Antoine Watteau's *pasticci*

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The Embarkation from Cythera?

In his article published in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1961, Michael Levey, director of the National Gallery in London from 1973 to 1985 and acclaimed connoisseur of 18th-century French art, offered nothing less than a new interpretation of a key painting of the 18th century.[1] His starting point is a philological problem. With much hesitation and only after having been prompted by the Academy, Antoine Watteau submitted his reception piece in 1717 (Figure 1). The report recorded the following title: *Le pelérinage à lisle de Citere*. For the moment we will put aside the question of the title's translation, as it would lead straight to the problem which we will only approach gradually.

Figure 1: Antoine Watteau, Le pèlerinage à l'isle de Cythère*, 1717, Oil on canvas, Paris, Musée du Louvre.*

1 Levey, 1961.

Firstly, a summary description: A young cavalier is kneeling in front of a young seated woman in the group of figures closest to the beholder. He is gesturing lively with his hand and is leaning towards her, certainly to whisper words of love. She remains reserved, only the inclination of her head reveals that she is listening to her admirer's words. However, this does not go quickly enough for the putto huddling by her feet. Impatiently, he is tugging her dress. The couple further to the left is about to leave. He has stood up and is offering his lady both hands to assist her with getting up. The woman from the next couple is looking back to this little scene, while her cavalier is putting his arm around her waist and is presumably urging her to move on. The hill slopes behind the couple. At the foot of the hill there are two couples in rural costume tightly crouched together and taken up in an animated conversation. Then again, a fashionably dressed man, who is turning around to his companion dressed in peasant costume. She is grabbing his arm lovingly, although not in a very gracious manner. To ensure that both find their way, a putto is flying ahead keeping the cavalier's cane and pointing towards the left with his other hand. In the left-hand corner a few couples are already close to their destination, a golden ship. A cavalier embraces his lady, probably to help her embark the ship. The last couple on the left-hand side is wholly in consent. He is bending his upper body in an affected pose towards her. She has linked her arm with his and is looking at him affectionately. On the ship two lightly dressed rowers greet the arriving couples warmly. Above, a group of putti is flying: one is holding an arrow, another a bow, and another a burning torch.

Figure 2: Antoine Watteau, L'Embarquement pour Cythère*, 1719/20, Oil on canvas, Berlin, Schloß Charlottenburg.*

A few years later, in the penultimate or last year before his early death, Watteau painted a second version of his masterpiece, which was bought by Frederick the Great, an admirer of Watteau's art (Figure 2). The application of the paint is less free, the contours more precise, the modelling more plastic; the couple on the bottom right is a new addition. The garden sculpture, which was a herm of Venus in the older version from 1717, became a full statue of Venus in the version in Berlin. Despite these changes, the Berlin version is about the same as the Paris version. But what is going on?

A historical title for the later version was handed down as well. Jean de Jullienne was a friend of Watteau's and he marketed Watteau after his death. The engravings published after 1735 under the title *L'Œuvre d'Antoine Watteau* reproduced his paintings while at the same time serving as a republication of Watteau's print sets. This publication has the character of an illustrated *catalogue raisonn*é. However, it is not a complete one. A few of Watteau's most important works are missing, such as the first version of *The Embarkation for Cythera* in the Louvre or the great *Pierrot*. This might in part be because Jullienne could not provide the necessary original for each engraving; or perhaps because he preferred to reproduce paintings as prints which were in his possession and which he could then sell on, aided by the publicity of this *catalogue raisonné*. For art historians Jullienne's album with engravings after Watteau's paintings is a fluke. A large number of lost paintings or decoration was preserved in those prints. Furthermore, Jullienne's collection of prints is a helpful tool for the attribution of paintings.

Jullienne's second publication with reproductions of Watteau's paintings and decorations is useful in another way as well. The engravings are reproduced with a caption. There is no evidence that Watteau gave his paintings titles. The picture titles used today were only invented after Watteau's death by Jullienne or by *littérateurs* commissioned by Jullienne. If we consider the titles offered by the engravings as what they are (usually, they are the beginning of a picture-poem), that is valuable source of contemporary interpretation, not necessary the same as the artist's. As they have the advantage of being contemporary, then we should at least gratefully accept them as a guideline, albeit not necessarily as a compulsory template of interpretation. That is particularly true if they were published by a friend of Watteau's.

In Jullienne's *L'Œuvre d'Antoine Watteau* Watteau's painting in Berlin was given the title *L'Embarquement pour Cythère* (*Embarkation to Cythera*). Tardieu's engraving was made in 1733 (Figure 3). The title recorded in the Academy's protocol from 1717 is older: *Le pelérinage à lisle de Citere.* At this point we cannot avoid the problem of its translation any longer. The preposition "à" is ambiguous. It can mean "to", as well as "in" or "at". Therefore, the same title can be translated as "Pilgrimage to Cythera", which corresponds to the title of the engraving from 1733. However, grammatically equally correct would be the translation "Pilgrimage on Cythera". In his famous article from 1961, Michael Levey could almost convince all experts with this second translation.

Figure 3: Nicolas-Henri Tardieu, d'après: Antoine Watteau, L'Embarquement pour Cythère*, Engraving, in: Jean de Jullienne,* L'Œuvre d'Antoine Watteau *[…], vol. I, Paris 1735.*

The herm of Venus is decorated with the flowers of love, red roses. Statues or herms of Venus are positioned at places where the Goddess is worshipped. The place of worship of the Goddess of Love was on the island of Cythera. Therefore, we are already on Cythera – Levey's discovery. According to Levey the couples are not leaving for the island of love, but they are about to leave it.[2] The condition of Watteau's painting prior to conservation and the traditionally assumed melancholic connotation of Watteau's art supported Levey's hypothesis. Based on the darkened varnish, Levey thought it is dawn in Cythera. Time to go home.

Challenged by Levey's interpretation, Hermann Bauer had been arguing for a long time prior to the painting's restoration that the diffuse light in the painting in the Louvre was an obvious sign of the Poetic, Idyllic and the Enchanted etc. and could not be defined as a particular time of day.[3] The restoration chased the shadows of dawn away for good. Still, the problem that worried Levey, remains unsolved. Ultimately, the pilgrims are moving to the left towards the ship, therefore they are moving away from Venus. Hermann Bauer's solution to the problem: the pilgrimage to Cythera is an allegory, an

2 Levey, 1961, p. 181.

3 Bauer, 1980, p. 26.

allegory for the states of courtship. Watteau did not tell the story of a pilgrimage, but he visualized the persuasion to love.

Watteau did not leave anything un-attempted to emphasize that the departure is not a literal one and that the ship is only a metaphorical vehicle. The ship is golden, the rowers are not human, but delegates of the Goddess. Also, when one starts realizing that the ship is formed like a magnificent Baroque bed, first pointed out by Mirimonde,[4] with a shell motif and some kind of red bed baldachin, then one does not want to see the painting as soberly as Levey did. Where could the pilgrims be heading to anyway? The foggy air blocks any view of a concrete destination. The figures are not only on an island iconographically. The painting itself is island-like. We do not have an entry-point and the painting does not have any exit. The way from the first flirt to the fulfilment of the desire for love dominates its internal spatiality and temporality. This way is embedded in the allegory of Cythera itself; aesthetically and erotically it is out of question whether the couples actually wanted to go somewhere else, or if that was it.

Hermann Bauer's insight that Watteau is telling the story of the persuasion to love through couples in different situations was not entirely new. Already Auguste Rodin associated the painting with a "longue action", the states and successes of courtship depicted in different phases of action like a film strip. The sitting and kneeling, standing up and helping up, moving forward, looking backwards, and walking together peacefully would represent different stages of the successful persuasion to love – a foreshadowing of an amorous future for the first couple to the right.[5]

Auguste Rodin and Hermann Bauer understood that Watteau's narrative is an improper one, a sequence of different stages of the persuasion to love. Despite knowing that all the couples symbolize a happy couple's life, what keeps the couples visually connected and what prevents them from falling apart into disconnected groups?[6] Recognized by Hélène Adhémar and Donald Posner as an important precursor to preposition for Watteau's *Fêtes galantes*, a comparison with an engraving by Bernard Picart – a depiction of a concert in a park – will offer helpful insights (Figure 4).[7] The location is more concrete in Picart's work than in Watteau's 'Embarkations', however, the various couples are much more isolated: the left couple with the urging cavalier and the reserved woman, the couple reading together on the right next to them, the concert in the center of the picture and the two musicians observed by a person at rest are disconnected and isolated groups in the composition. It is completely different to the musical rhythm described by Vinçon, which the figures in the *Embarkation to Cythera* adhere to and which not only ensures the formal, but also the atmospheric unity.[8]

4 Mirimonde, 1962, p. 18.

5 Rodin, 1912, pp. 103f. In this sense Manuela Vergossen described the narrative structure of the *Embarkation to Cythera* as a "love story that is in a constant metamorphosis" ("Liebesgeschichte, die sich in einer stetigen Metamorphose befindet"). Vergoossen, 2005, p. 89.

6 Rodin, 1912, pp. 103ff.

7 Adhémar, 1950, p. 106; Posner, 1984, p. 124.

8 Vinçon, 1996.

Figure 4: Bernard Picart, Concert dans un parc*, 1709, Engraving, Versailles, Musée de Versailles.*

As mentioned above, the title *Le pelérinage à lisle de Citere* was recorded in the minutes of the Academy by a secretary on 28 August 1717:

> "Sieur Antoine Watteau, painter from Valenciennes, accepted on 30 July one-thousand-seven hundred-twelve, brought the mentioned painting, that had been commissioned from him and that depicts *le pelérinage à lisle de Citere.* The Academy accepted the mentioned sieur Vatteau as an Academician, after it voted in the usual way."[9]

Strangely enough, the title of the painting "le pelérinage à lisle de Citere" was crossed out in the protocol afterwards and substituted with the words "une feste galante". The common explanation for the correction is that the Academicians struggled to categorize Watteau's painting within the known genres of painting and therefore had to create a genre only for Watteau. But there is strategy behind this correction, one that was favorable not only for Watteau.

Which category should one put Watteau's academic reception piece in? The painting is of a comparatively large format, which in itself is already ambitious. It shows multiple figures and those figures seem to be embedded in a narrative. This accords with the defi-

9 "Le sieur Antoine Watteau peintre de Valenciennes après avoir été agrée le trente juillet mil sept cent douze a fait apporter led(it) tableau qui luy avoit été ordonné representant le pelérinage à lisle de Citere. L'Académie après avoir pris les suffrages à la manière accoutumée elle a receu ledit sieur Vatteau académicien." Cited after Morgan Grasselli/ Rosenberg, 1984, p. 25.

nition of history painting. It can be assumed that Watteau was also aspiring to the dignity of a history painter and that the title *Le pelérinage à lisle de Citere* reflects the preliminary acceptance of the painting as a history painting. With the change to "a galant feast", a generically unspecific description, the door to the dignity of professorship which was connected to the title of the history painter, was closed.[10]

We have a tendency to side with the painter, but we should be careful with making a hasty judgement of an institution such as the French art academy. Did the academicians not have justified reasons to refuse Watteau the title of history painter? A history painting is, according to academic art doctrine, first and foremost a painting that shows a significant episode in the lives of significant people. The narrative has to adhere to three rules, which were also dictated in French theater: the action has to be unitary – targeted at one destination; the location has to be unitary and the action also has to be unitary in terms of time. Bearing these rules in mind, it is understandable that the Academy had problems with Watteau's picture.

Is it a unified narrative? Does the painting not crumble into variants of the persuasion to love, like already observed by Rodin? Is there a temporal unity, or is Rodin also right in this regard, when he sees it as a "longue action", hence the unfolding of the galant approaches in different time phases. And where is the spatial unity, if the location became a "non-location", the literal "Utopos" of the earthly paradise?

Count Caylus made the following critical remark in his memoirs of Watteau:

> "Despite a few pictures, such as *The Bride* or *The Wedding in the Village*, *The Ball*, *The Shop Sign* he painted for Gersaint, *The Embarkation to Cythera*, which he painted as a reception piece for our Academy and which he repeated, his compositions do not have an object ("objet"). They never express the struggle of a passion and are therefore robbed of the most piquant parts of painting: I mean the narrative."[11]

The "objet" for Caylus means the destination of the plot.[12] From this point of view the majority of Watteau's paintings do not have an object and therefore no narrative either. However, Caylus excluded some of Watteau's paintings from this critique, amongst them *The Embarkation to Cythera*. The committee for the reception of new academicians anticipated Caylus' critique and did not even exclude Watteau's *Embarkation* like Caylus did.

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10 Kirchner, 2005, pp. 107f., 111.

11 "[…] à la réserve de quelques-uns des ses tableaux tels que l'Accordée ou la Noce de village, le Bal, l'Einseigne faite pour le sieur Gersaint, l'Embarquement de Cythère qu'il a peint pour sa réception dans votre Académie et qu'il a répétée, ses compositions n'ont aucun objet. Elles n'expriment le concours d'aucune passion et sont, par conséquent, dépourvues d'une des plus piquantes parties de la peinture, je veux dire l'action." Caylus, 1984, pp. 79f.

12 Vidal, 1992, pp. 108f.; Michel, 2008, p. 70.

‘Contact tension’

The Academy was right, but we have to emphasize that Watteau was right artistically. These disruptions of the narrative of a history painting enabled Watteau to visualize a metaphor – he could tell a story without having to connect the figures in a traditional narrative.

Characteristic for Watteau’s artistic method as a whole is this paradoxical way of connecting figures and groups of figures. Some sheets in his *œuvre* as a draughtsman are preparatory for his compositions.[13] A free compositional study for the *Feast of Love* in Dresden is extant, executed in red and black chalk (Figure 5). There are three extant studies for the composition of the *The Italian Comedians* probably painted in 1720: the study in the Musée Jacquemart-André is loosely connected to the finished painting. The red chalk drawing in the British Museum in London is closer to the final composition. With a study from a private collection in New York (Figure 6) the outlines of the composition are set, although there was going to be a few changes to the figures.

Figure 5: Antoine Watteau, Plaisirs d’amour*, c. 1717, Drawing, Chicago, Art Institute.*

13 Parker, 1931, pp. 10f.; Vogtherr, 2016, pp. 58f., 61.

Figure 6: Antoine Watteau, Comédiens italiens*, c. 1719, Drawing, New York, Collection Laughin.*

So, there are preparatory studies for compositions in Watteau's paintings, but they are strikingly few. Some were probably lost – however, considering the amount of Watteau's compositional studies in proportion to his other extant drawings, they constitute less than one percent. On this basis, it can certainly be assumed that originally his compositional studies constituted only a small part of his *œuvre* as a draughtsman. Usually, artists prepared a painting by deciding on its overall composition before they started making studies and sketches. Watteau did not follow this common procedure in most cases.

Count Caylus, a close friend of Watteau's, had to distance himself from his deceased friend as he was a pioneer of classicism and therefore criticizes Watteau in his biography. Because of this he is a valuable source for us. Emphasizing how Watteau did not use compositional studies very often, he reports on the painter's usual practice: "I said that he usually drew without a particular purpose, because he never made the simplest sketch or a preparatory drawing for one of his paintings." As observed above, Caylus's remark was incorrect, but the fact that Caylus, who knew Watteau's work very well, generalized to that degree confirms how very rarely Watteau made preparatory studies for his paintings, unlike other artists. What did he do then?

> "It was his habit to make his studies in a little bound book, so that he always had a great number on hand. […] When he felt inclined to paint a picture, he would return to this collection. He chose the figures that he liked the best in the moment. Based on those he created his groups, often connected to a landscape in the background, which he had drafted or sketched. Only on a few occasions he did it differently. In this kind

> of composition, which is surely not worth imitating, lies the reason for the monotony of his paintings, which Watteau can be criticised for; besides that he repeated the same figure very often without realizing – either because he liked it or because he came across it first while searching."[14]

The quote above was taken from a speech on Watteau's life given by Count Caylus on 3 February 1748 at the Academy. Strong anti-rococo tendencies were on the rise in 1748, so both the date and the location, the Academy, certainly contributed to Caylus's critique, but the quote is a valuable record all the same. Watteau usually drew studies of figures, without having a particular painting in mind. He went back to these studies when he was planning on painting a picture and would put them together in a composition only then. A few examples of his artistic practice are representative for many others.

The sketches on a sheet in the Petit Palais in Paris were made using three different types of chalk – typical for Watteau's late style (Figure 7). The sheet is covered with several unrelated studies. In the top left corner Watteau drew a cavalier at rest. Below, a bare arm with a cloth is visible. In the lower center Watteau studied wine leaves in red and white chalk. On the right he added a seated man, who could be a gardener based on his clothes. We encounter the resting cavalier in *The Enchanted Island* (Figure 8). The painter placed him in the central axis of the picture wearing a green costume with a red tailcoat which has slipped from his shoulder. A musician is playing the flute in a painting in Angers titled *The Expected Explanation* (Figure 9). As is common for Watteau, the musical play has an erotic connotation. A young man – the gardener from the drawing – is sitting in the grass, but is now holding a little bunch of flowers in his hand. Dreamily, he is looking at it, probably contemplating when and if he can dare to declare his love to the lady next to him. This young lady is already inclining towards him trustfully and her facial expression shows that she is expecting this declaration of love with excitement. Once more Watteau used his study of the gardener in one of his paintings. *The Shy Lover* in Madrid is quite similar to the one mentioned above, only the musician and the children are missing and the woman's affection is more like coy curiosity (Figure 10). The courted woman from the Madrid painting was taken from a drawing by Watteau which is now in the Getty Museum (Figure 11) and which he reused for *The Elysian Fields* in the Wallace Collection (Figure 12).

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14 „Je dis que le plus ordinairement il dessinait sans objet. Car jamais il n'a fait ni esquisse ni pensée pour aucun de ses tableaux. (…) Sa coutume était de dessiner ses études dans un livre relié, de façon qu'il en avait toujours un grand nombre sous sa main. (…) Quand il lui prenait en gré de faire un tableau il avait recours à son recueil, Il choisissait les figures qui lui convenaient le mieux pour le moment. Il en formait ses groupes, le plus souvent en conséquence d'un fond de paysage qu'il avait conçu ou préparé. Il était rare même qu'il en usât autrement. Cette façon de composer, qui n'est assurément pas à suivre, est la véritable cause de cette uniformité qu'on peut reprocher aux tableaux de Wateaux. Indépendamment de ce que sans s'en apercevoir, il répétait très souvent la même figure, ou parce qu'elle lui plaisait, ou parce qu'en cherchant ç'avait été la première qui s'ètait présentée à lui." Caylus, 1984, pp. 78f.

Figure 7: Antoine Watteau, Figures et feuilles*, Drawing, Paris, Musée du Petit Palais.*

Figure 8: Antoine Watteau, L'Île enchanté*, c. 1717, Oil on canvas, Private Collection.*

Figure 9: Antoine Watteau, La déclaration attendue*, c. 1716, Oil on canvas, Angers, Musée des Beaux-Arts.*

Figure 10: Antoine Watteau, L'amoureux timide*, c. 1716, Oil on canvas, Madrid, Palacio Real.*

Figure 11: Antoine Watteau, Femme assise*, Drawing, Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum.*

Figure 12: Antoine Watteau, Les Champs-Élysée*, c. 1717-1718, Oil on canvas, London, Wallace-Collection.*

It is this method that was critically described by Caylus. Watteau had picked figure studies from his collection and combined them differently each time. That sounds uncomplicated, but it is not. It is actually really difficult to combine finished figurative material, without making it appear inhomogeneous. In Watteau's paintings it seems in no way inhomogeneous; it even appears as if the figures were made for nothing else than the respective composition.

Donald Posner plays the matching-game with a drawing of a man playing the guitar, which was probably made prior to the model (Figure 13).[15] Watteau based a little painting in Chantilly on this drawing, in which he also specifies the location: the musician is sitting on a stone bench (Figure 14). Watteau put this figure in a larger context in a painting on display in Dresden (Figure 15). Multiple figures have gathered in a park. A dignified gentleman in a ponderous pose admires the back of a sculpture of a female nude with the eyes of a *connoisseur*. To the right young men and women are resting on and next to a park bench. A musician is entertaining them with his guitar. It is the guitarist from the drawing. As reported by Caylus above, Watteau "repeated the same figure very often – either because he liked it, or because his eyes fell on it first when we was searching."[16] The guitarist, crossing his legs and bending his chest forward, appears to have been liked very much by Watteau or "while searching he came across him first", because he re-appears once more in Watteau's work, now in a painting that is salvaged in an engraved reproduction (Figure 16). In *The Gathering Outside* the group of young people was behaving in a civilized way, but the guitarist is now playing amid wilder proceedings. In this case Watteau used a drawing he had made after a painting by Rubens (Figure 17). We observe a proper montage/assembly with prefabricated elements. The appropriate contemporary term for this montage technique would be "pasticcio".

Continuing with another series of examples, we start with a drawing which shows a seated woman,[17] rendered in Watteau's typical late style in three different chalks, holding a fan in her left hand and looking and gesturing towards the right – these gestures do not have a narrative purpose in the drawing (Figure 18). In *The Venetian Feasts* (Figure 19) this figure reappears between the two dancers. Her withdrawal is motivated by the brisk young man. However, the right hand is already angled in the painting, perhaps signaling that her reluctance is only of a temporary nature. The study of the woman was reused for a figure of the seated woman dressed in red in *The Enchanted Island*. This time the gesture of reluctance, once again like in the study, is made much stronger by stretching the arm. Again, Watteau used the figure study in *The Assembly in the Park of the Louvre* (Figure 20) (third figure from the right). Should the attribution to Watteau be correct, then the figure can be discovered for a fourth time in a reproduction by Mercier after a lost painting by Watteau.

15 See Posner, 1984, p. 167.

16 Caylus, 1984, p. 79.

17 See Parker/Mathey 1957, II, p. 305. For further examples see: Vogtherr, 2016, pp. 53f. For considerations about transferring the drawing to the painting surface see: Wenders de Calisse, 2011, pp. 69f.

Figure 13: Antoine Watteau, Guitariste*, Drawing.*

Figure 14: Antoine Watteau, Le donneur de sérénade*, c. 1715, Oil on canvas, Chantilly, Musée Condé.*

Figure 15: Antoine Watteau, Réunion en plein air*, c. 1717/18, Oil on canvas, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie.*

Figure 16: Benoit Audran, after: Antoine Watteau, La Surprise*, 1716, Etching, London, British Museum.*

Figure 17: Antoine Watteau (after Rubens), Couple*, Drawing, Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs.*

Figure 18: Antoine Watteau, Femme assise*, Drawing, New York, Private Collection.*

Figure 19: Antoine Watteau, Fêtes vénitiennes*, c. 1717/18, Oil on canvas, Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland.*

Figure 20: Antoine Watteau, Assemblée dans un parc*, c. 1717, Oil on canvas, Paris, Musée du Louvre.*

One of Watteau's most striking peculiarities is that he combines drawings of single figures in compositions that do not fall apart despite having been constructed through these single figures. It seems that every figure Watteau took from his stock of drawings and inserted into any context became charged with magnetic power and connected with the other figures naturally. To explain this phenomenon in a less occult way: usually Watteau first prepared his figures one by one, but anticipated right from the beginning that he would be using them for various compositions – to an extent that he only had to put the figures together to create a connection and often even a convincing narrative that makes us believe that the figures were created for exactly this context.

Even isolated studies of single figures, when they happen to be juxtaposed on a sheet of paper connect to each other occasionally. Since the 19th century Watteau has been admired for his *mise en page*. This refers to an arrangement of single studies, which, however different they might be, join together as a closed whole on the picture plain. Due to the intensified research on Watteau's work as a draughtsman over the past decade, it was argued that Watteau could not have intended to put his studies in a particular order on the sheet – in later years he took out a sheet he had already used for some studies and then added in a new drawing to an empty spot.[18] One example comes from the collection of works on paper in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 21): on the left-hand side Watteau drew a woman with a distaff. The motif and drawing style suggest a dating to 1713-14. Years later (c. 1717-18), the artist used the empty right-hand side of the page to add a study of a young woman's head.[19] Both studies remain unconnected to each other, the newly added head study balances the sheet, but only in regards to the formal composition. A sheet in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (Figure 22) was also reused by Watteau. He added two small studies of seated women to four views of a woman's head he had done much earlier. This disrupts the balance of the sheet, and disrupts the 'spatial harmony'.[20] If we imagine the sheet without the two later studies, a 'contact tension' is created between the views of the woman's head – despite or because of her facing different directions it creates a sense of a casual gathering of a group of women. Watteau did not have many options for adding the seated women. But he arranged them diagonally facing each other. The sheet in Amsterdam entangles two pseudo-narratives and this entanglement creates additional tension and liveliness for the older and later studies.

On the sheets with single studies that were executed at the same time, this phenomenon becomes more obvious – I called it 'contact tension/contact electricity' because of the lack of a more appropriate term.[21] On a sheet in the British Museum in London, Watteau studied the model in 'lost profile' (Figure 23). On the same sheet Watteau captured the model's face and bust from the front. Two young women seem to be engaged in an intimate conversation. Watteau probably did not intend to achieve this effect, neither is

18 Sonnabend, 2016, p. 27.

19 Rosenberg/Prat, I, 1996, XXII, p. 358; Bailey, 2000, p. 7. Further examples in Rosenberg/Prat, I, 1996, pp. 130f, 362f., 526f., 528f.; Rosenberg/Prat, II, 1996, pp. 650f., 790f.

20 Plomb/Sonnabend, 2016, p. 216.

21 For the term: online: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kontaktelektrizität, 21.06.2018.

it based on a mistake by the beholder. The study of a model from behind on the right-hand side partially overlays his study of her front. Would one intend to read the sheet as a scene, the study of the back would have to be positioned closer to the beholder, being perspectively larger in size than the study of the front. But the opposite is the case: Watteau does not give the viewer any aid to connect the studies to a scene. However, the studies relate to each other, almost as if they did not have any choice.

Figure 21: Antoine Watteau, Femme à la quenouille/Tête de femme*, Drawing, c. 1713-1714/c. 1717-1718, New York, The Metropolitan Museum.*

Figure 22: Antoine Watteau, Têtes de femme/Femmes assises*, Drawing, c. 1717/18, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.*

Figure 23: Antoine Watteau, Femme*, Drawing, London, British Museum.*

The same phenomenon can be observed on a sheet with an actor or a model that Watteau depicted in an actor's costume, once with bonnet, then without hat and with the head tilted to the side (Figure 24). Watteau did nothing to conceal that this is the same head in two views and that there is no narrative connection between these two studies. But it is difficult not to see the sheets as showing two figures spending time with each other, one placing her head trustingly or lovingly on the other's shoulder.

Figure 24: Antoine Watteau, Tête d'acteur*, Drawing, Private Collection.*

This magnetism occasionally even works when Watteau placed two or three studies on one sheet. On a sheet at the Louvre, he captured three views of a female and male model (Figure 25) We are tempted to perceive the studies on the bottom right as connected: the fact that the lady turning away thoughtfully appears to be aware of the man's gaze upon her tempts us to create a little love story around them. Above, the two studies of the men with the bonnet merge together to two men having an active conversation. Even the two studies of a woman inclining her head to the right and to the left respectively are attracted magnetically by the context of the sheet; a context that does not exist. The head's inclination to the right (seen from our point of view) makes the woman seem to look sadly after the two men in conversation that are hurrying away. And the same figure, who is turning her head to the left, seems to have given up. This description is not intended to suggest an interpretation of Watteau's drawing. Watteau simply filled his sheet. But as he charged his studies with a lot of communicative power, he could not avoid connections being created. This communicative potential is the secret why Watteau only had to combine single studies to create a picture. But nothing is explained yet, especially not the secret. The terms magnetism and 'contact tension' were simply swapped for communicative potency.

Figure 25: Antoine Watteau, Femme et homme*, Drawing, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des dessins.*

Was it aesthetic calculation or mere austerity to fill the sheet as much as possible before additional artistic material is required? A decision is perhaps not desired. Regardless of the artist's intention we nonetheless get the indisputable impression of a coordination of these diverging studies. Watteau will not have found any preconditions for his artistic practice in French art. But as Watteau was from Valenciennes, which had been part of Flanders until seven years before his birth, and was labelled and marketed as a 'Flemish' artist at the beginning of his career in Paris, he might have remembered Dutch drawing of the 17th century, which shows parallels to his work as a draughtsman.

The combination of multiple studies on one sheet – multiple heads, heads and figure studies together and/or body parts – was used in 17th-century Dutch draughtsmanship.[22] Here, a few examples taken from Peter Schatborn's exhibition catalogue on Dutch figurative drawings (1981-1982): Jacob de Gheyn II covered his sheet with studies of a young man in different poses, a group of women that is being observed by two other figures, a standing woman with child, one study of an arm and two of hands (Figure 26).[23] Some sheets by Abraham Bloemaert combine two studies of a male chest with studies of a leg, a foot and a hand, or head-studies with studies of an arm and a hand – studies that were preparatory for the painting of the *Adoration of the Magi* in the Niedersächsische Landesgalerie.[24] And sometimes this *mis en page* used by Dutch artists is quite similar to Watteau's and creates a sense of connection between unrelated drawings. The two studies of a female arm by Caspar Netscher are too far apart on a sheet in the Rijksprentenkabinets in Amsterdam (Figure 27) to have been conceived as one study. The upper right and the lower left hand are gripping the same piece of fabric, so that the two different studies come together to form a common action.

Figure 26: Jacob de Gheyn II, Femmes, observateurs, femme avec enfant, garçon, bras et mains*, Drawing, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.*

22 Plomb, 2016, pp. 41, 47 with reference to Peter Schatborn's catalogue of the drawings exhibition in Amsterdam.

23 Schatborn, 1981, p. 36.

24 Ibid., pp. 38f.

Figure 27: Gaspar Netscher, Bras*, Drawing, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.*

Therefore, it seems that there are already cross-references between unrelated studies in Dutch drawing, but these references are usually of compositional or motivic nature. Although there is no direct evidence, it is indisputable however, based on aesthetic experience, that this 'connectedness' of the unconnected is much more intense in many of Watteau's sheets. Yet we have to ask again, but this time not in regards to a composition such as *The Embarkation to Cythera* but to the pasticcio on his sheets of drawings: what exactly is it that makes these figures, those hands, those heads etc. so open to each other? I could get away with saying that I do not know. However, this avoidance would not be terribly bad and it would not even be completely inappropriate in regards to this aesthetic phenomenon.

In 16th-century Italy the term *non so che* referred to correspondences, atmospheres and accordances which are obvious in their effect, but conveyed in such a subtle way (artistically and habitually), that the acknowledgement of not knowing appears to be the appropriate characterization and mode of appreciation.

French art literature translated the Italian *non so che* with *je ne sais quoi* – later this term became charged with 'aesthetic-theoretical' prestige when sentiment replaced the aesthetic-theoretical rules as a category of judgment.[25] Abbé Dubos represents this change of aesthetic paradigms with the publication of the first consequent sensualistic aesthetic, his *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* published in 1719.[26]

25 See Starobinski, 1964, pp. 11ff.

26 Dubos, 1993.

In the volume *Watteau au confluent des arts. Esthétiques de la grâce*, published by Valentine Toutin and Chris Ransea, Claude Jamain and Nathalie Kremer introduced the terms *je ne sais quoi* and *air* together with the umbrella term grace (*grâce*) as revelatory for Watteau's art. (The starting point had been Dominique Vivant-Denons admiring words for the *Pèlerinage à l'isle de Cithère* and René Vinçon's reading of Watteau.)[27] *Je ne sais quoi*, *air* and *grâce* are open terms which refer to atmospheric qualities. Atmosphere as an aesthetic quality creates unity within the art work, independently of narrative links.[28]

Observations of the interrupted gestures in Watteau's paintings is illuminating for the research question of this article. According to Katalin Barthe-Kovác the impression of interruption in the gestures of Watteau's figures – the gestures appear to stop before they become more concrete or targeted – contributes to what can be described with the term "grace".[29] It is this early stopping that creates a degree of uncertainty and of something undefined in the action of the figures or the narrative as a whole. Therefore, it allows them to work differently (or at least in a less defined manner) in other contexts. This lack of narrative and expressive definition promotes the adaptability of these figures to diverse compositions. The facial expressions and gestural confessions of interest, affection and repulsion are defined only to the extent that the same figures can also be read as being interested in, or affectionate/reluctant toward, other figures or other objects.

There are a few exceptions: the way the man is embracing the dancer in the etching after the painting *The Surprise* is an expression of open sexual desire. Nothing is vague or undefined here. In a drawing, Watteau copied this couple from the *Fun Fair* by Peter Paul Rubens, which was already in the royal picture gallery during his life-time, and combined this visual quote with the figure of a guitar player as seen above (Figures 16, 17). This is certainly a counter-example to the frequent use of 'stopped' gestures in Watteau's *œuvre*, but under the musician's look the passionate movement of the dancers becomes calm, because they are also de-contextualized from their original composition (Rubens). Passion and certainty is contained within the couple; the connection to the landscape or the musician remains vague.

Targeted glances and actions, rarely used anyway, stay within groups of figures, often couples, that can be isolated as such and were therefore easy to de- and re-contextualize. But even in these cases targeted action can be the result of the subsequent montage of the template material: for example, the couple in the pictures of shepherds at Musée Condé in Chantilly and Palace Charlottenburg (Figure 28) is a combination of two different studies, as was first noticed by Parker: [30] he is embracing her passionately from behind, she is backing off slightly but is giving in at the same time – a coherent action, but the result of a pasticcio.

27 Jamain, 2014; Kremer, 2014; Vinçon, 1996, above all, p. 46.

28 For atmosphere as an aesthetic category see Böhme, 1995.

29 Barthe-Kovács, 2014, pp. 220f.

30 Parker, 1931, p. 11.

Figure 28: Antoine Watteau, Les bergers*, c. 1717, Berlin, Schloss Charlottenburg.*

Pasticcio and collage

The fundamental openness of Watteau's single figures and figure groups contributes to their adaptability to different contexts, and is the reason for Watteau's painted pasticcios and the 'communicative potential' which is expressed even in the *mise en page* of disparate single studies. Cultural-historical equivalents are addressed with the pasticcio in opera in this publication. At the end, I would like to discuss another cultural-historical equivalent of the pasticcio in Watteau's *œuvre*.

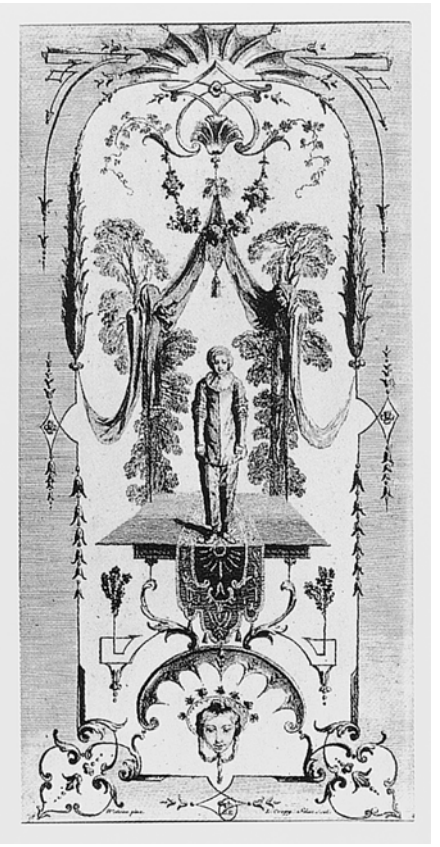
The Goncourt brothers talked about a fashion of idleness in their history of *The Woman in the Eighteenth Century*:

> "The regency is obsessed with cutting out. All engravings have to be cut out, particularly the hand-colored ones and the woman's idleness directs the scissors towards the most beautiful, the oldest, the rarest engravings that cost one-hundred livres each; once cut out, they are stuck to cardboards, varnished and furniture and hangings are made, a type of wall paper, screens, lamp shade. This folly is general, great the art, the art of cutting out."[31]

31 "Sous la Régence, la fureur est de découper. Toutes les estampes passent à la découpure, celles-là surtout qui sont enluminées, et le désœvrement de la femme taille aux ciseaux les plus belles, les plus vieilles, les plus rares, des estampes de cent livres pièce, une fois découpeés, on les colle sur des cartons, on les vernit et on fait des meubles et des tentures,

One can feel the discomfort. Two passionate collectors of 18th-century prints must have gotten goosebumps by just thinking about the fact that valuable engravings were cut apart like a cut-out book for children and were pasted together anew.[32] This really came into fashion after the Régence – the literary documents pile up in 1727. According to a letter by Charlotte-Elisabeth Aissé from 1727 everyone, little and grown up, had started to cut out colored prints in order to use the fragments (protected through a layer of varnish) for the decoration of tapestries, wall screens and chimney screens. If it was to go on like this, one would cut paintings by Raphael apart one day.[33]

Figure 29: Louis Crépy fils, Pierrot*, 1727, after: Antoine Watteau, Pierrot.*



des espèces de tapisseries, des paravents, des écrans. Folie générale, grand art que cet art des découpures!" Goncourt, 1862, p. 108.

32 For a general history of cutting-out since the 15th century see: Metken, 1978, pp. 7ff.

33 Cited after Apgar, 1995, p. 33. Charlotte-Elisabeth Aissé's letter to Julie Calendrini was probably Goncourt's source. See Metken, 1978, p. 101.

In the November issue of *Mercure galant* in 1727 Gersaint advertised the purchase of prints after the works of his friend Watteau by referring to this fashion: the engraver Crépy was currently engraving six plates after a wall screen with galant scenes by Watteau (Figure 29). Motifs such as these would be suited best for cutting out "through which the ladies nowadays make pretty furniture".[34] How one should imagine a piece of furniture like this is shown this example of a secretary: a grotesque motive by Watteau is pasted to its right wing amongst other "découpures" (Figure 30).

Figure 30: Secretary, Venice, c. 1730, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Art like Watteau's, which is built on the 'magnetic field' of the atmospheric, did certainly inspire the fashion of cutting out and the re-contextualizing of print fragments. But one should also consider the reversal of the cultural-historical causal chain. Perhaps Watteau's pasticcios respond to the play of de- and re-contextualization through the scissors. Described as women's folly by the Goncourts, this fashion of cutting out had a (male) predecessor.

34 "De pareils sujets paints sur des fonds blancs, conviennent à merveille aux découpures, dont les dames font aujourd'hui de si jolis meubles." Cited after Dacier/Vuaflart, t. III, 1922, p. 79. See Metken, 1978, pp. 101f.; Roland Michel, 1984, p. 286.

He was diverse – a garden artist, probably the first to import the English landscape garden to France;[35] a composer and musician, and a successful author of comedies of his time – without being temptated to characterize him as a universal genius.[36] In the context of this article, one other of Charles Dufresny's artistic occupations is of interest.

It is mentioned in the foreword to the 1731 volume of his plays and Pierre-Jean Mariette discusses it in his "Abecedario": around 1700 Dufresny radicalized the cutting out and gluing together of prints long before it became virulent. He was said to have possessed a cupboard in the drawers of which he had arranged what his scissors had left him as material for later *collages* – in one drawer he kept feet, in another arms; other drawers contained heads, noses, eyes, hands. The fragments were waiting to be brought together in new faces, new figures, new stories. Mariette saw as a result of Dufresny's art of cutting out and gluing together a collage with a group of drunks. In the process of de- and re-contextualization the drunks had emerged from an engraving of *The Last Supper*.[37]

How and if the fragments in Dufresny's collages fit together convincingly cannot be judged anymore because of a lack of extant examples of his skill. The rules and the intention, however, were clear: to evoke cohesiveness in the non-cohesive and simultaneously to "sublate" (Hegel) the tension of the diverse. The aesthetic reality in Watteau's pasticcios is defined, to a comparable degree, by the success of the assembly of something that does not genuinely belong together, and the restrained tension. In Dufresny's *collages* this tension might have seemed like an insufficient harmonization in a (negative) sense and in a positive sense a clever, and funny disturbance; in Watteau's art it became an atmospheric state of tension, in which the trace of disparity was generalized to an undefined (*je ne sais quoi*) longing; it became so general that art might as well stand for longing.

To come to a conclusion: The pasticcio as a compositional principle of Antoine Watteau is a way of connecting. This way of connecting is so withdrawn that what lies in between, which on the one hand makes this connection possible, but on the other keeps it hanging in the balance, becomes an aesthetic object itself.

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