

The Fragments d'Opéra: A Series of Beauvais Tapestries After Boucher

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FRANÇOIS BOUCHER is recorded in 1748 as being in the process of making “deux tableaux de chevalet, sujets tirés des Opéra; et leurs copies en grand retouchées de sa main, sur lesquelles seront exécutés deux pièces de tapisseries pour la Meutte [*sic*].”¹ The tapestries were certainly to have been made at the Gobelins manufactory, as the stipulation that the artist should provide easel paintings and large copies (cartoons) is in accordance with the procedure set up by the Directeur des Bâtiments, Le Normant de Tournehem, in 1748 for “tableaux destinés à être exécutés en tapisserie dans la manufacture des Gobelins,”² but no such tapestries after Boucher are known to have been woven there; when paintings by him were first reproduced at the Gobelins in 1752, they were the *Lever du Soleil* and the *Coucher du Soleil*, with no indication that they represented scenes from an opera. Both these paintings were hung in Mme de Pompadour’s château, Bellevue, and are now in the Wallace Collection, but the tapestries, also her property and only woven once, are not known to have survived; she returned them to the manufactory in 1761 and they are last heard of in 1768, when Jacques Neilson, head of a Gobelins workshop, was able to sell them—as he did so many other tapestries—to an Englishman.³ Boucher was given a studio at the Gobelins to make these large paintings, but he was not yet officially attached to the Gobelins manufactory, and his work for Beauvais continued for some years more.

It was in 1751, in fact, that he and Jean-Baptiste Oudry, the director of Beauvais in partnership with Nicolas Besniers, submitted a proposal for two new tapestry series. Their memorandum begins: “Les

sieurs Boucher et Oudry, tous deux peintres de l’Académie de Peinture, et chacun fort habile dans leur genre, proposent de faire des tableaux pour exécuter en tapisserie.” Boucher suggested eight subjects from the story of Rinaldo and Armida, described in some detail, and Oudry listed twelve “Combats de différents animaux.”⁴

Boucher’s proposal is rather surprising. Between 1733 and 1741, Charles-Antoine Coypel had designed three tapestries for the Gobelins of this very subject, of which examples were woven until the last

1. Maurice Fenaille, *Etat général des tapisseries de la Manufacture des Gobelins* (Paris, 1903–23) IV, p. 174. La Muette was a royal hunting lodge outside Paris, greatly enlarged by Louis XV for housing his mistresses. The singular form “Opéra” is perhaps used because *opera* is the plural of the Latin *opus*. The operas are named in other documents as the *Fêtes vénitiennes* (by Antoine Danchet and André Campra) and the *Fêtes de Thalie* (by J. de Le Font and Jean-Joseph Mouret) (Alexandre Ananoff, *François Boucher* [Lausanne/Paris, 1976] I, biographical entries nos. 318, 320, 321).

2. Edith A. Standen, “Some Notes on the Cartoons Used at the Gobelins and Beauvais Tapestry Manufactories in the Eighteenth Century,” *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 4 (1977) p. 25.

3. Fenaille, *Gobelins*, IV, pp. 183, 393. A document of 1754 says that these tapestries were more expensive than any others because of the number of figures in them and their “chaîne plus fine, ce qui augmente la main d’oeuvre” (Chiara Briganti, “Documents sur les arts à la cour de Parme au XVIIIe siècle,” *Antologia di Belle Arti* 4 [1977] p. 381).

4. Jules Guiffrey, “Modèles et bordures de tapisseries des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: Documents communiqués par M. F. Engerand,” *Nouvelles Archives de l’Art Français*, 3rd ser., 12 (1896) p. 146. The works by Oudry related to this project have been published by Hal N. Opperman, “Oudry aux Gobelins,” *Revue de l’Art* 22 (1973) pp. 59–64; Grand Palais, Paris, *J.-B. Oudry*, exh. cat. (1982) nos. 70–73.



1. *Renaud Endormi*, French (Beauvais), 1752–64, after François Boucher (1703–70). Wool and silk tapestry. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection, 1942 (photo: National Gallery)

decade of the century. Each of the three pieces had an inscription giving the act and scene represented from the opera *Armide* by Philippe Quinault and Jean-Baptiste Lully,⁵ and the series, with the addition of one scene from the opera *Roland*, was called “des fragmens d’opéras.” Perhaps Boucher wanted to pit his designs and the Beauvais workmanship against Coppel and the Gobelins, or Oudry may have thought that his customers would like to have the same story that was being woven elsewhere for the king.

Nothing came of the project as far as Boucher was concerned, but when two pieces of a new Beauvais series after Boucher were first woven in 1752, one of them was *Renaud Endormi* (Figure 1); its design more or less corresponds to the second subject in the 1751 memorandum: “Renaud dans le palais d’Armide

5. Fenaille, *Gobelins*, III, pp. 323–341.



2. *Le Sommeil de Renaud*, French (Gobelins), 1767, after Charles-Antoine Coppel (1694–1752), 1741. Wool and silk tapestry. Paris, Musée National du Louvre, OA 5200 (photo: Louvre)

3. Panel of a double screen, French (Beauvais), 1752–64, after Boucher. Wool and silk tapestry. Waddesdon Manor, The James A. de Rothschild Collection (photo: National Trust)

quitte ses armes et se livre aux charmes de la volupté.” The paladin is shown asleep in the enchanted garden of the sorceress Armida, as described in Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

The series to which the tapestry belongs is known, like Coypel’s, as the *Fragments d’Opéra*. It is small and somewhat unusual. Two pieces, *Renaud Endormi* (Figure 1) and *Vénus et les Amours* (Figure 5), are recorded as woven in 1752, but two more, which make up the complete series, the *Sommeil d’Issé* (Figure 7) and *Vertumne et Pomone* (Figure 11), were not made until six years later.⁶ In 1755, M. de Meulan bought a

6. A fifth tapestry, *Les Castagnettes*, has been listed as one of the series, but with no record of its being woven (Jules Bardin,



4. Boucher, *Arion Porté sur un Dauphin*. Oil on canvas. Princeton, N.J., The Art Museum, Princeton University (photo: The Art Museum, Princeton University)



Renaud Endormi, having acquired three pieces of the *Amours des Dieux* in 1750; an even more heterogeneous set was woven in the same year for Mme Rondet, made up of four pieces of the *Amours*, two *Fragments*, and “les Richesses” from the *Psyche* series.⁷ The only time when all four pieces of the *Fragments* are recorded as a set, in 1762, they were joined to three pieces of the *Amours des Dieux*.⁸ Four, in any case, is a small number of subjects to be considered a complete series; the other series after Boucher have from five to nine. It seems possible that the main use of the *Fragments* designs was to be called on when all the *Amours* cartoons were in use on the looms.

“Fragments” would thus seem an appropriate name for the series, but the phrase “fragments d’opéra” had a precise meaning at the time: separate acts of operas or ballets were often performed and were known as “fragments.”⁹ Like the three pieces of Coppel’s Gobelins series, the Beauvais *Renaud Endormi* may be supposed to illustrate the opera *Armide* by Quinault and Lully, first performed in 1686; one revival was in 1743.¹⁰ On January 15, 1749, the fourth act of *Les Eléments*, with words by Pierre-Charles Roy and music by André Cardinal Des-touches, was performed at Versailles: it was “La Terre,” represented by the story of Vertumnus and Pomona; Mme de Pompadour played Pomona.¹¹ *Issé*, an opera by Antoine Houdar de Lamotte and Des-touches, first performed in 1697, was revived in 1750.¹² *Vénus et les Amours* cannot be connected with a specific opera or ballet, though the goddess, of course, appeared in several.¹³ There is no way of telling if the tapestries represent actual stage scenes, though they mostly illustrate events that must have been part of the action in each opera.

The continuing popularity of operatic subjects in tapestry is shown by a letter from the heads of the Gobelins workshops in 1768 to the marquis de Marigny, then in charge of the royal manufactories. They asked for new designs illustrating the Five Senses, the Four Times of Day, the Four Seasons, the Four Elements, “ou bien les sujets pris dans les Opéras Comiques, qui ont fait le plus de plaisir au public.”¹⁴ After the Revolution, the furniture from Versailles sold in 1793–94 included a Gobelins-tapestry screen with six leaves, “représentant sur chacune en couleurs naturelles et vives des séances variées de divers opéras-comiques.”¹⁵

Three paintings for the *Fragments d’Opéra* series

are listed in a 1754 Beauvais inventory: “Trois tableaux de fragmens d’opéra peints par le dit sieur Boucher . . . contenant neuf aunes quinze seizes non compris les bordures.”¹⁶ These three designs were presumably the two woven in 1752 and the *Sommeil d’Issé*; some examples of the fourth tapestry of the series, *Vertumne et Pomone*, are dated 1757, so the painting would not have been available for the 1754 inventory. A memorandum of “4 Frimaire An 2” (1794) includes the *Fragments d’Opéra* paintings among the “tableaux remis à la Nation par M. de Menou,” then

La Manufacture de tapisseries de Beauvais [Paris, 1909] p. 62). Almost certainly, no tapestry of this subject was included in the *Fragments d’Opéra*. The source of the error is probably the listing for the set of four tapestries woven for Mme de la Billarderie in 1768: “Vertumne et Pomone, Sommeil d’Issé, les castagnettes, Jupiter en raisin.” “Jupiter en raisin” is *Jupiter and Antiope* from the *Amours des Dieux* series, or perhaps only a detail from this design, showing Jupiter disguised as a satyr; similarly, “les castagnettes” might be the bacchante playing the cymbals from the same tapestry. Mme de la Billarderie’s set would thus be like the one made for Frederick the Great in 1765, which consisted of four complete *Amours des Dieux* subjects, plus “la joueuse de castagnettes, Jupiter en raisin;” the “Jupiter en raisin” must be the known piece with Frederick’s arms that shows the god as a satyr approaching Antiope (Edith A. Standen, “The *Amours des Dieux*: A Series of Beauvais Tapestries After Boucher,” *MMJ* 19/20 [1984/85] pp. 66, 73).

7. Listed in the transcription of the Beauvais records made by Jean Ajalbert; I am indebted to Pierre Verlet for the opportunity to study this transcription, which is in the Louvre. Badin, *Beauvais*, pp. 61, 62, gives the purchaser’s name as Rondelet as well as Rondet, mentioning four *Amours* and two *Fragments*.

8. Badin, *Beauvais*, pp. 62, 84.

9. Théodore de Lajarte, ed., *Bibliothèque musicale du Théâtre de l’Opéra* (Paris, 1878) I, pp. 139, 143, 207.

10. Louis-César de La-Baume-le-Blanc Lavallière, *Ballets, opéra, et autres ouvrages lyriques . . .* (Paris, 1760) p. 102. Boucher designed scenery for an *Armide et Renaud* in 1761 and possibly before ([MMA], *François Boucher, 1703–1770*, exh. cat. [New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986] p. 162).

11. Lajarte, *Bibliothèque musicale*, I, p. 139; Lavallière, *Ballets*, p. 164.

12. This revival was also presumably the reason for Boucher’s painting of 1750, *Apollo et Issé*, in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours. It shows a later moment in the story than that of the tapestry, with the god, nearly nude, as his radiant self ([MMA], *Boucher*, no. 58).

13. For information about early French operas, I am indebted to Patrick J. Smith and Marion C. Stewart.

14. Fenaille, *Gobelins*, IV, p. 164.

15. Fenaille, *Gobelins*, IV, p. 393.

16. Roger-Armand Weigert, “La Manufacture royale de tapisseries de Beauvais,” *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire de l’Art Français* (1933) p. 233.

the Beauvais director: "3 fragments d'Opéra . . . 1 tableau Vertumne et Pomone." The *modèles*, or cartoons, are listed in a Beauvais inventory of 1820; *Vénus et les Amours* was in four strips, the *Sommeil d'Issé* in three, and *Renaud Endormi* in six. *Vertumne et Pomone* appears as part of a *Tenture Pastorale* (actually the *Noble Pastorale*), rather than as a *Fragment d'Opéra*; it was in four strips.¹⁷ They were presumably among the "93 tentures" or the "17 pastorales" that were sold in 1829.¹⁸

The Beauvais *Renaud Endormi* (Figure 1) does not show exactly the same scene as *Le Sommeil de Renaud* of 1741 in Coypel's series (Figure 2). Rinaldo is in a similar posture in both tapestries, reclining, his armor beside him, resting his head on his hand, but Coypel's design, appropriately dramatic since he was an aspiring though unsuccessful playwright,¹⁹ includes Armida with a drawn dagger threatening the sleeping warrior, with whom she is about to fall in love, and a cupid attempting to shield him. The exact reference to the opera is given in a medallion on wide versions of Coypel's composition: ARMIDE / AC^{te} 2^e sc^e 5^e.²⁰ Boucher, equally characteristically, merely shows Rinaldo's pleasantly languorous state in the enchanted garden.

Renaud Endormi is listed as woven in 1752, 1755, and 1764 and is also included in the only weaving of the complete series, made in 1762 for Henri-Jean-Baptiste Bertin, a high government official, Contrôleur Général from 1759 to 1763. In effect, Bertin's would have been a royal command, so that the example with the king's arms, formerly owned by Maurice Fenaille, is presumably from that series;²¹ it was published as owned by Daniel Wildenstein in 1971.²² One of the other examples is in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (Figure 1).²³ The busts of two nymphs from the left side were used for an oval screen panel in the James A. de Rothschild collection at Waddesdon Manor (Figure 3).²⁴ The two girls on the far right of the tapestry are seen, reversed, on the right in the painting *Arion Porté sur un Dauphin* of 1748 in the Art Museum, Princeton University (Figure 4);²⁵ the foremost of the pair, turning her head back, appears alone in the *Rape of Europa* of the *Amours des Dieux* tapestry series, first woven in 1750. The girl playing a pipe on the left is very like one in the *Jupiter and Antiope* of the same series.²⁶

Boucher had used the subject of Rinaldo and Armida in 1734 for his reception picture at the Académie,

a painting now in the Louvre.²⁷ The composition bears no relationship to the tapestry, except that there is a dolphin in both works of art. He did not paint the subject again, though in 1761 he designed Armida's palace for a production of *Armide*.²⁸

Vénus et les Amours (Figure 5) was woven in 1752, but not again except in the royal set ten years later. The latter piece was owned by Maurice Fenaille in

17. Badin, *Beauvais*, pp. 91, 105. *Vertumne et Pomone*, despite this listing, was definitely one of the *Fragments d'Opéra*. This is proved by a note on a list of the standard five pieces of a *Noble Pastorale* set delivered to the king in 1762; it explains why, though the king usually received sets of six, this one had only five pieces: "le sixième [tableau] ayant été exécuté par le peintre pour augmenter la tenture des fragments d'Opéra, qui n'étoient que de trois pièces et ce suivant les ordres de M. de Trudaine" (Ananoff, *Boucher*, I, "Tableau chronologique" no. 749). The king's set of the *Noble Pastorale* of 1769, "pour Mesdames," included a sixth piece, *La Bergère*, its only recorded weaving (Badin, *Beauvais*, p. 62); this was probably *La Bohémienne* from the *Fêtes Italiennes* (Edith A. Standen, "Fêtes Italiennes: Beauvais Tapestries After Boucher in The Metropolitan Museum of Art," *MMJ* 12 [1977] p. 111, fig. 7). Boucher was no longer designing for Beauvais in 1769. Daniel-Charles de Trudaine was Intendant des Finances; his orders were undoubtedly always obeyed at Beauvais. He owned Boucher's *Pensent-ils aux Raisins?* and its pendant, *Le Berger Recompensé*, of 1749, now in the Wallace Collection, London, and other works by Boucher (Ananoff, *Boucher*, nos. 336, 337; II, p. 319).

18. Badin, *Beauvais*, p. 47, n. 1.

19. He wrote some thirty theatrical pieces, of which only one was performed and published (*Dictionnaire de biographie française* IX [Paris, 1961] p. 1146).

20. Fenaille, *Gobelins*, III, pp. 327, 328. Wide versions of both the Gobelins and the Beauvais tapestries are illustrated on the plate facing p. 328. Coypel's shows a river god and nymphs, as does Boucher's.

21. Maurice Fenaille, *François Boucher* (Paris, 1925) pp. 17, 91; Hôtel Jean Charpentier, *Exposition François Boucher*, exh. cat. (Paris, 1932) no. 138.

22. Dario Boccara, *Les Belles Heures de la tapisserie* (Paris, 1971) pl. 199; Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 384/3, fig. 117, described as "Coll. inconnue"; a drawing for the river god is illustrated and one for a nymph in the foreground is listed.

23. George Henry McCall, *The Joseph Widener Collection: Tapestries at Lynnewood Hall, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1932) pp. 36–38, 81–83, ill.

24. Geoffrey de Bellaigue, *Furniture, Clocks and Gilt Bronzes* (London, 1974) II, no. 137.

25. As noted by Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 328/8.

26. Standen, "The *Amours des Dieux*," fig. 12 (*Europa*), fig. 8 (*Jupiter and Antiope*).

27. [MMA], *Boucher*, no. 26.

28. Ananoff, *Boucher*, I, "Tableau chronologique" no. 807. A composition showing Armida about to attack Rinaldo, as in Coypel's painting, has been attributed to Jean-François de Troy or to the young Boucher ([MMA], *Boucher*, p. 48, figs. 17, 18).



5. *Vénus et les Amours*, French (Beauvais), probably 1762, after Boucher. Wool and silk tapestry. Location unknown, formerly in the collection of Maurice Fenaille



6. Boucher, *Berger Gardant Ses Moutons*. Oil on canvas. Caen, Musée des Beaux-Arts (photo: R. J. Paté)



7. *Le Sommeil d'Issé*, French (Beauvais), probably 1762, after Boucher. Wool and silk tapestry. Location unknown, formerly in the collection of Maurice Fénaille



8. Boucher, *Cupid Lying on a Cloud*. Chalk drawing. London, British Museum (photo: courtesy Trustees of the British Museum)

1932,²⁹ but its present location is not known. It is full of reminiscences of other works by Boucher, especially in the attitude of Venus;³⁰ the most amusing detail is the coquettish sphinx, whose near relative appears in the *Berger Gardant Ses Moutons* in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen (Figure 6), and the *Génies des Arts* of 1761 in the museum at Angers.³¹ The gigantic urn in the Caen painting is decorated with the same horned head that appears on a vase in the *Vertumne et Pomone* of the *Fragments d'Opéra* (Figure 11).

Apollo disguised himself as a shepherd in order to make love to a shepherdess, Isse; in the tapestry (Figure 7), he holds the *houlette* of his feigned occupation and a cupid has taken possession of hers.³² The tapestry was woven in 1758, 1759, 1760, and 1768, as well as in the king's set of 1762, so it is surprising that the only identified example is one with the royal arms that was in the Fenaille collection in 1932.³³ Boucher was closely connected with the theatrical production of the opera; one of his contributions to the Salon of 1742 was "Un Esquisse de Paysage . . . représentant le Hameau d'Issé, qui doit être exécuté en grand pour l'Opéra."³⁴ The sprawling cupid seen from the back is also in a painting, *L'Amour Désarmé*, owned by William Randolph Hearst in 1942, and in a drawing in the British Museum (Figure 8).³⁵

Another Beauvais tapestry showing a young man bending to kiss the hand of a sleeping shepherdess belongs to the city of Paris and has been published as after Boucher (Figure 9).³⁶ But the girl has several companions, and the scene is exactly that described in Honoré d'Urfé's novel *Astrée* when Céladon finds his love asleep with her friends, Phillis and Diane, and tenderly kisses her hand. Astrée, before falling asleep, is said to "dénoue ses cheveux et délace son corsage trop serré," and Céladon, on seeing her, "remit sur un genou et s'approchant de sa belle main, ne peut s'empêcher de la luy baiser."³⁷ The tapestry must be the *Astrée Endormie* from the *Histoire d'Astrée* designed by Jean-Baptiste Deshayes, first woven at Beauvais in 1763.³⁸ In the life of Deshayes by Charles-Nicolas Cochin, published in 1765, a "tableau fait pour la manufacture de Beauvais" is said to represent "Diane & Astrée endormies auprès de la Fontaine d'Amour"; a fountain is, in fact, shown in the tapestry. Cochin adds that Deshayes "y répandit beaucoup de grâces, quoique ce fût un genre très-différent de celui qu'on regardoit comme le sien."³⁹ An oil sketch lent to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and later on loan from a private collection to the

University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, shows the sleeping Astrée, Céladon, and the cupids above them much as they appear in the tapestry (Figure 10).⁴⁰

The subject of the fourth tapestry of the *Fragments d'Opéra* series, *Vertumne et Pomone*, unlike the other three, was frequently represented by Boucher. The tapestry was also woven more often than the others of the series, in 1758, 1759, 1760, 1764, 1768, and 1776, as well as in the royal set of 1762;⁴¹ the last piece, with the royal arms, was sold at the Galerie Jean Charpentier, Paris, May 24, 1955, no. 108, and

29. Fenaille, *François Boucher*, p. 85, ill.; Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 387/1, fig. 1123.

30. See Ananoff, *Boucher*, nos. 84 (1732) and 250 (1743).

31. Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 169, fig. 546 (Caen painting, dated ca. 1739); no. 545, fig. 1502 (*Génies*, dated 1761; erroneously said to be in the Musée de Picardie, Amiens). The Gobelins tapestry woven after this picture for Mme de Pompadour (Heinrich Göbel, *Wandteppiche*: II. *Die romanischen Länder* [Leipzig, 1928] II, pl. 175) or a second weaving is in a private collection in Michigan.

32. The *houlette* is a shepherd's implement, used to gently dissuade sheep from encroaching on cultivated land (Edith A. Standen, *European Post-Medieval Tapestries and Related Hangings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* [New York, 1985] I, p. 176, n. 1).

33. Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 386/1 (not illustrated). Exhibited in Paris in 1932 (Hôtel Jean Charpentier, *Exposition Boucher*, no. 139).

34. Ananoff, *Boucher*, I, "Tableau chronologique" no. 201. This is probably not the sketch for a stage set in the Musée de Picardie, Amiens ([MMA], *Boucher*, no. 47).

35. Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 375, fig. 1095 (painting, assigned to 1751); no. 375/3, fig. 1098 (drawing). The painting is not at San Simeon (information from Gerry Norgaard).

36. Juliette Niclausse, *Tapisseries et tapis de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1948) no. 65. The design was attributed to Jean-Baptiste Deshayes when the tapestry was exhibited in 1986 (Catherine Join-Diéterle, *Chefs-d'œuvre de la tapisserie du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle dans les collections de la ville de Paris*, exh. cat. (Paris: Petit Palais, 1986) p. 13, detail ill. reversed).

37. *Astrée*, vol. II, book 8. I am indebted for this reference to Dr. Anne Desprechins.

38. Anne Desprechins, "Tapisserie royale à sujet de l'Astrée appartenant à la ville de Paris," *Études sur le XVIIIe siècle*, Université Libre de Bruxelles 8 (1981) pp. 147–150.

39. Marc Sandoz, *Jean-Baptiste Deshayes* (Paris, 1977) p. 16. Works by Deshayes, especially sketches, have often been attributed to Boucher (François Balangaud, "Esquisse pour le Mariage de la Vierge de Jean-Baptiste Deshayes," *Revue du Louvre* [1982] p. 388).

40. J. Patrice Marandel, *French Oil Sketches from an English Collection: Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries*, exh. cat. (Houston, 1975) no. 9 (attribution to Deshayes rejected, given to François-André Vincent).

41. Badin, *Beauvais*, p. 62.



9. *Astrée Endormie*, French (Beauvais), 1763–73, after Jean-Baptiste Deshays. Wool and silk tapestry. Collection of the City of Paris (photo: Préfecture de Paris)



10. Jean-Baptiste Deshays, *Astrée Endormie*. Oil sketch. Albuquerque, University Art Museum, University of New Mexico, on loan from a private collection (photo: Millar & Harris, London)



11. *Vertumne et Pomone*, French (Beauvais), 1758–76, after Boucher. Wool and silk tapestry, 10 ft. × 6 ft. 9 in. (3.05 × 2.06 m.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913, 14.40.708

was later in a private collection in New York.⁴² There are several others extant. One in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 11) has Boucher's name on the stone table at the left and the date 1757, presumably the year of the painting. The name and the same date are reversed on an example from the Casimir Perier and Veil Picard collections that was in a private collection in Geneva in 1976.⁴³ Two others have appeared in sales. One, from the Théodore Reinach and Ephrussi collections, was sold at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris, May 28, 1929, no. 10;⁴⁴ the other, from the Alfred Rothschild and countess of Carnavon collections, with Boucher's name, was sold at Christie's, London, May 2, 1935, no. 120.

The wider versions of the design, such as that with the royal arms, show, on the right, cupids playing on an elaborate fountain with a large stone dolphin on a huge shell. The stick of the rake at Pomona's feet is visible and there is a watering can beside it; on the left, the stone vase is seen in its entirety. There is another cupid above Vertumnus's back, filling the space occupied rather awkwardly by two tree trunks in the narrower examples.

The Boucher painting that corresponds very closely to the narrow tapestry versions of *Vertumne et Pomone* belongs to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (Figure 12).⁴⁵ It consists of five joined vertical strips, with a horizontal section at the bottom.⁴⁶



12. Boucher, *Vertumne et Pomone*. Oil on canvas. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Mildred Anna Williams Collection (photo: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco)

42. Badin, *Beauvais*, p. 84; Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 385/2.

43. Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 385/3, fig. 1121; George Leland Hunter, *Tapestries: Their Origin, History and Renaissance* (New York, 1912) frontispiece.

44. Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 385/1. It is here said to have been sold again (no city or auction house named) on June 25, 1937, no. 104, ill.

45. Thomas C. Howe, "Vertumnus and Pomona by François Boucher," *Museum Bulletin, California Palace of the Legion of Honor* n.s. 1, no. 5 (1968) fig. 1; Anna C. Bennett, *Five Centuries of Tapestry from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1976) p. 7, fig. 3; [MMA], *Boucher*, p. 243, fig. 161.

46. Information from Marion C. Stewart, San Francisco. According to a letter from Valerie T. L. Leigh of the South African National Museum, two of the three paintings that were associated with the San Francisco *Vertumne et Pomone* for many years

(the Ganay/Vail/Robinson Bouchers, now on loan to the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff) are also seamed. Though the four were certainly not made as companion pieces, it is possible that they were all originally in the Beauvais manufactory. Ananoff accepts only *Vertumne et Pomone* and one other of the four paintings as by Boucher's own hand (Ananoff, *Boucher*, note to no. 321).



13. *Vertumne et Pomone*, French (Gobelins), 1764–71, after Boucher, 1763. Silk and wool tapestry (detail). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 58.75.2

A drawing with one of Pomona's hands and her legs is in a private collection in Geneva.⁴⁷

In 1763, Boucher painted another *Vertumne et Pomone*, now in the Louvre,⁴⁸ that was reproduced in tapestry (Figure 13). Even though this was woven in the Gobelins basse-lisse workshop, the picture would not have been cut into strips to be placed under the warps; this age-old practice was continued at Beauvais until the end of the eighteenth century, but was abandoned at the Gobelins about 1750.⁴⁹ The designs for the Gobelins and for the Beauvais tapestries show markedly similar compositions and several repeated details, such as the tilted basket of flowers. Both seem

to be derived from a painting made for the king in 1749 and now in the Columbus Museum of Art (Figure 14);⁵⁰ Pomona here is like her counterpart in the Beauvais tapestry, but Vertumnus, sitting rather than standing, is closer to the Gobelins figure. The large

47. Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 385/9, fig. 1122.

48. Ananoff, *Boucher*, no. 482, fig. 1355.

49. The change on the Gobelins basse-lisse looms from the traditional method to one that left the cartoon intact was effected by Jacques Neilson, head of the workshop concerned from 1749: "Neilson, en 1750, proposa de supprimer le placement du modèle sous la chaîne. Le tapissier avait derrière lui, comme dans la haute lisse, le modèle entier. Pour exécuter le dessin des contours dans le sens du modèle, Neilson employa une étoffe transparente qui servait à calquer le trait et qu'on plaçait ensuite à suivre le trait par transparence. . . . A la Manufacture de Beauvais, l'ancienne pratique de la basse lisse subsista jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIe siècle; les modèles, coupés en bandes, étaient placés sous la chaîne, et cet usage amena la destruction complète des magnifiques modèles de Boucher et d'Oudry" (Fenaille, *Gobelins*, III, pp. 229–230). It has, however, been suggested that the method of placing tracings (*calques*) under the warps was used in Brussels in the 17th century (Nora de Poorter, *The Eucharist Series* [London/Philadelphia, 1978] I, pp. 145–148).

50. [MMA], *Boucher*, no. 56.

14. Boucher, *Vertumne et Pomone*. Oil on canvas. Columbus, Ohio, Columbus Museum of Art, Museum Purchase, Derby Fund (photo: Columbus Museum)



vase with a horned mask appears in all these versions of the subject.

The Columbus painting, like the Beauvais tapestry, may have been made as a result of the previously mentioned performance of the fourth act of *Les Éléments* in 1749. It has been suggested that Pomona is a generalized portrait of Mme de Pompadour in the part.⁵¹ When Boucher was called on to illustrate the scene for the 1767–71 edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,⁵² he changed the composition, showing Pomona standing and Vertumnus seated, but he kept the disguised god's crutch, the watering can, and the large vase, though the last is now somewhat more classical. The earliest painting of the subject, said to date from 1740–45, is quite different from all the other versions; Pomona is nude and is accompanied by a scantily draped nymph.⁵³ This may be Pomona's sister, Flora, who is present in the sixth scene of Act IV of *Pomone* by Robert Cambert and Pierre Perrin, first performed in 1671; in this scene Pomona, as shown in all the paintings and tapestries, is courted by Vertumnus in the shape of old Beroe, Pomona's nurse.⁵⁴

It will have been noticed how many repetitions there are in the *Fragments d'Opéra*. When the series was started in 1751, Boucher was approaching the summit of his career; by 1757, the date of the last painting, *Vertumne et Pomone*, his steady work for Beauvais had been over for some time. While Oudry was alive, Boucher continued to provide designs for the manufactory; in January 1754, for instance, André-Charlemagne Charron, who had just taken over from Besniers as Oudry's partner, wrote from Beauvais asking for 7,500 livres, a very substantial sum, "qui servira à payer en partie la tenture qui fait actuellement M. Boucher pour la manufactory."⁵⁵ This tenture was probably the *Noble Pastorale*, all five pieces of which were first woven in 1755,⁵⁶ though two of the related paintings are dated 1748.⁵⁷

Oudry died on April 30, 1755, and the marquis de Marigny immediately wrote to the king, "suppliant S. M. vouloir bien accorder au Sieur Boucher l'inspection sur les ouvrages des Gobelins," a salaried post that Oudry had held.⁵⁸ The appointment was made official on May 27 and Marigny's letter to Boucher of June 6 said, "Vous sentés bien que je compte aussi sur vos ouvrages pour cette Manufacture, où vous les verrés exécutés avec plus de précision qu'ils ne l'ont été ailleurs,"⁵⁹ that is, one must suppose, at Beauvais.

Marigny used an adaptation of this sentence in his letter of July 3 to the three heads of workshops at the Gobelins, the *entrepreneurs*, who had quarreled with Oudry while he was inspector; they answered with an exultant thank-you letter, saying of Boucher that "il nous a dit qu'il avait refusé les offres avantageuses qui ont été faites de la part des directeurs de la manufacture de Beauvais, pour s'attacher entièrement à nous."⁶⁰

Boucher's defection, so soon after Oudry's death, must have been a sad blow for Charron, now the sole director at Beauvais. A letter is extant that he wrote to the Intendant des Finances, M. de Trudaine, his source of government assistance, asking for payment to be made to the son-in-law of "feu Mr Oudry" for a painting. A note dated July 15, 1759, has been added to the letter, explaining the circumstances in which Charron wrote it: "feû Mr Oudry dans le moment ou M. Boucher refusoit des tableaux et ou la manufacture couroit le risque de le manquer j'imaginai de faire faire par Mr. Nollet son gendre, une copie d'un des tableaux des fêtes italiennes."⁶¹ It is clear

51. Artemis Group, *18th Century French Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture*, exh. cat., David Carritt Ltd. (London, 1978) unnumbered page.

52. John Harthan, *The History of the Illustrated Book* (London, 1971) p. 143, ill.

53. Frank Hermann, *Selected Paintings at the Norton Simon Museum, California* (New York, 1980) p. 80, ill.

54. I am indebted to Marion C. Stewart for information about this opera.

55. Ananoff, *Boucher*, I, "Tableau chronologique" no. 580.

56. Babin, *Beauvais*, p. 62.

57. Ananoff, *Boucher*, nos. 321, 324.

58. Jean Mondain-Monval, *Correspondance de Soufflot avec les Directeurs des Bâtiments* (Paris, 1918) p. 27, n. 1.

59. Fenaille, *Gobelins*, IV, p. 227.

60. A. L. Lacordaire, *Notice historique sur les Manufactures Impériales des tapisseries des Gobelins et de tapis de Savonnerie* (Paris, 1855) p. 84. The documents of the quarrel between Oudry and the *entrepreneurs* are given on pp. 78–84. Oudry ungraciously referred to Beauvais in one of these documents as a "manufacture inférieure."

61. Ananoff, *Boucher*, I, "Tableau chronologique" no. 322. This author places the letter under Jan. 1, 1748 (actually a date added to the document by another hand), but the reference to "feu Mr Oudry" shows it must have been written after Oudry's death in 1755. The painting copied by Nollet is identified by Ananoff as one of the *Fêtes Vénitiennes*, ordered in 1748 to be reproduced at the Gobelins, but never made (see note 1). It is extremely unlikely that such a painting would have been available at Beauvais; more probably Nollet copied one of the then old *Fêtes Italiennes*, which continued to be woven until 1762, or possibly one of the new *Noble Pastorale* series.

that Boucher abandoned Beauvais at this time; *Vertumne et Pomone* of 1757 is the only tapestry design he furnished after Oudry's death, and it is surely significant that it was made by order of the powerful M. de Trudaine.⁶²

It is even a question of how much original work Boucher supplied for the *Noble Pastorale*, first woven in 1755.⁶³ In these designs, he returned to the general scheme of the *Fêtes Italiennes*, now twenty years old; groups of attractive young people appear in landscapes ornamented with Roman ruins, elaborate fountains, classical statues, and immense urns. But the relaxed, almost languid inhabitants of this

dreamworld are even less active than their counterparts in the earlier series; very little is happening except gentle courtship and patient fishing. There are no peasants, like the crowd in the *Opérateur* of the *Fêtes*, and no fashionable aristocrats like those in the *Collation* or *Musique*. As Gertrude Townsend has written of these compositions: "The greater part of them seem to have been adapted from paintings which are known to have been executed several years earlier and presumably not primarily as tapestry cartoons."⁶⁴ The *Noble Pastorale* was the last tapestry series after Boucher woven at Beauvais.

62. See note 17.

63. Ananoff, *Boucher*, nos. 321–325. Paintings showing part of the *Fontaine d'Amour* and the *Pipée aux Oiseaux* in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, and the *Déjeuner* in the Indianapolis Museum of Art (Ananoff, *Boucher*, nos. 321a, 324a, 325) are dated 1748; the author considers the last to be a "rare modèle de tapisserie entièrement de la main de Boucher." A set of five tapestries is in the Huntington Collection (Robert R. Wark, *French Decorative Art in the Huntington Collection* [San Marino, Calif., 1961] figs. 7–13). The fullest account of the series is in Adolph S. Cavallo, *Tapestries of Europe and of Colonial Peru in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston, 1967) no. 55.

64. Gertrude Townsend, "A Pastoral by François Boucher," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 38 (1940) p. 82.