

François Bouquet
Curator, Private Mansions, Décors and Furniture
National Archives of France

Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum Stockholm Volume 28:1

Cover Illustration

Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), Portrait of the Artist's Sister Lydia. Study for The Cup of Tea, c. 1879–80. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 39.5 × 60 cm. Purchase: Hedda and N.D. Qvist Fund 2021. Nationalmuseum, NM 7618.

Publisher

Per Hedström, Director General.

Editors

Ludvig Florén, Magnus Olausson and Martin Olin.

Editorial Committee

Ludvig Florén, Carina Fryklund, Eva-Lena Karlsson, Helena Kåberg, Ingrid Lindell, Magnus Olausson, Martin Olin, Daniel Prytz and Cilla Robach.

Picture Editors

Jonas Burvall and Jenny Phan.

Photographers

Nationalmuseum Photographic Studio: Linn Ahlgren, Anna Danielsson, Viktor Fordell, Cecilia Heisser, Olle Andersson, Erik Cornelius, Ambrose Hickman and Hans Thorwid.

Photo Credits

The Schoolmaster – Noël Hallé's Tender Look at Education in the Mid-18th Century

Photo: Conservation des œuvres d'art religieuses et civiles (COARC), Paris (fig. 2, p. 14).

Photo: The Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Public Domain (fig. 3, p. 15).

Photo: The National Gallery, London (fig. 4, p. 16). Photo: Utpictural8 (figs. 5–6, p. 17).

Pierre Jacques Volaire's *View of Solfatara* Photo: Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, Naples/CC-BY 4.0 (fig. 2, p. 21).

Louis Masreliez' *Allegory of War* – Between History Painting and Interior Art in a Sequence of Interrelated Propaganda

Photo: The Royal Academy of Arts, Stockholm (fig. 6, p. 27).

Still Life with Flower Arrangement and Fruit Basket by Antoine Berjon

Photo: 2014 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)/ Adrien Didierjean, <u>collections.louvre.fr</u> (fig. 2, p. 30).

Old Italian Woman with Distaff by Jean Victor

Photo: Clermont Auvergne Métropole, MARQ/Florent Giffard (fig. 2, p. 32).

Photo: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Orléans/François Lauginie (fig. 3, p. 32). Photo: 2002 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)/ Franck Raux, <u>collections.louvre.fr</u> (fig. 4, p. 33). Photo: Amber Tree/Flickr via Wikimedia Commons/ CC BY-SA (fig. 5, p. 34).

Allegory of Sunday – A Painting by Ditlev Conrad Blunck

Photo: H. M. the Queen's Reference Library, The Royal Collection, Copenhagen (fig. 2, p. 36). Photo: Kunsthalle zu Kiel/Martin Frommhagen (fig. 3, p. 37)

19th-Century Finnish Landscape Painting. From Romantic Views to Colour Experiments

 $Photo: Finnish\ National\ Gallery/Public\ Domain\ (figs.\ 2–4\ and\ 9, pp.\ 42–43\ and\ 46).$

 $Photo: Wikimedia\ Commons/Public\ Domain\ (fig.\ 5, p.\ 43).$

Photo: Finnish National Gallery Archives (fig. 8, p. 46).

Mary Cassatt's Portrait of her Sister Lydia. A Free Study for *The Cup of Tea*

Photo: 2023 Image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence (figs. 3–4, pp. 49–50).

Julia Beck's Painting *Autumn Day* and 19th-Century Transnational Naturalism

Photo: MBA, Rennes, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/ Adélaïde Beaudoin (fig. 2, p. 54).

Photo: Brucebo Foundation archive, Visby (fig. 4, p. 56).

Photo: Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain (figs. 5 and 7, pp. 56 and 58).

Supplice de Loke - A Sculpture by Ida Matton

Photo: Ida Matton's archive, Uppsala University Library (figs. 2–4, pp. 60–63).

Isabelle Mann Clow's Dining Room Furnishings and Swedish Design in 1920s USA

Photo: Ray isbell, findagrave.com (fig. 2, p. 66). Photo: Chicago Historical Society, Chicago (figs. 3 and 9, pp. 66 and 70).

Photo: 2023 Image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence (fig. 4, p. 67).

Photo: Svenskt Tenn's archive (fig. 5–6, p. 69) Photo: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, LC-DIG-gsc-5a02318/LC-G612-T01-21928 (figs. 8 and 11, pp. 70 and 71).

Nature Inside: Plants and Flowers in the Modern

Photo and repro photo: the author (figs. 1–5, 8–17, pp. 73–75, 77–82). Photo: Period Postcards/Public Domain (figs. 6–7, p. 76).

Graphic Design

BIGG.

Layout

Ludvig Florén.

Translation and Language Editing

Clare Barnes and Bettina Schultz.

Publishing

Ludvig Florén, Magnus Olausson, and Martin Olin (Editors) and Ingrid Lindell (Publications Manager).

Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum Stockholm contains articles on the history and theory of art relating to the collections of the Nationalmuseum and is published with generous support from the Friends of the Nationalmuseum.

The Nationalmuseum collaborates with Svenska Dagbladet, The Wineagency, the Friends of the Nationalmuseum and the American Friends of the Nationalmuseum.

Nationalmuseum Box 16176 SE–103 24 Stockholm Sweden www.nationalmuseum.se

© Nationalmuseum, the authors and the owners of the reproduced works

E-ISSN 2001-9238



The Schoolmaster – Noël Hallé's Tender Look at Education in the Mid-18th Century

François Bouquet Curator, Private Mansions, Décors and Furniture National Archives of France



 $Fig. 1\ No\"{e}l\ Hall\'e\ (1711-1781),\ The\ School master, 1751.\ Oil\ on\ canvas, 63\times79\ cm.\ Purchase: Axel\ and\ Nora\ Lundgren\ Fund\ 2020\ (accession\ 2021).\ National museum,\ NM\ 7591.$

ome of the highlights of the French Enlightenment of the 18th century were the ideas regarding education and its possible evolution, ideas which remain influential to this day. Noël Hallé's (1711–1781) painting *The Schoolmaster*, recently acquired by the Nationalmuseum, reflects this and is a touching depiction of childhood, to which the artist's sharp eye brings depth and a sense of intimacy.

Noël Hallé belonged to one of the dynasties of French painters that flourished during the 18th century thanks to them closely following the evolution of taste and style. Grandson of Daniel Hallé (1614–1675) and son of Claude-Guy Hallé (1652-1736), both painters, he received his training in the workshop of his brother-in-law, Jean Restout (1666-1702), and won the Academy's first prize in 1736. After a lengthy stay in Rome as a boarder at the French Academy, he first participated in the Salon in 1747. He was to exhibit a selection of his works every year until his death. Once he became a member of the Academy in 1748, he achieved the status of an established artist and his reputation was assured. Indeed, in 1759, when Carl-Gustaf Tessin (1695-1770), in correspondence with Per Gustaf Floding (1731–1791), requested a painting by an acclaimed Salon artist, the latter responded that he would not commission Restout, who was too old, that [Jean Baptiste] Deshays (1729-1765) asked 800 pounds and [Joseph-Marie] Vien (1716-1809) 1,200, after which he adds that "Mr. Hallé also asks for 1200 pounds. His drawing is much less correct, his colouring more attractive though less true than that of M. Vien".2

Hallé benefited from a royal patronage that gave him many commissions, including for one of his masterpieces, *The Race of Hippomenes and Atalanta*, which was a cartoon for a Gobelins tapestry and a huge success at the Salon in 1765. However, his work was forgotten during the 19th century, before finally being rediscovered – particularly due to the aforementioned painting, which was a revelation to both



Fig. 2 Noël Hallé (1711–1781), Christ and the Children, 1751. Oil on canvas, 310×190 cm. Église Saint-Sulpice, Paris, COA-SUL 28/211.



Fig. 3 Noël Hallé (1711–1781), St. Anne Revealing to the Virgin the Prophecy of Isaiah, c. 1749. Oil on canvas, 62.6×41.3 cm. The Ciechanowiecki Collection, Gift of The Ahmanson Foundation. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.2000.179.16.

critics and the public at *The Loves of the Gods* exhibition at the Louvre in 1991.³

Noël Hallé and the Salon of 1751

The Schoolmaster is part of Noël Hallé's early work (fig. 1), as he exhibited this painting at his fourth Salon in 1751.4 An old schoolmaster, dressed in a large, worn-out frock with a turned-down collar, sits in an austere interior with only a bare wall to be seen. He hands a book, or rather a bundle of papers, to two children, the oldest of whom is a little girl who is clasping her hands together and looking at the old man, while a little boy cries behind her. The scene is painted with great realism, in the manner of a genre study, and underlines Hallé's observational skills and his ability to convey the psychological attitude of the characters, with the master's calm, the little girl's sustained attention and the seemingly simulated sorrow of the little boy. It is, moreover, these attitudes that were half-heartedly highlighted by a critic who saw the work at the Salon and pointed out a lack of progress in drawing and colouring by the artist, but "[could] only praise his two little schoolchildren, the expression is striking; but the schoolmaster is cold, and his head has no relief".5

That same year at the Salon, Noël Hallé presented a second work depicting Christ and the Children (fig. 2).6 Although best known as a history painter, he was interested in all types of subjects - religious and decorative paintings, mythological, realistic, genre or humorous scenes, as well as family portraits - and was commissioned this important work for the Church of Saint-Sulpice, to which Jean-Baptiste Marie Pierre (1714-1789), Jean Charles Frontier (1701-1763) and Carle van Loo (1705-1765) also contributed works.7 In the composition, the attitude of the two girls kneeling in profile at the foot of the Christ is the same as that of the young student with folded hands in The Schoolmaster. The destination for this canvas, intended to decorate the chapel of the Infancy of Jesus, suggests that a parallel can be drawn between reverent students and the blessed

children, as well as between the old schoolmaster - whose head strongly resembles that of the apostle - and Christ, in some ways portrayed in a teaching position. The name of this chapel and its decoration suggests that this was where young children gathered for catechism, which became part of religious instruction in the 18th century, with an hour-long oral lesson every Sunday.8 It appears that Hallé was particularly fond of this work, since he used the composition again twenty-four years later, modifying it slightly, detaching himself from Restout's influence, for a commission from the Collège des Grassins. Although he did not preserve the kneeling girls, the educational aspect of the scene is still central in this work for the school, which took in poor pupils from the diocese of Sens.9

Education in Hallé's work

The painter's interest in teaching and children, which is evident in The Schoolmaster, runs through all his work and is based on a real knowledge of educational issues. Two years prior to The Schoolmaster, Hallé executed a decorative painting depicting Saint Anne teaching young Virgin Mary to read (fig. 3) for the Brotherhood of Saint-Anne of the Master Carpenters of the City and Suburbs of Paris.¹⁰ More than rigorous tutoring, here the reading lesson is given the intimate tone of a moment shared between a mother and her daughter. Hallé thus shows a great interest in education and demonstrates a knowledge of personal learning processes, even in earlier works such as this. While school education was strengthened in the 18th century, learning to read remained a central issue and was sometimes a substantial investment for parents. Although pupils were often divided in classes, the teacher nevertheless commonly taught them individually, especially in underprivileged environments, to compensate for differences in pupil attendance and the differences in ability.11 Regardless of their social background, all pupils who learned to recognise words the same way, using the method of breaking them into characters



Fig. 4 Jean-Siméon Chardin (1699–1779), *The Young Schoolmistress*, c. 1737. Oil on canvas, 61.6×66.7 cm. Bequeathed by Mrs Edith Cragg, as part of the John Webb Bequest 1925. National Gallery, London, NG4077.

and then syllables, could decipher text the schoolmaster pointed to with his finger or a stylus (fig. 4).

In the 18th century, this type of education was extended to young girls, because the Reformation movements were concerned with providing them with an education that would make them not only proper housewives but also good Christian mothers. However, it was uncommon for boys and girls to be educated together, as represented in *The Schoolmaster*, because religious authorities, which regarded this as a possible opportunity for sin, often governed the organisation of schools or at least intervened in the choice of teachers. Therefore, this intriguing painting probably portrays the education of a young girl and her little

brother by a private master, a practice that was widespread among the modest bourgeoisie in the second half of the century, as the "monastic" education criticised by some thinkers gave way to a more useful education.¹²

More than just a reading lesson?

Noël Hallé thus takes a tender look at a schoolmaster and his two pupils, capturing a moment in the reality of mid-18th-century education, but is this really the sole subject of his work? The austere setting, the teacher's worn frock coat and his dirty nails bring a critical eye to the scene, turning it into social commentary. The obvious destitution of the old man questions an education system organised through unequal means,

one that is largely dependent on the local context. Later in his career, at the 1765 Salon where he also presented The Race of Hippomenes and Atalanta, Hallé exhibited two sketches depicting The Education of the Rich and The Education of the Poor (figs. 5-6), which sharply contrasted the mores of a well-to-do, austere family with those of a warm household of craftsmen: these are a clear manifesto in favour of the benefits of family education, necessary for the development of children, and which some of the Salon's critics noted.13 But a final element adds another layer to The Schoolmaster: the little boy, particularly appreciated by the critics, a frontal figure with a face pierced with light, crying and strangely grimacing. This undisciplined young pupil, who seems to force his tears to escape the lesson, disturbs its serenity and the devout attention of the girl. This troublemaker, who could be reminiscent of the painter's work as an illustrator, adds a certain comic character to the scene: indeed, Hallé did not hesitate to combine the profane and the sacred, the grandiose and the humorous, in his works.

Many of Noël Hallé's paintings and drawings show a great sensitivity to childhood. A few months earlier, in 1751, the same year he executed *The Schoolmaster*, Hallé had married Françoise-Geneviève Lorry and fatherhood was probably already on his mind. Later work by the painter suggests that he was very attached to his family, which he enjoyed drawing and painting, beginning in 1754 with the birth of his son Jean-Noël, and continuing with that of his daughter Catherine-Charlotte-Geneviève the following year.¹⁴

Appreciation of The Schoolmaster

As a renowned and affluent artist, Noël Hallé achieved great freedom in the choice of paintings he executed: he became financially independent, didn't have to work for the Bâtiments du roi and was able to rely on private commissions. Despite its unenthusiastic reception by the critics, *The Schoolmaster* appears to have been not only very





Figs. 5–6 Noël Hallé (1711–1781), The Education of the Rich/The Education of the Poor, 1765. Canvases pasted on wood, 34.3×42.5 cm. Private collection.

popular at the Salon, so that the painter made several copies, but also appreciated by the artist and his family.15 When Noël Hallé died in 1781, one of these paintings probably the copy exhibited at the Salon was sold, indicating he kept it in his studio until his death; furthermore, forty years later, another Schoolmaster is mentioned in his son Jean-Noël's after-death inventory. Hallé also made an etching after the painting as soon as executed in 1751.16 He had become interested in etching during his stay at the Academy in Rome, but he did not practice much and engraved only four of his paintings, two of which were done during his stay in Rome. The engraving after this painting is particularly rare and, unlike the last one, has not been commercialised.17

The Schoolmaster is a surprising painting in many respects, and was certainly inspired by other commissions and personal reflections of the artist at this time, so should probably be considered in the light of its contemporary reception. Of the copies Hallé executed to meet demand after its exhibition at the Salon, at least four are known today, all with similar dimensions. Just as with the present painting, Hallé repeated some of his more popular subjects, appreciated by a clientele of amateurs, on several other occasions.18 Scenes such as the present one should be sorted under the intimate genre paintings prized by collectors who were sensitive to the social dimension, while probably also appreciating its slightly satirical tone. Works such as this, produced outside the field of official commissions, often did not add to the renown of the artist's name which, in Halle's case, gradually faded in the 19th century, in favour of painters from court circles or those prized by a rich nobility. It is therefore only recently that the name of Noël Hallé has again been associated with copies of this work: long kept in private hands, these paintings have sometimes been misattributed when exhibited

on the art market, even resulting in the fanciful inscription of "Fragonard" on one of them, thus highlighting the thick paste and the fiery aspect of Hallé's work.19

While one of the copies of the painting belongs to the Musées du Jura in France, the entry of *The Schoolmaster* into the Nationalmuseum's collection adds to the visibility of an artist who has only been recently rediscovered. Though an academician who also received the typical commissions of an artistic elite, he retained a great deal of freedom; this was expressed in his more intimate works, towards which his temperament seems to have led him. In these lesser-known works, he takes a biting yet tender look at society during the Enlightenment. Hallé's The Schoolmaster represents a testimony, to some extent even an exposé, of education in his time, but it is also an intimate social commentary in which he humorously inserted a small satirical nod.

Notes:

- 1. Nicole Willk-Brocard, Une dynastie, les Hallé: Daniel (1614-1675), Claude-Guy (1652-1736), Noël (1711-1781), Paris 1995.
- 2. Gunnar Wilhelm Lundberg, "Le graveur suédois Pierre-Gustave Floding à Paris (1755-1764) et sa correspondance", in L'Art français dans les pays du Nord et de l'Est de l'Europe (XVIIIe-XIXe siècle), Archives de la société de l'histoire de l'art français, vol. XVII, 1931-1932, p. 277: "M. Hallé demandoit de même 1200 livres. Son dessin est bien moins correct, son coloris plus séduisant quoique moins vrai que celui de M. Vien."
- 3. Les Amours des dieux: la peinture mythologique de Watteau à David (exh. cat.), Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 15 October 1991-6 January 1992, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 23 February-26 April 1992, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, 23 May-2 August 1992, Paris 1991, pp. 364-371, no. 56.
- 4. Explication des peintures, sculptures, et autres
- ouvrages de messieurs de l'Académie royale..., Paris 1751, p. 24, no. 43bis.
- 5. Jugemens sur les principaux ouvrages exposés au Louvre, le 27 août 1751, Amsterdam 1751, p. 18: "je vois avec peine que [M. Hallé] ne fait aucun progrès du côté du dessein, et malgré ses efforts sur le coloris,

- il est encore éloigné de la perfection. Je ne puis trop louer ses deux petits écoliers, l'expression y est frappante; mais le maître d'école est froid, et sa tête n'a point de relief: son gueux est un peu mieux."
- 6. Explication des peintures, sculptures, et autres ouvrages de messieurs de l'Académie royale..., Paris 1751, p. 24, no. 43; Jugemens sur les principaux ouvrages exposés au Louvre, le 27 août 1751, Amsterdam 1751, pp. 18-19.
- 7. The irregularly shaped pentagonal chapel was adorned with an elaborate pulpit and five rocaille panels depicting The Flight into Egypt (lost) and The Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the temple (still in place) by Pierre, Jesus among the Doctors (lost) by Frontier, The Nativity (Brest, musée des Beaux-Arts) by van Loo, and Jesus and the Children; the ceiling, also painted by Hallé, depicted Stella matutinal (still in place). The chapel was remodelled into the present Assumption Chapel, but the former layout of the chapel is known from an engraving. See: Willk-Brocard 1995, pp. 120-121.
- 8. Louis-Henri Parias (ed.), Histoire générale de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France, vol. II: De Gutenberg aux Lumières, Paris 1981, p. 121.
- 9. Le baroque des Lumières: chefs-d'œuvre des églises parisiennes au XVIIIe siècle (exh. cat.), Petit Palais, 21 March-16 July 2017, Paris 2017, pp. 90-93.
- 10. Willk-Brocard 1995, pp. 374-375, no. 34.
- 11. Parias 1981, pp. 435-439.
- 12. Parais 1981, p. 487. A century later, Baudicourt describes the engraving after Hallé's painting and mentions "the eldest daughter" and "her younger brother". See: Prosper Baudicourt, Le Peintre-Graveur français continué [...], vol. I, Paris 1859,
- 13. Willk-Brocard 1995, p. 195.
- 14. Willk-Brocard 1995, pp. 123-124.
- 15. Willk-Brocard 1995, pp. 380-381, nos. 43 a-d. See: "historique" for the copies sold at the death of the painter and the one mentioned in his son's inventory after his passing.
- 16. Baudicourt 1859, pp. 14-24.
- 17. Willk-Brocard 1995, pp. 201-202, no. 740, p. 551. Only the Adoration of the Shepherds, engraved after his 1770 painting, seems to have been intended for
- 18. Willk-Brocard 1995, pp. 191, 417-420. Several copies of The Education of the Rich and The Education of the Poor are known.
- 19. One of the copies was attributed to Nicolas Bernard Lépicié when sold in 1939. See: Dessins et tableaux anciens..., Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 20 June 1939, lot no. 89. Another one bears the inscription "Fragonard 1801" in red gouache in the lower right corner. See: Willk-Brocard 1995, p. 381, no. 43b.