

## *Yielding an Impression of Women Printmakers in Eighteenth-Century France*

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In 1767, Pierre François Basan (1723–1797) published his two-volume *Dictionnaire des graveurs anciens et modernes depuis l'origine de la gravure*, a work that would quickly become a standard printmaking reference on the library shelves of European print collectors.<sup>1</sup> As a professional printmaker turned print publisher, printseller, and auction specialist, Basan was embedded in the networks of the international print industry.<sup>2</sup> The twenty-six women, predominantly French, included in these volumes were a small fraction of the printmakers identified.<sup>3</sup> Like their male counterparts in eighteenth-century France, most were professional printmakers who specialised in replicating the designs of other artists.<sup>4</sup> When Basan brought out the second, expanded edition of his *Dictionnaire* in 1789, he nearly tripled the number of entries on women printmakers – evidence that women artists had come to play a greater role in the expansion and diversification of the print market in the decades leading up to the French Revolution.<sup>5</sup>

One printmaker Basan listed in both editions was Catherine Élisabeth Cousinet (born 1726), also known as Madame Lempereur through her

<sup>1</sup> P. F. Basan, *Dictionnaire des graveurs anciens et modernes depuis l'origine de la gravure*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1767).

<sup>2</sup> P. Casselle, 'Pierre-François Basan marchand d'estampes à Paris (1723–1797)', *Paris et Île-de-France*, 33 (1982): 99–185.

<sup>3</sup> Although most of Basan's brief entries on these women printmakers make reference to husbands, male relatives, or male teachers, it is worth noting that they were all allocated individual entries except for three instances of printmaker sisters who share entries. Basan, *Dictionnaire*, vol. 1, 154 (Croix) and vol. 2, 356–357 (Ozanne) and 362 (Passe), respectively.

<sup>4</sup> W. McAllister Johnson, *The Rise and Fall of the Fine Art Print in Eighteenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); V. I. Carlson and J. W. Ittmann, *Regency to Empire: French Printmaking 1715–1814* (Minneapolis, MN: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> There are 71 women artists listed in Pierre François Basan, *Dictionnaire des graveurs anciens et modernes depuis l'origine de la gravure*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie de Veuve Quillau, 1789). Here, as in the first edition, the overwhelming majority of these printmakers are allocated individual entries.



Figure 7.1 Catherine Élisabeth Cousinet, after Giovanni Paolo Panini, *La Pyramide de Sextius*, 1760.

Etching and engraving, 31.5 × 36.4 cm (cut to image). British Museum, London.

marriage to fellow printmaker Louis Simon Lempereur (1728–1807).<sup>6</sup> Basan cited her engravings *La Pyramide de Sextius* and *Les Trois Colonnes de Campo Vaccino*, after pendant paintings by the eighteenth-century Roman view painter Giovanni Paolo Panini, as two of her most significant works (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). These same prints were praised in the December 1760 issue of the French journal *L'Année littéraire* by the editor and art critic Élie Catherine Fréron, who noted that the paintings were dedicated to the ‘amateur’ Marguerite Le Comte, who also owned them. Fréron not only praised Cousinet’s works as ‘pleasing’ and ‘well made’, but also cited them as emblematic of eighteenth-century ‘progress’:

<sup>6</sup> Basan, *Dictionnaire des graveurs*, I, 149, cites her name as Élisabeth Cousinet, though her plates are sometimes inscribed ‘Catherine Élisabeth Cousinet’, ‘C. E. Cousinet’, or ‘C. E. Cousinet Femme Lempereur’.



Figure 7.2 Catherine Élisabeth Cousinet, after Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Les Trois Colonnes de Campo Vaccino*, 1760.

Etching and engraving, 31.5 × 36.5 cm (cut to image). British Museum, London.

One of the most honourable traits of our century, & that proves with the most lustre and evidence the progress of the Sciences & the Arts . . . is that we count [among us] many women of merit who have truly succeeded in several genres of Literature or the Fine Arts.<sup>7</sup>

Cousinet ‘truly succeeded’, but what, we might ask, does the career of a successful woman professional printmaker in eighteenth-century France look like? And how do we even measure success, much less attempt to flesh out a biographical narrative, given the dearth of historical information and the predominance of male voices? An assessment of the life and work of Catherine Élisabeth Cousinet gestures towards some answers.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Un des traits qui font le plus d’honneur à notre siècle, & qui prouve avec le plus d’éclat & d’évidence le progrès des Sciences & des Arts . . . est que nous comptons beaucoup de femmes de mérite, qui réussissent véritablement dans plusieurs genres de Littérature ou des Arts agréables.’ *L’Année littéraire*, 8 (1760): 215–216. Unless specified otherwise, all translations are my own.

As with most eighteenth-century French professional printmakers, male and female alike, very little is known about Cousinet's early career.<sup>8</sup> Most reproductive engravers began their training as teenagers.<sup>9</sup> For comparison one might point to Cousinet's contemporary Claire Tournay (1731–1773), the future (second) wife of professional printmaker Jacques Nicolas Tardieu. An impression of Tournay's 1750 engraving *Le Miroir*, after François Boucher, is annotated 'Second plate of Mlle. Tournay, given in March 1750', that is, when she was eighteen or nineteen.<sup>10</sup>

More often than not, the main figures in the early biographies of women artists are men. Most women artists in early modern Europe were taught by members of their families, be it a father, brother, husband, or uncle.<sup>11</sup> Such support was essential: women artists lacked access to the educational and professional opportunities enjoyed by their male counterparts. Sister engravers Rose Angélique Moitte (active 1768–1781) and Élisabeth Mélanie Moitte (active late eighteenth century), for example, learned the trade from their father Pierre Étienne Moitte (1722–1780); in fact, all six of his children took up careers in the arts.<sup>12</sup> Cousinet, however, does not appear to have hailed from a family of printmakers.<sup>13</sup>

Acknowledging its limitations, the information provided by Cousinet's first two biographers is nonetheless a useful starting point in considering her career. Basan, in his *Dictionnaire*'s second edition (1789), stated that Cousinet studied with Étienne Fessard (1714–1777) and Laurent Cars (1699–1771).<sup>14</sup> The German print scholar Carl Heinrich von Heineken wrote in his *Dictionnaire des artistes dont nous avons des estampes* (1790) that Cousinet had been instructed by Pierre Aveline II (1702–1760).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Although the listing of her work is incomplete and chronologically inaccurate, Y. Sjöberg et al., *Inventaire du fonds français: graveurs du dix-huitième siècle*, vol. 14 (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1930–1977), 328–337 remains the best source on the artist.

<sup>9</sup> A. Griffiths, *The Print before Photography: An Introduction to European Printmaking, 1550–1820* (London: British Museum, 2016), 234.

<sup>10</sup> '2<sup>e</sup>. Planche de Mlle. Tournay donnée en mars 1750' Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (Est., Db. 28), cited in P. Jean-Richard, *L'Oeuvre gravé de François Boucher dans la Collection Edmond de Rothschild* (Paris: Editions des Musées Nationaux, 1978), 389–390, no. 1613.

<sup>11</sup> On the circumstances of familial training for women printmakers, see Chapter 6 by Kelsey D. Martin in this volume.

<sup>12</sup> Basan provides one sentence on Rose Angélique Moitte and on Élisabeth Mélanie Moitte under the entry for their printmaker brother François Auguste Moitte (1748–1790) in *Dictionnaire de graveurs*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, 43.

<sup>13</sup> Brother Jean Baptiste Cousinet (1743–1803), nearly twenty years her junior, was a sculptor primarily active in Parma. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 328.

<sup>14</sup> Basan, *Dictionnaire des graveurs*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 156.

<sup>15</sup> C. H. von Heineken, *Dictionnaire des artistes dont nous avons des estampes*, vol. 4 (Leipzig, 1778–1790), 380. Heineken only succeeded in publishing the first four volumes of his *Dictionnaire des artistes* before his death in 1791. On Heineken's ambitions for this 'catalogue universel' see F.-R.

Both authors make pointed use of Cousinet's maiden name in discussions of her work, which signifies that she was an established printmaker well before she married Louis Simon Lempereur in c. 1756.<sup>16</sup>

It was unusual for women artists to operate on their own. Invariably, most navigated existing male-dominated networks of the art world. And yet it has too often been assumed that male artists guided the careers – and may even have executed the work – of their female students.<sup>17</sup> Certainly Fessard's work with amateur women printmakers, including King Louis XV's official mistress Madame de Pompadour and Louise Le Daulceur, was well known.<sup>18</sup> In the case of Aveline II, there are records of early states of two undated compositions signed with Cousinet's name, now lost, in two prominent late eighteenth-century European print collections: *Le Charme de la musique* and *Le Triomphe de Flore*.<sup>19</sup> It was customary in the printmaking industry for engravers to sign their names to plates made in part, if not in full, by their apprentices, assistants, and/or subcontractors.<sup>20</sup> It is entirely plausible that Cousinet worked with Aveline, Cars, and Fessard, though the first projects that firmly connected Cousinet with these established professional printmakers date from the mid-1750s, when she was around thirty years old.

The earliest work by Cousinet for which her authorship and the dating can be ascertained, however, links her to yet another printmaker, the aforementioned Pierre Étienne Moitte, who published her engraving *Le Bénédicité Flamant* after a painting by the seventeenth-century French artist Louis Le Nain.<sup>21</sup> In the lettering below the image that informed interested parties where to obtain impressions of Cousinet's engraving, the

Martin, 'L'économie de la connaissance des anciens maîtres allemands dans le cercle de Jean-Georges Wille', in E. Décultot, M. Espagne, and F.-R. Martin, eds., *Johan Georg Wille (1715–1808) et son milieu* (Paris: École du Louvre, 2009), 210–213.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, in both editions of Basan's *Dictionnaire*, almost all the women printmakers are listed under their maiden names, regardless of their marital status (single, married, or widowed), with cross references for the names of most married printmakers.

<sup>17</sup> R. M. Hoisington and Perrin Stein, 'Sous les yeux de Fragonard: The Prints of Marguerite Gérard', *Print Quarterly*, 29(2) (2012): 142–162.

<sup>18</sup> R. M. Hoisington, 'Étienne Fessard's Prints of the Chapel of the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés in Paris', *Print Quarterly*, 36(4) (2019): 405; S. M. Wager, 'The earliest known version of Madame de Pompadour's "Suite d'Estampes" rediscovered', *Burlington Magazine*, 159 (2017): 285–289; and *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 13, 491–499, including several book plates by Louise Le Daulceur (also known as Louise de Montigny Le Daulceur) etched for other women.

<sup>19</sup> M. Bénard, *Cabinet de M. Paignon Dijonval* (Paris, 1810), 505, no. 8775 and M. Huber, *Catalogue raisonné du Cabinet d'estampes de feu Monsieur Brandes*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1794), 242. On Aveline's print see *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 1, 337, no. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Griffiths, *The Print before Photography*, 238.

<sup>21</sup> National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (1952.2.20).



listing of Moitte's address on a previously unrecorded state corresponds with other prints he made and published between 1747 and 1752.<sup>22</sup> When Moitte moved, he updated his address on the plate.<sup>23</sup>

It usually took years to master control of the burin and gain fluency in the visual language of reproductive engraving. The achievement of *Le Bénédicité Flamant* shows Cousinet to be fully in command of her métier. Akin to how most eighteenth-century French professional printmakers would have worked, Cousinet made *Le Bénédicité Flamant* through a combination of etching and engraving in a proportion expertly tailored to the style and subject of her source. She dexterously employed the burin, articulating the details that imbued Le Nain's peasants with dignity and translating the tonal range of the painter's composition – from the brightly lit foreground figures to the hearth's soft glow and to the dark recesses of the armoire in the background.

Cousinet's next prints arose out of endeavours to provide engravings of several European art collections in the 1750s. So ambitious were these projects that they necessitated the efforts of numerous European printmakers over many years. For example, Aveline, Cars, Fessard, and Moitte all contributed engravings to two enterprises that reproduced important paintings in Dresden: the *Recueil d'Estampes d'après les plus célèbres Tableaux de la Galerie Royale de Dresde* (1753, 1757) and the *Galerie du comte de Brühl* (1754). Both undertakings were overseen by Heineken, then the director of the Dresden print room and formerly the secretary and librarian for the comte de Brühl.<sup>24</sup>

Although Cousinet does not appear to have made prints for either enterprise, she did engrave *Le Moulin de Quinquengrogne* after Nicolas Lancret's painting that hailed from Heineken's own

<sup>22</sup> The impression of *Le Bénédicité Flamant* in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (RP-P-1954-221) lists Moitte's address as 'Au coin de la rue St Julien le Pauvre, près le petit Chatelet'. See <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG38663> (accessed 29 May 2021).

<sup>23</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 335–336, no. 10. Here Moitte's address is listed as 'rue St. Victor la 1<sup>re</sup> Porte cochère à gauche, en entrant par la place Maubert', which accords with an advertisement Moitte placed in the *Mercure de France*, June 1754, 151. Cousinet's plate for *Le Bénédicité Flamant* was later acquired and published by Dennel, who in turn updated it with his own address as seen in the impression in the Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Cambridge, MA (R4394).

<sup>24</sup> M. Schuster, 'Remarks on the Development of the *Recueil d'Estampes d'après les plus célèbres Tableaux de la Galerie Royale de Dresde* by Carl Heinrich von Heineken 1753 and 1757'; and V. Spenlé, 'Représentation princière et connaissance des arts: les recueils de gravures d'après les collections de Dresde au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in C. Hattori, E. Leutrat, and V. Meyer, eds., *À l'origine du livre d'art, les recueils d'estampes comme entreprise éditoriale en Europe XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2010), 153–167 and 169–177, respectively.

collection.<sup>25</sup> Published by Moitte, this print of a charming mill scene outside Paris was made before February 1757, when Heineken sold the painting in Paris.<sup>26</sup> Because the calligraphic and tremulous quality of etched lines was so well suited for depicting atmospheric skies and verdant foliage, this intaglio technique often predominated in landscape prints, as it does in Cousinet's soft and shimmering *Le Moulin de Quinquengrogne*. Here the engraved marks accent the architectural structure of the mill and impart solidity to tree trunks; they strengthen shadows and enhance modelling and the variegated play of light and dark.

Around this time Cousinet also reproduced François Boucher's *Départ de Jacob* painting in another famous collection in Paris, that of Claude Alexandre de Villeneuve, the comte de Vence, *lieutenant-général du roi*.<sup>27</sup> The engraving of the comte de Vence's collection, in the words of W. McAllister-Johnson, occasioned a 'printmaking laboratory' in that the project brought together a range of artists, including many young and lesser-known professional printmakers; Cousinet was the only woman to engrave one of the paintings. In January 1757 in *L'Année littéraire*, Fréron announced Cousinet's *Départ de Jacob*, after Boucher, stating that she engraved it for Cars.<sup>28</sup> Boucher's *Départ de Jacob* painting, made in the manner of the seventeenth-century Genoese artist Castiglione – and, notably, Cousinet's print after it – were subsequently cited in the discussion of the comte de Vence's collections in Antoine Nicolas Dezallier d'Argenville's 1757 guide-book to Paris.<sup>29</sup> So, too, were painting and print listed in the book commissioned by the comte de Vence to describe his collection in 1759 and in the catalogue of his posthumous auction in February 1761.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, no. 12. A state before letters is in the Réserve Edmond de Rothschild, Musée du Louvre, Paris (6540 LR).

<sup>26</sup> *Catalogue raisonné, de tableaux, desseins & estampes, des meilleurs maîtres*, Paris, Pierre Remy, 13 February 1757, 104–105, no. 148. On Heineken's art dealing and collection see V. Spenlé, 'Un marchand d'art contemporain de Wille: Carl Henrich von Heineken', in E. Décultot, M. Espagne, and F.-R. Martin, eds., *Johan Georg Wille (1715–1808) et son milieu* (Paris: École du Louvre, 2009), 161–177.

<sup>27</sup> On the engraving of 92 paintings and 12 drawings in the comte de Vence's collection see W. McAllister Johnson, 'From Verrue to Vence: Systematic Engraving of Private Painting Collections in France to 1760', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 117 (1991): 77–92.

<sup>28</sup> *L'Année littéraire* I (1757), 214. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 330–331, no. 3. On Boucher's now-lost painting and a related drawing see H. Goldfarb, 'Boucher's Pastoral Scene with Family at Rest and The Image of the Pastoral in Eighteenth-Century France', *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 71(3) (1984): 87. An impression of the first, etched state of Cousinet's *Départ de Jacob* is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (59.608.65).

<sup>29</sup> A. N. D. d'Argenville, *Voyage Pittoresque de Paris*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1767), 164.

<sup>30</sup> Anonymous, *Catalogue des tableaux du cabinet de Monsieur le comte de Vence* (Paris, 1759), 33; *Catalogue raisonné du cabinet de feu M. le comte de Vence*, Paris, Pierre Remy, 24 November 1760 (announced auction date, actually postponed to 9–17 February 1761), 48, under no. 139.

Presumably Cousinet made *Départ de Jacob* in 1756 (if not earlier). In his discussion of the print Fréron identifies Cousinet as 'Madame Lempereur', which parallels the inscription of her maiden and married names in the plate. Lempereur also studied with the reproductive engraver Aveline II – did Cousinet and Lempereur meet through him, if not through the larger community of printmakers in Paris?<sup>31</sup> No one – man or woman – could participate and establish themselves in the French printmaking industry without relationships and networks. In lieu of a family of printmakers, Cousinet's initial art world connections were allied with and built on those of Aveline, Cars, Fessard, and Moitte. By marrying her fellow reproductive printmaker Louis Simon Lempereur in c. 1756, Cousinet became part of a professional alliance that would expand her network and offer greater opportunities to participate in the print market, not least because Lempereur possessed the means to publish, distribute, and sell her engravings.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, in the late 1750s the husband Lempereur's star was on the rise. Although no female professional printmakers became members of the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* in pre-revolutionary France,<sup>33</sup> Lempereur, for his part, became a provisional member (*agrégé*) of this prestigious arts institution in Paris in 1759, garnering him the privilege of exhibiting his work in the biennial public Salon at the Louvre.<sup>34</sup> At the very least, Cousinet could benefit from his expanding circle and heightened visibility.

In addition to engraving contemporary French paintings and portraits, Louis Simon Lempereur also was actively involved in engraving book illustrations, which from the mid-1750s forward became a mainstay of his work.<sup>35</sup> One of the most prominent illustrated book enterprises underway in Paris at this time was the new edition of the seventeenth-century

<sup>31</sup> On Aveline II see above and *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 1, 309–338.

<sup>32</sup> Griffiths, *The Print before Photography*, 226, on strategic marriages within the French print trade.

<sup>33</sup> Only four women became members of the *Académie royale* in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, all painters and pastellists: Marie Thérèse Reboul (1757), Anna Dorothea Lisiewska Therbusch (1767), Anne Vallayer-Coster (1770), and Marie Suzanne Giroust (1770). One wonders if this limitation prompted the professional printmaker Anne Philiberte Coulet to seek academic recognition abroad. In 1771, Coulet was appointed a member of the Vienna Hofakademie der Maler, Bildhauer und Baukunst, numbering among the first women to join. A. Weinkopf, *Beschreibung der Kaiserl. Königl. Akademie der bildenden Künste* (Vienna, 1783), 42. Similarly, Thérèse-Éléonore Hémery sought recognition by the *Académie de peinture et de sculpture de Marseille* and was accepted in 1785. See Chapter 6 by Kelsey D. Martin in this volume.

<sup>34</sup> Upon the completion of his assigned reception pieces, Lempereur was received as a full member (*reçu*) in 1775. W. McAllister Johnson, *French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture Engraved Reception Pieces: 1672–1789* (Kingston, ON: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1982), 159–160, no. 85.

<sup>35</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 255–328.



French poet Jean de La Fontaine's *Les Fables*, with illustrations based on Jean Baptiste Oudry's designs. *Les Fables*, like many eighteenth-century book projects, was long in the making, its four volumes published from 1755 to 1759. The engraving of the illustrated plates took place under the direction of Charles Nicolas Cochin II, official secretary to the *Académie royale* and one of the foremost illustrators, draftsmen, and printmakers of his time.<sup>36</sup> Cousinet engraved one plate, which was published in the fourth and last volume.<sup>37</sup> When the completed publication was written up in the prestigious *Journal des sçavans* in 1760, Cousinet was the only woman among the more than twenty printmakers – including Aveline II, Moitte, Fessard, Cars, and Lempereur – mentioned by name in conjunction with the illustrations.<sup>38</sup>

For printmakers, there were many benefits to be had in engraving book illustrations. The publisher – or the contractor who was overseeing the engraving of the illustrations – could easily farm out the plates to several printmakers, compensating them by the plate. Usually small in scale, such prints could be executed relatively quickly. It was stable work, providing a steady source of income, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century when there was a burgeoning market for illustrated books.<sup>39</sup> The book trade was also a form of commerce that had long involved women.<sup>40</sup>

Cousinet also made one plate for the 1757 edition of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Decamerone*,<sup>41</sup> a project to which Lempereur contributed as well, but it appears that engraving book illustrations would never be a specialty of hers, as it was for her husband. In this way Cousinet did not adopt the spousal strategy taken by Renée Élisabeth Lépicicé (née Marlié) (1714–1773), the subjects of her reproductive engravings of the 1740s closely paralleling those of her husband François Bernard Lépicicé, be they

<sup>36</sup> G. N. Ray, *The Art of the French Illustrated Book 1700 to 1914* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library in association with Dover Publications, 1986), 16–20; C. Michel, *Charles-Nicolas Cochin et le livre illustré au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1987), 375–376. It is worth pointing out that Cochin advised – and may even have provided texts for – Fréron's *L'Année littéraire*. See M. P. Sørensen, 'Élie-Catherine Fréron et le dessin', in Sophie Barthélemy, A. Cariou, and J. Balcou, eds., *Élie Fréron: Polémiste et critique d'art* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016) 244.

<sup>37</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 329, no. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Le Journal des sçavans* 56(15) (1760), 150. For more on *Le Journal des sçavans*, considered to be the first academic journal published in Europe, see R. P. McCutcheon, 'The Journal des Scavans and the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society', *Studies in Philology*, 21 (1924): 626–628.

<sup>39</sup> Griffiths, *The Print before Photography*, 191.

<sup>40</sup> Griffiths, *The Print before Photography*, 183, 226.

<sup>41</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 330, no. 2.

seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes or the eighteenth-century French compositions under their influence.<sup>42</sup>

Cousinet distinguished her work by focusing on single-sheet engravings of paintings, primarily landscapes, but sometimes also genre scenes. In the December 1758 issue of the *Mercure de France*, Moitte advertised four engravings he had 'recently engraved' after the paintings of the seventeenth-century Flemish artist David Teniers. Although Cousinet was not cited in the announcement by name, she was the engraver of the first composition on the list, *La Crédule Laitière*.<sup>43</sup> This print, along with her single-sheet engravings *Le Bénédicité Flamant*, *Le Moulin de Quinquengrogne*, and *Départ de Jacob*, demonstrated how Cousinet could interpret paintings of various genres, centuries, and styles. But there was considerable competition for such work in Paris. When the Swedish printmaker Per Gustaf Floding wrote to his patron the comte de Tessin in June 1759, he stressed: 'It is very difficult to find beautiful paintings to engrave, even though this capital is well endowed with them.'<sup>44</sup> And here Cousinet's husband's professional standing and art world connections proved fruitful for her future endeavours.

Louis Simon Lempereur worked with and was close to several amateurs – cosmopolitan, like-minded collectors who embraced drawing and printmaking to enhance their connoisseurship, expand their art historical knowledge, and forge social bonds within the milieu of the French cultural elite. Chief among Lempereur's amateur connections was Claude Henri Watelet, for whom Rembrandt's etchings were a passion.<sup>45</sup> Watelet also wrote about art. His authorship of the epic poem *L'Art de peindre*, published in 1760, led to his appointment to the *Académie française*. It was Lempereur who helped Watelet etch and engrave the illustrations for this publication based on the designs of the rising history painter Jean

<sup>42</sup> In the 1740s, husband and wife each made engravings after paintings by David Teniers and Etienne Jeaurat. So, too, did both artists engrave Jean-Siméon Chardin's painting *Le Bénédicité*. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 364–416 and 416–424, respectively.

<sup>43</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 334–335, no. 9. *Mercure de France*, December 1756, 198. Moitte's name appears on the other three engravings: *Les Compagnons Menuisiers*, *Le Marchand de ratafiat*, and *Le Marchand de mort aux rats*.

<sup>44</sup> 'Il est très difficile de trouver de beaux tableaux à graver, quoique cette capitale en soit bien pourvue', Floding to Tessin (1 June 1759), G. W. Lundberg, 'Le Graveur suédois Pierre Gustave Floding à Paris et sa correspondance', *Archives de l'art français*, 17 (1932): 261.

<sup>45</sup> C. Guichard, 'Amateurs and the Culture of Etching', in P. Stein, *Artists and Amateurs: Etchings in 18th-Century France* (New York: Met, 2013), 137–155 and *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 257–258, nos. 1–8.

Baptiste Marie Pierre.<sup>46</sup> Watelet's companion Marguerite Le Comte, with whom he would travel to Italy in 1763–1764, was herself a collector and amateur etcher.<sup>47</sup>

Le Comte possessed Panini's two paintings of architectural *capricci*, imaginary compositions in which he generalised upon antique ruins, that Cousinet engraved (Figures 7.1 and 7.2) and Lempereur published.<sup>48</sup> Fréron's praise for Cousinet's engravings, cited at the outset of this chapter, broadcasts the meaningful relationship between female printmaker and collector. As the announcement noted, because Le Comte had kindly lent her paintings *La Pyramide de Sextius* and *Les Trois Colonnes de Campo Vaccino* to Cousinet, the printmaker honoured and curried favour with her patron by dedicating both prints to her. Le Comte's ownership of the paintings is recorded on Cousinet's prints themselves, the elegantly engraved lettering interlinking patron and artist, valorising the latter's status. Women collectors, and by extension women collector dedicatees, were unusual in eighteenth-century France. Two of the most important precedents were the comtesse de Verrue, who collected seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish paintings,<sup>49</sup> and Madame de Pompadour, who favoured eighteenth-century French creations.<sup>50</sup>

The Lempereurs' relationship with Watelet and Le Comte continued bearing fruit. In 1762, Cousinet engraved *Le Calme* and *La Tempête*, after Joseph Vernet's pendant paintings of seascapes from Watelet's collection,

<sup>46</sup> In *Mémoire au roi Louis XVI: En dénonciation d'abus d'autorité, et de mépris* (London [Paris], 1784), 78, Watelet's bookkeeper Charles Nicolas Roland specifies that Pierre's designs were transferred to the plates and subsequently etched by both Watelet and Lempereur, the latter finishing them in burin. Lempereur also engraved Cochin's profile portrait of Watelet, which includes an open copy of *L'Art de peindre* below the amateur's visage. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 270, no. 55.

<sup>47</sup> On Le Comte, see *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 13, 484–491; Guichard, 'Amateurs and the Culture of Etching', 141–146; and M. Fend, 'Marguerite Le Comte's Smile. Portrait of an Amatrice', in M. Fend, J. Germann and M. Hyde, eds., *Thinking Women. Strategic Reinterpretations of Eighteenth-Century Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming 2024). Lempereur engraved Le Comte's profile portrait, after a drawing by Watelet. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 269–270, no. 54.

<sup>48</sup> *Les Trois Colonnes de Campo Vaccino* (under the title *An Architectural Capriccio with a Sibyl Preaching*) appeared at auction in London, Christie's, 29 April 2015, no. 567. D. R. Marshall, 'Early Panini Reconsidered: The Esztergom "Preaching of an Apostle" and the Relationship between Panini and Ghisolfi', *Artibus et Historiae*, 18(36) (1997): 146–147, figs. 12–13 reproduces *La Pyramide de Sextius* (private collection) and discusses the possible attribution of the canvas to Giovanni Ghisolfi.

<sup>49</sup> C. Guichard, *Les Amateurs d'art à Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2008), 103–104, 107.

<sup>50</sup> X. Salmon, ed., *Madame de Pompadour et les arts* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2002), 237–246.

dedicating both to the amateur.<sup>51</sup> Published and sold by her husband, Cousinet's engravings were promoted in no fewer than three journals that summer.<sup>52</sup> The prints couldn't be issued at a more propitious time, as the famous painter had settled in Paris in 1762 after spending years in Italy and then travelling in France. Vernet's most important commission was to paint a series of large-scale canvases of the ports of France for the monarchy;<sup>53</sup> it was his cabinet paintings of seascapes, however, that built his international reputation.<sup>54</sup> The time was ripe, accordingly, to offer engravings of Vernet paintings for sale.<sup>55</sup> Eighteenth-century taste encouraging the collecting and display of pendant prints promised a doubling of profits.<sup>56</sup> It is not difficult to imagine Cousinet's prints after the 'calm' and 'storm' imagery of Vernet's paintings serving as forms of entertainment in social gatherings. Viewers could delight in comparing and contrasting the effects of weather on sky and sea, appreciate the various motifs of ships and rocky coastlines, and concoct narratives based on their reading of the anecdotal figure details, especially the unfolding drama of the shipwreck.

Did Cousinet's reproductive engravings of Vernet's seascapes catch the attention of the younger and less-established professional printmaker Anne Philiberte Coulet (b. 1736), prompting her to approach Lempereur as a publisher for her own prints?<sup>57</sup> Coulet's first known engraving, *La Belle Après-dinée*, after Vernet, was published and advertised in *L'Avant-Coureur* in December 1762 by the printseller Denis Charles Buldet,<sup>58</sup> but by

<sup>51</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 332–333, nos. 5–6.

<sup>52</sup> *Mercure de France*, July 1762, 157; *Affiches, annonces et avis divers*, 23 June 1762, 99; and *L'Avant-Coureur*, 28 June 1762, 414.

<sup>53</sup> In 1758, the printmakers Jacques Philippe Le Bas and Cochin II began engraving Vernet's paintings of the French ports. The multiyear, subscription-based project extended into the 1760s and involved several printmakers. L. Manoeuvre and E. Rieth, *Joseph Vernet, 1714–1789: Les Ports de France* (Arcueil: Editions Anthèse, 1994), 159–161.

<sup>54</sup> The steady demand for Vernet's work is recorded in his account books. L. Lagrange, *Joseph Vernet et la peinture au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Didier, 1864) as cited by Philip Conisbee, 'The Shipwreck, 1772, by C.-J. Vernet', *Mélanges en hommage à Pierre Rosenberg: peintures et dessins en France et en Italie XVII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2001), 153–158.

<sup>55</sup> More than 300 reproductive prints were made after Vernet's paintings over the course of his lifetime. P. Arlaud, *Catalogue raisonné des estampes gravées d'après Joseph Vernet* (Avignon: Imprimeries Rullière-Libecio, 1976).

<sup>56</sup> On pendant prints, see McAllister Johnson, *The Rise and Fall of the Fine Art Print in Eighteenth-Century France*, 54–65.

<sup>57</sup> On Coulet, see *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 5, 284–285.

<sup>58</sup> *L'Avant-Coureur* (20 December 1762), 825. Basan bought Coulet's plate and 182 impressions of *La Belle Après-dinée* at Buldet's posthumous auction *Catalogue de tableaux, dessins encadrés et en feuilles, nombreuses collections d'estampes ... Composant le Cabinet & le Fonds de Commerce de feu le C.<sup>de</sup> Buldet, ancien Marchand d'Estampes*, Paris, F. L. Regnault, 4 December 1797, 78, no. 483. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 5, 284, no. 1.

the following year Coulet was working with Lempereur. From 1763 to 1776, Lempereur published eight of her engravings,<sup>59</sup> beginning with *Le Départ de la chaloupe* and *L'Heureux passage*, two of her 'superbly executed' engravings after paintings by the 'immortal Vernet', as praised by Fréron in *L'Année littéraire* in December 1763.<sup>60</sup> Coulet found support for her work with the Lempereurs, and they, in turn, benefited from publishing and selling her reproductive prints.

Basan and Heineken identify Lempereur as Coulet's teacher, but might not Cousinet have played a role in mentoring Coulet as well?<sup>61</sup> It is tempting to imagine that a mutual support system emerged between these two women printmakers. In June 1765, Lempereur published and advertised Cousinet's engraving *Les Commerçants Turcs*, after a Vernet from the collection of Armand Pierre François de Chastre de Billy, *premier valet de garde-robe du roi*.<sup>62</sup> Earlier that same year Lempereur published Coulet's *Les Pêcheurs napolitains*, also after a Vernet from the comte de Billy's collection.<sup>63</sup> Did Cousinet's opportunity to engrave *Les Commerçants Turcs* arise through the connections of her husband or of Coulet? The lettering on *Les Commerçants Turcs*, intriguingly, was engraved by another woman artist who signed her name to the plate at lower right: 'Jeanne Louise Coulet Scrip.' There is precious little information on this professional letterer, but surely she was related to – and most likely a sister of – Anne Philiberte Coulet.<sup>64</sup> In fact Jeanne Louise Coulet also engraved the lettering for Anne Philiberte Coulet's aforementioned *Les Pêcheurs napolitains* and its pendant *Les Pêcheurs florentins*, also after a Vernet in the comte de Billy's collection, published by Lempereur in 1766.<sup>65</sup>

Cousinet's *Les Commerçants Turcs* lacked a dedicatee. Although the comte de Billy's ownership of Vernet's painting is duly noted in the

<sup>59</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 5, 285–286, nos. 6–13.

<sup>60</sup> *L'Année littéraire* 8 (1763), 331–332. Lempereur advertised the two prints in the *Mercure de France*, January 1764, 137. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 5, 284, nos. 2–3.

<sup>61</sup> Basan, *Dictionnaire des artists*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 155; Heineken, *Dictionnaire des artistes*, 4: 372. The other artist cited as her teacher is Jean Jacques Aliamet, who also engraved several paintings by Vernet.

<sup>62</sup> *Mercure de France*, June 1765, 168. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 331–332, no. 4.

<sup>63</sup> *Mercure de France*, January 1765, 171, and *L'Avant-Coureur*, and followed by advertisements for *Les Pêcheurs florentins* in 1766. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 5, 284–285, nos. 4–5.

<sup>64</sup> On professional letter engravers see Griffiths, *The Print before Photography*, 42–43. Mademoiselle Niquet lent her lettering expertise to several reproductive engravings made between the 1770s and 1790s, including Jean Massard's engraving *La Mère bien-aimée*, after Jean Baptiste Greuze (1775). For a reproduction of this print and other examples of Niquet's work, see <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG145820> (consulted 29 May 2021).

<sup>65</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 5, 284–285, nos. 4–5.



lettering, Cousinet's name takes centre stage below the image, broadcasting its creation by a woman artist.<sup>66</sup> And broadcast her work abroad such prints did. In the eighteenth century, an international network of art agents ensured that French reproductive engravings could be acquired by a wealthy and cosmopolitan clientele spread across Europe. 'If in any of the arts the French have been and are superior to the rest of Europe, it most undoubtedly is in that of engraving.' This assertion was made in 1769 by the English writer Arthur Young, his statement prefacing his praise for Cousinet's (and Coulet's) expertise in interpreting Vernet's paintings, *Les Commerçants Turcs* among them.<sup>67</sup>

Collectors eager to acquire the pendant engraving to Cousinet's *Les Commerçants Turcs* had to wait until 1772 for the publication of *Les Suites d'un naufrage*, also after a Vernet painting in the comte de Billy's collection. With their detailed burin work, reproductive engravings could take months – sometimes even years – to execute. Here we are reminded as well of the overwhelmingly invisible labour performed by women which imposed other demands on Cousinet's time. To what extent was she increasingly devoted to helping Lempereur run the business, to say nothing of caring for their daughter Geneviève Françoise Sophie (c. 1762–1775)?<sup>68</sup> The lettering of *Les Suites d'un naufrage* explains that the composition was etched by Nicolas Delaunay, a student of Lempereur, and finished in burin by Cousinet.<sup>69</sup> As with Cousinet's other prints advertised by her husband, the release of this long-awaited engraving was featured in several French journal advertisements, providing information that was in turn picked up by discriminating editors of German periodicals.<sup>70</sup>

In 1776, the publication *Almanach historique et raisonné des architectes, peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs et cizeleurs* offered a guide to the French art scene. Although Cousinet doesn't have her own entry – her 'talents' are praised under those of her husband – she is the only woman mentioned in

<sup>66</sup> 'LES COMMERÇANTS TURCS / Gravés par Catherine Élisabeth Cousinet femme Lempereur, d'après le tableau original de Joseph Vernet, / haut d'un Pied six Pouces sur deux Pieds et demi de large. Tiré du Cabinet de Monsieur de Billy.'

<sup>67</sup> A. Young, *Letters Concerning the Present State of the French Nation* (Dublin, 1769), 190 and 185, respectively.

<sup>68</sup> *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 254.

<sup>69</sup> A proof of the first, etched state of the print in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, is dated 1770. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 12, 482, no. 62.

<sup>70</sup> For example, information on Cousinet's engravings after Vernet appeared in the Leipzig periodical *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste* 8 (1762), 370–371 (*Le Calme* and *La Tempête*) and 13 (1772), 363 (*Les Suites d'un naufrage*).

the section on printmakers who excelled in historical subjects.<sup>71</sup> A few women have entries in the section devoted to printmakers specialising in landscapes and seascapes, including Coulet, though she is erroneously referred to – and her identity confused with – the ‘wife of Lempereur’.<sup>72</sup> With similar names, professions, and subjects – not to mention their mutual publisher, Lempereur – the confusion of Cousinet and Coulet in the *Almanach historique* may have been an honest mistake, but it nonetheless feels like a slight: both artists had worked for years in a male-dominated industry to establish their respective reputations as reproductive engravers.

When Laurent Guiard, first sculptor to the duc de Parme, wrote to an Italian colleague in October 1783 during his visit to Paris, he spoke of seeing ‘beautiful things by the sister of M. Cousinet’, referring to her brother, Jean Baptiste Cousinet, adjunct sculptor to Guiard in Parma.<sup>73</sup> After this mention, however, the trail goes cold.<sup>74</sup> As with many eighteenth-century women printmakers, even Cousinet’s date of death is unknown.<sup>75</sup> Yet the continued listing of her prints in European auction catalogues underscores a widespread recognition of her oeuvre.<sup>76</sup> It is hoped that my reassessment of Cousinet’s life and work suggests both a certain success and the historical hindrances that make her only so visible to us. Over the course of three decades, Cousinet created an impressive range of engravings after European paintings owned by important and well-appointed individuals in Paris, cosmopolitan capital of Europe. Her connections to these collectors integrated her into networks in the French printmaking industry and, by extension, abroad. Eliciting respect and admiration, the professional achievements of Cousinet offer tantalizing glimpses of what an eighteenth-century French woman professional print-maker might have been.

<sup>71</sup> *Almanach historique et raisonné des architectes, peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs et cizeleurs* (Paris, 1776), 163.

<sup>72</sup> *Almanach historique*, 178. Unfortunately, this confusion of the prints of Cousinet and Coulet continued into the nineteenth century, as can be seen in the entry on the former printmaker in C. Blanc, *Manuel de l'amateur d'estampes*, vol. 2 (Paris: P. Jannet, 1856), 60, 531.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Laurent Guiard to Giambattista Bodoni, 6 October 1783, cited in *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 328.

<sup>74</sup> Two engravings not listed in the *Inventaire du fonds français* are Cousinet’s pendant engravings of ruins in Rhodes and Heraclea, after paintings by Jean Baptiste Pillement, published by Jean Baptiste Crépy, probably in the 1770s. G. Pillement, *Jean Pillement* (Paris: J. Haumont, 1945), 95.

<sup>75</sup> Cousinet was outlived by her husband, who eventually remarried. When Lempereur died in 1807, his wife is listed as Thérèse Charlotte Boitel. *Inventaire du fonds français*, vol. 14, 328.

<sup>76</sup> The earliest reference I have found to the auction of Cousinet’s work is an impression of *Le Bénédicité Flamant* that sold at *Catalogus von Einer Sammlung allerhand Naturalien*, Copenhagen, 27 October 1760, 171, no. 168. From this point onwards her reproductive prints, above all her engravings after Vernet and Panini, appear in European auction catalogues.