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WATTEAU AND ENGLAND

Marianne Roland Michel

1. H. Walpole, *Anecdotes of painting in England*, London, 1771.

2. J. de Jullienne, *Abrégé de la vie d'Antoine Watteau*, preface to the 1st volume of the *Figures de différents caractères*, Paris, 1726.

3. A.-J. Dezallier d'Argenville, *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres*, vol. 2, 1745.

4. E.-F. Gersaint, 'Abrégé de la vie d'Antoine Watteau', in *Catalogue... de feu M. Quentin de Lorangère*, Paris, 1744.

5. Comte de Caylus, *Vie de Watteau*, lecture read before the Academy in 1748.

6. *Journal de Rosalba Carriera pendant son séjour à Paris, en 1720 et 1721*, publié par A. Sensier, Paris, 1865.

'England has very slender pretensions to this original and engaging painter; he having come hither only to consult Dr Mead, for whom he painted two pictures ...'. Thus starts the entry written by Walpole on Watteau in 1771.¹ Interestingly enough, if Watteau had never been to England, Walpole would not have mentioned him. Nevertheless the purpose of this paper is to see whether there was, between this country and the artist, more than 'slender pretensions'.

This trip, which probably had little to do with Dr Mead's medical care, seems rather important when one reads the comments of Watteau's early biographers, even if they disagree about its dates or its purposes. If an unreliable mention, stating that Watteau was in England around 1710-12, is discounted, all the biographers put the visit at the end of Watteau's life, but Jullienne² and Dezallier³ suggest 1718, Gersaint⁴ 1720, while Caylus⁵ says, rightly as far as I can be sure, 1719. The biographers agree that he remained there for about a year, and there are two reasons to believe Caylus. First, Watteau is mentioned as being in England in the 1720 *Almanach Royal*, which would place his visit at the end of 1719, when the yearly issue was revised. Reinforcing this first mention is Rosalba Carriera's *Diario*.⁶ The Venetian artist arrived in Paris in May 1720, where she was the guest of the famous collector Pierre Crozat at his hotel on the rue de Richelieu, where Watteau himself had lived and worked a few years earlier. In Paris she met all the artists and patrons more or less related to Watteau and his society. But his name is only mentioned in August 1720 when she writes: 'Vu M. Vatto et un Angleis'. If he had been

back in Paris earlier, his name would certainly have appeared in her diary. The fact that she mentions him together with an Englishman seems to confirm his recent arrival. Thus it may be assumed that he remained in England from the summer of 1719 until the following summer.

One may wonder why Watteau went to England. Of course, he was far from being the only French artist to cross the Channel. Without even mentioning the numerous engravers as well as second rate painters established in London, there were Nicolas Largillière, who had visited London twice at the end of the 17th century, and Charles de La Fosse, supervisor of the painted mural decorations of Lord Montagu's house during Queen Anne's reign. La Fosse had offered Watteau invaluable help some years before his arrival in London. These examples demonstrate that English collectors were keen on French paintings, and wanted to patronize French artists.

The exact reasons for Watteau's desire to go to London are unknown. Julienne attributes it to Watteau's well known unpredictableness, and Caylus states that it was the enthusiasm expressed by some people who had never been to London themselves. Dr Mead's reputation as a physician seems less important than the financial benefit he bestowed upon Watteau in the form of many commissions. Jullienne writes: 'Il ne laissa pas pourtant d'y faire quelques tableaux qui lui attirèrent l'admiration des connoisseurs'. and Gersaint says more precisely: 'Il fut fort occupé pendant le séjour qu'il fit en Angleterre, ses ouvrages y étoient courus et bien payés. C'est là qu'il commença à prendre du goût pour l'argent dont il n'avoit fait jusques alors aucun cas'. All Watteau's biographers write about the deterioration of his health, due to the smog. But Caylus, the only one to mention the sadness and loneliness of his life in a country whose language he didn't speak or understand, states nevertheless that 'quoique français, [Watteau] y fut assés accueilli et ne laissa pas de faire ses affaires du côté de l'utile'. In other respects, if political involvements are considered, one may note that a military and commercial treaty between France and



FIG. 1 *Le docteur Misaubon*. Engraving by Arthur Pond after Watteau. Misaubin, the celebrated charlatan, was in London during Watteau's stay.

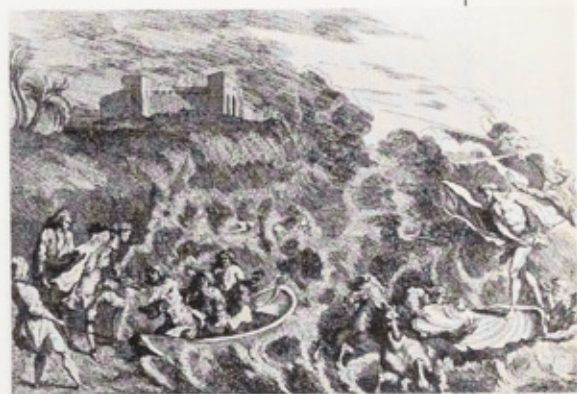


FIG. 2 *Le Naufrage* - Engraved by Le Comte de Caylus after a design by Watteau. Popularly, but erroneously believed to refer to Watteau's return from England; in fact it predates that event.



FIG. 3 *L'Amour paisible* – engraved by Bernard Baron after Watteau's painting, formerly the property of Dr Mead.

7. P. A. Orlandi, *Abecedario pittorico*, Bologna, 1719, revised edition 1753.

8. London, 20–22 March 1754.

9. Today in Berlin, Schloss Charlottenburg.

10. K. Parker et J. Mathey, *Antoine Watteau, catalogue complet de son oeuvre dessiné*, Paris, 1957, no. 331; engraved in reverse in the *Figures de différents caractères*, between plate 270 and 271.

11. See *Watteau 1684–1761*, catalogue of the exhibition in Washington, Paris, Berlin, 1984–1985, no. 71.

England was negotiated in 1719. This treaty made it easier for French artists to come to England at a time when there were not so many local artists, and English patrons were looking for paintings.

In fact, little is known about Watteau's works in England. Always mentioned are the two pictures he painted for Dr Mead, obviously famous enough (maybe because the collector himself was famous) to be quoted in the 1753 edition of the *Abecedario pittorico*, by Orlandi, the only addition to the 1719 edition. At the end of the entry is written: 'Sono ornati molti gabinetti dell'opere sue: Il celebre e Eccellentis. Dottor Meit in Londre possiede due famosi quadri, che rappresentano figure della comica del Teatro'.⁷ The posthumous sale of Dr Mead's collection took place the following year in London⁸ at which time the two Watteau pictures were sold for 42 and 52 pounds, respectively. A copy of the sale catalogue, preserved in the British Library and dated 1755, contains this caption: 'Watteau being in England, and not in the best health or circumstances, Dr Mead relieved him in both, and employed him in painting these two pictures, which are engraved by Baron'. One of the paintings mentioned as 'Pastoral conversation' in the sale catalogue, was engraved with the title *L'Amour paisible* (Fig. 3). It must not be confused with another picture also entitled *L'Amour paisible* which belonged to Frederic II.⁹ In the Mead picture, which is unfortunately lost, Watteau made use of a composition by Van de Venne he had first copied in a drawing.¹⁰ This is not the case with the other picture, 'A company of Italian comedians', which has survived. Although its exact provenance is unknown, it now belongs to the National Gallery in Washington. A very recent cleaning and restoration answers fully some questions which had been raised about its authenticity.¹¹

Both pictures were engraved by Baron whose name leads us to the group of French born printers and etchers who were living and working in London when Watteau arrived. He certainly met them, and it is thanks to the engravings of these artists that a great many of Watteau's paintings became known very early in England

and that English taste was influenced by the new *genre*.

The most important of the artists involved with Watteau were Claude Dubosc, Bernard Lépicicé and Bernard Baron. Claude Dubosc, who had settled in London in 1712, asked other French artists to join him, and collaborate in the engraving of the Battles of the Duke of Marlborough. Bernard Lépicicé was amongst them. Watteau could have met him either in Paris or in London. After Watteau's death, Lépicicé was to engrave some of Watteau's drawings for the *Figures de différents caractères*, as well as the allegorical portrait of La Roque and the small portrait of Watteau. Dubosc had also invited Bernard Baron who helped him to engrave some illustrations for *Gulliver* after Antoine Grison who, incidentally, had beaten Watteau in the 1709 Prix de Peinture, but was obscure before and remained so after.

Dubosc engraved many Watteau drawings after the plates of the *Figures de différents caractères*, and published them as a *Livre de paysage*, with a Savoyard holding the title. The title page gives his address as: *The Golden Head in Charles street, Covent Garden*. Dubosc engraved nine other plates from the *Figures de différents caractères*, assembling them in a series and providing them with either French or bilingual titles. Thus plate no. 178 is entitled *Le jeu de lute* – *The lute player*, no. 347 *Le concert de musique* – *The musical concert*; no. 282 becomes *La Mesure*, no. 350 *Les Patins*, and again *L'Innocence champêtre*, *Noce de village* etc.¹² Because plate no. 303 is called *Partie carée*, which is the title of a painting whose print was published in Paris in 1731, it is almost certain that Dubosc's series was published after that date.

Dubosc was back in Paris by 1725 and later returned to England. He might have obtained the two volumes of the *Figures de différents caractères* as soon as they were published,¹³ as well as some plates for the *Recueil Jullienne*¹⁴ which he was to engrave later on in England. These are *La Disense d'aventure* (*The Fortune teller*), some *Seasons* in arabesques, *Escorte d'équipage* (*Baggage train*), *Retour de campagne* (*Return from the campaign*), *Camp volant* (*The Bivouack*), *Alte* and *Defillé*. Through these prints, Watteau's art gained a

12. One has to remember that none of the genuine *Figures de différents caractères* bear a title.

13. Respectively in 1726 and 1728.

14. Printed and published separately from 1719 onwards, the plates were republished by Jullienne in 1735, in two volumes.

wide audience and the public, who could not afford to buy Jullienne's huge volumes, was able to get separate plates or small series at a fairly reasonable price.

Although Dubosc engraved his plates after the French ones, and in reverse, it seems that some of the original paintings were in England at the time. The references in the sale catalogues are often so vague that it is difficult to determine the subject. For example, a *Young fortune teller* appears in a Dr Bragge's sale in 1754, then in 1765, and again the Desenfans sale of 1786. Military subjects are also mentioned in 1764, 1788, 1794, and 1800, possibly corresponding to Dubosc's prints. They are entitled *An encampment*, *The halt of an army*, *An halt of soldiers* and its companion.

When Bernard Baron arrived in London in 1712, he was quite a young man, and certainly some kind of relationship was established between Watteau and him some years later. Evidence for this is a drawing by Watteau¹⁵ presumably depicting Baron at work. Baron owned one of Watteau's paintings, *Les deux cousines*, which he engraved for the *Recueil Jullienne*, whose plate bears the legend: 'du cabinet de M. Baron en Angleterre'. However, it is not known whether he purchased it from Watteau in 1719 or 1720, or after the painter's death. Baron also engraved the two paintings belonging to Dr Mead, for whom he used to work. The plate, after the *Italian comedians*, is advertised in the *Mercure de France* in 1733, under the following entry: 'estampe nouvellement gravée en Angleterre par le sieur Baron, d'après un tableau de feu Watteau qui est dans le cabinet de M. Mead, médecin du roy de la Grande Bretagne. Il le fit faire à Watteau dans le voyage qu'il fit à Londres. Ce tableau est gravé sous le titre des *Comédiens italiens*; ce sont presque tous portraits de gens habiles dans leur art que Watteau peignit sous les différents habits des acteurs du théâtre italien'.

The main difference between Baron and Dubosc is that Baron did not make English versions of plates issued earlier in Paris. Rather Jullienne commissioned him in his great undertaking of engraving Watteau's works. The three plates previously

15. Red chalk; London, the British Museum.



FIG. 4 *A Village plunder'd by the Enemy* – engraved for Boydell, possibly after Watteau.

mentioned, plus the *Accord parfait*, were published in Paris in 1730 and 1733, and belonged to Jullienne's two volumes. This collector probably asked Baron to find some Watteaus unknown to him in English collections, and to engrave them. Some time later in 1748, Baron engraved for Boydell *Le Pillement d'un village par l'ennemy* (Fig. 4) and *La revanche des Païsans*, two pictures whose attribution to Watteau seems dubious, but which were probably sold at auction in London in 1790, 1795 and 1805 with the title *Soldiers plundering a village*. Not only an engraver, Baron was also a publisher, as is seen in the etching made by Mercier after the *Leçon d'amour*, dedicated to Comte de Caylus, which bears in its margin: 'Sold by B. Baron in Panton Square, Pickadilly'.

Thus now appears the name of Philippe Mercier, a strange and interesting artist whose life and production have been thoroughly studied by Robert Raines and John Ingamells.¹⁶ His relationship to Watteau remains ambiguous, and his name is too often used to describe some poor paintings inspired by Watteau, whose authorship remains – and will remain – unknown. Mercier arrived

16. J. Ingamells and R. Raines, 'A catalogue of the paintings, drawings and etchings of Philip Mercier', *Walpole Society* 46 (1976–78), pp. 1–70.

17. E. Dacier et A. Vuafart, *Jean de Jullienne et les graveurs de Watteau au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1922–29.

18. Up to 1980, *L'Ile de Cythère* was known through its version belonging to the Heugel collection; the other version, probably in England as early as 1725, was sold at Christie's, London, 11 Dec. 1981.

19. See *Einschiffung nach Cythera*, exhibition held in Frankfurt, Städel Institut, 1982.

FIG. 5 *La Promenade* – engraved by Philippe Mercier after Watteau.



in London in 1716 from Paris, where he might have known Watteau. Watteau's biographers state that when in London he often saw Mercier, perhaps as a friend, certainly professionally. Actually up to 1727, when Mercier was appointed Court Painter, and his manner began to be influenced by the English portrait or conversation piece, his paintings clearly bear the mark of Watteau whose compositions he engraved and possibly copied. Additional evidence of Watteau's influence on Mercier is provided by Dacier and Vuafart.¹⁷

These authors state that the pictures Mercier etched had been painted by Watteau in England. Some of these were unfinished sketches which Mercier might have used very freely. Surprisingly enough, not only did Jullienne not ask Mercier to find some Watteau pictures which might be in England, as was the case with Baron, but he found other engravers to make new prints instead of using Mercier's etchings in the *Recueil*. This is the case with the *Ile de Cythère* engraved by Larmessin in 1730, and with *La Leçon d'amour* engraved by Dupuis in 1734. When the prints were published in Paris, the two paintings belonged to Jullienne. It is possible that Mercier's etching after *La Leçon d'amour*, dedicated to Caylus who was in England in 1723–24, was made when the painting was in London. This painting was brought back to France at a later date. As for the *Ile de Cythère*, Mariette states that this is the picture engraved twice, by Mercier and by Larmessin. As a matter of fact, an unknown version of this subject¹⁸ appeared recently on the London market and was purchased by the Städel Institut in Frankfurt. Some experts believe that the Heugel collection's version engraved by Larmessin was a contemporary copy of the newly discovered canvas.¹⁹

In addition to those two paintings, Mercier etched the central group of *La Collation* (engraved by Moyreau about 1730 for the *Recueil Jullienne*) and seven other Watteau subjects which Jullienne never published. First there are *La Boudeuse*, a figure taken from *Les agréments de l'été*, and *La Promenade* (Fig. 5), more or less a variation from *La Cascade*. This is probably why the attribution

to Watteau of these two paintings is in doubt. In addition, Mercier etched the *Danseur aux castagnettes* in 1723 and *L'Amant repoussé* in 1724. Then come *La troupe italienne en vacances*, *La toilette du matin*²⁰ and finally the *Triomphe de Vénus* whose original was perhaps a picture sold at the Harvey sale in 1790 and the Richard Cosway sale in 1821.

This fact may help us to understand why Jullienne did not use Mercier's etchings for his *Recueil*, as one might have expected. Actually, I believe that this patron chose to have engraved either paintings which belonged to famous collections (for instance the *cabinet du roi* at La Muette, or Dr Mead in London, or again the comtesse de Verrue or some *Fermier général* in Paris), or else paintings to be sold, whether they belonged to Gersaint, to the dealer Sirois, or to Jullienne himself. But there was no benefit in using Mercier's prints which reproduced paintings not available on the French, but only on the English market.

Indeed, from the beginning of the 1720s, many Watteau paintings could be seen in England. In 1744, Count Rothenburg wrote to Frederick II that 'tous les ouvrages que Watteau a faits sont en Angleterre, où l'on en fait un cas infini'. Nearly twenty years earlier, in 1726, Jullienne mentioned that Watteau's pictures, extremely sought after, were in Spain, England, Germany and Italy.²¹ The problem is to know whether these pictures were all genuine, or if collectors bought copies of Watteau's works.²²

The taste for Watteau is demonstrated by the numerous references we find in 18th-century sale catalogues, as well as through the prints which show his influence, even when they were engraved after other prints published slightly earlier in France. The names of Rocque and Vivares should be mentioned here, and Michael Snodin has recently pointed out, as an excellent example of Watteau's influence, an etching by Chatelain, *Veüe de la Maison Royale de Richmond*, which derives directly from *L'Embarquement pour Cythère*.²³

One has to be very cautious when studying sale catalogues. R. Raines has perfectly demonstrated that the many 'Watteaus'

20. The picture engraved under this title is in a private collection, Paris. See cat. exh. *Watteau*, 1984-85, no.

37.

21. In his *Abrégé de la vie d'Antoine Watteau* (cf. note 2).

22. Cf. R. Raines, 'Watteaus and "Watteaus" in England before 1760', *G.B.A.* 89, Febr. 1977. But E. de Goncourt quoted in 1875 Reynolds answering to Bourgeois about the English taste for Watteau: 'Watteau est peu connu chez nous, ses ouvrages sont extrêmement chers sur le continent, et les marchands et les brocanteurs ne nous apportent que des copies ou des imitations de Lancret et Pater'.

23. *Rococo Art and Design in Hogarth's England*, Catalogue of the exhibition, London, V. & A., 1984, C6 (hereafter referred to as *Rococo*).

24. See note 22.

25. I express my gratitude to Colin Anson, who kindly gave me access to the Watteau files compiled by the late David Carritt, mainly sale catalogue references.

26. Recently identified by Pierre Rosenberg as the painting belonging to the York City Art Galley (see cat. exh. *Watteau*, no. 4).

27. This picture was engraved by Baron, as mentioned above.

mentioned on the English art market were not always to be attributed to the painter.²⁴ In addition, it is almost impossible to count on any one of those references, titles or even descriptions to identify a specific picture, or to judge its quality or authenticity. There are so many 'landskip with ornaments', 'conversations' sometimes small, or pastoral, or musical, 'in a landscape', 'figures dancing', 'masquerades', etc. that it is in fact impossible to know whether or not it is the same picture which has been sold two or three times.²⁵

For example the following military subjects are mentioned in sale catalogues: *Soldiers on a march* in 1755, two *Halts of soldiers* at the Leviez sale in 1762, probably the same as *An halt of soldiers* and *Its companion* sold two years later. Would they be the *Alte*, nowadays in the Thyssen collection, and its pendant, *Le deffilé*²⁶? In 1764, the Harenc sale catalogue includes *An evening with a march of soldiers. A Battlepiece* was sold in 1783, *The marching of an army*, on copper, at a Stuart sale in 1788, *The halt of a French camp* at the Hunter sale in 1794, and again *An encampment* in 1795 and in 1799, and *The march of an army* in 1800. In 1804, *A camp with soldiers refreshing themselves* was sold and probably sold again the following year as *The halt of an army preparing to take refreshment*, this time together with a pendant. In addition, the *Plundering of a village* is mentioned several times in sale catalogues.²⁷

Concerning the prints engraved in England in the 18th century, it is evident that most of them were derived from paintings which were on the London market, such as *L'Escorte d'équipage*, with the title of *Convoy of the Equipage* and English verses engraved by Dubosc, as well as the *Camp volant (The Flying camp)*, *Alte* and *Deffilé*. Other paintings on the English market include the *Rendez-vous de chasse* (in fact a replica of the Wallace Collection painting) sold in 1794 and 1795, and engraved by Blake around 1782 with the title *Morning amusement*; *Le Sommeil dangereux*, sold in 1774, engraved by Riley; and as already mentioned the *Disense d'aventure*, or *Fortune teller*. In a Blackwood sale, in 1755, there is an interesting mention of two *Seasons* ('A landskip representing Spring – Ditto

... Autumn') purchased by two different people. It is tempting to identify these paintings as two of the Jullienne Seasons, one of them, *Spring*, having been rediscovered in England recently.²⁸ The four compositions were engraved in reverse by Foster from the French prints, and they were sold by Sayer, opposite Fetter Lane, Fleet Street.

A few other paintings might be identified: *Qu'ay-je fait assassins maudits* could be *The mock doctor* sold in 1730; also mentioned are *Colin Maillard (Blind man's buff)* in 1731, *Bathing Diana* and *Le triomphe de Cérès* in 1738 and 1742, *Vertumne and Pomona*, and some oval *Seasons*, most probably the arabesques engraved by Dubosc or by Rocque in 1754 after Huquier rather than the Crozat Seasons, whose *Spring* was rediscovered in England some years ago, then destroyed, and *Summer*, in the National Gallery in Washington. *Galatée sur les eaux* was seen in an auction in 1748, *La Partie quarrée* in 1758, the *Repas de campagne* in 1783, and the *Monkeys* (painter and sculptor) in the 1780s, etc.

Prints published in England reproduced drawings as well as paintings. As early as 1728 J. Clark, printseller in Grey's Inn, engraved and sold 'A drawing book of figures designed by M. Watteau', which were the *Figures de modes* and the *Figures françoises et comiques* in reverse, etched by Watteau himself for the first series and published in 1710 and 1715. Claude Dubosc engraved for the second time one of the *Figures de différents caractères* (no. 249) after a drawing, now in the musée Jacquemart André, with the title of *Menié et la Meunière* together with other plates from those series with various titles mentioned above. Concerning the pictures, there are several subjects, but not surprisingly the *Fête galante* stands out; *Coquettes* by Bartolozzi, *Pour garder l'honneur d'une belle* engraved by Vivares with the title 'The white simple Pierrot', *Pour nous prouver que cette belle* by Lyne, *Les champs Elisées* entitled by the engraver, Blake, *Evening Amusement* (as a pendant to *Morning amusement*, the *Rendez-vous de chasse*); *L'Occupation selon l'âge* by Fourdrinier, the *Bosquet de Bacchus* by Bockman, *La Troupe italienne* and *Arlequin, Pierrot et Scapin* by Simon and *Les habits sont italiens*,

28. Offered for sale at Christie's, London, in July 1983, but bought in.

FIG. 6 *Falshood*, from George Bickham's *Universal Penman*, after Watteau's *La Disuse d'aventure*.



Falshood.

FIG. 7 *La Disuse d'aventure*, engraved by Laurent Cars after Watteau.



etc. This taste is also illustrated by some arabesques (*Seasons*, *L'Enjôleur*, *Le Vendangeur*), or by some rearrangements of Watteau's inventions. T. Riley engraves in mezzotint *La Finette*, on the same plate as the *Mezetin*, creating thus a new composition of two figures explained by some silly verses: 'Fair Amaryllis can with ease impart . . . Have made more conquests than the force of arms'. On the other hand, *Louis XIV remettant le cordon bleu au duc de Bourgogne* is used in three different plates illustrating the *Recueil des habillemens des differens peuples* published in London in 1772 by Thomas Jefferys: *Habit of Louis XIV, King of France*, *Habit of the Dauphin son of Louis 14 king of France*, and a *Habit of a lady of quality of France*.

My last three examples are crucial to this symposium's theme in so far as they illustrate how Watteau's influence in Rococo England spread wider than the simple reproduction of his work. The first is related to tapestries. At Ham House is a series of four, woven at Fulham (a manufacture incidentally founded by a Frenchman, Parisot), one of which precisely reproduces the Watteau picture engraved by Scotin with the title *La Cascade*, with the addition on the left of two children from the *Amusements champêtres*, another Watteau painting. The three others include

figures taken from Watteau, Lancret and Pater. There are also two tapestries, owned at the beginning of the 19th century by the Duke of Devonshire, which are larger versions of *La Mariée* and *L'Accordée de village*. My second example is to be found in Worcester porcelain, where some plates or cups are decorated with figures based on paintings by Watteau. In the Rococo Exhibition is a cup and saucer²⁹, their decoration again derived from *La Cascade*.

My final example can be found in George Bickham's oeuvre, where he made use of details after Watteau's prints, in order to illustrate the books he published. In the *Musical Entertainer*³⁰ we find two figures from the *Bosquet de Bacchus*, illustrating *The beautiful charmer*, as well as a hundred or so other plates borrowed from Watteau's oeuvre gravé, including some arabesques used as frames. In *The Universal Penman* (published 1740), *Falshood* (Fig. 6) is illustrated by the *Disease d'aventure* (Fig. 7), *False greatness* takes one figure from *Le Goût*, two others from *Le Plaisir pastoral*. Finally one recognises in *Pleasure and recreation* (Fig. 8) a funny mixture of *Iris* (Fig. 9), together with Lancret's figures.

Through these single figures as well as through the groups, all



Pleasure and Recreation.

29. *Rococo*, O34.

30. Published in London in 1737-1738, but some plates bear a date of 1734 or 1735.



FIG. 9 *Iris, c'est de bonne Leure...* Engraved by Cochin, after Watteau.

FIG. 8 *Pleasure and Recreation* from George Bickham's *Universal Penman*, after Watteau's *Iris*.

31. See note 17.

32. Cabinet of the late Greffier François Pagel, sold by Mr Thomas Philipe, 20–25 May 1799, No. 525. This drawing was bought by Barron, perhaps a member of the engraver's family.

FIG. 10 General Seymour Conway and his wife, by J G Eckhardt (Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art).



these plates show clearly what the English public – as well as the European one – expected specifically from Watteau: an illustration of his perfect creation, the *Fête galante*. This is well demonstrated by a print engraved by J. Pye and published by Boydell in 1774. Even though the attribution of the lost original to Watteau may be in doubt, as suggested by Dacier and Vuaflart, the whole composition refers nevertheless to his oeuvre.³¹ In a London sale of 1799 was a drawing whose description is certainly related to this lost picture: ‘*A landschape, a lady sitting on a bank, conversing with a gentleman and child, behind are two naked children playing with goats, very fine in red chalk*’.³² This description and its meaning brings us back to Horace Walpole, who was quoted at the beginning of this paper. He owned a picture by Watteau and copied in watercolour two of the Jullienne prints. In the *Anecdotes of painting*, he characterizes Watteau’s art in terms which explain clearly the reasons for his success and why so many people in England and elsewhere wished to have paintings by him or paintings inspired by him.

In conclusion, Walpole expressed it best when he wrote: ‘The genius of Watteau resembled that of his countryman D’Urfé; the one drew and the other wrote of imaginary nymphs and swains, and described a kind of impossible pastoral, a rural life led by those opposites of rural simplicity, people of fashion and rank. Watteau’s shepherdess, nay, his very sheep, are coquet; yet he avoided the glare and clinquant of his countrymen; and though he fell short of the dignified grace of the Italians, there is an easy air in his figures, and that more familiar species of the graceful, which we call gentle. His nymphs are as much below the forbidding majesty of goddess, as they are above the hoyden awkwardness of countrygirls. In his halts and marches of armies, the careless slouch of his soldiers still retains the air of a nation that aspires to be agreeable as well as victorious. But . . . his trees appear as unnatural to our eyes, as his figures must do to a real peasant who had never stirred beyond his village. . . . [They] are copied from those of the Tuilleries and villas near Paris; . . . there I saw



FIG. 11 *La Cascade* engraved by Scotin after Watteau.

the originals of those tufts of plumes and fans, and trimmed-up groves, that nod to one another like the scenes of an Opera . . .?'

This extract suffices to illustrate the reasons for a taste, as well as of a certain disdain. The first one is much stronger and reflects an admiration which explains both the collections and the numerous engravers. This explains, too, some aspects of English painting during the second quarter of the 18th century, and even after, as illustrated by Mercier, also by Nollekens, and sometimes by Hogarth, as for example in his *Fishing party*.³³ Another example is to be found in the portrait of General Seymour Conway and his wife (Fig. 10), painted for Horace Walpole by Eckhardt around 1755.³⁴ Once more, the print by Scotin after Watteau, *La Cascade* (Fig. 11), was used as a model, and it would be interesting to know whether the sitters were aware of this fact. In any case, this portrait proves clearly how much the 18th century English artists were indebted to Watteau's creation and how much the collectors' taste was influenced by his genre.

33. Dulwich College, London.

34. *Rococo*, O35.