

Authors and *Aquafortistes*: The Goncourt Brothers  
and the Nineteenth-Century Etching Revival



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## Short Abstract

This thesis examines the etchings made by Jules and Edmond de Goncourt alongside their writing, placing the Goncourt brothers' engagement with etching within the historical context of the nineteenth-century etching revival. The brothers made ninety-three etchings from 1859-70, a period that coincides with their major co-written works, including *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* and their six novels. The 1860s also marked the height of the etching revival, a movement that forged close connections between artists and writers in order to promote etching as a printmaking medium. Within the revival, the Goncourt brothers provide a unique example of authors who were also etchers, or *aquafortistes*, and I argue that the brothers' firsthand experience with etching had an important impact on their writing. Whether as a form of connoisseurship and research for their art-historical work, as a source of thematic and stylistic inspiration for their novels, or as a means for Edmond to mourn and commemorate Jules after his tragic early death, I identify a variety of intersections between writing and etching in the brothers' *œuvre*. As a whole, the aims of this thesis are threefold. First, it seeks to reclaim the importance of etching as a source of artistic inspiration for the Goncourt brothers' writing, building on and extending prior readings of the relationship between literature and art in the Goncourts' work which have primarily focused on painting. Secondly, it demonstrates how the brothers' firsthand experience as *aquafortistes* during the nineteenth-century revival offers a different perspective on etching from the conventional ideas promoted by other writers and critics during the revival. Finally, it aims to expand discussions of the links between literature and art in nineteenth-century France, moving beyond the sphere of painting to reveal important connections between printmaking and writing.

## Long Abstract

Known today for their work as novelists, art historians, diarists, and collectors, Jules and Edmond de Goncourt were also avid etchers, or *aquafortistes*. Although this activity has thus far been treated as a hobby or pastime rather than a serious pursuit, this thesis reveals that etching was in fact a crucial part of the Goncourt brothers' identity, particularly for Jules. Jules and Edmond practiced etching for over a decade from 1859 until Jules' death in 1870, making ninety-three etchings in total, ten by Edmond and eighty-three by Jules. Significantly, these etchings were produced over the period in which the brothers wrote their major works, including *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, and their six novels, as well as during the height of the etching revival of the 1860s. This thesis argues that the Goncourt brothers' firsthand experience with etching had an important impact on their writing during the 1860s and analyzes the different ways in which the brothers engaged with larger issues surrounding printmaking during the nineteenth-century etching revival.

Studies of the relationship between literature and the visual arts in the Goncourt brothers' *œuvre* thus far have mainly focused on the brothers' interest in art forms such as painting and drawing. Important studies such as Robert Ricatte's comprehensive discussion of the Goncourt brothers' novels (1953), Bernard Vouilloux's analysis of the Goncourt brothers' aesthetic (1997) or the collected volume edited by Jean-Louis Cabanès on "art et écriture" in the brothers' writing (1997) do not mention etching as a significant factor in the Goncourts' approach to art in their fiction or art-historical works. This reflects a larger tendency within studies of literature and the visual arts in nineteenth-century France, which are dominated by discussions of the relationship between writing and painting, rarely expanding to consider other art forms such as printmaking. To some extent, the bias towards painting reflects its position as the most prestigious art form in the

hierarchy of the arts throughout French history. However, this emphasis on painting obscures the diversity of other art forms with which nineteenth-century writers interacted on a daily basis, particularly the importance of prints as a source of literary inspiration. Recent art-historical studies by Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho (2013, 2017), Stephen Bann (2001, 2013) and Patricia Mainardi (2017) have begun to reclaim the significance of nineteenth-century print culture and reconstruct the ways in which prints formed an important part of everyday life. From avant-garde prints sought after by collectors, to political caricatures in newspapers, to popular advertising posters on the street corner, prints were omnipresent in nineteenth-century France. Writers thus engaged with prints more frequently than paintings, and in ways that encouraged close and repeated looking.

The 1860s etching revival in particular offered a moment of direct and sustained contact between printmakers and writers. The revival began in the 1850s with the etchings of artists such as Charles Méryon and artists in the Barbizon school, and reached its peak in the 1860s, after the founding of the Société des Aquafortistes in Paris by Alfred Cadart and Auguste Delâtre in 1862. The revival sought to promote etching as a more authentic and spontaneous form of printmaking, presenting it as an alternative to mechanical photographs, mass-produced lithographs, and traditional reproductive engravings. Writers and artists, as well as the processes of etching and writing, were also inextricably linked during the revival. Prominent writers and critics such as Charles Baudelaire, Théophile Gautier, and Philippe Burty publicized the revival with newspaper articles and prefaces to the Société des Aquafortiste's publications of *Eaux-Fortes modernes*. Writers also drew explicit parallels between the acts of writing and etching in the shared materials of black ink and white paper, the use of the printing press to disseminate an artist/author's work, as well as the similarities between etching and handwriting. However, among the many

writers involved with the etching revival in the 1860s, the Goncourt brothers were the only authors with a sustained experience of both writing and etching.

Using the Goncourt brothers as a unique example of the links between writing and etching during the revival, this thesis builds on and extends current art-historical and literary scholarship on etching in nineteenth-century France. There has been a renewed interest in the etching revival in the past decade, with excellent exhibitions and catalogues produced by the University of Chicago Smart Museum of Art (2008), the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (2009), the Van Gogh Museum (2013, 2017), the J. Paul Getty Museum (2016) and the Rhode Island School of Design (2017). Within French literary studies, research such as Evangelhia Stead's work on "gravures textuelles" (2002), Véronique Partensky's exploration of etching and literary fantasy (2007), Michèle Hannoosh and Clare Chagniot's work on Baudelaire and etching (1989, 2017), or Hélène Védrine's discussion of Félicien Rops' etchings in relation to decadent literature (2002) has begun to tease out the links between printmaking and literature in nineteenth-century France. However, the only studies of the Goncourt brothers' relationship with etching thus far have discussed the brothers' etched illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Launay 2001, Pety 2003, Warner 2004) or briefly addressed the brothers' depiction of the figure of the etcher in their short story "Feu Monsieur Thomas" and novel *Manette Salomon* (Stead 2002, Partensky, 2007, Anar 2008, Berat-Esquier 2010). This thesis expands on this previous work to look more deeply and broadly at how the Goncourt brothers' experience as *aquafortistes* shaped their writing and to explore how their engagement with etching offers a fresh perspective on the central issues of the etching revival.

Chapter I begins by examining the thirty-eight etchings made by Jules and Edmond as illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, the brothers' history of eighteenth-century French art. After exploring how the illustrations shape the text-image relationship in *L'Art*

*du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, I investigate how the brothers' etchings played an essential part in their quest to understand and portray the act of artistic creation in their text. Further, I suggest that the illustrations allowed the brothers to recreate the culture of amateur etching in eighteenth-century France, where etching was used as a tool for connoisseurship. Finally, I consider how, as copies after eighteenth-century artworks, the brothers' etchings constitute an unexpected response to what Walter Benjamin termed "the work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility." By emphasizing how the act of copying can be creative, I argue that the brothers' etchings challenge ideas about the relationship between original and copy in ways that are aligned more with contemporary approaches to engraving and lithography, rather than the rhetoric of the original print espoused during the revival.

Chapter II then investigates the Goncourt brothers' fifteen etchings after artworks by lithographer Paul Gavarni. Gavarni was a mentor and close friend of the brothers, and the inspiration for two texts that bookend their literary career: their first commercial success, *La Lorette* (1853) and their final co-written text, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* (published, after Jules' death, in 1873). After setting up the complex relationship between etching and lithography as printmaking techniques in nineteenth-century France, I show how the Goncourts' etchings constitute an unusual response to Gavarni's work, focusing on his watercolors and pen and ink drawings rather than his more famous lithographs. I then examine the Goncourts' etchings alongside *La Lorette* to suggest that they offer an alternative perspective on the brothers' approach to Gavarni as an "artiste-écrivain," revealing the ambiguity of Gavarni's status as both a model and rival for the brothers. I then turn to *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* to explore how the metaphor of stenography can be used to characterize the brothers' approach to their biography and their etchings after Gavarni, contrasting these with their etchings and biographies for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

Questions surrounding originality resurface in a new way in Chapter III, which

focuses on a close reading of the brothers' 1867 novel *Manette Salomon* alongside Jules' etching after nineteenth-century painter Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, *Le Singe au miroir*. As the Goncourts' major fictional depiction of the nineteenth-century art world, *Manette Salomon* offers a fruitful opportunity for exploring the connections between art and writing in the brothers' work. First, I analyze how *Le Singe au miroir* brings together two metaphors for the artist, the monkey and the circus performer, that are also central to the Goncourt brothers' critique of artistic creation in *Manette Salomon*. I then consider the role of the mirror in *Le Singe au miroir* and relate the etching to several key scenes involving mirroring in *Manette Salomon*. Both etching and novel, I argue, demonstrate the brothers' ambivalent approach to mimesis in writing and art. Finally, I expand from *Le Singe au miroir* to consider how the brothers' understanding of the etching process as a whole provides an alternative approach to criticisms of "mechanical" arts in *Manette Salomon* and the etching revival more generally.

Chapter IV then widens the lens from this focused reading to look at the impact of etching across the six novels written by the Goncourt brothers, arguing that Jules and Edmond drew inspiration from etching in several different aspects of their novels. I first propose that the fragmented structure, narrative, and style of their novels draws on the principles behind nineteenth-century print albums, a format popularized during the etching revival. I then provide examples of how the Goncourts transposed etchings by Charles Méryon, a key figure of the etching revival, in *Manette Salomon*, showing how the brothers used etchings by specific artists as stylistic and thematic inspiration in their novels. Lastly, I examine the role played by etching in the Goncourt brothers' famous writing style, *l'écriture artiste*, which sought to capture fleeting visual impressions by translating elements from the visual arts into writing. I argue that Jules and Edmond incorporated vocabulary and techniques from etching into their *écriture artiste* across their

novels, demonstrating the importance of printmaking as a source of artistic inspiration for their writing alongside more often cited media such as painting and drawing.

Finally, Chapter V closes this exploration of the relationship between etching and the Goncourt brothers' texts by considering the afterlife of Jules' etchings after his death in 1870. I argue that Edmond's posthumous treatment of Jules' etchings shows the important role these prints played in Edmond's process of mourning and commemorating his brother. By outlining the key steps Edmond took to construct Jules' artistic reputation as an *aquafortiste*, I explore how these efforts provide a counterweight to other, more well-known ways in which Edmond sought to secure Jules' literary reputation. I also relate Jules' etchings to Edmond's four solo novels published after Jules' death, particularly *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), proposing that Edmond's strategic use of Jules' etchings reveals different aspects of Edmond's guilt over Jules' death and formed an essential part of Edmond's construction of his new identity as a solo author.

Through close analysis of the Goncourt brothers' written works alongside their own etchings, as well as their larger engagement with prints during the etching revival, this thesis emphasizes the multifaceted relationship between writing and etching in the Goncourt brothers' *œuvre*. I argue that the brothers' relationship with etching provides a valuable new lens through which to re-interpret their writing, tracing the range of ways in which their written work bears the imprint of their experience as *aquafortistes*. I also show how the Goncourt brothers offer a new perspective on the nineteenth-century etching revival, as their firsthand understanding of etching often contradicted the mainstream narratives presented by other writers and critics. Finally, I present the Goncourt brothers' engagement with etching as a case study for expanding discussions of the relationship between literature and art in nineteenth-century France beyond the sphere of painting, proposing new ways of approaching the intersections between literature and printmaking.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Short Abstract</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Long Abstract</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Conventions &amp; Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>12</b>
The Nineteenth-Century Etching Revival.....	18
The Goncourt Brothers as Authors and <i>Aquafortistes</i> .....	31
Pairing the Etching Needle and the Pen.....	46
<b>Chapter I. Creative Copies: The Etchings for <i>L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</i></b> .....	<b>50</b>
Introduction.....	51
Text and Image in <i>L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</i> .....	55
Amateur <i>Aquafortistes</i> : Etching and Connoisseurship .....	63
Etching in the Age of Technological Reproducibility .....	70
Conclusion .....	79
<b>Chapter II. Lithography &amp; Stenography: Gavarni and the Goncourt Brothers</b> .....	<b>81</b>
Introduction.....	82
Rival Revivals: Lithography and Etching in Nineteenth-Century France .....	85
<i>Artistes-écrivains</i> : Gavarni's <i>légendes</i> and <i>La Lorette</i> .....	90
Biography and Stenography in <i>Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre</i> .....	100
Conclusion .....	110
<b>Chapter III. Monkeys, Mirrors, and Mimesis in <i>Manette Salomon</i></b> .....	<b>112</b>
Introduction.....	113
The Artist as <i>Singe</i> and <i>Saltimbanque</i> .....	117
Mirrors and Mimesis.....	126
Mechanical Arts: Etching and Writing .....	136
Conclusion .....	145
<b>Chapter IV. The Needle and the Pen: Etching and the Goncourt Brothers' Novels</b> 147	
Introduction.....	148
The Novel as Print Album .....	150
Transposing Méryon in <i>Manette Salomon</i> .....	156
Etching and <i>écriture artiste</i> .....	163
Conclusion .....	171
<b>Chapter V. Etched in Memory: Mourning Jules</b> .....	<b>173</b>
Introduction.....	174
Afterlives and Artistic Reputation .....	176

Etching and Edmond's Novels.....	186
Conclusion .....	198
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>200</b>
Beyond the <i>Plume</i> and <i>Pinceau</i> .....	209
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Appendix I: Figures .....</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Appendix II: Timeline .....</b>	<b>252</b>

## Conventions & Abbreviations

All citations follow the Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition. All quotations are given in French, with the original spelling and punctuation.

This thesis makes extensive use of passages from the Goncourt brothers' *Journal*. A new critical edition of the *Journal*, edited by Jean-Louis Cabanès, is currently underway. However, only three volumes, covering the period 1851-1864, have been published at the time of writing. I have chosen to cite all *Journal* entries during this period using the Cabanès edition, abbreviated as *JC*. I then use Robert Ricatte's 1989 edition of the *Journal* for entries during the period 1865-1896, abbreviated as *JR*. To enable a reader using either edition to easily find the entry, I always give the date of the entry either in text or the footnote.

Similarly, only Volume I of the critical edition of the Goncourt brothers' *Correspondance générale*, edited by Pierre-Jean Dufief, has been published, covering the period 1843-1862. All letters during this period are cited using the Dufief edition. References to any other letters are taken from *Les Lettres de Jules de Goncourt* or Alidor Delzant, *Les Goncourt*.

All photographs of artworks from the Bibliothèque nationale and the Fondation Custodia were taken by the author. All other images are available online in the public domain, from the museum listed. The images used as frontispieces for the Introduction, Chapters I-V, and the Conclusion are numbered Figs. 1-7. The remaining figures are numbered consecutively.

All dates and titles of etchings by the Goncourt brothers are taken from the *Inventaire du fonds français après 1800*. Citation details for the *Inventaire* can be found in the Bibliography.

All chapter epigraphs are taken from works by the Goncourt brothers.

### Abbreviations

*JC* = *Journal*, Cabanès edition

*JR* = *Journal*, Ricatte edition

## Introduction

*Voilà plusieurs jours que nous sommes plongés dans  
l'eau-forte, mais jusqu'au cou et par-dessus la tête!*  
—*Journal*, February 17, 1859



**Fig. 1:** Jules de Goncourt, after Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *La Lecture*.  
Etching, stipple engraving and roulette, 1864

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Elizabeth Mongan in memory of Paul J.  
Sachs

Harvard Art Museums  
<https://hvard.art/o/266108>

On January 19, 1865, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt wrote in their *Journal*: “nous sommes assez bien caractérisés et résumés par le *la* que nous donnons, ce mois-ci, en trois choses: le roman *Germinie Lacerteux*, l’article *Fragonard*, et l’eau-forte de *la Lecture*.”<sup>1</sup> Here the Goncourt brothers elevate Jules’ etching *La Lecture* (Fig. 1) to the same status as their most famous novel and their major monograph on Fragonard, demonstrating the importance etching held for the brothers. Although Edmond and Jules are primarily known today as authors, they were also avid etchers, or *aquafortistes*, an activity that has thus far been treated as a pastime rather than as a serious pursuit. However, the Goncourt brothers were not alone in highlighting their etchings as significant pieces of work. The brothers practiced etching for over a decade from 1859 until Jules’ early death in 1870, making ninety-three etchings in total, ten by Edmond and eighty-three by Jules. During his lifetime, five of Jules’ etchings were accepted and exhibited at the *Salon*, demonstrating both his seriousness as an artist and the official recognition of his talent by the *Salon* jury.<sup>2</sup> After Jules’ death, prominent print critic Philippe Burty published a catalogue of Jules’ etchings in 1876 and Edmond donated the complete collection of the brothers’ etchings to the Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1884. The acceptance of the brothers’ *œuvre* by the Cabinet des Estampes provided an official stamp of consecration, while Burty’s catalogue publicized Jules’ prints, which were widely praised by critics. Although doubtless motivated by their friendship with the Goncourt brothers, print experts such as Burty, Roger Marx and Félix Bracquemond argued that Jules’ talent raised him above a simple amateur. In his catalogue essay for the 1897 auction of the Goncourt print collection, which included several of Jules’ etchings, Bracquemond wrote that “Jules de

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<sup>1</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal: mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. Robert Ricatte, vol. I, III vols. (Paris: R. Laffont, 1989), 1133. Hereafter cited as *JR*.

<sup>2</sup> Jules’ etchings exhibited at the *Salon* were *Thomas Vireloque*, after Gavarni (Salon de 1861), *La Consolation de la vieillesse*, after Greuze (Salon de 1863), *Fruits et Objets de table*, after Chardin (Salon de 1863), *Une Tête d’homme*, after Gavarni (Salon de 1864), and *La Lecture*, after Fragonard (Salon de 1865).

Goncourt, dont ce n'était pas l'état, avait le talent d'un vrai graveur.”<sup>3</sup> Burty similarly claimed in his 1876 catalogue essay that Jules' etchings “eussent suffi, si le public d'alors y eût pris garde et si lui-même eût prétendu aux succès d'artiste, à le classer dès le début parmi les aquafortistes d'élite.”<sup>4</sup> In an 1895 article, Roger Marx further argued that Jules' etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* “possèdent le ragoût, la haute valeur d'estampes originales. Oui, cette suite est de capitale importance; elle resplendit de vie, de couleur et de liberté....il eût suffi de ces eaux-fortes pour assurer contre l'oubli le nom de Jules de Goncourt.”<sup>5</sup>

Why then have the Goncourt brothers' etchings largely been forgotten today? While the brothers' etchings are often mentioned in passing in both literary and art-historical scholarship, they have not received sustained critical attention. Yet the same decade in which the brothers practiced etching also encompassed their major works as writers, from the eleven monographs of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* to their six co-written novels. The period 1859-70 thus provides a unique opportunity for studying the Goncourt brothers as both authors and *aquafortistes*. Moreover, it is no coincidence that the 1860s also marked the height of the nineteenth-century etching revival, a movement that brought together writers and artists to promote etching as an art form in unprecedented ways. This thesis situates the Goncourt brothers' written work within the historical context of the etching revival for the first time, arguing that the brothers' firsthand experience with etching had an important impact on their writing and analyzing the ways in which the brothers engaged with larger issues surrounding printmaking during the revival. My aim is to open new avenues for interdisciplinary explorations of the exchanges between

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<sup>3</sup> Félix Bracquemond, “Estampes Modernes; eaux-fortes originales; eaux-fortes de Jules de Goncourt; lithographies originales; œuvre de Gavarni; aquarelles et dessins composant la collection des Goncourt,” 1897, 4, Art Sales Catalogues Online, Netherlands Institute for Art History.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Burty, *Eaux-fortes de Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art, 1876), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Marx, “Les Goncourt artistes et esthéticiens,” *Revue encyclopédique*, March 1895, 92.

printmaking and writing in nineteenth-century France, a field that has been growing in recent years and offers exciting possibilities for rethinking standard narratives of the relationship between French literature and art history, which have traditionally focused on painting.

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in nineteenth-century print culture, particularly etching, in the last decade. Exhibitions centered around the etching revival have proliferated, from the University of Chicago Smart Museum of Art (2008), the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (2009), the Van Gogh Museum (2013, 2017), the J. Paul Getty Museum (2016) and the Rhode Island School of Design (2017).<sup>6</sup> In the last two years alone, exhibitions and publications have highlighted other aspects of nineteenth-century print culture, such as popular prints,<sup>7</sup> Impressionist printmaking,<sup>8</sup> and lithography.<sup>9</sup> Within literary scholarship, several studies have begun to tease out the relationship between etching and writing in nineteenth-century France. For instance, Evanghelia Stead has demonstrated the fashion, between 1856 and 1935 in France and England, for what she refers to as “gravures textuelles,” texts that title themselves as etchings or take on the stylistic elements, themes, and preoccupations of the etching

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth K. Helsinger, ed., *The “Writing” of Modern Life: The Etching Revival in France, Britain, and the U.S., 1850-1940* (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 2008); Peter Parshall, ed. *The Darker Side of Light: Arts of Privacy, 1850-1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Lund Humphries, 2009); Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho, *Printmaking in Paris: The Rage for Prints at the Fin de Siecle*, (New Haven; Brussels; Amsterdam: Yale University Press; Mercatorfonds; Van Gogh Museum, 2013); Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho, ed., *Prints in Paris 1900: From Elite to the Street* (Amsterdam; Brussels: Van Gogh Museum; Mercatorfonds, 2017); Lee Hendrix, ed., *Noir: The Romance of Black in 19th-Century French Drawings and Prints* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016); Britany Salsbury, ed., *Altered States: Etching in Late 19th-Century Paris* (Providence, RI: RISD Museum, 2017), <https://staging.publications.risdmuseum.org/altered-states/>.

<sup>7</sup> Patricia Mainardi, *Another World: Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Print Culture* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2017); Jillian Lerner, *Graphic Culture: Illustration and Artistic Enterprise in Paris, 1830-1848* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Sarah Lees and Richard R. Brettell, *Innovative Impressions: Prints by Cassatt, Degas, and Pissarro* (Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Christine Giviskos, *Set in Stone: Lithography in Paris, 1815-1900* (Munich: Hirmer, 2018).

medium.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, V erane Partensky has explored the link between etching and nineteenth-century authors writing in the vein of fantasy.<sup>11</sup> Studies of Baudelaire’s interest in etching<sup>12</sup> and the work of etchers Antoine Monnier and F elicien Rops in relation to literature<sup>13</sup> also provide specific examples of the links between etching and writing in nineteenth-century France. In many of these works, both art-historical and literary, the Goncourt brothers are mentioned as a noteworthy example of writers who experimented with etching. However, there has not yet been a comprehensive look at their involvement with etching during the revival or its impact on their writing.

Important studies such as Robert Ricatte’s comprehensive discussion of the Goncourt brothers’ novels, Bernard Vouilloux’s analysis of the Goncourt brothers’ aesthetic, or the collected volume edited by Jean Louis Caban es on “art et  criture” in the brothers’ writing do not mention etching as a significant factor in the Goncourts’ approach to art in their fiction or art-historical works.<sup>14</sup> The only brief explorations into the brothers’ engagement with etching in recent scholarship thus far have focused on two areas: their etchings for *L’Art du XVIII e si cle*, and their portrayal of the figure of the etcher in their 1856 short story “Feu Monsieur Thomas” and 1867 novel *Manette Salomon*. In their discussions of the Goncourt brothers as collectors, for instance,  lisabeth Launay and Dominique Pety mention the brothers’ etched illustrations for *L’Art*

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<sup>10</sup> Evangelhia Stead, “Gravures textuelles: un genre litt raire,” *Romantisme* 32, no. 118 (2002): 113–32. Examples of nineteenth-century French texts titled as etchings include Paul Verlaine’s *Eaux-Fortes* (1866), Joris-Karl Huysmans’ *Croquis et eaux-fortes* (1875), and Th ophile Gautier’s *Fusains et eaux-fortes* (1880).

<sup>11</sup> V erane Partensky, “Paris d’une ligne   l’autre: fantaisie urbaine et gravure   l’eau-forte,” in *Paris, cartographies litt raires*, ed. Chrystel Pin onnat and Chantal Liaroutzos (Paris:  ditions Le Manuscrit, 2007), 329–70.

<sup>12</sup> Mich le Hannoosh, “Etching and Modern Art: Baudelaire’s Peintres et Aquafortistes,” *French Studies* 43, no. 1 (1989); Claire Chagniot, *Baudelaire et l’estampe* (Paris: Presses de l’Universit  Paris-Sorbonne, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> H l ne V drine, *De l’encre dans l’acide: l’ uvre grav e de F elicien Rops et la litt rature de la d cadence* (Paris: Champion, 2002); Judd David Hubert, “Antoine Monnier disciple de Baudelaire et de M ryon,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 44, no. 1 (2015): 111–127.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Ricatte, *La Cr ation romanesque chez les Goncourt, 1851-1870* (Paris: A. Colin, 1953); Bernard Vouilloux, *L’Art des Goncourt: une esth tique du style* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997); Jean-Louis Caban es, ed., *Les Fr res Goncourt: art et  criture* (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1997).

*du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* as a means of engaging with eighteenth-century drawings in their collection.<sup>15</sup> Pamela Warner has similarly explored how the illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* further the Goncourt brothers' specific vision of art history.<sup>16</sup> Several studies have also used "Feu Monsieur Thomas," which features a fictionalized version of famous nineteenth-century French etcher Charles Méryon, or a chapter from *Manette Salomon* which depicts the artist Coriolis making etchings, as examples of how nineteenth-century authors were interested in the figure of the *aquafortiste* as a type.<sup>17</sup>

This thesis builds on these initial studies to broaden the scope of the discussion, arguing that etching provides a valuable lens for reading the Goncourt brothers' works, even those not explicitly related to etching. Each chapter proposes different ways in which we can bring together the Goncourts' texts and prints to reveal shared concerns, themes, and aesthetic qualities. The primary aim of this thesis is to use the Goncourt brothers' experience with etching to reveal new insights into the relationship between text and image in their co-written works from 1859-70. In addition to dealing with the brothers' own etchings, it examines their interactions with printmaking as critics and collectors, providing a holistic perspective on their engagement with etching during the revival. Although Jules and Edmond were interested in other forms of printmaking beyond etching, notably Gavarni's lithographs and Japanese prints, this thesis focuses specifically on etching as it provides a unique opportunity to analyze how the Goncourts' firsthand knowledge of the process informed their written work.<sup>18</sup> Before outlining the specific

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<sup>15</sup> Élisabeth Launay, *Les Frères Goncourt: collectionneurs de dessins* (Paris: Arthena, 1991); Dominique Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection: de l'objet d'art à l'art d'écrire* (Geneva: Droz, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Pamela Warner, "Jules de Goncourt aquafortiste: la rhétorique visuelle de l'eau-forte," *Cahiers Goncourt*, no. 11 (2004): 93–102.

<sup>17</sup> See Anna Arnar, "Seduced by the Etcher's Needle: French Writers and the Graphic Arts in Nineteenth-Century France," in *The "Writing" of Modern Life*, 39-56; Fanny Berat-Esquier, "Fantaisie et mythe du graveur: *Chien-Caillou* de Champfleury et *Un aquafortiste* des Goncourt," *Cahiers Goncourt*, no. 17 (2010): 85–101; Partensky, "Paris d'une ligne à l'autre: fantaisie urbaine et gravure à l'eau-forte"; Stead, "Gravures textuelles: un genre littéraire." For more on "Feu Monsieur Thomas" and Méryon, see Chapter IV.

<sup>18</sup> The connection between the Gavarni's lithographs and the Goncourts' etchings will be discussed in Chapter II. Although Jules and Edmond purchased their first Japanese print as early as 1861, Edmond's

arguments made in each chapter of this thesis, I believe it is essential first to sketch the historical backdrop of the etching revival. Following this, I will then provide an overview of the relationship between the Goncourt brothers' etchings and their written work, introducing the key texts that feature in this thesis. The final section of this Introduction then provides an overview of each of the five chapters, setting out the key aims and arguments of this thesis.

### **The Nineteenth-Century Etching Revival**

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The nineteenth-century etching revival was a unique moment in the history of printmaking in France, when artists, writers, and print publishers joined forces in a conscious effort to promote etching as a printmaking technique. Etching was first introduced in France in the sixteenth century and remained a popular artistic medium throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the first half of the nineteenth century, however, etching found itself increasingly competing for attention among a variety of new artistic media, such as photography and lithography, as well as its traditional rival, engraving. The revival sought to regenerate French etching by presenting it as an alternative to these other types of printed images. I will now briefly trace the early history of etching in Europe in order to contextualize the emergence of the nineteenth-century revival, beginning by exploring the relationship and technical differences between etching and engraving.

From its first appearance in Europe at the end of the fifteenth century, etching was almost always defined in relation, and usually in opposition, to its sister art of engraving. Engraving was first used in Germany in the 1420s, making it a well-established form of

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interest in Japanese art largely developed after Jules' death with the publication of his monographs on *Outamaro* (1891) and *Hokusai* (1896). For more on the brothers' interest in Japanese prints and decorative art, see for example, Laurent Houssais, "Les Goncourt et le japonisme," in Cabanès et al., *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle*, 137–56; Laure Katsaros, "The Goncourt Brothers: Reflected in the Magic Mirror of Japan," *The Massachusetts Review* 57, no. 3 (2016): 490–511.

printmaking almost seventy years before etching was invented. Etching initially grew out of a technique for decorating armor, and the armorer Daniel Hopper in Augsburg is recognized as the first person to use the technique to print images from iron plates in the 1490s. The technique then spread throughout Europe, where etching on iron plates was quickly overtaken by etching on copper plates, which allowed for easier corrections to the plate. Copper plates are still used as the primary medium for etching today. Etching then made its way to France at the end of the sixteenth century through the influx of Flemish engravers and printers after the fall of Antwerp in 1585, resulting in the emergence of Paris as a major European center of printmaking from the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>19</sup>

Both etching and engraving are *intaglio* (*taille-douce*) printmaking processes, meaning that they function through the incision of lines into a metal plate. However, there are fundamental differences between the two techniques. In engraving, the artist carves directly into the copperplate using a tool called a burin. The lines incised by the burin then hold ink during the printing process, transferring the ink onto paper when the plate is run through a printing press. In contrast, etching involves several intermediate steps. First, the copperplate is covered in an acid resistant coating, or “ground,” such as wax. The artist then draws on the ground using a thin metal tool called an etching needle, which scratches through the ground to reveal the copperplate beneath. When the drawing is complete, the plate then undergoes the “biting” process (*la morsure* in French) where the plate is immersed in an acid bath. The acid “bites” or eats into the lines exposed in the ground, creating incised lines in the copperplate. The depth of the biting depends on a multitude of factors, from the length of immersion to the temperature or strength of the acid, creating room for experimentation and chance. After biting, the plate is ready for printing. To

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<sup>19</sup> For a comprehensive history of engraving and etching in Europe see Ad Stijnman, *Engraving and Etching 1400-2000: A History of the Development of Manual Intaglio Printmaking Processes* (London; Houten, Netherlands: Archetype Publications; HES and DE GRAAF Publishers, 2012).

prepare for printing, the plate is covered in ink, then the excess is wiped clean so that only the lines incised by the acid hold ink. A dampened piece of paper is then placed on top of the plate. Finally, the plate and paper are run through a roller press, where the pressure of the roller presses paper into the lines on the plate, transferring the ink onto the paper. The final, reversed, image is a mirror image of the drawing on the copperplate.<sup>20</sup>

The addition of acid in the etching process means that the act of drawing on the copper plate is very different between engraving and etching. Engraving is a highly skilled and physically difficult process, requiring specialized training to manipulate the burin and great force to carve out lines in the plate. In contrast, the etching needle only requires light pressure to scratch through the ground, meaning that the motion of using the needle is essentially the same as drawing on paper. The ease of drawing on the copperplate made it much easier for artists and amateurs to pick up etching without formal training. In spite of these differences, early practitioners of etching often tried to use etching to imitate the effects of engraving, with its use of controlled, uniform lines and defined patterns of hatchmarks. For example, in his 1645 *Traicté des manières de graver en taille douce*, the first treatise on *intaglio* printmaking published in French, Abraham Bosse wrote that “la principale intention que peuvent avoir ceux qui gravent ou veulent graver à l’eau-forte, est de faire que leur ouvrage paroisse comme s’il estoit gravé au burin.”<sup>21</sup> However, the relative ease of etching was soon used by artists to make prints that looked very different from engravings, making use of etching’s ability to create lines of varying width and to pursue looser and more idiosyncratic mark making. Later commentators began to extrapolate from these technical differences to characterize etching as an art of freedom,

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<sup>20</sup> For more details on all aspects of the etching process, see Stijnman, *Engraving and Etching 1400-2000*. The glossary in Salsbury, ed., *Altered States* also contains very useful videos of the etching process.

<sup>21</sup> Abraham Bosse, *Traicté des manières de graver en taille douce sur l’airin. Par le Moyen des Eaux Fortes, & des Vernix Durs & Mols. Ensemble de la façon d’en Imprimer les Planches & d’en Construire la Presse, & autres choses concernans lesdits Arts* (Paris, 1645), 3.

spontaneity, authenticity, and originality, while engraving was presented as more painstaking, restrictive, and conservative.

In Charles-Nicolas Cochin's eighteenth-century treatise on printmaking, *De la manière de graver à l'eau forte et au burin*, for instance, Cochin acknowledged the close relationship between etching and engraving (both techniques would often be combined in the same print) but emphasized their differences, even presenting engraving as soulless: "On peut donc dire que si le burin termine & perfectionne l'eau forte, il en reçoit aussi beaucoup de mérite & de goût; elle lui donne une ame [sic] qu'il n'avoit point."<sup>22</sup> Both Cochin and the other main commentator on printmaking in eighteenth-century France, Claude-Henri Watelet, an amateur etcher and the author of the article "Gravure" in the *Encyclopédie*, thought that engraving and etching were better suited to different things. The precision of engraving made it a good fit for portraits, where the ultimate goal was accuracy, while etching provided a looser way to interpret genres like landscape which feature shifting light and changing nature. Watelet also went further than Cochin, presenting etching as a liberation from the strictures of engraving. As he writes, "on commença par soumettre [sic] cette nouvelle pratique [l'eau-forte] à une imitation servile des effets du burin: c'étoit les premiers pas d'un art timide qui n'osoit s'écarter de celui à qui il devoit la naissance; mais cette subordination dura peu [...] elle se débarrassa du joug que lui avoit imposé le burin."<sup>23</sup> However, Watelet also cautioned against the dangers of

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<sup>22</sup> Cochin's treatise was the first update on Bosse's earlier work. Cochin largely re-prints Bosse's treatise but adds his own commentary. Charles-Nicolas Cochin, *De la manière de graver à l'eau forte et au burin: et de la gravure en manière noire: avec la façon de construire les presses modernes & d'imprimer en taille-douce. Nouvelle édition augmentée de l'impression qui imite les tableaux, de la gravure en manière de crayon & de celle qui imite le lavis enrichie de vignettes et vingt-une planches en taille-douce* (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1758), xiii.

<sup>23</sup> Claude-Henri Watelet, "Gravure," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société de Gens de lettres*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (Paris, 1757), 7:882. ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/> Again, Watelet borrows from both Bosse and Cochin but with his own additions.

too much freedom in etching, which could lead to sloppiness and laziness, ultimately corrupting the art of printmaking.

These technical differences between etching and engraving were further amplified in the traditional positions of both printmaking techniques in the hierarchy of the arts. From the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries in France, printmaking as a whole was relegated to a level below painting because its primary function was reproductive. Although viewers and critics recognized the technical skill of printmakers, prints were primarily used as vehicles for reproducing and disseminating paintings to the public. Watelet, for example, captures the early modern perception of prints as “translations” of paintings when he writes:

Le graveur est pour les peintres dont il imite les tableaux, ce que le traducteur est pour les auteurs dont il interprete les ouvrages; ils doivent l'un & l'autre conserver le caractere de l'original, & se dépouiller de celui qu'ils ont; ils doivent être des protégés: on ne lit une traduction, & l'on ne consulte pour l'ordinaire une gravure, que pour connoître les auteurs originaux.<sup>24</sup>

Engraving was the preferred printmaking medium for reproductive prints, because of its technical purity and accuracy. This meant that engraving was officially taught by the Académie, while etching was left to artists to learn on their own. Engravers were usually professional printmakers who dedicated their careers to the craft,<sup>25</sup> while painters were discouraged from learning engraving because of the specialized training required. In contrast, a strong tradition of painter-etchers emerged across early modern printmaking. Because etching was not their primary artistic focus or means of earning a living, painter-etchers were often more adventurous and experimental as printmakers. As a more private medium, etching allowed painters to explore new subject matter. Their experience working in a different medium also often led painter-etchers to be more technically

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<sup>24</sup> Watelet, “Gravure,” 7:888.

<sup>25</sup> For more on the training of engravers, see Susanne Anderson-Riedel, *Creativity and Reproduction: Nineteenth Century Engraving and the Academy* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010).

adventurous, pursuing different effects. While some painter-etchers only briefly experimented with etching, others such as Rembrandt, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, or Francisco Goya practiced etching to such a high level that it came to equal, or even surpass, their paintings.<sup>26</sup> In the nineteenth century, the revival presented itself as a return to this illustrious tradition of painter-etchers.

The Barbizon landscape artists, the vanguard of the etching revival in the 1850s, appear to have been initially drawn to Rembrandt as a landscape etcher, admiring his innovative use of light effects such as *contre-jour* or *chiaroscuro* and his treatment of etching as a form of sketching.<sup>27</sup> As the etching movement was formalized with the foundation of the Société des Aquafortistes in 1862, Rembrandt was co-opted much more deliberately and promoted as a figurehead for the movement. Théophile Gautier's preface to the first album of *Eaux-fortes modernes* published by the Société des Aquafortistes, for example, mentions Rembrandt at the head of a litany of painter-etchers, as well as famous printmakers who worked primarily in etching such as Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Jacques Callot.<sup>28</sup> Léopold Flameng's 1860 design for letterhead for Auguste Delâtre (Fig. 8), one of the leading figures of the revival, includes portraits of Rembrandt and Dürer, while Ferdinand Roybet's 1866 frontispiece for the fourth album of the Société des Aquafortiste's *Eaux-Fortes modernes* (Fig. 9) similarly includes a bust of Rembrandt and an album of Dürer's prints to represent the two masters of etching and engraving. Nineteenth-century etchers thus presented themselves as the inheritors of a long tradition of printmaking in Europe.

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<sup>26</sup> For more on painter-etchers from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century, see Michael Wayne Cole, ed., *The Early Modern Painter-Etcher* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> For more on the appropriation of Rembrandt in nineteenth-century France, see Alison McQueen, *The Rise of the Cult of Rembrandt: Reinventing an Old Master in Nineteenth-Century France* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Théophile Gautier, "Un mot sur l'eau-forte," in *Société des aquafortistes. Eaux-fortes modernes originales et inédites: première année, premier volume* (Paris: A. Cadart & Chevalier, 1862).

The Société des Aquafortistes, founded by printer Auguste Delâtre and publisher Alfred Cadart, sought to create a community around etching, encompassing professional artists, amateur etchers, collectors, and critics. Delâtre's print studio offered a collaborative space for artists to print their work, while the headquarters of the Société at Cadart and Jules Luquet's print shop, depicted in a print by Adolphe-Martial Potémont (Fig. 10), provided a space to sell and advertise etchings to collectors. The headquarters also provided artists and amateurs with access to etching materials and lessons, as highlighted in an announcement in *L'Union des Arts*, a magazine published by Cadart and Luquet:

ceux [qui] auraient le désir de s'essayer dans ce genre [la gravure à l'eau-forte], trouveront chez MM. Cadart et Luquet tous les renseignements dont ils peuvent avoir besoin. Un atelier de manipulations pour l'eau-forte a été annexé à leur établissement de gravure, rue Richelieu, 79, et ils se feront un plaisir d'indiquer à tous ceux qui voudront bien s'adresser à eux, l'usage des instruments, l'emploi des vernis, les détails de la morsure, et les divers procédés qui forment le fonds de la gravure à l'eau-forte.<sup>29</sup>

The Société also published five albums of *Eaux-fortes modernes* which were mailed to subscribers, each containing sixty prints and a preface written by a prominent critic, spreading the reach of the revival. In addition to these publicity efforts, promoters of the revival further sought to validate etching by drawing on the traditional characterization of the medium as a more spontaneous and authentic form of printmaking. In his 1866 etching manual, the first technical guide to etching published since the eighteenth century, Maxime Lalanne wrote that etching, by the “caractère même de liberté, par la relation intime et rapide qu'elle établit entre la main de l'artiste et sa pensée, est le plus naturel des interprètes et le plus sincère.”<sup>30</sup> Art critics similarly promoted this vision of etching: Baudelaire claimed, for example, that etching was “la traduction la plus nette possible du

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<sup>29</sup> Alfred Cadart and Jules Luquet, *L'Union Des Arts*, February 13, 1864, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Maxime Lalanne, *La Traité de la gravure à l'eau-forte* (Paris: Cadart & Luquet, 1866).

caractère de l'artiste"<sup>31</sup> while Gautier argued that "nul moyen, en effet, n'est plus simple, plus direct, plus personnel que l'eau-forte."<sup>32</sup> Although this emphasis on etching's spontaneity and authenticity was not new, as we have seen in Cochin and Watelet's eighteenth-century treatises, it was presented with increasing urgency in the nineteenth century as a way of defending etching on three fronts.

In the 1860s, etching had to be differentiated not only from its traditional rival, engraving, but also from industrial printmaking methods such as lithography and from the newfound invention of photography. Although nineteenth-century engraving is now acknowledged to have been painted in an unfairly negative light by contemporary critics and modern scholarship,<sup>33</sup> engraving's traditional associations as a bastion of conservative, impersonal academic practice persisted in the nineteenth century and were used to throw etching's professed authenticity and originality into relief. At the same time, etching was also contrasted with other types of printmaking such as lithography, which was criticized for churning out cheap, low-quality images in industrial factories.<sup>34</sup> Gautier argued, for example, that "la Société des Aqua-Fortistes s'est fondée précisément pour combattre la photographie, la lithographie, l'aqua-tinte [...] en un mot, le travail régulier, automatique, sans inspiration qui dénature l'idée même de l'artiste."<sup>35</sup> As captured in Gautier's statement, etching was also frequently pitted against photography, which upended the tradition of reproductive printmaking through the camera's ability to create a perfectly accurate reproduction. However, claims like Gautier's should be taken with a grain of salt, and Chapters I and IV will return to this issue to nuance the opposition between etching

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<sup>31</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "Peintres et aquafortistes," in *Écrits sur l'art*, ed. Francis Moulinat (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1992), 334.

<sup>32</sup> Gautier, "Un mot sur l'eau-forte."

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Anderson-Riedel, *Creativity and Reproduction* or Stephen Bann, *Parallel Lines: Printmakers, Painters and Photographers in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001); Bann, *Distinguished Images: Prints in the Visual Economy of Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Chapter II will discuss the relationship between lithography and etching in more detail.

<sup>35</sup> Gautier, "Un mot sur l'eau-forte."

and reproductive printmaking, exploring how Jules and Edmond questioned the tendency to overstate the spontaneity of etching and downplay its mechanical aspects during the revival.

In addition to these efforts to promote etching by contrasting it with photography and other forms of printmaking, promoters of the revival took the originality associated with etching one step further by emphasizing the “original print” and the concept of *la belle épreuve*. Supporters of etching sought to elevate printmaking from its traditionally low status in the hierarchy of the arts and move beyond its primarily reproductive function, encouraging the appreciation of prints as original works of art in their own right. In his review of “La gravure et la lithographie à l’exposition de 1861,” for instance, Philippe Burty complained about the relegation of prints to poorly lit hallways at the Exposition, reflecting their low status in comparison to paintings. He argued that the arts administration needed to do more to change public perception of prints, as “la foule n’est que trop habituée à ne considérer la gravure que comme l’ornement des murs qui ne sont point assez riches pour se couvrir de peintures; il faut lui dire ce que cet ornement à bon marché mérite de considération.”<sup>36</sup> One strategy for elevating the status of prints was to emphasize the existence of original prints, or prints depicting an artist’s original composition rather than reproducing another artwork. However, the very idea of an original print also raises a paradox inherent to printmaking. In other art forms like painting or drawing, originals are distinguished from copies and there can only be one “original,” while in printmaking, there can be many “originals.” Each individual copy of a print, or “impression,” is simultaneously both a unique artwork and multiple. Traditionally, when printing multiple impressions of a print, the goal was to make each impression as similar

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<sup>36</sup> Philippe Burty, “La Gravure et la lithographie à l’exposition de 1861,” *Gazette des beaux-arts: courrier européen de l’art et de la curiosité*, July 1861, 173.

as possible. In the etching revival and throughout the nineteenth century, the goal increasingly became to single out specific impressions as more beautiful or rare, and therefore more desirable and valuable.

In his introductory essay to the album *L'Eau-forte en 1875*, Philippe Burty coined the term *la belle épreuve* to capture the idea that some impressions of a print are uniquely beautiful. For Burty, the beauty of a print is dependent on a variety of different factors, from “le sentiment de l’artiste qui l’a conçue, l’habileté de l’imprimeur qui l’a fait naître, le goût de l’amateur qui la distingue et la choisit. Elle n’échappe pas, d’ailleurs, à cette loi qui veut que les choses belles soient rares.”<sup>37</sup> Any variation in the appearance of an impression, from unintended accidents in the biting or printing processes, to deliberate choices such as experimenting with different types of paper or colored inks, can make certain impressions of a print stand out. Burty’s concept of *la belle épreuve* also prioritized “proof” prints, or impressions of a print made early in the process. Artists or printers would make proofs in order to test the appearance of their print and see if any changes needed to be made. These prints were seen as particularly valuable because they provide visual evidence of the artist’s working process and were seen as “closer” to the artist’s hand. Of course, artists had experimented with creating different versions of the same print long before the nineteenth century. Rembrandt in particular was famous for making many different “states” of his prints, reworking his plates and then re-printing them such that each version of the same plate is considered a different state of the same print. However, nineteenth-century etchers, including the Goncourt brothers, increasingly experimented with every stage of the process, from making changes to the plate using a technique called “stopping out,”<sup>38</sup> re-biting the plate to deepen and widen lines, selectively

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<sup>37</sup> Philippe Burty, “La Belle Épreuve,” in *L'Eau-forte en 1875* (Paris: Alfred Cadart, 1875), 8.

<sup>38</sup> Stopping out covers a portion of a plate so that it is not affected by re-biting. If an artist wants to rework one section of the plate but keep another part the same, he or she can cover the section they wish to keep

inking and wiping the plate with methods such as “retroussage,”<sup>39</sup> or changing the inks and type of paper used in printing. Operating outside the strictures imposed on engraving by the Académie, etchers had more freedom to explore these new techniques. The etching medium also lent itself particularly well to this type of experimentation given the relative ease of creating and editing the image on the plate, as well as the opportunities to intervene at different stages throughout the process.

As the rage for *la belle épreuve* reached fever pitch among collectors in the nineteenth century, it also opened the door to the manipulation of the print market. Artists and printers deliberately began to create scarcity in order to increase the value of their prints, publishing limited editions of their work or even “cancelling” or completely destroying their plates so that no further copies could be made, thereby increasing the rarity of the prints in circulation. Burty in particular was notorious for advocating that artists should destroy their plates, a controversial practice opposed by many artists. The Goncourt brothers, among others, ridiculed the craze for artist’s proofs and prints “avant la lettre,” which led collectors to pay more for inferior works simply because of their perceived mystique. Edmond took the idea of *la belle épreuve* to its logical, and comical, extreme in a *Journal* entry from February 19, 1889, for instance, writing:

Oui, si à certains amateurs, on apportait une feuille de papier, où il y aurait derrière, le certificat d’un Delâtre, attestant que c’est la première feuille pour le tirage de telle planche, qui a été préparée, mouillée, mise entre les couvertures, puis par une circonstance quelconque, remplacée par une autre, cette feuille ne contenant rien serait l’épreuve avant tout, l’épreuve désirable.<sup>40</sup>

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untouched with an acid-resistant varnish or ground. The plate is then be placed into the acid bath to deepen the exposed lines, while leaving those beneath the ground untouched.

<sup>39</sup> *Retroussage* is a technique invented by Delâtre in the 1860s. After inking the plate and wiping it clean, the plate is warmed again and a piece of muslin is rubbed lightly over it to drag some ink from the grooves, softening the edges of the lines in the printed image.

<sup>40</sup> *JR*, III: 232.

However, whether in promoting the original print or criticizing it, the controversy around *la belle épreuve* only drew more attention to etching, fueling the publicity behind the revival.

As we have seen, many of the ideas espoused during the revival were not new, but they were promoted with exceptional coordination across different parts of the art world in the nineteenth century. In their sociological study of the etching revival, Kurt and Gladys Engel Lang highlight the triumvirate of a publisher (Alfred Cadart), a printer (Auguste Delâtre) and a spokesman/critic (Philippe Burty) as the driving force behind the movement, arguing that “these three created a mechanism for rationalizing the production of prints and for distributing and establishing a market for their output.”<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, this triangle largely excludes the artists actually producing the etchings, although some artists did also become spokespeople for the movement, such as Félix Bracquemond and Maxime Lalanne. Recent scholarship has emphasized the way in which, contrary to the often-hyperbolic claims of its publications, the revival was in fact limited to an exclusive group of enthusiasts who occupied overlapping roles. Critics such as Burty were also avid collectors, printers such as Delâtre played an increasingly important role in the artistic production of prints, and artists themselves were one of the primary audiences for publications about etching. Ultimately, as Rosa de Carvalho writes, “the *fin-de-siècle* print world was a closed system, in which everyone was a producer and consumer in one way or another.”<sup>42</sup> The close involvement of writers in the revival therefore provides a unique opportunity for examining the intersections between printmaking and literature in nineteenth-century France, a key aim of this thesis.

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<sup>41</sup> Lang and Lang, *Etched in Memory: The Building and Survival of Artistic Reputation* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 30.

<sup>42</sup> Rosa de Carvalho, ed., *Prints in Paris 1900*, 49.

Writers and artists, as well as the processes of etching and writing, were inextricably linked during the revival. The Société des Aquafortistes directly involved writers from the outset: the five albums of *Eaux-fortes modernes* featured prefaces written by critics such as Théophile Gautier, Jules Janin, and Théophile Thoré. Critics also published articles promoting etching in other journals, such as Baudelaire's articles "L'Eau-Forte est à la mode" and "Peintres et Aquafortistes," published in *La Revue anecdotique* and *Le Boulevard* in 1862.<sup>43</sup> In addition, as Anna Arnar and Martha Tedeschi have explored, many of these commentaries on etching also focused on drawing parallels between writing and etching.<sup>44</sup> Using the same materials of black ink and white paper, the reproducible nature of etching echoes the way in which printed literature multiplies the author's handwritten manuscript. In Jules-Antoine Castagnary's preface to the fourth album of *Eaux-fortes modernes*, for instance, he characterized etching as an "art spontané comme l'écriture et puissant comme l'imprimerie, qui fait que le peintre confie directement sa pensée au métal, et que, comme l'écrivain, il en peut multiplier à l'infini les exemplaires."<sup>45</sup> In the same way that etching was associated with drawing in its ability to capture the artist's hand at work, etching was also likened to handwriting as a way of revealing individual personality – Gautier described etching as having "l'authenticité d'un paraphe, car le talent de celui qui la pratique se signe dans chaque taille."<sup>46</sup> Yet despite this interest in the similarities between writing and etching, most writers did not speak from personal experience of both processes. Among the many writers involved with the etching revival, the Goncourt brothers provide a unique example of authors who tried

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<sup>43</sup> For more on Baudelaire's involvement with etching, see Hannoosh, "Etching and Modern Art: Baudelaire's Peintres et Aquafortistes."

<sup>44</sup> Anna Arnar, "Seduced by the Etcher's Needle"; Martha Tedeschi, "The New Language of Etching in Nineteenth-Century England," in *The "Writing" of Modern Life*, 25-38.

<sup>45</sup> Jules-Antoine Castagnary, *Société des Aquafortistes. Eaux-Fortes modernes. Oeuvres inédites et originales : quatrième année, quatrième volume* (Paris: Cadart & Luquet, 1866), 2.

<sup>46</sup> Gautier, "Un mot sur l'eau-forte."

etching for themselves.<sup>47</sup> Their perspective as writers who took up the etching needle as well as the pen therefore provides valuable insight into the relationship between writing and etching in nineteenth-century France. The next section will now explore the Goncourt brothers' personal experience as both authors and *aquafortistes* during the etching revival.

### **The Goncourt Brothers as Authors and *Aquafortistes***

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The textual corpus of this thesis centers on the Goncourt brothers' co-written works from 1859-70, the period in which they practiced etching before Jules' death in 1870 as well as the height of the etching revival.<sup>48</sup> 1859-70 encompasses the publication of the Goncourt brothers' major works in a range of genres, including their eleven art-historical monographs for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, their six novels, and their biography *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*. These works mark the brothers' fully-fledged literary career in the 1860s, building on their first forays as authors in the previous decade. Given the wide range of Goncourt texts covered in this thesis, most of which are not well-known today, it is worth providing a brief outline of their biography and varied career as writers prior to 1859 in order to contextualize their writing and turn to etching during the 1860s.<sup>49</sup>

Edmond was born on May 26, 1822, followed eight years later by Jules on December 17, 1830. They spent their childhood in Paris with their mother after the death

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<sup>47</sup> There are some examples of writers who tried etching: Philippe Burty attempted etching a few plates with the guidance of Delacroix, and even sent Victor Hugo plates in an unsuccessful attempt to encourage the author to try etching. The poet Antoine Monnier published *Eaux-fortes et Rêves creux, sonnets excentriques et poèmes étranges* in 1873, featuring both poems and etchings by the author, but the Goncourts were the first to have a sustained experience of etching alongside their work as authors, producing etchings from 1859-1870.

<sup>48</sup> Chapter V provides the exception, looking briefly at Edmond's solo novels published after Jules' death.

<sup>49</sup> See Appendix I for a selective timeline of the Goncourts' biography. There has not been a recent critical biography of the Goncourt brothers so Élisabeth Launay's extensive timeline in *Les Frères Goncourt: collectionneurs de dessins* provided an invaluable resource. I also make use of Alidor Delzant's biography, *Les Goncourt* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1889), written by the brothers' friend and fellow collector. There have been two biographies written by André Billy, *Les Frères Goncourt: la vie littéraire à Paris pendant la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1954) and François Fosca, *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: A. Michel, 1941), but Delzant's biography remains one of the more reliable sources on the brothers' personal history, reproducing letters and documents to which Edmond gave him direct access.

of their father, a decorated army officer, in 1834. In 1848, their mother also died, leaving the brothers parentless but with a comfortable inheritance. Edmond, age 26, was working at the Caisse Centrale du Trésor Public while Jules, 18, had just finished his studies at the Collège Bourbon. However, the brothers quickly abandoned conventional career aspirations. Deciding that they wanted to pursue an artistic career, Jules and Edmond spent 1849-50 traveling in France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Algeria, recording their journeys in notebooks with both watercolor sketches and written entries. According to Edmond's later reminiscences, it was when the brothers returned to Paris in the fall of 1850 that they turned their hand to writing for the first time:

Sur une grande table à modèle, aux deux bouts de laquelle, du matin à la tombée du jour, mon frère et moi faisons de l'aquarelle dans un obscur entresol de la rue Saint-Georges, un soir de l'automne de l'année 1850, en ces heures où la lumière de la lampe met fin aux lavis de couleur, — poussés je ne sais par quelle inspiration, nous nous mettions à écrire ensemble un vaudeville avec un pinceau trempé dans de l'encre de Chine. Jusqu'à ce jour, toute notre littérature consistait en un carnet de notes, contenant les étapes et les menus de repas d'un voyage en France de six mois à pied, le sac sur le dos, et où seulement, tout à la fin, s'étaient glissées quelques notes sur le ciel, la terre, les Mauresques de l'Algérie.<sup>50</sup>

Even if Edmond's image of the brothers writing "avec un pinceau trempé dans de l'encre de Chine" may be no more than a literary flourish, it is undeniable that their careers as authors were fundamentally shaped by their earlier experiences as aspiring artists.

Jules and Edmond continued to practice watercolor sporadically throughout the 1850s and 1860s, with some notable examples such as their watercolors from their trip to Italy in 1855-56.<sup>51</sup> Jules' watercolor of the "Fosse Commune" also served as inspiration for the final scene of their novel *Germinie Lacerteux* and was reproduced as a frontispiece

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<sup>50</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1888), 139.

<sup>51</sup> Their notebook from their trip to Italy is kept in the Louvre. For more on this notebook, see Élisabeth Launay, "Des *Notes sur l'Italie* (1855-1856) à *Madame Gervaisais* (1869): éléments pour une étude génétique," in Cabanès, *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, 351-65.

to the 1876 edition of the novel.<sup>52</sup> Edmond explained the importance of this watercolor in a prefatory note, writing that “le dessin de la Fosse Commune, fait pour demeurer sous nos yeux et garder présente la mémoire du décor de neige, pendant que nous écrivions le dernier chapitre, me semble devoir intéresser tout lecteur curieux des procédés de l’auteur qu’il lit.”<sup>53</sup> As the “Fosse Commune” watercolor demonstrates, the brothers were interested in using their own artworks as documentary sources and direct inspiration for their writing from an early stage, something they would continue to do with their etchings. Although Jules and Edmond abandoned their idea of becoming watercolorists, eventually turning to etching instead, this first artistic experience ignited their interest in art and instilled in them firsthand knowledge of artistic techniques and materials.

After returning from their journeys abroad, the brothers made their first serious attempt to join the nineteenth-century literary world with the ill-fated publication of their first book *En 18...* in 1851. They had the bad luck to publish their “avorton de roman,”<sup>54</sup> on the day of the December 2, 1851 coup d’état by Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, which meant it went largely ignored by the press. On the same day, the brothers also began what would be perhaps their most significant written work, their *Journal*, later published as *Mémoires de la vie littéraire*. This massive undertaking covers the second half of the nineteenth century with frequent, often daily entries until Edmond’s death in 1896. The *Journal* became a repository for the Goncourts’ personal musings and snapshots of everyday life. As Edmond wrote in his preface “ce journal est notre confession de chaque soir [...] ambitieux, en un mot, de représenter l’ondoyante humanité dans sa *vérité*

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<sup>52</sup> Other than their notebook from Italy, the Goncourts’ watercolors are now dispersed throughout private and museum collections. See Alidor Delzant, *Les Goncourt*, for a list of the brothers’ watercolors and Philippe Burty, *Eaux-fortes de Jules de Goncourt*, for a discussion and woodblock reproductions of some of Jules’ watercolors.

<sup>53</sup> Jules de Goncourt and Edmond de Goncourt, *Germinie Lacerteux* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1876).

<sup>54</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, 10.

*momentanée.*”<sup>55</sup> The *Journal* was an indispensable source for the brothers’ writing, from which they would draw passages for use in their novels or other works almost verbatim. It was also infamous for its indiscreet and unflattering portrayals of other nineteenth-century figures with whom the Goncourt brothers socialized, particularly in transcribed conversations from the Dîner Magny and Princesse Mathilde’s Salon.<sup>56</sup> The *Journal* was so scandalous that Edmond only published heavily edited excerpts during his own lifetime, from 1887-96, and demanded that the manuscripts deposited at the Bibliothèque Nationale remain sealed for twenty years after his death.<sup>57</sup> With the publication of Robert Ricatte’s 1956-59 edition based on the original manuscript, and an ongoing critical edition begun in 2013 and edited by Jean-Louis-Cabanès, the *Journal* is now an invaluable resource on the Goncourt brothers and their world.<sup>58</sup> This thesis makes extensive use of passages from the *Journal* as it provides a wealth of autobiographical information on the Goncourts’ experience as authors and *aquafortistes*.

Following their ventures into watercolor and the flop of *En 18...* Jules and Edmond next turned to journalism with the help of their cousin Charles de Villedeuil, who founded two short-lived periodicals, *L’Éclair* and *Le Paris*, in 1852. This provided the opportunity for the Goncourt brothers’ first and only foray into contemporary art criticism with their *Salon de 1852* and their review of *La Peinture à l’exposition universelle de 1855*. These

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<sup>55</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt*, ed. Jean-Louis Cabanès, vol. I (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), 37. Hereafter cited as *JC*.

<sup>56</sup> The Dîner Magny was a bi-monthly dinner organized by Gavarni and Sainte-Beuve from November 22, 1862 until Sainte-Beuve’s death in 1869, attended by figures in literature and the arts such as Théophile Gautier, Gustave Flaubert, Paul de Saint-Victor, Philippe de Chennevières, Ernest Renan, Hippolyte Taine and Philippe Burty. The Goncourt brothers first attended Princesse Mathilde’s Salon in 1862 and became regular attendees and friends with the Princesse.

<sup>57</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt: mémoires de la vie littéraire*, 9 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, 1887).

<sup>58</sup> The Cabanès edition differs from the Ricatte edition by relying entirely on the manuscript, whereas the Ricatte edition incorporates elements from the Charpentier edition as well as from the manuscript. The Cabanès edition also more faithfully reproduces manuscript details such as formatting, dating, punctuation, etc. and also indicates whether Edmond or Jules wrote the passage in question. See the Introduction to the Cabanès edition for an overview of further differences between the two editions.

reviews provide an early sense of the brothers' aesthetic preferences. Among nineteenth-century artists, they primarily praise landscape artists and Orientalist painter Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps.<sup>59</sup> They also outline their materialist conception of painting, asking, “La peinture est-elle, en un mot, un art spiritualiste? N’est-il pas plutôt dans ses destins et dans sa fortune de tenter les yeux, d’être l’animation matérielle d’un fait, la représentation sensible d’une chose, de ne pas aspirer beaucoup au-delà de la recreation du nerf optique?”<sup>60</sup> In contrast to academic or “literary” painters, the Goncourt brothers insist that the purpose of art is not to express ideas or morals, but to provide a source of visual pleasure. As voiced in a later *Journal* entry from May 1, 1858, Jules and Edmond define painting as “[rien autre chose] qu’un chatouillement physique de l’œil.”<sup>61</sup> This emphasis on the visual and material qualities of painting is reflected in the Goncourts’ later writing on art in the 1860s, which is characterized by their microscopic attention to detail and deep understanding of technique and process. As I will explore in Chapter II, the brothers’ involvement with journalism also enabled their introduction to their artistic mentor and close friend, the lithographer Paul Gavarni, who contributed lithographs to *L’Éclair* and *Le Paris*. Gavarni was also the inspiration for the Goncourt brothers’ first literary success, *La Lorette*. The brothers’ sell-out short “physionomie” was a response to Gavarni’s famous series of lithographs depicting the *lorette*, a mid-nineteenth-century type between the courtesan and the streetwalker. Despite this success, however, Jules and Edmond became increasingly disillusioned with the petty world of journalism and decided to leave *Le Paris* in 1854 to pursue a new passion: eighteenth-century French art.

While the Goncourt brothers began acquiring eighteenth-century French drawings in the 1840s (Edmond even purchased his first drawing at age sixteen in 1838), collecting

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<sup>59</sup> See Chapter IV for more on the Goncourt brothers’ admiration of Decamps.

<sup>60</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Études d’art: le Salon de 1852, la peinture à l’exposition universelle de 1855* (Paris: Librairie des bibliophiles, 1893), 166.

<sup>61</sup> *JC*, II: 70.

became a serious passion in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>62</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, eighteenth-century Rococo art had fallen out of fashion, devalued by the turn to Neoclassicism after the Revolution and viewed with suspicion as frivolous depictions of the excesses of the *ancien régime*. Jules and Edmond saw an opportunity to rescue these forgotten artworks (while acquiring them at a bargain price!) and rehabilitate the reputation of what they believed were unjustly overlooked artists. Edmond later recalled in *La Maison d'un artiste*,

rien n'était plus facile et à meilleur marché, dans ce temps, que de faire une collection de dessins français du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: seulement, il y avait dans l'atmosphère un si énorme dédain pour cette école, les gens que vous connaissiez faisant de la peinture, vous plaignaient avec des regards si tristes, vous passiez pour un homme tellement privé de goût par les Dieux, qu'il fallait avoir un grand mépris de l'opinion des autres, pour la faire, cette collection!<sup>63</sup>

The brothers' interest in the *ancien régime* may have stemmed partly from aristocratic elitism (their great-grandfather was given his title under Louis XV), but above all the eighteenth century represented a nostalgic refuge from what they felt was the harsh reality of modern nineteenth-century French life. They found an affinity with the wit, elegance, charm, and grace of eighteenth-century French art, which epitomized the visual pleasure they sought in their art criticism.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to collecting eighteenth-century drawings, Jules and Edmond also became increasingly fascinated by historical documents and tried their hands at writing histories and biographies. In a *Journal* entry from the end of February 1854, they describe how “toute la journée, [ils] dépouill[ent] le papier révolutionnaire et, la nuit, [ils] écriv[ent] [leur] livre. Point de femmes, point de monde, point de plaisirs, point

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<sup>62</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the Goncourt brothers as collectors see Launay, *Les Frères Goncourt: collectionneurs de dessins*; Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection*.

<sup>63</sup> Edmond de Goncourt, *La Maison d'un artiste*, ed. Dominique Pety, vol. I (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob, 2003), 37.

<sup>64</sup> For more on the Goncourt brothers' interest in eighteenth-century France, see Marc Fumaroli, “Le ‘siècle’ des Goncourt ou le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle réhabilité,” in Cabanès et al., *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle*, 17–28.

d’amusements” –they even sold their dinner jackets “pour être dans l’impossibilité d’aller quelque part.”<sup>65</sup> The brothers went on to write two historical works, *Histoire de la société française pendant la Révolution* (1854) and *Histoire de la société française pendant la Directoire* (1855), as well as biographies of eighteenth-century French women such as Sophie Arnould (1857), Marie-Antoinette (1858) and *Portraits intimes du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1857-58).<sup>66</sup> The Goncourts’ approach to history differed from previous grand historical narratives by focusing on social history: they were more interested in reconstituting the experience of individuals rather than analyzing overarching political, economic, or social movements. They built their histories from the ground up, starting with documentary sources such as letters, pamphlets, prints, and paintings to reconstruct details of everyday life, an approach they would later use in their novels.<sup>67</sup> These experiences as historians and collectors of the eighteenth century in the 1850s then launched the brothers’ next project, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, which inspired their first experiments with etching in 1859.

*L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, the brothers’ eleven volume history of eighteenth-century French art, began with a monograph on eighteenth-century etchers Gabriel and Augustin de Saint-Aubin published in 1859. As recorded in an extensive *Journal* entry for February 17, 1859, Jules’ first etching was a small portrait of Gabriel de Saint-Aubin intended as an illustration for the brothers’ text (Fig. 11). Edmond later recounted in an 1870s letter to Philippe Burty that Jules decided to make this initial etching because “un graveur nous

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<sup>65</sup> *JC*, I: 139.

<sup>66</sup> For more on the Goncourts’ biographies of eighteenth-century women see Béatrice Didier, “*La femme au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* ou Qu’est-ce que la littérature?,” in Cabanès et al., *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle*, 43–52; Jennifer Forrest, “Nineteenth-Century Nostalgia for Eighteenth-Century Wit, Style, and Aesthetic Disengagement: The Goncourt Brothers Histories of Eighteenth-Century Art and Women,” *Nineteenth Century French Studies* 34, no. 1 (2005): 44–62.

<sup>67</sup> For more on the Goncourt brothers as historians see Göran Blix, “Les Goncourt et l’histoire-résurrection,” *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* 1, no. 17 (2010): 45–61; Nicolas Bourguinat and Éléonore Reverzy, eds., *Les Goncourt historiens* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2017); Jean-Paul Clément, “Les Goncourt, historiens de la Révolution et du Directoire,” in Cabanès et al., *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle*, 53–66; Robert Kopp, “Les Goncourt historiens,” *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* 1, no. 12 (2005): 7–17,

avait pris soixante francs pour une eau-forte qu'il n'a pas gravée et mon frère a trouvé plus économique d'être son graveur pour rien."<sup>68</sup> The brothers were self-taught etchers: although Jules listed himself as an "élève de Gavarni" in the five etchings he exhibited at the *Salon*, this was only a symbolic gesture indicating the brothers' close friendship with the artist.<sup>69</sup> After Jules' first etching, the brothers quickly recognized the power of etching to act as a complement to their writing, writing in a *Journal* entry from March 1859:

Allons, nous voilà dans les mains encore un outil d'immortalisation pour ce que nous aimons, pour le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, et nous roulons projet sur projet de livres popularisant par la gravure les hommes et les choses de ce temps: un Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, donnant les tableaux et les dessins inédits; une série sur les artistes par fascicules, comme nos Saint-Aubin; enfin les personnages célèbres du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les têtes de grandeur naturelle, d'après La Tour et autres.<sup>70</sup>

This project resulted in the brothers' illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, where Jules and Edmond completed thirty-eight etched copies of eighteenth-century drawings in their collection. Including these etchings, Jules and Edmond produced a total of ninety-three etchings from 1859 to 1870, ten by Edmond and eighty-three by Jules.<sup>71</sup>

Edmond evidently found it more difficult to work in the etching medium and his etchings are more simplistic and less technically adventurous than Jules' prints. Although Jules was more talented and made significantly more prints, it is still fair to consider the Goncourt brothers' etchings as a joint enterprise. The brothers were inseparable until Jules' death in 1870 so Edmond would have been intimately familiar with Jules' etchings even if he did not have a direct hand in their creation. Edmond likely watched Jules make all of his etchings, later describing how he made his own etchings "à ses côtés pour lui

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<sup>68</sup> Cited in Delzant, *Les Goncourt*, 194.

<sup>69</sup> As will be explored in Chapter II, Gavarni worked in lithography and only reluctantly attempted etching a few plates in 1857.

<sup>70</sup> *JC*, II: 218.

<sup>71</sup> This number does not include different states of the same etching – both brothers often experimented with different states, so the number of individual impressions of their etchings is well over 100.

[Jules] tenir compagnie pendant qu'il piochait le cuivre."<sup>72</sup> Jules' etched image of "Edmond dessinant" (Fig. 12) gives us a sense of how the brothers would have worked side by side, observing each other at work. Their repeated return to etching between 1859 and 1870, with Jules even making his final etching on his deathbed in 1869, demonstrates that this was an activity that the Goncourt brothers practiced regularly alongside their varied work during this period as novelists, art historians, diarists, and collectors.

The brothers' experiments with etching are first presented in their *Journal* as a means of distracting themselves from the difficulties of publishing their first novel, *Charles Demailly*. In their March 1859 *Journal* entry they describe etching as "[une] distraction venue à temps et qui nous empêche de songer au retardement de notre roman dans la presse,"<sup>73</sup> a sentiment repeated on November 29, 1859, where they write that they turned to etching while waiting for "la mise au jour de ce livre qui porte nos espérances et qui, jusqu'à présent, a eu tous les malheurs."<sup>74</sup> However, the brothers' interest in etching then clearly moved beyond a pleasant distraction. Multiple *Journal* entries testify to Jules and Edmond's intense absorption, even obsession, with their newfound pastime. In their entry for February 17, 1859, the brothers claim that they spent "plusieurs jours [...] plongés dans l'eau-forte, mais jusqu'au cou et par-dessus la tête!" and observed that etching made them "oublie[nt] absolument non seulement les heures, mais encore la vie, les ennuis, tout au monde et le monde entier. [Ils sont] de grands jours, d'un bout à l'autre, à vivre tout là dedans."<sup>75</sup> Their November 29, 1859 entry provides a similar description of their fascination with etching:

[...] nous nous jetons avec fureur à la gravure. Et plus rien n'existe pour nous que notre planche de cuivre et notre eau-forte. [...] ce travail

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<sup>72</sup> Handwritten note by Edmond on the cover of his donation of the brothers' etchings to the Cabinet des Estampes. Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, "Œuvre de Edmond et Jules de Goncourt," n.d., RESERVE EF-407 (A, 1-2)-FOL, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

<sup>73</sup> *JC*, II: 218.

<sup>74</sup> *JC*, II: 300.

<sup>75</sup> *JC*, II: 214.

mécanique, que coupe la surprise des morsures, le calcul, l'espérance de ce qui viendra, de ce qui ne viendra pas, est une occupation merveilleuse qui nous fait dîner sans savoir ce que nous mangeons, coucher sans avoir un sentiment du temps de la journée et nous réveille le matin: un miracle que l'amour même n'a jamais fait chez nous.<sup>76</sup>

Here etching is deemed more enthralling even than love, just as the February entry claimed that etching was more compelling than “les choses de l'imagination” such as “une idée” and “un scénario de livre.”<sup>77</sup>

In addition to practicing etching themselves, the Goncourts also participated in the larger etching revival of the 1860s. They maintained close friendships with key members of the revival such as Burty, Delâtre, and Bracquemond. They joined the Société des Aquafortistes in November 1862 after Cadart wrote to the brothers on July 10, 1862 inviting them to join the Société: “dans une entreprise comme celle tentée par la Société des Aquafortistes, je n'ignore pas combien votre concours nous serait précieux et honorable.”<sup>78</sup> The Goncourt brothers also collected etchings by contemporary printmakers. Their collection reads as a “who's who” of the etching revival, featuring etchings by artists such as Édouard Manet, Jean-François Millet, Charles Jacque, Francis Seymour Haden, Félix Buhot, Johan Jongkind, Maxime Lalanne, Rodolphe Bresden, and Félicien Rops.<sup>79</sup> As Chapter IV will explore, the brothers were also interested in etching in eighteenth-century France, collecting etchings by eighteenth-century French artists and dedicating several monographs of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* to etchers such as Gabriel and Augustin de Saint-Aubin, Hubert-François Gravelot, Charles-Nicolas Cochin, Charles Eisen, and Jean-Michel Moreau. The brothers' engagement with etching in the 1860s thus acted as an important counterpart to their literary activities at this time. I will now

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<sup>76</sup> *JC*, II: 101.

<sup>77</sup> *JC*, II: 214.

<sup>78</sup> Cited in Janine Bailly-Herzberg, *L'Eau-forte de peintre au dix-neuvième siècle: la Société des aquafortistes, 1862-1867*. (Paris: L. Laget, 1972), 4.

<sup>79</sup> Bracquemond, “Estampes Modernes.”

conclude this section by providing an overview of the Goncourt brothers' texts produced during this period, which form the primary corpus of this thesis.

After *Les Saint-Aubin*, Jules and Edmond went on to write a further ten monographs from 1859-70 on *Watteau*, *Prud'hon*, *Boucher*, *Greuze*, *Chardin*, *Fragonard*, *Debu-court*, *La Tour* and *Les Vignettistes*, which were compiled with the accompanying thirty-eight etchings into a luxury illustrated edition of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* in 1875.<sup>80</sup> *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* was a groundbreaking study, providing the first comprehensive treatment of these artists since Diderot's *Salons*. The eleven monographs brought together the Goncourt brothers' experience as historians and biographers with close observation from drawings owned by the Goncourts or in other collections. Alongside these art-historical monographs, the brothers also continued their historical and biographical work in the 1860s with *Les Maîtresses de Louis XV* (1860), and *La Femme au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1862). However, despite the brothers' ongoing interest in the eighteenth century, 1859 marked another turning point in their written *œuvre*: their return to fiction with their first real novel, *Charles Demailly*, published as *Les Hommes de Lettres* in 1860. Jules and Edmond would go on to write another five novels together: *Sœur Philomène* (1861), *Renée Mauperin* (1864), *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865), *Manette Salomon* (1867), and *Madame Gervaisais* (1869). In their novels, the brothers turned their focus from the eighteenth century to contemporary nineteenth-century French society. They brought their love for documentary sources from their work as historians, constructing their novels around extensive research and observations from life.<sup>81</sup> Each of their novels sought to expose a different aspect of modern life, focusing on one character to venture deep into the dark underside of nineteenth-century society, from alcoholism to prostitution.

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<sup>80</sup> For a detailed publication history of the different editions of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, see Chapter I.

<sup>81</sup> See Ricatte, *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt* for an extensive reconstruction of the Goncourt brothers' different research methods and sources for each of their co-written novels.

Jules and Edmond were the first to acknowledge the contradiction between their love of beauty in eighteenth-century art and their treatment of the most sordid elements of modern life in their novels, as well as their choice of women as the main characters:

Il est bien étrange, que ce soit nous, nous entourés de tout le joli du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui nous livrions aux plus sévères, et presque aux plus répugnantes études du peuple, et que ce soit nous, chez lesquels la femme a si peu d'entrée, qui fassions de la femme l'anatomie la plus sérieuse, la plus creusée, la plus intime.<sup>82</sup>

Both the lower classes and women exercised a combination of fascination and disgust on the brothers, who were notoriously elitist and misogynistic.<sup>83</sup> The brothers' preface to *Germinie Lacerteux*, which made their names as authors with a *succès de scandale* in 1865, acted as a manifesto for their pioneering approach:

Il nous faut demander pardon au public de lui donner ce livre, et l'avertir de ce qu'il y trouvera. Le public aime les romans faux: ce roman est un roman vrai. [...] ce livre, avec sa triste et violente distraction, est fait pour contrarier [les] habitudes et nuire à [l']hygiène [du public]. Pourquoi donc l'avons-nous écrit? Est-ce simplement pour choquer le public et scandaliser ses goûts? Non. Vivant au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans un temps de suffrage universel, de démocratie, de libéralisme, nous nous sommes demandé si ce qu'on appelle "les basses classes" n'avait pas droit au Roman.

It is not easy to classify the Goncourt brothers' novels among the proliferation of literary movements and "-isms" in nineteenth-century France. Their early work was influenced by both Romanticism and Realism through their literary heroes such as Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo, and Théophile Gautier.<sup>84</sup> The brothers' desire to investigate modern life and their use of documentary sources has also led them to be seen as precursors to Naturalism. Indeed, Émile Zola was an early admirer of their work, but later went on to become a competitor, eventually eclipsing the brothers' novels with what Edmond often bitterly

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<sup>82</sup> *JC*, II: 749. May 30, 1864.

<sup>83</sup> Roger Kempf, "La misogynie des frères Goncourt," in Cabanès et al., *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle*, 217–24; Annie Ubersfeld, "Les Goncourt et les animaux machines," *Francofonia* Autunno, no. 19 (1990): 103–13; Nicole Edelman, "Les Goncourt, les femmes et l'hystérie," in Cabanès et al., *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle*, 203–16.

<sup>84</sup> For more on the Goncourt brothers' literary inspirations, see Ricatte, *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*.

complained were thinly veiled copies.<sup>85</sup> In spite of these links to Naturalism, however, the Goncourt brothers' distinctive writing style, *l'écriture artiste*, has more in common with later developments in the *fin-de-siècle* Decadent novel.<sup>86</sup> The brothers' style, as well as their controversial subject matter, divided critics in the nineteenth century. While they were praised by other writers such as Hugo, Gustave Flaubert, Georges Sand, and (initially) Zola, none of the Goncourt brothers' novels were a commercial success and many were torn apart by critics in the press. The brothers used this as fuel for their depiction of themselves as misunderstood artistic martyrs in their *Journal*, as will be explored in Chapter V.

Jules and Edmond were equal contributors to their novels and all of their written works, providing an unusual example of artistic collaboration.<sup>87</sup> Alidor Delzant provides probably the most accurate description of their writing process:

Quand il s'agissait d'un livre à faire, les deux frères, longuement, dans la fumée inspiratrice du tabac, arrangeaient le plan, combinaient, convenaient de tel morceau de description qu'ils se rappelaient avoir serré, tout vivant, dans leur herbier de notes. Le sujet à traiter se décomposait bientôt dans leur esprit en un certain nombre de tableaux distincts, l'œuvre naissait avec ses membres divers, son commencement et sa fin. C'est à ces deux extrêmes qu'ils s'attaquaient d'abord, comme aux parties les plus importantes. Chacun s'enfermait dans une chambre et composait le même chapitre. A la lecture, on choisissait le meilleur. Puis commençaient de longues séances dans lesquelles se fondaient les deux morceaux, se précisaient, de plus en plus, les arêtes du style.<sup>88</sup>

The brothers' inseparable nature is captured in their *ex libris* (Fig. 5), designed by Gavarni and etched by Jules himself, which depicts two fingers of the same hand pointing at the

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<sup>85</sup> On April 5, 1886, for example, Edmond referenced the publication of *L'Œuvre*, writing: "Au fond Zola n'est qu'un ressemeleur en littérature, et maintenant qu'il a fini de rééditer *Manette Salomon*, il s'apprête à recommencer *Les Paysans* de Balzac." *JR*, II: 1238.

<sup>86</sup> For more on decadence and the Goncourt brothers' novels, particularly Edmond's later novels, see Katherine Ashley, *Edmond de Goncourt and the Novel: Naturalism and Decadence* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005). I will explore *l'écriture artiste* in Chapter IV.

<sup>87</sup> For other examples of literary collaboration in nineteenth-century France, see Seth Whidden, ed., *Models of Collaboration in Nineteenth-Century French Literature: Several Authors, One Pen* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), especially Lawrence R. Schehr, "Rhyparographers: Les Frères Goncourt and Monstrous Writing," 153-68.

<sup>88</sup> Delzant, *Les Goncourt*, 316.

brothers' initials. Edmond summed up their dual nature in his description of the *Journal* (and indeed all their written works) as: "la confession de deux vies inséparées dans le plaisir, le labeur, la peine, de deux pensées jumelles, de deux esprits recevant du contact des hommes et des choses des impressions si semblables, si identiques, si homogènes, que cette confession peut être considérée comme l'expansion d'un seul moi et d'un seul je."<sup>89</sup> Throughout their lives, Jules and Edmond never married or had children and pursued only fleeting love interests. Although there remains lingering speculation about their sexuality, the brothers presented their romantic disinterest as a sign of their dedication to a life of letters.<sup>90</sup> Their novels *Manette Salomon* and *Charles Demailly* explicitly present the brothers' idea that romantic love is incompatible with artistic creation. Both the artist Coriolis and writer Charles Demailly's careers are destroyed by the influence of their wives and Coriolis' opinion on marriage in *Manette Salomon* sums up the Goncourts' own perspective: "Le travail de l'art, la poursuite de l'invention, l'incubation silencieuse de l'œuvre, la concentration de l'effort lui paraissaient impossibles avec la vie conjugale, aux côtés d'une jeune femme caressante et distrayante, ayant contre l'art la jalousie d'une chose plus aimée qu'elle."<sup>91</sup>

However, the brothers' seemingly indivisible partnership was ruptured with Jules' death from syphilis on June 20, 1870. *Journal* entries written by Edmond bear witness to Jules' agonizing decline in the year leading up to his death. Throughout 1869, the brothers also worked on their final co-written work, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, which was completed just before Jules' death and published posthumously in 1873. As I will explore

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<sup>89</sup> *JC*, I: 37.

<sup>90</sup> For readings that deal with the homoerotic and homosocial aspects of male literary collaboration see Wayne Koestenbaum, *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (New York; London: Routledge, 1989); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

<sup>91</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, ed. Michel Crouzet (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 226–27.

in Chapter II, this biography of Gavarni brought the Goncourt brothers' work full circle from their publication of *La Lorette*. It also provided an opportunity for Jules' final return to etching with *Un Figurant* (Fig. 6), which poignantly records Jules' physical decline in its wavering lines. After the trauma of Jules' death and the siege of the Commune immediately afterwards, Edmond believed he would never write again. However, he eventually returned to literature, writing a further four novels, *La Fille Élisa* (1877), *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), *La Faustin* (1882), and *Chérie* (1884), which established him as an author in his own right, although each commemorated Jules in some way.<sup>92</sup>

Edmond also continued collecting and became particularly well known as a collector of Asian art, writing two monographs on Japanese printmakers, *Outamaro* (1891) and *Hokusai* (1896). If Jules was more of an artist, Edmond always took the leading role in building the brothers' collection, which he ultimately recorded in its entirety in his memoir and catalogue, *La Maison d'un artiste* (1881). As will be explored in Chapter V, Edmond went to great lengths to construct and preserve the brothers' legacy as writers, collectors, and *aquafortistes*. Most famously, Edmond's will set up his plans for creating an "Académie Goncourt" which would meet to award the Prix Goncourt to the best work of French fiction published that year. In the culmination of the inextricable links between art and writing that defined the Goncourt brothers' lives, Edmond funded the Académie and the Prix through the sale of the brothers' entire art collection in a series of auctions that took place in 1897. In 1903, the Académie met and awarded the Prix Goncourt for the first time, inaugurating a tradition that continues today. Aside from the Prix Goncourt, the Goncourt brothers have largely fallen out of the public consciousness today. Even in French literary studies, they have long been overshadowed by other

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<sup>92</sup> *La Fille Élisa*, for example, was based on the brothers' mutual notes made before Jules' death, while *Les Frères Zemganno* was a fictionalized autobiography of the Goncourt brothers. See Chapter V for more on Edmond's mourning of Jules and the role played by etching in commemorating his brother.

nineteenth-century writers, particularly Zola. However, as demonstrated by the wide variety of their experiences as novelists, historians, art historians, collectors, watercolorists, and *aquafortistes* outlined above, the brothers' work calls for a diverse range of critical responses, offering exciting opportunities for interdisciplinary analysis. The next section concludes this Introduction by outlining the different approaches taken in each chapter of this thesis.

### **Pairing the Etching Needle and the Pen**

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Through close analysis of the Goncourt brothers' etchings alongside their written works, this thesis emphasizes the multifaceted relationship between writing and etching in the Goncourt brothers' *œuvre*. I argue that the brothers' relationship with etching offers a valuable new lens through which to re-interpret their writing, identifying a variety of intersections between writing and etching in the brothers' *œuvre*. I also demonstrate how the Goncourt brothers offer a fresh perspective on the central issues of the nineteenth-century etching revival, as their firsthand understanding of etching often contradicted the mainstream narratives presented by other writers and critics. Furthermore, I present the Goncourt brothers' engagement with etching as a case study for expanding discussions of the relationship between literature and art in nineteenth-century France beyond the sphere of painting, proposing new ways of approaching the intersections between literature and printmaking.

Chapter I begins by examining the largest subset of Jules and Edmond's etchings, their thirty-eight etchings made as illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. After exploring how the illustrations shape the text-image relationship in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, I investigate how the brothers' etchings played an essential part in their quest to understand and portray the act of artistic creation in their text. Further, I suggest that the illustrations also allowed the brothers to recreate the culture of amateur etching in eighteenth-century

France, where etching was used as a tool for connoisseurship. Finally, as copies after eighteenth-century artworks, I consider how the brothers' illustrations constitute an unexpected response to what Walter Benjamin termed "the work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility." By emphasizing how the act of copying can be creative, I argue that the brothers' etchings challenge ideas about the relationship between original and copy in ways that are aligned more with contemporary approaches to engraving and lithography rather than the rhetoric of the original print espoused during the etching revival.

Chapter II then investigates the Goncourt brothers' fifteen etchings made after artworks by Gavarni. As mentioned earlier, Gavarni was a mentor and close friend of the brothers, and the inspiration for two texts that bookend their literary career: their first commercial success, *La Lorette* (1853) and their final co-written text, *Gavarni, l'homme et œuvre* (published after Jules' death in 1873). After setting up the complex relationship between etching and lithography as printmaking techniques in nineteenth-century France, I show how the Goncourt brothers' etchings constitute an unusual response to Gavarni's work, focusing on his watercolors and pen and ink drawings rather than his more famous lithographs. I then examine the Goncourts' etchings alongside *La Lorette* to suggest that they offer an alternative perspective on the brothers' approach to Gavarni as an "artiste-écrivain," revealing the ambiguity of Gavarni's status as both a model and rival for the brothers. Lastly, I turn to *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* to explore how the metaphor of stenography can be used to characterize both the brothers' approach to their biography and their etchings after Gavarni, contrasting these with their etchings and biographies in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

Questions surrounding originality then resurface in a new way in Chapter III, which focuses on a close reading of the Goncourt brothers' 1867 novel *Manette Salomon*

alongside Jules' etching after nineteenth-century painter Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, *Le Singe au miroir*. As the Goncourts' major fictional depiction of the nineteenth-century art world, *Manette Salomon* offers a fruitful opportunity for exploring the connections between art and writing in the brothers' work. First, I analyze how *Le Singe au miroir* brings together two metaphors for the artist, the monkey and the circus performer, that are also central to the Goncourt brothers' critique of artistic creation in *Manette Salomon*. I then consider the role of the mirror in *Le Singe au miroir* and relate the etching to several key scenes in *Manette Salomon*. Both etching and novel, I argue, demonstrate the brothers' ambivalent approach to mimesis in writing and art. Finally, I expand from *Le Singe au miroir* to consider how the Goncourt brothers' understanding of the etching process as a whole provides an alternative approach to criticisms of "mechanical" arts in *Manette Salomon* and the etching revival more generally.

Chapter IV then widens the lens from this focused reading to look at the impact of etching across the six novels written by the Goncourt brothers, arguing that Jules and Edmond drew inspiration from etching in several different aspects of their novels. I first propose that the fragmented structure and narratives of their novels draw on the principles behind nineteenth-century print albums, a format popularized during the etching revival. I then provide examples of how the Goncourt brothers transposed etchings by Charles Méryon, a key figure of the revival, in *Manette Salomon*, showing the brothers' use of etchings as stylistic and thematic inspiration in their novels. Lastly, I examine the role played by etching in the Goncourt brothers' famous writing style, *l'écriture artiste*, which sought to capture fleeting visual impressions by translating elements from the visual arts into writing. I argue that Jules and Edmond incorporated vocabulary and techniques from etching into their *écriture artiste* across their novels, demonstrating the importance of printmaking as a source of artistic inspiration for their writing alongside more often cited

media such as painting and drawing.

Finally, Chapter V closes this exploration of the relationship between etching and the Goncourt brothers' texts during the 1860s by considering the afterlife of Jules' etchings after his death in 1870. I argue that Edmond's treatment of Jules' etchings after his death reveals the important role these prints played in Edmond's process of mourning and commemorating his brother. By outlining the key steps Edmond took to construct Jules' artistic reputation as an *aquafortiste*, I explore how these efforts provide a counterweight to other, more well-known ways in which Edmond sought to secure Jules' literary reputation. I also relate Jules' etchings to Edmond's four solo novels published after Jules' death, particularly *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), proposing that Edmond's strategic use of Jules' etchings highlights different aspects of Edmond's guilt over Jules' death and formed an essential part of Edmond's construction of his new identity as a solo author.

Across all five chapters, the aims of this thesis are threefold. First, it seeks to reclaim the importance of etching as a source of artistic inspiration for the Goncourt brothers' writing, alongside their interest in other art forms such as painting, watercolor, and drawing. Secondly, it presents the Goncourt brothers as an overlooked example of the relationship between authors and *aquafortistes* which can help illuminate the larger relationship between etching and writing during the nineteenth-century revival. And finally, it aims to demonstrate the value of expanding discussions of the relationship between literature and art in nineteenth-century France beyond the sphere of painting to include so-called "minor" arts such as printmaking. For scholars of both literature and art history, I argue, these minor arts are of major interest.

## Chapter I

### Creative Copies: The Etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*

*“Nous, la Révolution nous a passé sur le corps. Il nous semble, quand nous tâtons à fond, être des émigrés du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Nous sommes des contemporains déclassés de cette société raffinée, exquise, de délicatesse suprême, d’esprit enragé, de corruption adorable”*  
—Journal, December 14, 1862



**Fig. 2:** Jules de Goncourt, detail of *Femme accrochant un cadre*, after Jean-Honoré Fragonard, etching, 1875

Source gallica.b.nf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

## Introduction

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The frontispiece to the 1875 edition of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Fig. 2) adapts an 1866 etching by Jules, after a drawing by Fragonard.<sup>1</sup> In Fragonard's original drawing, the lines of an architectural scene are visible within the frame, while in Jules' original etching, the frame is empty. In the 1875 edition, published after Jules' death in 1870, Edmond decided to add the title of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* within the frame, inserting words in the place of an artwork in Fragonard's original image. This substitution between writing and art is symbolic of the Goncourt brothers' analysis of Fragonard's drawings later in their text, where they contend that "le dessin chez Fragonard, est sa plume d'écrivain."<sup>2</sup> From the very first page of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, then, the frontispiece signals an interchangeability between the tools of the artist and writer, one that encapsulates the Goncourt brothers' own work as both authors and illustrators of the text. In their thirty-eight etchings used as illustrations, Jules and Edmond took up the etching needle in addition to the pen, becoming creators twice over. Intriguingly, however, both of these creative acts were simultaneously reproductive ones: the text of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* reproduces artworks in writing, while the etched illustrations are all copies after artworks by eighteenth-century artists. This chapter examines the complexities of this interplay between text and image, original and copy, using the brothers' etched illustrations as a new way of approaching *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

From 1859-70, the Goncourt brothers published eleven monographs about fourteen different eighteenth-century artists: "Les Saint-Aubin" (1859), "Watteau" (1860) "Prudhon" (1861), "Boucher" (1862), "Greuze" (1863), "Chardin" (1864), "Fragonard" (1865), "Debucourt" (1866), "La Tour" (1867), "Les Vignettistes: Gravelot, Cochin"

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<sup>1</sup> The original drawing is reproduced in reproduced in Gabriel Henriot, *Collection David Weill*, vol. III (Paris: Braun, 1926).

<sup>2</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Jean-Louis Cabanès, vol. II (Tusson: Du Lérot, 2007), 209.

(1868) and “Les Vignettistes: Eisen, Moreau” (1870).<sup>3</sup> These monographs were then compiled and published as one work, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, after Jules’ death. Each monograph provided an in-depth study of the life and work of a different eighteenth-century artist, combining biographical information with minutely detailed observations about specific artworks. As a whole, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* presents a masterful, if eclectic, panorama of eighteenth-century French art. Jules and Edmond’s choice of artists and artworks was guided by their own personal tastes, focusing on Rococo artists rather than academic history painters and on “minor” genres, such as drawings and the prints of “les vignettistes.” These choices parallel their collecting habits and artworks in their personal collection provided important visual sources for their text. In spite of this more idiosyncratic approach, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* is still recognized today as a major art-historical work. Jules and Edmond unearthed important documentary sources over the course of their research, publishing sources such as letters and contemporary biographies in their text, and their evocations of technique remain unparalleled. The Goncourt brothers’ explicit goal was to rehabilitate the reputations of these *ancien régime* artists, bringing them back into the public eye. The opening paragraphs of their monograph on Chardin outline their aim to redress “ce prodigieux exemple d’oubli” and “l’excès d’ingratitude et l’insolence de mépris” for eighteenth-century art, blaming an ungrateful “France qui, pendant tout un demi-siècle, a refusé de reconnaître les artistes vraiment nés d’elle, ses maîtres français, les vrais fils de son esprit et de son génie!”<sup>4</sup> Although the Goncourt brothers did not singlehandedly rediscover eighteenth-century French art, the

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<sup>3</sup> Versions of all of the monographs except for “Boucher” and “Prud’hon” were also published as newspaper articles in *L’Artiste* and the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. None of the articles included illustrations, except for “Fragonard” in 1865, which featured a copy of Jules’ etching *L’Abreuvoir*.

<sup>4</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Jean-Louis Cabanès, vol. I (Tusson: Du Lérot, 2007), 82.

publication of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* is seen as a turning point, crystallizing a growing interest in Rococo art in the first half of the nineteenth century in France.<sup>5</sup>

While there has been renewed scholarly interest in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* in recent years, few scholars have commented on the brothers' thirty-eight etchings made to accompany the text as illustrations.<sup>6</sup> Only Élisabeth Launay, Dominique Pety, and Pamela Warner have previously explored the illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, and Warner's article is in fact the only journal article dedicated to any of the Goncourt brothers' etchings.<sup>7</sup> As Launay, Pety, and Warner emphasize, the etched illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* are an integral part of the work, not merely an afterthought. The etchings were published as illustrations in two editions of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*: the initial publication of the individual monographs as eleven "fascicules" by Dentu from 1859-70 (four illustrations per *fascicule*), and then in a two-volume edition published by Dentu in 1875.<sup>8</sup> As mentioned in the Introduction, Jules made his first etching in 1859 to accompany the brothers' first monograph, "Les Saint-Aubin," a particularly appropriate pairing as the Saint-Aubin brothers were also etchers themselves. Edmond wrote in a letter to Philippe Burty from the 1870s that Jules began etching because "un graveur nous avait pris soixante francs pour une eau-forte qu'il n'a pas gravée et mon frère a trouvé plus

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<sup>5</sup> The publication of Diderot's *Salons* in 1813, 1818, and 1821 (making them available beyond their manuscript form for the first time) helped inspire interest in eighteenth-century painters. Romantic painters and poets also returned to Watteau in particular as a source of inspiration in the 1820s and 1830s. See Guillaume Faroult, Monica Preti, and Christoph Martin Vogtherr, *Delicious Decadence: The Rediscovery of French Eighteenth-Century Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> The publication of the first critical edition *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Tusson: Du Lérot, 2007), edited by Jean-Louis Cabanès, evidences this interest. See also Cabanès, "L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: histoire et esthétique," *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, no. 23 (2016-17): 27–38 and Pamela Warner, "Word and Image at the Tipping Point. The Goncourt Brothers and the Limits of Ut Pictura Poesis in *L'Art Du Dix-Huitième Siècle*," in *Le Réalisme et Ses Paradoxes (1850-1900). Mélanges Offerts à Jean-Louis Cabanès* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014), 389–403.

<sup>7</sup> Launay, *Les Frères Goncourt: collectionneurs de dessins*; Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection*; Pamela Warner, "Jules de Goncourt aquafortiste."

<sup>8</sup> Each *fascicule* had four illustrations, except for the *fascicules* on Cochin & Gravelot, Eisen & Moreau, and Debucourt, which had two each. There were also three editions published without illustrations: a Rappilly edition (1873-74), a Quantin edition (1880-82) and a Charpentier edition (1881-84).

économique d’être son graveur pour rien.”<sup>9</sup> However, etching soon became more than an economical choice for the brothers. As quoted in the Introduction, they wrote in a *Journal* entry from March 1859:

Allons! nous voilà dans les mains encore un outil d’immortalisation pour ce que nous aimons, pour le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, et nous roulons projets sur projets de livres popularisant par la gravure les hommes et les choses de ce temps: un Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, une série comme nos Saint-Aubin, personnages célèbres du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les têtes de grandeur naturelle, d’après La Tour et autres.<sup>10</sup>

The Goncourt brothers’ initial project was thus to use etching, perhaps even more than writing, as a way to share their love of eighteenth-century art. Over the next eleven years, Jules and Edmond practiced etching and writing in tandem, completing their thirty-eight etchings alongside writing their monographs.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter explores the different ways in which these etchings formed an integral part of the Goncourt brothers’ project to re-evaluate, rehabilitate, and resurrect the life and work of eighteenth-century French artists. First, I examine the role of the illustrations in the 1875 Dentu edition, using Edmond’s own copy preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale.<sup>12</sup> Edmond’s copy is an invaluable resource, as it includes all of the original illustrations as well as ten additional unpublished copies of Jules’ etchings from early or experimental states. I argue that the illustrations played an essential part in presenting the book as a luxury object modeled on eighteenth-century illustrated books, while also offering the opportunity for the Goncourt brothers to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of both text and image. I then consider how the act of making etchings

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in Delzant, *Les Goncourt*, 194.

<sup>10</sup> *JC*, II: 218.

<sup>11</sup> According to Edmond’s preface to the 1875 edition of *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, the brothers set aside a month each year to write each monograph as a respite from their novels: “Tout un mois, chaque année, au sortir des noires et mélancoliques études de la vie contemporaine, il était le travail dans lequel se récréait, comme en de riantes vacances, leur goût du temps passé.” Goncourt and Goncourt, *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, 247.

<sup>12</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *L’Art du dix-huitième siècle* (E. Dentu, 1875), Z AUDEOUD-281, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

alongside their writing shaped the brothers' approach to art history in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. I propose that their etchings not only enabled Jules and Edmond to understand and portray the act of artistic creation, but also allowed them to recreate the culture of amateur etching in eighteenth-century France. Finally, the third section explores how the brothers' illustrations, all copies after other artworks, relate to larger nineteenth-century debates about reproductive and original printmaking during the etching revival. Jules and Edmond's illustrations, I suggest, challenge ideas about the relationship between original and copy in ways that are aligned more with contemporary approaches to engraving and lithography, rather than the rhetoric of the original print espoused by promoters of the etching revival.

### **Text and Image in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle***

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Analyzing the role played by the Goncourt brothers' etched illustrations in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* immediately raises the question: why did they decide to illustrate the text at all? Unlike other nineteenth-century authors (Flaubert famously proclaimed, "Jamais, moi vivant, on ne m'illustrera"<sup>13</sup>), the Goncourt brothers were not against illustration when it came to their work. Edmond oversaw several illustrated editions of the brothers' novels and most of their historical works had illustrations as well as inventories of artworks for the reader to consult.<sup>14</sup> The choice to provide illustrations also fits with the brothers' own approach to art history. They based much of their research on close, direct observation of works of art, particularly those in their own collection. Providing illustrations would allow the reader to examine artworks in order to glean information from them in the same way. Another key aspect of the brothers' approach in *L'Art du*

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<sup>13</sup> Jean Bruneau, ed., "Lettre de Flaubert à Ernest Duplan, 12 June 1862," in *Gustave Flaubert: Correspondance*, vol. III (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1991), 221.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the illustrated editions of the Goncourt brothers' novels, see Christian Galantaris, "L'illustration des romans d'Edmond et Jules de Goncourt," *Cahiers Goncourt*, no. 16 (2009), 105-11.

*XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* was their desire to share new or unpublished resources. In the same way, their etchings share artworks that were not widely available, reproducing mostly drawings in the Goncourts' own collection (twenty-one of the thirty-eight illustrations) or items in other private collections.<sup>15</sup> The brothers further emphasize that the artworks they chose to illustrate had not been reproduced before. They highlight, for example, that the Chardin works they chose to etch (*Gobelet d'argent* and *Aliments de la convalescence*) had not yet been reproduced in print, noting that most of Chardin's still lives "sont vierges de reproductions gravées, et c'est à peine si la lithographie y a touché," while within his figurative paintings "on n'en trouve guère qu'un seul ayant échappé au burin: c'est celui qui a pour titre *Les Aliments de la convalescence*."<sup>16</sup>

Beyond these more practical reasons for including illustrations, however, the etchings also filled a key aesthetic purpose. In contrast to the un-illustrated Rapilly and Charpentier editions of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* which were priced at an affordable twenty francs/volume and three francs/volume respectively, the two Dentu editions were unabashedly luxury items: the 1875 Dentu edition cost an eye-watering 160 francs/volume.<sup>17</sup> The etchings were not the only reason for the expensive nature of the Dentu editions. The brothers' attention to detail extended to every aspect of the book, from custom typography and typesetting by Louis Perrin, to decorative *cul-de-lampes* and initial letters, printed on thick paper with wide margins. Jules and Edmond emphasize the shared aesthetic between Perrin's typography and their illustrations in a *Journal* entry from June 1859: "Jeté sur le pavé les Saint-Aubin. Une merveille typographique de Perrin, où nos eaux-fortes ne font pas trop mauvaise figure. – Première livraison d'un beau livre

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<sup>15</sup> The brothers copied after artworks in the following collections: Laperlier (3), E. Marcille (5), Baudicour (1), M. Jazet (1) and Mlle Maison (1). They also copied after drawings at the Louvre (4) and the Musée de St. Quentin (1).

<sup>16</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, I:93.

<sup>17</sup> The earlier Dentu edition cost ten francs for the first *fascicule*, five francs for each remaining *fascicule*.

de biographies d'art sur le XVIIIe siècle, que nous avons en tête.”<sup>18</sup> Both Dentu editions also had a limited print run of 200 copies and notes in the 1875 edition indicated that the plates for the illustrations would also be destroyed after printing.<sup>19</sup>

Philippe Burty eloquently captured the intended effect of this limited edition in an 1859 review of “Les Saint-Aubin” for the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, describing the Dentu edition as:

un de ces fins régals de curieux dont notre époque positive et bourgeoise aura bientôt perdu jusqu'à la tradition. Bien peu de gens comprennent tout ce qu'il y a d'attrayant dans cette simple ligne, - *tiré à 200 exemplaires* - Bien peu apprécient tout ce qu'il y a de charmant pour les yeux dans ces lettres *augustales*, aux panses adroitement évidées, aux appendices élégants, aux angles doucement arrondis. “Quel luxe insensé!” doit s'écrier M. Prudhomme, en faisant tourner ce papier sonore, couleur nankin fané, et résistant sous l'ongle qui tente de rayer les grandes marges, propices aux notes intimes! Et cependant tout cela, c'est l'art charmant de la mise en scène! ce sont les yeux se faisant les complices de l'auteur pour séduire l'esprit, et même avant de couper les pages, je me sens tout porté de sympathie pour un livre qui s'annonce si bien de lui-même.<sup>20</sup>

The Dentu editions were thus designed to appeal to bibliophiles interested in beautiful books as well as to collectors or connoisseurs interested in eighteenth-century art, often an overlapping set of groups.<sup>21</sup> Edmond lavished even more attention on his personal copy of *L'Art du XVIIIe siècle* (as he did with other copies of the brothers' own books), writing in *La Maison d'un Artiste*:

pour ces livres sortis de nous, j'ai voulu mieux encore que des papiers extraordinaires, que des reliures splendides; j'ai cherché à les rendre dignes des enchères futures, par l'adjonction de dessins originaux, de gravures rares, d'autographes, d'émaux, faisant, de ces affectionnés exemplaires d'auteur, des espèces de bibelots.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *JC*, II: 250.

<sup>19</sup> It is, however, unclear whether the plates actually were destroyed as several of the etchings were later printed again by François Liénard for Burty's catalogue of Jules' etchings, published in 1876.

<sup>20</sup> “Les Saint-Aubin par Jules et Edmond de Goncourt.” *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts*, November 15, 1859

<sup>21</sup> For more on the Goncourt brothers as bibliophiles, see Marine Le Bail, “La Bibliophilie des Goncourt au service du XVIIIe siècle: entre conservation et récréation,” in Bourguinat and Reverzy, *Les Goncourt historiens*; Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection*.

<sup>22</sup> Edmond de Goncourt, *La Maison d'un artiste*, I: 345.

The custom binding of Edmond's own copy of the 1875 edition, with textured, colored leather in an ivy leaf pattern forming a "G" and his inclusion of different states of the brothers' illustrations gives an idea of how owners of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* might have further customized the book for their own collections, celebrating it as a "bibelot" and artwork in its own right.<sup>23</sup>

Although Philippe Burty did not specifically mention the Goncourts' illustrations in his review, they clearly played an important part in the appeal of these collector's editions of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. As Pamela Warner notes, the illustrations are prominently signaled on both the title page and at the end of each chapter in the 1875 edition. The etchings for both Dentu editions were printed on loose-leaf paper rather than bound into the text, giving the reader freedom to refer to the illustrations alongside the text, to bind them into the book at specific places, or to place them into a portfolio along with other prints and drawings they might have in their own art collection.<sup>24</sup> If the book itself is a collector's item, the etchings are a collector's item within a collector's item. Furthermore, through the inclusion of their etchings, the Goncourt brothers also followed in the footsteps of the illustrated eighteenth-century books they praise in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, where "l'image remplit le livre, déborde dans la page, l'encadre, fait sa tête et sa fin, dévore le blanc" and illustrations were often "le succès, l'excuse ou le pardon de tout ce qui paraît; c'en est quelquefois le prétexte et l'idée, et la gravure dicte le livre."<sup>25</sup> The Dentu editions thus offer the nineteenth-century reader an opportunity to simulate

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<sup>23</sup> Edmond highlights the special binding of his copy in a *Journal* entry from December 14, 1894: "une reliure exécutée par Marius-Michel sur mon idée, avec l'entrelacement d'un lierre en fer de lance, et d'une branchette pourpre de *momichi* de mon jardin, reliure intaillée dans le cuir, colorée de la couleur des feuillages reproduits et où d'un rinceau formé de l'enchevêtrement des deux plantes, l'artiste relieur a contourné un grand G." *JR*, II: 1050.

<sup>24</sup> For more on print portfolios and viewing practices of prints in nineteenth-century France, see Chapter IV.

<sup>25</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, II:10.

handling an eighteenth-century illustrated book, furthering the Goncourt brothers' goal of bringing the eighteenth century back to life within their text.

However, this does not mean that the illustrations were purely used for aesthetic purposes – examining Edmond's copy of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* reveals that the brothers also intended them to work in specific ways with the text. Although the choice to print the illustrations on loose-leaf paper gave the reader flexibility to use them in different ways (as shown by other copies of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* where the illustrations seem to have been inserted at random)<sup>26</sup> Edmond's personal copy offers an opportunity to reconstruct how the brothers, or at least Edmond, envisaged the relationship between text and image. Edmond placed the illustrations in his copy deliberately, using one illustration as a frontispiece for each chapter, and then usually placing illustrations of specific artworks alongside descriptions of the same artworks in the text (eleven of the thirty-eight etchings have a matching description). By placing the etchings next to the corresponding written descriptions, Edmond invites comparison between the brothers' artistic and textual interpretations.

I argue that these pairings take three different approaches, revealing the variety of ways in which the brothers used their illustrations to reflect on the different strengths and weaknesses of both text and image. In many cases, the descriptions of the artwork reproduced by the etching are noticeably shorter and less detailed than the lengthy, exclamatory descriptions that characterize the rest of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. This could suggest that Jules and Edmond felt they did not need to provide elaborate written descriptions in these cases, instead letting the illustrations speak for themselves.

Alternatively, the brothers might have chosen these artworks to illustrate because they felt

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<sup>26</sup> See Jules and Edmond de Goncourt. *L'art du dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1875) Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMM-312799. Some of the illustrations in this copy are even placed in the wrong chapters, such as Eisen's *La Toilette* and Moreau's *Petite Fille Dormant*, which are placed in the chapter on Cochin.

they offered examples where words would not be sufficient. Although they do not specifically state this in these instances, Jules and Edmond renounce written descriptions in other places in the text, directing the reader towards the artworks instead. In their description of Augustin de Saint-Aubin's portraits of women, for example, they write:

Mais il faut laisser la parole à de pareilles choses. Il les faudrait, pour toute louange, réunis et montrés au public, ces portraits de Saint-Aubin. Il faudrait laisser la plume ici, et mener le lecteur à ces huit ou dix portraits de femmes acquis par M. de Janzé à la vente de Renouard, et à quelques autres dessins.<sup>27</sup>

In the introduction to his 1876 catalogue of Jules' etchings, Philippe Burty similarly suggests that Jules created his etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* "sans autre ambition que de faire dire à la pointe et à l'acide ce que la plume peut décrire mais non montrer." Burty here presents the illustrations stepping in where the writer's pen fails, and the distinction between "décrire" and "montrer" implicitly inscribes itself into the traditional ekphrastic divide that opposes writing and visual images in their relationship to time, where describing ("décrire") is a process that unfolds in time, but showing ("montrer") a visual image allows for immediate apprehension of the whole.<sup>28</sup>

While Burty's interpretation highlights the strengths of image over text, this comparison can easily be reversed. Warner, for example, has noted how the Goncourt brothers' written descriptions of the artworks reproduced in their illustrations focus on what is most difficult to capture in an etching. In their etching of Chardin's still life *Le Gobelet d'argent* (Fig. 13), for instance, she points out that their written description emphasizes Chardin's use of colors and white highlights:

Un gobelet d'argent et quelques fruits autour, rien que cela, c'est un admirable tableau de lui. Le brillant, l'éclair du gobelet n'est fait que par

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<sup>27</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, I:289.

<sup>28</sup> This classic division between art and writing is most famously established in Gotthold Ephraïm Lessing's 1767 work, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*. I will not be delving into the variety of critical interpretations of Lessing's work here, but a recent overview can be found in Avi Lifschitz and Michael Squire, *Rethinking Lessing's Laocoon: Antiquity, Enlightenment, and the "limits" of Painting and Poetry*, (Oxford: University Press, 2017).

quelques touches de blanc égratignées de pâte sèche; dans les ombres, il y a de tous les tons, de toutes les colorations, des filées d'un bleu presque violet, des coulées de rouge qui sont le reflet des cerises contre le gobelet, du brun rouge, du jaune, jouant dans des touches de bleu de Prusse, un rappel continu de toutes les couleurs ambiantes glissant sur le métal poli du gobelet.<sup>29</sup>

In this case, the text must step in to help the illustration, which cannot capture these elements of painting due to the nature of the etching medium. The black and white ink cannot recreate Chardin's magical use of color, and the "logique négative"<sup>30</sup> of the print means that Jules cannot recreate Chardin's white highlights. Where the painter superimposes these simple touches of white paint on top of the rest of the canvas, Jules must create the same effect through subtraction, leaving a blank space on the copperplate so that the white of the paper will be exposed in the final print. Text and image therefore must work together again here, "le texte s'offre comme un complément nécessaire, leur adjonction visant à restituer pleinement l'original."<sup>31</sup>

Finally, Jules' etching of *La Lecture* (Fig.1) after Fragonard's wash drawing (Fig. 14) offers a different example of how the comparison between text and illustration in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* reveals their shared characteristics rather than their differences. Highlighted as their most important etching in the *Journal*<sup>32</sup> and placed as the frontispiece of the Fragonard chapter in Edmond's copy of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, the brothers also present Fragonard's drawing as an outstanding example in their text: "comment ne pas parler ici de *La Lecture* du Louvre? [...] Jamais, avec si peu de chose, Fragonard n'a fait une femme."<sup>33</sup> In their written description, Jules and Edmond focus on the contrast between background and foreground, presenting the figure of the woman as formed by

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<sup>29</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, I:88.

<sup>30</sup> Warner, "Jules de Goncourt aquafortiste," 99.

<sup>31</sup> Warner, "Jules de Goncourt aquafortiste," 101

<sup>32</sup> As quoted in the Introduction, Jules and Edmond write: "nous sommes assez bien caractérisés et résumés par le *la* que nous donnons, ce mois-ci, en trois choses: le roman *Germinie Lacerteux*, l'article *Fragonard*, et l'eau-forte de *la Lecture*" in an entry for January 19, 1865. *JR*, I:1133.

<sup>33</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, II:212.

contrast, by what she is not. They write: “d’un plâtras de bistre se détache une femme de profil [...] elle s’avance toute claire, toute svelte, presque diaphane, du fond noir et solide du dessin.”<sup>34</sup> The reflexive verbs presents the figure as having agency: she emerges from the page, rather than being placed there by the hand of Fragonard. The brothers’ language reflects the way the woman’s body is formed by the white of the page, in the areas untouched by Fragonard’s brush, the opposite of Chardin’s highlights. In a remarkable affinity between text and illustration, Jules’ etching enacts this same process, letting the page shine through against the thickly inked hatchmarks in the background. The difference between the first state of the etching (Fig. 15) and the second state (Fig. 1) show that Jules had to refine and return to his work in order to create the optimal contrast between the figures and the background. Both textual description and image are thus focused on capturing the same aspect of the artwork, its distinctive play between foreground and background. The brothers’ use of the present tense in their text (“se détache”, “s’avance”) also presents the act of creation as happening while we watch, the same experience Jules would have had at every stage of the etching process, from watching his design form on the plate, to the acid biting away the ground to reveal the copper, to the print slowly emerging from the press, the moment when “les mains vous tremblent à saisir cette feuille de papier tout humide, qui porte une ligne à peu près viable.”<sup>35</sup> It seems particularly appropriate that it is an artwork depicting the act of reading that provides the opportunity for this overlap between text and image; indeed, *La Lecture* presents a *mise-en-abyme* of the reader’s own experience reading *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

Whether as practical tools for the reader, a key part of the aesthetic project of the Dentu collector’s editions, or explorations of the different capacities of text and image, the

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<sup>34</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, II:212.

<sup>35</sup> *JC*, II: 214. February 17, 1859.

illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* are thus an integral part of the text, not an afterthought or embellishment. As Delzant writes, the Goncourts' etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* “[font] corps avec leur livre; elles ne sont pas un commentaire, elles semblent pétries de l'essence même du texte et le lecteur ne les sépare plus dans sa pensée. [...] Elle [l'édition illustrée] est tellement de ses auteurs qu'elle a l'intimité de l'autographe.”<sup>36</sup> Thus far, however, we have mainly considered how the etchings function for the reader – as a complement and contrast to the text, and as a way of creating an evocative luxury object. But the etchings also played an important role for the Goncourt brothers as authors of the text. The next section considers how the act of making their etchings alongside the text shaped the brothers' writing and approach to art history in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

### **Amateur Aquafortistes: Etching and Connoisseurship**

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In their review of the Exposition Universelle in 1855, Jules and Edmond pose the essential question behind all of their writing on art:

Où est le style? Ce je ne sais quoi de particulier et de frappant où se reconnaissent les maîtres; cet accent qu'ils portent en eux et qu'ils prêtent aux choses; cette vue neuve de la création; le style! Ce sceau rare et merveilleux; cette marque d'invention, de propriété, de personnalité; cette franche et inimitable signature du génie!<sup>37</sup>

Whether in their analysis of nineteenth-century or eighteenth-century art, Jules and Edmond were fascinated by the source of each artist's unique style and creative genius. Just as their biographical and historical works on the eighteenth century sought to resurrect the past through ephemeral artifacts such as letters, pamphlets, and prints, the brothers attempt to understand the mystery of an artist's style in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* by

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<sup>36</sup> Delzant, *Les Goncourt*, 62.

<sup>37</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Études d'art*, 202.

recreating the artist's technique from the material traces left behind in their works.<sup>38</sup> As they describe in their monograph on Prud'hon, "rien de plus intéressant que de surprendre la main de Prudhon [sic] et de suivre les enfantements de son dessin dans ses études [...] véritables révélations, précieuses confidences du faire, qui nous permettent de regarder par-dessus l'épaule du peintre la marche de son crayon et d'assister, pour ainsi dire, à son travail."<sup>39</sup> Dominique Pety has analyzed how the brothers sought this kind of intimacy, even physical proximity, not only through close looking but also through owning and living with artworks, such that "l'intimité selon les Goncourt n'est pas seulement un secret individuel percé à jour, c'est une proximité quotidienne, affective et dynamique, établie avec un artiste du passé, auquel on demande une leçon de Création."<sup>40</sup> The Goncourt brothers' etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* allow them to take this art-historical methodology even further, literally retracing the movement of the artist's hand and recreating artworks line by line.

Further, the process of recreating these eighteenth-century artists' work has another dimension that would have allowed Jules and Edmond to feel an even closer connection to the past. As both Warner and Pety have noted, through the act of copying, the Goncourt brothers follow the same process that eighteenth-century artists would also have followed as part of their artistic training. For example, the brothers describe how Fragonard copied after Italian masters on his trip to Rome after winning the Prix de Rome:

il vit avec eux. Il les étudie, les interroge. Il les copie, il les pénètre. Il entre dans leurs toiles, et les dépouille presque.... Ce travail passionné où il presse les maîtres qu'il aime et les serre de tout près, lui apprend à saisir leurs secrets, leur manière, à retrouver leur faire, leurs procédés, leur main même sous sa main.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For more on the Goncourts' approach to history, see Nicolas Bourguinat and Éléonore Reverzy, eds., *Les Goncourt historiens*, particularly Pierre-Jean Dufief, "Les Goncourt et l'archive vivante," 19-34.

<sup>39</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, II:249.

<sup>40</sup> Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection*, 316.

<sup>41</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, II:188.

This passage captures the urgency, even violence, with which Fragonard and other eighteenth-century artists used the act of copying as an essential step on the way to finding their own artistic voice. Even for those artists not lucky enough to travel to Rome to learn from the Old Masters, official artistic training in both eighteenth and nineteenth-century France included copying after other artists' work through visiting collections of paintings or using printed reproductions.<sup>42</sup> Jules and Edmond also showed their interest in artistic training through their etching after Cochin's *Le Modèle d'homme posant à l'Académie royale* (Fig. 16) and their descriptions of the artistic studies of nineteenth-century artists in their novel *Manette Salomon*. Beyond recreating this professional instruction, however, I want to suggest that the Goncourt brothers' etchings also draw on a different culture of copying in eighteenth-century France, that of amateur etchers.

There was a vibrant culture of amateur etching in eighteenth-century France. Like the Goncourt brothers themselves, these amateurs should not be considered hobbyists. Charlotte Guichard emphasizes the dual meaning of "amateur" in the eighteenth century as both "someone who rendered artistic judgments and commissioned works from artists with whom he (or she) was engaged in a social context, similar to the role of what would be called a patron in English" and "someone who practiced the arts in an occasional manner" but "should not be reduced to that of a dilettante."<sup>43</sup> In eighteenth-century France, etching became particularly popular among amateurs because it was easy to learn and could be practiced at home. Etching became part of a culture of "sociabilité" among both upper class men and women, who made etchings to commemorate social events or exchanged prints among themselves, often with witty dedications or personal jokes.<sup>44</sup> Prominent amateur practitioners included collectors and connoisseurs such as the Comte

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<sup>42</sup> For more on the training of artists at the Académie in eighteenth-century France, see Nathalie Heinich, *Du peintre à l'artiste: artisans et académiciens à l'âge classique*, Paradoxe (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1993).

<sup>43</sup> Charlotte Guichard, "Amateurs and the Culture of Etching," in Stein, *Artists and Amateurs*, 137.

<sup>44</sup> See Guichard, "Amateurs and the Culture of Etching" for examples of these "gravures de société."

de Caylus, Pierre-Jean Mariette, and Claude Watelet, as well as women such as Marguerite Gérard, who was taught by Fragonard, or Madame de Pompadour, who famously learned etching from Boucher. The Goncourt brothers were familiar with the works of these amateur etchers, owning prints by Gérard and Watelet, and would have envied the world of educated amateurs sharing their passion for art with like-minded people through etching, a similar environment to what the Société des Aquafortistes sought to create in the 1860s. By sharing their etchings with the other collectors and bibliophiles who would purchase the Dentu editions of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Jules and Edmond could even be seen as engaging in this eighteenth-century vision of *sociabilité*.

Beyond the social aspects of eighteenth-century amateur etching, however, the practice of etching also had real value for connoisseurs as a tool for gaining insights into artistic techniques, something we have already seen in the Goncourts' own etchings. In a 1748 lecture to the Académie titled "De l'amateur," the Comte de Caylus presented copying as essential practice for amateurs to form their own artistic taste and judgement. Even though amateurs would not pursue careers as professional artists, he argued for "la nécessité, qu[il] croi[t] presque indispensable à l'amateur, de copier en tout genre, de dessiner et de peindre même d'après la nature, enfin de pratiquer toutes les opérations de ce bel art."<sup>45</sup> Caylus himself made over 3,000 etchings, many of which he published as illustrations to his art-historical texts. The Goncourt brothers wrote a short biography of Caylus in *Portraits intimes du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* where they specifically praise his work as an amateur etcher:

quel service, [a-t-il rendu] au public [avec] ces dessins, ces premiers jets de la main et de la tête des grands génies! Quels exemples pour les peintres! Que de plaisir pour les curieux! Le noble et grand travail de traduire, mot à

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<sup>45</sup> Comte de Caylus, *Vies d'artistes du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Discours sur la peinture et la sculpture. Salons de 1751 et de 1753- Lettre à Lagrenée.*, ed. André Fontaine (Paris: H. Laurens, 1910), 122.

mot, trait pour trait, ces coups de plume où l'idée du maître, à peine née, vivante déjà, bégaye et rit comme en un berceau!<sup>46</sup>

Here the brothers emphasize the educational role of Caylus' etchings for artists and connoisseurs, something Jules and Edmond clearly emulated in their own illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Beyond this desire to share artworks with an audience through making reproductions, however, Guichard contends that Caylus' etchings also played a role in his interpretation of art as an art historian, arguing that "through this pursuit, Caylus refined his expertise, and that labor played a role in his judgments about the value and attribution of the works." His etchings and those of other amateurs who were also distinguished collectors and writers on art such as Mariette and Watelet "thus invite us to reconsider connoisseurship not as theoretical knowledge but as practical knowledge put into action."<sup>47</sup> As collectors and connoisseurs in the model of these eighteenth-century figures, the Goncourt brothers certainly made use of this "scholarly, even cognitive"<sup>48</sup> dimension of amateur etchings in their illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

Through etching, the brothers move from optic observation to haptic experience, from intellectual or theoretical appreciation to physical and practical understanding. The brothers were known for their close looking and handling as collectors, "maniant," "touchant," "retournant" their favorite objects, "amoureuement caressé[s] de la main."<sup>49</sup> Etching provided the brothers with an alternative type of tactile, sensory engagement with eighteenth-century art. Sylvie Duran has demonstrated the omnipresence of tactile descriptions in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, which create the effect of a "pellicularisation de la toile-peau ou du papier-chair," and "impliquent, plus que l'œil, la *main*, et sollicitent une

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<sup>46</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Portraits intimes du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Etudes nouvelles d'après les lettres autographes et les documents inédits* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1857), 14.

<sup>47</sup> Guichard, "Amateurs and the Culture of Etching," 149.

<sup>48</sup> Guichard, 149.

<sup>49</sup> *JR*, III: 182.

fonction haptique qui vient doubler la simple fonction optique.”<sup>50</sup> This conflation of hand and eye, where the viewer is invited to imagine touching as well as looking at an art object, is realized in material form through the Goncourt brothers’ illustrations, which can be handled by the reader. In the process of making their etchings, Jules and Edmond would also have had to use hand and eye simultaneously while copying, moving between observing the object in front of them to drawing on the etching plate, oscillating between the roles of artist and beholder. Images such as their etching of *Augustin de Saint-Aubin dessinant* (Fig. 17) create a further *mise-en-abyme* by depicting the act of artistic creation, uniting both subject matter and process.

Both Duran and Jean-Louis Cabanès point to the image of “l’écorché” as an important metaphor for this interaction between artist or viewer’s hand and the surface of the artwork as skin in *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.<sup>51</sup> In the Goncourts’ descriptions, the figures in Fragonard’s paintings reveal “des rouges, des bruns, des verts de l’écorché, de tous les dessous de la vie,”<sup>52</sup> while the painter’s brush is compared to a scalpel in their portrayal of Chardin’s “couleurs toutes crues, ces dessous pareils à ceux que le scalpel trouve sous la peau.”<sup>53</sup> The scalpel provides a metaphor for the etching needle as well, which uses its sharp point with surgical precision, literally cutting away and revealing the copperplate underneath the etching ground. As they inscribe into the plate, Jules and Edmond reveal something about the artwork to themselves that they could not have accessed as viewers or writers: they see under the skin in the sense that they experience the artist’s process from the inside out. Another characteristic description of Fragonard’s drawing technique shows

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<sup>50</sup> Duran, Sylvie. “L’Agression: Les Goncourt et l’écriture des surfaces.” In Cabanès, *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, 395.

<sup>51</sup> Cabanès, Jean-Louis. “Les Goncourt et la morbidité, catégorie esthétique de ‘L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.’” *Romantisme* 21, no. 71 (1991): 85–92.

<sup>52</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, II:201.

<sup>53</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, I:108.

the importance of the Goncourts' imagined embodiment of the artist's hand for their connoisseurial analysis:

Il semble qu'il ait entre ses mains son crayon rouge sans porte-crayon: il le frotte à plat pour couvrir ses masses; il le fait sans cesse tourner entre son pouce et son index en virevoltes hasardées et inspires. Il le roule, il le tord, avec les branches qu'il indique; il le case aux zigzags de ses verdure. <sup>54</sup>

Here the brothers extrapolate from lines on a page not only to recreate the movement of Fragonard's drawing instrument, but to imagine the tactile experience of Fragonard's manipulation of the chalk, the interaction between "pouce," "index," and artistic implement. As *aquafortistes*, the Goncourt brothers had direct access to this type of embodied experience: understanding the way the etching needle sits in their hands, the pressure needed to incise lines of different widths into the copperplate. Beyond the process of retracing the lines of a specific artwork, etching gave the brothers firsthand knowledge of the tactile experience behind all artistic creation, adding another dimension to their art-historical research.

By using etching as part of their work as connoisseurs and art historians, the Goncourt brothers thus triply immerse themselves into the eighteenth-century art world depicted in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. They not only retrace the movement of eighteenth-century artists' hands through copying the lines of their artworks, but they also recreate the practice of eighteenth-century artistic training through copying, as well as the connoisseurial techniques of eighteenth-century amateur etchers. Placing the brothers' etchings in the context of eighteenth-century artists and amateur etchers therefore reveals how the act of copying played different roles in the art world of eighteenth-century France. I would now like to conclude this chapter by looking at how the Goncourt

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<sup>54</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, II:213.

brothers' etchings fit into changing ideas about the value of copies and reproductive printmaking during the nineteenth-century etching revival.

### **Etching in the Age of Technological Reproducibility**

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Gautier's preface to the first volume of *Eaux-Fortes modernes* published by the Société des Aquafortistes was more than the introduction to a new artistic society, it was a call to arms. As he writes, "la Société des Aqua-Fortistes s'est fondée précisément pour combattre la photographie, la lithographie, l'aqua-tinte, la gravure dont les hachures recroisées ont un point au milieu; en un mot, le travail régulier, automatique, sans inspiration qui dénature l'idée même de l'artiste."<sup>55</sup> A notice by the publishers Cadart and Chevalier accompanying the volume similarly opposed etching to photography, engraving, and lithography, claiming that the artists in the society "voulurent protester par une publication qui montrât que l'interprétation de l'artiste par l'artiste devait se perpétuer, et non l'interprétation de l'artiste par la machine," presenting their goal as being to "montrer aux ouvriers en gravure et en lithographie les qualités qu'ils laissaient dans l'ombre pour leur substituer une sorte de métier dans lequel disparaissaient les angles de toute personnalité puissante."<sup>56</sup> What was it about this moment in nineteenth-century France that called for such an aggressive positioning of etching and how did the Goncourts' etched copies of eighteenth-century artworks go against the grain?

Technological developments in the first half of the nineteenth century created pressures that led spokespeople for the etching revival to present art forms such as photography, engraving, and lithography as diametrically opposed to the values of artistic independence and authenticity that they believed characterized etching. In his seminal

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<sup>55</sup> Théophile Gautier, "Un mot sur l'eau-forte."

<sup>56</sup> Alfred Cadart and Félix Chevalier, "Notice," in *Société des aquafortistes. Eaux-fortes modernes originales et inédites: première année, premier volume* (Paris: A. Cadart & Chevalier, 1862).

1936 essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” Walter Benjamin pointed to the invention of photography in the 1830s in France as a watershed moment that fundamentally changed society’s relationship with the work of art as a singular, “original” object, creating the environment in which the etching revival took place. He argued that photography differed from previous methods of reproduction such as printmaking because “for the first time, photography freed the hand from the most important tasks in the process of pictorial reproduction – tasks that now devolved upon the eye alone.”<sup>57</sup> For Benjamin, photography’s ability to “bring out aspects of the original that are accessible only to the lens [...] but not the human eye”<sup>58</sup> and to “place the copy of the original in situations which the original itself cannot attain”<sup>59</sup> posed a new threat to what he called the “aura” of an artwork, the special quality of a unique object that can only exist in one place at one time.

Benjamin is undoubtedly correct about photography’s massive disruption of the nineteenth-century art world, but, as critics such as Stephen Bann have pointed out, he is too quick to gloss over photography’s relationship with other forms of reproduction, specifically printmaking. Benjamin contends that reproductive photographs are “more independent of the original” than manual reproductions, such as prints, because an artwork “retains its full authority in the face of a reproduction made by hand, which it generally brands a forgery.”<sup>60</sup> However, this implication that reproductive prints were automatically recognized, if not as forgeries, at least as secondary or inferior versions of the original

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<sup>57</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version,” in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael William Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 20.

<sup>58</sup> Benjamin, 21.

<sup>59</sup> Benjamin, 21.

<sup>60</sup> Benjamin, 21.

artwork, does not reflect the reality of nineteenth-century print culture. With reproductive engravings, for example, Stephen Bann contends that:

it was common critical practice to compare the engraving to its original, and not unusual, at least among the critics associated with the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, to assert that the “translation” was superior to its original. [...] this traditional mode of engraving – which its exponents and supporters took care to differentiate from inferior or purely functional types of engraved image – puts into suspension the categories taken for granted in Benjamin’s notion of reproduction.<sup>61</sup>

The Goncourt brothers’ etchings for *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, I suggest, similarly challenge Benjamin’s assumptions. Furthermore, I propose that their etchings were in fact aligned more with contemporary ideas surrounding engraving and lithography rather than the rhetoric of the original print promoted during the revival.

Rather than considering a printed reproduction as automatically inferior to an original work of art, the Goncourt brothers emphasize the creativity inherent in reproducing another artwork in *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. In their chapter on Boucher, for example, they describe Boucher’s etchings after Watteau, and present the way he transforms different materials into print “sans leur faire rien perdre de leur feu et de leur esprit”<sup>62</sup> as a creative and admirable act, one that we can imagine acted as a model for the Goncourts’ own etchings. They write:

D’un trait large, d’un badinage d’aiguille, d’un travail hardi, heureux, sans peur, il indique du premier coup l’anatomie du mouvement des mains, les cassures de la soie, la rocaille des plis; il balaye les paysages avec la liberté de la sanguine de Watteau; il enlève les silhouettes à la pointe comme le dessinateur les enlève au crayon; il fouette d’ombre les visages; il les caresse de pointillée et de hachures avec l’aisance de son modèle. Jusque dans l’indication bâtonnée des jambes et l’accentuation des mules relevées, il garde sur sa planche l’accent et le style du maître [...] <sup>63</sup>

Like Boucher, who translates, transposes, and transforms Watteau’s “sanguine” and “crayon” into print, Jules and Edmond had to find creative ways to imitate the original

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<sup>61</sup> Bann, *Parallel Lines*, 40.

<sup>62</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, I:132.

<sup>63</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, I:132.

artworks they copied, given the technical differences between media. As discussed with their prints after Chardin, Jules had to reverse the additive technique of painting to make use of the play between white paper and black ink in etching. Many of Jules' prints also feature stippling, a technique that he used to capture the effects of soft media like chalk or pastel in print, or to better render the illusion of human skin. We can see Jules experimenting with the effectiveness of stippling to recreate flesh in his etching of La Tour's self-portrait (Fig. 18). As shown by the different states of the illustrations included in Edmond's personal copy of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Jules also tested the results of using colored paper or colored inks (Figs. 19, 20). For Jules and Edmond, the act of copying other artworks was more than just pure mimicry, as they had to consider which printing techniques would translate the *effect* of an artwork most successfully, rather than merely retracing its composition.

Nineteenth-century commentators praised Jules' experimentation with different effects. Delzant wrote that the etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* demonstrated "une interprétation bien personnelle qui s'est accrochée au caractère du modèle beaucoup plus qu'à la littéralité de ses détails. C'est l'impression de l'original qu'a surtout poursuivie et obtenue le graveur."<sup>64</sup> Roger Marx recommended that those curious about Jules' etchings go to look at his *œuvre* in the Cabinet des Estampes to observe firsthand how "sa technique, loin d'être uniforme, ne cesse pas de se diversifier selon le thème abordé; il cherche, il invente, il approprie un procédé spécial –pointillé, grignotis ou hachure –à la manière de chaque maître interprété."<sup>65</sup> Paradoxically, Jules' ability to vary his technique to ever more closely match the artist and material at hand was seen as proof of his own skill and mastery as an artist in his own right. Jules' etchings represent his own personal

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<sup>64</sup> Delzant, *Les Goncourt*, 190–91.

<sup>65</sup> Roger Marx, "Les Goncourt et l'art," in *Maîtres d'hier et aujourd'hui* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1914), 22.

interpretation of another artist's work: rather than completely effacing his own artistic identity, his etchings offer a palimpsest of hands and gestures, layering Jules' individual idiosyncrasies with the artist's unique style he sought to imitate.

Jules' etchings thus show the creativity of reproductive prints as "translations" of other artworks. As we saw in the Introduction, the idea of prints as translation dates back to early modern printmaking. In the nineteenth century, the metaphor of translation was widely-used to discuss reproductive engravings.<sup>66</sup> Reproductive engravings usually reproduced paintings and were made by professional engravers whose work was sanctioned by the *Académie*, unlike the more experimental work of either painter-etchers or amateur etchers. Although the etching revival rejected reproductive engraving, implying that it was less creative than original etchings, nineteenth-century engravings were still recognized for their skill in translating between the media of painting and print. In his 1867 *Grammaire des arts du dessin*, for example, prominent print scholar Charles Blanc distinguished between the act of copying and that of translating, arguing that "s'agit-il d'une peinture, le graveur n'ayant à sa disposition, en ce qui touche la couleur, que du noir et du blanc, cesse d'être un copiste pour devenir un traducteur."<sup>67</sup> Delacroix similarly wrote in his *Journal* on January 25, 1857,

La gravure est une véritable traduction [...] c'est-à-dire l'art de transporter une idée d'un art dans un autre, comme le traducteur le fait à l'égard d'un livre écrit dans une langue et qu'il transporte dans la sienne. La langue étrangère du graveur, et c'est ici que se montre son génie, ne consiste pas seulement à imiter par le moyen de son art les effets de la peinture qui est comme une autre langue. Il a, si l'on peut parler ainsi, sa langue à lui qui marque d'un cachet particulier ses

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<sup>66</sup> For an interesting comparison of how nineteenth-century art critics like Philippe Burty viewed art criticism and reproductive printmaking as different kinds of translations, see Ségolène Le Men, "Printmaking as Metaphor for Translation: Philippe Burty and the Gazette des Beaux-Arts in the Second Empire," in *Art Criticism and Its Institutions*, ed. Michael Orwicz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 88–108.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Blanc, *Grammaire des arts du dessin: architecture, sculpture, peinture, jardins: gravure, eau-forte, camaïeu, lithographie*. (Paris: Jules Rénouard, 1867), 620.

ouvrages et qui, dans une traduction fidèle de l'ouvrage qu'il imite, laisse éclater son sentiment particulier.<sup>68</sup>

Contrary to the rhetoric of the etching revival and later interpretations such as Benjamin's, a reproductive engraving could be considered a work of art in its own right rather than a "forgery" with no artistic merit. An engraver could be praised on a par with, or even beyond, the original artist, as Théophile Gautier famously did when reviewing Louis Pierre Henriquel-Dupont's epic series of engravings after Paul Delaroche's *Hemicycle*: "Paul Delaroche, sans atteindre au style des peintres dont il a si énergiquement groupé les portraits sur les bancs de marbre de cette académie idéale, a ici des qualités de dessin et de couleur qu'on ne saurait méconnaître; mais combien la réduction modifiée est supérieure à l'original!"<sup>69</sup> Although Jules' looser etching technique is very different from the smooth, formal style used in engraving, his illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* draw on the same ideas of translation from one art form to another, and similarly emphasize the creativity and skill to be found in copying.

However, some of the Goncourt brothers' etchings take this tradition of reproductive engraving one step further, venturing beyond translation to attempt to create illusionistic copies that could be mistaken for facsimiles. As Pamela Warner has noted, the illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* were printed without the conventional apparatus of a reproductive print, such as a border, printed title, and the names of the artist and/or publisher clearly indicated in the lower margin, thereby collapsing the distinction between original and copy.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, in several of the etchings, Jules experimented with an etching technique called "manière de crayon," which creates a thicker, fuzzier line in order to imitate the appearance of chalk or pastel drawings (Fig. 20). *Manière de crayon* etching

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<sup>68</sup> Eugène Delacroix, *Journal*, ed. Michèle Hannoosh, vol. I, II vols. (Paris: José Corti, 2009), 1086.

<sup>69</sup> Théophile Gautier, "Paul Delaroche," in *Portraits contemporains* (Paris: Charpentier, 1874), 302–3.

<sup>70</sup> Some of the etchings do have Jules' initials on the print, along with a number placing the etching in a series, but these are located in different places on each image, rather than in a standardized format.

was invented and practiced by artists such as Jean-Charles François, Gilles Demarteau and Louis-Marin Bonnet in eighteenth-century France as a way of creating “perfect” reproductions of drawings and color pastels, long before the invention of photography.<sup>71</sup> Instead of an etching needle, the artist uses an instrument that has multiple points or a roulette, creating a series of closely-spaced dots rather than a single line in order to mimic the “grainy,” textured effect of a chalk, pastel or pencil drawing on paper (Fig. 21).

The Goncourt brothers collected *manière de crayon* prints by eighteenth-century artists such as Gilles Demarteau and Edouard Dagoty and wrote about Louis Phillippe Debucourt’s use of the technique in *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. By using *manière de crayon* in their illustrations, the Goncourt brothers again directly engage with and resurrect eighteenth-century artistic techniques. These illusionistic prints further blur the line between original and copy in the same way that the brothers praise Debucourt’s ability to deceive the viewer with his use of *manière de crayon*, aquatint, and color in his prints: “l’illusion est complète [...] regardez-la encadrée à un mur: elle n’est plus pour vous une gravure imprimée; vos yeux croient s’amuser d’un dessin, et voient dans l’épreuve quelque chose de la main même de l’artiste.”<sup>72</sup> In the same way, Jules and Edmond’s use of *manière de crayon* deliberately encourages “l’illusion – si brève fût-elle – que le lecteur avait entre ses mains, sinon un dessin original, du moins une gravure avant la lettre du dix-huitième siècle.”<sup>73</sup>

Finally, the Goncourt brothers’ use of *manière de crayon* techniques also echoes the initial uses of lithography in nineteenth-century France as an even more effective way of reproducing and imitating drawings in print. Although I will deal with the invention of

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<sup>71</sup> See Emmanuelle Delapierre and Sophie Raux, eds., *Quand la gravure fait illusion: autour de Watteau et Boucher, le dessin gravé au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Montreuil: Roubaix: Gourcuff-Gradenigo; Association des conservateurs des musées du Nord-Pas de Calais, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2007, II:162.

<sup>73</sup> Warner, “Jules de Goncourt aquafortiste,” 96.

lithography further in the next chapter, it is worth noting now that lithography was first seen as a primarily reproductive medium. An 1816 report on lithography by the academicians at the Institut de France, for example, argued that the medium was extremely useful for reproducing drawings, writing that “les artistes viennent de trouver dans ce procédé un moyen nouveau de multiplier leurs dessins, non plus par des copies, mais par les fac simile [sic], et de manière à produire autant d’originaux que d’épreuves.”<sup>74</sup> The striking claim that each reproductive lithograph is not a copy, but instead an “original” clearly resonates with the Goncourts’ approach to their illustrations for *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. If “lithography promised to make ‘reproduction’ and ‘original’ interchangeable terms,”<sup>75</sup> the same slippage occurs in reviews of the illustrations for *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, where critics such as Roger Marx wrote that “Watteau, Boucher, La Tour sont là gravés comme s’ils s’étaient gravés eux-mêmes et que ces eaux-fortes possèdent ragoût, la haute valeur d’estampes originales.”<sup>76</sup> Although the Goncourt brothers never practiced lithography themselves, the similarity between their use of etchings as facsimiles for drawings and early lithographs demonstrates how their illustrations inscribe themselves into larger debates about the function of printmaking in nineteenth-century France. Contrary to the narrative of the etching revival that sought to dissociate etching from reproductive engravings or lithography, the illustrations for *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* emphasize the similarities between etching and these other forms of printmaking.

Of course, the often-hyperbolic rhetoric of the etching revival must not be taken purely at face value: the “battle” between photography, engraving, and lithography was not always so clear cut. Alfred Cadart, for example, the co-founder of the Société des Aquafortistes, worked with lithography and photography prior to the 1860s. Fresh off the

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<sup>74</sup> Cited in Anderson-Riedel, *Creativity and Reproduction*, 9.

<sup>75</sup> Anderson-Riedel, 34.

<sup>76</sup> Roger Marx, “Les Goncourt artistes et esthéticiens,” 92.

success of the first album of *Eaux-fortes modernes* in 1862, Cadart even sent lithographic stones to Manet and Henri Fantin-Latour and asked the artists to produce lithographs for a possible album, but the finished prints were too experimental and the album was never published.<sup>77</sup> Philippe Burty also defended reproductive engraving, lithography, and even photography in his art criticism. As Burty pointed out, the rise of photography would actually benefit printmakers by encouraging higher quality printmaking and recognizing the skill of reproductive engravers: “au moment où la photographie porte, et nous nous en félicitons, une atteinte terrible aux reproductions à bas prix, on ne doit en montrer que plus de respect pour les maîtres qui s’astreignent à la longue et pénible étude de l’art de la gravure.”<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Burty viewed lithography not as an irredeemable enemy of etching, but instead as an art that had lost its way, “[qui] se meurt aussi par l’oubli des grands principes qui doivent présider à toute œuvre d’art”<sup>79</sup> and which needed reawakening, “il faut donc rehausser cet art essentiellement français et qui a produit de si délicates improvisations.”<sup>80</sup> As Burty points out, the problem was less engraving, lithography, or reproductive printmaking in itself but *bad* copies in the form of cheap, mass-produced images with no artistic skill or merit. Jules and Edmond’s etchings for *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* provide an example of how the interpretative qualities of etching could be put to work to change the art of reproductive printmaking, celebrating copying as a creative act.

Finally, the Goncourt brothers were not alone in this approach to etching. In spite of the Société des Aquafortistes’ requirement that artists only submit “original” prints to *Eaux-Fortes modernes*, some artists (particularly painter-etchers from the Barbizon school) submitted etched copies of their own paintings. Most famously, Manet’s etchings, which were considered some of the finest prints of the revival, were almost all copies after

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<sup>77</sup> Christine Giviskos, *Set in Stone: Lithography in Paris, 1815-1900*, 69.

<sup>78</sup> Philippe Burty, “La Gravure et la lithographie à l’exposition de 1861,” 172.

<sup>79</sup> Burty, 177.

<sup>80</sup> Burty, 178.

Spanish paintings by artists such as Goya and Velzaquez, or after Manet's own paintings.<sup>81</sup> As Carol Armstrong has emphasized, Manet's etchings remind us to "locat[e] Manet's authenticity – his "sincerity" and his signature style – within rather than against the practice of the museum copy" and to recognize that "copying was the very signature of his "originality": in his work the mechanical and the original were patently intertwined rather than implicitly opposed terms."<sup>82</sup> Manet's ambiguous approach to originality resonates with the Goncourt brothers' work and provides an alternative model for how artists within the revival saw etching as a tool for experimenting with the value of copying. Ironically, it is the much-praised transparency of etching, where, as Baudelaire wrote, it was impossible for "l'artiste de ne pas décrire sur la planche sa personnalité la plus intime"<sup>83</sup> that makes it such a valuable medium for copying other artworks. The sensitivity of the copperplate, which requires only light pressure from the etching needle and therefore records the slightest movement of the artist's hand, always betrays an artist's individual personality. Rather than subduing an artist's own style in search of an ever more perfect imitation of the original, reproductive etchings make visible both the original artist's style and the unique style of the copyist, allowing an artist to uncover and display his own vision even when interpreting another artist's work. With reproductive etchings such as Manet's or the Goncourt brothers' prints, the relationship between original and copy is thus no longer a binary opposition.

## **Conclusion**

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This chapter has sought to unpack some of the ways in which the Goncourt brothers' etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* can be analyzed – whether as images for an

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<sup>81</sup> Manet published two albums of etchings with Cadart in 1862 and 1874, and also published two individual etchings in albums of *Eaux-fortes Modernes* in 1862 and 1863.

<sup>82</sup> Carol M. Armstrong, *Manet Manette* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2002), 88.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "Peintres et aquafortistes," 38.

illustrated book, as part of their art-historical methodology, or as a statement on the role of reproductive printmaking. Re-examining *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* through the lens of the brothers' etchings reveals that their approach to their writing went far beyond the words on a page, something that can be easily lost today when reading the text in isolation. Without considering the visual appeal of the illustrations, the experience of handling the book as a treasured object, we lose a key part of Jules and Edmond's quest to evoke the elegance and luxury that they believed characterized eighteenth-century art. The equal status of the brothers' etchings in the process of writing *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* also invites us to reconsider the ways in which their text came into being. As modeled by eighteenth-century amateurs and connoisseurs, etching offered an alternative form of embodied knowledge that complemented and deepened the Goncourts' writing. I have also emphasized the complex status of the brothers' etchings as unconventional objects that challenge both nineteenth-century ideas and our own assumptions about the relationship between original and copy. Finally, I demonstrated how the illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* exemplify the multitude of contradictions surrounding "technological reproduction" in nineteenth-century France. Although I have argued that the Goncourts' illustrations draw on eighteenth-century models of amateur etching, they also provide a fascinating starting point for considering nineteenth-century debates about reproductive printmaking. *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* may seem to be dominated by backward-looking nostalgia, but the illustrations are also inescapably rooted in contemporary issues driving the etching revival. In the next chapter, I consider how Jules and Edmond's creative approach to copying changed when the brothers no longer sought to recreate the world of eighteenth-century France, but instead turned to the work of their close friend, nineteenth-century lithographer Paul Gavarni.

## Chapter II

### Lithography & Stenography: Gavarni and the Goncourt Brothers

*“Dans la prose française, quelle prose plus spirituelle que celle  
qu’il jette au-dessous de ses lithographies!”*  
—Gavarni, *l’homme et l’œuvre*



**Fig. 3:** Jules de Goncourt, *Ex Libris*, after Gavarni, etching, 1862

British Museum

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## Introduction

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The Goncourt brothers' *ex libris* (Fig. 3), etched by Jules himself, depicts a hand indicating the initials "E" and "J" as a symbol of the brothers' inseparable nature.

However, a third figure is also present in this image: obscured beneath the crosshatched lines and scribbles of Jules' etching in the lower left corner is the signature "Gavarni."

Jules here records the designer of the *ex libris*, prominent nineteenth-century lithographer and close friend of Jules and Edmond, Sulpice-Hippolyte-Guillame Chevalier, known by his pseudonym Paul Gavarni (Fig. 22).<sup>1</sup> Gavarni's shadow presence in the *ex libris*, acknowledged but also overwritten by the marks made by Jules' own hand, is symbolic of the Goncourt brothers' complex relationship with Gavarni and their dual exploration of this relationship through writing and etching.

Jules and Edmond first met Gavarni in 1852 when they were working as journalists for *Le Paris* and *L'Éclair*, where they proposed bringing Gavarni on as an illustrator. As they later recorded in *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, the brothers had "passé [leur] enfance à regarder, à copier des lithographies de Gavarni" and were, "sans le connaître et sans qu'il [leur] connût, ses admirateurs."<sup>2</sup> Jules and Edmond quickly formed a close bond with the older artist, looking up to Gavarni as a mentor and even father figure: Jules addressed his letters to "P'pa Gavarni" while Gavarni referred to the brothers as "mes enfants."<sup>3</sup> Gavarni also made a portrait of the brothers as part of his *Masques et Visages* series for *Le Paris* (Fig. 23). The brothers' relationship with Gavarni is recorded in the *Journal*, where he achieved a larger-than-life status in entries from 1852-55 recording his quips and witticisms under the title "Gavarniana." The Goncourt brothers also publicly

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<sup>1</sup>There are several conflicting accounts of the origin of Gavarni's pseudonym, but the Goncourt brothers record that Gavarni told them it was the result of a misprint of his name at the 1828 Salon. After submitting sketches from his travels in the Pyrénées, one of which depicted the village Gavarnie, the title of the sketch was printed as Gavarni's name in the *Salon livret*.

<sup>2</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* (Paris: Henri Plon, 1873), 332.

<sup>3</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, i.

acknowledged Gavarni's lithographs as a literary inspiration in the publication of their "physionomie" *La Lorette* in 1853, their first literary success; although, as I discuss, this work differs from Gavarni's art in important ways. After these initial written engagements with Gavarni's work, Jules and Edmond returned to Gavarni's art from 1860-63, this time as *aquafortistes*.<sup>4</sup> The brothers made fifteen etchings after watercolors and pen and ink drawings by Gavarni, two by Edmond and thirteen by Jules. As I explore in the second section of this chapter, however, they did not make any etchings after Gavarni's lithographs, and although Jules listed himself as an "élève de Gavarni" on the etchings he sent to the *Salon*, Gavarni did not practice etching himself. The brothers' relationship with Gavarni then cooled over the next several years as the aging artist became increasingly reclusive and it was not until they heard of his death on November 25, 1866 that they revisited their earlier admiration of the artist. By the end of 1866, the brothers set out to write a monograph on Gavarni, which they worked on together until Jules' death in 1870. Indeed, as I analyze in Chapter V, this retrospective of Gavarni's life and work is inextricably linked to Jules' own death: the final etching he made was a copy after Gavarni in 1869, and Edmond records that the manuscript for *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* was left on Jules' desk next to his deathbed. After Jules' death, Edmond returned to the manuscript, finally publishing *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* in 1872-73.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter explores the complexities of the Goncourt brothers' relationship with Gavarni over these two decades, as expressed through both writing and etching. The

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<sup>4</sup> The *Inventaire du fonds français* dates the brothers' Gavarni etchings to 1860-62, other than *Un Figurant*, which Jules worked on in 1869, shortly before his death. However, in a *Journal* entry from January 26, 1863, Jules writes "je passe trois jours sur une eau-forte d'après Gavarni" so he must have been working on the etchings until at least 1863. *JC*, III: 495.

<sup>5</sup> Although it was published after Jules' death, I will be treating *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* as a co-written work, as the manuscript was completed before Jules' death. In an undated *Journal* entry from 1870 after Jules' death, Edmond refers to Jules writing the "dernier chapitre du livre de Gavarni" when the brothers travelled to Trouville in 1869. The monograph was not published until three years later, when it appeared serially in *Le Bien public* from June 12, 1872 - March 4, 1873 and was then published by Henri Plon in 1873. While Edmond could have made changes to the manuscript before publication, I believe it is likely that any changes would have been minimal out of respect for his brothers' memory.

fifteen etchings made by the brothers after Gavarni represent the most significant engagement with a single artist in their etching corpus, and the largest group of etchings after the thirty-eight made for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Similarly, *La Lorette* and *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* bookend the brothers' literary career with works inspired by and responding to Gavarni's art. Although Gavarni was one of the most well-known French lithographers of the mid-nineteenth century, he has since largely been overshadowed by his contemporary, Daumier. Because of this, there has been little scholarship on the Goncourts' relationship with Gavarni other than a chapter in Therese Dolan Stamm's study of the critical reception of Gavarni in the nineteenth century, Ségolène Le Men and Julian Zanetta's articles on *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, and Kerri Yousif and Courtney Sullivan's articles on *La Lorette*.<sup>6</sup> Other than a brief mention in Le Men's article, none of these studies deal with the brothers' etchings after Gavarni, so this chapter sets out to provide the first comprehensive overview of the Goncourt brothers' response to Gavarni's work through etching and to explore how their etchings relate to and differ from their written responses in *La Lorette* and *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*.

Given that Gavarni's life and work, as well as nineteenth-century lithography in general, are less well-known today, the first section provides an overview of the evolution of lithography in nineteenth-century France and its changing status relative to etching, placing Gavarni and the Goncourt brothers' relationship within this art-historical context.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Therese Dolan Stamm, "Gavarni and the Critics" (UMI Research Press, 1981); Ségolène Le Men, "Les Goncourt et Gavarni," *Francofonia*, no. 21 (1991): 71–85; Julian Zanetta, "'Tout l'homme': le Gavarni des Goncourt," *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, no. 24 (2018): 161–76; Kerri Yousif, "Word, Image, Woman: Gavarni's and the Goncourts' Portrayal of the Lorette," *Image & Narrative* 15, no. 3 (2014): 22–37; Courtney A. Sullivan, "'Cautériser La Plaie': The Lorette as Social Ill in the Goncourts and Eugène Sue," *Nineteenth Century French Studies* 37, no. 3–4 (2009): 247–61.

<sup>7</sup> Building on Beatrice Farwell, ed., *The Charged Image: French Lithographic Caricature, 1816-1848* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1989), there has been a recent resurgence of interest in nineteenth-century lithography and popular prints in art-historical studies: see for example, Cynthia Burlingham, "Revivals and Modernity: The Printed Image in Nineteenth-Century France," in Hendrix, *Noir: The Romance of Black*, 5–15; Giviskos, *Set in Stone*; Lerner, *Graphic Culture*; Mainardi, *Another World*; Rosa de Carvalho, ed., *Prints in Paris 1900*.

The second section then examines the Goncourts' etchings alongside *La Lorette* to suggest that they offer an alternative perspective on the brothers' approach to Gavarni as an "artiste-écrivain," revealing the ambiguity of Gavarni's status as both a model and rival for the brothers. Finally, I turn to *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* to explore how the metaphor of stenography can be used to characterize both the brothers' approach to their biography and etchings, contrasting them with their etchings and biographies for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

### **Rival Revivals: Lithography and Etching in Nineteenth-Century France**

It may seem counterintuitive that the only nineteenth-century printmaker to whom the Goncourt brothers devoted a significant portion of their etchings was not an etcher, but rather a lithographer. Yet the timing of the brothers' engagement with Gavarni's work reflects the complicated, interdependent relationship between lithography and etching during the nineteenth century, where the rise and fall of lithography inverted the rise and fall of etching during the revival. In comparison to the long history of etching, lithography is a relatively recent printmaking technique, first invented by Alois Senefelder in Bavaria in 1796. Unlike the intaglio printmaking processes of etching and engraving, where the artist incises lines into a metal plate, lithography is a planographic process that uses the flat surface of a limestone block and relies on the mutual repulsion of water and oil. The artist first draws on the limestone with a greasy crayon or ink made with oil, fat, or wax (Fig. 24). The surface of the limestone is then treated with a combination of acid and gum arabic, which creates a rougher surface on the areas unmarked by the crayon. The stone is then wiped with water, which is repelled by the greasy marks left by the crayon but is retained as a thin film on the treated areas of the limestone. A greasy ink is then applied, which adheres to the greasy crayon marks and is repelled by the water on the treated areas. Finally, the stone is run through a special lithographic printing press which transfers the

ink to paper, creating the final print. Lithography completely revolutionized the printmaking process, making printing easier, faster, and cheaper than ever before. The ease of drawing directly on the stone made it even faster for artists to create their designs and the durability of limestone in comparison to copperplates made it possible for publishers to print many more copies of the same print, making each copy cheaper. As discussed in the previous chapter, the lithographic technique also allowed for the creation of very different effects, capturing gradations of tone and shadow in a way that was previously impossible in etching and engraving.

After Senefelder's invention, lithography quickly spread to France. The first French lithographic publisher, Peter-Friedrich André, was licensed in 1802, but it took another decade for lithography to take off in Paris, with the establishment of Charles Philibert de Lasteyrie and Godefroy Engelmann's lithographic firms in Paris in 1815 and 1816. Engelmann presented a portfolio of lithographs to the Institut de France in 1816, which issued a highly favorable report, primarily focused on lithography's ability to reproduce drawings. This emphasis on lithography as a new reproductive invention, rather than a creative or artistic medium was also evident in the designation of the twenty-four lithographs published by Engelmann and de Lasteyrie exhibited at the 1817 *Salon* as "produits de l'industrie," listed under the name of the publisher rather than the artist. However, in the 1820s, lithography was also taken up by artists who experimented with the creative possibilities of this new medium. Academic painters such as Anne-Louis Girodet and Jean-Baptiste Isabey made substantial numbers of lithographs, as did Romantic artists Théodore Géricault and Eugène Delacroix.<sup>8</sup> From the 1830s, lithography also became particularly associated with images of modern life and caricatures printed in

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<sup>8</sup> For more on early French lithographs, see Frédéric Chappey et al., eds., *De Géricault à Delacroix: Knecht et l'invention de la lithographie, 1800-1830* (Paris: L'Isle Adam: Somogy éditions d'art, 2005). For Romantic prints, see Valérie Sueur-Hermel, *Fantastique! l'estampe visionnaire de Goya à Redon* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2015).

the illustrated press. Lithographic albums depicting cityscapes, landscapes, contemporary fashions, or portraits of famous figures proliferated, and a brief period of relaxed censorship laws after the July Revolution led to the rise of political caricatures.<sup>9</sup> New journals such as Charles Philippon's *La Silhouette* (1829-31), *La Caricature* (1830-35) and *Le Charivari* (1832- 1937) satirized modern life in lithographs by artists like J.J. Grandville and Honoré Daumier.<sup>10</sup> As Patricia Mainardi observes, "lithography was soon identified as the medium par excellence for images of modern life because of the ease with which it could be executed, its responsiveness to individual stylistic temperaments, and its ability to depict the ephemeral and shifting scenes of a rapidly changing society."<sup>11</sup>

By the 1840s, however, the popularity of lithography as a creative artistic medium began to wane, and it was increasingly used for commercial purposes. The market became inundated with cheap, mass-produced prints and artists no longer saw lithography as an innovative medium. Victor Adams' 1846 image of Lemercier & Cie (Fig. 25), the lithographic printing firm that dominated the market in the 1840s, shows the extent to which the process of lithography had become industrialized and commercialized. It was into this void that etching made its reappearance in the 1850s and 1860s as a medium for artists to experiment with original printmaking. But the cycle turned again in the 1870s when etching's popularity began to fade, opening the door for lithography's own renaissance. Re-invigorated by the use of transfer and color lithography,<sup>12</sup> lithographs by

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<sup>9</sup> There have been many books published on political caricature in mid-nineteenth-century France. See, for example, David S. Kerr, *Caricature and French Political Culture, 1830-1848: Charles Philippon and the Illustrated Press* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); Laura O'Brien, *The Republican Line: Caricature and French Republican Identity, 1830-52* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> For recent scholarship on Daumier and Grandville, see Valérie Sueur-Hermel, ed., *Daumier: l'écriture du lithographe* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2008); Keri Yousif, *Balzac, Grandville, and the Rise of Book Illustration* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Mainardi, *Another World*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> In transfer lithography, artists draw on special paper with lithographic crayon or ink, rather than directly on stone. The paper is then run through a press onto a prepared stone, transferring the design onto the stone, which can then be printed using the normal lithographic process. Godefroy Engelmann and his son Jean invented chromolithography or color lithography in 1838, using four stones with four different colors (red,

Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Symbolist, and Nabis artists such as Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Odilon Redon, Pierre Bonnard, and Édouard Vuillard came to dominate French original printmaking until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

The histories of lithography and etching thus offer two different perspectives on the rise and fall of print movements in nineteenth-century France, fueled by technological innovation, changing tastes, and cultural shifts. Although the Goncourt brothers were too young to witness the first wave of lithography themselves (Edmond was born in 1822 and Jules in 1830), they were interested in the medium before they turned to etching in 1859. Lithographs did not form a major part of the brothers' modern print collection. Other than the 2,000 Gavarni prints acquired by Edmond after Jules' death, they collected some key examples of early lithography such as Bonington's *La Rue du Gros-Horloge* from the famous lithographic series *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France, Normandie*, as well as lithographs by Daumier, Delacroix and Goya.<sup>14</sup> However, in the Goncourts' *Salon de 1852*, their only commentary on the prints section of the Salon is a long *éloge* of lithography. Jules and Edmond praise lithography as a reproductive medium, "toujours prête à l'idée, toujours docile à la main, fac-simile plus libre, plus vrai, plus facile" to the point that "on peut se demander si la lithographie ne tuera pas le burin."<sup>15</sup> However, they then contrast reproductive lithography with the work of a long list of "les lithographes peintres," including Gavarni, comparing "la lithographie sage, régulière, admirablement travaillée dans les procédés reçus, très soigneusement croisée de noir, trop souvent une lithographie de graveur" with "la lithographie toute pleine de flou, toute

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yellow, blue, black) and a device to align the paper across the different stones. However, color lithography was mainly used for commercial purposes in the 1840s and 1850s, until Jules Chéret revolutionized the art of the printed color poster after starting his own lithographic press in 1866.

<sup>13</sup> For more on Impressionist printmaking see Lees, *Innovative Impressions*. For *fin-de-siècle* printmaking see Rosa de Carvalho, ed., *Prints in Paris 1900*.

<sup>14</sup> Félix Bracquemond, "Estampes modernes."

<sup>15</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Études d'art*, 159.

chercheuse de nouveau, toute originale, toute hardie, toute peinte.”<sup>16</sup> The brothers clearly prefer this more artistic work, but in 1852, this type of lithography was already in decline. Indeed, when the Goncourts met Gavarni that same year, the artist’s career was also at a turning point – his work at *Le Paris* and *L’Eclair* was a sharp contrast from his earlier work in the 1830s and 40s and represented his last significant lithographic series.

The Goncourt brothers’ perspective on Gavarni’s work is thus very different from earlier critics like Balzac or Gautier who witnessed Gavarni at the height of his career, during the early ascendance of lithography.<sup>17</sup> Gavarni made a name for himself as an artist relatively late in life, traveling and working in an eclectic variety of jobs before establishing himself in Paris at age twenty-four in 1828-30 with his lithographs of contemporary fashions in *La Mode*. As his popularity grew, he began contributing prints to *La Caricature*, *L’Artiste* and *La Silhouette* in 1831-32 and he even founded his own magazine in 1833, *Le Journal des gens du monde*. The magazine failed after only seven months, however, and Gavarni went to debtor’s prison in Clichy for a year. Once out of prison he joined *Le Charivari* in 1834, and throughout the 1830s and 1840s developed his own unique style, becoming known in particular for his witty *légendes* or captions. His lithographic series such as *Les Fourberies de femmes*, *Les Lorettes*, *Les Débardeurs*, *Les Enfants terribles* and his illustrations for publications like *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* and *Le Diable à Paris*, made him a household name, as well as a critical favorite. In 1847, however, Gavarni’s career took an abrupt turn when he left Paris for London. He traveled in England from 1847-51, where instead of continuing to create the fashionable, lighthearted prints for which he was known, he focused instead on the lives of the poor, publishing a series of prints titled *Gavarni in London*.<sup>18</sup> He returned to Paris at the end of

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<sup>16</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 162.

<sup>17</sup> For more on Gavarni’s critical reception, see Dolan Stamm, “Gavarni and the Critics.”

<sup>18</sup> Paul Gavarni, *Gavarni in London: Sketches of Life and Character, with Illustrative Essays by Popular Writers*, ed. Albert Smith (London: David Bogue, 1849).

1851, where he subsequently joined *Le Paris* and *L'Éclair* in 1852, publishing his 365 lithographs for the series *Masques et Visages* in a final burst of creativity. These lithographs revealed a different, more mature style, with darker humor and looser handling of the lithographic crayon, but the public was disappointed not to find the playful, stylish images they were familiar with in Gavarni's earlier work, and his popularity quickly waned. After 1853, Gavarni turned away from lithography to watercolor and drawing, as well as a few experiments with other printmaking techniques such as etching. He eventually becoming increasingly reclusive and obsessed with his other two great loves, mathematics and his garden, until his death in 1866. This very brief overview of both the history of lithography and Gavarni's career is important for informing our understanding of the Goncourts' etchings and their two written engagements with Gavarni's art, *La Lorette* and *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*. The brothers' etchings and texts fall at very different points in both the brothers' career and Gavarni's career, as well as in the fluctuating popularity of lithography and etching as print media. The next section now begins at the start of this period, by exploring how the Goncourt brothers' etchings relate to *La Lorette*, their first written work inspired by Gavarni.

### ***Artistes-écrivains: Gavarni's légendes and La Lorette***

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One of the most surprising aspects of the Goncourt brothers' etchings after Gavarni is that none of them reproduce his famous lithographs. Instead, the brothers opted to copy watercolors or pen and ink sketches by Gavarni, a crucial point that has not yet been addressed by critics. When Ségolène Le Men discusses Jules' etchings, for example, she contends that they are:

plus graphiques que picturales; gravées par la pointe, elles traitent le dessin comme une écriture au trait, mais ne s'engagent nulle part dans la voie de

la création, plus picturale, liée à la matière lithographique, qu'ils décrivent si bien dans les longues phrases énumératives de leur texte.<sup>19</sup>

However, this critique that Jules' etchings fail to capture the more pictorial qualities of lithography, its ability to capture subtle tones of light and shadow, misses the fact that Jules was not trying to reproduce the effects of lithography in his etchings. When viewed instead as reproductions of the very different technique of pen and ink drawing, etchings such as *Femme en chapeau* (Fig. 26) and *Profil d'homme* (Fig. 27) reveal Jules' effective translation of this medium into etching. The multiple states of his etching of *Thomas Vireloque* (Fig. 28) similarly show how Jules experimented with adjusting the shading through crosshatching and deeper biting in order to capture Gavarni's watercolor technique. While Edmond's etching *Tête d'homme* reveals a more awkward attempt to recreate Gavarni's technique line by line in the way Le Men criticizes, Jules' etchings after Gavarni represent a deeper understanding of Gavarni's work – just not his work as a lithographer.

In this section, I explore the question of why the Goncourt brothers chose to make their etchings after watercolors and drawings rather than Gavarni's more well-known lithographs. I propose that their etchings reveal a tension between artistic homage and creative differentiation, a tension raised by Gavarni's embodiment of the figure of the "artiste-écrivain." As "aquafortistes-écrivains," the Goncourt brothers tread on the same ground as Gavarni, who was also considered to be doubly talented, known as both an artist and a writer for his *légendes*. Unlike other caricaturists who did not write their own captions (Charles Philipon famously wrote Daumier's captions), Gavarni wrote his own, which usually record the speech of the figures in the image, often in extensive dialogue or monologue, or with snippets of songs or poems. Gavarni's captions also differentiated him

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<sup>19</sup> Le Men, "Les Goncourt et Gavarni," 85.

from other contemporary caricaturists whose work used physical distortion or exaggeration for comic effect. In contrast, the humor of Gavarni's lithographs lies in the pairing of image and text, rather than in the image alone. As Baudelaire writes in "Quelques caricaturistes françaises," when comparing Daumier and Gavarni, "Daumier est un génie franc et direct. Ôtez-lui la légende, le dessin reste une belle et claire chose. Il n'en est pas ainsi de Gavarni; celui-ci est double: il y a le dessin, plus la légende."<sup>20</sup> Gavarni's captions immediately raise the chicken-and-egg question of whether the image or the text came first, one that Henri Béraudi jokingly suggested had achieved "un peu l'air d'une controverse théologique" among nineteenth-century critics: "le Verbe existait-il dès le commencement du dessin, ou seulement l'idée première du Verbe?"<sup>21</sup> According to the Goncourts (to whom Béraudi defers), Gavarni told them that his captions arose naturally from his images, not the other way around: "J'attaque ma pierre sans penser à la légende, et ce sont mes personnages qui me la disent [...] Quand je fais mon dessin en vue d'une légende faite, j'ai beaucoup de mal, je me fatigue; et cela vient toujours moins bien: *les légendes poussent dans mon crayon, sans que je les prévoie ou que j'y aie pensé avant.*"<sup>22</sup>

Gavarni's art was so indissociable from his captions that it was commonplace to refer to him as an *écrivain*, *homme de lettres* or *littérateur* as well as an *artiste*. However, as Therese Dolan Stamm has explored, these terms could be used to both praise and criticize his work. For critics like Baudelaire or Champfleury who preferred the work of Daumier over Gavarni, captions like Gavarni's were unnecessary to true caricature and even a distraction or a compensation for insufficient drawing skills. For Baudelaire, "le

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "Quelques caricaturistes françaises," in *Écrits sur l'art*, 225.

<sup>21</sup> Henri Béraudi, "Gavarni," in *Les Graveurs du XIX siècle: guide de l'amateur d'estampes modernes*, vol. 7 (Paris: Librairie L. Conquet, 1888), 28.

<sup>22</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, 274. Italics in original. However, as Béraudi notes, this claim should be taken with a grain of salt, offering examples of how Gavarni researched his captions. When creating his series *La Boîte aux lettres* for instance, Béraudi records that Gavarni "avait acheté comme documents à étudier, des lettres au poids chez les épiciers. Il se préoccupait longuement de composer des noms drôles" Béraudi, "Gavarni," 29.

plus beau est dans la légende, le dessin étant impuissant à dire tant de choses.”<sup>23</sup> Yet other critics such as Balzac, Gautier, and the Goncourt brothers wholeheartedly praised Gavarni’s combination of text and image.<sup>24</sup> In the concluding sentence of *Gavarni, l’homme et l’œuvre*, Jules and Edmond sum up Gavarni’s life’s work as “un Œuvre de dix mille pièces, où se trouve, pour la première fois dans l’histoire de l’art, le talent de l’artiste réuni au talent de l’écrivain.”<sup>25</sup> They are careful to differentiate between *écrivain* and *littérateur*, writing that:

Gavarni n’est pas à proprement parler un littérateur; il est un écrivain de légendes et de pensées. Là, il est un maître et peut lutter avec les plus forts condensateurs de l’observation ou de l’esprit français. Dans la prose française, quelle prose plus spirituelle que celle qu’il jette au-dessous de ses lithographies!<sup>26</sup>

The contrast between *littérateur* and *écrivain* emphasizes Gavarni’s observation and reproduction of reality rather than a more imaginative type of literary creation, capturing the brothers’ characterization of his writing as a type of stenography, which I explore in the next section. As an *artiste-écrivain*, Gavarni joins the Goncourts’ two favorite eighteenth-century artists, Watteau and Fragonard, whom the brothers depict as figures of the *peintre-poète* in *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. As Dominique Pety has explored, Jules and Edmond find in these artists the ultimate combination of literature and art, representing “surtout l’affirmation que tout artiste véritable, qu’il soit peintre ou écrivain, aura la double capacité de restituer la chair et l’idée.”<sup>27</sup>

Throughout their career, the Goncourt brothers similarly aspired to embody the figure of the *artiste-écrivain* or *peintre-poète*. Stéphanie Champeau has written

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<sup>23</sup> Baudelaire, “Quelques caricaturistes françaises,” 225.

<sup>24</sup> J.J. Grandville provides another example of a nineteenth-century caricaturist who divided critics over his “literary” nature. See Michèle Hannoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature: From the Comic to an Art of Modernity* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, “From Metaphor to Metamorphosis: Visual/Verbal Wordplay and the Aesthetics of Modernity in Grandville’s Caricature,” *Word & Image* 29, no. 4 (October 2013): 456–86.

<sup>25</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Gavarni, l’homme et l’œuvre*, 432.

<sup>26</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 109.

<sup>27</sup> Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection*, 338.

extensively on the brothers' use of the word "artiste" and their application of the term equally across both writing and visual arts, from the description of the brothers' writing style as "écriture artiste" to Edmond's characterization of their house and collection as "la maison d'un artiste."<sup>28</sup> As *aquafortistes* (and previously, as watercolorists), the Goncourts put into practice the artistic sensibilities that they believe qualify them to be *artistes* even in their writing or collecting habits. The ambiguous "stylus" held by the hand in their *ex libris*, which resembles both a pen and an etching needle, captures the dual nature of the brothers' creative aspirations, as does the fact that this image etched by Jules was placed within each book that they wrote. It seems particularly fitting that Gavarni, the artist who the Goncourts felt best united art and writing, designed the image.

However, if Gavarni was an inspiration to fuse art and writing, his work also posed a challenge to Jules and Edmond to compete with and even surpass their mentor. Keri Yousif has argued that the Goncourts' first literary success, *La Lorette*, demonstrates this tension between emulation and competition, and I want to suggest that the Goncourts' etchings after Gavarni, including their frontispiece for *La Lorette*, reveal a similar tension. Only a few months after meeting Gavarni, Jules and Edmond published the six chapters of *La Lorette* in *Le Paris* and *L'Éclair* from November 1852 to January 1853, which were then compiled and published as a booklet in August 1853. In their "physiologie," Jules and Edmond depict the *lorette*, a fashionable young woman who entertained multiple paying clients, occupying a middle ground between the humble *grisette* and the wealthy courtesan.<sup>29</sup> By the 1850s, the *lorette* was a well-established type, having been popularized a decade earlier by Gavarni in a series of prints published in *Le Charivari*

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<sup>28</sup> For more on *écriture artiste*, see Chapter IV.

<sup>29</sup> Gavarni's prints and the Goncourts' *La Lorette* fit into the larger craze for *physiologies*, or types, in the 1840s. See Richard Sieburth, "Une idéologie du lisible: le phénomène des Physiologies." *Romantisme* 15, no. 47 (1985): 39–60.

from 1842-43.<sup>30</sup> As Baudelaire wrote, “Gavarni a créé la Lorette. Elle existait bien un peu avant lui, mais il l’a complétée.”<sup>31</sup> However, where Gavarni's lithographs depicted the *lorette* as a playful young flirt, portraying her amusing exploits with multiple deluded men, the Goncourts deliberately depicted the *lorette* in a completely different light as “la femme estomac,”<sup>32</sup> a greedy, dangerous, destructive woman who preys on men. Unlike the earlier, lighthearted vision of the *lorette* initiated by Gavarni, the Goncourts’ book inaugurated a new series of works that viewed the *lorette* through a negative lens.<sup>33</sup>

In *La Lorette*, the Goncourt brothers thus negotiate a complicated relationship with Gavarni. On one hand, his lithographs are the inspiration and basis for their book, which they dedicate to “notre ami Gavarni.” On the other, the brothers specifically highlight the difference between their approach and Gavarni’s prints, addressing Gavarni in their dedication by stating “Vous trouverez dans ces quelques lignes du cru, du brutal même: il est des plaies qu’on ne peut toucher qu’au fer chaud.”<sup>34</sup> In a note to the reader, they again emphasize their role in contradicting the popular depiction of the *lorette*, writing that “[le lecteur] verra ainsi qui, le premier, a protesté contre l’assomption de la Lorette.”<sup>35</sup>

Courtney Sullivan and Lucette Czyba have interpreted this difference between the Goncourts and Gavarni’s versions of the *lorette* as a result of larger social and political changes in the transition from the July Monarchy to the Second Empire, particularly the rise of the bourgeoisie and new forms of capitalist consumption.<sup>36</sup> However, I would like to focus here on Keri Yousif’s reading of *La Lorette* as a way for Jules and Edmond to move from admirers of Gavarni to competitors. Yousif argues that the Goncourts’

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<sup>30</sup> The term “lorette” was first coined in 1841 by journalist Nestor Roqueplan to describe young girls living in the newly developed Notre-Dame de Lorette neighborhood of Paris.

<sup>31</sup> Baudelaire, “Quelques caricaturistes françaises,” 225.

<sup>32</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *La Lorette* (Tusson: Du Lérot, 2002), 58.

<sup>33</sup> Courtney A. Sullivan, “‘Cautériser La Plaie’.”

<sup>34</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *La Lorette*.

<sup>35</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt.

<sup>36</sup> Sullivan, “Cautériser La Plaie”; Lucette Czyba, “Paris et la lorette,” in *Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: aspects d’un mythe littéraire* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1984).

provocative posture in *La Lorette* was a way to make a name for themselves as young authors, as well as a response to the rise of popular visual imagery like Gavarni's lithographs, which "cast a shadow on literary production as writers were now forced to contend with an encroaching image."<sup>37</sup> She argues that the brothers competed with Gavarni's lithographs by using the same methods that he employs in his images. Jules and Edmond show their ability to create a rival "verbal caricature" in *La Lorette* through the text's division "into a succession of verbal sketches that rely on reduction, exaggeration, and repetition [...] the exact tenants of visual caricature, in which a figure is reduced to its most salient characteristics for humorous effect."<sup>38</sup>

I agree with Yousif that *La Lorette* shows the Goncourts taking on the challenge of directly competing with Gavarni. Even the writers most supportive of Gavarni's work set up a rivalry between the artist and his literary contemporaries. Balzac claimed that "Gavarni a fait un livre à son insu, il vole les écrivains du jour"<sup>39</sup> while Gautier contended that "en deux lignes au bas de ses planches, [Gavarni] a écrit plus de comédies, de vaudevilles et d'études de mœurs que tous les auteurs de ce temps-ci ensemble."<sup>40</sup> However, rather than reflecting a wider anxiety about the invasion of images into the world of literature, I believe *La Lorette* represents an equivocal attempt by Jules and Edmond both to emulate Gavarni's unique status as "artiste-écrivain" in his captions and also attempt to outdo him. Yousif's description of *La Lorette* as "verbal caricature" misses the fact that Gavarni's images do not use the kind of visual caricature she describes. Instead, it would be more accurate to describe the Goncourts' text as a series of *légendes*. Whereas the brothers' usual writing style features long sentences, a multitude of adjectives

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<sup>37</sup> Yousif, "Word, Image, Woman: Gavarni's and the Goncourts' Portrayal of the Lorette," 24.

<sup>38</sup> Yousif, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Honoré de Balzac, "Travestissemens pour 1832 et Physionomie de la population de Paris," *L'Artiste*, 1832, sec. III, 51.

<sup>40</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Portraits contemporains: littérateurs, peintres, sculpteurs, artistes dramatiques* (Paris: Charpentier, 1874), 337–38.

and inverted clauses, Jules and Edmond only use short sentences in *La Lorette*, often repeating the same declarative structure, effectively creating a series of one-liners that read like Gavarni's captions. By writing their own "captions," Jules and Edmond set out to demonstrate that they are also able to "mêler le cru et le haut, l'observation et les considérations en deux lignes,"<sup>41</sup> emulating Gavarni's style but also seeking to surpass it with their new version of the *lorette*.

This mix of emulation and competition attests not only to the way in which the brothers responded to Gavarni on a personal level as a rival as well as an artistic idol, but also to the difficulty of fully reconciling the two halves of the *artiste-écrivain*. If Gavarni sought to bring writing into the world of art with his captions, the Goncourts would go on to make their career by bringing art into the world of writing, beginning with turning Gavarni's images of the *lorette* into words. The Goncourt brothers' relationship with Gavarni is usually treated as unqualified admiration, even filial piety, however, *La Lorette* challenges this interpretation, revealing a similarity with the more ambiguous way in which, for example, Baudelaire reacted to Gavarni's art. As Michèle Hannoosh has observed, Baudelaire's criticism of Gavarni as an *homme de lettres*, who "comme tous les hommes de lettres [...] est légèrement teinté de corruption," using his "hypocrisie charmante" to flatter rather than expose the faults of society, reads as a type of "suppressed admiration" and that "the deprecatory familiarity with which he treats Gavarni may signal a self-portrait, or even a self-caricature, the poet's confrontation with his own ethics, aesthetics, and politics."<sup>42</sup> Gavarni, I want to suggest, acts as a similar foil for the Goncourt brothers, especially once they became printmakers themselves.

A decade after the initial publication of *La Lorette*, Jules' 1862 etching of

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<sup>41</sup> *JC*, I: 283. July 1, 1856. "À faire quelque chose comme *La Lorette* [...] y mêler le cru et le haut, l'observation et les considérations en deux lignes."

<sup>42</sup> Hannoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature*, 180.

Gavarni's sketches for a frontispiece to *La Lorette* (Fig. 29) adds another layer to the ambiguity of the text-image relationship in this work. Like the brothers' *ex libris*, Jules and Edmond probably requested a design for the frontispiece from Gavarni, which was then etched by Jules, resulting in a type of collaborative artwork. The frontispiece also enacts a doubly retrospective gaze: if, in 1852, *La Lorette* looked back a decade to Gavarni's 1840s lithographs, in 1862 both Gavarni and the Goncourt brothers use their respective takes on the *lorette* to create a third image together. In his etching, Jules chose to reproduce Gavarni's preliminary sketches as well as the final sketch, providing a fascinating insight into Gavarni's creative process for both the viewer and for Jules as copyist.<sup>43</sup> We see Gavarni restlessly experimenting with the pose of the model, adding and taking away clothes, even reversing the orientation of the page. In the final image, the *lorette* faces the viewer, wearing a see-through dress with a sign reading "To Let" (in English) around her waist, leaning confidently against a book with "Edmond et Jules" just visible on the cover.<sup>44</sup> How should we read this image? Is it an opportunity for Gavarni to reclaim the figure of the *lorette*, demonstrating his power to summarize the Goncourts' text in one figure? Or does the larger than life book next to the figure overshadow his creation, acknowledging the rival status achieved by the Goncourts' book since its publication a decade earlier? Gavarni and the Goncourt brothers, text and image, vie for our attention in this frontispiece, testifying to the impossibility of separating art and writing for both the *artiste-écrivain* and the two *écrivains-artistes*.

In addition to this frontispiece, Jules and Edmond's other etchings after Gavarni provide a similarly ambiguous perspective on the brothers' treatment of the artist as both inspiration and rival. By only reproducing watercolors and drawings, not Gavarni's

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<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, the location of Gavarni's original sketch is not known today.

<sup>44</sup> The "To Let" sign must have been too scandalous to publish, as when the frontispiece was finally printed in the 1883 edition of *La Lorette*, the sign was removed (Fig. 30).

lithographs, the brothers seem to avoid competing with the artist on his own terms. On one level, this choice could have been due to the shift in Gavarni's career towards watercolor and drawing and away from lithography by the time the brothers made their etchings in the early 1860s. As watercolorists themselves, Jules and Edmond also particularly admired Gavarni's "solides, puissantes, brillantes" watercolors, which they praise in *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* as "parmi les plus belles des aquarelles modernes."<sup>45</sup> They might have been motivated to multiply and share these lesser-known works in print through their etchings, similar to their copies of eighteenth-century drawings in their collection.<sup>46</sup>

In their very use of the medium of etching, however, Jules and Edmond add an undercurrent of artistic rivalry that mirrors that of *La Lorette*, affirming their ability to work in an art form that Gavarni had not mastered. In Chapter CXIX of *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, the Goncourt brothers recount Gavarni's brief, unfortunate experiment with etching. In 1857, Gavarni tried etching a series of contemporary portraits, including one of Balzac which the Goncourts claim, "sur le cuivre, était un chef-d'œuvre de finesse, d'esprit."<sup>47</sup> But when the plates were sent off for biting, they were ruined by the acid, and afterwards, the brothers recount, "Gavarni n'eut pas le courage de les reprendre, et, dégoûté par la cuisine et la chimie de la chose, il renonçait définitivement à l'eau-forte."<sup>48</sup> Although Jules and Edmond displace the blame for the failure of Gavarni's experiment with etching onto the complexities of the etching process, we know that they themselves had mastered this process and used it to do what Gavarni could not. The brothers felt that etching was a particularly good fit for capturing the freedom and expressivity of Gavarni's pen and ink drawing technique, describing it as "ce genre pour lequel semblait né l'artiste

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<sup>45</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, 322.

<sup>46</sup> Five of the etchings were made after watercolors and drawings in the Goncourts' collection: *Thomas Vireloque*, *Groupe de têtes d'hommes*, *Homme endormi*, *Chanteurs ambulants*, and *Un Figurant*.

<sup>47</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, 380.

<sup>48</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 322.

qui faisait ces dessins à la plume, d'une plume si légère et si volante, si pittoresquement griffonnante."<sup>49</sup> Reproducing Gavarni's drawings in etching thus allowed the brothers to pay homage to his artistic talents, while also demonstrating their own, different talents as *aquafortistes*.

By practicing etching alongside their writing in the 1860s, Jules and Edmond model themselves after Gavarni as an *artiste-écrivain* but do so in a medium beyond his artistic capabilities. While their etchings after Gavarni thus remain a testimony to their great admiration for the artist, it is important to acknowledge this undertone of rivalry, as it is precisely through homage and emulation that Jules and Edmond attempt to challenge and even surpass Gavarni as both authors in *La Lorette* and artists in their etchings. Several years after their etchings, and over a decade after *La Lorette*, however, the brothers' work on *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* demonstrates a different relationship with Gavarni's art, one I now explore in the final section of this chapter.

### **Biography and Stenography in *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre***

On November 25, 1866, Jules and Edmond woke up to shocking news: "Je me lève, je monte en haut, j'ouvre *La France*: Gavarni mort! Nouvelle brusque, un coup de foudre! L'enterrement à l'heure où je lis cela...Et nous n'y serons pas, nous ne serons pas derrière le cercueil de l'homme que nous avons le plus aimé et le plus admiré!"<sup>50</sup> After the brothers' close relationship with Gavarni during the 1850s and the early 1860s, they largely lost contact with the artist in the final years of his life. Following the news of Gavarni's funeral, the brothers wrote that same day to Sainte-Beuve, who had previously written a major article on Gavarni,<sup>51</sup> expressing their desire to write their own biography:

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<sup>49</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 380.

<sup>50</sup> *JR*, II: 51.

<sup>51</sup> Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Masques et Visages: Gavarni* (Paris: C. Lévy, 1886).

“un jour peut-être, quant [sic] le flot des larmes de chroniqueurs aura passé, essayerons-nous d’apporter à la gloire du grand peintre de la vie moderne, un pieux travail d’étude et de souvenirs, qui n’oubliera pas le vôtre et qui ne le fera pas oublier.”<sup>52</sup> They then quickly paid a visit to the artist’s son Pierre a week later and then again in March the following year. They took home Gavarni’s “Mémoires” on March 8, 1867: “Nous nous sauvons comme des voleurs, avec deux volumes sous le bras, les Mémoires de Gavarni que son fils vient de nous confier. Nous avons eu peu de joies si vives.”<sup>53</sup> Occupied with writing *Madame Gervaisais* in 1867, the brothers did not record any more engagement with Gavarni’s work in the *Journal* until February 5, 1868 when they paid another visit to Pierre Gavarni:

Nous emportons de chez Pierre Gavarni des cartons de papiers, vrais morceaux de la vie de Gavarni, et nous nous y plongeons du lever au coucher. Une espèce d’autopsie, qui semble aspirer, absorber notre existence, nous la laisser à peine, si bien qu’il nous semble ne plus exister de notre vie propre, mais de la vie de l’homme que nous suivons, que nous creusons, derrière lequel nous emboîtons le pas.<sup>54</sup>

The metaphor of an “autopsie” here is immediately similar to the Goncourts’ methodology in their work on eighteenth-century art and history, where they dissect the intimate details of the past using the paper traces left behind in the form of letters, diaries, pamphlets, prints etc.<sup>55</sup> The description of their utter absorption in their research is also strikingly similar to the brothers’ many descriptions of etching in the *Journal*, where they emphasize how etching makes them forget “la vie, les ennuis, tout au monde et le monde entier” leading them to spend “de grands jours, d’un bout à l’autre, à vivre tout là-dedans.”<sup>56</sup> The

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<sup>52</sup> Jules de Goncourt, *Lettres de Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1885), 259.

<sup>53</sup> *JR*, II: 68.

<sup>54</sup> *JR*, II: 131.

<sup>55</sup> The brothers’ description echoes their *Journal* entry from the end of February 1854, when they were researching their *Histoire de la société française pendant la Révolution*: “Le matin, nous emportons, d’un coup quatre à cinq cents brochures de chez M. Perrot qui loge près de nous, rue des Martyrs. [...] Toute la journée, nous dépouillons le papier révolutionnaire et, la nuit, nous écrivons notre livre.” *JC*, II: 139.

<sup>56</sup> *JC*, II: 214.

processes of researching and writing *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* and making etchings after Gavarni are thus linked as two different ways of using complete immersion to gain insights into the artist's life and work. In this section I analyze *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* and the Goncourts' etchings together for the first time, using a key metaphor that the Goncourts' introduce in their text: stenography.

In *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, Jules and Edmond use the metaphor of stenography to describe both Gavarni's famous *légendes* and their own work as biographers. In Chapter LXXXIV, dedicated to Gavarni's captions, they write: "N'avez-vous pas rêvé parfois d'une sténographie de l'idiome courant, usuel, débraillé, qu'un peuple et un temps emportent avec eux? une sténographie de la langue parlée et causée? [...] La légende de Gavarni est cette sténographie."<sup>57</sup> Mirroring Gavarni's ability to work as a stenographer and seize the essence of contemporary speech through his captions, the Goncourt brothers similarly present their task in *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* in terms of stenography, describing the monograph as "une biographie, pour ainsi dire parlée, – où la parole du causeur, de l'homme qui se raconte, est notée avec la fidélité d'un sténographe."<sup>58</sup> Why stenography? Stenography, or "shorthand," uses symbols or characters instead of conventional "longhand" letters to enable a writer to capture speech more effectively, "pour écrire aussi vite qu'on parle," as Jacques Cossard explains in the title of a 1651 treatise introducing stenography to France.<sup>59</sup> Stenography was popularized in France during the Revolution, where it was used to record legislative debates and trials, and became increasingly prevalent and commercialized in the nineteenth century. In *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, the Goncourt brothers take stenography from its political or

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<sup>57</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, 271.

<sup>58</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, i.

<sup>59</sup> Informal practices of stenography date back to the Greeks, continued through medieval Europe, and were first codified in England by John Willis' 1602 treatise. For more on the history of stenography, see Albert Navarre, *Histoire générale de la sténographie et de l'écriture à travers les âges* (Institut sténographique de France, 1909).

commercial uses to apply it to both Gavarni's art and their writing. They also focus primarily on stenography's association with accuracy, rather than its use of special characters or speed. In their introduction, the brothers highlight the "fidélité" of their stenography, while Gavarni's captions are praised for their ability to reproduce "la langue parlée et causée" so accurately that his words "vous tombent dans l'oreille du bout du salon ou du coin d'une rue."<sup>60</sup>

Rather than drawing parallels between specific stenographic techniques and Gavarni's captions or their writing, the Goncourts draw on a more general conception of stenography as a means of moving between the spoken and written word, between the oral and the visual. For Jules and Edmond, orality is the key feature of Gavarni's captions, which usually record direct speech, whether a comment by one figure or a dialogue between multiple characters in the same print. In addition to Gavarni's use of contemporary colloquialisms to bring words to life and capture "l'idiome courant, usuel, débrillé" of nineteenth-century France, Jules and Edmond also highlight how his use of syntax and punctuation lends an oral/aural quality to his writing:

chez Gavarni, les apostrophes, les balivernes, les dialogues ne sont jamais des phrases. Ils sont toujours une parole. Ils ont les coupures, les réticences, la syntaxe au petit bonheur, le flux, le désordre et l'éclair du verbe sous le coup d'une émotion ou d'une pensée. Ils ont l'essoufflement même de la voix.<sup>61</sup>

The brothers here praise Gavarni's ability not only to record the content of speech but also to capture individual, emotional, idiosyncratic *ways* of speaking, "la parole comme elle parle."<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, when Jules and Edmond characterize *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* as a "une biographie, pour ainsi dire parlée," a record of "la parole du causeur, de l'homme

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<sup>60</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, 271.

<sup>61</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 272.

<sup>62</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 273.

qui se raconte,” their emphasis on Gavarni as a conversationalist reflects the brothers’ knowledge of the artist through his own spoken words. As Pierre-Jean Dufief has observed, the Goncourts are interested in recording speech in their eighteenth-century biographies as well, where they use letters as key sources in order to become “les archivistes du discours, les paradoxaux conservateurs de ce qui semble ne pouvoir être conservé, les paroles qui volent.”<sup>63</sup> However, rather than relying on letters as the closest approximation to speech, Jules and Edmond are able to return to their previous records of Gavarni’s speech in the *Journal*. Throughout the *Journal*, perhaps the ultimate stenographic document, Jules and Edmond record everything from passing comments overheard on the street to transcriptions of entire conversations from their many dinners. Among this polyphony of recorded voices, Gavarni’s stands out, literally separated on the page under the written heading “Gavarniana” in entries from 1852-55.<sup>64</sup> As Ségolène Le Men notes, in these sections, the brothers use some of the same methods of punctuation and syntax that Gavarni employs in his captions, such that “les “Gavarniana,” comme les légendes des lithographies, peuvent se lire à haute voix.”<sup>65</sup> The brothers’ use of exclamations and rhetorical questions captures the idiosyncratic texture of Gavarni’s speech, while periods and dashes suggest pauses and emphasis, capturing the halting nature of Gavarni’s verbal *légendes* unfolding in real time. On March 1855, for example, they record: “Gavarni a dit: “Ah! c’est excellent d’avoir les pieds froids pour travailler – ou d’avoir faim. – Parce que tout le sang est à la tête. – La pensée est une congestion.”<sup>66</sup> Or in 1852, “Oui, il y a du progrès. – Mais le Progrès? – Que’est-ce que la vapeur? Si

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<sup>63</sup> Pierre-Jean Dufief, “Les Goncourt et l’archive vivante,” in Bourguinat and Reverzy, *Les Goncourt historiens*, 32.

<sup>64</sup> Ségolène Le Men observes that the -ana suffix “fait écho à la célèbre série de Daumier Caricaturana, ainsi qu’à l’habitude, en bibliophilie, d’instaurer par ce moyen des familles de titres et d’ouvrages.” Le Men, “Les Goncourt et Gavarni,” 76.

<sup>65</sup> Le Men, “Les Goncourt et Gavarni,” 77.

<sup>66</sup> *JC*, I: 184.

vous avez décuplé le besoin de Vitesse de l'homme."<sup>67</sup> It is often hard to tell Gavarni's spoken aphorisms from his published *légendes*, as in a personal favorite from 1855: "Au Musée, il y a trois lignes: les gens qui regardent les tableaux, les gens qui regardent les poches des gens qui regardent les tableaux et les gens qui regardent les mains des gens qui regardent les poches des gens qui regardent les tableaux."<sup>68</sup>

For *Le Men*, such stenographic recordings in the *Journal* and *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* "rédui[sent] la présence des deux frères à [une] fonction mécaniste, à [un] prolongement instrumental d'un auteur virtuel" rendering them no more than "un appareil d'enregistrement."<sup>69</sup> However, I would argue that this characterization does not fully capture the Goncourt brothers' (somewhat idiosyncratic) view of stenography. Introducing another nineteenth-century method of recording speech, the phonograph, as an alternative metaphor to stenography helps elucidate the difference. Jean-Louis Cabanès has explored how the Goncourts' work, recording and reproducing speech and sound in their *Journal* and novels, combines the action of the phonograph with that of a stenograph, creating "une sténographie que l'on ose dire phonographique."<sup>70</sup> Yet there are some key differences between the two recording methods. Instead of translating from the ear of the listener to the eye of the reader (via the hand of the stenographer), the phonograph is capable of perfectly and directly imitating the subtleties of speech and voice. Although both the phonograph and stenography involve an intermediary (a needle or a pen), stenography requires the presence of the human hand and, in the Goncourts' and Gavarni's writing, the creativity to render the expressive qualities of voice through linguistic elements like syntax and punctuation. When Léon Daudet referred to the Goncourt brothers as "sublimes phonographes," for example, Edmond complained that

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<sup>67</sup> *JC*, I: 74.

<sup>68</sup> *JC*, I: 74.

<sup>69</sup> *Le Men*, "Les Goncourt et Gavarni," 78.

<sup>70</sup> Jean-Louis Cabanès, "Les Goncourt phonographes," in Cabanès et al., *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle*, 32.

this characterization limited their writing to mere mechanical reproduction, rather than emphasizing the role of creativity in the brothers' work.<sup>71</sup> It is the entirely technological, impersonal process of the phonograph from which the Goncourts seek to distance themselves, whereas stenography, in their view, is more about a creative process of intervention and translation.

Although the brothers assure the reader of the “fidélité” of their stenography in *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, their approach to Gavarni's biography was, in reality, much more subjective. Unlike their biographies of eighteenth-century figures whom they had never met, the Goncourts had to adopt a new approach to biography when writing the life of someone they knew personally. As Julian Zanetta puts it, the brothers were torn between “respect et profanation, adhésion des fils adoptifs et distance des biographes, admiration éperdue à l'égard de l'artiste et circonspection d'analystes rigoureux quant à l'homme, conformément à leur profession de foi réaliste.”<sup>72</sup> In a *Journal* entry for February 8, 1868, Jules and Edmond acknowledge that they would not be able to share “toute la vérité vraie,”<sup>73</sup> in their biography, omitting some of the more unseemly aspects of Gavarni's life, such as the fact that his father made him legitimate by marrying his mother, a seamstress. The brothers reflect that “ce que c'est pourtant que l'histoire, quand on l'écrit de gens qu'on a connus et aimés!” Beyond making sure their biography is tasteful, however, they also acknowledge an even greater power as biographers:

Une des joies d'orgueil de l'homme de lettres –quand cet homme de lettres est un artiste –c'est de sentir en lui la faculté de pouvoir immortaliser à son gré ce qu'il lui plaît d'immortaliser. Dans ce peu de chose qu'il est, il a comme la conscience d'une divinité créatrice. Dieu crée des existences; l'homme d'imagination crée des vies fictives, qui laissent dans la mémoire du monde un souvenir plus profond, plus vécu pour ainsi dire.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *JR*, III: 325. September 26, 1889.

<sup>72</sup> Zanetta, “‘Tout l'homme’: le Gavarni des Goncourt,” 168.

<sup>73</sup> *JR*, II: 132.

<sup>74</sup> *JR*, II: 132.

Unlike the objective accuracy of the phonograph, the Goncourts deliberately preserve, and revel, in the possibility of subjective, selective, even god-like intervention through their supposedly faithful stenography.<sup>75</sup>

This contrast between stenography and the phonograph can also help us situate the brothers' etchings in relation to *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, as well as to their illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Parallels between etching and the phonograph seem inescapable in the shared vocabulary of a "needle" that "etches" lines into a copperplate or record, and the use of incised lines to transmit information, whether visual or audible. The slippage between the terms of recording and printmaking is even more evident in French: Cabanès, for example, describes the action of the phonograph as "un instant vocal qui se grave [...] la vie palpitante que la gravure des voix fixe, invente ou ressuscite."<sup>76</sup> In spite of these similarities, however, etching is closer to the Goncourt brothers' understanding of stenography in *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*. As discussed in Chapter I, the brothers viewed their etchings as requiring creative effort, even when they are reproductions of another artist's work. Paradoxically, it is their search for an ever more accurate imitation of Gavarni's artworks that pushes them to the expressive limits of etching, in the same way that Cabanès argues that it is precisely the impossibility of achieving a perfect phonographic reproduction that acts as a creative challenge for the Goncourts as stenographers in their writing: "c'est parce que l'écrit tire de toutes ses forces sur le système sémiotique et articulatoire qui est le sien, comme s'il voulait basculer vers une impossible oralité, que l'on peut déceler dans cette tension un sublime phonographique."<sup>77</sup> Like their biography, the brothers' etchings also give them the power to memorialize a selective part of Gavarni's work, as shown by their eclectic choice of artworks to copy.

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<sup>75</sup> I will discuss this idea further in Chapter V when I examine how Edmond constructed Jules' reputation as an *aquafortiste* after his death.

<sup>76</sup> Cabanès, "Les Goncourt phonographes," 32.

<sup>77</sup> Cabanès, 36.

Stenography as a metaphor also helps us think about the “sur le vif” nature of the brothers’ etchings after Gavarni. Unlike their illustrations for *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, where it was the act of etching that allowed them to uncover the artist’s creative process and the movement of his hand, Jules and Edmond already had direct knowledge of Gavarni’s process from watching him work. As they preface one of their eloquent descriptions of Gavarni’s technique in *Gavarni, l’homme et l’œuvre*, “nous sommes restés bien des heures à le regarder travailler, car c’était un vrai miracle que de voir Gavarni *couvrir* une pierre: on avait devant soi comme le génie du dessin en action.”<sup>78</sup> Their etchings are thus less about uncovering the mysteries of artistic creation and more about turning real-life, fleeting observations of Gavarni at work into tangible visual records, in the same way that stenography fixes the ephemeral nature of speech in words. Where the Goncourt brothers’ copies after eighteenth-century artworks helped them create imaginative reconstructions of an inaccessible past, their copies after Gavarni act as a record of direct observation, and even participation, in Gavarni’s creative process.

As we have seen with the frontispiece to *La Lorette*, Jules not only observed Gavarni at work on his sketches, but he was also able to retrace the different stages of the creative process, transferring Gavarni’s thought process on paper to the copperplate. There are also two examples of collaborative etchings that Jules made together with Gavarni: *Profil d’homme* and *Croquis de têtes*. In *Gavarni, l’homme et l’œuvre*, the brothers recount that Gavarni drew the design for *Profil d’homme* (Fig. 27) with a toothpick on the copperplate, which Jules then traced over with the etching needle, writing on the plate that the original drawing was “dessiné au cure-dent par Gavarni.” In *La Maison d’un Artiste*, Edmond also describes another etching where Gavarni drew on the copperplate:

une tête de vieillard aux cheveux et à la barbe blanche, autour de laquelle  
Gavarni, que cela ennuyait d’en faire plus, pria mon frère de mettre

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<sup>78</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Gavarni, l’homme et l’œuvre*, 339.

quelque chose de son cru; et mon frère y a dessiné une tête de femme de profile en madras, et deux têtes de drôlatiques de carnaval, dont l'un porte sur le nez de grandes besicles.<sup>79</sup>

These examples show how the brothers were able to directly observe, and even collaborate with Gavarni in a way that was impossible for their etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

Just as the brothers use their close relationship with Gavarni to give them authority as authors in their biography, their experience of etching after, and alongside, Gavarni offers them an even deeper insight into his work.

Although Jules and Edmond made their etchings years before they even had the idea of writing *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, rather than at the same time as they were writing the book as had been the case with the etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, they surely returned to them for inspiration when writing. The fact that Jules returned to copying after Gavarni while the brothers were writing the monograph with his 1869 etching *Un Figurant* (Fig. 6) suggests that etching would surely have been a valuable critical counterpart to the brothers' writing if Jules' life had not been tragically cut short. Similarly, although the brothers' etchings after Gavarni were not used as illustrations for *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*, it is possible that they might have been included as illustrations similar to the etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* if Jules had survived to oversee the publication.<sup>80</sup> As a different type of "shorthand" for recording their observations of Gavarni's technique, these etchings act as a complement to the brothers' other work as stenographers recording Gavarni's words. Together, these visual and verbal records feed into the Goncourt brothers' biographical approach in *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*. Jules and Edmond used both real-life observations and creative processes of

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<sup>79</sup> Edmond de Goncourt, *La Maison d'un artiste*, ed. Dominique Pety, vol. II (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob, 2003), 369.

<sup>80</sup> Le Men notes, however, that the brothers might not have felt the same need to illustrate *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* as other reproductions of Gavarni's work had already been published, such as Pierre-Jules Hetzel, *Œuvres choisies de Gavarni: études de mœurs contemporaines* (Paris: J. Hetzel et compagnie, 1847).

translation to re-construct Gavarni's life and work, whether transposing spoken words into written words, or translating lines drawn by pen and ink into lines etched into a copperplate.

## **Conclusion**

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In comparison to the etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, which were made with a specific text-image relationship in mind, this chapter has explored how the Goncourt brothers' etchings relate to both Gavarni's work and the brothers' own writing in unexpected ways. Where we might expect their etchings to reproduce Gavarni's famous lithographs, we find Jules and Edmond focusing on a different side of Gavarni's *œuvre* and directly collaborating with the artist in addition to observing and copying his art, all of this taking place years before the brothers even considered writing a biography of Gavarni. The first section began by tracing the Goncourt brothers' relationship with Gavarni relative to the changing fates of both lithography and etching in nineteenth-century France, in order to illuminate the brothers' perspective on Gavarni's art and the intersection of their respective careers as artists and writers. Delving into Gavarni's reputation as an *artiste-écrivain*, I then sought to show how *La Lorette* and the Goncourts' etchings highlight the ways in which Gavarni was both an inspiration and a competitive challenge for the brothers. Finally, I analyzed *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* and the brothers' etchings using the metaphor of stenography in order to contrast their approach to biography and etching in these works with other examples such as *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. If the Goncourts' etchings after Gavarni confound expectations, they ultimately reveal similar complexities and contradictions in the brothers' writing on Gavarni, offering a new lens which has not previously been used to analyze these texts. Together with the illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Jules and Edmond's etchings after Gavarni provide productive ways of reading the brothers' writing on eighteenth and nineteenth-century art

and artists. In the next chapter, I move to examining the Goncourts' other major work on the art world, their novel *Manette Salomon*, exploring how a close reading of the novel in conjunction with the brothers' etching *Le Singe au miroir* reveals anxieties concerning the very act of artistic and literary creation.

## Chapter III

### Monkeys, Mirrors, and Mimesis in *Manette Salomon*

“À Decamps, le singe, la comédie simiesque! et macaques et guenons, – une ménagerie de grimaces! – habillés ou déshabillés, coquettes ou pétrins!”  
– *La Peinture à l’exposition de 1855*



**Fig. 4:** Jules de Goncourt, *Le Singe au miroir*, after Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, etching, 1860

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of James A. Bergquist

Harvard Art Museums

<https://hvard.art/o/235671>

## Introduction

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“L’homme auquel nous ressemblons le plus: c’est Decamps” the Goncourt brothers proclaim in a *Journal* entry from May 28, 1864.<sup>1</sup> After Gavarni, the brothers most identified with nineteenth-century artist Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, who was their favorite contemporary painter. Decamps was one of the most critically acclaimed and popular artists in the first half of the nineteenth century, praised for his use of light, color, and impasto brushwork in his Orientalist paintings.<sup>2</sup> In their review of the 1855 Exposition Universelle, where Decamps was one of the few French artists invited to show a retrospective of his work, Jules and Edmond lavish their praise on Decamps over any other artist, naming him “le maître moderne” and the “seul, selon nous, [qui] est appelé à prendre place dans l’immortalité.”<sup>3</sup> After Decamps’ death in 1860, the brothers also praise the artist in their 1867 novel *Manette Salomon*, where he was the inspiration for the main character Coriolis’ Orientalist paintings and described as a painter of “grande et sauvage poésie,” a “coloriste écrasant, tuant tout autour de lui” and the inventor of a “style héroïque moderne.”<sup>4</sup> In addition to their discussion of Decamps’ artwork in their writing, Jules also made one etching after Decamps, *Le Singe au miroir* (Fig. 4). This chapter takes this etching as its starting point, examining the print in relation to *Manette Salomon* for the first time. Although the etching was made several years before the publication of *Manette Salomon* and was not intended to be used as an illustration, I propose that there are nevertheless several important links between the etching and the novel. In contrast to the two previous chapters, where the connections between the brothers’ etchings and their

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<sup>1</sup> *JC*, III: 747.

<sup>2</sup> See David B. Cass, *Alexandre Gabriel Decamps, 1803-1860: Exhibition and Catalogue* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1984) for an overview of Decamps’ career and critical reception.

<sup>3</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Études d’art*, 202.

<sup>4</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, ed. Michel Crouzet (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 400.

written work were immediately apparent, this chapter examines how Jules and Edmond explored shared themes and issues across their work as *aquafortistes* and novelists even when etching and text are not explicitly linked.

Both Philippe Burty's catalogue and the Inventaire du Fonds Français simply list Jules' *Singe au miroir* etching as "d'après Decamps," without specifying which Decamps painting it reproduces. Further research reveals that Jules in fact selected a surprising artwork to reproduce. Although Decamps was famous for his *singeries*, or paintings depicting monkeys dressed as humans and participating in human activities, *Le Singe au miroir* is not one of his most famous works and it is unclear how Jules and Edmond would have encountered the artwork. The brothers were familiar with some of Decamps' best-known *singeries*: they would have viewed his paintings of *Le Singe peintre* (Fig. 31) and *Les Experts* (Fig. 32), as well as two drawings of *Les Singes boulangers* and *Les Singes charcutiers* at the Exposition Universelle.<sup>5</sup> The brothers' *Salon de 1852* also reviews a lithograph by Soulange-Tessier after *Le Singe peintre*.<sup>6</sup> In the brothers' article on the Exposition Universelle, they make a general reference to Decamps' *singeries*, writing: "À Decamps, le singe, la comédie simiesque! et macaques et guenons, – une ménagerie de grimaces! – habillés ou déshabillés, coquettes ou pétrins!"<sup>7</sup> However, *Le Singe au miroir* was not exhibited at the Exposition Universelle or the 1852 Salon and there remains some confusion today about which Decamps painting Jules copied in his etching.

According to Adolphe Moreau's 1869 catalogue of Decamps' *œuvre*, Decamps made two paintings depicting a monkey looking in a mirror: *Guenon se regardant un*

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<sup>5</sup> *Exposition Universelle de 1855: explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, gravure, lithographie et architecture des artistes vivants, étrangers et français, exposés au Palais des beaux-arts, avenue de Montaigne, le 15 mai 1855.* (Paris: Vinchon, 1855).

<sup>6</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Études d'art*, 163. The brothers give the following description of the lithograph: "Intérieur d'atelier, d'après M. Decamps. Un singe en jaquette est en train de peindre avec toutes sortes de grâces simiesques. Une palette, une pipe, un pistolet, un vase de Chine, –le mobilier du lieu, miraculeusement sortis de l'intérieur velouté de crayon lithographique."

<sup>7</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 202.

*miroir à main* and *Singe se mirant dans une glace* (Fig. 33).<sup>8</sup> The former is now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours and its composition is clearly different from that of the Goncourt print.<sup>9</sup> Although the title is different, Moreau's description of *Singe se mirant dans une glace* painting matches the Goncourt print, but the painting itself is more elusive: the catalogue entry lists only that it was sold in the "vente J. Fau" on the 7th and 8th of January, 1850.<sup>10</sup> I have traced the painting's current location to the Cooper Gallery, in Barnsley, UK, where it was bequeathed by Samuel Joshua Cooper in 1913, but the Cooper Gallery does not have any information about the exhibition history or provenance of the painting, so it is unclear whether the Goncourt brothers would ever have seen the painting in person.<sup>11</sup>

It is possible that Jules and Edmond might have seen the painting during the 1850 Fau auction. The auction catalogue shows that the sale took place at the Hotel des Ventes Mobiliers on the Rue des Jeûneurs, and in addition to the auction on the 7th and 8th of January, the paintings in the collection were also on display in an "exposition publique" January 6th and 7th.<sup>12</sup> While the brothers did not record attending either the auction or exhibition, we know that Jules and Edmond often attended auctions at the Rue des Jeûneurs,<sup>13</sup> and that they were in Paris at the time, so it is possible that they may have visited either the exhibition or the auction. Alternatively, the brothers might never have

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<sup>8</sup> Adolphe Moreau, *Decamps et son œuvre* (Paris: D. Jouast, 1869).

<sup>9</sup> Véronique Miltgen, *Peintures du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1800-1914: catalogue raisonné* (Tours: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Dewey Mosby's 1977 study of Decamps, the most recent catalogue of Decamps' works, only lists the Tours painting, missing *Singe se mirant dans une glace* entirely. See Dewey F. Mosby, "Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, 1803-1860" (Garland, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> Alistair Smith, "The Monkey and the Mirror," *The National Inventory of Continental Paintings in Europe*, <https://vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=88349>.

<sup>12</sup> "Catalogue d'une très importante collection de Tableaux Modernes, par les principaux artistes Français, et d'une belle réunion d'armes et armures anciennes des 16e et 17e siècles, armes orientales, objets d'art et de curiosité...composant le Cabinet de M. Joseph Fau," 1850, Art Sales Catalogues Online, Netherlands Institute for Art History.

<sup>13</sup> Chapter XXXII of *Manette Salomon* even features a memorable scene of Anatole attending a sale of a deceased friend's artworks in an auction house on Rue des Jeûneurs.

seen the painting itself, and might instead have encountered Decamps' work solely through another print. Moreau's catalogue entry for the painting *Singe se mirant dans une glace* refers the reader to a print reproduction, *Le Singe au miroir* (Fig. 34), a lithograph by Eugène Le Roux. The title of this print is the same as the Goncourts' title, providing one piece of evidence that they might have looked at the print rather than the painting. The print was also more widely available, as it was published in a volume of the book *Artistes anciens et modernes* in 1850.<sup>14</sup> If Jules made his etching after Le Roux's print rather than Decamps' painting, this puts their etching in a new light: it is a triple translation from painting to lithography to etching and a reproduction of a reproduction.

This brief exploration of the origins of Jules' etching of *Le Singe au miroir* serves to illustrate how this painting was an unusual choice for reproduction. This chapter sets out to unpack this image further, revealing several aspects that link the etching thematically to *Manette Salomon*, beyond the shared interest in Decamps' artwork. In the first section, I explore how *Le Singe au miroir* brings together two metaphors for the artist, the monkey and the circus performer, that are also central to the Goncourt brothers' critique of artistic creation in *Manette Salomon*. I then consider the role of the mirror in *Le Singe au miroir* and relate the etching to a key scene in *Manette Salomon* where Manette similarly models for a mirror. Both etching and novel, I argue, demonstrate the brothers' ambivalent approach to mimesis in writing and art. Finally, I expand from *Le Singe au miroir* to consider how the brothers' understanding of the etching process as a whole provides an alternative approach to criticisms of "mechanical" arts in *Manette Salomon* and the etching revival more generally.

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<sup>14</sup> The catalogue for the 1897 auction of the "Goncourt Bibliothèque: Livres Modernes" does not list the book as one of the items for sale, but this does not necessarily mean that it was never part of the Goncourt's personal library or that they would not have seen the book elsewhere.

## The Artist as *Singe* and *Saltimbanque*

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Published in 1867, *Manette Salomon* was the Goncourt brothers' sixth novel and the first novel to provide a realistic depiction of the art world of the 1840s and 1850s, portraying the variety of styles and schools that emerged after the decline of Neoclassicism and Romanticism, from the Orientalism of Decamps to the *plein-air* Barbizon school.<sup>15</sup> The novel inscribes itself between Balzac's *Le Chef d'œuvre inconnu* (1831) and Zola's *L'Œuvre* (1886) as a *Künstlerroman* presenting the artist's eternal struggle for original creation, which ends in failure in all three narratives. The first half of the novel traces the story of a group of artists from their training in the same artistic studio to their subsequent careers, focusing on four main characters: Coriolis, a talented Creole artist with aristocratic origins, Anatole, a bohemian artist and prankster, Garnotelle, a successful but pandering Academic painter, and Chassagnol, an art critic and mouthpiece for the Goncourts' aesthetic opinions. Manette, a Jewish woman and professional model, does not appear until the second half of the novel, initiating Coriolis' downfall through her transformation from model to lover, mother, and finally wife. Heavily colored by the Goncourts' misogyny and anti-Semitism, the second half of the novel depicts Manette's increasing control over Coriolis, corrupting his pure love for art and reducing him to a commercial painter.<sup>16</sup> Long overshadowed by Zola's *L'Œuvre*, which Edmond bitterly complained was a thinly veiled copy,<sup>17</sup> today *Manette Salomon* is one of the Goncourt brothers' best-known novels and has been the subject of a variety of critical readings.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Manette Salomon* was first published serially in *Le Temps* under the title of *L'Atelier Langibout* from January-March 1867, then as *Manette Salomon* in November 1867.

<sup>16</sup> See Marie Lathers, *Bodies of Art: French Literary Realism and the Artist's Model* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), for more analysis of Manette's Jewish identity in the novel.

<sup>17</sup> As quoted in the Introduction, for example, Edmond referenced the publication of *L'Œuvre* in a *Journal* entry from April 5, 1886: "Au fond Zola n'est qu'un ressemeleur en littérature, et maintenant qu'il a fini de rééditer *Manette Salomon*, il s'appête à recommencer *Les Paysans* de Balzac." (*JR*, II: 1238).

<sup>18</sup> Robert Ricatte's chapter on *Manette Salomon* in *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt* remains a classic study on the brothers' sources for the novel, while the articles collected in the 2014 special edition of the *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* on *Manette Salomon* provide a more recent critical overview.

The driving force throughout *Manette Salomon* is the problem of artistic originality. Coriolis is constantly obsessed with searching for a new kind of painting, one that will allow him to accurately capture and express his vision of the world: “une ligne à trouver qui donnerait juste la vie, serrerait de tout près l’individu, la particularité, une ligne vivante, humaine, intime, où il y aurait quelque chose d’un modelage de Houdon, d’une préparation de La Tour, d’un trait de Gavarni.”<sup>19</sup> Although Coriolis’ quest is ultimately thwarted by Manette, reflecting the Goncourt brothers’ belief that love and art should not mix, his goal is still presented as the ideal to which an artist should strive. Jules and Edmond deliberately contrast Coriolis with both Anatole and Garnotelle, who show a lack of creativity as artists, choosing either to reproduce the work of others, or to stagnate in a rut of repetition. The brothers’ praise of originality and their criticism of copying in art is most memorably presented in a tirade by Chassagnol, where he defines artistic talent as “la faculté petite ou grande de nouveauté [...] qu’un individu porte en lui”<sup>20</sup> and warns the other artists of the dangers of the *pastiche*:

Un jour ou l’autre, tu seras empoigné par quelque chose de mou, de décoloré, d’envahissant comme un poulpe...le pastiche te mettra la main dessus, et bonsoir! Tu n’aimeras plus que cela, tu ne sentiras plus que cela: aujourd’hui, demain, toujours, tu ne feras plus que cela...pastiches! pastiches!<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to the Goncourts’ presentation of Fragonard’s time in Rome in *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, where Fragonard was able to find his own style through copying the Old Masters, Chassagnol specifically criticizes the Académie and Prix de Rome for leading young artists to pastiche more famous artists rather than developing their own artistic vision.

Furthermore, the question of originality is also raised in *Manette Salomon* through

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Jean-Louis Cabanès (1992), Marie Lathers (2001), and Carol Armstrong (2002) all offer compelling readings of the novel which inform this chapter.

<sup>19</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 422.

<sup>20</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 140.

<sup>21</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 141.

the metaphors of the artist as monkey and circus performer. The novel features its own monkey, Anatole's pet monkey Vermillon, who acts as a textual version of one of Decamps' *singeries*, 'aping' the activities of Anatole only to illuminate his weaknesses as an artist. Similarly, Anatole's affinity for the role of both *saltimbanque* and Pierrot draws on the trope of equating the artist with the circus performer, someone capable of great feats of artistry but also dependent on the fickle whims of the public. Although *Le Singe au miroir* directly engages with both of these metaphors, scholars have not yet explored the possibility of connecting *Le Singe au miroir* and *Manette Salomon*.<sup>22</sup> In this section, I will show how Jules' etching provides a visual alternative to the Goncourts' use of these metaphors in their novel, demonstrating how the brothers explored similar themes in both etching and writing.

Both *Le Singe au miroir* and Vermillon in *Manette Salomon* draw on a long tradition of *singeries* in art.<sup>23</sup> Monkeys dressed as humans first appeared in sixteenth-century Northern European genre paintings by artists such as David Teniers. These paintings used monkeys, famous for their skill at mimicry, to present moralizing caricatures of human weaknesses such as lust and gluttony. The image of the *singe-peintre* first emerged in this context, where the depiction of the monkey as artist threw into relief the imitative aspect of art itself, which seeks to imitate and reproduce nature. In subsequent versions of the *singe-peintre*, the monkey as metaphor for the artist could be used as an opportunity for either criticism or self-reflection. Grandville's famous

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<sup>22</sup> Scholars have often linked Vermillon to another artwork by Jules, a watercolor he made of his pet monkey Kokoli. Robert Ricatte, for example, claims that when the Goncourt brothers were writing *Manette Salomon*, "ils eurent sous les yeux, pour ranimer leur souvenir, l'aquarelle [de Kokoli] de Jules, procédé déjà utilisé dans *Germinie*" (331), referencing Jules' watercolor after the *Fosse Commune* used as inspiration for the final chapter of *Germinie Lacerteux*. Although Ricatte notes that the brothers "ont connu et aimé les *Singes* de Decamps, et Jules a même gravé, d'après l'une de ces toiles, le *Singe au miroir*" he dismisses the print as a source of inspiration in favor of the watercolor which he claims had "une résonance bien plus personnelle" (331). The watercolor is now in a private collection and I have not been able to find a reproduction of it.

<sup>23</sup> For an overview of the history of *singeries*, see Anne-Marie Lecoq, "Le Singe de la nature," in *La Peinture dans la peinture*, ed. Pierre Georgel (Paris: Adam Biro, 1987); Bertrand Marret, *Portraits de l'artiste en singe: les singeries dans la peinture* (Paris: Somogy, 2001).

caricature of Ingres as a monkey blindly imitating Raphael and his classical models, followed in turn by a train of disciples, criticizes the ways in which artists slavishly copy other artists in the name of tradition.<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, Chardin's painting (Fig. 35) offers a more philosophical reflection on the nature of art itself, where the monkey's direct confrontation with the viewer (or Chardin painting the image) presents a self-aware self-portrait of Chardin's own actions.

The Goncourt brothers present their own version of the *singe-peintre* in *Manette Salomon* through Vermillon, who “avait contracté, à côté d'[Anatole], le goût de la peinture.” First expressed as a literal “goût” – the monkey loves to eat “des vessies de couleur,” particularly his namesake vermilion red – Vermillon is then “saisi par une rage de gribouiller du papier, il s'était mis à arracher des plumes aux malheureuses poules du portier, à les tremper dans le ruisseau, et à les promener sur ce qu'il trouvait d'à peu près blanc.”<sup>25</sup> Vermillon's imitative talent ends here, however, and he becomes doomed to pure repetition: “il n'avait pu encore tracer, en dessinant d'après nature, que des ronds, toujours des ronds.”<sup>26</sup> Vermillon is capable of “creating” through making marks on canvas, but his marks are meaningless. The Goncourts thus take up the same theme as painted *singeries* which satirize the artist as capable only of blindly imitating nature in the same way as a monkey imitates humans. Jean-Louis Cabanès has analyzed the parallels between Vermillon and the human artists Garnotelle and Anatole in *Manette Salomon*, demonstrating how the presence of Vermillon highlights the similarities between these artists and the monkey. He argues that Garnotelle represents the “singe académique” because “il reprend à son compte les recettes définies par la tradition,” while Anatole is the “peintre blagueur” thanks to his “pratique picturale constamment soumise au régime

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<sup>24</sup> For more on Grandville's *singeries* see Wettlaufer, “From Metaphor to Metamorphosis.”

<sup>25</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 230–31.

<sup>26</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 231.

de la copie et une parole qui le plus souvent trouve à s'énoncer sous la forme du pastiche, de la charge."<sup>27</sup> The figure of the monkey in the text highlights the theme of "copie and polyphonie," and Vermillon is a mirror which reflects the true nature of Garnotelle and Anatole's artistic practice back on themselves. As Cabanès puts it, "si Vermillon, le singe-peintre, trace 'des ronds, toujours des ronds,'" Anatole and Garnotelle "les peintres-singes, tournent en rond dans la cage de l'imitation."<sup>28</sup>

Does Jules' etching of *Le Singe au miroir* similarly present an image of the *singe-peintre*? Unlike Decamps' painting *Le Singe peintre* (Fig. 31), the monkey in Decamps' original painting of *Le Singe au miroir* (Fig. 33) is not shown in the act of painting, and there are no artistic attributes such as a paint palette or brushes in the objects surrounding him. However, the similarities between the objects scattered around the floor in *Le Singe au miroir* and those in the studio of *Le Singe peintre* (both paintings depict artistic props such as a blue and white China vase, pistols, and a feathered Oriental hat) suggest that the scene in *Le Singe au miroir* also takes place in an artist's studio, perhaps even the same studio as *Le Singe peintre*. Furthermore, close examination of *Le Singe peintre* reveals that there is a second monkey, also dressed in a white tunic, in the background of the painting. *Le Singe au miroir* could thus have been intended as a pendant to *Le Singe peintre*, focusing on this second monkey in the artist's studio. However, if we read the monkey in *Le Singe au miroir* as a stand-in for the artist, I believe the commentary of the image is less on the imitation and copying of other artists, as is the case with Vermillon in *Manette Salomon*, and more on the imitation of reality itself in art. I explore this reading of *Le Singe au miroir* in the next section by analyzing the role of the mirror in the etching as a literal and metaphorical reflection on mimesis.

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<sup>27</sup> Cabanès, "Le Portrait de l'artiste en singe," 96.

<sup>28</sup> Cabanès, 94.

Beyond the figure of the *singe-peintre*, then, the clothing of the monkey in *Le Singe au miroir* also opens another reading of the print (and Decamps' original painting) by introducing the theme of the circus. Although the monkey's clothing is reminiscent of an artist's white smock, fitting with the interpretation of the monkey as a *singe-peintre*, the white jacket is also similar to a circus outfit: either the military-inspired jackets of equestrian acrobats or the baggy white clothing of Pierrot. Monkey, artist, and circus are similarly linked in *Le Singe peintre*, where Lecoq identifies the clothing of the monkey in the foreground as the "le costume d'écuyer des animaux du cirque,"<sup>29</sup> which can clearly be seen in comparison with a nineteenth-century circus poster (Fig. 36). Additionally, if the monkey in *Le Singe au miroir* is the same monkey as in the background of *Le Singe peintre*, his outfit in *Le Singe peintre* also includes a conical hat, shown on the bench beside him in the background of the painting. This combination of loose white clothing and conical hat is the same as the classic outfit worn by Pierrot (Fig. 37).

These connections between the monkey and the circus add another layer to Jules' *Singe au miroir* etching and another point of connection with *Manette Salomon*, where the circus is an important theme. Like the *singe-peintre*, the figure of the circus performer was a powerful metaphor for artists and authors in nineteenth-century France.<sup>30</sup> As Jean Starobinski argues in his classic book, *Portrait de l'artiste saltimbanque*, "l'on s'aperçoit en effet que le choix de l'image du clown n'est pas seulement l'élection d'un motif pictural ou poétique, mais une façon détournée et parodique de poser la question de l'art [...] Il s'agit d'un autoportrait travesti."<sup>31</sup> Starobinski distinguishes between two types of identifications between the artist or author and the circus performer, epitomized by the

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<sup>29</sup> Lecoq, "Le Singe de la nature," 59.

<sup>30</sup> See for example: Françoise Baligand and Zeev Gourarier, *Au cirque: le peintre et le saltimbanque* (Paris: Somogy; Musée de la Chartreuse, 2004); Sophie Basch, *Romans de cirque* (Paris: Laffont, 2002); Robert Storey, *Pierrots on the Stage of Desire: Nineteenth-Century French Literary Artists and the Comic Pantomime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Jean Starobinski, *Portrait de l'artiste saltimbanque* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 8.

contrasting poems of Théodore Banville's "Le Saut du tremplin" (1857) and Baudelaire's "Le Vieux saltimbanque" (1869). Banville's depiction of the gravity-defying feats of the acrobat, who risks everything in pursuit of new heights – "plus loin! Plus haut!" – culminates in the apotheosis of the acrobat:

Enfin, de son vil échafaud,  
Le clown sauta si haut, si haut,  
Qu'il creva le plafond de toiles  
Au son du cor et du tambour,  
Et, le cœur dévoré d'amour,  
Alla rouler dans les étoiles.<sup>32</sup>

Here the agility and skill of the circus performer and his quest for the ultimate acrobatic trick parallel the author's attempts to master and elevate the written word through ever more creative combinations: "le poète s'identifie à ce pouvoir de lévitation; il y reconnaît l'empire qu'il entend lui-même exercer sur le corps verbal du langage."<sup>33</sup> After Jules' death, Edmond used the figure of the acrobat in this way in his first solo novel, *Les Frères Zemganno*. The novel follows two acrobat brothers in their quest to create the ultimate trapeze performance, which ends in tragedy for the younger brother, an allegory of the creative struggles and lives of Edmond and Jules. Yet even before *Les Frères Zemganno*, Anatole is paired with the figure of the *saltimbanque* in *Manette Salomon*. He is described as "naturellement un peu acrobate," and even becomes part of a circus troupe in Marseille, thanks to "toutes les affinités de sa nature de clown."<sup>34</sup> Only the appearance of Coriolis and Vermillon convinces Anatole to return to Paris and his artistic career. In a ball held by Coriolis (which takes place in his *atelier*, locating the circus at the heart of the artist's workplace) Anatole then literally embodies the figure of the circus performer. He first appears in a *saltimbanque* costume and captures the physical energy and skill of the acrobat in "une danse folle, éblouissante, étourdissante, où le danseur, avec une fièvre de

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<sup>32</sup> Théodore Banville, "Le Saut du tremplin," in *Odes funambulesques* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1874).

<sup>33</sup> Starobinski, *Portrait de l'artiste saltimbanque*, 28.

<sup>34</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 215.

vif-argent et des élasticités de clown, bondissait, tombait, se ramassait.”<sup>35</sup>

Midway through the ball, however, Anatole disappears and changes into a new costume, returning “en cravate blanche, en habit noir, avec la figure enfarinée d’un Pierrot.”<sup>36</sup> The tone of his performance immediately changes: “ce n’était plus sa danse de tout à l’heure, une danse de tours de force et de gymnastique: c’était maintenant une danse qui ressemblait à la pantomime sérieuse et sinistre de sa blague – une danse qui blaguait!”<sup>37</sup> Anatole’s costume change enacts the transition between the two versions of the circus performer: the acrobat’s glorification and vertical leap also has its opposite in the depths of tragedy, embodied by Pierrot, the sad clown. Baudelaire’s prose poem “Le Vieux saltimbanque” provides a famous example of this theme, where he identifies the poet with the pathetic figure of a clown who no longer amuses his audience. Contrasting “l’explosion frénétique de la vitalité” that characterizes the rest of the circus and “la misère absolue, la misère affublée, pour comble d’horreur, de haillons comiques” represented by the abject clown, the narrator of the poem sees “l’image du vieil homme de lettres qui a survécu à la génération dont il fut le brillant amuseur; du vieux poète [sic] sans amis, sans famille, sans enfants, dégradé par sa misère et par l’ingratitude publique, et dans la baraque de qui le monde oublieux ne veut plus entrer!”<sup>38</sup> The fate of the *vieux saltimbanque* is a reflection of the clown’s, and by extension the artist and author’s, dependence on the audience for approval, which can be taken away at any moment, as well as the ways in which a comic performance can mask (or fail to mask) the horror and misery of reality.

For the Goncourt brothers, this “sérieuse et sinistre” aspect of comedy is an

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<sup>35</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 321.

<sup>36</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 321.

<sup>37</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 322.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Baudelaire, “Le Vieux saltimbanque,” in *Petits Poèmes en prose* (Paris: Michel Lèvy frères, 1869).

essential part of their exploration of the darker side of Pierrot and the circus in *Manette Salomon*. Pierrot is an illustration of Anatole's failed artistic ambitions in the novel. The only time Anatole seriously considers making a "chef-d'œuvre," his "Christ Humanitaire," the painting goes comically wrong and he turns Christ into a Pierrot, demonstrating Anatole's failure to escape his comedic *performance* of the artist in order to *become* a true artist. In his dance as Pierrot at the artist's ball, Anatole similarly mocks the entire tradition of representing female beauty and love in art:

il parodiait la femme, il parodiait l'amour. Les poses, les balancements de couples amoureux, consacrés par les chefs-d'œuvre, les statues et les tableaux, les lignes immortelles et divines de caresse qui vont d'un sexe à l'autre [...] il caricaturait tout cela dans des charges d'artiste [...] dans des attitudes dérisoires d'imploration de pudeur et de respect, moquant, avec un doigt de Cupidon sur la bouche, toute la tendre sentimentalité de l'homme.<sup>39</sup>

His ironic dance then devolves into "le cancan infernal de Paris," "le cancan corrompu, le cancan ricaneur et ironique, le cancan épileptique qui crache comme le blasphème du plaisir."<sup>40</sup> Anatole as Pierrot embodies the cynical, destructive power of "la blague," introduced earlier in Chapter VII of *Manette Salomon*. Chapter VII reads as a prose poem dedicated to "cette forme nouvelle de l'esprit français"<sup>41</sup>: "la Blague, ce rire terrible, enragé, fiévreux, mauvais, presque diabolique, d'enfants gâtés, d'enfants pourris de la vieillesse d'une civilisation; ce rire riant de la grandeur, de la terreur, de la pudeur, de la sainteté, de la majesté, de la poésie de toute chose."<sup>42</sup> The Goncourts' vision of *la blague* extends the dark side of comedy further than Baudelaire's "Le Vieux saltimbanque." *La blague* not only exposes but revels in the horrors of the world –it laughs at the pathetic clown, even if the *blagueur's* laugh only conceals the emptiness inside himself. Mockery

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<sup>39</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 323.

<sup>40</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 323.

<sup>41</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 108.

<sup>42</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 109. For more on the Goncourts' use of *la blague* in their writing, see Marie-Ange Voisin-Fougère, "La Blague chez les Goncourt," in Cabanès, *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, 71-92.

and satire act as a self-defense mechanism, in the same way that Anatole as Pierrot can only mock what he cannot create himself: a great work of art.

In *Manette Salomon* the monkey and circus performer are thus used to provide humorous interpretations of the artist, but also to reveal some darker truths. In particular, *la blague*, the realm of both the trickster *singe* and the comedic *saltimbanque*/Pierrot problematizes the very act of artistic creation as an imitation of reality, the concept of mimesis itself. As Nathalie Preiss explores in her discussion of *la blague* in nineteenth-century French literature, “la blague remet en cause le régime de la représentation fondée sur la ressemblance” and as a “revendication de l’artifice pur, elle ouvrirait la voie à un “réalisme absolu” enfin délivré d’un réel de référence.”<sup>43</sup> The next section now explores how *Le Singe au miroir* engages with this destabilizing power of *la blague*. Jules’ etching is centered around the confrontation of the monkey with his own image, a literal representation of the function of a *singerie*: reflecting back humankind’s true identity by using a monkey as a mirror. I now want to consider how the use of the mirror in *Le Singe au miroir* extends the metaphors of the artist/author as monkey or circus performer in *Manette Salomon*, revealing the Goncourt brothers’ broader anxieties about mimesis in art and writing.<sup>44</sup>

## **Mirrors and Mimesis**

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In a first example of mirroring between etching and novel, Chapter XXXVII of *Manette Salomon*, I propose, replays in text a version of the moment depicted in *Le Singe au miroir*. The chapter begins by describing how Anatole first observes and then mimics

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<sup>43</sup> Nathalie Preiss, *Pour de rire! la blague au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle ou la représentation en question* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), 2.

<sup>44</sup> I will be keeping my focus here on a close reading of *Manette Salomon* and *Le Singe au miroir*, rather than delving into the larger theoretical implications of mimesis in literature and art. For more general discussions of mimesis in relation to nineteenth-century French Realist novels and art, see Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (London: Penguin, 1990); Christopher Prendergast, *The Order of Mimesis: Balzac, Stendhal, Nerval, Flaubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Vermillon's behavior, until "bientôt avec son goût et son talent d'imitation, il arriva à singer le singe," mirroring "toutes ses grimaces, son claquement de lèvres, ses petits cris" even "sa façon de cligner des yeux et de battre des paupières."<sup>45</sup> Anatole's imitation of Vermillon then culminates in a rampage through the *atelier*, enacting the scene we might imagine took place just before the moment depicted by Decamps' painting of *Le Singe au miroir*, which emphasizes the aftermath of the monkey's rampage through his broken chain and the overturned objects and smashed vase in the background. In the novel, Anatole and Vermillon similarly engage in a "course volante entre l'homme et la bête, un bousclement, un culbutis, un tapage, des cris, des rires, des sauts, une lutte furieuse d'agilité et d'escalade, mettaient dans l'atelier le bruit, le vertige, le vent, l'étourdissement, le tourbillon de deux singes qui se donnent la chasse."<sup>46</sup> Like the broken and dispersed objects in Decamps' painting, "les meubles, les plâtres, les murs [...] tremblaient" in Coriolis' studio."<sup>47</sup> The furious escapade then ends in the following way:

Et tous deux au bout de la course, se trouvant nez à nez, il arrivait presque toujours ceci [...] [Vermillon] ouvrait sa gueule avec la lenteur d'un ressort à crans, et montrait des crocs prêts à mordre. Mais à ce moment, il trouvait en face de lui une tête qui ressemblait tellement à la sienne, une répétition si parfaite de sa colère de singe, que tout décontenancé, comme s'il se voyait dans une glace, il sautait après sa corde et s'en allait réfléchir tout en haut de l'atelier à ce singulier animal qui lui ressemblait tant.<sup>48</sup>

This remarkable passage seems directly inspired by *Le Singe au miroir*. Vermillon makes the same facial expression as the monkey in *Le Singe au miroir* who also bares "des crocs prêts à mordre" in a grimace of "sa colère de singe." However, Vermillon's "reflection" in the text is Anatole, not a mirror. The monkey is "décontenancé," disconcerted, by his reflection, or literally de-countenanced: his face (countenance) is no longer his own. The play on words with "réfléchir" also presents the monkey as self-reflective, and it is

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<sup>45</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 229.

<sup>46</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 229.

<sup>47</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 229.

<sup>48</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 229.

Anatole that is described as an “animal” and that resembles the monkey, not the other way around. In this complex game of mirroring, Anatole is not a “singulier animal”: he doubles, and is doubled by, Vermillon.

The Goncourt brothers thus characterize the relationship between Anatole and Vermillon as reciprocal: “A la longue, les deux amis avaient déteint l’un sur l’autre. Si Vermillon avait donné du singe à Anatole, Anatole avait donné de l’artiste à Vermillon.”<sup>49</sup> The use of “déteindre,” does not create a rigid distinction between the “deux amis,” rather, it presents the boundary between human and animal as porous, asking us to rethink whether the monkey resembles the man or the man the monkey. Both *Le Singe au miroir* and this scene in *Manette Salomon* thus pose the classic question asked by *singeries*, but in an unconventional way that focuses on self-examination and self-reflection, rather than overt satire. Further connecting the metaphors of the *singe* and *saltimbanque* in the novel, Jules and Edmond also emphasize a similar mirroring effect between Anatole and Pierrot. As they write, “chez [Anatole] ce n’était pas seulement le peintre, c’était l’homme aussi qui se sentait entraîné par une pente de sympathie vers le personnage légendaire incarné dans la peau de Deburau: entre Pierrot et lui, il reconnaissait des liens, une parenté, une communauté, une ressemblance de famille.”<sup>50</sup> Pierrot also functions as portrait for Anatole, who “l’aimait comme quelqu’un qui lui ressemblait, un peu comme un frère, et beaucoup comme son portrait,”<sup>51</sup> directly echoing Starobinski's characterization of the circus performer as an “autoportrait travesti” of the artist. Furthermore, this idea of a “ressemblance de famille” echoes the relationship between Anatole and Vermillon, man and monkey. Vermillon “retrouvait en [Anatole] un peu de sa race: c’était bien un homme,

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<sup>49</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 203.

<sup>50</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 180.

<sup>51</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 180.

mais presque un homme de sa famille,”<sup>52</sup> thereby uniting artist, monkey and Pierrot in a family trio.

Jules’ etching of *Le Singe au miroir* explores similar mirroring effects. Even more than Decamps’ original painting, Jules’ etching emphasizes the encounter between monkey and mirror. The etching narrows the focus of the scene, eliminating the background entirely, a surprising choice because the Goncourt brothers were very interested in the artist’s studio as a location in their writing.<sup>53</sup> While he may have simplified the composition to make it easier to copy, Jules was an accomplished etcher and certainly had the technical ability to copy the painting in full. Instead, it seems likely that he wanted to focus solely on the encounter between monkey and mirror. This strategic editing renders the depiction of the monkey more ambiguous by removing the evidence of his implied animalistic violence in Decamps’ painting, such as the smashed vase, creating the potential for the monkey to be more human-like than bestial.<sup>54</sup> Instead of mere incomprehension at his reflection, the encounter between monkey and mirror could read on an allegorical level as an existential crisis: after being imprisoned, the *singe-peintre* finally breaks free from his chains, only to be tormented by his own image in the mirror. Unlike the well-behaved monkey in *Le Singe peintre* who is content to paint his tasteful landscapes, untroubled by philosophical doubt, *Le Singe au miroir* opens an interrogation of the ability of art to imitate and represent reality.

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<sup>52</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 230.

<sup>53</sup> *Manette Salomon* features vivid depictions of multiple *ateliers*: from the teaching studio of the Atelier Langibout, Anatole’s bohemian studio, Garnotelle’s cold and lifeless professional studio, or Coriolis’ studio filled with exotic objects, many of which echo the bric-a-bac in the background of *Le Singe Peintre* and *Le Singe au Miroir*.

<sup>54</sup> In their later passages on Vermillon’s death and burial, the brothers also invoke an intense sense of pity for the monkey’s suffering, as if he were a human. Notably, as Vermillon becomes more ill, he becomes more human-like: the Goncourts describe “ce qu’il y avait de la douleur d’un visage sur sa mine, en faisaient comme un petit malade approché tout près de l’homme et de sa pitié par cet air de souffrance humaine qu’a la souffrance des animaux.” *Manette Salomon*, 402.

The issue of mimetic representation, I want to suggest, is raised by the problematic depiction of the mirror in both Decamps' painting and Jules' etching. Unlike Decamps' painting of *Guenon se regardant un miroir à main* where the object held by the female monkey ("guenon") is clearly a hand mirror, implying a commentary on female vanity, the mirror in both Decamps' painting and Jules' etching of *Le Singe au miroir* is more problematic. First, its large, rectangular, framed shape directly echoes that of a painting. Then, in his etching, Jules' chose to fill the blank space around the monkey's image inside the frame with black hatching, which does not fit with the white background of the print. This choice makes the inside of the frame read less like the reflection of what is behind the monkey (which would be blank) and more like the colored background of a painting. These elements lead to the impression that without the title, the object in the monkey's hands could be interpreted as a painting, not a mirror. *Le Singe au miroir* thus blurs the line between painting and mirror, highlighting their shared nature as representations or reflections of reality. Yet the substitution of painting and mirror also has the troubling effect of reversing the imitator and object of imitation. If the framed item were a painting, the real monkey's grimace could be read as an attempt to imitate (reflect) the painting of himself, while if the item in his hands is a mirror, it is the mirror's surface that reflects/imitates the monkey. The representation of the mirror in *Le Singe au miroir* thus highlights the instability of the relationship between reality, reflection, and art.

I argue that we can see an exploration of this same conflation between painting and mirror in *Manette Salomon*. Chapter LXII features a scene of Manette modeling for a mirror that replays and reverses her initial modeling scene for Coriolis' painting *Le Bain Turc* in Chapter L. Thus far I have focused on the links between man and monkey through the pairing of Anatole and Vermillon, but critics have also explored the connections between Manette and Vermillon in the novel. For example, Marie Lathers re-analyzes

what Cabanès calls the “dispositifs symétriques”<sup>55</sup> between Vermillon and the other characters in the book, arguing that Manette can also be equated with Vermillon. She proposes that the couples of Manette-Coriolis, Anatole-Vermillon can also be read as Anatole-Coriolis, Manette-Vermillon, because “Manette and Vermillon are defined by their negative status with respect to the human male: Manette is *not male* and Vermillon is *not human*, while Anatole and Coriolis are both human and male. Taken together, then, Manette and Vermillon represent the *almost human* of woman and monkey.”<sup>56</sup> While Vermillon is not present in Chapter LXII, there are implicit connections that link Manette to a monkey in this modeling scene, a textual version of J.J. Grandville’s caricature, *Académie du dessin* (Fig. 38). The Goncourts refer to Manette’s “zébrures des peaux” and “glissements serpentins,” subtly describing her in animalistic terms. Their bizarre description of Manette’s feet looking like a second pair of hands, like a monkey’s hind paws, seems to be a simian reference. The brothers describe how “elle prenait tour à tour dans ses mains chacun de ses pieds, des pieds d’Orientale, qui semblaient d’autres mains entre ses mains” and this conflation between hands and feet is also continued in their attention to “son long pouce,” where the word “pouce” can be used to describe both a thumb and big toe.<sup>57</sup>

In this scene, Manette, alone in Coriolis’ studio, undresses and models for herself in a mirror, (com)posing her body into an artwork in its own right:

C’était, sur les zébrures des peaux, un remuement presque invisible, un travail sur place et qui semblait immobile, des avancements et des retraites de muscles à peine perceptibles, d’insensibles inflexions de contours, de lents déroulements, des coulées de membres, des glissements serpentins, des mouvements qu’on eût dit arrondis par du sommeil. Et à la fin, comme sous un long modelage d’une volonté artiste, se levait de la forme ondulante et assouplie, une admirable statue d’un moment.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Cabanès, “Le Portrait de l’artiste en singe,” 94.

<sup>56</sup> Lathers, *Bodies of Art*, 155.

<sup>57</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 304.

<sup>58</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 304–5.

This scene rewrites the Goncourt brothers' earlier description of Manette's first session posing for Coriolis by removing Coriolis from the equation, making Manette simultaneously model, artist, and artwork, and replacing Coriolis' canvas with a mirror. Carol Armstrong argues that the mirror scene demonstrates "the impossibility of neatly portioning the scene of art, Pygmalion-like, into the separate, opposed, clearly gendered spheres of the subject and object of art,"<sup>59</sup> subverting the traditional artist-model relationship so that "the relations among posing, making, and viewing become a closed circle, all performed by the same figure, Manette, and excluding the male painter, Coriolis, from the circle."<sup>60</sup> While I agree with Armstrong's observation about the construction of this closed circle, her claim that this is all performed by Manette leaves out the key role of the mirror in this equation.

Throughout the process, Manette gazes at herself in a mirror: "elle se caressait d'un regard jusqu'à l'extrémité des pieds, et se poursuivait encore au-delà, dans la psyché au bout du divan, qui lui renvoyait en plein la répétition de son allongement radieux."<sup>61</sup> It is precisely the presence of the mirror that enacts the artistic transformation in this scene. While Manette later complains to Coriolis "il n'y a que la glace qui me voit!"<sup>62</sup>, presenting the mirror as a substitute for Coriolis' gaze, she misrepresents the way the mirror intervenes in the artist-model relationship. Rather than replacing Coriolis, the mirror functions as a tool to turn Manette's gaze back on herself, allowing her to become simultaneously model and artist. The Goncourts describe her pose as created by "une volonté artiste" and the act of posing is equated with painting in their description of "cette lente et graduelle réalisation des lignes qu'elle ébauchait, remaniait, corrigeait, conquérait avec le tâtonnement d'un peintre qui cherche l'ensemble, l'accord et l'eurythmie d'une

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<sup>59</sup> Armstrong, *Manet Manette*, 63.

<sup>60</sup> Armstrong, 62.

<sup>61</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 304.

<sup>62</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 305.

figure.”<sup>63</sup> Manette thus regains creative power through the mirror, yet unlike Coriolis, her gaze does not manifest itself in the physical object of a painting. The artworks created by her gaze are her body, which becomes a “statue,” and her reflection in the mirror. Here, the mirror replaces Coriolis’ canvas, becoming both the means of producing the artwork and the artwork itself: the Goncourt brothers describe how Manette generates “un Musée de sa nudité”<sup>64</sup> filled with the artworks created by the reflection of her body in the mirror.

This unstable boundary between painting and mirror echoes Jules’ ambiguous depiction of the mirror/painting in *Le Singe au miroir*. Further, in the same way that our interpretation of the monkey’s reaction to the object he holds in Jules’ etching changes according to whether it is a painting or mirror, so the comparison between the two modeling scenes in *Manette Salomon* brings into question the relationship between Manette’s body and the resulting image, whether the painting on Coriolis’ canvas or her reflection in the mirror. Her body is necessary to produce both painting and reflection, but it has a different relationship of dependency to each: the canvas can exist without Manette’s body, while her reflection is utterly dependent on her body. Jules and Edmond describe how, after Manette’s careful creation of her pose, “brusquement, elle rompait cela avec le caprice d’un enfant qui déchire une image.”<sup>65</sup> The “cela” here refers to her reflection/painting, which can be destroyed with the slightest movement of her body. The relationship between Coriolis’ painting and Manette’s body is seemingly more independent, as the painting can exist without the presence of the model. However, the relationship between mirror, painting, and model’s body is complicated by an unusual description of how Coriolis thinks Manette’s body has begun to reflect his painting. He describes to Anatole how he believes there is a symbiotic relationship between Manette

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<sup>63</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 304.

<sup>64</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 305.

<sup>65</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 305.

and his canvas, claiming, “je voyais le reflet de ma toile sur son corps, et il me semblait qu’elle était chatouillée là où je donnais un coup de pinceau.”<sup>66</sup> Here the canvas is not independent from Manette, and even starts influencing her body. If his painting is supposed to be the mirror of Manette's body, Coriolis’ statement reverses the relationship, and her body becomes a mirror reflecting the canvas.

The relationship between reality (Manette’s body) and image (whether Coriolis’ painting or Manette’s reflection in a mirror) is thus unstable in *Manette Salomon*, just as in Jules’ *Singe au miroir* etching, which reverses the relationship between imitator and imitated depending on whether the monkey confronts his own imitation in either a mirror or a painting. Both novel and etching thus test the boundaries of mimesis and problematize the classic view, put forward by Stendhal’s narrator, of the novel as mirror that faithfully reflects external reality – “un miroir qui se promène sur une grande route.”<sup>67</sup> This interrogation of mimesis in *Manette Salomon* has been explored from other angles. Béatrice Laville and Vérane Partensky, for example, argue that mimesis is problematized in the novel through the conflict between nature and civilization. In their view, the novel is ultimately a reflection on the inability of art to match nature, “car la nature, plus artiste que le peintre, est douée du privilège de l’originalité, toujours première face au peintre condamné à seulement la *reproduire*.”<sup>68</sup> They point to Anatole, Coriolis, and Garnotelle’s inability to create artworks when in Paris and to Coriolis’ recourse to the Orient and Fontainebleau as a means of accessing the creativity found in nature. The novel’s final scene of Anatole’s ecstatic apotheosis as a zookeeper in the Jardin des Plantes then represents the victory of nature over art: “le maléfice de la représentation, indissociable de l’art pictural se trouve évincé” as “renonçant aux séductions de l’imitation, [Anatole] a su

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<sup>66</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 276.

<sup>67</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, ed. Jean Prévost and Anne-Marie Meininger (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 479.

<sup>68</sup> Béatrice Laville and Vérane Partensky, “Introduction,” *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* 21, Manette Salomon (2014): 12.

accepter le monde dans l'immédiateté de sa présence."<sup>69</sup> While I find this a compelling reading of the oscillation between city and nature during the novel, Laville and Partensky's ultimate conclusion that the Goncourt brothers call for the renunciation of art in the face of nature does not fully square with the brothers' stated preference for art over nature.

As the brothers write in a *Journal* entry for June 2, 1860, "une chose bien caractéristique de notre nature, c'est de ne rien voir dans la nature qui ne soit un rappel et un souvenir de l'art."<sup>70</sup> This idea that life also imitates art, as well as art imitating life, is also proposed by Michel Crouzet, who argues that in *Manette Salomon*,

La grande leçon "littéraire" du roman des peintres est justement l'absence délibérée de frontières entre le réel et l'œuvre. Toute description tend vers la description d'un tableau; tout tableau est présenté comme une description de la réalité [...] La description orchestre la communauté de substance et de style du réel et de l'art, elle présente une œuvre indistinctement picturale et littéraire; le réel est un potentiel d'œuvres.<sup>71</sup>

This multidirectionality between reality and representation, rejecting a clear boundary between nature and art in the same way that we saw in *Le Singe au miroir* and the mirroring scenes in *Manette Salomon*, thus provides a way of circumventing the mimetic hierarchy posited by Laville and Partensky. Returning to the metaphors of *singe* and *saltimbanque* in the novel, I would further add to Crouzet's interpretation that the Goncourt brothers present another solution to the impasse between nature and art through self-deprecation and irony. In order to move forward with any artistic creation, whether painting, etching, or writing, we must accept our positions as humble monkeys or circus performers and acknowledge that our written or visual reproductions of reality will never be a perfect mirror.

This self-aware approach is used in *Manette Salomon* from the very first chapter.

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<sup>69</sup> Laville and Partensky, "Introduction," 13.

<sup>70</sup> *JC*, II: 415.

<sup>71</sup> Michel Crouzet, "Preface," in *Manette Salomon* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 73.

Jules and Edmond open the novel with a dazzling display of artistry in their description of the panoramic view of Paris from the Jardin des Plantes, but the passage ends with a twist. The brothers quickly undercut their initial panorama by immediately following it with the appearance of the prankster Anatole, who seizes the opportunity to pose as a tour guide for the hapless tourists looking at the view. Anatole launches into a monologue that narrates the view over Paris to the reader, this time through the lens of his own comic interpretation. Anatole's exclamations, "Confiez-moi votre œil...Je n'en abuserai pas!" and "Je vais vous faire voir ce que vous allez voir!"<sup>72</sup> read as tongue-in-cheek commentaries on the subjectivity inherent in any verbal description. The gullible tourists see Paris as it is misrepresented by Anatole, in the same way that the reader is potentially (mis)guided by the Goncourts' artistic descriptions. By juxtaposing an exquisitely refined depiction of Paris with Anatole's comedic rendition (the Panthéon, for instance, previously described as "presque transparent dans le ciel, et comme lavé d'un bleu limpide"<sup>73</sup> becomes "un des plus grands gâteaux de Savoie du monde"<sup>74</sup>) the Goncourt brothers thus make an ironic point about the instability of verbal representation. If the problem of mimesis entails one reflection on representation and reproduction in both *Manette Salomon* and *Le Singe au miroir*, I would now like to conclude this chapter by considering how the Goncourt brothers' experience with etching provides another perspective on the presentation of mechanical reproduction in the novel.

### **Mechanical Arts: Etching and Writing**

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The question of reproduction reveals a fundamental contradiction in *Manette Salomon*: the act of copying is constantly criticized in the novel even as the Goncourt

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<sup>72</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 83.

<sup>73</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 82.

<sup>74</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 85.

brothers make ample use of it in their own writing. Following Chassagnol's impassioned tirade against the pastiche, the brothers then proceed to write their own pastiches.<sup>75</sup> In chapter CX, for example, the brothers insert an extract from a fictitious review of the 1855 Exposition Universelle supposedly written by un "patriarche de l'éreintement classique,"<sup>76</sup> only to provide an implicit critique of the critic through comic exaggeration of his pretentious style. Chapter CII similarly pastiches both Girodet and Chateaubriand in its tragicomic depiction of Anatole burying Vermillon in the Bois de Boulogne. Anatole references "le tableau de Girodet...l'enterrement d'Atala gravé par monsieur... monsieur... Tiens, voilà que je ne sais plus le nom de la gravure d'Atala,"<sup>77</sup> the painting itself a response to Chateaubriand's Romantic novella *Atala*. Jules and Edmond layer tragedy and humor in this bittersweet moment, pastiching both Girodet and Chateaubriand's depictions of the moonlit scene by alternating dramatic descriptions of "le ciel irradié d'une lumière de nacre et de neige, inondé d'une sérénité argentée, irisé, plein de nuages d'écume qui faisaient comme une mer profonde et claire d'eau de perles" with Anatole's interpretation of the night sky as a funeral convoy for Vermillon: "la lune, rien que ça! Première classe, franges d'argent, tenture et tout, les nuages dans des voitures."<sup>78</sup> So how do the brothers avoid being read as hypocritical copyists, *singes* in the model of Vermillon, in such pastiches? In Jean-Louis Cabanès' interpretation of these scenes, the brothers are able to resolve the contradiction between their criticism of copying and blatant use of it in the novel through the humorous transformation of the texts they copy, thereby demonstrating their creativity and originality even as copyists: "c'est par là que les romanciers se sauvent du simiesque, fascinant et exécré. La réflexivité

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<sup>75</sup> Of course, the Goncourt brothers were themselves the subject of many pastiches, most famously by Proust in *Le Temps retrouvé*. For more on this pastiche, see Annick Bouillaguet, *Proust et les Goncourt: le pastiche du Journal dans Le Temps retrouvé* (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1996).

<sup>76</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 429.

<sup>77</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 408.

<sup>78</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 408.

infinie et déformante suscite une anamorphose qui les fait apparaître tout autres que des singes, entendons comme des esthètes.”<sup>79</sup>

This creative approach to copying in the brothers’ writing, where the act of reproduction is viewed as translation, transformation, or transposition rather than servile imitation, is what I have also sought to demonstrate in their approach to reproductive etching. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, the brothers’ etched copies after artworks by eighteenth-century artists or Gavarni can be viewed as original artworks in their own right. Beyond this valorization of the copy as a creative object, however, I now want to explore here how the very *process* of making an etching, as experienced by Jules and Edmond, shows how repetitive, “mechanical” processes can lead to creativity. This reveals a new contradiction within *Manette Salomon*, as one of the key criticisms of artists like Anatole and Garnotelle in the novel is that the very act of drawing or painting for them is mechanical. The two artists’ lack of originality is reflected not only in their inability to invent new subjects or techniques for their paintings, but in the way they simply “go through the motions” of the artistic process. For example, Anatole adopts

ce déplorable aplomb de la main qui sait de routine la superficie de l’anatomie humaine, la silhouette ordinaire des choses. Et depuis longtemps il avait pris l’habitude de ne plus travailler que de *chic* [...] Anatole, pas plus qu’un autre, ne devait guérir de cette triste facilité, de cette menteuse et décevante vocation qui met au bout des doigts d’un artiste la production d’une mécanique.<sup>80</sup>

Garnotelle similarly achieves success through mere repetition. Thanks to “ce courage de la médiocrité: la patience” he develops “le dessin exact et pauvre, la ligne sèche, un contour copié, peiné et servile, où rien ne vibrait de la liberté.”<sup>81</sup>

This criticism of repetitive, mechanical artistic techniques was widespread throughout nineteenth-century France. Bernard Vouilloux has explored the transformation

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<sup>79</sup> Cabanès, “Le Portrait de l’artiste en singe,” 101.

<sup>80</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 179.

<sup>81</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 146.

of words such as *le cliché* (used by the Goncourts to characterize Anatole's drawing) and *le poncif* (also used by the Goncourts to criticize the Académie in Rome as "la Mecque du poncif!"<sup>82</sup>) from technical terms designating methods of artistic reproduction into popular vocabulary for criticizing artistic originality.<sup>83</sup> Grandville's caricature of Ingres provides another visual example through the personification of the pantograph (a tool for enlarging drawings) in the background, where the humanoid mechanical instrument has come alive and is able to create its own artworks. For nineteenth-century authors and artists, then, "le véritable risque auquel est confrontée la 'création' est celui d'une mécanisation de la pensée et de l'expression, d'une automatisation du vivant, [d'une] réduplication mécanique."<sup>84</sup> As discussed in the Introduction and Chapter I, the etching revival certainly evidenced these anxieties over a mechanization of artistic creation in descriptions of the revival's war against "le travail régulier, automatique, sans inspiration qui dénature l'idée même de l'artiste"<sup>85</sup> and "l'interprétation de l'artiste par la machine."<sup>86</sup> As Anna Arnar has noted, writers paradoxically alternated between promoting etching as an art of spontaneity ("un art spontané comme l'écriture [...] qui fait que le peintre confie directement sa pensée au métal"<sup>87</sup>) and describing it as an extremely difficult process that demanded respect, "the product of great bodily strain and struggle despite [its] appearance of spontaneity and ease."<sup>88</sup>

Yet none of the writers and critics espousing the virtues of etching during the

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<sup>82</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 143.

<sup>83</sup> Bernard Vouilloux, *Le Tournant "artiste" de la littérature française: écrire avec la peinture au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Hermann, 2011). The term *poncif* derives from a method of transferring a preparatory drawing onto a surface using a piece of tracing paper pricked with small holes (*le poncif*) through which charcoal powder can be dusted, reproducing the lines of the drawing. Similarly, a *cliché* originally designated a metal plate used for reproducing images or text in printmaking, a term that was quickly coopted into the language of photography as well.

<sup>84</sup> Vouilloux, *Le Tournant "artiste,"* 473.

<sup>85</sup> Gautier, "Un mot sur l'eau-forte."

<sup>86</sup> Cadart and Chevalier, "Notice."

<sup>87</sup> Jules-Antoine Castagnary, *Société des aquafortistes. Eaux-fortes modernes, oeuvres inédites et originales: quatrième année, quatrième volume* (Paris: Cadart & Luquet, 1866).

<sup>88</sup> Arnar, "Seduced by the Etcher's Needle," 42.

revival actually practiced etching themselves. As the only mid-nineteenth-century writers to have firsthand knowledge of the etching process, the Goncourt brothers present a very different perspective. For Jules and Edmond, I argue, etching is characterized neither as a heroic struggle nor as a moment of spontaneous inspiration, but rather as an exercise in patience. In a *Journal* entry from November 29, 1859, for example, they write: “Nous avons dit quelque part que l’eau-forte était une œuvre du démon. C’est tout le contraire: l’œuvre d’un monsieur bien sage qui s’applique, qui fait des petites raies, des petites vermicellures avec une petite aiguille.”<sup>89</sup> However, in contrast to their criticism of Anatole and Garnotelle in *Manette Salomon*, this repetitive nature of etching is not necessarily negative. In fact, the brothers highlight how it can be a pleasant, absorptive, even meditative experience. In multiple *Journal* entries, they reflect on how their intense absorption in etching provides them with a mental escape. On February 17, 1859, for instance, they describe “cet empoignement qui fait oublier absolument non seulement les heures, mais encore la vie, les ennuis, tout au monde et le monde entier,”<sup>90</sup> a sentiment continued in an entry for January 26, 1863, where Jules writes, “L’eau-forte me produit une absorption complète. Cela tire les yeux, prend la tête, remplit d’eau la poche à idées. On vit absolument du trait qu’on trace à l’aiguille.”<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, the description of Coriolis making etchings in *Manette Salomon* offers an alternative to Anatole and Garnotelle’s working process by emphasizing how Coriolis’ focus on the act of etching allows him to forget the rest of the world:

Il cherchait à s’enfoncer dans le travail, la lassitude, le brisement d’une espèce d’art mécanique. [...] L’eau-forte l’empoignait avec son intérêt, son absorption passionnée, l’oubli qu’elle lui donnait de tout [...] c’était comme une suspension momentanée de sa vie, que ce doux hébètement cérébral, cette espèce de congestion qu’amenait en lui la fatigue des yeux, ce vide qu’il se sentait dans le cerveau à la place du chagrin.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *JC*, II: 301.

<sup>90</sup> *JC*, II: 214.

<sup>91</sup> *JC*, III: 495.

<sup>92</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 453.

Crucially, etching is described here as “une espèce d’art mécanique,” a distinction that is also evident in a *Journal* entry for March 1859, where Jules and Edmond write that “nous restons plongés et la pensée enfermée dans l’eau-forte. Rien n’occupe, rien n’arrache des soucis présents comme ces distractions mécaniques.”<sup>93</sup> The brothers thus highlight the nature “mécanique” of etching as a positive quality, in contrast to the primary narrative of the etching revival that pitted etching against “mechanical” arts like photography or printmaking for a mass market.

For the Goncourt brothers, the mechanical, automatic side of etching should not be dismissed in favor of glorifying its spontaneity, which was often overstated by writers who had not experienced the etching process for themselves. In an amusing outburst from March 5, 1866, for example, Jules criticizes the interpretation of etching as an emotional act, writing:

Je lis dans un article de Saint-Victor: “ ce qui caractérise l'eau-forte de Seymour, c'est l'émotion... “ allons donc! Est-ce qu'on grave à l'eau-forte avec de l'émotion? Est-ce que vous ne savez pas ce que c'est que l'eau-forte? Un monsieur bien appliqué, qui, sous le jour d'un châssis, raye, en se crevant les yeux, une plaque de chaudron verni, où il prend garde de ne pas faire une raie de travers: le diable-au-corps de l'eau-forte, c'est la patience!<sup>94</sup>

However, this emphasis on patience does not remove all emotion from the etching process. The brothers’ experience of etching does involve intense emotions, but, critically, these are found not in the act of etching the plate, but in the “biting” and printing stages. In *Manette Salomon* and *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Jules and Edmond describe the importance of *la morsure*, or the biting process, where the metal plate is submerged in acid after the artist has drawn on it. This process requires skill but also a healthy dose of chance. In *Manette Salomon*, Coriolis becomes obsessed with “ce travail de l’acide qui,

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<sup>93</sup> *JC*, II: 218.

<sup>94</sup> *JR*, II:12.

selon le degré, la température, des lois inconnues, une chance, un hasard, va réussir ou manquer la planche, faire ou défaire son caractère, creuser ou émousser son style, la morsure le prenait aux émotions de son mystère et de sa chimie magique.” The brothers’ discussion of Gabriel de Saint-Aubin’s etchings in *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* similarly highlights the element of chance added by the biting process, “avec ses mystères de chimie, avec les surprises ou les déceptions de la morsure, avec les dégoûts et les reprises de goût pour une planche qu’on jette et qu’on reprend dix fois.”<sup>95</sup> Their emphasis on the way Gabriel de Saint-Aubin reworks his plates further demonstrates how for the Goncourts, “l’eau-forte est l’œuvre du démon et de la retouche,”<sup>96</sup> a multi-stage process rather than one where the artist can simply create a spontaneous image.

After *la morsure*, the final stage of etching is the printing process, which brings with it another element of the unknown. The long passage in the *Journal* recording Jules’ experience printing his first etching at Delâtre’s workshop emphasizes this aspect of the process. Jules writes:

Et sur ma chaise, j’attends, comme un homme qui a fait le plan d’une bataille et qui remet le reste à la Providence, ou comme un père qui attend un fils, une fille ou un singe. [...] Et voir laver la planche, la noircir, la nettoyer, mouiller le papier, monter la presse, mettre les couvertures, donner les deux tours, tout cela vous bat dans la poitrine et les mains vous tremblent à cette feuille de papier tout humide, qui porte une ligne à peu près viable.<sup>97</sup>

The process of waiting to receive the printed image is dramatized here by the repetition of the actions of the printer, the successive verbs (“laver,” “noircir,” “nettoyer” etc.) building suspense, only to be released in the climactic “birth” of the print, where the “tout humide” paper and the “viable” line amplify the imagery of birth introduced by the initial metaphor of a father waiting to hear about his child. Largely rewriting the brothers’ *Journal* entry,

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<sup>95</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, I: 284.

<sup>96</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, I: 284.

<sup>97</sup> *JC*, II: 213–14. February 17, 1859.

*Manette Salomon* restages a similarly suspenseful scene where Coriolis waits to receive his etchings off the press, introducing the metaphor of the gambler to capture the physical and emotional exhaustion that accompanies the printing process: Coriolis “sortait de chez l’imprimeur avec une sorte de prostration, un épuisement physique et moral comparable à celui d’un joueur sortant d’une nuit de jeu.”<sup>98</sup> The gambling metaphor captures how, for the Goncourts, etching is defined by chance, whether in *la morsure* or in the printing process.

By emphasizing etching’s nature as a multi-step art form and distinguishing between the artist’s varying degrees of control during its three stages, elided by other critics without personal experience of etching, the Goncourt brothers contradict the common presentation of etching as a direct translation of the artist’s hand. Baudelaire claimed, for example, that etching was “la traduction la plus nette possible du caractère de l’artiste”<sup>99</sup> while Gautier stated that with etching, “on a l’idée même du maître, toute pétillante de vie et de spontanéité, sans l’intermédiaire d’aucune traduction.”<sup>100</sup> Jules and Edmond’s descriptions challenge the idea that there is no “intermédiaire” or “traduction” in the production of an etching by emphasizing the role of the printer in producing the final image.<sup>101</sup> Rather than clinging to the myth of the great artist who is able to channel his artistic vision directly into the finished product, the process of etching for Jules and Edmond is about ceding control: whether through mechanical repetition that allows them to let go of external stimuli, or through accepting that their work will be shaped by chance and exterior forces. The brothers also do not shy away from the sometimes un-glamorous reality of etching. In *Manette Salomon*, they specifically refer to the printer as an

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<sup>98</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 454.

<sup>99</sup> Baudelaire, “Peintres et aquafortistes,” 334.

<sup>100</sup> Gautier, “Un mot sur l’eau-forte.”

<sup>101</sup> Some artists in the etching revival, such as Félix Bracquemond or Charles Méryon, did try to fully collapse the distinction between artist and printer by printing their own etchings themselves, but most etchers worked with a professional printer.

“ouvrier” and the *Journal* entry emphasizes his physicality, with “son bras nu, manche relevée.”<sup>102</sup> Again, it seems likely that critics such as Gautier and Baudelaire, who even argued that etching requires an “aristocratique”<sup>103</sup> temperament, wanted to obscure these associations with manual labor in order to promote etching as a higher art and retain the image of the etcher as a “maître.”

Finally, although the Goncourt brothers distance themselves from other writers’ depictions of the etching process, their “mechanical” vision of etching is not incompatible with the parallels drawn between etching and writing during the etching revival. In fact, in *Charles Demailly*, their major fictional depiction of a writer at work, their description of Charles’ writing process shares many of the same characteristics as etching. In Chapter XIX, for example, the brothers claim that during writing, Charles enters a state where:

l’homme échappe à la chair et s’en dégage; où l’homme n’a plus faim, n’a plus froid; où sa vue, retirée au fond de lui, n’a plus la perception de l’extérieur; où son oreille, emplie de la musique de ses idées et du bruit de sa tête, n’entend plus; où le temps se tait pour lui, et, n’ayant plus d’aiguille, n’a plus de mesure que les jours et les nuits; où ses entours, la vie ambiante des choses, le milieu où il est, cessent de l’affecter d’une sensation.<sup>104</sup>

The way in which Charles becomes oblivious to both internal sensations such as hunger and cold and the effects of the outside world when writing immediately calls to mind the brothers’ description of their complete absorption in etching in the *Journal*, or of Coriolis’ similar out-of-body experience in *Manette Salomon*. Their characterization of etching as a “mechanical” process is also echoed later in the chapter, when they describe writing as “cette belle, cette merveilleuse léthargie de la machine anéantie dans l’effort presque extatique du cerveau.”<sup>105</sup> Like the repetitive, meditative nature of etching, the writing process here renders Charles’ body a “machine.” Finally, it is only through a slow,

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<sup>102</sup> *JC*, II: 214.

<sup>103</sup> Baudelaire, “Peintres et aquafortistes,” 338.

<sup>104</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Charles Demailly* (Paris: Flammarion, 2007), 96.

<sup>105</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 96.

laborious process that inspiration finally comes to Charles: “sous la contraction de la volonté, sous la fixité du regard intérieur, des formes, des groupes commencent à se laisser poursuivre; puis sous la persévérance de la contention, la ligne naît, l’idée s’incarne, l’image se lève.”<sup>106</sup> As these passages reveal, understanding the Goncourts’ characterization of etching as a mechanical process does not distance it from the act of writing, but in fact draws the two creative processes closer. In contrast to their critique of Vermillon, Anatole, and Garnotelle mechanically aping the process of artistic creation in *Manette Salomon*, the brothers thus valorize the mechanical aspects of etching and writing in other places and reveal that these are not necessarily incompatible with, and indeed often necessary for, artistic creativity.

## **Conclusion**

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This chapter has approached the recurring questions surrounding originality and reproduction in the Goncourt brothers’ writing and etching from new angles. Through the pairing of Jules’ etching *Le Singe au miroir* and *Manette Salomon*, I analyzed how the theme of the artist/author as *singe* and *saltimbanque* is explored by the brothers as a way of questioning the artist’s ability to successfully realize an original creation. Moving beyond the explicit links between image and text in works like *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* and *Gavarni, l’homme et l’œuvre*, I showed how the Goncourt brothers test the possibilities of shared imagery across both etching and writing. By exploring how two episodes in *Manette Salomon* replay and rewrite the encounter between monkey and mirror in *Le Singe au miroir*, I then suggested that both etching and novel demand a deeper reflection on the nature of mimesis in literature and art. *Le Singe au miroir* and *Manette Salomon* demonstrate the Goncourt brothers’ interest in blurring the boundaries between art and

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<sup>106</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 97.

nature, while their use of figures such as the monkey or circus performer show how the brothers approach the impasse of mimesis through ironic, self-deprecating humor. Finally, expanding from *Le Singe au miroir*, I demonstrated how the Goncourt brothers' descriptions of the etching process contradict both conventional depictions of etching during the revival and their own criticism of mechanical art in *Manette Salomon*. It is precisely through embracing the repetitive, mechanical aspects of artistic creation that the brothers open a path to creative inspiration in both etching and writing. In the next chapter, I continue this exploration of the links between etching and writing in *Manette Salomon* to examine how the brothers drew from their experience with etching across their six co-written novels.

## Chapter IV

### The Needle and the Pen: Etching and the Goncourt Brothers' Novels

*“Mais n’avoir qu’une aiguille emmanchée pour peindre!”*  
—*Feu Monsieur Thomas*



**Fig. 5:** Charles Méryon, *L'Arche du Pont Notre-Dame*  
Etching with drypoint on green paper, 1853.  
Rosenwald Collection  
Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

## Introduction

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In the Goncourt brothers' description of printing their first etching, they set up a direct comparison between elements of etching and writing: "on cherche une taille comme on ne cherche pas une idée, on poursuit une ligne et un effet de pointe sèche comme on ne poursuit pas un scénario de livre!"<sup>1</sup> In the Charpentier edition of the *Journal* (the edited version published by Edmond after Jules' death), Edmond returns to this comparison but formulates it differently: "on cherche une taille comme on ne cherche pas une épithète, on poursuit un effet de griffonnis comme on ne poursuit pas un tour de phrase."<sup>2</sup> Where the original entry focused on structural elements of writing ("une idée," "un scénario de livre"), Edmond's edited version instead highlights stylistic elements ("une épithète," "un tour de phrase"). The original entry also primarily used the comparison between etching and writing to illustrate how the brothers' passion for etching overtook their love of writing in that moment. However, I believe Edmond's later edits shift the nature of this comparison to focus more on correspondences between formal characteristics of etching and writing. A perfectly placed "taille" in a print functions in much the same way as an "épithète" does when inserted into a sentence, while "un effet de griffonnis" represents an artist's stylistic exploration similar to that of an author searching for a new "tour de phrase." Using this *Journal* entry as inspiration, this chapter explores how the Goncourt brothers experimented with such correspondences between etching and writing in their co-written novels.<sup>3</sup>

Prior readings of the relationship between writing and the visual arts in the Goncourt brothers' novels have focused on other art forms, primarily painting. Robert

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<sup>1</sup> *JC*, II: 214.

<sup>2</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt: mémoires de la vie littéraire*, vol. I (Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1891), 271.

<sup>3</sup> A shorter version of this chapter will appear as an article in *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, Vol. 48, nos. 3–4 (Spring-Summer 2020).

Ricatte's classic study of the brothers' novels, for example, offers many useful examples of moments where the brothers were inspired by painters or paintings, but rarely mentions other art forms.<sup>4</sup> Bernard Vouilloux similarly focuses on painting, along with watercolor and drawing, as key influences on the Goncourt brothers' writing style.<sup>5</sup> Yet neither of these major studies, nor the range of articles and book chapters dedicated to the brothers' novels, identify prints as a possible source of inspiration for the brothers' writing, in spite of the fact that etching was the main art form practiced by Jules and Edmond. As shown in the previous chapter, the brothers' own etchings, such as *Le Singe au miroir*, could function as fruitful sources of visual inspiration for their novels. This chapter now looks beyond the brothers' own prints to consider how their engagement with etchings by other artists also informed and shaped their novels. Jules and Edmond closely studied and collected prints by both eighteenth and nineteenth-century etchers and this chapter argues that these experiences, in tandem with the brothers' firsthand knowledge of the etching process, had an important impact on their novels. Building on the previous chapter's exploration of etching's thematic role in *Manette Salomon*, I examine here how the Goncourt brothers' experiences with etching shaped their novels on a structural and stylistic level.

The only discussions of the role played by etching in the Goncourts' novels thus far have been in relation to Chapter CXXI of *Manette Salomon*, which depicts Coriolis experimenting with etching. Evanghelia Stead and Anna Arnar mention this chapter, but do not go beyond offering it as an example of the Goncourt brothers' interest in the *aquafortiste* as fictional subject, connecting the chapter to the brothers' earlier short story about an etcher, "Feu Monsieur Thomas."<sup>6</sup> Although I explore the links between "Feu

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<sup>4</sup> Ricatte, *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*.

<sup>5</sup> Vouilloux, *L'Art des Goncourt*.

<sup>6</sup> Arnar, "Seduced by the Etcher's Needle"; Stead, "Gravures textuelles."

Monsieur Thomas” and *Manette Salomon* in the second section of this chapter, I am interested in moving past these representations of the figure of the *aquaforiste* to analyze how etching permeates the Goncourts’ novels on a more fundamental level. The first section thus looks at the Goncourt brothers’ experience as print collectors and print connoisseurs, arguing that their encounters with nineteenth-century print albums helped shape their fragmented approach to narrative and structure in their novels. The second section then turns to the idea of transposition from one art form to another to explore how the brothers transpose etchings by nineteenth-century *aquaforiste* Charles Méryon in “Feu Monsieur Thomas” and *Manette Salomon*. Finally, the concluding section suggests several ways in which the brothers incorporated vocabulary and techniques drawn from etching into their *écriture artiste*, emphasizing the diversity of artistic inspiration for their writing.

### **The Novel as Print Album**

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In an article published in *Le Figaro* on March 30, 1865, Alphonse Duchesne described the Goncourt brothers’ novel *Germinie Lacerteux* in the following way:

tout à la fois un livre mal fait et un livre malsain: ou plutôt, ce n’est même pas un livre, mais bien une succession d’eaux-fortes dont plusieurs sont traitées avec une largeur et une violence qui arrachent à l’admiration un applaudissement dont, la page tournée, on a trop souvent à se repentir.<sup>7</sup>

Émile Zola similarly referred to *Manette Salomon* in a letter reprinted in *Le Figaro* on July 24, 1885 as “une collection d’eaux-fortes et d’aquarelles accrochées à la suite les unes des autres.”<sup>8</sup> While reviewers often likened the Goncourt brothers’ novels to paintings or sketches,<sup>9</sup> Zola and Duchesne’s comments present etching as an alternative metaphor for

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<sup>7</sup> Alphonse Duchesne, “Le Roman pathologique: Germinie Lacerteux,” *Le Figaro*, March 30, 1865, 1056, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Émile Zola, *Le Figaro*, July 24, 1885, No. 205.

<sup>9</sup> *Manette Salomon*, for example, was also described as a “collection de tableaux à la plume” by Alphonse Daudet and as “une suite de croquis” by Philippe Dauriac. See Alphonse Daudet, “Une lecture chez Edmond de Goncourt,” in *Trente ans de Paris* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1888); Philippe Dauriac, “Manette Salomon,” *Le Monde illustré*, November 23, 1867.

capturing the distinctively fragmentary nature of the brothers' novels. Both references to etching carry a slightly dismissive undertone, reflecting printmaking's status (alongside watercolor) as a "minor art" in traditional artistic hierarchies. Crucially, however, Zola and Duchesne's descriptions of "une succession" of etchings "[qui sont] accrochées à la suite" highlight the serial nature of viewing prints in nineteenth-century France, an aspect of print culture which, I argue, directly relates to the Goncourts' novels. During the nineteenth century, prints were created, published, and collected in ways that encouraged viewers to "read" them as individual elements in a sequence. This section explores how the Goncourt brothers' use of discontinuity and juxtaposition in their novels has much in common with these ways of looking at prints, suggesting that their approach to structure, narrative, and style draws on their experience as print collectors and connoisseurs.

Nineteenth-century print albums can be roughly divided into three categories: print suites created by individual artists, compilations of prints by different artists, and print collector's loose-leaf portfolios. The nineteenth century saw a renewed interest in print suites, or self-contained groups of prints by one artist, with well-known *fin-de-siècle* examples such as Odilon Redon's *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine* (1888-96) or Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's *Elles* (1896).<sup>10</sup> However, the origins of this interest in print suites can be traced to the 1850s and 1860s, when etchers popularized the format with influential series such as Charles Méryon's *Eaux-fortes sur Paris* (1850-54), Charles-François Daubigny's *Voyage en bateau* (1862), or Édouard Manet's suite of etchings published by Alfred Cadart from 1862-63. In addition to suites by individual artists, the etching revival also helped popularize compilations of works by different artists through the publication of the Société des Aquafortistes' five albums of *Eaux-fortes modernes* from 1862-67.

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<sup>10</sup> For more on the *fin-de-siècle* suite, see Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho, "The Suite: Refashioning an Old Formula," in *Printmaking in Paris*, 75-79.

Each album assembled sixty prints by different artists accompanied by prefaces by prominent critics. Finally, nineteenth-century print collectors also created their own print albums by storing works in loose-leaf portfolios. Manet's unpublished frontispiece to his 1862 etching suite (Fig. 39) is thus a tongue-in-cheek depiction of two types of print albums, showing his own print suite in a collector's print portfolio, on display in a typical nineteenth-century stand. While some prints were framed and hung on the wall, most prints were kept in portfolios for reasons of space, creating a more intimate viewing experience where collectors would leaf through different pages of their album, usually in the privacy of their study.<sup>11</sup> Jules and Edmond were deeply familiar with these aspects of nineteenth-century print culture. As collectors, the brothers assembled their own "portefeuilles ventrus"<sup>12</sup> of prints, which they kept in their *cabinet de travail*, as can be clearly seen on the bottom shelf of the bookcase in Jules Dornac's 1890 photographs of Edmond. As members of the Société des Aquafortistes, Jules and Edmond would have received copies of *Eaux-fortes modernes* and the brothers also collected print suites by contemporary etchers such as Paul Huet. What happened, then, when they turned their eyes trained by conventions of viewing and "reading" prints onto the novel?

Philippe Hamon has previously identified early photo albums as a model for the nineteenth-century novel, "un type de livre qui lui-même inaugure peut-être un nouveau type de lecteur et de lecture, une lecture en zigzag rapide et hasardeuse (l'acte de "feuilleter")" one that inspired novelists to pursue "nouvelles structures (sérielles et permutatoires)" as well as "une nouvelle écriture (celle du "détail," de la succession d'instantanés, du recueil, du fragment, du kaléidoscope) pour leurs récits."<sup>13</sup> I propose here that nineteenth-century print albums functioned in similar ways, providing a possible

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<sup>11</sup> For more on print collecting and privacy, see Parshall, ed., *The Darker Side of Light*; Rosa de Carvalho, ed., *Prints in Paris 1900*.

<sup>12</sup> Edmond de Goncourt, *La Maison d'un artiste*, I: 113.

<sup>13</sup> Philippe Hamon, *Imageries: littérature et image au XIXe siècle* (Paris: J. Corti, 2001), 42–43.

narrative model for the Goncourt brothers' novels. The physical similarities between a print album and a printed book are immediately apparent. As Dario Gamboni observes in his discussion of Odilon Redon's lithographic albums, "la suite des planches y introduit la succession temporelle du langage, et leur parcours s'apparente physiquement à la consultation d'un texte."<sup>14</sup> Beyond the experience of leafing through a series of pages, print albums also had a specific approach to structure and narrative that resonates with the Goncourts' novels.

Whether artist's suites, compilations of different artists' work, or collector's portfolios, nineteenth-century print albums all demanded specific ways of engaging with prints. In all three of these formats, prints were viewed as individual parts in a larger ensemble: although a collector might pull a particular print out of a portfolio to concentrate on it in isolation, the artwork nevertheless formed part of a larger sequence. However, this sequential arrangement of prints did not always imply continuity. Artist's suites, while often constructed around a theme, were not necessarily narrative. As Peter Parshall notes, "often these suites were improvisations in the proper sense: loosely connected if not random groups of images intended for sampling rather than reading in sequence."<sup>15</sup> Even suites with an explicit narrative, or numbering that imposes a specific order on the prints, must nevertheless tell a story through snapshots. The viewer must work to provide the implied connection between images in a series, to fill in the gaps between prints in order to construct a narrative as he or she turns the pages of the album. The fragmented structure of the Goncourts' novels, with their large number of short chapters (155 chapters in *Manette Salomon* alone), lack of transitional markers between sections, and abrupt shifts between different characters, times, and places require a similar

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<sup>14</sup> Dario Gamboni, *La Plume et le pinceau: Odilon Redon et la littérature* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1989), 100.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Parshall, "A Darker Side of Light: Prints, Privacy, and Possession," in *The Darker Side of Light*, 8.

effort by the reader to piece together disjointed elements. Although the underlying presence of a plot, no matter how discontinuous, unites the Goncourts' novels more than a random assemblage of prints, the brothers' approach to structure and narrative relies on the same logic as viewing prints. Individual chapters appear as if in isolation, but nevertheless form part of a series, with the expectation that the reader will be able to form connections between chapters presented in sequence even if the narrative links are eliminated or obscured.

Furthermore, the Goncourt brothers' emphasis on the juxtaposition of different chapters, rather than the creation of a seamless whole, is another approach encouraged by nineteenth-century print culture. Nineteenth-century print albums were organized with an eye to juxtaposition in order to encourage viewers to appreciate variety and contrasts. Artists often used suites to demonstrate their range, depicting different subjects and showcasing different techniques. Similarly, although collector's albums might group together prints by medium or artist, comparing artists' different approaches was considered a highly instructive way of developing one's taste as a connoisseur. This appreciation of originality and artistic diversity was also promoted as a key tenet of the etching revival. As Gautier writes in his preface to the first album of *Eaux-fortes modernes*,

Aucun genre ne prévaut, aucune manière n'est recommandée: on est libre de montrer toute l'originalité qu'on a, et personne ne s'en fait faute. Celui-ci raie brutalement son cuivre à coups de sabre, et se contente de quelques traits rudes et sommaires, n'écrivant sa pensée que pour les yeux qui savent lire; celui-là pousse à l'effet, recroise ses hachures, accumule les travaux; cet autre cherche l'aspect blond; un quatrième risque les brusques oppositions de noir et de blanc...il n'importe: tout est bien qui signifie quelque chose et qui montre dans un coin la griffe du lion.<sup>16</sup>

Gautier here actively invites the viewer to compare and contrast different styles, holding

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<sup>16</sup> Gautier, "Un mot sur l'eau-forte."

up originality as the ultimate criterion for judging a print. The Goncourts' novels similarly showcase their range as authors and their desire to experiment with different styles and approaches. Their chapters never follow one format, alternating from single-page prose poems to witty repartee between characters, from lengthy descriptions of the environment to recorded internal monologues. What Alphonse Duchesne criticized as inconsistency can be viewed in an alternative light as a prioritization of the same values of diversity and originality that were promoted by the etching revival. In "Peintres et aquafortistes," Baudelaire described etching as "ce genre, si subtil et si superbe, si naïf et si profond, si gai et si sévère, qui peut réunir paradoxalement les qualités les plus diverses, et qui exprime si bien le caractère personnel de l'artiste."<sup>17</sup> Jules and Edmond seek to combine similarly paradoxical qualities in their writing, all in search of demonstrating their originality as authors. Tellingly, they even use the same terms as Gautier in a February 25, 1866 *Journal* entry where they describe their quest for "l'épithète *rare*, voilà la signature, la *griffe* de l'écrivain."<sup>18</sup>

In their novels, the Goncourt brothers thus encourage their readers to adopt ways of reading that privilege contrasts and juxtapositions over continuity and uniformity, similar to modes of viewing prints, particularly etchings, in nineteenth-century France. Of course, Jules and Edmond's distinctive approach to structure, narrative, and style in their novels has other textual precursors: Michel Crouzet highlights "le poème en prose," "la lettre," and "la note de journal"<sup>19</sup> as textual models while Robert Ricatte points to the brothers' "culte de l'anecdote"<sup>20</sup> shaped by their experience as historians. However, I suggest here that the nineteenth-century print album, in its various forms, provides another possible source of inspiration, one recognized by contemporary critics like Duchesne and

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<sup>17</sup> Baudelaire, "Peintres et aquafortistes," 334.

<sup>18</sup> *JR*, II: 11.

<sup>19</sup> Crouzet, "Preface," 44.

<sup>20</sup> Ricatte, *La Création romanesque chez les Goncourt*, 64.

Zola but as yet unexplored by current scholarship. Placing the Goncourts' novels in a larger cultural context, one that extends beyond the sphere of painting, thus reveals the productive overlap between nineteenth-century ways of reading and ways of looking at prints. In addition to these connections between etching and the structure, narrative, and style of the Goncourts' novels, the brothers also experimented with transposing prints by specific artists into their writing. I will now examine how the brothers' use of Charles Méryon's etchings in "Feu Monsieur Thomas" and *Manette Salomon* provide examples of this type of transposition between etching and text.

### **Transposing Méryon in *Manette Salomon***

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Best known for his dark, enigmatic views of Paris in his series *Eaux-fortes sur Paris* (1850-54), Charles Méryon was the most critically acclaimed French etcher of the mid-nineteenth century, praised by writers such as Baudelaire during his lifetime.<sup>21</sup> His artistic vision was further immortalized by his struggles with mental illness and tragic death in the Charenton asylum. Although they did not personally own works by Méryon, Jules and Edmond were introduced to the artist's work during a visit to the print collector Jules Niel on October 19, 1856. They were immediately struck by Méryon's unique interpretation of Paris, praising his "âme gothique; [qui] semble être l'âme réminiscente de ce Paris vu avec les yeux du passé"<sup>22</sup> in a *Journal* entry from the same day. The brothers quickly translated their encounter with Méryon's works into the 1856 short story "Feu Monsieur Thomas," published in *L'Artiste*, which depicted a thinly veiled version of Méryon as the eponymous Monsieur Thomas and helped mythologize the artist's reputation as a tortured genius.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For more on Baudelaire and Méryon, see Chagniot, *Baudelaire et l'estampe*.

<sup>22</sup> *JC*, I: 317.

<sup>23</sup> Later edited and republished by Edmond after Jules' death as "Un aquafortiste" in *Quelques créatures de ce temps* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1878). All quotations used in this article are taken from the 1856 co-written version in *L'Artiste*.

In “Feu Monsieur Thomas,” the story’s unnamed narrator meets the printmaker Monsieur Thomas at a night of bohemian revelry and then accompanies him on a nighttime walk through Paris. This walk provides Jules and Edmond with the opportunity to describe the city, but they do so almost entirely through Monsieur’s Thomas’ own voice, recording the artist’s long monologue that narrates the scene in front of him. As Vérane Partensky has noted, although none of Monsieur Thomas’ etchings are described in the text, his monologue effectively turns the city into an artwork and the Goncourts’ descriptions into an ekphrasis: “le vagabondage dans Paris, informé par le regard artiste du graveur, fait passer les personnages *dans* l’univers de la représentation au gré d’un effacement des frontières entre la réalité et la fiction.”<sup>24</sup> The city is described in terms of etching, as “un gribouillis d’encre sur lequel tremble un quelque chose de blafard” and the artist laments that he has only “une aiguille emmanchée pour peindre!”<sup>25</sup> In addition to blurring the line between an ekphrasis of an etching and a written description of Paris, Monsieur Thomas’ speech also emphasizes the subjectivity of both visual and verbal representations of the city. He exclaims,

Ces réverbères, dans l’eau, tout là-bas, – des crucifix de feu; là, devant nous, comme des pans de fenêtres d’où les flammes des lustres filtrent à travers des rideaux de bal...Non, cela tourne: des colonnes torsées qui remuent de la braise dans la nuit et la mort de l’eau; non, ce n’est pas cela, c’est autre chose...Est-ce bête, les phrases!<sup>26</sup>

Here, Monsieur Thomas is unable to pin down an accurate description of the scene in front of him, the city “tourne” and he is reduced to a frustrated outcry at the inability of words to capture his vision of Paris. His exclamation, “est-ce bête, les phrases!” could also be read as a self-referential commentary at Jules and Edmond’s own dissatisfaction with their writing as a means of capturing both Méryon’s etchings and the city of Paris itself. “Feu

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<sup>24</sup> Partensky, “Paris d’une ligne à l’autre: fantaisie urbaine et gravure à l’eau-forte,” 359.

<sup>25</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, “Feu Monsieur Thomas,” *L’Artiste*, 1857, 37.

<sup>26</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 37.

Monsieur Thomas” can thus be read as a metatextual experiment that collapses text and image, reality and fiction: the Goncourt brothers’ textual description of Paris functions as an indirect ekphrasis of Monsieur Thomas’ etchings, therefore becoming an indirect ekphrasis of Méryon’s etchings as well.

Ten years after they wrote “Feu Monsieur Thomas,” the brothers published their novel *Manette Salomon*, where Méryon also appears. We shall now see how several chapters in *Manette Salomon* constitute an unexplored response to Méryon’s work, focusing on how Jules and Edmond use Méryon’s etchings as an opportunity to experiment with transposing the artist’s vision into verbal form. Unlike “Feu Monsieur Thomas,” where Méryon is never named, Chapter CXXXII of *Manette Salomon* opens with a direct reference to the artist. The Goncourts write: “Il y a au bout de l’Île Saint-Louis, du côté de l’Arsenal, un coin de pittoresque échappé au dessinateur parisien Méryon, à son eau-forte si amoureuse des ponts, des berges, des quais.”<sup>27</sup> The brothers then go on to describe this “coin de pittoresque”:

Une grande estacade, vieille, à demi pourrie, rapiécée de morceaux de fer, à demi déboulonnée par les voleurs de nuit, dresse là l’architecture à jour de son treillis de poutres. Cette masse de pilotis arc-boutés et s’entremêlant, ce fouillis d’échafaudages, ces énormes madriers goudronnés noirs et comme calcinés en haut, boueux, glaiseux, tout gris en bas, les milles trous des niches de l’armature, font songer à une jetée de port de mer, à une machine de Marly détraquée, à une forêt dont l’incendie aurait été noyé dans l’eau, à une ruine de la Samaritaine suspecte et hantée par la maraude.

Le soleil, tombant dedans, frappe des coups splendides qui font des barres dans toutes les traverses de l’estacade, y allument le blanc d’une blouse, chauffent de violet les têtes des poutres, dorent en bas leur pourriture de boue, et jettent à l’eau bleuâtre et tendre l’intensité noire et chaude du reflet de la grande charpente.<sup>28</sup>

This passage describes the Île Saint-Louis *estacade*, a jetty and footbridge across the Seine in use during the nineteenth century. However, the *estacade* does not feature in any of

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<sup>27</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 474.

<sup>28</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 475.

Méryon's prints. The Goncourts' references to "une machine de Marly" and "une ruine de la Samaritaine," both hydraulic pumps on the Seine, could mean that the brothers were inspired by Méryon's views of the Notre-Dame pump in his prints *L'Arche du Pont Notre-Dame* (Fig. 5) and *La Pompe Notre-Dame* (Fig. 40), which depict the pump as a similarly precarious wooden structure. However, I believe this passage is not intended to be a written ekphrasis of an existing print, but is, in fact, another experiment in indirectly replicating Méryon's etchings, as in "Feu Monsieur Thomas." By deflecting the reader's expectation of finding a Méryon etching recreated in this passage, Jules and Edmond shift the position of their description relative to the artist's etchings. Rather than an ekphrasis of a specific print by Méryon, this passage instead uses his *Eaux-fortes sur Paris* as inspiration for the Goncourt brothers to create their own rival etching in text. As an exploration of the visual capacities of the Goncourts' prose, this passage invites the reader to compare the brothers' textual treatment of the *estacade* with Méryon's etched interpretations of similar sites in Paris.

So how do Jules and Edmond try to capture the essence of Méryon's etchings, his visual language, through writing? Drawing on Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge's definition of transposition as the "recreation of one art using the specific procedures of another," as well as their insistence on the creative nature of this recreation as a "deliberate *misreading*, which emphasizes difference rather than similarity,"<sup>29</sup> I propose that this passage transposes characteristic elements of Méryon's prints, specifically his use of chiaroscuro and crosshatching, through the Goncourts' language and syntax.<sup>30</sup> One of

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<sup>29</sup> Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge, "Introduction," in *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), 10.

<sup>30</sup> Previous studies have looked at transpositions between painting and writing in the Goncourts' work, but have not yet explored transpositions between prints and writing. See, for instance Dominique Pety, "Écriture de la transposition dans *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*: la peinture de Chardin dans les *Salons* de Diderot et dans *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* des frères Goncourt," in Cabanès, *Les frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, 377-90.

the most distinctive elements of Méryon's works is his interest in chiaroscuro and ability to create dramatic contrasts between black and white using deep biting of the copperplate. The Goncourts' evocation of the "intensité noire et chaude" of the *estacade's* reflection seizes the artist's ability to create a black tone so deep that it appears warm, the synesthetic association echoing the brothers' admiration of black in etching elsewhere, where they associate it with touch or music.<sup>31</sup> Light is not a hazy, ethereal force here, the sun "frappe des coups splendides," creating strong "barres" that echo the lines of the *estacade's* own structure and capture Méryon's approach to depicting light and shadow through the stark juxtaposition of black and white tones.

The Goncourts' syntax in this passage also replicates Méryon's use of minute, precise hatchmarks to build up areas of tone. The brothers' accumulation of short, abrupt segments separated by commas, which lack clear markers of the relationship between subject and verb, as well as their multiplication of almost redundant expressions ("treillis de poutres," "masse de pilotis," "fouillis d'échafaudages" etc.) captures the cumulative nature of etching, in which individual marks build up to create form. As we saw in the previous chapter, the *Journal* records Jules and Edmond's intense immersion in the minute, repetitive strokes of etching. The brothers' description of the *estacade*, I suggest, transposes this same process into writing through the breakdown of their syntax into an accumulation of discrete parts, a de-structuring that further mirrors the episodic structure of their novels as a whole.

Beyond these stylistic transpositions, to which I will return in the next section, the reference to Méryon's etchings in Chapter CXXXII also establishes an artistic and literary

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<sup>31</sup> In a *Journal* entry from December 17, 1882, for example, Edmond praises the "ténèbres veloutées" of Seymour Haden's etching, "Sunset in Tipperary," (Fig. 41). *JR*, II: 972. He returns to the same etching on January 5, 1889 to describe how "ce noir fait au fond de [lui] un bonheur intérieur, une petite ivresse, semblable à celle que ferait naître chez un mélomane un morceau de piano d'un grand musicien." *JR*, III: 212.

*topos* for the surrounding chapters. After *Eaux-Fortes sur Paris*, series of etchings like Adolphe Martial Potémont's *Ancien Paris* (1864) or Gabrielle Niel's *Eaux-fortes sur le vieux Paris* (1864-67) followed in Méryon's footsteps by representing nineteenth-century Paris as a haunted city in the process of ruin, spotlighting the destruction entailed by the construction of Baron Haussmann's modern city.<sup>32</sup> Both Martial and Niel also made etchings of the Île Saint-Louis *estacade*. Niel's etching was not published until 1875, eight years after the publication of *Manette Salomon*, but Martial's 1864 etching may be another source of inspiration for the Goncourts' passage here. As Vérane Partensky has explored, nineteenth-century authors writing in the vein of fantasy, from Baudelaire to Huysmans, often drew on etching's associations with this dark, fantastic version of Paris to generate a mood for the reader.<sup>33</sup> Jules and Edmond's comparison of the *estacade* in *Manette Salomon* to "une machine de Marly détraquée, à une forêt dont l'incendie aurait été noyé dans l'eau, à une ruine de la Samaritaine suspecte et hantée par la maraude" capitalizes on this aesthetics of ruin associated with etching. Furthermore, this chapter falls during a transitional moment in *Manette Salomon*: Coriolis and Manette depart Paris for Coriolis' health, leaving Anatole behind. Thirteen chapters trace the story of Anatole in Coriolis' absence, providing an opportunity for the Goncourt brothers to explore the bohemian underworld of Paris as Anatole sinks ever lower into poverty and even into madness. These chapters have a melancholic, macabre air, from Anatole's fascination with death to his deliberate attempts to induce hallucinations by starving himself.

This dark tone is distinct from other episodes in *Manette Salomon*, and represents, I want to suggest, an exploration of the *topos* inspired by Méryon's etchings. Anatole's brief descent towards madness mirrors that of Méryon himself, who may have served as

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<sup>32</sup> See Ashley Dunn, "The Death Mask of Old Paris: Charles Meryon's *La Morgue* (1854)," in Salsbury, *Altered States*, for an analysis of Méryon's role in promoting this vision of Paris.

<sup>33</sup> Partensky, "Paris d'une ligne à l'autre: fantaisie urbaine et gravure à l'eau-forte."

inspiration for Anatole's character here. The Goncourts' writing also shifts into a more fantastic vein, with lyrical descriptions of events that hover on the border of reality. Their dreamlike depiction of Anatole swimming in the Seine at night in Chapter CXXX, in particular, is reminiscent of the brothers' depiction of similar scenes in "Feu Monsieur Thomas" which are explicitly linked with etching. Anatole's fascination with "ces muets enchantements nocturnes de la Seine" and "l'inconnu et le mystère de l'eau"<sup>34</sup> echoes that of Monsieur Thomas, who asks the narrator, "Avez-vous remarqué comme les fleuves sont plus beaux la nuit?" and praises "La nuit! voilà la reine des eaux-fortes! Cela fait du noir, mais du noir où il y a des choses."<sup>35</sup> The dark water with its flickering reflections also mirrors the dark, opaque acid bath used for *la morsure*, and the black ink used for printing in etching. Anatole and Monsieur Thomas are thus seduced not only by the Seine at night but also by the etching process itself, just as Coriolis is described as being spellbound by the "mystère" and "chimie magique"<sup>36</sup> of *la morsure* during his experiences with etching earlier in *Manette Salomon*. In the Goncourts' depiction of his nighttime swim, Anatole is physically immersed in both the subject and process of Méryon's etchings, as the mysterious and magical qualities of etching permeate this section of the novel.

Jules and Edmond thus use Méryon's etchings in *Manette Salomon* as an opportunity to experiment with a textual transposition of the artist's style and to explore themes associated with his work. The evocative reference to Méryon also demonstrates the brothers' participation in a larger nineteenth-century literary interest in the connections between fantasy and etching, as outlined by Partensky. Further, this recreation of etchings by Méryon is, I argue, just one example of a more widespread integration of etching into

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<sup>34</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 472.

<sup>35</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, "Feu Monsieur Thomas," 37.

<sup>36</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 454.

the Goncourt brothers' writing. The following section now turns to look at how the transposition of etching into writing can be viewed as one tool in the Goncourts' larger set of artistic approaches in their *écriture artiste*.

### **Etching and *écriture artiste***

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The Goncourt brothers are (in)famous for their *écriture artiste*, a highly refined but often impenetrable writing style that uses esoteric vocabulary, unconventional syntax, and techniques from the visual arts to capture fleeting sensations.<sup>37</sup> Although Edmond only coined the term “*écriture artiste*” in his 1879 preface to *Les Frères Zemganno*, where he described it as “une étude appliquée, rigoureuse, et non conventionnelle et non imaginative de la beauté,”<sup>38</sup> both Jules and Edmond developed this type of writing earlier in their co-written novels. Frequently criticized as mannered or precious, the *recherché* nature of the brothers' style nevertheless reflects their unrelenting search for ever more precise ways of fixing fugitive impressions of art and nature: “pour définir dans une phrase, pour faire dire à un mot le *cela* presque inexprimable qui est dans un objet d'art.”<sup>39</sup>

A *Journal* entry written by Edmond on August 27, 1891 highlights this point:

Les arbres tels que je les vois avec mon œil de myope à travers mon lorgnon no. 12 ne ressemblent en rien aux arbres peints dans les tableaux modernes et anciens; oui, ces arbres que je vois sont plutôt, avec le fourmillement de la feuillée, les arbres de la photographie, ou encore les arbres des petites eaux-fortes de Fragonard, où ce fourmillement de la feuillée est rendu par le *grignotis* du travail.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For discussions of the characteristics of *l'écriture artiste* and how it participates in larger stylistic currents in the nineteenth-century novel, see Pierre-Jean Dufief, “Posture et écriture artistes dans le Journal des Goncourt,” in *Ecrire en artistes des Goncourt à Proust*, ed. Pierre-Jean Dufief and Gabrielle Melison-Hirschwald (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2016); Henri Mitterand, “De l'écriture artiste au style décadent,” in *Histoire de la langue française 1880-1914*, ed. Gérald Antoine and Robert Martin (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016), 467–77; Alain Pagès, “Zola/Goncourt, polémiques autour de l'écriture artiste,” in Cabanès *Les frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, 315–22.

<sup>38</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, 54.

<sup>39</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 238.

<sup>40</sup> *JR*, III: 623.

Here, Edmond searches for a highly specific artistic reference to capture the appearance of the trees he sees before him, choosing Fragonard's etchings or photography as the best means of conveying the particular effect of trees viewed under certain conditions: in this case, the dual lenses of his *lorgnon* no. 12 and his myopic retina. This quotation captures the multifaceted nature of the Goncourts' *écriture artiste*, where the brothers select different artistic techniques to suit the subject represented. However, the diversity of the artistic inspirations for their writing has often been obscured by a persistent and anachronistic association between *écriture artiste* and Impressionist painting.

While it may be tempting to see similarities between the Goncourt brothers' deconstruction of sentences into individual clauses, for example, and the Impressionist's use of discrete, visible brushstrokes, several scholars have convincingly demonstrated that such comparisons are misleading.<sup>41</sup> Although Impressionist painting had its beginnings in the 1860s, it rose to prominence primarily in the 1870s and 1880s, after the period in which the brothers wrote their novels before Jules' death in 1870. Even later in life, Edmond was openly critical of Impressionist artists:

Ah! les bons impressionnistes! Il n'y a qu'eux, d'artistes! De drôles d'artistes qui n'ont jamais pu réaliser quoi que ce soit... Or la difficulté de l'art, c'est la réalisation: l'œuvre poussée à ce degré de fini qui la sort de la croquade, de l'esquisse, et en fait un tableau... Oui, des esquisseurs, des faiseurs de taches, et encore des taches qui ne sont pas de leur invention, des taches volées à Goya, des taches volées aux Japonais... Et les prétentions de ces impressionnistes!<sup>42</sup>

While the Goncourts share the Impressionists' interest in depicting light effects, this does not mean that they were necessarily inspired by their artworks: Decamps' use of light and color, for example, could provide a more likely source of artistic inspiration. In this section, I explore how removing the emphasis on Impressionist painting, and even

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Paolo Tortonese, "Goncourt, Monet et le siège de l'image: notes sur une antipathie esthétique," *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* 1, no. 11 (2004): 79–92; Vouilloux, *L'Art des Goncourt*.

<sup>42</sup> *JR*, III: 121. May 8, 1888.

painting in general, offers opportunities for more sensitive readings of the Goncourts' *écriture artiste* that acknowledge the breadth of the brothers' artistic references.<sup>43</sup> In the same way that Fragonard's etchings are just as viable, and indeed more appropriate, a reference than painting in Edmond's *Journal* entry, this section proposes that etching is a previously unacknowledged inspiration for the brothers' *écriture artiste*. In another *Journal* entry from January 3, 1890, Edmond wrote, "c'est curieux comme le contact intime avec la cuisine d'un art est, pour un littérateur, la révélation des choses nouvelles et originales à apporter dans son métier."<sup>44</sup> I now develop this idea by offering examples of moments where the brothers incorporate imagery, vocabulary, and techniques drawn from etching into their *écriture artiste* across their novels.

In the opening chapter of *Manette Salomon*, for instance, Jules and Edmond provide an exquisite passage of *écriture artiste* in their description of the panoramic view of Paris from the Jardin des Plantes, mentioned in the previous chapter. The passage explicitly refers to the visual arts, likening elements of the city to "un lavis d'encre de Chine sur un dessous de sanguine" and "la palette d'aquarelle des Anglais."<sup>45</sup> I argue that etching is also a third artistic reference here, reading the Goncourts' description of "un fouillis de toits, des milliers de toits d'où des tuyaux noirs se dressaient avec une finesse d'aiguille"<sup>46</sup> as a reference to the etching needle. The description of "les petites raies noires de leurs milliers de fenêtres"<sup>47</sup> may also draw on etching vocabulary for the lines scratched into the plate, reminiscent of the *Journal* entry where the brothers describe the figure of the etcher as a "monsieur bien sage [...] qui fait des petites raies, des petites

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<sup>43</sup> Dominique Pety and Barbara Giraud have also proposed collecting as an alternative model for the brothers' *écriture artiste*, pointing to the shared aesthetics of accumulation and use of technical vocabulary to describe art objects. See Barbara Giraud, "Entre loisir et travail: le paradoxe du style goncourtien," *Dix-Neuf* 16, no. 1 (March 2012): 62–73; Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection*.

<sup>44</sup> *JR*, III: 366.

<sup>45</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 82.

<sup>46</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 81.

<sup>47</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 81.

vermicellures avec une petite aiguille.”<sup>48</sup> Where previous analyses of this passage have focused on the Goncourts’ interest in an aesthetics of effacement, and their recreation of the subtle effects of wash and watercolor,<sup>49</sup> reading this passage as a transposition of etching brings out a contrasting focus: the brothers’ attention to line. From the demarcation of the horizon (“cette ligne nette et claire”) and the neatly defined shapes of houses (“les carrés des maisons blanches”) the city of Paris then overflows into a profusion of uncontrollable lines, “un fourmillement de demeures” and “un gâchis de lignes et d’architectures.”<sup>50</sup> Whether these lines help define the scene or “instaurent un brouillage des limites”<sup>51</sup> as Jean-Louis Cabanès argues, the brothers’ exploration of linearity and accumulation clearly stems from a different aesthetic from that of wash or watercolor. Proposing etching as an alternative inspiration returns to the Goncourts’ interest in the juxtaposition of different art forms and effects discussed in the first section. By contrasting the detailed, cumulative aesthetic of etching with the hazy effects of wash and watercolor, Jules and Edmond underscore their vision of Paris as a city full of jarring contrasts, a chimeric city characterized by both ethereal beauty and intricate, gritty detail.

The brothers explore similar juxtapositions in key passages of *écriture artiste* in other novels, such as Charles and Marthe’s boat ride on the Seine in Chapter XII of *Charles Demailly*, Germinie and Jupillon’s walk through the barricades in Chapter LXI of *Germinie Lacerteux*, or the Goncourts’ depictions of the city of Rome in *Madame Gervaisais*. All of these moments stand out as deliberate breaks in the narrative to experiment with pure description and artistic effects in the text, oscillating between more painterly evocations of light and color and explorations of superimposed lines and angles

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<sup>48</sup> *JC*, II: 301.

<sup>49</sup> See Jean-Louis Cabanès, “Brouillage et effacement des limites dans l’œuvre des Goncourt,” in Cabanès, *Les Frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, 443-58; Carine Vignes, “L’Ésthetique du flou chez les Goncourt: de la fantaisie à l’effacement,” *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* 1, no. 11 (2004): 167-87.

<sup>50</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 81.

<sup>51</sup> Cabanès, “Brouillage et effacement des limites dans l’œuvre des Goncourt,” 445.

which have more in common with etching. Striations of light and metal combine to create an effect of crosshatching in the “soleil couchant qui mettait des raies de feu sur les barreaux des grilles de fer”<sup>52</sup> in *Germinie Lacerteux*, while shimmering light effects are similarly delineated in the brothers’ description of the river in *Charles Demailly*:

la Seine rayonnait éblouissante; l’œil clignotant, le regard perdu dans l’incendie rayé par le sillon de la barque, ne percevaient plus que des éclairs ça et là, les ricochets de feu le long des troncs de saules et des estacades, la ligne de feu qui lignait le bord d’une nacelle, la raie de feu d’un jonc droit dans l’eau.<sup>53</sup>

The vocabulary of etching is again evoked in both passages’ variations on the terms “raie” and “ligne.” The river scene in particular also calls to mind the landscape etchings of artists in the Barbizon school such as Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, or Charles-François Daubigny, all of whom feature in the Goncourt collection. The brothers’ depictions of the city of Rome in *Madame Gervaisais* offer a final example. In one instance, after atmospheric descriptions of Rome “sous un éclairage étrange” and “dans un jour voilé,”<sup>54</sup> the city is then alternatively presented as a bewildering mass of lines:

un chaos et un univers de pierre, un entassement, une mêlée, une confusion, une superposition de maisons, de palais, d’églises, une forêt d’architectures d’où se levaient des cimes, des campaniles, des coupes, des colonnes, des statues, des bras de ruines désespérés dans l’air, des aiguilles d’obélisques, des Césars, des pointes d’épées d’anges, noires sur le ciel.<sup>55</sup>

The staccato rhythm of the phrase and its repetition of short segments separated by commas call to mind the repeated strokes of the brothers’ description of the *estacade* in *Manette Salomon* and could reflect a similar transposition of the hatchmarks of etching into writing. The deconstruction of the city into increasing architectural detail, accompanied by vocabulary of accumulation (“un entassement,” “une mêlée,” “une

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<sup>52</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Germinie Lacerteux*, ed. Nadine Satiat (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), 114.

<sup>53</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Charles Demailly*, 227.

<sup>54</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Madame Gervaisais*, ed. Marc Fumaroli (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 103.

<sup>55</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Madame Gervaisais*, 103.

superposition”) again recreates the technique of etching, while the “aiguilles d’obélisques” and “pointes d’épées d’anges,” provide a suggestive echo of etching tools.

Although there is no reference to a specific artist such as Méryon here, etching is a particularly apt source of inspiration for this and other depictions of Rome in *Madame Gervaisais*. Rome was a major artistic center for etching in the eighteenth century and Jules and Edmond were very familiar with prints made by French artists working in Rome. Artists studying in the Académie de France in Rome took up etching as an extracurricular activity, especially after the most famous Italian etcher of the eighteenth century, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, set up a studio across the street from the Académie in 1745.<sup>56</sup> Jules and Edmond highlight the importance of Rome as a hub for etching in *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, concluding that “il y avait alors à Rome comme un petit foyer de spirituelle gravure, qui invitait à l’eau-forte nos peintres français si longtemps rebelles à jeter leurs caprices sur le cuivre.”<sup>57</sup> The brothers owned two of the most important series of etchings produced by French artists working in Rome, Joseph Vien’s *Caravane du sultan à la Mecque. Mascarade turque donnée à Rome par Messieurs les pensionnaires de l’Académie de France* (1748) and a series of etchings made to commemorate Claude-Henri Watelet’s visit to the Académie in Rome with his mistress Marguerite Le Comte, *Nella venuta in Roma di Madama Le Comte e dei signori Wattelet e Copette* (1764), which Edmond referred to as “un des plus jolis livres illustrés du siècle.”<sup>58</sup>

The brothers’ favorite eighteenth-century etching by a French artist working in Rome in their collection was Fragonard’s *Le Petit Parc* (Fig. 42), which, I argue, could

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<sup>56</sup> For more on French etchers working in Rome, see Académie de France, *Piranèse et les français, 1740-1790* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Elefante, 1976); Perrin Stein, “Diplomacy, Patronage, and Pedagogy: Etching in the Eternal City,” in Stein, *Artists and Amateurs*, 102-35.

<sup>57</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, II: 188.

<sup>58</sup> *JR*, II: 669. December 8, 1875. See Stein, “Diplomacy, Patronage, and Pedagogy: Etching in the Eternal City” for more on both Vien’s *Caravane du sultan* and *Nella venuta in Roma*.

have provided direct inspiration for several scenes in *Madame Gervaisais*. The brothers describe the print in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*:

[Fragonard] jette quelque jardin de villa abandonnée, un dôme d'arbres, une épaisseur d'ombre avec un trou de jour, une terrasse où dort, caressée de verdure pendantes, la statue oubliée d'un dieu; et sous le travail brouillé de son aiguille, son grignotis, comme dirait le temps, le petit paysage pétille de lumière et de vie, avec ses cascades de branches, son fouillis d'herbe, et ces rampes à balustres que gardent allongés deux sphinx.<sup>59</sup>

In their novel, the brothers' description of Madame Gervaisais entering the gardens at the Villa Pamphili reads as a transposition of Fragonard's etching:

Sa calèche passait sous l'arc d'entrée garni de ces jardinières faites de sarcophages où un buisson épineux s'élançait du trou vide d'une cendre antique. Et elle se trouvait sous une voûte de verdure, haute, serrée et sombre, piquée çà et là de petites raies de soleil qui avaient l'air d'éclairer de la pluie toute fraîche tombée sur le lisse noir des feuilles. Le bois, s'ouvrant à tout moment, laissait apercevoir, à droite et à gauche, des haies d'aloës, des ravins veloutés de gazon, des touffes lumineuses d'argentéa, des pelouses étincelantes, des brillants d'herbe, des coins d'ombre tremblante où dormait une inscription sur un bout de pierre sortant de terre, une rampe de verdure de débris antiques [...]<sup>60</sup>

The description replicates the same elements of Fragonard's etching, from the framing device of trees forming an arch overhead, to the juxtaposition of nature with ancient stone ruins and the play between light and shade. In contrast to Méryon's bold demarcations of light and shade, Fragonard's etching technique is characterized by an accumulation of light, delicate touches that merely suggest forms and subtly build areas of shadow. In their depiction of shimmering light effects, from rays of sunlight piercing the leaves to dew sparkling on the grass, the Goncourt brothers recreate the way that Fragonard's print "pétille de lumière et de vie" and transpose his etching technique, "le travail brouillé de son aiguille, son grignotis" into writing. Their description of the leaves "piquée çà et là de

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<sup>59</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, II:188.

<sup>60</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Madame Gervaisais*, 35.

petites raies de soleil” further transposes the vocabulary of the etching needle and hatchmarks to capture Fragonard’s distinctive markmaking in *Le Petit Parc*.

Furthermore, in the same way that the Goncourt brothers exploited the *topos* associated with Méryon’s etchings in *Manette Salomon*, their descriptions of the gardens at the Villa Pamphili also recreate the mood and atmosphere of eighteenth-century French etchings of gardens in Rome, such as Hubert Robert’s series *Les Soirées de Rome* (Fig. 43) or the depiction of the waterfall at Tivoli in *Nella Venuta di Roma* (Fig. 44). The brothers write in *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* that with Robert and Fragonard, “cette grande terre de Rome se met à sourire” : the artists depict “plus rien de majestueux, mais plus rien de triste: sous le badinage et la légèreté de leur étude, la ruine joue avec la verdure; la tombe antique égaye le paysage; l’archéologie ne reconnaît plus ses reliques; les monuments deviennent un décor.”<sup>61</sup> The gardens in *Madame Gervaisais* are similarly described as places of beauty, joy, and hedonism. When Madame Gervaisais arrives in the Villa Pamphili, “devant elle, s’étendait et se déroulait, dans sa pompe, sa splendeur, son triomphe, sa végétation de fête, son architecture d’opéra, sa magnificence de félicité, de volupté et d’amour, le jardin italien, le divin jardin d’Italie.”<sup>62</sup> Her trips to the gardens at the Villa Pamphili, Villa Borghese, and Castel Gandolfo at different points in the novel thus offer opportunities for the Goncourt brothers to explore this aesthetic of eighteenth-century French representations of Italian gardens.

Without attempting to create an exhaustive list, these examples from *Manette Salomon*, *Madame Gervaisais*, *Charles Demailly*, and *Germinie Lacerteux* show a broad use of elements drawn from etching in the Goncourts’ *écriture artiste* across their novels. I have not included examples from the Goncourts’ two earlier novels, *Sœur Philomène*

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<sup>61</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, II:188.

<sup>62</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Madame Gervaisais*, 36.

(1861) and *Renée Mauperin* (1864), as both novels are more heavily focused on dialogue and narration, and feature fewer descriptive episodes of *écriture artiste*. Other than the passages mentioned here, the Goncourt brothers are similarly less interested in artistic descriptions in *Charles Demailly* (1860) and *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865). In contrast, their later novels *Manette Salomon* (1867) and *Madame Gervaisais* (1869) saw the flowering of the brothers' *écriture artiste* and the two novels are much more explicitly connected to the visual arts in general. My analysis of the passages from *Manette Salomon*, *Madame Gervaisais*, *Charles Demailly*, and *Germinie Lacerteux* here is not meant to suggest that etching was the only, or even primary, source of inspiration for the Goncourts' artistic descriptions in their novels. Rather, highlighting the presence of techniques inspired by etching underscores the diversity of approaches that the Goncourt brothers employed in their *écriture artiste* and demonstrates that analyzing their writing with greater attention to the unique qualities of specific artistic media can reveal different textual nuances.

## **Conclusion**

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This chapter has used etching as a new lens through which to examine the relationship between writing and the visual arts in the Goncourt brothers' novels. Whether in their approach to structure and narrative, transpositions of prints by artists like Charles Méryon, or the inclusion of etching techniques and vocabulary in their *écriture artiste*, I have argued that etching helped shape the Goncourts' novels in a variety of ways. By expanding the discussion of Jules and Edmond's engagement with printmaking during the etching revival to include their experience as print collectors and connoisseurs, I revealed similarities between contemporary methods of viewing and collecting prints and the brothers' use of fragmentary structure and discontinuous narratives in their novels, demonstrating the links between the nineteenth-century print album and the nineteenth-century novel. The Goncourts' interest in prints by Charles Méryon and eighteenth-

century French etchers working in Rome also provided an opportunity to re-read key passages of *Manette Salomon* and *Madame Gervaisais* as transpositions of these etchings, demonstrating the brothers' use of prints as visual inspiration for their descriptions of Paris and Rome. These transpositions, as well as other examples of vocabulary and techniques drawn from etching across the Goncourts' novels, provide evidence of the brothers' experimentation with transferring elements from etching into their *écriture artiste*. Ultimately, revisiting the Goncourt novels in the context of the brothers' engagement with etching brings printmaking into focus as an important source of artistic inspiration for their novels. Thus far, however, all four chapters of this thesis have focused on the roles played by etching in the Goncourt brothers' co-written works, whether their novels, *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, or *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*. In the next and final chapter, I move beyond the watershed year of 1870 to examine how Jules' tragic early death ruptured the brothers' literary partnership and shaped the afterlife of their etchings.

## Chapter V

### Etched in Memory: Mourning Jules

*“À cette heure, je maudis la littérature. Peut-être, sans moi, se  
serait-il fait peintre. Doué comme il l’était, il aurait fait son nom  
sans s’arracher la cervelle... et il vivrait.”*  
—Journal, June 18, 1870



**Fig. 6:** Jules de Goncourt, *Un Figurant*, etching with surface tone, 1869  
British Museum

© The Trustees of the British Museum

## Introduction

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Jules' final etching, *Un Figurant* (Fig. 6), provides a symbolic ending to this thesis. Unlike Jules' other etchings after Gavarni, which were completed from 1860-63, *Un Figurant* represents a retrospective return to Gavarni's artworks after the artist's death in 1866. At the same time as the print looks backwards to mourn Gavarni, it also points forward to Jules' own death less than a year later, his physical decline already poignantly apparent in the wavering line formed by his shaking hand, noticeably different from his previously confident technique. Epitomized by *Un Figurant*, the Goncourt brothers' mourning of Gavarni was inextricably intertwined with mourning Jules' own early death. As discussed in Chapter II, Jules and Edmond were inspired to write *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* after Gavarni's death, but Jules himself died while the brothers were still working on the manuscript. This layering of loss renders *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* a complex object, "un texte analogue, douloureux, commémoratif, devenu, dès sa publication, vie parallèle et double tombe où reposent ensemble le peintre et l'écrivain"<sup>1</sup> as Julian Zanetta puts it. In an entry from June 22, 1870, two days after Jules' death, for example, Edmond records the items in his brothers' room in minute detail, including the focal point of the writer's desk: "la grande table en bois blanc, sur laquelle nous avons si longtemps travaillé ensemble et qui est encore tachée de l'encre du livre de Gavarni."<sup>2</sup> In his initial undated entry from 1870, Edmond further seizes on the link between Gavarni's and Jules' death, writing:

Je pense à ce dernier chapitre du livre de Gavarni, qu'un matin, à Trouville, il me dit, étant encore au lit. Il l'avait composé dans l'insomnie de la nuit. Je ne peux dire la profonde tristesse dans laquelle je tombai quand il me déclama, avec une espèce de solennité recueillie, ce petit morceau sur lequel nous ne nous étions pas concertés et qui ne devait être fait que plus tard. Je sentis qu'en pleurant Gavarni, il se pleurait lui-même; et la phrase: Il dort à côté de nous au cimetière d'Auteuil, devint, sans que je puisse me

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<sup>1</sup> Zanetta, "Tout l'homme": le Gavarni des Goncourt," 176.

<sup>2</sup> *JR*, II: 259.

l'expliquer, le souvenir fixe et pour ainsi dire bourdonnant de ma mémoire. Pour la première fois, j'eus l'idée que je n'avais jamais eue jusqu'alors, j'eus l'idée qu'il pouvait mourir.<sup>3</sup>

Edmond here views Gavarni's death as an ominous foreshadowing of Jules' own, and Jules' work on *Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre* as a premature mourning of his own death, mourning that would then be taken up and repeated by Edmond.

This chapter explores how Edmond's mourning of Jules' death and subsequent construction of his brother's posthumous reputation incorporated Jules' activities as both an author and *aquafortiste*. In the same way that the brothers used both writing (*Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre*) and etching (*Un Figurant*) to mourn Gavarni's death, this chapter reconstructs the ways in which Jules' etchings played an essential role in Edmond's work to memorialize his brother. In the first section, I outline some of the steps Edmond took to mourn and commemorate Jules through his *Journal* entries, collecting, and editorial work on the brothers' co-written texts. I then add to these more well-known forms of commemoration by tracing the fate of Jules' etchings after his death for the first time. I argue that Edmond deliberately took specific actions to promote Jules' reputation as an *aquafortiste*, even over Jules' literary reputation. The final section then concludes by looking at how Edmond's posthumous treatment of Jules' etchings provides an important counterpart to Edmond's four solo novels published after Jules' death. Although he said he would never write again after Jules' death, Edmond went on to write four novels, *La Fille Élisa* (1877), *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), *La Faustin* (1882), and *Chérie* (1884), each of which commemorate Jules and deal with Edmond's guilt over his brothers' death in some way. Alongside these novels, I argue, Edmond's strategic use of Jules' etchings and construction of a narrative of artistic martyrdom reveal different aspects of Edmond's

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<sup>3</sup> *JR*, II: 244.

guilt over Jules' death and play an essential role in the construction of his new identity as a solo author.

### **Afterlives and Artistic Reputation**

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From late 1869, Jules began to suffer a debilitating physical and mental decline from syphilis, ending with his death on June 20, 1870 at age forty. January 19, 1869 marks the last *Journal* entry written by Jules, and Edmond would not write in the book again until after Jules' death, where a short preface explains his decision to return to the *Journal*:

Après bien des mois passés, je reprends la plume tombée des mains de mon frère. Dans le premier moment, j'avais voulu arrêter ce journal à ces dernières notes, à la note du mourant se retournant vers sa jeunesse, vers son enfance. "A quoi bon continuer ce livre? me disais-je. Ma carrière littéraire est finie, mon ambition littéraire est morte." Aujourd'hui, je pense comme hier; mais j'éprouve une certaine douceur à me raconter à moi-même ces mois de désespoir, cette agonie –cela peut-être avec un désir vague d'en fixer le *déchirant* pour des amis de sa mémoire. Je reprends donc ce journal et l'écris sur des notes jetées dans mes nuits de larmes, des notes comparables aux cris avec lesquels les grandes douleurs physiques se soulagent.<sup>4</sup>

In the following pages, written on loose leaf paper and pasted into the *Journal*, Edmond took up his pen again to record in agonizing detail the final months of Jules' life, forever memorializing his brothers' suffering.

At the same time, Edmond also turned to decorating the brothers' house in Auteuil as another form of mourning, arranging the objects in the brothers' collection as a monument to Jules. On Christmas day, 1873, for example, Edmond describes the bittersweet pleasures of displaying his collection: "Je me promène aujourd'hui dans cette maison, qui s'arrange, fait sa toilette, devient un nid d'art; et mon plaisir est tout triste que [Jules] ne soit pas là pour en jouir, pour, lui aussi, promener, dans ces pièces reluisant

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<sup>4</sup> *JR*, II: 243–44.

neuf, sa jolie gaieté d'autrefois."<sup>5</sup> Within these new spaces, however, Edmond always preserved one room dedicated entirely to nostalgic absorption: Jules' bedroom. As recorded in *La Maison d'un artiste*, this room provided Edmond with physical space to reflect on and remember his brother's life:

De certains anniversaires et des jours de tristesse, où le long passé inoubliable de notre vie à deux me revient au cœur, je monte dans cette chambre, je m'assois dans le grand fauteuil près du lit vide, et dans le recueillement de la demi-obscureté, et parmi ce que gardent et vous font retrouver d'un mort bien-aimé les choses de sa chambre mortuaire, je me donne la douloureuse jouissance de me ressouvenir.<sup>6</sup>

Edmond also used Jules' death chamber as a metaphor in his preface to the 1875 Dentu edition of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, where he explains to the reader the lack of two additional volumes on Clodion and "L'École de Watteau" that had previously been planned by the brothers:

Ces deux années n'ont pas été données à la collaboration des deux frères. Le plus jeune est mort. Le vieux ne se sent pas le courage, et pourquoi ne le dirait-il pas, le talent d'écrire, lui tout seul, les deux études qui manquent au livre. Du reste, s'il s'en croyait capable, un sentiment pieux, que comprendront quelques personnes, le pousserait, le pousse aujourd'hui à vouloir qu'il en soit de ce livre ainsi que la chambre d'un mort bien-aimé, où les choses demeurent telles que les a trouvées la Mort.<sup>7</sup>

Edmond's initial response to Jules' death was thus to relive the experience of loss through his *Journal* entries, and to create physical spaces for memorializing and commemorating Jules' life. Both the *Journal* entries and the remodeling of the house, however, were primarily private actions, although Edmond would of course later publish the *Journal* and open his house and collection for friends to visit. With the re-edited edition of *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, though, Edmond entered a different phase of mourning.

After renouncing creation without Jules, Edmond turned to editorial work on the brothers' co-written works rather than writing his own texts. As discussed in Chapter I,

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<sup>5</sup> JR, II: 561.

<sup>6</sup> Goncourt, *La Maison d'un artiste*, 2003, II:370.

<sup>7</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, 249.

Edmond began enhancing his own copies of the brothers' work through new bindings and the addition of supplemental material. As he explained in *La Maison d'un Artiste*,

pour ces livres sortis de nous, j'ai voulu mieux encore que des papiers extraordinaires, que des reliures splendides; j'ai cherché à les rendre dignes des enchères futures, par l'adjonction de dessins originaux, de gravures rares, d'autographes, d'émaux, faisant, de ces affectionnés exemplaires d'auteur, des espèces de bibelots.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond this personal editorial work, Edmond also began the process of issuing new editions and writing new prefaces for the brothers' texts, shaping the public presentation and construction of the brothers' co-written *œuvre*. In addition to *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Edmond also reprinted the brothers' novels in a variety of new editions, ranging from illustrated versions to cheaper editions and luxury limited editions.<sup>9</sup> Although Edmond presented this work as following the "sentiment pieux" of respecting his brothers' memory, Dominique Pety reminds us that "il ne faut pas omettre le rôle stratégique que joue l'ensemble du travail éditorial après 1870: les Goncourt font désormais figure d'aînés sur la scène littéraire, le survivant orchestre cette renommée nouvelle."<sup>10</sup> Jérôme Meizoz places this type of authorial self-fashioning in a historical context, arguing that the nineteenth century witnessed a cultural shift that simultaneously individualized the author and began fetishizing the range of objects produced by an author beyond his published texts, such as preparatory notes, manuscripts, or even handwriting: "l'œuvre se donne alors comme un fétiche métonymique de la personne, une "relique" empreinte de sacré, traitée comme telle."<sup>11</sup> Edmond's posthumous treatment of Jules certainly fits within this larger shift – we might see similarly quasi-religious undertones in the designation of Jules' bedroom as a type of shrine, or Edmond's collector's editions of the brothers' books as

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<sup>8</sup> Goncourt, *La Maison d'un artiste*, 2003, II:345.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the illustrated editions of the Goncourts' novels see Galantaris, "L'Illustration des romans d'Edmond et Jules de Goncourt."

<sup>10</sup> Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection*, 197.

<sup>11</sup> Jérôme Meizoz, *Postures littéraires: mises en scène modernes de l'auteur* (Geneva: Slatkine Erudition, 2007), 42.

modern-day relics. The partial publication of the *Journal* beginning in 1887 and the publication by Edmond of Jules' letters in 1885, also speaks to this interest in the more intimate aspects of an author's life.<sup>12</sup> Yet even among the increased attention to authorial legacy and reputation in the nineteenth century, the Goncourt brothers stand out for their obsession with posterity.

Both Jules and Edmond were hyperconscious of the reception of their work during Jules' life. Jules' death then placed Edmond in a unique position: by closing the chapter on the brothers' career as co-authors, Edmond was able to take a retrospective, editorial gaze on the brothers' works within his own lifetime. He became genuinely obsessed with their legacy, writing on December 3, 1885, for example: "Idée de tous les moments, chez moi, de défendre dans l'avenir de l'oubli ce nom de Goncourt par toutes les survies, survie par les œuvres, survie par les fondations, survie par l'application de mon chiffre ou de ma marque sur toutes les choses d'art possédées par mon frère et moi."<sup>13</sup> The ultimate manifestation of this desire to secure the survival of the brothers' name was the foundation of the Académie Goncourt and the Prix Goncourt, which will be discussed in the next section. However, these actions aimed at constructing and preserving the brothers' legacy did not solely focus on their literary production. I would now like to look at how Edmond also engaged in a strategic positioning of Jules' etchings which, I argue, offers a different perspective on Edmond's construction of the brothers' reputation. Exploring the afterlives of Jules' etchings for the first time, I outline three crucial steps taken by Edmond to publicize Jules' etchings after his death: publishing a *catalogue raisonné*, donating Jules' *œuvre* to the Cabinet des Estampes, and displaying his etchings in the newly created "Grenier" in the brothers' house.

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<sup>12</sup> Goncourt, *Lettres de Jules de Goncourt*.

<sup>13</sup> *JR*, II: 1201.

In 1875 and 1876, Edmond took a major step towards commemorating Jules as an etcher through the publication of a *catalogue raisonné* of his etchings edited by Philippe Burty, titled “Les Eaux-Fortes de Jules de Goncourt.” In addition to a complete listing of Jules’ etchings, the catalogue also included a long biographical introductory essay by Burty and twenty-one of Jules’ etchings re-printed by François Liénard. The catalogue could be purchased in two editions: one edition “de grand luxe sur papier spécial, avec les eaux-fortes tirées sur papier du Japon, à cent exemplaires avant toute lettre” for 200 francs, or a second edition “à deux cents exemplaires, les eaux-fortes tirées sur papier vergé, avec le numéro d’ordre et le nom de l’imprimeur à la pointe” for 100 francs.<sup>14</sup> A portion of Burty’s introductory essay along with a reproduction of Jules’ etching “Tête de femme” after Gavarni were also published in *L’Art* in January 1875 to promote the catalogue before its publication in 1876. Burty had long been one of the biggest supporters and collectors of the brothers’ etchings. He wrote in a letter from February 25, 1862: “inutile de vous répéter [sic] combien j’aime vos eaux-fortes [...] Et je vois avec une douleur muette que vous m’aimez bien peu, car depuis longtemps vous eussiez dû compléter mon œuvre.”<sup>15</sup> As early as 1861, he even appears to have been gathering information for a future publication on the brothers’ etchings, as evidenced in a letter from October 1861:

Donnez-moi donc un jour la liste exacte de votre bibliographie; celle exacte aussi de vos eaux-fortes et en vingt lignes les principales dates de votre biographie et de vos études artistiques. Ce sont des documents qui ne franchiront le seuil de ma collection, et n’entreront dans mes travaux sur les aquafortistes que le jour où vous m’y autoriseriez, mais qu’il est toujours bon de demander.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Burty, *Eaux-fortes de Jules de Goncourt*.

<sup>15</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Correspondance générale*, ed. Pierre Dufief, vol. I (Paris: H. Champion, 2004), 579.

<sup>16</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Correspondance générale*, I:560.

Burty proposed writing a catalogue of Jules' etchings in a letter to Edmond shortly after Jules' death. He also appears to have honored Jules' own wishes, as Edmond responded on June 30, 1870, writing, "votre idée du petit livre pour les amis me sourit. Il faut vous dire que, peu de jours avant sa mort, [Jules] m'avait dit: 'Je voudrais réunir mes eaux-fortes de Gavarni. Je demanderai cela à Burty qui sait fabriquer un livre avec une préface.'"<sup>17</sup> Edmond offered his help to Burty in researching Jules' etchings in another letter from July 6, 1870, where he wrote, "Vous viendrez chez moi, à mon retour, et tout ce que vous trouverez de Jules vous le prendrez. Les cuivres seront à votre disposition pour les planches qui manqueront. [...] Pour le petit travail que je suis heureux et fier de vous voir faire, vous aurez tout ce que vous voudrez et plus encore."<sup>18</sup> Edmond was thus fully involved and invested in the project from the outset.

Receiving the publisher's proofs of the catalogue for the first time was an emotional experience for Edmond, as he recorded in a *Journal* entry for September 13, 1875:

ce soir, chassé des pièces du bas de ma maison par l'odeur de la peinture, devant le lit vide de mon frère, je regarde le prospectus de ses eaux-fortes, qui m'arrive de chez Claye. L'imprévu des choses de la vie est surprenant. De ces eaux-fortes, pour lesquelles les manieurs de la pointe n'avaient pas, de son vivant, assez d'encouragement décourageant, de sourires ironiques, de mépris enfin, le pauvre enfant ne se doutait pas que bien peu d'années après sa mort, on en ferait un des plus beaux livres publiés à la mémoire d'un aquafortiste.<sup>19</sup>

Edmond was more critical of Burty's preface, however, complaining in an entry from November 1875 about "les travaux des journalistes!" and accusing Burty of writing "deux ou trois cents lignes, qui ne se tiennent, ne s'enchaînent pas, toutes remplies, à l'épluchage, d'indications fausses ou tout au moins pas rigoureusement justes: voilà ce

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<sup>17</sup> Cited in Delzant, *Les Goncourt*, 192.

<sup>18</sup> Delzant, 193.

<sup>19</sup> *JR*, II: 659.

qu'ils appellent un travail!"<sup>20</sup> Although this is a helpful reminder to read Burty's preface with a pinch of salt, Edmond then goes on to specify that his concerns are more about the accuracy of Burty's claims about the brothers' trip to Italy rather than the overall presentation of Jules' etchings in the catalogue. If we take Burty's catalogue essay seriously as a view of Jules' etchings endorsed by Edmond, then, the catalogue provides a valuable perspective on Edmond's strategies for ensuring Jules' reputation as an *aquafortiste*.

Edmond could not have chosen a more effective mouthpiece than Burty for promoting Jules' etchings. In their sociological exploration of how artists' reputations were built and survived (or more often, failed to survive) during the nineteenth-century etching revival in France, England, and America, Kurt and Gladys Lang identify two crucial aspects of ensuring an artist's reputation: recognition and renown. In their definition, recognition is "the esteem in which 'insiders' hold the artist," encompassing judgment by fellow artists, collectors, or other members of the art world.<sup>21</sup> Renown is then "a more cosmopolitan form of recognition, measured by how well the artist is known beyond the network of professional peers," which requires publicity from critics and dealers to share the artist's work with the wider public.<sup>22</sup> The Langs even specifically highlight Philippe Burty as one of the most successful examples of figures who could walk the fine line between insider recognition and public renown. Respected in elite artistic circles as a scholar and collector, Burty was also a prolific critic known by the public for his vocal support of the etching revival in popular journals. Burty's involvement in the catalogue of Jules' etchings thus immediately provided both a stamp of art world consecration and a lure to draw popular attention. A savvy businessman (in)famous for

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<sup>20</sup> *JR*, II: 662.

<sup>21</sup> Lang and Lang, *Etched in Memory*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Lang and Lang, 6.

tricks like destroying artist's plates to drive up the prices of prints, Burty also no doubt influenced the advertisement of the catalogue in *L'Art* as well as the inclusion of copies of Jules' etchings with the catalogue.<sup>23</sup> Again, these reproductions mobilize both aspects of renown and recognition: the first edition "de luxe" would appeal to more prestigious collectors, while the cheaper second edition would be more accessible to a wider public. With either edition, readers who purchased the catalogue also became collectors of Jules' work, spreading the reach of his etchings to a larger public than in his own lifetime.<sup>24</sup>

Along with publishing a *catalogue raisonné*, the Langs cite acceptance into institutional collections as one of the most important ways of guaranteeing the survival of an artist's reputation. Institutional entry enables future access to and research on an artist's works, as well as conferring a prestigious stamp of recognition. Edmond therefore took another significant step in ensuring Jules' reputation as an etcher when he donated all of Jules' etchings in his collection (as well as his own etchings) to the Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale in November 1884. An accompanying note specified that the donation was comprised of the

Œuvre unique formé par le graveur, offrant la réunion de ses quatre-vingt-six eaux fortes dont quelques-unes n'ont été tiré qu'a deux ou trois exemplaires et contenant tous les états. A la collection des eaux-fortes de mon frère je joins quelques très méchantes planches faites à ses côtés pour lui tenir compagnie pendant qu'il piochait le cuivre.<sup>25</sup>

The acceptance of Edmond's donation demonstrates that his earlier attempt to secure Jules' reputation as an etcher through Burty's catalogue must have been successful, as acceptance by the Cabinet des Estampes was by no means guaranteed. Félix

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<sup>23</sup> Burty suggested this tactic to the Goncourt brothers in a letter from October 1861, even attempting to entice them with the offer of a drawing by one of their favorite artists: "J'ai acheté hier votre *Lorette*. Vous devriez graver en fac-simile le petit dessin que Gavarni avait croqué pour votre exemplaire, en tirer 10 épreuves, et détruire le cuivre. Si vous faites cela, je vous offre un croquis de Saint-Aubin." Goncourt and Goncourt, *Correspondance générale*, 561.

<sup>24</sup> Other than the etchings published as illustrations for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* and the five etchings exhibited at the *Salon*, Jules kept his etchings mostly private, only sending a few copies to close friends.

<sup>25</sup> Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, "Œuvre de Edmond et Jules de Goncourt," RESERVE EF-407 (A, 1-2)-FOL, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Italics in original.

Bracquemond, for example, one of the most well-known nineteenth-century French etchers, was refused when he first tried to donate works in 1868 – his *œuvre* only entered the collection in 1901. Yet again, Edmond enlisted the help of Philippe Burty to further publicize the donation of Jules’ etchings. In a letter to Burty from December 21, 1884, Edmond wrote: “Tout en refaisant ma maison, je suis en train de faire mes paquets pour le néant et l’œuvre de mon frère que je devais laisser, après ma mort, au Cabinet des Estampes, je viens de le donner tout de suite. Voici la petite note que j’ai mise en tête. Si vous y trouvez matière à un fait divers pour un journal d’art, faites-en ce que vous voudrez.”<sup>26</sup> Edmond’s reference to remodeling his house here also marks another significant step taken by him to draw attention to Jules’ etchings in the 1880s.

In 1884, Edmond renovated the second floor of the house in Auteuil to make room for what came to be known as the “Grenier” (Fig. 45). In a newly designed attic room, symbolically located next to Jules’ death chamber, Edmond welcomed a literary circle that met every Sunday until Edmond’s death in 1896.<sup>27</sup> The Grenier encompassed a diverse group of young and established writers from across the different movements of naturalism, decadence, and symbolism, including Zola, Mallarmé, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Remy de Gourmont, and Pierre Loti, to name a few. Ten members of the Grenier went on to act as the initial members of the Académie Goncourt after Edmond’s death: J.K. Huysmans, Octave Mirbeau, Léon Hennique, Gustave Geffroy, the Rosny brothers, Paul Margueritte, Léon Daudet, Elémir Bourges, and Lucien Descaves. The *Grenier* came to represent the heart of Edmond’s newly arranged collection, a “microcosme de choses de goût, d’objets d’élection, de jolités rarissimes, triés dans le dessus du panier de la curiosité.”<sup>28</sup> Where Edmond used the first and second floors of the house to display his collections of

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<sup>26</sup> Cited in Delzant, *Les Goncourt*, 198.

<sup>27</sup> For more on the history Grenier as a social and literary space, see the articles collected in the special 2012 edition “Le Grenier des Goncourt” in the *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*.

<sup>28</sup> *JR*, III: 1046.

eighteenth-century French drawings and Asian art objects, the Grenier featured objects of more personal significance.

Edmond used the Grenier to display his collection of books by nineteenth-century authors, including a special bookshelf dedicated to Balzac and Gavarni. As he wrote in *La Maison d'un Artiste*, “c’est l’armoire, je ne crains pas de le dire bien haut, des deux grands génies du siècle, des talents les plus originaux de l’art et de la littérature, des deux hommes sans prédécesseurs.”<sup>29</sup> Strategically placed on top of this bookshelf was “une vitrine où sont exposés cinq volumes reliés par les grands relieurs,” displaying specially bound copies of the Goncourt brothers’ own books, including *Manette Salomon*, *Histoire de Marie-Antoinette*, *Maîtresses de Louis XV*, *La Femme au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, *L’Art au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, and a book collecting the letters Edmond received after Jules’ death. In addition to this literary memorial to his brother, Edmond also prominently displayed Jules’ etchings. He transformed the two bay windows in the *Grenier* into “petits cabinets d’exposition en plein air,”<sup>30</sup> where he exhibited Jules’ etchings alongside his favorite etchings by eighteenth and nineteenth-century artists. In one window, for example, Edmond records that he juxtaposed *Le Chat Malade* by Liotard after Watteau, *Spectacle des Tuileries* by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin and *Sunset in Tipperary* by Seymour Haden with Jules’ etchings of the *Portrait de l’Abbé Reynal* after La Tour, *La Lecture* after Fragonard and his *Profil d’homme* after Gavarni’s drawing executed with a toothpick.<sup>31</sup> Jules’ etchings would thus have been conspicuously exhibited to visitors in the Grenier, advertising him as an artist and allowing for direct comparison between his etchings and prints by some of the most famous etchers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Through the exhibition of Jules’ etchings in the Grenier, the donation of his *œuvre*

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<sup>29</sup> Goncourt, *La Maison d'un artiste*, 2003, II: 366.

<sup>30</sup> *JR*, III: 1052.

<sup>31</sup> *JR* III: 1048–49.

to the Cabinet des Estampes, and the publication of Burty's catalogue, Edmond mobilized different strategies to promote Jules' etchings after his death, even more so than during Jules' life when they were mostly kept private. Tracing these steps offers a previously undiscussed way in which Edmond mourned and commemorated his brother, alongside other activities such as his *Journal* entries, collecting, and editorial work. Edmond's posthumous treatment of Jules' etchings also relates to Edmond's four solo novels: while Edmond did not carry on etching after Jules' death, he did return to writing, raising important issues surrounding guilt and authorial self-fashioning.

### **Etching and Edmond's Novels**

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Although Edmond initially claimed that he could not and would not pursue his own writing after Jules' death, he eventually returned to literature with his four solo novels. Aspects of the four novels, particularly *Les Frères Zemganno*, the most obviously autobiographical, have been convincingly analyzed through a biographical lens as fictional transpositions of Edmond's guilt over Jules' death.<sup>32</sup> Pierre-Jean Dufief identifies three essential aspects of mourning across the four texts: "l'importance de la culpabilisation, le rôle de la remémoration et de la commémoration, l'importance de la célébration avec la création d'un mythe du couple fraternel."<sup>33</sup> As we have seen, Edmond's posthumous positioning of Jules' etchings clearly participates in the same project of "remémoration" and "commemoration." I would now like to explore how Edmond's treatment of Jules' etchings relates to the issue of guilt as well, constructing a narrative of artistic martyrdom that calls into question precisely "la création d'un mythe du couple fraternel" in Edmond's novels.

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<sup>32</sup> See Pierre-Jean Dufief, "Les Romans d'Edmond ou l'écriture du deuil," *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* 1, no. 16 (2009): 9–20; Ashley, *Edmond de Goncourt and the Novel*; Catherine Dousteysier-Khoze, "Introduction," in *Les frères Zemganno, Œuvres complètes des frères Goncourt* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Dufief, "Les Romans d'Edmond ou l'écriture du deuil," 11.

In a long *Journal* entry from June 22, 1870, two days after Jules' death, Edmond expressed his belief that literature was the cause of Jules' death. He writes, "m'interrogeant longuement, j'ai la conviction qu'il est mort du travail de la forme, à la peine du style," recalling "les heures sans repos passées au remaniement, au retravaillement, à la récorrection d'un morceau [...] ces efforts et ces dépenses de cervelle vers une perfection faisant rendre à la langue française tout ce qu'elle pouvait rendre et au-delà."<sup>34</sup> Edmond repeated this conviction in a letter to Zola in July 1870, writing:

À mon sentiment, mon frère est mort du travail, et surtout de l'élaboration de la forme, de la ciselure de la phrase, du travail du style. Je le vois encore reprenant des morceaux [...] les retravaillant des heures, des demi-journées, avec une opiniâtreté presque colère, changeant ici une épithète, là faisant entrer dans une phrase un rythme, plus loin reprenant un tour, fatiguant et usant sa cervelle à la poursuite de cette perfection si difficile, parfois impossible de la langue française, dans l'expression des choses et des sensations modernes. Après ce labeur, je me le rappelle maintenant, il restait de longs moments brisé, sur un divan, silencieux et fumant.<sup>35</sup>

Edmond's belief that Jules' pursuit of perfection in his writing style led to his death sealed a narrative of artistic martyrdom that had defined the brothers' career until that point.

Stéphanie Champeau and Dufief have previously explored the brothers' presentation of themselves as martyrs:<sup>36</sup> as Champeau observes, "trois éléments se conjuguent en somme pour faire le martyre de l'artiste: au caractère intransigent de sa vocation, à l'inhumanité du monde envers lui, s'ajoutent les souffrances physiques et nerveuses auxquelles son tempérament fragile le prédispose."<sup>37</sup> The brothers blamed their nervous disposition and ill health on the negativity with which their work was received by critics and the public, presenting themselves in frequent *Journal* entries as persecuted martyrs suffering for their art.

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<sup>34</sup> *JR*, II: 259.

<sup>35</sup> Cited in Delzant, *Les Goncourt*, 185.

<sup>36</sup> Stéphanie Champeau, *La Notion d'artiste chez les Goncourt (1852-1870)* (Paris; Geneva: Honoré Champion; Editions Slatkine, 2000); Pierre-Jean Dufief, "Les Goncourt et le sacerdoce de l'écrivain," *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* 4 (1997): 133–41.

<sup>37</sup> Champeau, *La Notion d'artiste chez les Goncourt*, 450.

In one of his final *Journal* entries, for instance, Jules wrote on January 5, 1869: “Oh! c’est bien nous qui aurons été les martyrs de nos livres, toujours, malgré la maladie, sur la brèche du travail et de la pensée.”<sup>38</sup> The brothers even compared their career to the Passion of Christ in an entry for April 6, 1857: “Que n’avons-nous écrit, jour par jour, au début de notre carrière, ce rude et horrible débat contre l’anonyme, cette Passion aux stations d’injures [...] ce long et horrible Golgotha, ces larmes dévorées, tant de douleurs muettes et renfoncées!”<sup>39</sup> Edmond’s conviction that the brothers were cursed was only confirmed by Jules’ death. The night before Jules’ death on June 19, 1870 Edmond wondered aloud in the *Journal*,

De quelle expiation sommes-nous donc victimes? Je le demande, quand je remonte cette existence qui n’a plus que quelques heures et qui n’a eu de la vie que l’amertume; qui n’a eu de la littérature et de la recherche laborieuse de la gloire que des insultes, des mépris, des sifflets; qui depuis cinq ans, se débat dans la souffrance quotidienne; qui se termine par cette agonie morale et physique; où partout et tout le temps, je trouve comme la poursuite d’une fatalité assassine.<sup>40</sup>

Although Edmond felt that forces outside their control were pitted against the brothers throughout their career, he also felt a piercing sense of personal guilt after Jules’ death. In a *Journal* entry for “10 heures du matin 18 June 1870” after sitting as witness to Jules’ final suffering over the entire night, Edmond let out a cry of anguish and remorse: “A cette heure, je maudis la littérature. Peut-être, sans moi, se serait-il fait peintre. Doué comme il l’était, il aurait fait son nom sans s’arracher la cervelle... et il vivrait.”<sup>41</sup> Blaming himself for forcing Jules to pursue writing instead of art, Edmond believed he could have perhaps saved Jules from his martyrdom if he had left him to pursue his natural artistic talent. As Dufief has explored, all four of Edmond’s novels are an apology for this guilt in some way: the deaths of the three heroines in *La Fille Élisa*, *La Faustine* and *Chérie* all replay

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<sup>38</sup> *JR*, II: 195.

<sup>39</sup> *JC*, I: 374.

<sup>40</sup> *JR*, II: 255.

<sup>41</sup> *JR*, II: 255.

Jules' death, from the depiction of Élisabeth's aphasia to the symbolic date of Chérie's death on June 20. However, Edmond's guilt is most obviously transferred and transposed in *Les Frères Zemganno*.

Edmond's second novel and first truly solo creation (*La Fille Élisa* was based on notes the brothers made together), *Les Frères Zemganno* is a thinly veiled autobiographical portrait of Edmond and Jules as the two gymnast brothers Gianni and Nello. Like Edmond and Jules, Gianni and Nello are completely inseparable in both their circus performances and in life, but their fraternal bond is ruptured by a trapeze accident that leaves Nello, the younger brother, paralyzed from the waist down. However, the novel presents two crucial twists on Edmond and Jules' own lives. First, the novel does not replicate Jules' death – Nello lives but is unable to practice his craft. Second, Gianni is not directly responsible for Nello's fall, which is instigated instead by the jealous figure of Tomkins, an American circus performer. As Dufief observes, these two narrative choices mean that “la faute, qui perd ses conséquences les plus tragiques, est atténuée, diluée” and that “l'agressivité, d'abord tournée vers le sujet dans le processus d'auto-dénigrement, s'extériorise sur un tiers, constitué en bouc émissaire idéal.”<sup>42</sup> Although the ultimate responsibility for Nello's fall is doubly displaced from Gianni onto the figure of Tomkins, a woman and a foreigner, Gianni's reflection on his role in Nello's injury nevertheless reads as a transposition of Edmond's guilt about turning Jules away from his natural inclination for art and towards writing:

Et longtemps, songeant à l'épanouie jeunesse de [Nello], à l'indolence et à la paresse de sa nature, à la pente de son caractère à se laisser doucement vivre, sans effort et sans recherche de gloriole, [Gianni] se remémorait tout ce que lui avec son exemple, son vouloir de célébrité, son dur célibat, avait contrarié, gêné, empêché dans cette vie toute sacrifiée à la sienne, et cela jusqu'au moment, où au milieu de sa songerie, s'échappait de la bouche de

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<sup>42</sup> Dufief, “Les Romans d'Edmond ou l'écriture du deuil,” 14.

Gianni avec l'accent d'un remords: [...] Carnage! ...Je suis foutûment coupable!<sup>43</sup>

Gianni's outburst reads as Edmond's admission that even re-writing Jules' death was not enough to exorcise his guilt, as it does not excuse him from preventing Jules from seriously pursuing his original love of art. In this way, perhaps publishing and sharing Jules' etchings was an even more effective way of addressing this guilt than writing, as it allowed Edmond to promote what he believed to be Jules' true nature and what might have been his path without the influence of Edmond, who like Gianni, "[l'] avait contrarié, gêné, empêché dans cette vie toute sacrifiée à la sienne."

Further, *Les Frères Zemganno* introduces a new form of guilt that opens another reading of Edmond's focus on Jules' etchings after his death. The final chapter of the novel plays out a poignant scene in which Nello wakes up in the middle of the night and discovers Gianni secretly practicing on the trapeze, unable to stay away from his calling but hiding it from his brother to save him from the pain. The sight of Gianni's "corps vaillant [...] si souple et si adroit et si fort" is too much for Nello and he cries out in "un déchirant sanglot," revealing his presence to Gianni. The brothers embrace in tears before the novel concludes with Gianni announcing the ultimate sacrifice: "Puis l'aîné, jetant un regard qui enveloppa toutes les choses de son métier et leur dit adieu dans un renoncement suprême, s'écria: 'Enfant, embrasse-moi...., les frères Zemganno sont morts... il n'y a plus ici que deux racleurs de violon.'" <sup>44</sup> By giving up his life's ambition and work as a gymnast for his brother, Gianni makes precisely the opposite choice from Edmond's decision to write *Les Frères Zemganno*. As Catherine Dousteysier-Khoze notes, "l'acte d'écriture même peut être perçu comme une forme de trahison puisque, à la différence de Gianni qui a arrêté quand son frère n'a pu continuer à travailler avec lui, Edmond

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<sup>43</sup> Edmond de Goncourt, *Les Frères Zemganno*, ed. Catherine Dousteysier-Khoze, Œuvres complètes des frères Goncourt (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010), 269–70.

<sup>44</sup> Goncourt, *Les Frères Zemganno*, 289.

continue, lui, à se consacrer à son art.”<sup>45</sup> *Les Frères Zemganno* thus expresses a new type of guilt for Edmond, the guilt of solo creation.

I argue that Edmond’s attention to Jules’ etchings can again be interpreted as an alternative response to this guilt. By promoting an activity that Jules excelled at as an individual and downplaying his own “très méchantes planches,” as he did in the preface to his donation to the Cabinet des Estampes, Edmond was able to commemorate his brother without violating an activity meant to be practiced together. Alternatively, we might also read a more self-interested motive into Edmond’s seemingly selfless elevation of his brother as an etcher that goes against Dufief’s emphasis on the celebration of a “mythe du couple fraternel.” Jacques Noiray proposes, for example, that even in *Les Frères Zemganno*, a seemingly faultless hymn to fraternity, Edmond “se donne ici le beau rôle. A Gianni, son double, la part virile de l’œuvre, la volonté, le travail patient, la conception originale. A Nello, double de Jules, [...] la part secondaire de l’‘enjolivement’, de l’élégance, de la virtuosité.”<sup>46</sup> Similarly, I will now explore how Edmond emphasized Jules’ talents as an *aquafortiste* rather than as an author in several key instances. By doing so, I suggest, Edmond left room for the interpretation that he played more of a role writing their joint novels, and by painting himself as a more of a writer than Jules, he further legitimized his choice to continue with his solo novels. Without suggesting that Edmond’s treatment of Jules’ etchings after his death was primarily selfish, I think it is important to acknowledge that promoting Jules the *aquafortiste*, perhaps at the expense of Jules the writer, had direct benefits for Edmond, who found himself in a newly vulnerable position as an aging author embarking on his first solo career.

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<sup>45</sup> Dousteyssier-Khoze, “Introduction,” 78.

<sup>46</sup> Jacques Noiray, “Tristesse de l’acrobate. Création artistique et fraternité dans *Les Frères Zemganno*,” *Revue des sciences humaines* 259 (September 2000): 101.

In 1879, for example, in the same year that Edmond published *Les Frères Zemganno*, he also began sitting for a portrait by Félix Bracquemond (Fig. 46), which deliberately presents Jules as an aquafortiste, rather than author. By working with Bracquemond, Edmond also provided another strategic mouthpiece for mobilizing both insider recognition and public renown for Jules' etchings. Bracquemond was one of the key figures of the etching revival alongside Philippe Burty. Respected for his artistic talent, he was also rare example of an artist who also published art criticism, acting as an important mediator between art world insiders and the general public.<sup>47</sup> Bracquemond's stunning portrait of Edmond is an etching *tour-de-force*, demonstrating the artist's ability to vary his technique to capture different shading and textures: the soft silk of Edmond's tie, the polished gilt bronze mirror behind him, the delicate wisps of smoke from his cigar. The portrait took nine states and three years to complete and was designed to be a pendant to *La Maison d'un Artiste*, whose publication in 1881 coincided with the exhibition of the portrait in the 1881 Salon.<sup>48</sup> As Jean-Paul Bouillon observes, the portrait acts as "un résumé visuel du livre,"<sup>49</sup> depicting Edmond in his *cabinet de travail* surrounded by eighteenth-century French art (the Clodion *bas-relief* at top left) and Asian art (the Japanese bronze hanging at lower left). Although Edmond dominates the center of the image, the print is in fact a double portrait.

Jules is subtly present in the portrait through the inclusion of a portfolio of his etchings in the foreground, identifiable by the letters "rtes" indicating the end of "Eaux-fortes" and the name "Jules." The portfolio at once highlights and obscures Jules'

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<sup>47</sup> See Félix Bracquemond, *Félix Bracquemond: écrits sur l'art*, ed. Pierre Sanchez (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob, 2002).

<sup>48</sup> Bracquemond won a *Médaille de premier classe* for the portrait. For more on the lengthy process behind the portrait see Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho, "An Icon of Collecting: Félix Bracquemond's Portrait of Edmond de Goncourt," in Salsbury, *Altered States*; Jean Paul Bouillon, *Bracquemond, Goncourt* (Gravelines: Paris: Musée du dessin et de l'estampe originale; Somogy, 2004).

<sup>49</sup> Bouillon, *Bracquemond, Goncourt*, 25.

presence: while it is given a prominent position in the foreground, the partial obstruction of the title and Jules' name make its full meaning legible only to the well-informed viewer and evokes an aesthetics of absence rather than full presence. In a *mise-en-abyme* of portraits, Edmond later pasted a copy of Bracquemond's portrait into the front of his personal copy of Burty's catalogue of Jules' etchings (the same catalogue depicted in the portrait).<sup>50</sup> A later portrait by Jean-Baptiste Guth from 1887-8 (Fig. 47) takes this *mise-en-abyme* one step further. In Guth's portrait, Edmond is depicted standing next to a portfolio of prints holding a copy of Bracquemond's portrait. Guth's portrait again ambiguously obscures Jules' presence: is this a depiction of Edmond's narcissistic indulgence in his own image, erasing Jules' presence through the placement of his arm blocking the lower right corner of Bracquemond's print? Or could the large portfolio next to him be a nod to Bracquemond's original inclusion of Jules' portfolio of etchings in his portrait, rendering Jules present again through his etchings? These different variations on Bracquemond's original image show the ambiguity present in the choice to represent Jules in the portrait not through his likeness or through a literary reference (a book with his name printed on the spine, for example), but through his etchings.

Bracquemond's portrait thus differs from other portraits of Edmond such as Jean-François Raffaelli's 1888 painting in the Musée des Beaux-Arts Nancy or Jules Dornac's 1890 photograph that includes Jules' likeness through a reproduction of Gavarni's double portrait of the brothers.<sup>51</sup> However, Dornac's photograph in fact includes another subtle reference to Jules' etchings: Pamela Warner has argued that Edmond's pose can be read as

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<sup>50</sup> Edmond's copy is currently held at the Fondation Custodia. Edmond bound the catalogue with a special black leather binding and included two of Jules' watercolors and several different states of Jules' etchings in the text, in addition to the etchings published as part of Burty's catalogue.

<sup>51</sup> Jules Dornac's photographs are reproduced in Pamela Warner, "The Competing Dialectics of the *Cabinet de Travail*: Masculinity at the Threshold," in *Interior Portraiture and Masculine Identity in France, 1789-1914*, ed. Temma Balducci, Heather Belnap Jensen, and Pamela Warner (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011). For more examples of portraits of the Goncourt brothers, see Christian Galantaris, "Deux cents portraits des Goncourt," *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* II (1993), 101-44.

alluding to an etching Jules made of *Edmond de Goncourt à cheval sur une chaise*.<sup>52</sup>

Dornac also took another photograph of Edmond which has a similarly hidden reference to the brothers' etchings, this time to Edmond's etchings. Edmond is shown looking at a framed watercolor he made of Jules, which he later copied as an etching. Dornac's photographs provide another example of the ambiguous nature of Edmond's simultaneous self-representation and commemoration of Jules. Dornac's photograph of Edmond looking at the watercolor of Jules is complicated by the presence of Edmond's own portrait directly overhead. Looming above the watercolor is Giuseppe de Nittis' pastel portrait of Edmond, which itself enacts another *mise-en-abyme*. De Nittis' portrait depicts Edmond writing at his desk in the *cabinet de travail* and was strategically placed across the room from the desk so that it would have been visible when Edmond was writing. In the same way that Guth's portrait depicts Edmond staring at his own image, the placement of de Nittis' portrait demonstrates that its primary audience would have been Edmond himself, reinforcing the "strong narcissistic charge" which Warner identifies in the male *cabinet de travail* – as "the room where his identity takes visual form [...] one of its major functions was to serve as a mirror of a man's identity to himself."<sup>53</sup> Dornac's photograph thus captures in one image the entanglement of Edmond's commemoration of Jules and his own self-fashioning and self-promotion.

Like Bracquemond's portrait, Dornac's photographs also depict Edmond in his *cabinet de travail*, the site of literary creation, therefore emphasizing his position as an author. Edmond similarly highlighted his *cabinet de travail* in *La Maison d'un Artiste*, placing it as the central chapter, the symbolic heart of his home. These efforts by Edmond to stress his identity as an author were accompanied by further attempts to underscore

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<sup>52</sup> Warner, "The Competing Dialectics of the *Cabinet de Travail*," 163.

<sup>53</sup> Warner, "The Competing Dialectics of the *Cabinet de Travail*," 163.

Jules' identity as an artist. In addition to his portrait of Edmond, Bracquemond also played a final important role in promoting Jules' etchings by writing a catalogue essay for the 1897 auctions of the Goncourt brothers' print collection. As mentioned earlier, Edmond's final act to secure the brothers' legacy after his death was to set up a series of auctions whose proceeds would be used to establish the Académie Goncourt and the Prix Goncourt.<sup>54</sup> Unlike other nineteenth-century collectors who chose to leave their collections to museums like the Louvre or turned their own houses into private museums, Edmond envisaged a different fate for the brothers' collection. His will outlined his wishes, printed as an epigraph at the head of each auction catalogue:

Ma volonté est que mes dessins, mes estampes, mes bibelots, mes livres, enfin les choses d'art qui ont fait le bonheur de ma vie, n'aient pas la froide tombe d'un musée, et le regard bête du passant indifférent, et je demande qu'elles soient toutes éparpillées sous les coups de marteau du commissaire-priseur et que la jouissance que m'a procurée l'acquisition de chacune d'elles, soit redonnée pour chacune d'elles, à un héritier de mes goûts.

After Edmond's death on July 16, 1896, seven high-profile auctions took place at the Hôtel Drouot from February 15 to June 19, 1897, raising an impressive total of 1,369,249.85 francs.<sup>55</sup> Each auction was accompanied by a published auction catalogue with introductory essays written by prominent critics such as Roger Marx, Philippe de Chennevières, Siegfried Bing, and Alidor Delzant.<sup>56</sup> Bracquemond wrote the catalogue essays for the two auctions of the Goncourt brothers' print collection, divided into "Gravures du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle" and "Estampes Modernes."<sup>57</sup> The Estampes Modernes

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<sup>54</sup> For more on the Académie and Prix Goncourt, see the essays collected in Chapter V, "La genèse du Prix Goncourt" in Cabanès et al., *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle*.

<sup>55</sup> For details of each of the auctions see Alain Barbier Sainte Marie, "La vente de 1897 des collections Goncourt," *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* 5 (1997), 61-73.

<sup>56</sup> Roger Marx and Philippe de Chennevières, *Dessins, aquarelles et pastels du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Feb. 15-17). MM. Mannheim, père et fils, *Objets d'art et d'ameublement du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Feb. 22-24). Siegfried Bing, *Objets d'art japonais et chinois, peintures, estampes* (Mar. 8-13). Alidor Delzant, *Bibliothèque du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Mar. 29-Apr. 4) and *Livres modernes* (Apr. 5-10). Félix Bracquemond, *Gravures du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Apr. 26-28) and *Estampes modernes* (Apr. 30-May 1).

<sup>57</sup> The Fondation Custodia also has a manuscript version of Bracquemond's preface for the Estampes Modernes catalogue bound into Alidor Delzant's copy of the Goncourts' auction catalogues.

auction was comprised of watercolors, drawings, and prints by nineteenth-century French artists, including 2,001 pieces from the *œuvre* of Gavarni. It also included Jules' watercolors and etchings, elevating his works to the same status as that of the other artists featured in the auction. Bracquemond further devoted a significant portion of his introductory essay to discussing Jules' etchings. Bracquemond's essay, I argue, follows similar lines as Burty's 1876 essay for his catalogue of Jules' etchings, with both working to promote Jules as an *aquaforiste* in a way that plays into Edmond's strategy of designating Jules as an artist and perhaps downplaying his role as an author.

Both Bracquemond and Burty use similar rhetoric in their catalogue essays, drawing on the opposition between amateur and artist as a way of distinguishing Jules as a true artist, rather than simply a skilled dilettante. After quoting a passage from *Manette Salomon* that describes Coriolis' anguish over the process of etching, Burty continues:

Tel est, en effet, l'état dans lequel l'Eau-forte et ses drames jettent les amateurs qui s'y essayent. Mais Jules était un artiste, et c'est ce qui le fit triompher de ces fatigues, de ces désillusions qui en sont plus tard les douleurs et les joies secrètes. Il avait la force d'application et la force d'intuition. Le 'métier' peut produire, dans la gravure, des résultats surprenants. Il ne peut que venir en aide au développement de ces qualités instinctives, le choix des travaux et le sentiment de la morsure.<sup>58</sup>

Burty here clearly denotes Jules as an artist and differentiates him from other amateurs like Coriolis, who, although a professional painter, only dabbled in printmaking. Burty's insistence on Jules' status as an artist rather than an amateur is somewhat surprising: as we saw in Chapter I, amateurs were widely respected in the etching community. In spite of Jules having never worked as a professional printmaker, Burty justifies his presentation of Jules as an artist by arguing that he combined natural talent and instinct with a mastery of the "métier" of printmaking. Burty cites Jules' use of different states as example of his ability to practice the real work of being a printmaker: the difficult task of returning to the

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<sup>58</sup> Burty, *Eaux-fortes de Jules de Goncourt*, XIV.

plate “pour donner la force ou l’harmonie suprême, réparer les manques, accentuer le caractère et l’effet”<sup>59</sup> rather than merely being content with a facile initial sketch.

In his auction catalogue essay, Bracquemond similarly returns to the idea of “métier” in emphasizing that Jules had true talent as a printmaker:

Jules de Goncourt, dont ce n’était pas l’état, avait le talent d’un vrai graveur, la pratique du dessin sur le métal, tout à fait différente du dessin sur le papier. Cette différence vient de l’âpreté du métier de graveur, dont les instruments sont inexorables. Les outils de fer ne sont pas des crayons; ils s’interposent entre la volonté du dessinateur et l’exécution du dessin.<sup>60</sup>

Bracquemond argues that Jules is “un vrai graveur” because he understood how to manipulate the demanding tools of etching and recognized the different means necessary to create a drawing on copperplate instead of a drawing on paper. Bracquemond similarly praises Jules’ mastery of “la morsure” as another key aspect of the printmaker’s “métier.” According to Bracquemond, etching requires not only skill in drawing on the plate, but also the ability to predict the effect of acid during biting, and he argues that “ce rapport entre le tracé du dessin sur le vernis et la morsure par l’acide, Jules l’avait compris dans toute sa virtuosité.”<sup>61</sup> While acknowledging that it was not Jules’ “état” to be a professional printmaker, Bracquemond again paints a picture of him as an artist steeped in the true calling of printmaking. In his catalogue essay, Burty ultimately presents his characterization of Jules as an artist as a way of rectifying previous ignorance of Jules’ etchings. He writes that his etchings “eussent suffi, si le public d’alors y eût pris garde et si lui-même eût prétendu aux succès d’artiste, à le classer dès le début parmi les aquafortistes d’élite. Mais il n’y songeait point.”<sup>62</sup> Bracquemond’s catalogue essay can similarly be seen as a way to redress Jules’ own modesty and introduce his work to the public as that of an artist worthy of being among the other artists featured in the Estampes

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<sup>59</sup> Burty, XIV.

<sup>60</sup> Bracquemond, “Estampes modernes,” 4.

<sup>61</sup> Bracquemond, 5.

<sup>62</sup> Burty, *Eaux-fortes de Jules de Goncourt*, 3.

Modernes auction. As close friends of both Jules and Edmond, Burty and Bracquemond's praise of Jules' etchings was far from objective, but their positioning of Jules as an artist rather than an amateur nevertheless adds to the constellation of other efforts taken by Edmond to secure Jules' reputation as a legitimate artist.

Bracquemond's and Burty's essays, as well as Bracquemond's portrait, thus provided an alternative way for Edmond to retell Jules' story in addition to *Les Frères Zemganno* and his other solo novels. By promoting Jules the *aquafortiste*, rather than Jules the writer, Edmond was able to write a new ending to his brother's narrative of literary martyrdom, finally recognizing Jules' artistic talents. Edmond's treatment of Jules' etchings also provided him with another way to address the two types of guilt expressed in *Les Frères Zemganno*: his guilt at turning Jules away from art, as well as the guilt of solo creation. Presenting Jules as more of an artist than a writer perhaps allowed Edmond to justify to himself his own decision to return to writing as his true calling, legitimizing his own future career at the same time as he commemorated the career that might have been for his brother.

## **Conclusion**

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Through tracing the fate of Jules' etchings after his death, I have tried to demonstrate the active role Edmond played in constructing Jules' posthumous image as an *aquafortiste*, offering a counterpart to Edmond's more well-known efforts to shape the brothers' shared literary legacy. The unusual circumstances of the Goncourt brothers' collaboration and Jules' early death provide a unique perspective on the construction of literary and artistic reputation. Typically, the distinction between the work done by an author to construct his own image and the work done by others is clear cut.<sup>63</sup> In the case of

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<sup>63</sup> Jérôme Meizoz notes that "la figure d'auteur elle-même apparaît alors selon deux modalités: comme hétéro-représentée ou construite par d'autres acteurs (biographie, éloge, nécrologie, etc.); comme auto-

the Goncourt brothers, it becomes almost impossible to draw a line between the two. Jules' own authorial self-fashioning during his lifetime was inextricably connected to Edmond through their co-written works. At the same time, Edmond's task of constructing Jules' reputation after his death was also inseparable from Edmond's own authorial career, whether in the books the brothers had written together or his own individual novels. As I have shown, Edmond's treatment of Jules' etchings provided an alternative way for Edmond to mourn and memorialize his brother. Focusing on Jules' etchings allowed Edmond to commemorate Jules as an individual more easily than in the brothers' co-written works, as well as to address his guilt that he had turned Jules away from art and towards writing. However, I have also tried to show how Edmond's construction of Jules' reputation as an *aquafortiste* reflects the same power in which the brothers reveled with their biography of Gavarni: "de sentir en lui la faculté de pouvoir immortaliser à son gré ce qu'il lui plaît d'immortaliser."<sup>64</sup> Edmond's strategic positioning of Jules as an artist had its own implications for Edmond's second career as an author, providing a way to assuage a different type of guilt, the guilt of solo creation. In spite of all of Edmond's efforts, however, Jules' etchings were largely forgotten or treated as a curiosity after Edmond's death. This thesis has returned to and reassessed the Goncourt brothers' etchings, and I would now like to conclude by considering the implications of this research for both studies of the Goncourts' work and scholarship on nineteenth-century print culture more generally.

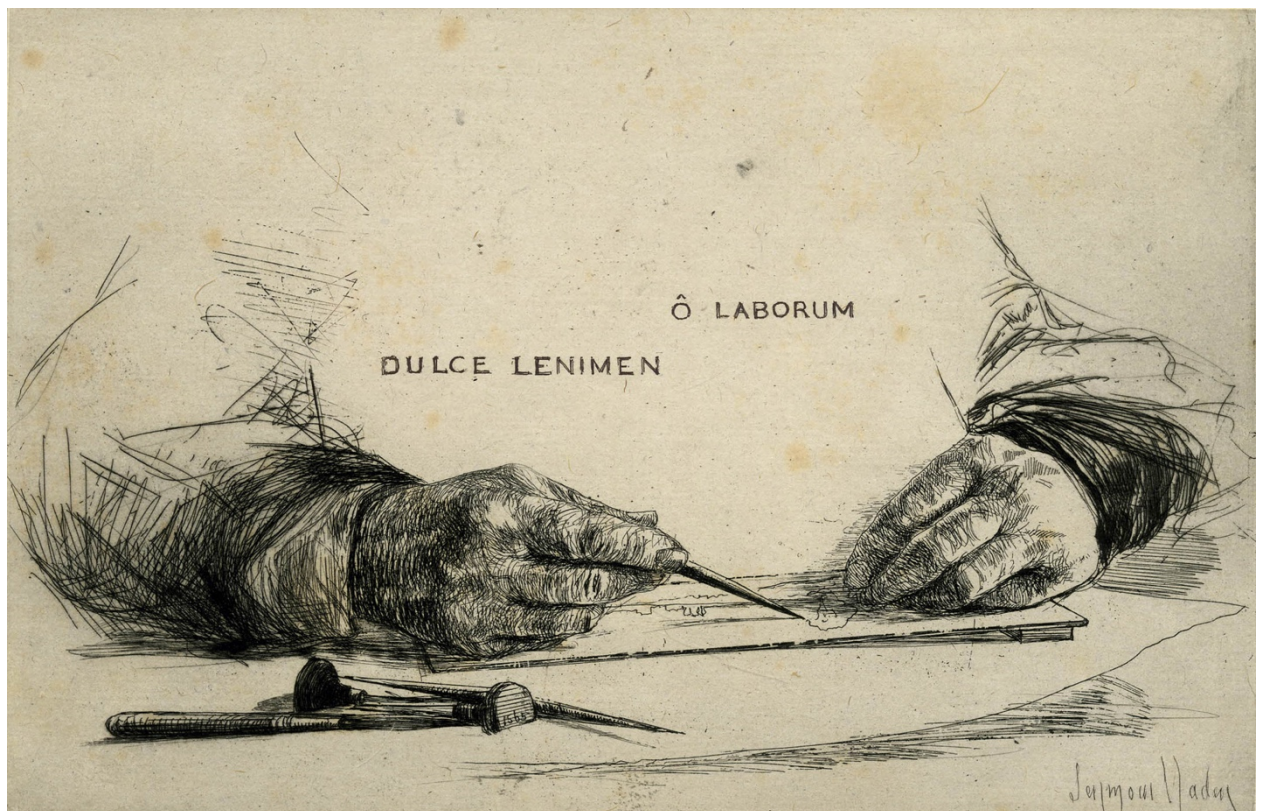
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représentée, ou façonnée par l'auteur lui-même (autobiographie, entretiens, journal intime, etc.)." *Postures littéraires*, 45.

<sup>64</sup> *JR*, II: 131.

## Conclusion

*“Du pinceau contre la plume, la lutte est, selon nous, mauvaise”  
—La Peinture à l’exposition universelle de 1855*



**Fig. 7:** Francis Seymour Haden, *Hands Etching - Ô Laborum*, etching, 1865  
British Museum  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

This striking etching by Francis Seymour Haden (Fig. 7), one of Edmond's favorite artists,<sup>1</sup> encapsulates in one image many of the issues explored by this thesis. Haden's intense focus on the hands of the artist, merely suggesting the rest of the body through sparsely sketched lines, centers the act of artistic creation firmly in the tactile experience of manipulating an etching needle on a copperplate. This captures one of the most characteristic aspects of the Goncourt brothers' own engagement with etching: their appreciation of the often-mechanical process of etching as a way of escaping the confines of the body and the intellectual process of writing. Haden's use of the classical quotation, "O laborum dulce lenimen" ("O sweet solace of my labors"), originally taken from Horace's praise of the lyre, similarly emphasizes both the laborious aspects of the etching process and its soothing, even healing powers. Haden's unusual inclusion of text within the image itself also speaks to the way this thesis has sought to bring together printmaking and writing. The Latin phrase hovers in the center of the print, rather than above or below the image where a conventional title or caption would be placed, as if the words emanate from the copperplate itself. However, the use of capital letters and copperplate font (as opposed to Haden's own handwriting, shown in his signature at bottom right), breaks the mimetic illusion and emphasizes the printed status of both image and text. The depiction of etching in this print as an activity that unites body and mind, the visual and the verbal, captures the multifaceted nature of the Goncourt brothers' experience with etching explored in this thesis.

By way of conclusion, I would now like to bring together the diverse connections made between the Goncourt brothers' work as authors and *aquafortistes* in the previous chapters to highlight four central themes that have emerged over the course of this thesis. Thus far, the thesis has been structured around specific interactions between writing and

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<sup>1</sup> See Ch. IV, p. 161.

etching in the Goncourt brothers' *œuvre*, with each chapter offering an example of different pairings of text and image. I would now like to step back and draw out transversal themes from across these examples, highlighting the importance of process, the appreciation of different forms of perception and knowledge, the negotiation of the hybrid figure of the *artiste-écrivain*, and the tension between original and copy as central issues. After pointing to the implications of these themes for future studies of the Goncourt brothers' work, I will also discuss how my investigation of the Goncourt brothers as authors and *aquafortistes* acts as a case study for considering the larger relationship between writing and printmaking in nineteenth-century France. Suggesting further areas of research, I emphasize the significance of print studies for reorienting studies of nineteenth-century French literature and the visual arts and moving beyond the dominant model of comparisons between painting and writing.

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As highlighted by Haden's etching, the first recurring theme throughout this thesis is the importance of understanding and appreciating the process of making, whether in etching or writing. In Chapter I, we saw how considering the brothers' process of making their etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* reveals as much about their function and purpose as examining the finished illustrations in relation to the published text. I argued that the act of making their etched copies not only allowed Jules and Edmond to resurrect the movement of the artist's hand, but also to recreate the training of eighteenth-century artists and the connoisseurial techniques of eighteenth-century amateur etchers, revealing new layers to the brothers' immersion in the world of eighteenth-century art in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Similarly, Chapter III demonstrated how the brothers' firsthand experience with the etching process, as described in the *Journal* and *Manette Salomon*, contradicted

conventional descriptions of etching during the revival, downplaying the idea of spontaneity and valorizing the repetitive, mechanical aspects of the process.

This emphasis on the act of creation as well as the final product in Jules and Edmond's experience of etching adds to prior studies of their self-awareness of the writing process. The brothers' experience with etching emerges as an alternative to their depiction of writing as a painful birthing process in the *Journal*, previously explored by Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau.<sup>2</sup> Although I highlighted the Goncourts' depiction of writing in *Charles Demailly* as having elements of the absorptive, mechanical nature of etching, the brothers elsewhere describe the agony of the writing process in terms of a monstrous birth:

La torture, le supplice, la peine de la vie littéraire est l'enfantement.  
Concevoir, créer, il y a dans ces deux mots pour l'homme de lettres, un monde de douleurs, d'efforts, d'angoisses. De ce rien, de cet embryon rudimentaire qui est la première idée d'un livre, faire sortir le *punctum saliens*, la vie de l'œuf, tirer un à un de sa tête les membres d'une phrase, les lignes des caractères, l'intrigue, le nœud, tout ce petit monde animé de vous-même et jailli de vos entrailles, qui est un roman – quel travail!<sup>3</sup>

Such *Journal* entries present writing as torture, creating the narrative of artistic martyrdom explored in Chapter V. Yet Stéphanie Champeau and Barbara Giraud also offer alternative readings of the Goncourt brothers' writing process as therapeutic, again linking etching and writing. Giraud argues that the repetitive nature of *écriture artiste* acts as a way for the Goncourt brothers to work through their obsessive neuroses: "le style artiste, par son caractère redondant, hypnotique et imbu de son propre vide ne serait en fait que la mise en acte d'un discours aux vertus thérapeutiques que l'auteur utilise lui-même pour se soigner de sa propre névrose."<sup>4</sup> The act of writing can therefore be both the cause and cure for suffering, and Champeau even asks to what extent the *process* of writing becomes an end goal in itself, such that the creation of a finished product (publishing a book) is no more

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<sup>2</sup> Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau, "Le deuil d'une promesse," in Cabanès, *Les frères Goncourt: art et écriture*, 39–48.

<sup>3</sup> *JC*, II: 347. July 13, 1862.

<sup>4</sup> Giraud, "Entre loisir et travail: le paradoxe du style goncourtien," 68.

than “un prétexte,” “un alibi plutôt qu’un but réel.”<sup>5</sup> Drawing attention to the process of etching and the ways in which it overlaps with, and distinguishes itself from, the process of writing thus reveals the contradictory nature of the Goncourt brothers’ presentation of the act of writing and emphasizes its alternative therapeutic qualities.

The question of process is also closely related to the idea of different types of observation and perception, and the knowledge that can be gained from diverse ways of experiencing the world. In Chapter I, I explored how copying after eighteenth-century artworks through etching offered a type of tactile, haptic knowledge different from the Goncourt brothers’ other forms of observation through documentary research and close looking at artworks. Chapter II similarly explored how the brothers’ etchings after Gavarni related to their use of stenography as a biographical technique. Their etchings act as a “shorthand” record of Gavarni’s drawing technique, similar to the way in which their written notations of speech attempt to capture the ephemerality of the spoken word, translating aural and oral experience into text. Jules and Edmond’s involvement with etching adds to the ways in which the brothers gathered knowledge about art and artists, complementing their experience as collectors, for example, which offered them the opportunity for different kinds of observation and perception.

As explored by Dominique Pety, the Goncourt brothers claimed that their close engagement with art on an everyday basis as collectors gave them heightened capacities for sensory perception.<sup>6</sup> Their shortsightedness brought looking and touching into close proximity – the brothers ask in a *Journal* entry for January 19, 1857, “n’est-ce point la façon de notre œil qui nous fait autant aimer l’art, embrassant mieux l’objet, que nous caressons de tout près, que nous touchons presque?”<sup>7</sup> Their experience “maniant,”

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<sup>5</sup> Champeau, *La Notion d’artiste chez les Goncourt*, 223.

<sup>6</sup> Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection*.

<sup>7</sup> *JC*, I: 353.

“touchant,” and “retournant”<sup>8</sup> objects provided them with a tactile appreciation of texture, while Edmond later claimed that he needed to soak up the colors of the Asian art objects in his “boudoir de l’Orient” in order to write:

Il me faut me remplir les yeux de la patine des bronzes, des ors divers des laques, des irisations des flambés, des éclairs des matières dures, des jades, des verres colorés, des chatoiements de la soie des foukousas et des tapis de Perse, et ce n’est que par cette contemplation d’éclats de couleur, par cette vision excitante, irritant pour ainsi dire, que peu à peu [...] je sens mon pouls s’élever, et tout doucement venir en moi cette petite fièvre de la cervelle, sans laquelle je ne puis rien écrire qui vaille.<sup>9</sup>

Etching similarly heightened the brothers’ perceptions, adding another dimension to their practice of close looking and handling as collectors. Etching allowed Jules and Edmond to observe and learn different things – the pressure needed to scratch through the etching ground to create different types of lines, the physical movement of the hand in relation to the copperplate. As an embodied experience of artistic creation, etching adds to the brothers’ visual and tactile observations as collectors.

This idea of the new observational capacities gained by practicing both etching and writing brings us to a third key theme of this thesis: the ways in which the Goncourt brothers’ etchings allow for a more complete understanding of Jules and Edmond as hybrid figures, *artistes-écrivains* or *écrivains-artistes*. In his discussion of writers who also practiced art, Bernard Vouilloux argues that “changer de médium, c’est pour un sujet, à la fois mobiliser d’autres potentialités (psychiques, cognitives, sémiotiques) et découper autrement le champ du réalisable.”<sup>10</sup> The Goncourt brothers’ ability to pick up the etching needle, as well as their collector’s *lorgnon* or writer’s pen, offered them new ways of approaching both text and image. Chapter II explored how Gavarni acted as both an initial model and foil for Jules and Edmond, who simultaneously aspired to the artist’s ability to

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<sup>8</sup> *JR*, III: 182. November 27, 1888.

<sup>9</sup> Goncourt, *La Maison d’un artiste*, 2003, II:349.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Vouilloux, “Passages de ligne,” in *De la plume au pinceau: écrivains dessinateurs et peintres depuis le romantisme*, ed. Serge Linarès (Valenciennes: Presses universitaires de Valenciennes, 2007), 21.

unite text and image and attempted to surpass his example, taking works like *La Lorette* in different directions. The exploration of the Goncourts' *écriture artiste* in Chapter IV then demonstrated how the brothers' incorporation of etching techniques into their writing allowed them to transfer and transpose elements between their work as authors and *aquafortistes*. Finally, Chapter V showed how Edmond negotiated Jules' dual talent after his death, constructing both his brother's posthumous artistic reputation and his own new authorial career.

This thesis thus places Jules and Edmond into a lineage of other authors who also had a significant artistic counterpart to their written work. Serge Linarès has explored how the phenomenon of the *écrivain-artiste* emerged over the course of the nineteenth century, following Romanticism's encouragement of "une transgression des frontières entre les activités artistiques."<sup>11</sup> The Goncourt brothers join other nineteenth-century writers who practiced art such as Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, or Eugène Fromentin<sup>12</sup> and artists who were famously also writers, such as Eugène Delacroix, Anne-Louis Girodet, or Gustave Moreau.<sup>13</sup> In addition to these well-known painters, many printmakers were also writers: Charles Méryon wrote verses to accompany his etchings, Antoine Monnier was both an etcher and a poet, while Odilon Redon and Félix Bracquemond wrote art criticism.<sup>14</sup> The Goncourt brothers thus provide one view into the work of different artist

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<sup>11</sup> Serge Linarès, ed., *De la plume au pinceau: écrivains dessinateurs et peintres depuis le romantisme* (Valenciennes: Presses universitaires de Valenciennes, 2007), 7. See also Serge Linarès, *Ecrivains artistes: la tentation plastique, XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> See articles in Linarès, ed. *De la plume au pinceau* on Hugo, Gautier, and Fromentin. See also Jacqueline Sarment, *Dessins d'écrivains français du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Maison de Balzac, 1983) for more examples of writers who made art – George Sand's paintings or Baudelaire's sketches and caricatures offer two other notable instances.

<sup>13</sup> Michèle Hannoosh, *Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (Princeton: University Press, 1995); Eugène Delacroix, *Journey to the Maghreb and Andalusia, 1832: The Travel Notebooks and Other Writings*, ed. Michèle Hannoosh (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019); Alexandra Wettlaufer, *Pen vs. Paintbrush: Girodet, Balzac, and the Myth of Pygmalion in Postrevolutionary France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Peter Cooke, *Gustave Moreau et les arts jumeaux: peinture et littérature au dix-neuvième siècle* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Chagniot, *Baudelaire et l'estampe*; Hubert, "Antoine Monnier Disciple de Baudelaire et de Méryon"; Gamboni, *La plume et le pinceau*; Bracquemond, *Felix Bracquemond*.

and authors working across both printmaking and writing, and further research could provide valuable information into how other figures negotiated this relationship.

Finally, a fourth theme that permeates this thesis is the tension between original and copy and the problem of artistic originality more generally. The nature of etching, and any form of printmaking, as a form of mechanical reproduction immediately raises questions about authenticity and value. Chapter I showed how the Goncourt brothers' etchings for *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* not only counter Walter Benjamin's claim that mechanically reproduced copies lack the authentic "aura" of an original artwork, but also offer an alternative viewpoint to the narrative of the etching revival that exclusively promoted the "original print." In addition to showing how copies can be original in their own right, the brothers' etchings also demonstrate that there is value to be found in the *act* of copying – both as a connoisseurial research technique and as a therapeutic act, as already discussed. Chapter III then further explored the question of artistic originality through the figure of the ultimate copyist, the *singe-peintre*, in both *Manette Salomon* and *Le Singe au miroir*. I analyzed how the brothers' unusual depictions of monkey and mirror in both etching and novel foreground the nature of mimesis as a glorified act of copying, where artists and writers are forever doomed to attempt to reproduce reality. However, I also argued that the Goncourt brothers present self-deprecating humor and irony as a way out of this impasse. Through recognizing their limits as monkeys and circus performers, they found ways to make their copying creative in both etching and writing.

Studying the brothers' etchings, which are almost entirely copies after other artists, thus allows us to appreciate the contradictions between their valorization of copying and the positions they take on originality elsewhere in their work. In addition to their praise of artistic originality in their art criticism or through Chassagnol in *Manette Salomon*, the brothers' writing was also defined by a search for originality. As Pierre-Jean Dufief has

explored, one of the main innovations of the brothers' *écriture artiste* was to promote an author's individual style as a criteria for aesthetic judgement – what matters is less *what* an author writes, but *how* they write, and whether they do this in a way that is innovative and recognizably different from others.<sup>15</sup> Edmond argued, for example, that “tout très grand écrivain de tous les temps ne se reconnaît absolument qu'à cela, c'est qu'il a une langue personnelle, une langue dont chaque page, chaque ligne est signée, pour le lecteur lettré, comme si son nom était au bas de cette page.”<sup>16</sup> These claims seem to contradict the ways in which the brothers find it a meaningful and worthwhile task to imitate other artists in etching. This certainly reflects the difference between the status of etching and writing for the brothers: as a more private activity practiced alongside their career as writers, etching offered a liberation from the demands of originality in the brothers' writing. Etching can perhaps again be linked to collecting here, since the latter provides a similarly paradoxical view of artistic creation. Although the collector does not create any of the objects in his collection, the practice of assembly and display transforms collecting into a creative process. For Edmond, creating a written version of the collection in *La Maison d'un Artiste* further rendered the collection a work of art in its own right, “prolong[eant] le projet de la collection au-delà de ses limites pour la transformer véritablement en œuvre d'art et inverser la menace de stérilité en création”<sup>17</sup> as Dominique Pety observes. Writing, collecting, and etching therefore all fall within a spectrum of originality, where artistic creation can take many forms.

Taken together, these questions of process, perception, hybrid talents, and originality draw out larger issues within the Goncourt brothers' *œuvre* through studying their etchings, a central aim of this thesis. Beyond offering examples of specific

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<sup>15</sup> Dufief, “Posture et écriture artistes dans le *Journal* des Goncourt.”

<sup>16</sup> *JR*, II: 362.

<sup>17</sup> Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection*, 237.

interactions between writing and etching in the brothers' work, I have sought to show how analyzing the Goncourt brothers through the lens of their experience with etching can reveal new insights into their work as authors and collectors. Furthermore, I hope this thesis will also be of value to those who are not Goncourt specialists, by offering a case study of the Goncourt brothers as a unique and overlooked example of the links between writing and etching during the nineteenth-century revival. I will now conclude by suggesting ways in which this thesis points to new approaches towards the relationship between writing and printmaking in nineteenth-century France.

### **Beyond the *Plume and Pinceau***

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“Du pinceau contre la plume, la lutte est, selon nous, mauvaise,”<sup>18</sup> the Goncourt brothers write in their review of the 1855 Exposition Universelle. In the context of their article, the brothers are primarily concerned with demonstrating that paintings that attempt to depict, and surpass, literary subjects will never be successful: “le Roméo et Juliette du coloriste, comme la Francesca du dessinateur, prouvent que le duel avec les Dante et Shakespeare, – qu'on soit Delacroix ou Ingres, – est le duel de Jacob avec l'Ange.”<sup>19</sup> Taken outside of this specific context, however, the brothers' quotation captures my own sentiment that it is more productive to move past the traditional conflict between *plume* and *pinceau*.<sup>20</sup> The opposition between painting and writing is a “lutte mauvaise,” a hopeless struggle, in my view, not because painting can never equal writing, but because a change of terms is necessary for expanding future discussions of literature and the visual

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<sup>18</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, *Études d'art*, 169.

<sup>19</sup> Goncourt and Goncourt, 169.

<sup>20</sup> The comparison between painting and writing dates back to Horace's famous dictum *ut pictura poesis*, “as is painting, so is poetry.” From the *paragone* in the Renaissance to Lessing's *Laocoön*, the “sister arts” of painting and writing have often been framed as rivals. Classic studies of this relationship include Clement Greenberg, “Towards a Newer Laocoon,” in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York: W.W Norton, 1967); W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

arts in nineteenth-century France.

The alliterative combination of *plume* and *pinceau* appears to be irresistible to studies of literature and the visual arts in nineteenth-century France, as shown by the titles of numerous recent works.<sup>21</sup> This reflects the way in which previous studies of literature and art in the nineteenth century have either exclusively focused on painting or used the term as a generalization that glosses over a variety of different artistic media.<sup>22</sup> This thesis has presented an alternative approach. I have sought to demonstrate the value of broadening discussions of the relationship between literature and art in nineteenth-century France beyond the sphere of painting. Artistic creation in the nineteenth century took many forms, from oil paintings to bronze, clay, or marble sculptures, watercolors to pastels, charcoal sketches to pen and ink drawings, photographs to prints. This thesis has tried to resurrect a slice of this artistic diversity by focusing on printmaking, specifically etching. Although I have concentrated on etching here, I hope that discussions of the intersections between etching and engraving (Chapter I) or lithography (Chapter II) have offered a glimpse of the richness and variety of nineteenth-century print culture. Printmaking offers an important complement and contrast to painting in nineteenth-century France, one that deserves further scholarly attention.

Why has painting been prioritized in studies of literature and the visual arts thus far? On one hand, the bias towards painting reflects painting's position as the most

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<sup>21</sup> Anika Muhlstein, *La plume et le pinceau: l'empreinte de la peinture sur le roman au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2016); Nicolas Valazza, *Crise de plume et souveraineté du pinceau: écrire la peinture de Diderot à Proust* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013); Linarès, *De la plume au pinceau*; Wettlaufer, *Pen vs. Paintbrush*; Gamboni, *La plume et le pinceau*.

<sup>22</sup> In addition to the books already cited, see Pascale Auraix-Jonchière, ed., *Écrire la peinture entre XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2003); William J. Berg, *Imagery and Ideology: Fiction and Painting in Nineteenth-Century France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007); Bernard Vouilloux, *La peinture dans le texte, XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: CNRS, 1994); Vouilloux, *Le Tournant "artiste" de la littérature française*. The references to the "pinceau" in Linarès and Gamboni's titles, as well as to painting in Vouilloux's *Le tournant artiste*, obscure the fact that Linarès is primarily concerned with drawings by writers, that Gamboni's discussion of Redon's work is focused on his lithographs, and that Vouilloux discusses art forms such as Japanese prints as well as painting.

prestigious art form in the hierarchy of the arts throughout French history, receiving pride of place at the *Salon* and other exhibitions, and offering artists opportunities for official commissions and institutional recognition in the form of prizes such as the Prix de Rome.<sup>23</sup> The prominence of painting and painters is also reflected to a certain extent in nineteenth-century writing on art. Art critics devoted most of their reviews to paintings, often with only a short section on prints or sculpture at the end. Similarly, fiction depicting artists, such as the famous trio of artist novels, Balzac's *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, the Goncourt brothers' *Manette Salomon*, and Zola's *L'Œuvre*, typically centered on the figure of the painter.<sup>24</sup> However, this institutional and literary emphasis obscures the reality of nineteenth-century writers' engagement with paintings, which was in fact usually more limited than interactions with prints.

Paintings were rarefied objects in the nineteenth century. Except for the small minority of the financial elite who could afford to collect paintings and live with them on a daily basis, contemporary paintings would be viewed in person in the public settings of the *Salon*, museum, auction house, or art dealer's gallery, or by personal invitation to an artist's studio. Even when writing about paintings, therefore, writers would not necessarily have had regular access to the actual artworks and would have to rely on memory or a printed reproduction. Before photography overtook reproductive printmaking towards the end of the nineteenth century, reproductive prints therefore acted as an essential mediation between paintings and the public, one that is often elided in scholarship. For most nineteenth-century writers, forming a paintings collection was out of reach. As Edmond

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<sup>23</sup> There were also prizes instituted for printmaking at the *Salon*, as well as officially commissioned engravings, but these were always regarded as secondary to painting. See Anderson-Riedel, *Creativity and reproduction*, for more on the official recognition of engraving.

<sup>24</sup> Some studies have begun to consider the depiction of sculptors and sculpture in nineteenth-century artist novels: see, for example, Nigel Harkness, "Ut Sculptura Poesis? Literary-Sculptural Intersections in Balzac and Proust," in *Au Seuil de La Modernité: Proust, Literature and the Arts: Essays in Memory of Richard Bales*, ed. Nigel Harkness and Marion Schmid (Peter Lang, 2011); Diana Knight, *Balzac and the Model of Painting: Artist Stories in "La Comédie Humaine,"* (London: Legenda, 2007).

explains in *La Maison d'un Artiste*: “une collection de tableaux est très charmante...mais je sentais qu’avec ma petite fortune, je ne pouvais faire qu’une collection secondaire.”<sup>25</sup> Prints offered a more affordable alternative, and print collecting became more and more fashionable over the course of the nineteenth century. The appearance of fin-de-siècle specialist journals dedicated to prints such as *L’Estampe* and *L’Estampe et l’affiche*, as well as the publication of the first major print collector’s manual of nineteenth-century prints, Henri Béraldi’s masterful *Les Graveurs du XIXe siècle: guide de l’amateur d’estampes modernes* (1885-92), point to the rising popularity of print collecting. As Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho and Peter Parshall have explored, nineteenth-century print collecting created new types of interior spaces, viewing practices, and social interactions – viewing prints could be a private, intimate experience or a social activity.<sup>26</sup> In contrast to paintings, prints were available as sources of direct inspiration and contemplation on a daily basis in one’s home, or through visits to other collectors. Manet’s 1868 portrait of Zola provides perhaps the most well-known depiction of how prints formed part of the backdrop of nineteenth-century writers’ lives, with a Japanese print and printed reproductions of Manet’s *Olympia* and an artwork by Velazquez presiding over Zola’s desk, the site of literary creation.

Furthermore, nineteenth-century print culture also extended beyond collectable prints into every aspect of daily life, from political caricatures in newspapers to popular advertising posters on the street corner, blurring the lines between interior and exterior, high and low art. Again, Rosa de Carvalho has explored how prints spanned the range from “elite to the street” while Patricia Mainardi has analyzed different categories of these popular prints, from caricatures to the ubiquitous “images d’épinal.”<sup>27</sup> In his important

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<sup>25</sup> Goncourt, *La Maison d'un artiste*, 2003, II:28.

<sup>26</sup> Rosa de Carvalho, ed., *Prints in Paris 1900*; Parshall, ed., *The Darker Side of Light*.

<sup>27</sup> Rosa de Carvalho, *Prints in Paris 1900*; Mainardi, *Another World*.

analysis of “l’image dans la ville,” Philippe Hamon identified similarities between literature and the nineteenth-century poster:

Se manifestant sous la forme d’un objet de papier sémiotisé, public, lisible et ludique, renouvelable, mobile, aisément mémorisable, souvent allégorique et allusif, à finalité séductrice et persuasive, voisinant par palimpseste ou juxtaposition avec d’autres objets de papier, l’affiche se trouve donc en concurrence directe avec cet autre objet totalement identique dans ses formes, ses caractères et ses fonctions, la littérature.<sup>28</sup>

In parallel to our oversaturation of digital images today, the omnipresence of prints in everyday life meant that every writer, even those who were not deeply involved with the art world, would have been accustomed to viewing and interacting with prints in some way. In contrast to what might be assumed from the prevalence of writing about painting and painters, nineteenth-century writers thus engaged with prints more frequently than paintings, and in ways that encouraged either close or repeated looking.

Finally, as suggested by Hamon’s comparison between literature and the poster, writing and printmaking were also linked on the level of formal resemblances. In the etching revival in particular, as we have seen, authors explicitly expressed an affinity with printmaking, emphasizing the resonances between etching and writing. The materials of black ink and white paper, the shared reliance on line, and the similar role played by a printing press in mechanically reproducing and disseminating an artist/author’s work all brought together printed images and printed texts. Nineteenth-century prints often foregrounded interactions between text and image as well, whether in prints used as book illustrations or caricatures with captions. These inherent connections between writing and printmaking offer new possibilities for relating literature and the visual arts in ways that are very different from the links between painting and writing.

Although as Patricia Mainardi notes, “art historical studies of the various genres of

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<sup>28</sup> Hamon, *Imageries*, 179.

illustrated print culture have lagged behind scholarship in other areas of art history, not least because of the discipline's traditional preference for original versus reproductive works,"<sup>29</sup> recent art-historical studies have begun to redress this bias towards painting and open new avenues for exploration into nineteenth-century prints.<sup>30</sup> Several recent literary studies have also suggested promising new directions in connecting nineteenth-century French printmaking and writing, such as Evanghelia Stead's work on "gravures textuelles," Vérane Partensky's exploration of etching and literary fantasy, Clare Chagniot's work on Baudelaire and prints, or H  l  ne V  drine's discussion of F  licien Rops' etchings in relation to decadent literature.<sup>31</sup> Other excellent older studies call for updating with materials now available through the digitization of museum collections and other online resources like Gallica, such as Dario Gamboni's study of Odilon Redon's relationship with contemporary writers or Jean Seznec's discussion of Flaubert's fascination with contemporary prints.<sup>32</sup> We are thus at an exciting point for further research into the connections between prints and literature. One goal of this thesis has been to use the Goncourt brothers as an example of the ways we might make these connections. Beyond more obvious instances such as the use of prints as illustrations, I have shown how the processes of printmaking and writing can be linked, as well as the ways in which prints can act as thematic, structural, or stylistic inspiration for authors. The methodologies proposed in Chapter IV in particular, whether comparing narrative approaches in the nineteenth-century novel to the print album, identifying textual transpositions of specific prints, or exploring the use of printmaking techniques in writing, can all be applied to other nineteenth-century authors and could lead to new discoveries.

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<sup>29</sup> Mainardi, *Another World*, 8.

<sup>30</sup> See works mentioned in Introduction, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Chagniot, *Baudelaire et l'estampe*; V  drine, *De l'encre dans l'acide*.

<sup>32</sup> Gamboni, *La plume et le pinceau*; Jean Seznec, "Flaubert and the Graphic Arts," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 8 (1945): 175–90.

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Ultimately, this thesis has sought to add *aquafortistes* to the many roles inhabited by Jules and Edmond de Goncourt: historians, biographers, art critics, novelists, collectors, watercolorists, and brothers. Through close analysis of the Goncourt brothers' written works alongside their own etchings, as well as their larger engagement with prints during the etching revival, this thesis has emphasized the variety of intersections between writing and etching in the Goncourt brothers' *œuvre*. My goal has been to reclaim the importance of etching for the brothers, who viewed it as an essential part of their identity, particularly for Jules, and as a significant activity alongside their other work. I have also sought to demonstrate that studying the brothers' relationship with etching offers a valuable new lens through which to re-interpret their writing, tracing the range of ways in which their written work bears the imprint of their experience as *aquafortistes*.

Furthermore, this thesis has shown how the Goncourt brothers provide a new perspective on the nineteenth-century etching revival, often contradicting the mainstream narratives shared by other writers and critics through the brothers' firsthand experience with etching. Finally, it has expanded discussions of the relationship between literature and art in nineteenth-century France beyond the sphere of painting, proposing new ways of approaching the intersections between literature and printmaking. The links between the writer's pen and the etching needle, the lithographic crayon, and the engraver's burin all call for further investigation alongside the traditional pairing of pen and paintbrush.

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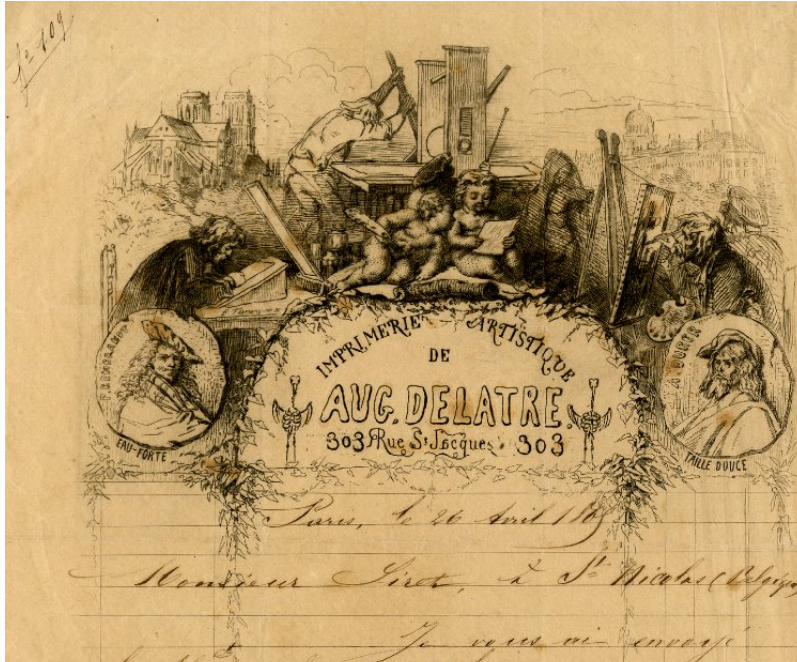
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## Appendix I: Figures

Figure 8



Léopold Flameng, Detail of *Tête de facture pour Imprimerie artistique de Delâtre*, etching, 1860  
British Museum

© The Trustees of the British Museum

Figure 9



Ferdinand Roybet, Frontispiece for *Eaux-Fortes modernes*, etching, 1866  
Source gallica.b.nf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 10**



Adolphe Théodore Jules Martial Potémont, *Siège de la Société des Aquafortistes*, etching, 1864.

Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

**Figure 11**



Jules de Goncourt, *Gabriel de Saint-Aubin*, etching, 1859

Source gallica.b.nf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 12



Jules de Goncourt, *Edmond dessinant*, etching with surface tone, 1859  
British Museum

© The Trustees of the British Museum

Figure 13



Jules de Goncourt, after Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *Le Gobelet d'argent*, etching, 1863  
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Elizabeth Mongan in memory of Paul J. Sachs  
Harvard Art Museums  
<https://hvr.dartmouth.edu/265654>

Figure 14



Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *La Lecture*, black chalk and brown ink wash, 1778  
Musée du Louvre  
© RMN, Musée du Louvre

Figure 15



Jules de Goncourt, after Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *La Lecture*, etching, 1865, State I/II  
British Museum  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Figure 16



Jules de Goncourt, after Charles-Nicholas Cochin, *Le Modèle d'homme posant à l'Académie royale*, etching, 1868  
Source gallica.b.nf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 17**



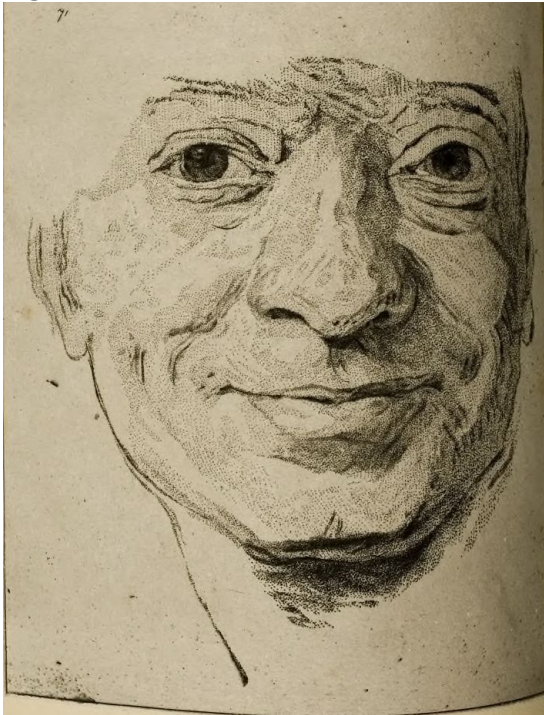
Jules de Goncourt, after Augustin de Saint-Aubin, *Augustin de Saint-Aubin dessinant*  
Etching and stipple, 1859.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Elizabeth Mongan in memory of Paul J. Sachs

Harvard Art Museums

<https://hvr.dartmouth.edu/art/o/266106>

**Figure 18**

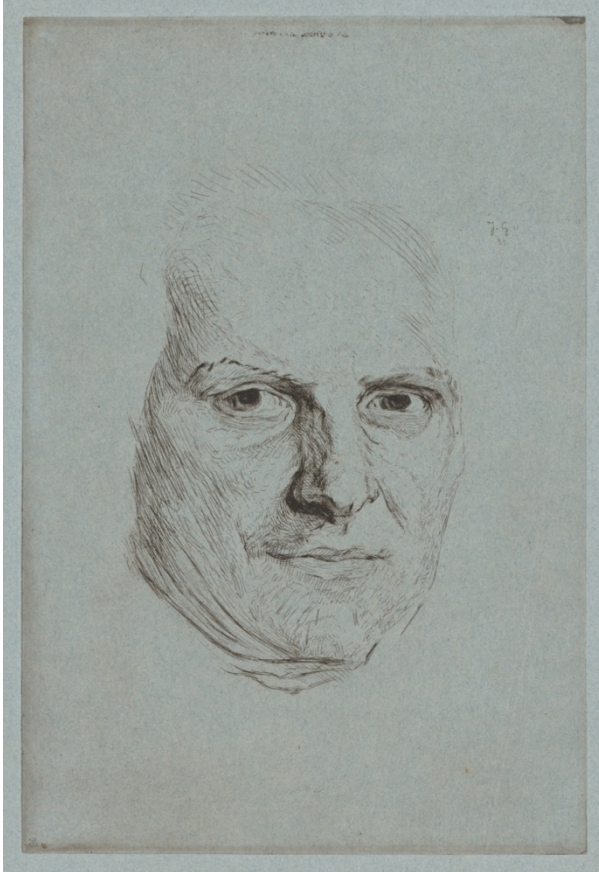


Jules de Goncourt, after Maurice-Quentin de La Tour, *Masque de La Tour*, etching and roulette,  
1865. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Elizabeth Mongan in memory of Paul J. Sachs

Harvard Art Museums

<https://hvr.dartmouth.edu/art/o/265832>

**Figure 19**



Jules de Goncourt, *Masque de l'Abbé Raynal*, after La Tour, etching, 1859  
Courtesy National Gallery, Washington

**Figure 20**



Jules de Goncourt, after Chardin, *Joueur de boules*, etching, 1863  
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Elizabeth Mongan in memory of Paul J. Sachs  
Harvard Art Museums  
<https://hvr.dartmouth.edu/art/o/265660>

Figure 21



Antonio Baratta after A.-J. de Fehrt, *Gravure en Maniere de Crayon*, plate VIII from Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers, Recueil de Planches, sur les Sciences et les Arts* (vol. 4) 1771/1779

Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

Figure 22



Paul Gavarni, *Self-Portrait with a Cigarette*, lithograph, 1842  
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund  
Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

Figure 23



Paul Gavarni, *Messieurs du Feuilleton: Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, from *Masques et Visages*,  
lithograph, 1853  
British Museum  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

**Figure 24**



Paul Gavarni, “On porte beaucoup de fleurs, ce printemps, surtout sur les chapeaux,” from *Les Anglais Chez Eux*, lithographic stone, 1853  
Mary Oenslager Fund, 2018  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

**Figure 25**



Victor Adam, *Interior of Lemer cier’s Lithographic Printing House*, lithograph, 1846  
Gift of E. Weyhe, 1923  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

**Figure 26**



Jules de Goncourt, *Femme en chapeau*, after Gavarni, etching, 1861  
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of James A. Bergquist  
Harvard Art Museums  
<https://hvr.dartmouth.edu/art/235681>

**Figure 27**



Jules de Goncourt, *Profil d'homme*, after Gavarni, etching, c. 1861  
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of James A. Bergquist  
Harvard Art Museums  
<https://hvr.dartmouth.edu/art/235682>

**Figure 28**



Jules de Goncourt, *Thomas Vireloque*, after Gavarni, etching, 1860, state III/III  
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of James A. Bergquist  
Harvard Art Museums  
<https://hvr.dartmouth.edu/art/235674>

**Figure 29**



Jules de Goncourt, Sketches for the frontispiece to *La Lorette*, after Gavarni, etching, 1862  
British Museum  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

**Figure 30**



Jules de Goncourt, detail of Frontispiece to *La Lorette*, after Gavarni, etching, 1883  
Source gallica.b.nf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

### Chapter III

Figure 31



Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, *Le Singe Peintre*, oil on canvas, 1833

Musée du Louvre

© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Michel Urtado

Figure 32



Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, *Les Experts*, oil on canvas, 1837

H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Figure 33



Attributed to Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, *Le Singe au Miroir*, oil on canvas, n.d.

Cooper Art Gallery

Photo credit: The Cooper Gallery, licensed under CC BY-NC

Figure 34



Eugène Le Roux, *Le Singe au miroir*, from *Artistes anciens et modernes*, lithograph, c. 1850

British Museum

© The Trustees of the British Museum

Figure 35



Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *Le Singe peintre*, oil on canvas, 1740  
Musée du Louvre  
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / René-Gabriel Ojéda

Figure 36



*L'Écuyer Quadrumane*, poster, 1864  
Source gallica.b.nf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 37**



Paul Gavarni, *Pierrot*, lithograph, n.d.  
Yale University Art Gallery

**Figure 38**



J.J. Grandville, *Académie de dessin*, from *Les Métamorphoses du Jour*, lithograph, gouache, 1869  
Maison de Balzac, Paris Musées

Chapter IV

Figure 39



Edouard Manet, *Frontispiece to Eaux-Fortes par Manet*, etching, 1862  
Samuel Putnam Avery Collection  
From The New York Public Library

Figure 40



Charles Méryon, *La Pompe Notre-Dame*, etching, 1852  
Rosenwald Collection  
Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

**Figure 41**



Francis Seymour Haden, *A Sunset in Ireland*, etching and drypoint, 1863

British Museum

© The Trustees of the British Museum

**Figure 42**



Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Le Petit Parc*, etching, 1763

Widener Collection

Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

**Figure 43**



Hubert Robert, *La Statue devant les ruines*, from *Les Soirées de Rome*, etching, 1763  
Bequest of Phyllis Massar, 2011  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

**Figure 44**



Etienne Lavallée-Poussin, from *Nella Venuta in Roma di Madama Le Comte e dei Signori Watelet*,  
etching, 1764  
British Museum  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Chapter V

Figure 45



Fernand Lochard, *Le grenier. Porte d'entrée, mai 1886*, from *Maison d'Edmond de Goncourt à Auteuil*, photograph, 1886.

Source gallica.b.nf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 46



Félix Bracquemond, *Portrait of Edmond de Goncourt*, etching, 1882

Joseph Brooks Fair Endowment

The Art Institute of Chicago

**Figure 47**



Jean-Baptiste Guth, *Edmond de Goncourt*, from *La Revue Illustrée*, wood engraving in black and cliché in green, December 1887-June 1888  
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

## Appendix II: Timeline

Year	Biography	Literature <sup>1</sup>	Etching <sup>2</sup>
1822	Edmond born		
1830	Jules born		
1834	Death of their father, Marc Pierre Huot de Goncourt		
1838	Edmond acquires first 18th c. drawing		
1848	Death of their mother, née Annette Cécile Guerin		
1849-50	Travels in France, Switzerland, Belgium, Algeria		
1851		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>En 18...</i></li> <li>• Begin writing in the <i>Journal</i></li> </ul>	
1852	Meet Gavarni Work at <i>Le Paris</i> and <i>L'Éclair</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Salon de 1852</i></li> </ul>	
1853		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>La Lorette</i></li> </ul>	
1854		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Histoire de la société française pendant la Révolution</i></li> </ul>	
1855	Travels in Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Histoire de la société française pendant le Directoire</i></li> <li>• <i>La Peinture à l'exposition universelle de 1855</i></li> </ul>	
1856	Travels in Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Feu Monsieur Thomas”</li> </ul>	
1857		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sophie Arnould</i></li> <li>• <i>Portraits intimes du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</i></li> </ul>	
1858		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Portraits intimes du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</i></li> <li>• <i>Histoire de Marie-Antoinette</i></li> </ul>	
1859	Meet Philippe Burty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Les Saint-Aubin</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gabriel de Saint-Aubin</i>, after Gabriel de Saint-Aubin*</li> <li>• <i>Augustin de Saint-Aubin dessinant</i>, after Gabriel de Saint-Aubin*</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Works cited in this thesis. See bibliography for full publication details.

<sup>2</sup> All etchings are by Jules unless otherwise noted. Etchings with an asterisk were published in *L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Germain de Saint-Aubin et le ménétrier</i>, after Germain de Saint-Aubin*</li> <li>• <i>Comédiennes en costume polonais</i>, after Nicolas Lancret</li> <li>• <i>Le Pont-Neuf et la Samaritaine</i>, after Gabriel de Saint-Aubin</li> <li>• <i>Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, dans un médaillon</i>, after Gabriel de Saint-Aubin</li> <li>• <i>L'Amour prenant le monde dans un filet</i></li> <li>• <i>Salle Bux (la salle d'armes)</i></li> <li>• <i>Pantoufles d'Anna Délion</i></li> <li>• <i>Le peintre Dumont le Romain</i>, after Maurice Quentin de La Tour</li> <li>• <i>Quatre sujets: Edmond dessinant, Stenterello, Chimère en bronze japonais, Terre cuite attribuée à Houdon</i></li> <li>• <i>Masque de l'abbé Raynal</i>, after La Tour</li> <li>• <i>Masque de Chardin</i>, after La Tour</li> <li>• <i>Après souper (Etude d'apr. Maria M...)</i>, after L.R</li> <li>• <i>Jeune femme</i>, after La Tour</li> <li>• <i>Vente d'estampes à l'hôtel Drouot</i></li> <li>• <i>Mlle Dangeville</i>, after La Tour</li> <li>• <i>Edmond de Goncourt à cheval sur une chaise</i></li> <li>• <i>Buste de femme</i>, after Jean-Antoine Watteau*</li> <li>• <i>Le Printemps</i>, after Watteau*</li> <li>• <i>Trois têtes de femmes</i>, after Watteau*</li> <li>• <i>Femme nue vue de dos</i>, after François Boucher</li> <li>• <i>Les Dimanches de Saint-Cloud</i>, after Gabriel de Saint-Aubin</li> <li>• <i>L'Abreuvoir</i>, after Jean-Honoré Fragonard</li> <li>• <i>Petite fille endormie</i>, after Jean-Michel Moreau*</li> <li>• <i>Le musicien Antoine</i>, after Watteau</li> <li>• <i>Augustin de Saint-Aubin enfant</i>, after Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (by Edmond)*</li> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>L'Auberge de l'Image Notre-Dame</i>, after François Raguenet (by Edmond)</li> </ul>
1860		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Les Maîtresses de Louis XV</i></li> <li>• <i>Watteau</i></li> <li>• <i>Charles Demailly</i> (First published as <i>Les Hommes de lettres</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Praeclorum musicorum coetus</i> (le chanteur Dargenon, le chanteur Paccinni, le musicien Antoine), after Watteau*</li> <li>• <i>Edmond de Goncourt fumant la pipe</i></li> <li>• <i>Le Singe au miroir</i>, after Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps</li> <li>• <i>Prud'hon</i>, after Louis-Léopold Boilly</li> <li>• <i>Le Café Godet</i>, after Jacques François Joseph Swebach-Desfontaines</li> <li>• <i>Marie-Louise</i>, after Pierre-Paul Prud'hon*</li> <li>• <i>Trois études pour Cupidon</i>, after Prud'hon*</li> <li>• <i>Mlle Mayer</i>, after Prud'hon*</li> <li>• <i>Le Cancan</i>, after Mès</li> <li>• <i>Thomas Vireloque</i>, after Paul Gavarni</li> <li>• <i>Mlle Mayer</i>, after Prud'hon*</li> <li>• <i>Venus au bain</i>, after Boucher*</li> <li>• <i>Bras du Fauteuil de Marie-Louise</i>, after Prud'hon*</li> <li>• <i>L'Automne</i>, after Watteau (by Edmond)</li> <li>• <i>La Vengeance divine</i>, after Prud'hon (by Edmond)*</li> <li>• <i>Edmond de Goncourt</i> (by Edmond)</li> <li>• <i>Le Cimetière des Innocents</i>, after Hubert Robert (by Edmond)</li> </ul>
1861		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Prudhon</i></li> <li>• <i>Sœur Philomène</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dame assise</i>, after Boucher*</li> <li>• <i>Croquis (joueur de dames)</i>, after Gavarni</li> <li>• <i>Mme de Polignac</i>, after Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun</li> <li>• <i>Cour de ferme</i>, after Boucher</li> <li>• <i>Profil d'homme</i>, after Gavarni</li> <li>• <i>Le Grand-papa (La Consolation de la vieillesse)</i> after Fragonard*</li> <li>• <i>Homme endormi</i>, after Gavarni</li> <li>• <i>La Femme en chapeau</i>, after Gavarni</li> <li>• <i>Femme nue de dos</i>, after Boucher*</li> <li>• <i>Lettre L</i>, after Boucher</li> <li>• <i>La Bouquetière galante</i>, after Boucher*</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vieille femme et enfants</i>, after Gavarni (by Edmond)</li> <li>• <i>Tête d'homme</i>, after Gavarni (by Edmond)</li> <li>• <i>Jules de Goncourt</i> (by Edmond)</li> </ul>
1862	First attend Princesse Mathilde's Salon First Dîner Magny Join Société des Aquafortistes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>La Femme au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</i></li> <li>• <i>Boucher</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Chanteurs ambulants</i>, after Gavarni</li> <li>• <i>Étude pour la Dame de Charité</i>, after Jean-Baptiste Greuze*</li> <li>• <i>L'Enseigne du chirurgien-barbier</i>, after Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin*</li> <li>• <i>Le Gobelet d'argent</i>, after Chardin*</li> <li>• <i>Les Aliments de la convalescence</i>, after Chardin*</li> <li>• <i>La Laitière</i>, after Greuze*</li> <li>• <i>Ex-libris</i>, after Gavarni</li> <li>• <i>Mon épouse serait-elle légère?</i>, after Gavarni</li> <li>• <i>La Lorette</i>, after Gavarni</li> <li>• <i>Mlle Allard, Festes grecques et romaines, danseuse d'Opéra</i>, after Louis-René Boquet</li> </ul>
1863		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Greuze</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Homme en pied</i>, after Greuze</li> <li>• <i>Jeune femme accrochant un cadre</i>, after Fragonard*</li> <li>• <i>Joueur de boules</i>, after Chardin*</li> <li>• <i>Le Maître à danser</i>, after Fragonard*</li> <li>• <i>Mme Lafarge</i>, after Henri Monnier</li> <li>• <i>les Chroniques de Saint-Mathurin de Larchant en Gatiennais</i>, after E. Bellier de la Chavignerie</li> <li>• <i>Le Pantin de Mlle Marcille</i></li> <li>• <i>Montreur d'images</i>, after Chardin (by Edmond)</li> <li>• <i>Figure d'enfant</i>, after Chardin (by Edmond)</li> </ul>
1864		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Chardin</i></li> <li>• <i>Renée Mauperin</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Jeune femme (la maîtresse de M.)</i></li> <li>• <i>Jeune fille assise</i>, after Fragonard*</li> </ul>
1865		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fragonard</i></li> <li>• <i>Germinie Lacerteux</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>La Lecture</i>, after Fragonard*</li> <li>• <i>La Fête de village</i>, after Philibert-Louis Debucourt*</li> <li>• <i>Les Travaux de la Fédération</i>, after Debucourt*</li> <li>• <i>Masque de La Tour</i>, after La Tour*</li> </ul>
1866	Gavarni dies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Debucourt</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Masque de La Tour</i>, after La Tour*</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mlle Fel</i>, after La Tour</li> <li>• <i>Voltaire</i>, after La Tour*</li> <li>• <i>Rousseau</i>, after La Tour*</li> </ul>
1867	Travel to Rome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>La Tour</i></li> <li>• <i>Manette Salomon</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A. Malvezzi</i>, after Prince Gabrielli</li> </ul>
1868	Move into house in Auteuil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Les Vignettistes (Gravelot, Cochin, Eisen, Moreau)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gentilhomme saluant</i>, after Hubert-François Gravelot*</li> <li>• <i>Le Modèle d'homme posant à l'Académie royale</i>, after Charles-Nicolas Cochin*</li> <li>• <i>La Lettre</i>, after Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen*</li> </ul>
1869		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Madame Gervaisais</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Un figurant</i>, after Gavarni</li> </ul>
1870	Jules dies		
1873		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gavarni, l'homme et l'œuvre</i></li> </ul>	
1875		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>L'Art du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle</i></li> </ul>	
1876			Publication of <i>Eaux-fortes de Jules de Goncourt</i>
1878		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>La Fille Élisa</i></li> </ul>	
1879		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Les Frères Zemganno</i></li> </ul>	
1881		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>La Maison d'un Artiste</i></li> </ul>	Bracquemond portrait of Edmond
1882		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>La Faustin</i></li> </ul>	
1884	Edmond remodels house to create Grenier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Chérie</i></li> </ul>	Edmond donates etchings to Cabinet des Estampes
1885		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lettres de Jules de Goncourt</i></li> </ul>	
1887		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication begins of Charpentier edition of the <i>Journal</i></li> </ul>	
1888		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Préfaces et manifestes littéraires</i></li> </ul>	
1891		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Outamaro</i></li> </ul>	
1894		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>L'Italie d'hier : notes de voyage, 1855-1856</i></li> </ul>	
1896	Edmond dies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Hokousai</i></li> </ul>	
1897	Auctions of Goncourt collection		
1903	First Prix Goncourt awarded		