

Divine Secrets of a Printmaking Sisterhood
The Professional and Familial Networks of the Horthemels
and Hémery Sisters

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Horthemels sisters:

Marie-Anne Hyacinthe (1682–1727), wife of Nicolas-Henri Tardieu
 Louise-Madeleine (1686–1767), wife of Charles-Nicolas Cochin *le père*
 Marie-Nicole (1689–1745), wife of Alexis-Simon Belle

Hémery sisters:

Marguerite (1745–1832), wife of Nicolas Ponce
 Thérèse-Éléonore (1753–after 1814), wife of Charles-Louis Lingée
 Louise-Rosalie (active c. 1777), married name unknown or unwed

This chapter compares the life narratives and artistic practices of two sets of sister-printmakers working and living in eighteenth-century Paris: the Horthemels sisters and the Hémery sisters.¹ Despite their relative obscurity within contemporary scholarship compared with the illustrious women of the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, these six women were, according to their Parisian contemporaries, some of the most well-respected *graveuses en taille-douce*: female intaglio engravers who produced printed images for circulation within the commercial art market. From supporting the enterprises of their husbands or sons to reaching beyond the familial atelier to pursue careers of their own, these sisters put to rest long-standing myths that female engravers were anonymous artisans who never claimed artistic authority over their work and/or were limited to finishing the plates of male family members. To explore their lives is to

¹ This chapter was born from a paper of the same title I gave at the 2018 American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference for the panel, *The Imprint of Women: Printmakers, Printsellers and Print Publishers*, organised by Cynthia Roman and Cristina S. Martinez. I cannot thank them enough for turning our little panel – and the fruitful discussion that resulted from it – into an edited volume on the much-underserved subject of eighteenth-century women and the world of prints. Additional thanks to my advisor, Melissa Hyde, for her thoughts on this chapter and enduring mentorship. The anachronistic title of this chapter was inspired by the 2002 film, *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, a comedy-drama involving a group of women who declare their sisterhood during a childhood ritual and blood oath.

contribute to a fuller, more nuanced understanding of the eighteenth-century Parisian print workshop and prominent printmaking families, many of whom would have struggled without the support and labour of mothers, wives, and daughters.

The call for in-depth studies of women's involvement in the world of eighteenth-century French printmaking has rung for decades; and yet, a lack of systemic research involving women and issues of gender within the study of European printmaking more generally persists.² The historic lack of interest in women artists and hierarchical division between what is considered fine art and craft are partially to blame, of course; but another culprit lies in the belief that women working outside of state-sponsored art academies – including engravers – were *almost always* anonymous artisans. This is perhaps truer when applied to earlier centuries; and indeed, past scholarship involving sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European print workshops has argued that women who signed their work and were relatively well known within their communities were the exception rather than the rule.³ And yet, new archival research suggests there were many professional female engravers who emerged at the turn of the eighteenth century, particularly in France.⁴

² For some scholarship involving eighteenth-century female engravers, see J. Brodsky, 'Some Notes on Women Printmakers', *Art Journal*, 35 (1976): 374–377; E. Poulson, 'Louise-Magdeleine Horthemels: Reproductive Engraver', *Woman's Art Journal*, 6 (1985–1986): 20–23; M. Préaud, 'Claudine, Elisabeth, Madeleine, Marguerite, Marie', *Revue de la Bibliothèque nationale de France*, 17 (2004): 45–50; G. Sheridan, *Louder than Words: Ways of Seeing Women Workers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2009); and S. Sofio, *Artistes femmes: La parenthèse enchantée XVIIIe–XIXe siècles* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016). For issues of gender in the history of printmaking more generally, see D. Gaze, ed., *Concise Dictionary of Women Artists* (Chicago, IL: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001); and D. Fordham and A. Albright, 'The Eighteenth-Century Print: Tracing the Contours of the Field', *Literature Compass*, 9 (2012): 509–520.

³ See E. Lincoln, 'Making a Good Impression: Diana Mantua's Printmaking Career', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 50 (1997): 1101–1147; 'Invention, Origin, and Dedication: Republishing Women's Prints in Early Modern Italy', in M. Biagioli, P. Jaszi, and M. Woodmansee, eds., *Making and Unmaking Intellectual Property: Creative Production in Legal and Cultural Perspective* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 339–358; and E. Lincoln, 'Models for Science and Craft: Isabella Parasole's Botanical and Lace Illustrations', *Visual Resources*, 17 (2001): 1–35. See also L. Markey, 'The Female Printmaker and the Culture of the Reproductive Print Workshop', in R. Zorach and E. Rodini, eds., *Paper Museums: The Reproductive Print in Europe, 1500–1800* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 51–74; and B. Bohn, *Women Artists, Their Patrons, and Their Publics in Early Modern Bologna* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021).

⁴ Much of this is still in the preliminary phase or unpublished, including my own dissertation, 'Les Graveuses en taille-douce: Women Intaglio Engravers in Paris, 1660–1799' (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, pending 2024). See also E. Dahan, 'Les graveuses en France pendant la Révolution. Etude d'un milieu artistique et familial (1783–1804)', unpublished MA thesis, Université de Strasbourg (2017); and T. Edwards, 'Les Sœurs Horthemels: Trois Femmes Graveuses au XVIIIe Siècle', unpublished MA thesis, 2 vols., Sorbonne Université (2019).

Lia Markey hypothesised in 2005 that the changing artistic milieu of the Age of Enlightenment – including the rise of the idea of individual genius within and outside the print workshop – likely afforded new opportunities to female printmakers.⁵ An increasing number of women began to claim artistic authorship (i.e., were credited as producers of plates), work with publishers outside of the family workshop, and even establish independent careers of their own. Indeed, in early modern France, notions of ‘Genius’ impacted emerging legal freedoms for intaglio engravers, demonstrated by a decree released by King Louis XIV and his *Conseil d’État* on 26 May 1660. The so-called Edict of Saint Jean-de-Luz was a response to a proposal to establish a professional body of 200 master engravers in the city of Paris, which the King rejected on the basis that intaglio engraving was a ‘liberal art’, not a trade or manufacture, that should be unfettered by guild rule. Intaglio engraving, the edict stated, ‘depends on the imagination of its authors and cannot be subjected to any other laws than those of their genius’.⁶ Though it was challenging for intaglio engravers to overcome the association to the mechanical arts (a debate that continued throughout the eighteenth century),⁷ the Edict of Saint-Jean-de-Luz legally confirmed there would be no *official* regulations in terms of apprenticeship or practice, and anyone could learn engraving or call themselves an engraver provided they had the means to do so. Though the decree did not mention *graveuses* specifically, it served as the catalyst for the sharp increase of professional engravers, both men and women, throughout the *Ancien Régime*.

The Edict of Saint-Jean-de-Luz made intaglio engraving a more accessible career path for *graveuses* during this period; but the reality of the printmaking workshop was that its success was *not* based on the individual genius of a single worker. Intaglio printmaking workshops were a familial and community workspace that required the use of many hands – including those belonging to mothers, wives, and daughters – who were involved in the design, engraving, and printing of a plate, as well as the publication

I would like to thank Turner Edwards, Hannah Lyons, Sarah Lund, and Marie Sophie Giraud for their insightful discussions of *graveuses* with me, both in person and online.

⁵ Markey, ‘The Female Printmaker’, 60–61.

⁶ The edict was reprinted by Jean-Michel Papillon at the end of his *Traité historique et pratique de la gravure en bois*, vol. 2 (1766), 80–83. My translation. See also M. Préaud, ‘Printmaking under Louis XIV’, in P. Fuhring, L. Marchesano, R. Mattis, and V. Selbach, eds., *A Kingdom of Images: French Prints in the Age of Louis XIV, 1660–1715* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2015), 9–14.

⁷ For a succinct discussion of this, see S. Anderson-Riedel, ‘The Art Academy and the Graphic Arts’, in *Creativity and Reproduction: Nineteenth Century Engraving and the Academy* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 1–25.

and sale of a print.⁸ This chapter employs two case studies – those of the Horthemels sisters and the Hémery sisters – to argue that the legitimacy of *graveuses*' work and the success of their careers were primarily based on a series of personal and professional networks, that is, the large kinship networks that extended and descended from their birth families and marriages *as well as* the professional networks within their respective communities of artists, engravers, printers, and booksellers. Female intaglio engravers such as the Horthemels and Hémery sisters navigated these networks to learn engraving as a practical skill to ensure their futures, help support their families, and claim artistic authority even outside of the familial atelier.

How to Train a *Graveuse*

Past scholarship has highlighted the importance of the Edict of Saint-Jean-de-Luz on the regulation and freedoms of intaglio printmakers more generally,⁹ yet very few scholars have questioned how the edict might have affected the *female* members of printmaking workshops.¹⁰ With no *official* requirements for apprenticeship in order to call oneself a printmaker – such as a contract signed with a master engraver, though this practice did exist, or the submission of a masterwork – both men and women were free to seek training among the family members and artistic community available to them.¹¹ This would greatly impact the women belonging to family workshops or those who lived within printmaking communities, as they could embark on a career as a professional engraver without the official training that was largely unavailable to them due to their gender, such as apprenticeships with master engravers or classes at the guild and *Académie* schools.¹²

⁸ See Chapter 5 by Hannah Lyons in this volume.

⁹ See P. Casselle, 'Le commerce des estampes à Paris dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle', MA thesis, l'École Nationale des Chartes (1976); and C. Le Bitouéz, 'Le commerce de l'estampe à Paris dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle', MA thesis, l'École Nationale des Chartes (1986).

¹⁰ One exception is Edwards, 'Les Sœurs Horthemels', from which this study benefits immensely.

¹¹ This is not to say apprenticeship contracts did not happen, just that they were not required in order to practise. See R. Mathis, 'What Is a Printmaker' in *A Kingdom of Images*, 23–35. Nor did this freedom mean that engraving was entirely accepted as a 'liberal art' in the *Académie*. See Anderson-Riedel, 'The Art Academy and the Graphic Arts', 1–25.

¹² Eighteenth-century French women did not typically sign apprenticeship contracts and they were not allowed to partake in the official art classes (design, geometry, perspective, etc.) offered by the *Académie de Saint-Luc* (the school of the Parisian artists' guild) or the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*. Much has been said on women in the Academy since Linda Nochlin's pioneering 1971 essay, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', but a brief overview of references

Knowledge of the fine arts was deemed essential for a well-rounded educated person of social status, but for those of the middle and lower classes, training in the art of engraving was more a financial investment. This was particularly true for the Horthemels sisters, daughters of a Netherlandish printer-bookseller, Daniel Horthemels. Their father's premature death in 1691 placed the family – including the widow, Marie-Anne Cellier, and her six young children – in a dire financial situation. An inventory upon Daniel's death describes a large stock and bookstore worth more than 55,000 books with two shops in the neighbourhood, for which Cellier was now responsible.¹³ The family was forced to downsize to pay off debts incurred by outstanding projects and rent; thus, the shop's proceeds could no longer support three unskilled daughters, and dowries were almost certainly out of the question.

The early education of the Horthemels daughters in the art of engraving was most likely an attempt to endow them with a practical skill and, eventually, secure their marriages.¹⁴ The yet-unmarried Horthemels sisters could not become printer-booksellers like their mother – a profession regulated by a guild where the only women legally allowed to practise were widows of masters.¹⁵ It would be Daniel *le jeune* and Denis Horthemels who would follow the profession of their parents, while their three sisters and another brother, Frédéric, explored other avenues to make a living. Learning the skill of engraving was accessible due to the aforementioned freedoms in regulation as well as the Horthemels's family geographic location. Their shop, operating under the sign, *au Mécénas*, was located on the rue Saint-Jacques, the bookstore and engraving district

includes: J. Pomeroy, L. Auricchio, M. Hyde, and M. Sheriff, *Royalists to Romantics: Women Artists from the Louvre, Versailles, and Other French National Collections* (Washington, DC: National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2012); D. Gaze, ed., *Concise Dictionary of Women Artists* (Chicago, IL: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001); and A. Lahalle, 'Et les filles?', *Les écoles de dessin au XVIIIe siècle* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006).

¹³ Edwards, 'Les Sœurs Horthemels', vol. 1, 14; AN, Minutier central, Étude XLIX, liasse 397 (11 December 1691), Inventaire après le décès de Daniel I Horthemels.

¹⁴ Edwards, 'Les Sœurs Horthemels', vol. 1, 22.

¹⁵ G. Sheridan, 'Louder Than Words', 3–4. See also G. Sheridan, 'Women in the Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century France', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 15 (Spring 1992). There were notable exceptions to this rule, cited by R. Arbour, *Dictionnaire des femmes libraires en France: 1470–1870* (Geneva: Droz, 2003), 7. For more on women in the trade guilds, see C. Crowston, 'Women, Gender, and Guilds in Early Modern Europe: An Overview of Recent Research', in J. Lucassen, T. de Moor, and Jan Luiten, eds., *The Return of the Guilds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); M. E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); C. M. Truant, 'The Guildswomen of Paris: Gender, Power and Sociability in the Old Regime', *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society of French History*, 15 (1988): 130–138.

of Paris. There are no extant apprenticeship contracts for any of the Horthemels sisters (very few exist for female engravers in general);¹⁶ but, having spent their childhood and adolescence in this *quartier*, they must have known an engraver within their community willing to take them under their wing. Perhaps even one of the sisters' future husbands, engravers Charles-Nicolas Cochin *le père* or Nicolas-Henri Tardieu, had a hand in their education. We do know that training to become a burin engraver could take several years – up to seven – and each of the Horthemels sisters was proficient in this technique.¹⁷

Though an indicator of more freedoms of practice, the lack of recorded apprenticeship contracts between female engravers and their tutors makes it difficult to know exactly the circumstances of their training. When combined with confusing or scattered archival material involving an engraver's birth family – as is the case for the Hémery sisters – we unfortunately can conclude very little about the life of a woman engraver before she began to produce work or her marriage. The early education of the Hémery siblings remains more elusive than that of the Horthemels for these reasons, compounded by their lesser-known husbands who have not often been the subject of art historical scholarship.¹⁸ Based on what archival records do exist, we know that the Hémery siblings had concrete ties to the rue Saint-Jacques and one of its parishes, the Saint-Benoît neighbourhood. They likely knew other artists, engravers, and/or booksellers and printers living and working within their community from whom they could have received their training.¹⁹

The Hémery sisters were born over a generation after the Horthemels, in the mid-eighteenth century, when diverse techniques in printmaking

¹⁶ The earliest example found thus far of an apprenticeship contract for a *graveuse en taille-douce* is actually under the tutelage of another female intaglio engraver, Suzanne Sarrabat (niece of famed engraver Abraham Bosse), who takes a female apprentice in 1686. See AN, Minutier central, Étude XLIX, liasse 383 (24 January 1686). Sarrabat trained several students from her home and founded a school to train poor young girls in her neighbourhood to better their social positions. See R. Mathis, 'Faire travailler les filles. L'apprentissage d'Élisabeth de Nieport auprès de Suzanne Sarrabat (1686)', *Nouvelles de l'Estampe*, 263 (2020), <https://journals.openedition.org/estampe/1456>.

¹⁷ Mathis, 'What is a Printmaker', 24.

¹⁸ The Hémery sisters' birth family is still up for debate, though some scholars have stated they were the children of a painter. This could be Martin Hémery, the *directeur* of the *Académie de Saint-Luc*, though I believe this is unlikely based on his death inventory (J. Guiffrey, *Scellés et inventaires d'artistes français du XVII^e et du XVIII^e siècle*, vol. II, 228). There was also a family of *imprimeurs-libraires* known as Emery/Hémery. See 'Pierre-François Émery', *BnF Data* online, https://data.bnf.fr/en/14512475/pierre-francois_emery.

¹⁹ See, for example, H. Herluison, *Actes d'état-civil d'artistes français: peintres, graveurs, architectes, etc.* (1972), 175, 258, 367; and Y. Bruand and M. Hébert, *Inventaire du Fonds Français: Graveurs du XVIII^e Siècle*, vol. XI (BnF, 1970), 303–312.

were beginning to be adopted and developed in France. Etching had become more in vogue in the latter half of the eighteenth century with the prominence of the *amateur*: elite members of society who produced prints for intellectual and social reasons rather than economic.²⁰ Trained professionals of the lower classes also adopted the technique due to the ease with which it could be learned and practised. In contrast to burin engraving, which required considerable training and technical skill, etchers employed a simple metal stylus to ‘draw’ rather than carve onto a metal plate. Anyone with training in design could attempt an etching (and drawing in general was considered a suitable practice for young women); however, the process of placing the plate in an acid bath to bite the incised design at various lengths of time took careful planning, tools, and experience. Thus, multiple hands were typically involved in the production of an etched plate. Marguerite Hémary was particularly adept at etching small-scale book illustrations, such as those for Claude-Joseph Dorat’s *Fables Nouvelles* (1773) or the *Almanach iconologique* of Cochin *le jeune* (1778–1781), though it is unknown how much say, if any, she had over the production of the final image. Nevertheless, such minute, detailed work required immense concentration and dexterity of hand. Clear communication was also required between the original designer, the etcher, and the printer to pull an image with the highest clarification despite its small size. That she was employed alongside other, well-known male engravers for various projects – such as Jacques Aliamet, Étienne Fessard, and her brother-in-law, Charles-Louis Lingée – is a testament to her skill as well as to the calibre of the circle of artists to which she belonged.

Though also trained in the art of etching, Thérèse-Éléonore and Louise-Rosalie Hémary primarily engaged in crayon-manner. Unlike engraving or etching, crayon-manner did not require the printmaker to incise the plate. Instead, they used engraving tools to apply stipple patterns to a prepared ground. The technique became popular through the reproduction of works by Antoine Watteau, François Boucher, and Jean-Honoré Fragonard. It was particularly employed as a method to reproduce crayon and chalk drawings for art students’ study. Both Thérèse-Éléonore and Louise-Rosalie produced crayon-manner prints after studies of heads by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, for example, capturing the appearance of the swift strokes and deftly shaded areas produced by the original artist’s hand for close study by students and connoisseurs alike. Thérèse-Éléonore in

²⁰ See P. Stein, *Artists and Amateurs: Etching in 18th-Century France* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014).

particular practised a variety of printmaking techniques – from crayon-manner to aquatint to mezzotint – suggesting an artist with an interest in technical innovation and access to a wide variety of tutors.

Pride and Printmaking: A Woman's Place within the Workshop

It has been argued that, when it came to the seventeenth-century female engraver at least, we cannot conclude that women found substantially more freedom within the culture of printmaking than in other artistic environments after marriage.²¹ Lia Markey once cited German printmaker Susanna Maria von Sandrart – trained in the art of engraving by her father but forced to resign after her marriage due to the ‘heavy demands of housekeeping’ – as one example of the obstacles female engravers faced due to their gender.²² The Horthemels and Hémery sisters represent a contrasting group of female intaglio engravers who managed to continue their work after marriage, largely because they married into other artistic families. Engraving seems to have been a kind of ‘practical dowry’ for many women who grew up on or near the rue Saint-Jacques – one that could open the door to further artistic practice.²³ Through her marriage to painter Alexis-Simon Belle, for example, Marie-Nicole Horthemels was able to convert from engraving to painting, a skill she then bequeathed to her son, Clément-Louis-Marie-Anne Belle.

Though the Horthemels sisters’ monetary dowries were affected by the premature death of their father and the subsequent downsizing of the family shop, the practical skill of engraving and knowledge of the printmaking business brought a different kind of value to their marriages.²⁴ By marrying a *graveuse*, their husbands enjoyed free promotion through their wife’s prints, which often featured the address of their husband’s home, workshop, or storefront as the location of sale. Their marriages did not mean, however, that the Horthemels sisters were now limited to reproducing the designs of their spouses; in reality, each sister created very few prints based on her husband’s works (or that of their brothers-in-law). Belle was the most frequently reproduced artist of the three, likely because he was a painter rather than an engraver. In contrast, there is only one known engraving by the Horthemels sisters produced after a design by

²¹ Markey, ‘The Female Printmaker’, 60. ²² *Ibid.*

²³ Edwards, ‘Les Sœurs Horthemels’, vol. 1, 85.

²⁴ For a discussion of the dowries of the three Horthemels sisters, see Edwards, ‘Les Sœurs Horthemels’, vol. 1, 22.

Tardieu (the *Portrait de Jean Soanen*), and the work was published via the Horthemels's family workshop rather than Tardieu's.²⁵ There is no record of any print after a design by Cochin *le père* by any of the Horthemels sisters.

Although she never reproduced the work of her husband, Louise-Madeleine Horthemels, *femme* Cochin did reproduce her *son's* designs (as did many others). Cochin *le jeune* had a prolific career as a draughtsman, first for the *Menus Plaisirs* and then for the *Académie royale* upon his acceptance in 1751. His mother began reproducing his designs in print as early as 1736 when Cochin *le jeune* was twenty-one and Louise-Madeleine was fifty, and the two continued to collaborate well into the 1740s and 1750s. But this was by no means the bulk of Louise-Madeleine's artistic production. Despite the Grolier Club's assertion in its oft-cited exhibition and catalogue of prints by women in 1901 that she was an engraver 'mostly after the works of her noted son', only four such works have been found or recorded.²⁶ Her career thus challenges the historical assumption that women printmakers only produced or finished plates after their male relatives. In fact, collaborative and supportive working relationships between designers and engravers existed between members of this family outside gendered hierarchies. For example, in 1746, Cochin *le père* translated several of Cochin *le jeune's* watercolours of the marital celebrations of Louis, Dauphin of France, into prints.

Two of the Hémery sisters, like the Horthemels, married into artistic families where their skills in printmaking were put to use.²⁷ Thérèse-Éléonore married engraver Charles-Louis Lingée with whom she had at least five children. She continued to produce prints from the 1770s through to the 1789 French Revolution despite the demands of marriage and child-rearing. She often signed her work 'Madame Lingée', published prints through the family workshop, and, very occasionally, reproduced the designs of her husband. One of her most ambitious works in scale and technique – a chalk-manner engraving featuring the bust of the Apollo Belvedere – is a collaboration between husband and wife, signed 'dessiné

²⁵ Though not digitised, a catalogue reference for this work can be found at 'Joannes Soanen Episcopus Senecensis ...' *BnF Catalogue général*, 5 January 2022; catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb445677807.

²⁶ See Edwards, 'Les Sœurs Horthemels', vol. II.

²⁷ Louise-Rosalie is the only Hémery sister that seems to have quit engraving after 1777; as of yet, no marriage certificate has been found.

par C. L. Lingée' and 'Gravé par Mme Lingée son Epouse'.²⁸ Still, the bulk of Thérèse-Éléonore's oeuvre was unrelated to that of her husband. Even their penchants for subject matter and techniques were different: Thérèse-Éléonore tended to focus on portraiture, figure studies, and arabesques while Charles-Louis's interests were somewhat more expansive, featuring more genre scenes and book illustration. Thérèse-Éléonore was also more experimental in her exploration of printmaking techniques while Charles-Louis stuck primarily to etching and engraving. And while Thérèse-Éléonore occasionally reproduced her spouse's designs, Charles-Louis engraved a plate after a portrait designed 'ad vivum [from life]' by his daughter: a revolution-era print titled *Victime de la Calomnie Gertrude*.²⁹

Marguerite Hémerly had a more collaborative relationship to her husband's artistic pursuits than her sister, demonstrating the variety of career paths and opportunities available to *graveuses* after marriage. Both Marguerite and her husband, engraver Nicolas Ponce, practised similar techniques (etching) and subject matter and even embarked on the same projects, particularly during the 1770s and 1780s. Ponce had trained in the ateliers of Étienne Fessard and Nicolas De Launay before joining a collaborative circle of designers and etchers with whom he became close friends, including Clément-Pierre Marillier.³⁰ Marillier employed both Ponce and his wife to reproduce his designs for book illustrations alongside other well-known etchers. Though most often credited simply as 'Madame Ponce' upon her plates, Marguerite's signature asserted her professional connection to her husband (whose work appeared alongside hers) as well as to the artistic lineage and circle his name invoked.

Several members of a single printmaking family were often employed for the same projects, such as large *recueils* that required the hands of many designers, engravers, and printers. For female engravers who faced difficulties achieving such commissions on their own, these projects served as unique opportunities to highlight their talents and further their careers.

²⁸ This image has not been digitised; it was seen and photographed during archival research at the BnF in Paris in 2019, where new attribution from Thérèse-Éléonore to her daughter, Marguerite, was discovered. The work can be found in the following album: BnF, Estampes et photographie, EF-181-FOL.

²⁹ Though not digitised, a catalogue reference for this work can be found at 'Victime de la Calomnie Gertrude', *BnF Catalogue général*, 5 January 2022, catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb402564650. See also J. Renouvier, *Histoire de l'art pendant la Révolution . . . Considéré principalement dans les estampes* (Paris: Veuve Jules Renouard, 1863), 295.

³⁰ R. Portalis and H. Béraldi, *Les Graveurs du Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 3 vols. (Paris: D. Morgand and C. Fatout, 1880–1882), vol. 3, pt. 1, 325.

In 1781, for example, the newlywed Thérèse-Éléonore and Charles-Louis Lingée, Marguerite Hémary and her husband Nicolas Ponce, and their brother Antoine-François Hémary all contributed plates to the illustrious *Cabinet Poullain*, a series of 120 prints representing a large collection of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish masters. The project was executed under the direction of printseller and publisher, Pierre-François Basan.³¹ Of the three siblings, Thérèse-Éléonore's contribution was by far the most accomplished: her luxurious stipple engravings – with their soft edges, rounded forms, and subtle tone variations – stand in contrast to the somewhat grotesque figures found in her brother's engravings and the clunky perspective of her sister's. Her plate after a painting by Frans van Mieris the Elder – featuring a female *Allegory of Art* holding a painter's palette, statuette, and theatrical mask (Figure 6.1) – was a particularly important work within the *Cabinet Poullain* and was referenced within the publication's frontispiece, designed by painter and prominent art dealer, Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Le Brun. The frontispiece depicts the same feminised allegory of 'Painting' with palette and theatrical mask sitting in a room displaying Poullain's collection. Though similar allegorical representations occasionally spearheaded such publications, Le Brun was the previous owner of the original *Allegory of Art* by van Mieris and was thus likely drawing upon its themes in his design; he was also no stranger to the merits of *real* women in the arts as the husband to the soon-to-be *académicienne* and painter to Marie Antoinette, Élisabeth-Vigée Le Brun. Though perhaps fitting considering the painting's subject matter, that Basan entrusted the reproduction of *Allegory of Art* to a female artist is more a testament to her skill as an engraver of crayon-manner prints (she was the sole artist to employ the technique in the entire publication) as well as an interpreter of masters of the Dutch Golden Age. The print also embodied the network of professional relationships underlying the *Cabinet Poullain* – from Poullain as collector, to Basan as publisher, to Le Brun as the prior owner of the painting, and to Thérèse-Éléonore as the engraver – thus legitimising the latter's identity as a professional artist situated firmly within such networks. Thérèse-Éléonore's contributions to the *Cabinet Poullain* and association with the professionals involved catapulted her career: she was

³¹ Antoine Poullain, the 'Receveur Général des Domaines du Roi', died in 1780. A copy of the *Cabinet Poullain* can be found at the Philadelphia Museum of Art Library. See 'Collection de cent-vingt estampes, gravées d'après les tableaux & dessins qui composent le cabinet de M. Poullain. ...' *Internet Archive*, 5 January 2022, archive.org/details/codcentoopoull/page/n4/mode/2up.



Figure 6.1 Thérèse-Éléonore Hémary, *femme Lingée* (French, 1753–after 1814) after Frans van Mieris the Elder (Dutch, 1689–1763), Plate 59, *Allegory of Art* in *Collection de cent-vingt estampes, gravées d'après les tableaux & dessins qui composoient le Cabinet de M. Poullain*, c. 1781.

Etching, 19 × 13 cm. British Museum, London.

accepted to the *Académie de peinture et de sculpture* in Marseille just four years after the ambitious publication.³² Basan would later laud the *graveuse* in his *Dictionnaire des graveurs anciens et modernes* (1791) as an artist who ‘superiorly engraved in crayon manner’, particularly for her works featured in the *Cabinet Poullain*.³³

³² E. Parrocel, *Histoire documentaire de l'Académie de peinture et de sculpture de Marseille*, vol. II (1890), 283–285.

³³ Basan, ‘Supplément’, in *Dictionnaire des graveurs anciens et modernes depuis l'origine de la gravure* (Brussels: Chez Ermens, 1791), 89.

A Career of Their Own: Personal Connections and Professional Collaborations Outside of the Familial Atelier

In eighteenth-century France, engravers who were *not* members of the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* in Paris – men and women – were typically engaged in projects originating from one of four spheres of professional communities: first, that of the designers, printers, and publishers of the rue Saint-Jacques (and beyond) who often belonged to the Parisian artists' guild; second, the community of fine-art collectors who sought to reproduce their collections in print; third, the designers and painters of the *Académie royale* who similarly engaged engravers to reproduce and disseminate their work; and finally, other government-run institutions, such as the *Académie des sciences* and the fine-arts academies of the provinces outside of Paris, which often employed engravers for various technical and artistic commissions. The Horthemels and Hémery sisters participated in all four of these spheres to varying degree. Though they were not official members of the *Académie royale* – an institution that only accepted four female members at any given time – the familial and community circumstances of the printmaking trade ensured continued work and, occasionally, provided access to institutions that were otherwise closed to them.

Despite their own lack of membership, the professional networks of the Horthemels sisters included personal ties to the artists of the *Académie royale*. Premier portrait painter to the King, Hyacinthe Rigaud, for example, was both the godfather of Marie-Anne Hyacinthe and commissioner of the printed portrait that can be most clearly attributed to the *graveuse*.³⁴ Scholars such as James-Sarazin and Turner Edwards have argued that she utilised her godfather's name as a claim of artistic legitimacy: her signature, 'Marie *Hyacinthe* Horthemels sculpsit', listed underneath her printed portrait of Cardinal de Bissy after Rigaud's painting, links the original painting/painter and print/engraver while also guaranteeing the fidelity and quality of the reproductive work.³⁵ Rigaud was not the only artist connected to the *Académie royale* with a close professional *and* personal connection to the Horthemels sisters – nor was he of the highest rank. Antoine Coypel, rector of the *Académie*, was present at the marriage between Marie-Anne Hyacinthe and Nicolas-Henri Tardieu just before his

³⁴ Edwards, 'Les Sœurs Horthemels', vol. II, 209.

³⁵ Ibid; see also A. James-Sarazin, *Hyacinthe Rigaud, 1659–1743* (Dijon: Faton, 2016). See British Museum (hereafter BM) 1927,0518.111.

promotion to Director and First Painter to the King. As Edwards has shown in his 2019 thesis, the close relationship between the Horthemels and the Coypel clan is reflected not only in the prints by Tardieu after Coypel, but also by the role that Louise-Madeleine Horthemels played in the dissemination of the works of Coypel's son.³⁶ Furthermore, the presence of prints after another academy member in the oeuvre of Louise-Madeleine – that of Nicolas Lancret – is no coincidence: Lancret had a close personal relationship to the family as well, serving as godfather to Louise-Madeleine's daughter.

The Horthemels sisters were intimately linked – both personally and professionally – to those who set the tone for the fine arts in eighteenth-century Paris: Rigaud, Coypel, Lancret, etc. These *académiciens* recognised the importance of engraving in the dissemination of their works and utilised family members and friends of *both* sexes to aid their artistic endeavours. Though the Horthemels sisters were not given academic membership, they nevertheless played important roles in the promotion of Academy members' work and commercial distribution of their designs. By proudly signing their prints they created visual and textual connections between themselves and the work of the members of the Academy. Such projects suggest that female intaglio engravers could achieve prestigious commissions and build important professional relationships despite their lack of membership of the most well-respected institution for the arts in France.

It is important to remember that membership to the Parisian *Académie royale* was not the only barometer of an engraver's professional reputation and skill. Though they did not carry the same prestige as the famous Parisian institution, the provincial fine-arts academies offered desirable professional opportunities for artists, such as the exhibition of their work and, thus, commissions and financial benefits from collectors and connoisseurs. The provincial academies and those abroad were also more open to those who could not achieve membership in the country's capital, including women. It has often been assumed that women who achieved positions within these academies did so via a male relative who, upon his own acceptance, put in a good word. This was not the case for Thérèse-Éléonore Hémery, who was accepted to the *Académie de peinture et de sculpture* in Marseille in 1785, one year before her brother, Antoine-François, and three years before her brother-in-law, Nicolas Ponce.³⁷ Though she likely did not attend classes

³⁶ Edwards, 'Les Sœurs Horthemels', vol. 1, 57.

³⁷ E. Parrocel, *Histoire documentaire de l'Académie de peinture et de sculpture de Marseille*, vol. II (1890), 283–285.

as a student at the academy, nor was she accepted to teach or hold a studio within its confines, Thérèse-Éléonore was accepted as an *associé agréé*, a class of professional artists considered separate from honorary amateurs.³⁸ Thérèse-Éléonore was still living and working in Paris in 1785 and had sent in several examples of her work to the Academy in Marseille. The story of her acceptance – transcribed via letters between Thérèse-Éléonore and the Académie’s secretary, Monsieur Moulinneuf – provides unequivocal evidence that she pursued career distinctions in her own right and affirms the role of professional networks unrelated to the familial atelier on the careers of eighteenth-century *graveuses en taille-douce*.³⁹

According to the letters, Thérèse-Éléonore had been recommended for membership by the Marseille academy’s own director (and painter to the King), Jean-Jacques Bachelier. Moulinneuf joined Bachelier in his admiration of Thérèse-Éléonore’s work and requested that the director sign her certificate of acceptance before personally handing it to her, thus suggesting a professional relationship or friendship between the two. Bachelier was a member of the *Académie royale* in Paris and professor at a drawing school there. He seems to have been invested in Thérèse-Éléonore’s career, but he was also interested in the education of young women more generally. In 1789, Bachelier published his *Mémoire sur l’éducation des filles* in which he proposed the establishment of an institute – capable of accommodating 200 girls at the expense of the nation – where they could acquire ‘useful knowledge relating to the various professions they could take up’, particularly ‘those of all works which have the arts as their object and of which drawing is the basis’.⁴⁰ Perhaps it was because of Thérèse-Éléonore’s proficiency in creating crayon-manner prints used for art students’ study of *dessin* that the two struck a professional connection that ultimately led to her acceptance to the Marseille academy.

To end this chapter, it is important to note that the career of a *graveuse* was not entirely dictated by the outer guidance and opportunities awarded via her personal and professional relationships; often, these women exercised independent ambition and initiative to ensure their reputations and futures through the careful navigation of these networks. The letters between Moulinneuf and Thérèse-Éléonore reveal how adept the latter was at securing her membership to the Marseille academy via personal flattery towards both Moulinneuf and the institution. After Moulinneuf

³⁸ Ibid. ³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ J. J. Bachelier, *Mémoire sur l’éducation des filles* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1789). See also A. Lahalle, *Les écoles de dessin au XVIII^e siècle*. My translation.

assures the *graveuse* of the ‘superiority of [her] talents in the art of engraving’ and relays that her works were placed on display in the Académie’s *salon de peinture*, Thérèse-Éléonore replies with the following:

Sir, I am imbued with the kindness and indulgences of the Académie for my feeble talents; the honor she [has] done me by admitting myself into her body will always be present in my memory, and will encourage me to make new efforts to make myself worthy of this flattering distinction; may my zeal and my projects deserve the suffrages of the Académie! Be my interpreter to her. Words fail me to express all the feelings with which I am affected. . . . the diploma I received from [Bachelier] is the crowning achievement of my happiness and satisfies my dearest ambition. I beg you to solicit the Académie for me to allow me to pay tribute to it [by sending] works that I will do subsequently, and to accept the respectful gratitude with which I received its benefits.⁴¹

Amongst the conventional flatteries and adulations, Thérèse-Éléonore makes clear her own professional ambitions – to become a member of the Académie, to receive her diploma, and to continue exhibiting work – all of which are separate from the careers of her husband or brother-in-law. According to Moulinneuf’s reply a month later, Thérèse-Éléonore’s suggestion to send more prints ‘to pay tribute’ to the Marseille academy was met with ‘the greatest satisfaction’, and the secretary proclaimed that her work would remain on display in the *salon de peinture* for the pleasure of artists and connoisseurs alike.⁴² The *graveuse* again replied with the ‘deepest gratitude’ and promised to continue producing work for the Académie: ‘It is up to me to make new efforts to make me worthy of all the interest which the Académie wishes to honor me.’ Thérèse-Éléonore’s willingness to promptly fulfil her duties as an *associé agréé* set quite an example: when her brother Antoine-François attempted to apply to the Marseille academy in 1786, he was chastised by Moulinneuf for not sending in several proofs of his work like his sister, an ‘aimable and worthy artist’ whose professional behaviour should be emulated.⁴³ On her part, Thérèse-Éléonore continued to draw an association between herself and the Marseille academy by signing future prints, ‘Gravé par Mme Lingée de l’Académie Royale de Marseille’ – a mark of her professional ambitions that are still visible today, tucked within the portfolios and illustrated books found within our most revered archives.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Parrocel, *Histoire documentaire*, 284. My translation. ⁴² Ibid. ⁴³ Ibid., 262–263.

⁴⁴ See, for example, her portraits of the members of the *Société académique des Enfants d’Apollon*, such as that of Mandini (BM 1944,1014.323) and Moline (BM 1983,U.2803).

Conclusion

By utilising an evidence-based approach to compare, contrast, and contextualise the Horthemels and Hémery sisters' training, familial collaborations, and professional achievements, I have demonstrated the variety of individual paths available to eighteenth-century *graveuses en taille-douce*, thus calling into question the enforcement of any unified female identity or group consciousness. Though it is important to attend to the obstacles (or opportunities) these artists may have faced due to their gender, the aim of this chapter was not to present the Horthemels or Hémery sisters as victims *or* heroines of their circumstances. When it came to the eighteenth-century *graveuse en taille-douce* the legitimacy of their work was not necessarily based on their status as exceptions to their sex; nor was it primarily due to their participation in traditional artistic modes of 'genius' or inventiveness. Above all, a series of personal and professional networks of friends, family, and community members connected the Horthemels and Hémery sisters to career opportunities and avenues of success; but it was ultimately the sisters themselves who navigated these networks to seek training, support the family workshop, and embark on careers of their own.