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HAL OPPERMAN

THE COUNTENANCE OF WATTEAU

*Review of the exhibition and catalogue Watteau 1684–1721  
(Washington–Paris–Berlin, 1984–1985)*

1985

## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

The following typescript, prepared in 1985, was conceived as a review article of the exhibition and accompanying catalogue *Watteau 1684–1721* (Washington–Paris–Berlin, 1984–1985). An edited version, reduced in length, was eventually published in *Art Bulletin*, LXX (1988), 354–359. The original typescript had entered into circulation by then, however, and has been cited on occasion by scholars of Watteau to the present day. This scan of the typescript is being made available in response to bibliographical enquiries, old photocopies having become increasingly difficult to find.

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The Countenance of Watteau

To Fritz Grossmann  
1902-1984

Hal Opperman

The comprehensive, "last word," monographic exhibitions that have become the primary vehicle of serious scholarship in French painting over the last twenty-five years are difficult for the specialist to review. Just so must they be difficult for the non-specialist to attend and comprehend. Merely to look closely at the one hundred seven drawings, sixty-eight paintings, and nine etchings exhibited at the Watteau tricentenary retrospective in Paris was a demanding task.<sup>1</sup> But no artist is more in need of a gloss than Watteau — the deceptive familiarity of his work falls quickly away when confronted so remorselessly — and the excellent catalogue provided, at truly reasonable cost, is approximately one foot high, two inches thick, and weighs well over five pounds. Its nearly six hundred pages contain thorough entries for all exhibited works and close to thirteen hundred reproductions of which more than a hundred are in color, illustrating several related essays and reference sections as well as the catalogue proper. To this description I would add a dual judgment: that this is the best book on Watteau ever put together, but that it is very difficult to "use," impossibly so, in fact, as the companion/guide to an exhibition. Visitors' first-hand impressions will have dimmed considerably by the time they have got through the catalogue at home, months later perhaps, and the reviewer suffers the same limitations. The review that appears during an exhibition inevitably ignores a catalogue of such scope and ambition and, once the novelty has worn off, few indeed are those willing to take a careful look back. In the present case, however,

this must be done. The exhibition and its catalogue are not a definitive statement to which one may readily turn whenever the need is felt for fact or other reassurance. Unlike any others of the similar Musées nationaux undertakings, from the memorable Nicolas Poussin of 1960 onward, the exhibition of Watteau is a new beginning and, in some ways, only a beginning. It is an invitation to a voyage into an artist (and beyond him a century) ripe for rediscovery, promising the excitement of seeing anew.

The catalogue is a joint venture; hence most of the difficulty in "using" it. The authors worked independently, with an occasional peek at one another's manuscripts, under the usual gun of an exhibition deadline. Their interpretations often differ spectacularly, yet there was no time to consult among themselves, compromise, and rewrite. Simultaneously two major books on Watteau were in progress, again with differing dates, or iconographical explanations, or biographical hypotheses, or sources of influence (no artist has ever attracted so astonishing a spectrum of opinion as Watteau).<sup>2</sup> The principal authors of the catalogue had access to these in one form or another and sometimes took them into account ... separately. Had the several authors smoothed over their disagreements we would surely have had a comforting, convenient reference work with no new breakthroughs, the product of a committee of experts. Instead we have, as the authors rightly state in their foreword, a contextual study left to stand as a collection of separate opinions. Each author contributes fundamental new insights in his or her strong suit that reach to the core of Watteau; if there is conflict among them in their weaker suits, that is an acceptable part of the game.

The three main authors are Margaret Morgan Grasselli, Curator in the Department of Graphic Arts of the National Gallery of Art (catalogue

of the drawings); Pierre Rosenberg, Conservateur en chef in the Department of Paintings of the Louvre (catalogue of the paintings);<sup>3</sup> and François Moureau, Professor of French literature in the Université de Dijon (essays on Watteau in his time, especially his theatrical milieu). Their strong suits are: for Rosenberg, interpretation of the meaning and the mood of Watteau's art; for Moureau, his social and cultural context; for Grasselli, the chronology of his artistic development. It goes without saying that all three maintain the highest standards as documentalists and connoisseurs.

Let us comment briefly on the introductory sections of the book, which are of varying interest and utility. "The Friends of Watteau" by Nicole Parmantier is a collection of capsule biographies, a good (though necessarily arbitrary) selection. The majority of Watteau's acquaintances are relatively obscure, but there are a few exceptions; hence the level of information is quite uneven. Nonetheless this is a useful compilation. So with the "Chronology," which is thorough but not informative in any new ways. "Fourteen Questions Around a Name" has quite another purpose. If, as Rosenberg states further on, the purpose of the exhibition is "to see more clearly" (p. 242), then the "Fourteen Questions" (of which he is certainly the author, though this section is unsigned) are a kind of preamble to the search. But they do not provide a collection of leitmotifs for the catalogue; some, certainly, are unanswerable. In his own time, how did Watteau enter the cultivated world of the arts? What are the sources of his ideas? He was always called a Flemish painter, set apart; then why, soon after his death, was he held up as the very symbol of the French school? What accounts for his popularity? All recognize his uniqueness, but then why — or more important, how — was he so influential? If he is the progenitor of a school, why is he so different from Boucher and Chardin? Why is he so open to reinterpretation by succeeding generations? How may one seize the inter-

play in his paintings between tangible subject and dream entertainment? These are some of the "big issues" which, raised but not addressed, set the stage for the enquiry. One answer is given here, perhaps the key for all the others. Watteau has always been considered a painter of "modern" life. What does this mean? He is no mere chronicler, a witness of his time. It is, Rosenberg says, because his pictures speak to our senses rather than our intellect that he represents the "modern" spirit. Rosenberg goes on to single out two further questions raised by Watteau's art: ambition and ambiguity. Surely he demanded more than pure painting of his pictures. "But more than other [artists], he tempted and defied words; he invited discussion and explanation, but he then shied away." (p. 13) "In fact, the artist's greatness may well reside in that multiplicity of interpretations of an œuvre that does not wish to reveal its intentionally ambiguous secret. ... Watteau's ambition is obvious, but we do not know what he meant. Will we ever know?" (p. 245) To combine these last questions into one: even though it is in some ways peculiar to Watteau alone, is not this very contradiction the quintessence of the "modern" in art?

\* \* \* \* \*

The paintings occupy the center of the catalogue and most of its bulk and, for a reviewer's purposes, offer the most convenient way in. Some exhibition catalogues come close to being <sup>complete</sup> catalogues raisonnés, but that is far from true here. Many pictures are present only in small reproductions and/or passing mention; many others are not there at all. Those lost but known through engravings rarely appear, as Rosenberg makes no systematic attempt to deal with the Œuvre gravé of Watteau's friend and promoter, Jean de Jullienne.<sup>4</sup> Mercifully absent are quantities of pictures that could be copies of lost works or damaged originals restored beyond

recognition. One cannot do everything, and on the whole Rosenberg set his limits well. Yet there are some works he knowingly excluded, for example the two attractive and interesting pictures from the museum of Valenciennes which he does not accept (most other specialists do). Since he makes other audacious inclusions, some of them much more controversial, in full recognition that he will be challenged, why not put these in too? Rosenberg is usually extremely reticent about the reasons for the absence of works, and only mentions them at all when it is indispensable to do so (this, coupled with the lack of any index to collections or titles, or any concordances with standard handbooks, contributes to the difficulty of using the catalogue as a work of reference). Of course we know why some wonderful pictures are missing: the Wallace Collection and the Musée Condé at Chantilly cannot lend; the two masterpieces in Dresden could not come because of the participation of West Berlin; requests for Fêtes vénitiennes and La Gamme d'amour from the National Galleries in Edinburgh and London were refused. And although these and a few others would have added greatly to the enjoyment of the show, they would not have furnished Rosenberg the occasion to add anything different and essential to the interpretation of Watteau's art. Coming to an understanding of this interpretation in an exhibition catalogue — where each work is discussed on its own terms and, on the whole, independently of the others — is an additive process; Rosenberg's remarks on such absent works would certainly have been pertinent, but his cumulative judgment would have been little altered through their inclusion.

The earliest documented subjects for Watteau paintings are the scenes of army camps and marches, few in number but very revealing for the glimpse they provide into his social consciousness. Rosenberg has five of them in his catalogue — perhaps all that survive — but only three were

actually shown. Camp volant (no. 6, Moscow) is documented as Watteau's first masterpiece, painted in 1709-1710; despite the old yellow varnish which has been only partially removed, it stood out as no other among the dozen pictures hung in the upstairs rotunda of the Grand Palais for the simplicity, sincerity, and humanity of its vision. Rosenberg talks of the realism and the monotony of this scene, whose message is **not** of the glory but of the banality of war. Elsewhere he notes the mixture of high and low life in the military pictures (Alte, no. 5, Thyssen collection)<sup>5</sup>, and the boredom of the humble soldiers who are not in control of their destiny (Les Fatigues de la guerre, Les Délassements de la guerre, nos. 15-16, Hermitage). Though his country scenes and fêtes galantes show "quite another world," are not the values of those who inhabit them the same?

The import of these highly original wartime pictures is genuinely different from that of conventional low-life subjects, as could be seen by contrast with two other pictures in that same first gallery. Though often doubted, La Diseuse d'aventure (no. 8, San Francisco) is indeed Watteau's original painting of this much copied composition; his touch is unmistakable. And the picture from Strasbourg of a Woman cleaning copper (no. 7) is indisputably by the same hand. The confirmation of these works is one of the major revelations of the exhibition, giving for the first time a direct and absolutely secure affiliation between the young Watteau and the Netherlandish genre tradition. How much one regrets that Rosenberg was not as willing to test his doubt by including two similar pictures — La vraie gaieté in Valenciennes and La Danse champêtre in Indianapolis — as he was to risk his certainty here. But Watteau was never truly comfortable as an anecdotal "Flemish" painter; scenes like these are very rare.

The second type of picture for which Watteau achieved notoriety was the village festivity. Like the military scenes they are superficially based on Northern prototypes, but Watteau transformed them totally through figure studies from nature on the one hand, and the make-believe of theatre on the other. Here one sees for the first time his characteristic union of observation and fantasy, along with the first traces of an accompanying ambiguity of intent. Watteau did not paint many of these and they tend to be large. Two of the most important were in the exhibition (nos. 10-11, Berlin); the first of them is not much more than an interesting experiment, but the other, the famous Mariée de village — though badly damaged and though its author's means do not always measure up to his ambition — is a poetic masterpiece. Missing from the exhibition — just as well, perhaps, for it is totally ruined — is L'Accordée de village in the Soane Museum, celebrated in Watteau's day. But the smaller variant of it from the Prado (no. 21) was an important addition; relatively poorly known to specialists and sometimes doubted, it can now be confirmed as an entirely autograph Watteau.

A third new subject type helped bring Watteau to the attention of the Académie royale in 1712, a type for which a convincing label has never been found. This is known in four closely related pictures, two of them lost and the other two in the show. According to Rosenberg Pierrot content (no. 13, Thyssen collection) would be earlier in date than La Partie quarrée (no. 14, San Francisco) and, in fact, it does appear more tentative in execution and in the conception of figures and group, as well as more rudimentary in its psychology. Here we have open-air scenes whose protagonists are clearly actors but, as Rosenberg says, they are not on the stage. The suggestion of irony, humor, mystery, and dreaminess presages his maturity and the fête galante. Although Rosenberg insists that

we are left free to interpret as we wish, the tale will be of love's irruption.

La Conversation in Toledo (no. 23) is a new theme for Watteau that appears about this same time. Ladies and gentlemen in contemporary dress replace the theatrical figures of the pictures just discussed, and the tone of social interaction changes accordingly. Set in an idealized countryside and an indeterminate present, non-specific in action and character (Rosenberg rightly dismisses all attempts to identify portraits of friends of the artist), these couples carry out their "games of gallantry and noble leisure." (Moureau, p. 494) Although there may be some meaning that eludes us, this is above all a "conversation piece" and also a proto-fête galante. The rarely seen and very large canvas called The Country Ball (no. 24, Noailles collection) was another of the revelations of the show. It has elements of Watteau's theatre pieces in costumes and scenery, and also of the village festivity pictures in the Italian poplars and parasol pines but especially in what Donald Posner has called the "scenic spectacle," despite the much smaller number of figures. In this way Watteau transforms what he had set out to do in La Conversation. Adding the focus of music and the dance, he arrives at what must have been his first ambitious and "complete" fête galante. With a further refinement of figures and groupings, eliminating some of the stiffness and disjunction still present here and in another, similar "transitional" work — the highly theatrical Gathering near the fountain of Neptune (no. 22, Prado) — Watteau will be ready to enter his brief artistic maturity.

Students of Watteau have long noted the change that came into his drawing style in the vicinity of 1715, when he entered the circle of the financier Pierre Crozat and all at once gained access to a good collection of paintings by old and modern masters, a truly spectacular collection of

sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drawings by the greatest artists of Italy and the North, and — perhaps most important of all — to the highest levels of fashion and taste of Parisian society (which is to say, of Europe). The effect on his paintings was just as great, as is shown by a small and very special group of works centered upon the four ovals of the Seasons painted for Crozat (doubtless, as Rosenberg suggests, as dining-room overdoors). L'Été (no. 35, Washington) is conventional in presentation, but there are some fine passages of painting in the subsidiary figures to the right, and also a radiant light-and-color sense that makes one regret the loss of its three companions over the years. Paintings like this have suffered through comparison with the "original" Watteau of the fêtes galantes but, seen in perspective, demonstrate that he could have been a great painter of history subjects and the nude had he chosen to pursue that path. How much more delectable is this one essay than the run-of-the-mill allegories of the last generation of history painters of Louis XIV, Watteau's contemporaries! The much smaller oval painting of Autumn (no. 34, Louvre) Rosenberg presents as an early idea for one of the Crozat overdoors, taking up a hypothesis of Marianne Roland Michel. The final composition, known through an engraving, is completely different and shows the intervention of an "academic" process of consultation and study usually ascribed to the guidance of the aged Charles de La Fosse. In this early version — a sketch, really — Watteau reveals his natural roots in the French decorative tradition going back to the time of Vouet and even to Fontainebleau, interpreted in a painterly, Flemish medium and with the addition of a still life that recalls Largillierre. This is not so much a genre that unites history with decoration (Rosenberg) as it is history growing out of decoration, a process that has a parallel in Watteau's simultaneous passage from the decorative panels of arabesque he had been painting to his easel

pictures of fêtes champêtres. This overlooked picture, recently restored, painted with an instinctual fluidity and ease, elegant without artifice, is in fact one of Watteau's most accessible works.

Three further pictures from the Louvre illustrate Watteau's experimentation with this sort of theme. Rosenberg would like to accept the hypothesis of Dacier and Vuaflart, that the Nymph and Satyr (no. 36) is an overdoor done for the Duc d'Arenberg at about the same time as the Crozat Seasons, which seems quite reasonable. Again, this is a revealing example of Watteau working through a decorative tradition toward a statement in history painting; with roots in classical, Venetian, and Flemish sources, Watteau comes to a personal mythological vision that betrays a secret kinship with the pastorals of the early Poussin. It is a shame the picture has darkened so and been repainted, for it cannot now be accurately compared to another masterful feminine nude, Diane au bain (no. 28), one of the most sensual and seductive of all Watteau's paintings. A recent acquisition by the Louvre (1977) and by far the most significant since the La Caze bequest of 1869,<sup>it is</sup> worthy in every way to mingle with that distinguished group. This warm and luminous female form, fully self-aware in her distraction, absorbs the forces of sun and earth, warm air and cool flowing water, in one of the most beautiful and pantheistic of all Watteau's landscapes. Despite its (scarcely noticeable) derivation from a figure in a painting of 1707 by Louis de Boullongne, and despite some imperfections in anatomy, this is the most original and convincing of Watteau's essays in the genre. It is of about the same size as the Nymph and Satyr but so different in concept, more spontaneous in feeling, splendid in its color, the nacreous light, car <sup>essing</sup> brushstrokes, and captivating expression. Compared to the latter, the last vestige of Rubensian robustness has been purged away in favor of a more ethereal, Venetian ideal. Although Watteau

was not long patient with this mythological vein, its nostalgia and elemental quality carry across to his new Elysian fields, one of the magical touches that animate the fête champêtre as he was beginning to develop it.

There is little else of merit in his approaches to the mythological genre. The small panel of the Judgment of Paris (no. 64) is a relatively trivial piece of theatrical business whose derivation from Rubens, so often noted, is only superficial. Watteau is not a master of the thinly-painted, transparent oil sketch. He normally builds up color and glazes in opaque overlays, in a manner analogous to his mature chalk drawings, as revealed in unfinished paintings such as Gallant Recreation (no. 63, Berlin) or in his oil counterproofs made before the underpainting of some of his canvases had dried (none included in the exhibition). Rosenberg finds attractive the recent hypothesis of Marianne Roland Michel that this was originally a pendant to Vertumne et Pomone (Wildenstein collection), and the two do make an interesting pair, with the svelte figure of Pomona, suggestively draped, shown seated and from the front, contrasted to the naked standing Venus seen from behind, while the youthful Paris sets off Vertumnus as an old crone. Rosenberg's observation that the uniqueness of Watteau's conception of Venus lies in how she unveils herself finds a response in the other picture which is concerned with a persuasive disguise. These pictures are clever but slight, attractive at first encounter but not at all central to the œuvre. Nor is the entrancing Sainte Famille (no. 30, Hermitage), an attempt to rival the brilliance, freedom, instability, and even the eccentricity of Van Dyck in a statement all Watteau's own, a picture whose only fault is its audacious originality, a spontaneous burst of artistic creativity neither slowly ripened nor thoughtfully followed through.

One of the most important accomplishments of recent Watteau scholarship has been to recapture the overt erotic content of a handful of his pictures.<sup>6</sup> These seem to have been scattered across the latter part of his career, as were the nude drawings — some of which could be considered suggestive — in Margaret Morgan Grasselli's view (cf. no. 68 of the drawing catalogue). The pictures that survive may well have been done in response to specific commissions; sly humor and vulgar punning are hardly a favorite vehicle for Watteau. Nevertheless their import, much subtilized and diffused, can be traced beneath the surface of the polite society of his fêtes galantes. Rosenberg points out the possible sexual innuendo of some of the titles of his engraved paintings: La Partie quarrée, for example, or the paired La Finette and L'Indifférent. But the famous dilemma remains: how accurately do these titles reflect Watteau's intention? Further, there is the disturbing fact that some perfectly innocent words and expressions assimilated suggestive connotations precisely during the short span of Watteau's working career: Moureau (pp. 495-496) notes that around 1700 the word "galant" retained only an old-fashioned, somewhat nostalgic sense of courtly behavior, while by 1720 it had taken on a tinge of irony and the derogatory, describing a kind of promiscuity at once shabby and genteel, just as Cythera, from an ethereal pastoral retreat had come to stand as explicitly as possible for the place of fleshly love (p. 500). Where in Watteau's art the line should be drawn between these two extremes is the most delicate problem in his interpretation and Rosenberg, it seems to me, keeps his balance admirably well.

The most unambiguously erotic pictures are low-life subjects, following the old Northern tradition. L'Indiscret (no. 31, Rotterdam) comes from a Rembrandt etching with a few modifications, but the meaning — masculine desire and feminine complaisance, in Rosenberg's words — is

quite the same. The "message" lies right on the surface; Watteau made no attempt to conceal it (but to generalize from this atypical work, as Rosenberg does, to the "majority" of his pictures having "an object," that is, a relatively simple and straightforward message to convey, is not defensible in my view, and Rosenberg's own analyses defy it).

L'Indiscret may once have been fun to look at, but its glazes have been stripped away so that we see only a surface of unrelieved yellow-brown with no depth, modelling, light, or reflected color. La Marmotte (no. 32, Hermitage — the word was a widely understood term, in popular usage, for the female sex) is a different matter altogether. Few of Watteau's paintings are as well preserved as this; few, in fact, are so well painted. The accuracy with which he captures this bright, chilly day on a north French village square, his sympathetic young Savoyard, the leafless trees set off against plastered masonry, red roof tiles, and the blue sky — all of this belied by the apparent insouciance of his sure, swift brushwork — constitutes a display of sheer talent rarely equalled in his century. As Rosenberg says, no formal, psycho-social, or emblematic study can "explain" why the work is so good. Trying to relate a solitary image like this to the rest of Watteau's œuvre is not easy. The espièglerie of his Savoyard is out-of-place in the refined atmosphere of the fête galante, though it does have parallels in some of the Italian comic scenes, which suggests that Watteau's figure is itself theatre-derived, probably from the stock characters of popular French farce.

Nothing could be more remote from this earthy, suggestive humor than the introspective scene of the Intimate Toilet (no. 37, Mouchy collection), another picture in perfect condition and of about the same date (around 1715). The very privacy of the <sup>moment</sup> A removes all possibility of licentious innuendo; the gilded quiver and arrows of the carved bedstead

eternalize an action as banal yet as primal as the motion of the sun. We can thank Rosenberg for exhibiting this astonishing picture for the first time ever and particularly for his characterization of it: a young woman nude, simply and naturally described. When considered side by side with La Marmotte, one finds the two poles of attraction that also move the world of Watteau's fêtes galantes: the impulsive force of erotic desire (often expressed in the comic mode) together with the beautiful, inevitable continuity of ordinary human time in its rhythmic repetitions, two fundamental human needs — a now and a future — with the conflicts and compromises they entail. No wonder the Watteau of the fêtes galantes, as Rosenberg simply states, is "the painter of indecision." (p. 13)

Approximately half the pictures in the catalogue are fêtes galantes (it is hard sometimes to distinguish between this genre and that of the theatre), and most of them belong to the artist's maturity, 1716 and later. Rosenberg's definition of the genre does not touch upon external appearances, which are variable within certain limits, but goes instead to the core: the fête galante is "the means [Watteau] used to describe the difficulties of human relations ... , happy love as well as unhappy love." (p. 243) As such it is understandably difficult to interpret and — again, within limits — interpretation is left up to the individual viewer. One of the objectives of Rosenberg's entries is to define the limits within which interpretation may occur, while sensitizing the reader to the language Watteau employs.

Watteau invariably presents us with an encounter and lets us feel rather than understand the stage to which it has evolved, the expectations of the protagonists, and some sort of hint of the outcome (never a verdict). This simple formula provides the scenario for all of the fêtes galantes, and Rosenberg's method of analyzing it is best illustrated with a few

examples. In L'Enchanteur and L'Aventurière (nos. 17-18, Troyes) Watteau has a standing, isolated figure confronting a seated figure of the opposite sex who does not look back but glances out at us instead. The principals stand fearless and proud, center stage, dressed to the teeth, each seeking to impose himself or herself on an indifferent partner. "May it be," Rosenberg asks, that each wishes "to seduce in order better to deceive?" Watteau makes us sense love unfulfilled in varying degrees, even love without an object.<sup>7</sup> Les Deux Cousines (no. 47, Ganay collection), one of the loveliest pictures in the show, contrasts a single figure of a young woman seen from behind with two couples pairing off: the offering and acceptance of the rose in the foreground, and in the distance a couple chatting in a park. Rosenberg notes the extraordinary effect of the isolated woman. Through a "combination of skillful arrangement and delicate analysis" — so easy to say but so hard to accomplish — Watteau conveys the frontier between a woman's longing and her girlhood dreams. Watteau can talk so tellingly and wittily of exclusion, as in Récréation italienne (no. 40, Berlin), where a man at one edge of the picture leans carelessly on a balustrade, turning away from the group of flirting couples in the center. This perfect embodiment of boredom is balanced by a curvaceous fountain nymph of stone at the other side, facing away from the couples and reclining on a dolphin, an emblem of desire. Rosenberg stops his interpretation at just this point; we may supply whatever nuances come our way. Watteau can handle powerful emotions too, as in Mezzetin (no. 49, New York). The rejected suitor serenades in desperate isolation — Watteau's strongest description, Rosenberg says, of amorous suffering — as a garden statue of a woman turns a cold shoulder to his plight. One feels a curious affinity for Poussin's stony Echo and the languishing Narcissus, with a bite of modern irony all Watteau's own. Then, too, Watteau is able to reach beyond such emotions

and such pains to L'Amour paisible (no. 66, Berlin), love fulfilled, a blissful landscape beyond desire and passion ... and infidelity.

The vocabulary of Watteau's language of love is subtle and fleeting. Rosenberg describes it best in pictures with a single couple (perhaps because there is no context to distract). In the famous Faux-Pas (no. 57, Louvre) all is in gesture and position:

The three hands admirably tell the story of the scene: one rests delicately on the ground, the other repels, the last encircles the waist and pulls. The nape of a neck and a face red with desire give the composition its tension and its violence. Nothing indicates that the man will be victorious, nor suggests that his companion's resistance is feigned.

What will the outcome be? As usual we are not told.

Watteau here mixes eroticism and modesty with the ambiguity he so loved. Moreover, he depicts as no one before him had done, the isolation and solitude of lovers.

Rosenberg first describes (translates, almost), then suggests a framework for interpretation, and finally generalizes from the particular episode to something universal in the human condition. This "method" is so successful time after time that one must concur in its validity. Its basis is always a reading of glances, gestures, and attitudes, as in The Singing Lesson and The Timid Lover from the Royal Palace in Madrid (nos. 43-44):

Watteau gave particular care to the hands of the protagonists in both scenes. The hands on the guitar and the flower stems are long, nervous, and clenched, while the music book and the fan are held delicately ... . The disposition of the figures was carefully studied. The man and the woman in The Singing Lesson are moving apart, while the couple in The Timid Lover is more intimate. The two paintings were conceived as pendants treating the theme of "the expected declaration." The language of music in one corresponds to the language of flowers in the other. ... [Watteau] may have wished to show two contrasting couples — the musicians who draw away from each other as if in discord and the harmonious couple formed by the attentive young woman and her shy suitor.

As a final example let us take The Sulking Woman (no. 46, Hermitage). Rosenberg describes this "indifferent, unapproachable, unfeeling" woman recoiling haughtily from the hesitant approaches of the gentleman behind her ("a young widow still unresponsive to the advances of a bashful suitor?"). Watteau communicates this through finely observed detail — the woman's hand crumpling her black satin dress, the man's hand awkwardly withdrawn to his chest.

Watteau lets us imagine what their relations might be. He does it not so much by observing their faces as their gestures and attitudes — the placement of a hand, the bearing of the head in relation to the nape of the neck or the throat. He lets us guess at each one's vulnerability and their hidden emotions.

How closely his description parallels the dance conventions of the time! Communication through gesture and movement — not through the mobile features of the face, which remains a pleasant mask — is both the means and the end of dance, whether as a courtly ritual, a theatrical entertainment, or as a private amusement of high society. Indeed, a social code of comportment, derived from and constantly sustained by the art of dance, permeated the fashionable society of Watteau's day. But we can say more of this later on.

The psychology of Watteau's pictures is based on the couple, even though one term of the unit is occasionally only implied. This is equally true in his multi-figured compositions, where the "message" comes not from a controlling, unified scheme of action (a central hero, or a plot with a development) but rather from the sum of the parts. It is a cumulation of the private histories of each of the couples of which only we — not they — are aware in the aggregate, and this is how Watteau's fêtes galantes differ from traditional history painting. Much of their ambiguity comes from this, as contemporaries recognized when they

described how he would string figures together with no apparent object. But as his conception of the fête galante matured Watteau seems to have been aware of the problem. He tried various devices to achieve greater unity before abandoning the genre altogether — thoroughly dissatisfied, it seems — about the time he went to England in 1719. One set of experiments involved composition: setting up oppositions (as in Récréation italienne); or sinuous, rhythmic linkages (e.g., no. 52, Amusements champêtres, Rothschild collection); or balanced, four-square compositions of the "classical" sort, based on Renaissance geometry (Gallant Recreation). Watteau found a second very important set of devices — fruitfully explored in recent scholarship — in emblems and other symbolic language (garden statuary with antique themes, the ceremony of the rose ...). Third, his borrowings from the canonical artists of the past may to some extent have been an attempt at justification-by-association, calling attention to affiliations with tradition in his (perhaps shockingly) modern art. He also tried a fourth approach, conceptual this time: using the stages of love as a metaphor of the voyage of life.

Amusements champêtres is a beautiful, rarely seen picture that illustrates Watteau's strategies well. Close in concept to the celebrated Pleasures of Love in Dresden, to a large extent it makes up for the absence of the latter in the show. Against a luminous background vista (derived from Domenico Campagnola) Watteau shows two couples of lovers, each engaged by the gestures, glances, and attitudes Rosenberg so well describes. Each couple is a world apart. But Watteau brings them together in our minds through the passage from the gathering of flowers in the first couple, to the offering and acceptance of the floral wreath in the second. Here the composition takes over, carrying our eyes in an elegant, undulating curve from the first couple on the right to the second, past a well-calculated

opening into the distance and on to the pair of children who imitate their elders in the flower-gathering game. The little girl inclines to the left in mirror image to the angle of the woman accepting the wreath, and this change of direction brings us up to the sculpture of putti playing with a billy goat (inspired by Jacques Sarrazin), a symbol of nascent love. The composition also moves in an arc out from depth at either side toward the center foreground so that the couple furthest along in this progress is the one closest to us. We can "read" the picture from right to left, as we have just done, or from left to right, in which case the insistent movement of the parallel diagonals, unequally spaced, carries us along: the bit of branch in the upper left, the putto seen from behind, the tree-trunk, the man in the red hat, his beloved, and finally the man at the far right. This movement describes a second arc suspended across the picture from its corners and hanging down like a festoon. The children are there as a witty counterfoil to the other couples. In a way these amusements champêtres are just as innocent for adults as for children, yet in another way human desire is all-powerful in its sway, affecting not only adults but children too. The adult male near the center, flesh-and-blood and here-and-now, has finished the flower-gathering game. He barely restrains his <sup>ag</sup>gression and his lust to possess, as Rosenberg notes, while to the left Watteau graphically depicts an amoretto in the act of mounting, in the universal realm of mythic play. In one sense a fully elaborated fête galante can be said to have as its theme love's dominion over all, timelessly; but in another sense Watteau seems to be presenting a sequence, from earliest awareness to flirtation and courtship to consummation, then satiety ... and back again. What is eternal may not be love's power as an absolute, but rather this eternal repetition, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. If we are correct in

carrying our interpretation this far it will be necessary to look much more closely than has so far been done at the pivotal point in the sequence — Watteau's children, where it begins and ends.

The key word in Rosenberg's description of the children in Amusements champêtres is that, for them, the time of love has not yet arrived. In a lost composition entitled L'Amour paisible — which has the same theme as the earlier picture of the same title (see no. 66) — Watteau includes two children in a balanced, pyramidal composition as one of three pairs of figures that represent 1) the "innocence" (Rosenberg) of childhood, 2) love proposed and accepted though not yet consummated, and 3) the harmony of love fulfilled. Having come full circle we are simply left to start anew. In Pleasures of Love the same cycle is depicted in a much more sophisticated composition with four couples and four stages of love, from the first declaration (reclining/seated) to the invitation extended but momentarily rejected (seated/rising) and the acceptance (standing and strolling away but still looking back). These three couples succeed one another from foreground to middle ground; the moment of consummation is left to the imagination, as always in Watteau, and the next stage of peace and fulfillment is represented by a reclining couple a bit to one side of the others. A child, who is clearly theirs (the fruit of love?) intervenes in the encounter of the middle couple (practically identical to that of the Faux-Pas), as if to help them over their impasse. Once again we have come full circle and the end of the cycle invites us to begin. There is even a mythological reinforcement here in the form of a statue. But is Venus disarming Cupid or is she feigning to withhold the quiver he struggles to reach? Both interpretations have their advocates. By the one, Watteau might be suggesting the passage from love's first pangs — Cupid's arrows — to the riper pleasures of Venus to follow. Or

by the other, he could be commenting on the contrast between the impetuosity of masculine desire and the slow awakening of a deeper passion. It has become fashionable in Watteau criticism, when faced with a dilemma of this sort, to say that both opinions are simultaneously valid; but I believe that attentive study will eventually yield a straightforward answer.

Watteau very seldom took on childhood as an independent theme. Two instances were in the exhibition. Iris c'est de bonne heure (no. 72, Berlin), in Rosenberg's words, depicts "the sensual awakening of a young girl ... as she turns away from her three companions who are still part of the world of childhood." Transferred from a mock fête champêtre to a Parisian interior the same sentiment might have inspired Chardin. The other picture, the tiny Heureux âge! âge d'or (no. 50, Fort Worth — one of the most brilliant American museum acquisitions of French painting in recent years), shows five very small children in an indeterminate arrangement, two of whom seem to be engaged in an encounter from the Italian comedy while the others watch the "play." Rosenberg notes sensitively the humor and the accuracy of Watteau's description of the tenderness and amusement of these infants but reproaches his inability to seize their subtle psychology: Chardin, he says, is more penetrating. But then, Chardin never attempted such a subject, a group of children of the same tender, impressionable age. Watteau works his usual magic and evokes in us the most ephemeral recollections of early childhood. One must not smother this image in Wordsworthian intimations; nonetheless, a few lines from the poet offer a more suggestive commentary than the platitudinous verses of its old engraving:

But it will not be long  
Ere this be thrown aside,  
and with new joy and pride  
The little Actor cons another part;

Filling from time to time his "humorous  
stage"  
With all the Persons, down to palsied  
Age,  
That Life brings with her in her equipage;  
As if his whole vocation  
Were endless imitation.

Let us note, for future reference, Moureau's observation (p. 515) that children in Italian theatre costumes were not uncommon on Parisian stages. It is also quite possible that Watteau derived the "living" statues of his fêtes galantes from the same source: statues of gods and goddesses frequently came to life and participated in the action in the theatre of Watteau's day.

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Rosenberg is greatly influenced in his interpretations by those of the late A. P. de Mirimonde whose work on musical iconography and related symbolism has been the most important contribution to our understanding of Watteau in the last two and a half decades. He follows his lead countless times, for example in La Leçon d'amour (no. 55, Stockholm), whose theme Rosenberg summarizes as "the union between music, nature, and love." Mirimonde was the first to point out that slight changes from one picture to another (Watteau often repeated himself) were not made randomly, but carry important changes of meaning in the amorous interplay they depict. Such a case is the Prelude to a Concert (no. 48, Berlin) where the principal group appears in two other pictures; all three are variations around the theme of harmony sought in vain. But while accepting Mirimonde's analyses as a framework for interpretation, Rosenberg cautions that they are neither exclusive nor exhaustive. As he points out, "there is also room ... , in addition to music and wine, for nature, the countryside, and an innocent description of children's games." Rosenberg's successful use of license of interpretation justifies this contention in the majority of

cases ... but not quite in all. There are a few notoriously difficult pictures where, despite heroic efforts, Rosenberg is unable to reconcile conflicting interpretations and unwilling to choose among them. But even in his less courageous moments he sharpens our perception of the problems by trying out new tools.

One of his most important critical distinctions is between two sorts of time in Watteau's work. Rosenberg employs it only infrequently and, though simple in appearance, it is not always easy to grasp because he assigns it different values in different circumstances. A quote from his entry for The Expected Declaration (no. 45, Angers), a sensitive work despite its drastic restorations, provides a place to begin:

Watteau succeeds in depicting ... the very special moment of tension that precedes a declaration of love. Watteau knows how to contrast the feminine protagonists of the scene with the lover, paralyzed with shyness, afraid of being rejected, still unaware of what the response to his declaration will be. Time seems to stand still for him. Because of that contrast Watteau was able to avoid the merely anecdotal, picturesque, or trite (emphasis mine).

Rosenberg assigns two values to the contrast: 1) by being able to seize the truth of such a moment Watteau is a remarkable observer of human nature, and 2) the resulting picture rises above the descriptive and sentimental, which are enmeshed in ordinary time, and thus becomes art. There is thus a narrative time and an aesthetic time, and the value of arrested time in the one here corresponds to the value of timelessness in the other. Is this a necessary relationship?

Another revealing instance is his entry for The Shepherds (no. 53, Berlin) which is one of Watteau's rare works on a subject of rustic love, with some erotic allusions reminiscent of La Marmotte. This painting exists in an earlier version (Chantilly) to which Rosenberg compares it. The Berlin picture is less inspired by Rubens; the figures are more

refined in dress and there are fewer peasants. It is less spontaneous, more distant in mood, more static and more serene. Watteau clarifies the composition "but above all he places his figures as if they were outside time" (emphasis mine). Here are two further lessons: 1) the aesthetic quality of being "outside time" is linked to the values of French classicism, and Poussin-the-ideal is favored over Rubens-the-real, while 2) there is a strong suggestion that Watteau's art "matures" in this classical direction, so that — all else being equal — the further "outside time" a work is, the better it is, allowing a sliding scale of aesthetic judgment on the single variable of distance from reality. I have already questioned the validity of this prejudice in relation to Rosenberg's discussions of Chardin.<sup>8</sup>

Rosenberg falters when he weighs off the real world of human social time (experienced by the actors in a picture) against the aesthetic ideal of timelessness (experienced by ourselves, the viewers). But when he keeps these two issues separate, when he stays inside a picture and talks of a dichotomous experience of time by the protagonists (as he did with The Expected Declaration), Rosenberg is able to make some telling observations. That Les Plaisirs du Bal (no. 51, Dulwich College) is set outside time, in a special time of lovers, describes the very raison d'être of a masked ball and to say so gives us a vantage point for appreciating this unique and glorious painting. But for all its mixture of costumes past and present, of theatre and real life, this is not a complex picture at a conceptual level. The full extent of Watteau's ambition can best be judged in the small group of pictures devoted to the island of love, with the implication of the temporal consequences of the voyage from here to there. In L'Ile enchantée (no. 60, private collection) — a strange and unsettling picture — nine couples and a single man, cut off from the longed-for

island in the distance by a wide body of water, are packed together on the shore, increasingly restive, losing patience, peevish. The polite veneer of gallant encounter has all but fallen away. The remote island is, as Rosenberg says, "on earth yet unreachable, in time yet timeless ... , synonymous with escape." The sullen couples are restrained against their will, and against nature, from accomplishing the voyage of love. Thus the cyclical rhythm that animates Watteau's fêtes galantes — discussed above — is broken. Or, as Rosenberg might say in different words, the would-be lovers are forced to remain in the world of ordinary time. They are finally allowed to make their departure in the great painting of the the Island of Pilgrimage to Cythera in the Louvre (no. 61) and its second version, L'Embarquement pour Cythère in Berlin (no. 62).

The discord launched when Michael Levey threw down his Cytherean apple in 1961 has been salutary for studies of Watteau. Levey challenged the Romantic stereotype by persuasively arguing that, rather than embarking from the real world for an enchanted land of disembodied dreams, Watteau's pilgrims are reluctantly preparing to return from the island of Venus to their humdrum existence after a day of amorous bliss. The real consequence of Levey's article — seen in perspective from a quarter century away — has been to reorient Watteau scholarship toward a new set of questions, and the aftershocks of his contention are still being felt. Ironically, though, Levey's solution to the initial question is far from unanimously accepted. And Rosenberg — searching to end the controversy — says that both interpretations are correct. The pilgrims are both going and coming because Cythera has two simultaneous locations, one of them temporal and the other outside time. It is "as much a definite site — the isle of love — as an abstract place that one arrives at or leaves indiscriminately; a chain of amorous episodes, as much the successive stages of crystallization as an

allegory beyond time." This interpretation appears to me correct. The picture (both versions; as Rosenberg quite rightly says, their subjects are the same) is above all else a fête galante and therefore obeys the cyclical time I have already described. In Rosenberg's formulation this is "an abstract place that one arrives at or leaves indiscriminately," which is saying the same thing. Yet it is also "a definite site" — the Aegean isle sacred to Aphrodite, rich in literary conceit. Rosenberg accepts this paradox, masking it with a metaphysical ambiguity which he sees as deliberate — in fact, the key to understanding Watteau. Here I must part company with him — not in what he observes, but in how he explains it.

It is indeed true that in the Cythera pictures "the unity of time and action are at the same time destroyed and respected," but it is false that this is a mystical proposition to which we must subscribe by an act of faith in the name of art. Let us recall once more that the picture is a fête galante, and that Watteau had developed four unifying strategies for what was otherwise a diffuse and disconnected affair: compositional devices, emblemata and symbolic language, visual citations from older art, and the theme of the metaphorical voyage replicating the cycle of life. He employs all four to full advantage here (with heavy reinforcement in the Berlin version). But there is one critical addition. The classical fête galante — by definition, one must say — does not have a plot. Watteau threw a monkey wrench into the works by supplying one here. The fête galante evolves and revolves "outside time," or more accurately in a cyclical time of its own. A "pilgrimage to the island of Cythera" has a narrative development which requires a linear, mundane time to unfold; it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The two demands conflict; they could be called irreconcilable. Did Watteau want this? Or did it just turn out that way?

What happened is clear enough. In 1717, Watteau had only recently invented the fête galante and was making it into a highly personal vehicle of poetic expression. He believed in its potential, that its validity was — or could become — universal. But it was experimental, still very new and unfamiliar, not at all well understood. He wished to enter the Academy and therefore chose to paint a picture with a narrative development, for two reasons: because this was by far the safer route, and because he stood an outside chance of being admitted as a painter of history, which could have meant a boost in his fortunes. Of course he chose a theme compatible with his vision and experience — a gallant masquerade from the theatre of the day that he could treat relatively more as spectacle than as narration. He wanted to have it both ways, and he got his wish: in the minute-book of the meeting of the Academy the day he was received into membership, the title of his picture, Le Pèlerinage à l'île de Cythère, is crossed out and replaced by une fête galante. The officers of the Academy saw both aspects because both are there. But may we not admit that the two pictures are wonderful and beautiful and whatever else we wish to say, despite their being illogical in concept, not because they are illogical?

We have lost sight of the original question: where are the pilgrims, on Cythera or the mainland? Michael Levey says Cythera, and I agree. This is a simple geographical question, but the subterfuge of asking a second question about their next destination without having answered the other one first has left the issue confused. The addition of the dimension of time (motion) requires separation of the problem into its component parts of whither and where. I would like to hope that Rosenberg's insights and the discussion in the preceding paragraph will have taken care of the whither. A circle of lovers, old and new, comes and

goes perpetually from this abstract place. Where is the place? Cythera, of course, the eternal isle of love, whose garlanded and venerated statues of the goddess mark the site beyond all ambiguity. Any confusions derived from the interpretations we may wish to put upon gestures, attitudes, glances, and the like can be overcome by reading the picture as a fête galante rather than by the rules of an Aristotelian tale. But only if we remain safely within the picture; contextually, there will be much more for François Moureau to tell.

The two versions side-by-side were a revelation, especially in how like they are. Both are masterpieces and there is no need to choose between them but I prefer Watteau when his ideas are understated; as Rosenberg says, they are more suited to allusion than to precision. The Louvre version was cleaned for the show, which amounted to little more than a thinning of the old varnish. The conservation report published in the catalogue discloses how quickly and with what assurance it was painted. This picture was executed on a white ground, while some others are on a reddish ground (e.g., no. 48). In a few cases that red ground, when the surface layer of paint has puddled in drying then shriveled and cracked, shows through and confuses our understanding of the original color scale. It would be interesting to study whether Watteau's use of red or white has any significance, for example for his chronology. As a final observation, one cannot help but note the aura of political sensitivity surrounding the two versions of this picture. The famous story of the bread pellets in the old Academy during the Revolution; the long history of fear of political fallout from overhasty or insensitive cleaning; the fact that Frederick the Great's taste for Watteau (he acquired the version in Berlin) is completely unaccountable on aesthetic grounds but not in terms of the socio-political matrix that shaped his personality (fascinating essay in the catalogue

by Helmut Börsch-Supan); the retention of this and a few other Watteaus in the very private Prussian royal residences even as the Kaiser Friedrich Museum was becoming one of the great public picture collections of Europe; the East German claims; the revelation — to most, including myself — that the Berlin Cythera up until 1983 was still the personal property of Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia; the protocol that required it and L'Enseigne to be exhibited briefly at the Metropolitan Museum while the Louvre version, by right of some ancient préséance, did not leave Paris ... . Another unanswered question, for an artist seemingly so politically innocent or at least dégagé: why? Watteau, and these pictures, are a world cultural property like no other artist or works of his century.

The fête galante is the central accomplishment of Watteau's career; all else that he tried surrounds it, nourishes it, prepares for it, is in some ways explained by it, though these other genres often have at his hands a life of their own. So it is most particularly with his pictures of the theatre. They, too, have baffled would-be exegetes and have given rise to a large body of contradictory opinion: this play or that play or no play; Watteau's friends dressed up, or the actors of this or that troupe, or no real persons at all ... . Rosenberg's conclusion is much the same as for the fêtes galantes. Watteau is a mixer-who-cannot-be-seized, and the ambiguity of his pictures is a deliberate ploy, an attention-getting mechanism. His art succeeds in direct proportion to the intensity and duration of our (unsuccessful) attempts to figure it out (cf. the entry for no. 38). I would prefer to accept this only as an interim assessment. The theatre scenes are fundamentally different from the fêtes galantes and there is very little latitude for personal interpretation.

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Rosenberg waffles in his attempts at reconciliation of opinion for the Comédiens français (no. 70, New York) and the Comédiens italiens (no. 71, Washington). His entries are confusing, even impossible to follow. This,

for me, is proof that the fêtes galantes are a case apart, since Rosenberg's analytical method works so well for them but fails utterly here. He can hardly be blamed. The theatre scenes have always been the most difficult side of Watteau's art and only just now — elsewhere in the catalogue — is there some sign from François Moureau that help may be on the way. There must be something behind works as fascinating as the two small pictures in Berlin, L'Amour au théâtre français and L'Amour au théâtre italien (nos. 38 and 65). I am not yet willing to cease admitting a possible link between them. Granted, the first is substantially earlier in date, but that does not preclude Watteau's having painted L'Amour au théâtre italien to respond to it, perhaps at the request of its owner. Moureau (p. 493) claims that the second picture represents, not the "official" Comédiens-Italiens who returned to Paris in 1716 (Louis XIV had banished them in 1697), but the independent troupes that performed at the foires, noted for their mockery of the established theatre and its conventions. The long-standing interpretation of the pictures as a kind of commentary on the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns (implicit in the verses of the engravings that reproduce them) may not, in fact, be far from the truth, though there are doubtless some particulars that still escape us. L'Amour au théâtre italien is in impeccable condition, and whatever it represents, shows Watteau in supreme control of his medium. The nocturnal atmosphere, delicate yet assured, makes of this one of the most perfect paintings of light and shadow of the eighteenth century.

Gilles has become Pierrot (no. 69, Louvre), and with the change in title Watteau's most arresting image — long considered enigmatic to the point of exasperation — is beginning to yield up its secrets. Rosenberg is even able to present some evidence of the picture's reputation in the eighteenth century. We are approaching consensus on some points, notably

Hélène Adhémar's idea that this was originally a sign for the lemonade-shop of the actor Belloni, who had been a famous Pierrot at the fairs (but Moureau is skeptical, p. 485). We are just past the end of the performance, and the actors "on parade" seek our attention and acclamation, as Donald Posner has recently demonstrated. The irreverent Pierrot is the symbol of the theatre of the fair (Belloni had been in trouble with the police for his subversive impertinences in that rôle). He stands isolated and alone, a unique and — as all agree — indefinable image of the outsider. Romantic misinterpretation though it may in part be, Watteau's self-identification with the tragi-comic Pierrot is difficult to discount.

Rosenberg is impatient, though, with the parallel drawn years ago by Dora Panofsky between Watteau's <sup>representations of Pierrot</sup> ~~Man of Sorrows~~ and the tradition for representing the Ecce Homo, an interpretation that has considerable currency among students of Watteau, especially in America. In my opinion it has the merit of conviction and should not be rejected out of hand. But the Man of Sorrows <sup>usually</sup> wears a crimson or purple <sup>cloak</sup>, not white, and stands on the same level as his captors/judges. We are much closer to the mark with depictions of the Transfiguration, with Christ above the heads of the attendant figures, particularly in the old Northern tradition where Christ, usually clad in white, stands firm on the mountain rather than hovering in the air. Posner is offended at Pierrot — a foul and blasphemous creature, at least on occasion — being likened thus to Christ. Seeing the composition as a Transfiguration rather than an Ecce Homo might satisfy his objections in part. But more important, this is a travesty, in the same spirit and doubtless following the same venerable theatrical tradition as Domenico Tiepolo's Life of Punchinello, the Italian forebear of the French Pierrot, at the end of the century.<sup>9</sup>

L'Enseigne (no. 73, Berlin), painted for Watteau's friend

Gersaint, the art dealer with whom he lived briefly in the last months of his life, was immensely moving in the context of the exhibition. For once Watteau succeeds in being enigmatic without ambiguity; he seizes and expresses the poignancy of the simultaneity of the endless repetition of the cycle of life — his principal theme — with the finite existence of the individuals he depicts. Recent interpretations have emphasized the vanitas symbolism, which Rosenberg downplays unnecessarily. "Inclined toward the past, turned toward the future," these couples are arrested at the precise instant of the present, caught between the portrait of the dead monarch packed in straw (all flesh is as grass) and their own image in the mirror, illusions of themselves that constitute the future. Ashes to ashes and dust to dust but in no way morbid, off the street in the shop of a dealer in art et curiosité, Watteau has achieved a painting that is painting in Rosenberg's words, illusion and reality. Donald Posner said it slightly differently: the heart of Watteau's vision is the reality of appearances. Carpe diem and dance of death, L'Enseigne embodies the exquisite agony of what François Moureau calls "the deep struggles of the time between the old base of Christian morality and libertinage." (p. 501) Nowhere can we see and sense this better than in Watteau.

Rosenberg's contributions to the exhibition touch upon many less important matters that need to be reviewed quickly. Watteau has received a great amount of attention as a landscapist — too much, I believe. There are many wrong attributions, drawings (cf. Grasselli, pp. 55-56) and paintings (The Bièvre at Gentilly, private collection; questioned by Rosenberg, pp. 323 and 344-345), and what remains is of slight interest. Watteau was directly influenced by Italian landscape drawings for the backgrounds of some of his paintings (cf. Grasselli, no. 139) as well as for the rare independent landscapes he painted. Of the two in the catalogue, no. 41

(Louvre) was the only one finally exhibited. It is a pleasantly eclectic essay in the vein of Titian and Campagnola, with a stepped-up classical composition reminiscent of Dughet, animated by a country figure from the repertory of Berchem and the Romanizing Dutch. Rosenberg finds exactly the right niche for it, noting that landscape for Watteau was not an end in itself. He makes far too big a fuss over the Landscape with a River (no. 33, Hermitage; not shown). I saw this picture at an exhibition in Paris in 1965, where it was loudly denounced by the press as a nineteenth-century fake. It has been tampered with, and the two strolling figures are certainly a later addition, as the Russian scholars claim. It is indeed by Watteau — but nothing to get excited about. Rosenberg sees a "wholly new approach to nature" in that Watteau "seems to compose rather than to let himself be guided by the subject." Frankly, I have no idea what he means. The picture is not dissimilar to the one just discussed, combining the influence of Venetian drawings with a vaguely defined Flemish pastoral quality. It is time to stop forcing Watteau into the mould of a pace-setting landscape painter. Marianne Roland Michel has made an important contribution in demonstrating that the background of La Perspective (no. 25, Boston), rather than representing Crozat's château and gardens at Montmorncy, is borrowed from a stage design. Rosenberg was apparently not able to take her discovery into account; he might have wished to alter his interpretation as well as his (too early) date.

Even less was Watteau a portrait painter. Just as modern scholarship is stripping away the supposedly specific (and significant) topography of many of his pictures, so the identification of particular individuals in his figure compositions is losing support. Rosenberg suggests caution in seeing La Famille (no. 54, formerly Edmond de Rothschild collection) as the portrait of members of the Le Bouc-Santussan family, an

interpretation based on the flimsy evidence of an engraving of it inventoried in that family in 1777. There is no evidence that the painting ever belonged to them, though, and we should probably dismiss the identification as a family confabulation perpetuated by a credulous notary; Grasselli is even more skeptical of it than Rosenberg (nos. 78 and 79 of the drawing catalogue). Lightened of its portrait load, this very beautiful little picture becomes an interesting formulation of love as it relates to childhood, a theme I have discussed above.

Let us summarily dismiss the Gulbenkian Head of a Man (no. 68). Watteau did not paint like this; the smudge of the cravat alone is enough to disqualify it. Three proper portraits remain to be considered, one that was in the exhibition and two that were not. The portrait of Watteau's friend Antoine de La Roque (private collection, United States; I have never seen it) was engraved for the Jullienne Oeuvre gravé and is generally accepted; the sitter reclines in a landscape with nymphs and satyrs behind him. Grasselli (under drawing catalogue no. 113) claims that these figures — which appear in the engraving as well as the painting — were added by Lancret. This kind of later tampering would explain the curious, un-Watteau-like, and hybrid concept of the picture; like the portrait of Watteau and Jullienne together in a landscape — which, it is now fairly well established, was assembled by the engraver from other bits — the portrait of La Roque gives a very misleading idea of Watteau's ambitions as a portraitist. Are these to be found in the disappointing Portrait of a Man purchased by the Louvre in 1973 (no. 67)? One must agree with Rosenberg, Posner, and a few others that it is like Watteau in some ways, particularly the hands. Nonetheless, it is a routine portrait by a painter who had nothing to say. What a contrast with the Portrait of Antoine Pater in Valenciennes which Rosenberg excluded from the show despite its deserved reputation and despite

the fact that its attribution to Watteau is a century older than that of the Louvre picture (but Parmantier doubts the reliability of the attribution as well as the identification of the sitter: p. 44)! Is it by Watteau? I believe it would have stood up very well if exhibited in proximity to Pierrot. Without direct comparison, though, one can only say that this is a great portrait by an artist who was not a portraitist ... and that would fit Watteau. Rosenberg challenges critics to come up with a better attribution for the portrait in the Louvre. With how much more reason one might challenge him to do the same for the portrait in Valenciennes.

Some attributions confirmed thanks to the exhibition have already been mentioned. If any doubts lingered still, the Chicago panel is by Watteau (La Rêveuse, no. 26). Gracious Repose in Oxford (no. 27; Rosenberg borrowed the title from an engraving after Watteau of an arabesque design with the same figure group in the center) cannot be by Watteau, however. Based on the original model of the print, or the print itself, it could have been painted from five to thirty-five years after Watteau's death. I cannot accept The Artist's Dream (no. 12, private collection), the most intriguing problem-picture in the exhibition. If by Watteau himself it would have to be rather early in date by reason of the figure style. Rosenberg hung it in Paris in the first gallery along with Gracious Repose; neither belonged. Grasselli doubts it, too, since the related drawings date from Watteau's maturity (under no. 107 of the drawing catalogue). The "vision" in the upper right repeats, with some changes, a group of figures known through an engraving made in England by Philippe Mercier in 1723 (Grasselli's date; Rosenberg says "about 1725"), purportedly after a painting by Watteau, entitled La Troupe italienne en vacances. Grasselli, along with practically everybody else, accepts that Watteau painted this lost

picture, but Rosenberg prefers to see the engraving as "a free interpretation of a part of [The Artist's Dream]." With one exception, the drawings are related to this theatrical grouping. The exception is a sheet with two studies of the writhing painter (formerly David-Weill collection), which I have not seen. One of the studies is quite visibly squared for transfer (how unlike Watteau!) and, from reproductions, I am most reluctant to accept this sheet as by Watteau. The differences in the handling of chalk, and especially in his whole figural conception, are too great to be explained by the supposedly early date and atypical subject. I would hazard a guess that the painting is a very early English pastiche, done shortly after the artist's one-year stay in London in 1719-1720. The anonymous artist would have had particular knowledge of Watteau's early style (we know that his pictures early and late were popular in England already in the 1720s). He would have had access to the now-lost painting of La Troupe italienne en vacances which Watteau doubtless painted in England. He would have seen at least one drawing of Watteau, the sheet of studies in Chicago (no. 107, in all likelihood also executed in London), from which he derived a couple of changes in the comedians. He would have "invented" the contorted figure of the painter. There are other possible scenarios, but this one fits the evidence rather well, and gives some hint not just of Watteau's popularity in England, but of the peculiar kind of reading his genius may have received there. Some such high appreciation — cult is too strong a word — may already have attracted him to London despite his failing health. Then, too, it is tempting to read the painting as a memorial to Watteau, depicted as the painter convulsed in despair alongside the entrance to a tomb.

The historian's task is to make sense of who Watteau was then on the basis of what we can see of him now. The interpretation of his art has always been the foremost concern; still to be discussed are the social

and cultural milieu as well as his chronology. All three concerns apply to any artist and are interrelated, but the understanding of Watteau's paintings also has a physical dimension larger than usual because of the great number of problems involving the material works themselves. This is apparent in the nature of Watteau collecting: the obvious demand for his works among his circle of friends (whom he often avoided); the division of the drawings at his death; the activity of Jean de Jullienne and the suspicion that he may have manipulated not just the market but also the works and perhaps even the artist (Marianne Roland Michel); the large number of problems concerning the engravings Jullienne published of both paintings and drawings (unacceptable number of discrepancies in dimensions of surviving works and those given on the prints, partial reproductions, works not engraved for no apparent reason); the strange, incomplete, and restless provenances of many of his pictures, traced with Rosenberg's accustomed thoroughness . . . . And how little we know of Watteau's patronage. For example, why the repetitions of a few small pictures (cf. the second versions of L'Aventurière and L'Enchanteur from Brodick Castle, nos. 19-20) as well as the obvious case of L'Embarquement pour Cythère? Watteau had little patience for this kind of restatement; there must have been force majeure, but who applied it? In not one single case do we know.

What lies behind the large canvas now called Gallant Recreation (no. 63, Berlin)? I quite like the picture although it is often maligned. It is in part a restatement of a lost work and contains figures derived from a very large number of his drawings, many of which were used in others of his paintings. Despite its having been left unfinished this is perhaps his most ambitious fête galante. As Rosenberg says, it does not betray his usual élan and vitality; less spontaneous, it is also more static, symmetrical, and classical. Nothing is known of its history prior to

Frederick the Great, but nothing of this scale could have been undertaken without a commission. For some reason Watteau abandoned it before completion. Posner speculates that he was bored with it, and Rosenberg that he was aware of having failed, in both cases with the implication that Watteau had exhausted this vein and was unable to renew himself. He may simply have lost patience at having to work to the dictates of a well-intentioned but demanding patron (Jullienne, for Roland Michel) and left the picture unfinished upon taking what may have been a precipitous decision to go to London and a happier lot.

What of the reworked pictures? Did he decide to "improve" upon some old, unsold works he had around the studio? Or did their owners so request? In La Sérénade italienne (no. 42, Stockholm) and The Embarrassing Proposal (no. 39, Hermitage) laboratory examination has shown that major changes were made some years after completion of the original versions, adding figures or altering their position without noticeable consequences for the meaning but allowing Watteau to transform his earlier, stiffer style. In L'Amour au théâtre français, however, a similar sort of reworking was probably substantive in intent, though the picture so far has eluded interpretation (no. 38).

Watteau was himself responsible for many of the material problems of his oeuvre. His abuse of rich oil so he could paint more quickly caused great deterioration in some of his finest works (nos. 10, 11, 21, 22 ...). One fascinating, innovative picture had to be withdrawn from the show because of it (no. 40), and others have been destroyed. Much of the damage, though, was not done by Watteau but by the owners of his pictures. Watteau's own pentimenti can be detected in Pierrot content (no. 13) and his careless métier is responsible for some alteration, but the picture's fatigue is mostly due to later mistreatment; it has also been brutally

cut down, perhaps for no other reason than to fit inside a favorite frame. Unnecessary cleaning and restoration have been inflicted on Watteau, for example his famous Assembly in a Park (no. 56, Louvre). The picture was apparently skinned and repainted by Louis La Caze, but even when it was in mint condition one wonders whether Watteau's execution was adequate to the poetry of his concept. Compared to Les deux cousines (no. 47) — which, of course, is in beautiful condition — it seems an overrated work. Alterations far beyond recovery ... is there any point in searching for the impact of L'Enseigne in its original format, or in asking what effect its missing edge and added corners have on our understanding of Watteau?

Watteau's decorative panels of arabesque ornament for interior décor almost always have central medallions with figures derived from the same drawings that provided the cast of characters for his fêtes galantes. The space is restricted, though, and the figures generally were used singly or in pairs (I will return to this aspect of Watteau's art in discussing his chronology, later on). Watteau was in demand for such panels but practically none are extant; tied to an ephemeral ornamental style, they quickly fell from fashion. I would like to suggest that parts of some of these may survive — the central scenes cut out and saved (and repainted around the figures, if necessary) when the arabesque surrounds were destroyed. Four excellent candidates were in the exhibition: The Singing Lesson (no. 43), The Timid Lover (no. 44), The Sulking Woman (no. 46), and The Faux-Pas (no. 57).<sup>10</sup> They are of about the same size and have figures of about the same proportion; Rosenberg notes that The Faux-Pas was cut from a larger canvas with a razor (the other three, to my knowledge, have not been carefully examined at their edges). All show a single couple (very rare for his easel paintings). None was engraved for the Recueil Jullienne.

Quite possibly they come from the same set of panels. Quite probably they were cut out to be sold when Watteaus were so scarce and prices so high, just after his death. Seeing them in isolation, in the wrong context, subjects them to a subtle manipulation of meaning. In fact Watteau's surviving œuvre as represented by the exhibition has been so altered by extraneous, irrelevant causes as to make its essence difficult if not impossible to restore. So much of Watteau sits in the substance of his materials and the ways he uses them!

The eleventh of Rosenberg's "Fourteen Questions" deals precisely with this. Because it is so tempting to look for the literary meanings of his works — not to say the philosophical system that underlies them — we forget his extraordinary mastery of paint to provide pure sensation, pure pleasure. Though Rosenberg's citations rarely go in this direction, he does give us the wonderful lines of Constable on Les Plaisirs du bal (no. 51), "painted in honey; so mellow, so tender, so soft and so delicious . . . . This inscrutable and exquisite thing would vulgarise even Rubens and Paul Veronese." How much more revealing than the disembodied symbolism of Claudel on L'Indifférent (no. 59): "Half fawn, half bird, half sensibility, half discursive, half aplomb and half already relaxed! Sylph , magic spell, and the vertiginous pen preparing for a paraph!" Intriguing but certainly not informative, typical of the effusions Watteau's strong images so consistently call up . . . . What is the real secret of the evocative power of L'Indifférent and its pendant La Finette? Beautiful painting in part (though both have suffered), but much more than that, an uncannily perceptive embodiment in paint of the arts of music and the dance and the emotions they awaken. Which brings us to Watteau's cultural context.

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François Moureau sketches the world of ideas and taste in which Watteau moved, its influence upon him and its perception of his art. This was a period of shifting standards. The arts of the court were being transposed to the city, and Moureau develops a milieu involving all sorts of "mixed" society, including actors and demi-monde, with which he associates Watteau. He emphasizes the importance of the new fashions as intellectually (and socially) liberating and attempts to lay the groundwork for characterizing this libertine milieu and its ideological significance. One of his best citations is from Le Voyage du Parnasse, an anti-modern pamphlet of 1716 aimed at Crozat and his circle: "Nothing proves our pettiness so much as this enslavement to fashion ... . Why is it necessary today, in order to be pleasing in paint, to make pictures that have, like these, nothing in them but glitter and where the figures resemble just so many dolls?" Was this Watteau? Probably, as was the unnamed painter René de Bonneval mentioned in 1717, whose pictures "conjure up tenderness with gallant stories" ... which true and faithful lovers do not need. Moureau derives some insights from "poetic tombstones." Recurrent themes of the first half of the eighteenth century concerning Watteau's art are novelty, the graces, gallant tone, and natural genius — concepts, as Moureau says, that are much harder to analyze than it would appear.

Watteau's society understood the arts naturally, not intellectually: this is Moureau's basic argument. Art is not a set of conventions interposed between experience and truth — a special language that stands for something else — but is directly, non-cognitively accessible. Theatre and painting imitate a familiar emotive world, while dance and music externalize this same world in a more intuitive way. There is so much to learn from the last two arts! Moureau barely begins. He notes the rise of

chamber music and the private concerts in Parisian hôtels, notably Crozat's, and how it had become good form in high society to play an instrument. He speaks briefly of Jean-Féry Rebel and the development of choreography in Les Caractères de la danse (1715). With the admission of mimesis, dance "as the mute art par excellence ... joins painting at the boundaries of the inexpressible" (p. 482). This is precisely the point of L'Indifférent (no. 59). The dance permeates Watteau, and JoLynn Edwards opens the door toward an understanding of this fundamental aspect of his art in a paper delivered at the colloquium held in Paris in 1984.<sup>11</sup> Another important paper was read by Florence Gétreau, who also has an essay in the catalogue on music in Watteau's paintings. She follows the lead of Mirimonde for interpretation, noting with Moureau the great éclosion of musical society under the Regency. In particular she shows that Watteau is accurate, so that his pictures are helpful to organologists (see her very interesting, very useful appendix of musical instruments in his pictures). Gétreau and Edwards demonstrate in their colloquium papers that attributions should be doubted when musical instruments and dance positions are misrepresented or misused.

Moureau — a specialist in the history of the theatre — sorts out the theatres of Watteau's day and shows that he was intimately familiar with all of them. There were four public stages. The Comédie-Française, with royal subvention, presented older and newer pieces by French authors in the rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie. Travelling companies of Italian comedians performing in the commedia dell'arte tradition could be seen at the seasonal Foire St.-Germain and Foire St.-Laurent (near the Porte St.-Denis). In 1716, the Comédiens-Italiens returned to residence at the Hôtel de Bourgogne (Les Halles quarter) under official patronage of the Regent. And finally, the expensive, somewhat stultified Académie royale de Musique — known as

the Opéra — continued the tradition of Lully at the Palais royal. In addition there were numerous private theatres with amateur performers (where, Moureau speculates, Watteau borrowed his costumes). There was a constant interchange of themes, rôles, and characters among all of these. Italian characters migrated to the Opéra and the private stages. Already by 1697 the Comédiens-Italiens had adapted considerably to the French theatre (scripts, acts, less improvisation). The fair troupes produced a blend of Italian all'improvviso with the French farce and chansonnier traditions. Theatre mixed with society as well: from 1713, the Opéra presented public masked balls that were immensely popular. This, one might add, was a carrying over to the city of the court tradition of opera-balls, where set pieces sung by performers alternated with general dancing: the wedding celebrations created by Monteverdi in Mantua in 1608 are a famous example, and similar manifestations occurred in the magnificent days of Versailles. The "democratization" of this tradition is undoubtedly the direct Parisian source of Les Plaisirs du bal (no. 51).

In the theatre Watteau's lifetime was a period of "digestion" rather than "creation," as Moureau puts it. Libretti were supplied indifferently by the same authors for any of the theatres, but across them all ran a pronounced emphasis on comedy, the vehicle of the modern spirit. By royal edict, the old-fashioned tragedies — moralizing and unpopular — had to alternate with comedies on the boards of the Comédie-Française. Modern taste preferred the plays of Dancourt and similar authors who — says Moureau — were sensitive to the slightest changes in society. He sees Mirimonde as essentially correct, remarking in Watteau a particular taste for the comedians of the fair and a somewhat ironic regard for the official French stage, just as the travelling companies mocked "the Romans" (their epithet for the established theatre). It is this spirit that animates the

Comédiens français (no. 70), a humorous picture whose exact meaning still escapes us but whose two main figures Moureau identifies from costume and declamatory style as heroic stock characters from conventional tragedy.

Moureau emphasizes again the "natural" roots of Watteau's theatrical scenes. Although we today have difficulty recognizing them, the conventions of the theatre were easily understood by his contemporaries. "Watteau does not paint the theatre; he is inspired by it." (p. 507) It is pointless, then, to look for portraits or identifiable scenes from real plays. Nor should we place much hope in ut pictura poesis as an explanatory tool: "Watteau's iconographic sources, even when they seem obvious, are not, in fact, what they seem, that is, illusions of illusions in the imagination of the painter." (p. 479) The only way to get a "reading" of a painting, then, is to rediscover the conventional associations of the individual character-types and to juxtapose them (much as the final meaning of a fête galante is the sum of its parts ... ). Moureau is able to do this quite convincingly for the Comédiens italiens (no. 71), an important but troublesome picture that Watteau painted in London.<sup>12</sup>

Rosenberg sums up the variegated interpretations it has received, then concludes that Watteau above all wanted to present us with a collection of portraits of his friends dressed up in theatre costumes, evocative of some vague metaphor of theatre and daily life. Though Watteau did sometimes work this way in earlier, smaller, casual pictures such as Coquettes qui pour voir galants (no. 29, Hermitage, not shown), the Comédiens italiens is obviously of a very different order of ambition. The large number of compositional studies done specially for it (cf. nos. 101-102 of the drawings) proves that this is no ordinary work. Moureau cuts through the problem quickly. The title was poorly chosen. Pierrot — par excellence a character of the fairs — is here being presented by Brighella (a classical rôle,

from the Opéra) and Folly, from the Comédiens-Italiens. This act confers a comic "royalty" on him as he is honored by the old and new theatres. Moureau gives essentially the same interpretation to Pierrot (no. 69). Crispin, a character of the Comédie-Française, mounted on a donkey, "the opposite of the heroic cavalier ... , presents the new king of comedy looking even stiffer than usual" in his "derisive and lonely reign." (p. 490)

Moureau explores the ramifications of the Cythera theme most revealingly. It was not something abstruse that Watteau stumbled across, but rather a commonly understood "place" in both literature (including the theatre) and actual practice. The two fed one another; "reality simulated fictions of the most refined sort."(p. 495) Cythera represented one aspect of gallantry as a way of life — the neo-Précieux movement and the "national mythology" going back to Honoré d'Urfé. Moureau gives an excellent account of the long background of pilgrimage, exile, and pastoral escapism (pp. 496-497). Courtly in essence, this set of attitudes was already desanctified and dying out — hence the double vein of parody and nostalgia concerning Cythera in the literature and theatre of Watteau's day. Cythera was "real" between 1710 and 1720; it was a name for private suburban retreats and pleasure-parties offering relaxation from the city (provided one could return whenever one wished). There is a literature of this, too — novels and so on — which came to be tied to the theme of departure. In Moureau's analysis, the voyage to Cythera was a gallant adventure, an extra-conjugal day-trip:

For now, insofar as our texts suggest it, the embarkation for Cythera, the sojourn on the Isle of Love, and the return were just so many different steps in an amorous escapade that involved the senses, without preoccupying the mind or the sensibilities.(pp. 500-501)

Thus a change of definition occurred in Watteau's lifetime, a cynical

substitution whereby to effect the voyage to Cythera meant to accomplish the sexual act itself — "perhaps the allegorization of a certain disdain for metaphysical realities," as Moureau obliquely puts it. Where does Watteau fit? Surely not at either of the two extremes.

The tradition of the pilgrimage to Cythera on the stage has often been discussed, but Moureau's is by far the best account. Watteau does not draw from Dancourt and the Comédie-Française but from the fairs and the Opéra where the theme of the embarkation flourished only very briefly. It was rare before the first full, scenographic treatment at the Opéra in Les Amours déguisés of 1713 (revived in 1714). It occurred a second time in the prologue to Arion, also in 1714, but was not again seen at the Opéra after that. The treatment there was purely mythological. Fuzelier, the author of Les Amours déguisés, simultaneously wrote the libretto for Les Pèlerins de Cythère, produced at the Foire St.-Laurent in the spring of 1713. The story is not "straight" mythology this time but parodied as a pleasure-trip down the Seine to Saint-Cloud. The ladies are disguised from their husbands as well as from their lovers for this pilgrimage to the land of conjugal infidelity, quick love affairs, and frivolous passions. A year later, at the Foire St.-Germain in 1714, Les Pèlerines de Cythère is already less cynical: free love leads to marriage. The third and last of the strolling players' cycle was Les Amours de Cythère performed at the Foire St.-Laurent in the autumn of 1715. According to Moureau this is the least parodic of them, culminating in a fête galante for the marriage of Harlequin. The theme ends here; there were no revivals.

The foregoing discussion has obvious implications for the interpretation of Watteau's morceau de réception. Though Moureau insists on the casual, impermanent nature of Cytherean encounters in the literature he

discusses, in fact the old strain of pastoral mythology lies beneath even the most parodic of the plays. And, it seems to me, the courtly ideals of fidelity and honorable love — even if mocked from time to time — are reaffirmed in the end much more often than not. Watteau is taking inspiration from the tradition of the heroic pastorate or opera-ballet, a "modern" form that developed on the stage of the Opéra beginning in 1695-1697 and which was very popular in his day. Moureau (p. 480) describes it as a sequence of entrées loosely tied together by a vague theme but with no controlling plot. Gallant in tone, often the pretext for exotic fantasies, it is characterized by "brief modulations of elementary passions." In its "sublime immobility of time" Moureau likens the opera-ballet to Watteau's fêtes galantes.

In the Pilgrimage to the Island of Cythera in the Louvre, and even more explicitly in the symbolically amplified version of it in Berlin, it is clear beyond any doubt that we are witnessing a progress toward love rather than a regression from it, a crescendo not a diminuendo.<sup>13</sup> Michael Levey is wrong about this. There is absolutely no indication of cynicism, no tongue-in-cheek punning however latent (and Watteau, as we have seen, was quite capable of utilising these if he wished). Thus it would be gross distortion of the pictures to impose on them a parodic overlay that — categorically — was outside Watteau's intent. He moves from the first setting aside of worldly concerns (the arms of Mars laid at the feet of Venus), to dalliance, courtship, and finally commitment to the voyage of love. In the next entrée Watteau brings his lovers to the gangplank of the nuptial bark, escorted by a swarm of mischievous, torch-bearing cupids. The nature of the voyage is left unstated, as always, but its pleasures as well as its perils are announced by the figureheads of the vessels — a siren in the original version and a sphinx in the other (which —

incidentally — brings out the theme of the voyage of life, through the riddle (Edipus answered about the ages of man). These couples are not returning from Cythera to the mainland, back to Paris from Saint-Cloud. Their destination, a place of warmth and fantasy, is anticipated by the marvellous landscape of the version in the Louvre.

Moureau's observations do have some implications for the chronology of the theatre scenes, despite Watteau's disinclination to depict plays directly. For example there is the curious Harlequin Emperor in the Moon (no. 1, Nantes) given to Gillot and/or Watteau. As Moureau points out (p. 524), there is a discrepancy between picture and play, since Columbine does not appear in the published text of that scene. Rosenberg and others associate the painting with the 1707 production, which of course fits well with the presumed dates of Watteau's apprenticeship with Gillot (about 1705-1708). But the play was revived in 1712 . . . . Another case is the lost picture known in Cochin's print entitled Pour garder l'honneur d'une belle, a composition that has always been dated very early because of its Gillotesque features. Moureau (p. 514) notes that it is of the period when Watteau was greatly influenced by Gillot. However, he elsewhere maintains that the picture is a precise representation of a moment in Act III, Scene 5 of Arlequin fille malgré lui, performed only once, at the Foire St.-Laurent in 1713 (pp. 487, 524). Concerning its presumed pendant, also lost, entitled by Cochin Belles n'écoutez rien — whose source he does not identify — Moureau remarks that it is of Watteau's first work, rather directly inspired by the Italian style (p. 513). The most suggestive of Moureau's associations of plays with pictures has to do with L'Ile de Cythère (no. 9, Frankfurt). Rosenberg and most others have dated the picture around 1709-1710, but a minority of scholars including Grasselli (under no. 22 of the drawing catalogue) prefers a date in the

vicinity of 1713. As we have seen, this later date coincides precisely with the first appearances of the embarkation theme at the fairs and the Opéra. How curious it is that all of Watteau's theatre scenes for which close matches have been found in actual plays cluster around 1713. And these would be his earliest essays in the genre.

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As an exhibit the drawings were a great success, stunningly beautiful, of high quality, uniform in condition and as realizations of artistic intent. This is, and always has been, the indisputably great Watteau. Grasselli made a "safe" selection, excluding doubt and controversy, which was the right approach to take. The oeuvre at present is far too large — for example, Grasselli maintains that the majority of the usually accepted arabesques and landscapes are not by Watteau — and the drawings she chose are part of a solid core to build upon. They were separated from the paintings, though, which made questions of purpose and significance hard to approach let alone to answer. One of Rosenberg's "Fourteen Questions" at the front of the catalogue has to do with the dichotomy between drawing and painting in Watteau's artistic activity, and it has still to be confronted — this is perhaps the most critical problem we face. It was certainly excusable, necessary even, for the drawings to be exhibited apart from the pictures: modern conservation practices allow works on paper to be exposed to light of much lower intensity than customary for paintings. (As an aside, why did the drawings appear so much more to their advantage in Washington than in Paris? Presumably the light level was no higher, but they were more visible, imposing no sense of strain to see them clearly as was the case in the Grand Palais. They were shown in several smaller galleries, less tightly spaced; there were fewer

visitors, hence more room, more air, less noise and shoving; and — most important, perhaps — the walls were white rather than light-absorbant, drawing-paper blue.) No exhibition could have put paintings and drawings back together as they must have cohabited in the artist's head, not even if they could have been shown physically side by side. Selection had to be severely limited. Too many works were unavailable. And Watteau imposed limitations by the very way he drew (often independently). The most regrettable shortcoming of the exhibition was thus the least remediable. Yet the drawing section of the catalogue sheds much light on Watteau's working methods, illuminating not just the drawings but the œuvre as a whole.

Grasselli's discussions of technique and style are accurate and insightful, even if her main contribution does not lie in this domain. She can give good descriptions of the process of making a drawing (e.g., no. 70, an ornamental design). Discussions of the first drawings in trois crayons are revealing: these begin as early as 1713, but merely as red chalk enhanced with black and white (nos. 21, 27). She is ever attentive to the uses to which the drawings were put. Although Watteau "often" made figure studies with no particular goal in mind (no. 78), this is far from being the rule (another of Grasselli's departures from custom). She includes examples of drawings done for specific pictures some of whose figures were nevertheless not used (no. 18). There are drawings, on the other hand, that were used only much later for a picture (no. 24). Sometimes even a sheet that could only have been casually made would find a subsequent use (no. 31). Watteau might take inspiration from an older drawing for a figure in a painting, but then work out the specifics in a new drawing (no. 36). And on occasion he would add a new figure to an older sheet of studies (no. 25). This is only a sample of her observations, just as the cata-

logue is only a sample of a much larger oeuvre that awaits thorough reinvestigation along similar lines. How far outmoded the standard catalogue of Parker and Mathey now appears! Grasselli's work is a fine new beginning. I would make two suggestions: no. 39 may not be by Watteau at all, but if it is, it belongs earlier than she puts it (cf. nos. 11 and 12). No. 74, on the other hand, looks later in date to me.

Chronology is the backbone of Grasselli's arguments, and the consequences of her ordering of Watteau's activity have repercussions for the problem of the painted oeuvre. In fact, it is my opinion that she shows us the way out of a long-standing muddle. She and Rosenberg discovered, somewhat to their amusement, that there are serious differences in their chronologies of the pictures. They seem to make light of it in the catalogue, but these are not just a few random differences of individual opinion, as one might at first take them to be. Grasselli's dating is quite systematic ... but one must go to the trouble of extracting its coherence from the separate entries, for she does not summarize it elsewhere. For his part Rosenberg makes his attitude fully explicit: Watteau's process of maturation is not linear; he desired to avoid the rational; hence his chronology presents "insoluble" problems (p. 243). Rosenberg's advocacy of this point of view is far too cavalier. He only grudgingly accepts to play the "chronology game" and when he does do, it is often with ill grace. Grasselli, on the contrary, persuasively builds a straightforward chronology based on two simple premises derived from first-hand study of the drawings: 1) Watteau made figure drawings for specific paintings more frequently than usually thought, and 2) he tended to use recent drawings for his paintings. Her convincing application of these principles in the individual entries demonstrates that she is right. Starting from several approximately datable pictures and from some drawings that can be dated

from circumstantial evidence, Grasselli creates a matrix of complementary coordinates. This permits her to place works on a temporal grid which is self-reinforcing and self-correcting due to Watteau's multiple uses of drawings (a single figure in more than one picture, or several figure drawings in a single picture). Healthy skepticism of received wisdom allows her to reject many traditional datings based only on speculation, so that she is able to knock apart the old assumptions and associations and to begin anew. The results are stunningly clear.

It will be necessary to spend some time to draw out the consequences of Grasselli's chronology. The analysis may be a bit tedious at first but the final product is worth the effort. Since neither she nor Rosenberg proposes a comprehensive chronology, what here follows is an approximate reconstruction for which I accept responsibility. I hope to show where Grasselli's thinking leads, and any distortions are unintentional. In the first place, it is surprising to discover that she dates ninety-one pictures, while Rosenberg dates only eighty-two, and that her dates are more firmly stated than his, on the whole (I am excluding the arabesque panels from this count). For one or two of the paintings I have been able to provide a "Rosenberg" date only by their relative position in the catalogue. In other cases I have had to take a "nearest" date, e.g. "after 1716" I have recorded as "1717." In all cases, whether proposed by Grasselli or Rosenberg, I have taken the mid-point of a spread. "1715-1717," e.g., becomes "1716." I have let two-year spreads stand: "1715-1716" remains as such, while "1715-1718" is recorded as "1716-1717."<sup>14</sup> We thus arrive at the following breakdown; where necessary I have credited a picture with a two-year span as one half in each of the years:

TABLE 1

<u>Dates</u>	<u>% of Paintings</u>	
	<u>Grasselli</u>	<u>Rosenberg</u>
1707-1709	4	8
1710-1712	11	16
1713-1715	23	27
1716-1718	51	41
1719-1721	<u>11</u>	<u>8</u>
	100 %	100 %

This table shows that, for Grasselli, Watteau's activity as a painter up to his provisional acceptance (agrément) into the Academy in 1712 must have been rather slight, much more so in any case than Rosenberg's chronology has it. And his production, slower to accelerate, would have peaked a bit later, about 1716-1717 (1715 for Rosenberg). It is interesting to draw a line between 1714 and 1715:

TABLE 2

	<u>Grasselli</u>	<u>Rosenberg</u>
% of pictures dated 1714 & before	24	40
% of pictures dated 1715 & after	<u>76</u>	<u>60</u>
	100 %	100 %

These figures are revealing enough, but some further reflection about how they were derived requires modifications that will exaggerate the difference of the two positions even more. To begin with Rosenberg: his dating of pictures is very closely tied to those selected for the exhibition (he gives dates for only eight other paintings). However, there is ample evidence that proportionately fewer of the early works survive than of the later ones, while Rosenberg's selection does not appear to be artificially skewed toward the early segment of the surviving œuvre. Therefore, my "Rosenberg" figure of forty percent of the œuvre as executed in 1714 or before is on the low side. It would have been higher had more early pictures survived, and had this been reflected in Rosenberg's selection for the show. Grasselli's figures, on the other hand, are influenced

by relation to surviving drawings. Only if we assume that Watteau drew much less from the figure in his beginnings than later, but that he nonetheless painted a considerable number of pictures in those years without the aid of drawings, would my "Grasselli" figure be too low: and all the evidence suggests that this is not so. On the contrary, Watteau's success as a figure draughts-<sup>man</sup> seems to have led him, slowly, into painting — not the other way round. Grasselli's selection fairly reflects the relative abundance, chronologically, of the surviving drawings. If we posit that significant numbers of early figure drawings have been lost without a trace, then a proportionately equal number of early paintings seems to have been lost as well. Thus the figures given in Table 2 require no correction for Grasselli's, but those of Rosenberg should be adjusted to approximately fifty percent 1714 and before, fifty percent 1715 and after, in order to take account of the biases of the sample. For Grasselli, then, fully three quarters of Watteau's output as a painter belongs to the last half dozen years of his activity, from the time he entered the circle of Pierre Crozat until his last illness and death. For Rosenberg, whose interpretation is similar in this respect to that of other specialists, fully half of Watteau's production comes prior to that date, that is, before his thirtieth year. Grasselli's chronology is innovative, bold, and provocative, yet it is founded much more on fact than on speculation. I propose now to illustrate it in general terms, by blocks of years, with Rosenberg's more traditional dating for comparison.

1708 and earlier. Both authors place Harlequin Emperor in the Moon (no. 1) in this period, accepting the possible relation to the 1707 performances, supported by the Gillot connection. Rosenberg has Défilé (no. 4, York) at this very early date ... but the exhibition proved that there is no reason to separate it from the other early military subjects

with which it is identical in style, around 1709-1710.

1709-1710. Rosenberg places La Diseuse d'aventure (no. 8) and the Woman Cleaning Copper (no. 7) in these years; Grasselli mentions neither. Rosenberg's dates seem acceptable to me. Both authors place three military pictures here: Retour de campagne (lost), Camp volant (no. 6), and Alte (no. 5), and to these I would add Défilé, which Grasselli does not mention (see preceding paragraph). Rosenberg sees Actors at a Fair (no. 10) as having been executed now. Grasselli would date it a little later, circa 1711, and I agree. Both note that this is Watteau's first such large spectacle with crowds of tiny figures. Finally, Rosenberg gives this quite early date for L'Ile de Cythère (no. 9). I believe him to be incorrect, and agree completely with Grasselli's date of 1713 (see below).

1711-1712. Grasselli believes that the Jullienne Seasons were executed about 1711. Rosenberg does not date them but notes that the figures in Spring (the only one to have reappeared so far) are by Watteau. As noted above, Grasselli has Actors at a Fair in this time (earlier for Rosenberg). Rosenberg places the next development of this type here: L'Accordée de village, La Mariée de village (no. 11), and The Marriage Contract (no. 21). Grasselli postpones these by from one to four years, and I concur. Grasselli has a fledgling fête galante in this period, La Promenade sur les remparts (lost?; not dated by Rosenberg). She also includes a developed fête galante, Les Agréments de l'été (private collection?; not dated by Rosenberg), which I believe to be much later, around 1716. Rosenberg places here the first state of The Embarrassing Proposal (no. 39), a canvas which would have been reworked in 1715-1716. Grasselli, though, dates the first version to circa 1715-1716 and the final version to 1717-1718, which seems much more likely: this is a full-blown fête galante which does not belong so early. Finally, there is agreement in situating some innovative theatre pieces at this time:

Les Jaloux (lost) and Pierrot content (no. 13) for both authors, Fêtes au dieu Pan (lost; not mentioned by Rosenberg), and Harlequin jaloux (lost; not dated by Grasselli). Rosenberg puts here L'Amour au théâtre français (no. 38) in its first version, assigning its final form to about 1716. For Grasselli the whole development of that work belongs, more reasonably, to 1713-1714.

1713-1714 (includes Rosenberg "1712-1713"). With the exceptions already noted the fête galante begins now for both authors: Gathering near the Fountain of Neptune (no. 22), The Country Ball (no. 24), and La Conversation (no. 23). I agree wholly with Grasselli's dating to these months of La Mariée de village and The Marriage Contract which are earlier for Rosenberg (see above). Grasselli does not date La Partie quarrée (no. 14), but Rosenberg situates it here, as the most advanced of the Italian comedy group begun in the previous period, which is convincing to me. Grasselli brings in some other theatre pieces now: L'Ile de Cythère (corroborated by Moureau's evidence from the stage, but much earlier for Rosenberg) and the closely similar Qu'ai-je fait assassins maudits (Moscow; not dated by Rosenberg), as well as the elaboration of L'Amour au théâtre français (see preceding paragraph). Rosenberg dates La Rêveuse (no. 26; not dated by Grasselli) to about 1713, and while I agree with him in relating it to Coquettes qui pour voir galants (no. 29; not dated by Grasselli), I would date both a little later, around 1715. Rosenberg also puts a group of what would be relatively precocious, true fête galante subjects in these years: L'Enchan-teur (no. 17) and L'Aventurière (no. 18), La Perspective (no. 25), and Le Plaisir pastoral (Chantilly), all of which Grasselli dates 1716 or later on the strong evidence of drawing style and practice. I agree with Grasselli's slightly later dating of two military subjects, Les Fatigues de la guerre (no. 15) and Les Délassements de la guerre (no. 16) which Rosenberg assigns

to 1712-1713. Rosenberg's implied date of about 1713-1714 for Diane au bain (no. 28) is contradicted by his own observations about its Venetian landscape background and by the maturity of style of the related drawing (no. 66); Grasselli's date of about 1716 must be correct, on the basis of comparison with other works in the exhibition.

1715 (includes "1714-1715" for Rosenberg and "1715-1716" for Grasselli). This is the pivot of Watteau's career, a crossroads where all of his interests meet, albeit briefly, and where the marvellous fermentation occurs that will ripen into his most original work. Here belongs the last great village spectacle, L'Accordée de village (much earlier for Rosenberg, but I am convinced by Grasselli's arguments). Here also is a second, coherent group of military subjects, separated from the first group by half a decade: Recrue allant joindre le régiment (cf. etching catalogue no. 7), Escorte d'équipages (lost), Les Fatigues de la guerre (no. 15), Les Délassements de la guerre (no. 16), and Départ de garnison (lost). Rosenberg dates the third and fourth of these to 1712-1713 and does not mention the others. There are two important Italian theatre pictures: Coquettes qui pour voir galants (no. 29; not dated by Grasselli) and Les Habits sont italiens (cf. etching catalogue no. 8; not dated by Rosenberg). Grasselli tentatively dates L'Amour au théâtre italien (no. 65) around this time, but Rosenberg's date of 1718 is certainly closer to the truth. Rosenberg places one landscape in 1715-1716 (no. 33) and another, similar work (no. 41) a couple of years later, though I believe it is as early as the first. Grasselli mentions neither of these but situates two lost landscapes which were engraved, L'Abreuvoir and Le Marais, in about 1715 (neither is dated by Rosenberg). As has long been recognized the Crozat Seasons are the centerpiece of this brief period, and some other allegorical/mythological works are associated with them, especially the Nymph and Satyr (no. 36; for Grasselli this extends

into 1716). Rosenberg adds the little Autumn (no. 34) and La Sainte Famille (no. 30), neither of which Grasselli dates. The pictures with erotic content begin now (but continue on afterwards): The Intimate Toilet (no. 37), La Marmotte (no. 32; slightly later for Rosenberg), and L'Indiscret (no. 31; only Rosenberg dates it). Finally, Grasselli dates one fête champêtre to 1715 or 1716 — La Contredanse (private collection?; not dated by Rosenberg). In my opinion the later date is preferable.

1716-1718. This is the core of Watteau and there is much greater agreement from now on. In fact, there has always been a kind of consensus here. Practically all of the developed, characteristic fêtes galantes were done in these years, with the exception of a few mentioned above and a few datable to the year in England, 1719-1720.<sup>15</sup> This is true whether the figures are few or many in number, large or small in scale. Both versions of Cythera (nos. 61-62) are here along with La Finette and L'Indifférent (nos. 58-59). The last of Watteau's mythological nudes, Diane au bain, was done about 1716 in Grasselli's dating (as mentioned above, I cannot accept Rosenberg's earlier date). Watteau's most famous and authoritative theatre pieces come now (it is important to note that they are few in number, thus never routine): Comédiens français (no. 70; not dated by Grasselli), L'Amour au théâtre italien (in Rosenberg's dating, preferable to Grasselli's), Sous un habit de Mezzetin (Wallace Collection), Arlequin, Pierrot et Scapin (private collection?; not dated by Rosenberg), and Pierrot (no. 69). Grasselli dates the last-named picture 1717-1719, and Rosenberg 1718-1719; I favor the latest possible date before the London trip, and therefore would place it in the following period, which seemingly would be acceptable to our authors as well. Then there are some odds and ends. The four small pictures of couples which I have speculated above were cut from arabesque panels (nos. 43, 44, 46, 57) are dated to these years by Rosenberg, though Grasselli does not

mention them. Rosenberg does not date The Remedy (Norton Simon) or L'Occupation selon l'âge (lost?), while Grasselli does not date the Judgment of Paris (no. 64), each assigned by the other to the period. I accept Grasselli's slightly earlier date for La Marmotte and her later one of about 1719-1720 for Heureux âge! âge d'or (no. 50), pictures that Rosenberg places in 1716 or 1717.

1719-1721. With the exception of a few English reruns of the fête galante theme all of the pictures in these last thirty months of Watteau's life are unique. It is best just to list them (those without initials or commentary following in parentheses are dated to this period by both authors). The fêtes galantes are L'Accord parfait (private collection; MMG), L'Amour paisible (lost but engraved by Baron), and La Troupe italienne en vacances (lost but engraved by Mercier, a hybrid between theatre and fête not accepted by Rosenberg: see discussion of The Artist's Dream above). The major works are Pierrot (see under 1716-1718); the Lady at her Toilet (Wallace Collection; MMG); Mezzetin (no. 49; 1718-1720 for Grasselli, but Rosenberg is evasive about the date, which would be earlier judging from its catalogue order); Iris c'est de bonne heure (no. 72); Heureux âge! âge d'or (MMG; earlier for Rosenberg); Rendez-vous de chasse (Wallace Collection; MMG); Comédiens italiens (no. 71); and L'Enseigne (no. 73). Rosenberg proposes a gamut of dates, early to late, for the Portrait of a Gentleman in the Louvre (no. 67), but seems to prefer the vicinity of 1720; Grasselli does not mention this troublesome sport.

So far discussion of chronology has been limited to the easel paintings and a few large, allegorical decorative canvases. Two other aspects of Watteau's activity that prepare the way, conceptually, for his figure pictures remain to be examined in this context: the panels of arabesque, and the drawings for fashion prints. Both of these are usually

situated very early in his career. Dacier and Vuaflart were the first to propose a date of no later than 1710 for the Figures de modes, etched by Watteau, then finished with the burin and published by Thomassin. Their reasons: Thomassin engraved a second set of Watteau costume studies under the title Figures françoises et comiques where the artist is qualified as "Peintre du Roy;" the Figures de modes do not include this title on the frontispiece; Watteau would have been eligible to employ it upon his agrément in the Academy in 1712; Thomassin was absent from Paris and living in Amsterdam between 1710 and 1713; therefore the Figures de modes were done before this time, and the second set of prints after his return. Nicole Parmantier accepts this argument (etching catalogue nos. 1-6); so does Grasselli (drawing catalogue no. 8) and, as far as I know, everybody else. However, I would propose that the evidence of style suggests that the drawings engraved as Figures de modes belong to the years 1712-1714 (cf. nos. 15-25 of the drawing catalogue), not 1710 or shortly before. I believe the prints must have been made around 1714-1715, after Thomassin's return; the appearance of the title "Peintre du Roy" on the Figures françoises et comiques probably indicates that they were made very soon after Watteau's réception into the Academy in 1717 (not his agrément in 1712). Watteau did not especially hold to his academic rights and dignities; his procrastination in submitting his reception piece would have made <sup>earlier</sup> use of the title embarrassing, <sup>and</sup> its presence here is probably a sign of its recent conferral. →

→ We might also note that of the ten paintings engraved late in Watteau's lifetime (two, at least, are dated 1719), published by Sirois, not one plate bears any mention of Watteau's academic affiliation.

As for the arabesque panels: Grasselli sees all of them as later in date than scholarly consensus would indicate. Rosenberg is typical of

the latter, dating the panels from the Hôtel de Nointel (nos. 2-3) to about 1707-1708. Grasselli dates these same panels to 1712 or later. The drawings of the arabesque Seasons, engraved by Gabriel Huquier, are contemporary (1712-1714). Those for The Birth of Venus and Autumn (nos. 40-41 of the drawing catalogue), also engraved by Huquier, are dated about 1715. Huquier engraved two further drawings in three prints, The Bower (no. 70) and The Temple of Diana (no. 71). These Grasselli dates to about 1716. She also very pointedly remarks that the extensive decorations for the Château de La Muette, now lost, were not necessarily done in 1709 or thereabouts (as many have assumed), when Watteau was presumably working for Audran, but quite possibly only in or after 1716 (as a few others have speculated), when the Regent purchased the property for his daughter. I might add that, if I am correct in identifying nos. 43, 44, 46, and 57 as having been cut from the centers of panels of grotesquerie, then they would have been painted around 1716-1718 (Rosenberg's dates are circa 1716 for The Timid Lover and The Singing Lesson, 1717 or perhaps 1718 for The Sulking Woman, and 1716-1718 for The Faux-Pas). Hence what has long been considered as a minor aspect of Watteau's youthful production, secondary if not altogether unworthy, an occupation he quickly and early dropped upon succeeding as a proper painter, needs to be reevaluated. He practiced ornamental decoration longer and later than has been too casually supposed, and undoubtedly he practiced it more seriously and more extensively than most have been willing to admit. Added to all that has been discussed above, this gives us a rather different Watteau than the one to whom we are accustomed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Is Rosenberg correct in stating that Watteau's development is not linear (and, therefore, the study of his chronology unrevealing)? On the contrary, his production makes sense as a sequence; this is not a scatter-shot sort of pattern. But the compression of much of his activity into a few years makes for a very short line, or rather, for several short, parallel segments representing his changing interests. A review of the foregoing discussion of dating should make this clear.

It now seems that there is no certain painting by Watteau as early as 1708 or before. Harlequin Emperor in the Moon must have been some sort of sign, a thing more than a work of art, and it cannot be compared to Watteau's true easel paintings. Then, too, it may be later than the likely circumstantial date of 1707, and it is probably a reworked Gillot. Coming to 1709-1710, we find the earliest surviving, approximately datable painting — Camp volant — and can confidently group it with some similar military subjects. These seem to be inspired by contemporary attitudes (rather than events), reinforced by his visit to Valenciennes and studies of actual soldiers from nature. There were not very many such pictures, but they caught the attention of a perspicacious few. Watteau's artistic personality, his modern values and modern approach, make their first appearance here. The Netherlandish genre scenes, so archaic by comparison, probably were done now, too (notably La Diseuse d'aventure). 1711-1712 is a time of gropings for Watteau. He hits upon a novel and significant approach with his drawings of figures in contemporary costumes ("modes"). He experiments with these in the context of a traditional Flemish village scene (Actors at a Fair) and, more successfully, through the transformation of Gillottesque theatre scenes into a new genre (Les Jaloux and its variants). Yet it is also a time of increasing recognition: agrément in the Academy as a painter, concurrently with what would soon become notoriety as a purveyor of decora-

tive arabesques.

1713-1714 witnesses an expansion of Watteau's contacts with artistic society, including the world of high fashion and of the theatre, as can be seen from the subjects of his drawings. He no longer appears as an outsider looking in, as he did to a large extent before. This is a period of both development and consolidation. The country genre takes a great stride forward with La Mariée de village. Watteau explores a new theatrical type, closer to the actual stage, with L'Ile de Cythère, Qu'ai-je fait assassins maudits, and L'Amour au théâtre français. He betrays his social ambitions and new connections with La Conversation, seemingly his only straightforward representation of a fashionable suburban pleasure-party. The proto-fête galante, more or less theatrical, appears with Gathering near the Fountain of Neptune and Country Ball. It should be noted that his pictures are still few in number — one or two or three of any type — and that Watteau did not yet see himself first of all as a painter. The arabesque panels must have taken a large part of his time; figure drawing was of consuming interest (appearance of the trois crayons technique, increasing mastery as a draughtsman); he showed no particular interest in the Academy, and no haste to join its ranks through delivery of his morceau de réception, now overdue.

1715 (continuing on into 1716, undoubtedly) is a culmination of the old and a point of departure for the new. Watteau sets aside the fête galante development, or more precisely, investigates elements that will soon lead him to it but does not yet find the thread. Watteau suddenly is at the center, in the circle of Pierre Crozat. The great, large nude drawings come now (nos. 60-65 of the drawing catalogue). He investigates the "high" art of the old masters and the French Academy (La Sainte Famille, Diane au bain, Nymph and Satyr, the Crozat Seasons), as discussed by Donald

Posner recently. He explores the theme of sexuality in a few suggestive, punning subjects such as La Marmotte and its lost pendant, La Fileuse. He finds an approach to eroticism that lies between mythology and everyday reality (The Intimate Toilet). There is an ending for one of his themes — the small-figure spectacle — with L'Accordée de village, and also a reprise with the second group of military subjects, centered upon two lost pictures, Recrue allant rejoindre le régiment and Escorte d'équipages. Watteau shows some interest in landscape. And his approach to the theatre changes, with subjects such as Coquettes qui pour voir galants and Les Habits sont italiens that represent, in all probability, portraits of his friends dressed up in theatrical costumes to no particular end. The period turns quickly into that of the fête galante, 1716-1718, months of intense activity completely dominated by the new theme whose high point comes with Pilgrimage to the Island of Cythera and admission to the Academy in 1717. His most original and ambitious arabesque panels must date from the beginning of these years (and they, too, belong to the fête galante), but this aspect of his production then ceases. The new vein of theatre develops in a handful of very original pictures (Comédiens français, L'Amour au théâtre italien, Sous un habit de Mezzetin ...) that will find a culmination in the final years.

1719-1721: the great event of Watteau's last years is the London trip which he made, according to Mariette, in hopes of gain, but which brought him little work and finally broke his health. It is preceded by several very large, very ambitious fête galante subjects which are expanded versions of others of his paintings: Country Entertainments and Les Charmes de la vie (both in the Wallace Collection), The Shepherds, L'Embarquement pour Cythère, and the unfinished Gallant Recreation (all three in Berlin). In the intriguing hypothesis of Marianne Roland Michel these are the last

of the fêtes galantes and would have been done for an unknown patron (probably Jullienne) who intended them to be resold. For equally unknown reasons Watteau withdrew from this scheme and fled to London instead, where he may have expected to find a ready, sympathetic, more generous, and perhaps more congenial audience. Most of the large-scale paintings were done just before, during, and just after the English sojourn: Pierrot, Rendez-vous de chasse, L'Enseigne as well as those mentioned above . . . . So were the great single-figure works (Pierrot again, Mezzetin, Lady at her Toilet). Here, too, the subjects of childhood (Heureux âge! âge d'or and Iris c'est de bonne heure). It is a time of synthesis, as Watteau makes his definitive statements in the theatrical vein with Pierrot (yet again) and Comédiens italiens. And above all else it is the time of L'Enseigne which, for Watteau himself — his most demanding critic — was a satisfactory if not a perfect realization of his intent.

The foregoing survey gives a qualitative idea of Watteau's development as a painter which it is extremely useful to join to a quantitative approximation, based on Grasselli's chronology. To accomplish this we need some idea of the magnitude of his œuvre. Exclusive of the arabesques, but including the lost paintings, an estimate of about two hundred fifty works is surely reasonable — if anything, this would err toward the high end. Two hundred, on the other hand, is a draconian estimate that ought to satisfy the most skeptical critic. Let us adopt a middle position, and assume an œuvre of about two hundred twenty-five pictures. Applying the percentages derived from Grasselli in Table 1, we obtain the following breakdown:

TABLE 3

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Number of Paintings</u>	<u>Paintings per year</u>
1707-1709	9	3
1710-1712	25	8
1713-1715	52	17
1716-1718	115	38
1719-1721 (2-1/2 yrs.)	25	10

These figures fly in the face of most modern scholarship, which has attempted to push Watteau's career further and further back, assuming a greater evenness in his productivity and assuming, also, that he was unusually precocious (although the old biographers contradict it). And yet, they are figures that are completely within the norms for painters in Paris at that time. An excellent point of comparison is furnished by the careers of Oudry (1686-1755) and Chardin (1699-1779), both of which have been thoroughly restudied recently. These artists, like Watteau, came out of a "popular," Pont Notre-Dame background, with roots in the Flemish artisanat, though all three aspired to (and eventually achieved) membership in the prestigious Royal Academy. In all three cases there is an unproductive period of apprenticeship with established artists: Watteau with Gillot and Audran, about 1705-1709; Oudry with Largillierre, about 1707-1711 (he was exactly two years younger than Watteau); and Chardin with Cazes and Noël-Nicolas Coypel, for how long it is not known, but probably just prior to and at the time of his admission to the maîtrise of Saint-Luc in 1724. In all three cases there is evidence that each artist was working on his own, and beginning to make a living at painting, at age twenty-six: Watteau in 1710, Oudry in 1712, and Chardin in 1725. Membership in the Academy clusters around age thirty: Watteau agrée at twenty-eight and reçu thirty-three, Oudry at thirty-one and thirty-three, and Chardin at age twenty-nine, simultaneously agrée and reçu. It is only at this time that

Oudry and Chardin enter upon a mature level of productivity, and there is no compelling reason to believe that Watteau was any different from his colleagues. To accept this in no way detracts from his originality, his merit, or his artistic personality.

After having undergone the customary apprenticeship up through his twenty-fifth year, during which he doubtless produced a few pictures (all but unknown today), Watteau from about 1710 to 1715 was a diligent, versatile, and talented young man who must have earned his living as a "decorator" in the widest possible sense of the word, increasingly less straightened in his circumstances but never truly comfortable. Easel pictures gradually became more frequent and more successful but they were never numerous, and as a consequence his painting style evolved little at first. He existed at the circumference of fashionable circles, one of dozens of modish furnishers (tailors, craftsmen and merchants of objets de luxe), designers and artisans of painted, carved, moulded, and engraved ornament for coaches, walls of rooms, furniture, and textiles. Watteau also moved in the parallel world of actors, musicians, dancers, and no doubt of writers and minor intellectuals as well. Due to a coincidence which may never be elucidated, he both passively got and actively made his "break," catching the spirit of the new libertine milieu which he understood and put into images like no other artist of his time, while simultaneously catching the eye of persons of standing on the other side of the social line. By a stroke of fortune he crossed this line in the vicinity of 1715 and by the same stroke, from a purveyor of fashionable imagery and décor he became a creator of high taste. The dividing line falls precisely between his two groups of original etchings: the little Figures de modes published, probably, in 1714-1715, and his two large-plate works of about 1715-1716 — Recrue allant joindre le régiment and Les Habits sont italiens — after two

recently completed, highly original and "modern" paintings. Watteau moves from simple modes to larger meaning through cultural context. His change in subject matter and orientation can only be explained through a change in his social milieu, a study newly begun by François Moureau. Watteau's energy and the scope of his ambition are revealed in the varied production of the first year of these new circumstances (conventionally, "1715"): the mythologies, the second group of military subjects (why return to these now, at the very moment of the death of Louis XIV, if not for their evocation of the new libertine spirit and as a result of specific demand?), the new theatre pieces, and the brief experimentation with suggestive depictions. From these springs his major contribution, the fête galante, of which he produces a hundred permutations and combinations in two or three years of furious activity. Then, about 1718-1719, come disenchantment with his lot and dissatisfaction with himself. Watteau changes gears, paints less, moves about, and creates a series of great masterpieces, each more original than the one before, in the two or three years remaining to him. This is the portrait of the "new" Watteau, the result of the revisions of his tricentenary show.

Grasselli, Rosenberg, and Moureau are not the only contributors to this renewal. The two recent books mentioned above are also extremely valuable, if not always for their conclusions, most certainly for the directions they make us look. Donald Posner dismantles the old masquerade by which Watteau could be identified with the narrator of Nerval's Sylvie — the misplaced Romantic, an outcast by his own choice in a present that had become the illusion of an unattainable past — and gives us the premises for seeing Watteau as a real and living man. Marianne Roland Michel deemphasizes another myth, that of Watteau the extra-social genius, by tying him to the world of commerce and collecting, restoring to him his

material ambitions, not just "artistic" ones. But the key to all of this, it seems to me, is Grasselli's new chronology. It was a misjudgment, now rectified to a considerable extent, to want to spread Watteau's development all the way back to his twentieth year, analogous to that of a prodigy like Rembrandt. On the contrary, Watteau's whole development encompasses no more than a dozen years. To hold with the same example, if we knew Rembrandt only from the Anatomy Lesson to the Night Watch (a similar number of years), would we have difficulties in following his development? Would we be troubled by diversity in scale, subject, manner, and spirit, to the point that we would condescendingly conclude that no inner logic animates Rembrandt's development, no artistic probity, no vital force? I think not; no more should we do for Watteau. Only if we distort our perceptions by forcing them to conform to yet another misbegotten Romantic belief — only if we accept that chronology is a cold, impersonal, objective cage constructed by historians to imprison the deadened souls of artists — does the problem arise. Chronology is not something artificial, nor is it artificial. It is quite simply the landscape  $\Lambda$  through which our artist moves, impelled by human motivations rather than rational calculations, a sequence of living encounters with ideas and happenings of his own day as he  $\Lambda$  responds to them naturally. Watteau cannot be reconstructed as a series of mechanical reactions to the stimuli of "artistic influences," except in a very limited and not very informative way. Categories such as "Flemish realism" or "academic history painting," though he was certainly aware of such distinctions, never seem to operate successfully when applied to Watteau, if by success we mean that they explain what makes him tick. Instead, to understand him, we must enter his own landscape to rediscover his subjective experiential ordering of  $\Lambda$ "facts."

The authors of the catalogue provide so many clues for this activity!

One of the most telling is the citation by Rosenberg of Vivant Denon:  
Pilgrimage to the Island of Cythera has all of "the profundity and philosophy of one of Poussin's compositions." Denon quite accurately saw why: as in a masterwork by Poussin, everything in the picture — gesture, expression, composition, atmosphere, light, landscape — speaks to its theme, in Watteau's case, the power and universality of human love. Watteau is not the anti-Poussin, a frivolous worldling. In his way he is just as serious. The two work to the same end, but their means are opposite. Watteau begins with nature in the particular, his figure drawings, and by combining them — usually without the aid of compositional studies — he constructs a universal case from a set of momentary observations. Poussin comes at it from the other side, ordering his pictures at the abstract level through compositional drawings, then descending to the concrete without consulting nature to create a present case on the premise of eternity. One can observe Watteau's approach by studying the evolution of his figure drawings, stiff and less expressive at first, but always based on nature scrutinized, increasing in their mastery until, in the latest of them, he attains the ability to capture natural declamatory gestures through fresh observation rather than through repetition of the old rhetorical conventions. Chronology, milieu, interpretation . . . . As we begin to know what to look for and where <sup>and how</sup> to look, we begin to be able to behold the countenance of Watteau.

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## NOTES

1. Watteau 1684-1721; exhibition held in Washington (National Gallery of Art), Paris (Galeries nationales du Grand Palais), and Berlin (Schloss Charlottenburg), 1984-1985. Catalogues in separate English, French, and German editions. My citations are from the English-language catalogue (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1984). Five of the seventy-three paintings in the catalogue — four from Leningrad (nos. 15, 16, 29, 33) and one from Berlin (no. 40) were not finally exhibited. Otherwise all of the paintings were shown in Paris, and only a smaller selection (with nothing new added) at the other two locations. A total of ninety-five drawings was on view in Washington, including twenty-two that could be seen only there and a further eleven also shown in Paris but not in Berlin (sixty-two drawings were lent to all three stops). Twenty-two drawings were displayed in Paris alone, fifteen solely in Berlin, and twelve in both of these cities but not in Washington. I did not see the Berlin version of the show, where a few drawings were added hors catalogue. The American edition of the catalogue contains an extra number (75a) which does not appear in the French edition due to the severance of diplomatic relations between France and the Cleveland Museum of Art.
2. Donald Posner, Antoine Watteau (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984); and Marianne Roland Michel, Watteau un artiste au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris: Flammarion, 1984).
3. Who simultaneously published a very valuable collection of the Vies anciennes de Watteau, textes réunis et présentés par Pierre Rosenberg (Paris: Hermann, 1984), which replaces the annotated edition of 1921 by Champion.
4. In this review I have given the titles of Watteau's paintings in the original French (spelling modernized), directly from the Jullienne engravings. If a picture was not engraved there, I give its customary

English title.

5. I have one small correction concerning Rosenberg's interpretation of Alte: the text in the background is that of a vivandier open for business, and the wreath hung out is a sign that wine and ale are being served; it is part of the realism of the scene, not an allegory of victory. See Norma Weston Betten, "The Military Paintings of Antoine Watteau," M. A. thesis, University of Washington, 1974, p. 34.
6. Particularly by Donald Posner in the work cited above, pp. 26-31, 99-107; and his earlier study Watteau, A Lady at her Toilet (London: Allen Lane, 1973).
7. Posner gives a sensitive analysis of the solitary spectator in Watteau's pictures, echoed by Rosenberg on some occasions (Posner, Antoine Watteau, pp. 173-176).
8. See my review of Rosenberg's exhibition catalogue of Chardin (1979), in Eighteenth-Century Studies, XIII (1979-1980), pp. 313-331.
9. While it has nothing to do with the gnocchi festival in Verona on the last Friday in Carnival — the source of the peculiar type of Punchinello in the works of the Tiepolo family — Watteau's Pierrot, and that of the Italian comedy in France, comes from a tradition of travesty in which irreverent associations with conventional Christian stories, doctrines, and observances commonly occur. There are several such allusions in Domenico Tiepolo's Divertimento per li Regazzi drawings begun in 1797. As George Knox cogently remarks, in these famous drawings "Punchinello is Everyman," a remark that should be extended to Pierrot and which, of course, allows for — justifies, even — Dora Panofsky's interpretation. On the subject in the Tiepolo family, see most recently two articles by George Knox:

"Domenico Tiepolo's Punchinello Drawings: Satire, or Labor of Love?," in Satire in the Eighteenth Century, ed. John Browning (New York: Garland, 1982), pp. 124-146; and "The Punchinello Drawings of Giambattista Tiepolo," Interpretazioni veneziane (1984), pp. 439-446.

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10. A already well-known example is offered by the much smaller picture now in Edinburgh, engraved for the Recueil Jullienne as Le Dénicheur de moineaux. L'Escarpolette in Helsinki (absent from the show; I have seen it only once, in 1966 in the museum) is also cut from an arabesque panel, but of a somewhat different type, larger, with a prominent white ground (though some believe it to be an old copy).
11. Colloque international Antoine Watteau, Paris, Grand Palais, 29-31 October 1984. The Actes are scheduled for publication in 1986.
12. A restoration report for the picture is published in the catalogue, and although it looks much more convincing since cleaning than it ever has before, I think there is still room for doubt as to whether this might not be a very old, very fine copy. We are learning every day just how formidable were Watteau's imitators in England.
13. Of all the numerous post-Levey interpretations it seems to me that that of Gérard Le Coat comes closest to the truth: "Le Pèlerinage à l'isle de Cithère: un sujet 'aussi galant qu'allégorique,'" RACAR, II no. 2 (1975), pp. 9-23.
14. My method was to prepare a card for every picture, with any indications of dating by either author exactly noted. I then reduced the dates to a single year or a two-year span, as described. The process was not as simple as it sounds, and the results are far from exact, but they are useful in the aggregate.

15. Always with the same exceptions, Rosenberg dates all of the fêtes galantes in the catalogue to 1716-1718, as does Grasselli (except for nos. 40, 42, and 47 which she does not date at all). Both place two pictures not in the show in these years: Les Charmes de la vie (Wallace Collection) and Fêtes vénitiennes (Edinburgh). Rosenberg dates two lost, engraved paintings, which are not dated by Grasselli, to 1716-1718: Bon voyage and Le Passetemps. And Grasselli puts a whole list of fêtes galantes, not dated by Rosenberg, in the same period: Assemblée galante (lost), Le Bal champêtre (lost?), Le Bosquet de Bacchus (lost), La Casacade (private collection), Les Champs élysées (Wallace Collection), Le Concert champêtre (lost?), Le Conteur (private collection), Country Entertainments (Wallace Collection), La Gamme d'amour (London, National Gallery), Gathering in the Open Air (Dresden), Pleasures of Love (Dresden), Pour nous prouver que cette belle (Wallace Collection), and Voulez-vous triompher des belles (Wallace Collection).