

# François Boucher and the art of conchology

by JAMIE MULHERRON

‘WHO CAN BETTER know all the differences of shells than those who draw them after nature? The smallest fold, the delicacy of the shape of the contour, and of the mouth, nothing escapes and nothing develops better their true character’, wrote Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d’Argenville in his 1742 treatise devoted to shells.<sup>1</sup> In François Boucher’s posthumous sale of 1771 his collection of paintings achieved 25,131 livres and 15 sols, his drawings 16,047 livres and 9 sols, and his shells 6,692 livres and 9 sols.<sup>2</sup> He was a famed shell collector and his natural-history cabinet, which was adjacent to his painting studio, is acclaimed in the shell literature of the period:

The late Monsieur Boucher, first painter to the King, had a beautiful cabinet of all the diverse genres of natural history, and similarly of curiosities of art. The shells above all attract the attention, whether for the rarity of the species, whether for their size, or whether, finally, for the brightness and variety of their colours, together with their beautiful state of preservation.<sup>3</sup>

By all accounts ‘the painter of graces’ was a serious connoisseur of shells who, according to his student Johann Christian von Mannlich, had spent a fortune trading his shells up in pursuit of the most perfect or beautiful example of each type.<sup>4</sup> Boucher’s interest in shells has often been related to the wider culture of *curiosité* in the eighteenth century,<sup>5</sup> but one question that remains to be asked is what did his clear case of *conchyliomanie* mean for his art, and the most obvious question of all – did he use real and identifiable shells in his drawings and paintings?<sup>6</sup>

Many artists have painted real shells; from Claude Lorrain, who scattered shells on the beaches of his sea ports such as *Sea port with the embarkation of the Queen of Sheba* (National Gallery, London), to Pierre Mignard and his *Neptune offers the empire of the sea to the king* (Musée National du Château, Compiègne), where

a triton can be seen blowing a triton’s trumpet (*conque de triton*),<sup>7</sup> or his portrait of *The Marquise de Seignelay as Thetys* (National Gallery, London), which has many identifiable shells, including a lovely music volute, a shell that takes its name from markings which appear like musical notation.<sup>8</sup> However, perhaps the most telling example of painted shells, in so far as the young Boucher is concerned, is found in his master François Lemoyne’s marine mythology *Perseus and Andromeda* of 1723 (Wallace Collection, London), where the two larger shells, although quite loosely painted, can be identified as a small queen conch (*rocher ailé*),<sup>9</sup> and, partially covered by ocean spray, a spider conch (*millipede*).<sup>10</sup> One of the earliest examples of shells appearing in Boucher’s art is his etching of his own version of *Perseus and Andromeda* of 1734 (Fig. 14), although this is etched with such bravura that it is impossible to identify the shell grouped with a branch of coral at Andromeda’s feet.

There is little to suggest that Boucher had a particular interest in shells in the 1720s, but when in the early 1730s he returned to Paris from Italy – where he had ample opportunity to see Bernini’s carved shells – he arrived back in a city where shell collecting was fast becoming one of the most fashionable pursuits – and Boucher soon found himself at the centre of it. The craze was driven and fed by a group of dealers including Edme-François Gersaint and Pierre Remy, who would travel to Amsterdam to buy shells and then hold auctions in Paris.<sup>11</sup> Boucher’s direct involvement in this market is implicit in his design for a frontispiece of a Gersaint sale catalogue of 1736. It shows Boucher adept at the depiction of individual shells and their ornamental arrangement (Fig. 15). In front of a natural-history cabinet in the shape of an alcove, where specimens can be seen in jars in the upper level, is a large imaginary shell with a sea fan behind it, around which are grouped many identifiable

I would like to thank Sankurie Pye, Curator of Invertebrate Biology at National Museums Scotland, for her help with identifying shells in Boucher’s paintings. Special thanks are also due to Alastair Laing and Juliet Carey for their encouragement while I was writing the article. Throughout this article eighteenth-century French has been transcribed as written. As there is a considerable distance between the eighteenth-century French vocabulary for shell types, which was highly imaginative but not particularly scientific, and modern scientific classification, when necessary, accepted scientific names are included in the footnotes. In the main text the everyday English name for a shell will be followed in brackets by the eighteenth-century French name.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Qui peut mieux faire connoître toutes les différences des Coquilles, que de les dessiner d’après nature? Le moindre repli, les finesses de la forme du contour, de la bouche, rien n’échappe & rien ne développe mieux leur vrai caractère’; A.-J. Dezallier d’Argenville: *L’Histoire Naturelle Eclaircie dans deux de ses parties principales, La Lithologie et la Conchyliologie, dont l’une traite des pierres et l’autre des coquillages*, Paris 1742, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> P. Remy: *Catalogue raisonné des Tableaux, Dessins, Estampes, Bronzes, Terres cuites, Laques, Porcelaines de différentes sortes, montées & non montées; Meubles curieux, Bijoux, Minéraux, Cristallisations, Madrepores, Coquilles & autres Curiosités, qui composent le Cabinet de Feu M. Boucher, Premier Peintre du Roi*, Paris 1771, p. 263.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Feu M. Boucher, premier Peintre du Roi, possédoit un beau cabinet dans divers genres d’histoire naturelle, de même que les curiosités de l’art. Les coquillages surtout attiroient les regards, soit par le rareté de l’espèce, soit par leur grandeur, soit enfin par l’éclat & le variété de leurs couleurs, jointes à la plus belle conservation’; A.-J. Dezallier D’Argenville: *La Conchyliologie, ou Histoire naturelle des coquilles de mer, d’eau douce, terrestres et fossils*, 3rd ed., Paris 1780, III, p. 236.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Il m’a avoué qu’il avoit des coquilles, qui sans être tres rares lui avoient couté plus de 600

livres piece, en les rétroquant toujours contre une plus belle de la même espèce’; et donnent chaque fois un ou deux Louis de retour’; J.-C. von Mannlich: *Histoire de ma Vie*, ed. K.H. Bender and H. Kleber, Trier 1989–93, I, p. 156.

<sup>5</sup> See D. Bleichmar: ‘Learning to Look: Visual Experience across Art and Science in Eighteenth-Century France’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46/1 (2012), pp. 85–111; A. Lafont, ed.: 1740. *Un Abrégé du monde. Savoirs et collections autour de Dezallier d’Argenville*, Paris 2012; B. Dietz: ‘Mobile Objects: the space of shells in eighteenth-century France’, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 39/3 (September 2006), pp. 363–82; B. Dietz and T. Nutz: ‘Collections curieuses: The aesthetics of curiosity and elite lifestyle in eighteenth century Paris’, *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29 (2005), pp. 44–75; J. Hedley: *François Boucher, Seductive Visions*, London 2004, pp. 51–54 and 67–69; K. Scott: *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London 1995, pp. 167–76; K. Pomian: *Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux. Paris–Venise: XVIe–XVIIIe siècle*, Paris 1987, pp. 143–62; A. Laing: ‘French ornamental engravings and the diffusion of the rococo’, *Atti del XXIV Congresso internazionale di storia dell’arte*, Bologna 1983, pp. 115–17.

<sup>6</sup> Rousseau uses the term *conchyliomanie* to describe the shell-obsessed M. Mussard; see J.-J. Rousseau: *Les confessions de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Paris 1878, III, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> The triton’s trumpet (*Charonia tritonis*) was known as the *conque de triton* in eighteenth century France. These were then considered to be giant whelks (*buccins*), rather than being understood as a category in their own right. One of the greatest of all shell collectors, the marquis de Bonnac had considerable numbers in his collection, including lot 619: ‘Un très grand Buccin, à qui on donne le nom de Conque de Triton’; P. Remy: *Catalogue raisonné, d’une collection considerable de Coquilles rares et choisies, du cabinet de M. Le \*\*\* [marquis de Bonnac]*, Paris 1757, pp. 110–11. Painters were almost expected to use real examples for their tritons, as indicated by this passage on

14. *Perseus and Andromeda*, etched by François Boucher and finished in burin by Pierre Aveline. 1734. Etching and engraving, 32 by 23 cm. (British Museum, London).

15. Frontispiece by Claude Duflos after François Boucher to E.-F. Gersaint: *Catalogue raisonné de Coquilles et autres Curiosités Naturelles*, Paris 1736. (Courtesy Ader, Paris).



specimens, including a sea urchin (*oursin*, or *bouton de mer*), abalone shells (*orielles de mer*; Fig. 19), a number of whelks (*buccins*) and spiral augur shells (*vis*; Fig. 17),<sup>12</sup> stalks of coral, a starfish, a venus clam (*Concha Veneris*)<sup>13</sup> and, perhaps most conspicuously of all, three fairly large shells with distinctive convex ribs and protruding spiky teeth similar in form to what we would now call spider conchs and which were also then known as *araignées*.<sup>14</sup>

The defining example of Boucher's role in the culture of *conchyliomanie* is that he designed the frontispiece to the great French shell text book, Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville's *La Conchyliologie*, first published in 1742 (Fig. 16) and with expanded

editions appearing in 1757 and 1780.<sup>15</sup> Here Boucher combines the observation of the natural-history illustrator with the slightly less specific history painter's use of shells, which points to later grand marine mythologies such as *The rising of the sun* and *The setting of the sun* (Wallace Collection, London). Strewn along the shore we see a sea urchin (*bouton de mer*), a thorny oyster (*huître épineuse*),<sup>16</sup> a type of tun (*tonne*),<sup>17</sup> a snipes bill murex (*la Becasse*; Fig. 18, B),<sup>18</sup> a pencil urchin (*Echinus digitatus*)<sup>19</sup> and a nautilus-type shell. The title of the book itself is written on a monumental oversized and abstracted shell set off with a large sea fan and branch of coral in a similar manner to the frontispiece of the Gersaint sale

*buccins* from the *Conchyliologie nouvelle et portable*, Paris 1767 (hereafter cited as *Conchyliologie* 1767), pp. 36–37: 'Buccins prend son nom du mot latin Buccinum, qui veut dire trompette, parce que les coquilles qui portent ont une espèce de ressemblance avec cet instrument, & qu'anciennement on les faisoit servir à cet usage, surtout chez les Romains. Les Poètes & les Peintres ne manquent jamais de mettre le Buccin à la bouche du Triton, s'il est question d'annoncer l'arrivée du Dieu des Eaux, ou de représenter une fête marine'.

<sup>8</sup> For the identifications of the shells in *The Marquise de Seignelay as Thetys* by Kathie Wray of the Natural History Museum, London, see H. Wine: *National Gallery Catalogues: The Seventeenth Century French Paintings*, London 2001, p. 250. The music volute (*voluta musica*) was called *la musique* in the eighteenth century, when it was classified under the family of *rochers* (the French term for murex), whereas in modern taxonomy they are classified under the family of volutes (*Volutidae*). *La musique* is illustrated in Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pl. 17, fig. F (Fig. 20, F). Boucher had a green one in his collection: '1648. Trois foudres, dont un à bec de perroquet, une musique verte, un plainchant, le couteil & deux autres coquilles'; Remy, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 229.

<sup>9</sup> With its long mouth, ridge of points and clavicle, this shell bears every resemblance to the queen conch (*Strombus gigas*).

<sup>10</sup> Lemoyne's shell corresponds closely to the shell illustrated in Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pl. 18, fig. B, described as 'l'Araignée, appelée millepède'.

<sup>11</sup> Dietz, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp. 375–76. For Gersaint and shells, see G. Glorieux: *À l'Enseigne de Gersaint: Edme-François Gersaint, marchand d'art sur le Pont Notre-Dame*, Paris 2002.

<sup>12</sup> In *La Conchyliologie*, Dezallier d'Argenville states that nothing is easier to confuse than a *vis* with certain types of *buccins* ('Rien n'est plus aisé que de confondre la *Vis* avec le *Buccin*'); Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 274.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, under *Cames*, pl. 24, fig. I, and the description on p. 324: 'Voici celle qui se

nomme *Concha Veneris*, à la lettre I, les pointes qui garnissent ses lèvres & ses stries profondes de couleur de rose, l'ont fait nommer *Coquille de Venus occidentale*'.

<sup>14</sup> For more on Boucher and *araignées*, see p. 259 below.

<sup>15</sup> A.-J. Dezallier d'Argenville: *La Conchyliologie ou Traité Général des Coquillages de Mer, de riviere et de terre, dans lequel on trouvera une nouvelle méthode, accompagnée de tables Latines & Françaises, pour distribuer ces Coquillages suivant leurs caracteres génériques dans les classes qui leur conviennent*, Paris 1757; *idem*, *op. cit.* (note 3).

<sup>16</sup> For the thorny oyster (*Spondylus princeps*), see Dezallier D'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pl. 13, fig. G, and the description on p. 318: 'L'Huître marquée G, est des plus belles & des plus rares; les Auteurs l'ont décrite par ces mots: *Ostreum flammis rubis insignitum*; non-seulement ses piquans sont couleur de feu, mais toute l'Huître est de la même couleur; on remarque deux Oreilles proche sa charnière: la Planche n'a pas permis de la représenter de sa grandeur naturelle'. Two of the most expensive shells in Boucher's sale were thorny oysters at 100 livres a pair: '1707. Deux huîtres épineuses des Indes, dont une très belle, à feuilles de persil, marbrée de rouge & de blanc, & une aurore' (150 livres); and '1708. Deux autres, dont une aurore, & une blanche, avec quelques traits rouges' (100 livres). Lots 1707–1725 were all thorny oysters; see Remy, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 237.

<sup>17</sup> Tun shells of the *Tonnidae* family.

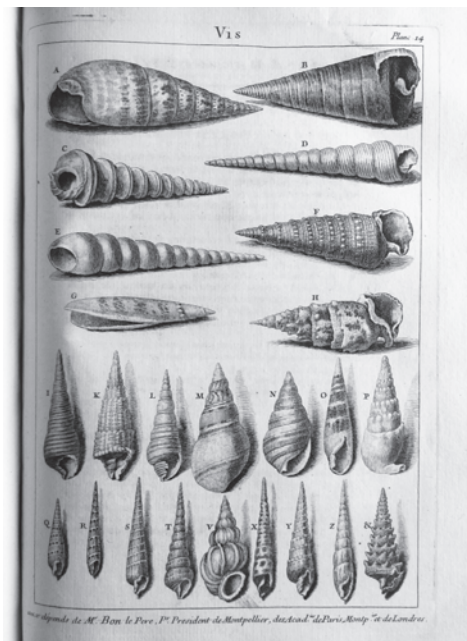
<sup>18</sup> Snipes bill murex of *Haustellum* genus. Dezallier d'Argenville classifies them under the family of *Pourpres*; see Dezallier D'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pl. 19, fig. B, and the description on p. 298.

<sup>19</sup> For the pencil urchin, see *ibid.*, pl. 28, fig. A, and the description on p. 348: 'L'Oursin marqué A, est des plus rares, on l'appelle *Echinus digitatus*, quand il conserve tous ses piquans, qui ne sont pas pointus comme les autres, mais de forme quarrée. Sa couleur générale est toute brune, & il vient de l'Amérique'.

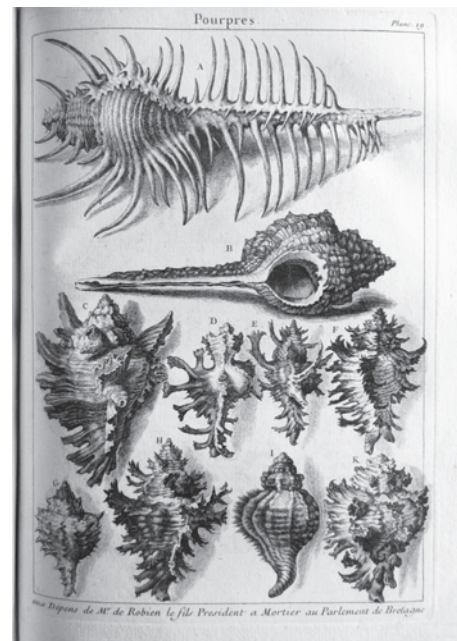




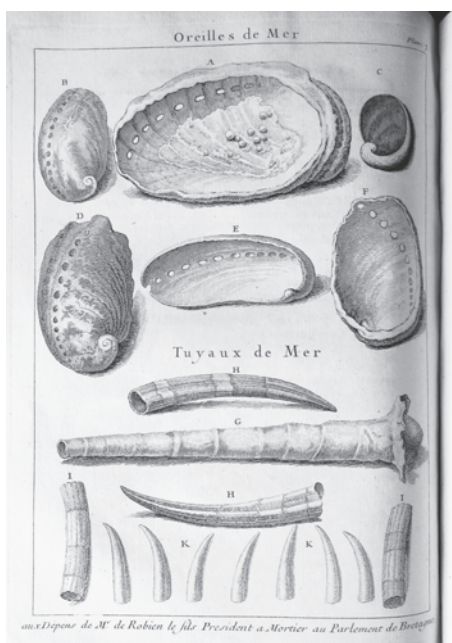
16. Frontispiece to A.-J. Dezallier d'Argenville: *L'Histoire Naturelle Eclaircie dans deux de ses parties principales, La Lithologie et la Conchyliologie, dont l'une traite des pierres et l'autre des coquillages*, Paris 1742, by Pierre Quentin Chedel after François Boucher. Etching, 25.5 by 17.5 cm. (Private collection).



17. *Vis*, plate 14 in A.-J. Dezallier d'Argenville: *L'Histoire Naturelle Eclaircie dans deux de ses parties principales, La Lithologie et la Conchyliologie, dont l'une traite des pierres et l'autre des coquillages*, Paris 1742. Etching, 29 by 21 cm. (Private collection).



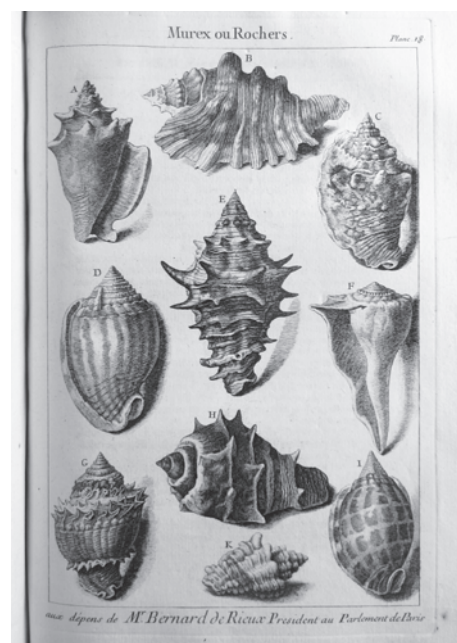
18. *Pourpres*, plate 19 in A.-J. Dezallier d'Argenville: *L'Histoire Naturelle Eclaircie dans deux de ses parties principales, La Lithologie et la Conchyliologie, dont l'une traite des pierres et l'autre des coquillages*, Paris 1742. Etching, 29 by 21 cm. (Private collection).



19. *Oreilles de Mer*, plate 7 in A.-J. Dezallier d'Argenville: *L'Histoire Naturelle Eclaircie dans deux de ses parties principales, La Lithologie et la Conchyliologie, dont l'une traite des pierres et l'autre des coquillages*, Paris 1742. Etching, 29 by 21 cm. (Private collection).



20. *Murex ou Rochers*, plate 17 in A.-J. Dezallier d'Argenville: *L'Histoire Naturelle Eclaircie dans deux de ses parties principales, La Lithologie et la Conchyliologie, dont l'une traite des pierres et l'autre des coquillages*, Paris 1742. Etching, 29 by 21 cm. (Private collection).



21. *Murex ou Rochers*, plate 18 in A.-J. Dezallier d'Argenville: *L'Histoire Naturelle Eclaircie dans deux de ses parties principales, La Lithologie et la Conchyliologie, dont l'une traite des pierres et l'autre des coquillages*, Paris 1742. Etching, 29 by 21 cm. (Private collection).

catalogue. In front a triton holds a giant barrel-sized shell with prominent convex ribs on the body and claw-like sharp teeth at the top of the shell's mouth, based on an *araignée* but of a scale

beyond the power of nature. The *Conchyliologie* frontispiece shows Boucher's range of shellwork, from identifiable shells to the abstracted but not purely invented shells of the history painter.

<sup>20</sup> *Rocaille* was published as part of a set of five arabesque designs, four by Claude Duflos (including *Rocaille*), and one by Cochin fils; see P. Jean-Richard: *Inventaire générale des gravures: Ecole française. Vol. 1: L'Oeuvre gravé de François Boucher dans la Collection Edmond de Rothschild*, Paris 1978, p.228, no.872. For the drawing for the print, see E. Brugerolles: exh. cat. *François Boucher et l'art rocaille dans les collections de l'Ecole des beaux-arts*, Paris (Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts), Sydney (Art Gallery of New South Wales) and Ottawa (Musée des beaux-arts du Canada) 2003–06, pp.138–41, no.25.

<sup>21</sup> The *Premier Livre de Fontaines* was produced by Gabriel Huquier and the *Second Livre de Fontaines* by Pierre Aveline. Each set consists of seven prints including the title-plate. They were first published in 1736.

<sup>22</sup> Alastair Laing illustrates a study by Boucher of Bernini's Fontana del Moro; see A. Laing et al.: exh. cat. *François Boucher 1703–1770*, New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art), Detroit (Institute of Arts) and Paris (Grand Palais) 1986, p.57, fig.38. Françoise Joulie draws attention to Boucher's knowledge of Bernini's fountain in the





22. Triton and nereid holding up a shell and a triton blowing a conch, plate 5 from the *Premier Livre de Fontaines*, by Gabriel Huquier after François Boucher. 1736. Etching with engraving, 25 by 15 cm. (Victoria and Albert Museum, London).



23. Detail of Three putti sitting on dolphins and two tritons, plate 7 from the *Second Livre de Fontaines*, by Pierre Aveline after François Boucher. 1736. Etching with engraving, 25 by 15 cm. (Private collection).



24. Rocaille, by Claude Duflos after François Boucher. Arabesque from a set of five designs for leaves of a folding screen. 1737. Etching with engraving, 49.8 by 25 cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

During the 1730s Boucher's interest in shells had a profound effect on his ornamental designs for prints, including the famous *Rocaille* (Fig.24), in which he again uses the compositional device of a large imaginary shell set off by a sea fan where identifiable shell types, including an abalone (*oreille de mer*; Fig. 19), a spiral auger shell (*vis*) and spiky *araignées* are brilliantly nestled here and there in a marine fantasy built around a classical *morceau d'architecture*.<sup>20</sup> It is again worth noting the prominence given to the ribbed and sharp toothed *araignées*, of which the composition has three, including a beautifully shaped example placed in the centre.

Containing no less brilliant passages of shellwork are the two *Livres de Fontaines* of 1736.<sup>21</sup> In these Boucher's first-hand knowledge of real shells meets his first-hand knowledge of the fountains of Bernini.<sup>22</sup> In many ways Boucher's fountains can be regarded as *capricci* around the theme of the shell – many of them consist of a shell-shaped basin with above it putti, tritons or nereids (or a combination of any of these), holding up a higher shell forming a tier above, such as plate 5 from the *Premier Livre de Fontaines* (Fig.22). Here too we find the origins of one of Boucher's great motifs, so important in his later marine mythologies; the triton holding the shell. In plate 2 from the *Second Livre de Fontaines* a handsome triton combining power and nonchalance holds a large water-spilling *rocher* with pronounced ribs (Fig.23).<sup>23</sup> Before leaving Boucher's ornamental

shellwork of the 1730s, mention needs to be made of the *Livre de Vases*. These are more eclectic than the fountains and not by any means all shell-based, but perhaps the greatest and most original of the vases, plate 11, is one where the body of the vase has been abstracted from shell forms including the 'pointes' on the top of the vase that are a feature of *Strombidae* such as the queen conch – while the pedestal is formed from the intertwining tails of a triton and mermaid.

The unidentifiable nature of the shell in the *Andromeda* etching of 1734, and the decision in the same year not to make the painting of the *Rape of Europa* (Wallace Collection, London) for his patron François Derbais a marine piece but to set it on dry land, suggests that Boucher's obsession with shells had not quite yet taken hold in 1734.<sup>24</sup> However, with the ornamental shell-based works of the 1730s in mind, it is not surprising that shells become distinctive features of Boucher's mythological paintings in the 1740s, beginning with *The birth of Venus* (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm) of 1741. Not only was the patron, the comte de Tessin, a shell collector and a subscriber to Dezallier d'Argenville's *La Conchyliologie*,<sup>25</sup> but in the pose of the colossus-like triton holding the large spiky shell (Fig.27) Boucher makes a discreet reference to the frontispiece of an established classic of shell literature, the *Recreatio Mentis et Oculi In Observatione Animalium Testaceorum, Curiosis Naturae Inspectoribus* by Filippo Bonanni (1638–1723), published

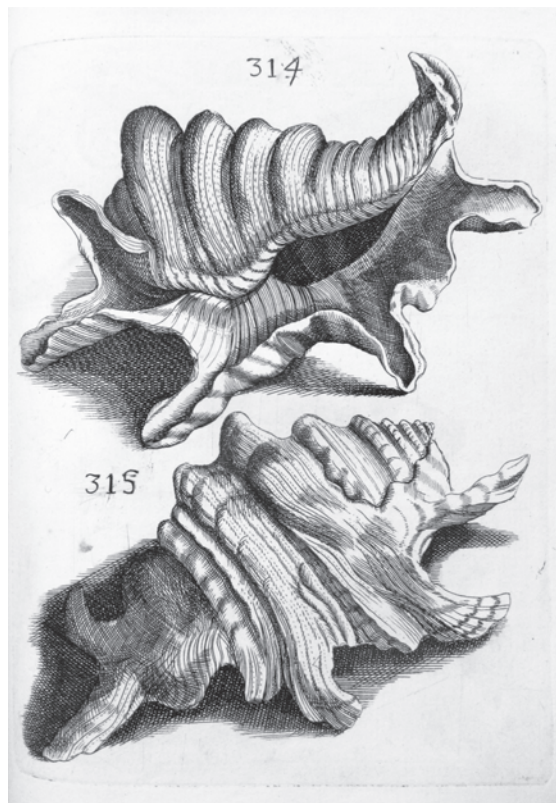
Palazzo Antamaro in Rome for the design for pl.6 of the *Premier Livre de Vases*; see Brugerolles, *op. cit.* (note 20), p.87. If Boucher was recording these fountains, he can hardly have failed to notice others, such as the magnificent Fontana del Tritone in the Piazza Barberini.

<sup>23</sup> A drawing which relates to this figure, in the Kunsthalle, Hamburg, is illustrated in A. Ananoff and D. Wildenstein: *François Boucher*, Lausanne and Paris 1976, I, p.14, fig.35.

<sup>24</sup> The still-life element is a profusion of flowers, without a shell in sight. For Boucher's commission for Derbais, see Laing *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 22), pp.133–38 and 157–60.

<sup>25</sup> M. Le Comte de Tessin, Surintendant des Bâtimens du Roi [de Danemarck], was one of the subscribers who 'contribué à la dépense des planches de ce traité [La Conchyliologie]' and his natural-history cabinet is also mentioned in the chapter 'Des plus fameux Cabinets de l'Europe touchant l'Histoire Naturelle'; see Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp.228 and 234.





25. Frontispiece to F. Bonanni: *Recreatio Mentis et Oculi In Observatione Animalium Testaceorum, Curiosis Naturae Inspectoribus*, Rome 1684. Engraving, 21 by 15.5 cm. (Private collection).

26. *Murex senis appendicibus canaliculatis decorus*, from F. Bonanni: *Recreatio Mentis et Oculi In Observatione Animalium Testaceorum, Curiosis Naturae Inspectoribus*, Rome 1684. Engraving, 21 by 15.5 cm. (Private collection).



27. Detail of *The birth of Venus*, by François Boucher. 1741. Canvas, 130 by 162 cm. (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm).

in Rome in 1684 (Fig.25).<sup>26</sup> Its illustrations are particularly beautiful, and the book by the 'sçavant jésuit Romaine'<sup>27</sup> was a desirable and costly publication (Fig.26).<sup>28</sup> Bonanni's shell, possibly a kind of giant turban shell, held by the triton with one forearm across his chest and the other raised above his shoulder, has been replaced by Boucher with one of his favoured ribbed and spiky *araignées*, very close in fact to the one used in the centre of *Rocaille*.

From the ornamental works and marine mythologies it is clear that Boucher had a predilection for the class of shell known today as *Strombidae*, which in the eighteenth century were considered murex and usually described by their French term *rochers* – as the body of the shells looked like rocks. Their amazing curvilinearity, asymmetry and spikiness makes them the quintessential *rocaille* shells, and their 'baroque' character was understood as such at the time (Figs.20 and 21). According to the author of the *Conchyliologie nouvelle et portative* (1767), with the *rochers* 'On ne trouve aucun genre plus singulier, ni plus baroque dans sa figure & dans sa couleur'.<sup>29</sup> The 1780 edition of Dezallier d'Argenville's *La Conchyliologie* defines 'baroque' simply as 'tout ce qui est irrégulier'.<sup>30</sup> There were strong formal reasons for Boucher's interest in these particular shells, but there is also a literary basis for the way he associates tritons with *rochers*. Pausanias, the classical source for the post-Renaissance triton, describes him as such:

<sup>26</sup> F. Bonanni: *Recreatio Mentis et Oculi In Observatione Animalium Testaceorum, Curiosis Naturae Inspectoribus*, Rome 1684. This is a slightly expanded Latin version of the earlier Italian version: *Ricreatione dell'occhio e della mente, nell'osservatione delle mente, nell'osservatione delle chioccioline, proposta a curiosi delle opere della natura, dal P. Filippo Buonanni della Compagnia di Giesù, con quattrocento, e cinquanta figure di testacei diversi, sopra cui si spiegano molti curiosi problemi*, Rome 1681.

<sup>27</sup> Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.114.

<sup>28</sup> See Dietz, *op. cit.* (note 5), p.369.

<sup>29</sup> *Conchyliologie* 1767, p.233.

<sup>30</sup> Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 3), p.xxxvii.

<sup>31</sup> Book 9, 'Boeotia', XXI, I, in: Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, with an English translation by W. Jones, IV, London 1935, pp.259 and 261.

<sup>32</sup> For the spider called the millipede, see Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pl.18, fig.B, and the description on p.294: 'Celui qui est marquée B, est l'Araignée, appelée millepeda, par le nombre des pieds qu'on voit au pourtour de son aile, qui est fort étendue, le corps est tout rempli de bosses & de tubercules, & la queue est allongée & recourbée. La tête ne laisse pas de se découvrir assez distinctement'.

<sup>33</sup> For the lambs, see *ibid.*, pl.17, fig.E, and the description on p.292: 'L'Araignée de





28. Study for a triton holding a shell, by François Boucher. 1752. Black and white chalk on tan paper, 33 by 30 cm. (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Weimar).

The Tritons have the following appearance. On their heads they grow hair like that of marsh frogs not only in colour, but also in the impossibility of separating one hair from another. [...] Their eyes seem to me blue, and they have hands, fingers, and nails like the shells of the murex [i.e. *rocher*]. Under the breast and belly is a tail like a dolphin's instead of feet.<sup>31</sup>

Boucher's naturalism substitutes the human hand holding a real murex for the murex-like hands, fingers and nails of the ancient triton. Often the exact type of *rocher* that Boucher used is difficult to identify. Rather than an illustrator's or still-life painter's shells, they are a history painter's abstraction from the real, but that they were based upon natural observation cannot be doubted. If we consult the types of *rocher* in Dezallier d'Argenville's *La Conchyliologie*, of particular significance to Boucher with his liking for shells with pronounced ribs and spiky teeth, they would be the *araignées* including the *millepede* (Fig. 21, B),<sup>32</sup> the *lambis* (Fig. 20, E)<sup>33</sup> and the *scorpion* (Fig. 20, B).<sup>34</sup> If this appears confusing, it was, and the author of the *Conchyliologie nouvelle et portative* takes a dim view of those *curieux* who failed to differentiate one from the other.<sup>35</sup> Boucher the painter can be forgiven for the artistic licence with which he treats his *araignées*, but Boucher the collector is less likely to have been such an offender. His shell collection contained numerous examples of each of the main types of *rochers*,



29. Detail of *The setting of the sun*, by François Boucher. 1752. Canvas, 319 by 261 cm. (Wallace Collection, London).

including the *millepedes* with their prominent ribs, the *lambis* with their extending fingers, the *scorpions* with their fiery teeth and curling claws<sup>36</sup> and last, but not least, the *rochers ailés* (winged) with their large and long mouths and distinctive *points*.

The marine mythologies *The rising of the sun* and *The setting of the sun* were commissioned from Boucher by Madame de Pompadour as models for a pair of tapestries for her house, Bellevue, although they need to be considered as independent paintings, since Boucher approached them as such, and they were exhibited as such in the 1753 Salon.<sup>37</sup> The subject of Apollo coming to and leaving his lover, the sea nymph Thetys, last thing at night and first thing in the morning, was an appropriate allegory for the king and his royal mistress. The French king was traditionally associated with Apollo, and Madame de Pompadour's maiden name was Poisson. Boucher was at the peak of his powers, and he produced two of the finest marine mythologies in art. In them his fondness for handsome well-built tritons holding shells seen in the fountains of the 1730s and the marines of the 1740s come even further to the fore. On the far right of *The setting of the sun* the triton with arched back and outstretched arm, powerfully, but with great delicacy, cradles a giant clam shell. Boucher's careful consideration of the figure and the shell is borne out by the existence of a preparatory drawing for the figure that, particularly in the outstretched fingers on the top

la lettre E, présente une figure fort singulière, garnie de pieds ou de doigts fort longs & crochus; sa queue, ainsi que sa clavicule, est pointuë, on la nomme Lambis'.

<sup>34</sup> For the scorpion, see *ibid.*, pl. 17, fig. B, and the description on p. 292: 'Celui de la lettre B, est le Scorpion dont le corps de couleur jaunâtre est tout ridé & chargé de tubercules; il sort de sa lèvre, cinq grosses pattes & deux autres plus recourbées l'une de sa tête ou de son sommet, & l'autre de sa queue, rien n'est plus beau que ses lèvres raïées de blanc & de violet'.

<sup>35</sup> 'Plusieurs Curieux nomment indifféremment ces Murex, Millepedes, Béliet, Scorpion, Araignée; cependant ils ont tous quelque différence particulière'; *Conchyliologie* 1767, p. 283.

<sup>36</sup> '1671. Une araignée mâle, & trois ailées, dont deux du premier âge. 1672. Deux araignées, l'une mâle, l'autre femelle, une aile d'ange, & oreille de cochon. 1673. Un mille-pied bien conservé & de la plus riche couleur. 1674. Un grand & très beau Scorpion mâle; il a plus de 6 pouces de l'extrémité d'une patte à l'autre. 1675. Le mille pied & le Scorpion, tous deux vifs en couleur. 1676. Le Scorpion orangé & le Scorpion ordinaire, en pendant. 1677. Dix-sept petites ailées, la plupart sort jolies dont artimon entortillé, la gueule noire, la tourterelle, la patte d'oie, le Scorpion, &c.'; Remy, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 232.

<sup>37</sup> See J. Vittet: *Les Gobelins au siècle des Lumières: un âge d'or de la manufacture royale*, Paris 2014, p. 293.





30. Detail of the frontispiece, by Antonio Pazzi after Giovanni Domenico Campiglia, to N. Gualtieri: *Index Testarum Conchyliorum*, Florence 1742. Engraving, 45 by 30 cm. (Private collection).

31. Detail of *The setting of the sun*, by François Boucher. 1752. Canvas, 319 by 261 cm. (Wallace Collection, London).

and the firm but delicate cradling lower hand, looks to have been staged and drawn from life (Figs.28 and 29).

Boucher's apartment in the Louvre, which he occupied from 1752, was divided into three areas; the domestic, the grand atelier and the natural-history cabinet that contained his shell collection. The atelier and the cabinet were both off the same corridor and there was also a door directly between them. Models and shells were but a door apart and could easily have been brought together for this drawing.<sup>38</sup>

Giant clam shells of this sort were rare. According to Dezallier d'Argenville's system, the species was classified as a type of *coeur* (heart) and could be equally be named *l'imbricata*, *la faitière* or *la tuillée*, which made reference to the similarity of the undulations of its profile to terracotta roof tiles.<sup>39</sup> As well as for its form, the shell was also prized for its size (it is the largest shell of all marine gastropods); a specimen in the cabinet of Christian VII of Denmark was known to be three *pieds*, almost a metre, long. Boucher had considerable numbers in his collection, and one shell in particular, '*Une grande tuillée de 14 pouces de longueur sur 9 de largeur*', at approximately 40 centimetres, is just about the

right size in relation to the figure of the triton and the spread of a man's palm to have been the actual shell used.<sup>40</sup>

The rarity and visual power of such a shell added considerably to the painting, and its presence is not likely to have been missed by visitors to the Salon of 1753. Eight years earlier the sculptor Jean-Baptiste Pigalle had made bases for the famous pair of giant clam shells which served as *bénitiers* (holy water stoups) at the church of Saint-Sulpice, which had quickly become one of the sights of Paris (Fig.32).<sup>41</sup> Their profile was such that in later editions of *La Conchyliologie* and in auction catalogues the designation '*bénitiers de Saint Sulpice*' came to define this type of giant clam shell with steeply ridged spiky contours.

To balance the giant clam shell in *The setting of the sun*, *The rising of the sun* also features two giant shells. While the very large oblong shell with pronounced volute and rising and falling contour held by the triton on the far left may be another, but flatter type valve of a giant clam, the real counterweight to the spiky giant clam in *The setting of the sun* is the extraordinary shell held by the triton at the lower right of the painting.<sup>42</sup> The large size, long mouth and knobbly protrusions all point to this being

<sup>38</sup> On the death of Charles-Antoine Coypel in 1752 Boucher moved into Coypel's apartment in the Louvre and remained there for the rest of his life. He immediately set about renovating the space, which was divided into the domestic area, the grand atelier and the cabinet. For a diagram, see Ananoff and Wildenstein, *op. cit.* (note 23), I, p.56.

<sup>39</sup> For giant clams, see Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pl.26, fig.E, and the description on p.335: '*L'Imbricata, ou la faitière, que l'on voit à la lettre E, est d'un jaune clair par dessus, & d'un blanc en dedans à éblouir, ses tuiles minces & très faillants rangées par étages, lui ont fait donner le nom de la tuillée, son ouverture forme un Cœur à jour parmi des dents*'.

<sup>40</sup> '1766. Le chou & la faitière ou tuillées d'un beau volume. 1767. Les mêmes coquilles, un peu moins grandes. 1768. Les mêmes plus petites, & vives en couleur. 1769. Deux autres. 1770. Deux petits choux & une tuillée. 1771. Deux petits choux & deux petites tuillées. 1772. Une grande tuillée de 14 pouces de longueur, sur 9 de largeur. 1773. Deux autres moins grandes 1774. Idem'; Remy, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.244.

<sup>41</sup> In his description of the interior of Saint-Sulpice of 1748, the abbé Gougenot draws particular attention to the pair of *bénitiers*: '*On a adossé aux deux pilliers des*

*Arcades qui avoisinent cette tribune, deux Bénitiers formés des deux côtés d'une coquille qui fut donnée à François I. par la République de Venise; ces morceaux qui sont une des plus grandes curiosités que l'on puisse trouver dans l'histoire Naturelle, sont montés chacun sur un Rocher de marbre du dessin & de l'exécution de M. Pigalle*'; L. Gougenot: *Lettre sur la peinture, sculpture et architecture*, [n.p.] 1748, p.30. The 1780 edition of *La Conchyliologie* states that '*Cœurs de l'espèce du Bénitier de Saint-Sulpice*' were '*connue aussi par les noms d'Imbricata, de Faitière & de Tuillée*', Dezallier D'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 3), I, p.118; and in the Marquis de Bonnac sale of 1757, '*Une très grande Tuillée*', one of a pair, is described as '*la même que celle des Bénitiers de Saint Sulpice*'. Remy, the auctioneer, even goes on to suggest that they would make good *bénitiers*. The full catalogue listings are: '611. Une très grande Tuillée, d'un pied sur huit pouces: ce volume n'est pas commun. Nous n'osons pas assurer que ce soit exactement le dessus & le dessous, quoique les deux charnières paroissent se bien rapporter: cette Coquille est la même que celle des Bénitiers de Saint Sulpice' and '612. La même Coquille, beaucoup plus grande; elle a 16 pouces de long sur dix de large. Ce volume passe par conséquent de beaucoup l'ordinaire; ses deux parties sont bien le dessus & le dessous, ainsi elle peut entrer dans un Cabinet, elle peut outre cela faire deux très





32. Holy water stoup formed of a giant clam shell and a base made by Jean-Baptiste Pigalle. 1745. Marble. (Saint-Sulpice, Paris).

a queen conch, further suggested by the way that the triton holds the shell, his upper hand perfectly placed to grip the unseen *clavicule* – the tapering nozzle – of the shell (Fig. 33). Boucher also paid particular attention to this figure, and a preparatory drawing likewise exists for it (Fig. 34). If we look closely at the drawing and the painting we can see that in the drawing the hands are closer together than in the painting, although the pose of the lower hand remains exactly the same.<sup>43</sup> What this suggests is that between drawing and painting Boucher has changed his mind to accommodate a larger, more dramatic shell, but rather than having a model pose again with the new shell, he has improvised, perhaps with one of his shells from his cabinet. This might explain the more precise nature of the giant clam and the slightly more abstract and fluid nature of the queen conch.

Queen conches were also classified under the family of *rochers*, but more specifically *rochers ailés*, often simply called *ailés*, due to the pronounced lips of the shell which formed a ‘wing’.<sup>44</sup> The first 1742 edition of *La Conchyliologie* fails to include a description or an illustration of a queen conch, although one is included in Niccolò Gualtieri’s *Index Testarum Conchyliorum* (Florence 1742; Fig. 30), where it is called a *murex maximus* (Fig. 37),<sup>45</sup> and the lacuna is filled in the third edition of *La Conchyliologie* of 1780, which includes many new plates and figures. Boucher, as one would expect, had numerous *rochers ailés* in his collection,<sup>46</sup> and while in general they were not particularly rare (*L’Amérique*



33. Detail of *The rising of the sun*, by François Boucher. 1753. Canvas, 318 by 261 cm. (Wallace Collection, London).



34. Study for a triton, by François Boucher. 1752. Black and white chalk, traces of red chalk and graphite on tan paper, 22.1 by 27 cm. (Art Institute of Chicago).

*beaux Bénitiers*; Remy, *op. cit.* (note 7), pp.108–09. During the Revolution *citoyen* Fragonard allocated the *bénitiers*, which had been confiscated from the church on behalf of the people, to the newly formed Museum of National History. Thankfully they were returned to Saint-Sulpice during the Restoration; see L. Réau: *J.-B. Pigalle*, Paris 1950, pp.80 and 161.

<sup>42</sup> In the juxtaposition and proximity of the shell with the nereid’s buttocks, and that between the mouth of the shell and the intergluteal cleft, it is difficult not to find the sort of visual pun for which Diderot criticised Boucher.

<sup>43</sup> A further drawing which includes this triton prising open a clam shell (without ridges) has been suggested by Françoise Joulie as a study for *The rising of the sun*; see F. Joulie and J.-F. Méjanès: *exh. cat. François Boucher, hier et aujourd’hui*, Paris (Musée du Louvre) 2003–04, pp.20–21, no.3. However, Alastair Laing considers it a spin-off drawing (i.e. after rather than before the fact), with which the present writer agrees. The drawing relates to, and possibly served for, a print by Gilles Demarteau; see Jean-Richard, *op. cit.* (note 20), p.178, no.622.

<sup>44</sup> Although ‘ears’ were a competing term with which to describe this feature of

shells. What Dezaillier d’Argenville, for example, calls ‘*Rochers ailés*’, Bonnani calls ‘*Murex auritus*’; see Bonanni, *op. cit.* (note 26), p.156. The 1780 edition of *La Conchyliologie* draws attention to this overlapping nomenclature: ‘*Aîle (Ala)*, se dit de l’extension de la levre qui termine un des côtés de la bouche d’une Coquille univalve, ce qui forme une espèce d’aîle. On dit un Rocher ou Murex ailé (*Murex alatus*). Quelques-uns donnent, en latin, le nom d’Oreille à cette partie (*Murex auritus*)’; Dezaillier d’Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 3), I, p.xxv.

<sup>45</sup> See N. Gualtieri: *Index Testarum Conchyliorum Quae Adservantur in Museo, Nicolai Gualtieri Philosophi et Medici Collegiati Florentini, et Methodice distributae Exhibetur Tabulis CX*, Florence 1742, pl.34.

<sup>46</sup> ‘1663. Une ailée du premier âge, nommée la pyramide. Elle est-rare & vive en couleurs; 1664. Sept ailées de differens âges, dont la tête de serpent, deux oreilles de cochon, deux lambis du premier âge, &c; 1665. Onze autres ailées, formant autant de variétés, soit pour l’âge, soit pour les couleurs; 1666. Dix autres idem; 1667. Deux grands lambis en pendant; 1668. Idem. 1669. Idem. 1670. Deux autres, avec une très grande chicorée’; see Remy, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.231.





35. Detail of *Juno commands Aeolus to unleash the winds*, by François Boucher. 1769. Canvas, 278.2 by 203.2 cm. (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth).

*abonde en murex ailes*'),<sup>47</sup> the model which served for *The rising of the sun* has a particularly good shape and a fine range of points.<sup>48</sup>

The inclusion of these special shells was deliberate, and it is telling, certainly in the case of the giant clam shell, that Boucher never repeated them in other paintings. While he would continue to paint shells, they were never again to be quite as integral to the composition and meaning as in *The rising of the sun* and *The setting of the sun* (Fig. 31).<sup>49</sup> When the paintings were exhibited in the Salon of 1753, *conchyliomanie* was at its height, and many leading patrons of art were also leading shell collectors. The conchological iconography would have been instantly recognised by patrons, and probably also by the wider Salon public, in these unique creations where mythology meets natural history.

Boucher did not invent the *conchyliomanie* fad but equally he did not just ride it. He had a genuine love of, or mania for, shells.<sup>50</sup> One motivation must have been the gentlemanly nature of collecting and hosting a natural-history cabinet, where, as we know from Mannlich's memoirs of the 1760s, he could hold forth as a man of substance with dukes and princes.<sup>51</sup> Boucher lavished great expense on his natural-history cabinet, which included sixteen mirror-topped tables and a large display case.<sup>52</sup> As Boucher's wealth grew, so did his collection. While he may have illustrated the frontispiece of Dezallier d'Argenville's *La Conchyliologie* of 1742, his cabinet was not at that time mentioned in the long chapter dedicated to 'Des plus fameux Cabinets



36. Detail of *Venus on the waves*, by François Boucher. 1769. Canvas, 265.7 by 76.5 cm. (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles).

de l'Europe touchant l'Histoire Naturelle'.<sup>53</sup> By the 1760s, however, significantly following his move to the Louvre, Boucher's cabinet is one of the more important, and the *Conchyliologie Nouvelle et portative* of 1767 singles it out for particular praise:

Monsieur Boucher, first painter to the King, in the Old Louvre. This emulator of Albani, whose brush is guided by the Graces, not only offers us radiant images, he possesses a Cabinet of curiosities as agreeable as it is instructive. This ingenious painter has placed his shells on tables covered in mirrored glass; they present to the eye of the spectator an enamelled parterre which seems to challenge nature. On the left on entering one finds an armoire with mirrored panels richly filled with madrepores, minerals and stones which are all beautiful.<sup>54</sup>

Boucher's scintillating shell display must have looked rather wonderful, with beautifully conserved specimens of the finest shells reflecting off the mirror-topped tables. Dezallier d'Argenville had included helpful chapters in his book on the cleaning and conserving of shells,<sup>55</sup> as well as a guide 'De l'arrangement d'un

<sup>47</sup> *Conchyliologie* 1767, p.234.

<sup>48</sup> One of a group of eight chalk studies of shells, formerly attributed to Watteau but rejected by Rosenberg and Prat, has a similar profile to this shell used by Boucher. The drawing is in the Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin (inv. no.KdZ 1777). Although at this stage there is not enough evidence to attribute the eight drawings to Boucher, their quality has never been doubted, and one would certainly expect there to be studies of shells by Boucher. For a discussion of the drawings, see P. Rosenberg and L.-A. Prat: *Antoine Watteau 1684–1721: catalogue raisonné des dessins*, Milan 1996, III, p.1160.

<sup>49</sup> In a similar fashion to the way that the Stockholm *Birth of Venus* quotes the frontispiece of Bonanni, *op. cit.* (note 26), *The setting of the sun* (Fig. 31) also seems to pay tribute to the frontispiece of Gualtieri, *op. cit.* (note 45; Fig. 30), in the similar poses and the relationship between the tritons offering the shells to the reclining female figures. Boucher's Thetys is forced to look the other way because Gualtieri's Venus does not have Apollo to contend with.

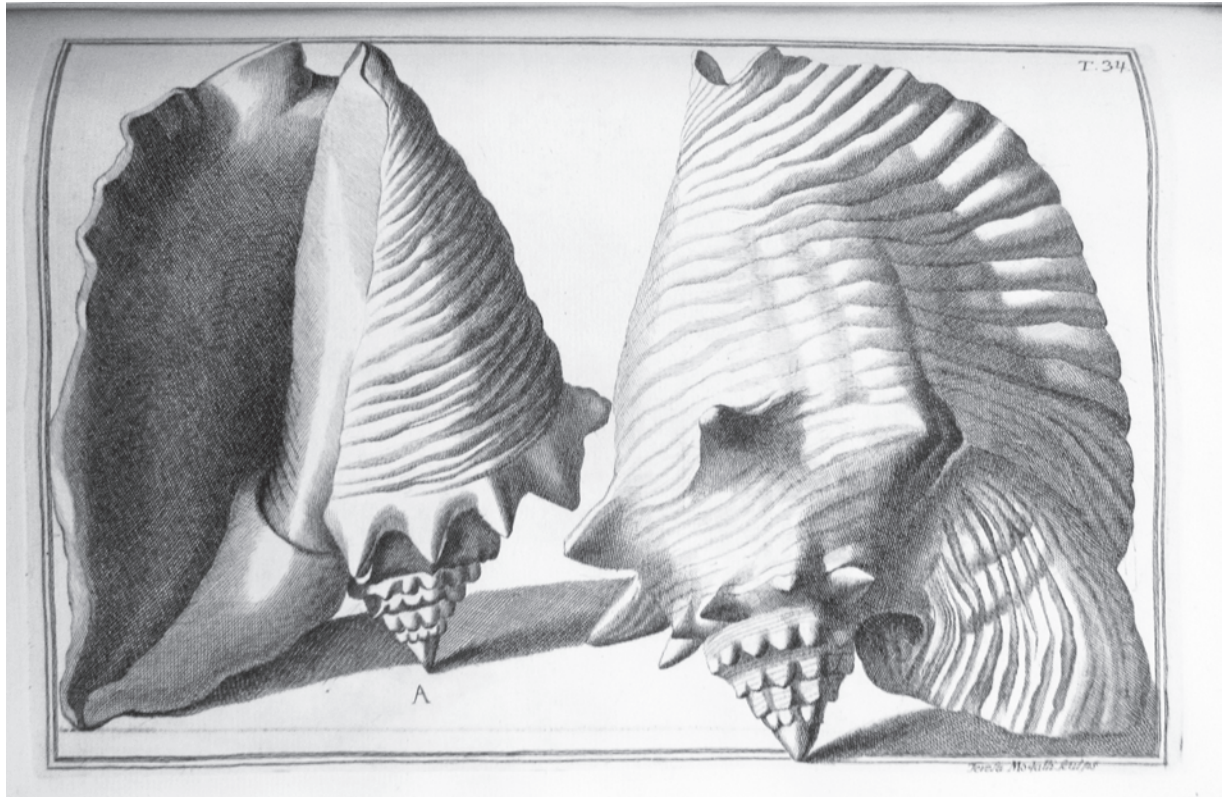
<sup>50</sup> This is also found in Boucher's theatre designs. The abbé Gougenot, for example, draws attention to Boucher's invented grotto world of the palace of Sangar for his set design to Lully's opera *Atys* performed in the winter of 1747: 'On voit tous les jours de

ces derniers exemples dans Mr. Boucher. A-t-on rien vu de si brillant que sa Décoration du Palais du fleuve Sangar? Cette voûte d'eau qui jouoit perpétuellement avec les colonnes de l'édifice, étoit tout-à-fait ingénieuse. L'éclat de sa lumière porté dans le fonds, reflétant sur les cascades, tandis que le devant de la Décoration entreteint dans un ton mate donnoit un beau repos à la vue: ces colonnes à moitié taillées dans le Roc, ornées de coquillages & d'une prodigieuse variété de plantes marines, formoient un pittoresque admirable'; Gougenot, *op. cit.* (note 41), p.50. For a discussion of Gougenot's quotation, see M. Ledbury: 'Boucher and Theatre', in M. Hyde and M. Ledbury, eds.: *Rethinking Boucher*, Los Angeles 2006, pp.133–60.

<sup>51</sup> Mannlich, who was the protégé of the Duke of Zweibrücken, was presented to Boucher by the duke in a morning meeting which took place in Boucher's natural history cabinet: 'Mgr le Duc me presenta un matin a M. Boucher le peintre des graces françaises. Il étoit dans son cabinet d'histoire naturelle qui, par la beauté et le choix des objets qu'il renfermoit, et surtout par son arrangement étoit unique. Le Duc qui avoit beaucoup de connoissance dans minerologie s'entretint longtemps avec lui sur cette matière'. Mannlich then goes on to describe the Duke promising to send some choice pieces for Boucher, which he did; see Mannlich, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.56.

<sup>52</sup> Lot 1021: 'Seize tables de différentes grandeurs avec des cases de verre, servant de coquilliers;





37. *Murex maximus*, by Teresa Mogalli, plate 34 in N. Gualtieri: *Index Testarum Conchyliorum*, Florence 1742. Engraving, 45 by 30 cm. (Private collection).

*Cabinet d'Histoire Naturelle*.<sup>56</sup> Displays could be weighted either towards a more scientific (*naturaliste*) or more aesthetic (*curieux*) type of cabinet:

The arrangement of shells requires some attention at this point. The naturalists arrange their shells by classes and families, and this is without doubt the best and most methodical manner, they mix up, following this principle, the ugly with the beautiful, the large with the small, in a way that the eye is sometimes fatigued. The *curieux*, on the other hand, give everything up to the pleasure of the eyes, they sacrifice methodical order to form varied compartments, as much according to the shapes of the shells as their colours; the enamel is charming and it makes the most beautiful *coup d'œil* that one could ever imagine; enchanted by this aspect, some form parterres, while others spread them out in different drawers of an armoire.<sup>57</sup>

Boucher belongs to the second category of *curieux*, but that he was not interested in shells for aesthetic reasons alone is suggested

by the fact that his second most expensive shell, at 160 livres, 'un bel arrosoir de six pouces de longueur',<sup>58</sup> is not the most alluring of specimens (more a 'brutte' than a 'belle'; Fig. 19, G), proving that the rarest of shells is not necessarily the most useful for a painting.<sup>59</sup>

The true testimony of Boucher's love of shells is that from the first stirrings of his passion in the 1730s to the end of his life, they had a special place in his art. This is true even in his final year, when, in two of the paintings for the decorative scheme for the Hôtel Bergeret de Frouville, shells are used.<sup>60</sup> In *Juno commands Aeolus to unleash the winds* (Fig. 35) Boucher includes a grouping of shells including an easily identifiable queen conch, while the shell in the foreground of *Venus on the waves* (Fig. 36) is painted so broadly and with such bravura that it is impossible to identify. We have come full circle from the precocious evasiveness of the shell of the *Andromeda* etching of 1734 to the wide brushstrokes of 1769 based upon the most intimate knowledge of shells.

plusieurs autres tables, guéridons & autres objets qui seront détaillés', which sold for 319 livres and 14 sous; Remy, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 147. The 'Appendix' to the sale also includes as lot 1863, 'Un coquillier plaqué en bois de violette, par Oebene, & garni en bronze doré, par Philippe Caffieri', which sold for 391 livres and 14 sous; Remy, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 262. Although Hedley, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 54, suggests that this exceptional shell display table or cabinet by Jean-François Oeben and Philippe Caffieri belonged to Boucher, Alastair Laing has pointed out that the function of an Appendix in an eighteenth-century sale catalogue was to add lots to the sale which were not a part of the main vendor's consignment. This then would put the status of this magnificent coquillier as Boucher's in doubt.

<sup>53</sup> Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 198–230.

<sup>54</sup> 'M. Boucher, premier Peintre du Roi, au vieux Louvre. Cet émule d'Albane, dont le pinceau guidé par les Grâces n'offre que des images riannes, possède un Cabinet curieux, aussi agréable qu'instructif. Ce Peintre ingénieux a placé ses Coquilles sur des tables couvertes de glaces; elles présentent aux yeux du spectateur un parterre émaillé qui semble le disputer à la nature. A gauche en entrant on trouve une armoire de glace richement remplie de Madrepores, Minéraux, Cailloux &c qui sont tout beauté'; Conchyliologie 1767, pp. 312–13.

<sup>55</sup> See Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), chapter 8, pp. 185–91: 'De quelle manière

on doit nettoier les Coquilles, les polir & augmenter leur beauté naturelle, sans les altérer'.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 9, pp. 192–97.

<sup>57</sup> 'L'arrangement de ces Coquilles demande ici quelque détail. Les Naturalistes disposent les Coquilles par classes & par familles, c'est sans contredit la meilleure manière & la plus méthodique, ils mêlent, suivant ce principe, les brutes avec les belles, les grandes avec les petites, de sorte que l'œil en est quelquefois fatigué. Les curieux, au contraire, donnant tout aux plaisirs des yeux, sacrifient l'ordre méthodique, pour former des compartimens variés, tant dans la forme des Coquilles, que dans les couleurs, l'émail, en est charmant, & c'est le plus beau coup d'œil qu'on puisse imaginer; enchantés de cet aspect, les uns en forment des Parterres, les autres les rangent dans les différents tiroirs d'une armoire'; Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 195.

<sup>58</sup> See lot 1528; Remy, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 223. An arrosoir is illustrated in Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pl. 7, fig. G, the description on p. 246. Boucher's most expensive shell was lot 1628: 'Un buccin très rare, & d'une belle conservation, nommé le pavillon d'orange. Il a deux pouces & demi de longueur (190 livres); Remy, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp. 227–28.

<sup>59</sup> Dezallier d'Argenville, *op. cit.* (note 1), pl. 7, fig. G.

<sup>60</sup> For this commission, see Laing et al., *op. cit.* (note 22), pp. 318–24, nos. 84 and 85.