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Four female heads—and a phantom of a profile lurking underneath its fully fleshed version in the lower right—emerge from the void of the page. The drawing, *Five Studies of a Woman's Head*, now in the British Museum, was produced in a single sitting with the model assuming different poses while the artist drew her. He, too, must have changed his position in order to cast a precipitously downward glance at his model's head, as the two radically foreshortened views of it at the top of the page, and three similar, if less abbreviated, ones on another sheet executed during the same posing session, suggest.<sup>1</sup>

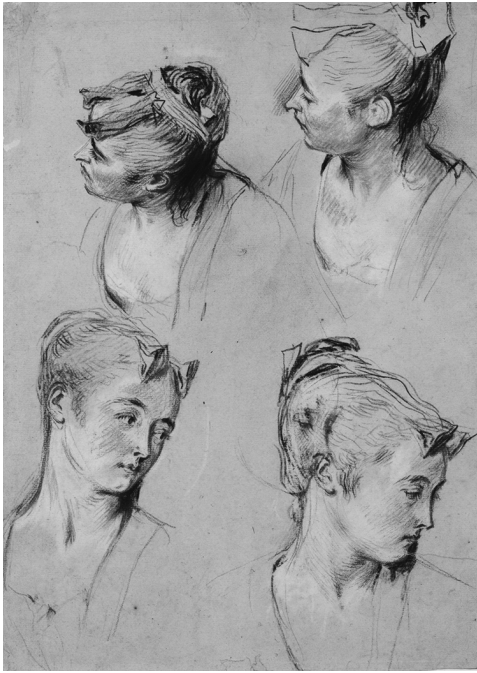
Notwithstanding the specificity of the model's poses, the drawings are not faithful records of a sitting, nor do they strictly correspond to its time span, as the two different hats worn by the model in the lower register of the second drawing—implying the woman took a short break in order to change—indicate. They are, rather, deliberate arrangements of carefully selected views. The successive positioning of the motifs on the page—a descending sequence of slowly rotating “takes”—creates a quasi-cinematic effect of movement that begins in the upper right corner of each sheet and ends in the lower right.<sup>2</sup>

Anachronistic as it may be, the analogy to the cinematic image helps us to appreciate the arbitrary dimension of Watteau's drawings in that it evokes the idea of montage rather than composition, a technique of putting together disparate

\* This text is based on my presentation at the Frick Museum's symposium organized on the occasion of the exhibition of Master Drawings from the Courtauld Gallery in January 2013, then expanded in my lecture delivered as part of the series “Selon Yve-Alain Bois: Retour sur le signifiant at the Centre Pompidou” in June 2013. Many thanks to Colin Bailey and Yve-Alain Bois, who had invited me to speak at these respective venues and offered many helpful comments, and to my fellow fellows at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, where I delivered a version of this text in September 2013, especially Lucia Allais, Elaine Freedgood, Carrie Jones, Ruth Mack, and Sophia Roosth for their stimulating feedback. Thanks also to Gokçan Demirkazik and Adela Kim for their assistance with research for this essay.

1. Margaret Morgan Grasselli has suggested that these two drawings were done at the same sitting. See her entry on the second drawing in Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau, 1684–1721* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1984), no. 83, p. 157.

2. The quasi-cinematic mobility of models in Watteau's work has been noted before. See Alan Wintermute, in *Watteau and His World: French Drawing from 1700 to 1750*, ed. Alan Wintermute (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1999), no. 29, p. 148.



*Antoine Watteau.*

*Left: Five Studies of a Woman's Head. British Museum.*

*© Trustees of the British Museum.*

*Right: Four Studies of a Woman's Head. Private collection.*

frames in order to create an illusion of movement in time and space. In this technique, the interval between the frames matters as much as the frames themselves. Similarly, in Watteau's drawing, it is the gaps between the head motifs—the empty reserves of the page—that matter as much as the motifs themselves in producing the effect of spatial and temporal sequence. What we see here, then, is not simply a record of the model's—or, for that matter, the artist's—body moving in time and space during a posing session, but a certain construction of temporality and movement in which the page itself acts as an agent, producing an impression of internal mobility and temporal extension of the image.

I begin with these head sheets to address a broader question of temporality raised by the early-eighteenth-century work of Antoine Watteau. Time mattered in Watteau's practice as a draftsman. He was known to have drawn continuously, even “during his recreation and walks” and at night, and to have taken far more pleasure in drawing than painting, the process of which, according to his friend the art dealer Gersaint, he found too constraining and too slow.<sup>3</sup> Unusually deft

3. For drawing while on walks, see Jean de Jullienne, “Abrégé de la vie d'Antoine Watteau” (1726), and Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville, “Autre Abrégé de la vie d'Antoine Watteau” (1745), in *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, ed. Pierre Rosenberg (Paris: Hermann, 1984), p. 17 and p. 49.



Watteau. Four Studies of a Woman's Head and Two of a Seated Woman. *Rijksmuseum.*

and swift as a draftsman, Watteau nonetheless held on to his drawings, returning to a sheet he had begun earlier to add other motifs, a habit generating a complex, nonlinear chronology of the page exemplified by drawings such as the one now in the Rijksmuseum where two seated full figures of women, one drawn in black chalk, another in red chalk, are embedded in a series of female busts drawn earlier. What seemed a more or less continuous movement of the head motifs in the British Museum sheet with which I began is, in the Rijksmuseum's drawing, syncopated, rendered discontinuous by the interruptions of the later insertions.

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For Gersaint's statement, see his "Abrégé de la vie d'Antoine Watteau" (1744), in Rosenberg, *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, p. 40. Gersaint also states that Watteau "found more pleasure in drawing than in painting," p. 44. This statement is echoed by Comte de Caylus, a noted amateur and friend of Watteau's who sometimes drew with him. Speaking of Watteau's drawing practice, Caylus reported, "This exercise was infinitely attractive to him; and even if most of the time the figure he drew from life had no determined destination, it was difficult for him to tear himself away from it." Comte de Caylus, "La vie d'Antoine Wateau [*sic*], peintre de figures et de paysage," a lecture read at the Academy on February 3, 1748, in Rosenberg, *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, p. 78. Caylus also mentions Watteau drawing at night. (Translations are mine throughout the text, unless stated otherwise.)

The vast number of drawings Watteau produced in the short span of his life—when he died at the age of thirty-seven, he had produced between two thousand and four thousand drawings—constitutes an aesthetic domain unto itself.<sup>4</sup> It was, in fact, recognized as such immediately after the artist's death, when his friend and supporter Jean de Jullienne made an unprecedented decision to engrave Watteau's drawing corpus, producing a compendium that not only offered a vast repository of models for other artists, among them Boucher, but also defined the authorial identity of the artist as a function of his drawing oeuvre.<sup>5</sup> Yet notwithstanding the many rich and nuanced discussions of the drawings, the aesthetic specificity of this output, the radical novelty of which had been recognized already in Watteau's time, and especially the meaning of the artist's technical procedures, remains to be fully articulated.<sup>6</sup>

Temporality—of a particular kind—is, in my view, the key aspect, indeed the very logic, of Watteau's drawing oeuvre. It is not only that he represents time, but that time enters into the ways he uses his tools and materials, altering their customary effects and the effect of drawings produced with them. It is, then, how time *materializes* in Watteau's work as the basic condition of the medium and the broader aesthetic, cultural, and philosophical implications of this approach to drawing that I would like to explore.

4. The exact number of drawings (which, before he died, Watteau is said to have asked four of his friends to divide among them) is difficult to assess because of contradictory contemporary reports. According to Pierre Rosenberg and Louis-Antoine Prat, the authors of the catalogue raisonné of Watteau drawings, the safe assessment is that Watteau left between two thousand to four thousand drawings, which did not include the drawings from his youth. Even at its lowest estimate, this is a staggering amount. Of these, only around 670 drawings are extant. For a summary of the debate around Watteau's drawing legacy, see Rosenberg and Prat, *Antoine Watteau, 1684–1721: Catalogue raisonné des dessins* (Milan: Leonardo Arte, 1996), pp. xii–xvi.

5. Watteau's drawings were reproduced in two volumes as *Les Figures de différents caractères, de Paysages et d'Études dessinées d'après nature par Antoine Watteau*. The first volume was published in 1726, the second in 1728. Through Jullienne's publication, Watteau's work became a model of draftsmanship, reproduced and disseminated in drawing manuals throughout the eighteenth century. See Émile Dacier, Jacques Hérold, and Albert Vuaflart, *Jean de Jullienne et les graveurs au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 4 vols. (Paris: Société pour l'étude de la gravure française, 1921–1929), and Marianne Roland Michel, "Watteau et *Les Figures de différents caractères*" in *Antoine Watteau, le peintre, son temps et sa légende*, ed. François Moureau and Margaret Morgan Grasselli (Geneva: Slatkine, 1987), pp. 117–27.

6. The early recognition of the aesthetic novelty and originality of Watteau's drawings is epitomized by Jullienne's statement in his 1726 preface to *Les Figures de différents caractères*: "Their style is new; their graces are so much the product of their author's mind that one can say they are inimitable. Every figure that has emerged from the hand of this excellent man has such true and natural character that it can, on its own, engage and satisfy the attention of the viewer, without having to be sustained by a composition of a great subject." (Cited in Dacier and Vuaflart, *Jean de Jullienne et les graveurs*, vol. 2, p. 6). Jullienne suggests the aesthetic self-sufficiency of Watteau's drawings as works unto themselves rather than mere preparation for paintings. Modern scholarship on Watteau's drawings cannot be cited in full here, but the fundamental accounts are Martin Eidelberg, *Watteau's Drawings: Their Use and Significance* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977); Margaret Morgan Grasselli, *The Drawings of Antoine Watteau: Stylistic Development and Problem of Chronology* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1987); Rosenberg and Prat, *Antoine Watteau, 1684–1721: Catalogue raisonné des dessins*; Wintermute, *Watteau and His World*; and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts, *Antoine Watteau and the Cultural Value of Drawing in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ph.D. diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, 2005).

In speaking of drawing as a medium, I do not, to be sure, wish to resuscitate the reductive notion of medium-specificity as Clement Greenberg (mis)understood it, his view emphasizing the transhistorical or essentialist status of the material conditions defining a given art form (in his case painting).<sup>7</sup> Rather, I am interested in what an account of the medium, in my case drawing, as practiced by a specific artist can tell us about the historical dimension and meaning of materiality. One can say that drawing was invented as a modern medium precisely in Watteau's time. Established since the Renaissance as a basic tool of creative process, drawing acquired in the eighteenth century an altogether different status and meaning: It came to be recognized as an autonomous artistic form; an index of an artist's personal style; an object of aesthetic contemplation and critical reflection; and, ultimately, a commodity.<sup>8</sup> Watteau's practice contributed crucially to this process of cultural invention—it may even be said to have initiated it, both because of the early appreciation of his drawings as works of art unto themselves and because of their wide dissemination owing to Jullienne's efforts.<sup>9</sup>

### *I. Repetition and Difference*

One intriguing feature of Watteau's drawing style is the way it combines a highly individuated treatment of motifs and figures with a repetitive disposition. Speaking of a work mistitled as *Two Seated Women* (Rijksmuseum), though it actually features the same woman seen from two different points of view, one art historian observed that “such examples—and they are legion—suggest that Watteau was

7. See Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting” (1960), in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 4 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), pp. 85–93. For a theoretical recasting of the notion of medium, see the following works by Rosalind E. Krauss: “Reinventing the Medium,” *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1999), pp. 289–306; “A Voyage on the North Sea”: *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999); and *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011).

8. While new attitudes towards draftsmanship appeared elsewhere at the time, notably in Britain (see Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000]), it was in France that drawing was conceptualized and institutionalized as the defining principle of art conceived as a liberal practice. Key for the appreciation of drawings as an autonomous art form were the Salon exhibitions in Paris, where drawings were displayed from 1737 on. Moreover, significant private collections of drawings emerged in France in the early eighteenth century. For these and other aspects regarding the new status of drawing in eighteenth-century France, see Marianne Roland Michel, *Le dessin français au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1987); Colin B. Bailey, “*Toute seule elle peut remplir et satisfaire l'attention*: The Early Appreciation and Marketing of Watteau's Drawings, with an Introduction to the Collecting of Modern French Drawings During the Reign of Louis XV,” in Wintermute, *Watteau and His World*, pp. 68–92; Charlotte Guichard, “L'amour du dessin,” *Les Amateurs d'art à Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2008), pp. 150–53; and Kristel Smentek, “The Collector's Cut: Why Pierre-Jean Mariette Tore Up His Drawings and Put Them Back Together Again,” *Master Drawings* 46, no. 1 (2008), pp. 36–60.

9. For Watteau's contemporaries' appreciation for his drawings, see Bailey, “*Toute seule elle peut remplir et satisfaire l'attention*.”

Watteau. Two  
Studies of a  
Seated Woman.  
Rijksmuseum.



always aiming to record *a multiple reality*, [and] that he moved around his models, making them take up given poses.”<sup>10</sup> Multiplication may indeed be defined as the very principle that governs not only the logic of this individual page but, more generally, Watteau’s entire drawing oeuvre. But this principle functions in a particular way: less as a conscious strategy than as an involuntary *mechanism* generating forms on the page (i.e., less as a result of moving the model than of manipulating the page itself). Thus the two figures in the Rijksmuseum sheet appear as copies of one another in reverse, that is, not as the result of the model’s changing pose but rather as the product of a mechanical process of internal doubling, as if by (an imaginary) counterproof.

I am referring to the primitive mode of mechanical reproduction wherein an image drawn in oily sanguine on a sheet of paper is multiplied—in reverse, and with weaker outlines—by pressing the sheet against another one and rubbing it, or passing it through a press. Watteau used counterproof often, both to replicate his already completed drawings and for the purpose of generating decorative designs, as in the case of his *Bower* at the National Gallery in Washington.<sup>11</sup> In



Watteau. Design for a Wall  
Decoration and a  
Lady’s Bust. Pushkin Museum.

10. Marianne Roland Michel, “The Rosenberg-Prat Catalogue of Watteau’s Drawings,” *Burlington Magazine* 140 (November 1998), p. 752. Italics mine. The drawing she is referring to is listed as *Deux femmes assises* in Rosenberg and Prat, *Antoine Watteau: Catalogue raisonné des dessins*, no. 399, pp. 654–55.

11. For a detailed discussion of this sheet, see Margaret Morgan Grasselli, *Renaissance to Revolution: French Drawing from the National Gallery of Art, 1500–1800* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2009), no. 39, pp. 96–97. Watteau’s predilection for counterproof also manifested itself in his choice of paper: He preferred softer over heavy sized and coated papers because this kind of paper was better suited

the latter, the artist first drew the arabesque elements on the right side of the page, leaving the left side blank, then folded the sheet in half lengthwise—you can still see the vertical crease on the paper where it was folded—and rubbed it on the verso to produce a faint replica of his design on the other side, to which he then added other elements. A more intriguing example of the artist's creative use of counterproofing is a sheet from the former Franz Koenigs collection, now at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, where the ornamental design on the right, having been counterproofed on the left side of the page, morphed—like a Surrealist automatic drawing—into a differently oriented head of a young woman, the scroll-framed cartouche turning into the woman's bonnet.<sup>12</sup>

This was not how the figures in the Rotterdam drawing were actually produced—both, for one, are outlined strongly, and are not exactly symmetrical—but the effect of the *mise-en-page* and the similarity of their poses create an impression *as if* they had been counterproofed, that is, as if the rear view had been generated by folding the page along the vertical axis, the page itself thus producing an image from within itself.

A similar principle of internal doubling governs, even more obviously, some of Watteau's half-figure drawings, notably the British Museum's sheet with a three-quarter figure of a woman shown simultaneously from the rear and *en face*. Here, again, the drawing announces itself less as a product of a posing session in which a model is asked to display herself from both sides than as a result of internal flipping or folding of the image upon itself such that it duplicates itself, appearing rotated from a rear to frontal view. To be sure, I do not pretend to ignore the differences in the two views of the figure—the woman's face is slightly larger than her head seen from behind, for example—but I



Watteau. Study of a Woman Seen from Behind and from the Front. *British Museum*. © Trustees of the *British Museum*.

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for counterproof. ("Sizing" is a technical term for treating paper in the course of its production so as to control its absorbency and texture; a heavy or strong sized paper is the most liquid-resistant and smoothest kind of paper.) The suitability of different papers for drawing is discussed by Weisberg-Roberts, *Antoine Watteau and the Cultural Value of Drawing*, p. 86. Counterproofs were valued more highly in the eighteenth century than they are now. They were considered to be an intrinsic part of an artist's oeuvre and were collected by connoisseurs. For example, Count Tessin owned a considerable number of Watteau's counterproofs. For a more general discussion of counterproof, focused on its uses and status in the seventeenth century, see Marie-Christine Seigneur, "On Counterproofs," *Print Quarterly* 21 (2004), pp. 115–27.

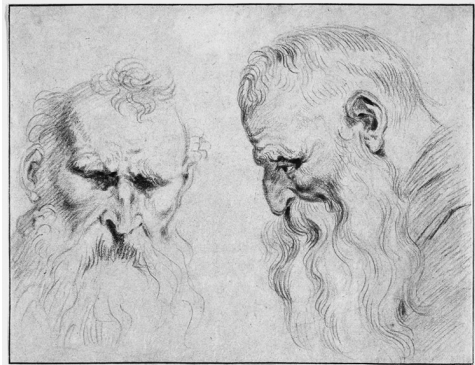
12. For this rarely discussed drawing, see *Five Centuries of European Drawings: The Former Collection of Franz Koenigs* (Milan: Leonardo Arte, 1995), no. 208. See also, briefly, Marianne Roland Michel, *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century* (Secaucus, N.J.: Chartwell Books, 1984), p. 95; and Weisberg-Roberts, *Antoine Watteau and the Cultural Value of Drawing*, p. 93. Rosenberg and Prat suggest that the left part of the drawing dates from 1713 while the right part was executed later, around 1716, *Antoine Watteau*, no. 191, p. 304.

wish to emphasize the effect of an involuntarily reflective relation between the two. (One realizes that duplication or repetition is almost always used in Watteau to produce *difference* rather than sameness, a point to which I shall return.)

Another example of such internal replication is a portrait drawing of Watteau's friend Haranger wherein it appears as if the artist, having first sketched the long-haired and hatted canon facing us, repeated the figure, with only a slight variation in the way his hand grips a cane, by rotating and displacing it to the right. The weaker, looser strokes with which the second figure was produced enhance its effect as a sort of counterproof of the first.<sup>13</sup> This approach to portrayal brings to mind other examples, such as Van Dyck's tripled likeness of Charles I, or Philippe de Champaigne's similar portrait of Cardinal de Richelieu. Yet, while both of these paintings were done for a specific purpose—they were visual aids for sculptors charged with producing portrait busts without having access to the sitter—the internally multiplied likeness of Haranger was not, it seems, externally motivated.<sup>14</sup> Even when Watteau made copies after other artists, such as the portraits of old men after Rubens we find in a drawing at the Harvard Art Museums, he seems to have been compelled to arrange



Watteau. Double Portrait of Canon Haranger. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. © Kupferstichkabinett. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.



Watteau. Heads of Two Bearded Old Men. Harvard Art Museums. © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

13. Although it may appear that Watteau had actually first sketched the figure *en trois quarts* and then repeated it on the left *en face* (the arm of the latter one having been drawn over the former one), it is assumed in the literature that the profile figure was drawn second, “around” the arm of the first. See Grasselli, *Watteau, 1684–1721*, p. 142.

14. Van Dyck's portrait, painted in 1635–36, was made for a sculptor working on a bust of the monarch. Champaigne's likeness was sent to Italy to Bernini's assistant, Francesco Mocchi, who succeeded Bernini, the author of the cardinal's portrait bust, in the execution of the sitter's full-figure statue. See Alain Tapié and Nicolas Sainte Fare Garnot, eds., *Philippe de Champaigne: Entre politique et dévotion (1602–1674)* (Lille: Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, 2007), no. 22, pp. 132–33.



these heads on one sheet as if they were two internally rotated views of the same person drawn from life.<sup>15</sup>

This logic of internal doubling also governs some of Watteau's more complicated compositions, as in the extraordinary drawing *Eight Studies of Women's and a Man's Heads*. At first this drawing produces an impression of a continuous rotation of one woman's head, even if her costume changes (in five views she is shown wearing a ruff), with a man's head in the lower right-hand corner looking as if it had been placed there to stop this endless proliferation. Upon closer inspection, though, one realizes that the effect of sequence was produced by internal pairing—most clearly discernible in the two pairs of female profiles in the upper register and the one in the lower left part flanked by two almost frontal views of the same woman—as if these heads were in the continuous process of generating themselves by internal self-reflection. One wonders what the artist needed that many variants of the same head *for*, and why, moreover, he executed so many serial views, evidently favoring this particular format.<sup>16</sup>



Watteau. *Eight Studies of Women's and a Man's Heads*.  
Musée du Louvre.

Unusual as such series may seem to be, they were not unique to Watteau. Multiple views of the same head, bust, or figure rehearsed on a single page were common enough in the preparatory practice of artists, notably Rubens or, in the French context, Michel Corneille the Younger, on whose work Watteau trained his eye.<sup>17</sup> Yet few artists submitted the head to such systematic visual scrutiny as did Watteau, drawing it in

15. For the discussion of the Fogg drawing, see Martin Eidelberg, "An Album of Drawings from Rubens' Studio," *Master Drawings* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), pp. 234–66. Watteau's friend Vleughels copied the same two heads but placed them on separate sheets. The two artists may have even been working side by side while they copied the drawings from Rubens's album, then in Pierre Crozat's collection, but Watteau's approach was evidently different. This is not the only case when Watteau puts two disparate heads copied from Rubens on the same page and in relation to one another. For another example, see Eidelberg, p. 239, fig. 6.

16. Similar examples include *Huit études de têtes* (Louvre, RF 33383), *Six études de têtes de jeune femme et deux têtes de jeunes garçons* (Louvre, RF 51760), *Neuf études de têtes* (Musée du Petit Palais, Paris), and *Six études de têtes* (Louvre, RF 33385). In this last, the device of internal multiplication by pairing is even more evident.

17. On the importance of both artists' drawings to Watteau's heads, see Wintermute, *Watteau and His World*, p. 32. Wintermute speculates that Watteau may have known Michel Corneille's drawings through Claude Gillot, who had trained in the studio of Corneille's brother.

endless permutations and rendering each motif with extraordinary suggestiveness and finish, its lifelike quality underscored by his virtuoso deployment of the technique of *trois crayons* (a combination of red, black, and white chinks). These aspects also distinguish Watteau's serial views from other forms of visual culture to which they are related, such as the basic conventions of academic pedagogy, in which the *tête d'expression* has been a staple exercise since Le Brun, and the illustrated drawing manuals widely used from at least the mid-seventeenth century on.<sup>18</sup> As a quick glance at an illustration from Odoardo Fialetti's *The Whole Art of Drawing* makes evident, Watteau infused his head motifs with a heightened sense of bodily presence.<sup>19</sup> Based on the study of live models and amplified by the whole arsenal of visual means, these bodily fragments come alive on the page as if they were a series of portraits rather than exercises in mastering the representation of a body part viewed from different angles. Their frequent pairing creates an impression that the heads are engaged with one another—a self confronting different versions of itself—and moving, not so much in space, which remains abstract, but in time. As a mode of portrayal, this temporal, fragmentary presentation seems geared to produce above all the effect of difference—visual and subjective—if often minimal, a matter of just a slight turn of the head.

This procedure exemplifies a more general principle at work in Watteau's oeuvre wherein a sequence of forms is very often generated through an internal lateral displacement, which is to say, in the relation of one form to another as much as in their relation to reality, the connection between them established by their contiguity



Odoardo Fialetti. Illustration from *The Whole Art of Drawing, Painting, Limning and Etching*. 1660.

18. Another difference of Watteau's drawings from the *tête d'expression* format is that his heads are resolutely *inexpressive*. It is not the face's capacity to convey emotions or states of mind but its phenomenological existence that seems to have interested him. Sarah Cohen linked the drawing of *Eight Heads of Woman and One of Man* to observation of a dancer in performance in Sarah R. Cohen, *Art, Dance, and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 184. For Watteau's head drawings' connection to broader visual culture, see Weisberg-Roberts's excellent discussion in chapter 5 of *Antoine Watteau and the Cultural Value of Drawing*.

19. *The Whole Art of Drawing, Painting, Limning and Etching* (London: Peter Stint and Simon Miller, 1660) was the English edition of Fialetti's *Il vero modo et ordine per dissegñar tutte le parti et membra del corpo umano*, first published in Venice in 1608. For the dissemination of Fialetti's designs throughout Europe in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Jaap Bolten, *Method and Practice: Dutch and Flemish Drawing Books, 1600–1750* (Pfalz: Edition PVA, 1985), pp. 188–92. See also David Rosand, "The Crisis of the Venetian Renaissance Tradition," *L'Arte* 3, nos. 11–12 (1970), pp. 15–17 and p. 19. For comparison to Watteau, see Weisberg-Roberts, *Antoine Watteau and the Cultural Value of Drawing*, pp. 183–86.

rather than their similarity. As such, Watteau's practice can be identified as a metonymic discourse, that is, one in which the syntagmatic associations based on concatenation as opposed to substitution, typical of metaphoric discourse, predominate.<sup>20</sup> Forming a metonymic chain, Watteau's studies of figures and bodily fragments produce a language in which each term derives its value from its difference from, or opposition to, an adjacent term. Semiotologists have associated this type of discourse with spoken rather than written language, and with literary forms such as popular novels and journalism, and more generally with realism.<sup>21</sup> Watteau's drawings cannot, of course, be characterized as realism in the historical sense of the term, but they do constitute an attempt to develop a visual language of observable reality.<sup>22</sup>

## II. *The Time of the Pose*

Watteau's contemporaries saw his drawings as a testimony to the artist's deep commitment to the study of nature, from which, in Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville's words, "he never strayed."<sup>23</sup> This resolute commitment is evidenced by the unmediated poses of many of his models.<sup>24</sup> The Harvard Art Museums'

20. Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), pp. 69–96. For a discussion of Jakobson on metonymy, see also Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 76–79.

21. See Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 60. For a broader discussion of metonymy vs. metaphor and syntagm vs. paradigm (or what Barthes calls the system), see pp. 58–88.

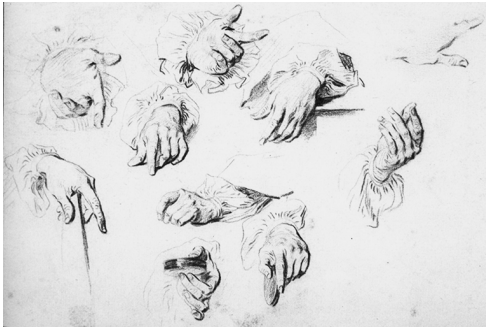
22. Watteau's work, too, has been associated with a form of spoken discourse, namely, conversation, which Mary Vidal argued was both a frequent theme and a structure of his paintings. In her view, though, the conversation model does not apply to Watteau's drawings. Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 62.

23. "Watteau distinguished himself by his deepest study of nature, from which he never strayed." Dezallier d'Argenville, *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, p. 47.

24. As Caylus put it, he posed his models in positions dictated by nature, preferring, moreover, the simplest ones. *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, p. 78.



Watteau. Three Views of a Military Drummer. *Harvard Art Museums*.  
© President and Fellows of Harvard College.



Watteau. *Top*: Ten Studies of a Left Hand.  
*Private collection.*

*Bottom*: Study of a Young Man Seen from the  
Back and Another Study of His Right Arm.  
*Pierpont Morgan Library.*

drawing of the *Military Drummer*, shown in three different attitudes, all of which seem directly observed, is one obvious example. Keeping the legacy of the academic pose at bay, Watteau tried to record how people actually moved in space, how they related to others, and what they did with their hands when they put them to specific uses. The immediacy of these poses and gestures, moreover, signals their occurrence in a specific moment in time, as in the sudden twist of the man's body underscored by the rapidity of the artist's hand work, done mostly in a heavy black chalk, in the sheet now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, or in the turn of the female model's head as she looks up, perhaps distracted by someone who has just entered the room, in a drawing from the same collection. (In both cases, what we see are not meaningful attitudes dictated by a narrative but random poses assumed by models that the artist would later use as he saw fit in different contexts.)<sup>25</sup> A whole new phenomenology of temporal existence thus emerges from the pages of Watteau's instant notations.

Yet these "immediate" images also testify to another kind of mediation: that of the drawing materials and tools and of the temporal conditions in which they are deployed. To begin with, when Watteau draws from "nature" he certainly takes into account what he draws *on*. As we saw in the British Museum study of a woman's head, Watteau lets the page act as an agent, allowing its reserves to produce the drawing's temporal effect. Moreover, it is often the case that the shape of the page defines the way the model

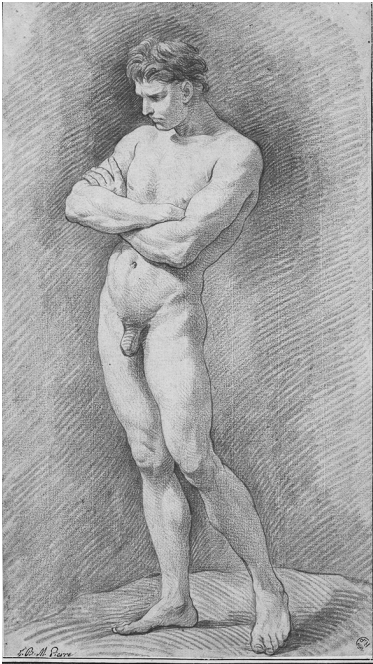
25. The *Seated Man Seen from Behind* was used by Watteau for his *Scales of Love* (National Gallery, London) and, with some alterations, for the *Pleasures of Love* (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden). The *Seated Young Woman* did not appear in any known Watteau paintings, though Grasselli has observed that her pose recalls to some extent that of the goddess in *Diana at Her Bath*. See *Watteau, 1684–1721*, p. 130.

appears on it. One particularly striking example is the drawing now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art wherein the man standing with his arm extended at almost a right angle to his body seems to have *assumed* the rectilinear shape of the sheet that both supports and frames him. Yet this study also indicates that the very process of posing as an activity extended in time can seep into Watteau's drawings and inflect the appearance of the page. (Sometimes quite literally: Here the artist was obliged, in the process of drawing, to expand the sheet by gluing an extra vertical strip on the right side in order to accommodate fully his model's left arm.) The New York drawing is an early preparatory study for the figure of a satyr in *Autumn*, a painting from the *Season* series commissioned by Pierre Crozat for the dining room of his *hôtel*, thus the man's gesture holding a bottle in his extended arm from which he would pour wine into Bacchus's cup.<sup>26</sup> In a later preparatory study, now at the Courtauld Institute, the model's pose is closer to that of the satyr in the painting, but it is the New York sheet that gives us a better insight into how Watteau works with his models and how the modeling session—specifically the time of the pose—affects what and how he draws. It is not only that we see here a specific individual rather than a satyr, a man with a somewhat flaccid body and individuated facial features and hair; it is also that his pose bears the unmistakable symptoms of fatigue or even boredom. A certain weariness on his face and the slackness of his pose, matched by the open, sketchy outlines, differentiate him strongly from the standard male *académie*, such as that by Bouchardon with its tense,



Watteau. Top: Seated Young Woman. Pierpont Morgan Library. Bottom: Nude Man Holding a Bottle in Each Hand. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

26. For this commission, see Cordélia Hattori, "De Charles de la Fosse à Antoine Watteau: Les Saisons Crozat," *Revue du Louvre* (2001), pp. 56–65.



Edmé Bouchardon. Standing Male Nude with Folded Arms. *Harvard Art Museums.*  
© President and Fellows of Harvard College.



Robert Mapplethorpe. Self Portrait. 1975.  
© The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.

well-articulated musculature tightly contained by the uninterrupted contour, a format of drawing in which, we are told, Watteau had no interest.<sup>27</sup> His man's arm holding a bottle conveys less strength than effort, and perhaps also a certain openness, a kind of availability. Roland Barthes's comment on Mapplethorpe's self-portrait—"the hand [caught] at the right degree of openness, the right density of abandonment"<sup>28</sup>—comes to mind, although Watteau's man appears more vulnerable than inviting. The point is that, like Mapplethorpe, Watteau offers us an image of posing as much as that of the pose, his drawing registering specifically its *duration*.

### III. The Artist's Hand

The Lugt collection's study for another satyr—actually Jupiter in disguise—for Watteau's painting of *Jupiter and Antiope* commissioned by Léopold-Philippe, duc d'Arenberg, offers an especially instructive example of another issue involved in registering the pose, namely, the role of the artist's hand.<sup>29</sup> Few drawings match the instantaneity of this work, "brutal and schematic," in one commentator's words.<sup>30</sup> The exceptionally rough and

27. "In effect, not having any knowledge of the anatomy, and having almost never drawn the nude, he didn't know how to understand and represent it, such that, to execute an *académie* [a full-figure representation of the male body] cost him a lot and was a disagreeable exercise for him." Caylus, *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, p. 72.

28. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 58.

29. The painting, now at the Louvre, was one of two over-door ovals executed by Watteau for the residence of the duc d'Arenberg. See Colin B. Bailey, *The Loves of the Gods: Mythological Painting from Watteau to David* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), no. 14, pp. 186–93.

30. Colin B. Bailey, *De Watteau à Degas: Dessins français de la Collection Frits Lugt* (Paris and New York: Fondation Custodia and the Frick Collection, 2009), p. 35.

rapid mode of execution in this drawing certainly had something to do with the posing session. As an earlier preparatory drawing indicates—it, too, executed with a remarkable, though more controlled, fury—Watteau first asked the model to kneel down but then changed his mind and tried a different, more lowly position better suited for the task of representing the satyr's/Jupiter's assault on the sleeping nymph. In the Lugt drawing, the model has crouched on the floor, leaning on his bent left arm and extending his right, a pose difficult to maintain for an extended period of time, thus the speed of Watteau's notation.<sup>31</sup>

What made such speedy notation possible was the artist's way with his tools. Just as the page in Watteau's drawing practice is often a quasi-indexical product of the contingencies of the posing process, so, too, is it a document of his specific use of his instruments, here, black and red chalks.

Consider the lower outline of the satyr's extended arm, which describes the trajectory of the artist's hand dragged skittishly across the page rather than offering a mimetic equivalent of this body part; or the lacerating strokes of black and red that describe the satyr's facial features but are also indexical marks of the artist's sharp chalk as it quickly touched the paper's surface.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, given the evident speed with which he drew the Lugt satyr, and the entanglement of black and red lines with one another in the rendition of the satyr's body, it seems to me quite likely that the artist used both chalks at once. He probably did not, as was the custom, use a *porte-crayon* for that purpose, a tool that, given the relatively small size of the sheet (roughly 10 cm x



Watteau. *Top*: Study for a Satyr about to Attack. C. 1717. *Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris.*  
*Bottom*: Jupiter and Antiope. 1715. *Musée du Louvre.*

31. As Martin Eidelberg has established (*Watteau's Drawings: Their Use and Significance*, pp. 35–36), it was the Lugt sketch, notwithstanding its roughness, that the artist used for the final composition.

32. I use the term *index* in the classic Peircean sense, as a type of sign that is defined by physical and causal relation to the object that produces it, as in an imprint. Watteau often used chalk to produce such indexical effects. Sometimes he used blunted chalk, while at other times, as in his portrait of the editor of the *Mercur de France* and friend and patron Antoine de La Roque (the British Museum), he would model aspects of the figure by dragging the broader edge of the chalk stick across the surface of the paper, indexing the shape of the chalk stick itself.

20 cm), would have proved unwieldy, forcing him to twirl it like a baton at an impossible speed. Rather, Watteau may have held both chinks in one hand and, having inserted them between his fingers, applied them interchangeably, or simultaneously, as he went along.<sup>33</sup> This idiosyncratic method of using chinks as, in a sense, extensions of his own fingers is, I think, precisely what enabled the artist to produce the effect of the satyr's instantaneous appearance on the page, even at the cost of some precision. (See the curve of the satyr's rump "invading" the territory of the arm.)

We witness a similar performance in the far more finished *Three Studies of a Young Girl Wearing a Hat*, now in a private collection. Here the artist observes the head of a child who is moving, and, in an attempt to follow her movement, he has to work relatively fast. And so he does. Up close, practically hovering above her, he unleashes a storm of black strokes that lands on her head like a giant oyster, its treatment recalling Watteau's gestural performance in the Louvre *Satyr*. (The drawings were indeed done at about the same time, c. 1715–16.) Pluridirectional, these thick, summary strokes underscore the movements of the girl's head, its vector accentuated



Watteau. *Nude Man Kneeling, Holding Fabric in His Right Hand*. Musée du Louvre.



Watteau. *Three Studies of a Young Girl Wearing a Hat*. Collection of Ann and Gordon Getty.

33. In her discussion of another drawing, *Three Studies of a Seated Woman* (Art Institute, Chicago), Marianne Roland Michel observed that it looked as if the drawing had been done *almost* simultaneously with red and black chinks, but she has not developed this observation further to consider how exactly it would have been done. Roland Michel, *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth-Century*, p. 78. An alternative to my suggestion that Watteau drew holding both chinks in one hand—not unlike how one holds chopsticks, only shorter—would be that he drew with both left and right hand at once, holding chinks of different colors in each hand. Though I have not been able to find a confirmation for either of these methods' having been used by Watteau, I am inclined to think the first of them was the more likely one.



by the pointed tip of her hat. In contrast to the agitated handling of the headgear, the girl's hair and face were fleshed out more softly in a mixture of black and red chalk. The thorough intermeshing of the strokes, especially the overlapping red and black crosshatchings that flesh out the girl's cheeks and the intertwined squiggles that convey the play of light on her hair, suggests that the chinks were used simultaneously. On the profile on the left, both chinks were positively dragged *together* on the surface to create the neck, indicating that they were held in one hand.

How different Watteau's execution is from that of the artists on whom he modeled his practice is amply evident when we cast a quick glance at the *trois crayons* study of a boy's head by Rubens. In Rubens's drawing, whose exquisite mimeticism prevails over visible traces of the artist's mark, Rubens's hand behaves as well as his subject, the boy himself: Both are *sage*. Not so Watteau's, especially in the agitated performance that produced the girl's hat, but also in the nervous energy that went into the depiction of her face, the strokes that, multiplied and mobile, testify not only to the artist's gesture but also to the materials with which he performed it.

What we witness here is, I would argue, not simply an unusually swift and open mode of drawing but a specific understanding of the artist's hand, a notion that was being conceptualized in France precisely in Watteau's time and, to a large extent, in relation to his draftsmanship.<sup>34</sup> In the eighteenth-century practice and discourse of connoisseurship, the notion of the "artist's hand" came to be understood as a mark of individual style, of authenticity, and, by extension, of authorship. Inherited by art history, this notion also helped to naturalize the connection between the artist as a person and his or her work.<sup>35</sup> Watteau, once a member of the circle of artists and



Peter Paul Rubens.  
Portrait of the Artist's Son  
Nicolaas. C. 1619. *Albertina*.

34. In France, the notion of the artist's hand emerged in the eighteenth-century discourse of connoisseurship wherein drawing came to be seen as the most direct testimony to the artist's individual style, the trace of a privileged mark of authorship. See Caylus, "Discours sur les dessins," in *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture, 1712–1746*, ed. Jacqueline Lichtenstein and Christian Michel (Paris: Beaux Arts de Paris, 2010), pp. 450–57. The issue has been addressed at length in Christian Michel, "Le goût pour le dessin en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles: De l'utilisation à l'étude désintéressé," *Revue de l'art* 143, no. 1 (2004), pp. 27–34; Bailey, "Toute seule elle peut remplir et satisfaire l'attention"; and Smentek, "The Collector's Cut." Watteau's were among the first, if not *the* first, contemporary drawings discussed in these terms. See Jullienne's *Préface* quoted in an earlier footnote.

35. See Mieke Bal, "Her Majesty's Masters," in *The Art Historian: National Traditions and Institutional Practices*, ed. Michael F. Zimmermann (Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, 2003), pp. 81–107.

amateurs gathered around Crozat (whose collection of master drawings was instrumental in the development of connoisseurship), performs this emergent eighteenth-century understanding of the artist's hand, making visible its operations, even flaunting the idiosyncrasy of his handling.<sup>36</sup> Yet this is an authorial performance of a particular kind: It is visibly aligned and even identified with the draftsman's tools and materials. Insistently indexical, Watteau's touch is, as we have seen, both a physical trace of the artist's gesture *and* a record of the implements with which he executed it. Turning his hand into a sort of *porte-crayon*, Watteau thus *de-naturalizes* the idea of the "hand" as a synecdoche of the artist's body and, by extension, of his person. His "hand" is, rather, manifestly an instrument of the medium. There is a certain automatism to its operations, a randomness and a quasi-mechanical quality—look again at the controlled mess of the Louvre satyr's head, or at the Getty girl's hat—that seem less the evidence of what is traditionally understood as a mind or imagination at work than of a willing submission of these faculties to the pure mechanics of making. To put it in only slightly exaggerated terms, one could say that in Watteau's work, it is the chalk that is doing the drawing, the artist's hand having been to some extent deactivated or given over to his tool, or else impeded, if only slightly, by holding two crayons at once.

This submission to or identification with the medium speaks of Watteau's capacity not only to mobilize but also to think *through* the materials. As such, it is symptomatic of a specific way of thinking that opens itself to chance, an approach that is linked to Watteau's working habits in a more general sense.

#### IV. Notation, Accumulation, Storage

We know from his contemporaries that Watteau drew mostly without any specific purpose, filling the pages with motifs that could serve him later, often more than once.<sup>37</sup> Some sheets testify to this practice of random accumulation of forms on the page more readily than others. Such is the case with *Crouching Child*; *Two*

36. The importance of Crozat's drawing collection for Watteau, ascertained already in the eighteenth-century sources, notably by Caylus and Mariette, has been discussed widely in the Watteau literature. Especially relevant is the argument advanced by Weisberg-Roberts about Watteau's copies after old masters' drawings from Crozat's collection as "heuristic" enactments of the connoisseurial approach to drawing developed in the collector's circle. See Weisberg-Roberts, *Antoine Watteau and the Cultural Value of Drawing*, chapter 4. For the most recent assessment of Crozat's impact, including on Watteau, see Rochelle Ziskin, *Sheltering Art: Collecting and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), pp. 69–118.

37. Caylus wrote that ". . . most often he drew without purpose. For never did he make a sketch or a study for any of his paintings, no matter how light or abbreviated. His custom was to draw his studies in an album [bound book], so that he always has a large number at hand. . . . When he wished to make a painting, he would resort to his collection. From it he chose the figures that suited best his needs of the moment. He put them together in groups, most often in relation to the landscape background he would have conceived or prepared before. It was rare that he would do it differently." *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, pp. 78–79. While Caylus, as has been noted, may have exaggerated—after all, there are some drawings, the satyrs discussed here being one example, that can be described as preparatory for a specific project—his account conveys the gist of Watteau's working method. For a historicized discussion of Caylus's account, see Christian Michel, *Le "Célèbre Watteau"* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2008), pp. 48–53 and 70–80.



Watteau. Crouching Child; Two Male Heads, One Wearing a Beret; Arms and Hands of a Recorder Player. *Rijksmuseum*.

*Male Heads, One Wearing a Beret; Arms and Hands of a Recorder Player*. The disparity of these motifs is clear, each being an image or a fragment of a different body evidently executed at different times, the figure of the child and the arms of the recorder player having been most likely drawn first, the two male heads added later. This disparity is further underscored by the differences in the means and mode of execution (i.e., from the broad strokes of sanguine that produced the figure of the crouching girl

to the highly finished, multi-crayon-plus-stumping rendition of the shaved male head in the center).

The random grouping of the motifs on a page, motivated as it may have been by economy—drawing paper was relatively expensive, and multiple uses of a single sheet were common among artists—is symptomatic of Watteau’s consistent embrace of chance not only in his practice but also in the mode in which he stored his drawings in bound books (*livres reliés*).<sup>38</sup> We do not know exactly how the artist assembled these books or how they looked because none of them is extant—they were dismantled soon after the artist’s death. He may have pasted his drawings onto the pages of ready-made, pre-bound albums, as did Italian collectors of drawings from the Renaissance on, or he may have bound the sheets together himself in some way.<sup>39</sup>

Assembling disparate manuscript notes and excerpts was an established practice in the European culture of the early modern period, and it constituted an art unto itself, as the plethora of illustrated manuals published before and during Watteau’s time attest.<sup>40</sup> To store *his* visual notes—for this is what his

38. See Caylus, as quoted in Michel, *Le “Célèbre Watteau,”* p. 78.

39. For the habit of mounting drawings in albums in Italy and France, see Carlo James, “Collectors and Mounting,” in *Old Master Prints and Drawings: A Guide to Preservation and Conservation*, trans. and ed. Marjorie B. Cohn (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), pp. 2–35. For eighteenth-century France, where drawings were also stored in portfolios and *paquets*, see Smentek, “Cut and Paste” (specifically for Mariette’s storing habits), and Bailey, “*Toute seule elle peut remplir et satisfaire l’attention,*” p. 74.

40. See, for example, Vincent Placcius, *De arte excerptendi vom gelahrten Buchhalten liber singularis* (Hamburg: Godfried Liebezeit, 1689). For the discussion of the early modern phenomenon of note-taking and note management, see Ann Blair, “The Rise of Note-Taking in Early Modern Europe,” *Intellectual History Review* 3 (2014), pp. 303–16.

drawings amounted to—Watteau likely resorted to the simplest manual method used widely by early modern scholars and writers, among them Blaise Pascal. The comparison is instructive, for Pascal used the page like Watteau drew on it: He filled a single large sheet of paper with his sundry thoughts jotted down at different times, often randomly, writing in all directions, as one partly reconstructed page from his manuscript of the *Pensées*, reproduced here, indicates. He would then cut these entries out, sort them according to their subject, and store them in bundles held together by strings that he threaded through the paper with a needle. When a bundle was complete, he would insert a label with a title of a series and tie the string.<sup>41</sup> The open-ended structure of this primitively manual method of note management—much simpler than the note-storing contraptions featured in the manuals, but based on a similar premise of ordered randomness—was convenient in that it allowed Pascal to continuously revise and rearrange them. Whether or not he intended to publish his manuscript in this way—that is, preserving its discontinuity—is uncertain, for Pascal, like Watteau, died prematurely, and the publication of his *Pensées* was accomplished posthumously by his sister and nephew.<sup>42</sup> What does seem certain, though, is that the physical form of his manuscript, which was described in the introduction to its first edition as a “sketch” (*dessin ébauché*), also had something to do with its content.<sup>43</sup> Pascal’s mode of writing and organizing his thoughts in fragments was closely related to his rejection of linear thinking and the rationalist form of discourse. An unorthodox apologia of Christian religion, the *Pensées*, in their very form, embodied Pascal’s mistrust of religious dogmatism: They were a material representation of his discourse of doubt.<sup>44</sup>



Blaise Pascal. Manuscript of *Pensées*. Folio A 184.

41. See Philippe Sellier, “Introduction,” in Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Philippe Sellier (Paris: Garnier, 1991), p. 26. For a detailed reconstruction of Pascal’s note sheets and his bundling system, see Pol Ernst, *Les Pensées de Pascal: Géologie et stratigraphie* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996).

42. The *Pensées* were first published in 1670, eight years after Pascal’s death at the age of thirty-nine. There is a rich literature on the fate of Pascal’s manuscript, the form of which posed an editorial challenge with which modern editors of the *Pensées* continue to grapple. On this issue, and on the understanding of Pascal’s work’s being inseparable from the vicissitudes of his manuscript, see Sellier, *Pensées*, pp. 25–39; and Roger Ariew, “Introduction: A Brief History of the Text,” in Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. and ed. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005), p. xi.

43. Pascal’s nephew, Étienne Périer, used this phrase in his preface to the Port-Royal edition of the *Pensées* (1670). See Sellier, *Pensées de Pascal*, p. 36.

44. On Pascal’s skepticism in regard to rational discourse and his antirationalist insistence on “the instability and cultural relativity of human beliefs,” see the brief but sharp analysis of Thomas G. Pavel, “The Subject of Modern Discourse,” in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 287–88.

The point of comparing Watteau's mode of storing images to Pascal's mode of managing his *pensées* is to suggest that Watteau's albums, too, amounted to a certain mode of visual thinking: one embedded in their very structure, which, judging from the way he used the albums, was based on the principle of concatenation—the order of metonymy—of heterogeneous elements. Watteau's drawings constituted a vast visual repertory from which he was known to have pulled figures and motifs at random, often transferring them mechanically—sometimes via counterproof—onto the canvas.<sup>45</sup> Figures drawn on different sheets at different moments in time and without the intention of ever being linked together would find themselves paired in paintings, often in such intimate interactions that it is difficult to imagine they had not been sketched in such a configuration in the first place. We also know that certain motifs in Watteau's paintings, such as the heads of two women featured in *In the Guise of a Mezzetin*, appeared there most likely because they happened to be next to each other on the same page of his album. (In the painting, they are spread asunder by the figure of the mezzetin.)<sup>46</sup> The modular structure of many of Watteau's drawings facilitated such automatic translation from one medium to another, and many were used repeatedly, in several different paintings, sometimes for a different purpose.<sup>47</sup> If, then, Watteau's drawing albums represented a form of thinking or knowing—a tradition of understanding the function of drawing that goes back to the Renaissance notion of *disegno*—it was



Watteau. Two Bust-Length Studies of Young Women (Portraits of the Daughters of Pierre Sirois). *British Museum*.

45. One example is the Petit Palais drawing of *Standing Savoyard with Marmot*, which is believed to have been transferred by counterproof onto the canvas of the painting of the same subject, now in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. See Grasselli in *Watteau, 1684–1721*, no. D50, pp. 115–16; and Rosenberg and Prat in *Antoine Watteau: Catalogue raisonné des dessins*, no. P32, pp. 319–21.

46. For this point about the painting, see Christoph Martin Vogtherr, *Watteau at the Wallace Collection* (London: the Wallace Collection, 2011), pp. 58–63. On Watteau's habit of selecting motifs from his albums at random, see also Caylus, in *Vies anciennes de Watteau*: “[He] very often repeated the same figure, either because he liked it, or because, searching for one, it was the first one that had presented itself to him” (p. 79).

47. One among numerous examples of Watteau's multiple uses of motifs is the woman's bust shown in *profil perdu* in the upper left of a drawing now at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which traveled to two different paintings, *Gamme d'amour* (National Gallery, London) and *Récréation galante* (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin). Another is the half-figure of a soldier leaning on his elbow in the Boijmans Museum drawing that appeared in *A Break in Action (Le délassement de la guerre)* and was repurposed in *The Supply Train (Escorte d'équipage)*, both paintings now in the Hermitage. For the latter, see Rosenberg and Prat, *Antoine Watteau: Catalogue raisonné des dessins*, no. 180, pp. 282–83, with the corresponding details of paintings reproduced in engraving. See also Grasselli, *Watteau, 1684–1721*, nos. D34, fig. 1, and P16, pp. 97–98 and 282–83. Let us note, moreover, that this mode of working is different from the standard academic procedure in which the artist may use separate sheets to sketch different aspects of the final composition. Here the sketches have no predetermined purpose.



Watteau. *In the Dress of a Mezzetin*.  
C. 1717–19. Wallace Collection.

knowledge of a specific kind: one that shunned a totalizing view in favor of recording the endless multiplicity of being in the world.

This mode of visual thinking—fragmentary, aleatory, and cumulative—can be historicized further as a form of skepticism: not that of Pascal but of an empiricist kind.<sup>48</sup> It may be linked, that is, to the new epistemology that was gaining importance in France in Watteau's time, largely owing to the influence of John Locke. Locke's work was disseminated in France almost from the moment of its first publication in Britain, such that by the early eighteenth century the English philosopher was considered to be a widely read author among the French public.<sup>49</sup> Whether or not Watteau actually read the work of Locke, the empiricist outlook was an important aspect of the cultur-

al landscape in which the artist worked.<sup>50</sup>

Watteau's persistent habit of registering the visible world in its infinite variety and detail, and indeed his entire enterprise as a draftsman, corresponds to the

48. For the "*scepticisme douloureux et désespéré*" of Pascal and the connection of his *Pensées* to specifically Pyrrhonian skepticism, see Sellier, "Introduction," pp. 41–42. By empiricist skepticism I mean the empiricists' skeptical attitude toward knowledge—their avowal of its limitations—and not the specific philosophy of skepticism, such as Pyrrhonism, which was based on total suspension of belief. While being skeptical in regard to knowledge, Locke was not *stricto sensu* a philosophical skeptic. (I am grateful to Alison Simmons for drawing my attention to the need for making this distinction.) Hume, on the other hand, explicitly defined his philosophy as skeptical, though he also distinguished his position from that of the Pyrrhonists. On this, see Robert J. Fogelin, "Hume's Skepticism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, pp. 209–37.

49. Introduced in an abridged form in 1688—two years before its publication in English—in the *Bibliothèque universelle*, Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* appeared *in toto* in Pierre Coste's translation in 1700 and was reprinted in a number of French editions throughout the eighteenth century. In addition to these publications, Locke's empirical doctrine was disseminated through the reprints of the British debates on his work in French journals, through summaries published in the biographical sketches, and, later, through sustained discussions of it among French thinkers. See John W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 5–9.

50. For Locke's impact on the domain of art—specifically on the Lockean dimension of art collecting in Watteau's milieu—see Isabelle Tillerot, *Jean de Jullienne et les collectionneurs de son temps* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2010), pp. 276–77.

basic empiricist premise promoted by Locke that knowledge is a function of sensory experience. The artist's sustained commitment to observation, his mistrust of the visual givens, such as the academic body or an inherited pose, his reluctance to compose, that is, to put the elements of the image into a preconceived whole—his compositional drawings are scarce<sup>51</sup>—all these aspects may certainly be described as an empiricist disposition. Moreover, it is tempting to relate a certain degree of automatism that characterizes Watteau's approach to drawing—his quasi-mechanical multiplications of motifs and figures, his habit of using chinks as extensions of his fingers, and other evidence of the artist's willing alignment of his hand with his tools—to the radical shift in the understanding of materiality produced by Locke's insights, specifically by his provocative suggestion that matter can be made to think.<sup>52</sup> Insofar as he entrusted drawing to its material bases, Watteau's practice may indeed be seen as a version of post-Lockean materialism. Not only committed to the empirically based depiction of the world, it also sought, by embracing and expanding a range of technical procedures, to activate the potential of the draftsman's tools *to think on paper*, thus tapping the cognitive capacity of the materials themselves.

A close correspondence may also be found between the structure of both Watteau's individual drawings and his albums and the description of the human mind offered by David Hume, who engaged with the empirical legacy of Locke and further developed some of its key insights.<sup>53</sup> Hume found the mind to be a complex and compound entity, "a kind of theatre where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different; whatever natural propensity we may have to imagine that

51. Those that exist—e.g., *Italian Comedians Taking Their Bows* (National Gallery, Washington, DC)—amply demonstrate that Watteau knew perfectly well how to compose on paper. Yet he did not adopt composition as his preparatory procedure. He preferred *assembling* motifs culled from his albums on canvas, following a principle of association about which I will say more below. As Grasselli put it in her entry on the National Gallery drawing, *Renaissance to Revolution*, p. 102: "For the most part . . . Watteau preferred to work out his composition directly on the canvas, with the result that lively ensemble studies like [this one] are all too rare." For the discussion of the extant compositional drawing of Watteau, see Eidelberg, *Watteau's Drawings: Their Use and Significance*, chapters 1, 3, and 4; and Roland Michel, *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 111–20.

52. Locke suggested that there was nothing contradictory in the notion "that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking." John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Roger Woolhouse (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 480. This suggestion gave rise to a running debate in Britain and France in the eighteenth century on whether matter can think. For an extensive discussion of Locke's claim and its implications, see John W. Yolton, *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 4 and pp. 14–27. And on Locke's impact on the French materialist outlook, see Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism*.

53. For the relation between Locke and Hume, see Yolton, *Thinking Matter*, pp. 50–106; Henry E. Allison, "Locke's Theory of Personal Identity," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27, no. 1 (January–March 1966), pp. 44–58; and, in relation to the issues I am concerned with here, Jane L. McIntyre, "Hume and the Problem of Personal Identity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, 2nd edition, ed. David Fate Norton and Jacqueline Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 177–85.

simplicity and identity.”<sup>54</sup> Neither a substance nor a location, the mind, in Hume’s view, amounts to a contingent collection of irreducibly varied and discontinuous impressions unfolding in time.<sup>55</sup>

This understanding of the mind led Hume to skepticism regarding personal identity understood as a simple and stable substance, the existence of which appeared to him unverifiable:

When I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are remov’d for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist.<sup>56</sup>

Hume thus concluded that, insofar as he could not identify a *single* impression from which the idea of the self could be derived, such an idea did not exist. What we amount to is “nothing but a bundle or a collection of different perceptions . . . in perpetual flux and movement.”<sup>57</sup> Personal identity, he declared, exists as a fiction, a matter of belief or illusion sustained by the efforts of our imagination and memory against the evidence of perceptual and subjective discontinuity and incoherence.

Watteau’s approach to his subjects—and, I would suggest, to himself as an artist—testifies to a similar kind of skepticism, even if it predates Hume’s own formulations.<sup>58</sup> His representation of the figure as a sequence of poses may thus be

54. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd edition, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 253.

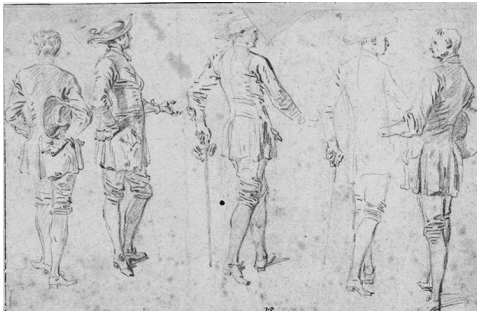
55. For the discussion of this point, see McIntyre, “Hume and the Problem of Personal Identity,” pp. 182–85.

56. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 252.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 253. (Let us note that this vision of the self brings Pascal’s material bundles of thoughts, i.e., his sewn notes, to mind.) Among the discussions of Hume’s account of the self that were helpful to me are McIntyre, “Hume and the Problem of Personal Identity”; Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume’s Theory of Human Nature*, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 85–105; Jan Goldstein, “Mutations of the Self in Old Regime and Post-Revolutionary France,” in *Biographies of Scientific Objects*, ed. Lorraine Daston (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 86–116. On the role of illusion in Hume’s concept of personal identity, see Jean-Philippe Narboux, *L’Illusion* (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), p. 110. For a broader discussion of the notion of personal identity in empiricist philosophy and its cultural impact, see Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), which is excellent, though it underestimates Hume.

58. Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature*—which the author wrote, incidentally, during his sojourn in France from 1734 to 1737—was published in Britain in 1739. Its last part, Book III, appeared a year later. (See P. H. Nidditch, “Preface to the Second Edition,” in *Treatise of Human Nature*.) Watteau, therefore, did not live long enough to be able to read it. However, in evoking Hume, I do not wish to imply that his philosophy was known to Watteau, let alone that it was a “script” the artist followed in his work. Rather, I want to suggest that the skeptical thinking Watteau developed through his own practice—a mode of thinking with a long tradition predating Watteau’s time—may be related to, and even in a sense anticipate, Hume’s insights. Both Hume’s and Watteau’s work stemmed, I argue, from an empiricist impulse, the condition of possibility for both being the Lockean outlook. I would even go as far as





Watteau. *Top*: Five Standing Men. *Musée du Louvre*. *Bottom*: Three Studies of Soldiers, Two Lying Down, One Seated. *École Nationale des Beaux Arts, Paris*.

understood not only as a symptom of general empirical curiosity but also, more specifically, as a sign of an intuitive recognition that, as Hume was to observe, “self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are suppos’d to have reference. . . . [There] is no impression constant and invariable.”<sup>59</sup> Whether it is the multiple iterations of a standing male figure unfurling, scroll-like, along the page; a sequence of supine soldiers rolling downwards across the sheet; or a spattering of back views of a bonneted woman seated on the ground, Watteau’s figure studies speak of an understanding of the person as an irreducible diversity of impressions that unfold in time to an observing mind.<sup>60</sup>

What I have said of Watteau’s tendency to “abdicate” his agency to his tools also applies to the object of his observations. He seems to let objects appear on the page in the form of successive impressions registered by his mind, as in the British Museum drawing: In the lower

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to suggest that their work may be treated as mutually explanatory, each providing a means—a language—of understanding the other. Hume’s work, it may be added, was highly relevant for the French culture of empiricism. While the *Treatise*, unlike other philosophical works of Hume, was not translated into French until the early nineteenth century (as Goldstein notes in “Mutations of the Self,” p. 98 and n. 26), it had considerable impact on French empiricist philosophy through its extensive reviews and discussion in French philosophical publications. On this, see Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism*, pp. 141–43. French familiarity with Hume’s work was, moreover, enhanced by the Scottish philosopher’s personal contacts with French Enlightenment thinkers. He was twice in France on long-term visits; in addition to his three-year-long stay there in the late 1730s, he returned to Paris between 1763 and 1766. See Hume, “My Life,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, pp. 527–28.

59. Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, p. 251.

60. Watteau’s emphasis on the difference between each iteration of the figure is another aspect that connects his visual imagination to Hume. The role of difference was key in Hume’s conceptualization of experience, which, in his view, resides in the perception of the collection of impressions that are differentiated. “Every thing that is different is distinguishable; and every thing that is distinguishable, may be separated” (*Treatise on Human Nature*, p. 36). Deleuze sees the principle of difference as the fundamental principle of empiricism. See his *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 90.



Watteau. Five Studies of a Seated Woman Seen from Behind. *British Museum*.  
© Trustees of the British Museum.

sequence of the figures, the drawing registers the gradual change in the woman's posture as she rises slightly, shifting her weight from her left arm to assume a more upright position, and suggests that Watteau drew while the woman moved, rushing to put on paper the impressions of her moving figure as they presented themselves to his mind.<sup>61</sup> This is to say that, looking at such a drawing, we get no sense of an agency that had existed prior to representation or had orchestrated the appearance of the figures into an image according to an a priori design. Rather, it is as if the figure

itself had orchestrated its appearance as a flux of impressions on the page, the artist having put himself in the position of the mere medium transmitting this flux. The page, like his mind, is a stage on which this flux of impressions appears. The comments of Watteau's contemporaries about his sketching continuously come to mind, again corroborating the idea that as a draftsman, Watteau assigned himself the role of a ceaseless transmitter of the visible.<sup>62</sup>

Letting the object itself produce the idea of itself—multiply itself—on the page, Watteau makes visible how his mind processes impressions, its operations amounting to a kind of mechanical replication. His predilection for the counterproof—manifest in how he both used and simulated it in his drawings—may thus be understood as an attempt to account, wittingly or unwittingly, for the mechanics of mental operations. In this aspect, Watteau's process, rather than illustrating empiricist philosophy, may be seen as its model: It may have given Hume some idea of how to describe mental functioning. For the Scottish philosopher's assertion that the mind generates its ideas by *making copies* of the impressions it receives seems not far from what Watteau repeatedly does on the page. Specifically, Hume's notion that ideas are, as he put it, "faint images" of impressions, reproducing their content exactly, if in an attenuated form, brings his understanding of the mental process strikingly close to the technical process of reproduction favored by Watteau—for what else is a "faint image" than a counter copy?<sup>63</sup>

61. Most likely Watteau first quickly drew the outlines of the moving figure in red chalk and later went over them to elaborate the details—thus the finished appearance of them here. In other drawings, though, we do see those first impressions—the quickly registered "imprints" of the visible—thrown on the page next to their more elaborated version, as in *Five Studies of a Standing Man*. See the lightly sketched figure second from right on this sheet.

62. "This painter drew continuously, devoting even his walks and recreation time to this exercise." Dezallier d'Argenville, *Vies de l'ancienne Watteau*, p. 49.

63. That Hume would be inspired by Watteau is, of course, a speculative but not entirely improbable idea. Although I have no information to confirm this, Hume could have seen Watteau's

The recognition of Watteau's empiricism allows us, then, to perceive not only the distinct quality of his aesthetic project but also the self-reflexivity that informs it. For a start, it casts into sharper relief the distinction between Watteau's procedures and those of the *ornemanistes*, such as Claude Audran III, with whom Watteau worked at the beginning of his career and who taught him some of the key tricks of the trade, including the use of counter copy to generate designs on a page.<sup>64</sup> Having acquired these methods, Watteau moved on to do something else with them—to *represent* rather than decorate the world, and, by doing so, to take stock of his own role in the process. In his hands, the mechanical procedures of the *ornemanistes* took on a different meaning, becoming not only a mode of making things but a way of seeing, understanding, and reproducing the world. Adopted and modified for his own purposes, these procedures became, moreover, an instrument of artistic self-knowledge, a means of staging the idea of the draftsman's process as an at once mechanical *and* self-conscious transmission—a performance of an empiricist's mind at work. (Locke's dictum that we cannot think without knowing we do so comes to mind.)<sup>65</sup>

Skeptical empiricism may also be recognized as the unspoken assumption behind Watteau's mode of storing his drawings in albums. For the albums were not only, as with other artists, a repository of his work. They defined the very nature of his process. As we have already noted, Watteau eschewed the preparatory process in the traditional sense of the word. Rarely did he draw specifically *for* a project or work by proceeding systematically from a compositional sketch to the elaboration of the individual figures and details. Instead, he preferred to immerse himself in his albums, their nonuniform, discontinuous structure making it easy to cull figures and motifs from them at random. It was the principle of association that governed his choices as he assembled rather than composed his paintings, according to Caylus.<sup>66</sup>

The image of Watteau flipping through the pages of his *livres reliés* in search of a motif or a figure that we inherited from Caylus raises, again, the question of the relation between this procedure and Watteau's vision of himself as an artist.

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drawings during his two visits to France, where, as we recall, he actually wrote his *Treatise*. Be this as it may, it is interesting to note the closeness of his terminology—his notion of impression as a weaker copy—to the technical procedures of an artist: “counter copy.” For a discussion of Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas, which constituted an important philosophical innovation, see David Owen, “Hume and the Mechanics of Mind,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, p. 71.

64. For Watteau's apprenticeship with Audran, see especially Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 45–74; and Katie Scott, “Playing Games with Otherness: Watteau's Chinese Cabinet at the Château de la Muette,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 66 (2003), pp. 203–7.

65. Locke spoke of “that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it: It being impossible for anyone to perceive without perceiving, that he does perceive” (*Essay on Human Understanding*, 2.27.9, p. 302). For Locke's notion of self-reflexivity, see McIntyre, “Hume and the Problem of Personal Identity,” p. 178, and Goldstein, “Mutations of the Self,” p. 93.

66. Caylus, *Vies anciennes de Watteau*. For a provocative discussion of Watteau's “cut-and-paste” procedure in the context of other eighteenth-century artists' practices, see David Pullins, “Framing Figure and Ornament: Notes on a Mode of Construction in Eighteenth-Century France,” in *Ornament as Portable Culture*, ed. Gülrü Necipoglu and Alina Payne, forthcoming.

As random accumulations of perceptions, heterogeneous in their content, the albums do not coalesce into an image of a coherent artistic self. Submitting himself to the aleatory principle of selection from his own drawings sketched at different times, Watteau opted out from unity and coherence as a means of self-definition. His working habits testify to a sense of doubt that was perhaps less psychological—as the accounts of his contemporaries tend to suggest—than epistemological, less a matter of temperament than of a (self-conscious) tactic: a *techné* of the self skeptical of itself as a source of knowledge.<sup>67</sup>

#### V. *The Timely Subject*

One can say that Watteau was, in more than one sense, a *chronic* draftsman. Chronic not only because, as his contemporaries indicated, he was an inveterate sketcher but also because the internal structure of his sketches, the principle—if there was one—that organized his sheets and his albums, was time. His was, however, a specific understanding of time: not a preexisting flow from within which objects emerge into view, but time *produced* by the objects themselves, by their sequential mode of appearance, which Watteau was so keen to record. Similarly, in the drawings where the motifs or figures were organized by more complex chronology (and, as far as one can tell, also the albums in which he stored them), it is not the time imposed from the outside—the temporality of a specific project—but that of the artist's idiosyncratic, nonlinear process that comes into view. This was, essentially, the model of temporality introduced by empiricist philosophy, which, by locating time in the object, revealed time to be the structure of the mental life of the subject.

Inasmuch as it maintained that sensory experience alone could assure us of the existence of things, empiricism challenged the idea of an “absolute” time existing independently of the subject.<sup>68</sup> Locke saw time as a construct of the mind. As he suggested, time is based on our observation of a succession of ideas that pass through our mind, making us notice the distance between them—time is the term we assign to that distance.<sup>69</sup> The problem posed by this formulation was that, insofar as it suggested time to be an independent mental operation, it contradicted Locke's own empiricist proposition that all contents of the mind derive from external sensations.<sup>70</sup> Hume approached the issue in a more skeptical

67. In other words, this is a self rooting its vision in experience, not in itself. As for the association of Watteau's working methods with his temperament, it predates the Goncourt brothers' nineteenth-century construction of the artist as a melancholic. We find it already in the eighteenth-century testimonies, e.g., in Caylus, who spoke of Watteau's melancholic disposition (“*si sombre, si atrabilaire*”) relieved only by drawing from the live model. Caylus also linked Watteau's method of painting to his impatience, *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, pp. 72 and 77. Gersaint, too, related Watteau's working habits to his character in *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, p. 40.

68. On the empiricist challenge to the notion of absolute time, see, most succinctly, Donald J. Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past: Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and the Rhetoric of Relative Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 27–31.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29.

fashion by focusing more specifically on how we arrive at the perception of time (rather than what time *is*).<sup>71</sup> We cannot, Hume argued, imagine time in an abstract sense. The idea of duration can only be formed through the experience of particular things or particular ideas that appear to us in a particular fashion, that is, in succession, such as, for example, five notes played on a flute (an instrument, let us note, that Watteau so often drew). It is by hearing this sequence of sounds produced by an instrument that we arrive at the notion of temporality, which is to say that time is an effect of that specific sequence and not, Hume insists, an effect of some independent, sixth impression arising from this experience.<sup>72</sup> This is to say that the sense of time is derived not from any particular impression or reflection but from the *manner* in which these impressions appear to us.<sup>73</sup> An effect of successive perceptions, including the perceptions of ourselves, appearing continuously on the stage of our mind, time is thus “forever present with us,” defining our subjective functioning and our personal identity.<sup>74</sup>

If Hume had wished to have his discussion of time illustrated, he could have certainly used one of Watteau’s drawings—the British Museum sheet would do. For what do these repeated shapes of a woman amount to if not those “real objects whose succession forms the duration, and makes it be conceivable to the mind,” of which Hume spoke?<sup>75</sup> In a more general sense, the impression of time Watteau’s drawings generate stems from his commitment to represent the object *insofar* as it is changeable, his predilection for showing figures in a sequence, and, in the single-figure drawings, his emphasis on the figure’s existence in its own particular moment, rather than in an imposed narrative time. Moreover, one could say that some of Watteau’s drawings thematize time, as in his frequent representation of musicians playing their instruments—notably flutes—which could serve as a practical illustration of empiricist, object-based, and sequence-derived temporality.<sup>76</sup>

71. See Hume, “Of the other qualities of our ideas of space and time,” *Treatise on Human Nature*, pp. 34–39. For an extensive discussion of Hume’s notion of time, see Donald L. M. Baxter, *Hume’s Difficulty: Time and Identity in the Treatise* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 17–29, and Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, pp. 91–97.

72. I am paraphrasing Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, p. 36.

73. “Wherever we have no successive perceptions, we have no notion of time. . . . [Time] cannot make its appearance to the mind, either alone, or attended with a steady unchangeable object, but is always discover’d by some *perceivable* succession of changeable objects.” *Ibid.*, p. 35. And further: “[Time] can plainly be nothing but different ideas, or impressions, or objects dispos’d in a certain manner, that is, succeeding one another” (p. 37).

74. “For we may observe, that there is a continual succession of perceptions in our mind; so that the idea of time being forever present with us.” *Ibid.*, p. 65. As for identity, Hume defines it as a relation “common to every being, whose existence has any duration” (p. 19). Thus, personal identity is also durational: It is developed through the observation of changes in time. It is only when we experience ourselves in different moments of time that we can establish a relation of identity between different, changing perceptions of ourselves. By making sense of this change—that is, by establishing a relation between different perceptions—we arrive at the sense of ourselves as a sum of these perceptions. For the discussion of this point, see Baxter, *Hume’s Difficulty*, p. 48.

75. Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, p. 39.

76. See, for example, *Two Studies of Flutist and Head of a Boy*, red, black, and white chalk on buff-colored paper, the Getty Museum.

Yet the distinct temporality of Watteau's drawings cannot be understood solely in relation to how time was theorized in empiricist philosophy. It also had something to do with the way in which time was actually experienced, beginning with the experience of those whom Watteau drew. We have already noted how the draftsman's page registered the duration of the model's pose. We must now consider what the time of Watteau's subjects *qua* subjects—that is, as specific individuals—brought to representation. One notable case is that of soldiers, who were a subject of numerous studies and constitute a distinct group in his oeuvre. Although their precise dating remains debatable—as is the case with many of Watteau's drawings—some of these studies can be situated with certainty in the period of Watteau's return visit to his native Valenciennes in 1709–10. Valenciennes, the capital of the Flemish province of Hainaut—French at the time—was then at the center of the ongoing War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), and many soldiers were stationed in the area. It is clear from these sheets that Watteau immersed himself in their community, aiming his gaze at the lowest military rank, the infantrymen.<sup>77</sup>

One remarkable aspect of these studies is their atypical focus on the private existence of these men rather than their military performance. They are not depicted fighting, though in September 1709, around the time Watteau arrived in his hometown, the famous battle of Malplaquet (one of the bloodiest in European history) was raging in the vicinity of Valenciennes, causing tremendous losses on all sides.<sup>78</sup> Nor are they shown, with the exception of one extraordinary drawing, performing military drills.<sup>79</sup> Instead, it is fatigue, listlessness, sleep, reverie, and simple diversions, such as card-playing or pipe-smoking, that Watteau offers to view. (His military paintings, in which some of these figures appeared, were also unusual in

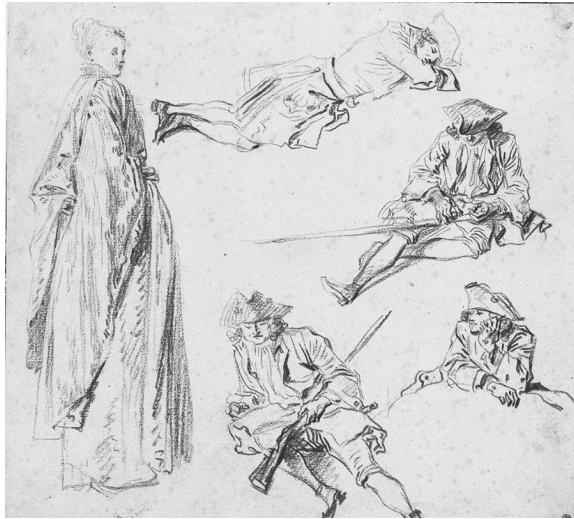
77. Some drawings make the draftsman's immersion in the soldiers' company more explicit than others; see, for example, the scene *Soldiers Playing Cards amidst Ruins*, Graphische Sammlung im Städelschen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt. Rosenberg and Prat, *Antoine Watteau: Catalogue raisonné des dessins*, no. 124, p. 198.

78. We have no precise date of Watteau's arrival in Valenciennes, nor, for that matter, any other documented information about his journey there, except for the evidence of the drawings themselves. What we do know from the brief mentions in Watteau's contemporaries' accounts of his life (e.g., Gersaint, *Vies de l'ancienne Watteau*, p. 33) is that Watteau went there after the Prix de Rome competition at the Academy in which he participated, which was judged in August 1709. It may be assumed, then, that he arrived in Valenciennes sometime after that, in the fall of 1709. He would have witnessed if not the battle itself then certainly the influx of the wounded in its wake to the city, where a military hospital was located. It is interesting, nonetheless, that he chose to focus mainly on the diversions of the soldiers and their lassitude; in other words, on the psychological rather than directly physical effects of the war. For Malplaquet, which took place on September 10 of the year of Watteau's arrival in Valenciennes, see Philippe Contamine, *Histoire militaire de la France*, vol. 1 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992), pp. 533–35; and John Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siècle: The French Army, 1610–1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 19. For Watteau in Valenciennes, see Julie Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 69–70.

79. *Six études d'un soldat vu de trois quarts*, red chalk, Musée de Beaux-Arts, Quimper, represents the stages of the military routine of charging the musket.

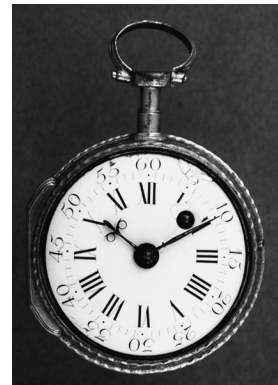
that they focused on retreats, halts, and encampments rather than battle scenes.)<sup>80</sup> Stretched or slumped on the ground (as in the “three studies of soldiers” drawing at Ensba), sleeping, cleaning their guns, daydreaming (as in the Boijmans Museum drawing), or otherwise engaged in intimate activities, Watteau’s soldiers are shown outside the military discipline that structured their professional life: They exist in their own time. Even when he draws recruits on the go, their equipment bags slung across their shoulders, their muskets under their arms, their belted swords and bayonets dangling at their sides, as in a drawing now at the Yale Art Museum, he manages to catch one just in the moment when he has stopped, bending down to adjust a buckle on his shoe, taking time, that is, to

attend to himself, while his companion looks on.<sup>81</sup> What seems to interest Watteau the most are precisely those individual and private moments in his military subjects’ existence. (It also seems to me that, given the focus of these sketches, the very reason for Watteau’s engagement with military subjects was a desire to give an image to those thin slivers of time in which a soldier, in the dehumanizing context of war, may have personal experiences, and in which he is able to experience



Top: Watteau. *Four Studies of Soldiers at Rest and One of a Standing Woman*. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.

Bottom: Pierre Le Roy. *Gilt-metal-cased cylinder-*virgule* watch*. Paris, 1717–85. British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum.



80. For a discussion of Watteau’s military paintings, see Hal Opperman, “The Theme of Peace in Watteau,” in Moureau and Grasselli, *Antoine Watteau*, pp. 23–28; Vidal, *Watteau’s Painted Conversations*, pp. 43–49; Arlette Farge, *Les fatigues de la guerre* (Paris: Le Promeneur, 1996); and Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France*, pp. 53–107.

81. Wintermute has made a compelling suggestion that the drawing represents, in fact, the same soldier in two different poses. *Watteau and His World*, no. 11, p. 112.

himself, if fleetingly, *as a subject*, as do the two lowermost figures in the Boijmans Museum drawing, shown in a state of reverie and reflection.)<sup>82</sup>

Yet if Watteau lets his subjects live their own lives on the page, he also submits these lives to a discrete type of visual discipline. Stepping back to consider how the soldiers' bodies are arranged on the page in some of these drawings, we note a curious pattern: When there are three or more figures on the sheet, their presentation is often not only sequential but circular, their bodies positioned as if to mark the passing time on a dial of an invisible clock. In the Ensba drawing, the slouching body of the soldier in the upper left looks in fact like a long minute hand of a watch, its downward movement in space, as if on a dial, suggested by the position of the soldier next to it, laying on his back, and, further down on the curve, by the sideways-leaning figure in the lower right. (It is as if by rolling downwards the soldier's body lifted off the ground a bit.) The three figures thus describe a segment (a quarter) of a circle, one shown slightly askew—an arrangement all the more salient when we juxtapose the drawing with a face of an actual early-eighteenth-century timepiece, such as a portable watch made by Pierre Le Roy.

An even more pronounced rhythm of an hour or a minute hand moving on a clock's dial (the minute hand's movements were of course easier to perceive<sup>83</sup>) structures the appearance of the soldier figures in the Boijmans Museum drawing. Here the men's bodies form a distinct semicircle that—passing from the sleeping soldier in the upper center, his body stretched out, his head nestled in his arms; to the seated one, cleaning his musket; to the next one, leaning against a barely contoured mound, his head resting on his elbow while he gazes off dreamily into a distance; and finally to a reclining figure with a gun under his arm—produces a partial image of a timepiece. Each figure appears—the more so that it is suspended in an abstract space—as if it were a digit on a dial's face, a slice of time incarnated: one o'clock, two o'clock, four o'clock, and six o'clock. You can almost hear the clock ticking as your eye moves from one soldier to the next.<sup>84</sup>

Even on the sheets with soldiers standing—such as the one featuring a drummer, at the Harvard Art Museums, mentioned earlier, and two others, representing

82. Although this is not the place to develop this argument, it also seems to me that Watteau's extraordinary military paintings perform a similar function. Their idiosyncratic thematic focus—retreats, halts, encampments, bivouacs rather than battles—speaks of Watteau's interest in the soldier's *experience* of war rather than war *per se*, and in laying bare its devastations not only on the physical level but on the level of the subject as both social and psychic entity. Farge, for one, has suggested that Watteau's military paintings reveal the "interiority of disaster" in *Les fatigues de la guerre*.

83. The minute hand was introduced in watches only in the late seventeenth century, after the introduction of the balance spring (1674), which made watches accurate enough to show minutes. See David S. Landes, *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, Mass.: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 139.

84. The particularity of this arrangement is the more evident when we realize that when Watteau used these figures in painting—for he used all four of them in *Le délassement de la guerre* and reused one of them in *Escorte d'équipages*—he arranged them in a different order, but still in a semicircle. For a comparison of the drawing with details of the painting, see Rosenberg and Prat, *Antoine Watteau: Catalogue raisonné des dessins*, nos. 180 and 180a, p. 282.





Watteau. *Top*: Three Standing Soldiers. *c.* 1715. *Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris.* *Bottom*: Three Studies of Soldiers Holding Guns. *Private collection.*

recruits, in the Fondation Custodia and a private collection in Paris—the figures are distributed in a sequence that is notable for not being flat and frieze-like, but rather shaped in a curve. Assuming different poses while standing on an undefined ground, the soldier appears thus not unlike verticalized ciphers rising from the white template of the (invisible) face of a clock, the different moments in the posing session marked by the visual analogy to the dial's image as the measure of time. (One cannot help noting that the figures' feet produce shadows not unlike those cast by a sundial's style, reinforcing the sense of their function as sentinels of passing time.)

What to make of these clock-like arrangements? I would suggest that the temporal substructure that emerges from these drawings—in some arguably more clearly than in others—has something to do with the importance timekeeping devices acquired in this period as both material and imaginary bases of experience. The new status of these instruments was due to the late-seventeenth-century

technological innovations in their production, chief among them the introduction and spread of the portable watch, which made possible a privatized and individualized experience of time. Although wearable timekeepers date back to the beginning of the sixteenth century, when watches as small as a ring could already be produced, albeit only as rare luxury items, it was only in the late seventeenth century that the new technological developments in measuring time—the invention of the escapement and the introduction of the balance-spring—permitted the manufacture of more precise and gradually also cheaper portable watches.<sup>85</sup> Beginning in the late seventeenth century and continuing throughout the eighteenth, we witness in Europe a proliferation of these newly accurate and increasingly affordable devices for

85. For this, and, more broadly, for the technological advances in timekeeping, see Samuel L. Macey, *Clocks and the Cosmos: Time in Western Life and Thought* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1980), pp. 17–18 and p. 33.

timekeeping, most of them produced in Britain and later also in France. Miniaturized and mobile, the watches proved to be a “revolutionary instrument” that altered the nature of temporal experience, introducing time as a key element of private, rather than only collective, life, as in the realm of church bells, clock towers, or even stationary pendulum clocks.<sup>86</sup> Carried on the body, the dials of the portable timepieces made time visible on demand, its image ever present to their owners, with the French word for “watch” (*le montre*) emphasizing the visual nature of the relation to time thus established between an individual and his or her device: Time was *shown*.<sup>87</sup>

As historians and cultural historians have recognized, the introduction and spread of the portable watch had profound consequences for society and culture.<sup>88</sup> Both companions and monitors, these wearable devices forged a personalized idea of temporality, a notion of time as a private possession, something one could have for oneself, as it were, but also something that was “watching” you, an ever-present measure of, potentially, all your activities.<sup>89</sup> As such, they have been seen to contribute to the spread of individualism, to promote personal achievement, and to spur individual productivity, but also, on a different level, to have caused the emergence of the new temporal economy in the eighteenth century—what E. P. Thompson has called “time-discipline”—a phenomenon accompanied by a change in the internal apprehension of time by workers.<sup>90</sup>

Portable watches also came to be indispensable in the military service and tactics, especially during war. Good timing was needed in moving troops, as large numbers of men could not be controlled by voice commands alone, a requirement that increased during the coalition wars of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, which involved the participation of armies of different princes, posing the challenge of coordination.<sup>91</sup> How important the portable

86. Though pendulum clocks, invented in 1656, introduced time into the private sphere of the home, they were not personal devices in the sense that portable watches were. The fact that the latter measured time more precisely than before and that they could be worn on the body turned the portable watches into widely used instruments of convenience, something you would wear so that you could tell the time, rather than for decoration or to mark prestige. See Landes, *Revolution in Time*, pp. 91–92.

87. “*Montre*. . . certaine petite horloge qui se porte ordinairement dans la poche.” *Dictionnaire de L’Académie*, 4th edition, 1762. As Macey has observed, in the eighteenth century portable watches were worn most often in the waistcoat pocket, waistcoats having come into fashion precisely around the time when the spring balance was invented. *Clocks and the Cosmos*, p. 30.

88. Classic studies include Carlo M. Cipolla, *Clocks and Culture, 1300–1700* (London: Collins, 1967); Macey, *Clocks and the Cosmos*; Landes, *Revolution in Time*; and E. P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past and Present* 38 (December 1967), pp. 56–97. On changing cultural definitions of time, see, among others, Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past*, and Krzysztof Pomian, *L’Ordre du Temps* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

89. As Landes has observed, “While the dial of the public clock was not always in full view, the portable watches functioned as ever visible and ever audible companion and monitor.” *Revolution in Time*, pp. 92–93.

90. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism.” For timepieces’ contribution to individualism and other effects, see Landes, *Revolution in Time*, pp. 93–100.

91. On time measurement in war, see Landes, *Revolution in Time*, pp. 98–101; and William McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

watch was for the military commanders in Watteau's time is indicated by the fact that the duc d'Arenberg, Watteau's later patron, hired a famous British clockmaker, Henry Sully, to follow his own and his allies' armies during the Flanders campaign of 1708 (an episode in the War of the Spanish Succession) specifically for the purpose of attending to the commanders' and officers' watches.<sup>92</sup>

But we may assume that, in addition to their widening uses and social impact, portable watches also had an effect on collective and individual imaginations.<sup>93</sup> By rendering time visible in one's everyday life, portable devices must have influenced the way one visualized the world, one's place in it, one's work (if one did work), and *oneself* as a person. It is, moreover, tempting to speculate that, precisely insofar as they offered the material basis for the subject's immersion in time, portable watches prompted the philosophical recognition that, as Hume put it, "time is forever with us." This is to say that in injecting time into the internal life of a subject, the portable watch also made it possible, if not imperative, to account for the self in temporal terms.<sup>94</sup>

A new model of temporality emerged, then, in the early eighteenth century for both philosophical and technological reasons. While the empiricist redefined time as a subjective experience—something that could only be *experienced* rather than assumed—the advent of portable watches offered the technological means through which this experience became measurable and accessible for the individual subject. A *timely subject* was thus wheeled in on the cultural stage by both empiricist philosophy and the technological advances in the production of time-pieces: a subject not only increasingly expected, if not obliged, to be "on time," and someone whose activities came to be measured in time units, but also someone whose internal life was defined or structured by time.<sup>95</sup>

92. Julien Le Roy, "Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire de l'horlogerie depuis 1715 jusqu'en 1729," in Henry Sully, *Règle artificielle du temps: Traité de la division naturelle et artificielle du temps, des horloges et des montres* (Paris, 1717), new ed. revised and augmented by Julien Le Roy (Paris, 1737), p. 384. (Note that Julien Le Roy, who edited and revised Sully's work, was himself a famous French watchmaker and the father of a watchmakers' dynasty that included Pierre Le Roy, whose watch is reproduced here.) Duc Leopold-Philippe d'Arenberg, who fought in the War of the Spanish Succession against the French, became Watteau's patron when he commissioned the painting of *Jupiter and Antiope* discussed above. The commission occurred most likely during d'Arenberg's stay in Paris after the war in the winter of 1715 to 1716. See Bailey, *The Love of Gods*, p. 189.

93. Landes hints at their psychological effects without developing the discussion further, *Revolution in Time*, p. 93.

94. Hume, for one, explicitly invokes clock-time in his *Treatise*, for example, when he enjoins us to observe an object "at five o'clock and then regard the same object at six . . ." (*Treatise on Human Nature*, p. 65). That the entry of time into the philosophical accounts of the self coincided with what has been called the "horological revolution" in Britain—a term referring to both the development of new technologies of watchmaking and to Britain's dominance of the market for portable watches in the period 1660–1760—appears thus not to have been accidental. For the discussion of the "horological revolution," see Macey, *Clocks and the Cosmos*, pp. 17–31.

95. That one finds a plethora of analogies between human functioning and the clock in the literature of the time is not surprising. Thus, to give just one example, the interlocutor of Fontenelle in his dialogue on the *Plurality of Worlds* opines about someone she respected all the more because he "resembled a watch" ("il ressemble à une montre"). M. de Fontenelle (Bernard Le Bovier), *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Paris: Guerout, 1687), p. 19.

Did Watteau own a portable watch? We know that in the early modern period merchants and practitioners of liberal professions, such as doctors, lawyers, professors, and others who gained their living independently, saw it necessary to acquire portable watches. Their income depended on their use of time.<sup>96</sup> So did, albeit not as directly, the income of artists. The time it took to produce a painting continued to serve as a measure of its value even for the academic artists eager to divorce their creations from the idea of manual labor.<sup>97</sup> We happen to know that Antoine Coypel, Watteau's older contemporary and his supporter at the Academy—it was under his directorship that Watteau was received as a full member of this institution—owned *two* portable watches. They were mentioned in some detail in the painter's after-death inventory.<sup>98</sup> Alas, we do

96. Landes, *Revolution in Time*, p. 95.

97. Thus, writing in 1739 to the superintendent of the king, Orry, about his delay in delivering a royal commission, the painter Charles-Antoine Coypel (the son of the Antoine Coypel mentioned below) explained that it *took time* to produce "*des bonnes choses*," by which he meant works of imagination rather than mere skill. Letter cited by Nathalie Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1993), p. 205.

98. *Inventaire après décès d'Antoine Coypel . . .*, reproduced verbatim in Nicole Garnier-Pelle, *Antoine Coypel* (Paris: Arthena, 1989), p. 250. One was a Thompson watch, another made by Scheult, both *horlogers à Londres*. (Thanks to Katie Scott for the tip on Coypel's watches.)



Watteau. Three Studies of a Woman Wearing a Feathered Hat. *Calouste Gulbenkian Museum*.

not have such an inventory of Watteau's possessions. But whether or not the artist actually owned a portable watch, his drawings offer evidence that his visual imagination was shaped by it.

We see this clearly in the soldiers drawings, but we also find a dial-like temporal structure undergirding Watteau's other drawings, among them the British Museum sheet with female heads with which I began this essay. Though I have earlier referred to this arrangement in a deliberately anachronistic fashion as filmic, it would be more accurate to describe it as *chronometric*, insofar as the sequence of turning heads, each occupying a different position on a curve, calls to mind a series of digits on the face of a dial, such as those with which Watteau likely would have been familiar. For what this drawing does is what the watch does: It registers the changing pose of the model by increments that mark the passage of time, just as the watch registers time by the incremental movement of its hands across its face—a minute or an hour at a time. The measured appearance of these motifs on the page points, then, to the presence of a chronometric template that, as if implanted in the artist's gaze, shaped his process of translating the posing session—*his* experience of it—into drawing. Similar observations can be made about a number of drawings, among them *Three Studies of a Girl Wearing a Hat*, discussed earlier, her pointed hat like a tip of the watch's hand, *Three Studies of a Woman Wearing a Feathered Hat*, now in the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, or *Three Head Studies of a Young Black Man* in the Louvre. What these sheets share is the effect of a passage that is temporal more than spatial: While the space of the heads in each remains abstract and undefined, their progress on the page is intelligible as a movement in time precisely because of the visual analogy between their positioning and the position of the Roman or Arabic numerals on a clock's dial. In other words, they embody time not only as illustrations of an empirically verifiable change in the appearance of a specific object—the head—but also as bodily analogues of the technologic markers of change, the digits representing minutes or hours on the clock.<sup>99</sup> And although none of these arrangements amount to a full circumference of a dial—what we see is only a slice of time—its presence is implied.

This recurring structure of representation in Watteau's drawings points, then, to the ways in which the new tool for time measurement insinuated itself into the draftsman's process, subtending the distribution of his observations, and the posing session in the course of which these observations were made on the page. And if it did, it was evidently linked to the broader historical phenomenon of change in the experience of time, which, as an ever-present visual image disseminated through the widening use of portable watches, became embedded in the individual mind, providing both a material and imaginary basis for comprehending one's experience, including the experience of oneself as an artist at work.

99. Until the third quarter of the eighteenth century, it was necessary to show the numbers of both hours and minutes on the dial. Minutes were, in other words, only visible as numbers until then. After that, fifteen-minute indications were sufficient. Landes, *Revolution in Time*, p. 140.

Emerging from the pages of Watteau's drawings is, indeed, a *timely subject*—not only the individuals represented by the draftsman but also the draftsman himself. This multiple subjective presence generates a complex, plural temporality in Watteau's work. Those who pose for the artist, or those he captures unawares on the page—the soldiers sleeping, dreaming, gazing, or fiddling with their guns; the female models enveloped in their own thoughts; the absent-minded black boy in the Louvre drawing—bring their own time into the drawing. But traversing its surface is also another path of time, that of the draftsman: the way in which Watteau distributes the figures on the page, the regularity we have discerned in these arrangements, is the product of his mind, hand, and tools, an image of his *drawing* time.

### VI. Watteau's Time

Where did Watteau work? According to his contemporaries, the artist led a notoriously nomadic life, living most often with others—Vleughels, Crozat, Gersaint—and moving frequently, of his own will, even towards the end of his life, when he was seriously ill.<sup>100</sup> As far as we know, he never had a proper studio but worked in improvised conditions, sometimes, as Caylus reported, in rooms rented for the specific purpose of sketching in them from live models.<sup>101</sup> Despite his membership in the Academy, he never participated in the academic pedagogical practice and rarely, if at all, availed himself of the academic models.<sup>102</sup> His training and his working habits—drawing everywhere, including on the street, as his depictions of Savoyards suggest—took him beyond the parameters of the artistic establishment.<sup>103</sup> It could be said that, in effect, Watteau worked *nowhere*. His studio was portable: It consisted of his albums filled with images that he used and reused in his paintings, his practice of storing his work in such easily transportable form perfectly suiting his nomadic existence. If his practice was located, it was located in time.

In this way, the artist's working habits resembled the behavior of his creations, those multiplied instances of individual existence we witness repeatedly on his pages. For his figures, too, rarely occupy a particular space. Shown in specific

100. It was Gersaint who spoke of Watteau's insistence on moving even when he was seriously ill, *Vies de l'ancienne Watteau*, p. 38. Caylus observed that Watteau was dominated by "un certain esprit d'instabilité. . . . Il n'était pas sîtôt établi dans un logement qu'il le prenait en déplaisance." *Vies de l'ancienne Watteau*, p. 71.

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 71–72.

102. It has been suggested that Watteau may have used academic models when working on Crozat's *The Seasons*. See Martin Eidelberg, "A Cycle of Four Seasons by the Young Watteau," *The Art Quarterly* 19, nos. 3–4 (1966), pp. 269–76.

103. See, for example, *Standing Savoyarde with a Marmot Box*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. For Watteau's nonacademic formation in the commercial establishments of Paris, see, among others, Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*; and Guillaume Glorieu's "Les Débuts de Watteau à Paris: Le Pont Notre-Dame en 1702," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (2002), pp. 251–61.



*Watteau. Woman  
Reclining on a  
Chaise Longue.  
C. 1718. Fondation  
Custodia, Collection  
Frits Lugt, Paris.*

poses, at times visibly engaged with others or with themselves, they are nonetheless abstracted from any particular context: Watteau almost never indicates their location or situates their movement, or else he suggests it only summarily, for example, by a piece of furniture. They emerge as if from nowhere and testify to no particular place. Sometimes they wear anachronistic costumes and it is not certain who they actually are—Actors? Models? Friends? Hosts? The drawings neither identify them nor place them historically or socially with any precision.<sup>104</sup> (If the anachronism of their attire defines them, it is by evoking time rather than space.)<sup>105</sup> Existing in the thickness of their own time, most of his figures could be anywhere. They were transferable, like their maker, who apparently could—or had to?—work wherever he was.

The point of this analogy is not to reactivate the assumption of the causal connection existing between the artist's life and his work. If anything, it is the other way around: It is Watteau's work that seemed to have, at least to some degree, conditioned his peripatetic, thoroughly ungrounded existence. A compulsive draftsman, Watteau displaced himself in search of forms and figures—not commissions so much as things that he could put on paper—in a perpetual pursuit of time to draw.

104. Caylus reports that Watteau had costumes that he had his models put on. *Vies de l'ancienne Watteau*, pp. 78–79.

105. Etienne Jollet described Watteau's use of period costumes as an anachronism of the motif, distinct from the temporality of the work itself. See Jollet, "La temporalité dans les arts visuels: L'exemple des temps modernes," *Revue de l'Art* 178 (2012), p. 58. For a larger, provocative argument about the temporal plurality of a work of art, see Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).