turkey carpet in the foreground, he takes care to fill the middle of the space with the sitter’s judicial robes in blacks and reds of a saturation which is not bettered in oil, and a surface texture which pastel alone can attain. No opportunity is omitted to underline the wealth, power and intellect of its subject, and it is well worth analysing how and why this is achieved.

Gabriel Bernard, comte de Rieux, seigneur de Passy, de Glissoles (1687–1745), président de la deuxième chambre des Enquêtes au parlement de Paris, was the younger son of Samuel Bernard (1651–1739), reputedly the richest banker in France.³⁷ Samuel Bernard’s spectacular ascent to such heights (his father was a mere portrait painter, and he commenced his career as a merchant-drupe) inevitably incurred the disapproval of courtiers such as Saint-Simon, who recounts with glee how Louis XIV, in desperate need of money to finance his wars, managed to avoid a formal reception of the financier by staging a chance encounter at Marly.³⁸ Bernard was ennobled by letters patent only in 1699, the year in which he commissioned the imposing pastel by Vivien now at Rouen. Three years later he was made a chevalier de l’Ordre de Saint-Michel, and in 1725 his ascendancy was completed by his being made comte de Coubert. This too was marked by another of the most striking late baroque portraits – the full length painting (1726) by Rigaud at Versailles (fig. 2). La Tour, in the commission to paint the son, would have been as conscious as his client of the need to produce a supreme masterpiece, and there are indeed echoes of the Rigaud in the composition, and even such details as the inclusion of a globe by



Figure 2

³⁵ The suggestion was made by René Gimpel in his *Journal*, 4.x.1918; there is however no documentation for this. Pons 1987 discusses the frame in some detail.

³⁶ The pastel is on blue paper, of which there seem to be several layers, mounted on canvas, tacked round the sides to a keyed stretcher (the earliest known example of the use of a stretcher in place of a strainer on a pastel). I am grateful to Michelle Sullivan at the Getty for sharing information on the construction (2019).

³⁷ For a general biography of Bernard and his son, see Clermont-Tonnerre 1914.

³⁸ Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, éd. Yves Coirault, Paris, 1984, III, pp. 133f. Saint-Simon himself borrowed heavily from Bernard, whose will (Clermont-Tonnerre, *op. cit.*, p. 130) shows an outstanding amount of 200,000 livres.

which Rigaud hinted at the origin of Bernard's vast wealth, the *Compagnie des Indes*.³⁹

Bernard's eldest child Madeleine was of marriageable age by 1701, when the family's social position could aim no higher than Jacques Hardouin Mansart, son of the *surintendant des bâtiments*. Some years later the eldest son Samuel-Jacques Bernard de Coubert was married into an old but obscure family (his children did rather better, Louise marrying Lamoignon de Bâville in 1731). In 1717 Gabriel himself married the sister of his father's second wife, from a family of old nobility; but after her death, two years later, he made a much more spectacular alliance, to Suzanne-Marie-Henriette de Boulainvilliers (1696–1776), daughter of the impoverished Henri, comte de Boulainvilliers, ironically an arch-reactionary (perhaps outflanking even Saint-Simon) who believed that the purity of the aristocracy was endangered by the French monarchy, and that the noblesse de robe, created by the delegation of legal powers to the bourgeoisie, was a “monstruosité”.

These alliances continued in the next generation, and their purpose was succinctly summarised by a contemporary: “Le mariage de M. le marquis de Mirepoix avec la fille de M. le président Bernard de Rieux, doit se terminer incessamment. Les emplètes se font par Samuel Bernard, c'est-à-dire avec une magnificence convenable à une fille de finance qui se métamorphose en femme de condition.”⁴⁰ Mathieu Marais commented in a letter to president Bouhier (12.III.1733): “La folie de la France est d'entrer dans la famille (ou dans la caisse) de M. Bernard, et voilà encore M. le marquis de Mirepoix qui épouse la petite de Rieux, âgée de onze ans, jolie comme un ange, fille du président et de la demoiselle de Boulainvilliers: elle ne risque que d'être duchesse et d'avoir tous les biens de la maison de Lévi.” She died three years later in childbirth.

The pastel may be seen as a part of de Rieux's own metamorphosis, as of course did his career as a *parlementaire*. Commencing as a *conseiller* (1714) at the *deuxième chambre des Enquêtes*, he was promoted to *président* in 1727. In 1717 he was given the lands of the comté de Rieux appropriated by his father from a defaulting debtor, and from then on was known by that title.⁴¹ As the accessories in this portrait indicate, de Rieux was not merely a magistrate, but also a man of the highest culture. Although Humphrey Wine has argued that the books shown in the pastel may only have been those required for his official duties, to avoid the opprobrium attracted by financiers who kept libraries only for display, de Rieux formed a significant collection (of which the catalogue was published after his death), including valuable manuscripts (perhaps the large folio he holds in the pastel), the works of Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke and a section on “l'art du dessin, de la peinture & de la gravure” indicating that he was an informed client.⁴²

La Tour's masterpiece has also to be seen as the ultimate in luxury objects, a fashion statement in line with de Rieux's social pretensions, which (as with his elder brother) certainly involved conspicuous consumption at the highest level. Of course such complex matters had many sides in a society as sophisticated and complex as that of Ancien Régime France. There was also a competitive element to them, just as there was in the case of fashionable mistresses, as emerge from the pages of the police

³⁹ Such was the dominance of these images that when de Rieux's own son, the marquis de Boulainvilliers, was portrayed by Louis-Michel Van Loo in 1758, many of the same elements recur (New York 2005, no. 83 repr.).

⁴⁰ *Revue rétrospective*, Paris, VI, 1836, p. 266. The bride was just five days past her 12th birthday at the time of the marriage.

⁴¹ Gaspard des Monstiers de Mérinville forfeited the territory in 1707, but in 1739 had the judgment overturned and resumed possession of the title and lands; the *président de Rieux* however continued to be known by that name, although appending that of his wife, Boulainvilliers.

⁴² *Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque de feu Monsieur le président Bernard de Rieux*, Paris, 1747; it included some 3314 items, a number of which were multiple volumes. The principal categories were religion; law; philosophy, natural history, science and the arts; literature; and history. Among the collection was an early set of Vasari, a 1531 manuscript of Servetus (no. 468) sold for 799 livres. See also Renée Simon, *Henry de Boulainvillier*, The Hague, 1975, p. viii.

reports of the era. The dancer Mlle Le Duc⁴³ set so high a price after the death of her protector, the marquis de Vassé, that de Rieux alone could afford her – at a cost of some 80,000 livres in jewellery, silver and furniture. Mlle Le Duc's charms also attracted the comte de Clermont, a prince of the blood, and a thoroughly nasty individual from whose clutches the more famous dancer la Camargo had only recently escaped. De Rieux had to cede his mistress, but was furious, and carried out an intricate programme of revenge by showering La Camargo with vastly expensive presents. To no avail: Le Duc is thought to have married Clermont secretly around 1765.

This lifestyle required de Rieux to be closer to Paris than either the territories of Rieux or of Glissolles, which he inherited on his father's death in 1739. That year he purchased the splendid château de Passy from his sister-in-law. Here he entertained lavishly, and among the guests was Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, to whom was written the following note by another habitué:⁴⁴

De Paris, ce 30 août 1742.

Si vous voulés vous trouver, ce soir, Monsieur, à l'opera comique, comme nous sommes convenus hier soir, je vous meneray a Passy, et je vous rameneray, après le souper.

Je suis charmé d'avoir cette occasion de vous assurer de la considération avec laquelle je suis, Monsieur, votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur

Le comte d'Egmont

Afin que nous puissions nous trouver plus sûrement, le rendés vous era sur le théâtre, après la piece.

La Tour's relationship with de Rieux was established as early as 1738, when he was commissioned to portray the niece of the magistrate's wife, Mlle de La Fontaine-Solare. The Getty pastel was complete in time for the 1741 salon, but may have been executed in 1740 or even 1739. Evidently again satisfied, de Rieux soon after commissioned a portrait of his wife, née Suzanne-Marie-Henriette de Boulainvilliers (1696–1776), en habit de bal (Paris, musée Cognacq-Jay; fig. 3), which was exhibited in the Salon the following year. On a slightly smaller scale, this second work is another of the pastellist's great masterpieces.

La Camargo herself was the subject of a well-known La Tour *préparation*. This was his world too. After de Rieux's death⁴⁵ in 1745, Passy was inherited by his son, the marquis de Boulainvilliers, but soon after was sold to the fermier général Le Riche de La Pouplinière; La Tour's portrait of



Figure 3

⁴³ The story is told by Barbier, *Chronique de la régence et du règne de Louis XV (1718–1763)*, Paris, 1858, III, pp. 341ff, .IV.1742, and, in more detail, in Jules Cousin, *Le Comte de Clermont*, Paris, 1867, I, pp. 156ff.

⁴⁴ Cited Clermont-Tonnerre 1914, p. 173; B&W, p. 35.

⁴⁵ His posthumous inventory is at AN MC/ET/LXXXVIII/597 20 décembre 1745: "Inventaire de Gabriel Bernard de Rieux, conseiller du roi en ses conseils, président au Parlement et en la deuxième chambre des enquêtes, à la requête de Suzanne Marie Henriette de Boulainvilliers, son épouse".

his wife, from around this date, is another celebrated icon.

Among the smaller footnotes about the possible influence of this pastel, one notes that de Rieux's secretary at the time it was being made, one Claude Maucourt, later turned to art and became a pastellist.

The history of the work illustrates the vicissitudes of La Tour's art. It descended in the sitter's family at the château de Glisolles, near Évreux, until finally sold by the duc de Clermont-Tonnerre, in 1918, when it was bought by the leading dealers of the day, René Gimpel⁴⁶ and Nathan Wildenstein in partnership (and published by Wildenstein's son Georges in 1919). There, in January 1919, it was seen by Georges Clemenceau, who proclaimed "c'est le plus beau pastel que j'aie vu...il devrait rester en France." It was also the most expensive, and although offered to the state later that year, it was rejected.⁴⁷ The Greek shipowner Nicolas Ambatielos purchased it for £48,000, but was unable to complete the purchase as he ran into severe financial problems, following his legal case with the British government. The pastel was



Figure 4

reclaimed on his bankruptcy. Another twelve years were to pass before it found a suitable home – that of Maurice de Rothschild in 1931 (where the photograph in fig. 1 was taken). But, along with much of his collection, it was seized by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, around 1940,⁴⁸ with the intention of being sent to Hitler's Führermuseum in Linz.⁴⁹ It was repatriated after the war, and returned to the family, where it graced the château de Pregny. Maurice de Rothschild's son, Edmond Adolphe, a banker in Geneva, offered *Le président de Rieux* to the Louvre, but once again France was unable to afford it, and thus, in 1994, it became the crowning glory in the magnificent collection of pastels at the Getty.

There in 2018 it was exhibited together with a reconstruction⁵⁰ demonstrating the montage of the 16 visible sheets of blue paper (fig. 4); head and hands are each on separate sheets. There are further layers of blue paper between the primary support and the canvas. This is large

⁴⁶ An account is given in his diaries, Gimpel 1963; see also the relevant collectors' biographies on this website.

⁴⁷ Archives des musées nationaux, sér. D 5, cabinet des dessins, refus, 25.VIII.1919.

⁴⁸ The ERR card BoR4 has some confusing annotations and alterations, indicating several sources: Edmond de Rothschild, the German embassy in Paris, and the Rosenberg-Bernstein collection.

⁴⁹ Linz-Nr 1493; restituted 1946, Mü-Nr 7558.

⁵⁰ Published online in 2020 via Google Arts & Culture.

La Tour and *L'abbé Huber, lisant*

2014



[Maurice-Quentin de La Tour](#)

L'abbé Jean-Jacques-Clément HUBER (1699–1744)

Pastel on paper, 81x102 cm

c.1742

Geneva, musée d'Art et d'Histoire, inv. 1911-68

PROVENANCE: Jacob Huber, frère du sujet; Isaac Vernet, inv. 1773; [son frère Jacob Vernet (1698–1789); sa fille, Catherine-Charlotte, Mme Pierre Fabri; sa fille Catherine-Marie, Mme Michel-Jean-Louis Saladin du Vengeron; desc.: leur petits-fils] Ernest Saladin (1827–1911), legs 1911.

EXHIBITED.: ?Salon de 1742, no. 129. Geneva 1951, no. 37.

LITERATURE: Stryiński 1912, p. 18 repr.; Albert Rheinwald, “L'abbé Huber ou la psychologie d'une conversion”, *Genava*, v, 1927, pp. 93–104, repr.; B&W 182, fig. 149; Lüthy 1959–61, II, p. 221 n.r.; Philip Conisbee, *Painting in eighteenth-century France*, Oxford, 1981, fig. 103; Apgar 1995, p. 128 repr.; Loche 1996, no. 124; Debrie & Salmon 2000, p. 78, ill. 26; La Tour 2004a, p. 123, fig. 2; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [J.46.1901](#)

RELATED WORKS: (fig. 6) replica, pastel, 79x98 cm, Saint-Quentin, musée Antoine Lécuyer, LT 1. Ancien fonds d'atelier de l'artiste; legs Jean-François de La Tour 1807. Exh.: Paris 1927a, no. 36; pl. xxix-41; Paris 1930, no. 40; Paris 1949. Lit.: Lapauze 1899, no. 1 repr.; Erhard 1916, no. 2 repr.; B&W 181, fig. 117; Ratouis de Limay 1946, pl. xii/16; Fleury & Brière 1954, no. 23; V. & L. Adair 1971, p. 81 repr.; Bury 1971, pl. 24; Debrie 1982, p. 16 repr.; Alastair Laing, *Lighting*, 1982, fig. 16; Debrie 1983, p. 66 repr.; Debrie 1991, p. 123ff repr.; Debrie & Narbonne 1993, p. 35 repr.; Debrie & Salmon 2000, p. 78f, ill. 27; Cabezas 2004, p. 28 repr., p. 32 detail repr.; Fumaroli 2005, p. 30 repr.; Fumaroli 2007, repr.

GENEALOGY: [Huber](#)

IN 1772, JUST A FEW YEARS before his death, the German engraver Georg Friedrich Schmidt decided to engrave a second of the self-portraits of his great friend, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour. Schmidt had worked closely with La Tour during his six years in Paris, and he presented his engraving of La Tour's first self-portrait (shown in the Salon de 1737) when he was agréé to the Académie royale in 1742. La Tour had reciprocated, rising (as he typically did with portraits of his closest friends) to one of the gorgeous pastel which melted the heart of André Gide when he saw it at the Cronier sale in 1905: "poussé, traqué, réduit aux abois avec quelle intelligence, quel amour! L'émotion me prenait à la gorge à contempler cette œuvre admirable." This time Schmidt drew on a slightly later self-portrait – the "petit Buste de l'Auteur, ayant le bord de son chapeau rabattu" which La Tour exhibited in the salon of 1742 – which is now lost, so his preliminary sanguine drawing (now in Saint-Quentin, fig. 1) and the resulting print (fig. 2) offer particularly valuable information about another great work in La Tour's career. As one critic put it,⁵¹ "le Peintre s'est si bien représenté lui-même, qu'en regardant son portrait on évite de le louer trop, de peur de louer l'original en face, & de blesser sa modestie."



Figure 1



Figure 2

The sanguine shows a considerable amount of detail, not only of the work it celebrates, but of the accessories in the foreground, the books and papers which await only the lettering that can only be added directly to the plate since it reverses. But there are changes to the background: one apparently minor addition to the top right of the print is the lower part of an otherwise undelineated picture, ambiguously suggesting the interior of either a salon or a studio. On the other side, however, hanging much lower, is La Tour's celebrated pastel of his friend, the abbé Huber. This then we presume is the artist's studio, and here is supposedly the version of the pastel which La Tour kept with him till his death. In his 1768 will, he bequeathed it to the sitter's nephew, the soldier and amateur pastellist Jean Huber (1721–1786), "qui a tant de talens différens", while in the 1784 version it is to go to Baron Daniel d'Hogguer in Hamburg.) It differs from the version given to Huber himself (and now in Geneva) primarily in the absence from its own background wall of a framed picture: although more heavily foreshortened in the Geneva pastel than in Schmidt's print, the Louis XV swept frame (of the very latest

⁵¹ Possibly the abbé Pierre-François-Guyot Desfontaines, "Exposition des tableaux de l'Académie de peinture et de sculpture", *Observations sur les écrits modernes*, xxix, 1742, lettre 435, pp. 353.

fashion) is the same. Schmidt's self-referential game would sit happily in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, and doubtless further amuse André Gide.



Figure 3

But if we look more closely at the detail on the left of the print (fig. 3), we note that Schmidt has made one further alteration: instead of being fixed on the book he is reading, the abbé's eyes are raised, to look at – and perhaps after – La Tour himself. This is no random selection: Schmidt has chosen a work La Tour exhibited in the same salon as his oval self-portrait,⁵² but eschewing the drama of Dumont le Romain jouant de la guitare, the bravura of the présidente de Rieux en habit de balle or the quieter beauty of Mlle Sallé, “habillée comme elle est chez elle”, he elects a bibliophile, hunch-backed priest to preside over his friend. That merits deeper enquiry.

Fortunately there are a number of biographical studies⁵³ covering various aspects of the man Smollett called the “little French abbé, a man of humour, wit and learning” who nevertheless perpetrated “an unparalleled piece of treachery” recounted in the pages of *Peregrine Pickle*.

The abbé Jean-Jacques-Clément Huber (1699–1744) was in fact Swiss, born into an important family of Protestant merchants and bankers. His father, also christened Jean-Jacques, was a Genevan négociant who had set up also in Lyon. In 1691 he married Anne-Catherine Calandrini, daughter of the recteur de l'Académie de Calvin and his wife, the niece of the mathematician, associate of Newton and religious fanatic, Nicolas Fatio de Duillier. Huber's elder brother Jacob (1692–1750) was linked with John Law, and in 1719 married the daughter of Jean Vasserot, a prominent Amsterdam banker; her expectations were far greater than the immediate cash dowry of 120,000 livres reported disparagingly by her uncle François Calandrini in his diary. Jacob's son, Jean Huber (1721–1786), was the amateur pastellist who became obsessed with painting Voltaire. Two of the abbé's sisters were the theologian, Marie Huber, and Andrienne, Mme Cannac d'Hauteville, who wrote mystical works. Perhaps in reaction to this atmosphere, the young Jean-Jacques rebelled and “ayant fait diverses friponeries chez son père” was imprisoned in a “maison de correction”. After 15 months he escaped, fled to Turin, converted to Catholicism, taking the additional name Clément⁵⁴ (that of the current pope), and obtained a degree in theology. The convert was welcomed and he was taken up by Germain-Louis Chauvelin (1685–1762), soon to become garde des sceaux and foreign minister (replacing Rosalba's great patron, Fleuriau de Morville), and by his wife, née Anne Cahouet de Beauvain (1695–1758), to whom the diminutive Huber was described as “abbé du boudoir”.

⁵² One should not confuse this with the earlier autoportrait “à l'index”: although one anecdote also links Huber to it, suggesting that the mirth arose from a practical joke in which La Tour observes Huber's consternation as he is prevented from entering the studio (see La Tour 2004a, p. 48; E. & J. de Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1881, I, p. 356, n.).

⁵³ Lüthy 1961 provides a useful introduction to the deeper studies by Albert Rheinwald, “L'abbé Huber ou la psychologie d'une conversion”, *Genava*, v, 1927, pp. 93–104; Jacob M. Price, “The French farmers-general in the Chesapeake: The MacKercher-Huber mission of 1737–1738” *The William and Mary quarterly*, XIV/2, .IV.1957, pp. 125–153, which discusses the American episode; and Paul Brazier, “Ce mystérieux abbé Huber”, *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Genève*, XI, 1957, pp. 91–152; 1959, pp. 339–403, which provides a thorough account of his Swiss adventures but breaks off in mid career (presumably the author intended to publish further parts). These documents are not without errors, some of which are mentioned in this article. While there is enough material for a full modern biography, this article focuses on the abbé's relationship with his portraitist.

⁵⁴ A Jesuit text in the Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon, Guillaume Budé, *De asse, et partibus ejus*, includes an “Ex-libris J. Jacobi Clementis Huber 1721.”

By 1725 Huber had joined the retinue of the bishop of Strasbourg and grand aumônier de France, cardinal Armand-Gaston-Maximilien de Rohan (1674–1749). Chauvelin sent him on various missions of diplomacy or espionage. In 1731–32 he was in London, where he visited Sir Hans Sloane's private museum.⁵⁵ On his return to Paris he was befriended by the fabulously wealthy fermier général Alexandre-Jean-Joseph Le Riche de La Pouplinière (1693–1762), whose household was graced by the greatest artists, writers and musicians of the day, Voltaire, Roussau and Rameau among them; but Huber also met tax farmers and even sovereigns, such as Karl I. Herzog von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1713–1780).⁵⁶

When La Pouplinière decided to marry his beautiful young mistress, the actress Françoise-Catherine-Thérèse Boutinon des Hayes (1714–1756), Huber's opposition made of her an implacable enemy: but Thérèse's brother was secretary to Cardinal de Tencin, and the celebrated salonnière Mme de Tencin used her influence with Cardinal Fleury to ensure that La Pouplinière was compelled to regularise the liaison, which took place in 1737. As we shall see, Huber was by then out of the country.

Several years before that, Chauvelin got Huber to conduct a secret investigation of the finances of Jean-Louis d'Usson, 2^e marquis de Bonnac, French ambassador to the Swiss Grisons: malversation, and the suspicion of it, were frequent in eighteenth century diplomacy where ambassadors were expected to finance their own missions. Huber it seems also looked into the contraband trade in salt, targeted at evading the unpopular *gabelle*.

Based on a careful analysis of Huber's movements, Paul Brazier reached the conclusion – which seems highly probable – that the abbé's friendship with La Tour can be dated to the ten-month period between his return from Switzerland in August 1734 and his next foreign mission. Brazier plausibly suggests that the connection arise through the Chauvelins and may even have taken place at the château de Grosbois. Although La Tour was by then 30 years old, this is at the very start of his established œuvre and so the matter deserves careful examination.

One of the earliest portrait by La Tour is that of the curious figure Charles-Cardin Richer de Roddes de La Morlière (1681–1736), chevalier du Saint-Sépulcre, former secrétaire du vicomte d'Andrezel à La Porte 1724–26. Although now an avocat in Paris, he is shown in Turkish dress in a pastel which was engraved by Lépicié in 1734 (he had already been painted in essentially the same costume by Aved). The attribution of a pastel (fig. 4) corresponding to the engraving, but in reverse, has been disputed, on the basis that the artist's technique was poorer than in the Voltaire portraits from 1735. But the pastel may antedate the plate by several years, and it remains possible that it is the original work rather than a copy. An annotation on the BnF copy of the Lépicié engraving informs us that–



Figure 4

M. de la Morlière s'est fait graver en 1734, avec un habillement Turc, parce qu'il a séjourné plusieurs années à Constantinople. Il y avait passé avec M. Dandrezelle qui y a été et qui y est mort Ambassadeur du Roy. Il est fils de M. de Rodes, homme fort connu autrefois par rapport aux différentes mines dont il a fait l'ouverture en France, et il s'est ruiné à ce travail. Ce fils qui est celui dont il s'agit a passé une partie de sa vie à Paris dans les plaisirs; quoy qu'avec peu de bien. Il était fort connu de M. le Garde des Sceaux, et lorsqu'[il] a acheté Grosbois, il l'a établey dans cette terre pour y avoir soins des ouvrages qui s'y font et y faire prospérer la fonction de Cap.ne du château sans y avoir aucun titre.

Lépicié also engraved a *Vue du château de Grosbois* after Jean Rigaud.

⁵⁵ A letter from Huber to Sir Hans Sloane, 15.IV.1732, is in the British Library, Sloane MS. 4052, foll. 97–99.

⁵⁶ Voltaire's letter to his son, Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand, which discusses Marie Huber, mentions the abbé as "très-connu de monseigneur votre père." (*Lettres à s.a. mgr le prince de *** sur Rabelais...*, 1767).

As Brazier deduced, this short period in 1734–35 must have been the date when La Tour made his first portrait of the abbé (fig. 5).⁵⁷ Shown in academic rather than clerical costume, the pose is more reminiscent of Holbein's Erasmus⁵⁸ than of other La Tour portraits. Perhaps one should also note the various Jean Clouet portraits of another humanist Guillaume Budé, whose book Huber owned.⁵⁹ The pastel is an astonishingly accomplished⁶⁰ work for so early a date: but the evident age gap between it and the later pastels of the *abbé lisant* confirm Brazier's analysis.

By May 1735 Huber was sent on another secret mission: Waldegrave, the British ambassador in Paris, saw fit to warn Newcastle of “a french Abbé called Hubert...gone for England upon some secret Errand from the Garde des Sceaux...his figure is remarkable for it is very crooked, Brownish Complexion with a sprightly Look; He is reckoned a very good for nothing Fellow, but has parts and will undertake anything for money.” Suspected of Jacobitism, he was probably closer to the Prince of Wales's opposition and in particular to Charles, Lord Baltimore, proprietor of Maryland.



Figure 5

This connection proved invaluable in the next episode in his career, that which attracted Smollett's interest. Teaming up with a Scottish adventurer, Daniel MacKercher (later known for his involvement in the Annesley peerage claim), aided by his intimate knowledge of the tobacco excise duties (which were the basis of La Pouplinière's *ferme*), and facilitated by Lord Baltimore's introductions, in November 1736 Huber obtained Chauvelin's support for an audacious plan to allow the French to import tobacco from America via Britain so as to avoid a substantial amount of tax. Huber and MacKercher travelled to America, and attempted to persuade the suspicious Virginia and Maryland planters to accept the scheme, which would offer them higher prices than they received from British purchasers. Doubts about the scheme's legality led to MacKercher's return to England to obtain an explicit license from the Board of Trade. In his absence, Huber amended the terms extensively and obtain a commitment from a group of Virginia planters. With this apparently successful result, he left Chesapeake for Europe in the

summer of 1738. But bafflingly the scheme was not pursued – whether rejected by the *fermiers généraux* themselves, or abandoned because MacKercher thought the abbé had betrayed him, is now impossible to say. Even more confusion surrounds the role of a certain George Fitzgerald who became involved in acquiring Huber's “interest” in the Virginia tobacco to be sold to the *fermiers généraux*.⁶¹

Back in Paris, Huber sat for the second La Tour portrait. It was shown at the salon of 1742, no. 129: [le portrait] de M. l'Abbé *** assis sur le bras d'un Fauteuil, lisant à la lumière un in-folio. Two versions were made: that now in Geneva, and the one kept by the artist and now in Saint-Quentin (fig. 6). Both are astonishing. The adventures of the abbé in the seven years since the first pastel are clearly etched on this face so vividly described by Lord Waldegrave. This time, instead of disguising his friend as a humanist from another age, La Tour is explicit about his disability, his shoulders hunched unequally,

⁵⁷ Geneva, mAH, inv. 1927-1. By descent to N. Huber. Dep. Fondation Gottfried Keller, Berne, 1927). Lit.: Gielly 1927b, repr. p. 92, c.1736; Rheinwald 1927; B&W 183, fig. 69; Brazier 1957–59, pl. 1; Lüthy 1959–61, II, p. 221 n.r.; Suzanne Stelling-Michaud, *Le Livre du recteur de l'Académie de Genève (1559–1878)*, 1972, p. 94, as 1732; Loche 1996, no. 123; Debric & Salmon 2000, p. 74, ill. 25.

⁵⁸ Longford Castle, on loan to the National Gallery.

⁵⁹ v. note *supra*.

⁶⁰ Debric & Salmon 2000, p. 78, note that the work does not yet present all the mastery of the later portraits, but concede that “la touche en est cependant fondue et, même à très faible distance, ne peut être décelée.”

⁶¹ Price, Lüthy and the other Huber biographers were unaware that George Fitzgerald, who died in 1744, had a nephew (and partner) of the same name: see L. M. Cullen, “The two George Fitzgeralds of London, 1718–1759”, in David Dickson & al., eds., *Irish and Scottish mercantile networks in Europe...*, 2007, pp. 251ff.

even having him perch on the arm of the chair for the myopic perusal of his book. The Goncourt brothers, in a lengthy and beautiful discussion that is deservedly well known,⁶² saw a “chef-d’œuvre où, dans un cadre à la Chardin, le pastel s’élève presque à Rembrandt.” La Tour’s first biographer, the verbose abbé Duplaquet whose purple prose was too much even for the diligent B&W to include, has nevertheless a description⁶³ of the “tableau inimitable” of the abbé Huber lisant which may have influenced the Goncourt description, and merits inclusion here:

L’heure de la scène est la nuit; le lieu une chambre, éclairée par deux flambeaux, le sujet, un de ces Etres disgraciés par la Nature dans leur formes extérieures & qu’ordinairement la providence équitable dédommage par les qualités intérieures, qui ont bien leur prix dans la société, mais qui ne peuvent pas être l’objet de la Peinture. Joignez à ces desavantages, le costume lugubre d’un Ecclésiastique, l’attitude penchée d’un lecteur, les yeux fixés sur un livre. Représentez-vous l’obscurité, qui éteint toutes les nuances, qui confond tous les objets. Voilà les difficultés que notre Peintre choisit, pour se montrer supérieur à tous les obstacles. L’art des Rimbrandt acquiert une nouvelle perfection sous ses doigts. Ils nous offrent ici la Magie du clair obscur.

Tout est noir dans le tableau; cependant tout est nuancé, distingué, espacé. Au lieu de ces effets tranchants de la manière Flamande, qui coupent brusquement l’intervalle de l’ombre & de la lumière, c’est un passage doucement ménagé de l’une à l’autre, qui laisse jouer les reflets: la clarté réfléchie par les surfaces polies, contraste avec celle qui est absorbée par le mât des étoffes. Le livre s’élève obliquement sur une pile d’autres livres. L’œil mesure l’espace qui les sépare & sa saillie hors du tableau. Vous voyez couler graduellement la cire & se condenser en larmes sur la bougie. L’un des deux est écoulée dans toute sa longueur & sillonnée par la trace du feu, sans distraire l’attention du lecteur. La vue est frappée par l’ondulation de la flamme, elle s’obscurit vers la points, par la surabondance des parties qui n’ont pu s’enflammer, & s’échappe en tourbillons de fumée. Dans ces effets merveilleux l’artiste à peint le mouvement des corps.

Dans la figure de son ami, il peint le mouvement de l’ame. Quoique sa face inclinée se présente en raccourci, vous en saisissez le développement & la phisionomie. Ses yeux, presque cachés, annoncent pourtant le regard d’un homme d’esprit. Son visage s’épanouit, le rire est prêt à se déployer sur ses lèvres, toute sa figure s’anime. Il lit sans doute une scène plaisante de Molière.

In fact the book is not Molière, but Montaigne: Duplaquet (and the Goncourts) knew only the Saint-Quentin version where the spine of the volume is not lettered.

The reference to Rembrandtisme, in both Duplaquet and the Goncourt, is perhaps more properly to Caravaggisme – although the autoportrait au chapeau en clabaud was also described by critics as “dans le goût du Rimbrandt” (Anon. 1742). The abbé Huber lisant is the sole example in La Tour’s œuvre of a candlelit scene, although it may have been rehearsed in the clever adaptation of a Rubens painting of the Magus Gaspard into the Saint-Quentin Diogène [J.46.3785](#), holding a lantern in place of the bowl of gold; but the lighting effects are not fully adjusted. We know too that the pastellist had some early exposure to his namesake’s work: the Saint-Quentin copy [J.46.3774](#) he made of one of the musicians in Georges de La Tour’s *La rixe de musiciens* (Getty) which was in Paris before 1750.⁶⁴

⁶² *L’Art du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1881, I, pp. 356–57: “Le tableau, c’est l’abbé Hubert. – Le bonhomme d’abbé est représenté à mi-jambes, assis de côté sur un bout de fauteuil, le coude appuyé sur une table couverte d’un damas vert. Devant lui, un gros in-folio, relié en veau, se dresse sur deux gros volumes jetés l’un sur l’autre, et faisant pupitre. Une de ses mains disparaît, posée sur la page ouverte; l’autre joue dans la tranche rouge du volume d’où sort une marque blanche. La figure de trois quarts, l’abbé lit. Penché sur la table, son large estomac relevant le rabat gros bleu du temps qui s’envole à demi, les lèvres avancées, la mine gourmande, il semble enfoncé en plein dans une jubilation ecclésiastique et une jouissance épicurienne de bénédictin. On le voit sucer la moelle du gros bouquin, savourer des lèvres l’épellement des lettres, des lignes, de la page. Juché sur un carton, un chandelier de cabinet à deux branches porte devant le lecteur deux bougies; une seule brûle encore, faisant flamber sur le noir sourd du fond le prisme de sa flamme à base bleue, et au bout du lumignon charbonné de sa mèche en feu, sa langue de lumière blanche; de l’autre bougie, creusée, ravinée par un fumeron, et qui a laissé pendre en grappes, en stalactites, en cascades, sur la bobèche, les énormes coulées de sa cire, il se lève en l’air les deux ronds de fumée d’une lumière éteinte à l’instant même. C’est tout le tableau. Un abbé, un livre et deux bougies, – de cela, La Tour a su faire, avec l’harmonie du vrai et l’intérêt de la lumière, ce chef-d’œuvre où, dans un cadre à la Chardin, le pastel s’élève presque à Rembrandt.”

⁶³ *Éloge historique de La Tour*, Saint-Quentin, 1789, pp. 29ff.

⁶⁴ Rosenberg 2004 traced it to the 14.IV.1750 sale by the widow of Pierre d’Hariague; it was not specifically listed in his 1735 inventaire (but might have been one of the undecribed genre pictures), but may well have been on the Paris art market in the 1730s.

Huber was now within two years of his death. He undertook no further foreign travel, and it is possible (judging from the dramatic change in his appearance) that he was already sufficiently ill to make him aware of his mortality. Although critics have discussed the guttering candle only in terms of the intensity of Huber's concentration on his book, the metaphor of a life nearing its end does not need to be spelled out.

Huber nevertheless became involved in yet another money-making project. This time it involved a monopoly of a new textile process, the *moirage* of silks by calender. On 7.v.1743 Louis XV granted Huber this privilege. The machine with its rollers required special premises, located on the rue Louis-le-Grand, and the following year a 30-year royal licence was obtained for the calender, to be operated by a certain André Smith. He was not “flamand de nation”,⁶⁵ but British; he had married Marie Fabry, the daughter of a goldsmith in Tours. Such business opportunities were not open to nobles (they would amount to derogation), leaving the way open for adventurers and foreigners such as Huber and Smith.

By 27 March 1744 Huber, close to death, made a will which was to have considerable implications for La Tour over many years; it is of sufficient significance that a transcription of most of it is appended to this essay. Huber's death occurred in Paris a few weeks later, on 16 April 1744.⁶⁶ The legacy however was not without complications. The principal terms of the will were as follows. Isaac Vernet was named executor, but “comme il n'est pas possible aujourd'hui d'avoir un état exact de mon bien, ayant actuellement entre les mains de M. Isaac Vernet 165 billets de la dernière loterie sur lesquels il y a des déductions à faire pour les lots échus et dont les billets doivent



Figure 6 [Zoomify](#)

être éteints...de plus n'ayant point arrêté mes comptes avec M. George Fitzgerald et Compagnie depuis le 1^{er} octobre 1743, je prie mon bon et cher ami Isaac Vernet de liquider tout cela.” These uncertainties did not however restrain the abbé from nominating a large number of specific bequests: beneficiaries included Fitzgerald and Mme Geoffrin, as well as a large number of friends, protégés, godchildren and

⁶⁵ As Huber's biographers have; see Paul Feuga, “Un mécanicien à Lyon à la fin du XVIII^e siècle” in *Châtillon et sa région*, 1992, pp. 165f. Nine letters from the abbé Huber to Andrew Smith in Pall-Mall, London, were written between March 1742 and February 1743. Smith's son Joseph-Pierre (1741–1811) took over the calandre at his father's death, c.1763; in 1764 he married François-Hubert Drouais's sister-in-law, Marie-Anne Doré, at Saint-Roch; one of his sons by a second marriage became a history painter.

⁶⁶ There is considerable confusion over the date of his death. Debrie & Salmon 2000 (p. 78 and n.17) and La Tour 2004a, aware of the conflict with Brazier's 16.IV.1744, decided that Fleury & Brière's 16.IV.1747 was to be preferred, assuming that 1744 was a confusion with the date of the will. All the Swiss biographers (Lüthy, Apgar etc.) give 1744, and Rheinwald 1927 even provides an extract from his uncle's diary a few days later (21.IV.1744): “Nous avons appris la mort de l'abbé Huber, à Paris. Il a fait un peintre son héritier, laisse à ses frères 1200 livres, et laisse à sa mère et à sa grandmère...50 livres de chocolat.” The will, which was made on 27.III.1744, was deposited by Vernet on 16.IV.1744: AN MC L/366. The inventaire après décès was dated 8.VI.1744 & seq. (L/367: the document runs to some 49 pages), and numerous other documents in the same étude remove any doubt from the matter. Debrie & Salmon cannot have known this document.

employees.⁶⁷ The derisory bequests to his mother and grandmother may reflect the religious conflict in the family: his grandmother's brother Fatio de Duillier was still alive. To each of his nine siblings he left 1200 livres, and two additional amounts of 1200 livres each for "mon frère aîné Jacob Huber et sa femme, ma belle-sœur, que j'ai toujours aimée". His brother Pierre was given the calender, with the licence and lands, subject to a pension of 800 livres p.a. for Smith and his family. To "M. Vernet, mon bon et cher ami, mon carrosse, ma chaise et mes chevaux de carrosse avec toutes leurs appartenances, mais à condition d'en faire usage et de prendre le carrosse ainsi que je l'en ai prié plusieurs fois et qu'il convient à son état"; to the contrôleur général, Philbert Orry "mon portrait peint par La Tour comme une petite marque de l'attachement sincère que j'ai toujours eu pour lui indépendamment de sa position...." Finally Huber named as his héritier universel Maurice Quentin de La Tour, "peintre du Roi", "que j'ay toujours chéri comme mon enfant et dont je respecte autant la vertue que j'admire les talents". Huber however had the prescience to foresee that La Tour might refuse, in which case Isaac Vernet was to receive the residue, subject to payment of a pension of 2000 livres p.a. to La Tour and to ceding to him an annuity worth 500 livres, "car je mourrais inconsolable si je le laissais dans le cas de manquer du nécessaire".

That annuity had it seems already been bought with La Tour in mind, as evidenced by a document in the Minutier central, summarised as follows:⁶⁸

Constitution de 500 livres de rente viagère par le prévôt des marchands et des échevins de Paris, au profit de l'abbé Jean Hubert, licencié en théologie de la faculté de Turin, demeurant rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, moyennant la remise d'un billet de 300 livres de la loterie royale de 1743, auquel est échu un lot de 500 livres de rente; le bénéficiaire jouira de son vivant de ladite rente, constituée sur la tête de Maurice-Quentin de Latour, de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, demeurant rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, qui en aura la jouissance après la mort de l'abbé.

In the event it seems that the estate was insufficient to cover the various legacies and disputes with the Fitzgeralds and the fermiers généraux, while the profits from the calender monopoly never materialised, so that the machine was surrendered to Smith. La Tour renounced the succession universelle, but Vernet did so too. Four years later La Tour offered to surrender the annuity of 2000 livres against a single payment of 10,000 livres "par pure considération" for Huber, "et dans un esprit de conciliation". Lüthy thought this concluded the matter, but the estate was still under discussion in 1770, where it was the subject of a bizarre letter from La Tour to Vernet.⁶⁹ One can only imagine how many more lost letters related to this Jarndycean affair, and how much of the artist's nervous energy was consumed by them. It is medically improbable however that such concerns precipitated the degeneration of the artist's personality which was beginning to emerge in other correspondence.

Some idea of the complexity can be gleaned from the list of documents included in the abbé's inventaire après décès, which also provides some colour about the abbé's life. His servant, laying claim to some cooking utensils, testified that the abbé Huber never used the kitchen and that to his dying day, his master "s'en trouvé très peu de foin et avoine qui n'ait pas suffi a beaucoup près pour la Nourriture des chevaux". This library was inventoried in 76 numbers of up to 30 items each, and encompassed reference, classical, literary, theological, travel, historical, scientific, and mathematical works, including a high proportion in English – among them Pope's *Homer*; item 55 was "quatre Volumes in-quarto dont Essais de Montaigne prisés Sept livres." Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, in seven volumes (no. 66), was valued at 55 livres, while the two-volume *Recueil Crozat* was 60 livres (no. 64). An extensive wardrobe included not only the clerical clothes – including nine rabats – of the kind shown in the later pastels, but also a coat in "camelot gris fourré de peaud de renard" which may be that shown in the earlier pastel. In the bedroom

⁶⁷ Huber's valet de chambre, Louis-Michel Crouët dit Neüilly, later gained employment with Mme Geoffrin (I am grateful to Rochelle Ziskin, private communication, 2021, for this and other observations).

⁶⁸ 18 November 1743; AN MC CXV/544.

⁶⁹ It was printed by B&W but without identifying the recipient. For a fuller collection of La Tour documents see www.pastellists.com/Misc/LaTour_chronology.pdf. Isaac Vernet makes another appearance in La Tour's story, in 1753, when with his wife he appears to have introduced La Tour to his famous pupil Belle de Zuylen, Mme de Charrière (see Mme Prévost's letter of 23.X.1753).

was found “un petit chandelier a deux branches et double cabochon decuire dore d’or moulu” which might be that shown in the larger pastels, as could the armchair covered in “velours d’Utrecht cramoisi”. Apart from numerous prints in ebonised frames, the few pictures included “une esquisse en pastelle faite par Parrocel peintre a Paris representant une publication de paix sous glace dans la bordure a filets de bois doré prisé cent livres” – conceivably the framed picture in the background of the Geneva pastel, and no doubt his “beau dessin de Parrocel dont il est capable de connoitre le merite” bequeathed to Orry (in addition to the La Tour portrait).

The question as to which version of the *abbé lisant* was exhibited at the Salon in 1742 has recently been broached. The natural assumption is that this would have been the larger version which belonged to the sitter, while that retained by the artist was effectively a studio replica. But Debie & Salmon 2000 (p. 79) argue that the differences in handling, and the use of a technique in the Geneva version which is found in pastels shown at salons from 1746 on, indicates that the Saint-Quentin version was that shown in 1742, and that the Geneva version was a “l’imitation autographe destinée à l’ami portraituré ou à sa famille.”

There are it seems to me several difficulties with this theory, although none is insuperable. One might argue that the reference in Huber’s will to “mon portrait” intended for Orry demonstrates that the sitter possessed only one La Tour portrait, which must be the 1735 pastel: but both this and the later Geneva pastel formed part of the disputed estate, and must have belonged to Huber unless subsequently acquired by the family. But it seems unlikely that La Tour would have made such an important work (without even referring to it in the long 1770 letter) when his friendship was with the abbé rather than his family. For Salmon’s technical argument to be really convincing, the replica would have had to be made after a significant interval, and as close as possible to 1746. This presents no difficulty if as Salmon thought the abbé were still alive:⁷⁰ but with the earlier date, the interval is uncomfortably short for the technical differences to be attributed to chronological development.

To this debate we can now add the additional, if also imprecise, evidence of the inventaire après décès. Immediately after the Parrocel pastel mentioned above appear the only other pastels I could find in the inventory:

A l’égard de deux tableaux en pastelle representans portraits d’hommes sous leur glaces dans leurs differentes bordures de bois doré étants au dessus des deux portes de lad[ite] chambre a coucher aux deux cotes de l’alcove il n’en a été fait aucune prisée attendu la reclamation qui a été faite par le Sr De Latour peintre de L’academie royale de peinture et de sculpture sur le proces verbal dud[ite] Sr Commissaire Daminois comme apparenans aud[ite] Sr De la Tour pourquoy n’en est icy fait mention que pour servir de memoire.

Of course it is not certain that these are portraits of Huber himself, nor whether they include the earlier pastel. But to me the positioning of these two as symmetric overdoors is supportive of the proposition that at least one was his version of the *abbé Huber lisant*, nor would it seem from the hang that it was in the course of being copied.

The difficulty bestetting any student of La Tour’s œuvre is the artist’s astonishing flexibility in working in completely different styles at the same time. There is ample evidence of this later in his career, and I am unpersuaded that this is not the case in 1742. In any case both the Saint-Quentin and Geneva versions are wonderful, autograph tributes from this artist for whom personal friendship always coaxed additional dash. It is notable that when La Tour’s brother was trying to sell the pictures (at some stage before he made his will in 1806), the handbill he printed gave pride of place to the abbé Hubert lisant, placing it at the head of the list:

Le Portrait d’un Abbé, assis devant une table, sur laquelle il y a un in-folio, qui sert de pupitre à un autre in-folio dans lequel il lit; il est si occupé de sa lecture, qu’il ne s’aperçoit pas qu’une des deux bougies qui l’éclairent, file et fait fondre la cire qui coule le long de cette bougie, et sur le chandelier à deux branches qui est à sa droite. Ce

⁷⁰ See note 15 *supra* as to whether Huber died in 1744 or 1747. Huber may not have needed to sit again, but our argument is that La Tour would not have made the replica for a dead friend.

Tableau est sans contredit le plus vrai & le plus beau qui ait jamais été fait en ce genre, il fait l'admiration de tous ceux qui le voient.

So many of La Tour's patrons appear in this essay that it is unnecessary to list their portraits one by one. We may not have letters by which Huber introduced his friend to specific commissions, but the pattern – and the priority – of these connections, with Orry, the Rohans, Tencins, La Pouplinières and the other tax farmers is clear enough. Further Huber's circle, as indicated by his legatees, included intellectuals such as Mme Geoffrin and the abbé Le Blanc.⁷¹ What Huber left La Tour was ultimately far more valuable than the financial legacy that did not materialise: it was this network of contacts and credit – in the broadest sense – on which an artist's career was founded.

Appendix – Testament de l'abbé Huber

AN MC/ET/L/366; with omissions

Ceci est mon Testament olographe et ma dernière volonté que je désire être exécutée dans tous ses points après mon décès.

Comme il n'est pas possible aujourd'hui d'avoir un état exact de mon bien, ayant actuellement entre les mains de M^r Isaac Vernet⁷² cent soixante-cinq billets de la dernière lotterie sur lesquels il y a des déductions à faire pour des lots échus et dont les billets doivent être éteints, et en outre une somme due à M^r de Montmartel et payable le quinze février mille sept cent quarante-cinq; de plus n'ayant point arrêté mes comptes avec M^r George Fitzgerald et Compagnie depuis le 1^{er} 8^{bre} 1743, je prie mon bon et cher ami <M^r Isaac Vernet> de liquider tout cela tant ce qu'il a entre ses mains que ce qui demeure et mains de M^r Fitzgerald au cas que je vienne à mourir avant d'avoir fait cet arrangement le nommant des à présent mon exécuteur testamentaire, bien convaincu que son amitié le portera à me rendre ce dernier bon office, et voici quelles sont mes dispositions.

Je légue à ma Grand Mere Calandrin douze sols et à ma Mere autant, ou cinquante livres de chocolat à lune et à l'autre à leur choix, les priant de trouver bon que je les déshérite d'autant qu'elles ne sont pas dans le cas d'avoir besoin de ma succession

Je légue à chacun de mes frères et sœurs qui se trouveront vivants au temps de mon décès douze cent livres à chacun pour leur tenir lieu ou à leurs enfants de toutes prétensions quelconques

En outre je légue séparément à mon frère aîné Jacob Huber et à sa femme ma belle sœur que j'ai toujours aimée douze cent livres ou une pièce de vaisselle d'argent de même valeur

[other bequests to family, friends and servants]

Je légue à mon frère Pierre douze cent livres en outre et par-dessus les douze cent livres ci-dessus

Je légue à M^r Vernet mon bon et cher ami mon carrosse ma chaise et mes chevaux de carrosse avec toutes leurs appartenances mais sous condition d'en faire usage et de prendre carrosse ainsi que j'en ai prié plusieurs fois, et qu'il convient à son état

Je légue à Neuilly mon domestique dont je dois récompenser la fidélité l'attachement outre ses gages échus, cinq cent livres pour porter mon deuil, toute ma garde-robe mon linge mes fourrures en un mot tout ce qui peut être compris dans l'habillement et en outre une rente viagère de huit cent livres dont le fonds sera pris sur tout ce que je laisse et le placement fait pour mon ami M^r Vernet

...

Je légue à mon bon et cher ami M^r de la Pouplinière outre seize cent livres dont il a mon billet ma montre d'or à secondes de Graham ou celle que je me trouverai au temps de mon décès, comme un léger souvenir de l'homme du monde qui le plus aimé, et tous mes papiers pour en faire l'usage qu'il trouvera bon, lesquels papiers lui seront remis par M^r Vernet après qu'il en aura tiré tout ce qui regard mes effets

Je légue à M^r le Contrôleur général, c'est à dire à M^r Orry s'il est vivant au temps de mon décès, mon portrait peint par la Tour que je le prie d'accepter comme une petite marque de l'attachement sincère que j'ai toujours eu pour lui indépendamment de sa place, et mon beau dessin de Parrocel dont il est capable de connaître le mérite

⁷¹ In *Lettres de Monsieur l'abbé Le Blanc...*, ed. 1751, II, p. 243, lettre LIV is addressed to abbé Huber "sur l'utilité des manufactures" and commends his project for establishing the calandre in France.

⁷² Isaac Vernet (1700–1773), officier des gardes suisses, négociant à Marseille, banquier, exécuteur du testament de l'abbé Huber, membre du conseil des Deux Cents à Genève 1738.

Je legue a Mad^e Geoffrin dont j'honore et respect l'amitié ma Thetiere d'argent et deux goblets couverts a fleurs naturelles de porcelaine de Saxe qui font le coin de ma cheminée

...

Je legue a Smith Directeur de ma Calandre dont j'ay reconnu et ne saurois asses louer la probité et l'attachement, une pension de huit cens livres a prendre sur le produit de ma Calandre – je dis une pension de huit cent livres pendant trente ans qui sont le terme de mon privilege pour passer apres lui ladite pension a sa femme et a ses enfans; et cela en outre et non compris le salaire qui pourra lui etre due au tems de mon decés ...

Je legue a l'abbé le Blanc dont je respecte l'honneur et la vertu dans l'indigence une somme aussi de deux mille livres

Je legue a M^r Jacques Fitzgerald capitaine dans Dillon quinze cent livres, au lieu d'une bague que j'aurais laissée a mon bon et cher ami George Fitzgerald le jeune son oncle qui j'espere regardera cette marque d'amitié comme donné a lui-même

Je legue a mon frere Pierre Huber en outre ce que j'ay dit ci-dessus ma calandre, mon privilege, et le batiment, ma calandre pour toujours parce quelle m'appartient, et la privilege et le batiment pour le tems marqué a condition de donner a Smith la pension de huit cent livres ci dessus et a M^r de la Tour Peintre une rente de mille livres tant que la dite calandre subsistera; et faute par mon frere Pierre d'accepter ces deux conditions, le present legs sera tenu pour nul, et la dite calandre et privilege seront vendus, mais toujours a la condition des deux dites rentes, celle de Smith sera prelevée de preference a tout.

J'institue mon ami M^r de la Tour que j'ay toujours cheri comme mon enfant, et dont je respecte autant la vertu que j'admire les Talens, pour mon heritier et legataire universel; et l'autorise pour et autant qu'il est en mon pouvoir, persuadé que son premier soin sera de paier ce que je pourrai avoir de dettes au tems de mon decés; je le prie de nen oublier aucune et sil sen trouvoit meme de douteuses, de juger favorablement de celui qui se portera pour creancier, sur tout si ce sont d'honnetes gens

Et en cas que le dit M^r de la Tour ne fut pas en volenté d'accepter ce legs universel crainte des embarras ou cela pourroit le jetter, j'institue et nomme a sa place mon bon et cher ami M^r Vernet <mon legataire universel>, sous condition de faire en sorte que le dit M^r de la Tour aie de moy deux mille livres de rente viagere bien assurées, en outre et par dessus un contract de cinq cent livres de rente que j'ay mis sur sa tete, et qui lui demeurera

Si quelcun trouve extraordinaire cette disposition en faveur de Mr de la Tour ce quelcun ne le connoit pas comme moy, qui mourrois inconsolable si je le laissois dans le cas de manquer du necessaire

Par cette mienne derniere volenté j'annule toute disposition anterieure Fait a Paris ce vingt sept Mars mille sept cent quarante quatre J J C Huber Je me reserve pourtant d'ajouter a cette presente disposition d'autres legs que la douleur que je souffre dans ce moment pourroit m'avoit fait oublier mais faute par moy dy ajouter elle nen aura par moins son plein effet. Elle consiste jusques a present en deux feuilles contenant chacune quatre pages...

Je legue a M^r Sermet mon ami dont j'estime la probité et le bon cœur mon diamant pesant quatorze grains comme une legere marque de ma reconnaissance; ou suppose que je ne me trouvasse pas ce diamant au tems de mon decés un diamant de quinze cent livres

Je legue a M^r Sarrazin le fils en reconnaissance des soins qu'il sest donné pour ma calandre, deux mille livres Fait a Paris ce 1 Avril je dis premier Avril Mille sept cent quarante quatre

J J C Huber

La Tour, *Duval de L'Épinoy*

2010



[Maurice-Quentin de La Tour](#)

Louis DUVAL DE L'ÉPINOY (1696–1778)

Pastel on multiple sheets of paper, 119.5x92.8 cm

1745 [Zoomify](#)**Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, inv. [2380](#)**

PROVENANCE: [?la fille du sujet, Mme François-Pierre Dedelay de La Garde, née Marie-Marguerite Duval (1732–1752); inv. p.m., 23.II.1753.] Le sujet; Jean-Jacques Gallet de Mondragon (1711–1796), son gendre; saisie d'émigré, 2.I.1797; restauré à sa veuve, née Marie-Jeanne Duval (1733–1823), par arrêt des Consuls, 6.IX.1802; leur fils, Jean-Jacques Gallet, 2^e marquis de Mondragon (1755–1819); son fils Théodore, marquis de Mondragon (1794–1875); sa fille, Eulalie, marquise de Beaumont (1828–1892); son fils, Guillaume-Marie-Théodore de La Bonninière, comte de Beaumont (1850–1901); vente, château de Beaumont, Beaumont-la-Ronce, 19–28.IV.1903, ff5210. Acqu. Jacques Doucet a.1905, ff120,000; Paris, Georges Petit, 5–8.VI.1912, Lot 75, est. ff300,000, ff600,000; baron Henri de Rothschild, Paris, 1927; acqu. 1943

EXHIBITIONS: Salon de 1745, no. 167 (“M. **, amy de l’auteur, aussi en grand”; Paris 1908a, no. 37, pl. 27; Paris 1927a, no. 37, pl. xxx-42; Paris 1930; Washington 1950, no. 22 repr.; Lisbon 1999, no. 32 repr..

LITERATURE: Mme de Graffigny, letter to Devaux of 7.IX.1745, correspondence, 2000, vi, p. 577; [abbé Desfontaines], “Explication des peintures, sculptures, & autres ouvrages...Salon du Louvre, 1745”, *Jugemens sur quelques ouvrages nouveaux*, ix, 1745, p. 210; Desmaze 1854; Mariette 1856, III, p. 70; Desmaze 1854; Tourneux 1904b; Tourneux 1904c; Guiffrey 1908, p. 641; Lemoisne 1908, p. 21 repr.; Furcy-Raynaud 1912, p. 301; Guy Pène du Bois, *Hearst's international*, xxii, 1912, p. 129; *New York times*, 27.x.1912; Ratouis de Limay 1927, p. 329 n.r., “La Tour s’est en effet surpassé, et dans l’exécution de la physionomie fine et un peu hautaine..., et dans celle, vraiment étonnante, de l’habit de moire grise...”; B&W 133, fig. 124; “The novelty at the 1930 Paris salon: the first annual salon, in 1737, reconstituted”, *Illustrated London news*, 17.v.1930, p. 887 repr.; André Pératé, “Les salons”, *Revue bleue*, lxxviii, 1930, p. 377 n.r.; Ratouis de Limay 1946, pl. xiv/19; José de Azeredo Perdigão, *Calouste Gulbenkian: collector*, Lisbon, 1969, pp. 124–27, p. 128 repr.; Bury 1971, pl. 17; Barbara Maria Stafford, *Artful science: Enlightenment entertainment and the eclipse of visual education*, 1996, fig. 180; Goffen 1995, pp. 96–97 repr. cl; Soares Costa & Sampaio 1998, pp. 92–95 repr. cl; English text, pp. 289–90; Debrie & Salmon 2000, pp. 119ff, ill. 53; *Calouste Gulbenkian Museum – album*, Lisbon, 2001, p. 123, no. 97 repr.; D. T. Jenkins, ed., *The Cambridge history of western textiles*, 2003, pl. 26; Marguerite de Saint-Marceau, *Journal 1894–1927*, ed. Myriam Chimènes, Paris, 2007, p. 706; Kisluk-Grosheide & Munger 2010, p. 222, fig. 62; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [1.46.1724](#)

RELATED WORKS: A number of copies of varying levels are known; see artist article in *Dictionary* for list

GENEALOGY: [Duval](#)

DUVAL: C’EST LE TRIOMPHE de la Peinture en pastel⁷³ according to Antoine Duchesne, prévôt des Bâtiments du roi, in an annotation to his copy of the livret of the Salon de 1745 where this work was coyly described as “M. ***, amy de l’auteur”.⁷⁴ Mariette too annotated his copy: “le roy des pastels de La Tour”. It is impossible to challenge either appraisal. But as we gorge our eyes on this sumptuous portrait of a man with a Jocondesque smile, a few thoughts may take us beyond the purely sensuous pleasure of the harmony of silvers and blues that flatter both the sitter and the medium itself – La Tour as always is showing off, choosing a composition that allows him to cover a wide expanse of moiré silk requiring the greatest virtuosity in technique, thereby forcing his critics to concede that these short strokes of white chalk which make no sense close up turn into pure light from the required distance. In the process the master overturns the received laws of colour: in pastel, blue can be a warm colour, and pinky reds can recede in favour of glowing silvers.

Mme de Graffigny described her response in a letter to to her friend Devaux (7 September 1745):

J’ai hier matin voir les tableaux du Louvre. Il ne sont pas merveilleux cette année, quoique Mrs les peintres ayent eu deux ans pour travailler. Ce sont Presque tous portraits, et La Tour empeche de regarder les autres. Disenteuil [abbé de La Galaizière] y est de sa façon, si singulièrement ressemblant que je pensai lui aler parler. A coté de lui est un sous-fermier, peint aussi par La Tour, qui est un chef d’œuvre. Il est assis, il prend du tabac en vous regardant a vous faire rire par son air riant. Il est habillé de la plus belle moire gris de perle qui ait jamais été fabriquée; on est pret a tater l’etoffe, rien n’est si admirable.

The subject is shown at his desk, in a pose of almost English nonchalance, caught in the act of taking snuff, his relaxation emphasised by his crossed legs and the placing of the chair at an angle to the gilt-mounted bureau on which are displayed the large tome he is reading, and a terrestrial globe, turned to Africa, with no obvious connection with the sitter. The globe, judging by its size, brass fittings and

⁷³ This essay may be cited as Neil Jeffares, “La Tour, *Duval de L’Épinoï*”, *Pastels & pastellists*, http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTour_Duval.pdf.

⁷⁴ Among the other La Tour pastels exhibited that year, the portrait of Philibert H. Orry, directeur des Bâtiments du roi has similar dimensions and a reverse composition, so that they may almost be considered pendants. The subjects’ social positions were however quite distinct.

dotted lines marking the tropics and ecliptic, appears to be the model supplied by the abbé Nollet in 1728. The presence of these working tools keeps the atmosphere this side of languor, but the impression of studied informality is reiterated by the dog's-eared page where the book lies open, and the angled volumes on the shelf which juxtapose a fine binding with the unbound books clearly intended for use. This sitter wants us to see him not simply as a well-dressed gentleman, but as a scholar and a man of action.

La Tour also wants us to know that he was an “amy de l’auteur” – a phrase that carries additional resonance today as art historians continually remind us that this artist was at his best when portraying his friends. He does this by a trick whose magic is only revealed by viewing the work in person: it does not work from a photograph, however high the resolution. As you approach the pastel, the expression suddenly changes – at a distance of about one metre – from a wry, quizzical, almost cynical ambiguity, to one of pure pleasure. This is effected by the inclusion of the sitter’s two top front teeth in the slightly opened mouth: they are virtually, but not completely, invisible in the pastel, but are not perceptible at a distance or in reproduction. The trick was used by other artists – notably by Vigée Le Brun, one of whose hallmarks it became, but never with quite so much subtlety.⁷⁵

How accurate was La Tour’s description of the 49-year old Louis Duval, sieur de L’Épinoz, “sans profession déclarée” at the time of the pastel? Surprisingly little is known about this financier and his origins. His father Jean Duval was a marchand en gros in Amiens; even his dates are uncertain.⁷⁶ He rose to be an échevin of the town, a position sufficient for Chaix d’Est-Ange to declare that the family came from the haute bourgeoisie; but the fact remains that when exhibited, La Tour’s masterpiece was of a wealthy roturier whose ennoblement was only achieved two years later by the purchase of the office of secrétaire du roi. The commission of this pastel may be seen as a stepping stone on the path of de l’Épinoz’s social advancement, which had clearly come a long way from wholesaling in Amiens. The official line was that “[il] a fait pendant longues années le commerce de mer avec exactitude”,⁷⁷ but the key step is revealed in a typically snide remark in Barbier’s *Journal*:⁷⁸ Duval made his money in John Law’s Mississippi bubble. He subsequently invested his money in numerous maritime adventures, notably those of the baron d’Huart,⁷⁹ who endeavoured to finance various activities linked with trade routes to the West Indies via Canada, and the fly-by-night timber companies run with Philippe Seichepine and Antoine-François Angevin. By around 1730 he was in a position to make a reasonably good marriage, to a Marie-Anne⁸⁰ Bersin (1699–1780), related to another Amiens négociant, Jean-Baptiste Bersin (1691–1772) and also Duval’s own cousin. Bersin had arrived somewhat earlier than Duval, as he had bought his position of secrétaire du roi in 1720 and was to become a grand audancier de France.

In 1741 Duval was one of nineteen financiers awarded a nine-year contract for the tax farm in Tuscany.⁸¹ One of his partners was Jean-Baptiste Philippe, of whom La Tour would make a superb portrait in 1748. The syndicate was managed by an obscure banker, Gabriel-Louis Boët de Saint-Léger (the La Tour

⁷⁵ For a broad discussion of this topic, see Colin Jones, *The smile revolution in eighteenth century Paris*, Oxford, 2014; at p. 130, the author notes that La Tour made “numerous subtly animated portraits, in which the teeth floated tantalisingly in and out of focus”, but brackets the dental exposure in his Democritian self-portrait with those by “odd-ball artists” such as Liotard and Ducreux. In fact there are numerous smiles with visible teeth in earlier portraiture, from Boucher to Perronneau and Mme Roslin.

⁷⁶ The otherwise reliable Favre Lejeune 1986 gives them as 1684–1730, but it is hardly plausible that he was 12 when his son was born.

⁷⁷ AN V² 42.

⁷⁸ Edmond-J.-F. Barbier, *Journal historique et anecdotique du règne de Louis XV*, Paris, 1851, III, p. 262, 1751: “Le second fils de M. de La Garde est maître des requêtes et a épousé une fille de M. Duval, homme de fortune du Système et dans les affaires, dont il a eu cent mille écus en mariage. Celui-ci est plus convenablement marié.”

⁷⁹ See J. F. Bosher, “A fishing company of Louisbourg, Les Sables d’Olonne, and Paris: La société du baron d’Huart, 1750–1775”, *French historical studies*, IX/2, 1975, pp. 263–77.

⁸⁰ Not Jeanne-Françoise-Marie as in most sources.

⁸¹ For details of this episode, see Jean-Claude Waquet, “La ferme de Lombart (1741-1749). Pertes et profits d’une compagnie française en Toscane”, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, XXV/4, 1978, pp. 513–29.

preparation in Saint-Quentin is either of his wife or sister), whose fraudulent arbitrage operations led to a scandal in which Duval and Philippe were expelled from the Lombart farm.

As for Duval's friendship with La Tour,⁸² this may have dated from 1739 since it has been suggested that he owned one of the best versions of La Tour's portrait of Dupouch (now in Washington) which was exhibited that year.⁸³ In any case the frame was said to be engraved with the verses:

La peinture autrefois naquit du tendre amour
Aujourd'hui l'amitié la met dans tout son jour.

It is said by some of the early sources⁸⁴ that La Tour strained this friendship by enlarging the commission, presumably from the standard bust length, in order to be able to secure a larger price. It is certainly true that the artist gave himself the enormous challenge of depicting the fullest expanse of watered silk in the coat, matching breeches and complementary waistcoat, contrasting the stiff reinforcements of the side pleats with the softness of the lace, while the colour and texture of the outfit is set against the plump pink silk damask of the upholstery. For evidence of La Tour's mastery of colour, note the catchlights on each upholstery tack, depicted with tiny dots of pink gouache. As with a number of the larger La Tour pastels, Duval consists of a number of irregularly shaped sheets of paper joined for the most part imperceptibly, although in a few places the edges can now be detected.

Duval de l'Épinois's elevation, within two years of the Salon, coincided with a number of further marks of arrival. Among these were the acquisition of the château, lands and title (a marquisate) of Saint-Vrain (fig. 1) which went back to the 13th century. Until 1735 it was in the de Broglie family, but it was acquired that year by the flamboyant and fabulously wealthy *fermier général* Alexandre Le Riche de La Pouplinière.⁸⁵ Its location, only 36 km south of Paris, made it possible to hold the fêtes in which La



Figure 1

Pouplinière delighted, involving the numerous artists, musicians and dancers whom he supported so lavishly. This was the world of Voltaire, Rousseau, Rameau and Casanova – and also of La Tour whose portrait of La Pouplinière's young wife is one of the best-known pastels at Saint-Quentin. Both Duval and La Pouplinière remained among the artist's friends, as we know from a letter to La Tour by the abbé Le Blanc (8 April 1751) sending his regards to the two financiers. There were clouds over La Pouplinière's enjoyment of the property, notably an interminable law suit with the neighbours which was only finally settled in 1762. By 1747 he

decided to sell Saint-Vrain to de l'Épinois and his wife, for 210,000 livres, payable in instalments (and to La Pouplinière's creditors) over 22 years, with the contents sold for 30,000 livres in cash.

Among the few facts about de l'Épinois vouchsafed by the main sources are his daughters' marriages – the clearest indicators of social progress. In 1751 the nineteen-year-old Marie-Marguerite was a suitable match for François-Pierre Dedelay de La Garde, baron d'Achères et de Rougemont (1712–1789), maître

⁸² This might have dated from 1739 if, as has been suggested, Duval owned one of the best versions of La Tour's portrait of Dupouch which was exhibited that year (now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington). Unknown in 1928 when Besnard & Wildenstein was published, the pastel was acquired by Jean Cailleux from Soffrey de Beaumont-Beynac before its sale to Samuel Kress in 1956. The suggestion appears in Colin Eisler, *Paintings and sculptures from the Samuel Kress collection*, Washington, 1959, p. 321 (repeated in Debric & Salmon 2000, p. 207 but is prudently omitted from Washington 2009); it appears to derive from Jean Cailleux but is not repeated in the firm's *Cailleux 1912-1962, album jubilaire* which appeared in 1963. I suspect the suggestion was simply based on a confusion between of marquis de Beaumont, born both by the Beaumont-Beynac family and Duval's descendants, the family of Bonnin de La Bonnière, which do not in fact seem to be closely related.

⁸³ However the suggestion (by Jean Cailleux in 1963) seems to have been based on a confusion between Beaumont-la-Ronce and château de La Roque.

⁸⁴ Mariette, *op. cit.*

⁸⁵ Georges Cucuel, *La Pouplinière et la musique de chambre au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1913, p. 84ff.

des requêtes, and son of a secrétaire du roi. Mme de Pompadour witnessed the marriage;⁸⁶ the bride brought a dowry of 100,000 écus and the Saint-Vrain estate. She died a year later; her widower soon remarried, into the Fénelon family, but de l'Épinois had the foresight to draft provisions into the contract allowing him to recover Saint-Vrain: "M. Duval aimoit beaucoup cette habitation où il avoit un des premiers appelé le genre anglais pour rompre la monotonie de nos anciens parcs. Des bosquets d'arbres verts lui rappeloient ceux d'Italie où il avoit voyagé."⁸⁷ According to Marie-Marguerite's posthumous inventory,⁸⁸ carried out 23 February 1753, located in the chambre à coucher du sieur de La Garde was a "tableau pastel représentant le sieur Duval, garni de glace dans sa bordure, portrait de famille, pour mémoire." While this might be a repetition of the La Tour, no contemporary copy is known, and it is quite likely that Duval recovered the work with other family property.

Duval de l'Épinois left his mark on the gardens, which contained important botanical specimens such as a laurier à fleurs de tulipes (*Arbor tulpifera*, recently imported from Louisiana and described by Père Charlevoix⁸⁹).

He created a number of paths, at the intersection of which he placed a 12-metre-high obelisk which has puzzled specialists ever since. Was it a monument to Cassini who had recently commenced his work of mapping France by establishing the Paris meridian? The obelisk is in fact slightly off this meridian, but the inscriptions *Geographia incremento* and *Obletationi publica* surely reflect the same interests as La Tour's globe – and the book of maps of North America in the English language found in de l'Épinois's estate inventory,⁹⁰ and which relate to his adventures with d'Huart.

There is other evidence of de l'Épinois's interest in books: he is, for example, listed among the subscribers to a 12-volume edition of Corneille

published in 1764. Saint-Vrain was not of course his main residence: that was the substantial house at 1, rue d'Antin, constructed by another beneficiary of the Law scheme, Bourgeois de Boyne, between 1715 and 1725.

The marriage in 1753 of de l'Épinois's second daughter Marie-Jeanne (1733–1823) was to last far longer. The contract this time was signed by the king himself, and the groom was the very wealthy Jean-Jacques Gallet de Beauchesne, comte de Pleuvault, marquis de Mondragon (1711–1796), maître des requêtes, maître d'hôtel du roi, son of a secrétaire du roi. This time however de l'Épinois was unable to pay his daughter's dowry, as a result of the default by the Société d'Huart in the Canadian business. A séparation des biens ensued, but information about de l'Épinois's subsequent affairs becomes very scarce. By 1770 he had sold his office as secrétaire du roi. Saint-Vrain was sold, and was acquired by Mme du Barry after the death of Louis XV.

Duval de l'Épinois died in 1778, in what circumstances we can only surmise. The building at rue d'Antin, which had already passed to de l'Épinois's son-in-law Gallet de Mondragon and was now known as the hôtel Mondragon, was confiscated⁹¹ when he emigrated in 1792; it was valued at Fr164,000. Here Joséphine and Napoléon were married in 1796, within weeks of Mondragon's death in exile in Germany. The house and contents were restored to his widow by an arrêté des consuls, 19 fructidor an X [6.IX.1802].

VENTE aux enchères publiques
AU CHATEAU DE BEAUMONT
C^{te} de Beaumont-la-Ronce (INDRE-ET-LOIRE) par
M^r Chauvin, notaire à Tours, les 19, 20, 22, 23, 24,
26, 27, 28 avril 1903 et jours suivants de :
MEUBLES ANCIENS ET DE STYLE
Objets d'art, Diamants, Argenterie, Tableaux
(Pastel de Latour, portrait par le baron Gros)
Gravures, Miniatures, Suite de quatre très
Belles tapisseries de Beauvais XVIII^e siècle
(Scènes chinoises); Ecran Beauvais, Bronzes, Por-
celaines, Armes, Voitures, Orangerie, Vins de
Château-Latour, Bibliothèque. Exposition les 18 et
21 avril de 1 h. à 4 h. — On peut consulter le Cata-
logue à Paris chez M. Amard, 23, quai de l'Horloge.

Figure 2

⁸⁶ Archives nationales MC ET XCVII/329, 22.v.1751.

⁸⁷ *Mémoires historiques de Jeanne Gomart de Vaubernier, comtesse du Barry*, Paris, 1803, III, pp. 2–5.

⁸⁸ Helpfully signalled in Wildenstein 1967, p. 173.

⁸⁹ *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France*, Paris, 1744, II, p. 6.

⁹⁰ Inv. p.m., Archives nationales Y 10913; MC XCVII 499.

⁹¹ H. Monin & L. Lazard, *Sommier des biens nationaux de la ville de Paris*, Paris, 1920, pp. 257, 269, 276.

La Tour's pastel seems to have stayed with the house in the rue d'Antin during this period. When Mondragon emigrated in 1792, the hôtel was visited by the painter Lemonnier, who designated the portrait of "Duval l'oncle, peint au pastel par La Tour" to be put in reserve for the benefit of the nation. It was then returned to the family, and descended to de L'Épinoÿ's great-great-granddaughter Eulalie (1828–1892), who married the marquis de Beaumont. At some stage before 1869, when the hôtel Mondragon became the seat of the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, the pastel was removed to the château de Beaumont, Beaumont-la-Ronce, where in April 1903 it suffered the indignity of public auction conducted by M^e Chauvin, notaire à Tours, advertised under the headline "Meubles anciens et de style" in the small print of the *Revue des deux mondes*.⁹² The promised "pastel de Latour" (fig. 2) was described in the catalogue⁹³ as a presumed portrait of the marquis de Mondragon, and fetched the insignificant sum of Fr5210. The matter of the sitter's identity was quickly resolved by Maurice Tourneux,⁹⁴ and the pastel was very soon snapped up by the famous couturier Jacques Doucet, who paid a more respectable sum of Fr120,000. Here, in the rue Spontini, it took pride of place among one of the very greatest collections of pastels of all time, as can be seen in the 1905 watercolour by Alexander Karbowski (fig. 3). But its stay here was again short-lived, as Doucet decided to dispose of his entire collection of XVIII^e art in favour of the modern school. According to Matilda Gay's diary, this was provoked by a *chagrin d'amour* – the woman he wished to marry had died suddenly: "It is the act of a spoilt child who, having been deprived of his favorite toy, breaks all the others."⁹⁵ The full circumstances were more sordid: Doucet lived in the hôtel in the rue Spontini with a Mme Raimon, née Jeanne Ruaud who died suddenly on 28 February 1911, allegedly at the hands of her husband. Doucet's response was to abandon his house, his collection and his library.⁹⁶

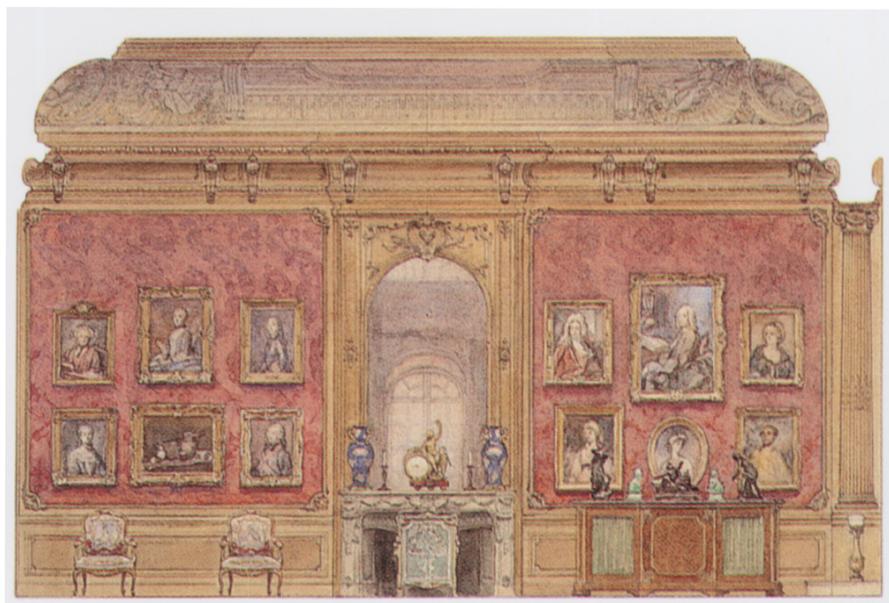


Figure 3

⁹² 1903, p. 718.

⁹³ Of which no copies are known; the sale is not listed in Lugt.

⁹⁴ "Études d'iconographie française: identification de deux modèles de La Tour", *Gazette des beaux-arts*, xxxi, 1904, pp. 275ff. In fact the subject had been identified in a contemporary critique of the 1745 Salon published in the *Jugemens sur quelques ouvrages nouveaux* and usually attributed to the abbé Desfontaines, although Fréron and Mairault collaborated on this short-lived literary periodical. The review, and the subsequent letter to the editor, have been unaccountably overlooked in the literature of salon criticism.

⁹⁵ Quoted in William Rieder, *Charmed couple: the art and life of Walter & Matilda Gay*, 2000, p. 92.

⁹⁶ See Jérôme Delatour, "Doucet chez Rothschild", in *De la sphère privée à la sphère publique: Les collections Rothschild dans les institutions publiques françaises*, ed. Pauline Prevost-Marcilhacy, Laura de Fuccia & Juliette Trey, Paris, 2019. The episode is also mentioned in René Gimpel's journal, 16 February 1918.

Doucet's sale, in 1912, was one of the most spectacular in a period in which pastels enjoyed their second era of fashion; and, at that sale, "le roy des pastels de La Tour" reigned again. According to a contemporary journalist,⁹⁷

It was offered at the very first session of the sale and from the time of its appearance created a frenzy of excitement such as is rarely seen even at Parisian art sales. Apparently more than two dozen people scattered through the crowded Georges Petit Gallery coveted the work. Bids came from everywhere in the auction room. ... The price ... mounted the scale with astounding rapidity. Each new offer put one or more prospective buyers out of the competition. At \$100,000 the battle had become a duel between Henri de Rothschild and a woman who has successfully kept her identity secret. At \$132,000 the auctioneer's hammer fell.

It was bought by baron Henri de Rothschild⁹⁸ for Fr600,000, double the estimate, and a world record price for a pastel. (At 1912 exchange rates this was £24,000, equivalent⁹⁹ to £2.5 million in 2015.) "What were we coming to when pastels brought more than paintings?" was the gossip reported by Pène du Bois. Writing in the *Burlington magazine*, Robert Dell, its first editor, although an ardent francophile, revealed typically British incomprehension of the medium: "Is it in accordance with common sense that a masterpiece by Fragonard [*Le Songe du mendiant*] should fetch 137,500 francs, and a masterpiece by Latour, who can hardly be counted the equal of Fragonard, 660,000? The truth is that prices have no sort of relation to artistic value." Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux, reputedly the model for Proust's Mme Verdurin, was even more disgusted, writing in her *Journal*: "Les prix atteints par les bibelots de la vente Doucet révoltent les braves gens. Acheter 600 000 francs une tête de Latour, l'accrocher à son mur, immobiliser de tels capitaux est une manière de rendre les infortunés criminels."

It seems however that Henri de Rothschild also thought he had "paid too much for the whistle", and reports soon circulated that he had refused to accept the purchase on the grounds that the work was "not authentic", a view apparently endorsed by experts he had employed. A referral to the Tribunal de Commerce was threatened, but the baron seems to have thought better of this.

But Duval de l'Épinois was not yet at rest, disturbed this time, in Henri de Rothschild's splendid hôtel at the corner of the rue de Berri and the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, by the constant stream of new omnibuses that trundled down the faubourg. Every pastel collector's nightmare: the vibration caused the picture to shake, and the experts predicted that no pigment would remain if the situation persisted. Rubber pads and every type of insulation were tried in vain, before the baron implemented a Rothschild solution:¹⁰⁰ he built a new house on the Avenue du Bois (now the Avenue Foch). The pastel today¹⁰¹ remains in a remarkably good state: the colours are amazingly fresh; while some of the joins in the paper sheets are now visible, they are far less evident than in some other La Tour pastels. There has been some mould, the traces of which remain most evident (but only on careful inspection) on the book and on the skirts of the coat. The top right background has an unusual texture that may suggest later intervention. But none of this is significant, and the miraculous treatment of the face seems as fresh today as ever.

By 1930 Rothschild was happy to lend the picture to an exhibition in Paris devoted to recreating the artists who had exhibited at the Salon of 1737. Among pictures by Boucher, Natoire, Tocqué, Chardin, Aved, Jean-François De Troy, Tournières, Jean-Baptiste and Carle Van Loo, it was, according to one critic, La Tour who stole the show:¹⁰²

M. Duval de l'Épinois, assis à son bureau, jambes croisées, se retourne et sourit. Je ne sais s'il va nous offrir une pincée de l'excellent tabac dont il vient de se barbouiller les narines, mais il est visiblement satisfait de son bel habit de

⁹⁷ Guy Pène du Bois, *Hearst's international*, XXII, 1912, p. 129.

⁹⁸ Baron Henri (1872–1947) was a doctor, playwright, entrepreneur and philanthropist. The most recent study, by Harry W. Paul (Ashgate, 2011), concentrates on his medical career and makes no mention of the La Tour.

⁹⁹ Using Bank of England figures for consumer price inflation.

¹⁰⁰ The report appeared in the *New York times*, 27.X.1912. In Louis Aragon & Jean Cocteau, *Entretiens sur le musée de Dresde*, 1957, p. 134, Cocteau tells the story, but suggests that Rothschild successfully persuaded the préfet de police to change the bus route. It is possible that Rothschild consulted Charles Moreau-Vauthier, whose *La Peinture* appeared the following year, and contained a discussion of the effect of vibration on pastels mounted on stretched canvas, noting (p. 106) that the resultant "tambourine" "vibre même aux bruits des rues voisines."

¹⁰¹ Inspected *in situ* in June 2015.

¹⁰² André Pératé, "Les salons", *Revue bleue*, LXVIII, 1930, p. 377.

moire grise, dont les pans, rejetés sur les bras du fauteuil, insultent par leur chatoisement à nos costumes tristement étriqués.

During the war, forces of a different kind came into play; the baron was obliged to sell the pastel, which was acquired by the oil magnate Calouste Gulbenkian, where, in keeping with his motto “only the best is good enough for me”, it joined La Tour’s beautiful but restrained portrait of the dancer Marie Sallé. Gulbenkian assembled a collection of antique, oriental and Western art of the highest quality in his house on the Avenue d’Iéna in Paris where he lived from 1927. With the outbreak of war he moved to Vichy France, and as a result lost his British passport in 1940. By 1942 Gulbenkian and Henri de Rothschild were both living in Lisbon (Rothschild too was regarded as an enemy alien, until 10 June 1943).¹⁰³ Negotiations commenced concerning a number of works of art which Rothschild wanted to sell, then stored in London. Gulbenkian sought advice on the items from Sir Kenneth Clark, the then director of the National Gallery in London, writing on 22 April 1943:

I do not recollect all of them, but I know his la Tour *Baron de l’Epinoy* which is considered as one of the *chefs-d’œuvre* of the master, and is illustrated in colours, in Nolhac’s book. It was sold in the Doucet sale, at the time, for 700,000 francs, which was then a tremendous price. It is an exceedingly fine portrait and the only criticism I can offer is that it is a little *maniéré*. I do not think there is anything so fine in the national collections in London or in any private collection. The Baron told me that he is writing to his cousins, to let him know whether the picture is at present in good condition, because some of his works of art that had been sent to London have apparently been damaged by bombs. I told him that if the picture is in perfect condition, I will apply to you to examine it and if it has not suffered in any way, then I shall be very pleased to negotiate. I believe that if we can come to terms it will be a fine acquisition.

This was followed by a telegram to Clark which Gulbenkian sent on 19 May expressing particular concern about the state of the pastel which he feared might have suffered damage during the war, adding that (as he had emphasised before on different occasions) he was only interested in acquiring works of art of the very highest quality and in good condition. Sir Kenneth telegraphed back two days later (having it seems inspected the pastel at the offices of N. M. Rothschild in St Swithin’s Lane), saying that although the La Tour had a small blemish in the lower part,¹⁰⁴ it had not suffered any damage in its general appearance and that it was an excellent picture. All the pictures under consideration could be moved to the National Gallery where they could be examined.

Rothschild’s need for funds was now pressing, and on 23 June 1943, before Gulbenkian had received Clark’s full report on all the pictures, a first sale was agreed, including the pastel as well as a jasper and gold ewer with gold mounts once thought to be by Gouthière based on a design by Boucher. Formerly in Hamilton Palace, it was sold to the dealer Samuel Wertheimer in 1882 for 2350 guineas (about £266,000 in 2015 money); Gulbenkian had already offered £2500 for it (say £100,000 today). The combined price, which was not broken down (but must be largely attributable to the pastel), was 1 million Portuguese escudos (£100,000 in 1943 money, equivalent to about £4 million in 2015). The transaction was completed by instruction to Clark. Clark’s report on the remaining items reached Gulbenkian in July, and congratulated him on the purchase of the La Tour which Clark considered “quite exceptional”, although he was more lavish in his praise of the other item: the jasper ewer “could only be compared with the jewels in the Treasure House of St Mark’s.” The purchase of the pastel was in fact Gulbenkian’s own judgement and taste rather than Clark’s.

¹⁰³ The most detailed account of these negotiations is given in José de Azeredo Perdigão, *Calouste Gulbenkian: collector*, Lisbon, 1969, pp. 124–27. I am also grateful to Luisa Sampaio for kindly making available documents in the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, consulted 17 June 2015; and to Richard Wragg of the National Gallery, London for providing information from their files, 22 June 2015. Other National Gallery files were consulted in 2010 and 2015. It appears that Henri de Rothschild approached Gulbenkian, although it is possible that they were introduced Lisbon’s leading lawyer José Azeredo de Perdigão, who was to become a trustee of the Gulbenkian Foundation and numbered both men among his clients (see Jonathan Conlin, “Philanthropy without borders: Calouste Gulbenkian’s founding vision for the Gulbenkian Foundation”, *Análise social*, XLV/2, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ This may refer to the small join in the paper where the back of the chair joins the skirts of the coat. This join is in fact clearly visible in the colour reproduction in Nolhac 1930.

Gulbenkian's pastel of Marie Sallé was also at the National Gallery and documents show that it was stored in the Manod slate quarry in Wales during the war (they do not however mention Duval which presumably stayed in Trafalgar Square).

After the war many of the stars of the Gulbenkian collection, including Duval de l'Épinoÿ, were exhibited in the central hall¹⁰⁵ of the National Gallery in London before moving to Washington in 1950. After his death in 1955 the collection was moved to a specially built museum in Portugal. There it remains, and there you must go if you wish to enjoy its magic.

It is difficult to improve on Maurice Tourneux's description¹⁰⁶ of this masterpiece: "Duval de l'Épinoÿ ne *pose* pas, il vit de cette vie mystérieuse dont La Tour – au prix de quelles angoisses et de quel efforts! – surprenait le secret et qu'il fixait en molécules impalpables sur le châssis de papier bleu, muet témoin et muette victime de ses rages et de ses désespoirs, quand il sentait fuir l'insaisissable perfection."

¹⁰⁵ A photograph in the archives of the National Gallery (NG30/1948/1), taken 18.1.1948, shows Duval on the north wall, to the right of the doorway.

¹⁰⁶ *Les Arts*, 36, .XI.1904, p. 6.

La Tour, *Mme Boët de Saint-Léger*

30 October 2018



There are many hurdles to be overcome in cataloguing the work of some artists, especially so in the case of Maurice-Quentin de La Tour. With a career almost entirely in Paris, never dating or even signing his portraits, working in a technique that altered little rather than evolving steadily (he exhibited works showing the range of his different styles side by side), La Tour challenges us in many ways. So the art historian must cling on to whatever can be found, and establishing sitters' biographies is an obvious starting point. I've written repeatedly about the hazards of guessing age from appearance in portraits, but at least some bounds can be established for sitters whose identities are known. But not of course for the "inconnus" so many of whose masks are found in the artist's collection now in Saint-Quentin. Among those famous "préparations" are some where the names are known – but seem not to advance us very far, in spite of the apparently exhaustive researches carried out on

that collection by dozens if not hundreds of scholars. One such example is the portrait identified in Fleury & Brière 1954, no. 36 (and all earlier and later sources until now) as of "Charles Maron, ancien avocat en parlement", a phrase derived from a faulty transcription of La Tour's brother's will. In fact the transcription correctly has "au parlement", not "en" – the distinction ignored by Fleury is between a practising lawyer, "au parlement", rather than a bachelier en droit, called but not practising, to whom the honorific title of "avocat en parlement" applied. (Such pedantry may well have been ignored in the eighteenth century too.) Fleury did of course note that no Charles Maron is to be found among the lists of avocats; but he did not comment on how odd it was that J.-F. de La Tour should have provided a forename for this sitter, but not for the 29 others in his list (apart from a royal).



The solution is extremely simple, once you spot it: the sitter was surely Nicolas de *Channe-Maron* (1734–1782), avocat au parlement from 1764; a straightforward mistranscription of Channe as Charles. I'm afraid it means I have to renumber the pastel, which is now [J.46.1433](#) (but I retain a note of the former number [J.46.2338](#): you need to be confident these numbers will always take you to the work).

But the pastel I want to discuss more fully is the study (above; Saint-Quentin inv. LT 50; [J.46.1318](#) in the *Dictionary*) known in every source as of Mme Boëte (or Boëtte) de Saint-Léger. The name (without a title) comes from La Tour himself – written on the slip of paper that was originally included within the frame, and remains visible in some of the old reproductions, but is no longer to be seen today (the Goncourts 1867 went too far in doubting the inscription, while Champfleury 1886 and later Lapauze 1905 both insisted that the name was written directly on the pastel itself, which is evidently incorrect):



Incidentally you can just make out in the lower left corner of this full image (from the 1916 German monograph by Hermann Erhard) the curious paraph that looks like an M which is found on quite a number of the préparations at

Saint-Quentin (most again concealed by the new mounts), and has not as far as I know yet been deciphered. My suggestion is that these marks were added by Félix Mennechet at the time of the 1849 inventory; he was the administrator and perpetual secretary of the *École de dessin* (the symbol is probably a contraction, “Mr”).

All the La Tour literature to date has followed La Tour’s phonetic misspelling, and adds only the single fact mentioned in Champfleury’s discussion in 1886 (p. 38; the pastel is reproduced in a drawing by Henri-Patrice Dillon on the opposite page):

Certains de ces portraits portent un nom inscrit sur le papier même du pastel, qui ne laisse aucun doute sur la qualité des personnes: ... ; *Boëte de Saint-Léger*, qui fut presque la compatriote du peintre, et que ses charmes aidèrent à tirer de la tourmente révolutionnaire.

This remark Champfleury justifies in a footnote:

Un registre de 1793 de la mairie de Ham constate que la citoyenne Anne-Julie Boëte de Saint-Léger habitait cette village depuis 1786 jusqu’au 3 février 1793, jour auquel la municipalité lui accorda un certificat de résidence.

And so all subsequent writers. Thus in 1991 Christine Debrie repeats this, adding only “On ne sait rien de plus de cette agréable personne”, described as Anne-Julie, Mme Boëte de Saint-Léger, while Debrie & Salmon in 2000 merely reproduce the pastel under the same name with no further comment. Erhard (1916, no. 37 repr., p. x) phrased it slightly differently: “Die munter-selbstgefällige Frau Boëtte de Saint-Léger stattet er mit einer fast belustigenden Gesundheit aus.”

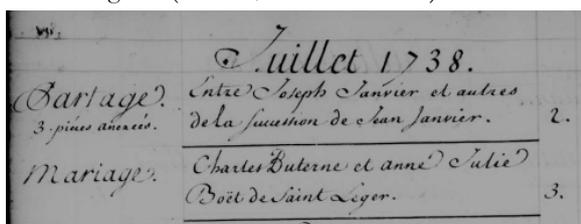
What Champfleury (and all subsequent writers) failed to disclose was his source for the Ham certificat. It comes from a book by Charles Gomart, *Ham, son château et ses prisonniers*, 1864, p. 231, where the pastel is explicitly mentioned. The entry in fact spells her name correctly as “Boët de Saint-Léger”. The author was a local historian, and came across a name he recognised (he had donated a view of the Hôtel de ville to the museum in Saint-Quentin in 1850, and was evidently familiar with its contents) and assumed it must be the same person.

And although she (apparently) spent some eight years living in this small town, about 21 km west of Saint-Quentin, she was not in any sense a compatriot of the artist. She was not born there; there is nothing to suggest she lived there before 1785, and an exhaustive search of the burial records at Ham indicates she did not die there. (She might even have claimed a longer residence to avoid disclosing her Parisian background.)

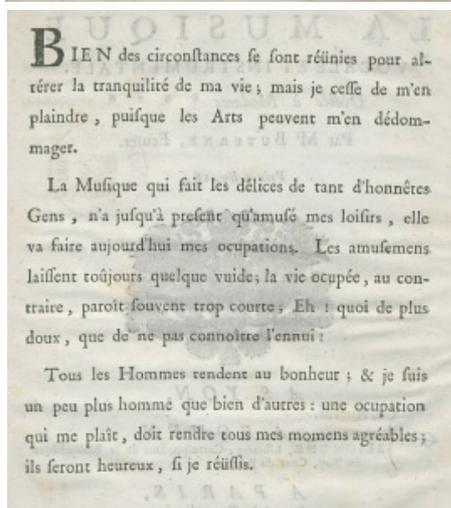
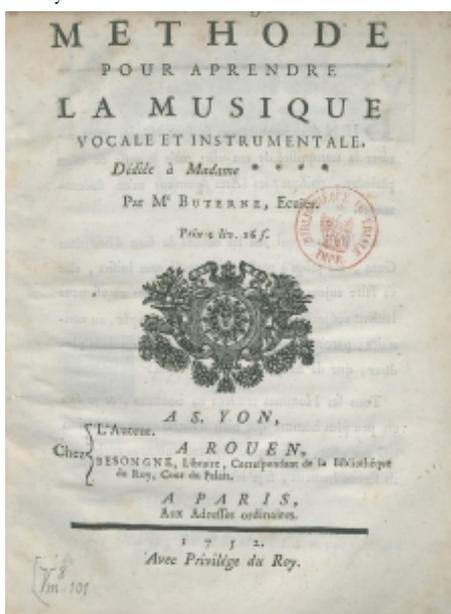
Anne-Julie (Julie was her preferred name) was the daughter of Louis Boët de Saint-Léger (–1741), an avocat au conseil du roi in Paris (reçu 1692: successive Almanachs record various addresses including the rue Saint-André). He also held a position as conseiller au présidial de Caudebec. The family may well have had its origins in Normandie, although I have been unable to demonstrate the connection with the [family](#) of the wealthy négociant Daniel Boüette of Rouen conjectured in one recent source.^[1]

We do not know Julie’s exact date of birth, but it is likely to have been c.1720 as she married in 1738, according to this

entry in the minutes of the notary (and La Tour subject) Pierre Laideguive (AN MC/XXIII 3.VII.1738):



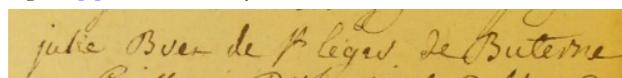
Her husband (whose name is not given in any La Tour publication I have seen) was Charles Buterne (–1752), gendarme de la Garde ordinaire du roi, according to all documents in the Archives nationales. But in fact he was a musician and composer. He was the son of Jean-Baptiste Buterne (–1727), composer, organiste de la chapelle du roi, maître de clavecin de la duchesse de Bourgogne and a former capitoul of Toulouse. Charles’s conversion from a military career to music is hinted at in the preface to the sonatas and method for the publication of which he obtained a royal warrant in 1745:



(Fétis and all subsequent musicological sources seem to err in misreading the warrant at the end of this volume as conferring on Charles the offices of his father.) The pieces

may be slight, but it is difficult not to feel that the composer himself was rather engaging and as amiable as La Tour’s sitter appears. Nevertheless, following the birth of three children in quick succession after their marriage (first a son Louis-Charles, then two daughters, Charlotte-Jacques-Éléonore and Charlotte-Julie, baptised respectively at Saint-Louis-en-l’Isle 16.VII.1740 and Saint-Sulpice 17.X.1741), Julie obtained a séparation de biens from Charles, registered in 1742, after suing her husband for reasons that are not now clear. Charles’s death in 1752 would have simplified her legal position, and the Archives nationales include deeds for a number of property transactions in Paris until the move to Ham for which no other document has been found. One complication however concerned her son: in disposing of some property from their inheritance in 1786, Julie (still apparently in Paris rather than in Ham) required the court’s consent because her son had disappeared for several years without his family having any knowledge of his whereabouts or fate. The amounts involved were small, and it does not seem that Julie was particularly wealthy.

She would have been known as Anne-Julie Boët de Saint-Léger, femme de Charles Buterne. Here is how she signed [\[2\]](#) in 1754, two years after her husband’s death:



Of course during the Revolution she was more likely to revert to her maiden name alone, as Citoyenne Boet de Saint-Léger. But La Tour’s inscription was surely written in the 1740s or 50s.

The question neither Gomart nor any subsequent art historian has asked was whether there was another Mme Boët de Saint-Léger? Debrie’s and other authors’ references to “Anne-Julie” simply derive from the Ham reference, which is only linked to the Saint-Quentin portrait by Gombert’s suggestion. The name is unique and the pedigree I have compiled, reproduced [here](#) with an extract below, lists only one other possibility (indeed one of the documents in the registres de tutelles comments on the absence of relatives): Julie’s sister-in-law.

Julie’s brother, Gabriel-Louis Boët de Saint-Léger (Paris 22.X.1705– Paris 20.XII.1779), was a wealthy financier with connections in international trade, extending from representing the Rouen Boüettes to Russian and Italian commerce with St Peterburg, Florence and Leghorn. One of the financiers heavily involved with the Italian trade was the subject of perhaps La Tour’s greatest portrait, [Louis Duval de L’Épinois](#) (1745), while another fermier général who joined the same syndicate (awarded a nine-year lease by the state of Tuscany in 1741) was Jean-Baptiste Philippe, the subject of another very fine pastel by La Tour dated 1748 (J.46.2508). One historian [\[3\]](#) described Boët de Saint-Léger as “un escroc” on the basis of his arbitrage operations for this syndicate, essentially involved in discounting bills on which he was entitled to a commission of 1/3% as well as the profits that accrued to his 5/24ths share of the bank they co-owned. His fraud led to complicated litigation in the 1740s, and it seems from information provided by the marquis de Stainville (Choiseul’s father), the chargé d’affaires for Tuscany in Paris, that Duval and Philippe were implicated in the scam: they and three of their colleagues

were expelled from the syndicate. Immediately after, in 1746, Gabriel-Louis went to Russia to establish a new trading business there.

At some stage before 1734 Gabriel-Louis married Charlotte Courtois, the daughter of François Courtois, chef d'échansonnerie and pâtissier du roi (her parents married in 1710, but her date of birth is not known more precisely; she was probably several years older than Julie). There were at least three children, born from 1734 on; a grandchild even had the celebrated composer and chess-player Philidor as godfather (1774). But by 1749 the marriage had soured (perhaps Charlotte had no desire to go to St Petersburg), and Charlotte (like Julie, seven years earlier) obtained a séparation de biens from Gabriel-Louis. Unfortunately such arrangements did not have the full force of divorce, and when, in 1761, Charlotte was entitled to her share of a deceased aunt's estate, Gabriel-Louis simply refused to give permission, and she had to go to court to obtain the necessary authorisation to inherit. The papers are all in the name of "Charlotte Courtois, femme Boët de Saint-Léger" as of course she still was.

Unless and until a finished portrait turns up corresponding to the preparation with an inscription or provenance that decisively identifies the sitter as Charlotte, Mme Boët de Saint-Léger, or as Anne-Julie Boët de Saint-Léger, Mme Buterne, I don't think we can be entirely certain which lady La Tour portrayed, or precisely when. If we think the pastel was made in the mid-1740s, depicts a lady of a certain maturity, and was more likely to be commissioned by a wealthy husband of a wife from whom he was not yet separated, that husband working closely with other financiers portrayed by La Tour, we would be inclined to go for Charlotte rather than Julie. Such a narrative can easily be extended to explain why no finished pastel was completed, if the marital breakdown (or the discovery of financial irregularities and flight from France) supervened.

But in either case, the sitter was not a local Saint-Quentinoise: rather a member of a family of wealthy financiers, possibly connected too with the musical world – two of the other spheres from which La Tour drew so many of his clients.

Here is the family pedigree:

Louis Boët de Saint-Léger (–1741), conseiller au présidial de Caudebec, avocat au conseil du roi à Paris, reçu 1692
 ⇒ Gabriel-Louis Boët de Saint-Léger (Paris 22.x.1705– Paris 20.xii.1779) ∞ a.1734 (séparée 1749) Charlotte Courtois (p.1711– p.1761), fille de François Courtois, chef d'échansonnerie;
 ⇒⇒ François-Louis Boët de Saint-Léger (1734–p.1781) ∞ Anne-Marie-Louise Lettrier
 ⇒⇒⇒ Marie-Andrée (12.vi.1774–): parain André Danican-Philidor
 ⇒⇒ Louis Charles Boët de Saint-Léger (1736–1812), chev. SL, capitaine du regiment de Soissonois
 ⇒⇒ Charlotte-Elisabeth (Paris 2.vii.1737 – p.1789), pension 1789 ∞ Jean-Guillaume de Masin, comte d'Arquian, commandeur de ND du Mont-Carmel
 ⇒⇒⇒ Gabrielle-Charlotte-Magdeleine (1767–) ∞ Alexandre Baudron de La Motte
 ⇒ Anne-Julie (a.1720–p.1793), habite à la ville de Ham 1785–93 ∞ 1738 (séparé 1742) Charles Buterne (–Paris 17.v.1752), gendarme de la Garde ordinaire du roi, compositeur
 ⇒⇒ Louis-Charles Buterne (absent depuis quelques années en 1786)

⇒⇒ Charlotte-Jacques-Eléonore (Paris, St Louis en l'Isle 16.vii.1740–)

⇒⇒ Charlotte-Julie (Paris, St Sulpice 17.x.1741–)

NOTES

[1] Jean-Marie Delobette, *Ces Messieurs du Havre. Négociants, commissionnaires et armateurs de 1680 à 1830*, 2002, p. 274 & passim.

[2] AN Y4749^B registres de tutelles, avis Buterne, 29.xi.1754.

[3] Jean-Claude Waquet, "La ferme de Lombart (1741-1749). Pertes et profits d'une compagnie française en Toscane", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, xxv/4, 1978, pp. 513–29.

La Tour, *Autoportrait au jabot*

2019



SUPER OMNES DOCENTES SE INTELLEXIT.¹⁰⁷ Those are the words inscribed on the old frame of the famous La Tour Autoportrait au jabot now in Amiens (left). They are not directly from Psalm 119 (no. 118 in the Vulgate), but from St Augustine’s commentary, where the authorial voice (“me intellexi”) is turned into the third person. The King James version of verse 99 is: “I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.”

I’ve been meditating quite a lot about this picture (and some testimonies about it) in the context of preparing my La Tour catalogue. The standard approach is to lock yourself away for many years and release the final product on paper. I’m trying to do this differently, sharing the work as I go, as you can find in the various documents on my website indexed from [here](#). Sometimes I release a fairly final version (corrections are always welcome!) of my thinking, as in my recent [entry](#) on the portrait of Mme de Pompadour, which perhaps I should have shared on this blog. But the present portrait (or rather, group of versions of it) raises many issues which I haven’t fully resolved, and so the blog is the best possible way to share the puzzles and open the discussion before I go nap on the definitive cataloguing. You’ll see why if you read to the end. As much of the intermediate workings are rather detailed, skip straight to the end if you want.

Everyone will be aware that there are several versions of the Autoportrait au jabot (and at least ten later copies that make no further appearance in this post are listed in my online [Dictionary of pastellists](#) in the La Tour self-portraits [article](#)), and that one of them was supposed to be the one La Tour exhibited at the Salon in 1750 when he tricked his younger rival by placing it next to the pastel of La Tour himself that Perronneau had made – probably (or itself perhaps a version of) the pastel now in Saint-Quentin (right).



Too much has already been written on the respective merits of the two portraits. But while the mirror compositions suggest that the La Tour self-portrait, of all the known types, was surely that “au jabot” (rather than say the “oeil-de-bœuf” or “chapeau en clabaud” etc. types); that the specific work was that in Amiens (reproduced at the top of this post: no. [J.46.1128](#)) has rather been deduced from the fact that it is larger than the other versions assumed to be autograph, those in the musée Cognacq-Jay ([J.46.113](#): left below) and in the Norton Simon Museum ([J.46.1132](#): right below). Horridly I’m going to refer to these pastels as Amiens, CJ and NS.

¹⁰⁷ This essay first appeared on my blog neiljeffares.wordpress.com on 6.VII.2019 with title “Super omnes docentes se intellexit...” . This is the version of record, and may be cited as Neil Jeffares, “La Tour, *Autoportrait au jabot*”, *Pastels & pastellists*, http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTour_Auto_jabot.pdf.



This isn't assisted by some erroneous confluences and confusions in the literature, so that, for example, Besnard & Wildenstein 1928 (p. 149) records Amiens as having a note on the back stating that it was made in 1751 – a year after the salon in which it was assumed to have been shown. (That label in fact belongs to a version sold in 1867 which it turns out is not the Amiens pastel at all; I list it as [J.46.1131](#).) Among dozens of other errors in the literature I will mention here just two more: the date inscribed on the back of NS is 1754, not 1764 as usually reported; while CJ, contrary to Mme Buroillet (*Pastels et dessins*, 2008, p. 139), was not the one from the Laperlier collection sold in 1879, lot 52 (that was NS) – CJ has no secure provenance before Pierre Decourcelle who sold it in 1911.

It was while I was trying to resolve the 1750/1751 confusion that I began to look harder at the questions these versions raise. I am most grateful to the curators at Amiens and Pasadena for providing imaging and documents that I discuss below. I should also remind readers about the usual important notice about attributions being subjective etc., and record the fact that the provisional suggestions I make below are not endorsed by other experts.

Before we get into the documents or delve further into the literature (even recent publications remain hopelessly confused), what can be said of the visual appearance of the principal versions? My own belief, before the recent discoveries, was that CJ was the best, showing all La Tour's brilliance and inventiveness, while remaining an autograph replica of Amiens, which "must" be the one shown in 1750. I was a little surprised on the several occasions I saw it (in the musée de Picardie, Amiens and most recently in Orléans, when it was lent to the 2017 Perronneau exhibition) that Amiens seemed underwhelming for the mythology attached to the 1750 competition: as I wrote in a recent (but before the discovery at the end of this post) private email to a curator, "The Amiens pastel is not entirely happy: the jabot always struck me as a little pedestrian, while the shadows on the underside of the arms I find particularly perplexing." (The shadows consist in some odd strokes of heavy black pastel.) But not to the point of questioning Amiens being autograph. Nor as far as I am aware has it been questioned by any other art historian (Fleury 1900a notes that he had not initially been persuaded of its authenticity, but changed his mind when the inscription and provenance were revealed), despite extended discussions in numerous sources (see the *Dictionary* entry for the full literature): thus for Debie & Salmon 2000, it is "une œuvre essentielle"; while, in his préface to Dominique d'Arnoult's Perronneau monograph of 2014, Xavier Salmon was even more emphatic, writing that the La Tour pastel exhibited in 1750 was "très certainement celui aujourd'hui conservé au musée de Picardie à Amiens, œuvre magistrale de psychologie et de maîtrise technique."

CJ is smaller than Amiens in that the lower part of the bust is cut off; there is still space above the head. It is highly finished, with a superb sense of modelling which you can perhaps see most easily in the structure of the eye socket. The handling is relatively free – La Tour recreates effects rather than repeating each stroke exactly – just what I’d hope to find in an autograph replica.

NS (which I have not examined *de visu*, let alone side by side with the others – something which is not likely to be possible) caused me some concerns in the way it followed Amiens. While sticking to more or less the size of CJ, the figure is moved up so more of the bust shows, with less space above the head (see my scaled composite):



NS then imitates the exact composition of Amiens far more closely – for example, the angle of the arm, which in CJ is allowed to drop vertically, follows the angle of Amiens exactly: indeed the top of the hand placed in the waistcoat is still included, although it now makes little sense and might comfortably have been omitted had the artist allowed himself the same freedom as taken in CJ. (It is perhaps worth observing that there are two copies of the portrait in miniature now in Saint-Quentin: the enamel, LT 85 (1.46.11282), which came from the Duliège family, follows CJ, while the miniature on parchment, LT 87 (1.46.11283), apparently in existence by 1786, follows Amiens.) There are differences too in the eyes: those in CJ engage us directly; those in Amiens and NS both seem slightly to veer off to the left. (You might think this an error in Amiens, corrected in CJ, so it is odd to find them repeated in NS.) More obviously the technique differs, in the face in particular, with a network of hatching in place of the finished appearance of CJ and much more prominent than in Amiens (although this isn’t immediately evident from the photography which makes the hatching on Amiens more prominent than I recall from direct examination). But elsewhere there is a very precise replication of each chalk stroke in Amiens: it is perhaps too close (in a way that is found in some otherwise excellent copies of other La Tour pastels).



I'm not worried about the appearance of these visible strokes on the flesh, *per se*; La Tour adopted this technique frequently, particularly in portraits intended for connoisseurs who he thought would be more receptive to the brilliance of these strokes which require to be viewed from a specific distance, while the general public found them too sophisticated. Perhaps the most extreme example of this heavy hatching is the pastel of Chardin in the Louvre (J.46.1436) from the 1761 salon. There are other examples from the mid-1750s – and, to make this problem even more tricky, there is very little sense of a chronological progression in La Tour's technique that allows one to say that he used a specific technique at a particular time.

So it doesn't follow that he came back to the Amiens pastel and made a replica say 14 years later in a different technique than the one he would have used say in 1750. You can't even say that he wouldn't make two versions in different techniques at the same time. But I can see why one would like to propose different dates for NS and Amiens and CJ, to help explain away the differences. Because of course the question is whether these are autograph versions. Normally the effect of these vigorous hatchings in the master's hand is to make the portrait come to life. Judging from the photograph of NS I don't have that immediate response. There seems to be a flatness to the modelling compared with the other versions that is surprising. Further the best of La Tour's heavily hatched faces have an irregularity and energy I don't see in NS. One shouldn't attach too much importance to a single example, but putting the face in NS against a similar detail from his Chardin shows how differently he used this hatched technique:



Time now to broach the various inscriptions on the works. The reason we know it is NS rather than CJ that was in the Laperlier sale is because his 1879 sale catalogue mentions verses on the back by the abbé Violette, a priest in Saint-Quentin – just the sort of thing which makes you believe there is a continuous provenance back to the artist. So we have to look at that.

Although it wasn't easy to find Violette's biography, I can tell you (after a lengthy search of parish records) that he was abbé Charles-Théodore Violette (1737–1815), curé de Notre-Dame de Saint-Quentin, and a member of the Assemblée provinciale in 1787. So clearly it would be significant if NS turns out to have belonged to Violette.

As it happens there is rather a lot of writing on several different sheets pasted to the backing card of NS. There is a central panel in a mid-nineteenth century formal hand, with La Tour's qualities and honours transcribed precisely from the title page of the abbé Duplaquet's 1789 *Éloge historique de La Tour*:

Portrait
de M. Maurice-Quentin Delatour, Peintre
du Roi, Conseiller de l'Académie Royale de Peinture & de Sculpture
de Paris, et Honoraire de l'Académie des Sciences, Belles-Lettres,
et Arts d'Amiens, Fondateur de l'Ecole Royale gratuite de Dessin,

de la Ville de Saint-Quentin.
Peint par lui-même, en 1754

The “*Peint par lui-même, en 1754*” comes from this label alone. The writing is quite clear: 1754, not 1764.

The rest of the writing appears to come from a different, probably single, hand, but appears on two sheets. The lower sheet contains, on the left, an epitaph in Latin which I find extremely difficult to decipher. I suspect the Latin isn’t very good, but the text seems to echo the sentiments of the French verses below. Very broadly translated, it seems to mean:

This dust is mixed with the dust of Apelles, citizen of the Seine [“Sequana”] and citizen of the Somme [“Summa”]; they were astonished to find La Tour [“turrium”] under the soil; but his excellence and his mighty deeds will resound.

To the right are the abbé Violette’s verses which have been partially transcribed in several publications (but not the three lines at the bottom, which are critical):

Vers pour mettre au bas du portrait.

citoyen de la Somme, Apelle de la Seine,
 de La Tour, dans ces traits, c’est bien toi ressemblant:
 c’est ta bouche, tes yeux, ce rire caressant
 qui vers toi tous les cœurs entraîne.
 pour bien peindre le tien, ton âme, tes vertus,
 bienfaisance, candeur, esprit, talens, droiture,
 dons rares que te fit largement la Nature,
 il faudrait toi, mais tu n’es plus!

L’inscription manuscrite, l’épithaphe et
 et les vers français sont de M. Violette cure
 de Notre-Dame de St quentin

As I read these, I don’t think the writing can be that of Violette himself. While sometimes people refer to themselves in the third person, that really doesn’t fit here, and he would probably have signed if it was his own writing. The verses themselves must have been composed after the artist’s death, but the inscription could have been transcribed by anyone who had found it at any time in the nineteenth century or later. It isn’t even sure that they were intended for this version – they could equally have been intended for the Amiens version, or indeed any other La Tour self-portrait (or any portrait of La Tour at all).

After La Tour’s death there were memorials (such as Duplaquet’s éloge, cited directly on the label), epitaphs and statues etc., so there were many occasions for the local curate to produce some verses of this kind. (For the very complicated events concerning La Tour’s death and burial at Saint-Quentin, see my La Tour [DOCUMENTATION](#). The two witnesses were La Tour’s half-brother Jean-François de La Tour and the latter’s cousin, Adrien-Joseph-Constant Duliège, who as it happens was vicaire at Violette’s church of Notre-Dame. We met him in my last [post](#), on La Tour’s brother and the letters that had descended to Mme Sarrazin.) But I don’t think that Violette was ever the owner of the pastel: the words could have been added later by anyone coming across his verses – perhaps even taken from another version.

But it turns out that there is more to learn from the upper panel, apparently in the same hand, which appears to contain some innocuous biographical information:

Maurice Quentin de la Tour,
 Né à St Quentin, le 4^{bre} 1704,
 revenu audit lieu le 26 Juin 1784,
 ou il est mort et enterré au cimetière
 de la Paroisse de St André, le 18
 février 1788 –

Again these appear to be facts which would have been well known to anyone in Saint-Quentin throughout the nineteenth century or later. (The 26 Juin 1784 date is difficult to read; the month is correct, but the day should be 20 June according to other documents you can find in my chronological table of [DOCUMENTS](#)) The inscription gives La Tour's date of birth as 4 September rather than 5: such confusions are common in a Catholic country where children were usually baptised the day after their birth, although in La Tour's case he was born and baptised on the 5th.

The significance is that the *same* mistake, and in fact exactly the same inscription, word for word (perhaps with misreadings: "revenue audit lieu le 21 juin 1784" and mort... "le 18 fev. 1783"), followed by "peint par lui-meme", appear on the back of a *miniature* version of the autoportrait purporting to be by La Tour. At the time when it was described by Auguste Jal in his biographical dictionary, 1872 (*sub verbo* La Tour) it belonged to the princesse Mathilde (whom the Goncourt brothers derided for her susceptibility to fakes), and came from Aimable-Pierre-Joseph Opigez (1802–1881), a literary figure whose father and brother were alarmingly makers and retailers of objets d'art. It's now lost (unless it corresponds with one in the musée Antoine-Lécuyer at Saint-Quentin: their two miniatures have no earlier provenance but I am investigating if we can tie them in). But as we know La Tour didn't do miniatures.

The question however is whether this precise inscription taints the NS pastel or merely identifies it as the source of a later fake. It's rather long to fit onto a miniature of normal dimensions. The possibilities include: (i) a common source for both NS and the miniature; (ii) the miniature copied from NS, or vice versa; (iii) Jal mistakenly referring to the princesse's picture as a miniature when perhaps it was NS: but if so how did it get from her collection to Laperlier? (I couldn't find either a pastel or miniature of La Tour in her posthumous sale in 1904.)

Having discarded the Violette provenance, the first certain sighting of NS is in the Laperlier sale of 1879 where the Violette verses are first mentioned. It is very probable that either NS or CJ is the pastel which belonged to Symphorien Boittelle (1813–1897), sous-préfet for Saint-Quentin before becoming préfet for the Aisne département, and later sénateur; in his sale at Paris, 24–25.IV.1866, Lot 70, not reproduced, is described as in a "light" blue coat, dimensions 44×35 cm. Boittelle's collection was of mixed quality, and this was in one of a number of lifetime sales. The pastel reappeared with Jacques Reiset: his posthumous sale describes it as coming from the Boittelle collection, so it is no doubt the same. Both these sale prices were very modest, but that was a question of fashion rather than an indication of quality.

There was another sale in between, Paris, Drouot, Delbergue-Cormont, 8.XI.1867, where a pastel Lot 146 was sold, said to be dated on the back 1751 (although 1750 is mentioned in the preface), which all sources to date have identified as the Amiens version: the pastel is described but no size was given. It was said to be in a nice frame "en bois sculpté" (as CJ still is, while NS has been reframed). Although Amiens's then frame was a fairly standard moulding which probably wouldn't have been so described, and while its owners were attempting to sell it at that stage, a detailed analysis of the provenance shows that it cannot have been sold in the 1867 sale. (It is most probable that the vendor in 1867 was Sosthène-Louis-Félix Cambray (1819–1905), homme de lettres and a prolific collector and seller of drawings and prints. He might well have purchased Boittelle's pastel. Although the commissaire-priseur's copy of the 1867 catalogue shows Fr650 annotated against lot 146, it is not included in the list of bordereaux also

bound into the same copy. However on the sheet opposite the lot is recorded “c.600 Lap.400 Gautier 300”, suggesting that Laperlier may well have bid, and perhaps bought it post sale, so this may well be NS – except for the 1751 date reported in the catalogue.)

In brief the 1867 pastel cannot be the pastel I’m calling Amiens because the musée de Picardie purchased that work (to which we now need to turn) in 1878 from the Lorne family who had owned it since 1796. It is true that the art critic Léon Lagrange had seen it around 1866 when the heirs of a previous generation were keen to sell, but it was not in fact sold then. I will spare you all the detailed steps from the 1770 gift of the pastel (recorded on another label pasted to the back of the work) by one Mlle Mangenot to the abbé Savary (he was Charles Savary (1731–1810), curé de Sainte-Colombe-lès-Sens) and its purchase in 1796 by François-Théodore-Clément Lorne (1768–1854), commerçant en gros de sel à Sens, who, the previous year, had married Savary’s niece but subsequently left it to his widow, his second wife: hours of harmless fun were required to establish these details, when of course, as Mme du Deffand would have told us, it is only the first step that counts: how it came into the hands of Marie-Louise Mangenot (1702–1782).

That takes us to her brother: the abbé Louis Mangenot (1694–1768), chanoine du Temple à Paris, poet, journalist, and great friend of the salon critic Philippe Bridard de La Garde who wrote so gushingly of La Tour’s later submissions. Mangenot was also the intimate friend of another La Tour subject, the playwright Crébillon (who made Mangenot his heir). Marie-Louise was probably the sister who was described in Palissot’s *Nécrologe* as “fort dévote”, but who “tyrannisait” her brother.

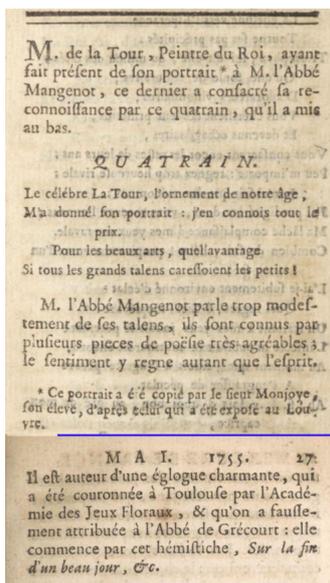
Most of the printed sources record Mlle Mangenot’s label, but only a few – notably Bitton 1936, which has been almost entirely overlooked – make the connection with her brother. Yet the abbé Mangenot does appear in the standard La Tour literature – as the author of yet more verses to be attached to a La Tour self-portrait:

Admirez jusqu’où l’art atteint
La Tour est gravé comme il peint...

Cited by Louis Hordret (*Histoire des droits anciens... de la ville de Saint-Quentin*, 1781), they were attached erroneously by B&W to the Autoportrait au chapeau en clabaud (J.46.1087). As that was only engraved by Schmidt in 1772 (after Mangenot’s death), it is however far more likely they were intended for the earlier Autoportrait à l’oeil de boeuf (J.46.1001), exhibited in 1737 and engraved by Schmidt in 1742. It of course, unlike the other self-portraits, does show the artist in his working clothes.

What this shows however is that Mangenot was indeed close to La Tour, followed his self-portraits etc. So there is nothing surprising in his owning one (except perhaps that there is no evidence that he had the means to pay for a major work by the artist). And one that he owned must be “right” in the sense that ones only traceable back to the mid-nineteenth century might not be – so that investigations such as opening the back and looking for anachronistic irregularities in the mounting of the pastel and canvas on the strainer etc. (often the easiest way to detect later fakes, of which there are sadly many in the La Tour catalogues) would be unnecessary (indeed pointless).

This is where things stood until a few days ago. While writing up my entries I investigated Mangenot more thoroughly, and came across this article in the *Mercure de France*, published in the edition for May 1755 (pp. 26–27). As far as I am aware it is completely unknown to art historians: indeed the only secondary reference I have been able to find (although not linked to Amiens, nor naming the copyist) is in the very useful *Dictionnaire des journalistes* in the entry on Mangenot (who would later edit the *Mercure* himself: it was then in hands of Louis de Boissy):



The footnote is, to say the least, astonishing. Unambiguously it identifies the La Tour portrait given to Manganot as a copy by his pupil Jean-Gabriel Montjoye. Although he was mentioned in La Tour's will and believed to be a pupil, recorded as an exhibitor in some minor events, virtually nothing was known about Montjoye's biography until I unearthed some documents three years ago which are summarised in my *Dictionary* [entry](#). Despite appearing in the Salon de la jeunesse in 1767 and later, he had in fact been born in 1725. But the surviving work, with one exception, all belonged to the 1780s or 90s, thirty years after Amiens. The one in the Louvre exhibited last year probably gives a fair account of his work: it was, I think we can agree, one of the weakest works in the show. The only earlier work I have found ([J.543.11](#)) is signed and dated 1768 – still some 15 years after the copy he made for Manganot:



One isn't likely to confuse this with the work of his master.

How do we make sense of all this? There are I think only two realistic logical possibilities, given that Amiens clearly belonged to Mangelot: either he subsequently acquired the original; or the Amiens pastel is indeed the copy Montjoye made for Mangelot as celebrated in the poem.

I'm not sure that either of these hypotheses will meet with universal approval. The first seems at best contrived, and raises all sorts of difficulties: why, having been given a version with which he was satisfied, would he seek to acquire the original – hardly likely that the artist would have made him a second present, so how could he afford it, and what did he do with the Montjoye copy? (The Lorne family papers make it quite clear that the abbé Savary had only this pastel, and 17 framed prints.)

The second requires us all to admit we were wrong in accepting Amiens as autograph. (The La Tour original, exhibited in 1750, must be lost – perhaps another work La Tour destroyed himself, or just still hidden away?) It requires us to reassess Montjoye's competence. But is that such a step? Not only was Amiens made far earlier, when Montjoye was 30 years old and presumably at the peak of his skills; but it was also made under La Tour's direction, and possibly with a good deal of assistance from the master. And the crucial fact we so easily forget is that it is far easier for artists to make brilliant copies of masterpieces than to create independent works of the same quality: we see this all the time in the pastiches and copies that flood the salerooms.

Do however look at the strange black shadows around the waistcoat buttonholes in the 1768 Montjoye. Isn't that what troubled me about the arm in Amiens?



To sum up, provisionally at least. I'm quite happy that CJ is a fully autograph replica by La Tour. I have some doubts about NS which may nevertheless be fine: if at some stage it is opened for conservation I shall be interested in what can be seen, but I certainly wouldn't reject it outright. Amiens in contrast, and to my surprise, seems to raise real difficulties: despite its quality, the conclusion from the *Mercur* footnote is hard to evade. Whatever assistance La Tour may have given, this appears to be the work of his pupil – you can only escape this by believing in a rather convoluted alternative narrative. The absence of the version shown in 1750, of which Amiens is no doubt a very precise copy, makes the classification of NS rather trickier as we cannot be sure how closely either followed the original.

La Tour, *Mlle Puvigné*

2021



[Maurice-Quentin de La Tour](#)

Mme Jean-Baptiste d'Albessard, née Louise-Claire Hamoche-Puvigné (c.1735–1779), dite Mlle Puvigné

Préparation, pastel on paper, 32x24 cm

Inscribed “puvigny”

Saint-Quentin, musée Antoine-Lécuyer, inv. LT 60 [inv. 1849, no. 39].

c.1750

PROVENANCE: Ancien fonds d'atelier de l'artiste; legs Jean-François de La Tour 1807

EXHIBITIONS: Maubeuge 1917, no. 90; La Tour 1930, no. 52

LITERATURE: Lapauze 1899, no. 39 repr.; Erhard 1917, no. 73 repr.; B&W 409, fig. 202; Sutton 1949, pl. XXXVIII; Fleury & Brière 1954, no. 46; Debrie 1983, p. 58 repr.; Debrie 1991, pp. 161ff repr.; Graffigny 1997, v, p. 306 repr.; Debrie & Salmon 2000, p. 188, ill. 103; Cabezas & al. 2008, p. 14 repr.; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [J.46.266](#)

THE DOZENS OF PRÉPARATIONS¹⁰⁸ by Maurice-Quentin de La Tour in the museum in his native town of Saint-Quentin have always attracted great attention, frequently being ranked ahead of his finished portraits. They have an immediacy and a vitality that is instantly arresting: the cliché that the artist is looking into his sitters' souls is overused, but here not misplaced. While much of the portrait historian's duty is to explain who sitters were, and what relationship they had with the artist, most of these préparations have lost their identities. Only a few are known today, usually from the slips of paper in La Tour's own hand on which he wrote their names. One such was Mme Boëte de Saint-Leger whose full identity we wrote about on this [blog](#).

The case of Mlle Puvigné (above; see [J.46.266](#) in my La Tour catalogue for full details) is a little different, as her brief career as a dancer is known. As we shall see completing the picture, which has not hitherto been possible, provides an astonishing insight into the overlapping worlds of La Tour's subjects: the oldest nobility, the richest fermiers généraux, actors and dancers. It also tells us about the other side of the “douceur de vivre” in the Ancien régime.

The entry in Fleury & Brière provides essentially all that was known about her to art history and musical scholarship (here from the 1954 edition):

Puvigné ou Puvigny (Mlle), danseuse. Née vers 1735, fille d'une danseuse à l'Opéra, elle monte sur les planches dès son enfance; élève de Mlle Sallé¹⁰⁹, de qui elle continue la manière, elle entre à l'Opéra en 1746 et devient rapidement un des premiers sujets; elle prit sa retraite en 1756 et mourut probablement en 1785, car elle ne figure plus aux *Spectacles de Paris* en 1784. Mlle Puvigné fut également l'une des étoiles du théâtre¹¹⁰ des Petits Appartements à la cour.

Only one other image of her is known – hardly a portrait, but the costume drawing by Louis-René Boquet (Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra) shows Mlle Puvigné in an elaborate taffetas dress with paniers. She is supposed to be the living statue in *Pygmalion*, a ballet set to music by Rameau, which she premiered in 1748 at the Académie royale de musique:

Until now, no one has known her full name. The dates mentioned by Fleury & Brière – more termini than approximations – became fixed as 1735–1783 in B&W, with no additional evidence. The Fleury & Brière entry abbreviates the information in Fleury's original 1904 catalogue, which confusingly has her as a star in 1741 (when she was only 6) but notes that she and her mother



¹⁰⁸ This essay first appeared simultaneously on my blog neiljeffares.wordpress.com on 27.1.2021. This is the version of record, and may be cited as Neil Jeffares, “La Tour, Mlle Puvigné”, *Pastels & pastellists*, http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTour_Puvigne.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ See the entry in my La Tour catalogue, at [J.46.2842](#).

¹¹⁰ Organised by Mme de Pompadour: La Tour catalogue, at [J.46.2541](#).

were both drawing pensions (*État actuel de la musique du roi*, 1773, p. 72) in 1773 (of 1000 and 250 livres respectively). Entries in the theatrical usuels – the excellent CESAR database serves as a compilation of these references – provide a list of her known appearances which I won't repeat in detail. Here for example is the entry in Campardon, *Les Spectacles de la foire*, 1877, II, p. 286:

PUVIGNÉ (Mlle), danseuse de l'Opéra-Comique à la foire Saint-Laurent de 1743, avait un rôle dans le ballet-pantomime des Fleurs, exécuté à la suite de l'Ambigu de la Folie, ou le Ballet des dindons, parade en quatre entrées, de Favart, représentée le 31 août de cette même année.

One should add that she was première danseuse in Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* 1749 and in *Les Fêtes de Polymnie*. She made a sufficient impression to appear, for example, on numerous occasions in Mme de Graffigny's correspondence¹¹¹: she noted “une petite fille de sept ans qui dance” in a letter of 10 September 1743, adding–

Je ne puis t'en donner une idée si parfaite qu'elle ne soit au-delà : c'est le dernier effort de la nature pour la beauté, la figure, les graces, la force, enfin je crois, et tout le public a les memes yeux, que s'il est possible de voir un objet parfait sous le soleil, c'est celui-la.

On 12 June 1744, at the ballet *L'École des amants* at the Académie royale de musique, “J'y revis ma petite merveille que j'adore toujours”. A month later, at the *Jardins de l'hymen*, “Ma petite divinité y a dansé; j'ai toujours pleuré d'admiration.” In August, “J'ai vu ma petite divinité, plus enchanteressée que jamais.” By 30 September 1744, she returned to the Foire, “et j'ay admiré le chef-d'œuvre de la nature⁴ jusqu'au larmes a mon ordinaire.” Her correspondent, Devaux, began to wonder about her admiration for Puvigné; on 9 October 1744 she told him:

Je ne sais ou tu prend que l'admiration est un sentiment humiliant. Ce n'est pas au moins celui qu'inspire la petite Pluvigny. On ne pouroit etre humilié que par comparaison ; or je ne pretens pas danser comme elle, je ne pretens pas peindre comme Lebrun, je ne pretends pas chanter comme la Lemaure. Il y a bien peu de chose admirable qui ne soient dans le meme cas, et meme nous n'admirons pas les choses qui contraient nos pretentions. Nous ne faisons que / les envier si elle sont fort au-dessus de nous.

Somewhat obscurely, Voltaire mentioned her (also misspelling her name) in a letter to Mme du Deffand sent from Potsdam, 20 July 1751:

Nous aurons incessamment icy L'enciclopédie, et peutêtre mademoiselle Pluvigné. N'a t'elle point eu quelques dégoûts de la part de l'ancien évêque de Mirepoix¹¹²? ou de la Sorbonne?

The scandal sheets of the day hint at more, but with few details. However one source which has previously been overlooked¹¹³ is the manuscript collection of police reports in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. These provide a rather different account of Mlle Puvigné's career which are worth reproducing in full, even if you may find them somewhat distressing. Scroll down if you are only interested in her later life.

First we have to start with her mother, who came to the attention of the police first in 1736. I won't transcribe the whole of the complaint, but suffice it to say that she was then living in Paris as a tenant of a M. Blanchard, chirurgien in the rue Montorgueil. A dispute with a neighbour over a chimney which Blanchard had opened up led to Colombe-Françoise Puvigné, as she is described, danseuse de l'Opéra-Comique, assaulting the official who was deputed to block it up. In the course of the row, it was claimed that she was “connue de tout le monde pour une prostituée”, and the papers include a warrant (signed by René Hérault, lieutenant général de police, and the subject of a portrait by Liotard) for her to be sent to the Fort l'Eveque prison for 24 hours:

¹¹¹ My thanks to Penny Arthur for guiding me through the references in the magnificent Voltaire Foundation edition.

¹¹² Jean-François Boyer (1675–1755), évêque de Mirepoix 1730–37; he had previously been précepteur du dauphin; he subsequently obtained the “feuille des bénéfices”, effectively giving him direction of the church in France.

¹¹³ It is mentioned in an obscure article, M. Fuchs, “Les danseurs des théâtres de provinces au XVIII^e siècle”, *Archives internationales de la danse*, 15.1.1935, p. 29; but Hamoche's name is transcribed as Lamoche, again throwing us off the scent.

Il en ordonné au s^r Jean officier ³²²
 du Guet d'arrêter & conduire en ³²¹
 prison pour 24 heures seulement
 L'abbé de la Roche L'abbé de la Roche
 Couturier & du même de l'opéra
 Comique apparue le 12 avril 1736.
 Signé Beraud

Monneur Jean de la Roche Jazant
 conduit au feu l'abbé de la Roche
 apparue le 12. avril 1736. Jean

Fast forward to 1749, when there is another report of the mother, followed by the complete file (edited here to remove duplications – some of the draft reports are very hard to read – but preserving original spelling etc.) on the daughter which follows with minimal commentary as none is needed¹¹⁴ – beyond noting that the list of the aristocracy is every bit as exclusive as La Tour's own clientèle, and the documents resonate in every sense of the worlds in which she – and he – had to make their way.

Mlle Puvignée mere
 Danseuse à l'opéra
 Rue La Croix du petits Champs
 Chés une lingere à la belle flamande

Du 8 Juillet 1749

LA D^{LE} PUVIGNÉE mere Danseuse a l'opéra demeure depuis un an rue de la Croix des petits Champs chés une lingere à la belle flamande et ocupe tout le second Etage sur la Rue,

Elle est agée d'environ 28 a 30 ans, brun, petite, bien faite, assés jolie. Elle est de Paris.

Il y a 3 a 4 ans qu'elle avoit M. Bernard de Saint-Saire¹¹⁵ President a la V^e des Enquestes rue N^e Dame des Victoires, qui a se remarié en second noces depuis environ 2 mois. Sa p[remi]ere f[emm]e avec laquelle il n'a vecu qu'un an est morte en couche; l'enfant est vivant.

Elle a eu ensuite M. de Valroche¹¹⁶ <frere de M. Bouret> Interessé dans les soufermes demeurant Rue du Mail pres la P. de V[ictoires] Il est garçon et va[...] de tems en tems chés la D^{le} Puvigné. On assure qu'il a un bon du Roy pour la premiere place vacante de f[ermi]e[re] général.

Elle est actuellement entretenue par M. Mazade¹¹⁷ fils fermier général rue N[otr]e D[am]e des Victoire [~~avec son pere~~] <N^a Scavoir si M. Mazade pere n'est pas mort>, mais depuis environ 4 mois son pere est mort. Il va presque tous les jours chés la D^{le} Puvigné.

Du 10 juin 1749. N^a Elle a une petite fille, <qui a quelque 13 a 14 ans>, qui est aussi danseuse a l'opéra, on m'a assure que le M^{is} de Courtenvaux¹¹⁸ avoit eu son pucelage pour une montre d'or ~~elle n'a que 13 a 14 ans~~ il y a environ un an. Elle est fort jolie, petite, brune, le nez aquiline, petite bouche, fort jolie

Voir tant pour l'histoire de la mere que celle de la fille danseuse seule a l'opéra. La feuille de cette d^{re} c'est la suite...

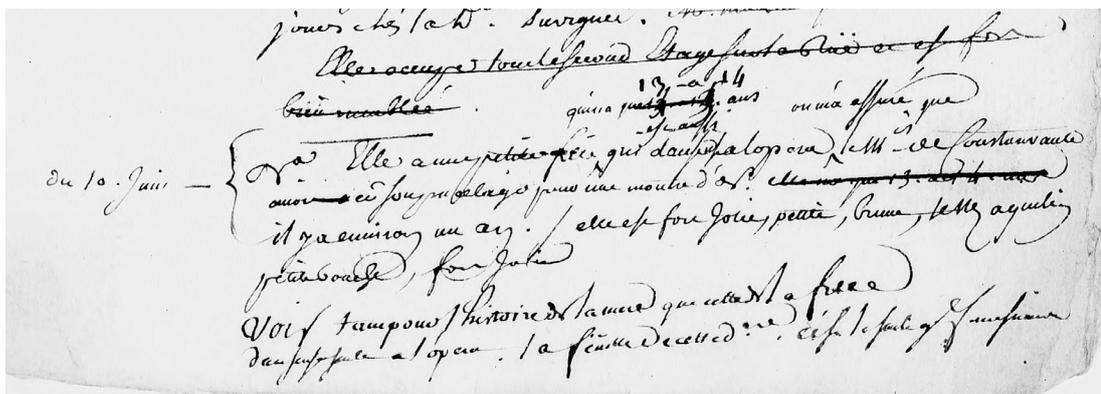
¹¹⁴ The reports were made by the police inspector Jean-Baptiste Meusnier, dit Meunier, who was assassinated in 1757.

¹¹⁵ Better known as Anne-Gabriel-Henri Bernard, marquis de Boulainvilliers 1766 (1724–1798), président au parlement, gouverneur d'Ile-de-France 1775, prévôt de Paris, maître des cérémonies de l'ordre de Saint-Louis. He was the son of La Tour's famous président de Rieux. In 1749 he was at the 2^e des Enquêtes, not the 5^e. His first wife was Marie-Madeleine de Grimoart du Roure; his second, whom he married in 1748, Marie-Madeleine-Adrienne de Hallencourt de Boulainvilliers (1725–1781).

¹¹⁶ Antoine-François Bouret de Valroche (1711–1776), fermier général, secrétaire du roi. In 1765 he married Marie-Antoinette Petit, de l'Opéra. For her liaison with the marquis de Bonnac, see [Jeffares 2002](#).

¹¹⁷ Jean-Laurent Mazade de Bobigny (1719–a.1759), fermier général 1740, brother of Marie-Madeleine Mazade (1716–1773), who, with her husband Antoine-Gaspard Grimod de La Reynière (1690–1756), were also La Tour sitters: [J.46.1867](#) and [J.46.188](#).

¹¹⁸ Louis-Charles-César, chevalier de Louvois, marquis de Courtenvaux, comte, puis duc d'Estrées (1695–1771), maréchal de France, chev. Saint-Esprit.



Du 20 Janvier 1751

LA D^{LLE} PUVIGNÉ fille, danseuse seule à l'opera, demeure avec sa mere rue de la Croix des petits champs à la belle flamande

Elle est agé de 16 à 17 ans, petite, brune, la bouche bien faite, le nez acquilin, jolie. Il a déjà été dit dans la fetuille du 8 Juillet 1749 à l'article de la mere, quelle avoit vendu la pucelage de sa fille, qui n'avoit au plus que 12 a 13 ans, a M. le M^{is} de Courtanvaux.

Depuis quelques mois que la Dlle Puvigné est de retour de Lyon, d'où <(par parenthese)>elle a raporté de forts bons effets, sa mere la produite a M. le Prince de Soubise chés qui elle va diner ordinairement trois fois par semaine lorsqu'il est à Paris et afin d'observer le decorum la mere l'accompagne. Le prince de Soubise¹¹⁹ est dans le gout d'en avoir plus avoir sur ce tout à il ne donne à la d^{lle} Puvigné que 12 louis par mois.

Du 6 avril 1751

LA D^{LLE} PUVIGNÉ fille, danseuse a l'opera demeure actuellement <depuis environ trois mois> avec sa mere, rue St Honoré chés Vignolles Coutellier <vis a vis l'oratoire> au p^{er} etage sur la rüe, meme maison que la Dlle Le Miere

Il a été dit dans la feuille du 20 Janvier d^{er} que la d^{lle} Puvigné allois de tems en tems chés le P^{ce} de Soubise, soit pour y diner, ou pour danser seule aux differents Bals qu'il a donné <Le 2. Jan^{er} d^{er} la P^{sse} de Soubise lui a fait ... pour son Etrene d'une ...rette fine de diamans en reconn^{ce} a ce quelle a plusieurs fois dansé ...> Il n'en est plus question depuis plus de 2 mois; elle est sous les auspices de M. le marquis de Voyer¹²⁰ <rue du Gros Chenet> qui ... au moins trois a 4 fois par semaine l'a voir/ Il n'y arrive ord^t que le Soir dans son Equipage. Il n'y couche jamais.

Du 10 Juillet 1752

Vendredi 7 de ce mois M. le Duc de Luxembourg¹²¹ a été souper avec la D^{lle} Puvigné, tête à tête, dans la petite Maison de Campagne du Prince de Soubise situé entre Vaugirard et les Invalides, proche d'Issy, et la ramenée chés elle à deux heures du matin.

Meunier

Du 18 Septembre 1752

M. le Comte de Kaunitz¹²² ambassadeur de l'Empereur a fait plusieurs presents à la D^{lle} Puvigné, sur laquelle il paroît vouloir jeter un dévolu; néanmoins quoiqu'elle ait déjà été collationer plusieurs fois chés lui, on ne croit pas que la mariage soit encore consommé.

Meunier

Du 13 Novembre 1752

¹¹⁹ Charles de Rohan, prince de Soubise, 2^e duc de Rohan-Rohan (1715–1787), gouverneur de Flandre &c 1751, maréchal de France 1758, ministre d'état, maréchal de Soubise; he was the subject of a Perronneau pastel.

¹²⁰ Marc-René de Voyer de Paulmy, marquis de Voyer d'Argenson (1722–1782), maréchal de camp, lieutenant-général d'Alsace; gouverneur de Romorentin, inspecteur général des dragons, directeur général des haras royaux 1758, associé libre 1749, puis honoraire amateur de l'Académie royale de peinture, vice protecteur de l'Académie de Saint-Luc 1751–64: see entry for La Tour's portrait J.46.3144.

¹²¹ Charles-François-Frédéric de Montmorency-Luxembourg, duc de Piney-Luxembourg, prince de Tingry (1702–1764), chev. Saint-Esprit 1744, maréchal de France, capitaine des gardes du corps du roi.

¹²² Wenzel Anton Fürst von Kaunitz-Rietberg 1764 (1711–1794), chev. Toison d'or 1749, St Stephen, Maria Theresia, Hof- und Staatskanzler. He was portrayed by Liotard.

M. de Fontanieu¹²³ fils, demeurant rue Vivienne chés M. son pere¹²⁴, Conseiller d'Etat et Garde des meubles de la Couronne, entretien fort secrettement, et donne tout ce qu'il peut à la D^{lle} Puvigné fille, Danseuse à l'opera. Il court même un bruit quelle est grosse de ses oeuvres.

Meunier

Du 19 Janvier 1753

Il y a environ six semaines que la D^{lle} Puvigné fille, Danseuse à l'opera, avoit donne pour adjouir à M. de Fontanieu fils, M. le comte de Mniszeck¹²⁵ grand Chambellan de Lithuanie, mais elle de l'a gardé que 15 Jours. <> dit hautement que pendant cet espace de tems elle en a tire plus de 14000#. En autres presens, il lui a donné une Navette d'or enrichi de Diamants. <C'est actuellement la Dlle Rez qui en est en possession, au grand regret sans doute de la Dlle Puvigné pries g^{der}>

Du 3 avril 1753

D^{lle} Puvigne fille danseuse à l'opera
~~Rue S^t Honoré~~
 Rue neuve des petits Champs
 Près la rue de Richelieu

La D^{lle} Puvigne fille danseuse à l'opera est le fruit des amours de la D^e Puvigné et du nommé Haroche <Drouillon¹²⁶> jadis acteur de l'opera comique. Elle est agée d'environ dix huit ans, petite, brune, bien faite, le nez acquin, assés jolie; sa mere qui danse dans les ballets à l'opera, a parüe sur plusieurs Theatres de province.

En 1744 la D^{lle} Puvigné, âgée seulement de 8 à 9 ans, debuta à la foire St Germain sur celui de l'opera Comique dirigé alors par le S. Berger; mais ce spectacle aiant été suprimé en 1745, elle partie pour Lyon avec sa mere et elles ne revinrent à Paris qu'en 1749 quelle entrerent toutes deux à l'opera aux 1200# d'appointements.

La Dlle Puvigné n'étoit point encore nubile lorsqu'elle reçut les premieres leçons du M^{is} de Courtanvaux, qui ne la fit pas bien riche, car l'histoire rapporte qu'il ne donna que quelques Louis à la mère, et une montre d'or à la fille.

En 1751 le Prince de Soubise crût en avoir les gands et la garda jusqu'au commencement de l'annee 1752; il ne la même pas encore aujourd'hui entierement quittée. Depuis elle n'a eu que des passades avec le Duc de Deux Ponts¹²⁷ <le m^{is} de Voyer>, le Comte de Kaunitz, le Duc de la Valliere¹²⁸, le Duc de Luxembourg. Maintenant elle est, en attendant mieux, à M de Fontanieu fils du Con^{er} d'Etat qui lui donne ce qu'il peut. Pendant le bail de celui-cy, elle a encore une passade avec le Comte de Mniszech, Grand Chambellan de Lithuanie, qui lui a valu 13 à 14000#.

Meunier

Du 14 May 1753

On s'est trompé dans ce qui a été donné precedemment de la filiation de la D^{lle} Puvigné. Voici ce qu'il faut suivre.

Le S^r Sabatier étoit, dit-on, un riche armateur de St Malo, qui périt sur mer, et avec lui tout ce qu'il pouvoit avoir de plus precieux. Il laisse sa femme sans fortune, avec une fille qui dans la suite a parüe à l'opera Comique avant la derniere supression qui en fut faite en 1745, et depuis sur differens Theatres de Province, sous le nom de Julie. C'est dans ces dernieres Caravanes que le S. Bercaville alors Comedien de la Troupe à Bruxelles, ensuite Lecteur de feu M. le Marechal de Saxe, l'a connue, en est devenu amoureux et la épousé. Aujourd'hui elle a le privilege de la Comedie de Lille. Quant à la mere de Julie, qui étoit lors du deces du S. Sabatier, encore jeune, fraiche et Jolie, elle plût au S^r Puvigné de Martel, homme riche et de condition, qui, dit-on, l'épousa clandestinement, du moins il en eût la Dame Puvigné mere aussi danseuse à l'opera; laquelle du tems quelle étoit à l'opera comique; eût de ses amours avec Hamoche acteur de ce Théâtre (et non avec Drouillon comme il a été dit dans la feuille du 3. Avril dernier) la D^{lle} Puvigné fille dont il s'agit, qui toujours pour tenant M de Fontanieu fils.

Meunier

¹²³ Probably the elder son, Bonaventure-Moïse de Fontanieu (1728–1757), maître des requêtes.

¹²⁴ Gaspard-Moïse-Augustin de Fontanieu (1694–1767), conseiller du parlement de Paris, intendant des meubles de la Couronne, maître des requêtes.

¹²⁵ Jan Karol Mniszech (1716–1759), chev. Orla Bialego 1744; his wife, Katarzyna Zamoyska, was portrayed by Roslin.

¹²⁶ Drouillon in the copie nette, Haroche in the original manuscript.

¹²⁷ Christian IV. Pfalzgraf von Birkenfeld-Zweibrücken (1722–1775); the subject of a portrait by Tocqué.

¹²⁸ Louis César de La Baume-le-Blanc, duc de La Vallière et pair de France (1708–1780), grand fauconnier de France, chev. Saint-Esprit 1749; there is a Cochin portrait. The *Journal et mémoires du marquis d'Argenson* (v, p. 303, December 1748), give a rather more innocent sounding account of his encounter: "M. de la Vallière d'est mis à entretenir la petite Puvigné, danseuse de l'Opéra, qui a à peine Treize ans et qui n'est qu'une enfant; il fait construire pour lui des cabinets à sa maison des champs, à l'imitation du roi; il doit de tous côtés."

Du 26 Septembre 1755

Rue Notre Dame des Victoires

Il y a deux ans que M de Fontanieu ... a la Dlle Puvigné fille danseuse à l'opéra ... maintenant elle est entretenue par M. de Fontanieu l'ainé m^e des Requetes demeurant <ainsi que son pere...> Rue Vivienne ... M. de Fontanieu donne 100 pistoles par mois à la D^{lle} Puvigné, et l'on assure qu'il lui a donné pour 5 à 6000# de vaisselle d'argent ...

La D^{lle} Puvigné demeure avec sa mere rue N^e D^e des Victoires/a 3^e porte cochere a droite, et entrance du cote de la rue du mail ... pour 200# de loyer et trois domestique à leur service.

Du 6 aoust 1756

DEPUIS deux mois la D^{lle} Puvigne danseuse à l'Opéra, est entretenüe par M. Masson de Maisonrouge¹²⁹, Receveur général des finances, qui vient la voir trois à quatre fois par semaine.

La D^{lle} Sallé ancienne danseuse à l'Opéra, qui jouissoit de 3. Pensions de 600# chacune <Il y a aux petits appartemens 4 places de baladins et 4 places de Baladines, à sa l'ancienne denomination. Chacune de ces places est de 600#. La D^{lle} Sallé an avoit deux et jouissoit en valeur de 600# de pension>, étant porte la Semaine derniere, la D^{lle} Puvigné en a obtenu une, M^{lle} Lany l'autre. M^{lle} Vestris cours apres la 3^e.

But there the police documents end. What happened to Mlle Puvigné? We still don't know her name. But we do now have some names of close relations, although merely searching for these online or in genealogical references books doesn't get very far. We can however identify her biological father, the actor Jean-Baptiste Hamoche: here's the entry in Campardon, *Les Spectacles de la foire*, 1877, I, pp. 391ff:

HAMOCHÉ (JEAN-BAPTISTE), excellent pierrot de la foire, commença par jouer la comédie en province, puis vint à Paris, où il s'engagea chez Saint-Edme et chez la dame Baron (...). Admis à l'Opéra-Comique, il y obtint, grâce au naturel et à la vérité de son jeu, de nombreux applaudissements et devint l'acteur favori du public. A la foire Saint-Laurent de 1732, il prit de / moitié avec Devienne la direction de l'Opéra-Comique, et célébra son entrée en fonctions par une petite pièce qu'il commanda à Carolet et qui fut jouée à l'ouverture de la foire, le 7 juillet, sous le titre du Nouveau Bail. Malheureusement l'entreprise d'Hamoche ne réussit pas; les deux associés se brouillèrent et de dépit l'acteur s'engagea à la Comédie-Italienne, où il débuta le 1er décembre 1732. Dépayé sur cette scène, Hamoche ne tarda pas à la quitter, et le 30 juin 1733 il faisait sa rentrée à l'Opéra-Comique dans la Fausse Égyptienne, de Panard. (...) / Hamoche fut fort bien reçu, mais l'incorrigible Pierrot se brouilla une seconde fois avec son directeur, à qui il fit même un procès, et quitta de nouveau la scène à la fin de la foire Saint-Laurent de 1733 pour n'y plus reparaitre que le 13 juillet 1743 (...). Il joua encore (28 août 1743) les rôles d'un ivrogne dans la Fontaine de Sapience, opéra comique en un acte, de Laffichard et Valois, et (31 août 1743) Osman, Turc, Huascar, Inca, et Zima, sauvagesse, dans les actes I, II et III de l'Ambigu de la folie, ou le Ballet des dindons, parodie en quatre actes, de Favart. Enfin Hamoche, s'étant créé encore de nouveaux ennuis à l'Opéra-Comique, finit par quitter tout à fait la scène et par se retirer en province.

The key fact here is the reference to Favart's play, *L'Ambigu de la folie ou le ballet des dindons*, in which Mlle Puvigné debuted on 31 August 1743, the other two dancers being Mlle Lany and Noverre. Hamoche was the lead actor.¹³⁰

Let us return then to the other names. Neither Sabattier nor Puvigné de Martel get us far. But, as luck would have it, I came across a document in the Archives nationales, in which a certain Vincent Martenne de Puvigné renounced the succession of his half-sister Julienne-Nicole Sabatier, veuve de Louis-Gabriel Cabre de Bercaville, 27.XI.1786 (AN MC/XXIV/953).

Cabre, formerly an actor, was secrétaire to the maréchal de Saxe¹³¹ and then (1761) to the maréchal de Löwendal (two more La Tour sitters: [J.46.2863](#) and [J.46.2188](#)). He was later inspecteur du Théâtre de la

¹²⁹ Etienne-Pierre Masson de Maisonrouge (1700–1785), receveur des finances à Amiens. His second wife, the singer “la Romainville”, took Vestris as a lover just after her marriage. According to Casanova, Maisonrouge had a child by La Tour's lover, Marie Fel ([J.46.1762](#)), before 1752.

¹³⁰ His biographical details remain a little obscure. He married Anne Bisson or Dubuisson at some stage before 1703; her inv. p.m. was taken 28.VI.1742 (AN MC/VIII). The maître de danse de l'Académie royale de musique, Nicolas Hamoche, may have been related.

¹³¹ Confirmed by his widow's entry in the scellés apposés..., AN Y13810, 4.II.1785, place Saint-Michel.

Monnaie until 1780. As for Julienne-Nicole, she did, as Meunier noted, appear on the stage. Here is the entry in Campardon:

BERCAVILLE (JULIE), actrice de l'Opéra-Comique, débuta à ce théâtre à la foire Saint-Laurent de 1733, dans le Départ de l'Opéra-Comique, pièce en un acte et en vaudevilles mêlés de prose, de Panard, et joua le rôle de la Lune, dans Zéphire et la lune, ou la Nuit d'été, opéra comique en un acte, de Boissy, représenté à la même foire. Julie Bercaville, qui n'était connue à l'Opéra-Comique que sous le nom de Julie, débuta plus tard sous son nom de famille à la Comédie-Française.

In her will¹³², Julienne-Nicole left a substantial annuity to her “frère uterin” [half-brother] Vincent Martin de Puvigné [sic]; a portrait of an “abbé en robe de chambre” was left to a priest. But there was no mention of any half-sister or niece or anyone that could be La Tour's Mlle Puvigné (nor indeed of any pastel portrait that might have been the work the préparation was made for).

Her half-brother was Vincent-François Martenne de Puvigné (1718–1791), chevalier de l'ordre de Saint-Jean-de-Latran, officier d'infanterie, commandant de l'Île de Rodrigues in 1752 (where in 1761 he played a role in the astronomical observations of the transit of Venus), and died in the Île Maurice. He was born in Nantes (paroisse Saint-Laurent, 9 November), his parents being Vincent Martenne, sieur de Puvigné and Guillemette Seguin.

So the logic of the police report is that Guillemette Seguin must originally have been married to the armateur Sabatier. And that indeed proves to have been the case: Joseph Sabatier married Guillemette Seguin, a minor, in Saint-Malo on 3 January 1708. Further, three years later, on 23 August 1711 in the cathédrale de Saint-Malo, Guillemette, veuve de Joseph Sabatier, married Vincent Martene, chevalier, sieur de Puvigné of the parish of Saint-Séverin, Paris.¹³³

Also a chevalier de Saint-Jean, he was the son of Vincent [de] Puvigné, chantre de la chapelle-musique du roi in Versailles 1682–1720. In 1736 Vincent Martenne de Puvigné, son of Vincent and Marie-Françoise Tristan, together with his three sons, Vincent-François, Jean-François and Ange-Martin-Dominique, were admitted bourgeois d'Arras¹³⁴; there was no mention of Colombe-Françoise, who of course was already in Paris. On 10 September 1734 in Arras “Vincent Marten comte et chevalier de St Jean de Latran ecuyer de puvignez”, signing as “Le chevalier de Puvigné”, and a new wife, Louise Lebon, baptised another son, Joseph-Aimable, who was buried six months later.

This was quite a grand family: another son of “Vincent Martene de Puvigné, ordinaire de la musique du Roy” and Marie-François Tristan was baptised Louis on 26 December 1678 in the chapelle of Saint-Germain-en-Laye; his parrain Louis le Grand Dauphin, his marraine the queen, Marie-Thérèse d'Autriche.¹³⁵

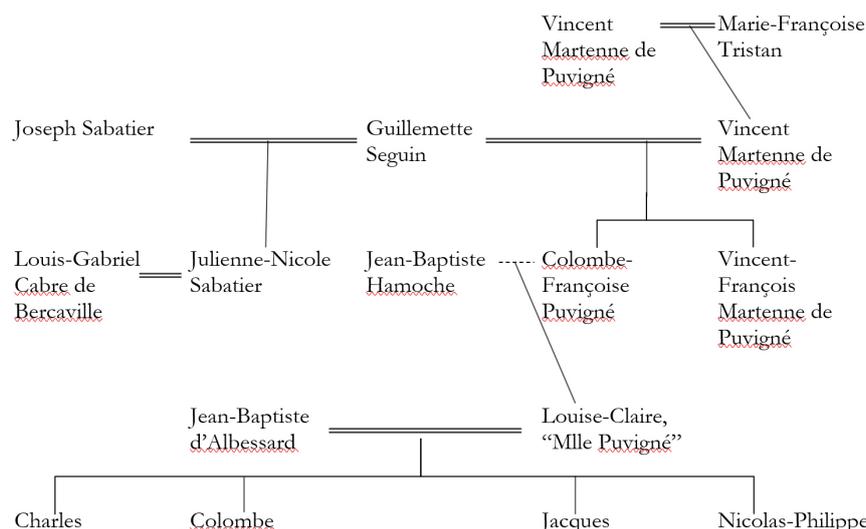
Guillemette was thus the mother of Julienne-Nicole by her first marriage, and of Vincent-François Martenne de Puvigné and Colombe-Françoise by her legitimate second marriage. Colombe-Françoise, who was probably born c.1718–20 (from Meunier's estimate) may never have married, but was the mother of La Tour's sitter when she herself was probably 15–17 years of age:

¹³² AD75 DC 6 262, 10.III.1785.

¹³³ The Guillemette Seguin who lived until 1758, providing 1500 livres for the repair of the chapel of Saint-Jean de Saint-Michel (Archives de la Gironde), was probably a homonym: she seems to have married a Jean Pinsan in Bordeaux, Saint-Michel, 24.IV.1731.

¹³⁴ Didier Bouquet, *Registre des bourgeois d'Arras... 1731–1774*, 2020, pp. 42f, transcribed as “de Prurigne”.

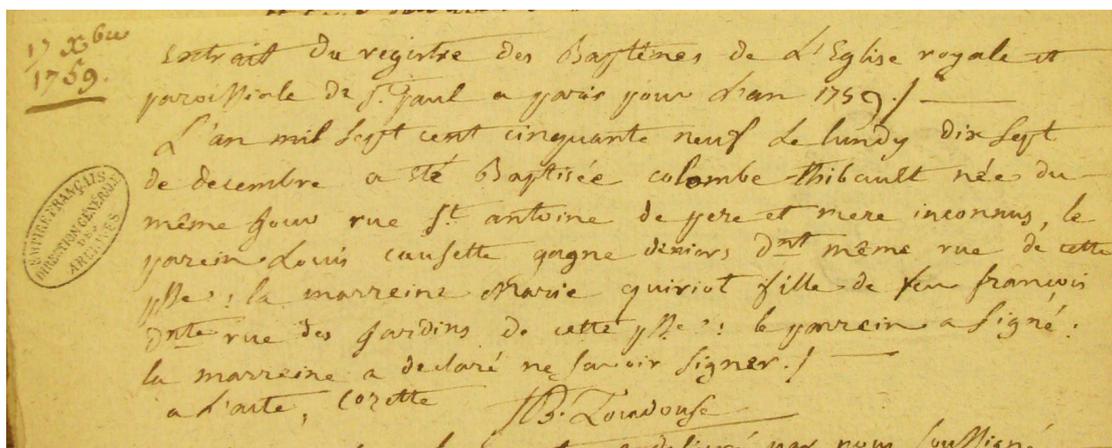
¹³⁵ <http://archives.musee-archeologienationale.fr/index.php/acte-de-bapt-me-de-louis-martenne-de-puvign-dans-la-chapelle-du-ch-teau-vieux-de-saint-germain-en-laye-la-reine-tant-sa-marraine>.



There is one further clue in Julienne-Nicole Sabatier’s will: a substantial legacy in favour of her godson Nicolas-Philippe d’Albessard. It is that which enabled me to make the link to the Dlle Puvigné: she was Louise-Claire Hamoche-Puvigné (c.1735–1779) who, on 8 August 1760, in Paris, Saint-Eustache, was married to Jean-Baptiste d’Albessard (1716–1794). If not of the highest aristocracy, it was a very good match: her husband was conseiller du roi, avocat général au parlement de Bordeaux, and had married once before (in 1751).

She had already borne two children to him: Charles (before 1758 – died young) and Colombe Thibaut (1759–1784). Another son, Jacques, was born in Paris in 1768 (he died in 1834). When Jacques applied for military service in 1787 as an officer in the regiment de Guadaloupe, Chérin was persuaded to issue the necessary proof of nobility to d’Albessard and “Louise-Claire Hamoche”. And, c.1772, she gave birth to Nicolas-Philippe d’Albessard, whose marraine was her aunt Julienne. Nicolas-Philippe served in the Egypt campaign, and died without issue.

Colombe-Thibault became dame de chambre de Madame Victoire. In 1782, after the death of her mother, she wanted to marry André-Isidore-Louis de Mornard, secrétaire du Cabinet de Madame Victoire. Her father applied¹³⁶ to the Châtelet in Paris to legitimate the daughter who had been born the year before her parents’ marriage, and baptised in Saint-Paul, Paris with father and mother unknown and with a workman and illiterate girl as godparents. A certified copy of her baptism was required: one can only imagine the circumstances in which her mother was unable to be recorded:

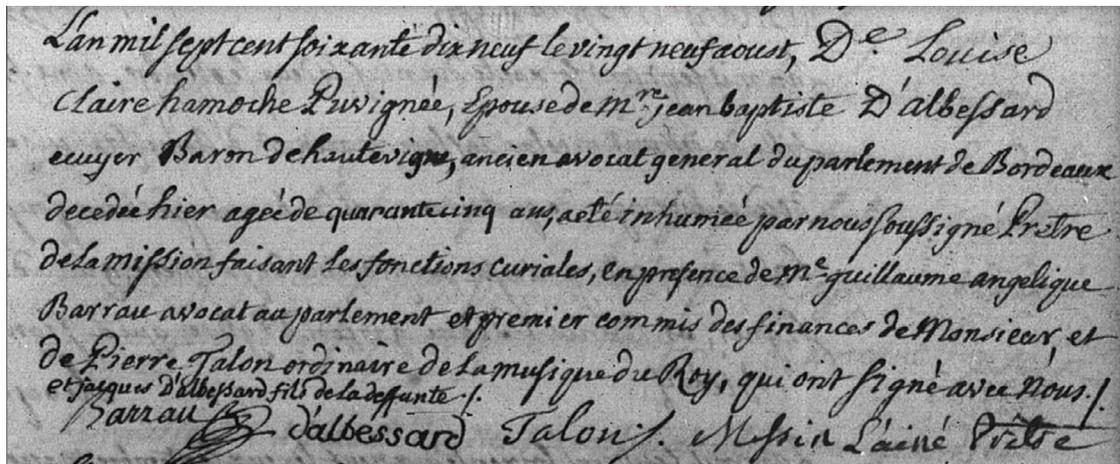


¹³⁶ Registres de tutelles, AN Y5100B, 20.XII.1782.

Witnesses to her 1782 marriage contract included Mme Victoire de France, the ducs and duchesses de Fleury and de Civrac. Colombe-Thibault died eighteen months later.

The avocat général sat on the Assemblée Générale de la noblesse d’agenois, and was guillotined in Bordeaux. The family’s pedigree is set out in O’Gilvy’s *Nobiliaire de Guienne*.

The witnesses at Louise-Claire’s burial at Versailles (paroisse Saint-Louis, 29 August 1779) were M^e Guillaume Angélique Barrau, avocat au parlement et premier commis des finances de Monsieur, Pierre Talon ordinaire de la musique du Roy (1721–1785; a known cellist and composer), and her son Jacques d’Albessard.



One should note in passing a comment in a letter from Toussaint-Pierre Lenieps to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, of 23 April 1763, including news from Paris after a fire in the Opéra with gossip about the actors – among them a garbled version of Mlle Puvigné’s history:

M^{lle} Puvigné, avec plus de 200 m. L. de capital, est partie pour Pau, Epouse d’un Prést à la Cour des Monnoies de cette capitale du Bearn. Elle faisoit un métier qui n’enrichit pas toutes celles qui le font, mais qui donne souvent des ocasions au Scandale, & des homes à la Gréve.

None of this tells us why or for whom La Tour undertook his pastel. While portraits of actors were often intended to further their careers on the stage, we cannot avoid the suspicion that this commission was placed by one of her “admirers”. Even more disturbing is the idea that her mother may have thought it helpful for business: if so, does that make La Tour complicit? Or us?

La Tour, *Mlle Ferrand méditant sur Newton*

2013



[Maurice-Quentin de La Tour](#)

Élisabeth FERRAND (1700–1752) [Zoomify](#)

Pastel on paper, 73x60 cm

1752

Munich, HVB Group, dep.: Alte Pinakothek, inv. [HuW6](#)

PROVENANCE: Paris, Georges Petit, Baudoin, Mannheim, Féral, 14–15.VI.1920, Lot 7 n.r., Éc. fr., ?Mme de Chatenay, mère; Louis Dumoulin, Paris, 1922. James Schwob d'Héricourt, Paris, 1928. J. Ch., Paris; Galerie Jean-François Heim, Basel; acqu. 1966

EXHIBITIONS: Salon de 1753, no. 78 (“Mlle Ferrand méditant sur Newton”); Paris 1922; Munich 2022, no. 19

LITERATURE: Fleury 1922, repr.; B&W 145, fig. 53; H. Bauer, *Meisterwerke des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 1966, p. 36f; Hertha Wellensiek, “Eine Bank kauft Rokoko”, *Weltkunst*, 1966, p. 1204 repr.; Watson 1968, p. 351 n.r.; Bury 1971, pl. 46; Hohenzollern & Soehner 1972, p. 35, fig. 29; Laurence Bongie, *Diderot's femme savante*, Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century, CLVXI, 1977, p. 153, p. 150 repr., Ulrike Boskamp, “Mademoiselle Ferrand méditant sur Newton von Maurice-Quentin de La Tour. Zur Rezeption von Newtons Opticks in Frankreich vor 1760”, unpublished MA thesis, Freie Universität, Berlin, 1994; Debie & Salmon 2000, p. 172, ill. 88; Goodman 2000, pp. 105f, fig. 58; Patricia Fara, *Newton: the making of a genius*, 2002, fig. 5.2; Siefert 2009, pp. 76f repr.; Nina Rattner Gelbart, “Adjusting the lens...” *Early modern women*, XI/1, 2016, pp. 116–27, fig. 1; June Barrow-Green & al., “The gender gap in mathematical and natural sciences...”, *Proceedings of the international congress of mathematicians*, Rio de Janeiro, 2018, I, p. 1071, fig. 3; Monika Hinterberger, *Eine Spur von Glück*, 2020, pp. 185–226 repr.; Nina Rattner Gelbart, *Minerva's French sisters*, 2021, fig. 1; Hipp & al. 2022, p. 100f; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [J.46.1798](#)

RELATED WORKS: autograph replica commissioned by sitter, executed 1753 after her death

GENEALOGY: [Ferrand](#)

IN A HIGHLY REGARDED and influential monograph entitled *The portraits of Madame de Pompadour: celebrating the femme savante*,¹³⁷ Elise Goodman devoted several paragraphs to the description of an important pastel by La Tour which graces the galleries of the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, in the context of the fashion for women who “embraced Newton’s ‘philosophie naturelle’”:

One of those women was Mlle Ferrand, whom La Tour depicts meditating on her Newton in an incisive pastel exhibited in the Salon of 1753. Pictured in three-quarter length in the intimacy of her study and clad in her *deshabillé du matin* to facilitate comfortable contemplation, Ferrand interrupts her reading to discourse with the spectator who has just entered her intellectual domain. La Tour honors Ferrand’s intelligence. Her firm pyramidal form may ingeniously allude to the solid geometry employed by her English muse and undoubtedly concretizes the resoluteness of her active mind. Her wide-eyed acuity and firm mouth, as well as her upright attentiveness, signal to the beholder that Newton’s physics is energizing her being. She clearly conveys that cerebral vigor. Her open hand and splayed fingers, directing the viewer to her ear and then on to her book, indicate that she wishes to hear what her interlocutor has to say about Newton’s optics and gravitational theory.

Her tome, albeit magnified for expressive purposes – its monumentality signifies its importance – is Voltaire’s *Eléments de la philosophie de Newton*, whose first edition is actually a rather modest though richly illustrated octavo of 399 pages. Nevertheless, like Ferrand’s book, the actual *Eléments* is identified on its rectos with the words “DE NEUTON.” First published in Amsterdam in 1738, the volume was dedicated by Voltaire to its principal catalyst, the marquise du Châtelet (this time the deified “Minerve de la France”), to enshrine her glory and that of her sex. In the preface, Voltaire elaborates on the importance of Newtonian physics for people of all classes and both genders, counseling women to apply themselves to science as assiduously as their Gallic Minerva applies herself.

Mlle Ferrand, about whom we possess no biographical information, was a bourgeois beneficiary of Voltaire’s attempt to disseminate to the French public in intelligible language Newton’s opaque physics and its scientific method. This experimental method had displaced the outmoded but nonetheless entrenched a priori rationalism of Descartes and his principal French disciple, Fontenelle, whose *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686) enjoyed a great vogue among women of the period. A sensational success in France, the *Eléments* was reissued in several editions throughout the eighteenth century – Mlle Ferrand may be reading the 1752 edition hot off the press – and caused one reviewer to gush: “Finally Voltaire appeared, and immediately Newton is understood or about to be; all Paris resounds with Newton, all Paris stutters Newton, all Paris studies and learns Newton.” One native Parisian, Mme de Pompadour, was apparently taken with Newton: in her library were Voltaire’s *Oeuvres complètes* (1757), which contained the *Eléments*, and a copy of Francesco Algarotti’s *Il Newtonianisme pour les dames* (1738), one of the major popularizing scientific works geared to women, whose author “Newtonized” with du Châtelet and Voltaire.

In its own terms, Dr Goodman’s analysis is an exemplary account of the way this picture fits into her thesis, expressed in the type of art historical narrative currently favoured in academic circles. There are useful insights (notably how La Tour has altered the page¹³⁸ depicted from the 1738 printed edition, fig.

¹³⁷ Berkeley, 2000. This passage (footnotes here omitted) appears on pp. 105–6, and the pastel is reproduced as fig. 58.

¹³⁸ Although I believe Dr Goodman is correct in thinking that La Tour has based the page he draws on the octavo edition by Voltaire, scaling it up, adding additional marginal notes, and altering Voltaire’s spelling to the English version. La Tour similarly enlarged the books he depicted in his portrait of Mme de Pompadour, “pour la plus grande gloire” of his sitter: see Hourcade 2004a, p. 129. La Tour himself had an interest in optics, and owned an English telescope (by Peter Dolland).

1), valuable information about the cultural context and much good sense. But the passage retains an unsatisfactory element of speculation, and unsurprisingly is not entirely accurate. We can debate fruitlessly whether Ferrand is engaged in dialogue with an interlocutor, or “meditating” as La Tour informs in an unusually specific description, while the virtual duplication of the pose in other portraits from around the same date, such as Mme de Mondonville au clavecin (Art Institute of Chicago) or Marie Fel tenant un porte-crayon (fig. 2), arguably undermines the specificity of the compositional analysis. Other questions can be answered: as we shall see, Mlle Ferrand is not reading the 1752 edition; she might have been irritated that her fine *toilette du matin* and expensive lace are dismissed as casual “deshabille”; she would have been horrified to be described as “bourgeois”, and would be justly disappointed that her very solid contributions to Enlightenment philosophy are conflated with vapid Sunday afternoon pretensions to intellectual accomplishment. The account mentions none of her secrets – I refer not to her lesbianism, but to her astonishing role in harbouring one of the most celebrated royal fugitives in European history. But most of all what this account omits, and what when known cannot fail but alter our emotional response to this magnificent portrait, is that it was commissioned by a woman who knew she was dying, and was exhibited publicly months after her death to an audience who knew exactly who she was and called her “la célèbre Mlle Ferrand”. How today we can have lost that information – and rediscovered it, only to lose it again, not once but repeatedly – is the subject of this essay: it touches on the processes of art historical research as much as on the glory of this single, if special, example.



Figure 1

* * *

In the salon of 1753, at the height of his powers, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour exhibited an unprecedented¹³⁹ eighteen portraits, among them the picture described in the livret as *Mademoiselle Ferrand méditant sur Newton* (no. 78). They included many other well-known works, such as the splendid portrait of the abbé Nollet (no. 87) also now in Munich, the celebrated portrait of “M. Rousseau, Citoyen de Genève” (no. 90) and the much-loved *bouffon* Manelli (no. 91). There are also records of lost works, some with cryptic descriptions: the portrait of “Madame de Geli” (no. 75), although known to be a Mme Barbaut-Gély because of her gushing letter of praise to the artist, has only now¹⁴⁰ yielded up her full identity as Marie-Madeleine-Louise Barbaut, wife of Antoine Gelly, payeur des gages à la cour des aides de Bordeaux since 1743 and by 1749 a secrétaire des commandements du comte de Clermont. (Clermont and another of his secrétaires, Paradis de Moncrif, were La Tour subjects in previous salons.)

¹³⁹ For him; Oudry exhibited a similar number of works at this salon, more if the drawings and prints are counted separately.

¹⁴⁰ Letter dated 1 September 1753, published in Desmazes 1874. Her names are provided in an *obligation*, 4.IX.1751 (Archives nationales, minutier central, XXXVI/470, first published in the online *Dictionary of pastellists*, 25.III.2013; see also www.pastellists.com/genealogies/barbault.pdf).

Among the critics, who were generally enthusiastic about La Tour's submissions, only Fréron specifically mentioned the portrait of Mlle Ferrand:¹⁴¹

Je me contenterai de citer le Portrait de Mlle *Ferrand* méditant su *Newton*, qui est très-beau, & qui étoit d'une grande difficulté pour l'exécution.

The pastel then disappeared for 167 years, turning up at a mixed auction at the Galerie Georges Petit on 4–5 June 1920 where it was catalogued as anonymous French school (lot 7). Although not reproduced – and despite being given a fictitious presumed identification which shows that the expert (Jules Féral) must have had in mind a possible attribution to Vigée Le Brun since the name chosen (“Mme de Chateney mère”) appears in exactly that form in that artist's work list for 1787 – there can however be no doubt that the picture described is the Munich pastel:

Les yeux bruns, le visage souriant et tourné de trois quarts vers la droite, elle est assise, vue à mi-corps, le bras gauche accoudé sur une table couverte d'un tapis bleu, la joue légèrement appuyée sur la main. Elle est vêtue de blanc, une fanchon de dentelle garnie d'un ruban bleu nouée sous le menton et, derrière elle, posé contre d'autres volumes, un livre est ouvert; on lit sur une page: DE NEWTON.

It was bought by the Paris dealer Louis Dumoulin, who soon recognised it as the lost La Tour pastel from the 1753 salon. By January 1922 it had been lent, along with another supreme masterpiece also then on the Paris art market (Paul Cailleux's pastel of *Dumont le Romain jouant de la guitare*) to an exhibition at the Louvre of the Saint-Quentin La Tours which had been recovered after the war.¹⁴² Élie Fleury, in a review in the *Burlington magazine*, confirmed that the pastel had been in a recent Georges Petit auction, he thought with an attribution to Mme Vigée Le Brun.¹⁴³ By 1928 it had been bought by James Schwob d'Héricourt (1874–1939), a wealthy industrialist with interests in wool manufacture and in the Mumm champagne house, and a close relation by marriage to the unfortunate capitaine Alfred Dreyfus. After his death the picture subsequently belonged to someone identified only as “J. Ch., Paris” in the records.¹⁴⁴ There is nothing to suggest that it suffered the fate of other pictures in Schwob d'Héricourt's collection:¹⁴⁵ a 1929 painting by Foujita, seized by the Nazis from his residence in the rue Beauséjour, was not returned to his heirs until 1998.



Figure 2

¹⁴¹ Élie-Catherine Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce tems*, XI, 1753, p. 190.

¹⁴² The story of their fate has been told most recently, and most fully, by Hervé Cabezas and Christine Kott in the exhibition catalogue Saint-Quentin 2007.

¹⁴³ Fleury 1922.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, Hohenzollern & Soehner 1972 and several other reports following the picture's acquisition in 1966.

¹⁴⁵ A report by Vincent Noce in *Libération*, 19.VI.1998. At the time of the raid the Nazis destroyed a portrait of Mme Schwob d'Héricourt as a “portrait juif”, and arrested his daughter-in-law who died in Auschwitz.

The pastel was acquired in 1966 by the Bayerischen Hypotheken- und Wechsel-Bank for the collection which is now on display in the Alte Pinakothek. The sitter's identity remained stubbornly unknown, Johann Georg Prinz von Hohenzollern, the influence behind the acquisition, remarking that "Die Lebensdaten der Dargestellten sind unbekannt". Sir Francis Watson,¹⁴⁶ writing in the *Burlington magazine* in praise of the bank's generous loan, noted rather sniffily the "two fine pastels by Quentin de la Tour" which "represent typical minor aspects of the Enlightenment in France". He added "The unfortunate bluestocking Mlle Ferrand had recently gained notoriety as the result of a painful law-suit in which her father had been compelled to recognize her as his legitimate daughter." What an interesting piece of information – sadly unreferenced: but is it true? As far as my research has been able to establish, there can only be one such case,¹⁴⁷ the celebrated action by a Mademoiselle Ferrand heard in 1738 concerning the estate of her father, Michel Ferrand, président aux requêtes au parlement de Paris, who had died fifteen years previously. He had married an Anne Bellinzani in 1676, and by her had one legitimate son, Antoine Ferrand, who predeceased his father without posterity. By 1686 the couple effected a legal separation, but Anne was by then pregnant and a daughter (whose first name we never learn) was subsequently born; she was sent to a convent and only much later discovered her identity, when she instituted the suit (which she won).

There are two problems with this: one is the implausibility of La Tour's sitter being 67 years old; the other is more fatal, namely the sitter's real identity which was discovered and published by Professor Laurence Bongie in a book entitled *Diderot's femme savante*, published in the Voltaire Foundation's prestigious series *Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century* in 1977 (vol. CLXVI). Unfortunately the book was not widely read by art historians.¹⁴⁸ Mlle Ferrand was not, I should say, Diderot's muse of the title, but the chapter devoted to her explains how she might have been, giving her dates and explaining her contributions to Enlightenment thought. It also tantalises us with a Fermatian promise of a full-length study, a promise repeated in several subsequent publications by the author,¹⁴⁹ but not (so far as I am aware) as yet delivered.

Relatively little research on pastels or La Tour took place in these years, and it was not until the 1980s that academic interest began to focus on the works that Sir Francis Watson had disdained. By 1994 "Mademoiselle Ferrand méditant sur Newton von Maurice-Quentin de La Tour. Zur Rezeption von Newtons Opticks in Frankreich vor 1760" was a suitable topic for an MA thesis at the Freie Universität, Berlin, 1994 by Ulrike Boskamp,¹⁵⁰ who was well aware of Bongie's research and had located further archival documents. Her work however was sadly unpublished, and evidently unknown to Dr Goodman when she reported the total lack of biographical information about her subject. Xavier Salmon, drawing on Goodman's work in the discussion of the pastel in the definitive monograph¹⁵¹ he co-authored with the by then deceased Christine Debrie, reported only "la biographie malheureusement obscure". Although the pastel was again reproduced with her full identity in 2002, by Patricia Fara,¹⁵² her book was known mainly to historians of science and once again escaped the attentions of art historians. Thus M. Salmon, in his catalogue of the monumental La Tour exhibition of 2004, advanced no further in his reference to Mlle Ferrand, while I did no better in the print edition of my *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800* published in 2006.

The Munich website, consulted in March 2013, provided no indication of deeper knowledge:

¹⁴⁶ Watson 1978.

¹⁴⁷ An account is given by François-Alexandre-Pierre de Garsault, *Faits des causes célèbres et intéressantes: augmentés de quelques causes*, Amsterdam, 1757, pp. 324–29.

¹⁴⁸ The London Library copy which I borrowed in March 2013 had never previously been taken out.

¹⁴⁹ Most importantly Laurence L.Bongie, "A new Condillac letter and the genesis of the *Traité des sensations*", *Journal of the history of philosophy*, xxv, 1978, pp. 83–94, which includes further remarks about Ferrand and her philosophical contributions.

¹⁵⁰ I am extremely grateful to Dr Boskamp for sharing with me her main discoveries and in particular the transcripts of Mlle Ferrand's will and posthumous inventory. They can be found in the Archives nationales, Minutier central, will of 8.II.1752, XCII/575; the inventaire après décès, 8.IX.1752, XCII/578.

¹⁵¹ Debrie & Salmon 2000, p. 172, ill. 88.

¹⁵² *Newton: the making of a genius*, 2002, fig. 5.2.

Die Porträtierte gehörte einer der sehr vermögenden und hochgebildeten Magistratenfamilien von Paris an. Sie ist hier in ihrem Boudoir im Morgenkleid mit dem Häubchen auf dem Kopf am Toilettentisch dargestellt, auf dem allerdings keine Schminkutensilien liegen, sondern ein Folioband aufgeschlagen steht. Der Überschrift kann man entnehmen, dass es sich um die Werke von Newton handelt, die sie in der französischen Ausgabe liest und mit ihrem Gegenüber zu diskutieren scheint. Das Bild ist nicht nur eines der herausragenden Meisterwerke des Künstlers, sondern ist auch ein Beleg für die hohe Bildung der Frauen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung.¹⁵³

Here matters might have lain had I not been researching a quite different matter, and come across Olivier Courcelle's excellent website devoted to the celebrated mathematician Alexis Clairaut,¹⁵⁴ where Bongie's work on Ferrand is cited.

* * *

This is not the place to attempt to deliver Bongie's promised biography, nor is it necessary to recapitulate the very considerable amount of material that has been published about Élisabeth Ferrand (1700–1752). But I will attempt summarise the points that I consider illuminate her portrait, and by issuing this incomplete note online I hope it may attract a broader audience than previous research. It is also fair to say that by no means all her secrets have yet been revealed.

Among these is her relationship with the various families called Ferrand, several of whom seem quite plausible.¹⁵⁵ I had wondered, without foundation, that she might be related to Mme de Pompadour's cousin, the fermier général Laurent-René Ferrand. Munich evidently thought she belonged to the family of Parisian magistrates (which as it happens includes the judge involved in Watson's paternity suit); they descend from a Poitou family, originating with a Jean Ferrand, médecin ordinaire du roi, who was ennobled in 1574. We have only two clues: one is somewhat cryptic, arising from Mlle Ferrand's correspondence with Prince Charles which was mostly addressed to "Mademoiselle Luci", "sœur" de "La Grandemain" (the codename for the comtesse de Vassé, with whom she lived), but on one occasion a letter is addressed to "Mademoiselle La Marre". From this Jacobite scholars inferred a reference to Les Mares, an estate of a third family, the Norman Ferrands, seigneurs des Mares, de Rouville and de La Conté.¹⁵⁶

The second piece of evidence seems to me of considerably greater authority, although it is spoilt by a typographical error. In the recently launched *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*¹⁵⁷ we find her burial notice among the—

Enterrements. Du 5 septembre [1752] [...] d'Élisabeth Férand, fille majeure de Pierre Férand, Seigneur de Roulleau, décédée rue S[aint] Dominique. A S. Sulpice

There is however no territory called Roulleau. It stretches the error too far to get to de Rouville, and in any case that family is fully researched, with the only father of the right generation being Georges-Louis Ferrand, sgr de La Conté.

But there is a different noble family, not well documented but nevertheless claiming the seigneurie of Bouleaux, near Saint-Didier. In the standard genealogy¹⁵⁸ we find the following clue:

Election de Châlons, 1697: Ferand, Paul, seigneur de Bouleaux: *D'azur, à trois épées d'argent garnies d'or, en pal, les pointes en bas*

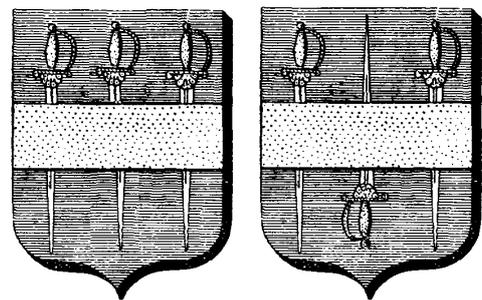


Figure 3

¹⁵³ "The woman portrayed was a member of a very wealthy and erudite family of Parisian magistrates. Here, she is in her boudoir wearing a dressing gown and bonnet, sitting at her dressing table, upon which there are no make-up accessories, but instead, an open folio volume. It can be inferred from the title that it is a work by Newton that she is reading in French, and she seems to be discussing it with the person opposite her. The painting is not only one of the artist's most outstanding masterpieces; it is also evidence of the superior education of women during the Enlightenment."

¹⁵⁴ In particular the page www.clairaut.com/n11mai1748po2pf.html, consulted 28.III.2013.

¹⁵⁵ They are documented in the Ferrand genealogy file on my site, at www.pastellists.com/genealogies/ferrand.pdf.

¹⁵⁶ See Andrew Lang, *Pickle the spy*, 1903, p. 48f.

¹⁵⁷ 1752, p. 568. My attention was drawn to this on the Clairaut site.

¹⁵⁸ Édouard de Barthélemy, *Armorial général de la généralité de Châlons sur Marne*, Paris, 1862, p. 40.

This must be the same family: Pierre Férand or Ferrand was the first seigneur des Bouleaux and was the father of Paul and another Pierre.¹⁵⁹ I have included the arms (fig. 3, left) because, for once, they provide an important further piece of the jigsaw. They confirm that this is the same family listed by Jouglà de Morenas¹⁶⁰ under the heading Ferrand de Montigny 15110 (Bourgogne). They also differ minutely from the arms of the Poitou family of Parisian magistrates (fig. 3, right), where the central sword is pointed upwards but the others are the same. It is likely that at some stage these families were connected, but Jouglà listed them separately. It would be a digression too far to explain the relationship to Charles Ferand, lieutenant général de police et lieutenant particulier au bailliage de Saint-Dizier¹⁶¹ and the family's claimed relationship to Jeanne d'Arc. The état civil records for the parish do not currently seem to be available.

Confirmation of this connection is found in Mlle Ferrand's posthumous papers¹⁶² which record an outstanding debt of 18,000 livres due from a certain M. de Roquette as unpaid purchase price for "sa terre des Bouleaux". This ties in with some property transactions reported in an article by the baron de Baye in 1884 concerning the château de Montmort (Marne),¹⁶³ suggesting litigation continuing long after Mlle Ferrand's death, probably connected with an initial sale by "Élisabeth Ferrand fille majeure" of several territories in 1728. It seems likely that her father was dead by then, and that she had inherited significant wealth. From her posthumous papers we know that she had an income from annuities of some 3000 livres.

It is time to turn now to Élisabeth Ferrand's life in Paris, a glimpse of which is again provided in her posthumous inventory. She lived on the ground floor of the couvent des Filles de Saint-Joseph at 10–12 rue Saint-Dominique (somewhat confusingly referred to as the îlot Saint-Germain: marked in the 1739 plan de Turgot, fig. 4),¹⁶⁴ a refuge for ladies made famous by Mme de Montespan, who moved there in 1687, and, 60 years later, by Mme du Deffand, with her famous salon, "tapissé de moire bouton d'or", frequented by everyone from Voltaire to Turgot. Ferrand's apartment included an antichambre, a salle de compagnie, and a chambre à coucher leading to a garde-robe and a maid's room. She employed a servant and a chambermaid. This was a life which she shared for many years with the comtesse de Vassé, née Antoinette-Louise-Gabrielle des Gentils du Bessay (1710–1768), who had married, at the age of 14, Henri-Joseph Grognet, comte de Vassé, mestre de camp de cavalerie. Following his death in 1733, the wealthy widow never remarried, but lived in an adjacent apartment to Mlle Ferrand's until the latter's death.

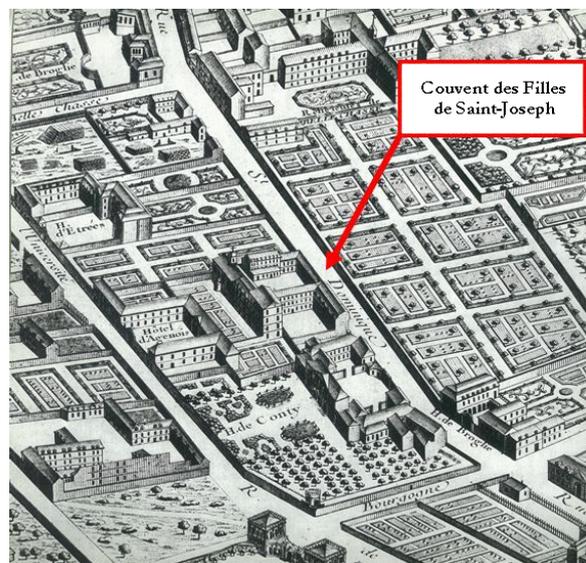


Figure 4

¹⁵⁹ My surmise in a first draft of this essay has subsequently been confirmed by Professor Bongie (private communication, April 2013).

¹⁶⁰ Henri Jouglà de Morenas, *Grand Armorial de France*, Paris, 1934–49, s.v. Ferrand, reporting a different source (Meurgesy).

¹⁶¹ See *Archives de la Société des collectionneurs d'ex-libris et de reliures historiques*, IX–X, 1902 p.117ff.

¹⁶² Kindly provided to me by Ulrike Boskamp.

¹⁶³ Baron J. de Baye, "Notes sur le chateau de Montmort (Marne)", *Revue de Champagne et de Brie*, XVI, 1884. "Du 17 septembre 1728 contrat d'acquisition par messire François Rémond, seigneur de Montmort, de demoiselle Elisabeth Ferrand fille majeure, des fiefs appelés: Le Borgne ou Beaugard et de la Mauricerie situés à la Gaure. Ces fiefs avant ladite acquisition devaient foi et hommage au seigneur de Montmort." (p. 24); "Procès entre M. le marquis de Montmort seigneur des hautes et basses vendanges et madame de Roquette dame des Bouleaux avec deux sentences rendues au bailliage royal de Châlons les 22 mai et 3 juillet 1781 qui maintiennent M. de Montmort dans la possession desdits fiefs et ordonne que ladite dame et M. de Velyse feront déclaration des héritages qu'ils possèdent sur les mêmes fiefs." (p. 32).

¹⁶⁴ See Jacques Hilariet, *Dictionnaire historique des rues de Paris*, 1997, II, p. 402, who does not however mention Ferrand.

The list of celebrated Enlightenment figures with whom Élisabeth Ferrand was in intimate contact was remarkable, including Helvétius, Réaumur, Clairaut and the two Bonnot brothers, Gabriel, abbé de Mably and Étienne, abbé de Condillac (fig. 5 shows Volpato's engraving after Baldrighi's portrait). It is to the last of these that we owe the clearest indication of her intellectual accomplishments in an era when few women dared to publish in their own name. As Bongie has shown,¹⁶⁵ as early as 1747 Condillac alluded to Ferrand's incisive analysis of the Molyneux problem in his *Mémoire* of that year: "Locke, Berkelai et moi nous avons tous trois tort. Demandez en la raison à une demoiselle qui m'en a fait appercevoir." It is difficult to imagine a clearer endorsement of her intellectual credentials.

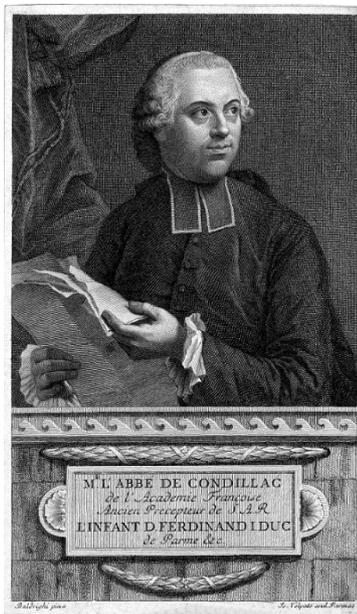


Figure 5

epistemological device. The fact that the idea to employ it came from Ferrand suggests that it was her touch that inscribed Condillac's philosophical manufacture of the self as an effect of touch, which is relevant to the argument I will be developing here.

Ferrand provided an epigraph from Cicero (*Tusculanarum quaestionum*, 1/9) for the *Traité*: "Ut potero, explicabo, nec tamen, ut Pythius Apollo, certa ut sint et fixa, quae dixerō: sed, ut homunculus, probabilia conjectura sequens." Commenting on this, Grimm wrote:

Cette épigraphe est du choix de Mlle Ferrand, personne d'un mérite rare, philosophe et géomètre, morte il y a deux ou trois ans, et fort regrettée de notre auteur dont elle était l'amie intime, et de tous ceux qui l'ont connue. Si nous en croyons M. l'abbé de Condillac, Mlle Ferrand a une très grande part au *Traité des sensations*, et je ne sais si cet aveu fait plus d'honneur à elle ou à celui qui le fait. Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est que l'introduction n'est pas la partie la moins intéressante du *Traité*. Notre philosophe en parlant de Mlle Ferrand, fait l'éloge de son propre cœur, et l'on aime à lire un auteur qui a le bonheur de connaître le

Condillac's most significant work, the *Traité des sensations*, appeared in 1754 (fig. 6) with a generous acknowledgement of Ferrand's role in forming his thinking and exposing logical problems in his initial approach. For an account of this, particularly in relation to Condillac's most striking explanation of the development of the senses by progressively animating a statue, I turn to another distinguished art historian, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth,¹⁶⁶ who must narrowly have missed making the connection with the Munich pastel:

The idea of using a Galatea-like statue was in fact given to Condillac by his friend Elisabeth Ferrand, who had great influence on the development of his ideas regarding the relation between sight and touch, and whom he actually credits in a dedication as the real author of the *Treatise*. ... I may add that, in and of itself, the use of the statue metaphor in eighteenth-century discussions of human nature was not new. It appeared, for example, in André François Boureau-Deslandes's *Pygmalion, ou la statue animée* published in 1741. In his *Letter on the blind*, Diderot mentioned in passing a similar idea when he suggested that it was possible to imagine a block of marble that could think and feel ... Yet, in Condillac's *Treatise*, the statue is not a mere reference made in passing but the main actor in the theater of his argument, its structuring

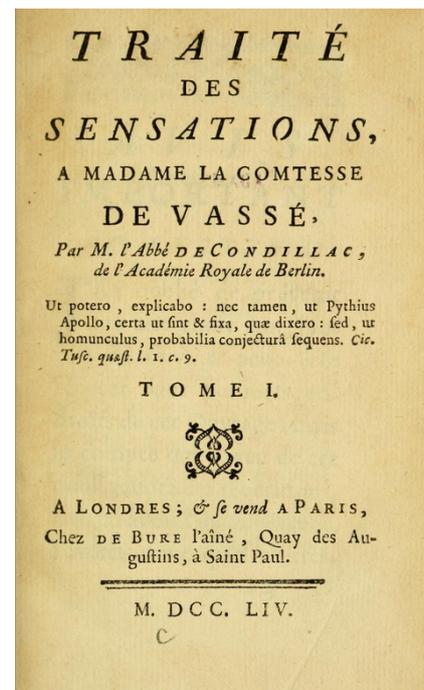


Figure 6

¹⁶⁵ Bongie, *op cit.*, 1978, p. 89.

¹⁶⁶ Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "Pompadour's touch: difference in representation", *Representations*, LXXIII/1, 2001, pp. 54–88, cited here without references. See also Bongie, *op cit.*, 1978, who includes a June 1750 letter by Condillac to Gabriel Cramer acknowledging Ferrand's contribution.

prix de l'amitié.¹⁶⁷

Grimm was rather less charitable in another passage:

M. Condillac avertit, dans la préface [du *Traité des sensations*], que ce qu'il y a de mieux appartient à Mlle Ferrand, qui lui a donné une idée de son ouvrage. Cette demoiselle était une personne de peu d'esprit, d'un commerce assez maussade, mais qui savait de la géométrie et qui a laissé un legs à M. de Condillac dans son testament.¹⁶⁸

It is to Grimm too, writing much later (November 1779), that we owe the earliest account of her secret role in harbouring Bonnie Prince Charlie in the period from 1749 after he left Avignon and decided to return to Paris in heavy disguise.¹⁶⁹ This she undertook with the comtesse de Vassé and their neighbour, and Charles's mistress, the princesse de Talmont, née Marie-Anne-Louise Jablonowska. Grimm:

Le malheureux prince Édouard, après être sorti de la Bastille, resta caché pendant trois ans à Paris, chez madame la marquise de Vassé, qui demeurait alors avec son amie, la célèbre mademoiselle Ferrand, à Saint-Joseph, au faubourg Saint-Germain. La princesse de Talmont, dont il était toujours fort amoureux, habitait la même maison. Il se renfermait pendant le jour dans une petite garde-robe de madame de Vassé, où il y avait un escalier dérobé par lequel il descendait la nuit chez la princesse, et le soir derrière une alcôve du cabinet de mademoiselle Ferrand. Il jouissait là tous les jours, sans être aperçu, de la conversation d'une société fort distinguée. On y parlait souvent de lui, on en disait et beaucoup de bien et beaucoup de mal, et l'on se doutait bien peu du témoin caché devant qui l'on parlait. L'existence du prince dans cet asile, et le profond secret qui le déroba si longtemps aux yeux de tout l'univers entre trois femmes, et dans un maison où l'on recevait l'élite de la ville et de la cour, semblent tenir du prodige. M. de Choiseul qui, plusieurs années après le départ du prince, avait entendu parler de cette singulière anecdote, ne pouvait y croire. Etant ministre des affaires étrangères, il écrivit lui-même à Mme de Vassé pour lui en demander les détails. Elle lui avoua tout, sans lui laisser ignorer qu'elle avait été obligée de chasser le prince de chez elle, à cause des scènes trop vives qu'il avait eues avec Mme de Talmont, scènes qui commençaient toujours fort tendrement, mais qui finissaient souvent par des querelles et même par des coups. Nous tenons ce fait d'une amie très particulière de madame de Vassé.¹⁷⁰

Charles was to stay in the convent for several months in early 1749, but returned repeatedly over the next three years. His own pastel by La Tour¹⁷¹ had been made before this, as it was shown in the salon of 1748 (fig. 7 shows Michel Aubert's engraving of it), but it is likely that it was at some stage at the convent when his banker Waters lent it to the princesse de Talmont for copies to be made, in 1751–52.

As their extensive correspondence shows,¹⁷² Charles relied heavily on Élisabeth not merely to act as peacemaker in his interminable and occasionally violent rows with the princesse, but during his absences from Paris to provide him with crucial intelligence – as when the princesse's Paris maid discovered the secret and was suspected as being unreliable. Another duty was to post forward-dated letters setting false trails intended to deceive spies as to his whereabouts. These were not tasks without grave personal risks for Élisabeth, and there is no doubt that it was she, rather than Mme de Vassé, who was committed to the matter.¹⁷³ The increasing demands Charles made on her created tensions in the relationships between the three women (McLynn had little doubt that



Figure 7

¹⁶⁷ Friedrich Melchior, Baron Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister etc.*, éd. M. Tourneux, Paris, 1877–82, II, p. 438, 1.XII.1754.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁶⁹ Among more modern accounts, Frank McLynn's *Charles Edward Stuart: a tragedy in many acts*, London, 1988, is very readable. Charles was no doubt called prince Édouard in France to avoid confusion with Charles, duc de Lorraine (1712–1780).

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, x, pp. 229–30.

¹⁷¹ For the confusions between this and the pastel of his brother, see Grosvenor 2008.

¹⁷² These are mostly preserved at Windsor. I have relied on the summary in McLynn, *op. cit.*, pp. 378–97.

¹⁷³ After Élisabeth's death, Mme de Vassé moved quickly to terminate the relationship.

Élisabeth and the comtesse de Vassé were lesbians). Towards the end of 1751, when Mlle Ferrand had been ill with a fever and unable to respond to the princesse's enquiries about Charles, the princesse wrote a series of vicious attacks on Élisabeth which she could only describe as "blush-making" (inter alia she was accused of "bassesse").

Élisabeth was in fact seriously and chronically ill for several years before her death.¹⁷⁴ In his letter of 10 June 1750 to Cramer, Condillac was able to report to him that "elle [Ferrand] se porte mieux, mais elle n'est pas encore tout a fait remise de son accident." It is likely that she did not expect her condition to recover when she made her will on 8 February 1752; she was to die on 3 September 1752. The will included bequests to Condillac (6000 livres "pour avoir des livres"), to his brother de Mably and to Clairaut, while Mme de Vassé was the principal legatee, with Nicolas Baille,¹⁷⁵ a former conseiller of the grand conseil and intendant of the duc d'Orléans, as the executor. In a most unusual clause of particular significance for art historians,¹⁷⁶ Mlle Ferrand stipulated the following:

Veut et entend la dite demoiselle testatrice que son portrait qui est chez le Sieur Delatour peintre soit comprise dans le dit legue universel. Duquel portrait elle prie Madame de Vassé d'en faire faire une copie par le dit Sieur Delatour et de Remettre cette copie a Monsieur Baille con^{er} au grand conseil dont elle connaît l'attachement et l'amitié pour elle. Etant persuadée qu'il recevra avec plaisir cette marque de son souvenir quelque peu considerable que le soit.

So this enigmatic woman has left us with some final puzzles: was this réplique made? I am inclined to agree with Professor Bongie¹⁷⁷ in thinking that it probably was: there was every opportunity, the funds were available and there is no reason to doubt the commitment of her friends to honouring this very intimate request. We know from the drafting that the primary version was with La Tour by early February 1752, and was presumably well under way, if not actually finished, by that stage, but, it seems, not yet delivered rather than already returned for the copy. It is a fairly safe bet that the picture was commenced in late 1751 or the very start of 1752, with the implication that I have drawn at the start of this essay. But the new questions that impose are: which version was exhibited at the Salon; what happened to them after the deaths of the respective recipients;¹⁷⁸ and which is now in Munich? It by no means follows from the accomplishment of the Munich pastel that it was the earlier picture: La Tour's autograph repetitions are often just as fine as his first attempts.

A few days after her death, on 3 September, and burial, at Saint-Sulpice on 5 September, a posthumous inventory was conducted. A delightful detail that arises is the description of her clothing, including the dress in which La Tour shows her: "une robe et le tablier de Satin blanc des indes", as well as "le bavolet et les engageantes a trois rangs et d'ancienne dentelle d'angleterre." This *robe à la française* and skirt, of high quality silk satin, as well as the *point d'Angleterre* (which, despite the name, was a Brussels bobbin lace),¹⁷⁹ were expensive, prized garments rather than ones chosen for comfort.

¹⁷⁴ Bongie, *op. cit.*, 1978, pp. 92, 94.

¹⁷⁵ (1683–1761), conseiller honoraire du roi en son grand conseil et intendant des maison, domaine et finances du duc d'Orléans.

¹⁷⁶ Not reported by Bongie in 1977; I am particularly grateful to Dr Boskamp for generously providing this to me.

¹⁷⁷ Private communication (e-mail, 2.IV.2013).

¹⁷⁸ The Archives départementales de Nevers contain papers from the Jaucourt family (to whom the comtesse de Vassé was connected through her mother's first marriage), including the "exécution du testament" of the comtesse de Vassé, 1769; however this contains no mention of the pastel (Myriam Bernard-Lavie, e-mail, 16.IV.2013), nor I understand does the testament itself (M^e Brolin, Paris, 30.V.1768, Archives nationales). Nicolas Baille, whose wife predeceased him by 26 years, died without surviving posterity (according to Saint-Allais). Neither pastel seems to have appeared at auction before 1920.

¹⁷⁹ I am grateful to Aileen Ribeiro, personal communication (28.III.2013).

La Tour, Mme de Pompadour

2019



[Maurice-Quentin de La Tour](#)

Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, marquise de POMPADOUR (1721–1764)

[Zoomify](#)

Pastel on ten sheets of paper, 178.5x131 cm

1748–55

Paris, musée du Louvre, inv. [27614](#)

PROVENANCE: Le sujet; inv. p.m., 4.vii.1764, no. 288; son frère, marquis de Marigny; inv. p.m., 1781, no. 1818, “un grand Tableau peint en pastel...portrait de famille... pour mémoire”. Auguste-Louis-César-Hippolyte-Théodore de Lespinasse de Langeac, comte d’Arlet (1759–1814). a.1796; offered to the Museum central des arts 26.ii.1796 & seq. but refused; Paris, Paillet & Delaroche, 11.vii.1803, Lot 335, “ce morceau, le plus grand Ouvrage de cet Artiste, est recouvert par une belle Glace blanche faite exprès à Saint Gobin, et a appartenu à feu Louis XV”, F500; Paillet; acqu. Louvre 1803, F500, dep.: Musée spécial de l’École française, Versailles, 1803–23; Louvre inv. 1815–24, no. 54, Chalcographie royale; dep.: Chambord 1939–p.1942

EXHIBITIONS: Salon de 1755, no. 58; Paris 1838–45, no. 1079, anon.; Paris 1930, no. 13, repr. p. 49; Paris 1935c, no. 99; Paris 1949, no. 36; Paris 1963b; Paris 1965b, no. 75; Paris 1967a, no. 58; La Tour 2004c, no. 10 repr. clr; Paris 2018

LITERATURE: lettre du 8.vii.1748, Graffigny 2004, ix, pp. 175f, p. 178 n.6; Prinz Wilhelm von Preußen, lettres au marquis de Valori, 23.xii.1755, 17.i.1756; Anon. 1755a; Anon. 1755c; Anon. 1755d; Anon. 1755e; Dulondel 1755; Estève 1755a; Estève 1755b; Gautier-Dagoty 1755; Grimm 1755; La Porte 1755; Dusaulchoy de Bergemont 1800; Archives des musées nationaux, sér. D 2, cabinet des dessins; Houssaye 1849; Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi*, 16.ix.1850; 2e éd., 1852, II, pp. 396ff; P.-C. [Philarete Challes], “Les nouvelles galeries du Louvre”, *Musée des familles*, 1851, p. 289, grav. repr. (in reverse); La Rochemore 1853, pp. 58–60, 72; Mantz 1854, p. 177, “un de ceux que le temps a effacés”; Champfleury 1855, pp. 89ff; Dréolle de Nodon 1856, p. 132f & *passim*; Jean-Baptiste Capefigue, *Madame la marquise de Pompadour*, 1858, pp. 46, 195, 284 (“beaucoup préférable au portrait peint par Boucher”); Antoine-Jules Dumesnil, *Histoire des plus célèbres amateurs...*, Paris, 1858, I, p. 152f, “sa conservation est aussi satisfaisante qu’on pouvoit l’espérer d’un genre aussi éphémère que le pastel”; Gautier 1858; La Fizelière 1860, pp. 296ff, repr. opp. p. 300; Goncourt 1867, pp. 146ff, 350, Campardon 1867, repr. frontispiece; Reiset 1869, no. 819, p. 353; Guiffrey 1873, pp. xxxviii, 20f; Marsy 1875; Champfleury 1886, chap. ix; Alfred Trumble, *The collector*, 15.i.1890, p. 41; 1.ii.1890, p. 49; 15.ii.1890, p. 57; Champney 1891, p. 269 n.r., “the head cut out during the Revolution”; Dilke 1899, repr. opp. p. 160; Babin 1901; Magnier 1904, p. 5; Tourneux 1904a, repr. p. 113; Fourcaud 1908, p. 111 n.r.; Guiffrey 1909, fig. 99; MacFall 1909, pp. 136–42, repr. opp. p. 140; Glaser 1910, repr. opp. p. 129; Keim 1911, frontispiece; Vaillat 1912, pl. v; Jean-François Raffaëlli, *Mes promenades au musée du Louvre*, Paris, 1913, repr. opp. p. 58; Fleury & Brière 1920, pp. 74f; Ratouis de Limay 1925, p. 34f, pl. 29; B&W 385, fig. 36, 38; repr.; *Illustrated London news*, 28.vii.1928, repr.; *Illustrated London news*, 28.vii.1928, repr.; Gillet 1929, pp. 13–16, pl. 11, 10 (detail); Bouchot-Saupique 1930, no. 46; Leroy 1933, pp. 43–45; Delpuech 1946, repr.; Ratouis de Limay 1946, pl. ix/12; E. & J. de Goncourt 1948, pl. 47; Guth 1952, repr. p. 48; René & Lydie Huyghe, *Cent chefs-d’œuvre du musée du Louvre*, 1952, no. 75 repr.; Золотов 1960, pl. 17; Mirimonde 1966, pp. 152ff, repr.; Золотов 1968, repr. p. 89; V. & L. Adair 1971, p. 92 repr.; Bury 1971, pl. 7; Monnier 1972, no. 74; Monnier 1973, p. 314; Richards 1984, fig. 6; Quoniam & al. 1986, no. 341; Roland Michel 1987, p. 39 repr. clr; Maheux 1988, fig. 3; Viatte & Sérullaz 1996 p. 391 repr.; Kathleen Nicholson, in Joanna Woodall, ed., as *Portraiture: facing the subject*, Manchester, 1997, p. 57; Inge E. Boer, “Culture as a gendered battleground”, in Tjitske Akkerman & al., *Perspectives on feminist political thought...*, 1998, fig. 6.2; Debrie 1998; Margaret Crosland, *Madame de Pompadour: sex, culture and power*, 2000, pp. 10, 111; Debrie & Salmon 2000, p. 107, ill. 46; Goodman 2000, repr.; Hyde 2000, pp. 463f, repr.; Andrea Weisbrod, *Von Macht und Mythos der Pompadour*, 2000, fig. 6; Akpabio 2002, p. 28; Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, “Pompadour’s touch: difference in representation”, *Representations*, 73, 2001, pp. 54–88, fig. 6; Méjanès 2002, repr.; Pascale Gorguet Ballesteros, “Les atours de la Pompadour”, *Connaissance des arts*, 173, 2002, pp. 42–51, repr.; Xavier Salmon, “Un mécène à l’écoute de son époque”, *Dossier de l’art*, 83, .ii.2002, pp. 4–17, repr.; Versailles 2002, *passim*; Alden Gordon, “Searching for the elusive Madame de Pompadour”, *Eighteenth century studies*, xxxvii/1, 2003, pp. 97f, 105, 107, 111 n.15 n.r.; Marie-Josèphe Bossan, *L’Art de la chaussure*, 2004, p. 173 n.r.; Hourcade 2004a, pp. 129f, figs. 1, 2; Hourcade 2004b, p. 362; La Tour 2004a, pp. 151f, repr.; Méjanès 2004, p. 43 repr.; Salmon 2004f, p. 14, repr.; Mary Sheriff, “Decorating knowledge”, *Art history*, xxviii/2, .iv.2005, pp. 151ff; Ken Ireland, *Cythera regained?: the Rococo revival in European literature and the arts*, 2006, p. 80, as source for Théophile Gautier novella, *Le Petit Chien de la marquise*, 1836; Пирова 2006, pp. 13, 77 repr.; Burns 2007, p. 135, fig. 23; Rosenberg 2007, p. 525; London 2008, repr.; Soulié & Lessing 2008, no. 380; Sprinson de Jesús 2008, fig. 12; Goodman 2009, fig. 6.29; Trauth 2009, p. 156 repr.; Eva Kathrin Dade, *Madame de Pompadour. Die Mätresse und die Diplomatie*, Köln, 2010, pp. 228f, repr. cvr; Petherbridge 2010, p. 133 n.r.; Rosamond Hooper-Hamersley, *The hunt after Jeanne-Antoinette de Pompadour: patronage, politics, art...*, 2011, fig. 16; Kaufmann-Khelifa 2013, p. 25 repr.; Le Prat & Luquet 2013; Burns & Saunier 2014, pp. 68f repr.; Dan Edelstein, “Political thought”, in Daniel Brewer, ed., *Cambridge companion to the French Enlightenment*, 2014, p. 78 n.r.; Barbara Lecompte, *Marquise au portrait*, roman, Paris, 2014, repr.; Smentek 2014, pl. 17, fig. 4.1; Fragonard 2015, pp. 180–82; Guichard 2015, fig. 9; Warsaw 2015, p. 32 repr.; Prat 2017, fig. 395, as 1752–55; Burns 2017, p. 22 repr.; Salmon 2018, no. 90 repr.; [Jeffares 2018g](#); Jeffares 2018k, p. 107 repr.; Jeffares 2018m; Wine 2018, p. 197 n.20 n.r.; Gutowska-Dudek 2019, pp. 16, 18f repr.; Hoisington 2019, fig. 6; Sandt 2019, p. 214; Faroult 2020, fig. 188; Jérôme van Wijland & al., *Académie de médecine: Catalogue des peintures et sculptures*, 2020, p. 150 repr., as model for Charles Champmartin portrait of Antoine Portal; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [J.46.2541](#)

RELATED WORKS: For preparations, copies, engravings etc., see *Dictionary of pastellists* online

GENEALOGY: [Poisson](#)

ON A TOUT DIT SUR MME DE POMPADOUR”, Charles Magnier¹⁸⁰ wrote in 1904, opening a volume of documentation which has been more often cited than read. There can however be little dispute that La Tour’s full-length pastel of Mme de Pompadour is the most important work in the

¹⁸⁰ Magnier 1904. All bibliographic references will be found in full in the online *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*.

medium made before 1800 – and perhaps ever. His *président de Rieux* (J.46.2722), exhibited 14 years earlier, is arguably more spectacular (by area it is 25% larger, although still smaller than Vivien’s largest pastel of Max Emanuel J.77.285); but *Pompadour’s* place at the apogee of the dix-huitième pastel is founded on the sitter’s personal importance and the work’s dominant position in the Louvre’s pastel collection, where it has been admired for some 200 years (while de Rieux has been in a public museum only since 1994), following a carefully planned appearance as La Tour’s sole submission to the 1755 Salon.

Proportionately the secondary literature is vast, although much of it uses the work as a starting point for theoretical explorations of Enlightenment or feminism; we do not pursue those here. Nor is there any need to rehearse the biography of the sitter which has been repeatedly told with varying degrees of scholarship. The themes explored in the pastel are those of the seminal exhibition at Versailles in 2002, *Madame de Pompadour et les arts*, to which of course it could not be lent for reasons of fragility, as Henri Loyrette explained in his preface to Jean-François Méjanès’s 2002 monograph devoted to the work: “la poudre fragile du pastel n’autorise ni vibration ni donc mouvement.” That book, together with Xavier Salmon’s extended catalogue entry following the most recent and detailed conservation campaign, remain the most important sources, to which any subsequent author must acknowledge their indebtedness.¹⁸¹

The commission

It might seem thus that there is nothing more to be said: but not so, even as regards the circumstances of the commission. While Méjanès 2002 (p. 6) conjectured that “tout indique que le projet remonte à 1748 et la commande à 1749”, he offered no conclusive evidence; and Salmon 2018 reverted to the traditional view that the work started in 1752, setting out the sparse correspondence between Marigny and the artist from that year as it appears in Besnard & Wildenstein 1928, which Salmon claimed proved that the work was commissioned in 1752. But Méjanès included hints from earlier correspondence between Pompadour and her brother (discussing her portraits by various artists which Marigny might take round the courts of Italy) that contact with La Tour had already been established, if perhaps broken off. All of this makes more sense if we start with a document that neither Méjanès nor Salmon seems to have been aware of – the correspondence of Mme de Graffigny, included in the expanded chronological [TABLE](#) of La Tour documents on this site since 2017 (the relevant Graffigny volume was published in 2004).

Earlier letters show that Graffigny had appreciated La Tour’s work at the salons of 1743 and 1745, but the crucial letter is that she wrote to her faithful correspondent François-Antoine Devaux on 8.VII.1748.¹⁸² After describing in detail one instance of La Tour’s insanity (he had destroyed the *autoportrait au chapeau clabaud* intended for the Uffizi, having shown it to Louis XV and being disappointed that the French king hadn’t liked it enough to demand it for himself), she went on to describe another “anecdote toute fraîche de ce maître peintre et plus, maître fol”:

Je lui dis que puisque j’étois en connoissance avec lui, j’espérois qu’il me permettoit d’entrer chez lui, où n’entre pas qui veut. Sur cela il me pria à genoux d’y diner. (Je pouvois bien le faire.) Je lui dis que j’étois fort curieuse de voir un portrait de Mde de Pompadour, dont j’ai beaucoup entendu parler, comme d’une merveille non achevée. Le boureau secoua encore l’oreille, baissa les yeux, et dit: « Il n’est plus. » Il l’a encore brûlé parce qu’il avoit donné un faux trait. Il étoit en grand. C’étoit un tableau de la taille de ceux dont il prend jusqu’à dix mille francs. Il est brûlé. Avez-vous une idée d’une tête aussi folle ? Je lui chantai pouille. Il me dit que j’avois bien aise de peindre à l’ancre, que j’en étois quitte pour une feuille de papier quand il me faloit retoucher une phrase, mais qu’il lui faloit des mois pour raccomoder un faux trait, et qu’il aimoit mieux recommencer. Voilà l’homme; au demeurant, de l’esprit et des sentimens.

¹⁸¹ The entry in the online *Dictionary of pastellists* has a larger bibliography than Salmon included. A vast number of copies are also listed in the *Dictionary* and are not discussed further here.

¹⁸² Graffigny papers, Yale University, Beinecke Library, GEN MSS 353, XLI, 245; published in Graffigny 2004, IX, pp. 175ff.

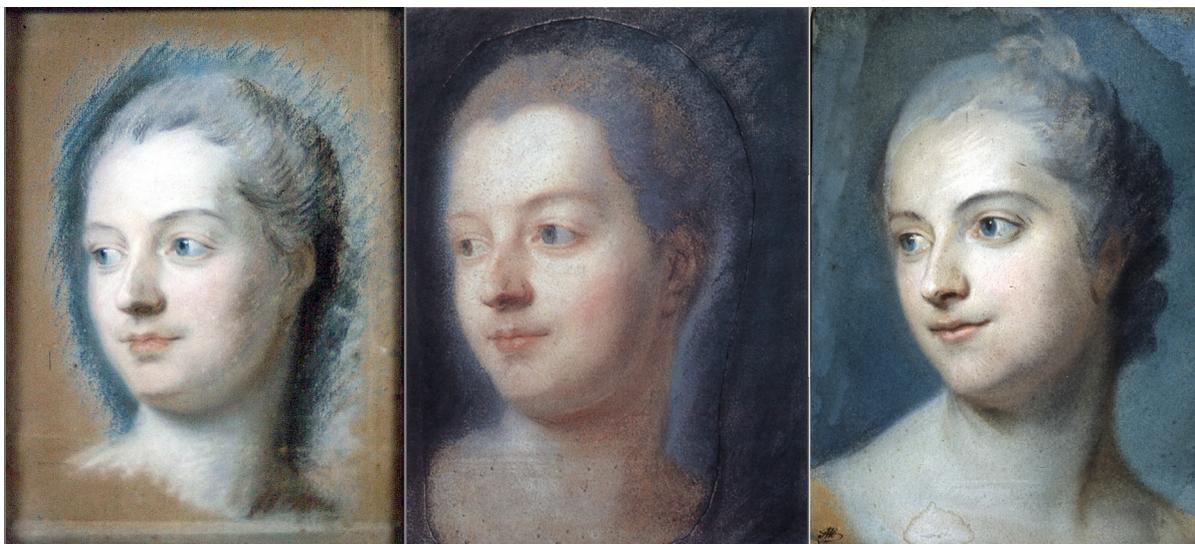
Had he actually burnt it, or merely damaged it in frustration? We return to this below. But the letter proves conclusively what Méjanès suspected about the start of this project. And it puts in a different light the comments in a letter of 28 May 1750 Méjanès (but still not Salmon) does quote, in which Pompadour writes to her brother Marigny (then Vandières,¹⁸³ in Turin while travelling in Italy) discussing the progress of various portraits (by Liotard, Boucher etc.), intending for him to have a good likeness of her to show at the courts he is visiting:¹⁸⁴

Je suis fort aise que vous soyez content de mes portraits; on les a trouvés ici très-jolis, mais peu ressemblans. Quoiqu'il en soit, comme c'est le moins mal qu'il y ait, je vous l'ai envoyé. Il n'y a plus de ressources auprès de Latour, sa folie augmente à chaque instant.

In isolation this is ambiguous; but taken together with Graffigny's letter, it is clear that the La Tour impasse we know from the later correspondence (see below) was already entrenched. It shows that there was already a first version of the Louvre portrait, if not an early state of that work itself.

One further source reinforces this earlier date, albeit it has not hitherto remarked. In Mariette's account, written in 1772, La Tour had an exchange with the king about the state of the French navy while the king was present when he was working on the portrait of Mme de Pompadour. Mariette added: "C'étoit dans le temps que les Anglois avoient détruit notre marine et que nous n'avions aucun navire à leur opposer." Since the portrait was exhibited in 1755, this cannot refer to naval engagements during the Seven Years' War, but almost certainly situates the incident to the War of the Austrian Succession, probably to one of the two engagements at Cape Finisterre in 1747: during the first (14.v.1747), Anson dealt a severe blow to a French convoy, while in the second (25.x.1747), Sir Edward Hawke secured a decisive victory that persuaded the French that they were unable to protect convoys from the West Indies. It is reasonable to infer that La Tour spoke out soon after these disasters had arisen – late 1747 or early 1748.

There is I think another clue that the composition, with its distinctive profil perdu, had already emerged – perhaps even that the series of three préparations now in Saint-Quentin had already been done. They are of course discussed in both Méjanès and Salmon, the latter juxtaposing the final sheet as attached to the main work as a fourth préparation in the sequence: plausibly arguing that one (LT 71) might have been discarded from an earlier version.



¹⁸³ Until 1754; but we shall refer to him as Marigny throughout to avoid confusion.

¹⁸⁴ *Correspondance de Mme de Pompadour avec son père, M. Poisson, et son frère, M. de Vandières*, ed. Auguste Poulet-Malassis, 1878, p. 55. The full text of the letters, bibliographic references etc. will be found in my edition of the chronological [TABLE](#) of La Tour documents, and so are not cited repeatedly in this essay.

La Tour – préparations for Mme de Pompadour (Saint-Quentin: LT 12; LT 71; LT 109)

This is from the other portraits that Pompadour is discussing with Marigny in her 1750 letter, which Méjanès argues are the various sketches Boucher had made for the magnificent portrait of the marquise now in Munich. The similarity of the exact turn of the head between the Boucher paintings and the La Tour pastel are inescapable. Although the Munich painting is dated 1756, the earlier sketches which Boucher made all use the same head, notably the version where she stands at a keyboard (Louvre, RF 2142) or at a dressing table (Waddesdon). There is a consensus that these date to c.1750.

If then La Tour had started his work in 1752, he would have been following Boucher rather than (as I suspect) the other way round. There is precedent in Boucher's œuvre: his 1754 demi-pastel of the marquise now in Melbourne (J.173.202) evidently draws directly from Nattier (1746). La Tour I believe would not have borrowed so directly. But, while the profil perdu was by no means common in his work, he had chosen it for both his Académie pieces, Restout and Dumont le Romain, had employed it to great effect in Perrinet de Jars (1740, J.46.2481), and rather less dramatically in the early Louis XV of 1745 (J.46.207). Yet in none of these had he found quite the perfect angle for the head: it is the retrogression that gives Pompadour such a commanding presence. La Tour used the pose only once more – for the pastel of his friend, the abbé Pommyer (c.1757).

Let us pick up the correspondence again, with the letters from B&W's documentation which Salmon quotes.¹⁸⁵ First the letter of 28.II.1752 which the future Marigny wrote from Versailles to La Tour in the Louvre:

Ma sœur voudrait sçavoir Monsieur dans quel tems vous comptés faire son portrait. Je me suis chargé de vous en écrire, vous me ferés plaisir de me le mander par votre réponse que j'attendrai demain et que je pourrai recevoir de bonne heure si vous voulés bien me la faire tenir par la voye des voitures de Versailles.

We then proceed to La Tour's letter of 13.VII.1752:¹⁸⁶

J'ay mil remercimens à vous faire sur les bontés que vous avez pour mon bon ami M. Restout et sur ce que vous avez bien voulu répondre de mon zèle à Made la Marquise de Pompadour. — Il est tel que je partirais sur le champ, si les portraits n'avaient grand besoin d'être préparés icy pour réparer le dommage qu'ils ont souffert; je ne sçais le temps qu'il me faudra parceque le chagrin que j'en ay eu m'a furieusement dérangé la cervelle, mais vous pouvez compter que je feray tous mes efforts pour me hatter, les bontés du Roi et la manière obligeante dont vous m'annoncez cette grâce me pénètre de reconnaissance et de tous les sentimens, que vous devez inspirer à ceux qui aspirent à l'honneur de votre estime, et j'ose dire amitié, comme celui qui est très respectueusement...

To which he added this bizarre postscript:

Je ne suis plus si fâché d'avoir ignoré l'heure de la poste, puisque je puis, dans cette même lettre, vous faire part de ma situation, je ne sçay pas si ce sont les efforts que j'ay fait, hier après la lecture de votre lettre ou la complication d'idees différentes, mais je me trouve dans un abattement, un aneantissement, qui me fait craindre la fièvre, la teste vuide, etonnée et tout le corps brisé, je ne sçay que devenir, j'ay cru que le lit reparerait mes forces, il n'a rien opéré, je dois essayer si l'air me fera du bien, car je suis bien pressé de répondre au plus vite aux marques d'amitiés dont vous m'honorez.

Marigny replied (from Compiègne) on 24.VII.1752, with commendable restraint:

Lorsque je receus votre lettre du 11 de ce mois, Monsieur, je la communiquai à ma sœur, à qui il fut aussi impossible qu'à moi d'en interpreter le sens du post scriptum. Elle me dit de vous écrire pour sçavoir détermination si vous vouliez venir, ou non, et je l'eusse déjà fait si je n'avois trouvé l'interprétation désirée dans la lettre que vous avés écrite à M. Gabriel; quoy Monsieur, vous luy faites part du chagrin que vous avés des accidents arrivés en conséquence aux deux portraits de ma sœur et vous ajouctés que j'en suis la cause innocente? Pour innocente, cela est très certain, mais

¹⁸⁵ The MS drafts of these letters was first located by Courajod, AN O 1925, and first published by the comte de Marsy in an overlooked article of 1875.

¹⁸⁶ Salmon 2018, p. 184, infers from Marigny's reply that the date of the main part of this letter must be 11.VII.1752, with the footnote added two days later; but a simple misreading by Marigny or Desmaze is a simpler explanation. Méjanès read it thus.

expliqués moy, je vous prie, en quoy j'ai pu en être la cause? Je comptois, je vous l'avoue, un peu plus sur votre amitié et je me flattois que vous auriez recours à moy pour faire cesser des chagrins que j'aurois pu occasionnés; vous me deviez, Monsieur, cette marque de confiance. Je me pique d'être juste et sensible, vous êtes l'un et l'autre, je laisse à votre cœur le soin de vous faire sentir combien je dois être blessé d'un pareil reproche de la part de quelqu'un a qui je n'ay cessé de temoigner amitié.

Ayés agréable, Monsieur, de m'écrire quels sont les griefs que vous pouvés avoir et quels sont les moyens que vous desirés que j'employe pour y remedier, vous devés compter sur tout le cas que je fais de vos talents et sur le plaisir que j'auray de vous le prouver en vous faisant justice. Ma sœur peut elle compter d'être peinte par vous? elle est impatiente de vous voir finir son portrait, faites honneur aux sentiments dont vous faites profession en venant au plustot terminer ce portrait pour la satisfaction de ma sœur, à qui vous devés de la reconnoissance, et pour celle de son frère, à qui vous deviez plus d'amitié. Je suis, etc...

J'attans votre reponse.

Although not in B&W (nor Méjanès or Salmon), it seems to me likely that the letter from Mme de Pompadour to La Tour, known only from a summary from an 1854 bookseller's catalogue which omits the date, belongs to the same exchange.¹⁸⁷ Sent from Choisy, the marquise told the artist that:

Elle est à peu près dans le même embonpoint où il l'a vue à La Muette, et elle croit qu'il serait à propos de profiter du moment pour finir ce qu'il a si bien commence. S'il peut venir demain, elle sera libre et avec si peu de monte qu'il voudra: "Vous connoissez, Monsieur, le cas que je fais de vous et de vos admirable talents."

At this stage both Méjanès and Salmon then recount the famous anecdote about La Tour's refusal to paint the marquise "en ville", a story which makes more sense in the context of her Choisy letter. It is of course part of the La Tour mythology which I analyse in my essay on the progression of [Tropes](#) in the early La Tour biographies, my [edition](#) of which has relevant annotations. Salmon cites the anonymous *Almanach littéraire* for 1792; Méjanès the same document, which however he credits to Jean-René Durdent. (Durdent may well have been the D-t who signed the abbreviated version of the story given in Michaud,¹⁸⁸ the version Méjanès quotes; but he is unlikely to have been the original author as he was born in Rouen in 1776.) In fact however, as I have explained, the earliest occurrence was in the review of Duplaquet's *Éloge* which appeared in the revived *Année littéraire*.¹⁸⁹ The author is not identified, but may perhaps have been the editor Louis-Marie-Stanislas Fréron, son of the founder of the original periodical. In any case here is that earliest version of the story:

Le feu Roi s'amusoit beaucoup des saillies originales de *M. de Latour*, qui les pousoit quelquefois assez loin: on en pourra juger par l'anecdote suivante. Mandé à Versailles pour faire le portrait de Madame de Pompadour, il répond brusquement: *Dites à mdame la Marquise que je ne vais pas peindre en ville*. Quelques amis lui font observer l'inconséquence de ce procédé; il promet de se rendre à Versailles un jour indiqué, mais à condition que la séance ne sera interrompue par personne. Arrivé chez madame la Marquise de Pompadour, il réitère ses conventions, et demande la liberté de se mettre à son aise, pour pouvoir peindre commodément. On la lui accorde; alors il détache ses boucles de souliers, ses jarretières, son col, ôte sa perruque, l'accroche à une girandole, tire de sa poche un petit bonnet de taffetas, le met sur sa tête; et dans ce déshabillé pittoresque, commence le portrait. Il n'y avoit pas un quart-d'heure qu'il étoit occupé lorsque le Roi arriva. *Vous avez promis, Madame, que votre porte seroit fermée*, dit *M. de La Tour*, en ôtant son petit bonnet? Le Roi rit beaucoup du costume et du reproche de l'artiste, et l'engagea à continuer. *Il ne m'est pas possible d'obéir à votre Majesté*, réplique *M. de Latour*; *je reviendrai, lorsque Madame sera seule*. Il se lève, emporte sa perruque, ses jarretières, et va s'habiller dans une autre pièce, en répétant plusieurs fois: *je n'aime point à être interrompu*. La belle favorite céda au caprice du Peintre, et le portrait fut achevé. *M. de Latour* le peignit en pied, grand comme nature; on l'a vu exposé au Sallon du Louvre; c'est un des plus grands ouvrages qu'on ait encore exécuté en ce genre.

It is tempting to wonder if there is any truth to this at all, particularly as it seems to run parallel to a similar story in Mariette:

¹⁸⁷ It will be found in my chronological [TABLE](#) immediately after Marigny's letter. The summary here is from Auguste Poulet-Malassis's 1878 edition of Pompadour's correspondence, p. 246f. The repetition of the phrase "le cas que je fais de ... vos talents" by brother and sister suggests collusion.

¹⁸⁸ *Biographie universelle*, XLVI, 1826, pp. 343–44.

¹⁸⁹ *Année littéraire*, VIII, 1789, 318–329; it was reprinted in *L'Esprit des journaux, françois et étrangers*, XIX/3, mars 1790, p. 90.

La conduite qu'il a tenu avec M^{me} la Dauphine, qui souhaitoit avoir son portrait de sa main, est trop singulière pour que je ne la rapporte pas, sans y rien changer, dans les termes que s'en est expliqué avec moi M. Silvestre, chargé de la négociation. Il avoit reçu une lettre de M^{lle} Silvestre, sa fille, attachée à M^{me} la Dauphine, par laquelle il demandoit à son père de faire ressouvenir M. de La Tour de l'engagement qu'il avoit pris avec la princesse, mais qu'elle désiroit qu'au lieu de Fontainebleau dont on étoit convenu, le portrait se fit à Versailles; elle marquoit que sa maîtresse avoit d'autant plus lieu de le désirer que son embompoint étoit revenu, et que peut-être n'auroit-elle pas un aussi bon visage à lui offrir si elle redevenoit enceinte; elle faisoit assurer le peintre qu'elle se revêtiroit ce jour-là de toute sa bonne humeur et qu'elle l'invitoit à en faire autant de sa part. Qui ne croirait qu'à la lecture d'une lettre si honnête et si obligeante, M. de La Tour ne montreroit un désir égal à sa reconnaissance? Point du tout. Il répond froidement qu'il ne peut se rendre à l'invitation, qu'il n'est point fait pour ce pays-la, et cent autres choses qui alloient à le perdre si elles avoient été redites.

The suspicion that this is the source of the “peintre en ville” story is increased since Mariette follows on with one of the other stories about the sessions with Pompadour and the king:

Ce n'est pas le seul mauvais personnage qu'il ait joué à la cour. Il y a quelquefois pris des libertés qu'à peine se seroit-il permis avec ses égaux. Une fois qu'il y peignoit le portrait de M^{me} la marquise de Pompadour, le roi présent, Sa Majesté fit tomber la conversation sur ses bâtimens, sur ceux qu'il faisoit construire alors, et en parloit avec une sorte de complaisance. Tout à coup La Tour prend la parole, et, feignant de l'adresser à lui-même: « Cela est beau, dit-il, mais des vaisseaux vaudroient mieux. » Il disoit cela au moment que les Anglois venoient de détruire notre marine. Le roi en rougit et se tut, tandis que le peintre s'applaudissoit en secret d'avoir dit une vérité dans un pays qui ne la connoît pas; il ne sentit pas qu'il avoit commis une imprudence qui ne vaut que du mépris.

Yet another story concerns the pastel when finished, and the price La Tour demanded. Made famous by the Goncourts, it is repeated very widely¹⁹⁰ – but not as far as I can see mentioned by either Méjanès or Salmon. The source for the story of La Tour's demand for 48,000 livres, reduced to 24,000 on Chardin's advice, is uncertain. It appeared in an article¹⁹¹ in the *Journal des arts, de littérature et de commerce*, 15.I.1800, p. 10:

Serait-il hors de propos de rappeler à ces hommes une petite anecdote sur le Peintre de portrait au pastel, Latour. Il venait de terminer celui de la marquise de Pompadour, et avait *modestement* demandé 48000 francs. Madame la Marquise, quoique généreuse, trouva les prétentions de l'artiste exorbitantes, et lui envoya 24000 francs en or. Il n'est pas nécessaire de remarquer que c'était payer très-grandement un portrait au pastel. Latour, furieux, se promenait dans son appartement, criant à l'avisement de son talent, lorsque Chardin, son voisin aux galeries du Louvre, l'aborde d'un grand sang froid, et lui demande s'il sait combien tous les tableaux qui ornent Notre-Dame, et au nombre desquels se trouvait le chef-d'œuvre de Lesueur, ceux de Lebrun, du Bourdon, de Tetelin, etc., ont coûté. – Non. – Eh bien, calculez, quarante tableaux environ, à 300 francs cela fait 12000 f., encore ajoute Chardin, chaque Artiste donnait-il le petit tableau aux Marguilliers en charge. La Tour se tut et eut raison.

How much credence should we put on the story? Presumably Méjanès and Salmon thought little – a view encouraged by there being yet another echo of a story in Mariette, about the price of the La Reynière portraits. Although the story was not printed in La Tour's lifetime, and is not mentioned by contemporary biographers, the article was probably contributed by the director of publication, Joseph-François-Nicolas Dusaulchoy de Bergemont (1761–1835), a playwright, author and journalist of some repute. And while the 48,000 livres may not be independently corroborated, the final price paid – 24,000 livres – is the number which a later owner, comte d'Arlet (see below), later claimed had been paid for the portrait¹⁹² – at around the time the article was written. All this suggests the anecdote may have had some real foundation – even though we remain uncertain as to when and where it was delivered.

¹⁹⁰ Even Ratouis de Limay 1946, in a short summary (p. 35), includes the phrase “La Tour avait modestement demandé 48.000 livres”, revealing his source.

¹⁹¹ The article was a review of *Invitations familières faites aux élèves de ce temps dans les beaux-arts ... par un ancien amateur* by Jean-Louis Dupain-Triel (1722–1805), ingénieur géographe du roi et de Monsieur. However the La Tour story does not appear in his pamphlet, but only the review.

¹⁹² Archives des musées nationaux, 1796-1800, documents; cited Salmon 2018, p. 182.

The salon

The next stage in the story was the 1755 exhibition. Whether because, having worked intensively on this single piece, he had nothing else to show, or rather because he thought the single exhibit would maximise its impact, La Tour offered just this one work. Inevitably it was discussed by the critics – at least ten of them – the full texts of which are set out in the chronological [TABLE](#), and most of which are well known. They included one anonymous pamphlet¹⁹³ which included this observation which, although citing at length, Méjanès did not analyse further:

il resterait à désirer pour ce Tableau, qu'il fût mieux placé; il est dans la partie la plus éclairée du Salon; tous les objets extérieurs viennent se peindre dans la glace, ce qui rend ce Portrait très-difficile à être vu; je ne doute pas que ce Tableau vu à nud ne fit encore plus d'effet; la glace paroît brune, et je crois qu'elle le noircit.

What this led to can be inferred from a document¹⁹⁴ which, while published in 1873 and again in 1904 and 1920, has since been largely overlooked. The reflections in the glass were so severe (and one can only imagine¹⁹⁵ the determination of La Tour to put this right) that the work had to be moved overnight, at some expense:

Mémoire des frais faits pour le Salon de 1755 par Deschamps et payés par l'Académie.

Pour avoir changé de place le portrait de Mme de Pomadour	
pendant une nuit, employé 6 hommes	24
Pour le chevalet et la balustrade qui était autour dudit tableau	67
Pour le garçon menuisier	-/12

How was it actually displayed? It is tempting to imagine that the arrangement was similar to that used to display the Boucher portrait of the marquise in the following salon, as shown by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin's sketch of the Salon de 1757, where the enormous work was placed on a free-standing easel.¹⁹⁶ While this will remain speculative, I suggest that had the La Tour already been on a free-standing easel, altering the direction would not have required the work invoiced. It seems more likely that the easel, with its new balustrade, was a response to the difficulties of hanging the pastel on any of the walls, given the unusual lighting in the salon.¹⁹⁷

Those difficulties result of course from the need for pastels to be glazed. Another salon critique which has been universally overlooked is Gautier-Dagoty's *Observations...* (1755).¹⁹⁸ It contains important comments on the original glass (which had to be removed at some stage after 1942 – see below), but the significance only becomes completely clear in the light of the move mentioned above:

L'harmonie de ce Portrait surpasse les compositions en huile de ceux de M. Michel Vanloo & de M. Tocqué: c'est, dit-on, la glace qui a cet avantage; elle met tout d'accord, & laisse une unité que l'on perdrait entièrement, si le Tableau étoit à nud. Des demi-Connoisseurs qui ont déjà écrit sur le Salon, ont prétendu au contraire que la glace étoit noire, & qu'elle gâtoit le Tableau. On voit bien que ces Auteurs n'ont pas vû comme moi le Tableau sur le chevalet. Le Pastel & la Peinture en caustique sont des Peintures froides & sèches que l'on ne peut vernir; la glace seule peut adoucir ces

¹⁹³ ANON. 1755d, *Lettre sur le Salon de 1755, adressé à ceux qui la liront*, Amsterdam, 1755. In Paris 1974a, p. 141, it is suggested that the La Tour pastel was placed beside Nattier's portrait of Madame Henriette jouant de la basse de viole (MV 4454) and Tocqué's portrait of Marigny; no source is cited: the extensive correspondence (Nattier 1999, p. 252f) concerning the positioning of the Nattier at the Salon does not seem to mention the La Tour.

¹⁹⁴ AN O¹ 1908-3, F^o 89; Guiffrey 1873, pp. xxxviii, 20f; with a typo in the date, so that it seemed to refer to the 1765 salon; Magnier 1904, p. 11. Fleury & Brière 1920, p. 75, mention that the work had been shown at the salon "avec un soin particulier, sur un chevalet isolé par une balustrade". The passage was recently spotted by Udo van de Sandt: Sandt 2019 (forthcoming; I am most grateful to the author for sharing a preprint with me).

¹⁹⁵ But La Tour remained close friends with Chardin, tapissier for that year, giving him his portrait ([i.46.1436](#)) in 1760.

¹⁹⁶ Waddesdon Manor. See Anthony Blunt, "Drawings at Waddesdon Manor", *Master drawings*, XI/4, 1973, pp. 359–64, 405–25, no. 5, pl. 5, reproduced in full; van de Sandt 2019, detail. Waddesdon also have a satirical cartoon showing the Boucher portrait by Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin.

¹⁹⁷ The diagram on p. 54 of Isabelle Pichet's *Le Tapissier et les dispositifs discursifs au Salon (1750–1789)*, Paris, 2012 clearly illustrates the problem: light flooded into the Salon from three sides.

¹⁹⁸ It is omitted from all standard bibliographies (and from Méjanès and Salmon); I published it online in 2015.

Peintures féminines, & leur donner une certaine chaleur suave que l'huile porte naturellement en lui-même; les yeux mâles sentent la beauté de cette composition; le beau sexe seul peut s'accommoder du Pastel & de l'ancoustique.

The remaining salon critiques are far more conventional, focusing on the identification of the attributes by which the marquise is surrounded. Sometimes one wonders if Pierre Clément wasn't right before his few words on La Tour's submissions to the 1748 salon, when he noted that "il me semble que ces curioistés ne sont faites que pour les yeux, & que la description n'en est guère moins ennuïeuse que la vue en est agréable"; perhaps even portraiture became the poor relation of history painting precisely because of the lack of something to discuss. For the critics in 1755, focusing on the detail allowed them to avoid an overall response, which on balance seems to have been rather muted. Against some enthusiasm, others wrote that it "laisse beaucoup de choses à désirer; mais il faut convenir qu'il renferme de grandes beautés de détails." For Pierre Estève, the lack of resemblance (compared with the Van Loo portrait of the marquise *en sultane* at the same salon) was a problem, and he strongly disapproved of the profil perdu composition. For Grimm, however, while—

Ce portrait a été généralement déprisé; trop, à mon avis; la composition en est très riche; il y a dans le dessin et dans l'exécution des détails admirables, mais le total est froid; la tête est trop tourmentée et fatiguée; à force de retoucher, M. de La Tour lui a ôté ce premier feu sans lequel rien ne peut réussir en fait d'art.

Also omitted by all sources to date is the discussion of the portrait in two letters from Friedrich der Große's brother August Wilhelm von Preußen (1722–1758), known as prince Guillaume, to Guy-Louis-Henri, marquis de Valori (1692–1774), French ambassador to Berlin, dated 23.XI.1755 and 17.I.1756; these relate both to the perceived likeness of the work and to the role of the image as a diplomatic tool (Wilhelm being offered an unrecorded copy). We reproduce them in full, not least because they provide the only hint, albeit indirect, at what the marquise herself may have thought of her portrait:¹⁹⁹

[23.XI.1755] Votre lettre, mon cher marquis, m'a fait un plaisir extrême; j'avais vu une relation de Paris, des tableaux qui ont été exposés au Louvre; le portrait de madame de Pompadour, peint au pastel par Latour, y était marqué comme étant très-bien travaillé, d'un grand goût, d'une belle composition, mais que la ressemblance y manquait; vous m'en avez donné la confirmation. Nous savons, par l'histoire, qu'Apelle réussit à bien peindre l'air audacieux d'Alexandre, mais je crois qu'il faut un pinceau plus fin pour exprimer, sous des traits réguliers, un esprit vif et une physionomie touchante et spirituelle, tant il est vrai, et les peintres devraient en convenir, qu'il est plus facile de peindre le dieu de la guerre que la déesse de l'amour. Cependant j'espère que la muse protectrice de la peinture ne refusera point ce portrait à la postérité, et qu'elle dirigera avec sagesse la main d'un de ses élèves, pour qu'il trouve enfin la ressemblance. Je vous assure que je suis vraiment flatté de le recevoir, et vous ai bien l'obligation d'y prendre part.

[17.I.1756] Vous m'avez fait rougir, cher marquis, par l'extrait de la lettre de M. de Puyzieulx, je suis à la vérité très-flatté de ce que madame la marquise de Pompadour a lu celle que je vous ai écrite; les sentiments vrais et sincères communiqués à un ami indulgent en font l'unique mérite; M. le duc de Nivernais, que j'ai depuis trois jours le bonheur de connaître, m'a assuré qu'elle s'est souvenue que son portrait me ferait plaisir; c'est à vos bontés que je serai redevable de posséder ce bijou.

The political programme

The centrepiece of every account of the work is what Méjanès justly described as the *nature morte* of books and pictures whose detail commands our attention today just as it did for the salon critics at the time. Unlike other portraitists of the day – notably Boucher,²⁰⁰ La Tour did not find it sufficient to depict a generic book in the sitter's hand: the detail had to permit viewers to identify each work on display – because the very essence of the portrait was the political manifesto the marquise chose to put

¹⁹⁹ *Mémoires des négociations du marquis de Valori*, 1888, II, pp. 339f. It seems highly unlikely that the unsourced commentary La Fizelière 1859 attributed to Mme de Pompadour can be genuine: "Nul n'est plus propre que lui, a-t-elle dit, à rendre avec les ressources de son crayon le regard inspiré du génie ou le désordre sublime de l'enthousiasme. Aussi réussit-il mieux que personne à rendre la physionomie des philosophes, des acteurs et des écrivains célèbres; pour le reste, il n'est pas bien sûr qu'il puisse gagner à la comparaison avec Vivien et Mlle Rosa-Alba."

²⁰⁰ Emma Smith, *Portable magic*, 2022, p. 81 drew a parallel between the Boucher and two other portraits of women reading from different periods, noting that the Boucher fits into the iconography of the Virgin Mary reading in medieval and Renaissance paintings of the Annunciation.

forward. By prominently displaying Voltaire's *Henriade*, Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* and the most recent volume of the *Encyclopédie* (evidently a late addition to the portrait, as Salmon points out: volume IV was published in .x.1754; why the volume was moved slightly to the right isn't entirely clear, as the perspective of the objects in front of it remains unconvincing), Pompadour declared herself an unconditional supporter of the Enlightenment and the philosophes. She was of course not alone at court: Malesherbes himself would famously give protection to Diderot's papers when the *Encyclopédie* was to be suppressed: but as that measure demonstrates, the relative power between these factions oscillated.

And, as Méjanès argued, Pompadour's programme was simply too advanced. The king did not buy the picture for the royal collection.

Of course not all the programme on display was political. The sheet of music she holds was declared a masterpiece of illusion by one critic, while the baroque guitar also reminds us of her musical accomplishments. Guarini's *Pastor Fido* sits beside the *Henriade*: the six editions she owned of this work reveal a passion for the theatre that La Tour did not have to invent. Mariette's *Traité des pierres gravées* of 1750 represented her interest as a collector: a plate is draped over the table.²⁰¹ We discuss these further below. Salmon also cites Philippe Hourcade's observation²⁰² that the sizes of the books shown were exaggerated to emphasize their importance: the marquise owned the 1749 quarto edition of *L'Esprit des lois*, which was somewhat smaller, but didn't have a tome III; she owned no quarto edition of the *Henriade*; while *Pastor Fido* has also been enlarged – “pour la plus grande gloire” of the sitter. Another instance of that is given in my essay on [Mademoiselle Ferrand](#).

Every element of this portrait has been examined in great deal by one author or another, starting from the contemporary critics. Even the dress, as Salmon argues,²⁰³ contains a political message of support for the Lyon silk industry (was that support intentionally withdrawn when Pompadour later posed for Drouais in a painted fabric imported from China?). Tiny details such as the “ravissantes mules roses” have been the subject of analysis and comparison.²⁰⁴

Neither the apartment with its green and gold decoration nor the landscape painting in the background have been precisely identified, despite extensive research. The colours are more flattering for a pastel that would have been the white and gold colour scheme prevalent in Versailles. The Italianate landscape, which does not correspond to any item in the marquise's inventaire, nevertheless seems to be in the manner of a Dutch artist such as Nicolaes Berchem, by whom she did own several examples.²⁰⁵ A similar ambiguity (both as to location and background paintings) arises with La Tour's other ambitious portrait, of Marie-Josèphe de Saxe et son fils (Saint-Quentin).

In both these and the third La Tour portrait en pied, of the président de Rieux (as well as with Duval de l'Épinoy), La Tour includes a terrestrial globe, rotated to show a part of the world. Pompadour's is turned to France.

Salmon mentions too the Savonnerie carpet “traité dans une perspective chromatique d'une folle audace” – but without noting the similar treatment in the president de Rieux which I highlighted in a

²⁰¹ It is often misread as from her own Suite d'estampes, but Méjanès put this right. See also Smentek 2014.

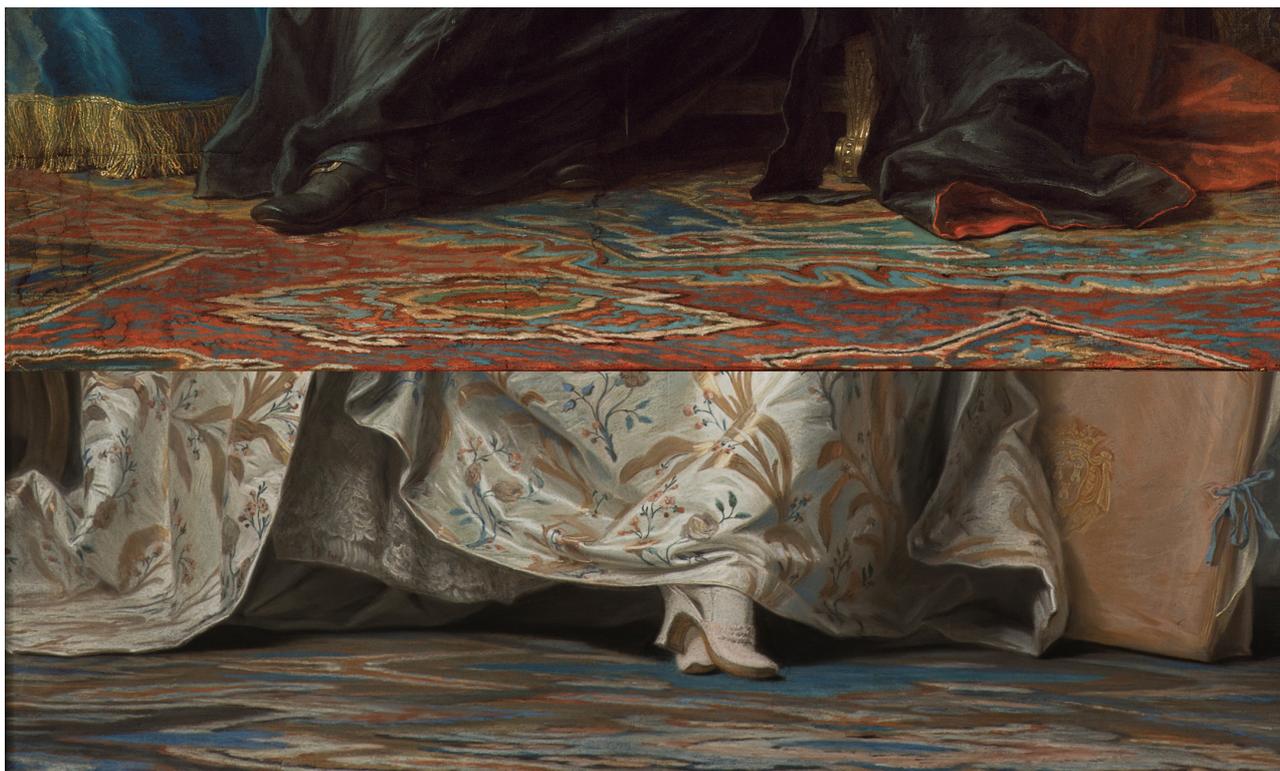
²⁰² Hourcade 2004a, p. 129.

²⁰³ Salmon describes it as “lampas”, but for Méjanès this is less likely than an embroidered fabric; he notes the ambiguity left by La Tour's pastel.

²⁰⁴ See e.g. Marie-Josèphe Bossan, *L'Art de la chaussure*, 2004, p. 173; La Tour's delightful treatment is nevertheless found to have simplified the items compared with the depiction in the Munich Boucher.

²⁰⁵ See Méjanès, p. 45, citing the paper by Danielle Gallet, “Madame de Pompadour et l'appartement d'en bas au château de Versailles”, *Gazette des beaux-arts*, .x.1993, pp. 129–38.

lecture several years ago when I finally discovered the full identity of La Tour's mother, and demonstrated that the pastellist's maternal grandfather was a tapissier from Noyon:



A word about the audacious perspective: the success of the *président de Rieux*, and its sense of immediacy, arguably comes from the greater proximity; the *marquise de Pompadour* is shown from a considerably more distant viewpoint.²⁰⁶ Physically her face on the paper is only three-quarters the height his occupies.

Resemblance

Did La Tour's pastel convey an accurate resemblance of the *marquise*? There is no definitive answer to such a subjective question, particularly when the comparative evidence is also unreliable; but a rough grouping of images²⁰⁷ seems to put the La Tour *marquise* somewhat out of line with the consensus: his cheek bones too high, his nose too straight, no matter how old she is in the other portraits. In short, as the critics suggested, he flatters – to a degree that may challenge the traditional image of La Tour as an uncompromising seeker of truth:²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ La Tour discusses the question of distance from the model in his letter to Marigny of 1.VIII.1763, noting that he worked much closer to the model than other portraitists. However the letter is read (Schieder 2012, pp. 274f, interprets it as recommended practice), the Louvre portrait is exceptional in his *œuvre*.

²⁰⁷ A comparative iconography of the *marquise de Pompadour* is beyond the scope of this article. The Versailles exhibition catalogue did not attempt a systematic list. A starting point might be Elise Goodman's monograph on *The portraits of Madame de Pompadour*, 2000, which Salmon omits. Earlier sources, including Raggio 1967, provide useful additions. La Fizelière 1860 may be the first, although it is unreliable: the claim that La Tour made an earlier pastel of Mme de Pompadour which was held by her husband rests on a story in untraced *Mémoires* said to be by an abbé Bayle, bibliothécaire to the *marquise* (possibly a confusion with Bridard de La Garde).

²⁰⁸ Nattier (1746) – La Tour – Boucher (1757)/Drouais (1764) – Pigalle (1748) – Van Loo (1760) [approximate dates].



Frame

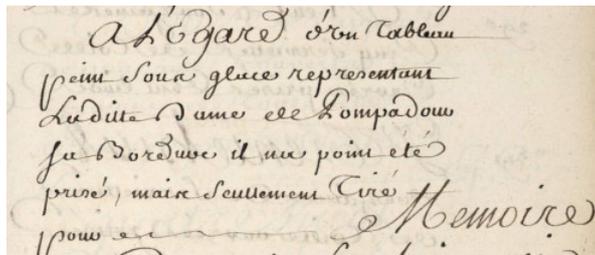
As Gautier-Dagoty's critique makes clear, pastel, frame and glass were each seen as inherently valuable, forming a trinity of independent craftsmanship indissolubly linked. While Pompadour's glass was lost around 1942, that of the président de Rieux was also lost more recently during transport while still in a private collection. But the magistrate retains his original, superb frame, unlike the marquise, which has been reframed at an uncertain date in the neo-classical austerity of Louis XVI rather than the opulence of his grandfather's reign.²⁰⁹ The visual confrontation of works which were executed only fourteen years apart needs no further commentary:



²⁰⁹ It has been suggested (Le Prat & Luquet 2013) that the original frame was the one with the marquise's devices (although the arms on the fronton have been changed) now gracing Gainsborough's portrait of Lady Alston (Louvre, inv. RF 1947-1, 228x166 cm). Pons 1987 considered this possibility, but thought the frame more likely to be for a Nattier portrait. Further the size is too far from the 1755 Salon livret dimensions to have been used for the La Tour then: the area of the Gainsborough is 65% larger than the La Tour portrait, presenting not only technical problems for pastel and glass, but visual problems for a composition incorporating what remains.

History since the salon

As noted above, the pastel was not purchased by the king. Instead the sitter herself acquired it, for a price of 24,000 livres as discussed above. Salmon expresses some doubt as to whether it appeared in her posthumous inventory, just nine years after the Salon: he wonders (p. 182, repeating exactly Monnier's text) if this may be the "tableau peint sous glace, représentant la dite Dame de Pompadour, sans bordure" noted in Cordey's 1939 transcription of the inventory, but with the necessary reservations – it is inherently unlikely in view of the weight of the original sheet (evidently present in 1755 and 1803 on, until c.1942) that the pastel could be under glass without a frame. However if we consult the original manuscript inventory (Marigny's copy is now at INHA), we find that Cordey's transcription is in error. Although the (exhausted) notary has carelessly omitted the word "dans", the next word is clearly "sa", not "sans". I think item 288 correctly transcribed includes "un Tableau peint sous glace representant la ditte dame de Pompadour [dans] sa bordure":



The writing for the pastel is rather smaller than for the large painting of her (item 168), evidently considered more important by the notary; but the most puzzling thing is its location – among an industrial quantity of pieces of glass (nothing else is inventoried in the room), suggesting it was effectively in storage rather than on display. You don't get the full impression of this from Cordey, who cannot bring himself to transcribe these pages from item 288 preceding the picture.

One can thus ignore the story in Soulavie²¹⁰ about Charles Le Normant d'Étiolles, who apparently reserved the term "ma femme" for his wife for "les occasions d'une menace" – as when "elle voulut ravoir un jour le superbe portrait par Latour, qu'il avoit encore d'elle. *Allez dire à ma femme de venir le reprendre elle-même*, lui fit-il dire par l'abbé Bayle."

In any case, it passed to her brother, and "un grand Tableau peint au pastel sous glace" appeared among family portraits noted in the marquis de Marigny's posthumous inventory at the château de Menars, no. 1818. It was not however included in the Marigny sale (the catalogue, by Basan and Joullain, dated .II.1782, although the sale is thought to have taken place 18.III.–6.IV.1782; it included a number of other pastels).

It is unclear how it then passed to "Lespinasse d'Arlet" by 1796²¹¹; he was surely Auguste-Louis-César-Hippolyte-Théodore de Lespinasse de Langeac, comte d'Arlet (1759²¹²–1814) rather than his apparent father (Salmon is unsure, but Étienne-Joseph was normally known by the title of marquis, or comte, de Langeac), although there are some confusions in the auction records with his brother, the poet Égide, chevalier de Lespinasse de Langeac whom Piot described as the "doyen des amateurs de tableaux".²¹³

²¹⁰ *Mémoires historiques et anecdotes de la cour...*, 1802, p. 351. The source is unclear, and may even be La Tour himself who met Soulavie in his later years.

²¹¹ The earliest document in the Archives des musées nationaux concerning this affair is from 26.II.1796, when Pierre-Louis Ginguéné, directeur général de l'Instruction publique, made the proposal to the Musée central on Lespinasse's behalf.

²¹² His date of birth, 9.XI.1759, omitted in most published sources including Salmon, may be found in the État civil reconstitué. His age makes it less likely that he purchased the pastel immediately after Marigny's death, so there is likely to have been an intermediate owner. There is a genealogy with sources [here](#).

²¹³ In the membership lists of the Club de Valois for 1790, the comte d'Arlet is shown at the rue Blanche, Chaussée d'Antin (the address from which the letters to the Louvre of 5.III.1797 and 15.XII.1800 were sent), while his brother, Égide, chevalier

But d'Arlet, who was had served as capitaine de cavalerie, régiment Royal-Roussillon,²¹⁴ was certainly also active in the saleroom, with catalogues unambiguously annotating his name rather than his brother's.²¹⁵ However in this case he had a special reason to be interested in this portrait: Mme de Pompadour was a great supporter of the comte de Saint-Florentin, later duc de La Vrillière, ministre d'État, secrétaire de la maison du roi, ministre de l'Intérieur, effectively Louis XV's premier ministre – and d'Arlet's natural father.²¹⁶

Whether he acquired it sentimentally or speculatively, he had difficulty in disposing of the pastel (his other purchases were all oils as far as I can see), and as Salmon narrates, between 1796 and 1800 he conducted fruitless negotiations with the then Museum central des arts (the Louvre) which foundered in part because the officials there declined to visit it in situ or arrange its transport, while d'Arlet was understandably concerned about possible damage, citing in particular its fragile glass (he also claimed that it was the only pastel *en pied* ever attempted in Europe). Indeed when he finally consigned it to public auction, Paris, Paillet & Delaroche, 11.VII.1803, Lot 335, Paillet added a note about the glass (along with two inaccurate puffs):

500 — 335. = Un très-beau Tableau peint au pastel, par le célèbre Latour. Il représente Madame de Pompadour, de grandeur naturelle, en pied et assise, tenant un Livre de musique, et près d'un Bureau où sont posés des Livres et autres accessoires. Ce Morceau, le plus grand Ouvrage de cet Artiste, est recouvert par une belle Glace blanche, faite exprès à Saint Gobin, et a appartenu à feu Louis XV.

*Paillet
Musée*

It had no takers, so Paillet himself bought it for the modest sum of 500 francs,²¹⁷ and offered it immediately to the Louvre. Denon replied: not having had any intention of acquiring the pastel, he recognised that if he did not now do so, someone would buy it for the glass alone and the work would be destroyed. As Salmon continues the story, the work was sent to the Musée spécial de l'École française

de Langeac, was separately listed, in the rue Poissonnière (Augustin Challamel, *Les Clubs contre-révolutionnaires*, 1895, pp. 36, 52. D'Arlet was also recorded at the rue Blanche in 1793 at the time of a notice to creditors disclosed in the very lengthy court case *Veuve Marchand c. Langeac d'Arlet* reported in the *Journal du Palais*, XI, 1813, pp. 558ff. In the registres de tutelles (following the death of his sister, AN Y5713A, 11.XII.1788), he alone of his brothers resided in the rue Blanche; he signed “Lespinasse Langeac C^{te} Darlet”. His eldest brother, the comte de Langeac, was portrayed by Vigée Le Brun in 1775 according to her lists, and is possibly best known for leasing the hôtel de Langeac to Thomas Jefferson in 1785.

²¹⁴ He is listed as a sous-lieutenant in this regiment in the *État militaire* in 1786, but is omitted from the 1789 edition. The 1788 document in the registres de tutelles gives his rank as capitaine.

²¹⁵ His posthumous sale, 4.I.1815, included nearly 300 pictures, mostly Northern school, but he disposed of many more during his lifetime, including a large group at the 1803 sale. His collection included works by Chardin, Fragonard and Prud'hon.

²¹⁶ Camille Hermelin, “Histoire de la ville de Saint-Florentin”, *Bulletin de la Société des sciences... de l'Yonne*, 1911, LXV, pp. 512f. For obvious reasons the evidence is not as certain as one would wish, but it is clear that d'Arlet's mother was Saint-Florentin's mistress, and the legal disputes between d'Arlet and the Saint-Florentin estate suggest paternity. Courcelles does not mention this, nor does he give the date of Étienne-Joseph's marriage to Marie-Madeleine-Josèphe-Aglac de Cusacque (19.X.1756, after three of the children he lists had been born). The gossip is provided by Pidanzat de Mairobert, *L'Espion anglais*, lettre III, 20.VII.1775, London, 1785, pp. 361ff. A modern source is equally candid: Jeffrey Merrick, “Marital conflict in political context: *Langeac vs. Chambonas, 1775*”, in *Family, gender and law in early modern France*, ed. Sizanne Desan & Jeffrey Merrick, 2009, pp. 137–182. Lemoyne exhibited busts (not in the livret) of Saint-Florentin and the comtesse de Langeac in the Salon de 1767 (Réau 1927, nos. 83, 92).

²¹⁷ Equivalent to about €2000 in today's money, after adjustment for consumer price inflation. But other La Tour pastels obtained even smaller bids in the 1810 sale. The reproduction above is from one of the RKD copies of the catalogue, and shows that it was bought by “Paillet/Musée”, suggesting he acted as agent for them, notwithstanding the Denon letter which Salmon quotes. According to B&W the Louvre paid F600, but the Denon letter implies there was no mark-up.

at Versailles in 1803, where it was on show for several years and then kept in storage until returned to the Louvre in 1823. It was recorded in the inventaire des dessin 1815–24²¹⁸ as

54. Idem [Tour, Maurice de la] Portrait en pied de Madame de Pompadour

in the Chalcographie royale. There it remained until the outbreak of war in 1939 when it was sent to Chambord – unlike the other Louvre pastels, which were recognised as too fragile to travel that far. (The most important were placed in underground vaults at the Banque de France until some months after it was noticed that the air-conditioning system had broken down, causing greater problems than the journey might have resulted in.)

While at Chambord, on 13.X.1942, a detailed condition report was made by Germain Bazin. Conditions were evidently not ideal: initially housed in the donjon, it had been transported to one of the first floor rooms in the appartements Henri II, where the relative humidity was 65° compared with 75° in the donjon, and the light was better. Bazin noted a little more dust on the inside of the glass than had been evident five weeks previously, but attributed that to the superior light; they were the inevitable consequence of the urgent move to which the work had been subjected in .IX.1939. In his report Bazin also noted an outbreak of glass disease.²¹⁹ The glass was replaced at an unknown date after the pastel returned to the Louvre, perhaps by the Louvre framer Javouhey whom Bazin suggested should go to Chambord and take measurements for new glass and frame.

Physical construction of the pastel

By far the most detailed account of the physical construction of the pastel is in Salmon 2018, although to follow the discussion it is necessary to view the excellent You Tube [video](#) showing the conservation of the pastel sponsored by Canson. Here is a screenshot:



²¹⁸ Archives des musées nationaux, 1DD66.

²¹⁹ The detailed reports are discussed in Le Prat & Luquet 2013; a digest appears in Salmon 2018. The description of the problem as “cynérèse” [*sic, recte synérèse, or synaeresis*], occurs only as Bazin’s note of a telephone conversation with Jacques-Charles-Marie Cogniard, head of the laboratory at the Banque de France; the circumstances as well as the misspelling suggest this may have been a confusion. Jerzy Kunicki-Goldfinger (private communication, 22.v.2019) considers that synaeresis can be excluded, while noting that the formation of spherical bubbles within the glass as described by Bazin is not a normal symptom of glass disease, which more commonly appears as droplets on the inner glass surface: Dr Kunicki-Goldfinger suggests that Bazin may have mistaken the location of the bubbles perhaps because of refraction through the glass. See §v.9 of my [PROLEGOMENA](#) for a discussion of different types of glass disease.

Several problematic questions remain open. The first concerns the large hole in the canvas behind the marquise's head. We can discount the suggestion by James Wells Champney (1891), who thought "the head cut out during the Revolution". Salmon suggests that this intervention occurred in the early nineteenth century, in an attempt to repair the tear around the eye, by accessing the area from behind. If so it would seem a bizarre approach, not least because the hole is so large (covering the whole head, from throat to well above the hairline). Does it not seem more likely that the hole was actually made by La Tour himself – perhaps even during his attempt to destroy the picture in 1748 (which he may have exaggerated when he told Mme de Graffigny that he had burned it), only later to change his mind and fix it again?



The second concerns the *châssis à clés*, a structure that was rarely in use before the end of the eighteenth century (see §IV.1 of my [PROLEGOMENA](#) for a full discussion). Such keyed stretchers were more likely to be used than the fixed strainers for larger works: and indeed La Tour had already used them, for the *président de Rieux* (1741: the earliest known use of a stretcher on a pastel), for *Frémin* and for *Dumont le Romain*. Salmon believes that the stretcher was a later addition, perhaps at the beginning of the nineteenth century (further suggesting that this was done at the time the hole in the canvas was pierced): but his reasons²²⁰ for this are unclear, if they are not simply the widespread belief that *châssis à clés* were not employed before then. What does seem to support that view is the way the pastel is mounted onto the stretcher. The conventional approach was to stretch the canvas around the stretcher, pinning it along the outer edge, and the paper would then be folded over the sides, if not all the way round to the back. Here the canvas and paper are cut sharply at the edges of the stretcher and do not project over the sides at all, the tacks going through the front edges of the surface. A further anomaly is that while the bottom and right edges of the strainer seem smooth enough, the left edge appears to be very roughly cut (I have not been able to observe the top): it is possible that this edge was shaved later to allow it to fit the rebate of a new frame: but any reduction in size would have been minimal (the width of the battens appears roughly the same all round, at approximately 10 cm).

All this leaves open the question of when, and why, this reduction took place. It might be tempting to assume that this occurred as a later intervention, but once a pastel as fragile as this is completed, the exercise of transferring it to another stretcher would be unacceptably hazardous – unless the artist

²²⁰ Salmon seems to be following the discussion in Le Prat & Luquet 2013. I am grateful to Valérie Luquet for making a copy of this unpublished report available to me, in .v.2019, after the first issue of this essay.

himself were around to make good the extensive damage inevitably caused. One might imagine that in order to preserve the tension in the canvas, the new stretcher might have been constructed to fit inside an old strainer, so that the canvas could be tacked to the new frame before the outer one was removed: that requires us to believe that the original work was at least about 10 cm larger all round – say 200x150 cm. Part of Salmon's argument concerns the print, which is cut down the middle to remove the bust of Louis XV: Méjanès had advanced the seductive theory that this omission was an intentional delicacy which would have been understood by viewers in 1755; Salmon more mundanely attributes it to the accident of cutting down. But we should note, by comparison with the real Mariette print,²²¹ that the missing part of the print on the scale on which it is represented in the pastel requires an additional 7 cm on this side alone: and even then that would leave the bust of the king right at the edge, possibly in the shadow of the frame, which would be an arguably worse message. Further, in the current presentation the dead centre of the image falls on Pompadour's proper left eye (exactly where the tear is), any extension to the right only would lead to a visual imbalance (as the sitter faces left, it would be bizarre for the head not to be at or to the right of centre).



Salmon notes that the cutting down must have been done by the time Charles Steuben painted his copy in 1838 (MV 4446), as it has exactly the same dimensions and image as the Louvre pastel. But by the same logic, any such reduction must have taken place by 1755: the dimensions given in the Salon livret, 5 pieds 6 pouces by 4 pieds (old units), at 178.7x129.9 cm, correspond almost exactly to the present dimensions (incidentally the livret and actual dimensions of the président de Rieux also match to similar accuracy). That would not permit even the extension for the bust of Louis.

There is a further argument that the pastel was exhibited in 1755 at essentially the present size. This concerns the glass. As we have established above, the pastel did have its glass in the marquise's posthumous inventory, and that glass was considered the most important part of the object in the 1803 sale – both in Paillet's description, and in Denon's response. Further that sheet seems very likely to be the one that developed the problems identified in 1942. Glass disease usually arises from incorrect proportions of the ingredients used to make the glass, and what is described is entirely consistent with a

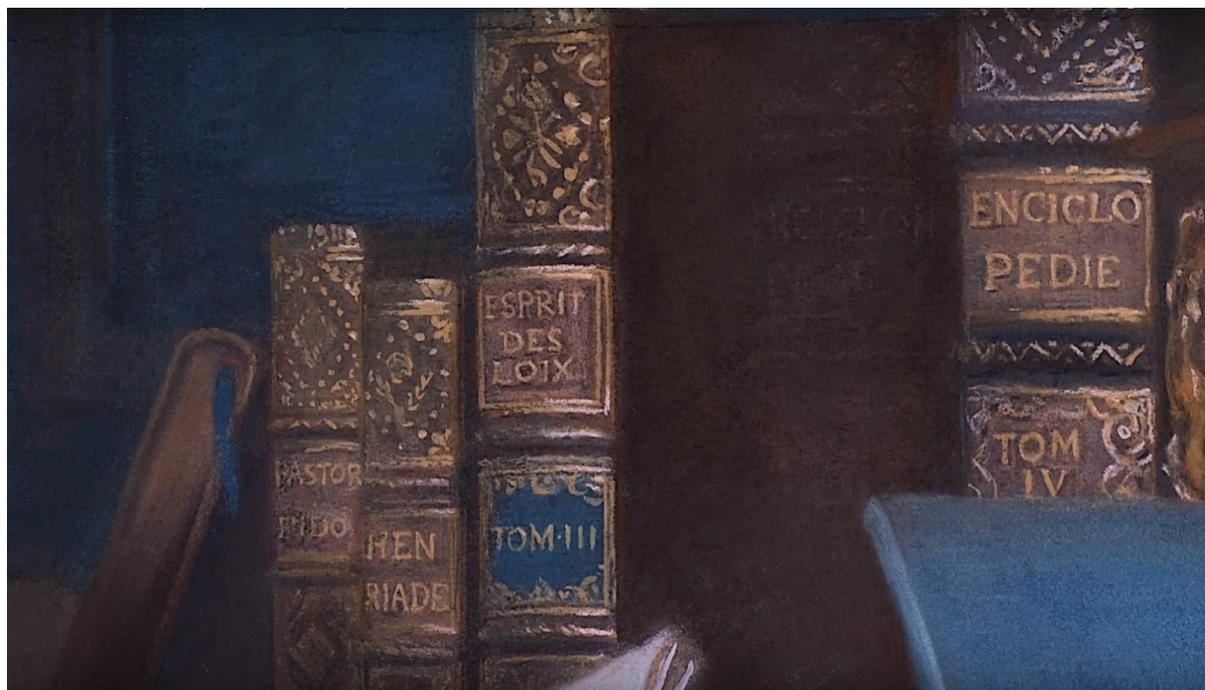
²²¹ One notes not only the introduction of Pompadour's name as engraver (the original was engraved by the comte de Caylus, although the plate itself is unsigned), but considerable liberty with the lower part of the image.

sheet made in France in the mid-eighteenth century, and much less likely to occur in a new sheet fixed in the early nineteenth century.

In the absence of any firm evidence to the contrary, the simpler explanation would seem to be that La Tour himself rescued the wreck of his first attempt, which he had attacked so vigorously as to penetrate the head and perhaps damage the original strainer, and that he cut it down and mounted it on the present stretcher before it was shown in 1755. La Tour himself, I suggest, may have patched the hole with layers of paper²²² before attaching the present sheet with the new head; but being then supported only by layers of paper rather than canvas, it was vulnerable to the tear we now see. An even more straightforward explanation of the anomalous attachment of the canvas to the stretcher with tacks on the face of the work is simply that the rebate of the (present or previous) frame was inadequate: rather than cutting the frame, the sides of the canvas were simply trimmed to fit. It is thus possible that the aspect of the work is exactly as it has been since 1755, if not 1748.

Condition and finish

It can be exceptionally difficult with pastel to follow how much deterioration has occurred since the work left the artist's studio. A work of this kind with the history unfolded above has had many opportunities to lose pastel, not just in the tear to the eye noted above (fixing tacks to the new stretcher would have resulted in unacceptable vibration levels for any conservation standard). What is perhaps surprising is that the work shows such variation in the level of finish. Here for example is the admirably clear image of the books, whose titles retain much of the sharpness they must have had originally (note that tome IV can only have been added after publication of that volume, in .x.1754):



On the other hand the lace *engagements* look jumbled, and contrast with the sharpness La Tour obtained in an equivalent passage in the *président de Rieux*:

²²² It should also be noted that the Getty *président de Rieux* also appears to have multiple layers of paper mounted on the canvas.



Similarly the sheet of music she holds is depicted with far greater haste than in comparable examples – the *princesse de Rohan* or *Marie Fel*, both of which have legible notes:²²³



Critical fortune

Since the 1755 salon La Tour's portrait of the *marquise de Pompadour* had remained unknown and unreproduced. But after its return to the Louvre in 1823, it has been central to the museum's collection of pastels, and virtually no commentary has failed to mention it, usually at far greater length than any other work in the medium.

Arsène Houssaye first wrote extravagantly about the pastel (1849), and probably inspired Sainte-Beuve's famous discussion, in his *Causeries* for Monday, 16.IX.1850.²²⁴ Champfleury 1855 prints this in full (before adding to it). Mantz (1854, p. 177), writing just 100 years after its completion, described the work as “un de ceux que le temps a effacés.” In contrast, Antoine-Jules Dumesnil, just four years later, thought that “sa conservation est aussi satisfaisante qu'on pouvoit l'espérer d'un genre aussi éphémère que le pastel”.²²⁵

Théophile Gautier's beautiful essay “*Les soirées du Louvre*” (published in *L'Artiste* in 1858) concerns a concert held in the “magnifique Salle des Pastels” which he describes in meticulous detail. The *La Tour Pompadour* is of course discussed at length. This *Grande salle des pastels* seems essentially unchanged

²²³ I discuss the erasure of the words in the *princesse's* pastel in my [article](#) on that work.

²²⁴ The passage quoted in Salmon 2018 is the first page only in the fifth edition of the collected *Causeries*.

²²⁵ *Histoire ds plus célèbres amateurs...*, Paris, 1858, I, p. 152f.

from then until when this photograph²²⁶ was published in *La Renaissance de l'art français...* in 1919 (p. 239):



Magnier 1904 pointed out that the portrait was moved from its normal place in the Louvre to the newly opened “musée du mobilier français” in 1901, where it was mentioned by Babin 1901, alongside the La Tour comte de Provence (then thought to be the young Louis XV), before being rapidly returned to its earlier location “devant les protestations des amateurs et de artistes”.

The wonderful passage from the Goncourts’ 1867 essay on La Tour (“La Tour a au Louvre une grande et magnifique place. ...”) is worth rereading, as is their later book on La Pompadour.²²⁷ Campardon’s biography of the marquise, with extensive documentation, appeared in 1867, with a truly wretched engraving after the La Tour pastel as frontispiece. Champfleury (published initially in *L’Athenaeum français* in 1853, expanded into the 1855 monograph on La Tour) devotes a chapter to “Son oeuvre au musée du Louvre” – it starts rather differently to the Goncourts: “Il ne faut pas juger La Tour au Musée du Louvre: on risquerait d’en garder une fâcheuse opinion.” While dismissing the pastels of the king, dauphin and dauphine – [ils] “ne sont pas des oeuvres d’une grande valeur” – he exempted “le fameux portrait de madame de Pompadour” from his wrath.

Frédéric Reiset, in the appendix to his 1869 catalogue of the Louvre’s pastels, summarized its importance in a few words:²²⁸

Ce magnifique ouvrage, qui est le principal ornement de la salle des pastels du Louvre, est et restera, croyons-nous, le terme le plus élevé et le plus parfait du genre. Tant que le soleil ou l’humidité n’auront pas dévoré ces couleurs fugitives, tant qu’elles adhéreront à leur fond, le charme sans pareil de la figure principale, le bon goût, l’ingénieuse disposition des accessoires, la complète harmonie de l’ensemble feront de ce portrait le désespoir de tous les pastellistes et de bien des peintres à l’huile.

²²⁶ A similar photograph appeared in Guiffrey 1909, fig. 98, where several pastels on either side of the Pompadour had been interchanged.

²²⁷ Many of these texts are freely available on Gallica, and absolve me from the need to quote lengthy passages.

²²⁸ Reiset 1869, p. 353.

Inevitably the fame of the work spawned a flood of copies and reproductions, too numerous to list here, and too vacuous to discuss. It was popularized through engravings such as that made in 1838 by Léopold Massard (1812–1889, whom Salmon confused with Jean Massard, 1740–1822). Unknown however is the lost full-scale pastel copy by the forgotten Jules Chevreux (1837–1888) who died in a lunatic asylum. By 1890, when an American called Hamilton McKay Twombly thought he had bought the original for \$2250, Alfred Trumble, editor of *The collector*, discussed the swindle in several articles, pointing out that copies were available for as little as 1000 francs.

And so on, to modern times. The pastel even appeared on a French postage stamp in 2014 (from an engraving by Claude Jumelet).

No one summarized the importance of this work more succinctly than Pierre Rosenberg in his *Dictionnaire amoureux du Louvre* (2007): the portrait itself, as it were, defined La Tour:

Le pastel est impressionnant par sa taille. Il l'est par la virtuosité de son exécution. Il l'est encore plus par son ambition, son programme.

La Tour, *L'abbé Pommyer*

2001



[Maurice-Quentin de La Tour](#) ZOOMIFY

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

Pastel on brown paper, 55x45 cm

c.1757

Private collection

PROVENANCE: The sitter; his nephew, Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont (1733–1788), directeur des fermes du roi; his daughter, Mme Louis Theurier, née Geneviève Pommyer (1774–1832); her son, Charles Theurier-Pommyer (1800–1876); his widow, née Anne-Pierre de La Hupraye (1807–1883), marquise romaine; baron Alfred de Jacquier de Rosée (1871–1935), château de Schaltin, Namur, Belgium (the great-grandson of baronne Antoine-Laurent de Jacquier de Rosée, née Elisabeth d'Incourt de Fréchencourt, the daughter of the sitter's niece and sister of Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon, comtesse Pierre d'Incourt de Fréchencourt, née Marie-Françoise Pommyer de Rougemont); his widow, née Louise Anne-Marie Daly (1885–1967); their nephew, baron Emmanuel de Jacquier de Rosée (1906–1987); London, Christie's, 10 December 1993, Lot 53 repr.

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

LITERATURE: Anon. [Charles-Joseph Mathon de La Cour], *Lettres à Madame *** sur les peintures, les sculptures et les gravures exposées dans le Salon du Louvre en 1763*, Paris, 1763 (“un Ecclésiastique respectable”); Anon., *Journal encyclopédique*, vii, pt. 1, 1 October 1763, p. 120 (“On a vû avec beaucoup de plaisir celui d'un Abbé musqué, frisé & paré avec toute l'élégance possible, & qui semble regarder cet Artiste avec un sourire assez malin, & se moquer de son ajustement : ces deux tableaux qui sont du même Maître, sont d'une force de couleur & d'une expression qui étonnent”); anon. [abbé de La Porte ou Bridard de La Garde], *Mercur de France*, September 1763 (“il est difficile d'exprimer avec quel plaisir tout le monde est frappé de l'étonnante vérité [du Portrait d'un Ecclésiastique connu du Public, & très-considéré dans la Magistrature]”); Ernest Dréolle de Nodon, *Éloge biographique de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour*, Paris, 1856, p. 128 (“magnifique portrait en grand que fit De La Tour, et qui se trouve à Paris, très-bien conservé, chez un petit-neveu de l'abbé Pommyer”); Maurice Tourneux, *La Tour*, Paris, n.d., p. 71; Albert Besnard & Georges Wildenstein, *La Tour*, Paris, 1928, p. 66f; Melissa Percival, *The appearance of character. Physiognomy and facial expression in eighteenth-century France*, London, 1999, pp. 86f, 89, 91; Christine Debric & Xavier Salmon, *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour*, Paris, 2000, p. 84f, repr. p. 83 (“de toutes les versions, elle est assurément la plus belle”); Denis Diderot, *Salons*, éd. Jean Seznec & Jean Adhémar, Oxford, 1957–67, i, p. 172; Marie-Catherine Sahut, notice in exhibition catalogue *Diderot & l'art de Boucher à David. Les Salons: 1759–1781*, Paris, Hôtel de la Monnaie, 1984–1985, p. 302; Comte de Luppé, ed., *Lettres de Geneviève de Malboissière à Adélaïde Méliand 1761–1766*, Paris, 1925, p. 121, n. 3 (“on a de [Pommyer] deux pastels par La Tour, l'un au musée de Saint-Quentin, l'autre dans la collection Theurier de Pommyer, à Paris”); Neil Jeffares, “L'abbé Pommyer, honoraire amateur de l'Académie royale de peinture”, in *Gazette des beaux-arts*, May–June 2001, pp. 237–256,²²⁹ fig. 3; Morel Guillaume, “Maurice-Quentin de La Tour”, *L'Œil*, 561, September 2004; Xavier Salmon, “La rançon de la gloire: pastels autographes, répliques et copies dans l'œuvre de Maurice Quentin de La Tour”, *L'Objet d'art*, October 2004, pp. 42–55, fig. 2; Alastair Laing, “La Tour; Boucher. Versailles”, *Burlington magazine*, January 2005, p. 57 commissioned; Marc Fumaroli, *Maurice Quentin de La Tour et le siècle de Louis XV*, Paris, 2005, p. 36 repr.; Rena Hoisington, *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour and the triumph of pastel painting in eighteenth-century France*, unpublished thesis, New York University, 2006, p. 356; Jeffares 2006, p. 300, repr.; Louis-Antoine Prat, *Le Dessin français au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 2017, p. 405 n.r.; Jeffares 2017s, fig. 6; Wine 2018, p. 139, n.136; *Dictionary of pastellists* online, [1.46.2518](#)

RELATED WORKS: (A) pastel repetition, without chair, slightly reduced, 44.0x36.0 cm (Saint-Quentin LT 41). Lit.: Albert Besnard & Georges Wildenstein, *La Tour*, Paris, 1928, no. 382, fig. 190; Élie Fleury & Gaston Brière, *Collection Maurice Quentin de La Tour à Saint-Quentin*, Saint-Quentin, 1954, no. 43 (“pastel qui paraît avoir été retouché et altéré”); Christine Debric, *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour 1704–1788*, Saint-Quentin, 1991, p. 156, repr., colour; Henry Lapauze, *Les Pastels de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour du musée Lécuyer, à Saint-Quentin*, Paris, 1919, no. 23, repr. (“Les yeux ont une hardiesse spirituelle; les lèvres charnues et roulées avancent un peu, avec une expression de malice et de germandise. La Tour a plutôt exagéré qu'atténué l'amabilité presque galante et passablement profane de cette joyeuse figure”); Alfred Leroy, *Maurice Quentin de La Tour et la Société française du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1953, p. 69, repr. (Pommyer's “physionomie fine et souriante demeure d'un admirable réalisme”); Pierre de Nolhac, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Maurice Quentin de La Tour*, Paris, 1930, repr. opp. p. 70. (B) copy, pastel, with chair, 55.5x45.8 cm (Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, Everard Studley Miller Bequest 1966, 1620/5. Pierre Decourcelle; Paris, Drouot, 29–30 May 1911, Lot 119. André Seligmann, Paris, in 1935; René Fribourg; London, Sotheby's, 16 October 1963, Lot 611, £350, to Wardell). Exh.: *Cent pastels*, Paris, 1908, no. 32, pl. 24; *Chefs d'œuvre de l'art français*, Palais national des arts, Paris 1937, no. 179. Lit.: Besnard & Wildenstein, no. 383, fig. 78. (C) a drawing, also with chair, black and white chalk on blue paper, 44.0x35.5 cm (Bohler; sale, 1906. François Flameng; Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, 26–27 May 1919, Lot 134; Paris, Mme Thalmann in 1928. Private collection). Lit.: Besnard & Wildenstein, no. 384, fig. 191; *Les Arts*, 1918, repr.; Fleury & Brière, p. 65 (“douteux”). (D) Another version in a French private collection is a late eighteenth century copy (Salmon, private communication). (E) A later copy, pastel, 48.2x39.1 cm (with Christie's, Paris, April 2004), repr. Versailles exhibition catalogue, 2004, p. 87f, fig. 3. (F) Possibly the same copy, pastel, 45x36 cm (Gabriel Cognacq; Paris, Galerie Charpentier, 11–13 June 1952, Lot 62 n.r., d'après La Tour). Lit.: Fleury & Brière, p. 65, incorrectly described as same as Decourcelle version. (G) copy, pastel, 46x38 cm (Entzheim, hôtel des ventes des Notaires, 1 July 2007, Lot 70 repr., suiveur de La Tour, portrait du curé d'Aix en Provence). (H) copy, pastel (Bar-le-Duc, Vaxelaire, 21 October 2007, Lot 1m repr.). (I) copy, probably 20th century, pastel, 0.45x0.37 (Chiswick Auctions, 7 October 2014, Lot 82 reproduced, as circle of Lenoir, with a copy of Rousseau, neither recognised. (J) engraving by Auguste-Hilaire Lévillé (1840–1900), 11x7 cm, in reverse, inscr. “Gravure de A. Lévillé, d'après un pastel de La Tour. (Musée de Saint-Quentin.)”, for *L'Art*, 1875

ICONOGRAPHY: (I) oil painting, by Largillierre, 55.5x45.5 cm, oval, sd 1722 (London, Christie's, 10 December 1993, Lot 46, repr.; London, private collection; New York, Sotheby's, 26 January 2006, Lot 55, repr.). Lit.: M. N. Rosenfeld, *Largillierre*, Montreal, 1982, p. 260 repr., incorrectly identified. (II) profile of Pommyer, engraving with etching, by C. N. Cochin finished by Augustin de Saint-Aubin, 19.6x14.6 cm (plate), 1769. Lit.: C. A. Jombert, *Catalogue de l'œuvre de Charles Nicolas Cochin fils*, Paris, 1770, p. 130, no. 104 among the “portraits en médaillons & autres, dessinés par C. N. Cochin fils”: “104. M. l'Abbé Pommyer, Conseiller en la grande Chambre du Parlement de Paris, Amateur honoraire de l'Académie Royale de Peinture & Sculpture, &c; gravé à l'eau-forte par Cochin fils, en 1768. Cette planche n'a point été achevée.”; Portalis & Béraldi, Cochin, no. 94; see also p. 544; Bocher, *Saint-Aubin*, 219. (III) black chalk drawing of the abbé Pommyer “en paysan de Gandeleu”, by Cochin (Stanford University, Cantor Arts Center, inv. 1972.48), *18th century drawings from California collections*, Claremont and Sacramento, 1976, no 16 reproduced. Engr., sanguine manner by Demarteau, no. 262, 1771, 0.245x0.191; *Inventaire du fonds français*, 262; Goncourt, “Cochin”, in *L'Art du XVIII^e siècle*, II, p. 59; Christian Michel, *Charles-Nicolas Cochin et l'art des Lumières*, Rome, 1993, p.

²²⁹ This article, slightly expanded, is the basis of this essay.

129, pl. 17 reproduced. A later engraving by Adolphe Varin, 1881. (IVa) black chalk drawing by Cochin, 0.17x0.12, signed “Dessiné par C. N. Cochin le fils, a Gandelu, 1772” (Mme Theurier de Pommyer. Hans Fürstenberg, château de Beaumesnil, L.3615; Paris art market 2013). (IVb) version of (IVa) with different wig, hand, black chalk drawing by Cochin, 0.143x0.11, signed “Dessiné par C. N. Cochin le fils, a Gandelu, 1772” (Paris, Christie’s, 24 March 2021, Lot 49). (V) marble bust by Étienne-Pierre-Adrien Gois, 79x60x33 cm, sd 1783 (Birmingham Museum & City Art Gallery, P.21375. Pommyer/Jacquier de Rosée collections; Heim in 1968; acquired 1975). Lit.: Evelyn Silber, *Sculpture in the Birmingham Museum and City Art Gallery – summary catalogue*, Birmingham, 1987, no. 150, repr. Exh.: Heim Gallery, London, *French paintings & sculptures of the 18th century*, 1968, repr.

GENEALOGY: [Pommyer](#)

WRITING AT THE TIME of the great Chardin exhibition in 1979, discussing notable eighteenth century collectors of Chardin, Pierre Rosenberg confessed²³⁰ to being “fort mal renseigné sur...l’abbé Pommyer”. Twenty years later, with another Chardin exhibition (and a new catalogue raisonné, which even omits Pommyer from the index²³¹), that situation can now be partly rectified. As an honorary member of the Académie royale de peinture, and through his friendships with the artists Jean-Siméon Chardin, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, Charles-Nicolas Cochin and Jean-Jacques Bachelier, Pommyer was at the heart of the French art world; his collection included a number of important works; and the half dozen portraits of him – spanning a period from the Régence to the reign of Louis XVI – constitute an iconography of extraordinary range for an individual outside the royal family.

* * *



Figure 1

The abbé François-Emmanuel Pommyer (1713–1784) was seigneur de La Guyonnière, abbé commendataire de l’Abbaye royale de Bonneval, chanoine de l’Église de Saint-Martin de Tours, doyen honoraire de l’Église métropolitaine de Reims, prieur du Prieuré simple et regulier de Cossé et Viré, ordre de Saint-Benoît, conseiller du roi en sa cour de parlement et grand’chambre, président de la chambre souveraine du clergé, honoraire amateur de l’Académie royale de peinture and directeur de l’École royale gratuite de dessin. He was the seventh child of Yves-Joseph Pommyer (1665–1748), trésorier général de France au bureau des finances d’Alençon, secrétaire du roi (from 1719), and Marie-Marguerite Lefèvre. The family, originally from Château-du-Loir, was well connected among the noblesse de robe, being related to the Voysin, Lamoignon, Bignon and Nicolaj families²³².

The other children of the marriage were François (1703–1779), seigneur de Rougemont, who inherited his father’s position as trésorier général; his brother, possibly twin, Yves-Joseph-Charles (1703/04 – before 1756), also sgr de Rougemont; Marie-Thérèse (c.1705/6 – after 1744); Yves-Simon, sgr de

²³⁰ Pierre Rosenberg, *Chardin*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Grand Palais; Cleveland, Museum of Art; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 1979, p. 73. . Victor Advielle, in his account of the law case of the architecte Pierre Lefranc de Saint-Haulde (too long to include here), *L’Odysee d’un Normand à Saint-Domingue...*, 1901, p. 176, also admitted that he could find “aucune indication biographique sur cet abbé Pommyer.”

²³¹ Pierre Rosenberg, *Chardin*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Grand Palais; Düsseldorf, Kunsthalle; London, Royal Academy of Arts; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999–2000; Pierre Rosenberg & Renaud Temperini, *Chardin – suivi du catalogue des œuvres*, Paris, 1999; passing references to Pommyer appear on pp. 183, 271, 279.

²³² Most of this information derives from Borel d’Hauterive, Albert Révérend, *Annuaire de la noblesse de France*, Paris, 1906, 1909, 1910; see also Christine Favre-Lejeune, *Dictionnaire biographique et généalogique des secrétaires du roi*, Paris, 1986, vol. 2, p. 1098f, and J. François Bluche, *L’Origine des magistrats du parlement de Paris au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1956, p. 353f. Yves-Joseph Pommyer had the personal privileges of nobility from c. 1701, the date of his appointment as trésorier de France; the process of full ennoblement commenced in 1719 with his appointment as secrétaire du roi. François-Emmanuel was thus noble of the second degree.

Charmois (1707–1756), who assumed his father's position as secrétaire du roi in 1739²³³; and Marie-Élisabeth (c.1712–p.1744); and abbé Merry (1713–1802), sgr des Arches or de Sarche.²³⁴ The parents and all of the children were portrayed by Nicolas de Largillierre (1656–1746), in a series of eight paintings that descended through the family and finally came to light in a London sale in 1993.²³⁵ The highlight of the series was undoubtedly the double portrait showing the eldest twin brothers, half-length, playing with their King Charles spaniel, now in an American private collection.²³⁶ Figure 1 is the portrait²³⁷ of the nine-year-old François-Emmanuel in a brown velvet coat with gold embroidered waistcoat and a lace cravat, fashionably knotted *à la Steinkerque*, captures the sitter's essential features in a manner which we recognise instantly in the later images. Curiously Largillierre has given all members of the family brown eyes, in contrast to the blue-grey of La Tour's sitter.

There has been some confusion over the early provenance of the abbé's collection. Not all the pictures came down to the 1993 sale by the Jacquier de Rosée family²³⁸; a few may have left the collection soon after his death, while most of the collection must have been inherited by Pommyer's three surviving nephews and niece. The niece, comtesse Pierre d'Incourt de Fréchencourt (née Marie-Françoise Pommyer de Rougemont), had some of the pictures by about 1790. Her daughter Élisabeth (1767–1833) married the baron Antoine-Laurent de Jacquier de Rosée in 1788²³⁹; their great-grandson was baron Alfred de Jacquier de Rosée (1871–1935). Most of the pictures however seem to have followed a different route to the Jacquier de Rosée family, passing from nephews Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon Pommyer de Rougemont (1743–1790), gouverneur des pages de la chambre du roi, or Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont (c.1740–1786), directeur des fermes du roi, to the latter's daughter²⁴⁰ Geneviève Pommyer (1774–1832), who married Louis Theurier (1768–1851),²⁴¹ and thence to their son Charles Theurier (1800–1876), juge au tribunal de première instance de la Seine. Theurier changed his name by decree to Charles Theurier-Pommyer in 1860.²⁴² The pictures then passed to his widow, née

²³³ Two years later, he sold his position as substitut du procureur général du roi to Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon (AN V¹ 330 (449), 9 September 1741), but retained an honorary rôle among the gens du roi.

²³⁴ Merry Pommyer des Arches's biographical details are frequently given incorrectly. His surname is often cited as de Sarche or de Sourches, while the 1778 dedication on a bell at Saint-Marcoul by "Médéric Pommyer des Arches doyen et chanoine de Notre Dame" may be relied upon (*Travaux de l'Académie nationale de Reims*, CXI, 1901, p. 227). He signed a 1731 document "des Arches", but later ones "de Sarche". Birth c.1705 was inferred from the apparent age in Largillierre's 1722 portrait, but 1713 is implied by the age on his death certificate and other documents cited in Émile Bouchez, *Le Clergé du pays rémois...*, Reims, 1913, p. 68, detailing his senility.

²³⁵ London, Christie's, 10 December 1993, Lots 43–50; the catalogue entries drew on information from Dominique Brême.

²³⁶ It reemerged in a New York sale (Sotheby's, 23 May 2001), with the portrait of Marie-Élisabeth, and was included in the 2003 Largillierre exhibition (Paris, musée Jacquemart-André, no. 58).

²³⁷ Oil on canvas, by Nicolas de Largillierre, 0.555x0.455 oval, 1722. Location unknown (provenance: Pommyer; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée collections; London, Christie's, 10 December 1993, Lot 46). Literature: Myra Nan Rosenfeld, exhibition catalogue *Largillierre and the eighteenth-century portrait*, Montreal, 1982, p. 260, reproduced, incorrectly identified.

²³⁸ The catalogue entry for the 1993 Christie's sale reports that the pictures were thought to have been inherited c. 1911 from the marquise de Pommyer de Rougemont, but gives no explanation of the link with the d'Incourt de Fréchencourt or Jacquier de Rosée families.

²³⁹ Cécile Douxchamps-Lefèvre, Juliette Rouhart-Chabot & Marinette Bruwier, *Inventaire des archives de la famille de Jacquier de Rosée*, Bruxelles, 1962.

²⁴⁰ This step in the story is not free from doubt. I am most grateful to the comte de Lorne d'Alincourt for information from his family archive. The marriage of Geneviève Pommyer and Louis Theurier is referred to in Charles Theurier-Pommyer's birth certificate (and that of his sister Brigitte) (documents listed by the Cercle généalogique du Haut Berry). Since Yves-Joseph-Charles died in 1788, his pictures would have been split between his daughter and his sister without their having to pass to Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon; as Dominique Brême noted in the 1993 catalogue, the pictures are not clearly listed in the latter's inventaire après décès (AN MC LVIII 569, 8 January 1791), although there is a reference to a portrait of the widow Pommyer de Rougemont, which could be the 1772 Cochin drawing, and to a group of "trois tableaux peints...dans leurs différents bordures dorés" which might refer to some of the Largillierre paintings.

²⁴¹ A member of a family of merchants from Vierzon. A family portrait descended through the Luzarche family and is now in the musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours.

²⁴² Charles Theurier-Pommyer was living in Paris (rue d'Antin, 9) in 1851 when he acquired an estate in Vierzon from a number of parties including Louis Theurier (AN MC LXXII 815). He was identified as a relative of the abbé in Charles Desmaze, *Le Reliquaire de M. Quentin de La Tour, peintre du roi Louis XV, sa correspondance et son œuvre*, Paris, 1874; his widow's

Anne-Pierre de La Hupraye (1807–1883),²⁴³ who became a papal marquise in her own right; she had a large number of Cochin drawings in the 1870s. After her death (in Belgium), the collection passed to baron Alfred de Jacquier de Rosée, who owned the Largillierre portraits at the time of the 1928 exhibition in the Petit Palais (by then the identity of the family had been confused). Baron Alfred's widow, née Louise Anne-Marie Daly, died without issue in 1967;²⁴⁴ the pastels remained in the family until a further death led to the 1993 sale.

The territory of La Guyonnière is near La Roche-sur-Yon in the Vendée; Pommyer seems only rarely to have used the surname.²⁴⁵ His title of abbé was initially an honorific, possibly indicating merely that he had been tonsured; it would have been the normal term to apply to any of the hundred or so chanoines at Reims, which Pommyer became as early as 30 April 1732 – a position carrying a salary in the range 2–3000 livres.²⁴⁶ For a younger son of a well-connected family of modest means,²⁴⁷ a judicial position as a clerical counsellor would have been a natural choice, and would have made it easier to obtain potentially lucrative ecclesiastical benefices. Pommyer joined the cinquième chambre des enquêtes (concerned chiefly with appeals from minor civil and criminal cases) in the parlement de Paris on 23 February 1740,²⁴⁸ transferring to the 1^{ère} des enquêtes in 1757 when two of the chambers were abolished by

collection was described by baron Roger Portalis, *Les Dessinateurs d'illustrations au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris, 1877, I, pp. 100, 126. According to Jérôme's *Dictionnaire des changements de nom de 1803 à 1956*, Paris, 1957, Charles Theurier changed his name to Charles Theurier-Pommyer by official decree of 23 May 1860. In an unpublished note (London art market) which does not reveal its source, Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon's grandson is identified as the marquis Charles de Pommyer de Rougemont. The confusion perhaps arises from a reconstruction of Theurier-Pommyer's identity from information about his widow: she was created a papal countess in 1881, and elevated to marquise the following year, for Catholic works in her diocese (see Dominique Labarre de Raillcourt, *Les Comtes du Pape en France (XVII–XX siècles)*, Paris, 1965–67, II, p. 67). She died in Belgium without posterity, which suggests an explanation of how the pictures came to the Jacquier de Rosée family; although a nephew, Yves, inherited the title of *comte romain*.

²⁴³ Her father Antoine-Edmé de La Huproye (1765–1839) had been the magistrate entrusted with the inquiry into the death in 1830 of the prince de Condé in which his mistress, Sophie Dawes, baronne de Feuchères, was thought to have been involved. His excess of zeal led to his being forcibly retired, although his judicial position was allowed to be taken by his son-in-law, promoted from juge suppléant to full juge.

²⁴⁴ I am most grateful to Dermot Daly (private communication, 16 February 2012) for providing me with a copy of the Brussels sale of his aunt's effects (Galerie Moderne, 11 October 1967), including 14 Cochin drawings (among Lots 2203–2221) and a large collection of Pommyer family silver. This did not include the pastels which remained within the Jacquier de Rosée family. One of the Cochin drawings in that sale, Lot 2207, “Le chancelier Michel de L'hospital refuse de signer la mort du prince de Condé”, reappeared at Christie's, Paris, 17 March 2005, Lot 362, with a number of inscriptions, including “Ce tableau est et appartient a Mlle Porotteaux Chabert”, suggesting an intermediate step between the Theurier-Pommyer and Jacquier de Rosée owners. Mr Daly has also kindly provided me with a copy of the marriage contract between baron Alfred de Jacquier de Rosée and Louise Daly, 7 December 1912; in this the Largillierre paintings are listed, together with some Cochin drawings and the La Tour pastel of “la dame bleu”. The pastels of Pommyer and Maupeou may appear as the “abbé de Pommyer”, as a 9th picture by Largillierre (valued at BF1500), and an anonymous “Monsieur de Pommyer” (valued at BF500). Although it is not immediately clear what happened to the collection between the death of Mme Theurier-Pommyer and its acquisition by Alfred by 1912, it does not seem that the collection was first in the hands of Alfred's father Clément, nor that it was divided between Alfred and his brother Frédéric as confirmed by Mr Daly.

²⁴⁵ It appears in the marriage contract for his eldest brother Francois to Élisabeth-Thérèse de Lorne of 14 January 1731 (AN MC/XLVIII/56), and in a document dated 28 January 1740 (Archives nationales, V¹ 323 (190)) recording Pommyer's appointment as conseiller-clerc to the parlement. The Decourcelle sale (Paris, 29–30 May 1911) included (as Lot 79), in addition to a number of portraits associated with the Pommyer family, a portrait by Cochin, signed and dated 1780, of the comtesse de la Guillonnière: presumably by that date Pommyer had assigned the seigneurie to a relative or sold it.

²⁴⁶ See *Almanach historique, civil, ecclésiastique et topographique de la ville et du diocèse de Reims...*, 1770; John McManners, *Church and society in eighteenth-century France*, Oxford, 1998, I, pp. 400ff.

²⁴⁷ For example, the fixed assets of Pommyer's brother Yves-Simon Pommyer de Charmoy, who died in 1756, were declared at 4959 livres in his estate inventory, one of the lowest sums of any Paris magistrate (Archives de la Seine, D. C⁶ 294, fol. 149 v^o, cited in J. François Bluche, *Les Magistrats du parlement de Paris au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1986, p. 305). Estimates of the cost of an office of conseiller-clerc are in the region of 35,000 livres, but the income produced by this investment might only be 2% per annum (Bluche, *op. cit.*, pp. 122ff).

²⁴⁸ Succeeding Michel-Marie-Noël Amelot; Pommyer is listed as “prêtre diocèse, Paris, avocat parlement” (Archives nationales V¹ 323 (190), 28 January 1740).

Machault; in 1766 he became²⁴⁹ one of twelve conseillers-clercs of the grand'chambre (the most important chamber) before the Maupeou reforms of 1771 forced the resignation of all the members of the parlement, but he was reinstated in 1774 and remained in office until his death. On 5 February 1748, he was promoted to doyen honoraire of the Église métropolitaine de Reims, an honour he ceded to his brother Merry in 1770. At Tours, the church of Saint-Martin (where Pommyer was chanoine) eclipsed the cathedral, with the King as abbé and numerous aristocrats among its honorary positions sharing the substantial prebendal revenues. As far as we can tell, the income from all Pommyer's offices would have left him comfortably placed rather than enormously wealthy.²⁵⁰

The present portrait of Pommyer, with the same provenance as the Largillier, is by the pre-eminent pastellist of the century, Maurice-Quentin de La Tour (1704–1788). La Tour's bold technique is evident throughout this tour-de-force of the pastellist's art, including his familiar use of ultramarine to the sitter's temple, upper lip and chin, as well as some light feathering on the rabat, or clerical bands (black bands



Figure 2

with white borders replaced the white bands around 1750). The soutane, or cassock, was worn only in church or at home, and was not worn in town or when travelling; abbots received at court were considered to be travelling and therefore wore the habit à la française (rather than the soutanelle), with the petit collet, or tight cape in pleated black taffeta, the collar of which appears over his shoulder.²⁵¹ Pommyer is shown in the same chair as appears in a number of other La Tour portraits, presumably a studio prop. For Alfred Leroy, Pommyer's "physionomie fine et souriante demeure d'un admirable réalisme."²⁵² Henry Lapauze describes the image: "Les yeux ont une hardiesse spirituelle; les lèvres charnues et roulées avancement un peu, avec une expression de malice et de gourmandise. La Tour a plutôt exagéré qu'atténué l'amabilité presque galante et passablement profane de cette joyeuse figure."²⁵³ Melissa Percival discusses the image in the context of what she sees as La Tour's unphysiognomic portraiture, in which movement and the momentary are of the essence.²⁵⁴

Rather than hard bone structures, they emphasise the flesh parts of the face, something which can vividly be seen in the Abbé Pommyer's dimpled smile with its rounded cheeks and full lips, together with the irrepressible sparkle in his eye... He forcibly represents this world, and indeed this instant rather than the next. ... The Abbé Pommyer is portrayed, his wig a white cloud blending into the background hues and leaving behind a trail of dust over his black vestments. ... La Tour's Abbé Pommyer appears replete with life, health and animation, and yet the dust on his shoulders could be read as a Christian symbol of mortality. But transposed from rigorous Christian morality into the atheistic framework of materialism, the transience of pastel becomes a liberating space.

Numerous versions of this pastel testify to its significance within the œuvre. Among them, that at the musée Antoine-Lécuyer at Saint-Quentin²⁵⁵ (fig. 2) was described by Fleury & Brière as a "pastel qui

²⁴⁹ Following the death of Pierre II Langlois. This promotion was not an automatic progression; three senior members of the *1^{ère} des enquêtes* were passed over.

²⁵⁰ Another source of income may have been from property – for example, Pommyer was party to a lease granted on 14 September 1751 (AN MC CXII 705a).

²⁵¹ See Madeleine Delpierre, *Dress in France in the eighteenth century*, New Haven & London, 1997, p. 100f; Louis Trichet, *Le Costume du clergé*, Paris, 1986, p. 143.

²⁵² Alfred Leroy, *Maurice Quentin de La Tour et la Société française du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1953, p. 69, describing the Saint-Quentin version.

²⁵³ Henry Lapauze, *Les Pastels de Maurice-Quentin de La Tour du musée Lécuyer, à Saint-Quentin*, Paris, 1919, no. 23, also describing the Saint-Quentin version.

²⁵⁴ Melissa Percival, *The appearance of character. Physiognomy and facial expression in eighteenth-century France*, London, 1999, pp. 86ff.

²⁵⁵ Pastel, 0.44x0.36. Saint-Quentin, musée Lécuyer, inv. LT 41. Literature: Albert Besnard & Georges Wildenstein, *La Tour*, Paris, 1928, no. 382, fig. 190; Élie Fleury & Gaston Brière, *Collection Maurice Quentin de La Tour à Saint-Quentin*, Saint-Quentin, 1954, no. 43; Christine Debric, *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour 1704–1788*, Saint-Quentin, 1991, p. 156, reproduced, colour; Henry

paraît avoir été retouché et altéré”; the work lacks the depth and variation of light of Pommyer’s own picture, although its autograph status is evident from touches such as the zig-zag white highlights on the coat under the sitter’s right cheek, while similar blue chalk touches on the rabat in the present version are not copied; the work not only shows less background and omits the chair, but is reduced in scale by about 15:16. A larger version was formerly with Pierre Decourcelle;²⁵⁶ it includes the chair and is closer to the primary version in composition,²⁵⁷ differing only in small details. It has now come to light in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, but from a good photograph, does not appear to be autograph. It follows the primary version far more closely than the Saint-Quentin réplique, slavishly imitating with suspicious fidelity rather than recreating, while softening the effect, as is evident in this comparison of details of the faces, showing (fig. 3, left to right) the Saint-Quentin, Pommyer and Melbourne versions:

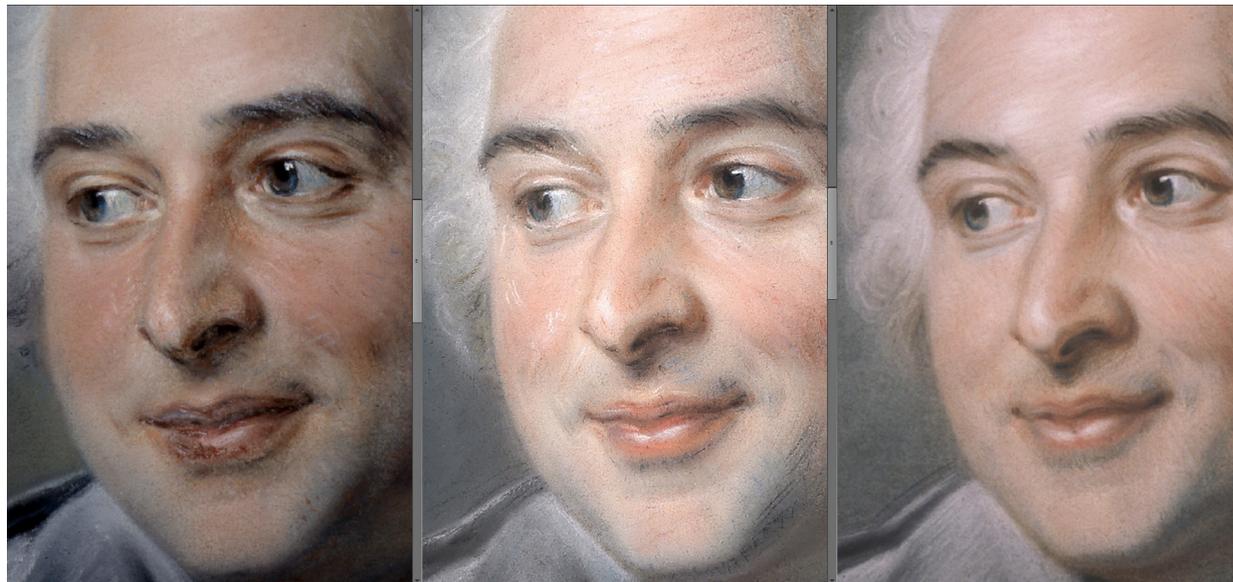


Figure 3



Figure 4

The provenance of the Melbourne version, known only from the Cent pastels exhibition of 1908, has recently been reestablished from a 1905 law case²⁵⁸ brought by a dealer: Pierre Decourcelle bought the pastel from the widow of the actor Alexandre Mauzin; while her claim to be the abbé’s arrière-petit-nièce seems to have been fantasy, Decourcelle also bought a drawing by Cochin from her, and among his 1911 sale were several Cochin drawings which also related to the Pommyer family. It is therefore plausible to suggest that the Melbourne version is likely to be a contemporary copy, possibly even ordered by the abbé. It was acquired by Melbourne soon after the René Fribourg sale, and had passed through the hands of several minor London dealers before John McDonnell recommended it for acquisition (for £1000); the museum’s reports accepted it as “a fine example

Lapauze, *op. cit.*, no. 23, reproduced; Alfred Leroy, *op. cit.*, p. 69, reproduced; Pierre de Nolhac, *La Vie et l’œuvre de Maurice Quentin de La Tour*, Paris, 1930, reproduced opposite p. 70.

²⁵⁶ Pastel, 0.55x0.45. Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, inv. 1620-5. Mme veuve Alexandre Mauzin; Pierre Decourcelle; Paris, Drouot, 29–30 May 1911, Lot 119. André Seligmann, Paris, in 1935; René Fribourg; London, Sotheby’s, 16 October 1963, Lot 611, to Wardell. Exhibited: *Exposition de cent pastels*, 1908, no. 32, pl. 24; Paris 1937, no. 179. Literature: Besnard & Wildenstein, *op. cit.*, no. 383, fig. 78; L. Roger-Milès, *Maîtres du XVIII^e siècle: Cent pastels*, Paris, 1908.

²⁵⁷ “De toutes les versions, elle [Pommyer’s] est assurément la plus belle” – Debrie & Salmon, *La Tour*, Paris, 2000, p. 84f.

²⁵⁸ Reported in *Le Journal*, 15 January 1905, p. 6.

of the fully developed art of pastel painting” and “there are two other known versions...both inferior in quality.”²⁵⁹ That presumably referred to the Saint-Quentin réplique (the primary version remained unknown) and a so-called preparatory drawing in black and white chalk on blue paper, formerly in the collection of Mme Thalmann in Paris in 1928, also with the chair, the authenticity of which has been questioned.²⁶⁰ On the basis of the image in B&W, this is understandable; but a more recent photograph (fig. 4) reveals white highlights that are credibly autograph, and a redrawn sleeve in the upper left background whose folds are found in the primary version and which argues in favour of autograph *préparation* status. Other versions have also been reported, almost all copies after the Saint-Quentin version, which was the set piece for the annual competition at the *École gratuite de dessin* in 1858.²⁶¹

As with many of La Tour’s works, it is difficult to date on criteria such as the apparent age of the sitter: but a comparison of the face with the Cochin and Gois images discussed below would suggest a date in the 1750s. In terms of composition (La Tour chose almost exactly the same pose as Largillierre had used so many years earlier), there is perhaps an analogy with La Tour’s *grand portrait*²⁶² of Mme de Pompadour (Musée du Louvre; the pastel was commenced around 1750, but not finished until 1755), which shares with the present composition the enigmatic smile and averted gaze rare in La Tour’s œuvre. Xavier Salmon draws parallels with the “*facture vibrante du visage*” of the 1753 portrait of the abbé Nollet in Munich,²⁶³ and speculates that the picture was executed in the 1750s and exhibited subsequently – for it is now clear that this work was in the Salon of 1763, appearing under the livret’s delphic “n° 69: *Autres portraits, sous le même numéro.*”²⁶⁴ The critic Mathon de La Cour mentions merely “un *Ecclésiastique respectable*”,²⁶⁵ but the abbé Philippe Bridard de La Garde, writing anonymously in the *Mercure de France* in September 1763, comments:²⁶⁶

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

The anonymous report in the *Journal encyclopédique*²⁶⁷ removes any residual doubt about the identification. Discussing the portraits of the royal family, the report moves to that of Le Moyne, and then adds:

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

Two letters from Pommyer to La Tour have survived,²⁶⁸ their content and informality (we have preserved the abbé’s somewhat erratic orthography) confirm the closeness of their friendship. In the

²⁵⁹ Leonard Bell Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria, 1861 to 1968*, 1970, pp. 363, 455.

²⁶⁰ Black and white chalk drawing on blue paper, 0.44x0.355. Private collection (F. Bohler; Paris, 23 February 1906. François Flameng; Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, 26–27 May 1919, Lot 134; Paris, Mme Thalmann in 1928). Literature: Besnard & Wildenstein, *op. cit.*, no. 384, fig. 191; *Les Arts*, 1918, reproduced; Fleury & Brière, *op. cit.*, p. 65 (“douteux”); Xavier Salmon, *op. cit.* Another version in a French private collection is a late eighteenth century copy.

²⁶¹ *Registre des délibérations*, 17 February 1858.

²⁶² See, for example, Elise Goodman, *The portraits of Madame de Pompadour*, Berkeley, 2000; for a discussion of the date and relationship between La Tour’s portrait and the series of portraits by Boucher which also show Mme de Pompadour’s face at the same angle, see Alastair Laing, *François Boucher 1703–1770*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, 1986, p. 253.

²⁶³ Christine Debie & Xavier Salmon, *Maurice-Quentin de La Tour*, Paris, 2000, p. 85.

²⁶⁴ The date of 1783 inscribed later on the backing board initially seems simply to be wrong; however, it may be an erroneous transcription of a date from a lost label, a fragment of which (with the sitter’s name) survives.

²⁶⁵ Anon. [Charles-Joseph Mathon de La Cour], *Lettres à Madame *** sur les peintures, les sculptures et les gravures exposées dans le Salon du Louvre en 1763*, Paris, 1763.

²⁶⁶ “Description des tableaux exposés au Salon du Louvre, avec des remarques, par une Société d’amateurs”, extraordinaire du *Mercure de France*, September 1763, pp. 197–206. I am most grateful to Xavier Salmon for drawing this to my attention. The identification with Pommyer was originally noted by Jean Seznec & Jean Adhémar, eds, Denis Diderot, *Salons*, Oxford, 1957–67, I, p. 172; see also Marie-Catherine Sahut, exhibition catalogue *Diderot & l’art de Boucher à David. Les Salons: 1759–1781*, Paris, Hôtel de la Monnaie, 1984–1985, p. 302.

²⁶⁷ “Suite de l’exposition...”, *Journal encyclopédique*, VII, pt. 1, 1 October 1763, p. 120.

²⁶⁸ Charles Desmaze, *op. cit.*

first, written from Reims and dated 15 October 1762 (which may well be close to the time of execution of his portrait), he writes:

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

Votre serviteur et amy de tout mon cœur,

L'ABBE POMMYER, doyen.

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

Sadly few pastels by La Tour's pupil Mlle Navarre²⁶⁹ have survived, and none that we can identify as of the prior at Reims (unless she is the author of the Melbourne copy).



Figure 5

Pommyer was an enthusiastic collector of the other painter mentioned, Jean-Siméon Chardin (1699–1779), and owned a *Tableau de fruits* which was also shown at the 1763 Salon (fig. 5). As Pierre Rosenberg has shown,²⁷⁰ this is most probably the *Bocal d'olives* now in the Louvre; it received the much quoted, but still striking, praise from Diderot:²⁷¹

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

Pommyer also owned a version of *Les Attributs des arts*, a painting with a rather complicated history. The original commission, ordered by Cochin for the château de Choisy, was based around a statuette by Bouchardon; the 1765 canvas is now in the Louvre. A second painting, which exists in several versions (one is in The Minneapolis Institute of Arts), replaced the Bouchardon statuette with Pigalle's *Mercur*, and includes the insignia of the order of Saint-Michel recently offered to Pigalle and reflected in the full title of *Les Attributs des arts et les récompenses qui leur sont accordés*. The primary version of this work was delivered by Falconet to Catherine the Great in 1766; the commission was probably instigated by

²⁶⁹ See Jean Cailleux, "Three portraits in pastel and their history", *Burlington magazine*, 27, November 1971, pp. i–vi; *Le Dessin en couleurs*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Galerie Cailleux, 1984, no. 39; and the entry on Antoinette-Geneviève Navarre in the online *Dictionary of pastellists*.

²⁷⁰ See Rosenberg, *op. cit.* 1979, p. 322ff.

²⁷¹ Diderot, I, p. 222f.

Diderot.²⁷² It was the Pommyer version that was shown in the Salon of 1769 (no. 31), and which Diderot²⁷³ praised in his critique:

En regardant ses *Attributs des arts*, l'œil recréé reste satisfait et tranquille. Quand on a regardé longtemps ce morceau, les autres paraissent froids, découpés, plats, crus et désaccordés. Chardin est entre la nature et l'art ; il relègue les autres imitations au troisième rang.... Chardin est un vieux magicien à qui l'âge n'a pas encore ôté sa baguette.



Figure 6

The painting apparently reappeared in the engraver Johann Georg Wille's sale;²⁷⁴ if this was indeed the picture which belonged to Pommyer, that suggests that at least some of Pommyer's collection was dispersed soon after his death, if not before. Moreover, these two Chardins are known to have belonged to Pommyer only because, very unusually, his name appears as owner in the Salon livret. Another painting which he owned was *Le Sacrifice de Jephthé* by Lagrenée, exhibited at the Salon de 1765, no. 24;²⁷⁵ while four years later, an annotated sketch by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin identifies Pommyer as the owner of another Lagrenée painting, of *L'Union de la Peinture et de la Sculpture* shown in the 1769 salon (fig. 6).²⁷⁶ These observations can only prompt us to wonder just what other pictures did he own?²⁷⁷

Unfortunately the abbé's posthumous inventory is singularly unhelpful.²⁷⁸ A pair of marine paintings were valued at 36 livres, while two prints of the king and queen were estimated at 40. A bust of Louis XV in white marble was the most expensive items, at 240 livres, while the family portraits were, as usual, simply noted "pour mémoire", but with singularly little detail: "onze tableaux, estampes, gravures & une buste de marbre". There appears to be no explicit mention of any pastel. The contents of the abbé's library and (rather well-stocked) wine cellar were however described in meticulous detail. In his country house at Croissy²⁷⁹, only one picture is mentioned, a portrait of "une femme" but it is "sur toile".

²⁷² Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 344ff; Rosenberg & Temperini, *op. cit.*, p. 143ff.

²⁷³ Diderot, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 82f; the picture is now lost. The Saint-Aubin sketch in his *livret* of the Salon is reproduced in Rosenberg & Temperini, *op. cit.*, p. 279, no. 181b. See also Richard S. Davis, "Institute purchases a great still life by Chardin", *The Minneapolis Institute of Arts bulletin*, XLIII/7, October 1954, pp. 50–51; Clare Le Corbeiller, "Mercury, messenger of taste", *The Metropolitan Museum of Art bulletin*, new series, XXII/1, 1963, pp. 22–28, who suggests that the Pommyer version is that at Minneapolis.

²⁷⁴ Paris, 6 December 1784, Lot 64.

²⁷⁵ Recorded as no. 120 in Lagrenée's own catalogue, published in Edmond & Jules de Goncourt, *Portraits intimes*, 1880, p. 338 "reçu un présent"; see also Marc Sandoz, *Les Lagrenée*, Paris, 1984, p. 201.

²⁷⁶ Now in the Cincinnati Museum of Art. I am grateful to Dr Esther Bell (private communication, 9 April 2013) for drawing it to my attention. The painting, 0.787x0.597 oval, signed and dated 1768, was sold in New York, Christie's, 4 June 2009, Lot 52. See Seznac & Adhémar 1967, IV, pp. 20f; Sandoz, *op. cit.*, pp. 217f, no. 188, p. XLVII, fig. 188B.

²⁷⁷ Perhaps the most tantalising possibility is that he was the Pommier whose name, along with a certain Dubois, is annotated on the British Library copy of a sale catalogue as being the former owner of a collection of some 150, mainly Italian, old master paintings (with names such as Bronzino, Caravaggio, Luca Giordano, Masaccio, Perugino, Pontormo, Salvator Rosa, Tintoretto and Veronese), sold in Paris on 2–3 July 1821; an earlier sale from the same collections took place in Paris on 27 May 1816.

²⁷⁸ AN MC/LVIII/519, 17 February 1784.

²⁷⁹ No. 6 bis Grande Rue; leased for nine years from 1779 at 1200 livres per annum from André de Bauldry, maître des comptes, brother-in-law of Étienne-François d'Aligre (*v. infra*). Joséphine de Beauharnais lived in the house from 1793 until Bonaparte acquired Malmaison for her in 1799. Mariette also lived in the village from 1750 to 1774; d'Aligre's son later acquired and rebuilt his house.

The 1993 sale included, together with the Largillierre suite and La Tour portrait of Pommyer, two other important pastel portraits: those of René-Charles de Maupeou, by Nattier, and of Marie Fel, by La Tour. Nattier's portrait²⁸⁰ of Maupeou, known until recently only by the references to it in the 1748 Salon, has now been published as such by Xavier Salmon; it was presented in 1993 without attribution or clear identification of the sitter. René-Charles de Maupeou, marquis de Morangles, vicomte de Bruyères (Paris 1688–1775) was born into a family of clerics and lawyers. He became président à mortier in the Paris parlement in 1717, a few years after his marriage to Anne-Victoire de Lamoignon, a member of another great political dynasty, through whom he also became related to Pommyer. Towards the end of 1743, Maupeou was made premier président, a position he held for the next fourteen years, and it seems clear that Nattier's pastel was executed shortly after this.

While it is not surprising that the wealthy and ambitious judge should have commissioned the fashionable Nattier to portray him, and to have had the resultant image engraved – Maupeou kept some 55 portraits of chanceliers and gardes des sceaux in his private apartments in the château de Bruyères²⁸¹ – it is less clear how the pastel should have come into Pommyer's hands. It is natural to assume a direct transfer to the family: not only was the abbé Pommyer related to Maupeou, but, as a conseiller-clerc member of the grand'chambre du parlement, he would have had frequent contact with the premier président. As we shall see below, Pommyer was the particular friend both of Maupeou and of his son René-Nicolas-Charles-Augustin, with whom Pommyer was to stay at the château de Bruyères. The son was the future chancelier (René-Charles de Maupeou did eventually achieve his ambition to become chancelier, but only for one day: by a prearranged device, he took office in 1768 but immediately resigned in favour of his son). While this might suggest that the portrait was presented to the family, Maupeou apparently did not collect the original, which remained in the artist's possession and was not sold until Nattier's decline in popularity led to a sale of the contents of his studio in 1763. (It is possible that Pommyer's enthusiasm for Chardin may also have been communicated to Maupeou fils, as a Chardin oil *Hure de sanglier* was exhibited in the Salon de 1769, no. 33, “tiré du Cabinet de Monseigneur le Chancelier.”) Thus it seems most probable that Pommyer purchased the portrait at, or soon after, that sale.²⁸²



Figure 7

The remarkable pastel²⁸³ (fig. 7) of the singer Marie Fel (1713–1794) remained, like the Nattier, unrecorded until its appearance in 1993. There the sitter was correctly identified, on the basis of the inscription on the sheet of music – “les yeux de l'Amour/un cantatille” is a reference to one of the short songs composed for Marie Fel by her brother Antoine. Two collections of his *cantatilles, airs et duos tendres et bacchiques* were published in Paris around 1748. The pose is remarkably similar to that of *Mlle Ferrand méditant sur Newton* (Munich), exhibited in the Salon of 1753, but, while that portrait invests its subject with all the seriousness that such a bluestocking would have demanded, La Tour here reinterprets the pose with humour: his mistress's open smile – quite unlike the enigmatic préparation at Saint-Quentin by which we know her best – indicates that she is party to the joke in which the putto on the drawing echoes the title

²⁸⁰ See essay, www.pastellists.com/Essays/Nattier_Maupeou.pdf; both pastels are now in the same private collection.

²⁸¹ See Olivier Bonfait, “Les collections des parlementaires parisiens du XVIII^e siècle”, *Revue de l'art*, LXXIII, 1986, pp. 28–42.

²⁸² The successful bidder was presumably not recognised by the German-born dealer Paul-Charles-Alexandre Helle whose annotated catalogue survives in the Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie (reprinted by Renard, *op. cit.*), and cites only the price, 37 livres.

²⁸³ *Marie Fel* by Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, c.1753. Pastel, 0.79x0.635. Location unknown (Pommyer; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée; London, 10 December 1993, Lot 52).

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

Pommyer became honoraire associé-libre de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture on 31 October 1767.²⁸⁴ Two associé-libre positions had opened up, as a result of the deaths of the historian Gaspard-Moïse de Fontanieu and of the art critic, the abbé Gougenot (who, incidentally, wrote an encomium on Nattier's portrait of Maupeou when it appeared at the 1748 Salon); the engraver and writer Pierre-Jean Mariette had also been promoted to honoraire amateur. The other candidates included Berthélémy-Augustin Blondel d'Azincourt (1719–1794), intendant des menus plaisirs; his claims to connoisseurship were not inconsiderable, and through his wife's inheritance he was able to amass an enormous collection which included over 500 drawings by Boucher alone.²⁸⁵ The third candidate, Pierre-Victor, baron de Besenval, was being advanced by Boucher and Pierre; one of the outstanding figures of the period, he had distinguished himself as soldier, patron of the arts (his famous marble bathroom by Brongniart was commissioned for the hôtel de Chanac-Pompadour, which he bought in 1767), writer and *galant* (numbering among his conquests the marquise de Polignac, Mme de Ségur and la Clairon; his declaration to Marie-Antoinette in 1776 was however a step too far). A fourth, the financier Boutin, trésorier de la Marine, is perhaps remembered only as the creator of an English garden in his house in the rue de Clichy, for which he commissioned Houdon's *Naiïade*.²⁸⁶

Against these candidates, Charles-Nicolas Cochin (1715–1790), in his rôle as *secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie*, set out the politics surrounding the choice of replacements and explained his support of Pommyer to Mme de Pompadour's brother, the marquis de Marigny, *directeur des bâtiments et manufactures du roi*, on 1 October 1767:²⁸⁷

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

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

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

Marigny's response was communicated to Cochin orally and recorded in his annotation of the letter: "Qu'il arrange celà à sa fantaisie, je m'en rapporte."²⁸⁸ The result of the election of 31 October was communicated to Marigny the following day: Pommyer and Blondel d'Azincourt each secured 27 votes,

²⁸⁴ Anatole de Montaiglon, *Procès-verbaux de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture 1648–1793*, Paris, 1886, VII, pp. 370f.

²⁸⁵ Colin B. Bailey, "Toute seule elle peut remplir et satisfaire l'attention: the early appreciation and marketing of Watteau's drawings, with an introduction to the collecting of modern French drawings during the reign of Louis XV", *Watteau and his world*, ed. Alan Wintermute, London, 1999.

²⁸⁶ He was also the subject of a Cochin portrait, engraved by Watelet.

²⁸⁷ Marc Furcy-Raynaud, "Correspondance de M. de Marigny avec Coypel, Lépicié et Cochin", *Nouvelles archives de l'art français*, xx, 1904, pp. 124–126. See also Charlotte Guichard, *Les Amateurs d'art à Paris au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 2006, p. 60f.

²⁸⁸ Cited in Christian Michel, *Charles-Nicolas Cochin et l'art des lumières*, Rome, 1993, p. 128f.

while Besenval received only three. Two new candidates, the duc de Nivernois and Armand-Pierre-François Chastre de Billy, premier valet de garde-robe du roi, commis des guerres, collectionneur, got one each; while Boutin was not mentioned. Apparently Watelet was furious with Cochin, who responded with admirable restraint. Besenval was to be elected associé-libre in 1769 (and in 1784 succeeded Pommyer as honoraire amateur). Pidanzat de Mairobert was particularly critical in his review of the members of the Académie; passing rapidly over others among the sixteen honorary amateurs and associates, mostly grand seigneurs or wealthy financiers, he singled out two:²⁸⁹

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

Four days before his election to the Académie Pommyer wrote to La Tour the second letter which has survived²⁹⁰:

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

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

L'ABBE POMMYER.

Au château de Bryères, ce 27 octobre 1767.

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

Although Pommyer was present at Boucher's investiture as premier peintre du roi (30 July 1768), his subsequent attendance at proceedings of the Académie was very infrequent, perhaps as a result of the attack on him by students unhappy at the award of the first prize for sculpture to the unpopular Jean-Guillaume Moitte. The incident was widely reported. Diderot mentioned the outrage to "le bel abbé Pommyer":²⁹¹ it seems that Pommyer was the first academician to leave the meeting, and found his passage blocked by the students, who cried "Passe, foutu âne". The unfortunate Moitte and the remaining academicians followed, and were hissed and cursed; Cochin, Vien and Pigalle were particularly blamed for supporting the successful candidate. Cochin described the incident to Marigny;²⁹² this version involved several students drawing their swords and attacking Pommyer's servant, who was riding on the back of his coach.

Pommyer became peripherally involved in his role as doyen honoraire of the Église métropolitaine de Reims in events surrounding the commission of a new altar for the chapter from Lambert-Sigisbert Adam. Various events, including the death of Adam, the late delivery of the marble to Marseille during the Seven Years War etc. led to a law case brought by Adam's brother Nicolas-Sébastien.²⁹³ After some years, a settlement was reached of which the evidence arose in a letter from Pommyer to chanoine Benoît:²⁹⁴

Au château de Bryères, 26 8^{bre} 1768.

²⁸⁹ *L'Espion anglois, ou correspondance secreete entre Milord All'Eye et Milord All'Ear*, London, 1785, VII, p. 80.

²⁹⁰ Desmaze, *op. cit.*

²⁹¹ Diderot wrote up the affair three times, in almost exactly the same language: first, in a letter to Falconet of 6 September 1768, which omits the epithet "bel" (Diderot, *Correspondance*, ed. Georges Roth & Jean Varloot, Paris, 1955–1970, VIII, p. 143); in a letter to Sophie Volland of 10 September 1768 (*ibid.*, p. 156); and in *Les Deux Académies*, a supplement to the Salon de 1767 (*Salons*, III, p. 342).

²⁹² *Procès-verbaux*, 27 August 1768, pp. 399ff.

²⁹³ For an account of this, see Charles Sarazin, "Cathédrale de Reims. Le Maître-Autel du XVIII^e siècle", *Travaux de l'Académie nationale de Reims*, CXXXVI, 1921, pp. 271–314.

²⁹⁴ Archives départementales de Reims. Fonds du Chapitre métropolitain. Fabrique; liasse 19, renseignements.

J'ay été très mortifié, Monsieur et cher confrère, que les circonstances m'aient empêché d'exécuter le dessein où j'étois de me rendre à Reims, comme j'avois eu l'honneur de vous le dire à Paris. Je ne le suis pas moins de n'être pas à portée de vous faire passer pour le moment, la quittance du S. Adam que jay depuis plus d'un an, étant absent de Paris. Dès que j'y serai retourné, mon premier soin sera de vous la faire tenir. Vous pouvés, si vous le jugés à propos, rendre toujours votre compte, puisque la présente peut vous fixer, que le S. Adam a touché six mil livres pour la dissolution de son marché, et mil livres tant pour les frais de transport, dommages et intérêts et tous les frais de procédures etc. ce qui forme bien les 7.000 1. que vous m'aviés fait passer, et qu'il a reçu. Je vous prierai de me faire passer le double du marché afin que je puisse le déchirer devant Adam comme je m'y suis engagé.

Je suis, Monsieur et cher confrère, avec respect, votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur.

L'abbé POMMYER.

Suscription : M. l'abbé Benoit, c^{ne} de l'église de Reims à Reims.

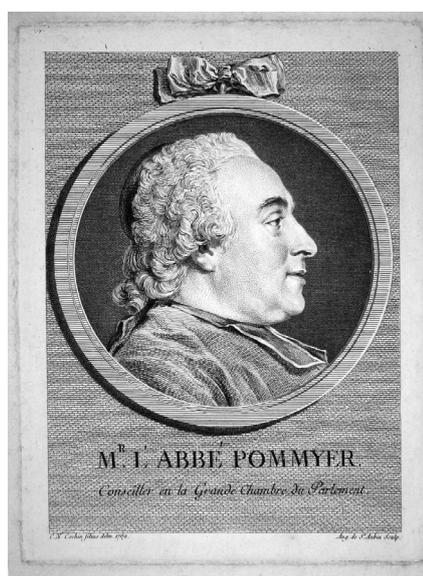


Figure 8



Figure 9

Pommyer did play a rôle in the row between the Académie royale and the Académie de Saint-Luc. Friction between the two academies had grown, perhaps as a result of the patronage by the Argenson family of the older, but humbler, institution; but, as the correspondence of Cochin again reveals, the royal academicians decided to confine their objections to the alleged use by their rivals of the term “Académie royale” to which they were not entitled; this was a battle in which Cochin was confident of victory. The parlement duly passed an arrêt, with which the Académie de Saint-Luc agreed to comply; but the new premier peintre Jean-Baptiste-Marie Pierre, reporting to Marigny, decided to establish a committee under Pommyer’s direction to decide if, despite the Académie de Saint-Luc’s submission, formal registration of the order was required.²⁹⁵ Several years later the formal suppression nevertheless took place.

Of the various portraits Cochin made of his friend, the etched profile²⁹⁶ of Pommyer, wearing the calotte, or skullcap, is the earliest: it was etched by Cochin in 1768 but finished by Augustin de Saint-

²⁹⁵ Letter of 10 November 1770; cited in Jules Guiffrey, “Histoire de l’Académie de Saint-Luc”, *Archives de l’art français*, IX, 1915, pp. 63f. The suppression in 1776 may have been influenced by Malesherbes’s financial reforms.

²⁹⁶ Profile of Pommyer, engraving with etching, by Charles-Nicolas Cochin finished by Augustin de Saint-Aubin, 0.196x0.146 (plate), 1769; “M^r L’ABBÉ POMMYER./Conseiller en la Grande Chambre du Parlement.”; below the line, “C. N. Cochin filius delin. 1769.”; “Aug. de S. Aubin Sculp.” Literature: C. A. Jombert, *Catalogue de l’œuvre de Charles Nicolas Cochin fils*, Paris, 1770, p. 130, no. 104 among the “portraits en médaillons & autres, dessinés par C. N. Cochin fils”: “104. M. l’Abbé Pommyer, Conseiller en la grande Chambre du Parlement de Paris, Amateur honoraire de l’Académie Royale de Peinture & Sculpture, &c; gravé à l’eau-forte par Cochin fils, en 1768. Cette planche n’a point été achevée.”; Baron Roger Portalis & Henri Béraldi, *Les Graveurs*

Aubin and dated 1769 (fig. 8). It was a few years later that circumstances brought the friends together, leading to a remarkable collection of portraits of Pommyer and his family. Pommyer was exiled to his country retreat at Gandelu (halfway between Paris and Reims, near Château-Thierry) in January 1771, ironically as a result of the infamous reforms of the parlement by Pommyer's friend Maupeou le fils, now chancelier. Cochin had also fallen from power (he was dismissed from his position as chargé du détail des arts in 1770), and he accompanied his friend to Gandelu. Here Cochin made several drawings of Pommyer, including that²⁹⁷ now in the Stanford University collection, which was engraved by Demarteau with the satirical title *paysan de Gandelu* (fig. 9): Pommyer is shown wearing his “costume de bienfaisance”, holding a cane, sitting on a rustic chair; a manuscript note on the Bibliothèque nationale copy of the engraving indicates that Pommyer dressed thus in his exile, and devoted himself to good works, including rescuing a grocer from bankruptcy. Cochin sent the drawing to his friend Montucla on 7 May 1771, explaining that it was a “plaisanterie”. Pommyer's relaxed informality at Gandelu is captured²⁹⁸ by Cochin in a sheet which is now in Berlin (fig. 10) a later annotation, by Charles Theurier-Pommyer, explains that Pommyer is talking to his servant at the door to his house on the left. A delightful picture of this idyll is offered by the unpublished journal of the bookseller Siméon-Prosper Hardy (1729–1806):²⁹⁹ the villagers put on a village fête for the abbé on the eve of his saint's day in 1772 with songs in his honour. Pommyer then entertained the village to supper and further festivities into the night. Hardy adds his own observations on this description, with a somewhat puritanical note:

Mon attachement à l'ancien Parlement de Paris me détermine à conserver ici l'extrait intéressant d'une fête villageoise donnée à M. l'abbé Pommyer Conseiller en la Grand-Chambre de ce Parlement exilé à Gandelu Bourg de la Champagne, quoique cette Pièce ne me fut tombée entre les mains que fort tard, puisqu'on la dattoit de la veille de Saint François de Paule patron de M. l'abbé Pommyer, 1^{er} avril 1772, à moins qu'on ne se fût trompé et que cette fête n'eût eu plutôt son exécution la veille de saint François 3 octobre de la susdite année. Suit le détail de cette fête.

Vers le soir les habitants s'étant assemblés devant la maison de M. l'abbé Pommyer, les chevaliers de l'arquebuse armés de leurs fusils un drapeau à leur tête, vinrent le saluer et se ranger en haïe à sa porte pour maintenir le bon ordre; toutes les filles et femmes du Païs mises le plus galamment entrèrent ensuite dans la salle de compagnie en se tenant par la main et chantant ce couplet de Branle qu'elles danserent en même temps. ...[vers de quelques chansons]...

du XVIII^e siècle, Paris, 1880–82, I, Cochin, no. 94; see also p. 544; Emmanuel Bocher, *Gravures françaises du XVIII^e siècle*, V, *L'Œuvre gravé d'Augustin de Saint Aubin*, Paris, 1879, no. 219.

²⁹⁷ Black chalk drawing on cream laid paper, of the abbé Pommyer “en paysan de Gandelu”, by Cochin, 0.235x0.187, signed “Dessiné par C. N. Cochin à Gandelu/le 29 mars 1771”; “Le Paysan de Gandelu”; “Vertueux, plein de sentiment,/patron de l'innocence:/l'honneur est son seul élément,/il est sa recompense”. Stanford University Museum of Art, Palo Alto, Mortimer C. Leventritt Fund, inv. 1972.48 (Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée; William H. Schab, New York, in 1969). Literature: Portalis, *op. cit.* 1877, I, pp. 100, 126; exhibition catalogue, *18th century drawings from California collections*, Claremont and Sacramento, 1976, no. 16 reproduced; *Fifty master drawings*, New York, William H. Schab, no date [1969], no. 29a; Lorenz Eitner et al., *Stanford University Museum of Art: the drawing collection*, Seattle, 1993, no. 101, pp. 68f, 316; Dagmar Korbacher, *Rendezvous: Die Französischen Meisterzeichnungen Des Kupferstichkabinetts*, Dresden, 2018, p. 95 repr. Engraved: sanguine manner by Demarteau, 1771, 0.245x0.191 (see Marcel Roux, *Inventaire du fonds français*, Paris, 1949, vol. 6, no. 262; Edmond & Jules de Goncourt, “Cochin”, in *L'Art du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1882, vol. 2, p. 59; Christian Michel, *op. cit.*, p. 129, pl. 17 reproduced).

²⁹⁸ *Vue de Gandelu* by Cochin, 1771. Black chalk drawing, 0.237x0.388, signed “Dessiné par C. N. Cochin le fils, à Gandelu, en 1771.”; annotated “Vue de Gandelu près de la Ferté sous Jouarre et de Chateau-Thierry, où fit exilé M. l'abbé Pommyer en janvier 1771. Il parle à son domestique à la porte cochère de la principale maison où il habitait.” Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, KdZ 26335 (Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée; William H. Schab, New York, in 1969). Exhibited: *Fifty Master Drawings*, New York, William H. Schab, no date [1969], no. 29b; *Fifty Fine and Rare Drawings, Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts*, New York, William H. Schab, no date [1971], no. 64, fig. 69; *Vom späten Mittelalter bis zu Jacques Louis David. Neu erworbene und neubestimmte Zeichnungen im berliner Kupferstichkabinett*, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, 1973, no. 182. Cochin continued to visit Pommyer's country retreat for many years: in a letter to Desfriches of 18 May 1782 he mentions that he is about to spend a fortnight with his friend “à la campagne” (Paul Ratouis de Limay, *Aignan-Thomas Desfriches*, 1907, p. 83).

²⁹⁹ BnF, MS Français 6681, II, f° 143ff, entry for 13 January 1773; partly cited in Valérie Goutal Arnal, “« Mes Loisirs, ou Journal d'Evenemens Tels Qu'ils Parviennent à ma Connoissance », chronique (1753–1789) du libraire Siméon-Prosper Hardy”, *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, XLVI, 1999, pp. 457–477.

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

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



Figure 10

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



Figure 11

Another Cochin drawing³⁰⁰ of François-Emmanuel Pommyer (fig. 11) belongs to the same group of drawings of members of the family made at Gandelu in 1772; they were in the possession of Theurier-Pommyer's widow when seen by baron Roger Portalis³⁰¹ in 1877 and reported by the Goncourts five years later. A second version of this, in the same pose as fig. 11 but with a different wig and a hand visible, also signed and dated 1772, appeared in a Christie's sale in 2021.³⁰² Dominique Brême (Christie's 1993 catalogue) thought that the drawing³⁰³ now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York might be of Merry Pommyer, also an abbé, since there is little resemblance to the La Tour image, despite the inscription on the verso mentioning the Grand'Chambre (evidently a later confusion), but the recent appearance of the 1772 Cochin portrait of Merry,³⁰⁴ and the relative ages of the sitters, suggests that in fact the Met sitter is their nephew, a third abbé

³⁰⁰ Black chalk drawing by Cochin, 0.17x0.12, signed "Dessiné par C. N. Cochin le fils, a Gandelu, 1772". It was in the collection of Hans Fürstenberg until 2013, framed with two others in the series, the eldest brother François Pommyer and Tribolet d'Auvillars.

³⁰¹ Portalis, *op. cit.*; see also Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 59, 92, 120, 122f.

³⁰² Paris, 24 March 2021, Lot 49.

³⁰³ Black chalk drawing by Cochin, 0.115x0.089, signed "Dessiné par C. N. Cochin le fils, a Gandelu, 1772"; inscribed *verso* "l'abbé Pommier conseiller a la gde Chambre du Parlement". New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman collection, inv. 1975.1.584 (Mme Theurier-Pommyer. Gaston Le Breton in 1922; David David-Weill; Irwin Boyle Laughlin; Mrs Hubert Chanler; London, Sotheby's, 10 June 1959, Lot 10; P. & D. Colnaghi; acquired Robert Lehman, February 1960). Literature: Portalis, *op. cit.*; George Szabo, *Seventeenth and eighteenth century French drawings from the Robert Lehman collection*, New York, 1980, no. 7, reproduced; Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann et al., *The Robert Lehman collection VII: fifteenth- to eighteenth-century European drawings*, Princeton, 1999, no. 124, pp. 344f; included in Jeffares 2001, fig. 9, erroneously as of François-Emmanuel Pommyer.

³⁰⁴ Paris, 24 March 2021, Lot 50. The portrait, black chalk, 0.143x0.11, was in the baronne Jacquier de Rosée sale in Brussels, Galerie Moderne, 11 October 1967, Lot 2218.

in the family, Nicolas-François-Bonaventure Pommyer de Rougemont (1735–1812), who is discussed further below. Questions of identification extend to others in the series, not least because the twin eldest brothers both appear to have been “seigneurs de Rougemont”. However, in Portalis’s list, Mme Theurier-Pommyer’s black chalk portrait of the trésorier Pommyer (i.e. Pommyer’s eldest brother François, dated 1772) is distinguished from the portrait of M. Pommyer de Rougemont in sanguine, also signed and dated 1772; the latter could be of any of the three sons of François’s twin Yves-Joseph-Charles, who was dead in 1772.³⁰⁵

Mme Theurier-Pommyer also had a large (“in-4^o”) black chalk drawing of the abbé Pommyer des Arches (i.e. Pommyer’s brother Merry), dated 1771, as well as a small (in-12^o) drawing of the same. Among these are probably the sanguine drawing in a private collection in Bremen³⁰⁶ in 1976; and a black chalk drawing with the Schab Gallery³⁰⁷ in 1969. They are clearly of individuals of different ages; despite the medium (Portalis may have confused the red and black chalk drawings in his list, or it may simply have been incomplete), the Bremen sitter can only be François (of the brothers only Merry and François-Emmanuel were alive in 1772, and Merry would have worn clerical bands). The Schab sitter is identified as Yves-Joseph-Charles; this must be the son, despite his resemblance to the right-hand boy in the double portrait of the twins by Largillierre fifty years earlier, who must be his father.³⁰⁸

Other members of the family drawn by Cochin were Pommyer’s niece Mme d’Incourt de Fréchencourt and her husband (black chalk medallions, dated 1771), both in Portalis’s list. A delightful Cochin drawing of a four-year-old child known as “Chou-Chou”, holding her doll, was not listed by Portalis but has survived in the family (fig. 12): dated 1771, it depicts Pommyer’s great-niece Élisabeth d’Incourt de Fréchencourt, the future baronne de Jacquier de Rosée, whose alliance represents a crucial link in the provenance of the entire collection. Mme Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont, née Marie-Élisabeth Huart (black chalk, signed and dated 1772; in Portalis), was herself clearly a close friend of Cochin, who dined every Wednesday with her, even after the abbé’s death.³⁰⁹ Four more Cochin drawings were in the Theurier-Pommyer collection in 1877: portraits of the lawyer Jacques Tribolet d’Auvillars, “à Gandelu 1772”; of the playwright Jean-Michel Sedaine, 1777; and of Mme de Moncrif,³¹⁰ 1780 (all three were no doubt friends of both Cochin and the abbé); and an illustration for Hénault’s *Nouvel abrégé chronologique de l’histoire de France*.³¹¹



Figure 12

³⁰⁵ According to the comte de Lorne d’Alincourt’s archives.

³⁰⁶ Sanguine drawing, 0.132x0.097, signed “Dessiné, a gandelu, par C. N. Cochin le fils, en 1772”. Location unknown (Mme Theurier-Pommyer; Bremen, private collection in 1976). Exhibited: *Zeichnungen alter Meister aus deutschem Privatbesitz*, Bremen, 1976, no. 167, fig. 81 reproduced.

³⁰⁷ Black chalk drawing, 0.119x0.096, signed “Dessiné, a gandelu, par C. N. Cochin le fils, en 1772”. Location unknown (Yves-Joseph-Charles Pommyer de Rougemont; Theurier-Pommyer; Jacquier de Rosée; William H. Schab, New York, in 1969). Exhibited: *Fifty master drawings*, New York, William H. Schab, no date [1969], no. 29c.

³⁰⁸ Of the Pommyer nephews, only Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon’s date of birth is known (1743): he would have been 29 in 1772. Although some sources describe him as the eldest, the apparent age of the sitter in the Schab portrait suggests that in fact Yves-Joseph-Charles was older.

³⁰⁹ A letter in verse to Mme Pommyer de Rougemont, dated 12 March 1785, suggestively talking of a lost bet and of the consumption of oysters, is reproduced in *Nouvelles archives de l’art français*, II, 1880–81, p. 41.

³¹⁰ Possibly Mme Pierre-Louis-César de Moncrif, née Marie-Suzanne de Vaucourt, whose son was (in 1783) to marry Anne-Julie de Lorne, Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon Pommyer de Rougemont’s sister-in-law. It is more likely however that this was the portrait of Anne-Julie herself, as it is so described in the Brussels sale, Lot 2206 (see note *infra*).

³¹¹ Paris, 1768; the illustration is entitled “Règne de François II. Le chancelier Michel de l’Hospital refuse de signer la mort du prince de Condé (1560)”.

All of these drawings must surely once have belonged to Pommyer himself, and most appeared on the art market after the death of Mme Jacquier de Rosée in 1967. The New York drawing belonged to Gaston Le Breton in 1922 (subsequent owners included the distinguished collectors David David-Weill, Irwin Boyle Laughlin and Robert Lehman), and so must have emerged before the other group of Cochin figures. Possibly another drawing in the series, a black chalk “dessin par Ch. Cochin, à Gandelu, 1771” appeared in the Decourcelle sale in 1911.³¹² Two more³¹³ black chalk drawings also left the Theurier-Pommyer collection before the First World War: both are signed “dessiné par C. N. Cochin à Gandelu 1771”; they were in Paris sales, 10 June 1911 (Lot 30) and 31 March 1914 (Lot 24); the former is entitled *Le curé de Gandelu*, and shows the abbé Pommyer in profile, dressed in full clerical outfit (fig. 13).³¹⁴ The second may be the same as the *L'enfant de Gandelu*, in the Marius Paulme sale.³¹⁵



Figure 13

On 7 March 1770 Pommyer became forty-sixth abbé of the Cistercian abbey of Bonneval, near Laguiole in Aveyron in the diocese of Rodez.³¹⁶ He succeeded Jean-Antoine d'Agoult, doyen of Notre-Dame, who had died on 4 October 1769. Pommyer took up his position as abbé commendataire – without attendance obligations – through his procureur, J.-B. Roy, doyen du chapitre de Mur-de-Barrez, and the affairs of the abbey were conducted by the prieur claustral dom Joseph-Aurélien de Preigney. When called to decide a matter concerning the abbey and the seminary at Laguiole in 1771, he declined to attend on the grounds of his “exile” at Gandelu.³¹⁷ The abbey had the relatively large number of 22 monks. Pommyer would have enjoyed perhaps half the abbey’s revenues of 20,000 livres.³¹⁸ One of his first acts (30 April 1770) was to lease the whole of the abbey’s estates to two farmers for nine years (such leases were uncommon: the last had been granted in 1679), at a rent of 25,000

livres plus large quantities of farm produce, ranging from wheat to cheese, and including 36 brace of red partridge. The tenant farmers themselves sublet the land: on the grant of one such sublease for 20,800 livres in 1777, Pommyer received a pot-de-vin of 6240 livres.³¹⁹

³¹² Paris, 29–30 May 1911, Lot 84: “en buste, de profil à gauche, assis sur une chaise, les cheveux relevés sur le front, bouclés et pendant sur la nuque”, 13x11 cm, not reproduced. This could be the small portrait of Merry Pommyer noted by Portalis. It is difficult not to imagine a Pommyer link with two other black chalk drawings by Cochin in the same sale: Lot 80 was a portrait of Marie-Nicolas-François de Bourgogne, chanoine de l’église de Reims, who became a conseiller-clerc au parlement de Paris in 1759, following Pommyer from the 1^{ère} des enquêtes to the grand’chambre, and joining him in the Chambre souveraine du clergé in the 1780s (signed and dated 1781, it was also engraved by Demarteau); while Lot 79 was the portrait, signed and dated 1780, of the comtesse de la Guillonnière discussed above.

³¹³ I am grateful to Christian Michel for drawing my attention to these after the original publication of this article in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.

³¹⁴ 0.12x0.086.

³¹⁵ Paris, 13–15 May 1929, Lot 55, reproduced pl. 38, 0.12x0.108.

³¹⁶ The abbey is not to be confused with the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Florentin de Bonneval near Chartres, now a mental hospital. I am most grateful to Sister Joséphine of the Abbaye for drawing to my attention the information in P. A. Verlaguet, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Bonneval en Rouergue*, Rodez, 1938.

³¹⁷ Archives départementales, H. Bonneval, pap. 2 fol.

³¹⁸ Revenues of 12–16,000 livres were published in the various *Almanachs royaux* for the period; the figure of 20,000 livres is based on the 1768 figures taken for the *Commission des Réguliers* (Bibliothèque nationale, Fr. 13.857, pp. 11ff; 13.858, pp. 162ff). The *taxe en cour de Rome* was 700 florins.

³¹⁹ Verlaguet, *op. cit.*, p. 649, n. 1. Pommyer may also have been instrumental in the strange affair of dom Jean-Baptiste Miroudot du Bourg (1716–1798), a Cistercian monk who had been taken up by King Stanislas for promoting the cultivation of ryegrass, became a member of the académies of Nancy and Metz, and formed a large collection of antiquities. In 1770, he was sent to the abbé de Bonneval as *commissaire*, perhaps by Pommyer, but expelled after spreading disorder in 1771, according to five letters from the monks to the *abbé général* of the Cistercians (*op. cit.*, pp. 605ff). He was appointed Bishop of Babylon and consul to Baghdad in 1776; later he joined Talleyrand in the consecration of constitutional bishops on 24 February 1791, leading to his suspension by Rome; and he died after a long spell in prison in 1798 (see Michaud, *Biographie universelle*, Paris, 1843–).

By 1774, he had become président de la Chambre souveraine du clergé de France, the supreme court for ecclesiastical law, ruling over eight lower courts. It was probably not a coincidence that his nephew abbé Nicolas-François-Bonaventure Pommyer de Rougemont became a conseiller-commissaire to the same court in 1780;³²⁰ this nephew was already prédicateur de la reine, chanoine de Saint-Cloud, and had preached an oration at the funeral of the dauphine Marie-Josèphe de Saxe in 1766.³²¹

Friendship with the painter Jean-Jacques Bachelier (1724–1806) led to Pommyer's appointment in 1776 as a director of the École royale gratuite de dessin.³²² Following a number of smaller provincial free schools of drawing, such as that in Rouen founded by Descamps in 1749, this precursor to the École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs had been founded in 1766 by the lieutenant-général de police Antoine-Raymond-Gabriel de Sartine (1729–1801), with Bachelier as artistic director. Under his influence the school emphasised the teaching of geometry as the best means of rejecting the excesses of the rococo in favour of the simpler Louis XVI style. Bachelier obtained support from the King as well as forming a prestigious board of patrons and benefactors. Pommyer was elected along with the soldier and



Figure 14

inventor Anne-Pierre, duc d'Harcourt³²³ (1701–1783), and the new président of the school, Jean-Charles-Pierre Lenoir (1732–1807), lieutenant-général de police, who had replaced Sartine in both his offices; Lenoir later resigned his administrative functions to become bibliothécaire du roi in 1785. Sartine, Lenoir, Harcourt and Pommyer were all witnesses at Bachelier's wedding on 7 June 1776.³²⁴ It is quite possible that Pommyer may have introduced Bachelier to La Tour, who opened an École royale gratuite de dessin in Saint-Quentin in 1782 and also left Bachelier his portrait in his 1784 will.³²⁵ By 1783 Pommyer owned Bachelier's painting *La Mort d'Abel*, which had been shown in the 1763 Salon (no. 79) along with the La Tour and Chardin pictures discussed above.³²⁶ With this painting, Bachelier was *reçu* by the Académie in 1763 as a history painter (having previously been accepted as a flower painter), but a year later the artist substituted another painting, *La Charité romaine*, as his *morceau de réception* in the new genre. There were other additions to Pommyer's collection: two small pendants by François Guérin, of a

³²⁰ *Almanach royal*, 1780: "Conseillers-commissaires... Députés des diocèses, Mrs les abbés... 1780 13 avril. Reims, Pommyer de Rougemont, Chanoine & écolâtre de l'église de Reims, Vicaire général du diocèse de Cambrai, rue de Bracq". He was already "prêtre, écolâtre du diocèse [responsible for regulating teachers] et chanoine de l'église métropolitaine de Reims" according to a certificate he issued in 1778 (archives d'Avançon, 2G402, p. 108: maître d'école, Pierre Treuvelat).

³²¹ Claude Pougin de Saint-Aubin & Jean-Louis Aubert, *Correspondance littéraire de Karlsruhe (12 juillet 1766 – 15 décembre 1768)*, ed. Jochen Schlobach, p. 197f.

³²² *Almanach royal*, 1780: "Cette École est ouverte rue des Cordeliers, en faveur des Métiers, pour quinze cens Éléves, à qui l'on enseigne les principes élémentaires de la Géométrie-Pratique, de l'Architecture, de la Coupe des Pierres, de la Perspective, & des différentes parties du Dessin, comme figures, animaux, fleurs & ornements." For a discussion of the school and its significance, see Hélène Mouradian & al., *Jean-Jacques Bachelier (1724–1806) peintre du roi et de Madame de Pompadour*, Paris, 1999. Cochin only became a director in 1779.

³²³ Not to be confused with his son François-Henri (1726–1802), the soldier, gouverneur de Normandie, tutor to the Dauphin, author and member of the Académie française.

³²⁴ AN MC XXXIII 621, reprinted in Mouradian et al., *op. cit.*, p. 201f.

³²⁵ See Mouradian et al., *op. cit.*, p. 22; Besnard & Wildenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

³²⁶ Oil on canvas, 1.462x1.137; the picture is presumably that described as "La Mort de Cain, dans sa bordure carrée", valued at 240 livres in Pommyer's inventaire après décès, but not subsequently; it was mentioned in Mammès-Claude-Catherine Pahin Champlain de La Blancherie, *Essai d'un tableau historique des peintres de l'école française depuis Jean Cousin en 1500, jusqu'en 1783 inclusivement. Avec le catalogue des ouvrages des mêmes Maîtres qui sont offerts à présent à l'émulation & aux hommages du Public, dans la Salon de la Correspondance*, Paris, 1783, reprinting *Nouvelles de la République des lettres et des arts*, XXVII, 1 July 1783, p. 242 ("on voit de [Bachelier]... la mort d'Abel, chez M. l'Abbé Pommyer").

Concert; and des Joueuses de domino, were lent by him to the Salon de 1777 (no. 75).

The architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel (1698–1782), honoraire amateur of the Académie, died on 4 January 1782, and Pommyer moved up to this rank by seniority. He was the obvious choice to be selected to inform the *avocat-général du parlement de Paris*, Jean-Baptiste-Paulin d'Aguesseau de Fresne, of his election several weeks later to take up the vacant position of honoraire associé-libre, following the suggestion from d'Angiviller.³²⁷ Pommyer's attendance at the Académie was now more frequent, and he was present at the admission of Mmes Vigée Le Brun and Labille-Guiard (31 May 1783).

The remarkable marble bust³²⁸ of the abbé Pommyer by Étienne-Pierre-Adrien Gois (1731–1823), signed and dated 1783, is now in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (fig. 14); it emerged from the Jacquier de Rosée family in the late 1960s. Compared with the previous images, it shows a much older sitter in magistrate's robes, but still wearing clerical bands and a calotte. Gois, a pupil of Michel-Ange Slodtz, was *reçu* in 1770 and had just reached the rank of full professor at the Académie, an achievement celebrated by Mme Labille-Guiard's portrait of the sculptor in the Salon of 1783 (no 127). Pommyer must have known his father, Edmé Gois, *commis au greffe de la grand'chambre au parlement*, although the father was dead by the time Gois's widowed mother sued her son (unsuccessfully) in 1761 to prevent his marriage to an impoverished Mlle Périchon.³²⁹

A comparison (fig. 15) of details from the images by Largillierre, La Tour, Cochin (the second version of the 1772 three-quarters bust) and Gois is revealing in terms of resemblance and the evolution of the abbé's features over more than 60 years.



Figure 15

³²⁷ *Procès-verbaux*, 1 February 1782, pp. 100f.

³²⁸ Marble bust by Étienne-Pierre-Adrien Gois, 0.79x0.60x0.33, signed and dated 1783. Birmingham Museum & City Art Gallery, inv. P.21375 (d'Incourt de Fréchencourt; Jacquier de Rosée; Heim in 1968; acquired 1975). Literature: Evelyn Silber, *Sculpture in the Birmingham Museum and City Art Gallery – summary catalogue*, Birmingham, 1987, no. 150, reproduced; *Burlington magazine*, CXVII/872, November 1975, pp. 748–49. Exhibited: *French paintings & sculptures of the 18th century*, Heim Gallery, London, 1968, reproduced. I am most grateful to John Rogister for drawing it to my attention.

³²⁹ Stanislas Lami, *Dictionnaire des sculpteurs de l'école française au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1910. The bust may be the one in marble exhibited under "Plusieurs portraits" by Gois in the 1783 Salon, although no specific description has been found.



Figure 16

In 1756 the husband of Voltaire's niece, Nicolas-Joseph de Dompierre de Fontaine, died, and Pommyer was appointed³³⁰ tuteur to their twelve-year-old son, Alexandre-Marie-François-de-Paule de Dompierre d'Hornoy (1742–1828), of whom a 1755 portrait by Drouais exists in several versions, one given to Voltaire in 1755, one copied by his mother, an amateur pastelist; the pastel version in Ferney may be a third copy (fig. 16). In the court documents, Pommyer is referred to with his uncle's title, du Motteau, suggesting he may have inherited this territory.

Pommyer also appears as a family friend in the correspondence of Geneviève-Françoise, "Laurette", Randon de Malboissière, who reports in a letter of 11 July 1764 to Adélaïde Méliand a small supper with Mme de Montalembert, her uncle, M. de Bonrepos and Pommyer.

Of Pommyer's later as a magistrate, little is known apart from a few observations by the somewhat partial author of the *Mémoires secrets*. In his 1770 note on the Paris parlement, he records the saying applied to Pommyer: "Les bavards sont toujours bonnes gens."³³¹ Some seven years later, his tone was different, as he records one of the many conflicts between the parlement and a Paris institution:³³²

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

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

In another incident a few years later, the grand'chambre issued a ruling suppressing a letter from a certain Mme Le Féron-Dubreuil, in which she protested about an inequitable judgement against her.³³³ The *Mémoires secrets* gave a detailed account:

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

The *Mémoires* go on to quote this closing speech in tedious detail; the advocate-general's principal charge being that the defendant compounded her libel by publishing her letter of complaint to the magistrate, and thereby demonstrated the truth of the original complaints. In conclusion:³³⁴

En consequence la cour a supprimé cet imprimé comme scandaleux, téméraire, injurieux à la magistrature ; a donné acte au procureur général du roi de sa plainte contre les auteurs & distributeurs de cet imprimé &

³³⁰ Guy Périer de Féral, baron de Schwarz, "La descendance collatérale de Voltaire", *Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century*, XLI, 1966, p. 295.

³³¹ Louis Petit de Bachaumont, Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert et al., *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France depuis MDCCLXII jusqu'à nos jours*, London, 1777–89, additions for 17 May 1770.

³³² *Ibid.*, 19 April 1777.

³³³ *Observations pour la dame Leferon-Dubreuil*; see Hippolyte Monin, *L'État de Paris en 1789*, 1899, pp. 200ff.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11 September 1780.

ordonné une information, même en temps de vacations, &c.

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

The premier président referred to was the infamous Étienne-François d'Aligre (1727–1798), who Beugnot claimed had “aucune des qualités qui fondent un grand magistrat”.³³⁵ He was rich and miserly, and was one of the main obstacles to the reforms of Calonne and Loménie. D'Aligre appeared as a witness (along with the prince de Conti and Cardinal Rohan) at the wedding of Pommyer's nephew Jacques-Jean-Baptiste-Simon Pommyer de Rougemont to Élisabeth-Sophie de Lorne (1759–1797) in 1777. Two years later Pommyer leased his house at Croissy from d'Aligre's brother-in-law. Commenting on the latest palace satire in 1780, the *Memoires secrets* cite with evident relish a description of d'Aligre, who was painted as “un vilain, un avare, un homme sans mœurs, joignant à l'indécence l'incapacité”; while among other lesser figures “Messieurs...l'abbé Pommier, tiennent aussi leur rang dans ce tableau, & l'on révele des anecdotes concernant chacun d'eux qui ne leur feroient pas honneur si elles étoient bien avérées.”³³⁶ In a satirical lampoon which appeared shortly after Pommyer's death, entitled *Le testament de M. l'abbé Pommier*, the theme was continued:

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

Another request in this apocryphal document was the following:

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

This was a thinly veiled reference to the scandal over the épices des juges, a custom under which the premier président distributed bonuses to the most active members of the court, at the expense of the civil litigants; by 1783 the system had fallen into such disrepute that even d'Aligre wrote a memorandum agreeing to consult the bureau of the parlement before dividing out the spoils.³³⁷ A false rumour concerning Pommyer was recorded by Hardy (4 May 1783):

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

On 25 June 1783, La Tour made a codicil to his will nominating a replacement for Pommyer as executor to his will (the previous codicil appointing him does not seem to have survived) on the grounds that Pommyer's duties were “trop importantes au service public pour en être distrait par l'exécution de mon testament. Je le pris de vouloir bien en conserver le titre honoraire.”³³⁸

Pommyer died in his hôtel in the rue de Braque,³³⁹ in the Marais, Paris, on 4 February 1784, aged 72.³⁴⁰ His death was reported in the Procès-verbaux of the Académie, together with a letter from his three

³³⁵ Nevertheless, d'Aligre countersigned with Pommyer the judgement of the Paris parlement given on 7 March 1778 (based on Pommyer's report) in favour of the 56 Protestant families from the Vermandois who had complained that their children's baptismal records showed them as illegitimate (AN X1b 4053). D'Aligre and Pommyer again signed the judgement upholding the marquise de Saint-Huruge's appeal against her husband (Henri Furgeot, *Le Marquis de Saint-Huruge, "généralissime des sans-culottes" (1738–1801)*, Paris, 1908, p. 79).

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 17 April 1783.

³³⁷ See John Rogister, *Louis XV and the Parlement of Paris, 1737–1755*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 8, n. 10.

³³⁸ Besnard & Wildenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

³³⁹ His Paris addresses given in the almanachs royaux are Paris, rue Beaubourg (1740–44); rue Pavée St Antoine, à l'hôtel d'Herbouville (1744–1750); rue des Francs-Bourgeois, au Marais, vis-à-vis la rue des trois Pavillons (1750–1755); rue d'Orléans [the present rue Charlot], au coin de la rue du Perche (1755–1758); rue de Paradis (1758–Easter 1776 – where his

nephews to Cochin apologising for the omission of his honorary membership of the Académie from their uncle's death certificate.³⁴¹

In the words of Maurice Tourneux, Pommyer was one of “ces abbés épicuriens, lettrés et savants qui n'ont guère du prêtre que le rabat et le petit collet.”³⁴² After Pommyer's death, Cochin wrote: “Je me trouve dans l'univers comme un homme entouré de ruines, car il n'est plus en mon pouvoir de faire de nouvelles connoissances, et bientôt je seray réduit à vivre presque seul. Au reste ces amertumes disposent à quitter la vie avec moins de regret, comme le disoit feu notre ami Chardin.”³⁴³ The author of the *Mémoires secrets* was predictably less charitable:³⁴⁴

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

Simon-Prosper Hardy learned of the death from the *Mercur*, but wrote a long entry in his diary³⁴⁵ recording the abbé's offices and income, adding—

Ce magistrat de très bonne mine, reçu le 23 février 1740, et surnommé lors de la Révolution de 1771 *le Paysan de Gandelu* pour avoir sçu dans le lieu de son exil se rapprocher des mœurs agrastes des habitans de sa retraite champêtre, en partageant avec eux d'innocens Plaisirs, avoit essuié en 1783 des désagrémens dans l'intérieurs de sa compagnie, et si les étoit attirés, si ce falloit en croire le Bruit Public, par son trop d'attachement aux Epices et autres Emolumens excessifs qu'on continuoit de percevoir à la Grand-Chambre; quelques Personnes croyoient même qu'il étoit fort possible que ces désagramens eussent contribué à déranger sa Brillante santé et à le précipiter dans le tombeau.

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

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

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

³⁴⁰ The address appeared as rue du Bac in the “Inventaire après décès de François Emmanuel Pommyer, prêtre du diocèse de Paris, abbé commendataire de Bonneval dans l'Eure-et-Loir, doyen honoraire, chanoine de l'église de Reims dans la Marne, prieur de Cossé-le-Vivien dans la Mayenne, président de la chambre souveraine du clergé, conseiller clerc au parlement, demeurant rue du Bac, bibliothèque. Quartier Saint-Germain-des-Prés” (AN MC/LVIII/519, 17 February 1784).

³⁴¹ *Procès-verbaux*, 7 February 1784, pp. 186f. As we have seen, Besenval succeeded as honoraire amateur. The maréchal de Ségur became the new associé-libre of the Académie. Neither Pommyer nor the duc d'Harcourt was immediately replaced on the board of the École gratuite. The abbé's position in the Chambre souveraine du clergé was taken by the abbé Tandeau de Marsac of Notre-Dame. There was a gap of perhaps a year before the appointment of Elléon de Castellane Mazangues, évêque de Toulon, as abbé de Bonneval.

³⁴² Maurice Tourneux, *La Tour, biographie critique*, Paris, n.d. [1904], p. 92.

³⁴³ Goncourt, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

³⁴⁴ *Mémoires secrets*, 6 February 1784.

³⁴⁵ BnF MS Français 6684, entry for 7.II.1784, v, f° 411. He later (f° 461) reproduced the satirical *Testament*.

La Tour, *L'abbé Deschamps*

3 June 2020



Catalogues raisonnés are in effect narratives, telling a story of how a work of art was created, more or less convincingly. They may on occasion offer alternative endings, but for the most part the convention requires the narrative to proceed in a simple historical progression (at least for each work: I have written [before](#) about whether the collection of such narratives for each picture may, in the case of a portraitist, not be more conveniently ordered differently, since no one expects readers to read the whole book at once). The result then offers the solution to a puzzle which is often more

compellingly told as the historical events were unearthed in the present day rather than as they unfolded at the time. So without more apology let me give you an alternative account of the catalogue entry you will find for the fine portrait by La Tour now in the Louvre (above; [J.46.162](#) in the numbering system used in my [catalogue](#)) of the abbé Claude-Charles Deschamps (?1699–1779), bachelier de Sorbonne, prêtre, chanoine et regnaire de l'église cathédrale de Laon.



You'll find virtually nothing about him in the La Tour literature published before 1922/23, when suddenly an unknown "pastel par Maurice Quentin de La Tour" (left; [J.46.1622](#)) appeared. The only prior mention is in La Tour's 1768 will (published by Maurice Tourneux in 1904) of "mon cousin Deschamps, chanoine à Laon". There is no mention of Deschamps, for example, in any contemporary or subsequent biography of La Tour. By 1923, La Tour had become one of the great names in the saleroom, the dramatic prices achieved at the Doucet sale in 1912 having rehabilitated him to the top table. Even immediately after the war his value was huge: Wildenstein sold the président de Rieux in 1919 for 1.2 million francs (perhaps £3 million in today's money, although the purchaser became bankrupt before payment was made).

The sale itself (Paris, Drouot, Baudoin, 16 March 1923, Lot 86 *bis*) was a little unusual: it was a single lot with its own catalogue (copies are very scarce, and not available online at the time of writing, but I've obtained a photocopy), presented by Baudoin and Martini, at the end of another sale.^[1] The vendor (of this lot alone) was disclosed as "Mme veuve R..., de Douai", and the catalogue contained some interesting details. The work was presented as "Portrait de Monseigneur Claude-Charles DESCHAMPS, Chanoine de Laon, cousin germain de M. Q. de La Tour": we discuss the wording further below, but it derives from a handwritten label on the back, which read "M^r Deschamps, chanoine de Laon, cousin germain de M^r Delatour, le Peintre" and which has subsequently been lost.^[2] The catalogue then offered some biographical details, provided by Lucien Broche, conservateur des Archives du département de l'Aisne:

Messire Claude-Charles Deschamps testa le 20 août 1779 et mourut peu après dans sa maison claustrale de l'ancienne rue des Prêtres, à Laon rue Sainte-Genève, ... Le mobilier du défunt fut vendu, du 27 au 31 janvier et du 1^{er} au 7 février, par le Greffier en chef du Chapitre de la cathédrale.

The reproduction in the catalogue is unusual in revealing that this loose sheet had been mounted in the manner of a drawing rather than a pastel, in a style that looks as though it had recently been done:



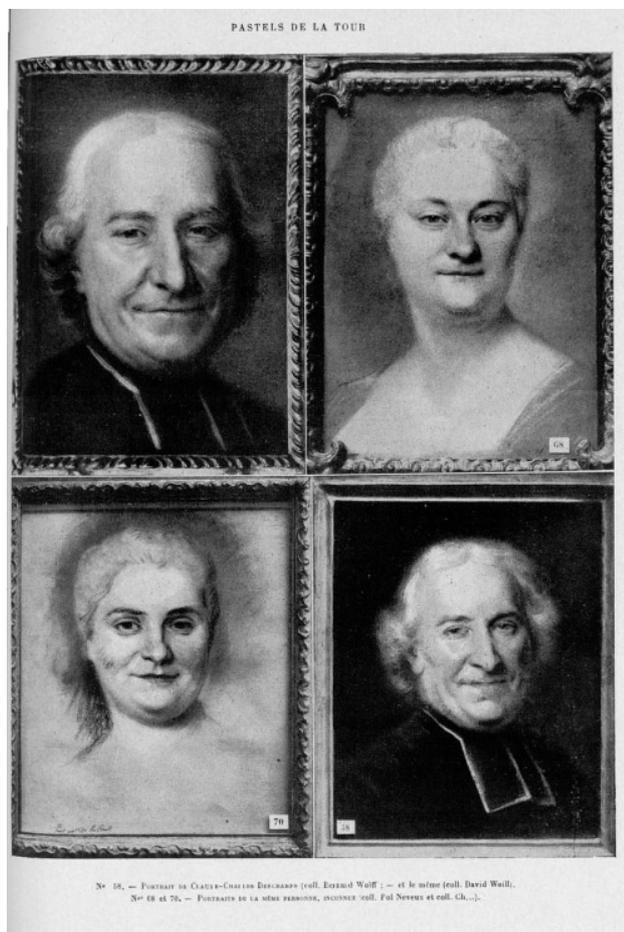
The 1923 catalogue also mentions that the pastel had been shown in the Louvre from August to October the previous year, included in the exhibition of La Tour pastels from Saint-Quentin repatriated from Maubeuge where they had been taken by the Germans and awaiting the reopening of the musée Antoine-Lécuyer.^[3] Uncatalogued, the exhibition included only two other La Tour pastels not from Saint-Quentin: two masterpieces belonging to the Galerie Cailleux, then also on the art market.

The pastel, estimated at 12,000 francs, sold for 13,500 to the dealer Jules Féral, and soon after was acquired by the legendary collector and philanthropist David David-Weill. (At his sale in 1959, it was bought for a mere £900 by Harry G. Sperling, president of the New York dealers F. Kleinberger & Co. Five years later it was bought by Dorothy Braude Edinburg, a collector of prints, drawings and ceramics. The daughter of Harry and Bessie Braude and wife of Joseph Edinburg, an executive at the hardware firm in Boston of which her father had been president, she donated more than 1500 works to The [Art Institute of Chicago](#), including this, in 1998.)

By 1926 the palaeographer and archivist Charles Samaran (presumably following a request to research Deschamps, perhaps from David-Weill – that isn't clear) made some enquiries of Lucien Broche (unpublished correspondence, bibliothèque de l'Institut de France), but Broche, after checking with Charles Sorin, the archivist at Laon, was unable to locate Deschamps's will or the other Deschamps documents from the bailliage de Vermandois which had been lost during the German occupation. (We shall see below why this doesn't greatly matter.)

Despite sending a dozen works from his own collection to the famous 1927 exhibition of *Pastels français du XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (of the organising committee of which he was chairman), David-Weill did not lend this pastel. Instead a second version (the one now in the [Louvre](#)) had mysteriously appeared. It belonged to the artist (and son of a piano maker), Bernard Wolff (1860–1949), whose sister later bequeathed it to the Louvre. According to information provided by Élie Fleury to the authors of the 1927 catalogue, this pastel had been found at a “château du Boulonnais” by “un commissaire-priseur de Douai”; the date on which Wolff had acquired it was not given, but the pastel seems never to have passed through public sale.

Paul Jamot published both versions in a review of the exhibition in the *Bulletin de l'art ancien et moderne* in 1927:



By then the David-Weill version had been reframed, more convincingly. Jamot struggled to explain the relationship between the two portraits: it was clear that they were the same image, and that the smaller sheet couldn't really be regarded as a *préparation* for the Wolff pastel. Although La

Tour often made different versions using varied techniques, these usually followed the trajectory from *préparation* to finished work. Jamot, comparing the two versions with the other La Tours in the exhibition, saw the Louvre version as the outlier, failing to note how much later it was in the artist's œuvre. Modern photographs of the detail of the face make the differences even clearer:



The evident difference in handling Jamot suggested might be explained by wear in the David-Weill version: but this isn't particularly evident (although of course extensive later restoration *might* be an explanation). Suzanne Folds McCullough, as recently as 2006, sought instead to resolve the puzzle by dating the Chicago sheet to 1779 – ignoring the fact that if anything, the abbé looks younger in that version, and the 1768 of the Louvre version is practically at the end of La Tour's activity. The particular difficulty is that there is no coherent narrative in which La Tour would do two such different, finished portraits at the same time: and yet the fall of light, shadows etc. show these to be versions of a single image.

But the real point was that while the Louvre pastel is a work of extraordinary boldness and virtuosity, the David-Weill sheet is relatively lifeless and passive. In my view this is because it may be a copy; it attracted attention in 1923 because the original was unknown (and because La Tour is such a formidable artist that a good copy of his work, made by someone evidently familiar with his earlier technique, can fetch a powerful punch, even if it is knocked out by confrontation with the original), and, once accepted and acquired by an illustrious collector, no one had (or has had until now) the courage to draw the obvious conclusion.

Ultimately this is a question of connoisseurship.^[4] Many will not accept my personal opinion, which dissents from the views of other writers (up to and including the 2018 Louvre pastel catalogue, where the Chicago sheet was reproduced as by La Tour without qualification). And I can see that there are arguments in its favour – the strongest being that it is not an accurate copy of the Louvre pastel. But I wonder whether the Chicago version would have had unanimous support had it emerged after the Louvre version was known. Readers of this blog are of course invited to offer their own views which I will receive with interest.

There are two objective facts that may help my view gain wider acceptance.

Firstly, no one seems to have noticed the extraordinary coincidence of the two versions both passing through Douai, when there is no obvious connection between the sitter and his family and that town during the sitter's lifetime or immediately following period. Had the two versions always been together in the same family, I think we would

have been told. But the Louvre sheet came from a chateau in Le Boulonnais, quite far away from Douai where the commissaire priseur who handled it lived, and where the Chicago sheet originated with the untraceable “Mme veuve R..., de Douai”.

The second point is that the inscription on the David-Weill version (which was said to be in a contemporary hand) identifies the sitter as La Tour’s “cousin germain” (first cousin). This has subsequently infiltrated the literature, and is repeated in all sources including Salmon’s 2018 Louvre catalogue. But it isn’t true. As I [demonstrated in 2016](#), Deschamps was in fact La Tour’s *second* cousin: he was the son of Denis Deschamps, maître écrivain à Laon, and Anne-Françoise Caton. The connection to La Tour was through Caton’s mother, Marguerite Garbe, whose sister Marie married the pastellist’s grandfather Jean de La Tour in 1669 (you can enlarge images on this blog by clicking on them):



La Tour himself described him only as “mon cousin”, in the 1768 will, a term he uses in the broad sense. So the writer of that inscription made a guess that at the very least puts him at some remove from the immediate family. The suspicion arises (which, now it has vanished, may be unverifiable) that the inscription is a much later addition (reinforced by the phrase “Delatour, le Peintre”).

And so even the question of the date of the Chicago sheet seems to me open. It may be that scientific studies of the paper and materials might yield an answer, although (even if my suspicions are well founded) a copy of this quality is likely to have been made with carefully chosen media. (Pigment analysis in pastels is much less advanced than in oil painting, and most materials used in the early twentieth century were also in use in the eighteenth.)

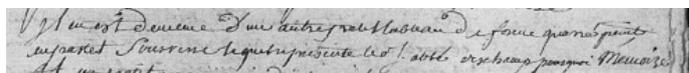
Turning now to the beautiful work in the Louvre (at the top of this post), there is no question about its authenticity (*pace* Jamot). It has been the subject of conservation in 2004 and 2013 (by Valérie Luquet, Marianne Bervas and Sophie Chavanne) and a detailed technical report was compiled in 2014 by Pascal Labreuche, noting among many other things the relatively modest materials used, and even the small droplets of fixative which are still evident on the surface.

As I have discussed in previous [blogs](#) and in my catalogue entry, the discussion in the Louvre 2018 exhibition catalogue where it was most recently shown failed to take note of my 2016 genealogy (or of the other new points in this post). It also offered no provenance for the Louvre pastel before the acquisition by the commissaire priseur de Douai as reported by Fleury beyond the assertion that it had been the “propriété du modèle”. That was presumably inferred from the inscription on the back, to which we return below, but it may well be that the search for provenance (to resolve the claims of the two versions) was

what motivated the 1926 enquiries by Charles Samaran mentioned above.

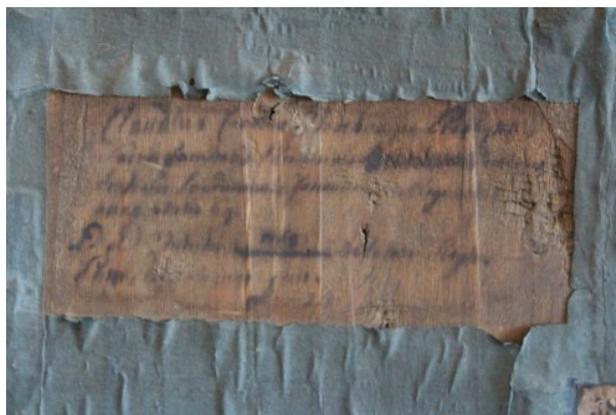
It is also worth noting that La Tour preserved his contacts with members of his extended family throughout his life. When the artist’s much-loved brother Charles died (3 July 1766), La Tour was out of the country (in Holland), and Deschamps signed the burial entry at Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois. He was, as noted above, mentioned in the artist’s 1768 will, the same year in which the portrait was executed.

Also mentioned in La Tour’s 1768 will was Deschamps’s sister Marie-Jeanne, Mme Mauclerc, and (like the abbé’s will which Samaran sought without success), her inventaire is actually at the Minutier central in Paris.^[5] Mme Mauclerc died in her brother’s house, rue des Prêtres (now Saint-Geneviève), Laon on 22 September 1774 (attended by the abbé, but not by her husband). I have transcribed the inventaire in my chronological table of [documents](#), at 10 January 1775, and it reveals among other family portraits in oil, “un autre petit tableau de forme carré peint en pastel sous verre le quel représente led. S. abbé deschamps” – surely the Louvre pastel which she had evidently been given during her brother’s lifetime:



Her effects were divided among her siblings. (Here is a link to the [Deschamps](#) genealogy.) Deschamps himself died in the same house in Laon, 18 December 1779. In his own will (which I did manage to locate, in the Minutier central in Paris, with certified copies of other documents from Laon), he left everything to his niece Charlotte, Mme Dorison (another La Tour sitter, [J.46.1631](#)).

Returning to the rather faded inscription on the back of the Louvre pastel, there are several more puzzles to be solved:



which we transcribe as:

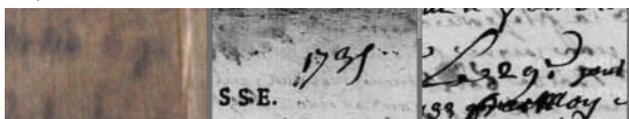
Claudius Carolus Deschamps Presbyter/Sacrae facultatis parisiensis baccalarius theologus/ecclesiae laudanensis canonicus <mot rayé ou illisible> regnarius/anno ætatis 69/1768/DD Quentin de La Tour, regius pictor academicus, fecit

Whose writing is it? What does it say (in particular what is his age)? What has been erased and why? These difficulties are compounded by the fact that writing with a quill pen on untreated wood with prominent ring patterns is quite tricky: ink runs, and the pen is redirected by the unevennesses. The

writing is certainly not La Tour's own hand. But we do have a number of samples of the abbé's own writing, as he was curate at Saint-Médard, Agnicourt from 1729 to 1744, and the entries in the parish register are in his hand. I think the fit is good enough to say that the inscription is his with reasonable confidence.

What does it mean? DD is easy enough, *Dono Dedit* (gave as a present) etc. "Ecclesiae lauanensis canonicus": chanoine de l'église de Laon. But "regnarius" is a sufficiently unusual term that Jean-François Méjanès transcribed it as "regularis". In fact "regnarius", or in French "regnaire" or "renaire" (you won't find either word in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*), is a specific dignitary at the chapter at Laon, a kind of master of ceremonies (before whom a sort of sceptre was carried in solemn processions), and we know from various documents that Deschamps was Regnarius at Laon by 1774.^[6] What I have been unable to establish is precisely when he was elevated to this rank, or whether prior to this he was the "sous regnaire". There is thus a simple explanation that the erasure is of the word "sous" and occurred on his promotion to the higher position.

Trickier is the question of the dates. 1768 is I think unambiguous, but I'm not so sure that the age preceding this is definitely 69. Nevertheless the entire literature has inferred that the abbé was born in 1699 (simply by subtracting 69 from 1768). The phrase "anno ætatis" is much abused in portraiture, by artists and art historians alike who forget it means "in the [69th] year of his age", i.e. he was 68 at the time, and so logically (depending on what day in 1768 the portrait was made) could have been born anywhere between 2 January 1699 and 31 December 1700. But is that final digit 9 at all? As you can see from some examples in the abbé's hand from the Agnicourt parish register, it's not impossible that he wrote 5, consistent with a birth in 1703/04 (left to right: Louvre inscription; 1735; 29e).



The reason the question has attracted my attention is that his parents, Denis Deschamps and Anne-François Caton, were married in Laon on 19 February 1703:



There is no indication that his father had been married before 1703 (although registers are missing for Vailly-sur-Aisne where the Deschamps family originated), and

numerous documents explicitly describe Claude-Charles as the "frère germain" of the daughters of Denis and Anne-François Caton (including Noëlle, Mme Augustin Masse and Marie-Jeanne, Mme Pierre-Marie Mauclerc, mother of Mme Dorison); he is also described as a cousin germain in the registre de tutelles for Henry-Pierre Messenger, son of Anne-Françoise Caton's sister. The division of property recited in the inventaire of his sister Mme Mauclerc (1775) makes it quite clear that the abbé was her full brother, while Mme Berthelot (a half-sister by a later marriage of Denis Deschamps) is distinguished as a "sœur consanguine".

Thus, if the inscription on the Louvre pastel is correctly "ætatis 69", the abbé was born illegitimately to Denis and Anne-Françoise before their marriage (when Denis remarried in 1739, another child was born less than two months later; but four years before marriage is improbable, particularly since Denis Deschamps and Anne-Françoise lived in different towns before their marriage). If incorrect, his birth was unrecorded (improbable: the record of Anne-Françoise's annual births at Saint-Cyr, Laon is continuous to the end of 1705). (Incidentally the problem isn't solved by assuming the abbé had forgotten his own age.)

But there is an alternative, if surprising, explanation: here is the entry for the first child, baptised Claude-Charlotte on 17 November 1703:



I have found no entry for the death of this girl or any other record of her existence. Is it perhaps possible that the future abbé Claude-Charles was misidentified as a girl at birth? The child was baptised the day of its birth, somewhat hastily (baptisms were most often the day after birth unless the infant looked as though they might not survive until then). Seven out of eight of his siblings were girls. Mistakes of gender at birth were not such an unusual occurrence; in 1731 one of the twin children of Jean-Antoine Philippe, another La Tour subject, was wrongly registered. That would be consistent with a reading of "ætatis 65".

Whatever the abbé's age, we can but agree with Jean-François Méjanès who commented of this, the latest of the Louvre's La Tours, that the restrained palette of the pastel strokes "accentue néanmoins l'intensité expressive du visage sur lequel s'est concentré l'artiste"; the "grande attention" and "profonde humanité" that emerge justify more than any of the other works shown in the La Tour exhibition of 2004 the title of "voleur d'âmes". Those who visited the Louvre's pastel exhibition in 2018 will have been able to form their own view (although not perhaps as closely as they might like, as this small jewel was skyed in the hang I have discussed [elsewhere](#)).

NOTES

[1] That of Paul-Émile Rémy-Martin, the second of four sales of the collections that the cognac merchant's father,

Paul-Émile-Rémy Martin (yes the hyphens are in the correct places), had assembled at the château de Lignières.

[2] I am most grateful to the Art Institute of Chicago for confirming this to me, and the absence of any image of the lost label.

[3] See Fleury 1922b; Cabezas 2009a; [Prolegomena](#), §xii.6.

[4] Those of you familiar with the system in the *Dictionary* will see (from the absence of the Greek letter σ) that I have not inspected the Chicago sheet in person. While I would prefer to do so, the factors I have taken into account in reaching my view are unlikely to be altered by examination *de visu*.

[5] AN mc lxx/386, 10.I.1775

[6] This is in the power of attorney he granted on 22 October 1774 attached to his sister's posthumous inventory. In the *Bulletin de la Société académique de Laon*, 1913, André L'Éleu published a commentary on Fromage de Longueville's unpublished *Entretiens* (1765), which contains encrypted satirical portraits of his contemporaries including one "*Erophile*, chanoine regnaire", whom L'Éleu identified as Deschamps, but I suspect anachronistically. I have been unable to find detailed records for the chapitre de Laon before 1768.

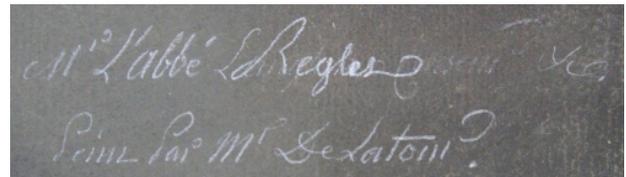
An elusive abbé: *L'abbé Reglet*

3 August 2018



In the last few years, the musée des Beaux-Arts in Orléans has been transformed with a complete renovation, a pioneering exhibition devoted to Perronneau in 2017 and most recently the reopening of the cabinet des pastels – vying with Saint-Quentin for the second place after the Louvre’s unequalled holdings. But more than that, the museum under Olivia Voisin’s guidance has taken a far higher profile in promoting its work, including intelligent use of social media and other ways of engaging the community of art historians to develop an understanding of the collection. In particular the works on paper, in the capable hands of Valérie Luquet, have been more open to discussion than ever. This blog – which doesn’t however provide a complete answer to the question, but perhaps illustrates the uncertainties I grapple with daily – is prompted by one of Valérie’s recent tweets, including photographs taken while caring for the beautiful La Tour known as the abbé Reglet (it’s second from the right above, but you can find it in the online *Dictionary of pastellists* at [J.46.2679](#); B&W 416):

Several confusions surround the work which the shorthand in the *Dictionary* compact too far for most readers. They stem from unfortunate conflation made in particular by Georges Wildenstein in 1928 (“B&W”) and probably before. The clue is in the graphite inscription of which Valérie posted this image (detail):



From which you can see that whenever the inscription was added, there was something different underneath. This is not La Tour’s writing, nor is it likely that the earlier, now illegible, words were his. We can almost certainly conclude that they were placed by a dealer who wanted to relate the portrait of an inconnu to one of the named sitters La Tour is known to have exhibited. Why not choose the pastel shown in 1769, of an “abbé Reglet” (*Dictionary*, [J.46.2675](#)) whose name comes from an annotation of the salon livret by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin? It’s an abbé, from about the right period (on technical grounds), and it has the advantage of being lost. Further Diderot commented favourably (you can find all the salon critiques of La Tour’s work [here](#)):

Mais venons aux morceaux de cet artiste. Savez-vous que c’était? Quatre chefs-d’œuvre renfermés dans un châssis de sapin, quatre *Portraits*. Ah! Mon ami, quels portraits, mais surtout celui d’un abbé! C’était une vérité et une simplicité dont je ne crois pas avoir encore vu d’exemples: pas l’ombre de manière, la nature toute pure et sans art, nulle prétention dans la touche, nulle affectation de contraste dans la

couleur, nulle gêne dans la position. C'est devant ce morceau de toile grand comme la main que l'homme instruit qui réfléchissait s'écriait: Que la peinture est un art difficile!...et que l'homme instruit qui n'y pensait pas s'écriait: O que cela est beau!

So the pastel with this inscription, which was sold in 1910, 1917 and 1992 (when Orléans acquired it), was considered to be of the abbé Reglet and conflated with the work exhibited in 1769 – even though Gabriel de Saint-Aubin had added a sketch in his copy of the livret which was plainly of a completely different portrait:



Bafflingly B&W reproduced both images, but didn't seem to see the problem – although it has not escaped later authors, among them the useful discussion in Debrie & Salmon 2000, p. 88. There it is suggested that the sitter might be another abbé – the abbé de Lattaignant, exhibited two years previously, and also described by Diderot (in less flattering terms: “la figure crapuleuse et basse de ce vilain abbé de Lattaignant” – but then it was the sitter rather than the pastel that he didn't like). Although the suggestion is seductive, no attempt is made to support it by investigating this poet's iconography – which in any case is always hazardous. You could perhaps almost persuade yourself that this profile (from Lattaignant's poems, 1757) is of the same man:



But what isn't plausible is that in 1767, Lattaignant was 70 years old. The Orléans man is far younger. (The profile incidentally is by Garand, of whose portraiture Diderot also had something double-edged to say: “*Je n'ai jamais été bien fait que par un pauvre diable appelé Garand, qui m'attrapa, comme il arrive à un sot qui dit un bon mot.*”)

Two further points have not I think been noticed, although Ólafur Þorvaldsson has tweeted the reference to an earlier sale (28.III.1860, not reproduced) which I have as [J.46.2682](#) (B&W 417):

DELATOUR (MAURICE-QUENTIS).		
17	Masque de Delatour. (Esquisse).	42
18	Portrait de l'abbé Reglet, curé et fondateur de l'église Saint-Sulpice.	60

Isn't this the Orléans pastel? It's certainly quite possible, even probable; but not I think certain. The pastel is described as of “L'abbé Réglet, curé et fondateur de Saint-Sulpice”, a description that finds its way into the headline for B&W 416 too. Of course if B&W were simply transcribing what was on the back of the pastel sold in 1910, the conflation would be complete. But if so that label (which has not survived) would probably have been picked up in 1910 or 1917. Rather I think B&W have simply obtained the biographical information from the 1860 sale and simply assumed it was correct, and applied it also to the 1769 pastel.

In fact as far as I can see it is simply wrong. The curé de Saint-Sulpice at the time was Jean du Lau d'Allemans, whose face (known from an engraving after a portrait by Chevallier) was completely different (nor could I find any other Saint-Sulpice clergy with names similar to Reglet in this period). And the “fondateur” of the church would have come from a different century altogether. Yet I don't think the name Reglet for a La Tour pastel from the 1769 salon would have been widely known until Saint-Aubin's sketches were systematically studied, unlikely before 1860. So my marginal preference is to think that the 1860 sale might have been of the 1769 pastel (perhaps with a corrupted inscription), since lost totally.

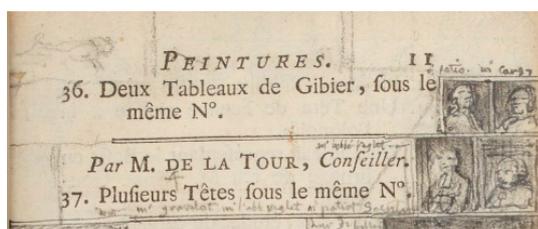
The other thing that no one else seems to have noticed was that the “abbé Reglet” shown in the 1769 salon was almost certainly named in La Tour’s 1768 will (you can find transcriptions of all these documents in my annotated expansion of B&W’s [table](#)):

A M^{rs} Laideguive, notaire, Geulette, conseiller de Pondichery, hotel de Conti, rue des Poulies, à M^{rs} les abbez Raynal et Reigley, de Bar sur Seine, chez M. l’abbé de Crillon, place Royale, à chacun des quatre, un diamant ou en argent cent pistoles.

This allows us to identify him as abbé Charles Régley (1719–p.1791), aumônier du prince de Marsan, prieur d’Estréchy et de Baigne, translator of Spalanzani, and the author of (among many other things) an *Éloge historique du brave Crillon, discours qui a remporté le prix d’éloquence de l’Académie d’Amiens*, 1779. He retired to Bar-sur-Seine (not far from Les Riceys, where he was born) c.1791 but no further trace is known. La Tour of course was later a member of the académie d’Amiens. Incidentally Régley’s address was given as that of the abbé de Crillon, Louis-Athanase de Berton-des-Balbes, abbé de Crillon (1726–1789), agent general du clergé de France; younger son of the duc de Crillon (and a descendant of the brave Crillon the subject of Régley’s éloge); he was well known as a shell collector, with a cabinet de curiosités. (Postscript, 21.XII.2020: He appears to be the same as the Dom Charles Régley (1718–p.1793) who was baptised at Ricey-le-Haut 29.VI.1718, in a family related to Nicolas de Channe-Maron (another La Tour subject); he took orders in 1736, and belonged to the Benedictines. He edited the *Almanach de Reims* from 1752 on; a manuscript annotation on the BnF catalogue for the 1752 edition has “par Dom Reglet, bénédictin défroqué”, which would explain his subsequent use of the “abbé” title.)

None of this answers the question of the identity of the Orléans sitter. Perhaps La Tour made a second pastel of Régley (the age would fit). Probably it’s a different abbé – La Tour seems to have known a good many. There may be a clue in the illegible inscription, but I can’t decipher it (the last word perhaps looks like Censeur).

I should perhaps add a word about Diderot’s text and the four La Tours in the 1769 salon. Several of the other critics praise them too, some naming Gravelot, and adding general praise for these four pastels. The other names come from Saint-Aubin: Patiot (secrétaire du duc de Belle-Isle, a natural history collector, mentioned in La Tour’s 1784 will) and a name B&W read as Cars but looks to me more like Cangy; both are lost.



The pastel of Gravelot is (said to be) in the musée des Beaux-Arts at Bordeaux (left) – but although the orientation is correct, the mise-en-page (so often accurately captured by Saint-Aubin even in his tiny sketches) looks rather different. The Bordeaux pastel measures 45×35 cm, considerably smaller than most La Tour finished pastels (even the Orléans Reglet is larger, at 48×43 cm). Is it a guide to the size of the other three “heads” in the 1769 salon, which Diderot tells us were all shown in a single pine frame? That presentation is rather strange for pastels, and one is tempted to dismiss the words as some kind of metaphor: but he goes on to describe Reglet as “grand comme la main”. None of the other critics say anything about this. But if the Gravelot shown were only a study for the final work, then perhaps the 1769 Reglet gave rise to further versions, perhaps completely reworked. Too much speculation.

It is of course even more tangential to point out that Régley’s name (insofar as it has survived at all – one book is aptly named *The Quest for the Invisible*), rests in his translation of Spallanzani’s work on spontaneous generation, with notes from Needham, an enemy of Voltaire. Régley appears in Voltaire’s correspondence, just before the 1769 salon, in a letter to the comte de La Touraille, who by a curious coincidence was married to Louis Patiot’s niece (she was the subject of a Carmontelle portrait). La Tour was more interested in telescopes than microscopes, but one can’t help noticing the scientific (or natural history) interests shared by Régley, Crillon and Patiot.

La Tour's second thoughts: *Dumont, Restout*

5 October 2021



So much of my work on La Tour has been unravelling and rejecting myth. Herodotus faced much the same problem with his sources, but eventually conceded “having condemned others’ opinions, I must now say what I think about these obscure matters.” The problem of course is in finding new, reliable sources of information – or else one is simply compounding the confusion. With an artist on whom so much scholarship has been devoted, entirely new sources are difficult to find. But sometimes crucial information has been hiding under our noses.

The legend about La Tour’s destruction of two of his masterpieces in a senile attempt to “improve” them is more than just a story: the evidence was shown to all in the Louvre exhibition in 2018. The sorry state of Dumont le Romain (left), and the even sorer remnants of what was once Jean Restout (right), were bravely presented to an audience with a reasonable account of their confused history. You can find my version of this written up in the relevant entries in my online catalogue raisonné: Dumont at [J.46.1681](#), Restout at [J.46.2687](#). (Remember you find these by searching the J numbers in the search box on [www.pastellists.com](#), opening the relevant pdf and going to the J number which is in a decimal sequence – so [J.46.2787](#) is before [J.46.279](#). Or you can go direct to the pdf from

[www.pastellists.com/LaTour.htm](#). You can also find a precis of the discussion below in §II.4 of my main La Tour article, [www.pastellists.com/Articles/LaTour.pdf](#). As always the crucial contemporary documents are transcribed, with further references, in [www.pastellists.com/Misc/LaTour_chronology.pdf](#).)

But here at any rate is a broad chronology of what must have happened.

At a session of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture on 25.v.1737 “le sieur Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, Peintre de portraits en pastel, aiant fait apporter de ses ouvrages” was *agréé* (provisionally accepted for membership). His set pieces for full reception were selected the following week: they were to be portraits of the academicians François Lemoyne and Jean Restout. Lemoyne committed suicide a few days later, and Jean-Baptiste Van Loo was nominated instead: but his departure to London and later return to his native Provence created a further hurdle, before La Tour eventually submitted Restout alone, in 1746, when he was finally *reçu*. Four years later he also presented the portrait of Dumont le Romain as a gift to the Académie; it is often erroneously described as a *morceau de réception*.



Some six years after that, in 1756, the Polish painter Tadeusz Kuntze copied both works. Although this has been in the *Dictionary* since 2015, the copies are not mentioned in other La Tour scholarship and their significance has escaped me until now. Tadeusz Koniecz, dit Kuntze (Zielonej Górze 1727 – Rome 1793), was trained in Rome at the Académie de France, 1747–52, and stayed on to paint religious and allegorical pictures there in the tradition of Reni and Solimena. In 1756 he was sent to Paris where he made oil copies (all now in Wilanów) of artists' portraits which had been acquired by the Académie royale (normally as

morceaux de réception), including pastels by La Tour (Dumont le Romain, Restout) and Lundberg (Boucher, Natoire). He returned to Poland in 1757 before settling in Rome in 1759 and disappearing from our story. His copies were run of the mill, boringly but helpfully unimaginative.

A few years later attention focused on engravings of both La Tour pastels. Neither sitter had had a portrait engraved (the Cochin portrait of Dumont was engraved by Saint-Aubin only in 1770). The engraver Pierre-Étienne Moitte (1722–1780) – who also engraved La Tour's portraits of Belle-Isle and of Jolyot de Crébillon – was *agrée* on 26.IV.1761, with Galloche, acting recteur, deputed to set him two subjects for his morceaux de réception. Evidently the La Tour portrait of Restout was one of those, but the other was never recorded. Six months later, in a session of the Académie where La Tour was present, the question of the format of the engraving was raised: La Tour's portrait being deemed unsuited to the usual oval format (Moitte's head of Crébillon for the *Galerie française* is no doubt what was in mind), the Académie decided that the whole portrait be engraved, but in view of the additional work required, this single engraving would suffice for Moitte's reception. It was not however delivered until 1771 (although it must have been based on the pastel before its reworking already underway in 1769 – see below), for reasons unknown but one may speculate that La Tour's dissatisfaction with his own work may have played a part in the delay. Nevertheless the engraving accurately corresponds to Kuntze's 1756 copy of the original version of the pastel.



Separately the engraver Jean-Jacques Flipart (1719–1782) produced a full-length portrait after Dumont le Romain. (Again one may speculate that it was originally the other set piece for Moitte, but there is no evidence for this.) Flipart

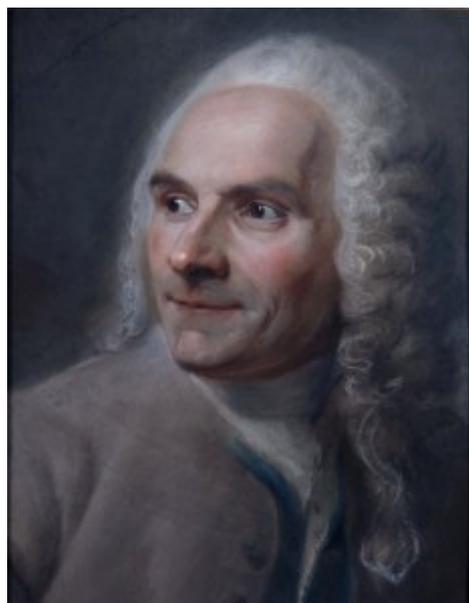
was *agrée* in 1755 but never *reçu*, and this engraving was not part of his Académie requirements. Apart from the La Tour, he engraved a self-portrait by Rosalba and a pastel by Vivien, but most of his work was not portraiture: he was best known for his genre pieces after Greuze. A 1772 *Chasse au tigre*, after Boucher (actually a leopard), is one of the few plates for which the engraver's preparatory drawing survives (Paris, Drouot, Thierry de Maigret, 27.III.2009, Lot 76).



The lettering on Flipart's Restout includes the artist's offices, and thus provides a *terminus post quem* for the plate (or at least the complete state), of 1768, when Restout was promoted to chancellor of the Académie. Unlike the Moitte, it is reversed from the pastel; and perhaps for this reason its departures from the Louvre work have gone unnoticed. It is equally possible that anyone comparing the print with the pastel would simply have assumed the alterations were the engraver's fancy. That theory survives the discovery of what may be Flipart's preparatory drawing in the Walker Art Gallery (again omitted from all La Tour scholarship to date) – a drawing which however is in the same sense as the pastel, reinforcing the suggestion that it may have been preparatory to the engraving; the lower part is unfinished.



(The evidence of the Cleveland *préparation* is limited to the central fold in the turban, which matches far more closely the print than the Louvre pastel. The Restout *préparation* in Saint-Quentin, of stunning quality, with a knotted falling lock of hair as in the Kuntze copy, can however tell us nothing about the overall composition.)



But it is in both cases the almost exact match of the Flipart and Moitte engravings with the Kuntze copies that provides incontrovertible evidence of how the pastels looked in 1756 and during the 1760s before La Tour's changes.

That changes were made is of course well documented. Shortly after Restout's death in 1768 La Tour retrieved both portraits with the intention of "improving" them. Mariette mentions only Restout, while Diderot compounds the confusion when he interrupts his *Salon de 1769* with an account of a visit to La Tour's studio in which he suggests

that La Tour is copying rather than altering the pastel of Restout he had borrowed:

Je sortais du Sallon; j'étais fatigué; je suis entré chez La Tour, cet homme singulier qui apprend le latin à cinquante-cinq ans, et qui a abandonné l'art dans lequel il excelle pour s'enfoncer dans les profondeurs de la métaphysique qui achèvera de lui déranger la tête. Je l'ai trouvé payant un tribut à la mémoire de Restout, dont il peignait le portrait d'après un autre de lui dont il n'était pas satisfait. O le beau jeu que je joue, me dit-il! Je ne saurais que gagner. Si je réussis, j'aurais l'éloge d'un bon artiste; si je ne réussis pas, il me restera celui de bon ami. Il m'avoua qu'il devait infiniment aux conseils de Restout, le seul homme du même talent qui lui ait paru vraiment communicatif, que c'était ce peintre qui lui avait appris à faire tourner une tête et à faire circuler l'air entre la figure et le fond en reflétant le côté éclairé sur le fond, et le fond sur le côté ombré; que soit la faute de Restout, soit la sienne, il avait eu toutes les peines du monde à saisir ce principe, malgré sa simplicité; que, lorsque le reflet est trop fort ou trop faible, en général vous ne rendez pas la nature, vous peignez; que vous êtes faible ou dur, et que vous n'êtes plus ni vrai ni harmonieux.

Diderot's account at least offers an explanation of La Tour's interest in a tribute to his recently deceased mentor. No such explanation can account for the assault on the Dumont pastel: the subject would live on to 1781.

The following year La Tour laid out the problems with the portrait of Restout in his long letter to Belle de Zuylen (5.III.1770). The letter is too long to quote in full, but this is relevant:

C'est s'occuper de chimères, on ne fait ny tableaux ny poèmes tels que je les désire. Cette perfection est au-dessus de l'humanité; je l'éprouve actuellement: j'ay sur le chevallet le portrait de feu M. Restout, fait et donné à l'Académie en 1744; j'ay voulu depuis sa mort luy témoigner ma reconnaissance des grands principes de peinture qu'il m'a communiqué, en remaniant cet ouvrage. Après avoir fait cent changemens, on me dit « Quel dommage! » Il y avoit un mouvement qui se communiquoit à ceux qui le voyoient. Je suis encore après et ay changé jusqu'à ce jour; je ne puis dire quand il sera fini. On attend d'autres ouvrages faits anciennement, que j'ai eu en fantaisie de remanier; je les renverray si un compagnon de voyage arrive avant.

(Once again La Tour is confused about dates: his morceau de réception was presented to the Académie in 1746, not 1744.) But at least the letter makes it clear that what was under way was a “remaniement”, not a copying. The postscript disclosed that the Académie had required him to return the portrait of Restout, more or less as it was:

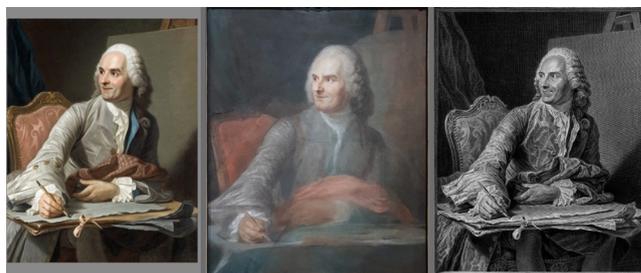
les regrets de l'Académie m'obligent de tacher de remettre le portrait de M. Restout à peu près comme il était. Voilà bien du temps perdu et des efforts *in vanum*. Mieux que bien est terrible! On ne se corrige pas, puisque j'ay tombé dans le cas plus de cent fois.

The pastels were presumably returned to the Académie soon after, or perhaps later. They were listed among the revolutionary seizures from the *ci-devant* Académie on 9.XII.1793, when they were inventoried in the Premier Garde-meuble with this note: “Ces deux tableaux sont perdus par l'auteur même qui, trop vieux, voulut les retoucher: on peut compter que les glaces.” In the

21.VII.1796 inventory, Phlipault noted that they had not been transported to the maison de Nesle with the other Académie pictures; the entry included the important note that by then they were “sans bordure”; if the glass too had been removed since 1793 that would have led to further losses beyond those inflicted by the artist.

But interesting though these verbal documents may be, they leave us completely ignorant of the visual issues which must be paramount in any art historical analysis. Further there is a limit to what scientific analysis alone can bring to this discussion: the use of multiple sheets (Restout we know is on 13 sheets of paper, Dumont on 5), repaired joins etc. can offer little to tell us whether changes were made during the 1740s or thirty years later: no newly invented pigment or material is likely to be detectable.

What we can now say with confidence is that La Tour decided to make radical changes to both works for essentially aesthetic reasons. Those to Restout are less clear in view of the subsequent deterioration (so that what was deliberately altered and what has been damaged are sometimes irretrievably confused). Why round the corners of the canvas on the easel, unless La Tour had developed a dislike of linearity (or had noticed that the perspective of the plane of the canvas and that of the easel were incorrect)? Most curiously, the proper arm, visibly on a separate sheet on the Louvre pastel, seems if anything to be closer to the original than the rest of the work. The most important alteration is that the portfolio resting on the artist's knees on which he has been drawing has been replaced by a far less ambitious work table covered in baize. The gesture of drawing, with the porte-crayon now resting on cloth, makes no sense. But the covering up of the sitter's legs has transformed this three-quarter length portrait jusqu'aux genoux into a half-length image: what is lost in sense is gained in proximity: it is in the current vernacular up close and personal.



The changes to Dumont can be more exhaustively listed. Among the minor details, one notes that the original had a fuller background curtain, a rectangular palette with an oil reservoir, a larger group of brushes and a simpler table with no drawer, supporting different objects. The effect of these differences, notably in the table, is again, and even more dramatically, to change to viewpoint, providing a *di sotto in sù* perspective (unique in the œuvre) which served to make the portrait both more intimate and more reverential.



What is clearly happening illustrates La Tour's problems with the viewpoint, one of numerous particular difficulties facing the portraitist on which he wrote at great length to Marigny in 1763:

Les gens délicats sont blessés d'un tableau dont le point de distance est près et n'a pas au moins vingt-cinq pieds. Partant de ce principe, quel embarras pour une vûe courte et foible, forcée d'être à deux ou trois pieds du modèle, obligée de se hausser et baisser à mesure, de tourner à droite, à gauche, pour tâcher d'appercevoir de près ce qu'on ne peut voir bien que de loin! Il faudroit être à ma place pour sentir les efforts que je fais pour mettre une figure et une teste ensemble dans les règles de la perspective. Les angles sont si courts que la personne qu'on peint de près ne peut pas regarder de ses deux yeux à la fois l'œil du peintre. Ils vont et viennent sans être jamais ensemble. C'est pourtant de leur parfait accord que résulte l'âme et la vie du portrait. De la naissent les inquiétudes qui occasionnent tant de changements qu'ils font passer le malheureux peintre pour fou ou tout au moins capricieux, fantasque; à la vûe de tant de difficultés l'humeur gagne l'artiste et, au souvenir de M. Coppel qui n'a pas rempli les intentions du Roi, elle s'aigrit et s'éloigne de beaucoup de choses telles que des devoirs, des bienfaisances, etc.

In his letter to d'Angiviller in 1778, in which La Tour argues at length as to why he needs the use of an additional logement in the Louvre, spelling out all the difficulties consequent to his perfectionism he mentions perspective. And the postscript reinforces this:

J'ay oublié qu'il s'agit du portrait de M. Retout [sic], que j'ay enlevé pour un mot de critique de feu M. Toqué: c'est un maître à danser. Ce mot et le désir de donner aux élèves l'exemple avec le précepte de la perspective qui manquoit dans mes portraits sont les causes funestes des peines infinies que je me suis donné jusqu'à present. Dieu et Monsieur le Comte me soient en ayde, j'en ay un très grand besoin.

It may be possible to read this as indicating that La Tour had not returned Restout to the Académie as he had reported to Belle de Zuylen, or perhaps that he had borrowed it again; once again La Tour's correspondence baffles us today as much as it baffled Marigny and other recipients at the time. But the evidence of Kuntze, Flipart and Moitte tells us much of what we need to know, and hadn't troubled to see until now. The distant monuments to Pompadour and de Rieux are dismantled for these friends.

The Louvre's pastels catalogue: errata and observations

12 July 2018 – extract, La Tour entries only

78. La Tour auto (Neilson)

[J.46.1009](#). Is this entry out of sequence? It is far later than the following items, even if the work of which it is a replica is early. The argument can't be that self-portraits are brought to the front (although this would explain the sequence of the late Ducreux, cat. no. 51), as cat. no. 91 is far later.

XS appears to have made extensive use of my research on Neilson, including my discovery of the pastels by him in a Scottish collection, identifying Dupouch etc. Incidentally they were, but are not now, at Amisfield; they are in a different house. The information he presents is not in the Curmer biography or the Christie's sale catalogue. In my Neilson article (until I corrected it in June 2018) a typographical error gave Curmer's first name as Alfred when in fact it is Albert. On p. 339 XS prints my erroneous Alfred.

However XS has simply repeated the erroneous provenance inferred by Christie's (and followed too by me until 2018) based on the inscriptions rather than independently verifying them. In fact Antoine-Marie Lorin died in 1859, not 1871; and the H. Lorin who received the pastel on the death of "Antonin" was not Antoine-Marie's son Henri (1817–1914) but the latter's nephew Henri (1857–1914), brother of the Henriette-Louise (1852–1930) who married Paul Gautier de Charnacé. For the steps see my [Neilson](#) genealogy.

Omitted from the bibliographie is Maurice Tourneux 1904a, where the pastel is discussed on p. 36, and reproduced p. 13; it was then in the Lorin collection. It is curious that it escaped B&W's catalogue, but it was not unpublished when it emerged in 2005.

79. La Tour Mlle de La Fontaine Solare

[J.46.2926](#). I have all the "œuvres en rapport" listed here, not just one as the text suggests. The identification of the source of Stanislaw Leszczyński's pastel is mine. (There is e.g. no mention of the association in the Voreaux 2004 catalogue of Stanislaw's work, where the pastel is included as no. 19, p. 190f.) But there are other related works: the curious Mme d'Authier de Saint-Sauveur, whose condition precludes a determination of its status but seems most likely "wrong"; the autograph Mme Restout recently acquired by Orléans; and the obvious pastiche, J.9.6183.

In the historique, XS notes that the pastel was seized by the Nazis before January 1941. In fact, in common with other pictures from Jewish collections, it was first required to be deposited in a vault (no. 63 in this case) in the Banque de France (along with the 23 Louvre pastels noted above). It was then transferred to the Jeu de Paume on 29.x.1940 before being taken to Germany.

80. La Tour Frémin

[J.46.1819](#). Bibliographie omits Denk 1998, fig. 15; Williams 2015, fig. 5.2, as well as the Goncourt (1867, p. 350: "la coloration puissante"). It is worth citing Lady Dilke's

assessment (1899, p. 164) with which I concur: "the Louvre collection is of the highest value and contains at least one of Latour's finest male portraits, that of the sculptor René Frémin."

Since Mariette described the pastel shown in 1743, hors cat., as of Frémin "jusqu'aux genoux, fait en sept jours" I have two J numbers, [J.46.1818](#) and the Louvre's [J.46.1819](#); XS may well be justified in conflating them. This may or may not be related to the other puzzle: the pastel is mounted on a châssis à clés, of a kind very rarely used for 18th century pastels (although the exceptional size might explain it), and has had a batten attached to one side to extend the work, apparently to fit into the present frame. It is tempting to assume that this was done around 1852, a date that appears on some newsprint used to line the back. Photographs in the file demonstrate that the batten was applied outside the canvas, which folds between the stretcher and the batten. That would seem to preclude the original state having been bigger – unless there were an earlier, more radical transfer onto the stretcher. That would explain why the canvas that projects from the back has been fixed less tidily than one might expect. But such a transfer is difficult to reconcile with the exceptionally high finish of the work. And while one should not take the story of its being finished in seven days too literally, it might suggest that there was an earlier, less finished version.

To understand this fully it is necessary to establish the detailed provenance (this [genealogy](#) may help). XS omits the steps between Frémin's posthumous inventory in 1744 (as cited by Rambaud) and the acquisition by the Louvre from "Mme Piot" [*recte* Piat: she signs "fe Vor Piat"] in 1853, noting only that it might be the pastel that had been offered to the Louvre previously. In fact Louvre documents now in the Archives des musées nationaux establish that the pastel passed to Frémin's grandson Alexandre-César-Annibal Frémin de Sy (1745–1821), mousquetaire du roi, who left it to his sister, Mme Noël (her name is omitted from all standard genealogies, and her youth suggests she can only have been a half-sister of the marquis de Sy: in fact detailed research in the parish registers at Sy confirms she was the illegitimate daughter of one Marie-Charlotte Noblet, the 21-year-old daughter of a local carpenter in Sy, and bore only her family name, as Adélaïde-Cécile Noblet, until her marriage to Laurent Noël). (Since César-Annibal was an émigré during the Revolution, his wife – who had remained in Sy – dying, his château being demolished and all its contents sold, it is likely that during the Revolution the pastel had remained with his father's widow, who survived until 1817.)

It was Mme Noël who offered the pastel to the Louvre, first in 1829, again in 1834; she was told that the pastel didn't suit the Louvre, the sitter not being a celebrity. After her death in 1844 it passed to her daughter Marie-Catherine-Clémence Noël (1808–1854), who had married Victor-Louis Piat in 1832 (hence "femme Victor Piat"). He was a worker

in the clockmaking industry, but lost his job around 1850 and failed to obtain further employment. With three daughters to support Mme Piat wrote a series of increasingly desperate letters to sell the pastel to the Louvre, eventually dropping the price by a third to the 2000 francs for which it was finally acquired 18.XII.1853. She died the following year.

The condition report obtained more than 18 months earlier provides key information about the pastel: it was in perfect condition despite the fact that the frame had suffered “quelques ravages du temps et du différentes déplacements du tableaux”; the dimensions (sight size) were 90×73 cm, and it corresponded exactly to the 1747 Surugue engraving (the aspect ratio of the print and pastel in its current form are both 1.23, while without the extension the ratio would have been 1.27). It being unlikely that the family had reframed the work, the spatial arrangement in the print indeed suggests that the extension has been in place from the very beginning.

Oeuvres en rapport: XS notes that the pastel was engraved by Surugue (who was born in 1716, not 1710, although the error is found in several reference works). On 22 décembre 1743, months after the pastel was exhibited, and two months before his own death, René Frémin was parrain to Surugue’s daughter Marie-Élisabeth, baptised at Saint-Benoît. She died soon after.

The adoption of the spelling “Fremin”, without an acute, is curious – pp. 160, 162; but with the accent in the index, XS’s previous works (Debrie & Salmon 2000, *La Tour* 2004) and most modern sources.

81. Attr. La Tour, Religieuse

J.46.2183. See my *Gazette Drouot* article. The entry is very confusing, starting from the beginning “L’œuvre est entrée au Louvre comme attribué à Maurice Quentin de La Tour”: in fact it was given as by him. It was rejected by Monnier but when I saw it with Jean-François Méjanès in 2004 we both thought it had more potential and agreed on at least reinstating it as “attribué à” La Tour. Looking at it again, and allowing for a curious problem with the nose (perhaps explained by earlier restoration) I now think it is probably autograph. XS appears to think so too, but has inexplicably retained the “attribué à” qualification. A tweet by the Louvre suggested that the attribution to La Tour was recent, to which I responded with some of the above. The claim that the pastel entered the Louvre as an anonyne was repeated in XS’s Louvre lecture (available on [YouTube](#), at 6m00 in); further it was claimed that the misidentification as Madame Louise was “généralement retenu” even though I rejected it in the 2006 print edition of the *Dictionary*. The exhibition history omits Paris 1888 – and Paris 1963 (see note at Cat. 1 above), where indeed the identification was questioned (“portrait présumé de”). The historique given by XS, which starts with “Georges [sic] de Monbrison”, is incomplete; reference to the *Dictionary* when XS was writing would have extended this back to 1851, and another researcher (Ólafur Þorvaldsson) has recently kindly drawn my attention to the 1863 sale. Subsequently I noted that the pastel had been lent to an exhibition in Paris in 1874 (as of “Mlle de Charolais, fille de Louis XV, en carmélite, très-beau pastel de Latour”) by Maurice Cottier, the painter and

collector who co-owned the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. Cottier probably bought it at the 1863 sale. After his death it passed to Monbrison, who was the nephew of Mme Cottier. The full provenance should be:

Baron de Silvestre; Paris, 11.XII.1851, Lot 234, anon. René Soret; vente p.m., Paris, Drouot, Perrot, 15–16.V.1863, Lot 152 n.r., as by La Tour, ‘très beau pastel d’une conservation remarquable’, H360. Maurice Cottier 1874; desc.: le neveu de Mme Cottier, née Jenny Conquéré de Monbrison, George Conquéré de Monbrison (1830–1906), château de Saint-Roch 1888; sa nièce Laure-Augusta-Marianne de Monbrison, Lady Ashbourne (1869–1953); don 10.VII.1920 ‘au désir de sa mère’ [Mme Henri-Roger Conquéré de Monbrison, née Élisabeth-Louise-Hélène Hecht (1848–1912)].

Since it was given in memory of Lady Ashbourne’s mother, that name should be given.

During the war, this was one of the pastels damaged while stored in the vaults of the Banque de France. “Un très léger point de moisissure sur le portrait anonyme de Madame Louise de France a été retire par Mr Lucien Aubert”, according to a contemporary report; it is not clear if this was the spot on the nose mentioned above.

82. La Tour Le dauphin

J.46.2126.

It is unclear why XS now refers to Louis le dauphin as “le dauphin Louis Ferdinand”. It is not the form given in the almanachs royaux or in Jouglà de Morenas, in XS’s previous work, or on p. 331 of XS (where the normal style is given).

There is no discussion of the curious appearance of the face, which presumably is the result of some form of rubbing.

83. La Tour Orry

J.46.2431.

Omissions from the bibliographie include Champfleury 1855, p. 89; Graffigny 2002, vii, p. 115 repr.; and James-Sarazin 2016, i, p. 521 repr.

On Duval de l’Épinoy, Mme de Graffigny etc. discussed p.168 one should cite my essay http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTour_Duval.pdf, not simply www.pastellists.com. My other essay http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTour_Rieux.pdf would also be helpful.

The copy in Sierre mentioned in the œuvres en rapport is J.46.2433, repr. in the *Dictionary*.

There is no suggestion for the maker of the frame in stuc doré with the curious mark DL. The question is discussed Pons 1987 p. 42, of which there is an illustrated version online in <https://www.theframeblog.com/2017/07/12/18th-century-french-frames-and-their-ornamentation/>. Is this not (as Bruno Hochart suggests) the Sieur De Launay, quai de Gesvres recommended by Petit de Bachaumont for his composition frames at this time?

84/85. La Tour Restout/Dumont

J.46.2687/J.46.1681. Why combine the entries? In the discussion of the Revolutionary history, XS omits the crucial note in the 1796 that the works were now “sans bordure”, the 1793 inventory having noted that, in view of

the damage inflicted by the artist, “on peut compter que les glaces.” Why aren’t there sections for the œuvres en rapport? There are many in the *Dictionary*, including of the full versions and the preparations. A more consistent approach to œuvres en rapport (which are sometimes just cross-referred to the *Dictionary*, sometimes set out in full, sometimes embedded in the text) would make the book easier to use.

Specifically the Flipart engraving of Dumont and the Moitte of Restout are only mentioned in passing, and the possibly preparatory drawing for the former in the Walker Art Gallery not at all. Nor are the 1756 oil copies of both by Tadeusz Kuntze (not Kuntz) in Wilanów (although XS mentions his copies after the Lundberg morceaux de réception which are less important). These provide crucial evidence of the appearance of the pastel for La Tour’s radical changes.

Among the omissions from the bibliographie is Denk 1998, figs. 22 and 23 (her work is cited for the Chardins, but has many more pastels). Further the description of both pastels in Chennevières 1888, p. 333, “en assez fâcheux état”, is worth citing also for his outrageous suggestion that “si détériorés qu’ils soient par le temps et l’abandon, j’imagine qu’un adroit pastelliste, — et il n’en manque pas dans notre temps, — les pourrait remettre en état de figurer dans la série de nos portraits d’artistes.”

86. La Tour Lemoyne

J.46.2015. The incomplete bibliographie omits for example Denk 1998, pl. VI; McCullagh 2006, fig. 8; Williams 2015, fig. 5.5.

A far more extended discussion of which salon etc is required, including of my classification: I published the Dormeuil version as not autograph in the online *Dictionary* (J.46.2011) in 2013. But I think it likely that it is a copy of the lost La Tour rather than (as XS implies) a pastiche (a derived work with alterations) after the Louvre J.46.2015. There are three points XS does not discuss. First, there are differences in the face: notably the cleft chin and tighter jowls in J.46.2011 indicate that J.46.2015 does show an older figure, albeit probably not as much as 16 years older (but the pastel shown is 1763 was probably executed in the 1750s). Second, XS does not mention the Valade painting in which the head (including the wig) seems to be copied directly from J.46.2011 (or the lost autograph prototype J.46.201, quite possibly the Joly de Bammeville pastel J.46.2023). Third, an examination of Lemoyne’s workshop sale in 1778 (see <http://www.pastellists.com/Collectors.html>) reveals that he owned other copies after La Tour pastels (the strongest hope for the Dormeuil pastel was the provenance).

87. La Tour Maurice de Saxe

J.46.2865. All the copies and more are of course in the *Dictionary*. XS and I disagree about status of some versions. XS discusses the Pannier version, which he regards as autograph, and mentions the Christie’s 2015 sale but does not state that it was there classified as “attribué”. XS does not disclose which pastels he has examined *de visu* (the *Dictionary* does disclose this, using the symbol σ).

For “Prohengues” read Pierre, marquis de “Prohenques”; B&W’s error has been repeated in numerous secondary sources, obscuring the identity of the maréchal de Saxe’s executor.

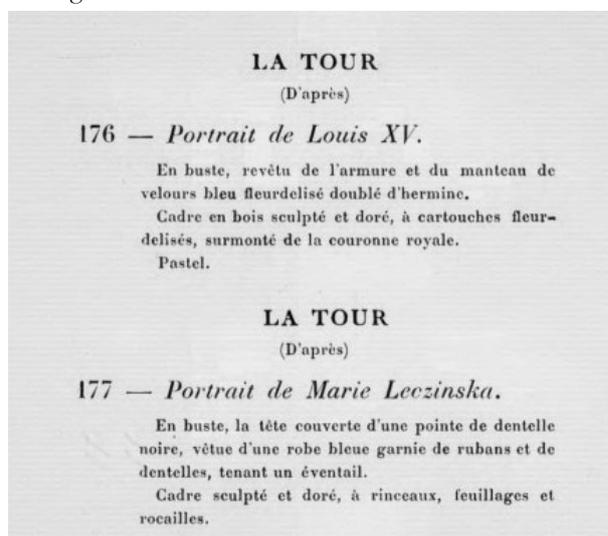
XS’s bibliographie omits Jeffares 2015c, fig. 11.

88. La Tour Louis XV

J.46.2089. The bibliographie omits Fumaroli 2005 and Fumaroli 2007. The presentation of the œuvres en rapport (here and in other entries) doesn’t assist in determining whether the sales refer to the same or different versions. In the discussion of the Liotard versions, the pastel in Vannes which R&L include was discovered by me in Vannes, and first published by me in the 2006 print *Dictionary*. The copy in the musée Garinet is in oil, not pastel. Among a number of omissions (listed in the *Dictionary*) is a pastel copy in La Salle University Art Museum, and the version listed (with the queen photographed) in Schloß Seifersdorf in 1904 (see further under cat. 89).

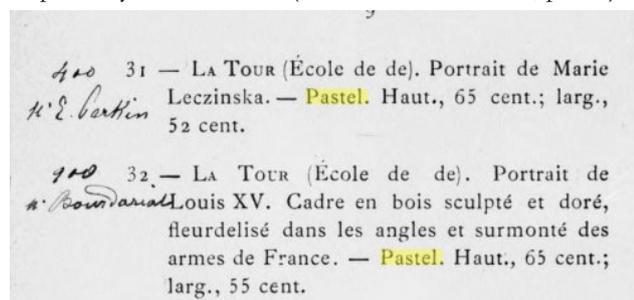
In XS’s Louvre lecture ([YouTube](#), at 46m30s) it is stated that the frame for this and for the queen (cat. 89) were made by Maurisan, and his receipt for frames for pastels of these subjects is mentioned on p. 164 of the catalogue. But according to Pons 1987 (p. 48), only that of the queen could correspond with the works in the Louvre: the 1748 invoice covered works by La Tour and Nattier, “dont **un** par M. La Tour” [my emphasis]. Indeed the *entremiliens* of the frames for the king and dauphin were “d’un losange et entrelas et de bandes très délicatement travaillé”, which are not found on the Louvre frames. If XS has new evidence, he should give his source and explain Pons’s error.

As XS has repeated (on p. 176f) his previous discussion about the provenance of the other pastel of Louis XV now deposited in the Getty (fig. 40), it may be worth correcting this at some length. (The online version of the *Dictionary* was amended to follow Salmon’s 2007 *Metropolitan Museum journal* article, but I will shortly correct it in line with this discussion.) The pastels of Louis XV and Marie Leszczyńska in the Delaherche sale, respectively lots 176 and 177, were described in considerable detail in the catalogue:

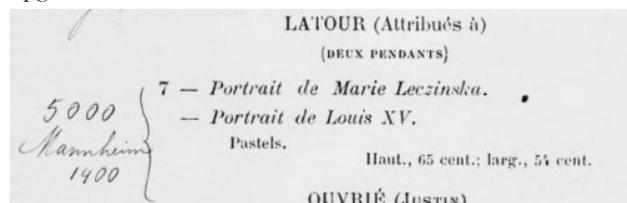


This makes it quite clear that they were copies of the pastels in the Louvre (the king’s ermine mantle is not present in the

Getty pastel, and the frame described is a copy of that in the Louvre, quite different from that of the Getty; the queen's frame is also evidently a copy of that in the Louvre, which differs from that of the king). These were no doubt the pastels that appeared in the Sichel sale, where they were respectively lots 32 and 31 (not 31 and 32 as in XS, p. 176);



but it was there, not in 1910, that they were separated, with the queen being bought by Perkins, while the king was acquired by Bourdariat. At this sale they were “école de La Tour”, a euphemism for copies; they were of different sizes, and had different frames. It isn't clear if they were reunited by the comte de B... whose sale took place in 1910; it seems more likely that these were a different pair, now described as pendants, both 65×54 cm, and the attribution upgraded:



The annotation in the sale catalogue is ambiguous, but is consistent with the statement that Mannheim bought Marie Leszczyńska (as he died three weeks later it would have been back on the market very rapidly), while this version of the king was bought by the great-grandfather of the owner of the Getty pastel in 2004. But that pastel cannot have been the one in the Delaherche or Sichel sales. And that pastel copy and that of the queen, missing from the œuvres en rapport, are significant perhaps because of the trouble that had been taken to copy each of the two different frames. One speculates if they might even be among the copies recorded by Durameau in the magazin at Versailles in 1784.

89. La Tour Marie Leszczyńska

J.46.2269. The bibliographic omits Fumaroli 2007, repr.; Tarabra 2008, p. 294 repr.; Grison 2015, fig. 7; Perronneau 2017, fig. 12; Goncourt 1867, p. 350f has a passage that should not be overlooked but appears only on p. 38. See also the 1958 *Times* review cited above (Chardin, cat no. 42-45).

The œuvres en rapport refers to the *Dictionary*, but incorrectly states that I have omitted an oil copy sold at Sotheby's Olympia, 20.IV.2004; I have not – it appears between J.46.2294 and J.46.2297 (oils don't get J numbers but do appear in the sequence). The copy in the mBA Bordeaux (inv. 1431) is not a painting but a pastel (XS repeats Monnier's error). The version listed in Nancy in the 1895 catalogue does not appear in the 1897 edition.



The version said to be “conservée à Berlin (ancienne collection Cassirer, vente, Londres, 23-24 mars 1926” is my J.46.2291, sold in Berlin, at the auction house Cassirer & Helbing, 23–24.III.1926, Lot 416 from the collection of Graf Brühl – apparently the one photographed in Schloß Seifersdorf in 1904 (left). Given Brühl's importance in the Saxon court this and its pendant, Lot 415 from the same sale (which Monnier and so XS didn't mention), are of some interest: all the more so because the frame, which is just barely visible in the photo (and which I originally mistook for a Dresden frame), appears also to copy the Louvre frame for Marie Leszczyńska:



See the discussion above (cat. 88) for the Delaherche and Sichel copy: on p. 179, XS writes of the Delaherche version “il ne semble pas s'agir de la version du Louvre”: this seems to suggest he thinks it is of a different model – but the Delaherche catalogue description above follows the Louvre version precisely. We have no evidence of what the frame on Graf Brühl's Louis looked like, but it seems quite likely that at least two sets of contemporary copies of the La Tour pastels were issued with the frames as well as the pastels being copied.

Among the œuvres en rapport, XS lists a copy of the La Tour by Tocqué at Gatchina. This again is taken from Monnier without identifying her mistake. She cited Serge Ernst, *Gazette des beaux-arts*, April 1928, p. 244, where the

Gatchina painting is stated to be after the large painting in the Louvre: but this of course is after Tocqué's own painting in the Louvre, inv. 8177, sd 1740, and commenced 1738 (ten years before the La Tour), as comte Doria pointed out in the *Gazette des beaux-arts* just a few months later (September 1928, p. 156). Gillet 1929 reproduces the Tocqué and La Tour on facing pages (8/9).

La Tour, tête de Marie-Josèphe de Saxe, inv. 27618 *bis*

[J.46.22251](#). The recently discovered first attempt at a portrait of Marie-Josèphe de Saxe (as the paper size indicates, surely an abandoned work rather than a *préparation*) is mentioned and reproduced in two places (p. 179, fig. 41 and pp. 198ff, fig. 55). This has perhaps distracted attention from the chronological problem it raises, which isn't adequately dealt with by XS's statement "On ne sait si ce fut La Tour qui utilisa lui-même sa *préparation* pour doubler son carton ou si cette opération eut lieu postérieurement." The problem is that XS relates the unfinished head to the 1761 portrait of the dauphine, while he also considers that the pastel of the queen was that exhibited in 1748. It is scarcely likely that a completed pastel, exhibited at the Salon and delivered to the royal collection, would be returned to the artist's studio a dozen years later to have a new backing fitted.

The problem seems insoluble, but thanks to two discoveries Ólafur Þorvaldsson has been able to propose an ingenious solution. Although at first sight the unfinished head ([fig. 55](#)) appears to match closely [cat. no. 94](#) (and indeed the related preparation [fig. 54](#), as well as the large Saint-Quentin LT 17), you might think that it looks a little younger, before dismissing that as a subjective and unreliable judgement. But there is a crucial (and objective) difference in the hair on the left side of her head. In the 1761 work this is swept back in a series of curls which are all concave up: in the unfinished head, however, they are concave down, indicating a series of tighter, smaller curls from a previous era. The discoveries are of two miniatures which share this feature, [one](#) in the Habsburg collection in the Miniaturenkabinett at the Hofburg, which is somewhat perfunctory (and hitherto misidentified), but the other, in the Wallace Collection (set in a later [box](#)), gives us I think a pretty clear idea of what La Tour's very first pastel of the dauphine must have been like:



The miniature is in Reynolds 1980, no. 30 repr., as anonymous, but recognised by Guy Kuraszewski of Versailles (letter of 1975 in Wallace Collection archives) as of Marie-Josèphe de Saxe at the time of her marriage in

1747. It is evidently after the lost La Tour, and shows the dauphine in almost exactly the same pose as the 1761 pastel, ignoring the 1749 composition entirely. Commissioned in 1747, and finished by the following year (as XS notes, p. 198), it must have been in La Tour's studio at the same time as he was preparing the pastel of the queen (cat. no. 89) for exhibition at the salon.

90. La Tour Mme de Pompadour

[J.46.2541](#). I have numerous additions to the inevitably incomplete bibliographie, ranging from Gautier 1858 to Guichard 2015. It was reproduced as early as 1851. By 1890, when an American called Hamilton McKay Twombly thought he had bought the original for \$2250, Alfred Trumble, editor of *The collector*, discussed the swindle in several articles, pointing out that copies were available for as little as 1000 francs. The copy XS says I have omitted is in fact there ([J.46.2568](#)), and has been since before the sale (20 October 2017), but no doubt there are many others out there.

It is surely of interest to cite Mantz (1854, p. 177), writing just 100 years after its completion, describing the work as "un de ceux que le temps a effacés." Less accurate is Champney 1891, who thought "the head cut out during the Revolution". The omission of Professor Goodman's monograph on *The portraits of Madame de Pompadour* (2000) is odd. Champfleury 1855 prints in full (before adding to it) the full two pages of Sainte-Beuve's famous discussion, from Monday, 16 September 1850 (the citation in XS is the first page only in the 5th edition of the collected *Causeries*), but it was Arsène Houssaye who first wrote extravagantly about the pastel (1849), and probably inspired Sainte-Beuve.

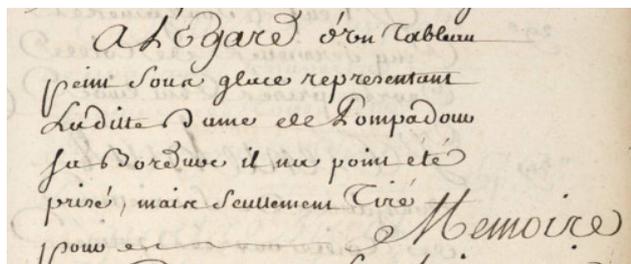
The most significant omission however is the correspondence of Mme de Graffigny, specifically her letter of 8.VII.1748. Even if we believe La Tour's claim to have destroyed the first version of the portrait, it is perfectly clear that XS's account ("La première mention du portrait date de 1752", p. 184) is far too late.

A general problem is the treatment of salon critiques, which are not explicitly listed in the bibliographies. Several are discussed in the main essay, but there is no reference for example to the Gautier-Dagoty *Observations...* (1755), which is omitted from all standard bibliographies until I published it online in 2015 (you can find the full text in my [exhibitions](#)). It contains important observations on the significance of the original glass which had to be removed at some stage after 1942. The standard spelling (p. 184) of *synérèse* (*synaeresis*) is with an initial s, not a c (as the etymology requires). Guiffrey 1873 reproduced accounts for the workmen and carpenters employed to relocate the pastel overnight during the Salon of 1755 due to the reflections in the glass exacerbated by its initial position.

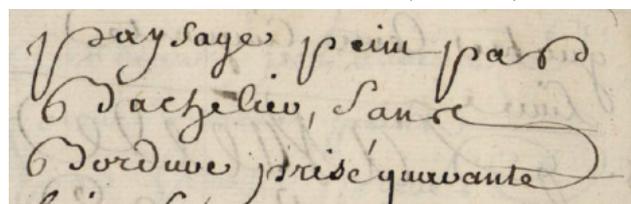
Also omitted is the discussion of the portrait in two letters by Prinz Wilhelm von Preußen to the marquis de Valori, 23.XII.1755, 17.I.1756; these relate both to the perceived likeness of the work and to the role of the image as a diplomatic tool (Wilhelm being offered an unrecorded copy).

XS speculates (p. 182, repeating exactly Monnier's text, drawn from Cordey's 1939 transcription and his question) that this may be the "tableau peint sous glace, représentant

la dite Dame de Pompadour, sans bordure” in Mme de Pompadour’s posthumous inventory, but with necessary reservations – it is inherently unlikely in view of the weight of the original sheet (evidently present in 1755 and 1803 on, until c.1942) that the pastel could be under glass without a frame. However XS should have consulted the original manuscript rather than relying on Cordey; Marigny’s copy is now at INHA. Although the (exhausted) notary has carelessly omitted the word “dans”, the next word is clearly “sa”, not “sans”: I think item 288 correctly transcribed includes “un Tableau peint sous glace representant la dite dame de Pompadour [dans] sa bordure”:



(In case you think this is some obscure notarial convention, this is what “sans Bordure” looks like (item 1245):



The writing for the pastel is rather smaller than for the large painting of her (item 168), evidently considered more important by the notary; but the most puzzling thing is its location – among an industrial quantity of pieces of glass (nothing else is inventoried in the room), suggesting it was effectively in storage rather than on display. You don’t get the full impression of this from Cordey, who cannot bring himself to transcribe these pages from item 288 preceding the picture.

91. La Tour Préparation

J.46.2608. See my *Gazette Drouot* article. The Bibliographie omits Dayot 1904, p. 321 repr.; Dreyfus 1909, repr.; MacFall 1909, repr.; *New York times*, 9.VI.1912, repr.; *Gazette Drouot*, 21.III.2008, p. 113 repr.; Prat 2017, p. 233 n.r.

Expositions: Paris 1908a, no number, repr. p. 39: XS confuses this with a quite different pastel, no. 51 in Paris 1908a, which is in fact J.9.6645 (Éc. fr., Allégorie de l’Architecture).

It should be noted here that the technique is quite different from the La Tour preparations of the “second category” as defined in the entry; it is unusually highly finished and has a dubious inscription. In 1883 it was simply a “tête de femme”, and in 1922 it was sold as of the “Comtesse de X” even though Roger-Milès (as was his habit) had given it the *nom de fantaisie* of la Pompadour in 1908. When Haldane MacFall reproduced the work (again as of an inconnue) the words “La Comtesse” were clearly visible; they may have been obscured subsequently, perhaps in order to present the sitter as the *marquise* de Pompadour, as she appears in

Roger-Milès and B&W. But the face is so different to hers that I do not think we can retain even “présumée”.

The postscript from letter from Kaunitz cited here as though unpublished has appeared frequently in print since it was first published by the Goncourts, *Madame de Pompadour* (p. 214 in the 1888 edition).

92. La Tour d’Alembert

J.46.1218. Omissions from the bibliographie include Denk 1998, fig. 11; Conisbee 2003, fig. 13; Tarabra 2008, p. 91 repr. Also overlooked (I am grateful to Ólafur Þorvaldsson for pointing this out) is the letter from d’Alembert to Mme Du Deffand of 27 janvier 1753 which sheds light on the commission: “L’atour a voulu absolument faire mon portrait, et je serai au salon de cette année avec la Chaussée, qu’il a peint aussi, et un des bouffons italiens: je serai là en gaie et triste compagnie.”

XS relies upon Gasté’s 1896 article for the sitter’s legacy to Condorcet, although Gasté thought the will itself was lost. It is not (it was deposited in the Archives nationales on 29.X.1783, where it may be found under code MC/RS//504, together with d’Alembert’s posthumous inventory, carried out in his apartment at the Louvre, 1.XII.1783, MC/RS//505). The documents are of some interest as they indicate the obscurity into which La Tour’s work had fallen, even though one of the executors who assisted at the inventaire was Watelet. Most of the pictures, including the La Tour, were found “dans la chambre ou led. feu d’Alembert couchoit & ou il est décédé”. The pastel was valued together with another undescribed oil painting, 20 livres together, and fell into the residual estate, which did indeed go to Condorcet. But many of the other portraits were singled out: in the valuation Mlle Lusurier’s oil portrait was explicitly described, and specifically bequeathed by d’Alembert to Remy; Watelet was given d’Alembert’s portrait of Descartes. Pride of place however was given to another portrait – a portrait of Friedrich der Große “en Grand & en Pastel”, which had been valued at 120 livres in the inventaire, and was left to Mme Michel Camus Destouches, née Jeanne Mirey (it reappeared in her posthumous inventory a few years later). The artist isn’t named, but might perhaps have been Cunningham.

Gasté’s 1896 article omits some of the material from his 1893 contribution to the *Bulletin de la Société des beaux-arts de Caen*, notably its appendices. Both editions include the statement from Harou-Romain himself that “elle me donna encore un portrait en pastel de d’Alembert” in a letter of 30.V.1819: this must surely be Jean Harou-Romain rather than his son. The correspondence in Appendix II of Gasté 1893 spells out the connection: Mme Condorcet’s letter to her friend Marie-Aimée-Caroline-Antoinette Cauchois (1775–1841), Mme Jean Harou-Romain, agreeing to be marraine to her expected child, in a letter of 11 thermidor an XIII (30.VII.1805); Sophie-Clémentine-Cornélie Harou was born three months later, 26.X.1805. It was evidently Sophie-Clémentine, who married Numa Danjon, rather than her brother who eventually received the pastel before it passed to her son Daniel Danjon.

There are more œuvres en rapport than listed. But the most interesting question concerns the preparatory study J.46.1238, formerly in the Doucet collection, and which bears a

striking resemblance to the Louvre pastel: indeed the orientation is far closer to that finished portrait than the Saint-Quentin preparation LT 13 (J.46.1227; fig. 52). XS dismisses the Doucet sheet as not of d'Alembert because it clearly relates to the second Saint-Quentin preparation LT 42 (J.46.1235): this latter subject has blue eyes, and so cannot be d'Alembert whose eyes were brown. But there is arguably a different possible explanation. LT 42 is itself rather odd: it is exceptionally weak, and has a number of atypical features (such as the green outline). I have previously defended it as just within the artists' range, but the condition makes it hard to judge, and the sharp strokes could have been added by a determined copyist. While apparently belonging to the "ancien fonds de l'atelier", the documentation leaves room for doubt. And if that sheet is set aside, there is no longer any objection to J.46.1238 as of d'Alembert.

93. La Tour auto vieux

J.46.115. Bibliographie omits Denk 1998, fig. 85; Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines*, 1999, p. 36, fig. 14. It also does not list, although the passage is cited at the end of the entry (and repeated *in extenso* on p. 38), the Goncourt brothers' wonderful description of this pastel. Omitted too is Champfleury's description of the late autoportrait (pp. 92f in the 1855 edition): he preferred it to La Pompadour, and thought it "le meilleur des pastels de La Tour"; his description of "son sourire un peu satyrique et un peu comédien &c." may arguably have inspired the Goncourts' "fantôme ironique".

The provenance of the work is indeed rather confusing. XS cites Fontaine's list (of pictures at the magasins de Versailles), which he reads as implying that the work was in the former Académie royale, but is then unable to find any confirmation of that in other Académie lists. But Fontaine explained (Fontaine 1910, p. 119) that this list is "l'état des portraits d'artistes ou d'amateurs déposés dans les magasins de Versailles assez peu de temps sans doute après la suppression du musée des monuments français...comme...nous ne trouvons pas, pour beaucoup d'oeuvres, d'indication de provenance, il est naturel de penser qu'elles étaient arrivées directement de Paris." Further the La Tour entry, which occurs on p. 124, is unnumbered (so it was not included in the inventaire of an II), and Fontaine adds a footnote: "Jamais il n'y eut, semble-t-il, à l'Académie, de portrait de La Tour par lui-même."

94. La Tour Marie-Josèphe de Saxe

J.46.2242. See discussion of inv. 27618 *bis* above.

95. La Tour Chardin

J.46.1436. Bibliographie omits Denk 1998, pl. VII; Williams 2009, fig. 4; Lajer-Burcharth 2018, fig. 2.86; and the Champfleury 1855 (p. 89) discussion where the pastel is contrasted with ("fort éloigné") the two Chardin self-portraits the author so much admired; nevertheless "il a de la physionomie".

The conservation report of 12 February 1943 commented on "les zébrures noirâtres qui balafrent la figure et lui donnent un aspect très désagréable paraissent dues à deux causes: des restaurations au blanc dit d'argent qui ont noirci et d'autre part l'usure qui a fait apparaître l'ébauche en ton

grisâtes. Il semble qu'il soit impossible de remédier à cet état."

96. La Tour comte de Provence

J.46.2624. Bibliographie omits Versailles 2006b, fig. 61.

97. La Tour Deschamps

J.46.162. The reference to the Chicago version in *œuvres en rapport* cites only B&W; the Dictionary, under J.46.1622, provides more information about its history.

The discussion on p. 206 of XS is based on an old assumption that Deschamps was a first cousin of La Tour, so that his grandfather would be Jean de La Tour as XS states. In fact, after painstaking research leading to this pedigree <http://www.pastellists.com/Generalogies/LaTourPedigree.pdf> which I published in 2016 (see also my essay La Tour's family), it is now clear that Deschamps was La Tour's *second* cousin. Deschamps's grandmother Marguerite Garbe, Mme Pierre Caton, was sister of La Tour's grandmother, Marie Garbe, Mme Jean de La Tour. Although he refers to one document I published, XS appears not to have read my work on the family; and when he cites Besnard & Wildenstein 1928, pp. 74-5, he does not cite my hugely expanded and heavily annotated revised edition http://www.pastellists.com/Misc/LaTour_chronology.pdf.

The pastel in the Louvre version is surely the one recorded in the posthumous inventory (10.I.1775) of the sitter's sister, Marie-Jeanne, Mme Maculerc, who died in Laon (in her brother's house, attended by him but not by her husband) on 22.IX.1774, among other family portraits in oil, "un autre petit tableau de forme carré peinte en pastel sous verre represente led. S. abbé deschamps."

La Tour's Stuart copyists: The Kamm family and others

2016

LET US CONGRATULATE³⁴⁶ the Scottish National Portrait Gallery on its recent purchase of the Allan Ramsay painting of Bonnie Prince Charlie – and Bendor Grosvenor, who recently identified it in his television programme: for an account of this see his [blog](#). In his 2008 [article](#) in the *British Art Journal*, Grosvenor finally sorted out a long-standing confusion between the two pastels by Maurice-Quentin de La Tour of Bonnie Prince Charlie and his brother Henry, Cardinal–Duke of York, and it is these images that relate to what I want to discuss here. I shall refer to the sitters as Charles and Henry rather than as Charles III or Henry IX (or in the Stuart vocabulary of the time the Prince (of Wales) and Duke (of York)), but Grosvenor's re-identification of the SNPG's (slightly less) recently acquired pastel of the former as the latter raised a controversy almost as heated as British regnal numbering. The fact is that both brothers looked like one another (despite the difference in age) to within a tolerance below the inaccuracies of eighteenth century portraiture, and the identification requires evidence, not perceived resemblance.



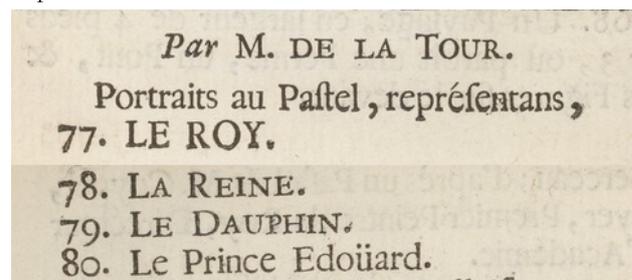
Figure 1 La Tour, Henry, Duke of York (Edinburgh, SNPG)

The National Galleries of Scotland have now conceded the point, and the pastel appears on their [website](#) as of Henry (James's "youngest" [sic] son). There is no need for me to repeat the careful and detailed arguments in the 2008 article; in the response by Edward Corp the following year ([link](#) for

those with JSTOR subscriptions); or indeed in the original Corp article in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1997. There are also well known Stuart iconographies, among them Nicholas 1973, Sharp 1996, Nicholson 2002 to which I refer below (full details in my [bibliography](#)). Further there is a relevant, if very brief, footnote on pp. 312f of Laurence Bongie's 1986 excellent study of Prince Charles in France (on which see also my article on [Mlle Ferrand](#)). But even a bibliography of Jacobite iconography is too vast a subject for this post.

I need only remind you that the SNPG pastel of Prince Henry was exhibited in the Salon of 1747 (among the "Plusieurs portraits au Pastel, sous le même N^o [111]", although "Monsieur le Duc d'Yorck" was identified by the critic abbé Le Blanc). This itself is a little curious, because the pastel shows the prince in military guise, although Henry had already (25 May 1747, three months before the Salon opened) reached Rome having decided to abandon such a role in favour of the Church: he was created a cardinal weeks later. It was likely to have been made after Henry's arrival in Paris, shortly after the victory at Prestonpans in September 1745, while he was trying to raise support for the Jacobite rebellion, but before his departure for Boulogne in December that year.

A pastel of Charles was exhibited in 1748 but is now lost:



(Charles was called prince Edoüard in France because they already had a prince Charles – de Lorraine.) The numerous copies show that the portrait must have been extremely similar to the earlier pastel, with which it has been repeatedly confused (it does however seem that all the contemporary copies relate to the portrait of Charles rather than his brother). Its timing too was curious: when the salon opened, Charles was to be expelled from France under the terms of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (although not signed until 19 October 1748, its terms were already known). One minor curiosity is that both pastels are reminiscent of La Tour's portraits of Louis XV: that of Henry, with the raised arm reminiscent of Rigaud, closer to the 1745 pastel of the king, while Charles follows the more conventional pose of the 1748 pastel – the parallel with which would not have escaped visitors to the salon, or those who looked at the livret (the progression of type, from all caps for the king, to cap and small cap for his queen and heir, to cap and lower case for the foreigner was not however accidental).

³⁴⁶ This essay first appeared as a post on my blog, neiljeffares.wordpress.com, on 2 April 2016. It may be cited as Neil Jeffares, "La Tour's Stuart copyists: the Kamm family and others", *Pastels & pastellists*, <http://www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTourCopyists.pdf>.

Apart from Charles, all of these portraits will be found in the La Tour articles in the *Dictionary*. For Charles we have to content ourselves with the copies in other media, of which perhaps the most reliable is the slavish engraving by Michel Aubert:



Since Aubert died a few years later and the print created while artist and sitter were still alive, its documentary value is indisputable, and I think this is enhanced rather than diminished by the fact that he didn't reverse the sash of the Garter: my guess is that he thought it was the Saint-Esprit as worn by the Dauphin, which he also engraved after La Tour in 1747.

One puzzle raised by Corp is easily disposed of: the green ribbon of the Order of the Thistle in the Edinburgh pastel has faded to blue simply because that was what happened to mid-eighteenth century green pastel. The colour was notorious (and the reputation of the famous Swiss pastel maker Bernard Stoupan rested on his ability to produce a stable green): it was usually made by mixing blue and yellow pigments, but while the former was stable, the latter was a vegetable extract from the buckthorn tree which was sensitive to light. My Twitter followers will remember some of the other examples, among them Liotard's portrait of the [maréchal de Saxe](#), whose green uniform now appears blue. And I shan't begin to speculate as to the significance of the tide marks visible around Henry's head, which possibly relate to alterations made by La Tour (don't go there...).

But in the discussions of these Stuart portraits a vital role is played by the various copies that were made at the time. Jacobite portraiture, for obvious reasons, is both highly complicated and of greater interest to British scholars than to French specialists, and perhaps that is why several confusions have arisen which should be addressed (even if the outcome is to restore rather than to remove question marks). Indeed not all these copies have survived, and the hazard of discussing ill-documented lost copies of lost

works (which may indeed be after quite different portraits) is obvious. But I would direct readers in particular to Corp's entirely justified health warning about the reliance placed on the typescript notes assembled by Clare Stuart Wortley in the 1940s, a document which she was unable to complete before her death and which includes several tantalising references to correspondence which cannot be verified. Perhaps like Fermat she was right; but let us hope the letters are found with less effort than a proof of his theorem.

One of the difficulties is where a copyist is named in the source, but a later commentator supplies a forename, often from the nearest reference book. Thus (I suspect) when we are told that in September 1747, Prince Charles sat for a miniature portrait by Georges Marolles, can we rely on the "Georges"? I am not aware of any miniaturist of this name, and I suspect the reference should be to Antoine-Alexandre de Marolles, a well-known miniaturist who worked for the French royal family and is represented in Chantilly (see Lemoine-Bouchard 2008 for more).

One of the engravings derived from the La Tour portrait of Charles is by Petit (not Gilles-Edme, but Gilles-Jacques Petit) after Mercier (1753).



Corp 1997, who reproduces it (fig. 36), judiciously puts a ? before the predictable identification of "Philip Mercier" which now appears without qualification in most sources (the same picture is evidently the source of the Ab Obici Major mezzotint). But it is biographically and stylistically improbable that the English Huguenot painter (born in Berlin) would have made a copy after La Tour for the Irish Jacobite Colonel O'Sullivan to be engraved in Paris by Gilles-Jacques Petit. It seems to me far more probable that the artist concerned was Claude Mercier, the pastellist who might well have spent some time in La Tour's studio. His work, which is entirely French, is usually signed "C. Mercier" and inevitably given to Charlotte Mercier, Philip's daughter, despite the absurdity discussed in my [article](#) on

him. It is not improbable that the unknown man now in Mapledurham was another Jacobite. As for Mercier's copy of the La Tour, that (like so many of these works) is lost: O'Sullivan later fell out with Charles, not over the colonel's incompetence on which many blame the disaster of Culloden, but over a mistress.

But a particularly important piece in the jigsaw is a miniature (with various repetitions) which has caused great confusion. One of these (whether it is the "primary" version can be debated) is apparently signed "J. Kamm 1750" on the reverse.



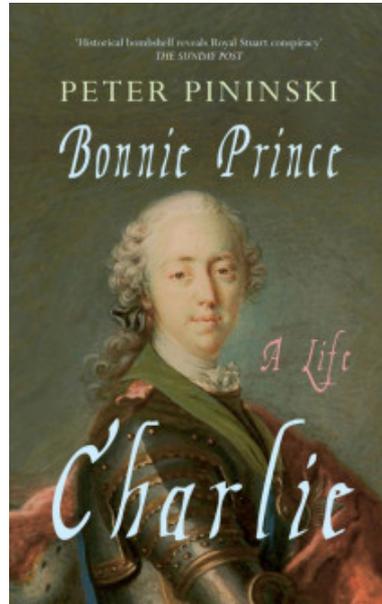
It belonged to Donald Nicholas who reproduced it in his 1973 iconography on the prince. It, and all the related miniatures (which although unsigned appear to be by the same hand), now appear as by "John Daniel Kamm" (sometimes as Jean-Daniel Kamm, and with various dates for his birth and death almost always wrong), and immediately provoked my suspicion as to whether this is the right Kamm, or simply the one found in the first reference book that came to hand.

Here is what we know about Johann Daniel Kamm. Like his father, Johann Peter Kamm, he was a potier d'étain (a



somewhat grander profession than it sounds following Louis XIV's decree that solid silverware be surrendered to the treasury, but not an orfèvre). Johann Peter's wares

included highly decorated objects of museum quality (e.g. Kunstgewerbemuseum, Dresden). Johann Daniel specialised in commemorative medals, of which one of the best known (signed I D KAMM) marked the exhibition of Clara, the Dutch rhinoceros, in Strasbourg in 1748 (you may know her from Oudry's painting, the centrepiece of a Getty exhibition in 2007). Far later (1779) he issued a medal to mark the inauguration of the mausoleum to Maurice de Saxe (signed D KAM: note the D again). His last known work was dated 1790. He died in Strasbourg in 1793, having married there in 1758, and his career seems to have been conducted in that city.



There is however some evidence that he visited Paris, most readily found in Johann Georg Wille's journal. This is particularly relevant since the other important portrait of Charles at the time of the La Tour was by Tocqué (given it is said to his mistress the princesse de Rohan, née Marie-Louise-Henriette-Jeanne de La Tour d'Auvergne (1725–1781)), and it was engraved by Wille at around the

same time as the miniatures were produced; further there is a signed miniature by Kamm after the Tocqué (reproduced in Piniński's recent biography, fig. 3, detail on the cover shown here).

Wille's journal refers to visits of his friend Kamm to Paris in the 1770s. Although it is the editors who supply Kamm's forenames, Wille refers to exchanging medals etc. (supporting the identification as Johann Daniel), and evidences Kamm's links with Silbermann the organ builder. The Silbermann-Archiv has numerous references to this Kamm: he was in Paris in the 1750s and made a sketch of the organ at Notre-Dame for Silbermann.

But despite this I can find no evidence that Johann Daniel Kamm was a miniaturist or even a portraitist (although the engraved portraits on medals requires some drawing skills). Wille doesn't refer to him as an apprentice or as an engraver.



I confronted essentially the same problem when cataloguing Perronneau's work. In the Salon de 1750, he exhibited a lost pastel described simply as:

136. M. Kam, en habit de velours noir,

I decided in 2006 that this was more likely to be the portraitist and miniaturist Jean-Frédéric Kamm, who was *reçu* at the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1759 (when he lived in Paris, rue du Colombier). When Dominique d'Arnoult published her catalogue raisonné on Perronneau recently, she followed this identification, and unearthed entries in the Chantilly accounts for Kamm's work for the maison de Rohan-Soubise, at the same time that Perronneau worked for them:

Peintres en portraits: Kamme – De celle de onze cent quatre livres payee au Sr Kamme peintre du Roy de Pologne sur les ordres par Ecrit de S.A. pour des portraits par lui faits Sçavoir : 3 mars 1752 600 l.t. ; 28 juin – 504 ; 1104 l.t.

It may not be coincidence that Prince Charles had close connections with the Rohan family, and his mistress in 1748 was of course the princesse de Rohan: but even more suggestive is the reference to J. F. Kamm in 1752 as “peintre du roi de Pologne”, i.e. Stanislaw Leszczyński. This is because, soon after the liaison with the princesse de Rohan, Charles Edward turned his attentions to the princesse de Talmont – who had previously been Stanislaw's mistress (and was closely related to both her lovers). And it was she who badgered George Waters, Charles's banker, to borrow the La Tour pastel so that it could be copied. Only three days would be required, she pleaded, for a copy to be made by M. Le Brun (not identified in the Jacobite sources, but surely Michel Le Brun, brother-in-law of Jean-Baptiste Van Loo). In fact she had the portrait for far longer. The Le Brun copies are not known, if they ever existed; and there is every reason to suspect that she might have engaged the services of the peintre du roi de Pologne.

But how, you may ask, do I explain how Johann Friedrich Kamm copied Tocqué's portrait when it was Johann Daniel who was so close to Wille? The copy of course was probably made from the painting, not the print; but probably while it was in Wille's studio. But in fact we can demonstrate that Wille knew and supported Johann Friedrich as well as Johann Daniel Kamm. This comes from an announcement in the German journal *Wochenstück*, 24. Mai 1756, S. 161 :

1) Was bey der Kayserl. Franciscischen Academie freyer Künsten vorgehet, und unternommen wird.
 Unter die Zahl der Ehren-Glieder, unserer befreytten Kayserl. Academie, ist auch Herr Johann Friederich Kamin, aus Straßburg gebürtig, und Hofmahler des Königes von Lotharingen und Bar, wegen ganz besonderer Geschicklichkeit in Migniatour-Mahlen, erwählet und angenommen worden. Er befindet sich dermalen in Paris, alldort er wegen seiner Kunst sehr hoch gehalten, und verehret wird.

This reports J. F. Kamm's appointment as an honorary member of the Kaiserlich Franciscianischen Academie freier Künsten und Wissenschaften in Augsburg. Just a month before (29 April 1756), it was Wille himself who was appointed “als ein Ehren-Glied, und Consiliarius Academicus” – and impossible to imagine that his academic advice had not extended to recommending his protégé.

So, in contrast to Johann Daniel, there is clear evidence that Johann Friedrich Kamm was a talented miniaturist who worked for royal houses and was in Paris at the right time. One would have thought that he was obviously the “J. Kamm” who signed both miniatures. But it isn't quite that simple.

Several sources cite, with not a little confusion, a letter from Waters to the prince, written we are told in 1749, referring to miniatures by one Kamm. Most recently Corp 2009 notes that the letter is not to be found where it is supposed to be in the Stuart papers, and cannot be located. This is particularly frustrating since the description of it given by Clare Stuart Wortley is as follows:

In the year 1749, George Waters writes to Charles about copies of his portraits being made by Jean Daniel Kemm. Copies presumably from the La Tour portrait.

If “Daniel” appears in the Waters letter, then evidently I am wrong – but not if it is Stuart Wortley's gloss. The misspelling of Kamm looks as though she is quoting directly (unlike Nicholas, who refers to John Daniel Kamm). But until the letter is located the issue cannot be resolved.

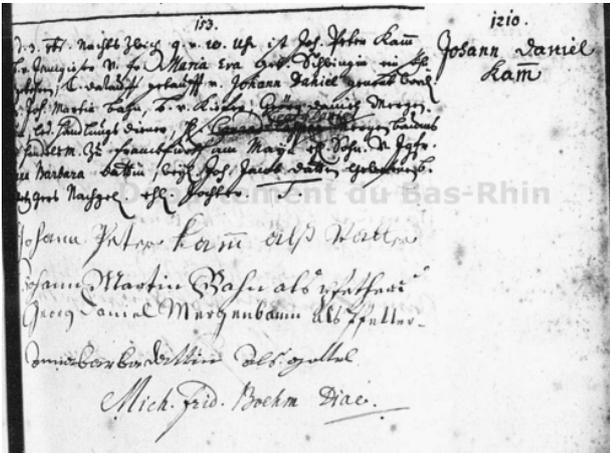
There is one further question to be asked. How were these Kamms related? It's not as simple as you might think. The matter is complicated by the existence of a third artistic Kamm: Jean (*tout simple*) Kamm, who is recorded as a pupil of Doyen enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris from June 1767 (aged 19 years 9 months, so born in September 1747), “from Alsace” (which usually means born there). He was still on the books two years later, but is otherwise completely unknown. However two further details are recorded: in 1767 his address was “chez M. du Plessis médecin rue du Colombier vis à vis l'hôtel d'Holande”; while in 1769, it was “chez M. Cadet chirurgien rue du Maille.”

The significance of the first address is not so much that “M. du Plessis” was a well-known freemason, Nicolas Huet-Duplessis, since at that time everyone was, and it doesn't mean he was a Jacobite, but that the “rue du Colombier” is the same address as that recorded in the registers of the Académie de Saint-Luc when Johann Friedrich Kamm was *reçu* in 1757. Coincidence perhaps? But the second address is even more interesting: [Aglacé Joly](#), the wife of Claude-Antoine Cadet, de l'Académie de chirurgie, was a miniaturist and pastellist, while their daughter Henriette-Thérèse married the important enamellist and pastellist [Jean-Baptiste Weyler](#) (Strasbourg 1747 – Paris 1791), the son of another strasbourggeois butcher and his wife, née Maria-Salomé **Kamm**.

All of which suggests that Johann Friedrich and Jean were very closely related. And indeed the *Nouveau dictionnaire de biographie alsacienne* tells us that they, and Johann Daniel, were all brothers. But curiously they do not provide the dates for either Johann Friedrich or Jean, and having spent some hours among the parish records I fear that the statement may be overconfident.

Kamm may not be a common name outside Strasbourg, but the family of butchers who lived there at least from the seventeenth century were very numerous. Almost all the boys were given the first name Johann, followed most often by Daniel, Michael, Christoph etc.; all the girls were called

Maria (don't ask me what sect of Lutheranism this was), followed by Salome, Ursula or Catharina. So creating a reliable genealogy turns out to be far trickier than normal. ([Here's](#) where you start.) This compounded by the fact that there were rather a lot of different parishes in Strasbourg, and the fact that (for me at least) the German handwriting of the period is sometimes tricky. Here for example is Johann Daniel's baptismal entry (which is much easier to read than most of the other entries):



Suffice it to say that (as far as I can see) none of the Johann Friedrichs share these parents, nor does Johann or Jean born in September 1747. And since Johann Daniel's mother was born in 1690, it seems rather improbable that Jean can have been a full brother.

But then Jacobite enthusiasts always like a note of mystery. I note that the Royal Archives at Windsor are to close for several months for refurbishment. Is it too much to hope that some of Clare Stuart Wortley's documents will resurface?

Anne Féret, Mme Nivelon (1711–1786)

17 May 2020



The [Dictionary of pastellists](#) has limited room for the biographies of copyists who worked in other media. In an earlier [post](#), I explored one of the miniaturists who copied La Tour, and who had escaped attention through obscurity.

The same cannot be said of the oil painter “Anne Baptiste Nivelon”: if you search online you’ll immediately find dozens of references to this artist who made excellent oil copies after portraits by La Tour, Van Loo and others. (As

they are not in pastel there's no entry for her in the *Dictionary of pastellists*.) You'll also find that nothing is known of her biography, other than that she worked for the Menus plaisirs and was favoured by the dauphine. Thus there are several references to her copies in the 2004 La Tour exhibition catalogue, notably the portrait en pied of the dauphin (above) with its pendant of the dauphine, executed in 1764 for Christophe de Beaumont, archevêque de Paris, and now in Versailles (MV 3793; MV 3797), both after pastels by La Tour. Laurent Hugues discussed her work at length in *De soie et de poudre*, 2004. There are also large oils of the duc de Belle-Isle (again after La Tour), and a Louis XV after Louis-Michel Van Loo.

That information is readily available and I need not repeat it: but published sources do not disclose her dates, quoting instead *floruit* 1754-71. All this is summarised in Xavier Salmon's catalogue of a portrait exhibition at the musée Lambinet (*Cent portraits pour un siècle*, 2019). For an exhaustive genealogical analysis of the family, including this apparent impasse, I can refer you to this recent [document](#) which concluded (in the version online at the time I am writing) that "sa biographie reste étrangement mystérieuse." Art history has got no further until now.

The pendants of the dauphin and dauphine are signed "Fait par Anne Baptiste Nivelon [l'an] 1764" though it is difficult to make this out in the reproduction. Some further light on these is shed by a curious and slightly puzzling document which was published in 1930, but seems to have been largely overlooked since (you can find it in my Chronological table of [documents](#) relating to La Tour, at 1 July 1761). It's a note from Louis-Marie-Augustin, duc d'Aumont (1709-1782), premier gentilhomme de la Chambre du roi, directing Jean-Jacques Papillon de Fontpertuis (1715-1774), intendant of the Menus plaisirs to have Mlle Nivelon make copies of the La Tour pastels of the dauphin and dauphine.

M^r le duc d'Aumont prie Monsieur de Fontpertuis de faire faire les portraits de M^r le Dauphin et de M^le la Dauphine par la demoiselle Nivelon; elle demeure à Versailles, rue de Satory. M^r de Fontpertuis aura la bonté de faire demander au nommé Latour, concierge de l'Hôtel de Nesles les portraits originaux de M. le Dauphin et de Madame la Dauphine. Ce sont les plus ressemblants qui aient été faits, ils sont en pastel. Il faut les ménager dans le transport.

Ce 1^{er} juillet Le duc d'Aumont

La demoiselle Nivelon annonce les portraits finis le 22 décembre

Among other things it tells us that the versions in Versailles made in 1764 were not the first copies Mme Nivelon made. (It also reminds us that the hazards of moving pastels were well understood even then.) But although we know that dukes at this time were apt to call any bourgeoisie "Mademoiselle" whether married or not, it adds little to help identify Mme Nivelon beyond the address, rue de Satory, which was already known from Germain Bapst's *Inventaire de Marie-Josèphe de Saxe, dauphine de France*, 1883.

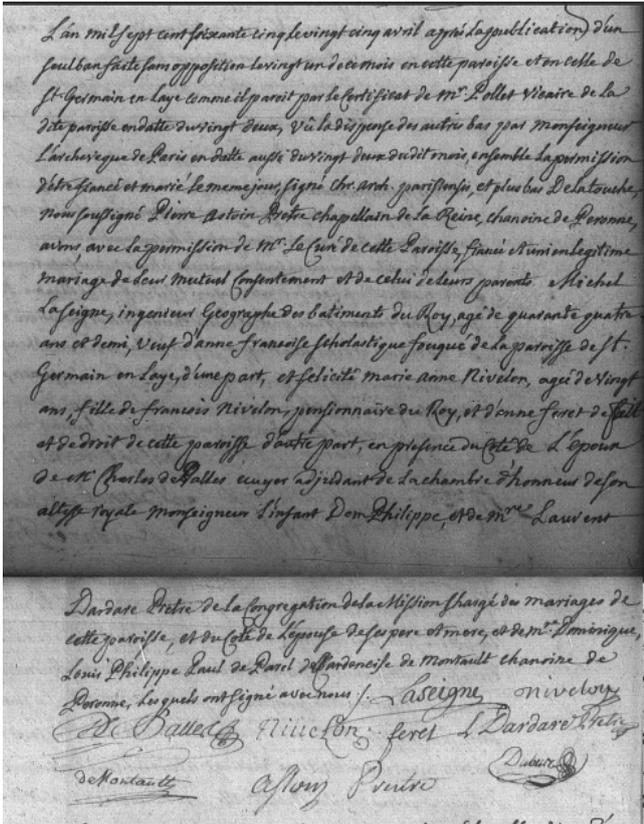
I ought perhaps to write this blog as a detective story, planting clues along the way for you to work out, but some of you just want to know the answer. Suffice it to say that, after working through the parish records at Versailles (Saint-

Louis), I concluded that the only likely candidate for Mme Nivelon was an Anne Féret who, on 16 January 1741 at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois in Paris, married François Nivelon (1692-1770). The marriage contract, signed two days before (AN MC/ET/VII/263), tells us more:

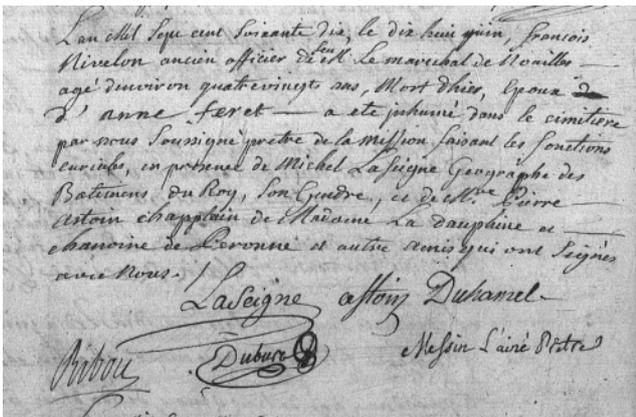
Contrat de mariage entre François Nivelon, valet de chambre de la maréchale d'Estrées, demeurant à l'hôtel de ladite dame, rue de l'Université, fils majeur de défunts Jean-François Nivelon, peintre du roi, et de Marie-Anne Regnault, et Anne Feret, majeure, demeurant rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre, fille de feu Jean-Baptiste Feret, peintre ordinaire du roi en son académie, et de Marie-Anne Thibert, dressé en présence du comte de Gramont, de la maréchale d'Estrées, de la comtesse de Mailly et de la comtesse de Vintimille qui ont signé.

The contract was under the communauté des biens regime, and the dowry a modest 500 livres. We can amplify François Nivelon's parentage: his father was also known just as François Nivelon (1663-1733), peintre du roi, born and died in Fontainebleau, and is the painter mentioned in the [genealogy above at 1.19](#). But his second wife's name was Regnault, not Arnault, and their eldest son François (born in Fontainebleau on 17 August 1692) did in fact survive, to become valet de chambre to the recently widowed maréchale d'Estrées, née Lucie-Félicité de Noailles (1683-1745) and later to her brother, Adrien-Maurice, maréchal-duc de Noailles (1678-1766).

Pursuing further records, notably the marriage in Versailles on 25 April 1765 of their daughter Félicité-Marie-Anne (baptised at Saint-Sulpice on 15 April 1745, so just 20 years old, no doubt a god-daughter of Mme d'Estrées) to Michel Laseigne, a géographe des Bâtiments du roi (aged 44½), the ceremony presided over by Pierre Astoin, chapelain to the queen and the dauphine:

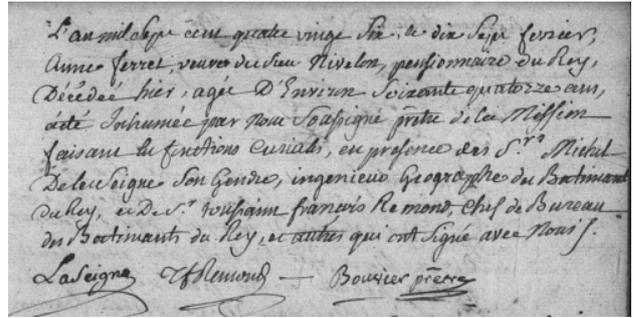


François Nivelon’s death, again in Versailles (paroisse Saint-Louis), occurred on 17 June 1770, and he was buried the next day; the witnesses included again abbé Astoin:



Nivelon’s death in 1770 explains why the copyist is referred to as la veuve Nivelon in January 1771 when she delivered a copy of *Madame Louise en carmélite* (MV 6613).

Anne’s own burial entry, still in Versailles, in 1786, again attended not only by her son-in-law, but by Toussaint-François Remond, chef de bureau des Bâtiments du roi (the most senior officer under Montucla, the commis):



The age of 74 on 16 February 1786 implies a year of birth of most probably 1711 or (much less likely – a one in eight chance) 1712.

Now Anne Féret’s connections with the Bâtiments du roi and relations with painters are all very suggestive (as is the fact that she was widowed between 1764 and 1771), but two obstacles remain to complete proof that she herself was “Anne Baptiste Nivelon”: why would she add a forename that does not appear in any document? And is there any evidence that she wielded a brush?

The answer to both questions emerged from researching her father, Jean-Baptiste Féret, a competent landscape and history painter at the Académie royale (even if the name is today little known: Pierre Rosenberg called him “ce paysagiste méconnu” in his brief entry in the 2005 exhibition catalogue *Poussin, Watteau, Chardin, David...*): he was *agrégé* 26 February 1707 and *reçu* 26 October 1709. According to Jal’s biographical dictionary (p. 573), Féret used the soubriquet “Baptiste” on its own, and it seems highly plausible that she added the name (which would have been known in the circles that employed her) in tribute to her father. Féret was born in Evreux c.1665, and on 23 April 1708, in Paris, Saint-Merry, he married a Marie-Anne Thibert. (The witnesses included Louis Galloche. She also came from a family of painters, including her brother Louis-Jacques Thibert, who married the daughter of a Daniel Thierry, maître peintre.) When he died in Paris, 12 February 1739, leaving the then unmarried Anne Féret and her brother, the seals were applied and an inventory taken (AN Y11669). And among the pictures listed were “huit esquisses ébauchées dans leurs cadres de bois, ouvrages de lad. demoiselle Ferret.” There was also a portrait of her father whose authorship is ambiguous. But I think there is no longer any ambiguity about one of La Tour’s best copyists.

Vernezobre's clients

18 June 2018



The figure of Jean-Nicolas Vernezobre (1719–1789), peintre de l'Académie de Saint-Luc (*reçu* 1750), quai Pelletier, would be completely forgotten today if it weren't for the striking (and much copied) portrait of him by Maurice-Quentin de La Tour in the musée Antoine-Lécuyer at Saint-Quentin (J.46.3054; right). It is almost certainly the pastel described in the 1806 will of the artist's brother as “Un Arménien”,

although for obvious reasons that was long confused with a portrait of Rousseau.

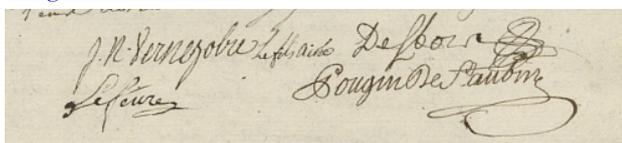
More recently a box of pastels supplied by Vernezobre surfaced – in a private collection, and was recently lent to the pastel exhibition at Lausanne which I discussed [here](#). I had of course done quite a lot of research on Vernezobre, both as pastel-maker and as artist; and indeed Vernezobre's

first wife exhibited a pastel at the Salon de Saint-Luc in 1753. His brother too may have dabbled, while a cousin, Geneviève Vernezobre de Laurieux, “travaillait en peintre”, although not necessarily in pastel. There are detailed articles on [Vernezobre](#) and his [wife](#) in the *Dictionary*, which I don't need to duplicate here. There is also a genealogy at [Vernezobre](#).



There was evidently a connection with La Tour's teacher Claude Dupouch, since the posthumous inventory of Dupouch's mother (who also lived in the quai Pelletier) recorded a debt of 130 livres from Vernezobre's father. And in 1760 Vernezobre was remarried, to the sister of the pastellist [Jean-Baptiste Lefèvre](#). Lefèvre you may recall from my last [blog post](#) is the artist I think responsible for two striking (if not brilliant) pastels currently on show in the Louvre.

But it turns out that he played a role in connection with a fascinating document which I recently discovered in the Archives nationales. This is the posthumous inventory carried out in 1760, several years after the death of Vernezobre's first wife. This provided a valuation of his stock, undertaken by Lefèvre and another pastellist, [Claude Pougin de Saint-Aubin](#).



There were 6534 “crayons en pastels a cinquante livres les cahier prisés entre les boites dans lesquels sont enrangées”, valued in total at 330 livres 14 sols. It also provided an invaluable list of two dozen debtors who owed relatively small amounts for crayons they had purchased (about half were already known as pastellists, and several others known hitherto only as artists in other media). A smaller number of creditors include marchands de couleurs. While it would have been nice to discover La Tour's name among the customers, his absence doesn't prove he didn't use Vernezobre's pastels – he might have settled his accounts promptly. And in the absence of the full accounts, we have little idea of turnover or profits from the business.

There follows my transcription of the relevant parts of the inventaire après décès de Mme Jean-Nicolas Vernezobre, née Françoise-Marguerite Desbois.^[1] While all the debtors now have entries in the *Dictionary*, I have added notes only

for those about whom we have independent information (consult the *Dictionary* to find it).

Les marchandises et ustensils servant en l'art de peinture prisés et estimés de l'avis de Sieur Claude Pougin de Saint-Aubin et Jean-Baptiste Lefèvre maîtres peintres à Paris...

Item six mille cinq cent trente quatre crayons en pastels a cinquante livres les cahier prisés entre les boites < dans lesquels sont enrangées > la somme de Trois cent trente livres quatorze sols.

Item Onze razors a manches de corne servant pour les pierres de couleur, jugés ensemble cy...8#

Item Soixante sept livres de couleurs differens servant à la composition des pastels jugés la somme de soixante dix huit livres deux sols

Item Cinq pierres à Broyer avec leurs molettes prisés ensemble la somme de Trente livres

Item Trois chevalets, deux portes origineux, une Boîte à couleurs < composée de ses palettes ...et Brosses > prisé au valeur de huit livres

Item un livre Intitulé, Relevé de ce qui m'est du de la vente des pastels tant bonne que douteuse, sommé enfin a lad^t somme de quatre cent sept livres quinze sols, dûe, Sçavoir–

par M. Gauges une livre cinq sols

par M. Garand^[2] une livre

par M. DuRonceray^[3] et plusieurs artistes, pour reste, quatre vingt onze livres onze sols six deniers

par M. Lambert^[4] aussi et plusieurs artistes, pour reste, sept livres sept sols

par M. Loir^[5] aussi et plusieurs artistes, pour reste, six livres, dix neuf sols six deniers

par M. Huquier^[6] douze livres

par M. Hermans neuf sols

par M. Boquet^[7] une livre dix sols

par M. Lion^[8] quatre livres seize sols

par M^{elle} de Bery quinze livres

par M. Cherfils^[9] quinze sols

par M. Lepointre^[10] neuf livres

par M. ... ami de M. Aubry une livre seize sols

par M. Trenelle dix huit livres

par M. ... de la connoissance de M. Cottin une livre

par M^{elle} de Belgarde douze livres

par M. L'abbé de St Non^[11] douze sols

par M. Allais^[12] six huit livres

par M. David une livre

par M. Deschamps vingt quatre livres

par M^{elle} Desgroux dix huit livres

par M^{elle} Glachand un sol

par M. Naudin^[13] douze livres

par M. de Bertherand Cent quarante deux livres

par M. Delaroche six livres

Et par M^{elle} Ledoux une livre Treize sols

Ledt relevé Inventorée en une piece Unique Neuf

Declare led. Sr Vernezobre qu'il est du aux du communauté et succession scavoir–

Et par M. Le President Renouard quarante huit livres pour restant d'ouvrages de peinture que led. Sr Vernezobre a faits pour lui...

Comme aussi declare led. Sr Vernezobre qu'il est du par les. Communauté et succession, scavoit-

Au Sr Solvet M^d de couleur la somme de deux cent dix sept livres par billets dont quatre et trente livres chacun, ...de vingt quatre livres aussi chacun etvu de vingt cinq livres

Au Sr Buldet M^e Peintre Cinquante neuf livres huit sols six deniers par memoire arrêté pour fourniture de verre blanc qu'il lui a faites

Au Sr Langlois^[14] M^d de couleur en six billets de vingt sept livres chacun, cent soixante deux livres

NOTES

[1] AN MC/CXXII/711, 11.III.1760.

[2] Jean-Baptiste Garand, miniaturiste et pastelliste (see *Dictionary*; in the following notes, *q.v.* means there is an artist article with additional information).

[3] The brother of Mme Favart, known hitherto only as a painter of two oil on copper portraits of his sister and brother-in-law.

[4] Possibly the pastellist Jean-Louis Lambert, but there are several other homonyms in the *Dictionary*.

[5] Alexis Loir (*q.v.*).

[6] Jacques-Gabriel Huquier (*q.v.*).

[7] Probably Louis-René Boquet (*q.v.*).

[8] Pierre-Joseph Lion (*q.v.*), just before his departure for Vienna.

[9] Jean Cherfils (*q.v.*).

[10] Charles Lepeintre (*q.v.*).

[11] Jean-Claude Richard, abbé de Saint-Non (*q.v.*).

[12] Jacques-Charles Allais (*q.v.*).

[13] Charles Naudin (*q.v.*).

[14] Jacques Langlois: *v.* [Suppliers](#).

Alexis Judlin (1740–1808), miniaturist

7 August 2021

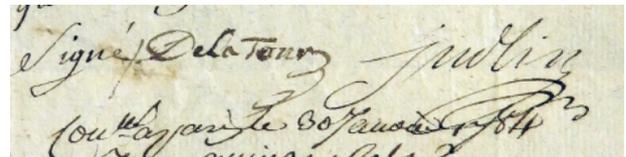


[Note, 9.VIII.2021: There have been a number of alterations to this blog since posted on 7.VIII.2021 – including to its title, since Judlin’s dates have since been discovered. Additions are integrated below.]

One of the features of my work on Maurice-Quentin de La Tour is the fully annotated documentation in which I (at least try to) provide short biographical details of all the people mentioned. When they are pastellists of course I simply refer to my dictionary (I’ve already researched them from primary sources wherever possible), but when they are not I try to ensure that the main reference sources agree before relying on them. And sometimes unpicking disagreements opens up a rabbit hole which I may not have the time or inclination to pursue myself, but where the elements I’ve uncovered are sufficiently suggestive that I wish others would (that’s particularly the case where hot topics such as international espionage or transgender celebrity arise – much better left to enthusiasts). The result is somewhere between a footnote in my La Tour monograph and a full essay or article in my dictionary...in other words, a blog post...

The starting point for these ruminations was a document I’ve recently added to http://www.pastellists.com/Misc/LaTour_chronology.pdf: you can find the full transcription at 10 janvier 1784. It’s one of those expert reports commissioned by the Châtelet to settle the frequent disputes between disappointed clients and portraitists – in this case a pastel by Jean-Gabriel Montjoye, the pupil of La Tour responsible, as you may remember, for the famous “self-portrait” in Amiens that, until my [revelation](#) in 2019, took everyone in as autograph (and continues to be reproduced as such by those who should read my research). This post isn’t about Montjoye, nor La Tour (who was clearly senile by this stage, and a bizarre choice for a forensic judgment), but the second expert

appointed by the court to countersign the report, described as “André Alexis Judelin peintre de l’academie de Londres demeurant a Paris rue dauphine hotel de Mouy.” The procès-verbal tells us nothing more about him other than that the inspection took place at La Tour’s studio in the Louvre rather than in Judlin’s; and his signature gives a more accurate spelling of his name:

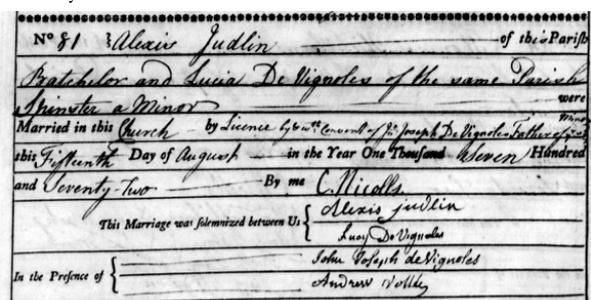


Judlin’s forenames are inserted into the notary’s document in a different hand in a space left for them, but are completely clear as André Alexis. Moreover they are the two forenames (not always both together) found in all documents below.

Judlin is well known as a miniaturist: you will easily find some of his works which have appeared on the art market, and his name appears in most art reference books – but with puzzling contradictions if all you want is to find his dates. There is a consensus that his origins were in Haut-Rhin, one of the two départements in Alsace (not Germany, although a good deal of German is spoken; baptismal records are in Latin). Both Guebwiller and Thann have been suggested as his birthplace: records for the former are not online, but although a great many Judlins were born in the 1740s in Thann (as for example Schidlof has), none has the right combination of forenames and parents’ names. Lemoine-Bouchard relies on Edouard Sitzmann’s 1909 biographical dictionary repeating (uncredited) the “discovery” published in the *Intermédiaire des chercheurs et curieux*, 25.III.1881, of the record of the birth of an André-Melchior Koessler in Guebwiller in 7.I.1742 from the marriage of an André Koessler with a Jeanne Judlin; it was explained that the miniaturist later adopted his mother’s name of Judlin as a pseudonym. The ICC contributor noted that he was a cousin of général Schérer. Sitzmann added that he died in Thann in 1800, which Lemoine-Bouchard found was incorrect. Instead she found a rather brief burial record for an André Judlin in Thann in 1795 which she adopted by a process of elimination, believing that he had probably died unmarried. Unfortunately the name Judlin or Jüdlin (and that of Koessler in its many variants) was extremely common, and this suggestion simply doesn’t match known facts about the miniaturist. There are literally dozens of André Judlins, but Alexis is very rare. No document suggests that the miniaturist was called Melchior.

The most important clue to the genealogy is the names of the artist’s parent provided by the Fonds Andriveau index cards for the two marriages discussed below: these make it clear that André-Alexis Jüdlin was the son of another André-Alexis Jüdlin and Jeanne Koessler (contrary to Sitzmann’s belief that Judlin was his mother’s name). The

second piece of firm (usually fairly reliable) evidence is the entry for his admission to the Royal Academy schools on 22.X.1773, “aged 27”, which points to a year of birth of 1746. How he got to London is unclear, but we know he was there at least a year previously, as on 15.VIII.1772 he married “Lucy de Vignoles” (*recte* Barbe-Lucie Vignoles) in St Marylebone:



We’ll come back to that document later, in particular the name of her father. He appears again in the baptism of their first child, Frances Henrietta Sophia, born 2.V.1773 but not baptised until 25.XI.1773, at the Roman Catholic Sardinian Chapel of St Anselm & St Cecilia in Lincoln’s Inn Fields:

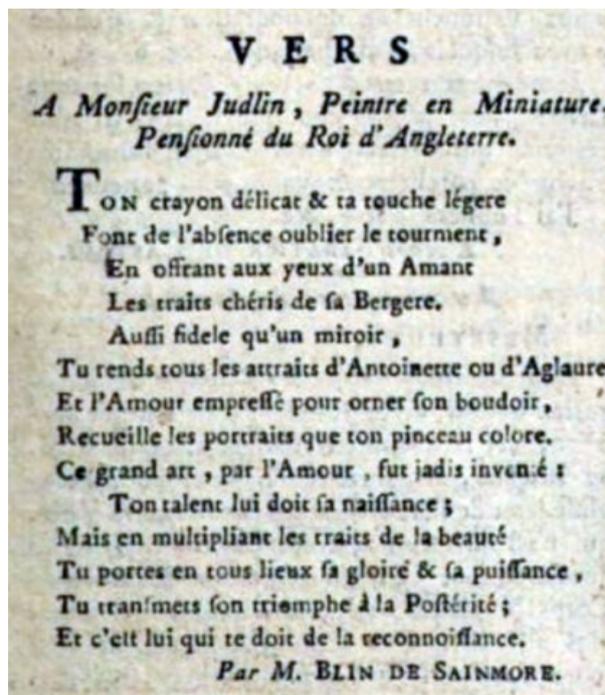


Meanwhile Judlin exhibited in the Royal Academy in London 1773–76, the catalogue entries listed as follows in Graves:

JUDLIN, Alexis. Miniature Painter.	
James Street, Covent Garden.	
1773.	160 Venus and Cupid.
	161 A portrait.
1774.	140 A girl with a basket of flowers; miniature.
	141 A Grecian lady; miniature.
	Warwick St., Golden Square.
1775.	166 Portrait of a lady; a miniature.
	Greek Street, corner of Queen Street, Soho.
1776.	153 A fancy piece representing innocence.
	154 Portrait of a gentleman.

Note that not all the items were miniatures, but I suspect we can assume they were in oil rather than pastel (or else I’d have to pursue all the loose ends in this post).

He was evidently in Paris by the time these lines appeared in the *Journal de Paris* (15.VI.1779):



The same author also provided verses to go under a bust of the chevalier d’Éon (*v. infra*) by Mme Falconnet. Adrien-Michel-Hyacinthe Blin de Sainmore was co-founder, in 1780, of the Société philanthropique, with Savalette de Lange, head of the masonic lodge to which La Tour belonged around this time. It seems very plausible that Judlin and La Tour met through this masonic route.

Judlin’s arrival in Paris is also documented in the two cartes de sûreté that were issued to him during the revolution. These, incorrectly transcribed and indexed, have been located since the first version of this post. They were issued on 4.X.1792 and 16.VIII.1793 respectively, to Alexis Judlin, peintre, living respectively in rue Dauphin and the rue de Thionville (the two addresses that also appear in the salons livrets. They both agree as to his age – 52 in 1792, 53 in 1793, so that he must have been born between 5.X.1739 and 16.VIII.1740. However the first carte gives his place of birth as Strasbourg, the second as Colmar: doubtless the artist felt that a village such as Guebwiller or Thann would have been too small to mention, but Mulhouse might have been nearer than Colmar as a substitute. Colmar parish records are not online, but provisionally Haut-Rhin 1740 seems the best inference. As to his arrival in Paris, the transcription of the first card has “depuis 1774” while the second has “depuis 14”, i.e. 14 years previously, or 1779. The first transcription s probably erroneous.



A letter of 15.VII.1780 from him to Benjamin Franklin concerns the miniature of the diplomat he was commissioned to make, probably after Duplessis. A miniature of Louis XVI (sold at Sotheby's in 1989) in a lilac coat, signed and dated 1784, bears an ambitious inscription around the case, suggesting an English market (if not a later addition): "Judlin Painter to the Queen of France took the outline of this Picture in 1784 while the King was ailing in the Queen's apartment in Versailles."

In 1785 he exhibited two miniatures at the Salon de la Correspondance, one a portrait, the other, also a tête de femme, but "dans le genre historique", both "d'un beau faire, d'un coloris vigoureux, & d'un grand style de dessin." When the official salons became open, he exhibited another miniature tête de femme in 1791, and in 1793 a case with five miniatures, one a portrait, the other topical allegories of "La Liberté", "L'Egalité", "La République", "Les Droits de l'Homme". No doubt the third of these is the miniature that you can find on a specialist's [blog](#):



So let's pursue his biography a little further. Brief references such as the engraver Wille's journals (noting Judlin's hospitable dinners) add little of substance, but genealogical records offer concrete facts (usually).

The transcriptions (Fichier Laborde) of the records of Saint-André-des-Arts made before the 1871 conflagration of all Paris registres paroissiaux provide a number of interesting events (you have to search all spelling variants): the baptism on 9.II.1780 of a son, born rue Dauphine, with parrain Alexis's brother Joseph "demeurant ordinairement à Vienne en Autriche"; two years later, another son with Lucie's sister Marie-Anne-Gabrielle as marraine; in 1786, another son, with parrain a former cavalry officer, Nicolas-Roland Fouquet Dulomboy. That is of some interest because only six months previously Dulomboy had married the comédienne Marie-Élisabeth Joly, and Judlin had acted as joint guarantor on her purchase of jewellery from François-Félix Boyer. One can only guess who was the parrain at the birth of Alexis Dulomboy, 3.XII.1785, just weeks after his parents are thought to have been married (although Fabre d'Eglantine, in a complaint about his former mistress, alleged that the marriage was irregular); the boy grew up to be a painter.

The following year, a fourth son, with parrain Jean-Baptiste Schérer, avocat en parlement and intendant du maréchal de Richelieu; however he was also the brother of the future général Schérer to whom Sitzmann told us the miniaturist was related. On 10.IV.1789, Lucie died and was buried in the presence of Judlin and François-Xavier and Jean-Baptiste Vogt, both secrétaires-interprètes, whose mother was an Elisabeth Judlin, doubtless a close relation.

On 26.VI.1793 Judlin remarried; his second wife was Lucie's sister Marie-Gabrielle de Vignoles. So it's clear that Judlin was particularly closely connected with this family, and we must revert to the question I parked much earlier. The Vignoles girls' father signed the St Marylebone register in 1772 as "John Joseph de Vignoles": that is enough to set us on a lengthy line of enquiry which I shall leave others to complete.

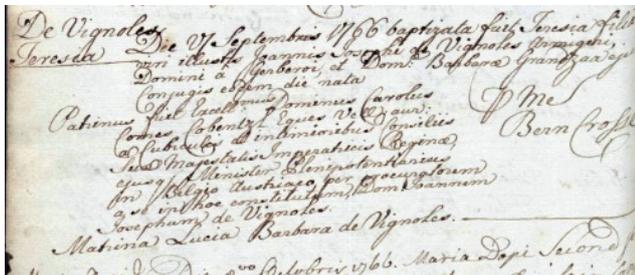
Google will take you directly to dozens of mentions of this mysterious figure who was associated with the chevalier d'Éon. The essence of these accounts is that Jean-Joseph de Vignoles (1721–1780), apparently a Fleming of French extraction probably from Antwerp, had been a Prémontré monk but had been forced to leave his monastery after his girlfriend (I assume the Barbe Borlé recorded as the girls' mother) became pregnant; they married in Holland where Vignoles became a merchant; in this he was unsuccessful and soon made bankrupt. He moved on to London where he put "Esq" after his name and dabbled in various matters from publishing to politics and spying.

His dubious reputation emerges from an account in British government papers which is too long to cite in full, but may be found [here](#): his "character and manner of life in England, where he had subsisted for several years without visible means of support, rendered him very suspected." Further enquiries revealed that "he was a man of letters and intrigue...likely that he acted as a spy for the Court of Vienna, that he corrected D'Eon's works for the press, and that a very close intimacy subsisted between them." But not

it seems above spying on d'Éon himself. His name was also connected with Beaumarchais, whose international activities have appeared previously in this [blog](#).

Vignoles was also a prominent freemason, the British Grand Master for Foreign Lodges: in 1766 he founded the Lodge of Immortality, held at the Crown & Anchor in the Strand in London. He was grandmaster, but the membership list reveals a mix of French-speaking gentlemen, merchants, surgeons and clockmakers (Francis Hobler and Justin Vulliamy) and numerous accounts (I don't know whether freemasonry or transvestite espionage attracts the larger cult) suggest that it was Vignoles who initiated d'Éon into the cult. For further details, see William Wonnacott's lengthy [article](#) on Vignoles published in 1921.

This material tells little about other members of the family, although it provides an explanation as to why Judlin's brother Joseph might have lived in Vienna. This is reinforced by the entry in the register for the Bavarian Chapel (Roman Catholic) in Warwick Street on 6.IX.1766 where Lucy was godmother at the baptism of her sister Teresia; the godfather was Karl Graf Cobenzl, the Austrian minister in Brussels (see [collectors](#)):



Another source suggests that the d'Éon connection continued after his return to Paris in 1777, as he is said to have contacted his dress-maker Rose Bertin on behalf of one of the Vignoles girls who wanted to follow her fashion.

In any case we have enough material to understand the significance of the V&A's miniature of d'Éon (inv. P.31-1929) which Judlin made in 1776. Engraved on the case "Mademoiselle / la Chevaliere D'Eon / Painted from the Life / in London 1776 / by Mon^r. Judlin", the V&A online catalogue nevertheless questions the identity of the sitter. Because it shows d'Éon in a conventional male uniform, it isn't as well known as the Stewart copy of the lost Mosnier portrait that the NPG acquired some years ago, but it deserves to be a little better known. Even the rather poor photograph at the top of this post no longer appears on the V&A's website, where the work is said to have been executed in France, no information is offered about Judlin and the sitter's identity is questioned. For the record, d'Éon wears the uniform of a lieutenant in the régiment du Colonel-Général des dragons, to which he was commissioned on 22.VII.1758.



As we started this post with La Tour, I'd better deal with the annoying entry [J.46.175](#) I've been forced to include in my La Tour catalogue, a record of a hypothetical portrait of d'Éon by La Tour. This is most unlikely to have any connection with Maurice-Quentin La Tour, but derives from the enigmatic legend on a Haward mezzotint of 1788 indicating that it was based on a copy by Angelika Kauffmann after La Tour. The lettering on the print adds that the portrait was made in d'Éon's 25th year (although d'Éon was not awarded the Saint-Louis until 1762), and that it was in the collection of George Keate. However this information may be entirely spurious, as the Haward engraving appears to copy a 1779 print by Bradel. It is also possible there may be a confusion with the Flemish history and portrait painter Jan Latour. But that is a different rabbit.

Postscript, 9.VIII.2021: Our original quest has now yielded the final answer, located in the Tables de successions (DQ8). Judlin did not return to Alsace, but remained in Paris, rue Dauphine. "Alexis Judlin" [sic], now a mere journalier, died on 1.XII.1808, aged 68, in the hospice Beaujon; of the heirs, there was "aucun renseignement".

NOMS, par ordre alphabétique, des Personnes décédées, ou réputées mortes par une longue absence, leurs professions et demeures; SAVOIR:				JOUR et ANNÉE de leur décès, ou de leur absence.	LEUR âge.
NOM DE FAMILLE, (en gros caractères).	PRÉNOMS.	PROFESSION.	DEMEURE.		
Judlin	Alexis	Journalier	Dauphine rue 14	1 ^{er} / 1808	68