

Telltale Statues in Watteau's Painting

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THE THESIS I should like to establish is that the Garden of Love topos forms the very syntax of Watteau's mature paintings, and if one minds the tale told by the statues in his paintings—Watteau's emblematic mutant of classical mythology—one finds a key to the deeper meaning of his oeuvre.*

Before 1710 Watteau was a displaced Walloon in Paris working his way up from hackwork into collaboration with one of the best placed decorators of the day, Claude III Audran. For eight years he painted, drew, and designed what was wanted and commissioned by fashionable society: arabesques to fill the panels of salons in hotels and chateaux (e.g., Meudon), chinoiseries (e.g., at La Muette), and gallant figures or scenes from *commedia dell'arte* in demand by engravers.

Typical of his work during this period are the quasi-mythological figures in *Les Enfants de Momus* (c. 1708; fig. 1). Momus himself has no Olympian pedigree; indeed he is more like a literary personification of faultfinding than a god, a kind of Ur-jester, a fitting patriarch for the marionette-sized harlequin, pierrot, and trio of cupids with shepherd staff, sword, tambourine, and jester accoutrements. They are disposed around a light stage-platform with a heart-shaped pool under a fountain graced by a pair of sculptured dolphins flaunting their tails. Above is an apparition of beautiful Colombine surrounded by a circle of roses. The curtain drapery is suspended above the chaste nymphs half-robed with growing vines, and trails down lightly until it beribbons the serious sileni on plinths on each side. Their upright sternness is mocked somewhat by the filigree of trees behind them, which bend gently forward toward the baldaquin like hovering fans.

Dolphins have been messengers of secret love at least since Ovid. Sileni plinths are older satyrs who have lost their he-goat legs; they retain their large horse-ears and knowing smile because in their day they have plumbed the depths of love and life; they know it all. And it was under Claude Gillot's direction that the young Watteau learned to fuse such low-density mythology and minor-league deities—at the most a Bacchus or two—with the love comedy of the *Forains* popular in the Parisian fairs during the expulsion of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*

*The reference number for the illustrations of the lesser known works of Watteau corresponds to the plate found in E. Dacier and Albert Vuaflart. *Jean Jullienne et les graveurs de Watteau au XVIIIe siècle*.

troupes (1697-1716). The “Children of Momus” arabesque has the fanciful feel and look of a marionette theater—which Gillot himself happened to be managing around the very time that Watteau did this piece.¹

Watteau not only led the eye of his contemporaries a merry chase through traditional pastoral scenes of courtship mixed with the antics of Columbine, Pierrot, and Harlequin,² but he also innovated beyond such homogenization. As he became acclimated to the polite society of Paris, Watteau made a significant addition to the vocabulary of artistic decoration by introducing the swing. Roman daily-life art has no swings. There are no swings in medieval art, probably because “swinging” lacks any orthodox, theocratic parallel. Nor are there any important swings in baroque art, although occasionally we see children on swings in the seventeenth century (a teeter-totter emblem of uncertainty), or an ape may swing to signify laziness.³ But Watteau made iconographic history in *L’Escarpolette* (c. 1709) by wedding a folk pastime to the gallant world of *fetes champetres*.

¹ Hélehe Adhémar, *Watteau, sa vie, son œuvre* (Paris: Pierre Tisne, 1950), pp.100-101.

² A striking example of the combination of gallant Arcadian scenes and vernacular comic types can be seen in the little-known folding screen Watteau designed c. 1709, *Six feuilles d’un paravent* (E. Dacier and Albert Vuaflart, *Jean-Jullienne et les graveurs de Watteau au XVIIIe siècle* [Paris: Maurice Rousseau Libraire. 1921-29], plates

³ Hans Wentzel, “Jean-Honoré Fragonards ‘Schaukel,’ Bemerkungen zur Ikonographie der Schaukel in der Bildenden Kunst,” *Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch*, 26 (1964),194; A. Pigler, *Barockthemen*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Verlag der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1956), 2:537-38,

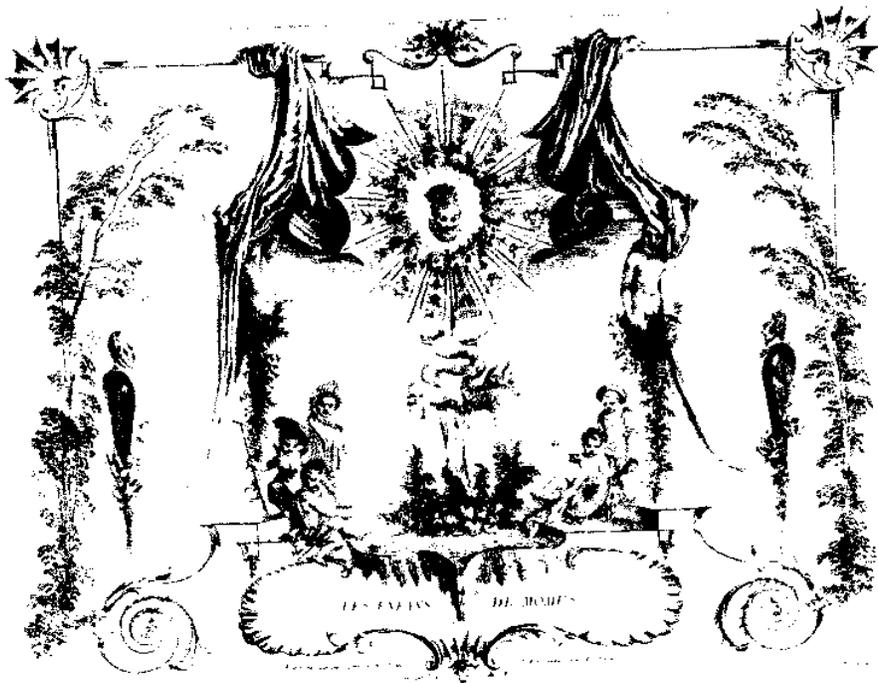


FIGURE 1. *Les Enfants de Momus* (c. 1708). D-V 120. Phot. Bibl. Nat. Paris.

As Watteau shows it (fig. 2), swinging is a model game for elegant lovers. It simulates the delicate, back-and-forth tug of learning to love, with movements suggestive of coquettishness: the man pushes softly and the woman glides through the air, pausing suspensefully at each upswing; there is discreet physical contact, but no more. Watteau's arabesque leaves little doubt, however, as to what is in play with the swing. The bagpipes, a folk emblem for male genitalia, dominate the mound between the urns on the far sides, which sport rose trees and the horned ram's head; against the bagpipes are a doffed hat, and an abandoned silken shawl, flanked by a tipping basket of flowers. At the very top center is a horned goat with fierce eyes that stare down any observer, and at the very bottom—from top to bottom thus—is an ornamental, noncommittal head of Bacchus, closely twined with grapes on the vine. Rising out of the large, grotesque trees, behind them, are four spectral silenus columns topped by urns that support an ethereal canopy of flowers and foliage; the immovable foursome appear like a company of sphinxes, the enigmatic wisdom of the ages, and cast a votive calm upon the scene.



FIGURE 2. *L'Escarpolette* (c. 1709), D-V 67, Phot. Bibl. Nat. Paris.

Another early arabesque (fig. 3) demonstrates Watteau's peculiarly rich integration of rustic and idyllic traditions and domesticated mythology, *Le Dénicheur de Moineaux* (c. 1710). The startling curve of the tree trunk (on the right in the engraving) and the wind-flattened bushes on the high and wild bluff (to the left) portend a storm; the mother bird, hanging dead-center, starkly perpendicular over the unsuspecting peasant boy and girl, seems already a victim. The hunting dog keeps a lookout on his ledge, alert for anything moving; but the dog cannot see that

the whole secluded world of peaceful retreat is held up by a pair of bona fide satyrs, performing Atlas-service. The girl's hat and ribbons are hung neatly on a rack to the right, and on the left side rest the ubiquitous bagpipes and a cage with a bird in it, the old love-emblem for a girl's virginity (which Jan Steen and countless others hint may take wing and fly away when two young people picnic together in a wooded spot alone). Tucked underneath the fleur-de-lis escutcheon, directly over a young ram lying down, hangs a basket full of eggs, another favorite emblem of the fragility of the maidenhead. The central couple in Watteau's piece, however, are so oblivious to the cosmic storm around them, totally unaware of the emblematic wealth assembled—caged bird, bagpipes, satyrs, ram, and eggs—so utterly innocent that they seem somehow out of reality. But the position of the girl's right arm as she sinks into languor, with her feet on the back of a faun who is gingerly reaching around behind his back with his arm to pluck a rose, bodes ill for the continuing balance and security of this island of peace. No wonder birds of the same family as the dead mother, high up out of harm's way, are shrieking in alarm to the proverbial owl about imminent disaster.

Le Dénicheur de Moineaux epitomizes the kind of iconographie base Watteau built upon and built into his painterly compositions. Early Watteau arabesques are not simple just because they are incredibly delicate.

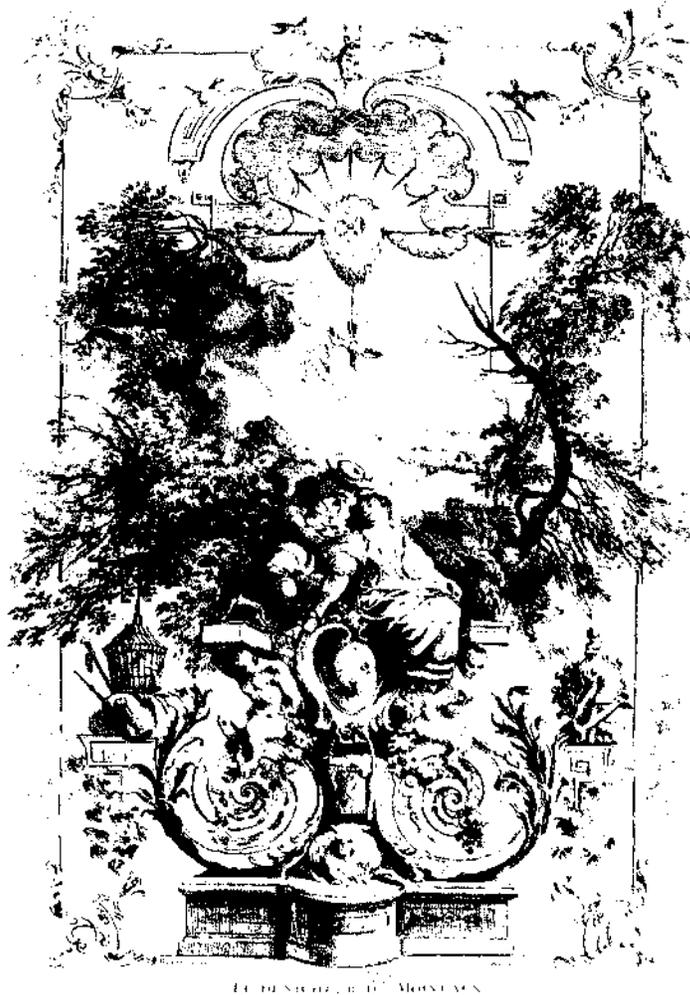


FIGURE 3. *Le Dénicheur de Moineaux* (c. 1710). D-V 5. Phot. Bibl. Nat. Paris.

Watteau assembled emblematic detail in carefully suggestive fashion, but it is his juxtaposition of strange elements as if they belong together that creates the wit and arouses a sense of uncertain expectation.⁴ Even Watteau's familiar love-emblems have the metaphorical intensity of symbols because they participate in the effortless, built-in juxtaposition of diluted mythical affairs, *commedia deli arte* reality, and idyllic Arcadian dreams. The satyr is alive and unreal, but also a statue and real; the satyr does not have "sensuality" as a dogmatic analogue, but as drawn *is* covertly sensual, next to a real basket of eggs, which is precarious in multiple contexts, and so

⁴ Jean-Louis Schefer calls this kind of mysterious, oracular complementariness in Watteau of a central figure or group and the hiding-revealing-contrasting foliage-scape "l'état orphique du monde" ('Visible et thématique chez Watteau,' *Médiations-Revue des Expressions Contemporaines*, 5 [Summer 1962], 40).

on. It is this everpresent, subtly critical commentary and mute counterthesis in all Watteau's basic thematic and compositional elements that already in 1710 begins to set off his designing conception and painterly language.

The fact that a note of bumptious impropriety is heard as a constant undertone in the early Watteau is the *artistic* reason, I think, why his work is often compared to Dutch genre painting. Watteau does stand for *commedia dell'arte* and the *Forains*—as his “picturesque,” army- camp war scenes show—and not with the official *Comedie-Française*. But Watteau's contemporaries and disciples, and also most interpreters, have missed the depth and seriousness in Watteau's critique of fashionable society.⁵ The penetrating critique within Watteau's rococo painting was missed, I dare say, not so much because his painterly finesse deflects analysis, but rather because the hidden framework that gives his painting an abiding, semi-epic dimension—the Garden of Love *topos*—has hardly even been recognized.

It is a commonplace of medieval rhetoric, inherited from ancient erotic literature via Horace, that amorous experience follows a definite order of successive steps, stages, or degrees, *gradus amoris*: *visits* (sighting), *alloquium* (dialogue), *contactus* (touch), *osculum* (kiss), *factum* (the deed).⁶ There is also a long literary tradition of *locus*

amoenus (love-ly place, pleasance) which has grown up out of Homer, Theocritus, Virgil, Claudian, Isidore of Seville, and others, and describes no place in particular (but not no place either). *Locus amoenus* appears in literature as an enchanted landscape with certain specific charms, grassy meadow, a grove of trees, and spring water, an ideal place that A. B. Giamatti calls “the earthly paradise.” *Locus amoenus* is the basic model for Elysium in Virgil's *Aeneid*, for example, and the Garden of Eden in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.⁷ What happens in the “earthly paradises” of medieval romance and renaissance epic is what is important, not the *hortus deliciarum* (garden of delights) itself.⁸ Those happenings are generally fateful; “earthly

⁵ Michael L-evey correctly says that ‘among the things that the eighteenth century did not understand about Watteau was the extent to which he was a rebel’ (*Rococo to Revolution: Major Trends in Eighteenth Century Painting* [London: Thames & Hudson, 1966], p. 55).

⁶ Lionel]. Friedman, “Gradus Amoris,” *Romance Philology*, 19 (November 1965), 167. 171-72.

⁷ Emst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (1948; New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), pp. 183- 85, 195- 98.

⁸ John V. Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography*

paradises” a.d. are crucibles for sorting out the true from the false, the transient from the enduring⁹—it is no accident that Dante’s ‘ ‘earthly paradise” concludes the *Purgatorio* (canto XXVIII).

It is not pertinent in this essay to sort out the many variants of *gradus amoris* and *locus amoenus* from Ovid to Tasso and from Roman classical *carmina* to Ariosto and Spenser, or to show that some are sanctified only by Venus while other pleasant isles hold a Circe. But there are certain basic features that recur in the artistic conjunction of these two literary *topoi*,¹⁰ and they are relevant to Mussia Eisenstadt’s thesis that Watteau is to be understood as the innovator in *painterly* expression of what was an age-old *literary* and cultural convention.¹¹

Le Roman de la Rose exemplifies the steps of love taken by a lover in a Garden of Love toward the desired prize. Once *Amant* is let inside the walled garden by *Oiseuse* (*luxuria*, Idleness), sees the rose reflected in the fountain-pool of Narcissus, and is smitten by the arrows of *Amors*, he joins the dance of *Deduit* (Mirth), speaks with *Bel Accueil* (the Lady’s receptive ear), gets permission to approach and touch, plucks off a close-growing leaf, kisses the rose, and then, in the extended continuation of Jean de Meun with his elaborate analysis of the innumerable, subtle dimensions of *tout l’art d’amours*, ends the *gradus amoris* in the Garden by raping the rose.¹²

The features of *Le Roman de la Rose* important for the interpretation of Watteau’s paintings are the aura of visionary illusion conjured up by the longing of the lover for the inaccessible beloved, and the psychomachic architectonics which stamps his pilgrimage: is it loving devotion or lust that drives him on? is the love humanly rational or simply sensual? is the beloved a dream or real? And it is noteworthy that all this restless desire and uncertain movement reach their poignant conclusion at the fountain of Narcissus in the center of the garden, so that the point of this gentle, thirteenth-century “immorality play” seems to be: if you

(Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 55.

⁹ A. Bartlett Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p. 85.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

¹¹ Mussia Eisenstadt, *Watteaus Fetes Galantes und ihre Ursprünge* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer Verlag, 1930), p. 11.

¹² See Friedman, pp. 174-75; Fleming, pp. 99-100.

play the chess of *amour* in the earthly paradise, in the Garden of Love, if you pursue the sweet torment of its courtesies and folly, the ironic end of *l'amour carneuse* is self-love, checkmate.¹³

Although Eisenstadt interprets *Le Roman de la Rose* too strictly in terms of pastoral and Arcadian ideals and the troubadour courtly love ethic,¹⁴ she labors successfully to show that *Le Roman* stood behind what Johan Huizinga calls the “languishing tenor” and “resigned melancholy” of fifteenth-century erotic poetry in France,¹⁵ and nourished fictions of *l'amour champêtre* in Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée*. Eisenstadt shows that these Garden of Love motifs formed all together a natural setting for the exotic costume balls held in the parks, such as Catharine de Medicis attempted, for example, around the theme of *l'isle enchantée*. By the 1660s in France it was the fashion to hold masques using allegories or myths like Daphnis and Chloe to dress up *one's* festivities, feigning bucolic innocence while celebrating a thoroughgoing sensuality.¹⁶ Such literary traditions and cultural habits were in the air when Watteau came to Paris—not to mention the secret love societies that developed later, like “Aphrodites” near Montmorency, led by the regent, Philippe d'Orléans, whose first by-law, it is reputed, was “*jamais avoir l'ombre d'un scrupule.*”¹⁷ (Montmorency is the place where Crozat, who became Watteau's friend and host around 1715, had a country chalet.)

Rubens's *Garden of Love* (fig. 4), which Eisenstadt mentions in passing,¹⁸ established a very definite, iconographic link between the literary *topoi* and the historical, cultural milieu I have just described and Watteau's paintings. If one examines the Rubens painting using the

¹³ Fleming, pp. 79,95; Giamatti, pp. 289-90. Fleming supports this convincing thesis by pointing out that the Pygmalion myth of Ovid, an exemplum of self-serving, sterile passion, is tossed in as an iconophilic aside near the end of the story, lines 20817-21214 (pp. 230- 37).

¹⁴ Eisenstadt follows the view that Jean de Meun's continuation of the romance counters Guillaume de Lorris's piece (*Watteau Fêtes Galantes*, pp. 123-24; see also Giamatti, pp. 61-65). This traditional view misses the core of irony in the whole poem which J. V. Fleming has argued. D. W. Robertson, Jr., would also more cautiously tighten up use of the term ‘courtly love’ to keep its referent more exactly the kind of courteous love which assumed a Christian feudal society in medieval Europe and held out the ideal of reasonable love for a woman based on the Ciceronian, classical ideal of friendship; otherwise it is too easy to have “modern” eisegetic readings of the chivalry which had become a somewhat artificial cult by the close of the twelfth century (see *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspective* Princeton: [Princeton Univ. Press, 1962/1973], pp. 448, 452-57, 460).

¹⁵ Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. F. Hopman (1924; Doubleday Anchor, 1954), pp. 306-16.

¹⁶ Eisenstadt, pp. 130-39.

¹⁷ {*ibid.*, pp. 115-16, 146-48.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

hermeneutical principle formulated by Kurt Badt,¹⁹ as Annegret Glang-Süberger has done in a recent dissertation, it becomes strikingly evident that Rubens depicts by sequential configuration of figures the *gradus amoris*, modified to a focus on schooling in love for marriage.

Rubens's *Garden of Love* is not just a brilliant genre painting dealing loosely with fashionable society and vaguely amorous activities. The initial couple (lower left) is not dancing; the hesitant woman, uncertain, is being pushed by a cupid toward some kind of love relationship. The next couple is seated together on the ground, which suggests resistance overcome, and the woman takes a meditative pose, as if almost persuaded by the man. Rubens gives each woman of the center group of three an appropriate cupid. The left one* whose cupid hides his arrow behind his back for later use, is the beautiful, sensitive, as yet unmoved *amor humanus*; the ecstatic one, whose cupid points upward, is *amor celestis*; and the matronly woman wearing a hat is *amor vulgaris*, who is encouraging the woman to her right—a twin of the woman in the initial couple—to stroke the hair of the boyish cupid lounging on her lap. The final couple (to the far right) is the initial couple again, wearing more festive clothes, now married and striding forward as assured, equal partners, arms parallel and legs in step. Rubens leads the eye on the right up the peacock's tail to the lifelike statue of milk-expressing Juno riding atop a water-fountain dolphin, putting a painterly compositional period to the statement that the painting is about initiation via marriage into motherly love.²⁰

¹⁹ “Read painterly compositions beginning left-under, followed by middleground development, concluding at the upper right.” Badt restricts this *general* principle, which he would base in the normal pattern of our ordinary perceptual experience, to interpretation of European painting that is broadly “representational”; he also excepts *Mannerist painting and Cezanne*. See *Model und Maler von Jan Vermeer. Probleme der Interpretation, eine Streitschrift gegen Hans Sedlmayr* (Cologne: Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1961), pp. 30-39.

²⁰ For detailed analysis and argument see Annegret Glang-Süberger, *P. P. Rubens, Der Liebesgarten* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1975), pp. 15-35.



FIGURE 4. Rubens, *The Garden of Love* (before 1634). Madrid, Prado. Phot. of the Museum.

Rubens's painting is not descriptive of what happened at Marie de Medicis' parties, nor even of what happened at Rubens's happy second marriage feast (which was probably the historical occasion for the painting), and it is not descriptive of what never happens, like the allegorical, mythological *Love Feast* of Pieter Pourbos a generation earlier. Rubens's *Garden of Love* (or better, *Schooling in Love*) represents concretely the very real stages and typical decisions that love presents to a man and especially to a woman. Rubens is too robust to maintain the hesitancy and irony of the traditional *topoi*, and he has enlarged and channeled their meaning toward the passion of marriage and motherhood—which one almost never finds in Watteau—but the balustrade to the left and the idyllic park behind it is a sure reminder of *locus amoenus*: we are confronted here with the “earthly paradise.”²¹ in which events crucial for the meaning of human life are faced, won, and lost. The alcove in the painting shows couples in various stages

²¹ F. Saxl's term for the “earthly paradise” is “a humanist dreamland.” See *Lectures*, 2 vols. (London: Warburg Institute, 1957), 1:215-17, 2: plates 143-53.

of amorous engagement near a fountain of the three graces, a kind of recessed antiphony to the main “suitor’s Progress” scene. This vignette in the background is tied to the whole by the rough joker-musician figure and sileni pillars, which are indeed present, but which serve basically as spectators, outside the elegant proceedings.

The original Rubens painting was not generally accessible after 1666, but Watteau did come to know the version copied probably by Theodor van Thulden before 1640 (the “Waddesdon” version now in Dresden), since it was owned by the comtesse de Verrue who went to Paris around 1700 as mistress to the Duke of Savoy, and was *adamede volupté* in the libertine “Académie” founded by the comte de Caylus, Watteau’s close acquaintance. Watteau could hardly have avoided her salon once he returned from his visit to Valenciennes in 1710 and began to be thrust frequently into the circles of gallant society. In fact, the comtesse de Verrue owned several of Watteau’s paintings.²² Watteau’s appreciative knowledge of this particular “Schooling in Love” painting is not in question. Critics have pointed out the similarity of Watteau’s pushing cupid in *L’île de Cythere* to the one at the left in the Rubens painting.²³ But more important than specific borrowing from Rubens and other masters is the fact that Watteau adopted the configurations and the statues, the fountains, and recessed alcoves that suggest both narration and the bittersweet irony peculiar to Gardens of Love unsaved by baroque marriage.

Direct observation of Watteau’s paintings is the only way to test the thesis, and irony is never a totally visible phenomenon; but I shall argue the case with an exegesis particularly of certain statues in Watteau’s paintings c. 1715-19.²⁴

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There is nothing unusual about the fact that painters use statuary as a visual gloss within a painting, either as a flattering way to fill out the curriculum vitae of their portrait subject or as a

²² Glang-Siibergriib, pp. 81, 93-94, 104; Eisenstadt, pp. 147-48.

²³ M. Levey, “The Real Theme of Watteau’s Embarkation for Cythera,” *Burlington Magazine* 103, No. 698 (May 1961), 183, note 17.

²⁴ I think the paintings show that Mario Praz, who writes in 1970 that Watteau is “the *boudoir reduction of Rubens*” (*Mnemosyne: The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970/1974], p. 146), grossly misstates, from a Renaissance and seventeenth-century bias, the proper similarities and differences between Rubens and Watteau, and misses the special, deep contribution of Watteau.

marginal *exemplum virtutis* showing knowledge and respect for antiquity (cf. Rubens, *Four Philosophers*)²⁵ The statues in Watteau's paintings are not on the whole real garden statuary, as they are, for example, in the work of Parisian Lancret, who uses them in paintings for decorative purposes.²⁶ The fact that Watteau's statues are either oddly juxtaposed, hand-me-down mythic characters like the sileni of the arabesques, or specially invented figures, always appearing (with an exception or two) on the emphatic, right-hand side of the paintings, is supportive evidence of their emblematic function and importance for Watteau. A.-P. de Mirimonde takes Watteau to be very traditional in this matter: "Les statues qu'il place dans ses parcs traduisent les sentiments et les pensées de ses personnages."²⁷

Among his paintings prior to *Le Pèlerinage* Watteau has several that utilize the statue of a headstrong goat mounted, teased, and tussled with by two, three, or four children.²⁸ The goat stands above a large shell of overflowing water in a fountain piece held aloft by the intertwined tails of a school of dolphins (fig. 5). Fresh water cascades from the goat's mouth (*La Cascade*). A nonchalant gallant stage center with cane and buckled shoes declares his love to a pretty coquette while a friend in back of him gently plucks a guitar *con amore*, and a pair of confidantes wait and whisper in the shadows. She is in white and holds back, demurely, with averted face, one arm behind her back, the other hand thrust deeply into her cloak pocket. What

²⁵ Iconographie specialists have not normally analyzed the sculptures and paintings within paintings in periods postdating the heyday of *emblemata*; but current studies that give critical weight to the phenomenon—for example, Ronald Paulson on Hogarth and *Zoffany in Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 35-47, 138-58, and Theodore Reff on Degas (in a lecture at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 22 January 1976)—demonstrate the expositional power of giving it careful attention. Dora Panofsky also illustrates the method very simply by comparing Watteau's light, satiric pendants on *Sculpture and Painting* in "Gilles or Pierrot? Iconographie Notes on Watteau," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 39 (1952), 333-34.

²⁶ A.-P. de Mirimonde, "Les Sujets musicaux chez Antoine Watteau," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 58, No. 1114 (November 1961), 279; Martin P. Eidelberg, "Watteau, Lancret, and the Fountains of Oppenort," *Burlington Magazine*, 110, No. 785 (August 1968), 455.

²⁷ A.-P. de Mirimonde, "Statues et emblèmes dans l'œuvre d'Antoine Watteau," *Revue de Louvre*, 12, No. 1 (1962), 12; see also Mirimonde, "Les Sujets musicaux chez A. Watteau," p. 258.

²⁸ Ettore Camesasca repeats with Adhémar (Watteau, sa vie, son oeuvre, p. 105) and others the judgment made by Goncourt that this particular statue of Watteau owes its conception to a sculpture produced by Jacques Sarrazin, Enfants à la chèvre, which was owned at that time by Crozat and placed in his garden at Montmorency (Tout / l'œuvre peint de Watteau [Paris: Flammarion, 1968/1970], pp. 108, 115). One can find the corresponding drawings in K. T. Parker and J. Mathey, Antoine Watteau, Catalogue complet de son œuvre dessiné (Paris: F. DeNobeles, 1957), plates 333-34. However, Watteau is so free in his adaptation of the group (three children in La Cascade, two in La Famille, and four in Récréation galante), and he utilized the theme so early in Pour garder l'honneur d'une belle (c. 1706) that it is an open question whether the reference to Sarrazin's work is artistically relevant.

is at her back hurrying near does not need to be put into words. In a much earlier piece that spoofs Pierrot as a reliable chaperone of virtue (*Pour garder l'honneur d'une belle*), Watteau placed as a foil behind the engaging, elegant lady and her reclining suitor a huge vase with a suggestive frieze of a boyish cupid about to climb astride a goat held prone. In *La Cascade* the couple is still standing, and while *the, factum* of the statue is implicit in the rhetorical stages of their "Progress," what needs decision now, before the pool-fountain so crucial to every *locus amoenus*, is whether to carry on the history or to retreat: that most decisive moment in the world or in the Garden of Love, where men and women act out their parts. Hence there is in *La Cascade* that indefinable element of hovering poignance that is not present in the ordinary, convivial *fêtes galantes* scene.

"*L'Amour Mal Accompagné*" (fig. 6) proves that Watteau intended the cherub-goat statue to be read, roughly, as fleshly love, for the frieze and statue in it have come alive to be the center action of the piece. The brutish goat is forced by the boys to dance to the lusty tune of bagpipes (played by a brawny ape), but the goat is recalcitrant, tumbling one cupid to the ground. A second naked ape festoons a bust honoring Pan, complete with goat bell around the neck. Madame Adhémar wrote off the disappearance of the painting behind this engraving as no loss, since it is a pastiche of Rubens and probably was commissioned by a person of vulgar taste.²⁹ However, it is crucial for understanding Watteau to notice the time-honored emblem in the lower left corner (which would be the right corner of the painting): music and the arts lie neglected in the presence of lascivious love.

²⁹ Adhémar, p. 85.



LA CASCADE
AQUA SALIENS

FIGURE 5. *La Cascade* (c. 1715). D-V 28. Phot. Bibl. Nat. Paris.



L'AMOUR MAL ACCOMPAGNE

FIGURE 6. *L'Amour Mal Accompagné* (c. 1715-16). D-V 272. Phot. Bibl. Nat. Paris.

More significant still is the lone, clothed ape, a dummy of Pierrot, who stands stiffly in an embarrassed pose, tricked-out as an accomplice, but not participating in the vice or in the surrounding festivities. Pierrot's long-standing character as innocent dupe and his morose appearance here as dressed-up ape, though unheeded by the revelers, offer a veiled critique of the festival and hint at the painter's authorial presence as spectator.³⁰

In the Berlin *Pilgrimage* cupids frolic over a shapely Venus statue rather than on top of a goat—two cupids are flesh and blood and one is stone. Almost the same Venus statue, without the extra cupids and footnote to Mars, stands in climactic position at the right side of *Plaisirs d'Amour* (Dresden), bathed in golden light (fig. 7); and the activities of the four couples in the foreground indicate that cupid has indeed done his work well. The couple lounging in the left-center are pausing in their *dialogue*; her lap dog looks off startled at the apparent, delicate *contact* imminent in the foremost, right couple; up behind them an attempted *kiss* and embrace is being fended off by the woman. (This very couple comprise a separate painting called *Le Faux*

³⁰ See Dora Panofsky, p. 334.

Pas [Louvre], and Watteau's exact use of colors—the woman's pale hand, pressed upward, and the man's reddened, thrust-downward hand—forcefully connote desire coming out in the open.) And the final couple, the top of the human triangle tilted toward the right, are looking back amused at these tentative moves of dalliance; they have passed that stage and are now resolutely walking off to the right, down the line of shortening trees, back behind the statue of Venus to enjoy the delights of love in *deed*. There is nothing melancholic in the painting at all: only a sturdy angle of movement from left to right, and the interconnected, advancing *gradus amoris* toward consummated love under the patronage of Venus, who ironically has to disarm her cupid lest things get totally out of hand.

Both the Berlin and the Louvre *Pilgrimage*, in contrast to the Dresden *Plaisirs d'Amour*, have an undulating S-line of couples rising gently over the foreground promontory that leads the eye from right to left. In both *Pilgrimages* the sense of movement is *away* from the statue at the right; the couples are leaving Venus behind. The fact that the Louvre *Pilgrimage* is more subdued, less explicit, does not reverse that point. That the pilgrims are leaving the delights of the Garden of Love—the island of Cythara is a prototype of *locus amoenus*—is supported in my reading³¹ by noticing the pirouette effect Watteau achieves.

³¹ I follow Michael Levey's conclusive argument in "The Real Theme of Watteau's Embarkation for Cythera," pp. 181-83. See also Edmund Hildebrandt, *Malerei und Plastik des Achtzehnten Jahrhunderts in Frankreich* (Wildpark-Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion M. B. H., 1924), pp. 108-9; Charles de Tolnay, "L'Embarquement pour Cythère de Watteau, au Louvre," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 45 (February 1955), 102.



FIGURE 7. *Plaisirs d'Amour* (c. 1717). Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen. Phot. of the Museum.

These turning bodies give a sense of procession, and move from sweet intimacy on the right to a more social conviviality on the left. Watteau does not extend *gradus amoris* to marriage and motherhood as Rubens did in *Schooling in Love*; instead he presents in the *Pilgrimages*, with keen penetration, what could be called the *post amorem* phenomenon. After the rendezvous has become an assignation in the privacy behind the statue of Venus—which is *not* a “seduction” but simply the game of Eros—and union has been enjoyed, there are the *post amorem* steps of whispered tenderness, caresses becoming more polite, professions and expressions of enduring love, and finally a gentle goodbye.



FIGURE 8. *Les Champs-Élysées* (c. 1717). D-V 133. London, Wallace Collection. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees.

The knowing smile on the face of the Venus term in the Louvre *Pilgrimage*, decked with roses and decorated with the leopard skin of Bacchus and the sheathed arrows of cupids who are carrying *away* the torch of love in the distant left, is as enigmatic as any of Watteau's sileni and yet has the Olympian composure of having triumphed in what has taken place, will take place, and always takes place in "the earthly paradise" or "the humanist dreamland" under her sway.³² Erotic Love teases her pilgrims with fears of what can be gained and lost, even for the nonce, before fulfillment, woos them on with intense, short-lived delights, and lets them down afterwards, inevitably, with a mixed sadness, since love's consummate pleasures unavoidably end. It is Watteau's genial innovation here to paint such steps of the *post amorem* story still within the dimensions of the Garden of Love *topos*, Cythara, and its spell.³³³³

³² Mirimonde, "Statues et emblèmes dans l'œuvre d'Antoine Watteau," p. 17.

³³ The "coming or going" debate which Claude Ferraton tried to renew fourteen years later (in "Watteau," *Galerie Jardin des Arts*, 149 [July-August 1975], 81—91) could become a quibble to save face. Two of the less-noticeable couples in the Louvre Pilgrimage have poses, it seems to me, that ring truer to withdrawing from attachments rather than to making advances. The peasant girl clutches her upper-class gallant who leads the central group of figures in the middle ground of the Louvre Pilgrimage with a familiarity that assumes intimacy already enjoyed (Vamour wipes out class distinctions), and is seeking assurances—"Was it alltrue?" And he, with a cavalier toss of his head, is coolly telling her, "Of course." The couple in brown near the boat—one notes that the middle-class lovers are the most prompt about return—strike a "farewell and be good" air even as he helps her aboard. The



FIGURE 9. *Nymph and Satyr* (c. 1715). Paris, Louvre. Phot. Clichés des Musées Nationaux, Paris.

Watteau increases the thematic density in his Gardens of Love that follow the Pilgrimage by increasing the contrapositive irony of the statues and by adding an anonymous, black-caped gentleman whose self-assured mien as spectator challenges the verity if not the reality of amorous intrigue. *Les Champs-Élysées* (fig. 8) quotes in its fountain- statue an earlier painting, *Nymph Surprised by a Satyr* (fig. 9), probably composed by Watteau when he first feasted on the Titian and Van Dyck archives of Crozat c. 1715.³⁴ In *Les Champs-Élysées* the beautiful statue nymph, asleep on a bed of water, and the upright male figure in black cape and red hat underneath her, form the open apex of a triangle on its side that has as vertex the three innocent children, chaperones for the rather prim girls putting roses between their tightly laced breasts; mean while a gallant watches on his hands and knees nearby. The background shows a reverse

Berlin and Louvre versions are so similar in composition that once Ferraton agrees the one is a departure from *Cythara*, despite the additional elaboration in the Berlin piece (which is normal when an artist does something over again), it is hard to withhold the same judgment from the other.

³⁴ For a long time its title was “*Jupiter et Antiope*”; however, because it lacks any emblematic sign, e.g., an eagle, to indicate that the lustful voyeur is Zeus, the mythological title is really overreading the painting. The vagaries of the title are a paradigm of how classical mythology was effaced to lower case and small print in the minds of eighteenth-century artists. Severe overpainting has made it difficult to determine the extent of Watteau’s contribution. Camesasca, in the French edition of *Tout l’œuvre peint de Watteau* (1970), lists it as authentic (p. 103); documentation in the English translation (no date) leaves its status uncertain (p. 105). Donald Posner lists it among the oval paintings of Watteau but does not use it at all in discussing *La Toilette* (see *A Lady at her Toilet* [New York: Viking Press, 1973], p. 23).

triangle of loving couples in a hazy pastoral setting where sheaves of grain seem to wait to be harvested in the lazy autumnal glow. The girl in the left-center foreground gives the viewer an impertinent stare, avoiding the glance of the gentleman who stands near the fountain, imperiously holding his cane. In the fountain, where a dolphin swims elegantly below and where up above a satyr's head with concave shell as headdress gushes out water, the statuary nymph reinforces his sardonic smile. A quiet afternoon in the park is really a masquerade that hides one's secret desire to be a nymph asleep, waiting for a lover to take her by surprise.

So that there be no mistake about his meaning, as it were, Watteau does the painting again, much as the Berlin version redoes the Louvre *Pilgrimage*, making the point artistically more explicit. The canvas called "*Divertissements Champêtres*" (c. 1718, fig. 10) uses the motifs of *Les Champs-Élysées* with much sharper sophistication. The saucy girl in the left-center foreground has become a gallant who plainly mocks the fastidious affectation of the women. The innocent children have detached themselves into a triangular emblem of tethering animal passion, pulling it back toward sociability. The couples in the back middleground have become a song-and-dance party, with music provided by fairly elderly gentlemen, and a few of the ladies, perhaps bored, peer out to the foreground for something new. The sardonic smile of the gentleman in black is the same, but the statue has shed any pretence of sleep and has become a voluptuous woman about to inject a little *commedia dell'arte* into the niceties of Garden of Love proceedings.

Watteau has also used this figure—which I call "Nude descending a plinth"—as a central statue in *Le Bosquet de Bacchus* and in the favored right-hand position of *Le Leçon d'Amour* where its core meaning has germinated (c. 1718; fig. 11 presents the engraving, which inverts the painting's right and left). All oblique lines—the guitar, the arms of the maid plucking roses for her mistress's lap, the shoulders of the one being serenaded, and the arms of both the singer and her soldier gallant—all point to the statue for resolution. In contrast to the idyllic setting (castle and church in the wooded background, mill and water wheel and arched bridge) and the refined propriety of the serenade and the delicate hint of its efficacy (a few roses have already fallen at the feet of the lover), the statue exudes a chubby, fleshly vitality that lives by other rules. Her hair is loose and still wet from the swift ride on the dolphin at her side; one of her arms reaches around to scratch impatiently the sole of her foot, and one bare leg is already over the edge.



FIGURE 10. *Divertissements champêtres* (c. 1718). London, Wallace Collection. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees.

Why is this statue interrupting the ' *Schooling in Love* ' ? The answer is tucked into the face of the plinth: a woman with flowing hair cups her ear to hear the music. It is the nymph Echo, who had that unhappy affair with Narcissus.

Watteau's "Nude descending a plinth" in *La Leçon d'Amour* and in ' *Divertissements Champêtres*, ' ' along with the mysterious black-caped stranger, suggests that the formalized lovemaking of Watteau's day is a charade, essentially narcissistic, of disguised and suppressed sensuality. It is not clear that Watteau means that the forthright, naked presence of the statuary woman might decisively alter affairs; but one may remember that the candle-holder ape dressed as Pierrot in *L'Amour Mai Accompagné* (fig. 6) was critical of wanton love. And in several paintings of these years Watteau pursues the motif of the world-wise gentleman who strides around as spectator and outsider. In *Réunion en Plein Air* the black-caped spectator quite coarsely inspects a reclining nude statue from the rear position of the satyr. In the complex painting called, not inappropriately, ' *Fêtes Vénitiennes* ' c. 1718-19, fig. 12)—if one keeps in mind the interminable length of Venetian festivals, so that wearing a mask in eighteenth-century Venice became almost a way of life—Watteau probes the bitter truth that not all masks worn by men and women in public together are narrow bands of velvet across the eyes.

The painting is a brilliant kaleidoscope of pied colors and outrageous hues, all vying for attention but still melted together into a luxurious masterpiece and centering on the white prima donna. Her slight, doll's body is tensed for the opening step of the dance, and her eyes betray some apprehension as to what might happen to her, opposite this imposing, paunchy fellow got up in a costume of oriental pomposity. Already at her right elbow, on the side lines, a "faux pas" attack is being disdainfully repulsed. On her left is a peasant in short pants playing his genital bagpipes, as if in collusion with her partner. Directly over the woman in white, high up on a vase in the shadows, as in the early arabesques, is a horned ram's head. And behind her is our critic, fitted with a blue cloak for the occasion, explaining the scene to a rather shocked companion. His left-handed gesture toward the statue, if not intentionally obscene, is at least heavily sarcastic: "Here, my good woman, you have an honest mirror of what you see before you. The primping, strutting pair stage-center are really a couple of gamecocks in an arousal scene before mating. The truth of the matter, behind the facade of sweetness and light, ravishing modesty, endless fantasy and schooled elegance, is our full-breasted, reclining beauty here, odalisque-hipped, arm raised above her head in an age-old artistic sign of seduction, about to sink out of sight on the back of a dolphin. That is the true reality, which, in our society, of course, is only statuary."



FIGURE 11. *La Leçon d'Amour* (c. 1718). D-V 263. Phot. Bibl. Nat. Paris.



FIGURE 12. *Fêtes Vénitienes* (c. 1718-19). Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland. Phot. of the Museum.

Watteau's statues have been considered "ambiguous" because they have never been taken seriously enough as integral to the meaning of the paintings. Somewhat in line with André Chastel's argument that painters from the Fifteenth to the twentieth century have often used "*le tableau dans le tableau*" as a thetical anagram of their deepest held esthetic,³⁵ I believe I have shown that especially from c. 1715-19 Watteau's statues are indispensable for the correct reading

³⁵ André Chastel, "Le tableau dans le tableau," in *Stil und Ueberlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes*, Akten des 21. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte in Bonn 1964, 3 vols. (Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1967), 1:16, 28-29.

of his paintings and highlight what sets him off from all the others who have made "*fetes galantes*" a household word in eighteenth-century scholarship. Watteau's unsettling *tristesse* is due to the thematic-narrative structure and irony of the Garden of Love *topos* he makes his painterly own, and to the covert but deeply committed critique of the style of life and love around him, which is phenomenologically present in the telltale statues.³⁶

I do not mean that Watteau moralizes, nor that he is anecdotal.³⁷ But if one takes the garden concerts and reunion-of-musicians scenes prevalent in seventeenth-century Lowland paintings as the horizon of Watteau's iconography or takes the unconsummated love suspense in Watteau's paintings as the troubadour ideal updated, one cannot explain the statues or the genuine hurt expressed in the art of Watteau, except psychologically (e.g., Watteau was an irritable, caustic fellow, according to his rakish friends).³⁸ Watteau is *for* passionately consummated love, the *factum* as well as *visits* step toward the Rose. It is just that Watteau sees, from a fundamentally *commedia dell'arte* perspective, that every earthly paradise has its snake in the grass. Watteau paints as if every man and woman is willy-nilly implicated. He paints both the earthly paradise and the enigmatic, soft bite of the snake.

* * *

³⁶ Watteau's irony ends (beyond the scope of this article) in Gilles, the poor man's Pierrot, who coalesces the emblematic statue function and the role of the mysterious, critical stranger into one moving symbol of a tragic clown who is the foil, mirror, and butt of humankind, a displaced creature who cries for acceptance and warm human love which society cruelly denies, even by the faint praise of applause. For hints of this interpretation see Erwin Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: On the Conception of Transience in Poussin and Watteau," in *Philosophy and History: The Ernst Cassirer Festschrift*, ed. R. Klibansky & H. J. Paton (1936; New York: Harper & Row Torchbook, 1963), pp. 247-52; Dora Panofsky, pp. 325, 330-34, 335-40; Madelein Osché, "Antoine Watteau: L'Instant qui s'éternise," *Jardin des Arts*, 18, No. 210 (May 1972): 34-39; Ronald Paulson, pp. 103-4.

³⁷ See Michael Levey in *Art and Architecture of the Eighteenth Century in France*, with Wend Graf Kalnein (Baltimore: Pelican History of Art, 1972), p. 19; Posner, p. 90.

³⁸ René Huyghe and Hélène Adhémar tend to adopt the idyllic concert as frame of reference for Watteau. See R. Huyghe in a footnote of the original French edition of his incisive interpretation, "The Universe of Watteau," in Adhémar, p. 53, note 12. As a consequence, perhaps, Adhémar has a blind spot; she feels uncomfortable with the mature Watteau who "seems to be obsessed "by the beautiful figure of Antiope and was "seduced for a certain period, 1715-1721 by the nude" (Adhémar, p. 104, cf. pp. 116-17). But that period covers the major part of Watteau's oeuvre and his best paintings! In the course of Mussia Eisenstadt's impressive detection of the traditions backgrounding Watteau's *topos*, she sometimes blurs the strands, which are indeed very interwoven (see *Watteaus Fêtes Galantes* and ihre Ursprünge pp. 129-32). Claude Ferraton proposes that the Venus term in the Louvre Pilgrimage represents "Platonic love" ("Watteau," p. 87). The psychologizing of Watteau's humor is widespread (e.g. Levey and Kalnein, p. 18); while true, it is not assuchartistically illuminating. In fact, it may be used as a hermeneutical escape hatch.

Watteau's knowing critique of what ruled and plagued polite society acquires historical strength and artistic subtlety from the fact that the painting no longer has pictorial referents which need to be or can be checked out in Cesare Ripa. Watteau illustrates particularly well one of the ways painting came to be of modern, secular age, where both the classical pagan frame of reference and the world picture of heaven and hell and God are lost to view. Many lesser painters in different European countries during the eighteenth century contributed to the loss of Renaissance and Baroque, metaphysically thick emblematics simply by the attrition of ignorance or by hollowing out older iconic rhetoric to stereotyped formulas which made such dimensions less attractive and viable for serious young artists.³⁹ But Watteau effected iconographic change without revolution in France and with genuine promise.

Like many of his contemporaries, Watteau learned how the simplification demanded by decorative art freed a painter from the literary encrustations of the Academy. One could say it is a positive contribution of the rococo style in general that it encouraged painting to be just painting, and that the delicate hedonism which attended various rococo cultural manifestations relaxed the painterly task and laicized its universe of sight.⁴⁰ The superficiality that followed such secularization is well known. Watteau, however, unlike many of his contemporaries, did two things with his depoliticized, demythologizing, popularly accessible paintings: (1) he embedded what he painted in the matrix of *commedia dell'arte* crossed with the grand Garden of Love traditions; and (2) he used similar figures drawn from life, in similar pictorial contexts with subtle differences that evoked a kind of Proustian, halfremembered, imagined cohesion.⁴¹ That combination, spirited by a rococo lightheartedness, resulted in a reform of standard iconic practice, much like that which Paulson notes in Gainsborough.⁴²

³⁹ See A.-P. de Mirimonde, "Plagiats et bévues en particulier dans l'iconographie musicale," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français* 1969 (1971): 184, for a particularly good example of how Jacques de Lojoue miscopied Veronese.

⁴⁰ See Patrick Brady's careful exploration of Watteau's particularly "delicate neo-mannerist (or proto-rococo) hedonism," in "Rococo Painting: Some Points of Contention," *Studi Francesi* 16, Nos. 47-48 (1972):271 — 80. Brady also attempts a careful characterization of "rococo" so that the concept is applicable to both plastic art and literature, in "The Present State of Studies on the Rococo," *Comparative literature*, 27, No. 1 (Winter 1975):26-27.

⁴¹ Denys Sutton, Antoine Watteau's "Les Charmes de la Vie" (London: Percy Lund Humphries, n.d.), pp. 8-11.

⁴² Paulson, 224-31.

Watteau set in motion a reform of iconic practice that proffered a hitherto untried web of graphic reference. The “rose” in Watteau’s paintings never stands for “the Beloved *One*,” like a Petrarchan Laura, Watteau’s “rose” is always a rose growing wild, cultivated, or picked to nestle between a young woman’s breasts or to lie fallen at a lover’s feet, *vaguely* emblematic, as A.-P. de Mirimonde has shown at length, of the promise, beauty, fragility, and brevity of voluptuous love. “Nude descending a plinth” does not *ha\econcupiscentia naturalis* as dogmatic *analogon*; it is not just part of the landscape as decor: the living nude statue charges epiphorically the painted ladies, gallants, and stranger present with undertones of passion held back and latent, whose outcome is unsure. That is, while there is no lexicon of fixed equivalents for Watteau’s amalgamation of traditional emblems and arabesques, chinoiserie and *commedia deli arte*, because his art no longer uses classical Humanist or scholastic Christian horizons, his images and pictorial language do cohere intelligibly within a new, targe cohering perspective on life, even if it cannot yet be delineated in categorical terms. The symbolic feature of Watteau’s art is not “self-reflexive” in a nineteenth-century romantic, private-subjective sense and not in a twentieth-century idiosyncratic sense: his pristine, Enlightenment style works in ways comparable to the *commedia dell’arte*, which presents perennial types (amateur, rake, gracious lady, shyster, melancholic voyeur) but can absorb current issues, concrete hopes, and foibles.⁴³⁴³

It is this kind of iconographie change Watteau initiated in French painting to move it on to modern secular art. His *Oeuvre gravée*—a genuine emblem book of the Enlightenment, often fitted out with verses and even Latin titles—came to be familiar to all kinds of artists and

⁴³ Cf. Benedetto Croce’s analysis in “Pulcinella e le relazioni della commedia del l’arte con la commedia popolare romana” (1898). *Saggi sulla letter atura italiana del Seicento* (Bari: Gius. Laterza, 1962), pp. 244-47. Jan Bialostocki has signaled the need in *Stil und Ikonographie, Studien zur Kunstwissenschaft* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1966), for a history of iconography, as a doorway to “eine Kunstgeschichte als Geschichte der menschlichen Vorstellungswelt,” which would let us finally ask the right kind of questions on “whether changes in the Way-of presentation, which fashions one’s images, corresponds with the changes that take place in the area of media and technique” (p. 156). Paulson’s 1975 study, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century*, tackles that very problem most perceptively. Theorists will need to take care, however, not to accept the newer and later iconographic system of any given age as more “empirical” and “visual” next to the older as a more “literate” and “conventional” style. The “return to Nature ” of each age, Robert de la Sizeranne has pointed out, is the call to break out of iconic canons formulated by previous generations that have become scholastic (French Art from Watteau to Prudhon, ed. J. J. Foster [London: Dickinsons, 1905], p. 7). But Watteau, Hogarth, and Gainsborough’s demythologizing reforms also became “conventional” formulas that needed to be posited afresh. The (modern) attempt to excise the iconic dimension from painting altogether suffers from the historical thinness that sticks to anarchic tendencies (see Hans R. Rookmaaker, “The Changing Relation between Theme, Motive and Style,” in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of Aesthetics, Amsterdam 1964* [The Hague: Mouton, 1968], p. 711). A “natural” iconography in painting semper reformanda est, under the enduring order experienced by each generation of artists.

connoisseurs, who more often than not adopted his manner rather than his meaning : and this only accelerated the process of emblematic change and reduction. Ironically, that fact may be an important reason why viewers and interpreters today have largely missed the key to the critical meaning of Watteau's paintings given us by the telltale statues.

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