Failure and Temporality in the Work of Antoine Watteau

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Abstract

Antoine Watteau's paintings have long been the subject of textual commentary. This relationship to text is conventionally sustained by interpretations that engage with the devices of representation: the semiotic. The aim of this thesis is to promote an alternative, less semiotic way of understanding Watteau's drawings and paintings.

For Walter Benjamin, the *Trauerspiel* or Baroque allegory is a completely temporal art form. It is not only ephemeral and transient but it constitutes a ruin because its relation with natural decay and the historical present is so close that it fails to establish itself resistant to change. Jules and Edmund de Goncourt, celebrated art critics of the eighteenth century, proffer a more conventional understanding of allegory when they determine that Watteau was a great poet and that his allegorical paintings convey messages concerned with ideals of love and beauty. Watteau's paintings can be considered more complex than the de Goncourt brothers would have us believe. For this reason, this thesis will work through the more sophisticated understanding of allegory and methodologies of allegory offered by Walter Benjamin so as to explore how failure and time recorded at a material level of Watteau's paintings might inform and affect a different awareness of Watteau's allegorical images. It will argue that temporality can be traced in Watteau's paintings. It will explore the possibility that Watteau's studio practice celebrates failure and that this practice of failure inscribes his images with time. It will also propose that the effect of Watteau's paintings is the result of the material and temporal condition of the sign and its failure to sustain eternal meaning.

To be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail, that failure is his world and to shrink from it, desertion...[1]

[1] Beckett, Samuel, *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuitt*, John Calder, London, 1965, p.125.

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Introduction

Many writers have written about and produced a range of different responses to the work of Antoine Watteau. The sum of this writing has been referred to as an "excess" of literature, a symptomatic response to "undecidable" images.[2] Yet although the quantity and variety of Watteau writing suggests his work is enigmatic, and some texts claim that his paintings are associated with a Romantic melancholy[3] and conditioned by 'vague and haunting emanations,' little writing about Watteau's work intelligently engages with its mysterious effects.[4] Traditionally much of Watteau writing is apparently not only limited in its ambitions but naïve: writers often offer little in the way of reflection, preferring instead to proffer imaginative description supported by unsophisticated thinking. In the eighteenth century, for example, Edmund and Jules de Goncourt identified Watteau's paintings' as allegorical messages, narratives of lost love and the affairs of the heart, conveyed through symbols.[5]

If involved critical accounts of Watteau's work and its affect are rare, they are not unknown. Two of the most significant, critically informed readings of Watteau's work are Thomas Crow's chapter entitled *Fêtes Galantes and Fêtes Publiques* in *Painters*

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[2] Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 88.

[3] Conisbee, Philip, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century France*, Phaidon, Oxford, 1981, p.143.

[4] Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 88.

[5] Love is the light of this world; love impregnates and permeates it, is its youth and its sincerity; and when you have traversed the rivers, the hills, the garden walks, when you have passed the lakes and the fountains, then the Paradise of Watteau opens before you. It is Cythera. Beneath a sky painted with the colours of summer, the galley of Cleopatra sways at the water's edge. The tides are dead; the woods are silent. From the grassy earth to the heavens, beating the breathless air with their butterfly wings, a swarm of cupids flies, flutters, dances, frolics, now joining with a knot of roses some too indifferent pair of lovers, now sealing with love knots the round of kisses that floats up into the sky. Here is the temple, the spiritual destination of this world: the painter's Amour paisible, Love disarmed, seated in the shade, the Love whose image the poet of Teos would have engraved upon some vernal drinking cup; it is a smiling Arcady, a tender Decameron, a sentimental meditation; caresses are dreamily exchanged, words lull the spirit; there is a pervasive atmosphere of platonic affection, of leisure preoccupied with love, of youthful, elegant indolence; the press of passionate thoughts composes, as it were, a ceremonial court of courtship; couples leaning on one another's linked arms exchange civilities, the compliments, at once tender and facetious, of the newly wed; looks with no fever in them and embraces no impatience; there is desire without appetite and pleasure without desire....It is love but it is poetic love, the Love that contemplates and dreams. de Goncourt, Edmond and Jules, *French Eighteenth-Century Painters*, Phaidon, Oxford, pp. 7-8.

and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris and Norman Bryson's *Watteau and Reverie* which can be found in his book *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime.*

In the chapter *Fêtes Galantes and Fêtes Publiques* Crow develops an account of Watteau's *fête galante* that distances Watteau's work from 'a personal theatre, a fantastic transformation of prosaic experience.'[6] Crow traces Watteau's passage through the milieu of fair entertainment and marginal, often highly unrealistic artistic practice, claiming that the curiosity of Watteau's paintings relies on 'two related and artificial systems of representation being manoeuvred into productive contact:' Fair informed elite theatre and painting.[7]

Crow arrives at his conclusion by situating Watteau's work in relation to the fair theatre at the turn of the eighteenth century and how during Watteau's apprenticeship, his creation of arabesques prepared him to create disjunctive, often ambiguous images. At the time of Watteau's arrival in Paris, paintings retailed not only through shops but also fairs: an urban variant of the annual commercial events held at pilgrimage churches and abbeys since the middle ages. There were two notable fairs, the Foire St. Laurent and the Foire St. Germain. These fairs contained 'everything that the merchants could gather to tempt the curiosity of men and to excite them to extravagance and prodigality.'[8]

Like the Salons the fairs attracted a range of classes and types: masters, valets, lackeys, thieves, courtesans and pretty young women. They were places of pleasure, of excess and license. Patrons visited the fair to purchase pictures, indulge in drinking and gambling but also, visit the theatre.

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[6] Crow, Thomas E., *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1985, p.56.
[7] Ibid., p. 57.
[8] Ibid., p. 46.

Troupes of *danseurs de cordes* or tightrope acrobats were the principal attraction of the fair theatre but this designation can be misleading. In 1697 the satire of the *Comédie italienne* raised official tempers so much so that its royal privilege was revoked and its company banished from France. A good number of the players of the Italian comedy found refuge, however, with the acrobats and theatre troupes of the fair. The addition of the italienne players to the acrobatic performances brought together a mix of theatrical genres to create a new genre. In this new genre acrobats would perform high above the audience while Columbine, Pierrot or Gilles acted out performances below.

Legally the fairs were unable to perform spoken drama. The italienne were accordingly licensed as acrobats and forced to present their 'stock playlets in pantomime form.'[9] To avoid the strictures on dialogue the italienne players or *forains* resorted to broad physical antics to express their characters or utilised a variety of performance tricks e.g., *en monologues*. During *en monologues*, 'an actor would appear alone on stage, speak his line then disappear to the wings while another performer appeared and replied.'[10] A different performance trick involved, when presenting defamatory versions of classical dramas, the *forains* appearing in the costume of the best known legitimate actors in their signature roles but speaking lines composed entirely of ridiculous-sounding nonsense syllables.

According to Crow the popularity among the affluent of a theatre where "all was permitted" was sufficient to threaten the solvency of the legitimate theatres. 'From the day of the opening of the St. Laurent fair "wrote the *Mercure* in July of 1715," the Comédie [de Français] and the Opera [were] rightly deserted.'[11] In reality, what the fair theatres threatened was more the fit that had existed between a cultural hierarchy and a

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[9] Ibid,. p. 49.
[10] Ibid., p.49.
[11] Ibid,. p.52.

corresponding social one: an elevated culture for the nobility and a marginalized low culture for the common majority.

Under Louis XIV a codification of symbol and status took place, which tried to limit the appeal of the vulgar in favour of grand-siècle classicism. Yet despite the Royal court's attempt to degrade the fair theatre and its carnivalesque hybridity, the Parisian elite embraced it: in particular, the *parades*. The *parades* were brief bawdy come-ons played on balconies above the doorways of the fair theatres. They were the crudest and most broadly physical entertainment available: ridiculous in style and full of buffoonery. Around 1710 the Parisian aristocracy became obsessed with staging private performances of Italian-style comedy, modelled not on the plays once acted at court or even the fair, but the *parades*. As we will see in more detail in chapter one, these rough performances made up of a few makeshift props, a bit of flour for whiteface, a simple story line, were incorporated into high-style balls and masquerades.

Thomas-Simon Guellette was the first to stage high society *parades* at his Paris masquerades and the first to take the idea to his country properties. Following the success of Guellette's masquerades a number of fellow high rank Parisians carried the fashion back to the Royal court. Via Guellette and company, the ritualised slapstick and mockery of traditional carnival brought forward by aggressive *forains*, became an important medium of elite diversion and even self-definition. A new fantastic erotic theatre, a genre with no rules, had been born.

According to Crow the elite masquerade with its theatrical performance, which was to become known as the fête galante, staged by Guellette and others, was available to Watteau and probably constituted a part of his everyday experience. Yet for Crow it would be simplistic to see Watteau's pictures as literal interpretations of the life around

him. They might contain in accurate detail the ambiguity of costume, dancers and flirtatious lovers for which the fêtes galantes were famous. But the significance of the fête galante lies for Crow, not in its source as a direct reference but in the way that its mixture of previously exclusive symbolic vocabularies, the serious and the playful, the high and the low, mirror the interplay of vocabularies in the revival of arabesque painting which occurred around the same time as the fashion for the social fête galante: a revival in which the young Watteau participated.

Watteau's second apprenticeship was with Claude Audran. Around 1708 Audran was becoming one of the dominant forces in the design of decorative interiors and his popularity was built on his revival of the arabesque. The arabesque, a form of decorative embellishment, was particularly suited to the country mansion or to evoking a country mansion atmosphere in a city interior. Audran's approach to the arabesque, in a way that mimicked the *parade* performances, involved creating travesties of classic themes. *The Trojan Horse* theme depicted by Audran in one of his arabesques derived for instance, not from Homer, but from a play of marionettes by Fuzelier entitled *Harlequin-Aenas, or the fall of Troy*, first performed in 1711 at the St. Laurent fair.'[12] Audran's designs, include, in a way reminiscent of the *parades* and fair theatre, a playful mix of serious and otherwise exclusive vocabularies: animals such as monkeys juxtaposed with humans, chimeras and acrobats.

During his apprenticeship to Audran, Watteau designed his own versions of the arabesque. His early designs stick close to that of his master and utilise similar techniques but later drawings for arabesques depart from the established pattern. In these later images the central motif innovatively expands to draw the surrounding elements into a tight frame around it. For example;

[12] Ibid., p.59.

> In an arabesque like *The Swing* (which virtually introduced the subject into the iconography of Western art), there is a [great] confusion … between the abstract border surrounding the central vignette and the props – the trees, vegetation, and architecture – which belong to the illusionism of the scene. The confusion is deliberate, and the effect is one of suspension between pictorial unity and free decorative fantasy. The various emblematic elements of the frame hover just beyond reach of the illusionistic space but close enough so that their mixed symbolic load spills into our reading of the enclosed drama. Below the richly dressed lovers, posed in their costumes of the stage, rest inflated bagpipes, a sign of rustic pleasure, but more pointedly in folk symbolism, of the male genitals; a woman's cast-off hat, shawl, and tipping basket of flowers rest against them. That bawdy subtext from the popular tradition is itself framed above and below by symbols from the classical lexicon of pleasure: the horned male goats another symbol of aggressive lust bears down from the top centre while a world-weary head of Bacchus closes the design at the bottom.[13]

If the fête galante offered elite society the opportunity to indulge in the cultivated ambiguity and indirection which it believed was the essence of true aristocratic deportment, for Crow, the new arabesque format similarly allowed playful and intriguingly layered allegories of desire that referenced without imitating the contemporary experience of the fête galante party-goer, the *honnêteté*.[14] It was, as he puts it, 'Watteau's great and original move, in 1712 or 1713, to project the disjunctive strategies of the arabesque, [with its complex layers of signification and potential for misdirection and intrigue], into an apparently unified moment in space and time: [Watteau's *fêtes galantes*].'[15] In Watteau's *fête galante,* the hybrid conjunction of disjunctive vocabularies found in the elite theatrical play coincides with the new representation conventions of the arabesque with the result that the arabesque metamorphoses into images with the condition of disjunctive signs: images with 'a disjunctive syntax [that] permits the testing of limits rather than the confirmation of them.'[16]

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[13] Ibid,. pp. 61-62.

[14] Ibid., p. 68. 'The essence of *honnêteté* lay in the maintenance of artifice and secret penetration of the artifice of others, the decoding of hidden messages and undeclared desires. Its ideal was an infinite responsiveness, one keyed by the words *complaisance, souplesse,* and *insinuation.*

[15] Ibid., p.62.

[16] Ibid,. p.

Bryson's influential approach to Watteau's work differs from that of Crow by concentrating more on the painterly sign than its historical significance. His work attempts to account for 'the excess of Watteau writing'[17] by suggesting that Watteau developed a more figural approach to the painterly sign, what he calls the subversive signifier, and that Watteau's subversive signifiers imply 'more than they state.'[18] According to Bryson, Watteau developed his more figural sign through reference to the theatre and its signage: in particular, the stage practice of the *Commedia dell' Arte.*

Although the function of readability may differ according to the tradition that it maintains, from coiffure to scenery, from the body of the actor (which becomes a sophisticated signifying system through hand gesture and pose), to its enrobement, for Bryson, the spectacle of theatrical enactment is there to be read. In the tradition of French drama, for instance, hand gestures signal the arrival of *récit* and assist authentication of the scripted performance. Conversely, in the *Commedia dell' Arte,* more emphasis is placed on the sign's ability to be itself visually articulate. This is because it is mostly responsible for the mostly silent conveyance of the narrative.

Watteau's use of hybrid signs and reference to conventions of stage and theatre readability, when employed without foreclosure, Bryson argues, suggest narrative but defer discursive attribution of meaning. In other words hybrid signs entail pictorial undecidability or semantic indecision. This can be interpreted to mean that when a painted figure appears to be insufficiently attributable as one thing or another, identification fails. To stabilise the experience of this indecision, Bryson suggests that the viewer volunteers an excessive semantic response that pours into the interval between the one thing and the other. Bryson claims that Watteau's *Commedia dell' Arte*

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[17] Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 65.

[18] Ibid., p. 73.

inspired undecidable paintings constitute a semantic vacuum, and that they open narratives and suggest identities but do not then sustain them.

As we have seen, Crow's and Bryson's engagement with Watteau each offers valuable contributions to the study of his work and its affect. Crow utilises the methodology of a thorough study of Watteau's social historical context to identify, by way of the coincidence of two modes of representation, eighteenth century fair theatre and painting, one possible explanation for the disjunctive and often enigmatic properties of Watteau's work. Bryson on the other hand gives attention to close looking and proposes, by way of a theory of discourse and figure and semiotics, the subversive signifier as a means of accounting for the challenge of determining meaning in Watteau's paintings. The different achievements of these two authors need not however represent the exhaustion of the potential of their thinking about Watteau. Bryson's and Crow's engagement with Watteau's paintings raises questions about art and history; that is, can you understand and explain enigma solely by way of semiotics and social history. Or put differently, is it not probable that by approaching Watteau's works via its signs and its cultural history something will be left unexplained?

There are, hidden in the writing of Bryson and Crow, indications of some left over issues: matters yet to be explored. For instance, Bryson's study of Watteau involves intense study of his paintings. He identifies and analyses different features of the image then, based on critically informed thinking about the image, proposes hypotheses. In Crow's consideration of Watteau's paintings historical studies are utilised to propose how Watteau's 'kind of allegory was made available as an image of elite pleasure in early eighteenth-century Paris;'[19] how the image is informed by the coincidence of the syntax of elite theatre and how the arabesque mode of representation may have led to the ambiguous images that Watteau is famous for. Yet although Bryson concentrates on

[19] Ibid., p. 64.

the paintings and Crow bases his conclusions on speculation regarding how the paintings came to be the way they are received, neither Bryson or Crow develop the issue of Watteau's studio practice, i.e., the way he made his paintings have the power to signal meaning, or constructed his representations.

When studied closely, Bryson's text also offers the unexplained teasing possibility that Watteau's paintings are conditioned by time. For example, toward the end of Bryson's semiotic-informed essay *Watteau and Reverie* Bryson submits Watteau's *Meeting in a Park* to an elaborate textual commentary.

> In the *Meeting in a Park*, there is a clear parallelism between the two women who turn their backs, one accompanied and able if she chose to turn towards the group, the other alone and facing the void...An attempt is being conducted, by a small group of highly civilised people, to take the greedy raw material of Eros and transform it into a principle of social harmony; the attempt may succeed - the primitive advance and recoil of the couple on the right are eventually fulfilled in the fruitful intimacy of the couple on the left; but the attempt may also fail, and if it does the individual is thrown back into deep solitude, as with the distant female near the lake. But the possible pain of such solitude is balanced by an independence and self-sufficiency that the other figures lack; it may, besides, be only temporary - the solitary female is not permanently disbarred from the erotic game, or banished from the group - her decision to secede is her own, and it has been respected by the others. The remote figure has before her a panorama, and is alone: the viewer and the distant girl communicate through empathy that bypasses the social - erotic society of the foreground. The shared loneliness allows to each a consoling awareness of lyricism.[20]

He then develops an account for the intricacy of his interpretation by suggesting that the juxtaposition of three different areas of figures, i.e., the flirting couple, the intimate couple and the distant solitary woman, 'hint that...the three subjects may be three stages in the development of a single relationship, a successive progress of love viewed in the simultaneous time of the image.'[21] That is, by way of the proposition that a juxtaposition of imagery can generate meaning and textual commentary, Bryson suggests that the

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20 Ibid,. p. 85.

21 Ibid., p. 85.

painting affords a complex interpretation, partly because it appears to compress temporally different but successive events into one image; events that, so juxtaposed, suggest speculative associations concerning their possible correlation.

Bryson's proposal suggests that time is a feature of the discursive effect of Watteau's paintings and this leads him to speculate further about the temporal organisation of Watteau's work. He speculates that *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* collapses a 'before' into an 'after' - the beginning of a day of love, as the pilgrims make their way to the island, and the end of the day of love, as they prepare to leave. Bryson goes on to suggest that Watteau, like Poussin before him, is a temporal risk taker, in so far as both risk 'undermining the temporal *vraisemblance* of a scene in order to maximise its discursive possibilities.'[22] It should be noted, however, that although Bryson identifies the issue of time in Watteau's work, he does not explore its potential to account for Watteau's enigmatic effect. In his work to account for the ambiguity of Watteau's images and their spur to excessive discourse, he instead prioritises the semiotic and textual implications of Watteau's compositions.

To develop a critically informed reading of Watteau's work that concentrates on his making it is necessary to work with a theory that concentrates on the production of art. One possible way of developing an informed understand of Watteau's work by way of its making is to examine his methodology in the context of Walter Benjamin's analysis of allegorical tragic drama. Watteau is ordinarily assumed to be an artist of the Rococo period and Benjamin's *The Origins of German Tragic Drama* ostensibly concerns allegorical drama during the time of the Baroque. However, analysing Watteau's work through Benjamin's review of Baroque allegory can be justified on two grounds. Firstly, because according to Michael Levey determination of the Rococo period without the

22 Ibid., p. 85.

Baroque is inconceivable since the Rococo 'could not exist without the Baroque.'[23] A claim supported by Benjamin who argued that the Baroque should not be considered a historical concept separate to the Rococo since the present is both the moment and site of the actuality of the past and the past is contingent on the action of the present.[24] Secondly, for Benjamin, the Baroque spectacle was not simply theatre but instead a crossover of drama and visual art. Indeed, according to Benjamin, many dramatic scenes of Baroque allegory consisted of artifice-constructed tableaux: representations of scenes maintained by a practice of allegory.

Benjamin's review of Baroque drama and the practice of allegory explores a range of allegorical stage techniques and mechanisms through which Watteau's working methodology might be studied. The technique of montage, which according to Benjamin creates a discontinuous present that 'vibrates across the epochs of recent history,' offers in particular the potential of an in-depth view of how a practice might bring about temporal and spatial effects at the level of the image and object.[25]

As well as offering a critical context for the exploration of Watteau's studio practice, Benjamin's thesis on the mechanics that produce and sustain the aesthetics of Baroque allegory might also enable new speculation about the enigmatic quality of his work through the subject of time. That is, Benjamin and other writers' analyses of Benjamin's proposals regarding the mechanics that sustain the aesthetics of Baroque allegory are suggestive of ways through which the time identified by Bryson in Watteau's paintings may be explored and innovative conclusions drawn. Benjamin's analyses of allegory specifically offers the opportunity to speculatively account for the enigmatic,

[23] Levey, Michael, *Rococo to Revolution: Major Trends in Eighteenth-Century Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1966, p. 15.
[24] *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, edited by Benjamin, Andrew and Osbourne Peter, Clinamen Press, 2000, p. xii.
[25] Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1999, p.11.

melancholic, haunting qualities that some have identified in Watteau's paintings, by offering a means of exploring Watteau's representations and his process, through the spectre-like temporality of Baroque drama: *Trauerspiel.*

In his book *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin & the Play of Mourning*, Max Pensky argues that Baroque allegory or *Trauerspiel* enters into a relation with historical time and natural history so dialectically deep that time itself comes to dictate its appearance.[26] Historical time testifies to modernism's secularisation process since it puts on display the fall from messianic time.[27] Two important symptoms of secular non-messianic time are the temporality of empirical experience and the spatialisation of nature. It follows therefore that if the *Trauerspiel's* relation with historical time and natural history dictates its appearance, it should be considered not only a "temporal" but also a spatial art form. That is, it should be determined that time and space dictates the appearance of the *Trauerspiel.* If the *Trauerspiel* is a temporally and spatially conditioned art form, it presents a suggestive medium through which to explore the time and space in Watteau's work. Benjamin's review of the formal techniques of Baroque drama offers a picture of technique and artifice that contains a number of apposite insights through which a time and space exploration of Watteau's paintings may be directed.

The first insight emerges if we follow Benjamin's thinking regarding dramatic examples of the *Trauerspiel* in which the direction and content of Baroque drama is often conditioned by the effect of a ghost. Close study of the *Trauerspiel* genre suggests that

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26 Pensky, Max, *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin & the Play of Mourning*, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993, p.75.

27 Authentic time is, for Benjamin, closely linked to a concept of nature conceived of before the advent of evolution theory or the historisization of nature. This concept linked an atemporal nature to a theological idea of nature and accordingly an infinite chain of being to the divine. For Benjamin therefore, authentic historical time is considered as religious time or messianic time.

the condition of the spectre - transient and temporal - dominates the environment and atmosphere of the plays. As a result, the symptoms of space and time that dictate the appearance of the *Trauerspiel* can be construed to be phantom like. Significantly the transient or spectral condition of the time of the *Trauerspiel* is not solely dependent on the action of the ghost. In the *Trauerspiel,* because history is embedded in a fallen nature that expresses not eternal bud and bloom but finitude and decay, the appearance of all things represented is like a ghost: provisional, endangered and marked by mortality. In the *Trauerspiel* everything represented is in other words conditioned by an indefinite spectre-like transition.

A second important insight yielded by Benjamin's analysis of the *Trauerspiel* reveals Baroque drama to be a complex artifice maintained and conditioned by a variety of techniques. This attention to artifice is significant in a number of ways. To begin with, if the *Trauerspiel* is a complex artifice of techniques and technologies such as repetition, these techniques are implicated in the spectral time which dominates its scenes of representation. Nature may for example express the meaning of allegory but the technique of repetition ensures that its emblematic representation is 'irremediably different from its realisation.'[28] The technique and technology of stage repetition also strongly differentiates the *Trauerspiel* from other related dramatic genres such as tragedy by making the *Trauerspiel* topologically dispersed or spatially contingent.

A third insight emerges from the way that the signs and space of representation in the *Trauerspiel* are temporally conditioned. In the *Trauerspiel* time is open-ended; hence the organising principle is not completion in and of time. The operative law or 'organising principle' is repetition and mourning. Unlike tragedy, the *Trauerspiel* does not reflect a higher life or intervention of a deity; it is a reflection of a reflection. God is

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28 Benjamin, Walter, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Verso, London, 1998, p.170.

absent and consequently the living and the dead share the same fate. They are doomed to repeat in a spectral existence and never complete their deaths or complete mourning for the passing of the absolute. In the fallen time of a decaying nature the spectral-fated repetition of the dead and the dying alike is the result of the separation of the absolute from experience and this gives rise to suffering and mourning. In tragedy the possibility of divine presence allows the word and dialogue to be brought to completion in an eternal frozen moment where its meaning is full, whereas in the *Trauerspiel* meaning is deferred perpetually through time. There is a discrepancy between appearance and essence. A figure may die but it will return. Signs and emblems take time to decipher and meaning slips with regard to the signifier. In allegory signs do not coincide with history but instead express the transient temporality of nature.

Benjamin largely explores the Baroque spectacle and its artifice not painting. We however might get a new idea of how to look at Watteau's paintings and differently account for their enigmatic quality, in a way that supplements the semiotics of Bryson or the social history of Crow, if we utilise Benjamin as a means of experimenting with the potential of the leftover issues of making and time in Watteau's work. This is because, if Watteau's paintings are conditioned by time, appear melancholic and haunt the spectator, Benjamin's categories of Baroque aesthetics engage with these very qualities. The process of this research will be uncomplicated. Three chapters will each address one theme in turn, i.e., the time of the image, the time of the practice and the effect of a spatial and spectral temporality. In each chapter Benjamin's review of the aesthetic techniques of Baroque drama will inform the methodology by which the chapter explores its theme. In addition, so as to more comprehensively explore and develop a picture of Watteau's work and his practice, wherever possible a compare and contrast methodology will be employed. Watteau's work and methods will be analysed and compared with, for example, other notable exponents of the *fêtes galantes* such as

Nicolas Lancret, as well as with, the not necessarily academic painter but a favourite of many academicians, Nicolas Poussin.

Inspired by the issue of the technique of repetition and its corresponding potential to effect temporal and spatial dispersal, chapter one will seek to explore how Watteau's paintings fail to cohere in one place. *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* will provide the focus for the analysis. Through detailed examination of such features as Watteau's construction of hybrid figures the temporal and spatial condition of the image will be established as both here and there and in and out of time: transient and spectre-like. In this chapter reflection upon the transient condition of Watteau's paintings is not restricted to the level of representation, it also includes the physical composition of the paintings. Indeed exploration and analysis of conservation work carried out on the Pilgrimage proposes a bond or embedded relation between the time of the image and the time of the object.

Chapter two endeavours to explore how the exaggerated, self-destructive, sometimes corrosive studio practice employed by Watteau may have encouraged the production of images contingent upon occluded but spectrally present histories. A feature of this chapter is the analysis of Watteau's unconventional and in some senses non-academic approach to montage and the construction of his images, his commitment to rapid working, and the ways in which his studio practices corrupted the longevity of his paintings. While the first chapter focuses on the establishment of time at the level of the image and its object, analysis of the second chapter is conducted at the level of studio practice, in particular, how a commitment to the pursuit of immediacy and a practice that produced images that failed to maintain some key aspects of academic orthodoxy, might condition Watteau's images with a haunting spectral temporality inscribed in the countenance of a transitional object.

By utilising *Trauerspiel* techniques to trace a pattern of evidence of the *Trauerspiel's* spectral space of representation, chapter three explores the temporal spectral sign in Watteau's late work *Gilles*. This chapter seeks to establish that *Gilles* works as a transient ghost-like image whose spatio-temporal form is conditioned by a spectral temporality. It is, this chapter argues, the temporal condition of the image and its signs that inspire its multiple failed interpretations, i.e., those many attributed meanings that fail to exhaust its potential, and which collectively can be interpreted as a melancholic mourning for the loss of eternal truth characteristic of the critical after-life of Watteau's oeuvre.

Each chapter addresses a specific feature of the enquiry but through their coincidence and overlap the work undertaken by these chapters together provide detailed hypotheses regarding new insights into the enigma of Watteau's work and its affects. The condition of spectral time and its dominating affect on the time and space of representation in the *Trauerspiel* will strongly inform this examination of Watteau's paintings. As a result the condition of spectral time will play a significant role in the development of the argument of the three chapters.

Chapter One

The illumination of what cannot appear: time

According to Benjamin, the organising principle of repetition in the *Trauerspiel* made it topologically dispersed or spatially contingent and this undermined any pretension to the occasion of the drama maintaining an idealised or localisable truth. If the technique of repetition undermines *Trauerspiel's* quality of being present "here and now" by historically and spatially dispersing its representation, then it is possible that in Watteau's paintings, similar techniques and their effects will also be contingent upon temporal and spatial dispersal. The aim of this chapter is to explore this possibility. It will seek to establish a picture or constellation of the time and space constituted by Watteau's *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* (fig. 1). It will offer by virtue of the picture of time exposed, the conclusion that the Pilgrimage fails to arrive in one place and that its transient - neither here nor there or past or present - condition can be considered to constitute a spectral temporality

The Pilgrimage to Cythera

Watteau painted a number of paintings that address the subject of the isle of Cythera, two of which are very similar. *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* currently housed in the Louvre Paris and *The Embarkation for Cythera* now owned by the Charlottenburg castle, Berlin (fig. 2). These two paintings have promoted much discourse. *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* was Watteau's reception piece to the Academy. It was presented to the Academy on 28th August 1717. *The Embarkation for Cythera* was, according to Margaret Morgan Grasselli, probably painted for Watteau's friend Jullienne around 1718 or 1719. Both paintings depict a scene of couples and attendants in the process of

disembarking or boarding a sailing vessel in a setting very evidently redolent of nature and allegorical symbols.

The question of whether the couples are arriving or leaving the isle of Cythera is a central issue to much of the debate surrounding these paintings. According to Cormack, Michael Levey claimed that despite its title, *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* depicts not a departure to but a movement from the isle of love.[29] Resistance to this interpretation comes from Donald Posner, who claims that the painting represents, rather less categorically, as much a departure toward the isle as a departure from the isle.[30]

In so far as both paintings strongly resemble one another and are similarly titled, the debate surrounding *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* is also necessarily related to *The Embarkation to Cythera.* Indeed for some, the debate concerning these paintings amounts to the possibility of establishing between them a continuity of narrative progression. For example, for Claude Ferraton (1975) 'the Louvre painting is a *Departure for Cythera* while the Berlin scene takes place on the island...The Paris painting represents love in the future, ideal love, dreamed love. [While] the Berlin painting represents love consummated, after which there is nothing more but to go home."[31] In other words, the Paris painting predicts the Berlin version and the two paintings accordingly represent a 'chain of amorous episodes, as much the successive stages of crystallization as an allegory beyond time.'[32] Malcolm Cormack agrees to such an extent with Ferraton's interpretation that he attempts to prove the likelihood of such a narrative link by further enhancing the proposed lineage from the Paris version to the

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[29] Cormack, Malcolm, *Watteau*, Hamlyn, London, New York, Paris, Sydney, p. 16.
[30] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1984, p. 184.
[31] Cormack, Malcolm, *Watteau*, Hamlyn, London, New York, Paris, Sydney, p.408.
[32] Ibid., p. 408.

Berlin version by proffering an intermediary painting; a painting that he has however never seen and which he admits is now lost. He states:

> As proof, we can turn to a ***lost*** painting that should probably be placed between the Louvre and Berlin versions. It was engraved by Benoit Audran with the title *Bon Voyage* (fig. 5).[33]

Much of the speculation regarding the Pilgrimage and *The Embarkation to Cythera* paintings is of course not verifiable. We can speculate about whether or not the Paris version represents a departure or an arrival but it is impossible to confirm such speculation without the aid of supporting declarations by Watteau. Consequently, we may say that much of the debate surrounding Watteau's Paris and Berlin Cythera paintings constitute conclusions without closure. However, these debates and other interpretations surrounding the narrative potential of the Paris and Berlin versions of Cythera can positively indicate one clear deduction: that is, the subject of time can be said to play a significant role in the reception of these paintings and time can therefore be identified as a condition of these works.

By way of illustration, in the introduction, I drew attention to how Norman Bryson's account of *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* traces time because it draws attention to three different areas of figures and that 'the three subjects [represented by these figures] may each [constitute] three stages in the development of a single relationship': what Bryson refers to as 'a successive progress of love viewed in the simultaneous time of the image.'[34] Likewise I drew attention to Bryson's undeveloped speculation concerning how *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* collapses a 'before' into an 'after' - the beginning of a day of love, as the pilgrims make their way to the island, and the end of the day of love,

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[33] Ibid., p. 409.
For a more involved consideration of the issue of lost Watteau paintings please see Chapter 3: Spectral space, the mourning play and the failure of meaning.
[34] Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 85.

as they prepare to leave. Other writer's commentaries also offer however other markers that indicate time as a feature of the reception of *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and *The Embarkation to Cythera.*

For instance, the similarities between these two paintings signify for many critics the probability that the later version is a re-working of the earlier version, an amended copy, or according to Cormack, a repetition that borrows extensively from the former. If we consider the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation as repetitions of each other, the historical provenance and location of these repeats also testifies to a representation tense with significant temporal and spatial differences. That is, although the represented scene can be construed to be constituted by way of a reflection, these two very similar paintings clearly have different histories and occupy as counterparts, two different locations. In addition, according to Frederico Zeri, linear progression is, although in a way different to Bryson, implicated in the composition of both paintings. This is because, as Zeri describes it, 'the compositional structure of both paintings is based on a curving line that departs from the bottom right corner, rises toward the centre, and then descends to the left where the preparation for the Embarkation is represented.'[35] In other words, the composition itself, in the way it directs the eye of the viewer, necessitates movement and therefore time in the form of suggested progression.

We have seen that time is a feature of these commentators responses to the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. For some the time of the image constitutes a suspension of time: the collapsing of a before into an after. For others the time suggested by these two paintings is linear and sequential either by virtue of compositional features or the relation of one painting to the other. For each of these commentators however the time of the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation is linked to the narrative implications of the

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[35] Zeri, Federico, *The Embarkation for Cythera*, English translation, NDE Publishing, p. 4.

image. But need necessarily the condition of time in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation be founded on the potentialities of narrative? Is it instead possible to determine an alternative picture of the time in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation? One way of tracing an alternative picture of time constituted by *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and its counterpart may be found by way of the different implications of time entailed by the symbol or allegorical sign.

Message communication in the Academy

In the Academy time was a recognised feature of image communication. In a finite world if a painting is to communicate a concept, Charles Le Brun thought, 'it must be iterable.'[36] 'Le Brun advised the Academy that the discursive aspect of painting should take priority over the figural and that the main task of the painter should accordingly be the intelligible expression of meaning.'[37] In order to express meaning, the painter was required to make use of methods of representation that avoid, for example, the possibility of secondary interpretations, as well as, any dislocation of the discursive process. Consequently, Le Brun and the Academy came to advocate a preference for a lexicon of symbolic images that might be interpreted instantly. The symbol became the mainstay mechanism for the transcendence of temporality and instant communication.

Many painters' in the Academy considered the symbol and reference to mythology necessary for the construction of the allegorical image. However, the symbol is not for everyone the basic mechanism of allegory. For Benjamin, the sign offers a far more appropriate tool for allegory. This is because, he concluded, Baroque allegory elicites a preference not for the eternal moment of bud and bloom but transience and decay.

[36] Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 85.
[37] Ibid., p. 85.

Edmund and Jules de Goncourt considered Watteau a 'great poet of the eighteenth century' and a painter of allegorical fêtes galantes.[38] Can it therefore be determined that Watteau employed an approach to allegorical painting that forecasts Benjamin's thinking regarding the allegory and the sign, and can therefore be elucidated by way of its analyses? Can an inventory of differences be ascertained between the symbol and the allegorical sign, and can these differences enable a picture to be drawn of time, in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*? A picture of time that might not be narrative based.

The Symbol and allegorical sign: a temporal distinction

Benjamin's separation of the symbol and allegory and the rehabilitation of the latter in the *Trauerspiel* book required him to develop his position with regard to the eternal moment of the symbol. Friedrich Creuzer describes the symbol as 'a sign for ideas which is self-contained, concentrated, and which steadfastly remains itself.'[39] The symbol is 'the very incarnation and embodiment of an idea ... The symbol may be defined by four factors: the momentary, the total, the inscrutability of its origin, the necessary '[40] Elsewhere, he also makes the...observation (about the first of these factors), that the 'stirring and occasionally startling quality [of the symbol] is connected to its brevity.'[41] The symbol is, according to Creuzer, the eruption into presence of meaning. Whereas for Benjamin, as we shall see, allegory is a perpetual deferral of meaning.

Creuzer was influenced in his thinking by Greek sculpture and therefore thought of the symbol as plastic. He states, for example:

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[38] de Goncourt, Edmond and Jules, *French Eighteenth-Century Painters*, Phaidon, Oxford, p.1. Please see the Introduction.
[39] Benjamin, Walter, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, Verso, 1998, p.163.
[40] Ibid., p.163.
[41] Ibid., p.163.

In the plastic symbol 'the essence does not strive for the extravagant but, obedient to nature, adapts itself to natural forms, penetrates and animates them. That conflict between the infinite and the finite is therefore resolved by the former becoming limited and not so human. Out of this purification of the pictorial on the one hand, and the voluntary renunciation of the infinite on the other, grows the finest fruit of all that is symbolic.[42]

In other words, 'the symbol [with its quality of the moment] tries to make the finite participate in the infinite, to freeze the moment into an image of eternity.'[43]
These definitions compare starkly with Creuzer's view of the mode of allegorical communication. For example, for Creuzer, allegory 'signifies...a general concept, or an idea which is different from itself; that is, there is in allegory a discrepancy between the difficult relationship of appearance and essence. Creuzer also, perhaps more importantly, determines that in allegorical representation, 'the concept itself has descended into our physical world, and we see it itself directly in the image.'[44] Thus, whereas the symbol is momentary and paradoxically transcendent,' allegory is, [in so far as it directly represents the world,] a successively progressing, dramatically mobile, dynamic representation of ideas which [has] acquired the very fluidity of time.'[45] In other words, whereas 'in the symbol we have momentary totality, [in allegory] we have progression in a series of moments;[46] all meanings are therefore subject to [or are conditioned by] time.' [47]

Influenced by Creuzer's thinking, Benjamin also argued 'that the symbol expressed a mystical desire for timelessness - that is, for the mystical instant or standstill of time as eternity, [then] underscored [this conclusion by claiming that the symbol accordingly]

[42] Benjamin, Walter, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, Verso, 1998, p. 164.
[43] Caygill, Howard, *The Colour of Experience*, Routledge, 1998, p. 59.
[44] Benjamin, Walter, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, Verso, 1998, pp.164-165.
[45] Ibid., p. 165.
[46] Ibid., p. 165.
[47] Caygill, Howard, *The Colour of Experience*, Routledge, 1998, p. 59.

lacked the dialectical potential of allegory.'[48] Unlike Creuzer however, where Creuzer believed allegory to be the trope that might best ***capture*** organic human history, its progression in a series of moments, Benjamin regarded allegory as a figuring of natural history. Allegory did not offer a false appearance of totality nor did it offer a romantic view of human history. Instead, for Benjamin, in a way more radical than Creuzer, allegory staged a petrified primordial landscape. Nature served the purpose of expressing the meaning of allegory and nature offered the 'emblematic representation of [the] sense of allegory. [But only in so far as] 'allegorical representation...[remained] irremediably different from its realisation.'[49]

For Benjamin, the *Trauerspiel* testifies to a fall from messianic time and a form of drama that exposes itself to be constitutive of a language marked by finitude. While in tragedy time is considered authentic and linked to a concept of nature as atemporal, an infinite chain of being, the divine and eternity, *Trauerspiel* obeys different laws. In it each moment is a repetition of a repetition, not a succession of moments, and the drama is spatially and temporally embedded in the historical and terrestrial world of its period, leading to the conclusion that time is considered inauthentic or fallen. In the *Trauerspiel* history becomes a part of the setting of nature, or as Benjamin suggests, in the *Trauerspiel* 'history stands written on the countenance of nature in the characters of transience.'[50]

It is this physiognomy of nature-history axis where we find the basis of a significant difference between the symbol and allegorical sign. This is because, Benjamin suggests, it was assumed in the Baroque period that nature is fallen and no longer eternal, and by

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[48] Hanssen, Beatrice, *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings and Angels*, University of California Press, Ltd. London, England. 1998, p. 67.
[49] Benjamin, Walter, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, Verso, 1998, p.170.
[50] Hanssen, Beatrice, *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings and Angels*, University of California Press, Ltd. London, England. 1998, p. 69.

entwining with fallen nature history can no longer assume the form of a process of eternal life. Instead, history takes on the countenance of "irresistible decay."[51] In the *Trauerspiel* the nature-history axis is necessarily presented in the form of decay, decomposition and dissolution. Nature imprinted with history is not seen 'in bud and bloom, but in the over-ripeness and decay of her creations.'[52] Consequently, unlike in tragedy where the use of the symbol aims to depict an ideal of eternity, what might be termed astral time. In allegory, a language of signs that do not coincide with the realisation of history and which are expressive of the transience of a nature marked by finitude, counter the eternal picture of time offered by the symbolic, by presenting a picture of ephemeral temporality and a perpetual deferral of meaning.

The techniques of a temporal allegory

The temporality of the allegorical sign constitutes for Benjamin the significant difference between allegory and the symbolic. The temporality of the allegorical is however not simply a product of the utilisation of representational signage that rejects the ideal totality of classicism. The technique of developing drama through post-idealised nature and representational mechanisms imbued with mortality rather than the eternal constitutes only part of the methodology of a dramatic tradition expressive of human finitude. A signage of nature imprinted with the physiognomy of history hollows out the idealistic tendencies of tragedy but the temporality of the *Trauerspiel*, the temporality of allegory, is necessarily a product of how these signs are deployed: the techniques of staging allegory.

[51] Ibid., p. 69.
[52] Ibid., p. 69.

One important staging technique for Baroque drama is the fragment. For Benjamin, 'the Baroque fragment was innately different from its romantic counterpart insofar as it resisted the uplifting movement of a reflective consciousness upon which the romantic theory of art was based.'[53] The allegorical fragment challenged the false appearance of totality offered by classicism by exposing the fabricated nature of the artwork. And, like the mortified quality of expressive terms gleaned from fallen nature, those ruined signs of the *Trauerspiel* correspondingly destroyed all notions of classical harmonious endurance.

The combination of a ruined nature-history mode of representation, with its corresponding quality of human time and the employment of a fragmentary approach to the structure of allegorical representation, offer another technique necessary for Baroque drama: notably, the death mask of representation. By way of illustration, Hanssen writes:

> The historical graphicness of "ruined" *Trauerspiel* accomplishes the invaluable service of depicting precisely the state of humanity and nature as fallen. This graphicness undermines the mythical enchantment in which this state appears through the mist of astral forces, mythological meanings, or pagan superstitions. Ruin operates as a mode of enlightenment. The world, in the *Trauerspiel*, is brought into merciless focus, and in this way even fate loses its mythic appearance, stands naked before the viewer as universal death...[54]

In other words, in the *Trauerspiel's* immersion of the drama into natural fate, the fatal connections between the different characters, moments, and locations depicted on the Baroque stage become engulfed or ruined by mortality; depicted things, objects and people, come under the thrall of universal death and the representational object therefore becomes a sign of the approach of death. For this reason, in allegory, 'the

[53] Ibid., pp. 69-70.
[54] Ibid., p. 82.

world of things, unlike [in] the symbolic, "towers oppressively over the horizon of the *Trauerspiel.*"[55] Perhaps however, as indicated in the introduction, the most significant technique for Baroque allegory is repetition.

In *The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin devised a set of theses that challenged the idealist concepts of art such as "creativity and genius". However, the essay also set out to demolish the idealistic concept of eternity by detailing how reproduction, repetition and reproducibility undermined the work of art's presumed quality of being present "here and now".

Drawing on the insights of the Viennese school of art history, Benjamin proposed that in the twentieth century the changed state of the artwork, a change necessitated by technological advancement, was a function of profound modifications of the perception of time and space. Technology, Benjamin claimed, had transformed how we perceive art objects. Through reproduction and the reproducibility, the artwork's authenticity as a thing "here and now" had become questionable. The presence of the art object as a thing localisable in time and space is undermined by reproductions that displace the image through time and space. The uniqueness of the artwork as an original moment is, in other words, undermined by its simultaneous repeated existence elsewhere.

Benjamin tentatively anticipates this argument in his study of the *Trauerspiel*. The founding argument of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* is that 'as a paradigm of

[55] Pensky, Max, *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the play of mourning*, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993, p.83.

secular modernity, the mourning play [can be, by way of] topological and temporal co-ordinates' shown to be fundamentally different from Greek tragedy.[56] Benjamin writes:

> In the European *Trauerspiel* as a whole the stage is not strictly fixable, not an actual place, but it too is dialectically split. Bound to the court, it yet remains a travelling theatre; metaphorically its boards represent the earth as its setting created for the enactment of history; it follows its court from town to town. In Greek eyes, however, the stage is a cosmic *topos.*[57]

Benjamin's thesis shows that the tradition of *Trauerspiel* theatre relied, like the *Commedia dell 'Arte*, on a mobile stage that substituted the earth through inauthentic apparatus. By contrast, Greek drama utilised the fixed open-air theatre in which the stage became identical with the cosmos. These topological and temporal variants not only entail a certain character to each dramatic tradition, e.g., in Greek tragedy the sense of a unique cosmic event, they also reveal that the *Trauerspiel*, unlike tragic drama, is necessarily ruled by repetition and the fundamental requirements of repeatability. That is, the impression of Greek tragedy offered by Benjamin describes 'not a repeatable [dramatic] act of ostentation, but a once-and-for-all resumption of the [mythical] tragic trial before a higher court. As is suggested by the open-air and the fact that the performance is never repeated identically, what takes place is a decisive cosmic achievement.'[58] In the *Trauerspiel* by contrast allegory is evidently dependent on a material law of repetition and by necessity inauthentic space and temporality. We will see this law developed later in an analysis of repetition in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera.*

By establishing repetition as a necessary law of Baroque allegory, the *Trauerspiel* study proposes the idea, in a way that anticipates the work of *The Work of Art in the Age of*

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[56] Hanssen, Beatrice, *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings and Angels*, University of California Press, Ltd. London, England. 1998., p.74.
[57] Ibid., p.74.
[58] Ibid., pp.74-75.

Mechanical Reproduction, that allegorical representation undermines the ideal of the eternal and original occasion. Just as important however, for this thesis, it firmly establishes repetition as a law of temporality in the *Trauerspiel* and a technique that locates failure at the very heart of allegorical representation.

For Benjamin, as we have seen, the allegorical sign has a temporal quality that clearly differentiates it from the symbol. This temporal quality, as we have also seen, is enhanced in Baroque drama by virtue of particular techniques of allegorical representation. In the *Trauerspiel*, fallen nature is employed as a language of expression so as to emphasise the ephemeral and fleeting quality of mortality. The methods of dramatic representation employed in staging this expression achieve a commonality of figure and object that, through a figural quality and the transient character of the means of expression, subject all to universal death and therefore finite time. The artifice of objects, figures and the fragmented scene is employed in Baroque drama to enhance a sense of incomplete time; and the repetition of scenes, signs, and reference in the Baroque enable the impression of a recurrent temporality conditioned by failure: time with no original moment, or time that fails to arrive. If we can determine evidence that Watteau utilised these techniques', they should provide, in so far as they suggest a temporal effect, the focus through which we might develop a picture of non-narrative time in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation.

To be thorough we should however explore, in addition to these criteria two further issues identified by Benjamin, as key features for the development of a material history. 'Benjamin claimed that the historic nature of the original could not simply be gleaned from its status as a palimpsest...Instead, the work's bearing witness to human history was a function of the position it occupied, first through "various changes in its

ownership," second, in the course of tradition or cultural transmission.'[59] At stake in this claim is the material endurance of the artwork and how it might bear witness to human history, what Benjamin explains as;

> [The] unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years.[60]

To develop a picture of non-narrative time in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation we might undertake a comparative study of the two paintings that focuses on the above techniques and how the artwork's material endurance may bear witness to the history of its context. We might explore in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation evidence of techniques similar to those found in the *Trauerspiel* so as to establish a picture of the time that these paintings' may occasion.

The Pilgrimage to Cythera and The Embarkation to Cythera a comparative study

The composition of *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* invites the viewer to look into a scene, over a foreground of silhouetted nature, to a hillock inhabited with figures. The eye is then drawn down across a cluster of figures below the main group and a gathering of winged *amoretti* toward a middle-distance of indistinct landscape and a horizon of mountains and infinity.

On first impression the painting is striking in a number of ways. As a whole the painting appears activated by the texture of description and flashes of white light. The light of the painting and its counterpart shade generated between the foreground and distance

[59] Ibid., pp. 72-73.
[60] Ibid., p. 73.

helps to create an imposing centre stage of well-lit figures. Of these figures three clusters to the right of the canvas appear by virtue of their actions, most noticeable. It seems particularly noteworthy however that of these three clusters one pair of figures stands - dressed in red, yellow, blue and white - at the centre of the canvas. This couple is composed of two standing figures, a male Pilgrim turned away from the viewer, and a female who, partially embraced, turns toward the eye line of another woman seated near her.

To the extreme right of this centre located pair we find a broad margin of mottled colours: overlaid patches of burnt umber, washes of green and brown, that through rapid and considered marks indicate an impression of thickets, foliage and nature.

Amongst these suggested leaves and the shadows of the hollows of the right-hand bushes we find the first of several classic references: the herm of Venus, its shaft adorned with roses, and Cupid's bow and quiver of arrows. At the base of this herm a boy naked from the waist down, seated on another quiver of arrows, introduces the first of three more groups of figures. The boy sits gazing up at a woman holding a fan, while a man in the apparent costume of a Pilgrim, in the course of kneeling, completes the trio by way of his close proximity to the woman and the close attitude of their respective poses.

To the left of this trio, we find a couple composed of a male Pilgrim helping a female figure to her feet: her back to the viewer, head and eye line tilted upward toward the female of the couple located at the centre of the canvas. The figure helping the woman to her feet stands directly below the outer most branches of the tree in front of which they are posed.

Situated to the extreme left of the centre located couple we find an area of dark tones that fade from view as they ascend the left-hand edge of the canvas. This glazed area of dark and mid-tones conceals at a point parallel with the upper torso and head of the herm, the suggestion of a sizeable abode: a castle. It also serves to highlight, by way of tonal contrast, the suggestion of a vessel. Seen prow first, this not fully described boat is signified by way of a gilt figurehead, roses, and an ornate awning but perhaps more importantly, what appear to be two semi-naked boatmen. These boatmen posed with their punts in-hand suggest a readiness to act, a readiness to depart, while around their heads winged *amoretti* fly.

We can detect compositionally behind the couple at the centre of the canvas and their dog, marginally below the top of the hillock upon which they stand, and adjacent to the boatmen and their partially described vessel, four groups of figures. A foursome of two couples, arm in arm who exchange glances, and three separate male female couples, composed so that each avoids the gaze of the viewer.

The Embarkation for Cythera differs from *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* in a number of ways but both paintings show evidence of utilising signs drawn from fallen nature.

Fallen nature:

Fallen nature, understood by Benjamin to express the ephemeral and fleeting quality of mortality, is represented in a number of ways in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and *The Embarkation to Cythera*. To begin with nature is represented in the form of seasonal change. In the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation a grassy knoll is pictured in such a way as to recall a stage set in nature. Not in an ideal eternal nature or a fixed Greek *topos* but instead a nature in decline framed by foliage.

By way of illustration, in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* an extensive browning and yellowing of the foliage that edges the stage indicates a very autumnal scene. Above and behind what appears to be a male Pilgrim helping a woman to her feet the trunk of a background tree is described in such a way as to be almost transparent, more bark and sinew than substance, more hollow than material. Through the transparency of this branch, above and below it, flecks of yellow ochre and mottled patches of golden brown represent the discoloration or seasonal change of leaves preparing to fall. This decline of vigour is also found echoed in the grassy knoll, the foreground rise, and higher up in the tree canopy.

The Embarkation to Cythera also offers a picture of a grassy knoll stage depicted by way of nature on the turn. As in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* trees, leaves, grass and branches express a process of dissolution: a process of decay. What is different about the scene described in The Embarkation is the apparent progress of the autumnal cycle. Where for example in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* the colours of the figures' clothes appear washed out and the foliage of the trees appears steeped in the process of seasonal decay, *The Embarkation to Cythera* presents a picture of nature that is, although undoubtedly tinged with the passing of the season, more vivid. For instance the foliage directly behind, above and below the head of the Pilgrim like figure, repeated from *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*, who helps the woman to her feet, is depicted in the Embarkation by way of ripe greens, browns and deep shadow; while high above the same figure glints of copper tone merely hint at the fading of summer. The grassy bank also offers a more vigorous stage for the theatre of the scene. The bank retains the appearance of land marked by the coming change of season but unlike in the Pilgrimage, the patches of mottled green command the flecks and shades of ochre, pale green and white. In addition, the exaggerated scale of the background tree canopy in the Embarkation offers

a dominating mix of saturated colours, which, in comparison with the Pilgrimage, appear barely touched by the pale dissolution of autumn.

Although *The Embarkation to Cythera* seems to be the representation of a scene reminiscent of early autumn and *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* late autumn, the careful choice of colour and mark exhibited by Watteau in both paintings indicate decisions with a purpose. Watteau clearly chose to represent and then re-represent in *The Embarkation to Cythera*, a composition staged by way of landscape allusions characterised by natural decline: a temporal process. The autumnal effects of these two paintings are not the result of an aesthetic caprice or a passion for painting on-site. They are the products of a process that intentionally constructs images informed by signs with strong temporal characteristics. This claim can be supported by way of drawing attention to the considerable number of other Watteau paintings that employ similar signs, images that combine markers that suggest the ripe and the corrupted, paintings that stage a landscape of features undermined by the ruination of the passing of time. For example, *The Respite from War*, c. 1713 (fig. 6), which pictures a number of soldiers at rest beneath a fabric canopy stretched between several trees that by stages offer a dominating leafy cover of autumnal shades; *La Perspective* (fig. 7), which offers the image of several groups of figures, seated, standing and walking in a park like setting of tall trees the majority of which are tinged with the warm glow of autumns colours: reds, burnt sienna, amber; and *Assemblée dans un parc* (fig. 8), which like *La Perspective* depicts costumed figures idling in a landscape warmed by the colours of the fall.

Another sign of fallen and therefore temporal nature offered by *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and *The Embarkation to Cythera* can be found in the use of mist or fog in the view beyond the foreground figures. In *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* there is a view to a

range of mountain peaks and a point of infinity. While beneath or behind the boarding party a mist rises to obscure the valley and its waterway. In *The Embarkation to Cythera* there is no view to infinity. Instead, a mist reminiscent of, but more extensive than, the mist in the Pilgrimage painting constitutes the only view available beyond the vessel; a view that might therefore be considered an occlusion.

Some commentators might alight upon the possibility of occlusion offered by mist or fog and argue that the suggestion of obscurity in these two paintings constitutes a technique of obsfucation, a pictorial device aimed at rendering signifiers more ambiguous and therefore in turn more suggestive of discourse or a poetic quality. This argument is well reasoned but not conclusive. What can however with some confidence be claimed with regard to the signage of mist or fog in a landscape is that it must represent a temporal occurrence. Early morning, late evening mist and fog are temporary terrestrial events. Fog comes and goes. Again, as with the depiction of autumn, this does not appear an accident of aesthetic. This is because Watteau also appears to have invested several other paintings with similar representations of the temporary. For instance, in *Défillé* (fig. 9), a war painting, Watteau composed a picture in which the foreground is strongly emphasised. Close up depictions of soldiers on horseback troop off into the distance. These potential aggressors are however contrasted with, in the middle distance and on the horizon, plumes of battlefield smoke. These emissions flood the sky and merge with the cloud to offer a picture capable of inviting interpretations informed by stern oppositions: life and death, duration and transition etc.

A similar effect is evident in *Le Camp Volant* (fig. 10), another war painting, where Watteau again purposefully imbues the environment of his scene with the invasive but ephemeral character of smoke. This painting which poses the ennui of soldiers waiting, like *Défillé* but with an even greater emphasis, poses an environment in imminent

transition. Where-as *Défillé* suggests a movement from stability to instability: a gradual corruption. *Camp Volant* appears to stage a camp scene of fatigued and reposed figures in a semi-nocturnal environment. Night is fading, daylight is breaking but the dense smoke of the campfire threatens to prolong this time of passing. The smoke of the fire invades the potential of the day to maintain a sense of indefinite twilight.

In a different context the same effect can be seen in, *L' amour au théâtre italien* c. 1717, in which Watteau maintains the utilisation of signage with a quality of obfuscation that is strongly characterised by time. This painting presents a troupe of *Commedia dell 'Arte* figures in a nocturnal setting. Twelve figures including, Pantalone, the doctor and Harlequin are arranged in a line across the canvas. On the far left a woman holds a lamp. In the top right of the canvas, what appears to be a full moon partially emerges from behind a cloud. In the middle of the canvas the light of a burning torch picks out Pierrot playing a guitar and his immediate company. The torch flame has the potential to operate symbolically: it could perhaps extravagantly be called to symbolise life and finitude. However, what can be claimed with some sureness is that the torch is a representation based on a referent strongly characterised by time. A burning torch illuminates only during the duration of its being lit. The torch in this painting therefore suggests a moment of passing and anticipates a dwindling that will never result in exhaustion.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which the Pilgrimage and Embarkation paintings signal an investment in temporally suggestive signage informed by fallen nature is offered in their pictorial foreground. In both the Louvre and Berlin version there is in the immediate foreground a silhouette of black/green shrubbery and two-withered tree trunks: one of which is comparatively large. These tree trunks echo the background trees; they are not by virtue of the lack of highlights the objects that first draw the

viewer's eye. They are however, because of their position, even though they are over-looked, petrified signs that prefigure interpretation. In other words, the composition of these two paintings appears to direct that any narrative interpretation be read through an ossified nature.

As with the representation of the seasons and mist, Watteau often depicted or repeated within the composition of his paintings, signs based on dead or withered tree trunks. In *Camp Volant* the cooking pot is suspended above the fire by way of the blasted remains of a tree. Likewise in the foreground of *Assemblée dans un parc* c. 1718 (fig. 8) a slender trunk missing several branches and with meagre foliage hugs the left-hand edge of the canvas while standing immediately behind the earth brown silhouette of a malformed cut-off trunk. And, in *Diana Bathing*, c. 1721 (fig. 11), Diana is pictured bathing her feet in a pool or stream, while sat next to the re-born remnants of a shattered stump.

If in the Cythera paintings the season is in decline and cyclic, if the misting of the mid-ground landscape in both paintings signals the time of day, and the fore-ground dead tree trunk in both denotes a presence of nature in decay not bud and bloom, we might conclude that in both paintings Watteau employs signage that is drawn from fallen nature and characterised by time, in particular, signs that signal temporality in a way that anticipates Benjamin's interpretation of the *Trauerspiel*. In the Cythera paintings and other paintings that utilise the same signs, fallen nature signals a time that is of the earth.

We have determined that there is evidence to suggest that Watteau utilised depiction of fallen nature in the Pilgrimage and Embarkation paintings and that his employment of fallen nature metaphors entails temporal affects. If Watteau also used techniques that

promote in his images qualities consistent with Benjamin's idea of the petrified object, the temporal affect of the Pilgrimage and *The Embarkation to Cythera* would be enhanced. So can we now find evidence of painting techniques and artifice in the Pilgrimage and *The Embarkation to Cythera* that might indicate that the paintings sustain themselves by way of an index of finite signs; things that as described earlier signal the approach of death?

The Petrified object and the fragment

There is evidence that the Pilgrimage and Embarkation utilise an index of signs conditioned by finite materiality. There is also evidence that this index of material signs perplexes as well as maintains the illusion offered by these paintings. Material signs, which are the product of technique and artifice, sustain the image as a picture to be interpreted but precariously. The material sign by virtue of its condition as the modelled fragments of finite material sustains the image but only in so far as the illusion it offers is ruined by the fragmentary quality of its artifice. 'In this guise...[the image] does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay:' a temporality with the characteristics of the ephemeral and the finite.[61]

Technique and artifice is everywhere in both the Louvre and Berlin versions of the Cythera paintings. A variety of techniques and approaches to modelling are employed across each painting. The occasion of each painting may accordingly appear as a synthesised moment but the mosaic of its artifice does not always maintain a coherent image. Or, put differently, the illusion of the image is maintained by virtue of techniques that can simultaneously ruin its illusion.

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[61] Benjamin, Walter, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Verso, 1998, p.178

The brushwork and application of paint toward the modelling of representation is for example nowhere concealed in the Pilgrimage. By way of illustration, there are examples of the technique of impasto that by virtue of their presence as distinct features of the image problematise what otherwise may appear to be a coherent spatial illusion. In the far distance of the image a landscape and ether merge in a range of scumbled warm and cool shades that in some places barely conceals the weave of the texture of the canvas. A range of mountain peaks emerges out of this blurred distance by way of impasto gestures (fig. 12). Pigment laden brush strokes that materialise mountain peaks harmonise with the shades of the countryside. These peaks loom as convincing illusions however only at the expense of the synthesis of the represented area. This is because, although the impasto successfully determines the illusion of a mountain summit the mottled staining and dry brushwork of the countryside appears materially indistinct and preliminary to the more substantial medium of the impasto. The snow-capped peaks appear to be in the distance but by way of the material plane sit proud of the surface, much further forward than the illusion of the land upon which they stand. Indeed the impasto of the peaks propels the distant peaks not only into the forefront of the viewer's attention but also renders these peaks as materially present as features that apparently occupy the middle ground. For instance, the texture of highlights represented by gestures of dry pigment applied rapidly to glazes of colour in the costume and figures of the middle ground is, by virtue of the volume of its effect, no less evident than the mass of the material realisation of the mountain peaks.

Similarly, a close study of the glazing of colours and brush strokes of drier pigment in the canopy of trees behind the pilgrims and especially in the foreground grassy bank we find a range of painterly processes that again barely seem to maintain the synthesis of the image. To illustrate, adjacent to the half-naked little boy seated beneath the herm we find a complex layering of colours and marks. According to the composition, the little

boy sits in the forefront of the middle ground close to but behind the range of bushes that demarcate the foreground. The foreground foliage is rendered by Watteau, not by way of careful measured representations of nature but marks, gestures, smudges and scumbles of paint that by way of their overlay and opposition suggest a texture of thickets and grass. In this area and others a technique of rapid generalised gestures combine to suggest a context of nature. But as with the effect of the impasto technique, although Watteau's method sustains at a distance the impression of its reference, the price of the technique is to perplex at a material level the coherence of the image. This is because at close quarters the material quality of the layered texture dissolves the broad suggestion of foliage. Close up, paint, mark, stain and even canvas emerge as the material reality of the illusion of nature and consequently, the more conventionally rendered adjacent depiction of the little boy sits as a part in relation to a very fragmented and perplexing material space.

The material rendering and obvious painterly representation employed by Watteau in the foreground depiction of nature can also be found elsewhere in the painting: most notably in the sky and mist around the heads of the pilgrims waiting to board the boat. In these areas the lead white under painting that Watteau utilised to enhance the light and illumination of his images shows through the representation of the image. In these areas, the ground colour can be seen through or even in places, be seen optically in advance of details that should supplant the foundation colour.

So far we have seen that techniques employed in the Pilgrimage render the illusion of space and arrange signs that suggest interpretation, but the material quality and method of creation of these signs can have the effect of freezing the fluid synthesis of the painting's illusion. The signs hollow out their reference to leave a sometimes-disconcerting matter like quality and these incomplete and imperfect objects then stare

out from the image like finite fragments or things. Instead of offering a picture of eternal continuity, these signs ruin mythical time by having a temporal quality. Can we now attribute similar qualities to *The Embarkation to Cythera*?

The mosaic of technique in *The Embarkation to Cythera* is less obviously traceable by way of the material properties of representation. None-the-less artifice noticeably maintains the image of the Embarkation. Where the Pilgrimage offers a painterly approach to technique that entails dissolution - at a material level - of the coherence of a representation, e.g., sky, bush, tree, foreground location, the Embarkation offers what has been defined as 'a more sharply defined picture language.'[62] This observation can be used to expose the artifice and accordingly the potential temporal qualities of *The Embarkation to Cythera.*

According to Margaret Morgan Grasselli most 'critics have preferred the Paris [Pilgrimage] to the [Berlin Embarkation]. Only Seidel (1900) and Posner (1984), in response to Adhemar...[she claims take] the opposite opinion.'[63] Margaret Morgan Grasselli does not share Seidel or Posner's points of view regarding the priority of the Embarkation over the Pilgrimage. She concedes that the Berlin version does, as Seidel and Posner claim, offer a structure that is clearer but suggests that in being clearer or more defined, its rhythm becomes less poetic. In addition Margaret Morgan Grasselli further volunteers that:

> The composition [of the *Embarkation*] is too heavily charged, too finished. The colours are more strident and less harmonious [than the *Pilgrimage*]. The disappearance of the landscape diminished the "enchanted" side of the work. The gestures have hardened and become heavier, and the faces are more 'earthly'. More explicit, they become less suggestive and more ornamental. Above all, the execution is more

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[62] Zeri, Federico, *The Embarkation for Cythera*, NDE Canada Corp, English edition 2000, p.6.

[63] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, 1984, pp.408-09.

mechanical, as if the artist were bored (compare, for example, the treatment of the trees), which is less inspired.[64]

The key phrases in this passage for this thesis are 'the gestures have hardened and become heavier, and the faces are more 'earthly'. More explicit, they become less suggestive and more ornamental. Above all, the execution is more mechanical, as if the artist were bored.' These phrases are key to our developing an understanding of the artifice and time in the Embarkation because they offer a picture of a painting that is embedded in the terrestrial but is at the same time heavily staged: a mechanical rendition. The Embarkation offers three opportunities through which we might explore these qualities and thereby expose the artifice and time implications of its image; the way that the composition presents a combination of platform and emblem; the montage of its main figures; and detail duplication.

The emblematics of the stage, the couple and the shield

For Benjamin, the breaking of the illusion offered by the stage was essential to the *Trauerspiel* in so far as the staginess of the *Trauerspiel* constituted an effort to express the "play" character of life itself. The *Trauerspiel* demonstratively emphasised the character of the "play" through a variety of techniques. One technique was to set up a stage within a stage and another was to extend the auditorium onto the stage area. Moreover the explicit reference to the stage Benjamin claims often occurs at a moment of crisis. For instance King Lear, cast out by his daughters into the storm, presents a mock trial with the footstool as Goneril; and Cleopatra, preparing for suicide, does so in order not to be dragged in triumph to Rome and see herself dramatically represented as a boy.

[64] Ibid., p. 409.

The staginess of these references is allegorical because, according to Benjamin, they turn the performance platform itself into an emblem of illusion. Nowhere is this made more emphatic than in *Richard II*. Forced to abdicate, Richard calls for a looking glass, and begins to quote Marlowe's *Faustus*. In this scene, Richard with his looking glass, like Hamlet with his skull of Yorick, is a figure of allegory, frozen for a moment into an emblematic stiffness. In the *Trauerspiel*, these references to the stage, the looking glass, the death's head, are all emblems of illusion and premonitions of death.[65]

In *The Embarkation to Cythera*, and *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* we find compositional techniques similar to the *Trauerspiel* method of staging a scene within a scene. In both paintings the composition of the image encourages the viewer to concentrate on a double scene: the figures on the grassy hill and the figures and action focused around the boat. In the Embarkation however there is an extra emphasis on the staginess of the composition. Unlike the Pilgrimage which, in the lower right-hand corner offers an expression of nature, a painterly index of signs, the Embarkation presents in the same right-hand corner a couple staged before a reflective shield: a mirror (fig. 13).

The double space of the scene of the Embarkation as in the Pilgrimage is littered with male-female interaction that can suggest a range of concentrated relationships. Each potential relationship is however, by way of a gesture or gaze, necessarily maintained and figured by the same emblematic composition: the couple. The couple in the lower right-hand corner of the Embarkation enhance Watteau's investment in the exploration of this emblem and importantly offer, by way of the shield, a sign that emblematically highlights illusion. The inanimate sign of the reflecting shield threatens to arrest and stiffen the vital meaning of the couple embraced before it. In the same way as the

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[65] Smith, Gary, *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Recollections*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press 1988, pp. 145-49.

Duke's dying speech in *The Traitor* freezes the movement of the sovereign's life into the image of the hourglass, the dead image of the reflection intimates by way of its specular quality a mortification of these figures.[66] The shield and its reflection signal the status of the couple as conditional temporal objects and by virtue of the repetition of the emblem of the couple across three demarcated platforms of activity, emphasises the status of the image as an illusion conditioned by mortality. The shield, the couple and the broken, repeated stage, renders the composition subject to the death mask of finitude and a collection of petrified things.

The emblem of the couple and the stage promotes and sustains at a semiotic level a quality of representation conditioned by the finite and therefore the temporal. But the Embarkation can be like the Pilgrimage, also determined to sustain this quality of mortified representation at a material level by virtue of Watteau's figures composed from fragments.

Composed fragments: hybrid figures

In *The Embarkation to Cythera* the compositional placement and pose of the main figures are interchangeable with *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*. For example, the stance of the two centre figures of the Embarkation, the pilgrim helping a woman to her feet, the kneeling suitor and the woman with a fan, the standing couple far left and the two couples centre left waiting to board the boat, replicate the pose of corresponding figures in the Pilgrimage. According to Margaret Morgan Grasselli quoting Eidelberg the method employed by Watteau to facilitate this repetition was oil counterproofs made

[66] Benjamin, Walter, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Verso, 1998, p.150.

directly from the Pilgrimage.[67] If we consider the similarities of the two paintings and their apparent dependence on a working methodology that aims at replication - the counterproof - it is possible to recognise a mechanical quality between these two paintings. There are some obvious differences between the composition of the two paintings, the boat, the vista and the Embarkation has a more graphic style, but when compared together they both appear to rely on a basic programme of production. In a way that recalls Benjamin's law of repetition expounded in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* the core composition and figures are automatic versions of each other. The mechanical character of these two paintings is not however confined to the duplicitous technique of the counterproof.

Investigation of the drawings and source material available to Watteau when painting *The Embarkation to Cythera* discloses the possibility that when painting several of the main figures, in addition to utilising counterproofs from the Pilgrimage, Watteau also made use of several other figure sketches. This is by itself not a revelation worth noting. However, what is worthy of note is that when comparison is drawn between, in particular, three painted figures and some drawings and sketches made by Watteau, the painted figures pose the possibility that they are the constructed product not of one single reference but a combination of reference. The painted figures are hybrid objects: composed fragments.

In Eidelberg's exploration of his argument that Watteau made more use of preliminary studies than is commonly acknowledged, he traces a quality of composition evident in Watteau's figures. He states for example, in reference to *Figures de modes* that:

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[67] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, 1984, p.408.

The changes in the figure of the guitarist are equally thoroughgoing, although never to the point of obscuring the relation between the drawing and the painting. The tilt of the head has been changed, that in the painting being based on an additional study from a model.[68]

Although Eidelberg opens the possibility that Watteau's figures constitute a hybrid composition of fragments, he does not then develop the possibilities of such figures. Comparison between the figures painted in the Embarkation and examples of Watteau's drawings suggests that it is possible to trace a lineage from the paintings' main figures to a raft of reference. For instance, there is a drawing currently owned by the British Museum that bears a remarkable similarity to the composed couple of a male pilgrim helping a woman to her feet (fig. 14). The British Museum drawing, through a combination of *trois crayons* represents the two figures by way of rapid rhythmical gestures that record schematically the pose of the couple. Watteau may therefore have referred to this drawing when composing the Embarkation but the British Museum drawing records very little portrait details. So if Watteau did utilise this drawing when painting the Embarkation his ideas regarding the modelling of the male figure's face must have been derived elsewhere. Watteau may have made up the image of the male's face but a drawing currently in a private collection in Paris suggests differently (fig. 15).[69] This drawing describes in characteristic fluid lines the likeness, detail and flowing locks of a face very similar to the male pilgrim painted by Watteau. We might conclude therefore, that when painting the pilgrim helping the female to her feet, Watteau composed the male figure from reference to two drawings; the body and pose from the British Museum drawing and the head from the drawing currently housed in Paris.

Similarly, reference can be traced that suggests the possibility that the kneeling male figure to the left of this couple, the pilgrim who bends toward the female figure with a

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[68] Eidelberg, Martin P., *Watteau's drawings: their use and significance*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 1977, p.23.
[69] Watteau, Antoine, Study of two pilgrim heads, private collection, Paris.

fan, may equally be the product of a process of construction. This is because there are two known drawings that record very similar figures' that are in a like manner dressed and posed. For example, *Deux gentilshommes, l'un à genoux, l'autre debout* (fig. 16), sanguine and cream coloured paper.[70] This drawing offers two sketches of male figures' in pilgrim costume. One of these drawings is a very rapid sketchy impression of a pigtailed male figure kneeling. This sketch does not offer much in the way of either facial detail or particularities of clothing. However, as with the composed pilgrim helping the woman to her feet, we can speculate that this drawing was supplemented by way of a second more detailed drawing: *Trois pèlerins* (fig. 17) chalk on paper.[71] This larger drawing contains three figures', two male pilgrims and a female, one of which describes a pilgrim kneeling. The drawing of the kneeling figure offers detail of the fabric and texture quality of its costume by way of inspired handling and light and shade, and, in addition, a generalised outline of the figure's portrait. One might argue that *Trois pèlerins* is so detailed and comparatively similar to that of the painted version offered in the Embarkation that Watteau might well have referred solely to this one drawing. However one small detail suggests differently. *Trois pèlerins* does indeed offer a striking resemblance to the painted version, in detail, accuracy of pose and facial similarity but the painted version and the kneeling sketch in *Deux gentilshommes, l'un à genoux, l'autre debout*, include a pigtail and ribbon: *Trois pèlerins* does not. Again, we may therefore hypothesise that the painted figure kneeling to apparently whisper to the woman with a fan is, like the pilgrim helping the female figure to her feet, a possible hybrid: a composed fragment.

It is the female figure with a fan that perhaps more interestingly than any other figure poses the possibility that Watteau constructed hybrid figures out of fragments in *The*

[70] Watteau, Antoine, *Deux gentilshommes, l'un à genoux, l'autre debout*, sanguine on cream paper, H. 173; H. 165, Private collection, Paris.
[71] Watteau, Antoine, *Trois pèlerins*, sanguine on white paper, Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden.

Embarkation to Cythera. Examination of the catalogue of Watteau drawings confirms that he drew and sketched many female figures with a fan. Each of these drawings offers a variation on pose and use of the fan. For example, *Deux femmes assises* (fig. 18,) presents the image of two female figures.[72] The right-hand figure is apparently seated although no chair is present. The figure gently reclines from left to right. In its right hand it holds a fan open and close to its face. *Deux études d'une femme assise sur le sol* (fig. 19,) presents a more detailed image of two females, both sitting on the floor. The female figure on the right, sitting upright leans to its left and away from the viewer whilst holding an open fan perpendicular to its chest.[73] While *Femme assise se tournant vers la gauche* (fig. 20,) offers a three-crayon sketch of the front view of a seated female figure turned to her right.[74] The figure's right arm is outstretched to the left-hand edge of the paper and in its left hand, resting in its lap the figure holds a closed fan pointed toward its right arm.

The model in each of these drawings is different and each figure is clothed differently. However, the dress of both fan holding figures in *Deux études d'une femme assise sur le sol* strongly resembles the dress of the painted female figure holding a fan in the Embarkation; and the model in *Femme assise se tournant vers la gauche* appears in many of Watteau's drawings of females holding a fan. For example, *Seated woman holding a fan* owned by the Metropolitan Museum New York (fig. 21),[75] which was Margaret Morgan Grasselli claimed also used by Watteau as reference for *La Perspective* (fig. 7). The dress in this drawing can also be found in *Full-length standing*

[72] Watteau, Antoine, *Deux femmes assises*, sanguine on cream paper. H. 178; l. 193. Kansas City, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Nelson Fund).
[73] Watteau, Antoine, *Deux études d'une femme assise sur le sol*, sanguine et mine de plomb, Chantilly, musée Condé (inv. 301F).
[74] Watteau, Antoine, *Femme assise se tournant vers la gauche*, sanguine, pierre noire et craie blanche sur papier gris-brun, H. 235; L. 142, New York, private collection.
[75] Watteau, Antoine, *Seated woman*, Metropolitan Museum New York.

figure study (fig. 22), private collection, Paris.[76] If the Metropolitan Museum drawing represents a different version of *Femme assise se tournant vers la gauche*, and it informed another drawing by way of not its pose or portraiture but the style of its dress, and if the same model sat for many of these drawings, it is perhaps not beyond the boundaries of possibility to tentatively speculate that, given the number of drawings Watteau made of females holding a fan, each of these drawings might have in some small way informed the painted version in the Embarkation. The process of accumulating these drawings might constitute an index of reference from which - not necessarily in any direct way - he informed himself when determining how best to construct a figure holding a fan.

There is of course stronger evidence that Watteau referred for particulars of pose etc. to more than one known drawing when painting the figure with a fan. Evidence that by extension offers support to the claim that the figures in this painting represent hybrid versions of an index of drawn reference. There is for instance, a *Drawing of a seated female holding a fan* (fig. 23), privately owned in Dublin, that strongly resembles the pose, style of dress and handling of the fan displayed in the Embarkation. This drawing resembles the Embarkation figure even to the extent of the description of light and shade in the fold of the dress, and the small amount of shoe made visible below the dress. As with the kneeling figure and the Pilgrim helping the female figure to her feet the likeness between the drawn figure and the painted figure might again lead us to conclude that Watteau here relied on only one source of reference. However, as with the kneeling figure a small but crucial detail suggests that this figure is also the product of a montage process. This is because the head of the figure in the full length Dublin drawing does not seem to be a model for the painted version. Importantly, the head of

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[76] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan, *Watteau 1684-1721*, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 1984, p. 303.

the painted version appears to more strongly match the head and shoulders portrait of a young female in the top right hand corner of a drawing of seven heads.[77] So, although we may tentatively speculate that a range of drawings might have informed the thinking of Watteau when he composed and painted the fan holding figure in the Embarkation, we may with more confidence claim that this figure is like the kneeling man etc. a composed fragment: a fragment produced by way of a mechanical process of montage.

It should of course be remembered at this juncture that, as stated earlier, the pose of these three figures are repeated versions from *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*. The stance of the three figures so far described reoccurs in the Pilgrimage but with slight differences of detail. For example in the Pilgrimage the male figure helping the female to her feet is presented in the same pose as the same figure in the Embarkation but with a hat. And the figure kneeling toward the female figure with the fan is in the Pilgrimage decked out in black and red with white flourishes, whereas in the Embarkation it is dressed in shades of brown. These figures, despite their differences of detail do not suggest any reason why they should not be also considered hybrid composites. Like their counterparts in the Embarkation their pose can be traced to the same drawings described earlier. Indeed these figures' show signs of being not only composed from those sources already described but from other additional sources not utilised in the Embarkation. To illustrate, the female figure with the fan again demonstrates a remarkable similarity to the pose captured by the Dublin drawing referred to earlier. Where however the head and shoulders of the same figure in the Embarkation strongly suggest that their source was one drawing from a page of six head studies (fig. 24).[78] The head and shoulders of the female figure with a fan in the Pilgrimage describe different features. The face has a more subtly pronounced chin and very red-pursed lips. The hair although tied back like

[77] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, 1984, p.178.
[78] Ibid. p.178.

the figure in the Embarkation is bunched higher on the head and tied with a distinctive black bow. The hair is brown rather than blonde and the cheeks are rouged red rather than pink. These differences are slight but numerous and significant enough to be noticeable. Rather than undermine the claim that Watteau composed hybrid fragments in these paintings the differences offer further evidence of construction by way of suggesting the probability of at least additional influence and the possibility of as yet untraced extra reference.

If as I claim the figures described in these two paintings are constructed hybrid fragments then their status as constructions opens a line of reasoning that enables the two paintings to be described as being underscored by temporality. This is firstly because the montage of these figures inscribes the image with a quality of mechanical technique. The technique of montage, as we have seen, involves the creation of form through the shuffling together of different parts or reference. It involves the pulling together and freezing into focus an image made out of fragments, fragments that when coalesced into the form of an image might be defined as a jigsaw of things.

The fragment makes the space of the picture a material construction: a collection of displaced and reorganised objects. The image of the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation may therefore be understood to operate - at a material level - in a way conditioned by the world of things: the finite. They might also, by extension, despite their flirtation with the devices of mythological representation, e.g. the statue of Venus, the cupids, the shield and sword of Mars, the laurel of Apollo, and the quiver and arrows of Eros, insinuate a quality of earthbound temporality. Artifice in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation ruins any pretension to eternal time by locating the image within the realm of the earthly: the world of finite things.

So far we have determined what Margaret Morgan Grasselli refers to as the Embarkation's earthly and mechanical qualities by studying the conditioning affect of the emblem of the couple, the stage, and the hybrid fragmentary construction of some of its main figures. This work suggests that at the semiotic level and the material level the Embarkation exemplifies a preponderance of technique and artifice that foreground illusion but also ground the painting in the world of things and temporality. Artifice despite reference to the contrary, can be interpreted to entail a painting conditioned by the temporal implications of its chosen means of expression. A third quality of detail duplication peculiar to the Embarkation, and not the Pilgrimage, highlights these findings still further.

Similarity of facial likeness in The Embarkation to Cythera

A close study of *The Embarkation to Cythera* reveals that it has twenty-four figures, whereas the Pilgrimage has only eighteen. There are approximately forty-four flying nymphs or cupids in the Embarkation and only twelve in the Pilgrimage. This increase in numbers dramatically constricts the space of the Embarkation by making the composition more complex, more full. It also moreover creates increased opportunity for comparison to be made between the figures. In the Pilgrimage most pictured physiognomy is seen in profile with only six figures showing both eyes. In the Embarkation the number of images' of faces that depict both eyes rises to ten. When studying the faces of figures in the Embarkation a sense of strong similarity begins to emerge. For example, close examination and comparison of the head of the female figure holding a fan, the female figure sitting immediately behind it and the head of the male seated beneath the statue of Venus reveal very close affinities (fig. 25). Each head displays significant differences that help develop the impression of different characters. The female behind the female figure with a fan for example has auburn hair swept back

and gathered in a bunch. The figure has brown eyebrows and light pink lips. The female with the fan has, as already mentioned similarly bunched but blonde hair, lightly rouged cheeks and greying eyebrows. The male figure beneath the statue has floppy blonde/brown hair that more loosely flows about its head. However, for all their differences the structure and outline of the faces of these figures do seem remarkably similar. Each of the three faces has a different attitude and therefore offers a slightly different profile. This inhibits like for like comparison, however careful unassisted scrutiny of the jaw line in all three faces shows a gentle curve leading to a slightly emphasised chin. In the male figure the chin is slightly enhanced, somewhat crudely, on the right by way of the shade of its head cast upon its shirt collar. But the lips in each face are similarly positioned low down above a dimple chin. Each set of lips are somewhat pursed with the lower lip presenting a fuller impression than the upper lip. The cheeks are all full but not fat or gaunt and the cheekbone position of each face is high but not unduly pronounced. Given these structural similarities and the close proximity of these figures another striking likeness that links these faces, one that is not however restricted to these figures, is that the eyes of each of the three faces are unseen. We see the place and position of two eyes but unusually for such prominent figures, all the eyes, by virtue of their position to the viewer, i.e., lower than the viewer or head turned away, appear concealed. All that is seen of the eyes is the line if the upper eye lid and eyebrows.

Earlier I suggested that the figure of the female figure holding a fan in the Embarkation seems to have drawn reference for its head and shoulders from a portrait drawing currently held by private hands in Dublin. If the claim that the faces of the three figures so far discussed are structurally similar is to be convincing, then the drawing that appears to have informed the portrait of the female figure holding the fan should have a strong likeness with the other two portraits. In the drawing, the sharp contrasts between

light and dark presents a slight emphasise on the form of the jaw and the position of the cheekbones. But in respect to the curve of the jaw, the chin and the position of the eyes, the similarity, although not unexpectedly inexact, is noteworthy. Consequently it is not beyond the boundaries of possibility that three faces were, directly or indirectly, informed by the Dublin drawing.

As we have seen the Embarkation presents an image that over time appears to hint at a debt to the replication of its own detail. Its more graphic, less painterly approach to representation and the abundance of figures encourages more comparison of features. Comparative assessment of the features of these figures suggests the painting contains a high level of artifice and is probably technically dependent on repetition. This dependence on repetition, an unavoidable underlying similarity of the countenance of many of the figures in the Embarkation might accordingly offer an account for Margaret Morgan Grasselli's perception that the Embarkation appears 'more mechanical' than the Pilgrimage. What we can say with some certainty however is that the repetition of features within the image of *The Embarkation to Cythera* increases the impression that the painting maintains a high degree of technique and artifice. Repetition in the Embarkation highlights the paintings dependence on the re-workings of its own features and therefore techniques of re-dressing, embellishment and editing. Consequently, at both a semiotic and material level, the employment of repetition, like the emblem of the couple, the stage and the montage of figures and space, can be said to highlight illusion. By way of the mechanics of duplication, repetition in the Embarkation can also be said to create an image conditioned by the imminence of the moment.

Earlier I surmised that the techniques employed in the Pilgrimage result in signs that hollow out their reference and that these incomplete and imperfect signs then stare out from the image like finite fragments or things to promote a temporal quality. I also

inquired whether the Embarkation operated in a similar way. Exploration of the Embarkation reveals a painting that is indeed like the Pilgrimage in so far as it is highly conditioned by artifice and signs conditioned by human time: the transient. The combination of the image of the stage and the emblem of the couple promote and sustain at a semiotic level a quality of representation conditioned by mortality. The hybrid figures central to the composition of both paintings' inscribes the image with a technique that makes the image a jigsaw of fragmented things that ruin any pretension to eternal time by locating the image within the realm of the earthly: the finite. In addition, the repetition of facial details in the Embarkation promotes, by way of the mechanics of duplication or the technique of repetition, a quality of image that suggests an image conditioned by imminence. We may conclude therefore that *The Embarkation to Cythera*, like the Pilgrimage, but for different technical reasons, sustains a quality of image that is temporal. The question that remains to be resolved is how stable is the illusion promoted by the techniques of the Embarkation? The material qualities of sign and representation in the Pilgrimage promote temporal qualities but they also problematise the illusion of the image. Does the mosaic of artifice in the Embarkation similarly trouble the illusion of the image they simultaneously maintain?

Both the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation are painted images that can be considered to offer an illusion of continuity or perpetuity that is undermined by the techniques of their making. The history of the construction of the Embarkation for instance, as determined above sustains an image of signs capable of suggesting many possible interpretations. The image the painting presents offers the possibility of narrative interpretation and maintains the impression of organised pictorial space. There is apparently a foreground a middle ground and a view to a (mid) distance through which many significant and insignificant figures are arranged. Like the Pilgrimage however, where variations in application and over emphasis in handling have the effect of both articulating a feature

of the image and under scrutiny, undermining our understanding of the location of that image feature, e.g., the mountain peaks, a particular feature of the Embarkation executes a similar affect.

From a distance the left-hand edge of the painting offers several instances of an indistinct or barely maintained space. Around the flying cupids the cloud and mist merge in a haze of sky blue and grey. In some places this barely determined spatial conjunction of near and far obscures the cupids cavorting near the barge mast. Shades of pink submerge beneath grey and the rotund form of cupid flesh becomes indistinct. Watteau's delicate use of shades here encourages obsfucation and his incomplete description of form hinders the viewer's ability to draw this spatial grouping into satisfactory *loci*. A lack of contrast and tone coupled to a shortage of form enhancing light and shade allows mist, sky and flesh to intermingle. However the techniques that render this area of the painting a diaphanous atmosphere do not properly speaking problematise the continuity of spatial illusion in the image. This area can appear somewhat undetermined or lacking in definition in contrast to the light and shade created space of the middle and foreground. But the loss of focus occasioned by the cupids and the mist do not break the illusion that their representation strives to foster. What does however, particularly in this area, break the paintings illusion is the surface of the painting. During the course of this and other paintings, Watteau purposefully employed *L'huile grasse*. This medium increased the drying time of oil paint and extended it. By working with the medium in large proportions to pigment however, Watteau risked the longevity of his images by creating layers of image that dried at different rates. Different drying times in the same painting encourage cracks.[79] The cracks in this area of the painting are very noticeable against the light airy touch of the

[79] A more involved exploration of Watteau's use of *L'huile grasse* and *craquelures* will be carried out in Chapter 2: Watteau's method: the spectre of time.

mist sky and cupids (fig. 26). The cracks are very material and sharply contrast by way of their edge the undetermined quality of the image that they inscribe. It is therefore Watteau's technique of application that here intrudes on the illusion of the representation. It is the technique of application that describes this area of mist sky and bodies that shatters the surface of the screen into fragments and returns the experience of the image to the material world. The Embarkation, like the Pilgrimage, may accordingly appear as a synthesised moment but its appearance, its illusion, is noticeably a condition not always sufficiently maintained by the mosaic of its technique and artifice. In both paintings, technique comes to problematise the image by reminding the viewer of its material and temporal status. Watteau's paintings do not by virtue of their grounding in materiality and repetition present to the viewer hermetically sealed surfaces that reflect eternity and eternal truths. They occasion an illusion problematised, ruined or petrified by a language of representation conditioned by the transience of materiality and the fragment.

If the technique of repeating the same emblem or facial impression in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation can insinuate a temporal shock to the continuity of their images; and if repetition thereby further grounds the paintings' index of signs into a framework suggestive not of eternity but fallen nature, how else might repetition inform these paintings? In the introduction I proposed the possibility that following Benjamin's insights into the *Trauerspiel* repetition and failure might make Watteau's paintings contingent upon different temporalities and locations; that his paintings might by virtue of a debt to repetition represent a material failure to arrive in one place. So now how might repetition expose a condition of space and time in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation that might constitute a failure to arrive?

Repetition

We detailed above how in tragic drama the hero inhabits and acts out his quest in an environment before time, an environment in which the hero and nature may be described as co-extensive. The hero does not act in relation to a 'distant' nature and nature does not corrupt his environment with the decay and passing of time associated with infinitude. In Benjamin's reconsideration of the *Trauerspiel* however, the allegory of the mourning play is by distinction spatially and temporally figured by history. To be precise Benjamin reconsidered the formal characteristics of Baroque drama in terms of temporal and spatial co-ordinates by setting history in the stage of nature and accordingly transformed the time of allegory into space.
We have also seen that the tradition of *Trauerspiel* theatre relied, like the *Commedia dell 'Arte*, on a mobile stage that substituted the earth through inauthentic apparatus. Techniques of artifice are fundamentally necessary for the depiction and re-depiction of the *Trauerspiel* consequently, unlike tragic drama, the mourning play is dependent on a material law of repetition.

If repetition is a condition of the embedding or setting to scene of history, can we by way of a topology of repetition determine a picture of the space and time in The Pilgrimage and *The Embarkation to Cythera*? We have already established something of a history of duplication and repetition between the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. For instance the main groups of figures in both paintings' are repeats of each other mechanically achieved by way of the counterproof: which is itself a repeat of the same image. Some of the main figures also appear to be hybrid figures derived from duplicated fragments of drawings shuffled together on the canvas. But is there a topology of repetition that extends beyond these two paintings? Can a topology of

repetition that might outline a history of reference and repeat provide a picture of the time and space occasioned by the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation?

In chapter four of his book *Antoine Watteau*, Donald Posner reflects on a number of Watteau paintings that he claims resist categorisation. He states that it is difficult to categorise Watteau's *L'Indifférent* (fig. 27), because 'it is not always clear whether [it and other paintings like it] follow or precede larger compositions [that use] the same figures...'[80] He then exemplifies his difficulty by way of another Watteau painting, *Le Faux pas* (fig. 28).

> [The two figures of *Le Faux pas* can be] seen first as a small detail in *La Danse paysanne*. In the Louvre picture they are reversed and magnified on a canvas as large as the whole panel on which they originally appeared. The advances of the man, whose passion is signalled by the red glow of his hand, and the presumably pretended resistance of the woman - who is often interpreted as having stumbled - together make a picture of the process of falling in love. The motif is found in earlier Netherlandish art, as in Jan Steen's depiction of coarse, peasant behaviour, and in Adriaen van der Werff's image of the amorous play of Arcadian shepherds, a painting of 1690 that was once known as the *'Declaration of Love'*. Watteau's *Le Faux pas*, which takes place on a kind of social and emotional middle ground between the two Dutch works, is, in the position and gestures of the figures, so close to van de Werff's picture that one wonders if he did not know a version of it. In any event, this is another example of how ready to hand were many of the elements Watteau developed in his *fête galante*.
>
> The 'Faux pas' theme was used again around the same time the Louvre painting was made, as a detail in the background of *Le Concert*, where two other couples and a child watch the pair embracing. And the theme became, in turn, the central motif in the drama of *Plaisirs d'amour* of about 1717.[81]

In these quotes Posner attempts to show how Watteau's use and re-use of the same compositional element in paintings that might belong to different genres invites confusion and stalls the classification process. It is Posner's argument that if for example, repeats of *Le Faux pas* may be found in different paintings, painted at

[80] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, Cornell University Press, 1993, p. 169.
[81] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, 1984, pp. 172-173.

different times and in different places, it is difficult to locate *Le Faux pas* satisfactorily within one genre. In elaborating this argument however Posner misses an opportunity to develop a picture of time and space implicit to but overlooked in his argument. These quotes' demonstrate the difficulty of attributing a category to *Le Faux pas* when its important compositional details are also repeated historically across a variety of *loci.* Repetition entails a difficulty of category attribution but it also entails historical time and space in an image. When Posner traces the repeated use of the central pose of figures in *Le Faux pas* to *La Danse paysanne*, *Le Concert* and *Plaisirs d'amour*, and when he recognises traces of *Le Faux pas* in Jan Steen's Dutch genre painting of coarse peasant behaviour and Adriaen van der Werff's image of the amorous play of Arcadian shepherds, he also maps a picture of the history of the repeats of *Le Faux pas* and the spatial displacement of its core compositional detail. The Pilgrimage and *The Embarkation to Cythera* afford me the opportunity to rectify Posner's omission and to take forward his approach as a model, not for the elucidation of difficulties of image classification but the picturing of the space and time in the Pilgrimage and *The Embarkation to Cythera.* Other work undertaken by Posner regarding the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation will be indispensable in this task.

Mapping the history of repetition in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation to Cythera.

Watteau's *Plaisir d'amour*, *Amusements champêtres* (fig. 29 & fig. 30) and the etching *Bon voyage* (fig. 5), offer traceable features that most convincingly replicate others found in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation.[82] For example, *Plaisir d'amour* is a *fête*

[82] Watteau, Antoine, *Plaisir d'amour,* 61 x 75 cm Gemaldegalerie, Dresden.
Watteau, Antoine, *Amusements champêtres*, 31.7 x 45.2 cm, Private collection, Paris
Watteau, Antoine, *Assemblée dans un parc*, 32.5 x 46.5 cm, Paris, Louvre (Giraudon).
Bon voyage: engraving after Watteau original, owned by the Trustees of the British Museum 18.3 x 22.5 cm.

galante composed of several couples, some in amorous poses, congregated in a park like setting. Like the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation, the standing and sitting couples are located in the foreground to the left of a statue of Venus with a quiver of arrows and a shy cupid. This statue almost exactly replicates the statue found on the right-hand side of the Embarkation although there are differences. The statue and plinth in *Plaisir d'amour* are greater in scale than the Embarkation version but the width of the plinth platform in *Plaisir d'amour* is narrower than the Embarkation plinth. While the head of the cupid adjacent to the Venus in *Plaisir d'amour*, in contrast to the Embarkation is turned away from the viewer. Otherwise the statue of Venus in *The Embarkation to Cythera* appears repeated in the *Plaisir d'amour*.

This is not however the only other traceable version of the statue of Venus depicted in the Embarkation. Another repeated version is also to be found in another version of *Plaisir d'amour*, that is, in the drawing that Posner and Eidelberg claim is a *Study for Plaisir d'amour* (fig. 31).[83] This drawing in sanguine and graphite describes a scene similar to *Plaisir d'amour*. There are some obvious differences between this drawing and *Plaisir d'amour* notably in the composition of the space. For instance in the lower left hand corner of the study a seated couple is schematically described in a series of brief gestures. On the far right of the composition, drawn in similar proportion to the painted version we do however find a sketch of a statue of a female and child placed on top of a large plinth. There is little detail in the drawing by which we might accurately compare it to the painted version but the pose of the female figure and its entwined dependent strongly resemble that of the painted version. Consequently we may claim that the statue of Venus depicted in the Embarkation can also be found repeated the

[83] Study for *Plaisirs d'amour*, sanguine and graphite 19.5 x 26.4 cm, Chicago, Art Institute. This sketch Eidelberg claims provided the basis for the painting and by its existence and close similarity to the painting sustains Eidelberg's conviction that Watteau's studio practice involved the production of compositional sketches. For a study of Watteau's studio practice please see Chapter 2: Watteau's method: the spectre of time.

Study for Plaisirs d' amour and by extension therefore, that the statue of Venus is repeated in Watteau's work at least three times.

Amusements champêtres similarly appears to occasion the repetition of features found in the Embarkation. In the Embarkation directly behind the woman with a fan and her kneeling suitor there is in a profile pose a seated couple hand in hand. The female figure as described earlier has auburn hair swept back in a bunch, is dressed in a white sleeved dress and has facial features strongly reminiscent of the female figure with a fan and the male figure seated before the shield of Apollo. The male figure of the couple sits with his back to the Venus and with his arms outstretched to the object of his attention. This figure's hair is described by short curls and locks in auburn blonde colour and sharp features outline the profile of its face. We see this couple repeated in *Amusements champêtres* again sitting behind a kneeling suitor and seated female figure, but this time with the male figure positioned slightly higher than in the Embarkation and more turned toward the viewer. In addition the features of this male figure's portrait can also then be found in Watteau's *Fêtes vénitiennes* (fig. 32) this time atop of a seated male figure playing a flageolet.[84]

The etching *Bon voyage* is according to Posner an image that was taken from a now lost Watteau painting.[85] In the image two figures, a female with a fan and a kneeling male in Pilgrim costume, complete with a round brim hat and cockleshell badge, sit beside the trunk of a tree. Behind the couple, and in the middle ground, three couples wait near to a sea-going vessel and some flying cupids. Although the scale of the figures is very different and the organisation of the picture is also reversed the kneeling figure and

[84] Watteau, Antoine, *Fêtes vénitiennes*, oil on canvas, 55.9 x 45.7 cm, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.
[85] For example, Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, 1984, p.188

female figure with a fan are strongly reminiscent of the same couple found in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation.

According to Posner the image of the *Bon Voyage*, like the *L'Ile de Cythère* (fig. 33)[86] is closely related to an engraved image made by Claude Duflos entitled *The Island of Cythera* (fig. 34).[87] Duflos's image dates from c. 1708 and depicts a variety of posed couples in a landscape. There is a boat and in the background a temple. Of the couples arranged in the image the pose of two couples is again reminiscent of the kneeling male figure with a female figure and fan, and the male figure helping a female figure to rise found in both the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. For Posner the importance of Duflos's engraving 'needs to be stressed.'[88] He claims 'that it seems certain [that] because of Watteau's involvement with the print trade that he knew Duflos and his work.'[89] Posner also then implies that Duflos's engraving 'anticipated' and stimulated Watteau's thinking when painting the Pilgrimage.[90]

As we have seen a lineage of repeats of fragments found in both the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation can be traced to other paintings. Image fragments can also be traced to an alleged compositional drawing and as previously discussed, a number of the figures found in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation can be tracked to a number of different figure sketches. Through a close study of related images a network of repeated features displaced across a series of works and a history of production can be drawn. If Posner is right and I am compelled to accept his claims, and the Duflos engraving anticipates and stimulated the Pilgrimage, then the convincing but not necessarily extensive picture of a

[86] Watteau, Antoine, *L'Ile de Cythère*, 43.1 x 53.3 cm, Frankfurt, Städelsches Kunstinstitut.
[87] Duflos, Claude, *The Island of Cythera*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale. Margaret Morgan Grasselli gives this image the title *On the Island of Cythera* and claims it is by an anonymous artist working after an original image by Bernard Picart. See Grasselli, Maragaret Morgan, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, 1984, p.497.
[88] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, 1984, p.187.
[89] Ibid., p.187.
[90] Ibid., p.187.

history of repeated imagery outlined above becomes more intricate. This is because, following Posner's work, the threads of lineage by which we might draw a line between one repeated image fragment and another should also necessarily include influence. That is, influence that anticipates and informs the Pilgrimage and therefore the Embarkation but also those qualities of the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation which forecast replication in the work of other artists.

The Comte de Caylus[91] and Gersaint[92] describe well Watteau's formative years in Paris, including Claude Gillot's tutelage of his style and his subsequent apprenticeship under Claude Audran. During Watteau's early career he had a variety of important friends and relationships. These include people willing to champion his progress, such as Jean de Jullienne, whose catalogue of etchings made from Watteau's paintings played no small part in the posthumous advancement of Watteau's reputation, Gersaint, and Nicolas Henin. It was through Henin and Caylus that Watteau gained access to Crozat's collection of 'drawings after the studies of the best Flemish masters, and the great Italian landscapists.'[93]And it was through the Flemish colony in Paris that Watteau met and befriended Nicolas Vleughels. Watteau also knew other artists who influenced both his career and his style, e.g., Antoine Dieuand and Charles La Fosse. According to Michel, under La Fosse's influence Watteau absorbed La Fosse's 'blend of a French and Venetian palette and his handling of paint.'[94] And according to Margaret Morgan Grasselli, Watteau and Vleughels shared an interest in the cult of Rubens and Veronèse: 'Watteau et Vleughels communièrent dans le culte de Rubens et de Veronèse.'[95]

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[91] Caylus presented *The Life of Antoine Watteau* to the Academy on the 3rd of February 1748.
[92] 'Gersaint became the first author of what we would now call sales catalogues, and produced exemplary ones, compiling full detailed, considered information'. Michel, Marianne Roland, *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century*, Chartwell Books, Inc., 1984, p. 54.
[93] Ibid., p. 55.
[94] Ibid., p. 65.
[95] Margaret Morgan Grasselli, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, 1984, p.52

Once Watteau's reputation was established he is known to have had two pupils Jean-Baptiste Pater and Nicolas Lancret.[96] Pater and Lancret studied under him and worked on paintings after his style. Watteau is also known to have collaborated on a number of paintings composed after his fashion with several other lesser-known artists than himself. For example, according to Marianne Roland Michel, Watteau worked on paintings with Boyer, Lajoue and Norblin de la Gourdaine.[97] In these works Watteau 'was supposed to have painted the figures while his collaborator provided the landscape or architectural backgrounds.'[98] This production of Watteau-like images created with Watteau's help was further perpetuated by a number of artists who produced copies of his well-known prints, for instance Octaviene.[99]

If we consider the number of figures that influenced Watteau's early career, in conjunction with the work of the artists that he is known to have studied and the quantity of images created in the likeness of his style, then it becomes clear that any tracing of influence in Watteau's work will involve a substantial number of references. Posner's tracing of *Le Faux pas* quoted above describes links between Watteau paintings and similar Dutch images. What Posner's tracing does not show is how the images that stimulated and informed *Le Faux pas*, i.e., Jan Steen and Adriaen van der Werff's images, could themselves be traced to other paintings. Drawing a comprehensive map of the history of influence inherent in an image, a map that can be exemplified by way of repeated features or image fragments drawn from the one image through several images to the one origin is probably impossible. Consequently what follows is not exhaustive but instead aims to establish sufficient evidence of repetition

[96] Michel, Marianne Roland, *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century*, Chartwell Books, Inc., p.59.
[97] Ibid., p.300.
[98] Ibid., p.300.
[99] Ibid., p. 242.

informed by influence to convincingly provide a more intricate picture of time and space occasioned by the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation.

Some influence in The Pilgrimage and The Embarkation to Cythera

According to Posner, long before Watteau began to paint his *fête galante* scenes, 'images in art and literature appeared that' represented lovers conversing, dancing or wandering in the pleasant atmosphere of fertile orchards and gardens.'[100] These images usually took the form of 'idealised representations of courtly lovers [or] realistic depictions of season... activities.'[101] For instance, the thirteenth century poem *Roman de la Rose* and its illustrations Posner suggests indicate an emergence of 'allegorical gardens of love, and islands of love, and...pilgrim lovers who walked through the countryside and sailed across the waters.'[102] These images of Arcadia and bucolic love Posner claims gave rise to and were followed by other related types of genre. For example, one genre involved the depiction of peasants with simple lives pursuing love and happiness. These images were based on such themes as festive peasants or the Prodigal Son carousing and were set in scenes of rustic entertainment, country weddings, village fêtes etc. Another genre linked to the depiction of country settings involved a mode of representation that aimed at creating images of gallant and amorous contemporary life in nature and the seasons: the *tableaux de mode*.

According to Posner, in the early years of his career Watteau 'drew on many of...these variant types' of image for inspiration.[103] By way of illustration, in works such as the *L' Accordée de village* (fig. 35,) and *La Mariée de village* (fig. 36,) we see a long-standing

[100] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, 1984, p.128.
[101] Ibid., p.128.
[102] Ibid., p.128.
[103] Ibid., p.128.

genre subject painted by both Pieter Breughel and Jan Steen. In *L' Accordée de village* groups of villagers and couples are depicted dancing or standing with joined hands in celebration of a happy couple seated before a backdrop awning and the village walls. In *La Mariée de village* the canopy of umbrella-pine trees tower over another bridal party scene. A wedding procession approaches the church, a carriage pushes its way through the throng, a musician plays and couples look on.

In these rustic scenes we find figures and poses that would not be out of place in Watteau's later *fête galante* paintings such as *Assemblée dans un parc* (fig. 8). Indeed, as Posner notes, 'the child by the dog at the left in *L' Accordée de village* and the pair of dancers behind her...appear elsewhere: the child in *Les Champs-Elysées* (fig. 37), and the couple in *Les Bergers* (The Sheperds).'[104] Moreover in some of the *tableaux de mode* genres images painted by Watteau particularly, *Le Printemps* (fig. 38) and *L'Été*, we also find, another strong feature of Watteau's later *fête galante* paintings. That is, we find figures in costumes derived from an earlier time. For example, the figures wear costume embellished with such seventeenth century features as: 'feathered hats, doublets, ruffs, and tall collars.'[105] The replication of features found in these and other such paintings adds weight to the argument that Watteau employed a repetitive approach when painting and reinforces the proposal that paintings such as the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation are spatially conditioned by a history of repetition. But the significance of these works also lies in the way these paintings reflect those works made by other artists; works that appear to echo Watteau's later production.

The bulk of Watteau's scenes of country life were painted before 1710. A few examples were executed after this date and a painting like *L' Accordée de Village* may well have

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[104] Ibid., p.22 & 25.
[105] Ibid., p.26.

been concluded as late as 1715. Other artists were involved in creating country scenes before 1710 and after 1715. Some of these artists created images that not only well represent genre work such as the country life and the *tableaux de mode* but also appear to anticipate in a similar way to that of Watteau's work at this time, Watteau's later *fête galante* paintings. For example, in the same way that we find genteel characters in Watteau's *Le Printemps* we find stylish ladies and gentlemen at their leisure in the costume pieces of Bernard Picart, as well as other features that appear to anticipate Watteau's later works.

Bernard Picart was a painter, draughtsman and engraver. He studied drawing at the French Académie and engraving with his father, and Benoît Audran I and Sébastien Leclerc. According to Michel, there is some evidence that Watteau was inspired by Picart's work. For example, with regard to *L' Enseigne de Gersaint*, Michel states, 'Watteau was apparently inspired by a print after Bernard Picart's *La Bénédiction du lit nuptial*, from which he also took the figure of a girl that is found in the *Figures de différents caractères'*.[106] Image analysis and comparison between a Picart engraving entitled *Concert in the Park* (dated 1709) and the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation offer further evidence that Picart inspired Watteau's paintings. Posner likens *Concert in a Park* to a painting entitled *Merry Company*, by a Flemish painter called Vinckboons that worked a quarter of a century earlier (fig. 39).[107] In Picart's print we find, as in the Vinckboons image, a harpsichord in a park setting, as well as a view of architecture in the background, and a body of water. In style of application and features of the composition, Picart's image is similar to that of the Duflos image. For example, both images describe the form and pose of the figures through very graphic means. The use

[106] Michel, Marianne Roland, *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century*, Chartwell Books, Inc., 1984, p.111.

[107] Vinckboons, David, *Merry Company*, Vienna, Akademie der Bildenden Kunste.
Picart, Bernard, *Concert in a Park.* Engraving, Versailles Museum (Cliché des Musées Nationaux).

of line is intended instead to describe detail. The costume in each image is also similar, in particular, the male jackets, with large cuffs, their stockings and wigs are found replicated in each image.

Duflos's image presents a series of figure poses that strongly resemble and appear to anticipate the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. The pose of at least one of the couples in Picart's image, although seen from a different angle, is similar to a pose found in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. The couple far left, seated behind the foreground pair, present an image of a kneeling male leaning toward a seated female figure with what appears to be a fan in its right hand. But besides this pair, the quality that most resembles Watteau's the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation is the way Picart demarcates and stages the scene. In the foreground, like the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation, close up nature cast in shade and in the form of hillocks and shattered stumps marks a boundary to a space, a slight incline, on which one of two scenes is staged. This high-lit space is flanked on the left by tall trees, deep in shadow, that like the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation emphasise the space of the stage and dominate the scene. Furthermore, although through different means, the Picart image, like the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation but also in a way similar to the stage traditions of the *Trauerspiel* mentioned above, also demarcates a second space, a space within a space: another stage beyond the foreground scene. In the Picart image this second stage is not as significant as in the Pilgrimage or the Embarkation, in so far as the narrative implications of Picart's image are played out primarily on the stage located in the middle ground. However, the second stage does afford a view to a location and a point of infinity like the Pilgrimage, and a boat as in the Embarkation.[108]

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[108] 'Picart is also known to have published a print entitled Pilgrimage to the Island of Cythera. This print includes 'five couples: three are seated, one of the pilgrims is kneeling; of a fourth couple the standing man helps his companion to get up; in the rear the last couple are about to step in to a boat steered by winged cupids'. Michel, Marianne Roland. *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century*, Chartwell Books, Inc.,1984. p. 201.

If Picart's *Concert in a Park* can be argued to foreshadow the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation then this quote suggests the first of two examples where image fragments found in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation forecast their repetition in subsequent work by other artists.

> Finally we come to the famous series Fragonard painted for Mme du Barry, who refused it, and which is now one of the jewels of the Frick collection. Four large canvases, to which a fifth was later added, illustrate four moments from a romantic novel: *La Rencontre* (The Meeeting), *La Surprise* (The Surprise), *L'Amant couronné* (The Lover crowned and *La Lettre d' amour* (The Love letter). The colour the treatment and the theme do not strictly recall Watteau but it is more than likely that a reference to the master of the fête galante was intended in their Spanish costumes, the ruffs worn by the young men, their satins in the dreamy garden and their conventionalised gestures. Doubtless even less fortuitous is the state in *La Surprise*, stone-coloured but so carnal, of Venus and a cupid, whom she prevents from reaching his quiver.[109]

Michel draws attention to the replication of reference in Fragonard's four panels of *The Progress of Love* 1771-73 so as to establish a link between Watteau and the last avatars of the *fête galante*. In this endeavour Michel draws attention to coincidences of costume and gesture that might for our purposes offer a speculative opportunity to argue a case of repetition between these Fragonard paintings and Watteau's inaugural *fête galante The Pilgrimage to Cythera*. However the statue of Venus depicted in the panel entitled *La Surprise* (fig. 40), offers excellent evidence of probable repetition in Fragonard's work derived not from the Pilgrimage but the Embarkation.

In *La Surprise* Fragonard presents an image of a couple meeting in a garden-like setting. A female figure is composed left of centre, staring with head turned to the left, while a male figure is depicted far-right entering the scene from a ladder. The male figure like the female figure stares intently beyond the frame toward something out of our sight. The gaze of both figures indicates anxiety, perhaps with regard to not what they might

[109] Ibid., p.305.

see which we can't; but what or who might see them. Regardless of this effect however, what is most striking about this image is that the protagonists of the meeting and the subjects of presumably the surprise are overlooked by a very large statue of Venus on a plinth. The significance of the statue for this image cannot be missed. Its scale and dominant position indicate that love is the stake of this intended narrative. For our purposes too this statue offers an obvious historical link to *The Embarkation to Cythera.* Admittedly there are some differences between the statue of Venus in the Embarkation, *Plaisir d'amour* and the alleged compositional *Study for Plaisir d'amour* (fig. 31). To illustrate, where the plinths that support Venus in the Embarkation (*Plaisir d'amour*, and the drawing) are round in form, the plinth in *La Surprise* is rectangular. Similarly, where the form of Venus in Watteau's work presents its left shoulder forward and tilts its head down from our left to right, the Venus in *La Surprise* offers its right shoulder first, then twists away from the viewer, head tilted down, right to left as we look. Again, where the nymph in the Embarkation (*Plaisir d'amour* and the drawing) holds fast to the form of Venus, in *La Surprise* the nymph falls backward, arms out. For all these differences however, these four images of the statue of Venus appear strikingly similar. The form and hairstyle of each Venus matches. Each Venus holds a quiver of arrows, is naked except for a piece of fabric and is embroiled with a nymph. What provides the key link between at least three of these statue forms is the way form colour and handling of the paintwork toward the impression that these statues have a flesh like quality. Michel refers to qualities in Watteau's statues of Venus as 'startlingly fleshy; their movements and un-idealised attitudes, as much as their expressions, give them a feeling of life;'[110] a quality further enhanced in particular in the Embarkation by their 'Rubensian flesh tones.'[111]

[110] Ibid., p. 204.
[111] Ibid., p. 306.

A second example of how image fragments found in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation repeated in the later work of another artist can be witnessed in Jean-François de Troy's *The Declaration of Love* (fig. 41).[112] Born in Paris in 1679, de Troy was a versatile artist. He painted *tableaux de modes*, histories and mythologies in a colourful and fluent manner that owed something to both Veronese and Rubens. *The Declaration of Love* 1731 is a much later work than either the Pilgrimage or the Embarkation. The composition of *The Declaration of Love* presents, as Watteau might, seven figures seated or standing around a bench in a garden. In de Troy's painting however, this gathering of couples, in a way quite unlike Watteau's *fête galante* paintings almost fully occupies the foreground of the composition. The figures are present in comparatively large scale, close to the plane of the canvas. This is not however the only perceivable difference between *The Declaration of Love* and Watteau's *fête galante*. Immediately behind the group we can see garden architecture: steps rising to a raised level bordered by ornamental stone railings, statues and ornamental urns. Watteau often utilised such compositional structures in his *fête galante* paintings, e.g., *Fêtes vénitiennes*, *L'Ile de Cythère*, *Les Plaisirs du bal*.[113] In Watteau's paintings this architecture helps to delineate a setting within which the groups of figures are arranged. But in de Troy's painting the architecture provides a backdrop in front of which the figures of the image are posed. Garden architecture in Watteau's paintings is also softened by or merged with a very evident nature. Whereas in de Troy's painting, the emphasis on the figures is heightened by their contrast with an unyielding quality of garden architecture in an environment barely occupied by the landscape. The qualities of composition presented by de Troy's painting in fact more resemble Picart's *Concert in a Park* than Watteau's *Fêtes vénitiennes*, *L'Ile de Cythère*, or *Les Plaisirs du bal*.

[112] De Troy, Jean-François, *The Declaration of Love*, c. 1731, oil on canvas, Charlottenburg, Berlin.
[113] Watteau, Antoine, *Fêtes vénitiennes*, oil on canvas, 55.9 x 45.7 cm, National Galleries of Scotland, Edingurgh.
Watteau, Antoine, *L'Ile de Cythère*, oil on canvas, 43.1 x 53.3 cm, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt.
Watteau, Antoine, *Les Plaisirs du bal*, oil on canvas, 52.7 x 65.4 cm, Governors of Dulwhich College, Picture Gallery, London.

Despite the obvious differences of approach to composition and pictorial emphases, *The Declaration of Love* does however show a debt to at least two *fête galante* paintings, the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. Like the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation it presents an image of couples communicating in a way strongly suggestive of the pleasures of courting and flirting. The debt lies though more particularly in the pose of the compositions dominant couple. That is, located in the centre and centre-left of the canvas, in a way highly reminiscent of similar repeated figures central to the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation, the paintings dominant couple consist of a kneeling male figure leaning toward a seated female figure holding a fan. There are again differences between de Troy's couple and Watteau's couple, e.g., the detail in the clothing the elaborate nature of their attire, etc. But the pose of de Troy's couple and its evocative suggestion, is remarkably reminiscent of Watteau's couple in both the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation.

In response to the question posed earlier, can we by way of a topology of repetition determine a picture of the space and time in the Pilgrimage and *The Embarkation to Cythera*? The aim of this section was to map the space and history of repeats occasioned by the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. This has involved tracing repetition of image fragments found at a material level across a range of works, so that we might establish a series of historical and spatial markers. What we have achieved is not an exhaustive tracing of all reference or all the evidence of repeats but we have however established the principle of repetition across a variety of works that include the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation; points or instances of repetition that demarcate and collectively begin to outline a configuration of space and time. To emphasise this point we have seen that Posner dates the Duflos engraving to c. 1708. *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* was presented to the Academy in 1717 and is currently on show at the Louvre. *The Embarkation for Cythera* was probably painted around 1718 or 1719 and is displayed in The

Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin. The female figure with a fan and the kneeling suitor repeated in each of these compositions can also be found in Bernard Picart's *Concert in a Park* housed in Versailles; Watteau's *Bon Voyage*, held by the Trustees of the British Museum, London; François de Troy's *The Declaration of Love* c. 1730 and shown now in Berlin. Moreover, the statue of Venus found in the Embarkation can also be seen in Watteau's *Plaisirs d'amour* currently on show in Dresden; the study for *Plaisirs d'amour*, Chicago, Art Institute and Fragonard's *La Surprise* (part of *The Progress of Love* 1771-73) currently housed in the Frick Collection New York.

Each repeated fragment was made at a different time and in a different place and each now occupies a different location. The technique of repeating image fragments accordingly offers a picture of the time and space occasioned by the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. But how might we describe this time?

Although the historical tracing described above tempts the interpretation that the time in Watteau's Pilgrimage and the Embarkation might be ideal, the picture of time offered by way of the tracing of repeated fragments in Watteau's paintings works against the identification of a progressive linear history. The pose of the kneeling male and female with a fan may, at one extreme be traced to Duflos circa 1708, while at the other extreme it may be traced to de Troy's *The Declaration of Love* painted in 1731. But the action of repetition and the fragment militate against an idealised understanding of the time impressed into these paintings. These fragments work against the ideal that they are stamped by and take part in a succession of linear moments. This is because they reveal the artifice of the image and the fabricated nature of the artwork and by doing so ruins any pretension to the classical harmony of the painting. The occasion of the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation is conditional upon the repetition of fragments which attest to the false unity of the image. Repeated fragments that testify to, by virtue of

their occupation of different times and *loci*, the condition of the image as both in and out of time, here and elsewhere: now and then. The Pilgrimage and the Embarkation cannot therefore represent synthesised still moments that present a succession of synthesised ideal history. They instead each present the occasion of fragments that fail to definitively arrive in one place and therefore present a ruined or temporary moment. The technique of repetition has the effect of imprinting in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation, a condition of spatial temporality that necessarily entails that these paintings fail to cohere in one place.

So far we have explored the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation through the techniques of the *Trauerspiel*. This work has established evidence that similar techniques used in the *Trauerspiel* can also be traced in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation and that it can be argued that these techniques affect a condition of temporality. In other words, we can establish a temporal quality of time in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation that is not narrative based. We have also determined that by virtue of the fact that repetition is a condition of the setting to scene of the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation, fallen nature provides the setting in which the figured action and allegorical signs are embedded. If we follow Benjamin's thinking, as stated earlier, the historic nature of the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation should be gleaned from how they bear witness to human history. That is, what they retain from the time of their origination, the culture and contexts that subsequently chose to retain them. If however the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation offer scenes that are constructed by techniques that affect a condition of temporality, then this needs to be taken into account when attempting to trace any history that these paintings might reflect or bear witness to.

Witnessing history

According to Margaret Morgan Grasselli *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* has always been famous. After its reception by the Academy in 1717 it was exhibited in the Salle d'Assemblée. It was seized along with the remainder of the collection of the Academy in 1795 and then entered the Louvre. Only once has its reputation undergone an eclipse in popularity. During the revolution, wrote Pierre Bergeret (1782-1863) 'the paintings of Watteau had fallen out of favour. The revolution had gone to everyone's head so no one wanted, no one spoke of anything else, but Greek and Roman. I remember that [*The Pilgrimage to Cythera*] was then in the study hall of the Academy; it served as target for the bread pellets of the draughtsmen and for the clay pellets of the sculptors...One day a student of the primitive sect, carried away by his antipathy for Watteau's painting, raised himself upon his bench and vigorously punched the painting to destroy it, so Philipaut [the curator of the Academy under the Revolution,] took down the unfortunate painting and put it in the attic.'[114] It was not kept out of view long. It was not mentioned in the catalogue of the Academy in 1810 but it reappeared in 1816 and has remained there ever since.

The Embarkation to Cythera has a far more involved provenience. The Embarkation as previously stated was probably created in 1718 or 1719 although there is no document to support this claim. It was probably painted for Jullienne and it is known to have belonged to Jullienne in 1733 when Tardieu engraved it. In 1743 it was sold at The Hague with the collection of Jacob (Francesco) Lopez. It was written about by Callus in 1748 and in 1763 it was again sold at The Hague to Frederick the Great of Prussia. It continued to belong to the Prussian imperial family but was displayed in the

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[114] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, 1984, p. 398.

Charlottenburg castle. The directors of the Charlottenburg castle have recently purchased the painting.

It is clear that both paintings have for many years independently sustained their value to reputable collections and collectors. Conversely many other Watteau paintings have apparently been lost. According to Michel:

> Jullienne's collection of prints is made up of 287 plates, to which we may add 33 supplementary plates, following the order of Dacier and Vuaflart's exemplary catalogue. By excluding prints after drawings -thus excluding some arabesques-the list of paintings in Camesasca's catalogue runs to 215 numbers, my own list in Tout Watteau to 250. But it has to be said that only about half of these correspond to identified paintings. The remainder are made up of prints after lost originals, which had already disappeared, in the eighteenth century.[115]

We may conclude therefore that the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation have withstood the tests of changing fashion in the arts and the potential for critical reassessments that might lead to their removal from exhibition or even loss and destruction; the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation were important enough to survive so their retention in some way reflects the concerns of history. So what history do they reflect?

To what history might the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation bear witness?

According to Posner 'there is no way of knowing exactly how Watteau lighted on the subject for [*The Pilgrimage to Cythera*], but [the theme of the garden of love] was so common in the literature and theatre of his time that he [probably] did not have to search for it.'[116] For some time the sources of Watteau's Cythera paintings have been sought in the Comédie-Française and in particular Dancourt's *Les trois Cousines.*

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[115] Michel, Marianne Roland, *Watteau An Artist of the Eighteenth Century*, Chartwell books, Inc.,1984, p.70.

[116] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1984, p. 187. Posner here refers to the Tomlinson, R., *La Fête Galante: Watteau et Marivaux*, Geneva-Paris, 1981.

Margaret Morgan Grasselli claims however that the true source of the theme of Cythera 'was born at the Fair and at the Opera...between 1710 and 1715.'[117] For example, the Palais Royal presented *Les Amours déguisés* by Bourgeois in 1713. The prologue to this opera 'represents a seaport where the Fleet of love is ready to set sail for the Island of Cythera. The lovers, "chained together by garlands of flowers," hasten to call Venus; Bacchus, leading bacchants and satyrs, follow her...Minerva refuses to embark for the island of her rival, and Venus, accompanied by Games and Pleasures disguised as sailors, calls encouragement to the couples about to depart.'[118] In another example presented at the Fair, Pierrot decides to go on a pilgrimage with Diamantine; Harlequin wants to accompany them and is dressed in a comic pilgrim costume complete with staff laden with roots, vegetables, onions and sausages.[119]

If we heed Posner, it is possible that the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation declare the vestiges of their time by the way in which the main features of the play is set in their respective images. However, it is also possible that different histories may be reflected in their images. It is possible for example that the theme of Cythera and the composition of a boat trip could be reflected in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation by way of reference not entirely based on the theatre. For instance, two features of early eighteenth century life present the prospect that the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation offer witness to particular social events. Firstly the popular pleasure trips down the Seine that actually took place around the years of Louis XIV's death. These pleasure trips plied the Seine between Paris and Saint-Cloud 'carrying city dwellers attracted by the promise of a short

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[117] Grasselli, Maragaret Morgan, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, 1984, p. 498.

[118] Ibid., p. 498.

[119] A play performed in Toulous in 1712, known through the manuscript by P.-F. Biancolelli. Grasselli, Maragaret Morgan, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, 1984, p.498

gallant adventure.'[120] Secondly, the social parties known as the fête galante which according to Crow, Watteau would have known.

Julie Anne Plax follows argues that 'the christening of *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* as a fête galante was singularly appropriate, for the genre of paintings known as *fêtes galantes* recapitulated neatly, in form and content, the social practice known as the fête galante.'[121]

According to Plax the fête galante was a ball often played out in masquerade that could be defined as a form of elite behaviour.

> Beyond the activity of men and women entertaining themselves in pursuit of love and music, fetes signified social identity. The fête galante was perfect for the conspicuous display of two fundamentally aristocratic conditions: leisure and exclusivity. Not only did fêtes galantes define and codify the behaviour appropriate for aristocratic leisure, but they were also opportunities for displaying elite behaviour. Fêtes were occasions that endowed total idleness with recognizable form and purpose. In turn, participation in performance at fêtes signified an individual membership in an exclusive circle.[122]

Elite or aristocratic performance at a fête galante required a distancing from and a mediation of the sexual intrigue and passion that energised the spectacle of the ball. This mediation was highly ritualised and involved the transformation of the individual into an artificial masked second self. This process would include dressing up in costume. The aristocrat might for example assume the clothes of a peasant, the costume of a theatrical figure or a character from the ballet. This transformation of the individual into a costumed mask and ritualised performer is Plax considers, consistent with the cult

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[120] Ibid., p.499.

[121] Plax, Julie Anne, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth Century France*, Cambridge University Press, p. 109. Plax is here referring to the way in which on receipt and acceptance of Watteau's reception piece the Academy altered the classification of *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* from history painting to the appellation une fêste galante. A change in category that marked the first time that the term fête galante was used to designate a genre of painting.

[122] Plax, Julie Anne, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth Century France*, Cambridge University Press, p. 111.

of *honnêteté*. What is *honnêteté*? Plax describes following Stanton, the *honnête homme* as an amalgam of artistry and aristocracy.

> A *honnête homme* never actually revealed his boredom. By playing the game of masking desire and by cultivating highly complex and oblique modes of behaviour and expression to achieve an aesthetic distance from direct experience or expression, one could dissimulate, having created a superior self and a fictive realm richer more brilliant than real life. As Routrou wrote, "This game is no longer a game, but truth in which by my actions I am represented...I, the object and actor of myself.[123]

In Paris around 1710 the social status of the individual was hard to determine solely from appearance or attire. During the period of the regency and the 'boom and bust years of John Law's *système*, when vast fortunes were made and lost overnight' the way status was determined changed.[124] Gold and silver was common so ornate or luxurious attire became available to more people. In this changed environment individuals had to strive hard to differentiate themselves and to establish their social place in relation to others. Consequently 'appearance and dress...took on an intensified importance.'[125] Everyday life became a masquerade. 'Paint and large wigs obscured the face [and] masks were frequently worn in public.'[126] Where previously the aristocrat could symbolise his status by way of a play of masquerade and camouflage at the fête galante, he now had to reinvent the rituals that had previously signified his elevated status. In 1715 the court at Versailles was dissolved but some time before this date the court ceased to be at the centre of society. The Paris salon and the fête staged within the city replaced the court as the medium through which and against which society could be preserved. This is because the city staged salon and fête allowed the opportunity to appropriate the city's popular culture. In one fête for example, a card game was employed as part of the fantasy of the ball and in another, the *théatre du bal.* Although

[123] Ibid., p.117.
[124] Ibid., p.117.
[125] Ibid., p.117.
[126] Ibid., p.118.

the *honnête homme* was no longer playing at court, the city fête offered new opportunities to 'live life as a fiction' and 'bring artifice to life.'[127]

One important consideration in this redrawing of the fête galante was the way amateur theatrics, which had once been the sign of the aristocracy, became once again a feature of elite entertainment and the fantasy of the fête. The role of the theatre as an aide to the spectacle of the fête is most obvious in the way the elite appropriated the parades and the fair theatre. Parades were short unpolished performances. They combined street entertainment such as tightrope walking with bits of theatre. According to Plax the parades were appropriated and transposed to private drawing rooms and country residences. Thereby providing new scenarios and masks that enabled rejuvenation of the fête galante.

As we have already identified the compositions of Watteau's *fête galante* paintings such as the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation, present scenes that appear staged. On these stages, figures in sometimes-conspicuous costume appear to perform social rituals and engage in leisure, pleasure, or sexual intrigue. One might think that having drawn a comparison between Watteau's paintings and the social event of the eighteenth century fête, Plax might accordingly argue that Watteau's *fête galante* paintings directly represent a reflection of or bear witness to the cult of *honnêteté*. Plax argues however that this not strictly the case. She claims instead that Watteau does not give us a faithful rendition of the fête. He gives us the mode of the fête but in a form consistent with its masking and ritual protocols. Watteau obsfucates the content of his scenes in much the same way as a *honnête homme* might, i.e., by way of masked signs and contradictory signals. For Plax the paintings constitute a form of elite play rather than representations

[127] Ibid., p.121.

of the history of the social fête. They do not record or illustrate the fête galante. On the contrary, they focus on certain aspects of the sociality of the *honnête homme* and therefore should be considered unreliable documents of social history.

Plax's argument is innovative and compelling. But if her work regarding the development of one possible history does not directly enable us to identify what history the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation testify to, how might Plax's argument help us?

Plax pursues the line that Watteau's paintings exemplify *honnête homme*, materially by way of their construction and making and by way of their utilisation of theatrical costume. The fashions of the figures in a painting perform for Plax the role of further exemplifying the ritual of socialisation exhibited by the *honnête homme*. Drawing such comparisons is not unreasonable. In doing so however Plax exposes another not unreasonable line of reasoning. In supporting her claims she describes time, e.g., she pulls the past into the present, and indicates with regard to our purposes, an opening to the identification of represented history. That is, the costumes and masks of the *fête galante* paintings can be traced to a theatrical tradition and thence to a social convention, each of which evolved and was maintained over many years. But the fashions of these costumes can also be identified to belong to a definable time and period. It is not Plax's argument to trace or develop the issue of time or history. Yet in emphasising the tradition of the *honnêteté* and the social fête, she opens a line of enquiry that she does not then explore, i.e., opportunities for the identification of history represented by dress fashions that are embedded in the staging of the scenes in Watteau's paintings. I intend to take advantage of this omission and the potential of dress fashion in Watteau's work so as to develop a previously undeveloped insight into the material history reflected in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation.

Dress fashion in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation

In the early eighteenth century the Regency style, which was the forerunner of the rococo style was characterised by a sense of lightness and a playful exoticism which reacted against the classical conformity of the fashion which prevailed under Louis XIV.

Typical fashionable garments for a man in 1715 would have included 'a coat, waistcoat and breeches, usually but not always, [made] of the same fabric.'[128] The coat was fairly crude, constructed out of just two fronts and two backs sewn together. By 1715 rather than hang loose from the body the coat was more tailored so as to be tight to the body. The front of the coat was tailored so as to swing slightly off the straight, buttons and buttonholes were prominent, as were the coat cuffs. The cuffs operated as something of a focal point. They were wide, flared and turned-back while remaining open. In 1715 the waistcoat would be worn about the same length as the coat, approximately knee-length and with horizontal pockets. The breeches or *culottes* were immensely baggy in the seat. They were gathered into a waistband and ended above the knee where stockings rolled over the knee band. Although the coat was the focus of a man's attire, the coat and the breeches could (around 1715) be made out of large floral silk brocades. Luxury trimmings were applied to the coat, cuffs, around the buttonholes and the pockets.

Light colours and flowing silks were typical features of women's fashion during the Regency whereas a baroque heaviness of style and fabric predominated prior to the 1700's. For most of the eighteenth century fashion dictated that a woman's dress

[128] Ribeiro, Aileen, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe 1715-1789*, revised edition, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2002, p.16.

consisted of open and closed robes. 'The commonest type of gown was the open robe, which consisted of a bodice and overskirt joined together but with the skirt open in front to reveal an underskirt or petticoat.'[129] The bodice was decorated with flat sewn-down revers extended to the waist. The stomacher, which filled in the gap between the sides of the bodice, was triangular in shape, sometimes boned and decorated. The sleeves were loose and ended in a wide cuff. The fullness of the petticoat was pleated into the waist and tied with a drawstring.

The most characteristic dress of the eighteenth century is the 'sack' or 'sacque' dress. The sacque 'dress had loose pleats unstitched at the front or back. It was worn either with the front seamed from just below the waist, or it was completely open in front, revealing the petticoat.'[130] The sacque dress was also called the 'robe volante'. This term implied that the flowing movement and looseness that typified the dress hid a multitude of sins and at the same time indicated its suitability for the bedroom.

In the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation we see a number of depictions of dress fashion that contrast with eighteenth century fashion: the time of their origination. For example, in the eighteenth century the most expensive hats for men were produced from beaver skins that were made into glossy impermeable fabric. The fashion was for the shape of the hat to be in the three-cornered style. The brim was turned up on three sides to form a kind of triangle with more or less equal sides. In the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation however we find a fashion for the hat that predates the eighteenth century. The male figures wear round brimmed hats, some of which are turned up at the front. They do not generally wear three corner hats. By way of illustration in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation the kneeling figure that leans toward the female figure with a fan wears a

[129] Ibid., p.33.
[130] Ibid., p.37.

round brimmed hat. The first male of the three couples waiting to board the boat in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation wears a round brimmed hat turned up at the front. The male figure helping the figures to board the boat in both the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation wears a round brimmed hat turned up at the front and the back, as does the male figure helping the female figure to her feet in the Pilgrimage.

Shoes also offer examples of divergence from eighteenth century fashion. In the early eighteenth century shoes were usually made of leather. Around 1715 the fashion was for the shoe to have square blocked toes and high square heels. 'The uppers covered the foot, ending in square tongues rising high in front of the ankle. The sides were closed, and the shoes fastened with straps from the heel leathers, buckled in front over the tongues.'[131] In the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation we find by contrast a range of footwear. In the Pilgrimage the male figure at the centre of the composition sports pointed shoes without heals. Where-as in the Embarkation the same figure wears pointed shoes with a small heel. In the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation the kneeling male figure sports round toed shoes with heels. But in both the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation the male helping the female to her feet wears shoes that are almost contemporaneous with the dress fashions of the time of the construction of the image, i.e., square toed shoes with a high tongue high above the ankle.

As stated above, in 1715 the waistcoat would be worn about the same length as the coat, approximately knee-length and with horizontal pockets. In the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation we find instead, Pilgrim jackets that taper to the waist and flair at the hip but stop short of the knee. They are short and without pockets although in keeping with the dress fashion of the early eighteenth century the cuffs of the male figures coats conform generally to the fashion, i.e., they are wide, flared and turned-back while

[131] Ibid., p.30.

remaining open. Similarly where the male breeches might be expected to be baggy at the seat, the *culottes* sported by each male in both the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation divert from this fashion. Yet by contrast the stockings are worn high to the knee in a way consistent with 1715 fashion.

In the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation the most obvious examples of early eighteenth century fashion are worn by the female figures. By way of illustration as stated above the sack dress was the most characteristic dress of the eighteenth century. In the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation the sack dress adorns the principle female figures. The female figure with a fan is dressed in a sack dress made of light flowing salmon pink coloured fabric, while the standing female at the centre of the canvas also wears a sack dress and petti-coat.

By way of comparison, in the work of de Troy we see images that display a continuity of dress fashion and fashions that are consistent with the time of the origination of the work. In de Troy's *The Declaration of love* 1725, the male figure wears a long jacket with long cuffs turned back but open.[132] The jacket has prominent buttons and straight pockets. The male figure also sports high-tongued leather shoes, with square toes, closed with a strap and buckle. In addition, according to the fashion of the 1720's to 1730, the hair of the male figure is tied back in a small bag, enclosed with a ribbon called a *bourse*. Next to the male, on the sofa sits a fur-trimmed three-corner hat. The female figure that is the subject of the amorous advances of the male figure models a sack dress and bodice laced at the front. The fabric is light and flowing in a way consistent with the early eighteenth century. Again in a later version discussed above by the same title *The Declaration of Love* 1731, we find a composition of figures modelled

[132] De Troy, J.-F., *The Declaration of Love*, 1725, oil on canvas, collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wright, New York.

in clothing consistent with the fashions of the time of the painting's origination.[133] In the 1730's heavy fruit-and-flower designs dominated contemporary ladies fashion. In de Troy's painting we see ample evidence of this fad. Four female figures are clothed in sack dresses one of which is patterned with large motifs of flowers in bloom. The three males model long frock coats embroidered and buttoned down the front, with straight pockets and large cuffs turned back. Again, as in the earlier version the principle male sports a hairstyle tied back into a *bourse.*

As we have seen the theatre, social practices or society events and dress fashions make up a list of potential histories reflected in the countenance of nature depicted in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. These histories of course need not be mutually exclusive. Posner recognises associations and links to the tradition of the theatre, as does Bryson, but Posner also recognises the potential influence of the fête galante ball. Margaret Morgan Grasselli among other commentators notes that gallant parties that took place along the Seine may have informed Watteau's thoughts when painting the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. But Margaret Morgan Grasselli also draws attention to the society masquerade and the early eighteenth century trend for amorous parties on boat trips down the Seine. Similarly Plax identifies qualities in Watteau's Pilgrimage that are consistent with the characteristics of the *honnête homme,* the fête galante masked revel, in a context informed by the traditions of the theatre. It is possible to definitively attribute historical dress fashions in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. But in the same way that it is impossible to definitively ascribe the remaining histories described above as potential referents in the creative process, it is also impossible by virtue of their mention in the interpretations made by these authors to conclusively discount their possible role. If we therefore accept a vestige of their presence what

[133] De Troy, J.-F., *The Declaration of Love*, 1731, oil on canvas. Schloss Charlottenburg, Potsdam. Berlin.

might this indicate regarding the history witnessed by the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation? And how might these diverse histories affect the temporal condition of Watteau's Pilgrimage and the Embarkation?

Diverse histories: lost times

To paraphrase the translator's preface to *The Arcades Project*, when the viewer approaches an historical object such as a painting, the viewer directs a degree of concentration on to what has been and thereby welcomes the past history of the object into the present.[134] In this process instances from the object's past come alive as never before and are newly experienced. The viewer redeems what might be considered the lost time embedded in the spaces of the object and in this sense, the historical instances that make up the lost time might be considered the apparitions of the object.

Accordingly if under scrutiny, the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation offer signs that can be traced from the perspective of the present to documented historical data, such as records of theatre traditions, French masque balls etc. And if this data can be thetically reconfigured in relation to the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation, then heeding the insights offered by Benjamin, we might determine that the histories traced in the

[134] 'To speak of the awakening was to speak of the "afterlife of works," something brought to pass through the medium of the "dialectical image." The latter is Benjamin's central term, in *The Arcades Project*, for the historical object of interpretation: that which, under the divinatory gaze of the collector is taken up into the collector's own particular time and place, thereby throwing a pointed light on what has been. Welcomed into the present moment that seems to be waiting just for it-"actualised," as Benjamin likes to say-the moment from the past comes alive as never before. In this way, the "now" is itself experienced as performed in the "then," as its distillation-thus the leading motif of "precursors" in the text. The historical object is reborn as such into the present day capable of receiving it, of suddenly "receiving" it. This is the famous "now of recognizability".., which has the character of a lighting flash. In the dusty, cluttered corridors of the arcades, where street and interior are one, historical time is broken up into kaleidoscopic distractions and momentary come-ons, myriad displays of ephemera, thresholds for the passage of what Gerard de Nerval (in *Aurelia*) calls "the ghosts of material things." Here, at a distance from what is normally meant by "progress," is the *ur*-historical, collective redemption of lost time, of the times embedded in the spaces of things.' Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1999, translators preface, pp.xxii.

Pilgrimage and the Embarkation can be considered the redeemed lost time of these paintings. Theatre traditions, amorous adventures, society balls each constitutes historical instances that haunt the materiality of the signs in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation. Those signs that otherwise might offer openings to narration, e.g., Pilgrims travelling to or from the isle of Cythera.

How these spectre-like histories affect the temporal condition of Watteau's Pilgrimage and the Embarkation can be best demonstrated by way of the elucidation of the temporal quality offered by one of these histories, for example, instances of dress fashion.

In *The Arcades Project* Benjamin collects and montages together a series of quotes under the category of fashion. The overriding impression that this montaged material history manifests is that fashion is closely linked to death and transience. For instance;

> For fashion was never anything other than the parody of the motley cadaver, provocation of death through the woman, and bitter colloquy with decay whispered between shrill bursts of mechanical laughter. That is fashion. And that is why she changes so quickly; she titillates death and is already something different, something new, as he casts about to crush her [B1, 4].[135]

> Fashion: Madam Death! Madam Death! - Giacomo Leopardi. "Dialogue between fashion and death";
> Nothing dies; all is transformed - Honore de Balzac, Pensées, sujets, fragments (Paris, 1910).[136]

As already discussed, in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation we find instances of merged examples of fashion history. By way of illustration, a jacket worn by a male might appear antiquated in comparison to his *culottes* as well as the dress of a woman to whom he is appealing. Similarly, a figure modelling a dated frock coat might also wear more fashionable shoes. If we consider these examples by way of Benjamin's fragments

[135] Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1999, p.63.
[136] Ibid., p.62.

of fashion material history, it becomes clear that these instances of merged history offer a quality of inescapable temporality. This is because when the past mingles with the contemporary, the impression of time offered might be described as a time in which nothing dies: all is instead transformed indefinitely. The different historical markers do not signify points in history and therefore the suspension of time between historical points. On the contrary, the different markers of different histories suggest a prolongation of history: a passing of time without the perspective of an end or beginning. We might conclude therefore that the spectral histories of dress fashion effect in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation a quality of transience that entirely compliments the quality of temporality afforded by the other techniques employed by Watteau, e.g., the metaphor of fallen nature, the fragment, repetition etc.

In addition to providing a foundation of material history of dress fashion in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation we also at this point need to consider the question of the material endurance of the artwork. What is at stake in Benjamin's claim that an artwork bears witness to human history through the position it occupied and the course of its transmission is its material endurance. Benjamin explains that the work of art determines the history to which it is subject throughout the time of its existence but that the sustainability of the relation is dependent upon the durability or capacity of endurance offered by the artwork. In other words the work of art is not passive in its relation to history. The artwork has agency and its relation to history is not necessarily fixed in so far as the durability of the artwork is a feature in the relationship. Changes in the artwork brought about through time can affect its relationship to history. So how might the endurance of the artwork, expose further evidence of temporality in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation?

History in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation is materially embedded in the countenance of transience

The Louvre carried out Restoration work on *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* from 1956 to 1983. Over many years the painting had accumulated layers of varnish. In the conservators' opinion these layers distorted the colour and tone of the image. The varnish for example, gave the image a yellow-brown tone that not only encouraged a melancholic quality but also reduced the sense of depth afforded by the tonal contrasts. Over a period of years the varnish covering the painting was gradually thinned. This process revealed a more elaborate colour-palette, increased the tonal range and accordingly improved the spatial recession of its composition. The restoration work also revealed areas of alteration and how in some areas of the painting Watteau's original handling of the paint barely concealed the canvas or preliminary crayon drawing.

This restoration work was pursued with considerable care. La Commission de Restitution was wary of altering the aesthetic character of a world-renowned work. That is;

> Le Pélerinage à l'Ile de Cythère, connu depuis longtemps dans une harmonie monochrome brune au point que la critique d'art y a souvent vu une scène automnale, presentait une difficulté au moins d'ordre psychologique.[137]

So the Commission undertook to gradually restore the painting and in a measured way. The aim was to redeem qualities but not to alter the painting in a way that was detrimental to its reception. In July 1983 the Commission gave the go ahead to the final thinning of the varnish.

[137] *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problèmes de Restauration*, Universite Libre de Bruxelles Grand Hall, du 22 Novembre au 12 Decembre 1986. Catalogue édité par le Ministère de la Communauté française de Belgique, p. 95.

Cet essai final, montré le 7 juillet 1983, a convaincu les membres de cette commission de l'opportunité de l'allègement et de la possibilité technique de procéder à celui-ci au degré souhaité.[138]

Margaret-Morgan Grassselli's response to the Commission's concerns is apposite. She states:

It is unrealistic to think one could rediscover the real colors and values of the eighteenth century. Certain tones fade and others become more transparent with age; therefore varnish removal would mean highlighting these discordances caused by time, and emphasising the material quality of the paint.[139]

Margaret Morgan Grasselli also states in response to the Commission's concerns regarding the risk to the aesthetic of the Pilgrimage that:

We do not believe that the restoration has changed our interpretation of the work. True, the painting is much less "blond," "autumnal," less "twilight' than has been mentioned, but its magic and mystery remain.[140]

So what can the Commission, Margaret Morgan Grasselli's statement and the restoration of the Pilgrimage reveal about the durability of *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and its temporal qualities?

To begin with if the restoration process undertaken since 1956 sought to address the accumulated layers of varnish applied by earlier conservators, the aim of securing the painting's longevity records the time of history's passing. In other words, it is clear that previous attempts to safeguard its future by arresting decay have imprinted time upon the painting's surface. The history of conservation imprinted on the surface of the Pilgrimage offers when considered in conjunction with Margaret Morgan Grasselli's

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[138] Ibid., p.95.
[139] Grasselli, Maragaret Morgan, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, 1984, p.460
[140] Ibid., p.399.

comments a further insight into the material endurance and time of the Pilgrimage. That is, if as, Margaret Morgan Grasselli indicates, some colours change over time regardless of conservation technology, the conservation work on the Pilgrimage exposes not only a history of the desire to resist at a material level the effects of time but the inevitable transition of the object. The paint will change and potentially crack, the colour and light will accordingly dim or increase in luminosity and the anxiety of those, which protect art for posterity, will then inflict such material alterations that will extend the transitional status of the object. The inevitable transformation of the object or the painting's material ability to effect action can be further exemplified when the Commission's concerns regarding the consequences of conservation are considered. It is clear from the Commission that the institution believes that the artwork has the capacity to alter opinion and thinking through time. This is because the contingencies of the materiality of the artwork necessitate conservation and that conservation recorded in the surface layers of varnish, affects interpretations that the Commission then felt duty bound to protect. For the Commission the accumulation of varnish and by extension the accumulation of history worked toward the impression of a melancholic quality maintained over time. The painting and its transition through time effected interpretation; indeed continues to effect interpretation by virtue of the impossibility of a return to an original moment.

The Commission, Margaret Morgan Grasselli's statement and the history of the restoration of the Pilgrimage offer a picture of a painting that has endured, succumbed and been transformed by time. Time has had its effect at a material level and the work might be described as transitional. So does this transitional state of endurance expose anything more concerning the temporal quality of the Pilgrimage?

If the material presence of the Pilgrimage is not fixed then, we can conclude that decay, restoration and change in the Pilgrimage expose a quality of temporal susceptibility. We cannot from a material point of view return the painting to an original appearance and we cannot predict its future other than to state that it will necessarily change or demand modification. This leaves the painting, not only vulnerable to the passing of time, but renders it an example of passing time. The painting is by necessity a temporal object. Consequently we can conclude that not only does the enduring transition of the object called *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* expose further evidence of its temporal qualities, it also indicates that the history reflected in the image of the Pilgrimage should be considered embedded in both the temporal conditions determined by the technique constructed scene and a countenance of transition: the material ruin of the painting.

A picture of time

The aim of this chapter was to demonstrate the validity of the possibility that the occasion of *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* may be contingent upon different temporalities and locations; and that accordingly it may represent a material failure to arrive in one place. To fulfil this objective I sought to establish a picture or constellation of the time and space which it occasions. I undertook an inventory of differences between the classical symbol and the allegorical sign and came up with a series of *Trauerspiel* techniques. I then analysed the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation by way of those techniques so that I might draw a picture of time in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* that is not narrative based.

From this work we have been able to determine that there is evidence to suggest that Watteau utilised techniques whose significance can be illuminated by Benjamin's thinking regarding the *Trauerspiel*. Most helpful in Watteau's use of allegory, is

repetition, which supports the claim that the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation are contingent upon a temporal and spatial effect. The techniques that Watteau employed inscribe in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation a quality of spatial temporality that entails that these paintings necessarily fail to cohere within the boundary of their frames. In the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation each repeat occupies a different location and was made at a different time. The Pilgrimage and the Embarkation occasion an experience that simultaneously involves images located elsewhere with the result of the emergence of non-narrative time in the images of the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation.

The Pilgrimage to Cythera and *The Embarkation to Cythera* occasion images that are both in and out of time. Images that, while present to the viewer, are illuminated by spectral instances of lost time. The spectral time in the representation is inscribed in the countenance of a similarly transient object: a ruin. In other words, the spectral time of the image is in the time of the object and the spectre like time of the object is in the time of the image. The valencey of the time of the image of the Pilgrimage and the temporal quality of the object in which it is inscribed exposes the extent of its spectral quality.

Chapter Two

Watteau's method: the spectre of time

In the previous chapter, I traced a picture of time in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and proposed that it presents to the viewer a scene illuminated by spectre-like instances of lost time inscribed in the countenance of a transient object. How might we account for this inscription of lost time? How might Watteau's paintings come to be conditioned or haunted by spectre-like time inscribed in the material ruin of a transitional object?

In *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problèmes de Restauration,* conservation studies involving microscopy and X-radiography which have exposed evidence that Watteau's choice of materials and methodological approach to representation were employed with a disregard for the welfare or longevity of his work. Watteau often mixed his pigments with a glazing agent called *L'huile grasse* in disproportionate proportions. *L'huile grasse* or fat oil, facilitates impasto, rapid working and tonally rich chromatics by enabling semi-transparent layers of colour to be superimposed on top of one another. The use of *L'huile grasse* does however effect the drying time of the pigment and different drying times in the same painting advance the hazard of *craquelures*. Cracks in the surface of a painting such as those identified earlier in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* not only affect the appearance of the image but also pose a hazard to its long-term integrity because they allow changes in atmosphere greater opportunity to effect flaking of its surface.[141] Conservation of Watteau's *Serenade italienne* also reveals that its current composition was preceded by a different version painted some years before. X-radiology has disclosed that Watteau painted over and adapted an earlier image so as to achieve the current version. If conservation studies propose that the potential corrosive effects of time on Watteau's paintings are exaggerated by Watteau's methods and the

[141] Please see Chapter 1: The illumination of what cannot appear: time, for insights regarding the effect of *craquelures* in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera.*

pictorial condition of some of Watteau's images is contingent upon an occluded past. One way of addressing how a spectral time may come to haunt or illuminate the decaying transition of Watteau's work is to explore Watteau's studio methods: his practice.

As previously indicated, during the early eighteenth century Watteau's *fête galante* style was perpetuated through Watteau's collaboration with other artists and in particular, the work of his two pupils, Jean-Baptiste Pater and Nicolas Lancret.[142] Lancret may have started out his career as understudy to Watteau but he soon became a distinguished rival. A comparative study of Watteau's methods and those of Lancret might therefore usefully facilitate an informative investigation into Watteau's ways of working.

There are interesting but not extensive anecdotal and historical records that make note of Watteau's working method. De Goncourt made some note of his methodological preferences and the techniques he employed. So as to explore Watteau's methods, I intend to make use of this information but my primary resource will be the paintings. The paintings offer the opportunity to study the time they occasion, and by way of the material evidence of their making, the time of their becoming: the time of painting. Toward this end I will study the surface of the paintings to see how the surface has recorded the history of its making. I will also further explore X-radiology images and restoration evidence so as to establish a picture of their occluded history of production, Watteau's spectre of time, as well as the material endurance of the artwork. That is, how it came to be transitional. For the purpose of this work I will focus attention on Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres* (fig. 2).

[142] Please see Chapter 1: The illumination of what cannot appear: time.

Divertissements champêtres

The Wallace Collection, London holds a number of striking examples of eighteenth century paintings and furniture. The Marquess of Hertford (1800-70) is largely responsible for the collection, which he began with two Watteau paintings purchased in 1827. Over a period of thirty years he then collected further works by Boucher, Fragonard and Greuze.

The eighteenth century collection is housed together on the first floor in long inter-connected gallery rooms. The paintings are not presented in a white cube they are contextualised by way of objects and interior design consistent with the period of their origination. For instance, as you enter the gallery you pass an eighteenth century writing table attributed to J. - P. Latz (c. 1691-1754), a Mantel Clock by L.-S. Boizot (1743-1809) and a pair of candlesticks based on models by C. van Cleve cast in c.1750. Before finding a collection of Lancret *fête galante* and *Commedia dell' Arte* paintings grouped together with a series of small *fête galante* by Pater. The Watteau paintings are located on the opposite wall to the Lancret's. One Watteau painting is particularly striking, namely *Divertissements champêtres* (translated to Fête in a Park, The Wallace Collection, or Country Amusements, Donald Posner). Posner dates *Divertissements champêtres* to around 1719-20.

Divertissements champêtres is by Watteau's standards, a large painting, 128 x 193 cm. It represents a woodland scene with glades, several small and large groups of figures, and a statue. The lay out may be described as follows. In the lower horizontal third of the painting, we find two groups of large-scale figures placed in the foreground. Each group of figures is composed of individuals positioned in a triangular formation sustained by eye contact; on the left of the canvas, two children, one standing, one crouching, play

with a dog on a lead. The head of the crouching girl, face partially concealed, is turned toward the left where the dog, held tight by the lead, turns to face her. The standing girl looks down, head tilted, not toward the other girl but the dog. On the right of the canvas, we find a group of five lounging men and women and one standing onlooker. This group of figures, two seated men, one standing and three seated women, who should dominate the pictured scene by virtue of their scale and detail, occupy the picture plane from almost the centre of the painting to its extreme right. The male figure nearest the centre of the painting's foreground, directs a stare toward the reclining male positioned immediately below the onlooker but it is not returned. The reclining male stares instead, in a shallow diagonal movement left and upward toward a woman positioned pictorially above and behind the centre male figure. This woman, who holds a basket of flowers, looks across two female companions to return his attention. The standing onlooker or 'witness' to the scene, furthermost right of the composition and nearest the picture plane appears to stare into the scene, beyond the men and women at his feet, through the trees and into an unidentifiable distance: toward a possible point of infinity.

In the middle ground of the painting, roughly speaking the horizontal mid third of the canvas, a variety and range of smaller scale couples and larger groups of figures can be seen to walk, sit and entertain themselves, framed by the trunks of the trees among which they are seated. For example, a couple furthest left of the canvas stand and gaze out sandwiched between two boughs pictorially positioned above but recessively behind the two girls playing with the dog. While three seated figures, right of the infant and beast trio, marginally left of centre, equally sandwiched by two prominent tree trunks, engage each other's gaze adjacent to a couple dancing. The scale of the figures of the middle ground is, according to the rules of perspective, approximately in proportion to the figures of the foreground. There is however scope for optical confusion between some of the middle and the foreground figures, for example, the left-hand group of

people immediately behind the foreground female figure holding the basket of flowers. This confusion is partly to do with the close proximity of these figures, their marginal differences of scale and the similarity of tonal contrast that highlights each of them. The opportunity for puzzlement afforded by these and other compositional features contribute over all to a complex section of the painting. The middle ground contains twenty-two figures condensed into six of eight possible variously sized tree framed views through the wood; it is shaded and dappled with light, both detailed and brief with regard to its representations and at its horizon, lies an indistinct, subtly modulated view to infinity.

Above the horizon line in the painting's upper horizontal third of the canvas, nature dominates. Trees, foliage, light and dark, characterise through detail, colour and tone. While on the extreme right, a statue of a rotund woman positioned above the standing onlooker in the fore ground, visually overlaps the condensed space of the middle ground, the nature-dominated space of the upper horizon and the view to infinity.

Divertissements champêtres is a striking painting not least because of its large scale and the dramatic tonal contrasts that it presents. But it is perhaps equally noteworthy because of its unconventional composition, i.e., the arrangement of figures and objects in space. According to Julie Anne Plax, Watteau applied to his military paintings the same techniques he applied elsewhere; namely that he created meaning in the military paintings by confounding, inverting, and toying ironically with pre-existing genres, conventions, traditions and practices. Plax argues that Watteau challenged the traditions of war painting in a variety of ways. One notable feature of Watteau's re-configuration of the war scene and accordingly the significance of its message was achieved she maintains through the spatial quality of his representations. In the eighteenth century there were established rules regarding the depiction of space in war paintings.

According to the topological tradition it was common to depict the victorious army fore grounded in front of an extreme birds eye view of the battle, a view so extreme as to as to allow 'one to read [the battle] as a map.'[143] This composition allowed the scene to 'naturalise certain kinds of information and an "official" point of view, e.g., *Bataille de Fleurus*, 1690[144].'[145] When painting war scenes however, Watteau employed among other devices a reversal of this tradition, with the result that his paintings suggest rather less heroic interpretations. In a number of Watteau war paintings, rather than stage the scene in the foreground with an expansive view toward the battle itself, Watteau inverts the pictorial space. He replaces the fore ground rise with a depression and forecloses our view with a raised background, e.g., *Return from the Campaign* (fig. 42). The fact that in some paintings Watteau provides a tiny glimpse of a view to the distant landscape, Plax contends, 'only underscores that it is cut off from view': it is not accessible.[146] I agree with Plax in her assessment of Watteau's approaches to space, both with regard to his War paintings and the later *fête galante* and *Commedia dell' Arte* scenes, in that he appears to have applied in his works, techniques that confound conventions and traditions. *Divertissements champêtres* not perhaps in an overt way exemplifies this tendency. For example, the witness, the largest depicted figure, is pictured with his back to us, peering into the scene not out toward its audience. Plus although the scene presents a view to a receding vista, a future beyond our location, the trees of the middle ground not only bar our way but also break the scene into separate pockets of interest. In other words rather than focus our attention onto a significant feature, the composition offers a variety of opportunities trapped within a space framed by nature and the vigil of a witness.

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[143] Plax, Julie Anne, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth Century France*, Cambridge University Press, p. 63.

[144] Anonymous, *Bataille of Fleurus*, 1690, Musée National du Chateau de Versailles. Cliché, Reunion des Musées Nationaux.

[145] Ibid., p. 63.

[146] Plax, Julie Anne, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth Century France*, Cambridge University Press, p. 73.

Watteau's approach to spatial composition as evidenced by *Divertissements champêtres* is very different to Lancret. Similarly although there are many similarities between Watteau and Lancret there are also numerous differences in their studio practice. Both invested a passion for drawing toward informed paintings but in very different ways; and both employed similar techniques but through very different methodologies. These differences are somewhat surprising given their former working relationship of master and student. A study of the similarities and differences between these two painters is not only appropriate but also apposite regarding the exploration of Watteau's working method. To facilitate this study it is important to first provide a more detailed picture of the maturing Lancret.

Nicolas Lancret, pupil and academic

Nicolas Lancret was first apprenticed to Pierre Dulin (a history painter who had modelled his art on the history allegories of Charles Le Brun), and was then trained at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture.'[147] He is often portrayed as a negligible figure but was in fact very successful and a 'key force in the visual arts of eighteenth-century Europe.'[148] Lancret counted amongst his patrons many of the crowned heads of Europe, as well as collectors among the aristocracy and wealthy business community. At the peak of his career, his sole rivals for commissions were Boucher and Lemoyne who mostly painted history paintings, while he instead remained entirely preoccupied by genre painting.

Lancret's style was, as already stated, particularly in his early career at the Academy, greatly influenced by Watteau. Like a good academician, he learned much from

[147]Holmes, Mary Tavener & Focarino, Joseph, *Nicolas Lancret 1690 - 1743*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York, in association with The Frick Collection, 1991, p.21.
[148] Ibid., p.12.

Watteau and he would continue to refer to Watteau's work throughout his career. He painted many *fêtes galantes* and *Commedia dell' Arte* scenes. He preferred park settings 'to interiors, and he always endowed his park scenes with statues, benches, and fountains. Lancret also reused favourite poses from Watteau paintings many times. For example, he reused a pose that Watteau had used in his portrait of Antoine de la Roque, for his *End of the Hunt* and *A Hunter and His Servant*; [as well as] Watteau's ubiquitous aggressive suitor bent over his prey,...[which] reappears in Lancret's *Bourbon-Conti Family,...Blindman's Buff*, the Wallace Collection's *Dance in the Park*, and the *La Feie Automne*.'[149]

Gradually Watteau's influence upon Lancret waned and he began to develop his own style of genre scenes. A style 'with the visual power and narrative coherence of history painting, that would carry when seen above the highest doorway at Versailles.'[150]According to Holmes and Focarino this involved employing conventions accepted by some academicians to produce more convincing descriptions. The aim was to better facilitate a legible narrative and a concrete, comprehensible image.

Lancret's *Italian Comedians by a fountain* (fig. 43) and *Conversation galante* (fig. 44) exemplify Lancret's personal investment in certain techniques proffered by some academicians but also the early influence of Watteau. In *Italian Comedians by a fountain* Lancret composes a *fête galante* scene inhabited by *Commedia dell' Arte* figures. Mezetin, Flaminia, Pierrot, Silvia and Harlequin, all favourite Watteau subjects, occupy a staged outdoor location replete with other preferred Watteau compositional devices, e.g., verdant foliage, classical urns and references to classic garden architecture. In the composition, again in a way reminiscent of Watteau's work, different

[149] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[150] Ibid., p.13.

groups of figures amuse themselves while the eyewitness Pierrot looks on.[151] There however, Lancret's debt to Watteau appears to wane. In a *fête galante* by Watteau, the figures of the scene might, as in *Divertissements champêtres*, be scaled and compositionally arranged in space so as to not signal priorities for viewer interpretation, but in *Italian Comedians by a fountain*, Lancret explicitly employs a compositional structure that invites a hierarchic reading. The figures are centrally placed, comparatively large in scale regarding the proportions of the canvas and grouped in a pyramid structure reminiscent of a painting by some academicians preferred Master Nicolas Poussin, i.e., *The Judgement of Solomon*.[152] Pierrot at the apex of the pyramid stands at the top, peering down toward the figures successively placed below him. He is the top of the pile, literally the centre of the canvas and spot lit in a frontal pose. Mezetin, Harlequin etc., are all pictured in a side on stance, shaded by each other and the fall of light. The gaze of Pierrot the structure implies, much like Solomon in Poussin's masterpiece, conditions this picture's narrative.

Lancret's supplementation of Watteau's influence with methods that echo the work and practices of 'model' academic painters does not end there. Unlike many Watteau *fête galante* and *Commedia dell' Arte* paintings, *Italian Comedians by a fountain* and *Conversation galante* also embrace the convention of depicting figures close to the picture plane. For some classical influenced academic painting it was the convention to 'dispose figures in a frieze...parallel to the picture plane, because such an arrangement clarifies the action just as it does on a...stage.'[153] An extension of this rule was the prescription that a frieze like composition should be supported by an uncomplicated

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[151] Pierrot in Lancret's *Italian Comedians by a fountain* is also reminiscent of the foreground witness in *Divertissements champêtres* discussed earlier.

[152] Poussin, Nicolas, *The Judgement of Solomon*, 1649, Louvre Paris. The painting dispenses with crowds and detailed architecture, and concentrates instead on the throne by way of the High Renaissance compositional mechanism of the triangle. At the apex of the triangle Solomon sits on the throne flanked at his feet by the evil mother (right) pointing toward the mother whose child is to be divided (seen on the left).

[153] Greenhalgh, Michael Gerald, *The Classical Tradition in Art*, Duckworth & Co, 1978, p.165.

'background reduced to a simple screen, whether of architecture or landscape, [so as to reflect] our concentrations back onto the figures' and condition our mood.'[154] *Italian Comedians by a fountain* and *Conversation galante* conform to this model in a way which Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres*, with its middle ground that interrupts the figured scene and the offered but denied view to infinity does not. Lancret's paintings again also deviate from Watteau's practice and pointedly veer toward an apparently more academic approach with regard to their chromatic usage. Lancret's paintings follow a one-time academic preference for pure and artificial colours that imitate nature by way of close observation, e.g., when Lancret paints Harlequin's costume he employs strong and vibrant red, yellow and blues, not the subdued versions depicted by Watteau. In Lancret's figures there is also more of an emphasis placed on the articulation of the figure, the pose and the development of form rather than chromatic invention. In contrast, Watteau, although heavily graphic in style, emphasised equally the importance of tonal highlights often applied late in the painting process.

Given the similarities and differences between Watteau and Lancret how might a comparative study of their work, which focuses on techniques, composition and pictorial space, illuminate a picture of time in their paintings and painting process and thereby illuminate how Watteau's paintings come to be haunted by spectre-like time?

A close study of differences recorded at a material level between Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres* and Lancret's *Italian Comedians by a fountain*, but more especially Lancret's *Conversation galante,* indicate two specific techniques of image making that might enlighten such an investigation. Techniques employed differentially by both Watteau and Lancret. *Divertissements champêtres*, *Italian Comedians by a fountain*, and *Conversation galante,* also further suggest protocols that might facilitate

[154] Ibid., p.165.

this study. Five academic values that might proactively found and better enable the interrogation of Watteau and Lancret's practice by way of their respective investment in conventions held to be important by some academicians. These values are chromatics, tonality, narrative, space, and finish.

The Quality of Montage

As described above, a cursory inspection of *Divertissements champêtres* records an allegorical scene of couples and small groups of people involved in convivial social interaction and the felicities of life. Under close scrutiny however, the apparent harmony of the social scene begins to appear less convincing. A distance becomes evident between couples, individuals and their companions and between figures and their environment. What previously appeared to be a cohesion of intermingling figures in a wooded setting, becomes instead a synthesis undermined by occasions of isolation and figure to ground dislocation. The scene fragments.

This apparent fragmentation, this failure to achieve spatial cohesion appears to be a direct result of how Watteau painted the picture. It was available to Watteau to carefully employ a range of pictorial strategies and values, including chromatic and tonal harmonies toward the cohesive location of his figures in space.

According to Vernon Hyde Minor 'the notion of space - whether of the city or the country - underwent radical shifts in philosophical thinking from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century.'[155] Indeed thinking altered to such an extent that the

[155] Hyde Minor, Vernon, *Baroque & Rococo Art & Culture*, Laurence King Publishing, 1999, p. 265.

> Conception of the world changed, not only from a geocentric to a heliocentric model, but from a nature that was the product of God's intention to a world of mechanical forces, mathematical order, and physical causes...[The forces of nature became] imminent (indwelling), not transcendent.[156]

In keeping with this change in thinking, the during the eighteenth century some French academics advocated an approach to the depiction of space that would, 'while making full use of...advances in perspective...render more convincing [paintings].'[157] For academicians, influenced by antiquity and classicism, the new emphasis on secular realism which aimed to harmonise through geometry with the newly found symmetry and pattern in nature did not mean the rejection of rendering nature ideal. One of the preferred prescriptions of the Academy, maintained that, in the depiction of landscape or the space of nature and its occupants 'the rules of art command the forms of nature.'[158]

In the eighteenth century the view of nature as something that should be when painted idealised and controlled through careful balance of composition, limited views, easily determined foreground, middle distance, and far distance, became quite popular with not only some artists but also their patrons. This can be exemplified by the fact that art consumers and spectators often found escape and pleasure in a wide variety of idealised and controlled images in which the depiction of space was a primary feature. For example, 'ideal landscapes, hermitages for saints, a golden age...contented peasants and shepherds [*fête galante* etc].'[159] So much so that 'Claude Lorrain who produced many

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[156] Ibid., p. 265.

[157] Greenhalgh, Michael, *The Classical Tradition in Art*, Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1978, p.170.

[158] Hyde Minor, Vernon, *Baroque & Rococo Art & Culture*, Laurence King Publishing, 1999, p. 269
The mastery over nature took several forms and was directed toward different outcomes by the Academy's principal figures. Le Brun who prioritised design or drawing in painting because he claimed the design or concept unified the subject, aimed to co-ordinate the pictorial means of communication, e.g., composition, symbol etc., toward an ideal end that was comparable to poetry. Whereas Roger de Piles advocated an approach to the construction of images that prioritised design but as a drawing and colour incorporated means of creating dynamic images that captivated the viewer. A more detailed study of the academic thinking espoused by LeBrun and De Piles regarding drawing, colour and tone can be found in the later section entitled Academic conventions: strategies of insurance.

[159] Hyde Minor, *Vernon, Baroque & Rococo Art & Culture*, Laurence King Publishing, 1999, p.304

pastoral landscapes in which a compendium of disciplines and rules of representation are employed so as to compose - fanciful - but eminently desirable nature numbered among his clientele popes, cardinals, and princes. Nobles who were no doubt encouraged to choose Claude's paintings [because of their populist standing. Indeed Claude] was enough of a success to fear unauthorised copies, so he kept a set of drawings for the purpose of authenticating all of his painting.'[160]

In Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres*, we find little concession to any idealised 'like life itself' spatial depiction. Indeed it would be more correct to say that we find the tradition of locating figures in convincing (if ideal) illusionistic space severely problematised by Watteau's technique. There are several examples of this problematised space. For instance, the foreground male figure furthest left of the group of five, the tree trunk immediately behind this self same figure and the standing on-looker or 'witness' in the foreground furthest right of the picture plane. Each of these examples occasions not a harmony of spatial illusion but a dislocation of the spectator's expectations of pictorial space because Watteau's technique in particular allows unexpected chromatic and tonal discontinuities.

To elucidate this point, the foreground 'witness' has an inexplicable halo of warm illuminating sienna brown around its head cape and left arm. In compositional terms this halo can of course be interpreted to be a purposeful mechanism that helps establish the figure. However, this is not entirely the case. This is because there are areas of the painting, particularly the fore ground foliage, grasses and middle ground around the base of the trees, that permit the appearance of, through their brief application or the condition of their impasto, what appears to be a base colour of sienna brown. The radiant glow or halo of the 'witness' is of this same colour. Speculation permits the

[160] Ibid., p. 270.

hypothesis therefore, that intentionally or otherwise, the halo of the 'witness' is the product of an erasure of the foreground that has revealed the colour of the ground upon which the painting has been executed. In fulfilling the role of establishing the figure, the halo also therefore inadvertently creates a dilemma in how we recognise its location. The halo might harmoniously synthesise with the foliage that surrounds the plinth to create a chromatic and tonally mediated figure and depicted nature. It might through its high tonal contrast with its surrounding context highlight the figure. But because the colour of the halo is not consistent with the natural shades that surround it and because the halo's colour appears to be the ground upon which the painting is painted, it also has the effect of disrupting the figure's expected spatial location. It optically projects the figure (marginally) out and away from the plinth in front of which it should stand and at the same time grounds it in the material of representation. In other words, by not consistently modelling the figure to ground relation of the 'witness' through recessive shades of colour and tonal contrast, Watteau's technique of erasure evokes a sense of dislocated space. The halo grounds the figure in space, but at the same time gives it a collage like quality. A quality that renders it both in and out of the represented scene: an integrated feature of represented nature and a patch that disturbs the continuity of represented space.

If Watteau employs a technique that does not conform to conventions maintained by some academics and which results in a collage-like quality that fails to achieve spatial continuity, do the occasions of dislocated space in Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres* represent a caprice of chance, an accident of a careless process? Is Watteau's failure to achieve a coherent spatial illusion a failure to achieve a desired ideal? Or can we establish that Watteau's dislocating technique, with its somewhat unconventional disruption of the viewer's desire and demand for spatial continuity, represents a purposeful methodological approach to chromatic and tonal relations.

Detailed scrutiny of *Divertissements champêtres* suggests different levels of assembly. The ground colour upon which the painting has been executed is visible, the structure of the composition can be formalised into foreground middle ground and distance, and the pictorial space is not harmonious but a mosaic of fragments. Its surface is materially evident by way of cracks in the paint, impasto and it is does not therefore offer a finished or sealed appearance.

However, creating a picture by employing a principle of construction does not signify a new approach to painting. Indeed it was a favoured practice of many academicians to employ a montage approach to painting. According to academic prescription but not always practice, the painter studies the masters so as to derive a shared method of pictorialisation: figure poses, expressions of emotion, compositional devices that may be re-deployed etc. A variety of references 'should' also be referred to in the development of a painting. Many studies of figures 'might' be made that will collectively enable painted figures to be fabricated into idealised forms. While the paintings themselves should be constructed piecemeal or in a jigsaw like fashion. For example, a compositional drawing should be inscribed onto the ground of the canvas, and then the background or minor features of the painting can be established (often by an apprentice) around the outlined principle figures. The master later paints the primary figures.

This approach to the construction of a painting aims toward, according to certain academic principles, an idealised unity in which perspective and idealised 'like life' spatial organisation, meaning, balance and form are synthesised. Montage works toward the idealised image through the careful choice and control of already-established properties. 'Three unities [or principles for picture making,] notably time, place and action' are some of the mainstay academic mechanisms for the controlled montage of

resources into a legible narrative painting.[161] These mechanisms work toward conveying the impression that 'there [is] only one plot, and [that] the action [is] accommodated in one day and [in] one place.'[162] The idea is that the unities enable restraint of interpretation and therefore allow the viewer to concentrate on the intended message. So as to assist the three unities in the restraint of possible image interpretations 'the characters [should be] depicted so as to appear far removed from us, i.e., in time and space, as well as in social station.'[163]

Nothing according to some academic traditions is supposed to confuse, delay or interrupt the conveyance of the intended message. Everything that might detour or confuse the message is edited out through the careful montage of ideal parts. If it is a conventional academic practice to construct a painting by way of a montage of parts, how might we begin to comprehend the evidence of Watteau's technique as an individual approach to montage and the construction of pictorial space?

Walter Benjamin's thinking regarding the practice of montage allows us to establish and illuminate a difference between the academic montage practices described above and the montage qualities in Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres*. Instead of montage working toward 'like life,' coherent spatial appearances, and representations that offer a disciplined narrative, Benjamin's understanding of montage aims to transcend the mono-linear narrative by creating a discontinuous presentation that vibrates 'across the epochs of recent history.'[164]

In *The Crisis of the Novel*, Benjamin writes that 'the basic formal principle of the novel'...[is] the individual in their solitude...while the literary epic is more

[161] Ibid., p.166.
[162] Ibid., p. 166.
[163] Ibid., p. 166.
[164] Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusettes, and London, 1999, p.11.

communal.'[165] Referring to Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf*, Benjamin declares that through Döblin's technique of montage, the novel, with its straightforward, linear, paratactic narrative is stylistically and structurally exploded. He writes:

> The stylistic principle governing this book is montage. Petty-bourgeois printed matter, scandalmongering, stories of accidents, the sensational incidents of 1928, folk songs, and advertisements rain down in this text. The montage explodes the framework of the novel, bursts its limits both stylistically and structurally, and clears the way for new epic possibilities. Formally, above all. The material of the montage is anything but arbitrary. Authentic montage is based on the document. In its fanatical struggle with the work of art, Dadaism used montage to turn daily life into its ally. It was the first to proclaim, somewhat uncertainly, the autocracy of the authentic. The film at its best moments made as if to accustom us to montage. Here, for the first time, it has been placed at the service of narrative.[166]

It is Benjamin's argument that the technique of montage, as exemplified by Döblin, constitutes scavenging multiple fragments, e.g., stories of accidents, sensational incidents, folk songs, and advertisements, then organising them in dissimilar configurations so as to form a piece of work that might 'shock an audience into a fresh recognition.'[167] Montage, for Benjamin, therefore necessarily works through a 'play of distances, transitions...intersections...[and] perpetually shifting contexts' that when formed into an image result in the 'blasting apart of pragmatic historicism - grounded, as [it]...always is, on the premise of a continuous and homogenous temporality.'[168] In other words, montaged images actualise varied and dis-continuous history and thereby entail heterogeneous narratives.

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[165] Caygill, Howard, *The Colour of Experience*, Routledge, London, 1998, p.71.
[166] Benjamin, Walter, *Selected Writings, Volume Two; 1927-1934*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, p.301.
[167] Howard, Caygill; Coles, Alex; Klimowski, Andrezeji, *Walter Benjamin for Beginners*, Icon Books, 1998, p. 126.
[168] Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusettes, and London, 1999, p.11.

As we have seen *Divertissements champêtres* carries traces of technique that suggest a quality of montage that in turn effects a dislocated space and opportunities for narrative interruption: not a unified controlled illusion and message. These qualities are consistent with those outlined above in that montage works through for Benjamin a play of distances, transitions etc., to actualise discontinuity. If for Benjamin, montage works through 'a play of distances and transitions' and in so doing embraces the effect of dislocated non-homogenous time and space. It is conceivable that the qualities of montage construction and occasions of dislocated space evidenced in Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres* can be understood or illuminated by way of Benjamin to reveal a practice that is accepting of outcomes that are inconsistent with conventions maintained by some academics. That is, viewed from the perspective of Benjamin's thinking, it is possible that Watteau's practice of montage does not represent the culmination of a careless process. Benjamin's thinking instead allows us to recognise Watteau's approach to the montage construction of his pictorial spaces as an identifiable practice all be it with unorthodox qualities; a practice of montage that transgresses certain assumptions regarding the process of painting and is accepting of a failure to establish idealised spatial illusions. Further study of Watteau's use of colour and tone and its montage-like qualities will be developed later in the section entitled Watteau, Lancret and the function of colour and tone.

It should at this point be noted that, whether Watteau was conscious of it or not, the quality of montage in Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres* can be, by virtue of such a Benjaminian illumination, considered conditioned by failure. In effecting qualities consistent with a play of 'distances, transitions...intersections...and perpetually shifting contexts' rather than mono-narratives symbolised by idealised imitations of nature, failure can be recognised as a significant feature of Watteau's montage. This is because such a montage technique necessarily risks a failure of its audience expectations in both

an active and a passive sense. In an active sense because Watteau would essentially court failure through his rejection of the convention for classic academic narrative (control and insurance for success), by favouring instead technical processes that promote an entirely unconventional sense of space and time. In a passive sense because, by risking a failure to fulfil the desire of his audience for a recognisable illusion of space and a simple narrative, he would also potentially become a passive - victim - of his audience expectations.

If in *Divertissements champêtres* Watteau employed an individual approach to montage, how extreme is his detour from convention? By way of comparison to what extent did Lancret maintain what might be termed conventional approaches to picture construction? Does, for example, Lancret's *Conversation galante* evidence by way of its coherence and synthesis, an academic or idealised approach to the montage construction of the image?

Lancret's Conversation galante

In Lancret's *Conversation galante* (fig. 44), unlike *Divertissements champêtres* (fig. 2), we find a painting altogether more in tune with some principle conventions regarding the construction of images, coherent spatial illusion and audience expectations.

Nine figures dressed in *Commedia dell' Arte* costume occupy the lower half of *Conversation galante*. The principal figures are, 'on the left, Pierrot, in pale blue-grey, [who embraces] Columbine [dressed in] a turquoise dress with a pale lavender overdress. A reclining man in a red smock [who is staring at] a lady in a yellow skirt, blue bodice and pink cap. On the extreme right of the canvas, [next to the reclining male,] a guitarist with a red cloak [who appears to be serenading the company of the

scene]; and on the far left [of the painting,] a lady wearing yellow [with a] dog.'[169] In *Divertissements champêtres*, where Watteau's representation techniques results in a failure to establish a continuity of implied space, in *Conversation galante* Lancret's technique works toward an image more spatially synthesised. The five values, chromatics, tonality, space, narrative and finish work in accordance with the unities or mechanisms of pictorial control to create an image that might represent a model of academic aspiration.

For example, close scrutiny reveals that through careful attention to chromatics and tonality, the figures overlap complement or subtly merge with each other and the space in which they are positioned. What we see of the figure wearing yellow is an elegant head, upper torso and arms. In *Divertissements champêtres* a comparable figure might on close examination appear abruptly distinct from the space in which it is located, an addition superimposed like a piece of collage, disrupted in its spatial context by a sudden change in colour or tonality. Instead this partial figure is made to gradually emerge from the loam of nature, wall and shadows by way of skilful gradations of chromatic and tonal harmonies. Colour and tone modelled in a way shunned by Watteau but which here contribute to a successful fulfilment of spatial expectations of the image. In *Conversation galante* there are no examples of confused colour harmonies or tonal clashes that render the illusion of space problematic. The illusion and academic ideal of 'like life' is maintained without interruption through the subtle and careful modulation of colours and tone. By way of illustration the figure's left arm rises from the mottled dark green and burnt umber coloured background through continuous shades of brown. Similarly, the blanket upon which the figure holds and feeds the dog is described through graceful ribbon like articulations of brush work that describe the material and

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[169] Ingamells, John, *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Pictures Volume Three, French before 1815*, The Westerham Press, 1989, p. 229.

its hanging position in such a way as to mirror and complement the folds and creases of Pierrot's blue-grey tunic. In these examples and more, colour and shade are sensitively applied so as to minimise the opportunity for abrupt shifts or ruptures in the continuity of the space of the image.

The compositional layout of *Conversation galante* not only reinforces the idealised chromatic and tonal harmony of its spatial illusion, it works toward an ideal of the unification of narrative and pictorial space: a congruity of ideal space and meaning. Like *Italian Comedians by a fountain* Lancret employs a simple compositional structure. The figure-intensive foreground creates a shallow relief where the narrative is mapped out, while the landscape provides the backdrop that allows reflection to fall on the figures. In *Italian Comedians by a fountain* Pierrot assumed the place of principal figure through his highlighted location at the centre of the canvas and his position a top the pyramid of figures. In *Conversation galante* although not the centre of the canvas, Columbine and Pierrot assume the same place of primary focus by virtue of the value of their collective tonal contrast being higher than any other figure, object or pairing of figures. In this painting, tone serves composition and Columbine and Pierrot receive our attention first. Then, like Pierrot in *Italian Comedians by a fountain*, Columbine and Pierrot direct the narrative accordingly. Interwoven through the modelling of their form, one in the lap of the other, starring eye to eye, the arrangement of this pair, mirrored in the duo to the right, centres the image, symbolises the integration of the space which they constitute and signals the message. They represent the optical centre of a homogenised whole in which each figure is over lapped and modelled in such a way as to encourage, through continuity of application, chromatics and tone, a sense of proximity, touch and place. These two figures do not suggest the passing of an event, nor predict a future. Instead, they signal a synthesis of parts toward the aim of an integrated image.

To briefly summarise, my study and observations of Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres* and Lancret's *Conversation galante* so far suggest extreme differences of approach to spatial composition that are salient at a number of levels, above all at the level of technique. In *Divertissements champêtres*, Watteau's painting techniques create the suggestion of a montaged surface and a corresponding fragmentary appearance. Watteau's technique fails to render a coherent spatial illusion and instead appears to court an image of chromatic and tonal dislocated elisions that in an allegorical manner upset easy narrative interpretations. In Lancret's *Conversation galante* techniques of brush-work and skilfully applied attention to colour harmonies appear to create a rhythmical integrated spatial environment in which the synthesised co-extension of the figures and their location symbolically offer the illusion of cohesion; and by extension, proffer an uninterrupted message. To be precise, in *Conversation galante* Lancret adopts a more obvious academic-like montage process and a modelling technique that employs colour and tone with a care for continuity. Watteau on the other hand appears to employ colour and tone with an abandon that results in a discontinuity of spatial illusion and accordingly encourages the suggestion that his practice diverges from the more academic conventions sustained by Lancret.

Clearly Watteau's *Divertissements champêtres* and Lancret's *Conversation galante* indicate very different investments in practice. Watteau appears to have adapted his technical methods and application toward the achievement of pictorial results that challenge rather than maintain the conventions of spatial illusion. Watteau appears to have employed montage type qualities toward the production of images that present what many academics would consider unjustifiable affects. Lancret on the other hand seems to have invested heavily in practices prescribed and utilised by many other academics. He applies techniques within established processes, in a way that Watteau does not, and that according to some conventions assured pictorial success.

If Lancret's paintings typify a certain view of academic practice do they also exemplify not only a working toward a successful fulfilment of expectations but also a working against failure: working against the risks of the fragmentation of the image that Watteau's quality of montage creates? If Watteau risked failure and a potentially deviant new spatial quality to his images through a more extreme approach to montage, is it possible that such an endeavour consciously or otherwise embraces a condition that is not necessarily new, a condition that might be known and avoided by many academic artists?

One way of addressing this question is to explore Watteau and Lancret's practice by way of a more detailed study of their loyalty to or deviation from collective academic conventions: the systems of values that some academicians posited to govern the construction or montage of a painting. This will expose the extent to which we might, however speculatively, attribute failure to Watteau's practice and help us determine in more detail that the material qualities of montage in *Divertissements champêtres* constitute an individual practice.

Academic conventions: strategies of insurance

We have already touched on some of the academy conventions for assisting the coherence of an image. According to the traditions of the Academy these rules, when collectively applied, should facilitate a controlled staging of the intended narrative. But what about the painting values of colour and tone and in particular, the sovereignty of drawing, given that drawing is the basis of all academic practice. To what extent did Watteau and Lancret adhere to prescriptions regarding drawing? What do Watteau and Lancret's approach to drawing reveal regarding their practice? But first of all, what were the prevailing academic conventions regarding drawing, the use of colour and tone?

The academic sovereignty of drawing

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the French Academy attempted to prescribe what subjects constituted appropriate material for painting, and what character the paintings should have. For example, according to Carl Goldstein;

> After assimilating the perfection of the antique, the artist of the academy is ready to choose a subject. He looks to histories, poetry, and the Bible, but only certain of subjects found in them are suitable; the subject is to convey the sense of universal experience in heroic terms, heroic in action or suffering.[170]

Conventions similarly existed with regard to how that subject should be depicted. Under the directorship of Charles LeBrun, the Academy advocated in particular a Cartesian-influenced approach to painting. This meant that painting should, as Bryson describes it:

> Discard the outward encumbrance of matter, and rise beyond it into a province exclusively de l'espirit. In perfect form...painting would not be physical at all, but [would instead communicate] ideas from one consciousness to another across an image that is altogether transparent; [the image would operate] as a channel of transmission...much like the Word.[171]

Toward this end the Academy prescribed that:

> In the presentation of the subject, the invention of the composition, ...; only one subject or event is to be depicted and nothing is to detract from it; if many figures, groups or incidents are necessary or useful - and not too many included - they must all relate clearly to the main subject and also must be subordinate to the principal figure or group, which has to be the most prominent in the composition.[172]

The mainstay academic mechanism for the development of paintings with compositions that offer strict legibility or a coherent narrative was drawing preparation. Many in the

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[170] Goldstein, Carl, *Towards a Definition of Academic Art*, Art Bulletin, New York, No: 57, 1975, p.103.
[171] Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 61.
[172] Goldstein, Carl, *Towards a Definition of Academic Art*, Art Bulletin, New York, No: 57, 1975, p.103.

Academy advocated for example a variety of drawings as a means of fore planning and predicting the execution of a conceived subject on canvas. According to Antoine-Joseph Dezallier D' Argenville, there are five different types of academic drawing: "thoughts", "finished drawings", "studies", "academies" and "cartoons".[173] Each of these drawings represents a different stage in the process of the development of a painting.

Those drawings called "Thoughts" are according to Dezallier 'the first ideas that the painter sets down on paper for the execution of the work he has in mind.'[174]These drawings may therefore also be considered preliminary sketches. This is because, 'the hand has done no more than rough in the mass of [or], so to speak, sketch the figures, the groups, the dispositions and the other elements that compose them.'[175] "Finished drawings" on the other hand may be qualified as those drawings that give a fair idea of the painted work. For Dezallier 'it is usually by following these [drawings], the last ones made, that the execution' of the painting is worked out.[176] "Finished drawings" differ markedly from "studies" in so far as Dezallier understood "studies" to be 'portions of figures drawn from nature (life drawing, from a "living model") or "in the round" (from casts).'[177] These drawings could include heads, hands, feet, arms, sometimes even entire figures, such as might be necessary for the montage construction of the painting's composition. This category could also include however such items as drapery, animals, trees, plants, flowers, fruits and landscapes. The penultimate category was called "Academies" and is perhaps self explanatory in that Dezallier considers "Academies" 'those figure [drawings] made from nature, in poses suitable to the [intended] composition of a painting, [so as] to catch exactly the nude, the shapes, the lights, and

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[173] Rosenberg, Pierre, *From Drawing to Painting: Poussin, Watteau, Fragonard, David & Ingres*, Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 68.
[174] Ibid., p. 69.
[175] Ibid., p. 69.
[176] Ibid., p. 70.
[177] Ibid., p. 74.

the shadows' that will be required for the intended painting.[178] These drawings are meant to be accurate and detailed with regard to, for example, anatomy. The last category of drawing, i.e., "cartoons" referred to the practice of fresco painting and consisted of tracing a drawing with a 'sharp end [into] the fresh plaster of a ceiling.'[179]

Although from a contemporary perspective each category of drawing classified by Dezallier might be considered worthy of attention in its own-right, and even though many eighteenth century artists valued their drawings, for many academicians these categories of drawings were the tools required for a rational methodical procedure. Ideally, 'the artist's process progresses in stages from the first ["thoughts" or] preliminary sketches to [compositional details and] drapery "studies", [from "Academies" for expressive compositional information, to "final drawings" and from there] to the painting.'[180]The drawing process constitutes the systematic structural mechanism by which the artist both gathers the most appropriate resources and plans his output. It is the index that underpins and assures a coherent unified narrative. If drawing co-ordinates the design of the image, what function did colour and tone perform for the academic's paintings?

The function of colour and tone

For LeBrun and Descartes, colour was not at all a consideration when painting. This is because, they argued, colour is dependent on matter for its effect, and as such, i.e., through its materiality, it degraded *de l'esprit* the image. Consequently, for LeBrun, when painting, chromatics constituted little more than ornamentation: the dressing

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[178] Ibid., p. 79.
[179] Ibid., p. 88.
[180] Eidelberg, Martin P., *Watteau's drawings: their use and significance*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 1977, p. 44.

between the lines. LeBrun's extreme position with regard to the importance of design and drawing was however eventually challenged by Roger de Piles. Like LeBrun, de Piles favoured the notion of expression and a 'painterly sign' that communicates, but unlike LeBrun, in addition to the function of drawing as a tool of design and expression, he emphasised the importance of colour.

De Piles challenge of colour to design became known as the quarrel between the *rubénistes* and the *poussinistes* and was fought by the two sides canonising Rubens and Poussin. Roger de Piles favoured Rubens, while LeBrun championed Poussin. When eventually the *rubénistes* triumphed it heralded a number of changes. Firstly, it announced a shift in Academic philosophy by bringing colour and the immediate effect of the whole painting - instead of merely the symbolic - to the fore. Secondly, it brought de Piles, instead of LeBrun the Directorship of the Academy. Thirdly, it brought the qualities of Rubens to centre stage in academic practice.

De Piles' thinking regarding the function and use of colour in painting are clear. Given 'that objects are only visible insofar as they have colour, and [that] painting [is] defined as the art of imitating visible objects, it [follows] that colour is an essential part of pictorial imitation.'[181] This does not mean however that, for de Piles the artist's aim is the simple imitation of nature through attention to its colour. The artist's objectives should be more ambitious. In a way similar to *dessin*, colour is a fundamental necessity when engaged in the imitation of nature but the main aim of the artist and the role of colour is to compensate for the insufficient powers of painting to imitate its objects truthfully; and better establish through artificial colour the beauty of painting. Simple colours are the artist's materials, i.e., pure colours on the palette, like pure white, black,

[181] Puttfarken, Thomas, 'Roger de Piles Theory of Art', Yale University Press, 1985, p. 43

yellow etc. These colours provide the ingredients for artificial colour, which is applied to the purpose of imitation. Artificial colour is the composite local colour required to best imitate the complexity of nature, e.g., a carnation, but the most important function of artificial colour is the correction of nature. Artificial colour, which is by definition not the same as the deficient colour found in nature, is the means through which, at the discretion of the artist, idealised nature and beauty is achieved. Put differently:

> The artist must not imitate all the colours which indifferently present themselves to the eye; but choose the most proper for his purpose; adding others, if he think fit, in order to fetch out the effect and beauty of his work.[182]

De Piles' distinction between imitative and artificial colour is just as sharply formulated in regard to *clair-obscur* or light and shade: otherwise known as the tonality in painting. To begin with, he claims that light and shade refers to the illumination of particular objects according to the laws of nature. Two consequences follow this rule. Firstly, when painting, light and shade can be achieved almost mechanically by way of knowledge gleaned from the observation of nature but also learned studies regarding the depiction of nature, e.g., books on perspective. Secondly, in so far as *clair-obscur* is an observed condition of objects illuminated in nature, so as to engage with the imitation of nature 'the painter must strictly observe' nature's laws.[183]

The essential quality of *clair-obscur* is however located, for de Piles, in how the artist establishes his own order and effects according to his own vision. Or, as Puttfarken describes it;

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[182] Puttfarken, Thomas, Roger de Piles Theory of Art, Yale University Press, 1985, p. 70.
[183] Ibid., p. 73.

> The *claro-obscuro* depends absolutely on the painter's imagination, who, as he invents the objects, may dispose them to receive such lights and shades as he proposes in his picture, and introduce such accidents and colours as are most to his advantage.[184]

Despite appearances to the contrary, it would be wrong however to claim that *clair-obscur* like colour constitutes for de Piles an area of artistic freedom unconstrained by the requirements of truthful imitation. What the above quote appears to suggest, i.e., that there are no rules, objectives or purposes determining the arrangement and order of *clair-obscur* but the vision or imagination of the artist, is misleading. When de Piles refers to the advantage of the *clair-obscur* he is, in fact, referring to a strict prescription: a requirement that must be met by any picture that is to be successful and effective. That is, the end of *clair-obscur* is to provide: 'for the repose and satisfaction of the eye, as for the effect of the whole together.'[185] The painter can choose and arrange his objects according to his vision but in the imitation of these objects, their literal light and shade should integrate with the devised *clair-obscur*: the imitated objects should become a part of it. In other words, the light and shade of the objects depicted should not look out of place within the *clair-obscur* of their depicted location.

As might be expected, conservation evidence suggests that the techniques of de Piles favoured by Rubens exemplify de Piles' principles regarding the function of colour and tonality in the creation of convincing spatial illusions. For example, according to *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problèmes de Restauration,* infra-red analysis of the painted surface of Rubens' paintings indicate that so as to achieve the illusion of a spatially recessive space, Rubens specially created a mid-tone by layering thin washes of grey over a white background. A mid-tone that would better ape nature and therefore

[184] Ibid., p. 73.
[185] Ibid., p. 73.

necessarily improves the coherence and convincing effect of the pictorial space of his images. That is;

> Rubens enrichissait la profondeur de ses modèles par l'application d'une mince couche d'impression grise transparente. Celle-ci, posée sur la préparation blanchée qui reste apparente, constitue le ton moyen sur lequel se détachent les couleurs et un particulier, les empâtements.[186]

While in the same book we see that in the *Judgement of Paris* Rubens utilised glazes of colour and transparent washes of brown in the shadows, juxtaposed against pure colour so as to establish and develop form in a coherent spatial illusion. For example;

> Dans la peinture of Rubens, ceux-ci s'elaborent au départ d'une mince couche d'impression brune transparente, formant le ton d'ombre auquel se juxtaposent les autres couleurs. Toutes pures, elles assurent la transparence des carnations d'où naît la sensation de volume.[187]

To summarise, for de Piles and the academic principles that he promoted the function of colour is to compensate for the insufficient powers of painting to imitate its objects truthfully and to better establish through artificial colour the beauty of painting. The function of *clair-obscur* or tone in painting is to assist colour in the perfection of nature by creating form out of light and shade and an integrated, convincing spatial illusion. The conventions regarding colour and tone constitute a strict prescription which de Piles' suggests, will, when employed in conjunction with the index of drawing as a preparation, correct nature and create a harmonious, coherent image that offers repose and satisfaction for the eye: successful ideal and beautiful paintings.

[186] *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problèmes de Restauration*, Universite Libre de Bruxelles Grand Hall, du 22 Novembre au 12 Decembre 1986. Catalogue édite par le Ministère de la Communauté française de Belgique,. p. 30.
[187] Ibid., p. 31.

To what extent did Watteau and Lancret adhere to such conventions of thinking as those promoted by de Piles and other academicians?

Loyal servants of the sovereignty of drawing?

In accordance with academic convention Lancret is known to have granted drawing a high status. '[He is known to have drawn] at the Academy, at the theatre, in the parks and streets, everywhere.'[188] Lancret appears to have conformed to the convention described by Dezallier before beginning a painting so as to accurately represent his vision. By way of illustration, he frequently, if not consistently developed preliminary sketches through 'the oil sketch technique.[189] Few examples remain but 'enough exist to suggest that he employed them when the occasion demanded.'[190] For instance, studies exist for, *The Picnic after the Hunt* (fig. 45) and *The Lit de Justice at the Majority of Louis XV* (fig. 46).[191] There are others but these appear to 'correspond to no known work.'[192]

Lancret's professional maturity and the academic influence regarding sequential processes can also be traced by way of the historical progression of his drawings. According to Holmes and Focarino, 'in much the same way that [Lancret's] paintings can be dated on stylistic grounds, his drawings can be placed in approximate chronological order by a general tendency away from busy, more atmospheric approach of the early work of the 1720's, toward a greater efficiency of line and simplicity of

[188] Holmes, Mary Tavener & Focarino, Joseph, *Nicolas Lancret 1690 - 1743*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York, in association with The Frick Collection, 1991, p. 48.
[189] Ibid., p. 47.
[190] Ibid., p. 47.
[191] Lancret, Nicolas, *The Picnic after the Hunt*, c. 1740, oil on canvas, 61.5 x 74.8 cm. National Gallery of Washington, D.C.; Lancret, Nicolas, *The Lit de Justice at the Majority of Louis XV*, 1723, oil on canvas, 56 x 81.5 cm, Louvre, Paris.
[192] Holmes, Mary Tavener & Focarino, Joseph, *Nicolas Lancret 1690 - 1743*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York, in association with The Frick Collection, 1991, p. 47.

shading - his new mastery requiring fewer and fewer strokes to define a figure.'[193] For example, *Seated Figure and Standing figure* c. 1720-25 (fig. 47), black, red, and white chalk on cream paper, 18.3 x 29.5 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., gift of Myron A. Hoer; and *Seated Woman* c. 1739 (fig. 48), red chalk on cream paper, 16 x 14 cm. Private collection, New York. Provenance: Cythera Fine Arts, New York, 1982.

Like Lancret, Watteau was also a prolific draughtsman. However, while Lancret appears to have followed academic conventions regarding drawing Watteau does not appear to have been similarly disciplined. For instance although there are examples of Watteau drawings that are considered preliminary studies for paintings, many writers do not doubt that he did not conform to the accepted convention of drawing as a method of planning a painting.

According to Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, Watteau appears to have flaunted at all levels the accepted practical drawing procedures of his more academic peers. For example, they state that Watteau, unlike Lancret, did not favour contemporary drawings (or sketchbooks) against earlier drawings, as was the convention. He seems instead to have used all his sketches as an archive for reference without privileging the more recent. By way of illustration;

> Whereas in the oeuvres of most other artists there is a direct relationship between a preliminary drawing and the painting for which it was executed, there are no such direct and easy relationships in the oeuvre of Watteau. One frequently finds that paintings are based on much earlier figure drawings or that a number of paintings done at different times in Watteau's career all hark back to the same figure studies.[194]

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[193] Ibid., p. 109.

[194] Eidelberg, Martin P., *Watteau's drawings: their use and significance*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 1977, pp. 5-6.

Reflection on Watteau and Lancret's individual approach to the drawn study offers further evidence of Watteau's individual approach to drawing, although a comparative examination of drawn studies by Watteau and Lancret can indicate some similarities. When developing "sketches" of figures and details for their paintings, it was both Lancret and Watteau's practice to work on a number of figures and a number of details per sheet of paper. For example, Lancret's *Man with a Bagpipe and Two studies of a Hand* (fig. 49), c. 1725-30. Black chalk on gray paper, 23.7 x 16.7cm. Private collection, New York; and Watteau's, *Four Studies of the Head of a Young Woman, her hair tied with ribbon* (fig. 50). [195]

In *Man with a Bagpipe, and Two studies of a Hand*, the paper is vertical or portrait and the drawn bagpipe player is placed centrally. The figure fills two thirds of the paper with its head starting just in from the top edge and its left leg running diagonally off the lower right hand edge of the paper. Below and to the right of the figure, Lancret has drawn two studies of different views of a hand. These sketches fit within the restraining edges of the paper, with the larger of the two, taking up almost a quarter of the total papers surface. Materially the drawing is sketchy and there is a range of qualities of line. For example, the outline of the figure's tunic is varied in thickness and weight of application. Over all however, the drawing may be said to lack tone, i.e., the range of tone from light to dark is not great.

Watteau's, *Four Studies of the Head of a Young Woman, her hair tied with ribbon*, consists of four different, partially complete studies. There are two heads in the top half of the drawing and two in the lower half. The two studies in the top half are turned to

[195] Watteau, Antoine, *Four Studies of the Head of a Young Woman, her hair tied with ribbon*, two shades of red chalk and black and white chalks, the Trustees of the British Museum, London.

face left while the two in the bottom half face right. Each study appears to be of the same sitter and the drawing therefore seems to record the sitter in four different aspects. None of the studies look out toward the viewer, their eyes are instead either closed or obscured or stare elsewhere.

The marks and lines that make up the studies are varied. There are thin and thick lines, dark and light line. The surface of the drawing suggests that lightly applied sketchy outlines preceded more heavily and tonally dark (but still sketchy), lines of definition. For example, in the lower right-hand study, around the woman's left shoulder, a patch of smooth white high lighting appears to cover over lines of black chalk and rough light grey sketching. The effect is of a white smooth surface blurred and bled into by black and grey lines. Although this white highlighting covers the black and grey lines and therefore suggests a probable sequence of making, this passage of drawing does not however, necessarily suggest an overall model for the sequence of drawing. Although each sketch has a passage of highlighting, it is impossible to decide, from the surface evidence of the drawing, whether the four studies were drawn at the same time or whether each study was drawn independently of the others. Thus grey preliminary sketches may always precede white in the extensively high-lighted parts, but if each sketch evolved independently of the others, the over-all sequence of first mark to last, is temporarily indeterminable. The surface of the paper is discoloured and pitted. There is no evidence of the paper being stretched before it was drawn on, which consequently will have affected its tonal development. This is because the border of the drawing paper can provide a conditioning tonal quality that influences the tone and shade range of the drawing. By not stretching the paper, Watteau allowed the high contrast white of the paper to dictate his tonal range.

Despite the similarities between Watteau and Lancret's drawings, Watteau's overall approach to the drawn study, for a variety of reasons, differs significantly from that of Lancret. Unlike Lancret, dating Watteau's drawings and establishing some semblance of chronological order among them has long been considered impracticable or even an impossible task. This is because not one of Watteau's studies bears an inscribed date. It is also because, except for obvious differences between juvenile and mature studies, the evolutionary changes in Watteau's drawings, unlike the drawings of Lancret, are often very slight. As Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg note, 'the different kinds of drawings that Watteau made...evolved at different rates, so that a late compositional drawing could still retain a surprising residue of Gillot's influence, while an early sheet of head studies could be more advanced than figure studies of about the same time.'[196]

Perhaps however the most significant difference between Watteau and Lancret's approach to the drawn study can be seen in how these two artists differently utilised their studies. Lancret unlike Watteau appears to have been firmly guided by his "studies," i.e., Lancret appears to have explicitly used his sketches as plans for his paintings by recreating or according to convention montaging from a drawing directly onto the canvas without amendment. For example, by way of the oil drawing print technique or the pastel-print process from sketch to canvas, or copying in a faithful manner from drawing to canvas. To illustrate this point, *Two Small Girls* (fig. 51),[197] is accepted to be a preparatory sketch for two figures in *Dance between Two Fountains* (fig. 52);[198]and *Two studies for the Luncheon with Ham* (fig. 53),[199] is considered to

[196] Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau: 1684-1721*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, USA, p. 58.
[197] Lancret, Nicolas, *Two Small Girls*, c. 1725. Red chalk on ivory paper, 20 x 24.4 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Regenstein Collection.
[198] Lancret, Nicolas, *Dance between Two Fountains*, c. 1725, oil on canvas, 207 x 230 cm. Gemaldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.

contain at least one preparatory study for the painting, *Luncheon Party in the Park* (fig. 76).[200]

Two Small Girls is a delicate and detailed drawing that depicts one standing girl from behind, in close proximity to a similarly dressed and similarly sized girl, drawn portrait style while sitting: head turned to the left. The two drawn figures are large in comparison to the paper and fill up the pictorial space. Its attribution as a study for *Dance between Two Fountains*, is not hard to understand because the painting does include a remarkably similar depiction of two girls. The scale of the painted figures and the drawn figures, the position of their heads, their jewellery and even the shadows, are consistent with each other. Similarly, the sitting corpulent figure in *Two studies for the Luncheon with Ham* offers a close affinity between the drawing and the painted figure, depicted bottom right, in *Luncheon Party in the Park.*

Watteau by comparison did not develop drawn studies of figures to be directly reproduced on canvas. Nor in contradistinction to Lancret did Watteau refine his drawn figures in his paintings. Indeed according to Eidelberg, Watteau not only made pastiches of his figure studies even when forming compositional drawings, he would, when painting, retain the broad outline of a study but replace details with other pre-existing figure studies: drawings made at another time for completely unconnected reasons.

In addition, Watteau is also known to have montaged together reference from his archive sketchbooks and other sketch studies, in a way reminiscent of many painters,

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[199] Lancret, Nicolas, *Two studies for the Luncheon with Ham*, red chalk on cream paper, 18.6 x 25.2 cm, c.1735, The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

[200] Lancret, Nicolas, *Luncheon Party in the Park*, oil on canvas, 55.7 x 46 cm, 1735, Museum of Fine Arts, ForsythWickes Collection, Boston.

directly onto an already conceived and painted background. A painted backdrop or setting that was in itself already the product of a montage of different resources, values and qualities.

It is clear from a comparative study of Lancret and Watteau's respective approaches to in particular, the drawn study, where Lancret sustained some of the principle conventions attributable to academic practice Watteau did not. As we have seen there is evidence to support the claim that Lancret followed convention by regularly producing examples of drawings consistent with Dezallier's categories; and there is also evidence that he used his drawings as plans for his paintings. In a way distinct from Lancret, although Watteau made drawings that appear similar to those of his peers and although he produced drawings that might be described according to Dezallier's categories, Watteau's approach to drawing in many ways directly contravenes assumed convention. His drawings do not record a consistent evolution of his style nor do they accordingly represent in themselves a continuity of development. Watteau did not refer always to contemporary drawings when painting his pictures. He did not date his drawings (nor his paintings); and he did not refer to his drawings systematically, i.e., preliminary sketch, studies, final drawing, toward a painting that the drawing process not only prefigured but promised. Indeed, he would when painting, metaphorically speaking, cut and montage from a variety of sources directly onto the canvas. He would thereby edit and review when painting rather than fulfil the predictions of his drawings.

If Lancret mostly adhered to assumed conventions regarding drawing but Watteau did not, to what extent did Watteau and Lancret adhere to academic thinking regarding colour and tone?

Watteau and Lancret and the function of colour and tone

It is known that through his friendship with Charles la Fosse, Watteau was able to study Pierre Crozat's amassed collection of old masters: notably works by Rembrandt, Callot and Rubens. When however we consider how Watteau utilised colour and tonality in the construction of his images, we find that Watteau's practice is markedly different to that of de Piles' most favoured Master. Where, as we might expect, Rubens paintings can be seen to exemplify conventions advocated by de Piles regarding the systematic development of coherent illusions of space, as we have already established with regard to *Divertissements champêtres,* Watteau's paintings display a use of colour, light and tonality that fragments the illusion of space.

By way of illustration, in order to construct the spatial illusion of his compositions, Rubens would initially map out the composition directly onto the canvas. Then as mooted earlier, he would through washes of dark tone over the prepared white background, broadly develop the composition in a range of tones. He would then fill out the expression of his subject by glazing thin layers of colour directly onto the tonal image.

According to *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problèmes de Restauration* conservation evidence suggests that Watteau approached the relation of colour and tone with regard to spatial illusion in a quite different manner. Like Rubens Watteau sometimes worked directly onto a white background, e.g., *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*, but Watteau did not before painting always map out his composition onto the canvas. Nor in contrast to Rubens did he develop a tonal image of contrasts and mid-tones as a preliminary guide to the development of volumetric objects and space. Indeed he did not always choose to work on white as a background. Instead, he frequently used and often in combination,

an ivory colour or ochre to mute the starkness of white under paint or adopted the colour of the canvas as background colour by working directly onto its un-primed surface.

As our analysis of *Divertissements champêtres* revealed these unconventional decisions produced a number of effects consistent with a technique of montage that recalls and anticipates Benjamin's twentieth century thinking. In contra-distinction to Rubens, the limited range of mid-tones and high contrast in Watteau's paintings has the effect of collapsing the depth of spatial illusion, which in turn promotes the impression of different superimposed levels of space; planes of space that through their dislocation indicate a rupture of spatial continuity and a fragmentation of narrative possibilities. While Watteau's mute base colours not only condition the range of illumination in Watteau's paintings they also, by limiting the value of the light tone, restrict the scope of light and shade and therefore the description of form. In other words, Watteau's mute high tones promote flatter, cut out like shapes rather than convincing descriptions of volume. Shapes that through their contour not only promote distinctions in the artifice of pictorial space but also intersections of difference within the illusion of a complete framework.

A case study of the curious use of light in *Divertissements champêtres* in contrast to Lancret's *Conversation galante* can further illuminate the extent of Watteau's divergence from the kinds of academic convention advocated by de Piles, as well as his adoption of techniques that chromatically and tonally promote a quality of montage that is consistent with the process of montage described by Benjamin.

A case study of light in Divertissements champêtres

In *Divertissements champêtres* Watteau's use of light curiously suggests that what appears spot lit is also illuminated by other means than the sun. By way of illustration, in the centre fore ground, the grassy land upon which the male figure sits, left of the group of five, is lit by way of the dappled light from above. Sunlight depicted by way of superimposed dashes of impasto, prismatic flecks, proud of the surface, mark the folds of the seated male figure's cape, face and legs, and in so doing hints at its form. A close inspection of this area of the painting reveals however, that although dashes of light colours simulate grasses and foliage in a way consistent with the fall of light from above, this area is illuminated not solely by pasted superimpositions of sunlight but also the base colour of the painting. The same colour that provides the halo of illumination for some of the figures and objects of the scene illuminates this location by radiating a warm contrasting glow of colour through the layered patches of mottled green and the superimposed flecks of grass and foliage. Sunlight marks the spot but the colour that came first, the *terra* of the representational artifice and the grounding for the depiction of nature, emerges through that which was montaged upon it to light the scene from within. This illuminating effect of the emergence of the ground colour through the montage of fragments that collectively adhere as the image is not restricted to this area of the foreground. Light from the ground colour also illuminates areas around the witness, far right, and the deep shade of the fore and middle ground far left. These areas are illuminated by way of a process of montage that does not hide its artifice, a process that does not create synthesised harmonious lifelike ideal images but instead a 'play of distances, transitions, ...intersections...[and] perpetually shifting contexts.'[201]

[201] Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusettes, and London, 1999, p.11.

The lighting in *Conversation galante* (fig. 44) is not dissimilar to *Divertissements champêtres* (fig. 2). As in *Divertissements champêtres* light falling from the left picks out and highlights foreground figures, while in the distance, an autumnal sky provides a backdrop of fading light. Also as in *Divertissements champêtres* light and nature characterise the scene. Nature in the form of light falls and enlivens the *Commedia dell' Arte* costumes through shimmering surfaces of represented silk and underpainting of light colours painted over by darker tones enables the colour of some objects to suggest the sense of an inherent warmth and lustre. Contrary to *Divertissements champêtres* however, where the illusion of light gives ways to an inner illuminating effect of montage enabled nature, in *Conversation galante*, artifice works to minimise its own appearance and the presence of nature never threatens the priority or signifying role of the light touched principal figures. For example, nature surrounds the costumed figures. Immediately above Pierrot and Columbine, a stone monument, shrouded and over grown by tree trunk and foliage dominates those figures it climbs above and the scene it looks down upon. Also, from the yellow dressed figure with a dog to the guitar playing male furthest right, the dark loam of nature, branch and leaf encroach upon figure and couple. The shadow of Columbine and therefore her location merges with the shrubbery she precedes. Yet, through deft and sophisticated brushwork and colour harmonies, the represented figures and their environment never conflict. A tension never arises between the space and character of represented nature and the *Commedia dell' Arte* figures. The potential force of the natural environment, sublime and beautiful, rendered through feathered brushwork and colour glazes is masterfully harnessed and made to sit harmoniously with the figures that share its space. Nature is controlled.

If Lancret adhered to or was more obviously loyal to conventions regarding the sovereignty of drawing, the function of colour and tone, Watteau was not. What if

anything does Lancret's loyalty and Watteau's deviance from convention indicate regarding their studio practice?

Watteau and Lancret's studio practice

Lancret's loyalty to convention and methodology offers the picture of a practice conditioned by discipline. The principles advocated by some academicians and maintained by many artists regarding how to create a painting are clear. Convention demands adherence to prescribed process and a sequential working method. Convention consequently helps determine that the main characteristics of Lancret's practice are control and care. Control in so far as convention dictates preparation and prediction rather than urgent experimentation; and care, in so far as the success of narrative coherence requires careful modelling and pre-selection. Furthermore, in so far as control and care might characterise Lancret's practice, and discipline and sequential or linear working processes condition his production, such a considered and methodological practice would also stage time progressively. That is, in employing a practice that seeks to control and predict its outcome, the stages of Lancret's making each predicate a future moment in a chain of production. Lancret's practice predicts the future by disavowing the present.

One way of elucidating how Watteau's divergence from prescriptive convention might inform a picture of his practice and in addition, help verify that Watteau employed an individual approach to montage may be gleaned by way of a critical disagreement.

Although the vast majority of writers agree that Watteau did not employ conventional academic procedures either systematically or in part, there are critical exceptions. For example, Eidelberg argues at length that Watteau did make more preliminary studies than

are currently acknowledged to exist and that he faithfully referred to these preliminary sketches when painting. He argues for instance that a Watteau drawing currently housed in the Metropolitan Museum can be directly related to Watteau's *Le Mezetin.*

Other art historians do not support Eidelberg regarding this claim. By way of illustration, when reference to the Metropolitan Museum drawing was first published, the drawing was not thought to be at all by Watteau. Later, although its similarity to the painting was recognised, it was believed that the style of the drawing was early and that of the painting late. The drawing was not consequently considered preparatory work for the painting. Similarly in Parker and Mathey's catalogue, the question of this drawing's status as a possible compositional study was totally evaded. They listed the drawing merely as an early work by Watteau. They did not even make reference to its resemblance to *Le Mezetin.*

Eidelberg describes the Metropolitan Museum drawing and *Le Mezetin* as follows.

> The pose of Mezetin in the two works is similar: the way the head is thrown back and the position of the arms is analogous; the crossed legs are almost identical. The setting is the same: luxuriant garden with the wall of a building at one side and a statue at the other. The wall at the left in the drawing is transposed to the right of the painting. Similarly, the statue is moved from the right to the left side. We might also note the change in the wall; in the drawing it is of the same type and serves the same bracketing function as in the *Figures de modes* but in the painting it is elaborate and pilastered. The changes in the guitarist are equally thoroughgoing, although never to the point of obscuring the relation between the drawing and the painting. The tilt of the head has been changed, that in the painting being based on an additional study from a model...The awkwardly turned-in position of Mezetin's right foot, however, suggests indebtedness not to a study from a model but rather the caprice of Watteau.[202]

In this description Eidelberg notes many differences when describing the two works. For example, in his description the wall on the left in the drawing is transposed to the

[202] Eidelberg, Martin P., *Watteau's drawings: their use and significance*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 1977, pp. 22-23.

right of the painting, the statue is moved from the right to the left side and Mezetin's right foot suggests indebtedness not to a study from a model but rather the caprice of Watteau. These differences can be reasoned away or they can lend support to those who would criticise Eidelberg's claim, in so far as the differences suggest that the drawing did not significantly inform the painting. It is not the objective of this research to contribute to such debates by providing alternative viewpoints or aiding attribution. However, this unresolved - probably not - resolvable - critical difference of opinion does offer between the poles of its argument support for the contention that Watteau developed an individual approach to montage, an unconventional approach to practice that risked and was therefore conditioned by failure.

If we abandon the attempt to link the Metropolitan Museum drawing to the *Le Mezetin* in an academically prescribed causal chain but remember the similarities that the drawing and the painting display, then these two works can be thought of as single moments that differently sustain a persistent vision over time; a persistent vision re-worked through time. Put differently, if the drawing and the painting are primarily considered different versions of the same theme, rendered at different points in history, each can be determined to exemplify not a logical sequence in a interdependent chain of creative practice but instead, alternative examples of the same struggle to render a vision; the same struggle to make and re-make in different mediums, an idea into an image at different times. Eidelberg's comparison between the Metropolitan Museum drawing and *Le Mezetin* although inconclusive can allow us therefore to form a picture of Watteau's practice that is characterised by material variety, is not linear in its historical progression and sustained by a drive to work and re work the same vision. It suggests a picture of a practice that, in spite of a convention and the security that it offered, not only employed montage-like techniques toward fragmentary effects but also was itself fragmentary in its character. Interestingly it also further suggests a practice

that repeatedly occasions failure: a practice that chooses to risk failure rather than employ systems that might predict more assuredly paintings that might be appreciated by academicians and the public a-like. This is because each different version each repeated figure or motif represents an opportunity to make good a previously failed idea but it also constitutes a new risk of failure. Eidelberg's argument allows us to speculate that Watteau's somewhat unconventional practice sustains an individual technique of montage that constitutes a history of risk and failure. This of course does not mean that Watteau necessarily sought to make failed images. Quite the contrary, but Watteau's practice can be seen as a challenge to a convention of making held by many to be without alternative, in that it creates new images by working in an individual way: a way that works through failure as a natural aspect of the working process. Watteau adopted methods that risked his paintings failing conventional measure but in so doing produced new and exciting pictorial qualities.

To briefly summarise, what we have seen in Watteau and Lancret's approach to the sovereignty of drawing is that they both employ a montage process but in different ways and toward quite different results. Watteau and Lancret also employ other conventional mechanisms toward the production of paintings but again in very different ways. Lancret appears to adhere to conventional processes and disciplines in the planning and creation of his paintings and works to avoid at all costs failure and rejection of his work: Lancret works against failure. Watteau on the other hand appears to work in a way that risks a failure of conventional audience judgements so as to achieve painting qualities that he holds to be important. However, is it, as previously queried, conceivable that although extreme in comparison with such peers as Lancret, Watteau's practice of montage represents in part, more an embrace of a known but avoided condition?

The academy prescription of process and discipline is geared toward the prediction and fulfilment of an ideal outcome. Lancret appears to work with academic values and conventions in that he more obviously offers coherent spatial illusions, a clear message or narrative. This requires that the artist work against the prospect of failure and for example, the fragmentation of the image. The imperative to avoid images that might fail expectations is nicely illustrated by the fact that even Lancret's paintings sometimes failed to fulfil the promise of the conventional drawing to painting process. By way of illustration, Paul Ackroyd[203] suggests that the final painting in a sequence of four entitled *The Four Times of Day*,[204] indicates techniques inconsistent with academic convention. In the painting called *Evening*, Lancret appears to have followed convention by first drawing out the composition onto the copper ground. Lancret then painted the landscape background around the graphically demarcated main figures. Microscopic analysis exposes however that at some point in the creative process, Lancret not only completely repainted the figure furthest left, but painted it over an already established background. This suggests that something about the figure did not work so Lancret was compelled to change and rework it out of sequence. Or put differently, the image had failed its own planned future and *had* to be rescued regardless of convention.

In this example, while producing a sequence of paintings to all intents and purposes according to convention, so as to complete the work, Lancret was required to repaint and amend part of the image. Everything that he had done up to that point, drawings, preparation of ground and pigments etc., lends itself to the conventions that for some insure against failure, i.e., the need to make corrections. Yet because it became

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[203] Paul Ackroyd is a conservator at the National Gallery London. He and his team carried out in 2003 a detailed inspection of *The Four Times of Day* using technologies of microscopy. For the purposes of this thesis I interviewed Mr Ackroyd with a view to understanding the techniques and practices of Lancret.
[204] Nicolas Lancret, *The Four Times of Day*, National Gallery London.1739, oil on copper, all 29 x 37 cm. A) *Morning*; B) *Midday*: C) *Afternoon*: D) *Evening*.

necessary to amend his plans he complied. Of the four paintings that make up *The Four Times of Day* there is only one example of such amendment. As we have already alluded to and shall see in more detail later, not only did Watteau regularly amended, correct and repaint figures and objects in his canvases, he sometimes changed the whole composition. So where Lancret and convention appear to work with great care to avoid a failure of vision and expectation, Watteau's practice seems to be unafraid of change. Indeed, uncertainty appears to be a natural condition of a working process that unlike Lancret's methods cannot be described as working against the prospect of failure. In response to the question posed above we might therefore conclude that Watteau's practice of montage is necessarily extreme and different to that of his immediate peers and accordingly novel within its context. Yet, in so far as it treats uncertainty and change in a way which Lancret and convention work against, its originality should be considered not without foundation.

If we now return to the original objective so that we might proffer an account for how Watteau's paintings might come to be haunted by spectral time, what can the different qualities of montage in Watteau's and Lancret's practice propose regarding the time in Watteau's paintings and how they come to be conditioned by spectral time inscribed in a transient, temporal surface?

Montage and the time of failure

In chapter one, I mapped a picture of the temporal and spatial dispersal of Watteau's repetition of reference in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*, so as to establish a picture of the time which it occasions. What I have argued above is that *Divertissements champêtres* evidences at a material level an intentional approach to montage that deviates from the

academic convention and the practice of Watteau's peers. I have also proposed that Watteau's approach to montage can be illuminated by Benjamin's review of Baroque *Trauerspiel* to effect in Watteau's paintings what Benjamin refers to as a 'play of distances, transitions...intersections...and perpetually shifting contexts'. We might therefore conclude that, the temporal and spatial dispersal of time occasioned by for example, the Pilgrimage, the time in painting that I mapped in the previous chapter, constitutes a fugitive history of (failed) spatial and (failed) temporal relations.

The spatial and temporal relations that a Watteau painting might occasion are many and varied. In an image there are a variety of levels that might each offer a temporal characteristic. Semiotic issues might reveal the inscription of historical subjects or represented objects such as dress fashion items, shoes, hats dresses etc., might be as we established in chapter one, attributable to a particular period. But in a painting such as *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*, there is no necessary logic of sequential history. Time represented at a semiotic or material history level will not be consistent with a linear view of history. Different historical times represented and occasioned by a variety of signs and symbols are instead shuffled together. It is the contention of this chapter however that the non linear time occasioned by Watteau's paintings, *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* or *Divertissements champêtres*, is not wholly a condition of the semiotic. Instead, the work of this chapter proposes that the time in Watteau's paintings is also a condition of Watteau's practice.

Earlier Eidelberg's comparison between the Metropolitan Museum drawing and *Le Mezetin* allowed us to form a speculative picture of the time in Watteau's practice by enlightening us to the potential of its material variety and its not historical progression. To be precise, the Metropolitan Museum drawing and *Le Mezetin*, if thought of as different versions of the same theme, rendered at different points in history, enabled us

to see in Watteau's method a persistent vision re-worked through time. This when coupled to anecdotal information from critics, enabled us to see Watteau's approach to the construction of his images as fragmentary. Fragmentary in so far as Watteau's practice consisted of a cut and paste approach to montage, the different parts often drawn from a variety of sources - each originating at a different time. Also fragmentary because he compiled his images not according to the future image predicted by a drawing process but the relationship between the image evolving on the canvas and his corresponding vision.

We have also seen that Watteau's fragmentary practice stands in stark contrast to the studio methods of Lancret. By adopting some of the prescribed disciplines of the academy and embracing sequential working processes Lancret was able to predict and control his output in a way shunned by Watteau. This difference in practice is crucial to the understanding of how the time in Watteau's paintings might be considered a condition of his practice. This is because, where Lancret's drawing process enabled a practice of temporal stages to transcend the immediate problems of image making by disavowing the present in favour of the future, the significance of each stage, drawing or element of montage, lying not with the articulation of the detail but its status as a stepping stone to something else, Watteau's method of montage with its temporally not sequential method of developing images is always imminent. That is, in so far as Watteau's process constitutes a non sequential fragmentary evolution of images, his process will not allow him to take a position in the creative activity from which the development of the image can be predicted. Instead all instances of making can equally be considered significant moments in the evolution of their own unseen outcome. It is of course to be remembered that Watteau famously claimed, against academic custom, the same status for his drawings as his paintings.

We might conclude therefore that where Lancret's paintings aim to transcend time, the time in Watteau's paintings could be considered to be a condition of the immediacy of their production. That is, given that Watteau's paintings frame a fragmentary history of montaged resources, e.g., stalled beginnings, compositional amendments and not sequential practices, the occasion of their presentation is conditioned by the immanent contingent practice of failed history and spatial relations that formed them.

Further verification of this proposal and the full extent of Watteau's commitment to techniques that result in imminent paintings conditioned by a history of failure and how they come to be inscribed in a transient, temporal surface can be established by way of the second technique of making.

The Technique of Erasure

Evidence of the conservation of a number of Watteau paintings' reveals that he often radically altered not only individual details but also groups of figures; anecdotal information provided by de Goncourt which describes Watteau's commitment to achieving at all costs the image of his vision, also supports the notion that Watteau often radically reviewed his paintings compositions: de Goncourt writes;

> I have often been a witness of the impatience and disgust with which his own productions inspired him; I have sometimes seen him totally efface completed pictures which displeased him, in the belief that he detected faults in their execution or conception and despite the very reasonable prices I offered for them; on one occasion, much against his will, I even wrenched one from his destructive grasp, an action which greatly upset him.[205]

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[205] de Goncourt Edmund & Jules, *French Eighteenth Century Painters*, Phiadon Press limited, Oxford 1948, p. 42.

In point of fact evidence of Watteau's practice of erasure and amendment is so commonplace that conservators apply specific terms when recording the conservation of his work; notably the term *repentir* for the many minor changes to the details in his images, and the term *changement de composition* for larger scale compositional changes.

X-radiography images indicate that *Divertissements champêtres* was, like so many Watteau paintings, the subject of *repentir*. For instance, *pentimenti* and X-radiography images show that there was originally 'a second female figure seated by the seated woman in the centre-left mid-distance, [that] the man at her side [has been] moved, [and] the right-hand foreground tree...[was] replaced [at some time by] two more distant trees.'[206] In addition to *repentir* recorded at the level of the image, *Divertissements champêtres* also has a horizontal seam that runs 10 cm. above the bottom edge of the painting where Watteau appears to have added a strip of canvas. This suggests that at sometime during the process of the development of the image, and for some unknown reason, Watteau decided that the proportions of the canvas were in need of amendment.

Of course Watteau was not the only eighteenth century artist to amend the development of his paintings directly on the canvas. For instance, Lancret as previously mentioned is also known to have occasionally deviated from academic convention and altered his works contrary to preliminary planning. X-radiography images of the *Italian Comedians by a Fountain* suggest that sometime during the painting of the picture some significant compositional changes took place. Originally there appears to have been 'a large classical urn on the right, and the balustrade [initially] turned away behind the extreme

[206] Ingamells, John, *The Wallace Collection, Catalogue of Pictures III, French before 1815*, the Trustees of the Wallace Collection, London, 1989, p. 359.

left-hand figure. The young man seated in front of the balustrade on the left [also appears to have been added] after the balusters had been painted, and the standing figure of Pierrot was originally slightly taller.'[207]

According to *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problèmes de Restauration* however, Watteau's approach to the amendment of his paintings is in a number of ways significantly different to that of Lancret. To begin with, where-as evidence of amendment in Lancret's paintings is limited, e.g., only *Evening* of the set of four paintings entitled, *The Four Times of Day* shows evidence of correction, Watteau appears to have habitually amended the detail and composition of his works through and over protracted periods of time. For example, *Plaisirs du bal* (fig. 54), *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* (fig. 1), etc. But the most striking difference between Watteau and Lancret's approach to picture amendment concerns, not so much the frequency with which Watteau rectified his work but the alacrity of his technique. Where Lancret appears to have approached the critical reappraisal of details and composition with care, i.e., with attention to the synthesis of old and new detail and consideration for the material longevity of the painting, Watteau instead seems to have adopted a more absolute, 'slipshod' or short cut approach to change and image development.[208]

By way of illustration, often, when Watteau considered alterations necessary, rather than carefully paint out with a suitable ground colour that which was to be amended, Watteau would eradicate or erase the detail, group or scene with liberal quantities of lead white. X-radiography images reveal that *Les Champs Elysées* (fig. 37), the companion piece to *Divertissements champêtres*, also owned by the Wallace Collection, at some stage in its construction was the subject of a significant reconsideration. A lead

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[207] Ibid., p. 239.
[208] Ibid., p. 367.

white patch was bluntly applied to a large section of the lower right hand corner of the composition; and a reclining female statue was then painted in (fig. 55). Similarly in *The Halt during a Chase* (fig. 45), X-radiography reveals that the image of a seated woman was rapidly 'erased, [with lead white] immediately to the left of the woman alighting from her horse (fig. 56).'[209] In the top right hand corner of *Gilles and his Family* X-radiolography has exposed a large irregular lead white erasure and in *Plaisirs du bal* the current image represents a very significant re working of an original composition facilitated by way of lead white corrections, i.e.;

> Des modifications plus rares changent le cadre même de la composition; on en trouve un example dans les *Plaisirs du bal* où un jet d'eau et des arbes remplacent partiellement un espace architecturale intérieur de caractére italien presentant une coupole, une abside arrondie et un mur décoré de pilastres cannelés, un escalier et une balustrade.[210]

So how might Watteau's more absolute, 'slipshod' or short cut techniques of erasure and amendment further verify the proposal that Watteau's techniques represent a commitment to imminent paintings conditioned by a history of failure?[211]

X-radiography images reveal the previous work of the artist, the lost images occluded by the prevailing appearance of its current presentation. Or put differently, X-radiography reveals a picture of the past images of a painting. These telescopic exposures of the past have a haunted appearance. Strong tonal contrasts blur and intermingle around details of form, while the unseen but always present, e.g., stretcher supports and nails, emerge spectre like from the dark. Although more apparent through

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[209] Ibid., p. 346.

[210] *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problèmes de Restauration*, Université Libre de Bruxelles Grand Hall, du 22 Novembre au 12 Decembre 1986. Catalogue edité par le Ministère de la Communauté française de Belgique, p. 35.

[211] Ingamells, John, *The Wallace Collection, Catalogue of Pictures III, French before 1815*, The Trustees of the Wallace Collection, London, 1989, p. 367.

X-radiography images, the past of a painting can also be witnessed recorded at its material level. The erasures and detail amendments to *Divertissements champêtres* are not only discernible by way of X-radiography, they are also observable, by virtue of Watteau's slipshod approach to correction, at the material level of the image. At the level of the image erasure and amendment is visible by way of a vague ghosting of the depicted forms and or material and chromatic inconsistencies reminiscent of the effects of movement when recorded by time-lapse photography. Watteau's decisions regarding the failure of parts of *Divertissements champêtres* to satisfy his vision are recorded not only as ghost like occlusions in X-radiography images but also as ghosting at the material level of the image.

Inconsistencies in the surface quality of Watteau's paintings also offer another spectral analogy. As previously mentioned both Watteau and Rubens favoured the use of *l'huile grasse*. Rubens utilised the fluid properties of *l'huile grasse* to enable transparent glazes, while Watteau mostly employed it to better facilitate impasto. Watteau however, also used *l'huile grasse* so as to better enable the rapid re-working of failed passages in his paintings.

> Rubens, comme Watteau, utilisait de l'huile grasse, nécessaire à l'onctuosité des pâtes, à la transparence des ombres et au passage fluide de l'une à l'autre. Toutefois, conscient que cet usage pouvait troubler la pureté chromatique des couleurs, il veillait aux qualités de transparence et de siccativité du liant. Pour preserver la transparence, il évitait aussi de <fatiguer> la matière. Il apparaît par contre clairement que Watteau ne se preoccupait ni des effets néfastes des produits qu'il utilisait - on sait qu'il avait l'habitude de repasser avec de l'huile grasse sur les parties à reprendre - ni de la pureté de ses couleurs...ni des effets de surface engendrés par les constantes modifications apportées a ses compositions.[212]

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[212] *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problèmes de Restauration*, Université Libre de Bruxelles Grand Hall, du 22 Novembre au 12 Decembre 1986. Catalogue edité par le Ministère de la Communauté française de Belgique, p. 41.

Watteau's persistent and often inappropriate use of *l'huile grasse* had several consequences. Firstly, as the quote above suggests, the *l'huile grasse* adversely effected the saturation of his colours to give the paintings a greyed, subdued more moribund quality. Secondly, where Watteau utilised it to excess, *the l'huile grasse,* when coupled to Watteau's constant reworking of details, resulted in an inconsistent painted surface. Rubens' translucent glazes or thin washes of *l'huile grasse* assisted pigment created a smooth consistent surface. But Watteau's rapid, excessively reworked *repentirs* often resulted in a patchwork like surface. In some parts of the painting, layers of re-working testify to a struggle to render an elusive vision. While in other parts of the painting, preliminary work is exposed by way of amendment and or unconventional practices. For example:

> Les effets de texture des supports, et en particulier la trame de la toile, sont toujours neutralisés dans les peintures de Rubens par une préparation à base de craie et de colle, suffisamment épaisse pour offrir une surface tout à fait lisse aux couches de couleur qui s'y superposent.[213]

And;

> On notera encore une pratique nouvelle, la suppression ou l' écrasement de matière à la hampe du pinceau pour souligner les plis d' un tissu (Jugement de Paris, l' Automne), profiler les marches d' un escalier (Ile de Cythère) ou le dessin d' un sol (Plaisir du bal), sorte de simplification du travail permettant une exécution plus rapide.[214]

If the erased past of Watteau's paintings is recorded at a material level of the image in the form of ghosting and the inconsistent integrity of the surface of Watteau's paintings offer glimpses of a not linear but literal past, we can conclude that Watteau's techniques of erasure and amendment represent a commitment to the creation of paintings that do not celebrate the pictorial effects mostly advocated by his academic peers, i.e., paintings

[213] Ibid., p. 31.
[214] Ibid., p. 33.

that do not bear the trace of amendment, that do not offer images fragmented by erasure and tonal or colour discontinuities. Watteau clearly did not adopt techniques that would militate against the need for correction, the academic strategies of insurance, e.g., prior planning etc. Nor did he physically approach the work of representation through materials and techniques that would conceal failures in his vision or skill. Instead, Watteau employed techniques and mediums that, as part of the realisation of the image, exposed ghostly qualities of a history of failure and erasure. Therefore, by virtue of Watteau's techniques of erasure and amendment we may propose that Watteau's allegorical paintings not only occasion an appearance haunted by spectres of failed history but also that their appearance was more than acceptable to Watteau.

Watteau's techniques of erasure might further verify the proposal that his paintings present a spectral history of failure but can Watteau's techniques further enable the claim that his paintings present this spectral history inscribed in a transient temporal surface? This question returns us to spectral temporality and can be undertaken by returning to Benjamin's *Trauerspiel*. Benjamin describes the relationship between the time of the spectre and the *Trauerspiel*.

> In the developed form of the tragedy of fate there is no getting away from the stage property. But alongside it there are dreams, ghostly apparitions, the terrors of the end, and all of these are part of the stock-in-trade of its basic form, the *Trauerspiel*. All of these are more or less closely orientated around the theme of death, and in the baroque they are fully developed, being transcendental phenomena whose dimension is temporal, in contrast to the immanent, predominantly spatial phenomena of the world. [215]

In this quotation we apparently see that transcendental ghostly apparitions are in the *Trauerspiel* seen in contrast to the immanent phenomena. Beatrice Hansen claims

[215] Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusettes, and London, 1999, p.135

however that the relationship between the time of the spectre and the *Trauerspiel* is more than one of simple contrast. According to Hansen the time of the spectre in fact dominates the *Trauerspiel*. She writes for instance, that because the *Trauerspiel* is 'ruled by spectral time, the time of phantoms, the mourning play did not display the temporality of discrete, singular decisions (Entscheidungen) typical of tragedy.'[216] It follows therefore that if the apparitions of fate in the *Trauerspiel* are transcendental by virtue of being 'manifestations of a world beyond history,'[217] we can declare that the time that dominates the *Trauerspiel* constitutes the witching time: the time when the hour stands still.

In establishing that the temporality of the *Trauerspiel* is conditioned by time without progression, we should not forget that although the time of the spectre may be described by way of its ahistorical condition, it is also a condition of the spectre to repeat. That is, it is the fate of the ghost to endlessly return. So although we may describe spectral time as Benjamin might, i.e., 'like an angel of history whose wings register the traces of disappearance…[and] bear witness to an experience that cannot come to light...'[218] We should also remember that repetition and perpetual transition also condition the time of the spectre and therefore the *Trauerspiel*. In other words we should conclude that, following Hansen, the immanent time of the *Trauerspiel* is conditioned by perpetual transition.

If the relationship between the spectre and the *Trauerspiel* constitutes a unity of time characterised by repetition and indefinite transition, one way to further enable the claim that Watteau's paintings immediately present a spectral history of failure and

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[216] Hanssen, Beatrice, *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Human Beings, and Angels*, University of California Press, 2000, p.64.
[217] Ibid., p. 64.
[218] Cadava, Eduardo, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*, Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 11.

substantiate how this specular history comes to be inscribed in a transient temporal surface may be found by way of evidence of transition in Watteau's techniques and paintings. We have already established through the work of chapter one that an extensive map of repetition can be drawn in Watteau's paintings and that the non-linear historical and spatial dispersal of repeats which they occasion can be said to temporalise Watteau's images. But if we can now establish that Watteau's methods and outcomes also demonstrate an investment that achieves material qualities of transition we can with some justification determine Watteau's techniques to be productive of immediate images and transient objects. We might establish that Watteau employed techniques and methods that achieve qualities of transition that he approved of by way of two notable features of his studio practice: a rapid approach to painting and the use of mediums' susceptible to corruption.

Rapid working and corrupt mediums

It was shown above that Lancret's studio practice was very different to that of Watteau in that he followed the conventional processes and constructed his paintings largely by way of the strategies of insurance advocated by many of his academic peers. So when Lancret's paintings reveal compositional amendment, e.g., that revealed by Ackroyd, we might with some justification conclude that these amendments indicate nothing more than a developing familiarity and confidence with his process. Put differently, they might not in themselves represent a significant deviation from accepted process.

However, another conclusion can be drawn from evidence of amendment in Lancret's paintings. It is possible that, rather than demonstrate confidence with a process, corrections in Lancret's paintings signal that when working toward a deadline, Lancret

felt the pressure of time and, finding his planned output inadequate, resorted to unconventional practices so as to meet his commitment.

The academic strategies of insurance such as those described by Dezallier, maintained by Lancret but largely shunned by Watteau, can take no less than the time required to fulfil each stage of the preparation for painting and therefore presuppose patience with respect to the realisation of vision. Rapid unplanned working processes may be considered therefore, the enemy of convention in so far as they short circuit planning and thereby imperil the security of an intended outcome by foregoing the foreseen in favour of the materially unseen. Indeed we might claim that working methods that prioritise brevity operate like Watteau's unconventional approach to montage, by prioritising, as a condition of urgency, not a disavowal of the present in favour of the future, but the immanent status of the image and therefore an image in perpetual transition. Bearing this in mind, is speed of working a feature of Watteau's working process and can we determine that Watteau undertook to work in such a way as to prioritise brevity?

According to de Goncourt Watteau is known, in contrast to Lancret, to have been an impatient artist. They, for instance, write that:

> [Watteau's] pictures suffer somewhat from the inconstancy and impatience of which his character was composed; he wearied of objects which he saw in front of him for any length of time: it was his only aim to flit from one subject to another.[219]

The de Goncourt also wrote that, with regard to the process of painting:

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[219] de Goncourt, Edmund & Jules, *French Eighteenth Century Painters*, Phiadon Press limited, Oxford 1948, p. 46.

Watteau, in order to stimulate rapidity both of effect and execution, liked to apply his paint thickly. This device has always been widely employed, and the greatest masters have had recourse to it. But to practise it successfully, elaborate and adroit preparations are required, and Watteau hardly ever made them. As some sort of remedy for this omission, he had the habit, when wishing to correct a picture, of heedlessly rubbing it with thick oil and then repainting. The momentary advantage he gained in this way subsequently caused considerable damage to his pictures, damage to which a certain untidiness in his procedure, that must have injured his colour, also greatly contributed. It was very rarely that he cleaned his palette, and he sometimes went for several days without doing so. The pot of thick oil, of which he made so much use, was full of dirt and dust and mixed with all sorts of colours that adhered to his brushes when he dipped them into it. How remote was this method of procedure from the exceptional precautions that certain Dutch painters used to take in order to work cleanly.[220]

If de Goncourt show Watteau to be an artist committed to rapid working then *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problèmes de Restauration*, compounds this picture still further. For example;

En effet, il adapte toujours sa technique d'exécution aux exigences de son tempérament créatif impatient, <pourvu que cela fit l' effet qu'il souhaitait>, écrivait d' Argenville et ce, au mépris des règles établies du métier, fondement même de la peinture de Rubens. Quand les résultats ne lui conviennent pas, Watteau retravaille son oeuvre à plusieurs reprises au risque d'y perdre la spontaneité de facture propre à sa première execution.[221]

These quotations make it clear that anecdotal and conservation evidence supports the claim that Watteau worked with brevity. The de Goncourt describes an artist that works feverishly with regard to the creation of his vision. Watteau paints rapidly with little care but for the development of his paintings and where need be correction and erasure of his failures of vision. Together these passages create a picture of a painter committed, passionately to making paintings and in particular, urgent in his methods with regard to the stimulation of effects. The conservation evidence supports the de Goncourt claims by emphasising the importance to Watteau of spontaneity. That is, conservation

[220] de Goncourt, Edmund & Jules, *French Eighteenth Century Painters*,Phiadon Press limited, Oxford 1948, p. 24.

[221] *Watteau Technique Picturale et Problemes de Restauration*, Universite Libre de Bruxelles Grand Hall, du 22 Novembre au 12 Decembre 1986. Catalogue édite par le Ministère de la Communauté française de Belgique.
, p. 34.

evidence supports the contention that Watteau painted in an unrehearsed, almost automatic manner.

Following the de Goncourt quotations and conservation evidence, we can consequently conclude that Watteau prioritised the instinctive creation of images and therefore what might be termed a transitory approach to painting. Having established at the level of studio practice, ways of working consistent with short cutting convention and achieving transitory images, now can we, at a material level, support the claim that Watteau's alacrity of erasure came to constitute transitory images inscribed in transitional objects? In other words, can we confirm at a material level that Watteau practised methods of working that achieved paintings with a material countenance subject to transition and decay?

Earlier I suggested the possibility that Watteau's methods might not only provide an insight into how Watteau's paintings came to be illuminated with time but also how Watteau's use of materials and techniques might account for their transitional countenance: their ruination. The suggestion is based on the possibility that Watteau's techniques and choice of materials might inscribe not only time into the framework of his images but also the effects of time by subjecting them needlessly to the viscitudes of material erosion. It is in the material basis of the immediacy of Watteau's images that we find a practice open to creating a transitional countenance: a decaying framework for a heterogeneous history of spectre-like lost time. It is in Watteau's use and abuse of his mediums that we find the most compelling evidence of a commitment to images that are fugitive.

It is obvious from the de Goncourt and conservation accounts of Watteau's techniques that, in addition to employing an approach to montage that risks failure at a number of

levels, Watteau also explored the potential of an immediate practice by working rapidly, and in such a way as to compel his images toward a condition of perpetual transition. Watteau's techniques of montage, rapid working, erasure and amendment might constitute the technical means by which the immediate or transitional image comes about but it is the medium itself, the material of the image, worked, reworked and fragmentary, that stages the temporal immediacy of the painting. The techniques register and inscribe, by virtue of their unconventional approach, spectres of failed history in an image conditioned by the immediacy of its development. But the immanent material transition of the image is, in Watteau's paintings, constituted by way of the use and combination of mediums that effect different drying times in the same painting and thereby advance the hazard of *craquelures*. By painting images in such a way as to wilfully disregard the problem of *craquelures,* Watteau facilitated paintings that would not only be needlessly effected in terms of their longevity but would also be in the long term, subject to unforeseen changes to their appearance. Watteau's approach to and use of his mediums encouraged *craquelures* and these in-turn set an uncertain future for Watteau's images.

The risks of working with *l'huile grasse* were well documented. So Watteau's approach to its usage begs the conclusion that Watteau willingly accepted all of its potentialities: decay, transition, and loss as a feature of the immediate images which he passionately sought.

The aim of this chapter was to explore how Watteau's paintings might come to be conditioned or haunted by a spectral quality of lost time inscribed in the material ruin of a transitional object. To facilitate an account for this question we studied the time in painting through the time of painting. *Divertissements champêtres* and other Watteau paintings offered the opportunity of studying the time of the becoming of Watteau's

work. Through the course of this study we have established that it is possible to claim that Watteau practised a montage approach to painting that can be shown, by way of Benjamin's thinking, to be different and more extreme than his immediate peers. Watteau's montage technique and its pictorial consequences deviated from convention to create images that are fragmented varied and discontinuous in regard to time and space.

As we have seen Watteau worked from a variety of sources, in no particular order and with mediums' that accelerated production, amendment and the unforeseen transition of the work through time. It is this process, which risked failure and practiced amendment as inevitable features of the becoming of the image, that can account for the inscription of lost time in the countenance of Watteau's paintings. Through his somewhat unconventional approach to montage, Watteau inscribed in his images an occluded history that haunts the surface of its countenance. Evidence of ghosting in the image, traces of amendment and discontinuities of colour and tone shatter the spatial continuity of the image; indications of failed events and lost time signal transition and spatial history. Watteau's technique for the erasure and loss of many failed works results in his paintings being conditioned by the spectral presence of their own failed past. Importantly however, Watteau's technique does not only render the image haunted by spectre-like transitions of lost time, it renders the painting itself, through the alacrity of its endeavour and the temporary quality of its chosen mediums', immediate transitional, spectre-like: a ruin.

Chapter Three

Spectral space, the mourning play and the failure of meaning

In chapter one we concluded that *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* presents to the viewer an image illuminated or haunted by lost time inscribed in the painting's transient countenance. The temporal and spatial condition of *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* entails that it fails to arrive or cohere in one place. It constitutes instead an occasion dispersed through space and time. In chapter two we addressed the question of how Watteau's paintings may come to be haunted by the spectre of time inscribed in a countenance of transition and decay. We reasoned that the occasions of lost time which haunt Watteau's decaying and temporally challenged paintings come about by way of techniques consistent with the *Trauerspiel*; and that these techniques may be considered a practice of montage that is individual to Watteau. Now we might ask the question, what about the affect of Watteau's work?

Many of Watteau's paintings including *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* have been described in melancholic terms. For example, Philip Conisbee states that, 'since the nineteenth century [*The Pilgrimage to Cythera*] has been associated with a Romantic, melancholy view of love, tinged with the sad knowledge of the inexorable passing of time.'[222] Norman Bryson has also stated that Watteau's ambiguous pictorial signs create the impression of 'vague and haunting emanations' moods, or atmospheres.[223] In the introduction I drew attention to Bryson's semiotic study of Watteau's work and how the subversive signifier has been offered as one way of accounting for the need to interpret Watteau's paintings. But is it possible to offer an account for such interpreted qualities as "melancholy" and "haunting" that does not rely solely on semiotics. Is it possible to

222 Conisbee, Philip, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century France*, Phaidon, Oxford, 1981, p.143.
223 Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 88.

explicate their interpreted unhappy affect in a way that takes its lead from the spectre-like temporality and failure which we have established as features of both Watteau's paintings and his practice?

Again, Benjamin's review of the *Trauerspiel* offers one possible way of addressing such an aim. As discussed earlier, according to Benjamin the condition of the spectre - transient and temporal - dominates the representational space and time of the *Trauerspiel*. In the *Trauerspiel* all things represented are like a ghost: provisional, endangered and marked by mortality. Death may interrupt a scene yet death is not finite. The murdered and the slain continue to inform the unfolding narrative but from another world. The dead became spectres who continue to affect those representations or other mirror reflections of nature and historical time posed in the mourning play. As a result, although ghosts fulfil significant roles in the mourning play there is no dialectic of the living and the dead. All figures are instead condemned to a spectral existence by way of the conditioning affect of the spectral time of the ghost.

The spectral condition of the mourning play significantly affects the way that it communicates meaning. In a world in which the possibility of the experience of God or the absolute and each figure is already conditioned by the dead, the figures of the mourning play suffer, mourn and melancholically lament a failure to coincide with eternal meaning. The condition of the ghost as both there and not there signals death but does not coincide with finitude. In the *Trauerspiel* the sign of the ghost represents a slip in signification to which all signs are subject. The *Trauerspiel* constitutes by way of the conditioning affect of the spectral, a space of representation in which all signs require decoding.

In Benjamin's insights regarding the spectral space of the mourning play, the posed object, the thing that haunts, has a significant affect but this affect is not divorced from the space it occupies. The ghost and its space are related. This relationship is replicated in painting through the relation of the figure and its ground. By extension, when a painting is considered to effect a haunting emanation, the thing that haunts and the space it occupies should not therefore necessarily be considered distinct factors. For an object, figure or detail, to haunt the observer of an image, e.g., an item of dress fashion, shoe hat or dress, it is reasonable to assume that the image need be by necessity already haunted. The pictorial space of the painting should be considered necessarily spectral in that for a phantom or lost object to affect a spectral presence, the conditions of its location should be favourable to possession. The space that the ghost haunts should be considered a condition of possibility.

Bearing this in mind this chapter proposes a new account for the melancholy affect of Watteau's *Gilles* (fig. 3) by exploring how we may more accurately define the temporal spatial images of Watteau's paintings as images that may be conditioned by practices that entail a condition of spectral time. It will then consider that the pictorial signs or imagery of *Gilles* inspire, in a way consistent with the *Trauerspiel*, slips in the process of signification; and that these time conditioned failures to definitively attribute signification represent a lament for the passing of eternal meaning.

So as to undertake this work it is essential that we first establish a firm basis for the claim that Watteau's work has been considered melancholic.

Gilles: **some interpretations**

In the Louvre, *Gilles* is hung out of sight of the main thoroughfare.[224] Flanked on either side by lesser-known examples of the Ancien Régime, it is once in view, something of a surprise. Almost life size, *Gilles* is larger in scale than most of the works that surround it. The composition of the painting presents the *Commedia dell' Arte* figure of Gilles in the centre of the canvas on a raised earth plateau. Tall upright and the focus of attention, the figure of Gilles, head positioned high in the frame, stares with eyes lowered in an arresting manner. Behind the figure of Gilles four *Commedia dell' Arte* characters and a donkey are depicted: the doctor dressed in black and a white ruff, the captain dressed in red, Leandre with a cockscomb hat and Isabelle. These figures are only partially seen as they are obscured by the stage like plateau upon which Gilles is positioned. Beyond these four fractional figures, framing the full-length figure of Gilles, a sky view bordered on the left and right by trees and foliage, offers a view through low lying clouds to an infinite distance.

Art historians and commentators have registered a variety of opinions regarding the effect of *Gilles*. 'The expression on [Gilles] face has [for instance] caused considerable perplexity. People have read in it "stupidity," "credulousness," "lethargy," "reverie," "melancholy," "poignancy".[225] In *Watteau and Reverie*, Norman Bryson interestingly 'tries to break down into constituents, - the [variety of] discourse that Watteau's images have called into...existence.'[226] These constituents he concludes are firstly the analogy of music, i.e., how Watteau's paintings represent a spiritual domain by way of evoking a musical quality. Secondly invalidism, which pertains to the way many writers find

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[224] Watteau, Antoine, *Gilles*, oil on canvas on panel, 184.5 X 149.5 cm, Louvre, Paris, c. 1718.
[225] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan and Rosenberg, Pierre, *Watteau*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1984, p. 434.
[226] Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 65.

interest in Watteau's own body and their belief that 'only disease can account for the quality of *envoi* his work everywhere displays; thirdly, the melancholy affect, mentioned in the introduction, which Bryson explains as the second stage of the appreciation of Watteau's paintings. In the first stage, we see graceful healthy young men and women preoccupied with pleasure. Then in the second stage, the fantasy of delight gives way to darkness. Psychological depth constitutes the fourth constituent of Watteau discourse. This type of account refers to the way that his images can be interpreted to represent 'the inwardness of real, living men and women.'[227] In other words, it is thought by some that his images do not merely depict nature through intense observation they instead offer an insight into real human passions. The fifth and final principle of Watteau discourse is reverie or fantasy. That is, some commentators recognise and betray in their own writing a perceived dream like quality in Watteau's images.

Having established a survey of constituents of Watteau discourse Bryson undertakes to deconstitute the 'myth' of Watteau writing so as to reveal observations of value from the banality of *idées reçues*. Bryson's aim with this work of exegesis is to develop the basis of his argument that it is as elucidated earlier. Watteau's creation of images conditioned by a 'semantic vacuum' that invites curiosity and entails discourse. It is the way that Watteau's figural approach to the painterly sign creates signifiers that imply 'more than they state' which brings about commentaries informed by musical analogies, melancholy etc.[228] That is;

> The meanings in Watteau's [paintings], have no [sufficient] signifier to pin them down, are experienced *mysteriously*, as moods, or atmospheres. The literary form of reverie...tries to articulate these vague and haunting emanations...'[229]

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227 Ibid., p. 67.
228 Ibid., p. 73.
229 Ibid., p. 88.

In the course of developing the argument that Watteau's 'semantic vacuum' entails discourse through the constituent variations of Watteau discourse Bryson addresses each constituent separately. In respect to the constituent of melancholy he draws attention to the prevalence or fame of Watteau's melancholy. He states,

> With Watteau, melancholy takes on an erotic form for the reason that it is expressed most often through an imaginary desire, and because desire is the most representable of the biological states of lack - the one with a natural closeness to visual imagination'. Perhaps for this reason speculation about a possible body of overtly pornographic work by Watteau has always been subversive: at the end of his life Watteau instructed that certain 'unworthy' paintings be destroyed. If such a corpus were ever found to exist, its discovery would greatly undermine the critical fixation on Watteau's famous melancholia, for in pornography the goal is to put to an end, however temporary, to the state of desire (desire is its enemy). But although Watteau's work obviously relates melancholy to eroticism, the paintings also forge a connection between the melancholic state and a much more traditional concern that centres on meaning.[230]

This statement is unequivocal about the link between Watteau's images and a melancholy affect. It offers no doubt that with Watteau melancholy takes on an erotic form, that Watteau's work forges a connection between the melancholic state and meaning, indeed that melancholia is a famously recognised feature of his paintings. Bryson continues this recognition of melancholy in Watteau's paintings when he then adopts a discursive approach invested with an interest in invalidism to describe Watteau the artist by way of the haunting emanation or mood of the sad *Gilles*.

> Watteau permanently dying tries to draw vitality from his figures by osmosis. He is the fool, whose comedy barely conceals a [mood of] sadness that is profound, though not bitter. He is Pierrot, he is Pagliacci, and above all he is the portrait of Gilles. He is sad because nature has disqualified him from love.[231]

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[230] Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 71.
[231] Ibid., p. 67

Margaret Morgan Grasselli also describes the figure of Gilles in *Gilles* in melancholic terms when she writes that Gilles is 'cut off from the world surrounding him, without movement, isolated and alone...separated from the four [other] actors [who] are enjoying themselves. Margaret Morgan Grasselli moreover emphasises the perception that *Gilles* has a melancholy affect when she describes the four minor actors and the sad mood of the donkey.

> The four minor actors lead 'with the help of a rope, a donkey decorated with ribbons and mounted by the "doctor"... The eye of the donkey, round and sad, the same as the one from *The Rest on the Flight into Eygpt* by Carravaggio (Galerie Doria, Rome), connects the two planes of [*Gilles*]. Watteau's poignant and awkward image of Pierrot remains unique in the history of art.[232]

Donald Posner disagrees with any conclusions that identify the melancholic potential of *Gilles*. This is because Posner attributes any perception of melancholia to be informed by a mis-reading of the figure of Gilles. 'By the second decade of the eighteenth century' the stage clown known as Gilles or Pierrot was very celebrated and its popularity in Paris even surpassed the Harlequin of the *Commedia dell' Arte*.[233] It is therefore not unreasonable to presume that Watteau's frequent depiction of Gilles reflects both this popularity and Watteau's familiarity with the figure. According to Posner however, any attempt to relate the Gilles of Watteau's painting with sadness is an error in judgement because the stage characters of Gilles and Pierrot that Watteau knew and probably considered when painting Gilles were not sad clowns.

> The sad clown was the creation of the nineteenth century, when the naïve, 'lunatic' Pierrot became the innocent Pierrot 'lunaire' of the Romantic poets. The great mime Jean-Gaspard Debureau shaped him on the nineteenth century stage, and the form he took had been prepard by decades of developing emotional attitudes associated with

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[232] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan and Rosenberg, Pierre, *Watteau*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1984, p.53.
[233] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1984, p. 267.

sensibilité. In Watteau's time Pierrots and Gilles were reprehensible in morals, obscene in language and gross in social behaviour; they did not display the shy lonely sensitivity and gently love of life that since around 1850 - but not only since then - many critics have thought they see in the picture by Watteau.[234]

Posner's argument can appear informed in so far as it draws our attention to the role of culture and historical context in the conditioning of our interpretation of representations. However Posner's assertion also appears to disavow his uncertainty regarding his own claim. This is because, firstly, when he describes the Gilles of Watteau's time as 'reprehensible in morals, obscene in language and gross in social behaviour', he also states that Gilles 'did not display the shy lonely sensitivity and gently love of life that since around 1850 - but not only since then - many critics have thought they see in the picture by Watteau.'[235] With these words, Posner qualifies his assertion that the culture and history of the post 1850 *Commedia dell' Arte* figure of Gilles promotes melancholy interpretations of the painting *Gilles*. To be precise, the words 'but not only since then', contradict Posner's argument by allowing for a melancholic *Gilles* prior to the cultural transformation of Gilles the buffoon into Gilles the sad clown. Secondly, Posner also, like Bryson and Margaret Morgan Grasselli, betrays a certain mood of sadness in his reflections on *Gilles*. At the end of his elucidation of *Gilles* Posner claims that the painting is a portrait and offers speculation following work advanced by Helene Adhemar that the figure portrayed might be the actor Belloni. He writes:

One must assume that the picture was made as a favour or gift and that there was a personal relationship between artist and actor. This seems reasonable enough, given Watteau's evident passion for the theatre. And Watteau may have had, after all, something of a spiritual affinity to the character - not of Pierrot, but of the man who plays him. For Belloni, if it is he we see, was about the same age as Watteau, and he left the theatre because of what became a mortal illness at about the same time that Watteau's health seems to have begun its steep decline. Belloni and Watteau both died in 1721.[236]

[234] Ibid., p. 267.
[235] Ibid., p. 267.
[236] Ibid., p. 271.

In the context of Posner's argument it is not necessary for him to offer such speculation. But by offering the interpretation that Watteau 'might have had a spiritual affinity with the character' that plays Pierrot because like Watteau, Belloni the actor was also suffering a mortal illness, Posner allows conjecture that *Gilles* is informed by a melancholy bond.

As we have seen Bryson and Margaret Morgan Grasselli identify a melancholic quality in *Gilles*. Posner rejects the idea that *Gilles* should be considered conditioned by a mood of sadness on the grounds that the historical and cultural referent of the clown conditions our interpretation of *Gilles*, yet his own account of Gilles draws attention to a potential moribund basis to the painting. Bryson attempts to account for the affect of Watteau's paintings by way of a sophisticated exploration of the semiotic. That is, how the discursive and figural qualities of Watteau's paintings come to entail the experience of vague haunting emanations that prompt the interpretation of meanings that are otherwise insufficiently signified in the image. Posner's interpretation of the signs that contribute to the composition of *Gilles* highlights however, how in attempting to reason the quality and affect of a painting solely by way of a matrix of associations between painted signs, language and culture, affects can be felt but not properly accounted for.

Gilles is one of a small number of famous paintings made by Watteau that was not etched for the Recueil Jullienne. Despite this Watteau's prints or secondary images offer a line of enquiry regarding the role of the depicted object through which we might begin to substantiate and develop lines of enquiry toward a not exclusive semiotic account for the melancholy affect of *Gilles*.

The Recueil Jullienne and drawings that represent lost images, missing paintings

The Recueil Jullienne which appeared in 1734 is a large *de luxe* edition of etched prints some of which where made during Watteau's lifetime, for example, the *Figures de Modes* and the *Figures Françoises, Recrue allant joindre, Les Habits sont italiens* (fig. 57). It gathers together 'two hundred and eighty seven prints, sixteen of which were published between 1735 and 1738.'[237] Seventy-three of these prints are reproductions of drawings, for instance, the *Figures de Modes* and fifty etchings of drawn arabesques or ornamental works. The collection mainly comprises an incomplete record of etchings of Watteau's painted *fête galante* scenes, decorative paintings, some painted landscapes, portraits, mythological, historical and religious subjects, some soldiers and three satirical subjects.

The paintings and original drawings, which formed the subject of each print, were owned by a variety of collectors. Jullienne himself owned thirty-nine paintings copied in the Recueil. These included twenty-nine *fêtes champêtres*, three military subjects, two landscapes, two gallant mythological scenes and two works that fit no particular category.

The task which the Recueil Jullienne fulfils is, if we follow the work of Michel, somewhat involved. According to Michel, Jullienne was more than a friend and supporter of Watteau. He was also a great admirer of his talent and intensely committed to the promotion and advancement of his reputation. The posthumous Recueil may therefore be considered not only a *tombeau de Watteau* or monument to his achievement. It might also be thought of as a means of promotion; a mechanism through

[237] Michel, Marianne Roland, *Watteau: An artist of the Eighteenth Century*, Chartwell Books, Inc.,!984, p.260.

which new interest might be aroused in Watteau's work, in particular, among notable collectors.

A steady turn over of works sold during the eighteenth century suggests that although Jullienne lost money on the enterprise of creating the Recueil it was successful at encouraging a market for Watteau's original works. In 1727 Jullienne obtained for 'ten years the exclusive right [for the reproduction of] the paintings and drawings he owned by Watteau.'[238] To maximise his investment and increase the number of works available to be etched Jullienne borrowed other paintings that belonged to his friends 'but above all he tried to buy them.'[239] For example he acquired three paintings from Henin and the *Serenade italienne* from the collection of Titon du Tillet. By 1756 however, at the time that 'the hand written catalogue of Jullienne's collection was drawn up, thirty-eight of the paintings by Watteau that Jullienne is known to have previously owned no longer belonged to him.'[240]

Watteau's prints might have been an accomplished means for the promotion and sale of Watteau's paintings but for many commentators Watteau's prints perform an extra function; that is there are prints in the Recueil that apparently represent lost paintings. According to Michel the number of prints that document lost paintings is probably considerable. She writes:

> Jullienne's collection of prints is made up of 287 plates, to which we may add 33 supplementary plates, following the order of Dacier and Vuaflart's exemplary catalogue. By excluding prints after drawings - thus excluding some arabesques - the list of paintings in Camesasca's catalogue runs to 215 numbers, my own list in *Tout Watteau* to 250. But it has to be said that only about half of these correspond to identified paintings.

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238 Michel, Marianne Roland, Watteau: An artist of the Eighteenth Century, Chartwell Books, Inc., 1984, p. 265.
239 Ibid., p. 265.
240 Ibid., p. 265.

The remainder are made up of prints after lost originals, which had already disappeared, in the eighteenth century.[241]

Michel and Posner make a number references to prints that they believe record lost paintings. For instance, Michel alleges that *La Ruine*, engraved by Bacquoy[242] (fig. 58) and *Le Bosquet de Bacchus*, engraved by Cochin,[243] each represent images that no longer exist. While Posner claims that *Escorte d' équipages* (fig. 59), engraved after Watteau, currently owned by the Trustees of the British Museum, London;[244] and *Départ de garison*, engraved after Watteau, and owned by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London,[245] record missing works. In addition, as already mentioned in chapter one, Malcolm Cormack claims that *Bon Voyage* (fig. 5) engraved by Audran is the engraving of a painting now no longer in existence that should however be placed historically between *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and *The Embarkation to Cythera.*[246]

Claims regarding how Watteau's secondary images refer to and document paintings that are now no longer traceable are not restricted to his prints. In *Watteau's Drawings: Their Use and Significance*, Eidelberg dedicates an entire chapter to the reconstruction of lost paintings from compositional drawings. By way of illustration, Eidelberg submits a painting in the Carnavalet Museum which portrays children parodying the characters of the *Commedia dell' Arte* to a lengthy study. This is because Eidelberg

[241] Ibid., p. 71.
[242] Ibid., p. 71.
[243] Ibid., p. 71.
[244] Posner, Donald *Antoine Watteau*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1984, p.33.
[245] Ibid., p. 34. *Escorte d' équipages*, engraved after Watteau, 30.4 x 40.1cm, Trustees of the British Museum, London;[245] *Départ de garison*, engraved after Watteau, 42.7 x 56.2 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
[246] 'A lost painting that should probably be placed between the Louvre and Berlin versions...was engraved by Benoit Audran with the title *Bon Voyage*. Cormack, Malcolm, *Watteau*, Hamlyn, London, New York, Paris, Sydney, p.409.

believes that the painting is the only 'one of a cycle of four paintings' to be still in existence.[247] He writes:

> The proposed cycle is of the Four Seasons, a traditional form of allegorical decoration. We do not know the three other paintings of the cycle, but we do have drawings in which Watteau planned their compositions and these are sufficient to establish the unity of the cycle in terms of iconography and style.[248]

To advance the task of restoring some idea of the missing paintings Eidelberg first identifies features of the Carnavalet painting that might establish its position in the cycle. For example, he recognises clues to re-naming the painting *Winter* by way of the emblem of 'a putto [warming] his hands over a brazier' and the depiction of dancing and music making.[249] These figurative emblems are, Eidelberg claims, in keeping with emblems employed by other artists in allegories of winter.[250] He also notes that in a previous winter allegory Watteau made for Crozat Watteau also utilised a similar figurative emblem, e.g., an 'old man of winter warming him-self at the fire.'[251]

Having outlined some credible claims for renaming the Carnavalet painting *Winter* Eidelberg then proposes that 'if Watteau painted an allegory of winter he would also have painted allegories of the three other seasons.'[252] To facilitate the identification or restitution of these now apparently lost paintings, Eidelberg undertakes to study a series of drawings that he claims planned the creation of the three missing seasonal allegories of the cycle.

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[247] Eidelberg, Martin P., *Watteau's drawings: their use and significance*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 1977, p. 206.
[248] Ibid., p. 206.
[249] Ibid., p. 206.
[250] Ibid., p. 206. 'We believe that this simple scene of children masquerading in *Commedia dell' Arte* costume is an allegory of winter. The idea of entertainment is often used to represent the season.
[251] Ibid.,p. 207.
[252] Eidelberg, Martin P., *Watteau's drawings: their use and significance*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 1977, p. 208.

The first drawing is entitled *Les enfants jardiniers* which Eidelberg and its current owners claim should be entitled *Spring*. The second drawing is *La moisson* which Eidelberg and Parker and Mathey both re-identify as *Summer*. The third drawing which Eidelberg claims provided the basis for the creation of the last phase of the cylcle, i.e., autumn, no longer exists but according to Eidelberg the drawing was engraved and included in the *Figures de différents caractères*; one of two collections of etched drawings that preceded the publication of the Recueil Jullienne. Eidelberg submits each drawing in-turn to an analysis of its emblems and details so as to establish each as an identifiable allegory of a season. He is careful to draw out stylistic consistencies that might link these three images together with a drawing which he claims is the compositional study for the re-named allegory of winter. By way of illustration:

> There is considerable justification for believing that these four compositions are related. They are joined stylistically, each bearing the marks of Watteau's early style. The button-like eyes and noses of the putti and the "u" shaped knees and elbows occur only in early works of Watteau. The four works are linked iconographically, each having, as it's subject one of the four seasons. All four allegories have similar horizontal designs in which a seated female figure is surrounded by putti. It is significant that in two of the allegories, those of Autumn and Winter the presiding genius is not the traditional male god but a young woman, so that all four seasons, correctly or not, are ruled over by women.[253]

In the course of identifying similarities between the four drawn images Eidelberg also admits to some differences between them. For instance, the drawings Eidelberg identifies as *Spring* and *Summer* are of a similar size but the drawing of *Winter*, which is a fragment of its former scale, is still considerably larger than either *Spring* or *Summer*. More significantly perhaps is the stylistic difference visible between *Spring* and *Winter* and *Autumn* and *Summer*. In *Spring* and *Winter* the compositions are crowded with putti 'with the result that the genii are relatively small in relation to the

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[253] Eidelberg, Martin P., *Watteau's drawings: their use and significance*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 1977, p. 255.

total composition. Where-as the compositions of *Autumn* and *Summer* are more simplified with the result that the scale of each figure is increased with regard to the overall image. Despite these and other differences Eidelberg remains convinced that the drawn images of *Spring*, *Summer* and *Autumn* each preface paintings that at one time existed and that these paintings completed a cycle of work. He states again:

> If there is justification for believing that the four compositions are related, equally justifiable is the belief that if one of the drawings was made for a painting, as is the case with *Winter*, then the other three drawings were also destined for paintings. As we have said before, the Carnavalet painting of *Winter* makes little sense by itself; it is more understandable as part of a series of the Four Seasons. We would then have lost three paintings as well as a drawing, but with fortune on our side for a change, we still have some idea of what the entire cycle looked like. In imagining the three other paintings of the series we can rely on the drawings for providing a general impression of their appearance.[254]

We have seen that for Michel, Posner and Eidelberg some secondary images, etchings or drawings signal the prior existence of paintings not known today. The print or the drawing provides the evidence that the painting existed. The work that Michel, Posner and Eidelberg undertake to reason the one-time existence of these now missing paintings is often compelling and theoretically plausible. Yet sometimes even these authors betray uncertainty regarding their own claims. At the end of the section outlined above regarding the reconstruction of three seasonal allegories, Eidelberg prompts caution regarding his own assertion. He states that 'given the changes which are likely to have happened between the stage of the compositional drawing and the actual execution of the painting'...'the mental reconstruction [of the three missing paintings] should be undertaken only with great caution.'[255] If Eidelberg feels it necessary to qualify his own claim that some of Watteau's prints and compositional drawings present missing

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[254] Eidelberg, Martin P., *Watteau's drawings: their use and significance*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 1977, p. 255.
[255] Ibid., p. 255.

paintings, what findings, if not lost paintings, can we draw from the otherwise evocative claims of Michel, Posner and Eidelberg. One possibility is that these writers' assertions expose how some Watteau images promote a sense that something is lost, missing or not substantially present.

Like some of Watteau's prints and drawings *Gilles* has also promoted a sense that something is missing. By way of illustration, despite being recognised as one of the masterpieces of the Ancien Régime, Watteau's *Gilles* has no known history before the end of the 18th Century. After 1805 the painting is known to have been owned by a Parisian picture dealer who was eager to sell it. However, Watteau's reputation at this time was at its nadir, so the dealer was forced to find some way of stimulating interest in it. He attempted this by writing along its bottom edge, two lines from a popular song: 'how happy Pierrot would be, if he had the gift of pleasing you.' The promotion was apparently successful because, despite advice against the purchase from Jacques Louis David, Watteau's painting was soon bought by the then Director-General of Museums, Vivant Denon.

By choosing to promote Watteau's painting by inscribing a phrase which infers that the Pierrot represented in the painting would be happy if only he could be considered pleasurable the dealer not only suggests that the painting appears to be unhappy, but also that because of its unhappy state, it seems to lack something which might otherwise be expected to be present. A something that if present may make the painting of Pierrot or Gilles a more pleasurable or a satisfying image to see.

Gilles has also stimulated a number of different debates concerning its status. It has for example stimulated dispute regarding its original function. According to Posner it is

generally agreed that *Gilles* must have been made as a poster or signboard of some kind. Margaret Morgan Grasselli concurs with this conclusion when she states:

> One point will confirm that the work was indeed originally a sign: when one looks at an enlarged photograph of Pierrot's face, one can clearly distinguish a vertical line dividing it. On the left part is a network of crackling in a circle while the right side is free of all damage. Faillant will suggest at the Watteau colloquium an explanation for that peculiarity: part of the sign was probably [knocked] down [from the wall] and certain less protected pieces may have fared worse than others.[256]

If *Gilles* was made to be a sign or a poster this would, Posner argues, account for several curious features of the painting. That is, if *Gilles* was intended to be a sign, this would explain the painting's large scale, it would justify the 'unusually broad handling' of its brushwork and clarify why it was not engraved or mentioned in 'the art literature of the eighteenth century.'[257] Yet although Posner and Margaret Morgan Grasselli agree that *Gilles* was not intended to be a work of art, the painting, according to Posner's observation still poses the question, what was *Gilles* initially intended to do and for whom? Was it meant to function 'as an advertisement to be set up at the fairgrounds…by some popular Pierrot and his company.'[258] Or was it as Helene Adhémar suggests 'one of two shop signs made for cafes that the actor Belloni, upon retiring from the fairs, opened up in 1718-19.'[259]

Gilles has also stimulated deliberation regarding the source of the various portraits that it depicts. For instance, according to Margaret Morgan Grasselli much work has been carried out with the aim of identifying the figures of the painting with different known actors plying their trade at the time Watteau was painting. In 1870 Manz saw Francis

[256] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan and Rosenberg, Pierre, *Watteau*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1984, p. 430.
[257] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1984, p. 270
[258] Ibid., p. 270.
[259] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1984, p.270.

Biancolelli in the figure of Gilles/Pierrot. In 1892 Schefer recognised Gilles as Corneille van Cleve, the rector of the Academy. Then Dacier and Vualflart thought they saw Giuseppe Balletti in the portrait of Gilles and by extension considered the painting a sign for the production of Danae at the Foire Saint-Laurent in 1721. In 1938 Panofsky did not rule out the possibility that Gilles was a self-portrait. Parker and Mathey saw in Gilles the portrait of Pierre Sirios, Watteau's dealer. And more recently Margaret Morgan Grasselli, following Adhémar's hypothesis mentioned above concluded that the figure of Gilles portrays the actor and coffee shop owner, Belloni.

Finally, *Gilles* appears to have stimulated debate concerning the status or origins of the *Commedia dell' Arte* figure upon which the central figure is based. Commentators ask, is the central figure based on the character named Gilles or Pierrot? By way of illustration, Posner writes:

> One notes that the picture's first recorded name, chalked on it, was 'Pierrot'. But it was very soon called 'Gilles' too. This is because, almost since their creation at the end of the seventeenth century, the two clowns have been virtually identical in comic character and costume.[260]

Posner's claim that the *Commedia dell' Arte* comic figures of Pierrot and Gilles were virtually identical is essentially born out by historical studies. According to Margaret Morgan Grasselli the Italian Pedrolino, originally introduced in Paris in 1673 was transformed into the French character Pierrot in 1684. This is confirmed by a family tree of the history of Pedrolino, drawn in Duchartre's *The Italian Comedy*.[261] In this family tree (fig. 60), Pedrolino is shown derived from the slave in the comedies of Plautus and

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[260] Ibid., p. 267.
[261] Duchartre, Pierre Louis, *The Italian Comedy*, Dover Publications, 1966, p. 261.

Terence but also transformed into a variety of other figures, notably Pierrot but also Gilles by way of Giglio and Gillotin.[262]

Duchartre's study indicates that in the transformation of Pedrolino into Pierrot, and the development of Pedrolino into Gilles, the figures become much like one another. That is, Giglio of the sixteenth century is shown to be as 'much like Pedrolino as Pierrot was like Gilles and Gillotin, between whom there is apparently no difference, whatever.'[263] Pierrot's costume was very similar to that of the Neapolitan Pulcinella's, except that it was tighter and more fitted. And like the costumes of Gilio, Gilotin and Gilles, it was white, with white shoes (fig. 61).[264]

Although there are acknowledged historical similarities between the comic figures of Gilles and Pierrot this has not impeded debate concerning the central figure of Gilles or even continued variations in the naming of it. By way of illustration, Moureau has elaborated an argument that Watteau took Pierrot rather than Gilles as his model for the painting.[265] While Posner refers to the central figure as Pierrot, Philip Conisbee refers to it as Gilles[266] and Bryson states that '[it] is Pierrot, [it] is Pagliacci, and above all [it] is...Gilles!'[267]

Although Bryson identifies five constituents to Watteau discourse, e.g., music, invalidism, melancholy, psychological depth and reverie, he also notes that there seems 'no reason at all why [the] various [types of Watteau discourse] should co-exist in the

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[262] Duchartre, Pierre Louis, *The Italian Comedy*, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, Bombay, Sydney, 1929, p. 261.
[263] Duchartre, Pierre Louis, *The Italian Comedy*, Dover Publications, 1966, p. 254.
[264] Ibid., p. 254.
[265] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan and Rosenberg, Pierre, *Watteau*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1984, p. 433.
[266] Connisbee, Philip, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century France*, Phaidon, Oxford, 1981, p.150.
[267] Bryson, Norman, *Word & Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 67.

same place:' at the same image.[268] To address the fact that the same paintings appear to suggest to different people different effects he identifies in the various constituents of the Watteau discourse an underlying homology. That is, he claims that each constituent, in different ways, insists on a quality that is absent or disconnected from the signs or signifiers of the image. For example, with regard to the music analogy, Watteau commentators who recognise a musical quality in his images make use of the way that in music the emotions seem to emanate from 'behind' the material of articulated sound, the 'acoustic signifier.'[269] And again, with regard to style of Watteau discourse characterised as betraying a bias toward invalidism, Bryson claims that this writing exposes a recognition that the paintings appear incomplete and in need of supplement. This supplement is biographical detail or the 'real' signified of the image that is by necessity absent.

Outlined above is evidence of how etchings in the Recueil Jullienne and Watteau's drawings and paintings promote an experience that something seems to be lost, missing or not substantially present. Bryson's semiotically informed conclusions suggest that Watteau's paintings affect a need for some external supplement. The prints and drawings that signpost lost or missing paintings, might therefore, following Bryson's argument, suggest that they be accounted for by way of the way that they invoke the requirement of some external supplement. Accordingly, it may also be argued that *Gilles* suggests a desire for a supplement: the desire to restore the lost object. However, *Gilles* as we have seen, has also motivated in some way an engagement that involves its substantiation as an art object - a thing - through the identification of a source or referent, or the function of the object. The questions that it has promoted may be generalised as what is it, what does it do, who is that etc. Consequently the line of

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268 Ibid.,, p. 69.
269 Ibid., p. 69.

enquiry regarding the object offered by the Recueil Jullienne and Watteau's drawings, through which we might begin to substantiate and develop a new account for the haunting melancholy affect of *Gilles*, can be seen not necessarily in that which is sensed to be missing from the painting, its perceived absence. Instead it may be seen or found by exploring the role of the object in *Gilles*. In particular what can the pictured object in *Gilles* reveal?

Allegorical objects

In classical allegory painters employed personification to articulate ideas and myths in visual terms. Artists who chose to create allegories of classical texts needed to find ways of representing the ideas and concepts that underpinned the narrative. This was partly achieved by painting the image of a figure with some of the accepted characteristics of the concept. By way of illustration two acknowledged characteristics of time are the ageing process and time's propensity to pass too quickly; that is time sometimes appears to be flying by. Consequently classical allegorists have often depicted the concept of time by way of the image of an old man with the addition of wings. For example, Francoise Lemoyne's, *Time saving Truth from Falsehood and Envy* and Nicolas *Poussin's A Dance to the Music of Time* (fig. 62).[270]

To emphasise a concept or suggest a narrative, the classical allegorist brought together a number of personified figures, each representing a different idea. In *Time orders Old Age to destroy Beauty* there are three personified figures, a seated old man with wings who represents time; a young beautiful woman who represents the idea of youthful

[270] Lemoyne, Francois, *Time saving Truth from Falsehood and Envy*, 1737, The Wallace Collection, London.
Poussin, Nicolas, *A Dance to the Music of Time*, c. 1639-40, The Wallace Collection, London.

beauty; and an old woman that represents old age.[271] Batoni composed the image so that the old man of time points up toward the beauty of youth while the older woman claws at the young woman's face. This combination and composition of figures and actions suggests a narrative reading of the passing of time. The narrative passes in a triangular movement from the pointed finger of the old man to the young woman to the old woman by way of the old woman's out stretched arm. Time passes from youth to old age by way of the corrupting effect of age.

The role of the object in the personification of figures and the development of complex allegorical narratives should be noted. The object in classical allegorical images plays a significant role in the suggestion of the word and meaning. Nicolas Poussin can further illustrate the important role of the object in the link between classical allegory and the word by way of two paintings: *A Dance to the Music of Time* and *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* (fig. 63).

Poussin's *A Dance to the Music of Time* has been identified as a representing 'the perpetual cycle of the human condition.'[272] The painting depicts a series of figures which apparently represent Poverty, Labour, Riches and Pleasure. According to commentators of Poussin the figures suggest the cycle of the human condition by way of the concept that poverty leads to labour, labour leads to riches and pleasure, but pleasure over-indulged leads to excess and thereby reverts to poverty. In the painting Poverty, Labour, Riches and Pleasure dance hand-in-hand in a circle. This compositional device suggests the conceptual link between the personifications. But the role of the object in sustaining the idea should not be understated. It can be demonstrated by way of two features; firstly, the figures of Poverty and Labour.

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271 Batoni, Pompeo, *Time orders Old Age to Destroy Beauty*, 1746, National Gallery London.

272 Ingamells, John, *The Wallace Collection, Catalogue of Pictures iii, French before 1815*, 1989, the Trustees of the Wallace Collection, London, p. 309.

According to Bellori and Félibien the figure of Poverty is identifiable by way of the wreath of dry leaves on its head which signifies lost possessions, while the figure of Labour is promoted by way of the shoulder-less attire which reveals sunburnt bare shoulders and work-hardened arms that suggest hardship. Without the wreath and the objectification of the figure these figures could not individually symbolise the idea of poverty or labour. Nor could they in combination suggest a narrative link to one another. Secondly, the significance of time in this painting is similarly dependent on the representational suggestion of the object. For example, 'in the sky Apollo holds the ring of the Zodiac, his chariot is preceded by the Dawn, Aurora, and [is] accompanied by dancing figures [who represent] eight of the Hours.'[273] To the right of the image an old man with wings sits staring at the four dancing figures and on the left a 'two-headed Janus...an old head looking back and a young head looking forward, [refers] to the passing of time.'[274] Without the object of the ring of the Zodiac, the figure of Apollo would not be identifiably linked to celestial time. Similarly the figure of the old man would be an incomplete sign of time if it were not depicted with the addition of wings.

Poussin's *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus*, is a visual allegory probably based on a subject drawn from Natalis Comes handbook of myths.[275] Hercules has been consistently interpreted as a symbol of the sun. Comes wrote that Hercules twelve labours were the twelve signs of the zodiac through which the sun moves. However Hercules was not only symbolically equated with the sun. His feats of valour were also an extremely well known symbol for virtue's conquest of human vices, and the founding of human civilisation. As Comes puts it,

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[273] Ibid., pp. 309 -310.
[274] Ibid., p. 310.
[275] McTighe, Sheila, *Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 40.

What has been said of Hercules refers not to the nature of the Sun, but also to the institution of human life...If one diligently considers what we have discussed of Hercules to this point, one will find that all that is said of him concerns the morals and the reformations of human life, and can easily be accommodated to the nature of the Sun.[276]

According to Sheila McTighe 'Hercules' defeat of Cacus marked a stage in the establishment of both religion and law, as well as the sun of virtue.'[277] It is probable therefore that the role of the symbol of Hercules in *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* is to promote and sustain an allegory of the founding of human civilisation. But the painting also contains a number of other compositional features which affect the suggestiveness of the image, in particular, an object: a ship. According to McTigue the ship can be attributed, through its motif of labour and navigation and by way of its use in classical texts such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with the affect of characterising the passage of the ages. To be precise, by way of its mention in Virgil's first Georgic and his fourth Eclogue, which offer versions of the myth of the ages, the ship can be considered to mark not only the passage of time, but also, like Hercules, the growth of human technology and the progress of civilisation.[278]

The links between image and meaning that guided the viewer's interpretations of allegory and thereby 'presumably joined artists and audience in a common allegorical dialogue...consisted of the large body of conventional signs and symbols published in the form of handbooks' such as Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* of 1590.[279]

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[276] Ibid., pp.41- 42.
[277] Ibid., p. 42.
[278] Ibid., p. 44-45.
Virgil, Eclogues, translation. H. Rushton Fairclough, London, 1916, p.31.
'But for you, child, shall the earth untilled pour forth...But soon as you can read of the glories of heros and thy father's deeds, and can know what valour is, slowly shall the plain yellow with the waving corn, on wild brambles shall hang the purple grape, and the stubborn oak shall distill dewy honey. Yet shall some few traces of olden sin lurk behind, to call men to essay the sea in ships, to gird towns with the walls, and to cleave the earth with furrows ...'
[279] McTighe, Sheila, *Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 9.

It was not the aim of allegorical paintings to utilise a language of signs that was open to corruption. The aim was to provide images that could be easily deciphered. A publication might assemble and illustrate allegorical emblems, personified figures and objects. This does not however mean that reference to such emblems will necessarily entail unambiguous communication or the suggestion of word and narrative without variation. Visual emblems are not words and although placement, attention to detail, diligent reference to acknowledged emblem records might produce visual images with the capacity to suggest an intended meaning. Variations, subtle juxtaposition of personified figures and emblematic objects can, either by purposeful design or accident, create ambiguities that stall or make interpretation of a narrative or conceptual significance a complex endeavour.

The ambiguity of the allegorical sign can be exemplified in a number of ways. For example, although the ship in Poussin's *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus,* and similarly the plough in Poussin's *Landscape with Polyphemus*, is conventionally accepted to represent the advancement of human civilisation it can also, 'in a more profound sense signal its corruption.'[280] The ship can indicate the fall from a Golden Age of plenty to a less ideal time of labour and endeavour. Equally, although Hercules' victory over the Cyclops may indicate the progress of civilisation: its moral advancement. These two mythological figures may propose a golden time of harmony and plenitude, but they also convey 'the idea of a time of savagery:' the time of the Cyclops.[281]

In like manner the way that the allegorical sign can confuse the interpretation of meaning by way of its juxtaposition with other signs or objects can be exemplified by

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[280] Ibid., p. 45.

[281] McTighe, Sheila, *Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 46.

way of the middle ground of Poussin's *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus*, with its ship and human labour, and the painting's foreground water nymphs. Water nymphs were often represented in seventeenth century paintings; Rubens, Pietro da Cortona as well as Poussin used them in a number of their paintings. Water nymphs, according to Comes are the 'seeds and the moisture by which all things are generated in nature.'[282] Poussin's use of the water nymph emblem appears consistent with this interpretation, in that 'he [often] seems to have [depicted] the nymph either wringing her hair or pressing her hands to her breast. [These poses seem to create] a sign [that highlights] the concept of fertility [through the function of] the passing of water through its natural cycle.'[283] If the water nymph symbolises fertility and generation then the nymphs in the foreground of *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* may be construed as harmoniously supporting the concept signalled by Hercules and the ship, i.e., the advancement of civilisation. Yet, as McTighe argues, the placement of the water nymphs in front of the ship and its human labourers can also indicate something of a tension. That is, the nymphs can seem to stand in contrast to,

> The activities of the human labour...While human beings subject to the forward motion of time and history, are forced to labour with...a fishing net to draw their living from the...sea, nature itself is self-sustaining and eternally renewed through the cyclic motion of water through the landscape. [*Landscape with Hercules and Cacus*] depicts a moment of tension between the Golden Age, seen as a moment of harmony between man and nature, and the progressive motion of human time. If...the monster Cacus [designates] the savage abuse of the passions that must be corrected by human institutions, nonetheless the fall from the Golden Age into time also denotes a degeneration of human life into work and pain.'[284]

In other words, the water nymphs in the foreground of *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* can be understood to supplement the allegorical suggestion of Hercules and the

[282] Ibid., p. 47.
[283] Ibid., p. 47.
[284] Ibid., p. 48.

ship. But they can also be interpreted to challenge and thereby problematise the harmony of the concept of the advancement of human civilisation promoted by Hercules and the ship, by implying a rift between an ideal time, and a time of history and human endeavour.

So far we have seen that in classical allegory objects function to drive commentators or witnesses to use words and identify meaning; although the meaning and signification of the allegorical object or sign is open to some ambiguity. The communication of meaning was the aim and the paintings sought to utilise known depictions or emblems of objects as symbols that might effectively entail determinable signification. So how does Watteau's *Gilles* compare with other allegorical painter's use of the depicted object? What can Watteau's use of the object sign reveal?

Watteau's objectless allegory?

There are a number of artists that might provide a useful comparison to the work of Watteau, e.g., Claude Gillot, Jean-Francois de Troy, Boucher and Fragonard. There are only two artists however, which offer a useful comparison with Watteau if the focus of the study is *fête galante* or *Commedia dell' Arte* images with allegorical qualities. As mentioned earlier Watteau worked in collaboration with many other artists but he was only the Master to two students, Jean-Baptiste Pater and Nicolas Lancret.[285]

Pater developed under Watteau's tutelage a style and imagery that was almost wholly dependent on Watteau. Indeed, when Pater died he was still described by the *Mercure* as

[285] Michel, Marianne Roland, Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century, Chartwell Books Inc., 1984, p. 59.

'a compatriot and pupil of the illustrious Antoine Watteau.'[286]As described in chapter two however despite 'always [revealing] a profound debt to Watteau, [Lancret developed] a mature [more academic style than Watteau which enabled him to make some] important contributions to the art of his own time.'[287] Given then that Lancret's mature work retained the influence of Watteau and preserved the genre of the *fête galante*, yet through its own innovation and recognised academic merit provided inspiration to the other artists; the mature works of Lancret rather than Pater might again offer the most obvious foil for a comparative study of Watteau's *fête galante* allegories.

A number of paintings suggest an opportunity to explore how Lancret's paintings told their tales, in particular, the way that they utilised the allegorical object to spur the promotion of a concept.[288] For example, *A Lady with a Gentleman with Two Girls in a Garden*, *The Four Ages of Man* (a series of four linked paintings) and the *Luncheon Party in the Park* (fig. 76).[289] *Lancret's Four Times of Day* (fig. 64 a-d) offers however a set of four paintings whose subject is consistent with our own; that is, they allegorically represent the theme of time.[290] Perhaps more importantly, the *Four Times of Day* also represents a historical shift in the eighteenth century's approach to the depiction of the concept of time.

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286 Holmes, Mary Tavener, edited by Focarino Joseph, *Nicolas Lancret 1690 - 1743*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York in association with The Frick Collection, 1991, p. 35.

287 Ibid., p.34.

288 According to Holmes and Foccarino, Lancret's 'tableaux tell their tales not only through the gestures and expressions of their characters, [but through the way that Lancret]...wove into his scenes a variety of conceits and motifs- among them traditional allegory, iconographic staffage, and even persuasive colors'. Holmes, Mary Tavener, edited by Focarino Joseph, *Nicolas Lancret 1690 - 1743*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York in association with The Frick Collection, 1991, p. 14.

289 Lancret, Nicolas, *A Lady and Gentleman with Two Girls in a Garden (The Cup of Chocolate*, oil on canvas, 88.9x97.8cm, c.1742, the Trustees of The National Gallery, London, no. 6422.
Lancret, Nicolas, *The Four Ages of man*: *Childhood*, 33 x 44.5 cm; *Youth*, 33 x 44.5 cm; *Maturity*, 33 x 44.5 cm; *Old Age*, 33 x 44.5 cm, oil on canvas, 1730 -5, the Trustees of the National Gallery London.
Lancret, Nicolas, *Luncheon Party in the Park*, 1735, oil on canvas, 55.7x46cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Forsyth Wickes Collection, 65.2649, Boston,).

290 Lancret, Nicolas, *Four Times of Day*: *Morning* 28.6 x 36.5 cm; *Midday* 28.9 x 36.8 cm; *Afternoon* 28.6 x 36.8 cm; *Evening* 28.9 x 36.8 cm, oil on copper, c. 1739 - 41, the Trustees of the National Gallery, London, nos. 5867-5870.

The first of the four paintings of *Lancret's Four Times of Day* is entitled *Morning* (fig. 64a). It consists of an interior boudoir scene that is reminiscent of Jean-Francois de Troy's paintings. The room is enclosed on three sides. On the far left, in the immediate fore-ground, a heavy green silk fabric thrown over a piece of furniture borders the image, while on the right French windows lead out of the image to an undisclosed, dark brown concealed space. Along the upper edge of the canvas, immediately above and behind two female figures, the back wall of the room and in particular, two round paintings in ornate frames which sit either-side of an ornate gold clock, closes off the space of the room.

Three figures, two females and one male occupy the room. One female, presumably the maidservant, stands to completing her duties, while the young lady of the house entertains a mature male admirer. This 'dishevelled lady believes her visitor is either beyond temptation or, more likely, susceptible to it.'[291] This is because, as the young lady leans across a coffee table containing cups, saucers, and a coffee-pot, so as to offer her male guest something from the table. In doing so her open at the top bodice allows an ample view of her right breast. This action incites a look of surprise but certainly not horror in her guest.

Midday is the second painting in the series of four (fig. 64b). It presents a group of figures out of doors. On the left of the picture close to the fore-most figure of the group but compositionally behind the four figures, foliage and a tree create a tonal margin which frames the left-hand as well as most of the upper horizontal edge of the canvas. On the far right, but this time rooted in the foreground, a small shrub and the trunk of a tree by intermingling with a large stone sundial and fountain help to define the right-

[291] Holmes, Mary Tavener, edited by Focarino Joseph, *Nicolas Lancret 1690 - 1743*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York in association with The Frick Collection, 1991, p. 90.

hand limits of the scene. The stone fountain extends from the upper horizontal edge to just above the lower horizontal edge of the picture. The right-hand foliage, tree and fountain occupy almost half of the available space of the image.

This picture represents three female figures and a male who have been picking flowers in a garden and have stopped by a sundial, inscribed with XII. While one of the female figures rests, the three other figures stand. The theme of time is highlighted by the actions of two of these figures. The male eye shaded against the sun by his outstretched left arm scrutinises the shadow cast on the face of the sundial. While the female figure to his left replicates his stare. Both of these figures also finger their own pocket watch.

Afternoon is the third in the series of four paintings (fig. 64c). The scene is set outside like *Midday*. Four figures, three females and a male dominate the image. The male and a female figure sit playing backgammon at a table situated in the left of centre foreground. Behind the male the other two female figures, left of centre, witness their game. Shaded by foliage and trees these two figures and the nature that frames them mark a mid-point in the spatial recession of the image; a recession that advances to a point of infinity, through a break in the foliage of the thicket, to the right of the sitting female.

Gaming was a popular pursuit among the leisured classes of the eighteenth century but in this painting, as with *Morning*, it is possible that the subject of time can be interpreted to be supplemented by way of the subject of love and desire. The eye line of the figures is the means of determining this possibility. The male and his companion to all intents and purposes play together but although the female of the partnership holds the male in her attention, he has eyes only for another. Instead of returning the gaze of

his partner, the male, head turned stares up at the younger lady immediately to his right (our left).

Evening is the last of the four paintings (fig. 64d). This scene represents five female figures dressed in loose white robes dispersed around a stream or lake. The time is late evening and the scene is watched over by a full moon. In the fore ground one figure sits with her leg in the water while a second stands immersed to her knees. Of the three remaining figures, one stands in water while the other two occupy a boat. The atmosphere appears romantic. The figures of the fore ground are cast in bright moon light while the boat and the three other figures merge with the middle ground of vague mist encroached nature.

It is possible that this picture depicts the subject of Diana and her maidens. The goddess Diana is most often referred to and represented as a chaste huntress. She was associated with the goddess of the moon, Luna, and as a result is often depicted wearing a crescent moon. Her other attributes often include a bow, quiver, spear, dogs and a stag, as well as a shield and chariot. Yet in this image, although the scene is depicted with a full moon, non-of the figures appears supplemented by the addition of any of the objects normally associated with the sign of Diana. So this image of women disporting themselves at a stream may be ridiculing rather than up-holding the subject of Diana.

There is in these four allegories of time a significant difference to those offered by Batoni, Lemoyne and Poussin. Before the seventeenth century time was, as we have seen, predominantly portrayed by way of personifications and classical or mythological signs and objects. The focus of time in these four images is by contrast not malevolent and does not involve the thief of life or the defilement of beauty. Where Poussin might pose a scene made up of iconographic attributes derived from classical literature

dancing in an ideal landscape traversed by Apollo, Lancret constructs scenes which signal time by way of everyday locations and events. Time in Lancret's images has become 'an excuse for changing one's clothes, varying ones recreation, ordering ones existence according to a system of constraints and propriety.'[292] Holmes and Focarino suggest that one of the reasons for the change in painted allegorical depictions of time is the seventeenth-century print that illustrated leisure and pleasure, and seventeenth century innovation in time keeping.[293]

In the seventeenth-century innovation in clock mechanisms and time keeping led to a different cultural relationship to time. Everyday rituals became governed by clock time and the popular prints of the day illustrated these changes. From the seventeenth-century on, painted genre depictions of time, influenced by the popular print, also became informed by the standard pattern of the day. Morning was represented by a *toilette*; midday was represented by luncheon; afternoon became known by images of games or a domestic activity; and evening was represented by attendance at a ball, or sleep.

Lancret was much influenced and interested in the popular print and indeed was a leader in the innovation of genre depictions of time through the influence of the print. So where Lemoyne and Poussin turned to literature for objects capable of signalling time, e.g., the scythe, wings and the hourglass, Lancret instead turned, but not exclusively, to the new pattern of the day and, significantly for this research, its objects. We see for

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[292] Holmes, Mary Tavener, edited by Focarino Joseph, *Nicolas Lancret 1690 - 1743*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York in association with The Frick Collection, 1991, p. 90.

[293] 'The development of genre-based [depictions of the] Times of [the] Day undoubtedly followed seventeenth century advances in clock mechanisms and manufacture, most notably the spiral balance spring for the pocket watch. Better watches and more of them increased the number of people able to calibrate time and willing to let their activities be governed by the hour and minute hands'. Holmes, Mary Tavener, edited by Focarino Joseph, *Nicolas Lancret 1690 - 1743*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York in association with The Frick Collection, 1991, p. 90.

example in *Morning* the boudoir and a lady at her *toilette* which signifies the start of the day. But we also see a series of objects that supplement the suggestion of time, in particular, by way of their association with the ritual of breakfast, the time of morning, i.e., the clock and the coffeepot and cups. In *Midday* we see a scene that depicts midday not by way of reference to lunch but by way of objects that signal time and the time of noon, e.g., the two pocket watches, the sundial and its vertical shadow and Roman numeral XII. And in *Afternoon*, we find a scene of pleasurable distraction and therefore, by way of the model of the new genre pattern of the day, the time of afternoon, complimented or further enhanced by the object of the backgammon board.

It should be noted however that despite Lancret's use of contemporary signage to promote the concept of time in the *Times of Day*, he did not entirely abandon in these paintings the more conventional allegorical signs and objects. Earlier we elaborated upon Poussin's use of the allegorical sign of the boat, an object that when presented in the context of an image, is by convention, understood to represent the advancement of human civilisation; although it can also, in a more profound sense signal its corruption. This allegorical device can be found in the last of the *Times of Day*: *Evening*. As can the classic allegorical figure of the huntress Diana and the emblem of the moon, which is conventionally associated with time, and re-birth through its cycles of return. Consequently whether Lancret sought to parody classical allegory in *Evening*, as suggested earlier, or simply sought to create a visual allegory of the time of evening, we can conclude that across the four paintings of the *Times of Day* Lancret utilised a combination of contemporary cultural and historically conventional objects and signs to communicate the concept of time. Many commentators have discussed and argued about the figures portrayed in the *Gilles*. For example, Dora Panofsky has argued that the figure of Gilles is related to a cycle of *parades* (or brief comic skits) called *The Education of Gilles*. 'In [*The Education of Gilles*] the clown [or Gilles] tries,

unsuccessfully, to improve himself by taking lessons in manners, dancing, grammar and history. Frustrated and ridiculous, he is a misfit and the butt of jokes.'[294] But in another analysis Panofsky differently drew comparison between the studies for Gilles in *Comediens italiens* and Rembrandt's study for the etching entitled, *Ecce Hommo*.[295] This comparison she concluded suggests that both *Comediens italiens* and *Gilles* present the figure of Gilles as a Christ-like presence.

Posner strenuously disputes both these claims. For instance, 'it hardly seems necessary [according to Posner] to comment on the improbability of a pious eighteenth-century artist and audience entertaining the idea that a personage who on stage was frequently lascivious in behaviour and vulgar in language, could be sympathetically compared to the Lord.'[296] Equally he also doubts whether Gilles can be based on *The Education of Gilles* when the cast of pictured players in *Gilles* does not correspond with the cast of *The Education of Gilles* cycle. After listing the differences between the figures in *Gilles* and *The Education of Gilles*, Posner does however identify figures in *Gilles* that correspond with characters from both the Gilles cycle and the *Commedia dell 'Arte*. For example, he states that the figure riding the donkey is most certainly the Doctor from *The Education of Gilles* and the *Commedia dell' Arte*. Then he elaborates his conclusion and the significance of the figure of the Doctor by way of Molière, who he claims used four doctors and their mounts in his play *L' Amour Médecin*.

Panofsky and Posner may differ in their points of view and their arguments may appear to some equally tenuous but what their work and that of other writers does show is that *Gilles* includes representations that trigger or spur associations with referents in

[294] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1984, pp. 268-9.
[295] *Comediens italiens*, copy after Watteau, 64 x 76 cm, Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection.
Rembrandt, *Ecce Homo*, etching, London, Victoria and Albert Museum.
[296] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1984, p. 265.

literature, and the dramatic traditions. The figures in *Gilles* signify reference and its associated meanings. Gilles can for instance signal different things to different people, i.e., Christ or as we have previously exposed "stupidity," "credulousness," "lethargy," "reverie," or "melancholy."[297]

Watteau's *Gilles* might contain figures that signal referents or spur associated meanings but it is an image that does not extensively include reference to classical allegorical objects or as we have seen above, the more contemporary allegorical objects utilised by the mature Lancret. *Gilles* does contain some objects, notably a partial sculpture of a satyr and a partly occluded or fragment of a donkey and its rope. When compared to the *Four Times of Day*, and for example Pater's *The Comedians' March* (fig. 65), which similarly depicts Gilles and his troupe but with the objects of a donkey, a drum, a dog, a satyr and a distant house, *Gilles* does appear comparatively objectless.

Gilles is of course not the only Watteau painting with a limited number of object signs. Most of the *fête galante* scenes depict groups of couples outdoors, in parks or woodland. These scenes often utilise natural vantage points in the landscape to pose their figurative interaction. Yet apart from references to park or garden architecture such as stone steps, walls or statues, some of these scenes include no more additional object signs than a musical instrument or a dog; and the significance of these objects is often questionable. *Voulez-vous triompher des Belles*? (fig. 66) by way of illustration, depicts two groups of *Commedia dell' Arte* figures, one in the foreground, one in the middle ground.[298] The two foreground figures of a masked Harlequin and his Columbine are involved in a scene of seduction and resistance. They are seated on a hill, while the

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[297] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan and Rosenberg, Pierre, *Watteau*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1984, p. 434.

[298] Watteau, Antoine, *Voulez-vous triompher des Belles?* otherwise known as *Harlequin and Columbine*, oil on panel, 36 x 24.9, 1684 - 1721, the Trustees of The Wallace Collection, London

other comedians listen to one of their number; his back turned to the viewer, play a partially concealed guitar. Above the groups, perched on a plinth, the second object in the picture, a bust of a head and shoulders, stares out beyond the scene. *Plaisirs d' amour* (fig. 29) which we have already discussed in chapter one, like *Assemblée dans un parc* (fig. 8) offers a scene of couples strolling and sitting in a parkland setting.[299] In *Plaisirs d' amour* the couples are arranged close to the only object depicted in the picture, a statue of Venus on a plinth which is reminiscent of the statue of Venus in *The Embarkation to Cythera*. And in *Assemblée dans un parc* Watteau places his standing and seated figures plus the object of a dog and an almost incidental man playing a flute adjacent to a lake.

If the role of the object in *Gilles* does not conform to convention, in that, unlike Poussin and Lancret's images, the object does not appear to play a significant role in the signalling of meaning because it is not extensively utilised, having explored the question of the object in *Gilles*, what can the question of the object reveal: what conclusions can we draw from Watteau's approach to the allegorical object?

As we have seen *Gilles* does not employ the classical allegorical methods employed by Poussin, Lemoyne nor does it utilise contemporary allegorical object signs such as those employed in the *Four Times of Day*. However Watteau's *Gilles* is not the only depiction of Gilles to limit its use of object signs. Lancret for example painted a picture which presents a full-length portrait of a Gilles entitled *Italian Comedians* (fig. 67).[300] In this picture the figure of Gilles is positioned, as in Watteau's *Gilles*, in the centre foreground. Gilles dressed all in white, stands among four other full-length figures and two supporting partial figures. The *Commedia dell' Arte* figure of the Doctor concludes

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[299] Watteau, Antoine, *Plaisirs d' amour*, 67 x 75 cm, c. 1717, Dresden, Gemaldegalerie.
Watteau, Antoine, *Assemblée dans un parc*, 32.5 x 46.5 cm, c. 1716, Louvre, Paris.
[300] Lancret, Nicolas, *Italian Comedians*, c. 1725 - 28, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris.

the line of figures positioned across the canvas on the right and what is possibly Columbine concludes it on the left. The only object visible in Lancret's scene is the guitar carried by Gilles on his back.

Lancret's *Italian Comedians* does not employ objects that might stabilise the interpretation of the image or suggest commonly held meanings. It has not been however, unlike Watteau's *Gilles*, the subject of many debates. It has not inspired interpretations that identify it as melancholic nor has it been the subject of multiple enquires regarding its origins. If Lancret's *Italian Comedians* and Watteau's *Gilles* similarly depict Gilles without object signs but Watteau's image has differently inspired melancholy interpretations and motivated enquires regarding its origins, then the limited use of object signs in *Gilles* cannot wholly account for its melancholic affect. The limited use of object signs in *Gilles* can however offer a conclusion which reveals an opening to a spectre-like temporality and failure based account for the enduring melancholic affect of *Gilles*. The limited use of object signs in *Gilles* reveals that it is not necessarily the missed action of the object signifier which might promote the haunting melancholic affect of *Gilles* but instead the type of spatial composition that renders the object signifiers in *Gilles* partial or omitted. In other words, the question of the object in *Gilles* points not to the significance of the role of the object - present or absent - but instead to its construction and placement in the constructed space of representation.

In chapter one I stated that in allegory, signs which do not coincide with the realisation of history and which are expressive of the transience of a nature marked by finitude, counter the eternal picture of time offered by the symbolic, by presenting a picture of ephemeral temporality. I have also previously claimed that, following Benjamin, the techniques of temporal allegory, conditioned and dominated by the time of the spectre,

maintain the space and time of the *Trauerspiel.* If we are to address the question of the significance of the construction and placement of the object in the constructed space of *Gilles*, and therefore address what it can reveal, can the mourning play's spectral space of representation and the temporal spectre-like thing or sign in the allegorical images of Watteau offer a way of accounting for the melancholic interpretations' affected by *Gilles*?

The spectral space of the mourning play

Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* distinguishes between the ancient Greek culture which gave birth to tragedy and the medieval Christian culture of the mourning play. Benjamin contrasts 'Greek and modern conceptions of happiness according to their distinct conceptions of the relationship between humanity, nature and divinity.'[301] For the ancients, happiness was understood as God-given victory because humanity, nature and divinity relate by way of a contest in which the absolute manifests itself in the gift of victory.[302] For modern man however, because humanity is separated from nature and divinity, happiness is conceived of as the absence of pain. This difference in conceptions of happiness and the differences between Greek and medieval culture, which show the divide between divinity and humanity/nature, provides the context for the exploration of the contrast between Greek tragedy and the mourning play.

[301] Caygill, Howard, *The Colour of Experience*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 52.
[302] 'His happiness is nothing if it is not destined by the Gods, and it is his destiny, if he wants to believe, that the Gods have given [the victory] to him and specifically to him. In this supreme hour that makes the man into a hero, in which reflection is far removed, in this hour when all blessings pour over him, in which the victor is reconciled with his city, with the groves of the Gods, with the eusebeia and even with the power of the Gods themselves, Pindar sung his victory odes'.
Caygill, Howard, *The Colour of Experience*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 53.

In Benjamin's elucidation of tragedy he aligns the moment of tragic death with the fate through which the tragic hero fulfils his destiny and completes his time. The death of the tragic hero constitutes the completion of a fate in which he bears witness to the manifestation of the Gods in the human and natural world. The death of the tragic hero must therefore be understood as not an occasion for mourning but instead praise and happiness. In tragedy, through death the hero completes his fate and becomes immortal.

By comparison in the Christian mourning play because God is remote and the arrival of the absolute has both already happened in the birth of Christ and is at the same time eternally deferred in the Last Judgement, the principle which governs the action of the play is not the completion of time, the significance of action fulfilled, it is instead, repetition. To reiterate claims made earlier, in the mourning play, death may interrupt the play of the hero but only for the game of the hero to continue through repetition in another world. In the morning play, time is open-ended. The dead do not die and complete their time, they become spectres: reflections of the representations posed by the mourning play's depiction of historical time. There is no dialectic of the living and the dead in the mourning play. Life is diminished or reduced to a series of endless reflections presented before an absent God. As a result all figures are condemned to a spectral existence. The figures of the mourning play are doomed to repeat and to never be completed through their death. Consequently in a world in which the experience of the absolute is removed and death brings only an intensification of reflection and repetition, the mourning play expresses, suffering mourning and a lament for significance. The mourning play is melancholic and this melancholy is expressed through a mode of representation that is spectral.

If the mourning play constitutes a spectral space of representation, it is, as we determined earlier, ruled by the time of the spectre. Although the time of the spectre

may be described by way of its ahistorical condition, this does not mean that the mourning play is ruled by petrifaction. It is a condition of the spectre to repeat, or put differently, it is the fate of the ghost to endlessly return. So instead of describing the time that rules the mourning play solely by way of the ossified condition of the dead, we may describe the spectral time of the mourning play as a unity of time characterised by repetition: the time of the revenant. A few words more concerning the time of the revenant and its repetitive condition seem appropriate at this juncture.

To speak of the time of the revenant, it is necessary to speak of and define more accurately what is a spectre? The spectre figures both that which is other - that which is dead - and the expected return of that which repeats itself, again and again. The figure of the spectre is not a whole thing it is armour or costume which is foreign to the spectral body it dresses while masking its identity. Derrida calls this the *visor effect* and what it amounts to is this, when we see a ghost, we do not see who looks at us, even though in [its apparition the ghost] looks like itself'.[303] What we see is 'the ungraspable visibility of the invisible' but also the body of someone as someone other, not a simulacrum but an absolute anteriority.[304] This makes what we see a non-contemporaneity of appearance or presence of the present with itself and it is in this non-contemporaneity of the apparition and the spirit that we find what is a spectre and by extension determine more about its time. This is because the non-contemporaneity of the presence of the present with itself makes of the spectre a disjuncture: a disjuncture of time: a 'time [that] is out of joint.'[305]

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303 Derrida, Jacques, *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the new international*, Routledge, New York & London, 1994, p. 7.
304 Ibid., p. 7.
305 Ibid., p. 18.

'If one understands by [the word time] the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present: "now," future present:' the moment of the spectre, its moment of disjuncture, clearly does not belong to this time.[306] If the present is a lingering in the transitory passage of time, a lingering between what goes and comes, what leaves and what arrives. The time of the spectre that conditions the *Trauerspiel* is more a radical unhinging of the lingering that is the passing of the present. What constitutes or how might we define this unhinged lingering? In the *Specters of Marx*, in response to the question, what is a ghost, Derrida writes:

> Repetition *and* first time: this is perhaps the question of the event as question of the ghost. What is the *effectivity* or the *presence* of a spectre, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, and insubstantial as a simulacrum? Is there, between the thing itself and its simulacrum, an opposition that holds up? Repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time, since the singularity of any *first time* makes of it also a *last time*. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a *hauntology*. [307]

Following Derrida therefore, we might define the unhinged time of the spectre as the first and last time event of repetition. Also according to Derrida, 'a spectre is always a revenant. One cannot control its coming and goings because it **begins by coming back**.'[308] So we might fill out, or expand upon the event of repetition that is the unhinged time of the spectre by way of describing the event of repetition as the work of a returning repetition through time, as time. For example, 'enter the ghost, exit the ghost, re-enter the ghost' while remembering that the revenant always begins by coming back.[309] In other words, the event that is the time of the spectre is the imminent perpetual transition that is the return of what appears to be 'out front, the future', the first

[306] Ibid., p. XX.
[307] Ibid., p. 10.
[308] Ibid., p. 11.
[309] Ibid., p. XX.

and last appearance of the ghost, coming back in advance from the past.[310] It is the event of a post history repetition of a repetition, a transition of repeated reflections and because it is the first and last time occasion of a repeat, an incompleteable re-emergence and disappearance, it is a radical failure of closure: an indefinite transition of folding and unfolding reflections that are necessarily temporary and temporal.

The abiding attribute of the melancholic and spectral mourning play is like the time of the spectre: imminent. This is because the mourning play is, unlike tragedy, immersed in a no longer eternal nature. As established earlier nature in the allegory of the mourning play does not represent 'bud and bloom' but instead the irresistible decay of a world conditioned by mortality. Consequently the emblematic representation of history, written on the countenance of fallen nature, is in the mourning play conditioned by the indefinite passing or transition of the temporal. Indeed the mourning play is both conditioned by time and performs the indefinite transition of temporality.

The mourning play maintains the characteristic of transition while mourning for the loss of significance through a spectral space of representation that is sustained by a variety of techniques. We have already identified and studied some of these techniques in chapter one with regard to *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and *The Embarkation to Cythera*. Those techniques included the metaphor of fallen nature, the petrified object, the fragment, the embedding of the scene in history and of course repetition. In addition to these techniques there are however other factors that directly inform and influence the expressive character of the mourning play. In particular there are factors that effect the staged scene. These include the role of dialectical opposition as a principle of construction and the discontinuity of the sign and its meaning.

[310] Ibid., p. 10.

There are a number of dialectical oppositions found in the mourning play, i.e., the Sovereign and Intriguer, legislation and anarchy, eternity and the moment, passive and active nihilism. To elucidate the role of the dialectic of opposition and the discontinuity of the sign and its meaning in the creation of a staged or composed drama that expresses the temporal condition of lament or mourning for a loss of signification we can focus on the stage relationship between the Sovereign and the Intriguer.

Sovereignty in the *Trauerspiel* is a convention by which a mortal claims the capacity and duty to hold absolute power within a historical continuum of catastrophic violence. The sign of the King is the human agency charged with meeting, in the face of historical adversity, the demand for meaningful and decisive action. Yet the figure of the Sovereign in the mourning play is powerless. The sovereign represents history and holds the course of historical time in his hand. But he is also himself subject to time, and as such, is helpless in the temporal continuum. The sign of the King figures its powerlessness through its inability to make a decision and eventually comes to embody the meaninglessness of absolute power. By creating a combination of Gilles and Pierrot in *Gilles* it could be argued Watteau courts a similarly impotent power to signify. Indeed it is probable that he creates a temporal and spatial sign that like the Soverign necessarily fails to coincide with an enduring or eternal meaning. I will later return to this point.

The Intriguer constitutes the figure of an inversion of the Sovereign. Instead of claiming the power of signification, the Intriguer represents the destruction of signification. If the Sovereign is the passive non-believer who negates the world in spite of him-self, the Intriguer is the active nihilist who negates everything through irony and dissemblance.

The staged relationship or staged composition of these two dialectically contrasting figures is fundamental to the expression of their dialectic inversion and the mourning plays lament for signification. The Sovereign is set aloof on the stage, issuing orders and reflecting in soliloquies. The Intriguer by contrast is situated in the space between the stage and the audience. This position, both inside and outside of the action, allows him to mock the King and by echoing his words drain the King's soliloquies'. Yet the Intriguer's mockery of the King and his undermining of the King's melancholy lament for the passed history also inadvertently undermines the basis of his own paraphrased words.

Positioned or placed in this way within the scene of representation the Sovereign and the Intriguer constitute a dialectical relationship between the 'melancholy failure to achieve signification [, i.e., to coincide with a signified, exemplified through the failure to make decisions, determine meaning etc.,] and the ecstatic destruction of any attempt to do so.'[311] They qualify each other and represent, by virtue of their spatial relationship and their subjection to time, the indefinite deferral of signification in the fallen spectral world of the mourning play.[312] The temporal condition and inherent failure to coincide with one eternal meaning might best be illuminated by the following quotation.

> As Benjamin says, the allegorical technique is central to the view that life is an illusion which, when dissipated, reveals nothing. The essential characteristic of seventeenth century allegory (the only kind with which Benjamin is basically concerned) is discontinuity, an unresolvable discrepancy between a visual sign or image and its meaning, "a dualism of signification and reality". Allegories are never understood easily and naturally, but decoded: they require effort, which takes time, so sign and meaning are never simultaneous, never fused. [313]

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[311] Caygill, Howard, *The Colour of Experience*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 60.
[312] The Sovereign's the desire to decree meaning for all time, while being undermined by his own time, and the Intriguer's immersion in the moment.
[313] Smith, Gary, *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Recollections*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press 1988, p. 148.

To return to the question posed above, can we see the evidence of the mourning play's spectral space of representation and the temporal spectral like thing or sign in the allegorical images of Watteau and by way of contrast and comparison other allegorical paintings?

Poussin and the location of the allegorical object

Sheila McTighe has undertaken an analysis of the combination of allegory and landscape in Poussin's work which provides an insight into the role of the scene, its spatial composition and its relation to the allegorical sign or the object spur to word.

Poussin's later allegorical paintings, e.g., *Landscape with Orion* (fig. 72), *Landscape with Polyphemus* (fig. 68) and *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (fig. 69),[314] present scenes with an emphasis on allegorical signs, rather than represent history in scenes with historical exactness, as demonstrated by *The Plague at Ashdod* (fig. 70) and *The Rape of the Sabines*.[315] These pared down sign intensive later allegorical images indicate 'not the passions of the soul, which Poussin's history paintings strove to make visible,' but 'something other than what we see:' a concept.[316]

Significant differences can be determined between Poussin's history paintings and the later allegorical images, at the level of both the subject and the image. For example, *The*

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[314] Poussin, Nicolas, *Landscape with Orion*, 119 x 183 cm, 1658, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Poussin, Nicolas, *Landscape with Polyphemus*, oil on canvas, 150 x 198 cm, 1649, The Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.
Poussin, Nicolas, *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, 119.4 x 198.8 cm, 1648, The Trustees of the National Gallery London.
[315] Poussin, Nicolas, *The Plague at Ashdod*, oil on canvas, 148 x 198 cm, 1630-1. Louvre, Département des Peintures, Paris.
Poussin, Nicolas, *The Rape of the Sabines*, oil on canvas, 154.6 x 210 cm, 1634. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
[316] McTighe, Sheila, *Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 9.

Plague at Ashdod, was according to Richard Verdi 'the first great canvas of [Poussin's] career to aspire to the ideals of Raphael's most rhetorical history paintings.'[317] It marks a new tendency in Poussin's style to effectively paraphrase the compositions of Raphael and his school. At the level of the image *The Plague at Ashdod* portrays a large ensemble of figures in a severe style. The Venetian inspired colours and handling have disappeared in favour of 'pure...colours, incisive outlines, solid modelling and an evenly diffused light.'[318] The scene presented is of a city. The plague victims die, suffer and lament their condition in a city square framed by Roman columns classical architecture and the ruins of civilisation.

Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake by way of contrast appears to be a subject and image based not on an established visual reference or a classic text but instead 'the artist's own invention.'[319] According to Richard Verdi,

> Though numerous attempts have been made to connect [the incident recorded in the painting] with a precise mythological theme, none is wholly convincing...There is a tradition - recorded in both Baudet's engravings of the picture of 1701 and the Strange sale catalogue of c. 1773 - that Poussin based [the theme of the painting] on an incident that he witnessed in the environs of Rome or near the ancient city of Terracina. On this evidence, Blunt posited a trip by Poussin to the snake-infested Lake Fondi, outside Terracina, in 1647. The theory has not met with general acceptance...'[320]

At the level of the image, *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* maintains its distinction from the traditions of history painting and therefore *The Plague at Ashdod* by presenting a scene dominated by the verdant growth of nature rather than a contrast between architecture and nature. The interplay between architecture and nature that

[317] Verdi, Richard, *Poussin 1594 - 1665*, Zwemmer in association with the Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1995, p.148.
[318] Ibid., p. 148.
[319] Ibid., p. 279.
[320] Ibid., pp.279 -280.

prevails in so many of Poussin's paintings is here stretched and rendered redundant. In the foreground lies a youth strangled by a huge serpent. Close by a male witness flees the scene in fear, while a kneeling woman whose view of the boy's demise is obscured, sits in indifferent wonder at the fleeing mans excitement. Further back in the middle ground of the painting another group of figures relaxes by a lake and some fishermen work, oblivious of the tragedy unfolding. In the distance the towers of fortification and the architecture of the civilised world are made mute by the horror of finitude in nature.

The differences between Poussin's early history paintings and his late individually inspired allegories are not according to McTighe, limited to subject matter and image composition. A significant difference can also be traced between the way that Poussin's history paintings and the later allegorical works became composed.

By way of illustration, according to McTighe several biographers note that when Poussin undertook to paint a painting such as *Matrimony* he would, as a preliminary to the drawing and painting process, use a "*planche barlongue*" or plank as a base for the staging of miniature carved figures.[321] By arranging miniature carved figures made from wax in a space that could be covered by a lid Poussin could then work out the disposition of the figures he intended to put in his painting, organise the light and shade and sort out the intended perspective of the scene. Once the scene had been set Poussin would then use the preliminary set as a basis for drawings and compositional studies that would in turn inform the painting. A process that strongly echoes the Academy's thinking regarding the planning of a painting, the academic conventions: strategies of insurance, discussed at length in chapter two.

[321] McTighe, Sheila, *Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 9

McTighe argues however that Poussin's "*planche barlongue*" technique probably did not underpin his later allegorical paintings. By way of a careful consideration of three drawings Poussin made between 1648 and 1651, McTighe instead proposes that Poussin created a graphic landscape schema 'which, with [some] variations...[then served] as the armature for the majority of his landscape allegories.'[322] Put differently, McTighe argues that three drawings provided a basic model or diagram for a series of allegorical paintings. The three drawings are Drawing: landscape, ca. 1648-50. Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts; Drawing: landscape, ca. 1648-50. Paris, Musée du Louvre, and Drawing: landscape, ca. 1648-50. Kunstmuseum Dusseldorf im Ehrenhof, Sammlung der Kunstakademie.

The reasoning behind McTighe's determination that these three drawings constitute a graphic schema is firstly, that they share the basic landscape elements that convey symmetry and balance which were the basis of artistic landscape ideals in the seventeenth century. Secondly, that they each offer a slight variation on the same composition, a composition that thrust the planes of the image into the distance while directing the eye into the centre of the image. Thirdly, that the compositions of the group of landscape allegories that Poussin created after 1648, i.e., *Landscape with Orpheus* (fig. 71), the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (fig. 69), the *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe*, and the *Landscape with a Serpent and Two Nymphs*, strongly resemble these three drawings.

Crucially for McTighe, the landscape drawings and the allegorical landscape paintings that they appear to diagrammatically compose share more than compositional similarities; that is, she contends they also appear to share a similar approach to the problem of the relation of the figure to ground. In the Dijon drawing for example, a

[322] Ibid., p. 10

fisherman has been sketched over a previously planned landscape. In the Pyramus and Thisbe landscape 'x-rays have [similarly] shown [that] the two main protagonists [were] painted over the landscape;' and again, in *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, the thinly painted figures reveal that they too were established after the landscape.[323] This McTighe asserts, does not mean that for Poussin the figures in these images were an after thought. It rather suggests that Poussin abandoned his previous Albertian formula of arranging figures on a stage, the miniature "*planche barlongue*", in favour of compositional practices that would create images which interlock figure and ground. This shift in practice McTigue further claims is not arbitrary but is in the interests of creating images that fulfil a different function, i.e., not the expression of history and its passions but the allegorical concept of the relation between human events and natural processes.

So what does McTighe's work reveal about the compositional space of Poussin's allegorical landscape images regarding the time of the image and the function of the sign? McTighe's work reveals that the space of the picture in Poussin's paintings is not without purpose: it is not arbitrary. In Poussin's history paintings spatial composition fulfils the function of helping to create and sustain images conditioned by academic concerns. In Poussin's landscape allegories McTighe's theory concerning the three landscape drawings proposes that Poussin's different approach to the construction of his allegorical landscape images was purposeful and probably intended to create images that conveyed a conceptual relation between human events and natural processes: history and natural history.

[323] Verdi, Richard, *Poussin 1594 - 1665*, Zwemmer in association with the Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1995, p. 12.

McTighe's work with Poussin's late allegorical landscapes and the schematic drawings that probably provided the basis for their creation also offers another speculative insight into Poussin's late allegories. That is, if the drawings that formed the compositions of the allegorical paintings constituted a schema, then the paintings may also be considered schematic plans which arrange and locate allegorical signs for interpretation. In for example, *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, if we follow McTighe's proposal, the image consists of a series of allegorical objects, signs and symbols arranged according to the contours of an ideal model.

McTighe's arguments regarding Poussin's spatial compositions in his late allegorical images are compelling and innovative. But in developing her argument regarding the schematic basis to the late allegorical landscapes she fails to elaborate on the inevitable repetition that would characterise so many paintings based on the same schematic model. And in arguing a new insight into Poussin's work, McTighe herself notes that the drawings that enable this new difference maintain the conventional academic conventions of symmetry and balance. So although, the three drawings enable McTighe to argue a new and compelling insight into the way we might think about Poussin's late paintings, these insights should be tempered by the realisation that although these images might represent a change in Poussin's thinking, i.e., a move toward allegorical images and an allegorical theme achieved through a new approach to composition, the paintings that result from this new approach, maintain the traditions of the Academy. In other words, Poussin's late allegorical paintings may represent a change in approach and aim but their spatial layout and the composition of the means of representation maintain the conventions of ideal *vraisemblance*. By extension, in their investment in the ideal representation of space they therefore suggest a striving toward - an ambition for - by way of the synthesis of coexistent features in a timeless representation of nature, not an

allegory of slipped signs as in the *Trauerspiel*, but an eternal continuity of the sign and its location: these are allegorical images with classical pretensions.

We can see the same commitment to academic symmetry, balance and therefore classical modes of allegory, in Lancret's *Four Times of day*. In Poussin's a *Landscape with a Man killed by a Snake*, the image is composed with a foreground, a middle ground and a view to infinity. In this image nature frames the scene and light draws the eye of the viewer into its centre. On the left of the image dark tones and the trunks of two trees create a border of shadows. This swath of tone and nature is then balanced on the right by a triangle of terrain cast in bright sunlight and a middle ground clump of trees that almost fills a quarter of the canvas surface.

In *Landscape with Orion* nature again frames an image with a foreground a middle ground and a view to the distance (fig. 72).[324] An area of rough leafy terrain and a series of bushes and trees cast in dark tone borders its left-hand vertical edge. Similar tall woody plants on the right then balance this border, while both the well lit left and darker right sides of the scene are linked in the upper centre of the image by a cloud of grey which hovers around the head of Orion.

As we have already noted similar compositional features, i.e., the balance of light and shade and nature framing a scene divided into foreground, middle ground and infinity, can be found in Lancret's *Midday*, and *Evening*. In *Midday* a dark tone canopy of trees and foliage combines with a cast in light sundial and the grounded trunk of a tree to frame four figures in the foreground and invite the viewer's eye to scan to infinity. Similarly in *Evening*, twisted and sinew like branches and reeds, and a vague but dark tonal outcrop of bushes and trees forms a border that frames the principle figure in the

[324] Poussin, Nicolas, *Landscape with Orion*, 1658, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

centre foreground, the lake with a boat cast not in sun light but moon light, and a misty and indefinite view to infinity.

We may conclude therefore that like Poussin's late allegorical images, although Lancret's *Four Times of Day* innovatively utilises both contemporary and classical approaches to the object sign, these paintings retain a predisposition to the classical ideals for image communication. That is, the compositions of the *Four Times of Day* indicate that the signage of these images is conditioned by the academic ideals and ambitions of immediate communication of meaning in a timeless or enduring setting which does not confuse signification. Lancret's *Four Times of Day*, like Poussin's *Landscape with the Blind Orion*, *Landscape with a Man killed by a Snake*, etc., is in the opinion of the Academy and its members spatially constructed in such a way as to present signs best disposed to the conveyance of enduring meaning. The composition of the *Four Times of Day* works toward disabling temporalities conditioning affect upon the conveyance of meaning by militating against the need to decode the sign: an action which as mentioned above requires effort and takes time, so the sign and meaning are never simultaneous, never fused.

How does the spatial composition of Watteau's *Gilles* compare with the apparently more conventional representational approach to the construction and location of the object or sign in pictorial space exemplified by Poussin and Lancret? Can we see in the pictorial space and location of the object in Watteau's Gilles evidence of the mourning play's spectral space of representation?

The strange space of Gilles

Donald Posner interprets *Gilles* in the following way.

In Watteau's painting the comedians have...come to the end of their performance, and the last bit of funny business, real or invented to tickle the audience, comes from the jiont effort to move the donkey, who stubbornly will not let them get their 'march' started. The Doctor looks at the spectators, like them enjoying the joke. Pierrot steps forward and, in front and above the others, faces the audience - but he does nothing. Pierrot's inaction and his spatial separation from the other actors seem strange.[325]

Borsch-Supan, like Posner, is also struck by the spatial relationship between the figure of Gilles and the other actors. He attempts to account for this curious spatial relationship... by supposing that:

Gilles is standing on a raised, narrow stage made to look like a piece of ground. Behind this platform, the other actors are coming up behind him with the donkey, and the background is a painted backcloth, strictly speaking a picture within a picture.[326]

If we follow the interpretation of Posner and the account of Borsch-Supan *Gilles* appears to seem strange and curious because of the way that the figure of Gilles is cut off from the other actors, up above and in front of them. The figure of Gilles stands in the foreground but the foreground does not appear to correspond with the space of the other actors. So what makes this spatial composition strange? And can we elucidate its spatial curiosity?

As discussed in chapter two the French Academy during the eighteenth century advocated an approach to the depiction of space that would, 'while making full use of... advances in perspective...render more convincing [paintings]'.[327] This meant harmonising symmetry and pattern in nature through geometry and the depiction of the space of nature in an idealised form that was like 'life itself.'[328]

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325 Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1984, p. 270.
326 Borsch-Supan, Helmut, *Antoine Watteau 1684 - 1721*, Konemann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2000, p. 62
327 Greenlagh, Michael, *The Classical Tradition in Art*, Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1978, p.170.
328 The following description of Claude's classical style of landscapes with figures by Sandrart might best sum up academic and observers of art expectations regarding the depiction of nature and pictorial space.

Leon Battista Alberti's suggests in *De pictura* that, in so far as the aim of the artist is to 'ensure that the pictorial world we see will look like a section of the real world' perspective is a precondition for a successful coherent composition.[329] In other words, rather than constitute two separate issues, perspective and composition, perspective functions to complement composition by structuring and guiding our perception of pictures. By way of elucidation of the significance of this complementary relationship, we should consider Alberti's description of the geometric composition of a chequered floor.

> The geometric 'method of dividing up the pavement pertains especially to that part of the painting which, when we come to it, we shall call composition...As we can easily judge from the works of former ages, this matter probably remained completely unknown to our ancestors because of its obscurity and difficulty. You will hardly find any 'historia' of theirs composed either in painting or modelling or sculpture [para. 21].[330]

If perspective is a precondition for a coherent composition then Alberti's description of the chequered floor 'constructed and seen in perspective, provides the space in which the artist can compose his figures in proportion and movement; it is literally the stage on which the artist can organise the choreography of his figures.'[331]

The aim of perspective is the two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional world. The problem for perspective studies is therefore the creation of the illusion of spatial depth. The primary tools of perspective are inclined lines drawn from above and below the eye line of the viewer toward a vanishing point. In classical painting such as

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'One can truly recognize [in *The Father of Psyche sacrificing at the Temple of Apollo*,] how the sun risen for some two hours above the horizon, dissipates the nebulous air...showing everything perfectly in natural light and shadow, including the reflection, so that the distance of each object can be as it were, measured in proportion and found correct, as life itself.' Greenhalgh, Michael, *The Classical Tradition in Art*, Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1978, p. 170.

329 Puttfarken, Thomas, *The Discovery of Pictorial Compostion: Theories of Visual Order in Painting 1400 - 1800*, Yale University Press, New haven & London, 2000, p. 70.

330 Ibid., p. 70.

331 Ibid., p. 70.

those painted by Poussin, if we follow Alberti's claims, linear perspective, not only performs the function of creating the illusion of spatial depth or recession it also helps to locate the spatial markers of a scene, i.e., the figures, objects and architecture; so that the scene can maintain the ideological academic priorities of the unity of subject and time. This grounding of figurative elements involves the correct computation of the scale of objects placed in the illusion of recessive space, i.e., the scale of an object in relation to its position or distance behind the plane of the canvas. If the artist accurately lays out the perspective grid and measures the size of his forms in a reliable manner, then the image created constitutes a harmonised rendition of foreground middle ground and distance: a verisimilitude of the three-dimensional space in which we live.

One example of the construction of an image by way of one-point linear perspective is Poussin's *Landscape with St Matthew* (fig. 73).[332] This painting presents an image of St Matthew, some classical ruins, a river and a ruined tower. In the composition St Matthew and an angel sit in the foreground among ruined stone columns. Behind them a wide river meanders toward a raised plane in the landscape, a settlement and the tower. Beyond the tower, in the distance, clouds and misty mountains indicate the point of infinity. *Landscape with St Matthew* is arranged according to a perspective plan that places the focal point of the image and its eye-line at the base of the ruined tower. The tower is not located at the centre of the image but it and its surrounding architectural motifs do operate as the anchor for a series of traceable lines that set the upper and lower vertical limits of a series of objects and figures. For instance, a diagonal line can be drawn up from the tower toward the upper-left hand edge of the canvas. Along this line the tops of a series of trees are set. While another diagonal line, drawn down from the eye line sets the border of the outcrop upon which these trees grow. Similarly, from

[332] Poussin, Nicolas, *Landscape with St Matthew*, 1640, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preufsischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie.

the tower, lines can also be traced which set not only the parallel edges of a block of stone placed in the foreground, but also other lines which set the contours of the terrain upon which the block is situated. In this way perspective locates and harmonises the scale of each figure, and object in relation to the space of the image: the foreground, middle ground and background. Perspective designs a harmonious relation between the space of the image and its objects and aims at verisimilitude of nature. St Matthew sits on an object, which is located on the ground. The ground upon which he rests extends without confusion and without lapses toward a distant point of infinity. In Poussin's allegorical images, perspective works with the model layout and the intermingling at a material level of the figure and ground to establish the continuity of an ideal visual space which according to the Academy militates against the need to decode the pictorial sign.

Another example of one-point perspective organising and maintaining the verisimilitude of an image is Lancret's *Dance between the Pavilion and the Fountain.*[333] This painting offers an outdoors *fête galante*. In the foreground, on the left of the canvas, a large classic pillared pavilion offers muted shade to a number of guests. This large form is then balanced in the composition on the right of the canvas by a fountain modelled out of a stone figure of pan and a female, plus a background of trees which recede into the distance. Between and amongst the pavilion and the fountain a variety of groups and couples lounge feast and dance. Behind the fountain the sun sets to fix the time and characterise the atmosphere of the scene. A gentle range of colour harmonies, shades and tone, invite the impression of warm frivolity and pleasure but it is the work of perspective design which holds the scene together; the eye line and the vanishing point - the point of infinity - situated at the centre of the canvas. From the point of infinity a

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[333] Nicolas, Lancret, *Dance between the Pavilion and the Fountain*, 1732, oil on canvas, Charlottenburg, Berlin.

series of diagonal lines can be traced which spread out, above and below the eye-line, which together, as in *Landscape with St Matthew* set the upper and lower vertical height of the predominant architectural features of the image. By way of illustration, from the point of infinity a diagonal line can be traced up toward the right-hand angle of the canvas which sets the height and incline of a distant hill, and a series of trees which get higher the closer they are to the foreground. A diagonal line can also be traced from the point of infinity toward the lower right-hand angle of the canvas. Along this line we find located the base of the trees in the middle distance, the foot of the fountain and the inclined hill upon which a group of figures sit and amuse themselves. In like manner, two diagonal lines which converge on the point of infinity can be traced from the head and feet of a male figure standing on the steps of the pavilion, to the head and lower form of a female figure located in the middle ground and from there back to the point of infinity.

In Poussin's *Landscape with St Matthew* and Lancret's *Dance between the Pavilion and the Fountain* perspective and composition work together to create a synthesised pictorial illusion of space. Perspective enables Poussin and Lancret to create life like scenes within which figures and objects are arranged or composed so as to elicit engagement with the subject of the image. The space of the painting and the composition work together toward a harmonious depiction of the subject conveyed in accordance with the Academy's preference and ambition for the eternal timelessness of the arrested moment. In these paintings, as well as Poussin's late allegories and Lancret's *Four Times of Day* perspective strives to create the conditions which the Academy deems necessary for the fusion of the sign with meaning, even though, as our previous discussions indicate, the pictorial sign is subject to ambiguities that stall or make interpretation of significance a complex endeavour.

Watteau's *Gilles* does not conform to the classical conventions of spatial composition exemplified by either of these paintings. The figure of Gilles may stand in the foreground on a lip of land edged by nature: foliage, leaf and branch. But the space demarcated, as foreground is not then anchored into a recessive framework of receding lines or diminishing scales. One might expect to be able to trace diagonal links between the forms of the foreground and forms in the middle distance which then stand in proportion to one or more organising points of infinity. But instead, the figure of Gilles poses in a space that does not appear to be linked by extension to the space of the land occupied by either the remaining figures of the image or the satyr. Why is this? How might we speculatively account for this irregularity in spatial construction?

A close look at *Gilles* reveals that there are perceivable similarities in scale between the figure of Gilles and the other figures. This reinforces the conviction proposed by convention and the position of Gilles and the foreground, that all the figures in *Gilles* should occupy a similar place in the image. Yet a close look at *Gilles* also reveals that the figure of Gilles and his troupe of Comedians necessarily occupy different spatial locations because these two areas of the image, Gilles in the foreground, the Comedians behind and below Gilles, are possibly governed by different composition guidelines; their perspective is differently organised. For example, Gilles and its place in the foreground suggests that it was depicted in relation to an eye-line or horizon line placed low down in the image: close to the level of the hands of Gilles. However, this horizon line does not then appear to correspond with the position of Gilles *Commedia dell 'Arte* colleagues. These figures, pushed back behind Gilles, in their unexpected sunk down location, suggest instead that they were envisaged and organised in relation to a horizon line placed below their own head height; an horizon line that is therefore considerably lower than the horizon line necessitated by the figure of Gilles and the foreground.

If *Gilles* presents an image composed of different perspectively organised spaces a number of conclusions follow. Firstly, we might conclude that *Gilles* exemplifies a transgression of an academic pictorial convention. Secondly, in its unconventional disregard for *verisimilitude* the pictorial space of *Gilles* constitutes a composed suture of fragments of different pictorial space. In other words, in *Gilles* perspective does not aid a harmonised composition, composition exposes instead barely concealed tensions between the composite elements of the image.

Is it possible to un-pick the curiosity of the space and location of objects in *Gilles* further? Can we trace for example, characteristics in *Gilles* that may also be found in the *Trauerspiel*: the characteristics of transition and the techniques for the creation of a spectral space. In other words, can we expose in *Gilles* similar mechanisms to those found in the melancholic spectral space of the mourning play; and by illuminating the painting in this way expose a temporal and failure based account for the melancholic affect of *Gilles*?

To establish *Gilles* as a spectral space of representation it is not only necessary to trace those techniques highlighted earlier which maintain the space and time of the mourning play but also find *Gilles* conditioned by the abiding characteristics of the spectral space of the mourning play: transition. Benjamin's work and reconsideration of the notion of origin may help in this regard.

Origin and the ripples of transition

Origin does not mean for Benjamin some original moment of creation. 'Origin [Ursprung], although a thoroughly historical category,...has nothing to do with beginnings [...] The term origin does not mean the process of becoming of that which

has emerged, but much more, that which emerges out of the process of becoming and disappearing. The origin stands in the flow of becoming as a whirlpool.[334]

Or as Caygill suggests,

> Origin should not be thought of as a chronological beginning nor spatially as a structure or fixed form, but in terms of a rhythmic patterning. This patterning or configuration is both concrete and apriori; it is indeed the folding and the unfolding of the a priori into the concrete, an involution which, because it takes place in time, is never complete. At any moment the pattern is both emerging and withdrawing, showing different aspects and concealing others.[335]

Given these insights into the term origin, the origin of an artwork can be understood to constitute not its basis in historical reference, aim or moment of inspiration, but instead how it constitutes or occasions a pattern of substantive transformation: emergence and withdrawal, even incompletion. These transformations operate like a ripple of time by for example either disturbing the presumed continuity of an oeuvre or problematising the continuity of the space and present time of the image.

To establish *Gilles* as a spectral space of representation if we concentrate on factors bearing upon the issue of pictorial space, a pattern of instances of transition consistent with Benjamin's definition of the term origin can be traced in *Gilles*. This pattern includes, the painting itself in relation to the oeuvre of Watteau, physical change or transformation and decay, and elisions of fragments of space to create technique informed composed images. To this list we might also add evidence of compositional placement that is akin to certain examples of stagecraft employed by the mourning play. So as to unpick the curiosity of the space of *Gilles* and reveal it as spectral we will study each of these instances of transition in turn.

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334 Buck-Morss, Susan, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, MIT Press paper back, 1991, p. 8.
335 Caygill, Howard, *The Colour of Experience*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 57

The transitional object

To begin with *Gilles* represents a departure from previous practice. The paintings prior to *Gilles* constitute mostly small-scale scenes and where an image does focus on a particular figure; the scale of the figure in that scene remains small. For example, *Portrait of a Gentleman (Count Caylus?)* measures 128 x 90 cm, *Sous un habit de Mezzetin* measures 28 x 21 cm, and *Iris* 97 x 116 cm.[336] At 184.5 x 149.5 cm. *Gilles* is not only large in comparison to these works but the figure of Gilles, is also within the frame of the image very nearly life-size.

Gilles is moreover one of Watteau's last works and seems to presage an entirely new approach. *Gersaint's shopsign* is the only known work which is thought to follow *Gilles*, and it unusually presents, in comparison to *Gilles* and Watteau's other *fête galante* images, a scene obviously set in the interior of a building: a city shop.[337] *Gersaint's shopsign* is like *Gilles* a large work, measuring 163 x 308 cm, so it appears to maintain a new ambition for scale. But given that *Gersaint's shopsign* is the last known work made by Watteau and that it does not resemble *Gilles* in subject, *Gilles* can be said to not only mark a transition in Watteau's oeuvre, it can also be said to constitute an unprecedented one-off occasion. *Gilles* constitutes in other words a shift in emphasis and thinking and a disruption in the continuity of the history of Watteau's production. The painting entitled *Gilles* constitutes a transitional object.

[336] Watteau, Antoine, *Portrait of a Gentleman (Count Caylus?)*, 128 x 90 cm, Paris, Louvre (Cliché des Musées Nationaux).
Watteau, Antoine, *Sous un habit de Mezzetin*, 28 x 21 cm, London, Trustees of The Wallace Collection.
Watteau, Antoine, *Iris*, 97 x 116 cm, Berlin (Dahlem), Staatliche Museen.
[337] Watteau, Antoine, *Gersaint's shopsign*, 163 x 308 cm, c. 1720-21, Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin.

Physical change, failure, transformation and decay

In chapter two we concluded that Watteau worked from a variety of sources, in no particular order and with mediums' that accelerated the production and amendment of the work through time. We also concluded that his studio process risked failure, treated amendment as an inevitable feature of the becoming of the image, and inscribed lost history in the countenance of his paintings. Consequently, evidence of physical change in *Gilles*, as in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and *Divertissements champêtres* also offers another marker of transition. By way of illustration, careful inspection of the image of the Doctor exposes signs which indicate that the Doctor was considered inadequate, or a failed version of the vision of Watteau and repainted. To be precise the area around the Doctor's head and upper torso has been the subject of over painting. Darker tone vertical lines rising from the donkey indicate folds and structure in the costume of the Doctor. But the form of the figure is now lost in an area of shade and mottled blur which absorbs contour and shape and melds it into an undistinguished relation with its surroundings. The genesis of the Doctor's form can be sensed but its presence is now altered and fused with a shadow of brushwork that is knitted into the space of the nature which borders it. Similarly, careful study of the head of the figure of Gilles invites the conclusion that the rim of its hat also failed to convince Watteau, failed to represent his vision and so it too was remodelled. On the lower right of the brim, where it meets the shoulder of the figure, dry brush strokes in sky blue over paint the darker tone of shaded burnt sienna. These brush strokes follow the curvature of the rim, reconstructing as they proceed the scale of the hat but also its spatial location. As the brim diminishes so to does the occupied space of Gilles. In contrast, as Gilles shrinks, over painted by blue, the space of the sky grows.[338]

[338] The observation that the brim of Gilles' hat has undergone transformation is endorsed by Margaret Morgan Grasselli, i.e., 'Watteau…first painted his Pierrot with a wider hat and that this part of the work is

Physical damage can also be exemplified by way of one side of the face of Gilles which is obviously afflicted by *craquelures*. Around the right hand eye of Gilles a series of very evident small and large scale cracks disturb the continuity of the surface of Gilles façade. Cracks cut and fragment the white headband and curved incisions fleck and disturb the flesh colouring of cheek and forehead. This fracturing of the surface has somewhat preposterously been explained as the result of the painting being knocked to the ground during its presumed former life as a shop sign. That is,

> One point will confirm that the work was indeed originally a sign: when one looks at an enlarged photograph of Pierrot's face, one can clearly distinguish a vertical line dividing it. On the left part is a network of cracking in a circle while the right side is free of all damage. Faillant will suggest at the Watteau colloquium an explanation for that peculiarity: the sign was probably [knocked] down [onto the floor] and certain less protected pieces may have fared worse than others. [339]

However, if as explained above and at length in chapter two Watteau worked in a way that not only risked failure but also the ruination of his work, we might equally conclude that the fracture and demise of the surface continuity of this part of the face of Gilles is a result of Watteau's technique. By extension, although Watteau may not specifically have intended these cracks, such examples of *craquelures* were an inevitable by product of a technique that openly risked the longevity of its outcomes. Whatever the reason for the existence of these breaks in the surface, we can with confidence conclude that like the examples of repainting, they mark a further example of physical transition in the image: the transition from one physical state to another.

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more worked over than the other' parts. Grasselli, Margaret Morgan and Rosenberg, Pierre, *Watteau*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1984, p. 433.

[339] Grasselli, Margaret Morgan and Rosenberg, Pierre, *Watteau*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1984, p.430.

Evidence of a failure to substantiate vision, re-painting and damage in *Gilles* determine that it is by necessity a temporal object. If the material presence of the painting is not fixed then we can conclude that decay, failure and change expose a quality of temporal susceptibility. This leaves the painting, not only vulnerable to the passing of time but renders it, like *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*, *The Embarkation to Cythera* and *Divertissements champêtres*, an example of passing time and an object in inevitable transition. Things that emerged within the frame of *Gilles*, e.g., the original brim to the hat of Gilles have disappeared and the status of what remains is conditional; a point that can be exemplified by way of the damage to the painting and its *craquelures*.

Elision of fragments: fragmented space

Perhaps the most obvious examples of transition or ripples of spatial and temporal change in the pictorial space of Gilles have already been alluded to. For example, in the above comparison of *Gilles* with Poussin's *Landscape with St Matthew* and Lancret's *Dance between the Pavilion and the Fountain* we drew attention to the way that *Gilles* transgresses the conventional allegorical images investment in *verisimilitude* by composing together different fragments of pictorial space. Each spatial fragment offers an instance of spatial transition mediated by way of over-painting, modelling and correction. By way of illustration, the lip of land upon which the figure of Gilles stands operates at its internal edge like a boundary line between one space and another. This boundary is defined by the modelling of colour light and shade which establishes the foreground terrain solid. But the same modelling of pigment in the peaks of its shadows, e.g., around the feet of Gilles and the left-hand corner adjacent to the Doctor and his donkey, blurs the boundary line that would otherwise determine one space different to another.

Another example may be found in the area of the painting which includes the tip of the donkey's ear. Apparently the donkey stands partially concealed by Gilles. The Doctor located within a shadow of black seemingly rides on its back. But where do both the Doctor and the donkey stand in relation to the background? The donkey's pert ear rises into a space ostensibly in front of both distant tree foliage but also a more distant vista of blue. Yet although highlights and warm light shades of red brown, a technique that should render the lit form of the donkey's ear spatially distinct from the darker shade of its surroundings. In this area Watteau also carried the middle shades of colour found in the donkey's ear over into the spatial knit of black surrounding the Doctor, the foliage and the sky. Similarly, he mottled the foliage colour and line into the darker shades of the distant vista. So where line and colour demarcate the space and form of the donkey they also blur its position: its location. In other words, around the ear of the donkey, at the feet of Gilles, but also the torso of the Doctor and the rim of Gilles hat, fragments of pictorial space which we have already established as discontinuous to each other, e.g., the foreground with Gilles and the middle distance, evidence a merging ripple from one space to another.

Where divisions mark the transition of one fragment of space to another we can also of course not only recognise a shift in space, a discontinuity of location, but a ripple in time. If the origin stands in the flow of becoming as a whirlpool, then the markers of spatial transition, inscribed in the process of the becoming and disappearing of *Gilles*, indicate time in a number of ways. For instance, the markers of transition constitute a rupture in the narrative continuity of the image. This is because the spatial transition which marks and highlights discontinuity of the foreground and the middle ground, ruptures and thereby renders tense the relation between the figure of Gilles and his compatriots. The figure of Gilles has been interpreted as a figure that does nothing while his fellow comedians work to move the donkey. Does Gilles therefore constitute

the sign of a figure that suggests the culmination of a performance and his companions the continuation of the same performance? Or are we witnessing here, in the same way that we can identify two locations in transition, two scenes with different times. If so these elided fragments of space and time make *Gilles* an image that is open-ended in time. *Gilles* does not represent a snap shot of time: a moment. It occasions the elision of discontinuous temporal relations, without beginning or end.

In addition, at a material level, the markers of transition between one fragment of space and another also indicate a blurring in the time of the becoming of the image. For example, where the brim of the hat of Gilles realigns the spatial location of the hat and the background, it also marks a re-alignment in time. By virtue of the remodelling of form in space, what once was is now traced in the present time of the image as a residue of its lost time.

Stage craft: the place of Gilles in pictorial space

In the section dedicated to the spectral space of the mourning play we outlined the stagecraft relating to the dialectic opposition of the Sovereign and the Intriguer. In this stagecraft the two figures are positioned so as to facilitate the aim of the deferral of meaning which distinguishes the mourning play. The aloof Sovereign is placed alone on the stage, away from the audience. The Intriguer meanwhile takes a position that is neither on the stage nor in the audience. From this position the Intriguer mocks the King and erodes the significance of the narratives proffered by each figure. Although the composition of *Gilles* does not present an image that is the mirror image of this composition there are similarities between the two. In the mourning play the Intriguer's position constitutes a position both inside and outside of the action and it is this that allows him to both drain the words of the King and his own. By being both outside the

action and party to it, the Intriguer can both mock and be a mockery. The same compositional play of inside and outside can be seen in *Gilles*. In *Gilles* however, unlike in the mourning play, the figure of fun, the mocked aloof central figure is also the figure positioned inside and outside the action of the drama. From this we can conclude two things. Firstly, that there is a comparative relation between the composition of *Gilles* and the conventional stagecraft of the mourning play's dialectic opposition of the Sovereign and the Intriguer. Secondly that where in the mourning play the spatial relationship between the Sovereign and the Intriguer helps to facilitate an indefinite transition of time and meaning, eternal time and the moment, meaning and meaninglessness. The combination and spatial relationship of the aloof Gilles, who is both inside and outside the action of the scene, similarly facilitates an instance of transition. That is, an instance of transition from inside to outside and the indefinite confusion and transition from aloof figure to mocked clown.

We have addressed the question of the significance of the construction and placement of the object in the constructed space of *Gilles*, by drawing comparison between techniques employed in the *Trauerspiel* and by examining it for evidence of spectral-like transition. So far in response to the above question our findings reveal that, like the *Trauerspiel*, the strange space of representation known as *Gilles* constitutes a space for the location of object signs which is determined or governed by the temporal condition of the spectre: transition. But how might this spectral space of representation, this strange space which by virtue of its transitional state perhaps helps occasion rather than locate the sign object for interpretation, assist us in our search for an account for the melancholic affect of *Gilles*?

Above I outlined Benjamin's insights regarding the spectral space of the mourning play, and suggested that in the *Trauerspiel* as in a painting, the posed object, the thing that

haunts, has effect but that this effect should not be considered divorced from the space it haunts. The ghost and its space are related. If through analysis of *Gilles* we are able to identify it as a space of representation conditioned by spectre-like transition or the temporal. The techniques used by Watteau to create *Gilles*, those techniques which echo those of the *Trauerspiel,* should be considered a condition of possibility for the haunting spectral condition of *Gilles*. By extension, the spectral space of *Gilles* might similarly be considered a necessary condition for, as in the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation, the haunting affect of instances of lost spectral-like time: occasions of the revenant.

If in the *Trauerspiel,* life is diminished or reduced to a series of endless reflections presented before an absent God and if moreover each figure or object of the play is doomed to repeat and never satisfactorily complete through death, then the object sign, like the ghost, will never coincide with its signified. This has two consequences. Firstly, the allegorical sign is never understood easily. It takes time and effort to decode it and this effort inherently fails to sustain one eternal meaning. Secondly, the allegorical sign therefore occasions a melancholic lament for meaning expressed through a pursuit of meaning that might be described as mourning for the loss of eternal significance.

We have already established that Watteau's paintings occasion instances of lost time. That is, they occasion images of objects that by virtue of techniques similar to those found in the *Trauerspiel*, in particular repetition, and Watteau's studio practice which risks failure and public rejection, can be said to be both in and out of time. We have also above demonstrated that *Gilles* has not only inspired a variety different analogies, e.g., Bryson's musicality, invalidism, psychological depth, reverie, but also inspired a variety of speculations regarding its function, i.e., portrait, sign etc. If therefore an exploration of the object signs in *Gilles* can find characteristics of transition consistent with the conditions of its spectral location, i.e., indicators of transition consistent with the spectre

or revenant, we might conclude that, as in the *Trauerspiel*, the object sign's spectre-like condition, promotes the melancholy lament for which *Gilles* is famous.

The fragmented figure or the artificial reflection of a temporal sign

A close look at *Gilles* reveals that the figures depicted there can be considered artificial reflections and failed signs. As we know, the painting's main figure is a composite figure evolved from a long lineage of *Commedia dell' Arte* characters and that it is, in its failure to coincide with a definitive signified, similar to the failed *Trauerspiel* sign of the Sovereign. According to Ducharte's history of Pedrolino, Pedrolino was derived from the slave in the comedies of Plautus and Terrence. Pedrolino was then transformed into Giglio, Gillotin, and finally Pierrot and Gilles. Confirmation that the main figure in *Gilles* sustains this confusion, the impression of the elision of at least three figures and the problematisation of definitive attribution can be found in the Bryson's statement quoted earlier that the figure dressed in white 'is Pierrot,...Pagliacci, and above all...Gilles!'

Like the figure of Gilles the image of the female figure (presumably Columbine) positioned on the right of the canvas, can also be argued to constitute an artificial reflection. Parker and Mathey link three drawings with *Gilles*. One of these drawings is the portrait of a female head and shoulders that strongly resembles the figure of Columbine. Parker and Mathey claim that this portrait drawing reappears or informs other paintings made by Watteau. Posner strongly disagrees with this claim.[340] He prefers the possibility that the portrayed faces in *Gilles* represent likenesses of people known to Watteau. The drawing of the female referred to by Parker and Mathey is owned by a private collection in London (fig. 75). It depicts in broad rapid marks the

[340] Posner, Donald, *Antoine Watteau*, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, 1984, footnote 77, p. 292.

image of a young woman's head looking from right to left. She has broad features, her hair is swept back and gathered behind her head and around her neck she wears a loosely tied scarf. When the drawing and the painting are compared it seems highly probable that the drawing informed the painting. Despite Posner's conviction that Parker and Mathey are wrong to claim that the Columbine in *Gilles* and by extension the drawing can be found in other Watteau paintings, Margaret Morgan Grasselli has convincingly linked the drawn study with two other paintings. These are *Comédiens italiens* and *Les Deux cousines*.[341] In *Comédiens italiens* the drawn female can be seen in painted form at the back of the image, to the left of another depiction of Gilles. In *Les Deux cousines* the drawn female can be seen on the left of the image engaged in a liaison with a male suitor. Like the Columbine in *Gilles*, both these painted versions offer a head and shoulders image of a young female with broad features; hair swept back and bunched behind her head. There are of course differences that can be traced between each of these painted portraits. The hair of Columbine in *Gilles* is for instance auburn, whereas in *Comédiens italiens* it is almost grey and in *Les Deux cousines* it is blonder. Equally the modelling of the facial colour in each varies from the overtly graphic in *Gilles*, to the more conventional but pasty colour of the figure in *Les Deux cousines*. This said however the similarities remain defiantly present in the composition, and facial structure of the features of the female image.

These paintings do not represent the only traceable likeness to the Columbine in *Gilles*. There is also an etching of a female head that strongly resembles this image. The etching is of a drawing, quite possibly the same drawing which Margaret Morgan Grasselli attributes as the study for Columbine in *Gilles* and the female figure in *Comédiens italiens* and *Les Deux cousines*. The etching is one of twenty four female

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[341] Watteau, Antoine, *Comédiens italiens*, oil on canvas, 63.8 x 76.2, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection.
Watteau, Antoine, *Les Deux cousines*, oil on canvas, 30.4 x 35.6, private collection, Paris.

figures in the first volume of *Figures de différents caractères, de Paysages, & d' Etudes dessinées d' après nature par Antoine Watteau, tirées des plus beaux cabinets de Paris* (fig. 74).[342]

If the figure of Columbine in *Gilles* can be linked to and its likeness be seen in a drawing owned in a private collection; and if the image of the drawing and Columbine can also be said to be reflected in female portraits in *Comédiens italiens*, *Les Deux cousines* and an etching in *Figures de différents caractères,* it is possible to claim that the Columbine in *Gilles* not only constitutes evidence of repeated artifice, it also constitutes a reflection of a reflection: a hollowed out mortified image and a failed sign. This sign signals but in so doing mourns the absence of meaning. It is doomed to its own fragmented status. It represents the loss of meaning through its power to suggest multiple interpretations that do not exhaust its capacity to signal. Like a ghost in the *Trauerspiel*, a sign conditioned by the transitional status of the revenant, Columbine is both there and not there. Columbine constitutes a sign with the spectral condition of spatial and temporal transition. It can be found dispersed across a number of works and historically traced in and through time in such a way that, like *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*, it cannot be said to fully cohere in one place.

As we have seen, the figure of Gilles constitutes the occasion of an elision of different images and historical figures. This renders the image of Gilles an artificial construction of fragments: a hollow representation. Columbine may also be considered, by way of the reflection of the image of Columbine in other paintings, a drawing and an etching, a hollowed out, mortified reflection: a failed temporal sign. The characteristics of these two figures mark each as an incident of transition. They are both spatially dispersed,

[342] Michel, Marianne Roland, *Watteau An Artist of the Eighteenth Century*, Chartwell books, Inc, 1984, p. 244.

conditioned by repetition and by extension temporal. If the main characteristics of the ghosts of the mourning play are repetition and indefinite transition, they may also be considered spectral. That is, we may think of these figures as imminent spectral forces in the pictorial space of *Gilles*. We may also by extension, as outlined above, consider them like object signs in the *Trauerspiel*, occasions of a lament for meaning and accordingly a spur to melancholy interpretation.

The spectral space of Gilles

The aim of this chapter was to explore the possibility of developing an account for the melancholic haunting affect of Watteau's *Gilles*. It takes its lead not solely from reasoning based on semiotics but from the spectre-like instances of lost time and failure which we have already established as features of Watteau's paintings and his practice. Informed by Benjamin's insights regarding the spectral and temporal condition of the mourning play this chapter proposes that *Gilles* constitutes a spectral like space of representation and that this space operates as a condition of possibility for the haunting affect of instances of lost time and failure. This chapter also offers the hypothesis that the pictorial signs or imagery which occasion lost time, in a way consistent with the *Trauerspiel*, entail by virtue of their transitional quality, slips in the attribution of meaning which approximate to a lament for the loss of absolute enduring meaning.

The unpicking of the curiosity of the space of *Gilles* noted a pattern of instances of transition and evidence of techniques consistent with the mourning play. This pattern of transition and evidence of techniques suggest that the space of representation known as *Gilles* is a complex occasion of ripples of spectral-like time. For example, physical change, the fragmentation and elision of different spaces, as well as, the compositional confusion of the represented space of performance, suggest states of transition, a

blurring in the time of the becoming of the image and an oscillation between inside and outside.

Similarly through the unpicking of the curious pictorial space of *Gilles*, we have also established that Watteau's approach to the construction of its space and the object signs located in it necessarily creates object signs that fail because of their spectral like time: their transitional character. For instance, Gilles is a repeat of Pierrot, Gillot, Belloni the actor etc., and by virtue of its open-ended reflections constitutes an occasion of transition that necessities decoding. It occasions, in other words, the time of negotiation between referents. Gilles, and the other pictorial sign objects, Columbine, the donkey etc., promote a slippage in the determining of meaning that takes time. The sign and its referent do not coincide because of the temporal, repetitive, revenant or transitional character of the sign/object.

To reiterate claims made earlier. If in the mourning play there is no dialectic of the living and the dead and life is reduced to a series of endless reflections presented before an absent God, all figures, all objects are spectre-like, doomed to repeat and never be complete through death. In a world in which the experience of the absolute is removed, the space of representation and its signalling agents, its petrified things of representation, inevitably express mourning and a lament for significance. The subject of the mourning play is melancholic but importantly a lament for meaning necessarily conditions the techniques and means of its representation.

If the sign objects in *Gilles* promote a slippage in signification by virtue of their transitional state, their temporal condition, it is possible to claim that the commentators who differently see, for example, Gilles, give testimony not to the ambiguity of its sign, the changing cultural value of its representations etc., but instead the finite temporal

condition of its construction. By extension, in the same way that the sign object in the mourning play constitutes by virtue of its artifice and presentation within a constructed and temporal scene, a fall from timeless truths, a fall that thereby merits a melancholic lament for the loss of meaning that endures. We can conclude that the constructed spectre-like sign objects in *Gilles*, similarly effect a condition of lament expressed through the melancholic mourning of multiple interpretations.

If the *Trauerspiel* like techniques in *Gilles* maintain a spectre-like transient space of representation and create time conditioned signs, then these techniques can be considered a condition of possibility for its melancholic affect. The *Trauerspiel* like spectre-like space of *Gilles* creates the spatial equivalent of a haunted house. A haunted house that allows unsettled spectre-like instances to haunt its space. It is the spectral like condition of the space of representation, and signs marked with the transitional condition of the revenant, which entail slips in attribution, multiple interpretations and the melancholy aspect for which *Gilles* has become known.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to offer a new account for the enigmatic qualities of Watteau's work: its melancholy, vague and haunting qualities. Although Crow and Bryson have offered significant accounts for the discursive and mysterious effect of Watteau's work, their accounts offered the subjects of Watteau's studio practice and time as new opportunities to be explored. Walter Benjamin largely explores seventeenth century theatrical drama not painting. However to establish a new way of looking at Watteau's paintings and offer a different innovative account for their enigmatic quality, we utilised his and other Benjamin-inspired thoughts on Baroque drama to experiment with time in Watteau's paintings and his studio process. Benjamin and other writers' analyses of Benjamin's proposals regarding the mechanics that sustain the aesthetics of Baroque drama suggested ways to explore Watteau's studio practice and time in his paintings. Innovative conclusions have been drawn particularly with regard to what I term the spectre-like temporality or transitional quality of Watteau's paintings.

In chapter one through a set of *Trauerspiel* techniques, in particular repetition, I sought to establish a picture or constellation of the time and space which Watteau's paintings occasion. These techniques enabled me to trace evidence of a quality of spatial temporality inscribed in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and *The Embarkation to Cythera* which enables the conclusion that these paintings are contingent upon different temporalities and locations; and that accordingly, they represent a material failure to arrive in one place. Two conclusions follow the determination that a spatial temporality can be traced in the Pilgrimage and *The Embarkation to Cythera.* Firstly, it is possible to claim that Watteau utilised techniques whose significance can be illuminated by Benjamin's *Trauerspiel.* Secondly, given that the Pilgrimage and the Embarkation occasion images of figures and objects that are by virtue of repetition, montage

construction and hybridity, both here and elsewhere and in and out of time, these paintings can also be said to be illuminated by spectral-like instances of lost time. Interestingly, the work of this chapter also established that the spectral time of the Pilgrimage is not simply a product of techniques located at the level of representation. Conservation work reveals that the object of the Pilgrimage is also by virtue of Watteau's chosen mediums and practices temporal, in transition, a ruin. If the spectral time of the image is inscribed into a countenance that is itself transitional, the work of this chapter proposes that the spectral time of *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* is the product of a bond between the time of the image and the time of the object. The spectral time of the image in the time of the object: the spectral time of the object in the time of the image.

Having established a picture of spatial temporality in the Pilgrimage, the aim of chapter two was to explore how Watteau's paintings might come to be conditioned by a spatial temporality that might be described as spectral. A second aim also included determining how the spectral-like temporal condition of Watteau's paintings, might come to be inscribed in, what the tracing of history reflected in the Pilgrimage revealed to be, the material ruin of the painting. To facilitate an account for these two questions we studied Watteau's studio practice: the time of painting.

Divertissements champêtres and other Watteau paintings offered the opportunity of studying the time of the becoming of Watteau's work. By studying this painting and its evidence of different practices through Benjamin's thinking, it was possible to propose that Watteau practised an individual approach to montage that was different to that of his peers: a practice that risked failure and worked through uncertainty in a way which is not consistent with conventions held by many eighteenth century academicians. Rather than aim to create images that appear timeless ideal moments, Watteau's

technique of montage instead created pictorial occasions that are temporally and spatially fragmented and discontinuous.

Unlike his peers Watteau worked from a variety of sources, in no particular order and with mediums that accelerated production, amendment and the unforeseen transition of the work through time. Amendment, correction and change are inevitable features of Watteau's images and it is this that can account for the inscription of lost time in the countenance of his paintings. By amending and changing his images, often rapidly with little care for conventions, Watteau inscribed in his images an over-painted or occluded history that came to haunt the surface. Evidence of ghosting in the image, traces of amendment and discontinuities of colour and tone which other artists might carefully hide, in Watteau's paintings shatter the spatial continuity of the image; indications of failed events and lost time signal transition and spatial history at a material level. In other words, Watteau's technique results in his paintings being conditioned by the ghost-like indicators of transition: signs of the spectral presence of their own failed past. Significantly Watteau's rapid technique does not only render the image haunted by spectre-like transitions of lost time, it renders the painting itself, through the alacrity of its endeavour and the temporary quality of its chosen mediums, spectre-like: a ruin.

Having established the evidence required to draw a picture of time in *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* and having determined an account for the inscription of spectre-like temporality in *Divertissements champêtres*, chapter three aimed to take its lead from these findings to explore and develop a time-and-failure based account for the melancholic haunting qualities of Watteau's *Gilles*.

The work of chapter three proposes that *Gilles* constitutes a spectre-like space of representation and that this space operates as a condition of possibility for the haunting

affect of lost time and failure. It also offers the hypothesis that the pictorial signs which in *Gilles* occasion lost time, in a way consistent with the *Trauerspiel*, inspire slips in the attribution of meaning similar to those which in the *Trauerspiel* occasion a mourning for or lament for the loss of absolute meaning.

In this work the unpicking of the curious pictorial space of *Gilles* provides the basis for the first of these proposals. By tracing evidence in *Gilles* of a pattern of instances of spectre-like transition consistent with Benjamin's definition of the term 'origin', we were able to claim that the space of representation in *Gilles* enables a spectre-like image: a painting conditioned by ripples in space and time. By extension, in so far as techniques consistent with the *Trauerspiel* techniques can be traced in *Gilles*, these mourning play techniques can be considered a condition of possibility for the spectral effect of its space and the spectre-like sign objects which it occasions.

If for an object to haunt a space the conditions offered by that space need to be favourable to possession, then the second proposal can be accounted for by way of the spectral condition of the object sign. The space of representation and its objects are, as we have already discovered, the products of a studio practice and an approach to montage which creates images signs or represented objects that are temporally and spatially contingent. The space and the object are similarly conditioned by techniques such as the elision of fragments and repetition which enable a spectral revenant-like quality of transition. The figure of Gilles is no exception. Gilles is a sign conditioned by failure. It signals more than one referent, like the examples of dress fashion in the Pilgrimage it therefore temporally and spatially fails to cohere in one place, one eternal moment, and it can thereby be argued to promote a slippage in the process of determining its meaning.

If *Gilles* promotes a slippage in signification by virtue of the spectral temporality of which it is a condition, it is possible to claim that the variety of interpretations that it has stimulated give testimony to the finite temporal condition of its construction: the transient condition of its failed signs. In the same way that the sign and spectral space of the mourning play melancholically laments the fall from eternal time and meaning by virtue of the spectre-like imminence of its signs, so too can we conclude that *Gilles* affects a condition of melancholy not solely by way of the semiotic but by way of its presentation of imagery and signs conditioned by fallen time.

The inspiration for this thesis came from two sources. Beckett's claim that 'to be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail,' and the enigma of Watteau's paintings. For centuries writers have described and identified many different qualities in Watteau's work. Commentators have revelled in their capacity to suggest grace, beauty, love and the idyllic, while some have recognised a darker potential in the sheen of the festive setting. I for the most part find Watteau's paintings ugly although some, in particular, *Gilles*, haunt me, as they appear to do others. The integrity of the painted surface is often rough, the handling of the paint inconsistent and the composition forced. This thesis, in attempting to offer a new account for the enigma of Watteau's work also sought to account for my own interest in his paintings.

Initial research into Watteau's work and his studio practices quickly presented the picture of an artist committed to painting, its undoing and reworking. This allowed me to explore the role of failure in his work allied to Benjamin's review of the *Trauerspiel*. In following the leftover issues of Watteau's making and the time in his paintings, I have experimented with Benjamin's thinking to probe the possibility that Watteau's paintings occasion a quality of time that may be described as spectral. I hope that I have competently established this claim. I hope also that I have adequately argued the case

for claiming that Watteau prasticed an approach to montage and painting which was different to that of his peers, radical in its means and through its commitment to immediacy and an uninhibited acceptance of the risk of failure, responsible for a spectral time in Watteau's images. The identification of spectral time in Watteau's paintings is my contribution to the Watteau discourse and the offer of a new account for their melancholic, haunting, enigmatic affect.

If *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* like other Watteau paintings constitutes a valence of the spectral time of the representation in the object, and the time of the object in the representation, then it is contingent, open to change and immediate. The bonding of the time of the image and the time of the object makes the occasion of the Pilgrimage, like a spectre, never quite present. It never fully arrives yet it has already departed. The argument which this thesis proffers is that if a painting is spectre-like, or not temporally and spatially fixed, then it is resistant to discursive arrest and this can account for its multiple interpretations: a mourning for meaning. It seems clear however that although I may have offered an account for Watteau's work, if its qualities are spectre-like and the product of a valence of image and object time that is open to change, then all attempts to account for the enigma of Watteau's work are susceptible to failure.

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