

Antoine Watteau  
French, 1684 - 1721

## *Ceres (Summer)*

c. 1717/1718

oil on canvas

overall (oval): 141.6 x 115.7 cm (55 3/4 x 45 9/16 in.)

Samuel H. Kress Collection 1961.9.50

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### ENTRY

Ceres, the goddess of the harvest, who presides over Summer, is shown as a young blond woman with poppies and cornflowers adorning her hair, wearing a white shift and a voluminous pink drapery. She wields a sickle as she sits on clouds among sheaves of wheat. The figures surrounding Ceres—the blond twins bearing sheaves, the crayfish, and the lion—represent the zodiacal symbols for the summer months (Gemini, Cancer, and Leo).

*Ceres*, or *Summer*, originally formed part of a set of four oval paintings representing the Four Seasons, “painted for the dining room of M. Crozat,” [1] Jean Antoine Watteau’s great patron. It was engraved [fig. 1], along with its companions, for the *Recueil Jullienne* (the compendium of prints after Watteau’s work): [2] *Spring* [fig. 2] was destroyed by fire in 1966; *Autumn* [fig. 3] has been lost for more than two centuries; *Winter* [fig. 4] has been lost for more than a century. [3] The *Seasons* most likely served as overdoors for the dining room of Pierre Crozat’s Paris *hôtel* on rue de Richelieu, where Watteau was living from about 1715, and certainly by the likely time of the commission, 1717. Cordélia Hattori has shown that they formed part of a larger decorative scheme in the dining room, consisting of eight or nine paintings by several artists, including an oval painting by Michel

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Corneille (most likely Michel Corneille the Younger, 1642–1708) and a circular painting by Giovanni Paolo Panini (Roman, 1691 - 1765), which was perhaps the ninth, added at a later date. The eight paintings are mentioned in an inventory of the house following Crozat's death in 1740, while nine are mentioned in a description by Louis Petit de Bachaumont, who noted the works by Corneille and Panini. [4]

Crozat (1665–1740) was one of the greatest collectors at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Louis Torterat Clément de Ris characterized his collection, with paintings alone numbering 400, as “the richest and most varied that a private citizen ever possessed.” [5] Crozat had begun collecting in 1683 in Toulouse, his birthplace, and continued to collect during the years that he and his brother Antoine served as treasurers in the Languedoc. By the time of their arrival in Paris around 1703 or 1704, both brothers had amassed so many artworks that each felt it necessary to construct a grand *hôtel particulier*. Sylvain Cartaud was the architect of Pierre's *hôtel*. When the building was completed, around 1707, Crozat commissioned interior decorations from Charles de La Fosse (1636–1716), including a painting of *The Birth of Minerva* for the ceiling of the large gallery of the house. [6]

The conceptual and compositional challenges of depicting a large-scale mythological figure in an oval frame were unprecedented for Watteau. The comte de Caylus was only the most strident of a number of critics who felt that “this deficiency in the practice of drawing put it beyond his reach to paint or compose anything heroic or allegorical, much less render large-scale figures...[T]his refined and light touch, which works so well on a small scale, loses all its merit and becomes unbearable when it is used in this larger expanse.” [7] However, in *Ceres* Watteau adopted a broader handling that befits the painting's function as part of a larger decorative scheme. Unlike cabinet pictures, the *Seasons* were never intended to be viewed at close range. The surface of the painting was somewhat abraded and in places overpainted before it entered the National Gallery of Art's collection, and the general effect of discoloration did not help its appearance, which led to criticism in the past. [8] But removal in 2001 of the old yellowed varnish and numerous repaints—and sensitive inpainting of the damaged areas, as described in the Technical Notes—have restored much of *Ceres*'s light-filled palette and brilliancy of touch. Watteau's pale-toned underpainting again plays its key role in the general luminosity and airiness of the overall conception of the cloud-borne goddess.

Hattori has shown that for the representations of the other Seasons, Watteau turned to specific prototypes in the work of various old masters. Ceres's head, shoulders, and upper torso derive from a drawing from life of one of Watteau's favorite models: the figure at lower center in a sheet of studies in the Louvre [fig. 5], but reversed as if Watteau employed a counterproof. [9] No doubt there were other drawings, long since lost, to which Watteau turned for models and ideas; several drawings related to other Seasons survive. [10]

Watteau's painterly style here is indebted to the work of Charles de La Fosse (French, 1636 - 1716), who was the leading Rubensian colorist at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By Caylus's account, Watteau executed the paintings "after the sketches by M. de la Fosse," [11] who lived in Crozat's *hôtel* with his wife and niece from 1708 until his death in December 1716. [12] Drawings in an oval format by La Fosse exploring the theme of *Zephyr and Flora* (for example, [fig. 6]) certainly seem to have been preparatory for a similar decorative scheme: their entwined gestures look forward to Watteau's *Spring* (see fig. 2). Moreover, Watteau was to perfect a drawing style in black, white, and red chalk, which La Fosse in turn had adapted from Sir Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577 - 1640). Drawings long attributed to Watteau are now given to La Fosse, such as two studies of a man in the British Museum. [13] The lion in *Ceres* is adapted from the lion in La Fosse's painting *God the Father* (Dunkirk, Musée des Beaux-Arts). [14] Watteau had come to La Fosse's notice when he competed for the Prix de Rome in 1712, whereupon the older artist became one of Watteau's first sponsors for membership in the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture. [15] La Fosse was a friend of Roger de Piles (1635–1709) and took an active part on the side of the Rubénistes, or proponents of color over line, in the debates of the Académie. [16] There is little doubt that La Fosse introduced Watteau to Crozat and that by 1715 Watteau, too, was working for and lodging with the great collector. [17] In an inventory made after La Fosse's death, Hattori has found mention of four oval paintings, the property of Crozat and destined for his dining room. [18] This discovery seems to bear out Caylus's statement that the decoration was conceived by La Fosse but completed by Watteau. It is most likely that Crozat commissioned Watteau to execute his versions of the decoration after the death of La Fosse, and—as Hattori has proposed—about the time he was received into the Académie in 1717.

The figure of *Ceres* derives generically from the fair-skinned beauties of Titian and Veronese, who were among the Venetian painters Crozat most admired. Venetian

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influences suffuse *Ceres*, which Michael Levey characterized as “virtually Veronese but Veronese as seen through the eyes of Rubens.” [19] Crozat brought back examples of Venetian art, including Veronese drawings, from his Italian journey of November 1714–October 1715, and it is easy to see how Watteau’s luminous tonalities and brushy manner would have gratified his patron’s Venetian taste. [20] Although most of Crozat’s Veronese paintings were not acquired until 1721, when he was negotiating the purchase of the art collection of Queen Christina of Sweden, Watteau would have had several spectacular works by Veronese available to him in Paris in 1715, such as *The Supper at Emmaus* in the royal collection (Paris, Musée du Louvre) or *Rachel at the Well* in the comte Léon de Lassay’s collection.

The artistic links between Venice and Paris were close early in the eighteenth century. Crozat was the nexus connecting Watteau and Pierre Jean Mariette (1694–1774) with Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757), Antonio Pellegrini (1675–1741), and Sebastiano Ricci (bapt. 1659–1734), for example. [21] *Ceres* is a pivotal surviving work that signals the increased impact of Venetian art on Watteau’s later style and on Parisian decorative painting in the second decade of the century. That the influence was reciprocal can be seen in a *Ceres (Allegory of Summer)* by Pellegrini (location unknown), painted, according to Pierre Rosenberg, during his 1720 visit to Paris, [22] or in the pendants of *Ceres* and *Flora* (Venice, Giustiniani-Recanati Collection), which were likely part of another *Seasons* cycle. [23]

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Collection data may have been updated since the publication of the print volume. Additional light adaptations have been made for the presentation of this text online.

Philip Conisbee

January 1, 2009

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## COMPARATIVE FIGURES

*Ceres (Summer)*

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**fig. 1** Marie-Jeanne Renard du Bos after Jean Antoine Watteau, *Summer*, in *L'oeuvre d'Antoine Watteau (volume I)*, c. 1740, engraving, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection, 1942.9.2092



**fig. 2** Louis Desplaces after Jean Antoine Watteau, *Spring*, in *L'oeuvre d'Antoine Watteau (volume I)*, c. 1740, engraving, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection, 1942.9.2092



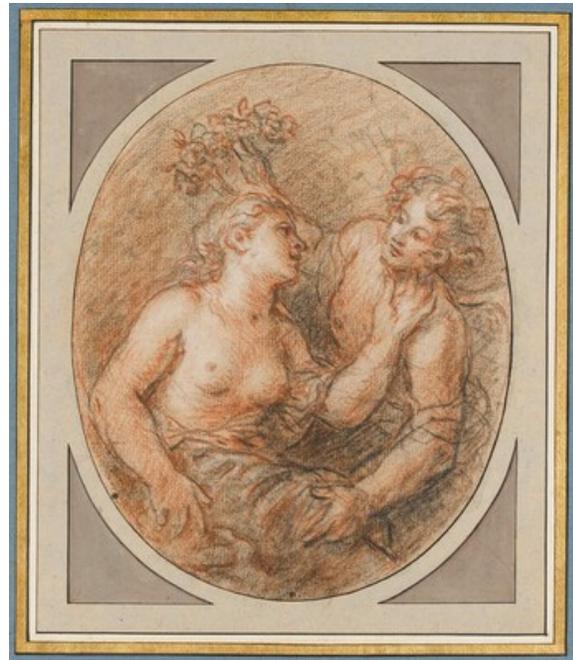
**fig. 3** Etienne Fessard after Jean Antoine Watteau, *Autumn*, in *L'oeuvre d'Antoine Watteau (volume I)*, c. 1740, engraving, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection, 1942.9.2092



**fig. 4** Jean Audran after Jean Antoine Watteau, *Winter*, in *L'oeuvre d'Antoine Watteau (volume I)*, c. 1740, engraving, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection, 1942.9.2092



**fig. 5** Jean Antoine Watteau, *Studies of a Woman*, c. 1715, red, black, and white chalk, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Jean-Gilles Berizzi



**fig. 6** Charles de La Fosse, *Zephyr and Flora*, c. 1710, red, black, and white chalk, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Thierry Le Mage

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## NOTES

- [1] Comte de Caylus, “La vie de Antoine Watteau, peintre de figures et de paysages,” read to the Académie royale on February 3, 1748 (reprinted in Pierre Rosenberg, ed., *Vies anciennes de Watteau* [Paris, 1984], 53–91; see especially 73): “qu’il a peintes dans la salle à manger de M. Crozat.”
- [2] Émile Dacier and Albert Vuafart, *Jean de Jullienne et les graveurs de Watteau au XVIIIe siècle*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1921–1929), 3: nos. 105–108; also reproduced in Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau 1684–1721* (Washington, DC, 1984), figs. 7–10, under P.35.
- [3] Most recently on this cycle, see Cordélia Hattori, “De Charles de La Fosse à Antoine Watteau,” *Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* 51, no. 2 (2001): 56–65. The most extensive previous discussions are Colin Eisler, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: European Schools Excluding*

*Italian* (Oxford, 1977); and Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau 1684–1721* (Washington, DC, 1984).

- [4] Cordélia Hattori, “De Charles de La Fosse à Antoine Watteau,” *Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* 51, no. 2 (2001): 57, 64 nn. 14–15.
- [5] Louis Torterat Clément de Ris, *Les amateurs d'autrefois* (Paris, 1877; repr., Geneva, 1973), 183: “[L]e plus riche et le plus varié que jamais particulier ait possédé.” See Margret Stuffmann, “Les tableaux de la collection de Pierre Crozat,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* ser. 6, 72 (July 1968): 1–144, for a catalogue and discussion of the paintings in Crozat’s collection.
- [6] On Crozat and La Fosse, see Margret Stuffmann, “Charles de La Fosse et sa position dans la peinture française à la fin du XVIIe siècle,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* ser. 6, 64 (July 1964): 31–34; see also Colin Eisler, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: European Schools Excluding Italian* (Oxford, 1977), 297; Louis Torterat Clément de Ris, *Les amateurs d'autrefois* (Paris, 1877; repr., Geneva, 1973), 184–187.
- [7] Comte de Caylus, “La vie de Antoine Watteau, peintre de figures et de paysages,” in Pierre Rosenberg, ed., *Vies anciennes de Watteau* (Paris, 1984), 73: “[C]ette insuffisance dans la pratique du dessin le mettait hors de portée de peindre ni de composer rien de héroïque ni d’allégorique, encore moins de rendre les figures d’une certaine grandeur...cette touche fine et légère, qui fait si bien dans le petit, perd tout son mérite et devient insupportable quand elle est employée dans cette plus grand étendue.”
- [8] For example, Antoine Seilern, *Paintings and Drawings of Continental Schools Other than Flemish and Italian at 56 Princes Gate London SW7, Text III* (London, 1961), 79.
- [9] Pierre Rosenberg and Antoine Prat, *Antoine Watteau, 1684–1721: catalogue raisonné des dessins* (Paris and Milan, 1996), 2: no. 414.
- [10] Pierre Rosenberg and Antoine Prat, *Antoine Watteau, 1684–1721: catalogue raisonné des dessins* (Paris and Milan, 1996), 2: nos. 370–374.
- [11] Comte de Caylus, “La vie de Antoine Watteau, peintre de figures et de paysages,” in Pierre Rosenberg, ed., *Vies anciennes de Watteau* (Paris, 1984), 73: “[I] les [a] exécutées d’après les esquisses de M. de la Fosse.”
- [12] Margret Stuffmann, “Charles de La Fosse et sa position dans la peinture française à la fin du XVIIe siècle,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* ser. 6, 64 (July 1964): 31–32. La Fosse also painted a *Seasons* ceiling for Crozat’s villa at Montmorency on the outskirts of Paris.
- [13] Pierre Rosenberg and Antoine Prat, *Antoine Watteau, 1684–1721: catalogue raisonné des dessins* (Paris and Milan, 1996), 3: nos. R 206 and R 207; the reattribution was made in Jean-Pierre Cuzin, “Deux dessins du British Museum: Watteau, ou plutôt La Fosse,” *Revue du Louvre et des Musées de*

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*France* 31, no. 1 (1981): 19–21.

- [14] Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau 1684–1721* (Washington, DC, 1984), 326, fig. 3.
- [15] Colin Eisler, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: European Schools Excluding Italian* (Oxford, 1977), 298.
- [16] Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau 1684–1721* (Washington, DC, 1984), 39.
- [17] Margret Stuffmann, “Charles de La Fosse et sa position dans la peinture française à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* ser. 6, 64 (July 1964): 33. Donald Posner has suggested that La Fosse “look[ed] over Watteau’s shoulder” as he drew and perhaps had hopes of making him into a history painter (Donald Posner, *Antoine Watteau* [Ithaca, 1984], 76).
- [18] Cordélia Hattori, “De Charles de La Fosse à Antoine Watteau,” *Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* 51, no. 2 (2001): 57.
- [19] Michael Levey, “A Watteau Rediscovered: ‘Le Printemps’ [sic] for Crozat,” *Burlington Magazine* 106, no. 731 (Feb. 1964): 57.
- [20] In Seilern’s view, Crozat’s Venetian treasures provided Watteau with “fresh inspiration” for the *Seasons* (Antoine Seilern, *Paintings and Drawings of Continental Schools Other than Flemish and Italian at 56 Princes Gate London SW7, Text III* [London, 1961], 79).
- [21] Michael Levey, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century Venice*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1980), 18; see also Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500–1800*, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier (Cambridge, 1990), 162.
- [22] Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau 1684–1721* (Washington, DC, 1984), 326, fig. 4.
- [23] Alessandro Bettagno, *Antonio Pellegrini: il maestro veneto del Rococò alle corti d’Europa* (Padua, 1998), nos. 45 and 46, repro.

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### TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The support consists of a medium-weight, plain-weave fabric. There are two horizontal seams running across the painting, one approximately 11 cm from the top edge and the other 9.5 cm from the bottom edge. The painting has been lined, and the tacking margins have been removed. Cusping is present along all four edges, indicating that the painting probably has not been reduced in size. The support was prepared with an off-white or light gray ground. On top of the ground in the areas of the design elements, Watteau applied an underpainting of various tones

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ranging from peach to dark gray. The paint was applied using a variety of techniques. Watteau built up the forms using thin scumbles over the underpainting, progressing into thick highlights with visible brushmarking. Over this, he applied glazes to form the shadows and Ceres's features and hair.

The painting was seriously damaged both by harsh cleaning and from a complex tear in the center of the canvas, which resulted in rather large areas of paint loss. Both of these conditions happened sometime prior to acquisition. As a result of the tear, the upper half of Ceres's left torso is missing. There are also wide losses associated with three diagonal branches of the tear running to the right of the figure into the clouds, into the head of one of the twins, and through the sickle in the hand of Ceres. The tear has been mended, probably when the painting was lined, and the losses have been inpainted. Additional inpainting exists to compensate for gaps at the edges of the picture, which occurred because the painting is attached to a stretcher that is slightly larger than the original support fabric. The painting was treated in 2001, and discolored varnish and inpaint were removed. The varnish and inpainting applied at that time have not discolored.

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### PROVENANCE

Commissioned by Pierre Crozat [1665-1740] for the dining room of his hôtel on rue de Richelieu, Paris; by inheritance with the hôtel to his nephew, Louis François Crozat, marquis du Châtel [1691-1750], Paris; by inheritance with the hôtel to his daughter, Louise-Honorine Crozat [1737-1801, married 1750 to the duc de Choiseul], Paris; the hôtel was sold in 1772 and demolished shortly thereafter, before which the painting was removed, probably to the Choiseul's Château de Chanteloup, Touraine; (estate sale of Etienne François, duc de Choiseul [1719-1785], Paillet, Paris, 18 December 1786, no. 3, with *Winter* from the same series); purchased by Meunier. Jean Baptiste Pierre Le Brun [1748-1813], Paris; (his own sale, Le Brun, Paris, 11 April-8 May 1791, 10th day [April 20], no. 204, with *Winter*); Rebes; (sale, Le Brun, Paris, 15 November 1791, no. 95, with *Winter*).<sup>[1]</sup> Roehn, Paris.<sup>[2]</sup> Charles Wertheimer [d. 1911], London. (Charles Sedelmeyer Galleries, Paris), by 1895; sold 1898 to Sir Lionel Phillips, bt. [1855-1936], Tylney Hall, Winchfield;<sup>[3]</sup> (sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 25 April 1913, no. 72); Nicholson. Henri Michel-Lévy [1845-1914], Paris; (his sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 12-13 May 1919, no. 28); Léon Michel-Lévy [1846-1925], Paris; (his sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 17-18 June 1925, 1st day, no. 160);<sup>[4]</sup> Batteroze or Betteroze. Charles-Louis Dreyfus [1870-

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1929], Paris.[5] (Wildenstein & Co., Inc., Paris, New York, and London), by 1935:[6] sold February 1954 to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York:[7] gift 1961 to NGA.

[1] Annotated copies of the sale catalogue give the name variously as "Rebes," "Mr. le president Rebe," and "de Rebes." See the extended description of this sale in the sale catalogues portion of the Getty Provenance Index Database, J. Paul Getty Trust (photocopy in NGA curatorial files), which includes the comment: "It is not known from which legislative body his title of president is taken, nor has his full name been found."

[2] Pierre Rosenberg says this was "probably Adolphe Eugène Gabriel Roehn (1780-1867) and not his son" (Alphonse); Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau 1684-1721*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris; Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin; Washington, D.C., 1984: 326.

[3] According to the 1895 Sedelmeyer catalogue and the catalogue of the 1935 Copenhagen exhibition, and repeated in William E. Suida and Fern Rusk Shapley, *Paintings and Sculpture from the Kress Collection Acquired by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1951-1956*, Washington, D.C., 1956: 204, the painting was supposed to have been in the Hugh A.J. Munro of Novar collection in Ross, Scotland. However, *Spring*, another painting in the series, was actually in the Munro collection (and sold at Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 1 June 1878, no. 149).

[4] Pierre Rosenberg, ed., *Vies anciennes de Watteau*, Paris, 1984, erroneously says this sale was in May.

[5] Published as with Dreyfus in Louis Dimier, *Les peintres français du XVIIIe siècle. Histoire des vies et catalogue des oeuvres*, 2 vols., Paris and Brussels, 1928-1930: 1(1928):31, no. 26.

[6] The painting was lent by Wildenstein to a 1935 exhibition in Copenhagen.

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[7] The bill of sale (copy in NGA curatorial files) is dated February 10, 1954, and was for a total of fourteen paintings; payments by the Foundation continued to March 1957.

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## EXHIBITION HISTORY

1909 National Loan Exhibition in Aid of National Gallery Funds, Grafton Galleries, London, 1909-1910, no. 95.

1935 Exposition de L'art français au XVIIIe siècle, Palais de Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, 1935, no. 262.

1936 Watteau and His Contemporaries, Wildenstein & Co., London, 1936, no. 27.

1948 French Painting of the Eighteenth Century, Wildenstein & Co., New York, 1948, no. 45.

1961 Masterpieces: A Memorial Exhibition for Adele R. Levy, Wildenstein & Co., New York, 1961, no. 20.

1984 Watteau 1684-1721, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris; Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin, West Germany, 1984-1985, no. 35.

2015 Charles de La Fosse (1636-1716): Le triomphe de la couleur, Musée national des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, 2015, no. 48b, repro.

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- 1912 Pilon, Edmond. *Watteau et son école*. Brussels and Paris, 1912: 118-120.
- 1921 Dacier, Emile and Albert Vuafart. *Jean de Jullienne et les graveurs de Watteau au XVIIIe siècle*. 4 vols. Paris, 1921-1929: 1:262, no. 106; 3:50, no. 106.
- 1921 Marcel, Pierre. *La peinture française: le XVIIIe siècle*. Paris, 1921: 23, repro. pl. 55
- 1928 Dimier, Louis. *Les peintres français du XVIIIe siècle. Histoire des vies et catalogue des oeuvres*. 2 vols., 1928-1930. Paris and Brussels, 1928: 1:31, no. 26.
- 1936 Blunt, Anthony. "Watteau and His Contemporaries." *The Burlington Magazine* (November 1936): 230, 231, repro. pl. B.
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- 1956 *Paintings and Sculpture from the Kress Collection Acquired by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation 1951-56*. Introduction by John Walker, text by William E. Suida and Fern Rusk Shapley. National Gallery of Art. Washington, 1956: 204, no. 81, repro.
- 1957 Parker, Karl Theodore, and Jacques Mathey. *Antoine Watteau: catalogue complet de son oeuvre dessiné*. Paris, 1957: 2:339, under no. 719.
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- 1959 Mathey, J. *Antoine Watteau. Peintures réapparues, inconnues ou négligées par les historiens...* Paris, 1959: 46-47, 68, 78, repro. pl. 115.
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- (reprinted 1964 in French, German, and Spanish): 316, repro.
- 1964 Levey, Michael. "A Watteau rediscovered: 'Le printems' [sic] for Crozat" *The Burlington Magazine* 106, no. 731 (February 1964): 54, 55, repro. fig. 3, 57.
- 1965 *Summary Catalogue of European Paintings and Sculpture*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1965: 139.
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- 1973 Posner, Donald. *Watteau: A Lady at her Toilette*. New York, 1973:20-21, 23, 28, 97 n. 14, repro. fig. 4.
- 1973 Scott, Barbara. "Marquis de Marigny: A Dispenser of Royal Patronage." *Apollo* 97, no. 131 (January 1973): 14, 15, repro pl. 1.
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