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A

**CONTRIBUTION OF *JAPONISME* TO THE AESTHETIC OF
THE FRENCH NATURALIST NOVEL: A STUDY OF SELECTED
WORKS OF THE GONCOURTS, ZOLA AND HUYSMANS**

by

SUSAN MIRANDA BARROW

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York**

2000

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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PREFACE

FRENCH NATURALISM'S EMBRACE OF JAPAN AS AN *OUVERTURE AU MONDE*

Throughout history, creativity and innovation in all forms of art have been fueled by communication and convergence of ideas across barriers of culture, nationality and language. French literature from the Middle Ages to the present day provides compelling examples of the powerful stimulus provided by the 'Other' to the essayist, novelist and poet. At the end of the 20th century, various sectarian ideologies throughout the globe seek to undermine cross-cultural ventures promoting the exchange of ideas between East and West, Orient and Occident, threatening to stifle this wellspring of creativity in the arts.

At this juncture it is appropriate to recognize the vital role of the Naturalists, French literary innovators of the latter half of the nineteenth century who responded to the attraction of Japanese culture, and as a result of this foreign stimulus forged a new vision and revolutionary interpretation of modern life in fiction. This study of three major authors (in emulation of the triptych format employed by the *ukiyo-e* printmakers of Japan) will focus on the protagonists of the Naturalist movement: the Goncourt brothers as initiators, Zola, who began his career as their

acolyte, and Huysmans, representative of the new directions of Naturalism's younger generation.

These *hommes de lettres* were all outstanding connoisseurs of art who knew and appreciated the art and culture of Japan propagated by the cult of *japonisme*. The qualities of *japonisme* in Naturalist fiction extend far beyond the picturesque description of oriental objets d'art as an enhancement of decor. As in the paintings of their contemporaries the Impressionists, Naturalist writers have a predilection for a quotidien milieu presented with eccentric compositional devices, effects *mise en relief* by the powerful presence of color and light. Particularly in the case of the Goncourts and Zola, their works exhibit a re-evaluation of the relationship between humankind and Nature which is related to the importance of the natural world in the Japanese tradition. Some of the most striking visual evocations of Naturalist writing stem from a profound understanding and appreciation of Japanese *ukiyo-e* genre prints and other art forms, an influence shared with the community of New Painters who had absorbed the same example. The consciousness of the Naturalist writer thus reflects an intimate contact with and reinterpretation of an oriental point of view, a decisive encounter resulting in the revitalization of western literature.

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My first encounter with the Graduate Center was as an auditor of Professor Bettina Knapp's course on The Artist and the Writer, an experience which inspired the decision to pursue the Ph.D. in French and ultimately my choice of dissertation topic. It is a great privilege to be able to draw upon Professor Knapp's exceptionally caring guidance and the scope of her expertise.

I am grateful to Professors Mary Ann Caws and John Kneller of the Henri Peyre Institute of the Humanities for the 1997 Research Travel Award to France and to the CUNY Academy of the Arts and Sciences for the 1997-1998 Lane Cooper Fellowship, grants which were instrumental in the steady progress of the dissertation process. My sincere appreciation is

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Thanks also to the MOA Foundation, affiliated with the MOA Museum of Art, Atami, Japan, for the opportunity to further knowledge and appreciation of Japanese art and culture throughout the course of my long-term employment at the New York branch office.

On a more personal note, this work is dedicated to S.S. and to S. with the *souvenir affectueux* of the author.

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INTRODUCTION

JAPONISME IN ART AND LITERATURE

“Ç’a été d’abord quelques originaux comme mon frère et moi, puis Baudelaire, puis Villot, puis Burty...puis à notre suite, la bande des peintres fantaisistes, enfin, des hommes et femmes du monde qui ont la prétention d’être des *natures artistiques*.”ⁱ[sic] Goncourt Journal, March 31, 1875, on the origins of *japonisme*.

“*Japonaiserie for ever*”ⁱⁱ[sic] declared novelist Edmond de Goncourt in an August 1867 letter to his close friend Philippe Burty, expressing anticipation at viewing the Japanese section at the upcoming Paris Exposition Universelle.ⁱⁱ Five years later, it was Burty, Parisian critic and *amateur des arts*, who coined the term “*japonisme*” for a series of articles on Japanese customs in La Renaissance Littéraire et Artistique.ⁱⁱⁱ The term replaced the somewhat pejorative term “*japonaiserie*” to describe the vogue among his peers for the art of Nippon.

In its primary stages, *japonisme* was the domain of an elite coterie of artists, *littérateurs*, *amateurs des arts* and other discerning collectors, many of whom first encountered Japanese wood block prints and objets d’art in Parisian curio shops dealing in oriental imports in the early 1860’s.

Notable initiates in literary circles were Baudelaire, Champfleury, the Goncourts and Zola. In the field of fine arts the engraver Félix Bracquemond, Manet, Monet, Degas and Whistler were among the first to respond to the Japanese aesthetic.^{iv} From the outset, *japonisme* was synonymous with a progressive, even revolutionary approach to the arts. An exclusive club, the *Jin-glar Society* (founded 1867) provided a forum for prominent *japonistes* to indulge an appreciation of Japanese culture in all its manifestations as they to dined *à la japonaise*. (Because of its members' political ideology, the *Jin-glar Society* has been described as a 'front' for pro-Republican political activists in a recent article.^v)

From 1878-1900, *japonisme* gradually integrated itself into the current of mass taste, tinting European painting, decorative and graphic arts and fashion with a shade of exoticism through the birth of Art Nouveau at the turn of the century. The multifaceted phenomenon of *japonisme* was reinforced by well-publicized and critically-acclaimed presentations of Japanese arts and culture at the Paris Expositions Universelles of 1867, 1878, 1889 and 1900, (figs. 1-2) and World's Fairs held in other capitals such as Vienna and London. *Japonisme* was an international movement which extended to Victorian America, especially after the unprecedented sensation produced by the Japanese exhibits at the

Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876.^{vi} Nevertheless, *japonisme* is considered to have stimulated its strongest and most original creative expressions in the art and literature of France.

“*Japonaiserie*,” the enthusiasm for the arts of Nippon, is often approached as the continuation of the Rococo trend of *chinoiserie*, the eighteenth century aristocratic taste for the acquisition and display of *articles de luxe* imported from the Orient. In France, these rarities were incorporated into the opulent decorative arts of the Louis XIV and XV periods. Among the most striking of these hybrid objects are blanc de chine and celadon Chinese porcelains mounted on ornate gilt bronze ormolu bases, and furniture such as the *commode bombée*, a chest of drawers veneered with Japanese or Chinese lacquer panels. (fig. 3)

Oriental objects inspired French craftsmen to produce works reflecting the *engouement* for *chinoiserie* of their eighteenth century patrons. A case in point is the Prince de Condé’s collection of rare *kakiemon* porcelains from Japan, decorated in delicate enamel colors on a milky-white glaze. These rarities served as prototypes at the Prince’s Chantilly ceramics factory from 1725-1740.^{vii} (fig. 4) The precious soft-paste Chantilly porcelains approximating Japanese models provide a

precedent for the Goncourt's "marriage" of Japanese art and French rococco manifestations of the *siècle des lumières*. It is this synthesis which provides the basis for their contribution to the evolution of aesthetics in the latter half of the nineteenth century in French art and literature.

Japonisme, the nineteenth century cult of Japanese culture in France, was a decidedly bourgeois phenomenon: part of the excitement of the discovery of Japanese art in the early 1860's was the affordability, even to impecunious poets such as Baudelaire, of these intriguing prints, lacquers, ceramics, carved ivories and other works by as-yet unknown artists. It is estimated that in *japonisme*'s early years a single color woodblock print cost between two and five francs.^{viii} Edmond de Goncourt remarked in his Journal that objects of similar finesse by a European hand would be much costlier, a justification for his investment.^{ix}

Vast quantities of "japonaiseries" of varying quality were imported and dispersed in France between 1860 and 1900. In his published memoir, Notes d'un Bibeloteur au Japon (1883) Parisian merchant Philippe Sichel recalls returning from his 1874 buying trip with one hundred fifty crates of some five thousand objects, all rapidly distributed amongst an eager clientele of writers, painters, industrialists and other *amateurs*. Tadamas

Hayashi, Japanese dealer resident in Paris from 1878-1901 is said to have imported some 160,000 ukiyo-e prints for his discerning clientele, such as Monet and the Goncourts.^x Serious studies on Japanese art began to be published in France by the early 1880's, as growth of connoisseurship contributed to a rise in price and demand.

Perceptive avant-garde critics of the latter half of the nineteenth century, notably Zacharie Astruc, Théodore Duret, Louis Gonse and Roger Marx, noted the pervasive imprint of the art of Japan--especially *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints--on the development of the Impressionist and modern schools of painting from the early 1860's. The impact of Japan was hailed as "meteoric," as significant as the heritage of the art of Greece and Rome on the development of the European Renaissance. The Japanese influence, wrote Louis Gonse, associate of the Goncourts, "...nous a donné la pratique des tons clairs, le goût des simplifications, la hardiesse de certaines coupures absolument inédites dans la mise en page des tableaux."^{xi}

In his 1891 article "Sur le rôle et l'influence des arts de l'Extrême Orient et du Japon" dedicated to E. de Goncourt, Roger Marx illustrates the debt the Western painter and printmaker owes to the Japanese model:

...Partout le souvenir du Nippon est présent...[dans]...le sentiment de l'élégance par instants hiératique des attitudes féminines, la

prédilection par le fait signifié par le geste, certain mode de perspective où la nature paraît embrassée à vol d'oiseau, comme en une vue cavalière, enfin l'ambition de rendre les groupes, l'amas compact des foules, la houle humaine avec l'invraisemblable grandeur des premiers plans (pourtant certifiée exacte par la photographie), n'est-ce pas chez les japonais qu'il convient de chercher l'origine? Dites encore si leurs kakemonos, leurs estampes, leurs albums n'ont pas obligé à mieux priser la puissance de l'expressivité du trait, de la silhouette, la saveur des indications simplifiées, réduites à l'essentiel, s'ils n'ont pas avivé la conscience de tout ce que peut enfermer de vie de réalité et de rêve, la cernée rapide d'un contour...^{xiii}

Even though Marx refers in his brilliant text to the manifestations of *japonisme* in the visual arts, there is certainly an allusion or *clin d'oeil* to the literary innovations of Goncourt and other proponents of a new aesthetic in the arts.

Although the connection between *japonisme* and new developments in painting during the second half of the nineteenth century seemed self-evident to contemporary critics, this connection took many decades to be re-established in twentieth century art history. The art historian Henri Focillon, specialist in medieval art, published a brief summary on L'Estampe Japonaise et la Peinture en Occident in 1921, stressing the importance of this episode in the long history of cultural exchange between Occident and Orient. Rewald's classic History of Impressionism (1947) includes a brief account of Bracquemond's 1856 'discovery' of an album by

Hokusai in Paris, resuming the impact of *japonisme* on various painters in several paragraphs.^{xiii} Yvonne Thirion's thesis at the Ecole du Louvre, Influence of the Japanese Print on French Painting of the latter half of the XIXth Century (1946), may be considered a starting point in modern scholarship of this phenomenon. According to Weisberg, it was the 1972 exhibition on cross-cultural influences in art and music held at the Munich Olympic Games which provided an impetus to modern *Japonisme* studies.^{xiv} The 1975 exhibition *Japonisme: Japanese Influence on French Art 1854-1910* organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art was a pioneering American contribution to the field, with the publication of Colta Ives' Great Wave: Influence of Japanese woodcuts on French Prints^{xv} of the preceding year.

International studies on the theme of the influence of Japanese art on the development of 19th and 20th century western visual arts reached a peak in the 1980's, with an influx of grants from Japanese sources. International museum exhibitions, in particular the 1988 *Japonisme* exhibition shown in Paris and Tokyo, with numerous publications, dissertations and scholarly conferences of subsequent years, have provided a solid documentation for the study of *japonisme* in fine and decorative arts, photography and architecture. Weisberg's extensive bibliography on

the subject, published in 1990 by the *International Center for Japonisme*^{xvi} at Rutgers University provides a solid foundation for the discipline. The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Museum at Rutgers houses this Center dedicated to the study of *japonisme* and its influence on the fine and decorative arts in Europe and the United States.

Evidence of *japonisme* in western painting and visual arts would seem as tangible as dated canvases from 1863 to the 1880's incorporating Japanese fans, robes, porcelains and prints by Whistler, Manet, Monet, Tissot, Van Gogh and other artists. However, despite these explicit manifestations, there is no critical consensus regarding the degree or importance of the Japanese influence on subject matter, composition, vantage point, format, palette and other aspects of European painting during the second half of the nineteenth century. One area of contention among art historians concerns the extent of the impact of photography versus the woodblock print on the development of new visual strategies; a case in point is Degas.^{xvii} Nonetheless, as important recent exhibitions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Origins of Impressionism (1994) have made clear, the history of western painting after 1800 cannot be written without taking into consideration the fascination provoked by the discovery by European artists of the visual and tactile qualities of the

ukiyo-e color woodblock print and sundry objets d'art in ivory, metal and lacquer fashioned by Japanese craftsmen.

The relationship between *Japonisme* and literature remains a less-explored territory, as evidence of its existence is more difficult to pinpoint and document than in the visual arts. However, the close alliance between artists and writers which characterizes this period--the friendship of Zola and Manet serving as a prime example--produced a dynamic exchange of ideas between the overlapping spheres of the pen and the brush. Pierre Sabatier's classic L'Esthétique des Goncourt, published after the First World War, is a brilliant and convincing study of the brothers' profound *japonisme*, emphasizing the pervasive influence of the Goncourts' innovations on a generation of French writers.^{xviii} Among literary figures who frequented the Goncourt grenier--eclectically decorated in tasteful mix of the French eighteenth century and japonaiserie--were Zola, Daudet, Huysmans, Maupassant, and Mallarmé.

In 1927 American scholar William Leonard Schwartz published a well-researched study of The Imaginative Interpretation of the Far East in Modern French Literature 1800-1925.^{xix} The author is largely concerned with *explicit* mention of Japanese objects or subject matter in novels and

poetry as illustrations of *japonisme*. A meticulous collection of prose similes by Goncourt, Maupassant, Huysmans and Proust indicates these authors' assimilation of the visual strategies and techniques of Japanese painting, calligraphy and objets d'art. Schwartz notes this excerpt from Edmond de Goncourt's Les Frères Zemganno (1879), "...les rondes ombres des sièges d'innombrables chaises de fer, projetaient, sur le sol mouillé, l'apparence d'une de ces inquiétantes légions de crabes escalant le bas d'une page d'un album japonais."^{xx}

The influence of oriental literary forms, such as the haiku, on the development of French poetry of the early twentieth century is explored in depth. Schwartz' pioneering work provides an important precedent for all subsequent writers on the subject of *japonisme* in French culture. Indeed, he concludes the chapter on the Goncourts with the following key point:

It may therefore be conceded that just as the Japanese color-print furnished a 'new language' to the French painters, so acquaintance with Japanese art in the eighties revived for Europe the feeling for nature and the power to represent reality. Above all, Japanese art has led to a general 'initiation à l'esthétique de l'étrange' which has changed the old laws of beauty, taught a new kind composition, and favored such bold experiments in literature and art as 'Naturalism' and Impressionism. It may be only a coincidence, but the reader has seen in the preceding pages that all the men who made nineteenth century French literature different from that of the classical period, also manifested an interest in the Far East or professed admiration for its art. ^{xxi}

The relationship between key scenes in Zola's novels and paintings by Impressionist painters such as Degas and Manet has been noted by Joy Newton and other scholars since the 1960's. However, these articles neglect to point out that it was Japanese art which provided the impetus for the Impressionists' innovative way of seeing and depicting reality echoed in literary works of the period. More recently French scholars Patricia Carles and Béatrice Desgranges have published studies on aspects of Zola's *japonisme* in the Rougon-Macquart cycle.^{xxii} For example, they contend that *japonisme* pervades La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret (1875), in which the intimate relation of humankind to the natural world is akin to the pantheistic conception of the Japanese Shinto tradition. It is also asserted that the episode of the brawl between Gervaise and the neighborhood women of the *lavoir* in l'Assommoir was inspired by Kiyonaga's well-known woodblock print of women cavorting in a bath house!

Japonisme, a theme which developed in the 1870's, continues to be a topic in French literary discourse a hundred years later. Roland Barthes's Empire des Signes (1970) provides evidence for the continued fascination of the modern intellectual with Japanese prototypes. According to the established schema/topos the westerner finds inspiration and/or

corroboration of his theories in the course of the encounter with oriental structures. “L’auteur n’a jamais, en aucun sens, photographié le Japon. Ce serait plutôt le contraire: le Japon l’a étoilé d’éclairs multiples, ou mieux encore: le Japon l’a mis en situation d’écriture,” writes Barthes.^{xxiii} Denise Brahimi’s Un Aller/Retour pour Cipango. Essai sur les Paradoxes du Japonisme (1992) reflects on the continuity of the potent East-West exchange in French literature and social sciences from the nineteenth century to the present. Michel Butor’s Le Japon de la France. un rêve à l’ancre (1995) provides further evidence of the vitality of this cross-cultural phenomenon. Butor’s series of vignettes summarizing the view of Japan in selected works by Voltaire, Goncourt, Zola, Huysmans, Loti, Claudel, Verne, Van Gogh and Barthes is interwoven with reminiscences of his own initiative voyage to Asia, interspersed with text from classic Noh theatre dramas.

**JAPONISME AND NATURALISM AS ASPECTS OF ONE AESTHETIC:
EDMOND DE GONCOURT'S STUDIES OF UTAMARO AND HOKUSAI**

The Goncourts leave a far greater legacy for literature than co-authorship of the candid volumes of their Journal: Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire, and foundation of the *Académie* and *Prix Goncourt*. Edmond (1822-1896) and his brother Jules (1828-1870), cultivated a passionate relationship with the visual and decorative arts, which began with their connoisseurship of the French *grand siècle* and later embraced the arts of Japan. This passion extended to a shared devotion to literary creation, a field in which the brothers endeavored to forge a new aesthetic in fiction beyond the models of post-Romanticism. With the publication of Soeur Philomene (1861) and Germinie Lacerteux (1864-65), the Goncourts claimed precedence as originators of the Naturalist novel, typically featuring subject matter documenting the existence of the lower classes, described in their vividly 'impressionist' *style artiste*. The distinction of "founder of Naturalism" would later be disputed with Emile Zola, who admired and supported the work of the two brothers prior to their initial meeting in 1868.

Edmond, with acute awareness of the significance for posterity of the Goncourts' literary and aesthetic achievements, quotes Jules' assessment of these accomplishments in the Preface to his novel Chérie (1884):

Or la recherche du vrai en littérature, la résurrection de l'art du dix-huitième siècle, la victoire du *japonisme*. . . ce sont les trois grands mouvements littéraires et artistiques de la seconde moitié du dix-neuvième siècle...et nous les aurons menés, ces trois mouvements...nous pauvres obscurs. ^{xxiv}

It may be argued from a current critical perspective that the most original and prescient contribution of the Goncourts is their early espousal of the importance of the aesthetic of Japan, and the recognition of the ways in which it was destined to affect the course of modernism in the West. Klaus Berger's authoritative *Japonisme in Western Painting* opens with Goncourt's prophetic and provocative assertion:

When I said that *Japonisme* was in the process of revolutionizing the vision of European peoples, I meant that *Japonisme* brought to Europe a new sense of color, a new decorative system, and if you like, a poetic imagination in the invention of the objet d'art which never existed in even the most perfect Medieval or Renaissance pieces. ^{xxv} [quoted in English]

Edmond first encountered Japanese prints circa 1860 in specialized Parisian shops such as *La Porte Chinoise* or *la Boutique Desoye*. In a Journal entry of that year, it is asserted that only he had the discernment to purchase one of the first albums of Japanese prints known in Paris! Although this grandiose claim has been dismissed by art historians, citing

the existence of such albums in France at a much earlier date, Edmond was cognizant of the far-reaching implications of this art form for the West. In addition to prodigious activity as a collector--the posthumous sale of his *japonaiseries* was a six-day event--Goncourt served as a virtual spokesman for *japonisme* in the arts. (fig. 5-6-7) The prominent dealer Madame Desoye designated him, “le premier et le plus illustre inventeur de l’art japonais en France.”^{xxvi}

Towards the end of a multifaceted career--as artist, journalist, historian, novelist, playwright and collector--Edmond embarked on a pioneering and ambitious project, a series of five monographs on the arts of Nippon. During his lifetime he managed to complete extraordinary studies of two exemplary artists of the *ukiyo-e* school of the Edo period (1615-1868), Utamaro and Hokusai. (Hiroshige, the master of landscape, received less critical attention in the nineteenth century, as he was considered a follower of Hokusai.) Published by Charpentier, Goncourt’s monographs on Utamaro (1891) and Hokusai (1896) were the first biographies of nonwestern artists to appear in France. It is significant that Charpentier, successful publisher of the Naturalist authors, was a prominent member of the circle of *japonistes*.

Ukiyo-e translates literally from the Japanese as “pictures of the floating world,” a phrase which also implies the Buddhist concept of melancholy inspired by the transient nature of existence. Goncourt defines *ukiyo-e* as “L’École de la vie” in the text of Utamaro. These genre studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were inexpensively-produced woodblock prints, generally produced in large editions. The prints, manifestations of the popular culture of the capital Edo[present-day Tokyo], depict Kabuki actors in their roles, notorious courtesans, scenes of daily living and ephemeral events. Europeans of Goncourt’s time were also appreciative of paintings on silk (*kakemono*) and delicately-hued limited edition prints (*surimono*) produced by the *ukiyo-e* masters. In their native land, the popular *ukiyo-e* woodblock print did not receive consideration as a serious art form until almost a century after recognition by western admirers such as Edmond de Goncourt.

Goncourt fully documented the biographies of Utamaro and Hokusai by comparing items in his own collection with the exceptional holdings of Siegfried Bing, Philippe Burty, Théodore Duret, Louis Gonse, Charles Haviland and other well-known Parisian *japonistes*. To supplement previously published material, he requested translations of inscriptions, artists’ prefaces and other primary sources from a close friend, the

Japanese dealer and expert Hayashi. Goncourt's works form the basis for scholarship of the Japanese print: his Hokusai was republished in English translation in 1988, co-authored by the curator of Holland's National Museum of Ethnology, repository of one of Europe's largest holdings of *ukiyo-e* prints. ^{xxvii}

It is fascinating to analyze these pioneering studies of Utamaro and Hokusai in order to understand the author's admiration for the artists and as an expression of his aesthetic principles. As Sabatier points out, there is no distinction between Goncourt the Naturalist author and Goncourt the art historian; the sense of what comprises the elements of beauty and the meaning and function of art are virtually identical in both spheres. One may better appreciate the *japonisme* permeating novels of the Goncourts, notably Manette Salomon and La Fille Elisa, after a careful reading of his sensitive appreciation of the art of the *ukiyo-e* artists.

In vivid word pictures, Goncourt 'illustrates' the images of his beloved prints by masters of the medium; there are no plates in either book except for a late portrait of Hokusai by his daughter. The aesthetic of Japanese art stressing fidelity to Nature as a source of beauty is emulated by the author. The *écriture artiste* formulated by the brothers Goncourt

employs an impressionist, color-laden vocabulary to describe transitory moments of existence. With this sketchy, suggestive prose style Goncourt presents a fleeting image of reality in the same fashion as the *ukiyo-e* printmaker captures a glimpse of the ephemeral ‘floating world;’ in both cases the result is an evocative image of ‘*le monde qui passe.*’

According to the chronological account, Utamaro (1754–1806) began his career as an illustrator of cheaply-printed pulp novels, ‘*les romans jaunes.*’ Later he achieved notoriety for his exquisitely-rendered studies of beautiful women, primarily the exclusive courtesans of the *Maisons Vertes* of Edo’s *quartier réservé*, the Yoshiwara. (fig. 8) Utamaro is admired by Goncourt for originality as initiator of “l’Ecole de la Vie.”

Et l’école que fondait Utamaro était l’école d’un art sortant de la convention, allant au peuple, et apportait la représentation des scènes intimes de la vie vulgaire, dans la réalité des poses, des attitudes, des mouvements, enfin, donnant le spectacle, pour ainsi dire, **photographique** de l’existence intérieure de la femme de L’Empire du lever du Soleil...^{xxviii} (52) [emphasis added]

In his prints, the artist magnifies the smallest moments of the cloistered existence of these women, elevating the courtesan to the rank of princess. Utamaro transforms the repetitive gestures composing the thread of their everyday existence into poetry, by means of his soft tints, imaginative use of texture and sinuous, calligraphic line. The artist achieves

in mastery of the art of the wood block print what Goncourt terms “le sublime de la beauté et du luxe.”

The author discusses the prints as documents of actual events, or as scenes closely observed by the artist, with the exception of images clearly based on historical events and supernatural legends. Goncourt remarks on the unexpected compositions, the striking effects in juxtaposition of figures in full light and in silhouette, bold explorations of shadow, reflection and pattern. He admires Utamaro’s daring choice of subject matter, for example the rare triptych of nude women divers gathering abalone, an image with the power to “*arrête, surprend, étonne.*” (fig. 9) Like the French artist Watteau of Edmond’s beloved 18th century, Utamaro is a master of the subtle gradations of color and qualities of light.

Je ne connais pas...dans aucun pays, d’impressions d’une harmonie aussi délicieusement mourante, et où les colorations semblent faites de ce qui reste de couleur dans le godet d’eau où on a lavé un pinceau, des colorations qui ne sont plus pour ainsi dire des couleurs, mais des nuages qui rappellent des couleurs...(46)

The author appreciates the ‘documentary aspect’ of the artist’s work, revealing to the curious gaze of the viewer the private lives of the subjects observed. He stresses the observation of Utamaro’s teacher that his pupil was a painter who seized the essence of his subject, “Il cherche ainsi à

pénétrer le mystère de la Nature.” As the writer perceptively observes, although Utamaro renders the physiognomy of his women with the conventional shorthand of lines and dashes to indicate facial features, nevertheless they are endowed with a marvelous individuality. Indeed, many are portraits of actual women employed in the various tea houses, identified by name in captions on the face of the print. (fig. 10) In a recent exhibition of Japanese prints at the Harvard University Art Museums, Utamaro was presented as “master psychologist and observer of the feminine condition,” a pertinent appreciation that would apply equally to the founder of the Naturalist school.

Goncourt responds to Utamaro’s *vérisme* in capturing miscellaneous aspects of reality and especially his ability to elicit strong emotions from the viewer, in a privileged glimpse of a hidden universe. The following passage is especially revealing of Goncourt’s enthusiasm for the Japanese artist’s vision:

Et ce n’est pas tout bonnement le ressouvenir, dans un trait spirituel, de l’occupation de la femme, c’est dans sa **réalité absolue** le retracement d’après nature. . . .Et vous avez la Japonaise en tous les mouvements intimes de son corps. . . .vous l’avez enfin la femme en sa grâce languide. . . .regardez ces deux fillettes qui se font des confidences, un bras passé autour du cou, et dont les deux mains libres se joignent devant elles, dans un mouvement de prière; regardez encore, regardez toujours...[emphasis added](35-36)

Goncourt praises in Utamaro's work the very life-like qualities which he sought to develop in his Naturalist novels based on careful observation and documentation of life from a feminine perspective. These perceptions are filtered through his writer's imagination and fantasy, imprinted with his encyclopedic knowledge of art. Like the *ukiyo-e* artist Utamaro, Edmond de Goncourt sought to candidly explore the hidden life of woman, in even the most banal, quotidien aspect of her existence. This intimate scrutiny is highlighted by the sensitive, delicate quality of the *écriture artiste* which captivates readers of the Goncourts' fictional narratives of feminine heroines.

According to the legend recounted to Edmond by Hayashi, Utamaro expired from 'an excess of pleasure' at one of the Yoshiwara *Maisons Vertes* which he had depicted so often in his work.^{xxix} This anecdote may have had a certain resonance for the writer, who rationalized the untimely demise of his brother as a result of exhaustion occasioned by efforts to elaborate the perfectly expressed phrase during their collaborative novel writing sessions. Such are the dangers of a life devoted to art! (In reality, however, Jules' death was due to complications of syphilis, an affliction whose devastating effects on speech and memory are recounted in the Journal.)

It is significant that Edmond de Goncourt's final ouvrage--in a sense, his testament--was devoted to the prolific Japanese artist Hokusai (1760-1849), who at age 75 signed his work with the sobriquet, "le vieil homme fou de dessin." In his Preface to Outamaro,^{xxx} the author had already compared himself to Hokusai at age 70, who at that stage considered himself still progressing towards understanding the 'true nature' of living things. Hokusai's assessment of his talents was well-known to his French admirers: "...à 90 ans je pénétrai le mystère des choses...et quand j'aurai 110 ans, chez moi, soit un point, soit une ligne, tout sera vivant...."^{xxxi} In Goncourt's perception, both he and the Japanese artist were creative, even revolutionary innovators in their respective domains, neither duly appreciated by contemporaries for their contributions.

Hokusai was by far the most celebrated Japanese artist amongst European connoisseurs of the nineteenth century. He had even sold some works to Dutch traders and residents in Japan, until the Shogun outlawed this commerce. Examples of Hokusai's prints were circulated throughout Europe by facsimile illustrations in at least two well-known publications, von Siebold's Nippon Archiv zur Beschreibung von Japan, available in

French translation from 1838, and de Chassiron's Notes sur le Japon, la Chine et L'Inde (1861).^{xxxii}

Goncourt's contemporaries held Hokusai in high esteem. Gonse provided this panegyric, "Rien ne lui fut étranger dans la nature, il dessinait avec une adresse égale...les scènes de genre ou de style...il était vraiment universel. Mais ce qui attirait surtout Hokousai,^{xxxiii} c'était l'animal humain."^{xxxiv} Duret's accolade from La Critique d'Avant Garde (1885) is similar in tone, "Hokusai, l'artiste le mieux doué, le plus puissante, le plus complet à tous égards de sa nation...[son] oeuvre sert ainsi de couronnement à l'art ancien japonais et en donne l'expression suprême définitive."^{xxxv}

In his monograph on the artist, Goncourt incorporates earlier studies by Gonse and Bing, publisher of the periodical Le Japon Artistique, with the addition of a newly-translated Japanese biography, a catalogue raisonné of the artist's known work in all media, a bibliography and listing of important collections world-wide. The four-hundred page opus meticulously chronicles Hokusai's tumultuous life and prolific output, the picaresque existence of an artist changing residences and signatures countless times, an impecunious vagabond indeed 'mad about drawing.'

In an interesting parallel with the life of his French biographer, Hokusai was also a *littérateur* and an *amateur du théâtre*. Like Utamaro, Hokusai began his career by illustrating the ubiquitous pulp novels, for which he provided a satirical text. In later years, the artist was equally esteemed for skill as a composer of popular verse known as *hai-kai*.^{xxxvi} One of Hokusai's first commissions was an advertising sign for an itinerant troupe of actors. As a connoisseur of art Goncourt may find this detail pertinent as it recalls Watteau's *L'Enseigne de Gersaint.*, a shop sign for a Parisian picture dealer. Early in his career Hokusai excelled in the depiction of dramatic scenes from the popular Kabuki dramas, a less well-known facet of the talents of this versatile and popular illustrator.

The biographer's excitement for this 'peintre universel' is evident in the enthusiastic account of the *Mangwa* ^{xxxvii}[*Manga*], fifteen volumes of sketches featuring countless episodes *saisis sur le vif* of everyday life in Edo. Goncourt's translation of the term *mangwa* is "*le dessin tel qu'il vient spontanément.*"^{xxxviii} (115) (fig. 11-12)

...cette profusion d'images, cette avalanche de dessins, cette débauche de crayonnages, ces quinze cahiers, où les croquis se pressent sur les feuillets...une oeuvre qui n'a pas de pareille chez aucun peintre de l'Occident! La mangwa, ces milliers de reproductions fiévreuses de ce qui est sur la terre, dans le ciel, sous l'eau, ces magiques instantanés de l'action, du mouvement, de la vie

remuante de l'humanité et de l'animalité, enfin cette espèce de délire sur le papier. (116)

Hokusai's *Manga* (published 1814–1878) with his series *36 Views of Mount Fuji* (1823) (fig 13-14) were the most significant contributions of Japanese *ukiyo-e* to the course of French art. It was an album from the *Manga* which engraver Felix Bracquemond acquired from his printer Delâtre in Paris ca.1856-58, circulated with great enthusiasm amongst his colleagues in avant garde artistic circles. The Japanese authorities granted Hokusai the posthumous honor of exhibiting selections from the famous *Manga* at their pavillion at the Paris 1867 Exposition Universelle.^{xxxix} A year later journalist and painter Zacharie Astruc noted in an article that Manet and Monet were loyal students of Hokusai.^{xl} Art historians have noted the great resonance that these 'spontaneous sketches' produced in the art of Degas, who was an enthusiastic reader of Naturalist fiction, preferring Goncourt to Zola.^{xli}

As emphasized in the Preface to Chérie, Goncourt valued his own contributions as a revolutionary innovator in the fields of literature and aesthetics. Likewise, he presents Hokusai as the originator of the 'vulgar school' of modern painting in Japan, casting aside stale pictorial conventions inherited from ancient Chinese and other 'foreign' models.

Goncourt's account stresses Hokusai's boundless creativity, his capacity to ceaselessly reinvent himself as an artist in terms of style and media, and even his assimilation of western techniques of shading and perspective from etchings introduced by Dutch traders. Goncourt, with his characteristic lack of modesty, sees himself as the equivalent of the French Hokusai, in his quest to replace the prevailing aesthetic based on classical models.

Goncourt's admiring biographical account of Hokusai reflects his own struggle as an often-maligned and under-appreciated author breaking new ground in French fiction. His high praise for Hokusai's qualities of originality, spontaneity, keen sense of observation of man and nature, depiction of the essence of gesture and action with a few bold, understated strokes, and ability to elicit the emotions of the viewer, describe the very qualities which Goncourt sought to develop in his Naturalist fiction. It is altogether fitting that the final work of Goncourt, doyen of Naturalist literature, should be dedicated to the acknowledged Japanese master of '*oukiyoye, [ukiyo-e] la peinture naturaliste.*'

The Goncourts considered themselves the first authors to introduce *japonisme* to fiction by virtue of a brief description of an oriental lacquer cabinet in their unheralded first experiment in fiction En 18...(1851).^{xiii}

However, precedence as proponents of *japonisme* is better-illustrated in their masterwork, Manette Salomon(1867), which may be read as a manifesto of the discovery and importance of the Japanese print for western art. Chapters 1-3 devoted to the Goncourts will discuss the japoniste aspects of this novel, followed by its largely implicit manifestations in Edmond's solo effort La Fille Elisa. The colorful images of life in Edo depicted in woodblock prints, paintings on silk and on three-panel screens will undergo a creative metamorphosis in the writer's imagination, resurfacing in the Naturalist fiction set in the Parisian metropolis of the second half of the nineteenth century.

ⁱ Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire*, texte intégral établi et annoté par Robert Ricatte (Paris: Fasquelle Flammarion, 1956/ Ed. Robert Laffont, 1989) 2: 640. All subsequent references are to this edition.

ⁱⁱ Denys Sutton, "Japonaiseries for ever: the Goncourts and Japanese Art." *Apollo* July 1984: 59-64. The full text of letter is found in William L. Schwartz, *The Imaginative Interpretation of the Far East in French Literature*(Paris: Champion, 1927) 9, note 2. "Nous passerons douze heures de fête à nous donner une indigestion de l'Exposition. Nous verrons tout! tout!! tout!!!. Au revoir donc. Japonaiseries for ever. Et tout à vous.

ⁱⁱⁱ Gabriel P. and Yvonne Weisberg, *Japonisme, an Annotated Bibliography*(New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1990), xii. See also Gabriel P. Weisberg, *The Independent Critic, Philippe Burty and the Visual Arts of Mid-Nineteenth Century France*(New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 224-230.

^{iv} Ernst Chesneau, "L'Exposition Universelle: le Japon à Paris." *Gazette de Beaux Arts*. September 1878:(385-397). Chesneau's account of the growth of *japonisme* from its earliest stages is invariably quoted by all historians of the movement.

^v Bernard Bumpus, "The Jing-Lar Society." *Apollo* March 1996: 13-16.

^{vi} William Hosley, *The Japan Idea: Art and Life in Victorian America*.(Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1990),32-42.

^{vii} Reginald G. Haggard, *Concise Encyclopedia of Continental pottery and Porcelain*.(New York: Praeger, 1968), 105-106.

^{viii} François Fosca, *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1941), 353.

^{ix} see his *Journal* entry of January 22, 1875.

- ^x G. Aitken and M. Delafond, *La Collection d'Estampes de Claude Monet*. (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1987), 21.
- ^{xi} Louis Gonse, "L'Art Japonais et son influence sur le goût européen." *Revue des Arts Décoratifs*, April 1898: 112-115. Extract reprinted in *Le Japonisme* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1988) 138-139.
- ^{xii} Roger Marx. "Sur le rôle et l'influence des arts de l'Extrême Orient et du Japon." *Le Japon Artistique* 36 (April 1891) 141-142. Quoted in *Le Japonisme*, (Paris: Ed. de la Réunion de Musées Nationaux, 1988), 137.
- ^{xiii} John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism*. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 207-209.
- ^{xiv} Gabriel P. and Yvonne Weisberg, *Japonisme, an Annotated Bibliography*. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), xxii.
- ^{xv} published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974. Ives is curator of Prints and Drawings at the MMA and most recently organized an exhibition of the analogies between ukiyo-e and the graphic work of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.
- ^{xvi} G. and Y. Weisberg, *Japonisme, an annotated Bibliography*. (New York: Garland Publishers, 1990).
- ^{xvii} See Theodore Reff, *Degas, The Artist's Mind*. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976). Degas, an amateur of Japanese art, was also a keen enthusiast of photography which he practiced as an art form.
- ^{xviii} Pierre Sabatier, *L'Esthétique des Goncourt*. (Geneva: Slatkin Reprints, 1970. reprint 1920 edition).
- ^{xix} William Leonard Schwartz, *The Imaginative Interpretation of the Far East in Modern French Literature 1800-1925*. (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1927), 112.
- ^{xx} William Leonard Schwartz, "The Priority of the Goncourts' Discovery of Japanese Art." *PMLA* 42(1927): 654-672
- ^{xxi} Ibid. 112
- ^{xxii} P. Carles and B. Desgranges, "Le Regard Impressionniste d'Emile Zola," *L'Ecole des Lettres*, March 1994: 1-16, and "Le Japonisme dans les Rougon Macquart," *L'Ecole des Lettres*, March 1992: 79-94.
- ^{xxiii} Roland Barthes, *L'Empire des Signes*. (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), 10.
- ^{xxiv} Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Préfaces et Manifestes Littéraires*. (Geneva: Slatkin Reprints, 1980), 71-72.
- ^{xxv} Klaus Berger, *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse*. (Cambridge University Press, 1992). 1.
- ^{xxvi} Michel Caffier, *Les Frères Goncourt, un déshabillé de l'âme*. (Nancy: Presses Universitaires, 1994), 220.
- ^{xxvii} Matthi Forrer and E. de Goncourt, *Hokusai*. (New York: Rizzoli, 1988). Goncourt is a considerably more engaging writer than the Dutch curator, even in translation!
- ^{xxviii} Edmond de Goncourt, *Outamaro, le Peintre des Maisons Vertes* (Paris: Charpentier, 1891), 52. All subsequent references are to this edition.
- ^{xxix} Edmond de Goncourt, *Outamaro*, 133.
- ^{xxx} Nineteenth century French spellings of Japanese names are variable. The modern French transliteration is Utamaro, as in English.
- ^{xxxi} quoted in Louis Gonse, *L'Art Japonais*. (Paris: Quantin: 1883). 261
- ^{xxxii} Jacques de Caso, "Hokusai rue Jacob." *Burlington Magazine* (September 1969): 562-565.
- ^{xxxiii} see note xxvi. Today the French spelling is Hokusai or Hokusai.
- ^{xxxiv} Louis Gonse, *L'Art Japonais* (Paris: E. Grund, 1926), 102.
- ^{xxxv} Théodore Duret, *Critique d'Avant Garde* (Paris: Charpentier, 1885), 163.
- ^{xxxvi} Haiku is a popular form of Japanese poetry consisting of seventeen syllables over three lines, in the form 5-7-5. The subject often comments on natural phenomena, as in this example by Sanpu (1647-1732). *Cherry-bloom, cuckool moon, snow--and already/ the year is through!*. See Henderson, *Introduction to Haiku* (New York: Doubleday, 1958).
- ^{xxxvii} Today the French spelling is manga, as in English.
- ^{xxxviii} Edmond de Goncourt, *Hokousai* (Paris: Charpentier, 1896), 115. All subsequent references are to this edition.
- ^{xxxix} Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987)

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- ^{x1} G. Weisberg, *Japonisme, an Annotated Bibliography*, xiii.
^{x2} Reff, 170. (His source is a quote by Georges Rivière).
^{x3} E. et J. de Goncourt, *Préfaces et Manifestes Littéraires*, 71.

CHAPTER 1

MANETTE SALOMON AND THE ADVENT OF JAPONISME: THE IMPACT OF THE JAPANESE PRINT ON THE ARTISTIC SENSIBILITY OF MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

“Ce soir le soleil ressemble à un pain à cacheter cerise, collé sur un ciel et sur une mer perle. Les Japonais seuls ont osé, dans leurs albums coloriés, ces étranges effets de la nature.” Goncourt Journal, July 19, 1864.

“...Un succès, à notre grand étonnement, mêlé naturellement de quelques injures. M...nous a appelé Japonais!...” letter from Jules de Goncourt to Flaubert, January 13, 1868, on critical reaction to Manette Salomonⁱ

Sixth of the seven novels co-authored by the brothers Goncourt,ⁱⁱ Manette Salomon was published in 1867, a pivotal year in the world of French arts and letters. 1867 marks the loss of two cultural luminaries: Baudelaire, then primarily known for his Salon criticism, and Ingres, champion of classicism. “In 1867 history painting was interred with Ingres, and 1868 signaled the triumph of genre, its successor.”ⁱⁱⁱ Baudelaire had been an advocate of genre, the depiction in art of scenes or events from everyday life, especially of the middle and lower classes. His essay on the illustrator Constantin Guys, *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne* (1863) encouraged the young Edouard Manet in this direction.

Japanese art, featuring the fourteen-volume *Manga* (sketchbooks) of Hokusai, and painted screens, porcelains and metalwork, entered the public eye with great acclaim at the 1867 Paris Exposition Universelle. “In the

context of the Universal Exposition, French artists and critics could not but see in Japanese art a reflection of the European interest in scenes from everyday life, namely genre painting.....”^{iv} Among the attractions of the Exposition were one-man exhibitions mounted by Gustave Courbet and Edouard Manet to bring their works to a mass audience; these were received with mixed reviews by the press.

The spring Salon, overshadowed by the Exposition Universelle, showed works by Degas, Berthe Morisot, Whistler and Fantin Latour, new painters with a fresh new vision defended by the young journalist Zola in his audacious art criticism.^v Japanese prints were discussed with enthusiasm by critics Zola, Duret, Duranty and the circle of innovative artists--including Bazille, Monet, Degas, Renoir and Sisley--who joined Manet at the Café Guerbois from 1866-70.^{vi} Manet’s portrait of his friend and fellow japoniste Zola, seated at a desk flanked by a painted screen and a woodblock print of a samurai-- a potent image symbolizing the interplay between East and West in art and literature--was painted during 1867-68.^{vii}

Manette Salomon: Portrait of the Art World in Transition

The Goncourts’ Manette Salomon provides a remarkable rendering of the diverse factions comprising the Parisian art world, a richly-textured

work of one hundred fifty-five chapters or *tableaux* depicting the tumultuous course of French painting from 1840-1855^{viii} (or as late as 1865)^{ix}. Although set in the immediate past, the critical issues of the 1850's involving the primacy of landscape versus genre, both categorized as 'naturalist' forms of painting by the critic Castagnary, remained topical at the time of publication. While distinguished commentators such as Duret considered landscape a more worthy expression of French genius,^x public taste favored genre painting, which eventually prevailed. The novel's time frame defines a critical period of striving towards modernity, the anticipation of a new order as the established schools of Classicism and Romanticism, symbolized by the vanished titans Ingres and Delacroix, lose their sovereignty.

Successively entitled "Les Artistes" and "L'Atelier Langibout," the novel was elaborated from the end of 1864 to mid-1866, based on notes in the Goncourt Journal from 1861.^{xi} Manette Salomon's protagonist is the unclassifiable creole painter Naz de Coriolis; the work was finally titled for the artist's Muse, a professional model of Jewish origin.^{xii} The novel is an ambitious work intended as a truthful depiction of the evolution of the milieu of French painting in mid-century. "Un des caractères particuliers de nos romans, ce sera d'être les romans les plus historiques de ce temps-ci,

les romans qui fourniront le plus de faits et de vérités à l'histoire morale de ce siècle," the Goncourts remarked.^{xiii}

In the Goncourt's conception of the Naturalist novel, traditional elements of plot and character development are secondary to the overall documentary emphasis. Characters are based on composite types, defined by social class, heredity and environment. This technique is used in Manette Salomon to suggest the multiplicity of elements composing the art world, a milieu in transformation. To situate Coriolis in this setting, the authors present a cast of characters representing prevailing types: society painters following the classical tradition of training at the Academy in Rome, rustic landscapists of the Fontainebleau forest, Orientalist painters of Middle and Near Eastern nudes and genre subjects, and Realist painters of rural peasant scenes. At the lower end of the spectrum are the bohemians like Coriolis' friend Anatole, would-be artists subsisting on the paltry commissions and assorted hack work that is their stock in trade. In the midst of this confusion the protagonist strives to understand and achieve the concept of modernity in his work in genre and landscape painting, shaped by his encounter with the Japanese woodblock print.

To accompany the diversity of styles existing at mid-century, a virtual ‘one-man show’ of aesthetic theory is supplied by the rambling monologues of the voluble *amateur des arts* Chassagnol. His diatribes against the prevailing “isms” in favor of a new aesthetic for the 19th century reflect the writings of Baudelaire, in particular his essay Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne of 1863.^{xiv} Chassagnol is essentially a mouthpiece for the authors; the total dedication of his life and funds to the pursuit of beauty reflects the commitment of the Goncourts. Chassagnol’s final word is a brief but succinct definition of *le beau* in art as “*le rêve du vrai*,” a formula which applies equally to the painting of Coriolis and to the aim of the Goncourts in their fiction.

L’Ecriture Artiste : Combining the Pen and Brush in Manette Salomon

The immersion of the Goncourt brothers in the art world as Salon critics, collectors and talented practitioners of sketching, watercolor and etching^{xv} provided first-hand documentation for an intimate portrait of this special milieu. Gavarni (1804-1866), the prolific lithographer often compared to Daumier, friend and mentor to the Goncourts from 1853 until his death, shared his first-hand knowledge of the Parisian ateliers with the authors.^{xvi} Gavarni’s frank illustrations of the everyday drama of Parisian

life and its sordid underside were paired by the fraternal writing team with the novels of Balzac as the primary sources for their naturalist aesthetic in fiction.^{xvii} Manette Salomon may be considered a literary homage to the unsettling, caricatural universe of the lithographer. (fig. 15)

Emulating Gavarni, in a prime example of the correspondence between artistic and literary techniques which characterizes their works, the Goncourts introduce quick sketches or life studies as a literary device. “Peintres, et adorant les peintres de mœurs et leurs croquis, qu’ils soient de...Gavarni ou de Hokousai; ils cèdent à la tentation d’introduire dans leurs romans des croquis semblables.”^{xviii} The novel’s sense of immediacy and contemporaneity is further accentuated by the authentic-sounding artists’ argot and the *expressions populaires* which enliven the dialogues. The Goncourts were “Peintres...d’une certaine humanité, saisie dans la courbe des gestes, dans la singularité des tics, surtout dans l’inflexion de la voix, dans la saveur de la parole.”^{xix}

The *écriture artiste* of the Goncourts, recognized by critics such as Ricatte and Caramaschi as a literary form of Impressionism *avant la lettre*, finds its fullest expression in Manette Salomon, in which a painterly prose depicts the world of painting. In emulation of the Japanese art of the

floating world, the *ukiyo-e print*, the Goncourts attempt to capture in literature the instantaneous, fleeting moments of everyday existence, “*le monde qui passe.*” Manette Salomon illustrates the impact of Japanese art on the inter-related spheres of literature and painting of mid-nineteenth century France. Anticipating trends in the visual arts, the Goncourts employed the written word to capture the elusive qualities of natural light and ever-changing impressions of color. “... ils ont voulu rendre avec des mots des impressions picturales, des tons et des formes, et surtout des formes en mouvement.”^{xx} Using language as an extension of their acute visual sensibility, the Goncourts’ creative approach to language granted the writer an advantage over the painter, confined by the physical limitations of his materials.

Manette Salomon presents astonishing visual imagery, such as this evocative rendering of a Paris skyline in autumn from the key opening chapter, a vision that would challenge the limits of the mere easel painter. Its simultaneous telescopic and panoramic points of view defy the conventions of western perspective.

Entre les pointes des arbres verts, là où s’ouvrait un peu le rideau des pins, des morceaux de la grande ville s’étendaient à perte de vue. Devant eux, c’était d’abord des toits pressés, aux tuiles brunes, faisant des masses d’un ton de tan et de marc de raisin, d’où se détachait le rose des poteries des cheminées. Ces larges teintes étalées, d’un teint brûlé, s’assombrissaient et s’enfonçaient dans du

noir-roux en allant vers le quai. Sur le quai, les carrés de maisons blanches, avec les petites raies noires de leurs milliers de fenêtres, formaient et développaient comme un front de caserne d'une blancheur effacée et jaunâtre, sur laquelle reculait, de loin en loin, dans la rouillé de la pierre, une construction plus vieille....^{xxi}(81)

The Discovery of Japanese Prints in Nineteenth Century France, fact and fiction

In Manette Salomon Japanese prints find their place in the Goncourts' panoramic fresco of the cacaphony of elements comprising the Parisian art world. Although it has been documented that Japanese prints were available in France as early as the 1830's,^{xxii} and may have been studied by Ingres,^{xxiii} it is the approach of the decade of the 1860's which marks a growing awareness of the arts of Japan amongst the earliest initiates. The Goncourts claimed to have been appreciative of the arts of Nippon in the 1850's; their novel En 18... (1851) briefly mentions oriental decorative objects in a western setting.^{xxiv} The extraordinary passage in Chapter XLVII of Manette Salomon, in which the painter Coriolis pores over his *ukiyo-e* albums in his Parisian atelier, directly reflects the experience of the authors. An 1861 passage from the Journal eloquently expresses the spectacular impact of the Japanese prints on the authors' sensibility.

J'ai acheté l'autre jour à la Porte chinoise [Parisian import shop] des dessins japonais...Je n'ai jamais rien vu de si prodigieux, de si fantaisiste, de si admirable et poétique comme art. Ce

sont des tons fins comme des tons de plumage, éclatants comme des émaux; des poses, des toilettes, des visages, des femmes qui ont l'air de venir d'un rêve; des naïvetés d'école primitive, ravissantes et d'un caractère qui dépasse Albert Dürer; une magie enivrant les yeux comme un parfum d'Orient. Un art prodigieux, naturel, multiple comme une flore, fascinant comme un miroir magique. (June 8, 1861)^{xxv} [emphasis added]

Octave Mirbeau's La 628-E8 (1907) contains a fanciful account of "La découverte de Claude Monnet"(sic), his fateful encounter with colorful *ukiyo-e* prints being used as wrapping paper in an obscure grocery store in Holland, "*il y a quelque cinquante ans.*" His joy in being able to possess these images parallels the experience of the Goncourt's fictional character Coriolis.

Rentré chez lui, fou de joie, Monet étala "ses images". Parmi les plus belles, les plus rares épreuves, qu'il ne savait pas être d'Hokusai, d'Outamaro, des femmes à leur toilette, des femmes au bain, des mers, des oiseaux, des arbres fleuris, il en vit une qui représentait un troupeau de biches, et qui lui paraissait être une des plus étonnantes merveilles de cet art étonnant...^{xxvi}

According to the catalogue of the recent Origins of Impressionism show, Barbizon painters Millet and Rousseau found inspiration in *ukiyo-e* prints in the early 1860's.^{xxvii} Indeed, the visual perception of Coriolis in Manette Salomon clearly parallels that of Théodore Rousseau(1812-1867). Théodore Rousseau's contemporary biographer describes the painter's reworking of *Le Village* for the Salon of 1864 to comply with the lessons of Japanese art:

Rousseau y trouvait[dans l'art japonais] la configuration exacte du dessin, le résumé des horizons et des plans, **la splendeur des couleurs, la phosphorescence de l'atmosphère**, la simplicité du procédé, l'imprévu, la nouveauté et l'audace des compositions. Il avait sous ses yeux une formule parlante, qui résumait, en mille aspects, ses recherches sur le modelé de la lumière appliqué jusqu'aux images populaires en pays japonais." . . . "Il changea toute l'harmonie de son Village, de doux et septentrional qu'il était , il rêva **un ciel bleu comme les saphirs colorés de l'Orient, comme les flammes ardentes des aurores boréales... Tout excepté la forme arrêtée des configurations mères, devint japonais par la mode des colorations.** Il repeignait patiemmentayant toujours en vue **la lumière implacable du Japon, ses intensités célestes, ses bleus profonds, ses aurores rosées comme un sublime corrosif...**^{xxviii} [emphasis added]

Like Rousseau, Coriolis is marked by his appreciation of the incandescent palette of the Japanese print, and the reader remarks the authors' delight in highlighting the prose of the novel with equivalent sparkling, dazzling effects of color and light.

Naz de Coriolis, the Painter "né de coloris"

Manette Salomon's emphasis on the artist's unfulfilled struggle towards modernity in mid-century centers on the flawed character of Naz de Coriolis. He is a creole nobleman from the distant île Bourbon [La Réunion], the French territory located off the coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean. This unusual name suggests the anagrammatic reading "*né de coloris.*" The heredity of a *méridional* provides a rationale for the qualities

of indolence, languor, lack of discipline and over-sensitivity which contribute to lack of success in the structured environment of the Paris art world. Coriolis nonetheless becomes a gifted painter obsessed with color, light and the observation of scenes drawn from life, with the potential to achieve Baudelaire's mandate as the "*Peintre de la Vie Moderne*" in search of "*le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l'art...*"

During the course of his eventful career, in spite of the great revelation of the Japanese print, Coriolis will not be recognized as a great artist, although by the novel's close the solitary genius does achieve an eccentric communion with incandescent color. Coriolis attributes his inability to achieve worldly success and critical recognition to the nefarious designs of his Jewish model-mistress, Manette.^{xxx} His Muse is transformed by his jealous desire into a monster of greed and cupidity, like an evil genie emerging from a cursed lantern. Although ostensibly a failure, Coriolis in fact achieves the victory of color over line that will define the Impressionist movement at its apogee in 1873,^{xxx} a remarkable example of the novel's anticipation of the evolution of painting. The explorations of scenes of modern life in Manette Salomon would have great resonance in the career of Degas, who emulated the Goncourt's exhortations to portray contemporary subjects in "a line that would render life."^{xxxi}

Coriolis's artistic peregrinations take him from student days at a tradition-bound atelier in Paris to sojourns in Asia Minor, Fontainebleau, the Normandy coast and the untamed landscape of the Camargue, south of Montpellier. Throughout his various manifestations as Orientalist, painter of the nude, landscapist, and chronicler of modern life, Coriolis retains the essence of a modern genre artist, enamored of light, color, the feminine form, and direct observation of nature.^{xxxii} These qualities are consistent with *japonisme*, and are heightened by his contact with *ukiyo-e* prints. Inherently attached to color, Coriolis' inevitable fascination with Japanese art crystallizes within his being; he will subsequently interpret western genre scenes and landscape through a prism of the Orient.

To understand the affinity between Coriolis and the Japanese print and its impact on his conception of art, it is necessary to place his encounter with the Japanese print in the context of the various stages of the painter's eventful career.

Japonisme in the Context of the Artistic Journey of Coriolis

i) After studies at the Parisian atelier of a master of the school of Ingres and David, the dissatisfied Coriolis travels to Asia Minor, where his painter's eye responds to the intensity of light and experience of "local color," i.e. the glimpse of a harem. He describes the dazzling first impressions of the exotic landscape to his *camarade d'atelier* Anatole in Paris:

"...tout est rose, bleu clair, cendre verte, lilas tendre...Rien que des couleurs gaies...Enfin, c'est éblouissant! Et je me fais l'effet d'être logé dans la vitrine des pierres précieuses au musée de **minéralogie**." (123)

This discovery of the primacy of color suggests the decisive six-month journey of Delacroix to southern Spain, Morocco and Algeria during 1832. ("Le pittoresque ici abonde...à chaque pas il y a des tableaux qui feraient la gloire et la fortune de vingt générations de peintres.^{xxxiii}")

In the case of Coriolis there is a predisposition for brilliant hues which sets the artist apart even prior to his adoption of the aesthetic of the *ukiyo-e* print. Upon return to Paris, Coriolis' entry in the fashionable Orientalist style is noticed at the 1852 Salon.

ii) Amongst studio bric-a-brac accented by exotic objects from the Orient, a cabinet filled with albums of Japanese prints provides reference and inspiration. The key scene of the painter studying his prized collection of *ukiyo-e* prints takes place in the winter of 1852. [A discussion of *The Japanese Print as Imaginative Stimulus for the Artist* follows on page 20.] Critical success the following year of Le Bain Turc, Coriolis's nude study of his mistress is followed by serious illness, implying the inauthenticity of this stereotyped mode of expression.

iii) The painter leaves the confines of the studio to join the Barbizon landscapists near Fontainebleau. There Coriolis responds to the integrity of Crescent^{xxxiv}, a proto-Impressionist who seeks to render "l'impression, vive et profonde du lieu, du moment, de la saison, de l'heure." (361) The maxim of this gifted painter of light is, "La palette est la décomposition à l'infini du rayon solaire, l'art est sa récomposition." (392) A sage fond of quoting Montaigne, Crescent is a Rousseau-esque figure who enjoys the simplicity of his rural existence, far removed from the social pressures of the capital's artistic cliques. In Fontainebleau, Coriolis's principal occupation is absorbing the lessons of Nature through the example of his humble mentor. Putting aside his painting, Coriolis meditates on the brilliant, ever-changing spectacle of light in the forest, a primal

experience. “Dans le haut des cimes, entre les interstices des feuilles, le couchant de soleil en fusion remuait et faisait scintiller les feux de pierreries d’un lustre de cristal de roche.”(338)

iv) Ending this bucolic interlude, Coriolis returns to Paris where he executes rapid sketches of low-life subjects in the *quartiers populaires*, eagerly seeking “la physiognomie moderne,” “le spectacle de la rue.” Emulating the example of Baudelaire’s painter of modern life Constantin Guys and of Gavarni, the artist attempts to capture the spontaneity of the often grotesque spectacle of plebian existence in its endless variations. “Il fixait d’un trait l’effort d’une attelé de maçons...le hanchement d’un blanchisseuse au panier lourd...” (411) Coriolis is especially drawn to the spectacle of women engaged in prostitution, an optique shared by the Japanese genre artists who depicted the lives of the denizens of the *Maisons Vertes* in the Yoshiwara pleasure district. “Il étudiait cette beauté singulière, spirituelle, l’indéfinissable beauté de la femme de Paris.” (413) Feeling on the threshold of a new art, “le pressentiment d’autres formes, d’autres visions, le commencement de nouvelles façons de voir, de sentir, de vouloir la peinture.”(413), Coriolis seeks to transfer the raw energy of these sketches onto canvas. However, two ambitious Parisian genre scenes,

a complex composition of army conscripts and a spectacle of a church ceremony are denounced as monstrosities by the critics.

v) On the Normandy coast at Trouville, Coriolis succeeds in capturing *en plein air* an appealing aspect of modern life, bourgeois men and women enjoying leisure at the beach. His complex landscape tableau, populated by women in bright accoutrements, seeks to render “la femme du monde...avec le piquant de sa tournure, la vive expression de sa coquetterie, l’osé de sa costume, le négligé de sa robe et de sa grâce, l’espèce de déshabillé de toute sa personne.” (442) Trouville was a favorite destination of many young Impressionist painters in the 1860’s, such as Bazille, Monet and Renoir, who depicted the new “vacation culture” in their canvases.^{xxxv} This particular work by Coriolis evokes paintings of beach scenes by Eugène Boudin ca. 1865.(fig. 16) The description of elegant women at play as painted by Coriolis would apply equally to the provocative, fashionably attired courtesans at leisure in the ‘floating world’ depicted in *ukiyo-e* prints by Utamaro and other *ukiyo-e* masters. Early Impressionist views of bathing, seaside revelry and boating parties were interpreted by contemporaries as western versions of subjects from *ukiyo-e* prints.^{xxxvi}

vi) Coriolis creates a short-lived sensation with his version of a modern nude, a prone young prostitute being approached by her client, a lecherous older man. This theme suggests Manet's scandal-provoking *Olympia* (1865) and *avant la lettre* his equally controversial boudoir scene *Nana* (1877). Nonetheless, the painter expresses disenchantment with the pursuit of modernity in painting, feeling that due recognition will elude him. "...ce navrement qui semble fatalement couronner dans ce siècle la carrière et la vie des grands peintres de la vie moderne." (452) In order to dispel his discouragement, the artist concentrates his energies on mastery of the technique of etching. This passion of the Goncourts, shared by Philippe Burty, Bracquemond and other japonistes, was enjoying a renaissance in the mid-nineteenth century. ^{xxxvii}

vii) Following the dictates of his mistress, Coriolis travels to the untamed Camargue region near Arles, where the flora and fauna recall the Orient, "Une vraie Egypte." The flamingoes here recall "le vol des grues voyageuses" glimpsed in the *ukiyo-e* albums of the painter. Cranes, herons and storks are considered auspicious symbols of longevity in Chinese and Japanese culture, a classic motif in oriental painting. ^{xxxviii} The intense turquoise-blue of the sky ("...des grandes plaques d'azur, des morceaux de ciel très crus..." 496) which Coriolis observes in the Camargue recalls the

brightly-hued universe of his Japanese prints. There is a striking parallel between this stage of Coriolis' development and the works of Frédéric Bazille (1841-1870) of Montpellier, whose canvases of his native region feature an identical turquoise sky.

viii) At a Paris auction, Coriolis witnesses the record-breaking sale of one of his previously scorned scenes of modern life, which at Manette's urging had been sold for a pittance to a speculator. In retaliation, the artist burns his remaining works in a self-destructive gesture of defiance. Furthermore, he refuses reconciliation with the Academy by turning down a government decoration. In order to support his household, the artist agrees to supply commercial pictures to a foreign gallery for an annual stipend.

ix) Despite this apparent abdication of artistic autonomy, the painter continues to pursue an inner vision. His final work will be dominated by an obsession with intense light, an artificially bright color with an incandescent quality suggesting the lesson of the Japanese print as interpreted by Theodore Rousseau, Bazille, Monet and other innovative artists of the decade of the 1860's.

Devant les vitrines de **minéralogie**, essayant de voler la Nature, de ravir et d'emporter les **feux multicolores** de ces **pétrifications** et de ces **crystallisations d'éclairs**, il s'arrêtait à ces **bleus d'azurite**, d'un **bleu d'émail chinois**, à ces bleus défailants des cuivres oxydés, au **bleu céleste de la lazulite** allant du bleu de roi au bleu de l'eau..[emphasis added] (532)

Coriolis has thus come full circle: his last manner rejoins his first, as implied by repetition of the term *minéralogie*. His brief self-definition as a young artist, "...je cherche...mais la nature!...faire de la lumière avec des couleurs..." (88) remains true in his maturity. Deprived of lasting recognition by the fickle artistic establishment, Coriolis has nonetheless succeeded in expressing in art the color inherent in his being; he remains true to the lessons of the Japanese print. Remarkably, the goal of Coriolis, to paint colors as bright as precious minerals and gems, anticipates the experience of Monet, an artist profoundly involved with the lessons of Japan. During a fruitful sojourn in Italy and the south of France in the 1880's, Monet described the revelation of the south in letters to his colleagues:

Shall we ever be able to feel contented before nature, above all in this place? With sun of such dazzling light, one finds one's palette rather poor. Here art would need tones of gold and diamonds.. . . I skirmish and battle with the sun. And what sun here! One would have to paint it with gold and gems.^{xxxix} [cited in English]

The Japanese Print as Imaginative Stimulus for the Artist

The text of Chapter XLVII of Manette Salomon (reprinted almost in entirety in the catalogue of the 1988 Grand Palais Japonisme exhibit) marks the spectacular first appearance of Japanese prints in French literature. Significantly, these images are introduced beyond mere elements composing an exotic décor. The Goncourts present *ukiyo-e* wood block prints as artistic expressions to be considered of equal calibre as European art. The protagonist of Manette Salomon is not shown admiring the Old Masters in the Louvre and only rarely commenting favorably on the fashionable offerings at the Salon. Like Manet, a leading exponent of *japonisme*, Coriolis also appreciates the seventeenth century Spanish painter Velasquez for his virtuoso handling of light and shadow.

Il combinera d'abord ses valeurs d'ombre et de lumière, de noir et de blanc...Il les combinera dans une tête, un pourpoint, une écharpe, une culotte, un cheval...Puis, de quelque couleur qu'il peigne ces différentes choses, vous pouvez être surs qu'il s'arrangera toujours pour garder les valeurs d'ombre et de lumière de son noir et de son blanc. (235)

Manet was able to achieve a synthesis between Spanish genre painting and the Japanese print in paintings of modern life such as *L'Olympia*(1865). Coriolis finds his sources of inspiration and the validation of his ideal in contemplation of his precious collection of Japanese prints.

In the studio, amidst the paraphrenalia of the classical European artist, Coriolis has added a mix of “Oriental” objects from Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. The Goncourts were particularly sensitive to the influence of the creative environment on the output of the artist or writer. Various elements of Coriolis’s studio were based on items observed by the Goncourts chez Flaubert,^{xi} an ardent admirer of all aspects of Eastern culture, as evidenced by this fascinating excerpt from an 1846 letter:

Je m’occupe un peu de l’Orient...non dans un but scientifique, mais tout pittoresque; **je recherche la couleur, la poésie, ce qui est sonore, ce qui est chaud, ce qui est beau.** J’ai lu le baghavad-geta,...un grand travail de Burnouf sur le bouddhisme, les hymnes du Rig-Veda[sacred text of Hinduism], les lois de Manou, le Koran et quelques livres chinois...^{xii} [emphasis added]

In 1868, the Goncourts purchased their home in Auteuil, which they designed as a repository for their treasured collections of French eighteenth century and Japanese and Far Eastern art and furnishings. The eclectic, hermetic interior provided a source of aesthetic *receuillement* . Eventually, its *grenier* served as meeting place for young writers of the Naturalist circle such as Zola and Huysmans, who emulated the *japoniste* tastes of the Goncourts.

In Manette Salomon, the studio bric-a-brac of Coriolis comprises several items of Far Eastern origin, amongst “L’*étalage et le fouillis d’un luxe baroque, un entassement d’objets bizarres, hétéroclites.*” These include a Chinese fan, a Javanese shadow puppet (“*personnage d’ombre chinois*”), Japanese swords and a cabinet full of albums of Japanese prints. It is noteworthy that these prints are not separated from their bindings and pinned to the walls. They are carefully put away, in the manner that Japanese scroll paintings are kept rolled in special cases for periodic contemplation by their owners. This safe-keeping implies the value that Coriolis attaches to his Japanese treasury of images.(In another parallel, Degas is said to have kept a cabinet of *ukiyo-e* albums in his dining room.)^{xliii}

In a perspective characteristic of Japanese art, the authors present the reader with an overhead or ‘bird’s-eye view’ as the painter consults the albums stretched out on the floor, “*couché sur le ventre.*” This intimate, visceral posture is akin to the Japanese custom of relaxing on a *tatami*, the thick straw matting which cushions the floor of the traditional home. He may well be emulating the position of the Japanese depicted in some of the prints. Upon opening the decorative album covers, Coriolis is able to transcend barriers of space and time, as his visual imagination unites him

with the fantastic “floating world,” (the literal meaning of the term *ukiyo-e*) pictured by the Japanese artists. His eye is captivated by the hallucinatory revelation of pure, flat expanses of color: “...il regardait, en feuilletant, ces pages pareilles à des palettes d’ivoire, chargées de couleurs de l’Orient, tachés et diaprés, étincelantes de pourpre, d’outremer, de vert d’éméraude.” (261)

Such strident hues indicate that these were primarily nineteenth century prints made with Prussian blue and synthetic aniline dyes imported from the west, used in *ukiyo-e* from about 1830.^{xliii} These were among the first samples of Japanese art to be admired by early French collectors such as the Goncourts, Manet, Monet, and Zola. In an irony often pointed out by art historians, the Europeans discovered Japanese printmaking in its decadent phase: the apogee of this artform was reached in the mid-eighteenth century.

The brilliant spectacle of nature as interpreted by the Japanese thrills

Coriolis:

Il se perdait dans cet azur où se noyaient les floraisons roses des arbres, dans cet émail bleu sertissant les fleurs de neige des pêchers et des amandiers, dans ces grands couchers de soleil cramoisies et d’où partent les rayons d’une roue de sang, dans la splendeur de ces astres écornés par le vol des grues voyageuses.
[emphasis added] (261)

This vividness creates a tactile impression that appears to transcend the limitations of the two-dimensional support. “Et tout à coup...une page fleurissante semblait un herbier du mois de mai, une poignée du Printemps, toute fraîche arrachée...”(261) The landscape, with equal elements of reality and fantasy, is alive with natural and man-made forms: white beaches, a bamboo trellis, a garden shading a tea house, distant temples. There are images of mythological and religious subjects, of priests(“*bonzeries*”) and various Buddhist deities. (The figure of the priest, whether Japanese or French, is a curious motif which recurs throughout the novel.)

Finally, the painter’s gaze rests on a parade of representations of elegantly attired and coiffed women amidst their leisurely pursuits: examining precious silks, painting fans, delicately sipping tea, consulting their fortunes... As befits the transitory world of *ukiyo-e*, water is a key element: “des femmes glissant en barque sur les fleuves, nonchalamment penchées sur la poésie et la fugitivité de l’eau.” The image of these beauties leaning dreamily over a balcony, “accoudées sur des balcons,” suggests Japanese eighteenth century prints of *bijin-ga*(“beautiful women”), a genre

which was the specialty of Utamaro, Kiyonaga, and their followers.^{xliv} (fig. 18)

In an unusual analogy, the languid pose of the women, chin in hand, is compared by the narrator to an attitude of the celebrated French mime, Debureau (1796-1846), perhaps as he was photographed. (fig. 19) In the last glimpse of the album, Coriolis observes the Japanese women biting the edge of their sleeves, “*elles semblaient ronger leur vie, en mordillant un bout de leur vêtement.*” This curious detail of women seizing fabric between their teeth may be observed in certain Japanese erotic prints, the *shunga*. (fig. 20) The dreaming state of the painter, cradling his chin on his palm as he gazes down at the albums, mimicks the attitude of the beauties contemplating the movement of the water in the *ukiyo-e* prints. This posture indicates the artist’s complete absorption in the prints, as his reality becomes a reflection of what he has internalized from these radiant images.

In an ironic shift of focus, the rich visual stimulation of the album is terminated by the dissonant vocal recitation of the Parisian omnibus stops which marks the opening of the next chapter, wherein Coriolis describes a fateful encounter on his journey home. However, the memory of the *ukiyo-e* prints has so strongly embedded itself on his imagination that it influences

subsequent perception of reality. The obsession with Japanese art is so strong that Coriolis' fascination with a mysterious female passenger is shaped by the impression of the beauties in his prints. In the evening shadow the woman's face appears to him "*comme un brillant d'ivoire,*" a material suggesting the bibelots of the Far East and the chalky-white complexion considered a mark of beauty in Japan. He notices her foreign quality and self-assured pose, "*elle a passé devant moi avec une marche, des gestes de statue,*" a stance recalling the hieratic posture of the women in his print albums.

This apparition reminiscent of the persona of Japanese prints is none other than Manette Salomon, professional artists model, resident of the Jewish quarter of Paris. This identification classes her as an "Oriental;" according to the racial theories of the era, all Jews, regardless of their birthplace, were considered to be of Middle Eastern origin. The signifier "Orient" denotes a broad concept in the French language, and the Goncourts amply exploit this sense of ambiguity. "Oriental" in the French sense qualifies all that is not Western or Occidental, a vast geographical area extending to all of Asia, the Near East, North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey and even Russia. The fluid concept of "Orient" for the reader of the Goncourts is laden with historical and literary overtones. Amongst

other classical references it evokes Racine's great alexandrine from Bérénice, "Dans l'Orient désert quel devint mon ennui! (I,iv)"

Coriolis, the creole from l'île Bourbon, has himself absorbed oriental characteristics from his stay in Asia Minor, "Il était presque effrayé à l'idée de retrouver la vie enfermée de l'Occident." He searches for the elusive Manette at a Jewish festival celebration; she is found in a pose reminiscent of the women of *ukiyo-e*, leaning against the balcony railing, dreamily gazing downwards at the dancers below: "...un coude appuyé sur la balustrade, une main soutenant une tête, un bout de profil, un ruban feu nouant des cheveux...Immobile, Manette laissait le bal venir à ses yeux, avec un air de contentement paresseux et de distraction indifférente." (268) Here, the red ribbon is an accent of color which links Manette to the flaming red sun in the album of Japanese prints.

The bodies of the courtesans in the Japanese prints are hidden under layers of extravagantly draped and multi-colored layers of textured clothing, "*brodées de pivoines et de griffons, des robes de plumes, de soie, de fleurs et d'oiseaux...*" The inaccessibility of their nakedness increases the erotic charge of the whatever glimpses of flesh are shown in the prints, usually the nape of the neck. This convention of Japanese art is at odds with

the métier of Manette, who proudly exhibits her exceptional form for painters she deems worthy. Preparing for the pose, there is again a repetition of a gesture from the prints, “...elle remonta sur la table à modèle avec sa chemise remontrée contre sa poitrine, et dont elle tenait entre ses dents le festonnage d’en haut, dans le mouvement ramassé, pudique d’une femme honnête qui change de linge.” [emphasis added] These details indicate that Manette’s appearance represents the fulfillment of the fantasy shaped by the artist’s appreciation of the rendering of the Japanese women in the *ukiyo-e* print. Moreover, her body is available without their camouflage of voluminous fabric. Manette thus becomes an embodiment of Coriolis’s characteristic “passion de l’exotique.”

Manette serves as the model for the “*Bain Turc*,” the Orientalist nude study that establishes the reputation of the painter early in his career at the Salon of 1853. Coriolis is destined to go beyond the facile stereotypes of this popular form of genre painting featuring the voluptuous, available forms of indigenous females. Manette, forced by jealousy to abandon her profession as a model, becomes the painter’s mistress and eventually mother of his son. Although he no longer paints Manette as the surrogate for the Oriental woman of his cherished *ukiyo-e* albums, Coriolis continues to be inspired by the Japanese print in his uninhibited use of bright, even

artificial color, and his poses of modern women at leisure or amidst their daily activities. His work is characterized by the dynamic interplay between careful observation of nature and his artist's imagination. It should be noted that Coriolis does not produce a pastiche of *japonaiserie*, incorporating a decorative backdrop composed of exotic textiles, ceramics, prints and lacquerware into western-style paintings, in the manner of fashionable, minor painters such as James Tissot or Alfred Stevens. Rather, he assimilates the lessons of Japan and its aesthetic to create an original style, in the manner of ground-breaking artists such as Manet and Monet.

Japonisme as Precursor to Modernism in Art and Literature

Perceptive commentators of the mid-nineteenth century invariably attributed new approaches in French painting in the areas of color, composition and subject matter to the Japanese influence. As critic and japoniste Théodore Duret pointed out in 1861, "L'apparition parmi nous des albums et des images japonais a achevé la transformation, en nous initiant à un système de coloration absolument nouveau. Sans les procédés qui nous ont été divulgués par les Japonais, tout un ensemble de moyens nous fût resté inconnu." One might add his often-quoted assertion that "...il a fallu l'arrivée parmi nous des albums japonais pour... juxtaposer sur

une toile un toit que fût hardiment rouge, un peuplier vert, une route jaune, une muraille qui fût blanche et de l'eau bleue."^{xiv}

Although Duret refers to the evolution of painting, his statement implies the extent of the impact of Japanese art in France during the second half of the nineteenth century. The worlds of painting, art criticism and literature were closely intertwined, as evidenced in the careers of the Baudelaire, the Goncourts, Zola, Huysmans and Mallarmé. The stunning novelty of Japanese art had an equivalent impact upon the literary imagination dependent upon visual stimuli.

In his Imaginative Interpretation of the Far East in Modern French Literature(1927), William Leonard Schwartz describes the Goncourts as tireless 'propagandists' for Japanese art, particularly in the establishment of the Japanese-decorated *grenier* at Auteuil, focal point for writers of the Naturalist 'school' during the 1880's. Manette Salomon can be interpreted as the early and enthusiastic response by the Goncourts to what they perceived as a new era in French cultural life, in which the Eastern influence is eagerly embraced as a creative force by progressive artists and writers. Coriolis, protagonist of their novel, is a prototype of the sensitive

modern artist whose aesthetic consciousness is marked by his admiration and emulation of the art of Japan.

In the opening chapter of Manette Salomon, the narrator (later doubled by Anatole, student of the Atelier Langibout) presents an aerial perspective of Paris for the reader as Anatole playfully lectures to a group of tourists from a labyrinthine tower in the Jardin des Plantes. The use of the bird's-eye view in early Impressionist painting of the 1860's (as in street scenes of Paris by Monet) was considered to be a device borrowed from the Japanese. (fig. 21) Indeed, the first genre scenes in Japanese art were panoramic cityscapes of the great cities of Edo and Kyoto, on three-panel painted screens of the sixteenth century, copied in nineteenth century versions. The cityscape in the work of *ukiyo-e* artists of the nineteenth century was a theme of Japanese art familiar to astute collectors and connoisseurs such as the Goncourts.

The Goncourts are ostensibly describing the Paris of the 1840's-50's, yet the cosmopolitan metropolis of Manette Salomon effectively describes the capital of 1867, host of the Exposition Universelle's elaborate international pavillions. Their fictional Paris, a heterogeneous society home to Russians, Africans, and visiting Asian royalty, is initially glimpsed

through the branches of a flourishing *oriental* cedar of Lebanon. This is a place of ceaseless novelty where even professors of Tibetan may be encountered on the streets! In subsequent chapters, exotic Parisian customs are revealed; at the artist's costume ball, women masquerade in the robes of "*Yeddo*" [Edo, former name for Tokyo], and pull back their eyes to have a Chinese appearance.

The reader notes that the art of the East has made a profound imprint on the aesthetic consciousness and visual perception of the narrator. In the key opening chapter, the Paris skyline is rendered in a jarring "mixed media" comparison, uniting normally incompatible drawing techniques of east and west. "l'oeil embrassait tout l'espace entre le dôme de la Salpêtrière et la masse de l'Observatoire, d'abord un grand plan d'ombre, ressemblant à un **lavis d'encre de Chine sur un dessous de sanguine...**" [emphasis added]

The black ink wash or *lavis* is essential to Far Eastern painting, as it is used to suggest rather than define form. Sanguine, or red chalk, is a classic drawing tool of European draughtsman--eighteenth century artists such as Watteau or Boucher often used it to great effect, often with black and white accents. It is unlikely that *encre de chine* would be brushed over

red chalk in an actual drawing. However, the Goncourts' *écriture artiste* permits the imaginative juxtaposition of these techniques to create a visual effect. Symbolically, this creative simile reflects their conviction that French art of the future would reflect the liberating influence in color and design of Japanese prints, paintings and decorative arts.

In many ways, the *japonisant* point of view of the Goncourts expressed in Manette Salomon is exemplified in the work of Edouard Manet, another ardent admirer and collector of *ukiyo-e* prints. His pictorial summary of the lessons of the East is summarized in his *Portrait of Zola* (1867). According to the art historian Sandblad, the images in this still-life as portrait can be interpreted as a sort of rebus. Manet's *Olympia* is presented as a synthesis between the art of the Japanese wood block print and European art, represented by the engraving of an oil painting by Velasquez.

To cite another example of his work, there is a striking parallel between Manet's panoramic view of the 1867 *Exposition Universelle* from the heights of the Trocadéro (fig.22) and the opening scene of Manette Salomon, set in the Jardin des Plantes. In Manet's unfinished oil sketch, a gardener works in the foreground, as at the botanical garden, while in the

middle-ground a Chinese man confers with a women in native costume, figures representing the internationalization of the metropolis.

The Goncourts declared in literature through Manette Salomon what Manet was expressing in his art. The year 1867 marked a definitive turning point in French cultural history as the East was embraced as a source of profound inspiration, the antidote to outmoded formulas. Japan and its art forms were hailed as a liberating force, encouraging its advocates to sweep away conventions in form, style and composition in all realms of artistic expression. The Goncourts and other artists and writers who emulated the East considered themselves to be the agents of a modernist revolution, boldly creating a radical aesthetic for the future based on the advocacy of *japonisme*.

Conservative literary critics such as Brunetière and Saint-Beuve sought to ridicule the Goncourts' achievement in Manette Salomon by describing it as "*japonais*." The almost inter-changeable terms *japonaiserie*, *japonerie* and *chinois* were used pejoratively in the second half of the nineteenth century, denoting the negative qualities "*bizarre et compliqué*"^{xlvi} The condescending qualifier "*japonais*" of such critics referred to the novel's irregular, asymmetrical structure and lack of

adherence to accepted ideas of clearly-defined plot and character development, which rendered the novel incomprehensible to a reader schooled in the classical tradition. Saint-Beuve accused the authors of creating “ des morceaux de style qui ne sont plus de la littérature mais de la peinture..”^{xlvii} In a later entry in the Journal, Edmond summarized his goal in literature precisely in terms of painting, “Je voudrais trouver des touches de phrases, semblables à des touches de peintre dans un esquisse: des effleurements et des caresses, et pour ainsi dire, des glacis de la chose écrite, qui échapperaient à la lourde, massive, bêtasse syntaxe des corrects grammairiens.” (March 22, 1882)^{xlviii}

Beyond their characteristic obtuseness, guardians of the literary status quo were able to glimpse an element of truth: *japonisme* had indeed sparked a new way of seeing and of transcribing the writers’ experience of reality. The new Naturalist vision pioneered by the Goncourts found scant critical or public success for the novelists. However, their literary innovations, largely inspired by an admiration for the colorful world of *ukiyo-e* genre prints, would be continued and adapted in works by Zola, Huysmans, Mallarmé and other intimates of the Goncourt circle. As always, the Goncourts claimed precedence for posterity, writing in the Journal, “Le goût de la chinoiserie et de la japonaiserie! Ce goût, nous

l'avons eu des premiers. Ce goût aujourd'hui envahissant tout et tous, jusqu'aux imbéciles et aux bourgeoises, qui plus que nous l'a propagé, l'a senti, l'a prêché, y a converti les autres." (October 29, 1868)^{xlix}

ⁱ François Fosca, *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1941), 221.

ⁱⁱ After *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865), and prior to *Madame Gervaisais* (1869)

ⁱⁱⁱ Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987), 187.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, 168.

^v John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 170.

^{vi} Jean-Paul Crespelle, *Guide de la France Impressioniste* (Paris: Editions Hazan, 1990), 94.

^{vii} Nils Sandblad, *Manet, Three Studies in Art* (Sweden: Lund, 1954), 77-80. See also Theodore Reff, "Manet's Portrait of Zola," *Burlington Magazine* January 1975, 35-44 *passim*.

^{viii} Edward Grant, *The Goncourt Brothers* (Durham: Duke UP, 1972), 85.

^{ix} Fosca, 224.

^x Mainardi, 175.

^{xi} Grant, 85.

^{xii} According to a 1997 lecture on Corot by Gary Tinterow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, artists' models in mid-nineteenth century Paris were typically of Italian or Jewish origin. Jewish models commanded a slightly higher tariff, as cited in Marcel Bovis and François Saint-Julien, *Nus d'Autrefois* (Paris: Arts et Metiers Graphiques, 1953), 6. "1850. Les modèles sont à 4 francs la pose de 4 heures, sauf les belles juives, plus recherchées, qui sont à 6 francs."

^{xiii} quoted in Pierre Sabatier, *L'Esthétique des Goncourt* (Geneva: Slatkin Reprints, 1970), 503-504

^{xiv} Fosca, 226, note 2.

^{xv} Jules was the more artistically talented of the two; he was noted for his etchings.

^{xvi} Fosca, 116-119.

^{xvii} Sabatier, 60; 69-77.

^{xviii} Fosca, 262-263.

^{xix} Enzo Caramaschi, *Réalisme et Impressionisme dans l'Oeuvre des Frères Goncourt* (Pisa: Libreria Gollardica, 1971), 46.

^{xx} Fosca, 428.

^{xxi} Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Manette Salomon* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1996). (All subsequent references refer to this edition.)

- ^{xxi} see Deborah Johnson's article "Japanese Prints in Europe before 1840," *Burlington Magazine*, May 1982, 343-348.
- ^{xxiii} see Shuji Takashina's article "Problèmes du Japonisme" in *Le Japonisme, Exposition au Grand Palais* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1988), 18-19 and note 9, 20. As cited by Takashina, Amary David's 1878 *Atelier d'Ingres* mentions Ingres' admiration for Japanese prints "il y a soixante ans."
- ^{xxiv} Sandblad, 71-72. See also Johnson, "Reconsidering Japonisme: The Goncourts' Contribution." *Mosaic* 24.2 (1991): 61.
- ^{xxv} quoted in E. and J. de Goncourt, *L'Art du Dix-Huitième Siècle et autres Textes sur l'Art* (Paris: Hermann, 1967), 189.
- ^{xxvi} Octave Mirbeau, *La 628-E8* (Paris: Union Générale d'éditions, 1977), 220.
- ^{xxvii} Gary Tinterow and Henri Loyrette, *Origins of Impressionism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), 234.
- ^{xxviii} Alfred Sensier, *Souvenirs sur Théodore Rousseau* (Paris: 1872), 271-2, 276-7 quoted in *Origins of Impressionism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), note 4, 235.
- ^{xxix} Ricatte attributes this anti-semitic aspect of the novel to the Goncourts' disapproval of their friend Saint-Victor's liaison with the sister of Rachel, the Jewish tragedienne. See Robert Ricatte, *La Création Romanesque chez les Goncourt, 1851-1870* (Paris: A. Colin, 1953), 312-313.
- ^{xxx} William Rubin, Lectures on History of Impressionism, Sotheby's, New York, Fall 1997.
- ^{xxxi} John Rewald, *History of Impressionism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 174-175.
- ^{xxxii} A similar virtuosity can be observed in the brief career of Frédéric Bazille (1841-1870), who painted with Monet and Renoir. See exhibition catalogue, *Frédéric Bazille Prophet of Impressionism* (Brooklyn Museum of Art: 1992).
- ^{xxxiii} E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs*, vol. 3 (Paris: Librairie Grund, 1976), 444.
- ^{xxxiv} Critics have identified the model of this character as J.F. Millet, or as a composite of Millet and Théodore Rousseau. In a *Journal* entry of July 10, 1883, Edmond de Goncourt calls Rousseau "le premier peintre de ce temps."
- ^{xxxv} William Rubin, Sotheby's, Fall 1997. "Vacation culture" is a term used by Meyer Shapiro in his art criticism.
- ^{xxxvi} *Origins of Impressionism*, 259
- ^{xxxvii} Gabriel Weisberg, "Philippe Burty, Notable Critic of the 19th Century." *Apollo*, April 1970. 296-300.
- ^{xxxviii} Sigfried Wichmann, *Japonisme, Japanese Influence on Western Art of the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Park Lane, 1981), 110.
- ^{xxxix} Extract of a letter highlighted in the show *Monet and the Mediterranean* exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, October 1997-January 1998, source not given. See Joachim Pissarro, *Monet and the Mediterranean*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1997)
- ^{xl} Ricatte, 352.
- ^{xli} quoted in William L. Schwartz, *The Imaginative Interpretation of the Far East in French Literature 1800-1925* (Paris: Honore Champion, 1927) note 4, 30, from a letter of Sept. 16, 1846 to E. Vasse, from the first tome of Correspondence edited by Conard
- ^{xlii} Cola Feller Ives, *The Great Wave: Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974), 34.
- ^{xliii} Johnson, "Reconsidering Japanese Art," 63.
- ^{xliv} Margaret Gentles, *Masters of the Japanese Print* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1965), 118-132; 152-164.
- ^{xlv} Theodore Duret, *Critique d'Avant-Garde*, quoted in Schwartz, note 5, 68-69
- ^{xlvi} *Grande Larousse de la Langue Française*, s.v. japonais, chinois, japonaiserie, chinoiserie.
- ^{xlvii} Fosca, 252.
- ^{xlviii} quoted in Jacques Dubois, *Romanciers français de l'Instantané au XIXe siècle* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1963), 114.

^{xix} E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire*, *texte intégral établi et annoté par Robert Ricatte* (Paris: Fasquelle Flammarion, 1956/ Editions Robert Laffont, 1989) 2: 178-179. (All subsequent references are to this edition.)

CHAPTER 2

HUMANKIND, MONKEYS AND NATURE AS AN EXPRESSION OF JAPONISME IN MANETTE SALOMON

“L’art chinois et surtout l’art japonais, ces arts qui paraissent aux yeux bourgeois d’une si invraisemblable fantaisie sont puisés à la nature même. Tout ce qu’ils font est emprunté à l’observation. Ils rendent ce qu’ils voient: les effets incroyables du ciel, les zébrures du champignon, les transparences de la méduse. Leur art copie la nature, comme l’art gothique.” *Goncourt Journal*, September 30, 1864.

“L’impression la plus profonde s’est traduite à Paris, dans les arts. n’est-ce pas, en définitive, un grand bonheur que les nouvelles inspirations demandées à ce peuple si éloigné, à cet Orient si différent de nous. Un lien tendait cependant à nous rapprocher: l’amour commun de la Nature par lequel les modernes féconderont leurs travaux; l’inspiration demandée à la vérité, la nouveauté d’impressions si neuves, toujours intéressantes, pleines d’attraits et de sentiment. . .” Zacharie Astruc, “Beaux-Arts. L’Empire du Soleil Levant,” article in *L’Etendard*, February 27, 1867.

Manifestations of japonisme in Manette Salomon occur beyond the description of *ukiyo-e* prints or of a studio decor enhanced by oriental objets d’art. The Goncourts’ abiding admiration for the art of Japan extended to a fascination with its culture, philosophy, customs and religion. The pantheist universe of Manette Salomon corresponds in many respects to the Oriental conception of the human species as the equal of all living creatures, each possessing an eternal spirit or soul.

Naturalistic depictions of “animals, plants, mountains, villages and flowers”ⁱⁱⁱ in Japanese prints and decorative arts served as a stimulus to the

Goncourts and other *japonistes* for the re-examination of the relationship between humankind and nature. As critic Zacharie Astruc wrote in his 1867 articles on *L'Empire du Soleil Levant* in *L'Etendard*, the *japonistes* shared with the Japanese “l’amour commun de la nature par lequel les modernes féconderont leurs travaux..”^{iv} In the same year Philippe Burty went so far as to warn that admiration of Japanese art’s naturalistic qualities would lead to the cult of Shintoism, the native animistic faith of Japan, in France!^v

The motif of the monkey in Manette Salomon represents a facet of japonisme, a living link with the Far East. Amateurs of French rococo from young adulthood, the Goncourts would have seen decorative *chinoiserie* paintings of mischievous monkeys attired in mandarin robes, exotic inhabitants of a mythical Orient, such as those in Christophe Huet’s *Grande and Petite Singerie* panels (1735) at the Château de Chantilly.^{vi} (fig. 23) The important role that simians play in Asian art and mythology as one of the twelve auspicious animals comprising the oriental zodiac^{vii} would be evident to the Goncourts as avid collectors of Chinese and Japanese *objets d’art*.

Japonistes of the Goncourts' caliber would have knowledge of representations of the monkey in Japanese art in two and three dimensions. Chinese paintings of gibbons were models for Japanese artists; Zen artist Mu-Ch'i's thirteenth century masterwork of a mother gibbon tenderly caring for her offspring served as a prototype for the mastery of monochrome ink painting. Japanese painters depicted the smaller macaque native to the archipelago from the early modern period, often in images reflecting its sacred status in Shinto as an 'intermediary' between the human and animal realms.^{viii} Amongst the *ukiyo-e* genre prints of urban entertainments such as acrobats, travelling circuses and sumo wrestling tournaments were illustrations of the antics of trained monkeys. (figs. 24-25) According to the anthropologist Ohnuki-Tierney, the monkey performance--still practiced in modern Japan-- is rooted in Medieval folk rituals based on the belief in the healing powers of the monkey, especially for the maladies of horses.^{ix}

Monkeys are often the subject of the small carved *netsuke* (decorative toggles) typical of the Edo period. *Netsuke* are "pieces of sculptured wood, metal or ivory used to secure a cord carrying personal belongings to the *obi* (sash) which acts as a belt in traditional dress."^x These *netsuke* were prized by *japonistes* for their imaginative and

naturalistic qualities. A passage in the Journal expresses Edmond's profound admiration for this type of miniature carving.

Enfin, j'ai là un bouton de fer, le bouton attachant la blague à tabac d'un Japonais à sa ceinture, où au-dessous de la patte d'une grue absente, d'une grue volant en dehors du médaillon niellé, se voit le reflet de cette grue dans l'eau d'une rivière éclairé par un clair de lune. Le peuple chez lequel un ouvrier a des imaginations pareilles à celle-ci, ne croyez-vous pas que ce peuple puisse être proposé comme professeur aux autres peuples?"^{xi} (April 19, 1884)

A likely literary source for the monkey in Manette Salomon is the sixteenth-century Chinese vernacular epic novel Hsi Yu Ki [Monkey]. Léon de Rosny, professor of Chinese, Japanese and other exotic languages at the *Ecole des Langues Orientales* could have introduced this well-known work to the *japoniste* circle. This hypothesis seems even more likely as there exists a Japanese version of this work published circa 1806 partially translated by Gakutei, a student of Hokusai, with illustrations by the master.^{xii} Wu Ch'êng-ên's saga recounts the adventures of the semi-human, semi-divine Monkey King, as he triumphs over the nefarious designs of hordes of gods and demons in his spiritual quest for the secret of eternal life. The intrepid trickster hero is ultimately rewarded for his courage and perseverance. At the conclusion of the one hundred chapters Monkey is granted the title of "Buddha victorious in strife" by the heavenly powers. Arthur Waley, translator of an abridged English version of Monkey which

appeared in 1943, interprets the admirable protagonist as the symbol of “the restless instability of genius.”^{xiii}

Whether inspired by literature, the visual arts or elements of both, the Goncourts’ portrayal of the monkey Vermillon in Manette Salomon is consistent with the Oriental view of this primate as quick-witted, curious and compassionate, a creature with a special status as humankind’s closest counterpart in the animal kingdom. Indeed, the monkey “serves as a powerful metaphor for the Japanese, and in general, for humans as defined in Japanese culture.”^{xiv} Even in modern Japan where bands of wild monkeys have virtually disappeared, the killing of a lone macaque is subject to strong taboo. These primates are respected by being addressed with the honorific suffix ‘*san*’ and their souls are venerated by Buddhist temples which hold memorial services for deceased monkeys.^{xv}

It is significant that a description of the monkey Vermillon in Chapter XXXVII of Manette Salomon employs the vocabulary of Buddhism, establishing a connection between the beast and the main religion of the Far East. “il[Vermillon] se recueillait sur son séant, dans des immobilités de vieux **bonze**[Buddhist priest]; le nez dans le mur, il semblait méditer une philosophie religieuse, rêver du **Nirvâna** des

macaques.^{xvi} (228) [emphasis added] Although the Goncourts were not specialists in eastern philosophy, they grasped some of its concepts, as this passage the Journal indicates: “Bouddha, un grand seigneur, un prince, fonde la religion du dégoût de la vie. Ce n’est que d’en haut que l’œil de l’âme et du cœur embrasse les misères humaines....” (July 28, 1862)^{xvii} As amateurs of the eighteenth century, the Goncourts may also have used the articles on “*Sintos/sintoisme*” [sic] and “*Budsdöisme*” [sic] in Diderot and d’Alembert’s Encyclopédie as a source background information.

As early as 1846 Flaubert was reading treatises on Buddhism and “books from China.” in his search for “color and poetry.”^{xviii} The opening of Japan to the West circa 1850 produced an outpouring of chronicles and first-hand accounts of Japanese life and customs by Dutch, English and French diplomats, merchants and explorers. The ample body of literature on Japanese culture available to the Goncourts is indicated by the publication in 1859 of Pages’ *Catalogue des ouvrages relatifs au Japon*.^{xix} Flaubert and Burty, intimate friends of the authors, were avidly involved in the study of oriental thought prior to the writing of Manette Salomon. Philippe Burty would encourage his fellow *japonistes* to study Japanese literature and language for an authentic appreciation of the art and culture in his articles of the 1870’s for *La Renaissance Littéraire et Artistique*.^{xx}

(The critic even described himself as a Buddhist in his correspondence with Zola, ca. 1883.)^{xxi}

In addition to the link with the Orient, the critic Ricatte attributes the presence of the monkey in Manette Salomon to actual life experience. In 1854 Jules de Goncourt purchased a small macaque during a trip to Le Havre. The pet monkey lived briefly in the Goncourts' ninth arrondissement residence until its fatal fall from a window. Jules attributed this suicidal leap to his own torments of the animal, and immortalized the late Kokoli in a watercolor.^{xxii} A Journal entry of 1856 seems to announce the origin of Vermillon in Manette Salomon. "Comme j'avais vu des singes, rue Cadet, s'épouiller avec plus de fraternité que des hommes et que nous pensions à faire quelque chose de cette bête,--le chien du sceptique,--voilà l'idée venue entre deux chopes au Grand Balcon." (July 25, 1856).^{xxiii}

The brothers' genuine curiosity about the intriguing behavior of this primate is reflected in Manette Salomon. As part of their documentary research for the novel, the Goncourts were privileged to attend the demise of a monkey in captivity, joining zoologists and natural scientists documenting the event.^{xxiv} The Goncourts practiced Naturalism as an intellectual discipline uniting literature and science, bringing together first-

hand observations of the behavior of living organisms with knowledge derived from the eighteenth century naturalist Buffon and the evolutionary theories of Darwin.

The monkey in Manette Salomon may also be related to French genre painting. Ricatte postulates that the character of Vermillon may be linked to satirical paintings of the primate by Alexandre Gabriel Decamps(1803-1860). (fig. 26) The Goncourts' Salon of 1855 notes with enthusiasm, "A Decamps, le singe, la comédie simiesque! Et macaques et guenons,- une ménagerie de grimaces!-habillés ou deshabillés, coquettes ou petrins!"^{xxv} As evidence of their esteem, Jules produced a fine etching of a clothed monkey studying his mirror image after an original by Descamps. (fig. 27) (In the novel this artist's luminous landscapes of the Middle East are favorably viewed by the *japoniste* painter Naz de Coriolis.)

Based on these Far Eastern and French antecedents, it is proposed that the monkey Vermillon appears in Manette Salomon as a living manifestation of the art and culture of Japan, an association reinforced by the Goncourts' first-hand observations of this animal. He first appears at the end of chapter XXXIV, as Coriolis, returning from Asia Minor, fortuitously encounters his Parisian *camarade d'atelier* Anatole at the port

of Marseille. Affirming the renewal of their friendship, the macaque, souvenir of the artist's initiative *voyage en Orient*, leaps off Coriolis' shoulder onto that of Anatole. Subsequently, the trio will inhabit the vast Parisian studio of the creole painter.

A curious pair of mirror-relationships develops, firstly between Coriolis and Anatole, the bohemian scamp whom the artist adopts as a surrogate brother. In the same manner, Vermillon becomes the 'double' and constant companion to Anatole, forming a bond between man and beast. Anatole has a natural affinity for animals, for he was "né avec des malices de singe." (103) Indeed, the tenderness and devotion on the part of Anatole towards Vermillon rarely finds its counterpart in human interactions of the novel, notably those between Coriolis and his model-mistress Manette.

Vermillon is named for his fondness for tubes of crimson red pigment, a hue rich in Oriental associations, especially in its suggestion of the sun. The French referred to Japan as Nippon, *L'Empire du Soleil Levant*. In *L'Encyclopédie*, "*Nippon*" [sic] is defined as the oriental designation for "le commencement du Soleil. Il doit son origine à l'idée qu'avaient les Japonais et les Chinois que les îles du Japon étaient les

premières éclairées par le soleil.”^{xxvi} One of Japan’s most sacred sites, Ise Shrine, is dedicated to Amaterasu, Goddess of the Sun, mythical ancestor of the Imperial family. Shinto shrines are marked by the *torii* gate, twin orange-red entrance posts. In the Goncourts’ novel, the aptly-named Vermillon displays a marked tropism for the heat of the sun’s rays. Symbolizing the sun and the Orient, the monkey provides a vivid *tache* of brightness in his frolics across the ‘canvas’ of the novel.

Vermillon’s presence in the novel introduces an element of irreverence to the solemn task of creating art. In Chapter XXXV a comic multiplicity occurs as the trio is shown *à l’oeuvre*, in an effect comparable to interlocking Chinese boxes. As Coriolis works studiously at his easel, Anatole, casually seated, makes a sketch. Behind him, the monkey imitates the younger artist, as he fruitlessly scribbles into a notebook. “...il[Vermillon] avait des étonnements, des désespoirs, il jetait de petits cris de colère, il tapait sur le papier...[il] flairait le porte-crayon avec précaution, comme un instrument de magie, et finissait par le tendre à Anatole.” (221).

In what appears to be a parody of the authors’ own scrupulous Naturalist observation of their subject matter, Anatole diligently studies the

monkey's gestures and facial expressions, surmising the animal's thoughts, which he equates with human emotions. "Ces petites volontés courtes et frénétiques des petits singes...le caprice des sensations, la mobilité de l'humeur...les passages de la gravité à la folie, les variations, les sautes d'idées, qui dans ces bêtes, semblent mettre en une heure le caractère de tous les âges..."(228-229) The pair become equals, even friends, as the artist succeeds in his perfect mimicry of the animal: "il arriva à singer le singe"!

Ironically, the animal finally adopts the man as his companion, "Il semblait que le singe se sentait comme rapproché par un voisinage de nature de ce garçon si souple, si élastique, à la physionomie si mobile; il retrouvait en lui un peu de sa race."(230) As Anatole picks up the mannerisms of the monkey with alacrity, so the monkey mimics the creative gestures of the artist by tracing circular patterns with feathers dipped in soot. However, in attempting to communicate his desires, Vermillon is frustrated, emitting 'bird-like' or 'child-like' sounds, unable to mobilize his tongue for speech as he observes in Anatole.

Vermillon makes a key appearance in Chapter XLVI, setting the scene as Coriolis prepares to study his resplendent albums of Japanese

prints in compensation for the dreary winter light of Paris. Just as the creole painter finds solace in the colorful intensity of the prints, so the monkey seeks the oriental sunlight he craves in the incandescent heat of the stove. In this instance it is the animal which initiates the instinctive behavior that is followed by the artist on an intellectual level.

“Ces jours-là, on voyait à Vermillon des attitudes paresseuses, engourdies, inquiètes et souffrantes. Travaillé par le malaise de ce vilain temps, ayant comme le froid de neige au fond de lui, il se postait près du poêle...Toute son attention paraissait concentré sur le rouge du poêle....[il] s’enfonçait dans une espèce de nostalgie profonde et de méditation concentré, avec un air confondu, cette espèce de peur de voir le soleil mort, qu’ont observée les naturalistes chez les singes en hiver. (260)

During his near-fatal illness, Coriolis displays an atavistic tropism identical to the monkey, turning towards the ‘warmth’ of objects from the Orient in his bedroom: “On eût dit que, comme dans les religions de ses peuples de lumière, il tournait sa mort vers le soleil.” (313)

During the novel’s idyllic Barbizon interlude Coriolis, his mistress Manette and Anatole delight in their immersion in Nature, while Vermillon, creature of the wild, remains in Paris in care of the concierge. Upon return to the studio in the fall (Chapter XCIX), the artists discover that their pet has been subject to neglect. After a brief illness, Vermillon expires in the nurturing arms of Anatole, who attends the sick creature

with more devotion than he had shown in aiding cholera victims in Marseilles in an earlier chapter. Anatole weeps, while Manette and Coriolis show no pity for the moribund creature, whose final gestures recall those of a dying human. “C’étaient des secousses...des élancements tout pareils à ces dernières revoltes qui jettent de travers, brusquement, les membres d’un malade.” (404) Ricatte calls the scene of the agony of the macaque “une des pages les plus discrètement pathétiques qu’on ait écrites,” ^{xxvii} ; clearly this episode is based on the Goncourts’ viewing of the death of a monkey in captivity.

After the decease, Anatole exclaims, “J’ai oublié de lui demander s’il voulait un prêtre,” and in spite of the jest of his remark, he himself assumes the role of priest for Vermillon, taking on the task of providing a dignified burial for his lost companion or brother. The devoted Anatole refuses to consider Manette’s curt proposal to dispose of the body in the trash. With the demise of the monkey, Anatole feels genuine grief, “il souffrait d’une impression d’avoir perdu quelqu’un qu’il n’avait jamais eue.” (467) Throughout the remainder of the novel Anatole will lead a solitary, monk-like existence, incapable of forming a lasting bond with another living being after Vermillon’s death.

The burial scene in chapter CII is astonishing in its depth of feeling. Flaubert noted in his congratulatory letter to the brothers, “L’enterrement du singe au clair de lune me reste dans la tête comme si je l’avais vu, ou plutôt éprouvé. Pauvre singe! On l’aime!”^{xxviii} In this passage, Anatole brings the draped corpse to the Bois de Boulogne to prepare Vermillon’s grave, insuring that the animal will not suffer the indignity of being stuffed and displayed in a taxidermist’s shop. The stop at a tavern is the equivalent of a wake, as Anatole drinks in memory of the life of his counterpart. The civilized Parisian park stands in for the primeval forest or jungle, original home of the monkey. The full moon shines brightly, the inverse reflection of Vermillon’s precious sunlight.

Laying the small body to rest, Anatole speaks as if in a trance, using a mystical dialect, “un chantonement nègre.” He transforms himself into a priest or shaman performing a sacred ritual. Returning the animal to the earth, Anatole’s intones a rhythmic farewell chant describing the karmic natural cycle. “Vermillon...paradis!...s’envoler dans le bleu!...Le bon Dieu pour les singes...Vermillon là-haut! Vermillon, amour!! oiseau! étoile!...petite fleur bleue! ...plus rien.” (409) The implication is that the soul of Vermillon will enjoy the pleasures of monkey life again in his afterlife; through metempsychosis his spirit will be reincarnated in another

form, perhaps even as the delicate flowers of the *ukiyo-e prints*, the “clochettes bleues.”

The characters of Manette Salomon possessing the most ‘human’ qualities are identified by their love of animals. Anatole’s female counterpart is Madame Crescent, a Lorraine peasant, wife of a Barbizon landscapist befriended by Coriolis. Introduced in Chapter LXXXIV, she demonstrates compassionate behavior towards man and beast. Madame Crescent’s innate bond with the animal kingdom is explained as the result of having been suckled by a goat as an infant. The trauma of witnessing the slaughter and consumption of this *nourrice* by her parents at age twelve assured her life-long vegetarianism and indignation at acts of animal cruelty. “Son instinct avait naturellement de la religieuse répugnance du **brahme** pour la bête qui a vécu et qu’on a tuée: pour elle, la boucherie ressemblait à de l’anthropophagie.”(367) [emphasis added]. Here Goncourts refer to the dictates of the Hindu religion of India to describe the ultimate respect for the souls of animals.

Madame Crescent’s joy in life is “*la poulomanie*,” raising exotic breeds of hens: “ses Houdan, ses Crèvecoeur, ses Cochinchine, ses Brahma, ses Bentham...”(364). This eclectic listing of breeds is yet another

reference to the theme of the co-mingling of elements of Orient and Occident that occurs in the novel. It is noteworthy that the rooster, associated with the rising sun and the Shinto sun goddess Amaterasu, is an emblematic avian motif in Japanese art.^{xxix} (figs. 28-29) Naturalistic studies of roosters in Hokusai's *Manga* series were adapted by the *japoniste* designer Felix Bracquemond, an associate of Burty and the Goncourts, for the decor of his well-known '*Rousseau*' dinnerware service of 1866-67.^{xxx}

At Barbizon Madame Crescent befriends Manette and Anatole, whom she refers to as '*le bélier*.' Like a mother hen, it pleases her to take these young persons under her wing. However, her kindness is undercut by the revelation of a virulent anti-Semitism. After learning that Manette is Jewish, the artists' model is rejected with the reflexive cruelty of an animal rejecting an alien species. In later chapters, Madame Crescent demonstrates exceptional devotion to her husband by assuming total responsibility for selling the works of the modest Barbizon master and seeking government commissions to ensure their livelihood. It is Madame Crescent who grants the painter the freedom to concentrate on his solitary task as an authentic artist living in harmony with the natural world, the prerequisite for genuine creation.

Une griserie d'un panthéisme inconscient lui était venue de ces études errantes qu'il faisait hors de son atelier, sans peindre, sans dessiner, plongé dans l'infini des ciels et des horizons, enfoncé du matin au soir dans l'herbe et dans le jour, s'éblouissant de la lumière, buvant des yeux l'aurore, le coucher du soleil, le crépuscule...(373)

Towards the denouement of the novel it is Madame Crescent who demonstrates a redeeming sense of humanity through her generous behavior towards Anatole.^{xxxi} An instrument of salvation, she literally rescues the stray bohemian from starvation by securing a post for him as caretaker at the Jardin des Plantes through her contacts at the ministries. Differing from the majority opinion, the peasant woman does not judge Anatole as a failure for lack of success as an artist or for his *clochard*-like appearance. For Madame Crescent he is a kindred spirit in need of succor, and her charitable response is as immediate and instinctive as if she were responding to the abuse of an animal.

This quasi-miraculous intervention grants Antaole admission to an earthly Nirvana, the luxuriant botanical and zoological garden where man and beast live in perfect and artificial harmony. Ironically, this man-made paradise in the Jardin des Plantes exists as a refuge in the midst of the ever-expanding metropolis. In this haven the iridescent colors and exuberant celebration of Nature characteristic of the Japanese prints are manifest in

the living beauty of the gardens and captive animal specimens, “*toutes ces existences flottantes.*”

The description of the gradual revelation of a rainbow of color by the advance of morning sun’s rays upon the bright plumage of the zoo’s peacocks, parrots, storks, and cranes recalls the incandescent hues of *ukiyo-e* revealed in Coriolis’ print albums in Chapter XLVII. There is even a reference here to the bright mineral colors which inspired the painter dazzled by the examples of the Orient. “...un morceau de la queue d’un paon fait scintiller un feu d’artifice de pensées et d’émeraudes, l’aigrette de la grue couronné tremble dans l’herbe comme un bouquet d’épis d’or.” (545) These captive birds recall the “*vol des grues voyageuses*” depicted in the prints. One could imagine the idyllic spring scene in the Jardin des Plantes as a Zen painting: the small tea-house-like dwelling which serves as the caretaker’s cottage, the small monk-like figure of Anatole amongst the vastness of the landscape, the classic Bird and Flower motifs derived from models of Chinese art.

While Coriolis found a temporary inspiration and an artificial respite from reality in his *ukiyo-e* albums, the failed artist Antaole inhabits an earthly Paradise in which nature’s splendor is celebrated in the perpetually

changing spectacle of color and light, and in the fantastic forms and movement of the animals. The implication of the superiority of Nature over its artistic imitation is evident. An 1856 Journal entry describes the pleasure of the Goncourts' visit to this setting which they would use in Manette Salomon. "Jardin de Plantes avec Pouthier.-- "La giraffe: les promenades de famille! L'hippopotame, monstre chinois, un édredon qui paît, l'éléphantiasis fait bête.--Jacques, l'homme des bois, un nègre enrichi." (August 29, 1856)^{xxxii} According to Ricatte, the character of Anatole was based on Jacques Pouthier, a bohemian artist friend of Jules de Goncourt.^{xxxiii}

Anatole himself gradually merges into this natural work of art, effacing his social identity as a human being, as the very molecules of his body seem to combine with those of 'lesser species,' the animal-life and vegetation surrounding him. It is significant that the novel concludes on an enigmatic note of man's return to Nature, a startlingly reverse process of evolution.

Peu à peu, il [Anatole]s'abandonne à toutes ces choses. il s'oublie, il se perd à voir, à écouter, à aspirer...la nature l'embrassant par tous les sens, il se laisse couler en elle, et reste à s'y tremper. Une sensation délicieuse lui vient et monte le long de lui comme en ces **métamorphoses antiques qui replantaient l'homme dans la Terre, en lui faisant pousser des branches aux jambes**. Il glisse dans l'être des êtres qui sont là. Il lui semble qu'il est un peu

dans tout ce qui vole, dans tout ce qui croît, dans tout ce qui court. Le jour, le printemps, l'oiseau, ce qui chante, chante en lui. Il croit sentir dans ses entrailles l'allégresse de la vie des bêtes; et une espèce de grand bonheur animal le remplit d'une de ces béatitudes matérielles et **ruminantes** où il semble que **la créature commence à se dissoudre dans le tout vivant de la création.** (546-7) [emphasis added]

This mystic unity between man and nature in the case of Anatole had been foreshadowed by the experience of Crescent, the solitary monk-like painter of the Barbizon forest.

Le **ruminement** des songeries d'un berger, l'exaltation des perceptions d'un artiste, la ténacité paysanne de la méditation, le travail surexaltant de l'isolement, l'immense enivrement sacré de la création, tout cela, mêlé en lui, lui donnait un peu de l'extatisme des anciens Solitaires. Comme chez quelques grands paysagistes à l'existence sauvage...on eût dit que la sève des choses lui était monté au cerveau." (373)

The repetition of the ambiguous terms *ruminantes/ruminement*, referring both to human contemplation and to mammals which chew the cud, is significant as an equation between the human and animal realms. The explicitly pantheistic universe of Manette Salomon unites Western myths of Antiquity with the animistic Oriental conception of the universe, which postulate the presence of a soul in all life forms, according to the eternal cycle of rebirth.

The conclusion to Manette Salomon, in which occidental and oriental pantheistic traditions seem to merge is remarkably close to the concurrent aesthetic explorations of American painter and *japoniste* Whistler. In 1867-1868 Whistler was working on his uncompleted *Six Projects series*..^{xxxiv} These were sketches for a scheme of interior decoration in which the artist sought to combine the elegance of a frieze of Greek Tanagra figures with motifs borrowed from Japanese art, such as the cherry blossom. Early *japonistes* often invoked Greek art, representing the classic definition of beauty, in their discussion of the art of Japan, viewing the two as complementary ideals. In his 1867 articles on Japanese civilization for *L'Etendard* Astruc referred to Japan as “this Greece placed in the Far East.”^{xxxv} In their Promenades Japonaises (1878) coauthors Emile Guimet and Felix Regamey declared, “ Si les Japonais sont à ce point semblables aux anciens Grecs et Romains, c’est qu’ils ont à la fois une simplicité antique, païenne, et un haut degré de la civilization.”^{xxxvi}

In the end, the Goncourts, Whistler and most other *japonistes* opted to emulate the ‘Naturalist’ expression of the Japanese, which permitted an artistic freedom that far surpassed the confines of the classical ideal. In their writings the Goncourts tended to exalt the imaginative qualities of Japanese art to emphasize a lack of appreciation for Greek models, as in

this characteristic phrase, “Pourquoi une porte japonaise me charme-t-elle et m’amuse-t-elle l’œil tandis que toutes les lignes architecturales grecques me l’ennuient? Quant aux gens qui prétendent sentir l’une et l’autre, ma conviction est qu’ils ne sentent rien.”^{xxxvii} (Journal, February 25, 1867)

A contemporary of the Goncourts, Alidor Delzant, noted that Manette Salomon had caused an uproar upon publication in 1867 for its revolutionary modernist appeal for a renewal of the concept of Nature in French art and literature.

...le grand mouvement du retour de l’art et de l’homme du dix-neuvième siècle à la **nature naturelle**, dans cette étude sympathique des choses à laquelle vont, pour se retremper et se rafraîchir, les civilisations vieilles, dans cette poursuite passionnée des beautés simples, humbles, ingénues de la terre, qui restera le charme et la gloire de notre école présente.^{xxxviii} [emphasis added]

The advocacy of the return to “*la nature naturelle*” by the Goncourts, Astruc, Burty and other influential *japonistes* in the year of the debut of Japan at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* coincided with their appreciative observation of the fundamental interdependency of humankind and Nature expressed in the art and culture of Japan. As a twentieth century curator of Far Eastern Art pointed out insightfully in his introduction to a 1976 exhibition of the art of Japan, “Nature and Japan sound alike to the initiated, and to these enlightened people they are synonymous.”^{xxxix} This

revelation was already part of the consciousness of the pioneering French *japonistes* one century earlier.

ⁱ Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire*, texte intégral établi et annoté par Robert Ricatte (Paris: Fasquelle Flammarion, 1956/Robert Laffont 1989), 1: 1103.

ⁱⁱ Zacharie Astruc, "Beaux Arts. L'Empire du Soleil Levant," *L'Etendard*, Feb. 27, 1867, quoted in Tinterow and Loyrette, *Origins of Impressionism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), 234, note 3.

ⁱⁱⁱ Gabriel P. Weisberg, *The Independent Critic, Philippe Burty and the Visual Arts of mid-Nineteenth Century France* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 104.

^{iv} Zacharie Astruc, "Beaux Arts, L'Empire du Soleil Levant," *L'Etendard* (Feb. 27, 1867), 1-2, quoted in Weisberg, 104.

^v Weisberg, 97.

^{vi} Ptolemy Tompkins, *The Monkey in Art* (New York: Scala Books, 1994), 66-73.

^{vii} According to Buddhist legend, the other eleven animals associated with the Buddha are: the rat, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and boar. See *the Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 2, Fall 1980, 21-24.

^{viii} Emiko Ohnuki Tierney, *The Monkey as Mirror, Symbolic Transformation in Japanese History and Ritual* (Princeton: Princeton Upress, 1987), 20-26.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, 114-119.

^x *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, s.v. *netsuke*.

^{xi} E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal*, 2: 1065.

^{xii} Wu Ch'eng-en, *Monkey*, translated and prefaced by Arthur Waley. (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 7.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*, 7.

^{xiv} Ohnuki-Tierney, 21.

^{xv} *Ibid.*, 24-25.

^{xvi} E. and J. de Goncourt, *Manette Salomon* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1996), 228. All subsequent references are to this edition.

^{xvii} Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Journal*, 1: 838.

^{xviii} see note xli, Chapter 1. Flaubert's letter of September 16, 1846 to E. Vasse is quoted in William L. Schwartz, *The Imaginative Interpretation of the Far East in French Literature, 1800-1925* (Paris: Honoré champion, 1927) note 4, 30.

^{xix} John Sandberg, "Discovery of Japanese Prints in the 19th Century before 1867." *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, May-June 1968, 301.

^{xx} Gabriel P. Weisberg and Yvonne M.L. Weisberg, *Japonisme, An Annotated Bibliography* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1990), 156-158.

^{xxi} Centre Zola, Paris, Archives of correspondence between Zola and Burty on the subject of *Au bonheur des Dames*. Non-dated, non-paginated, microfilm.

- ^{xxii} Robert Ricatte, *La Création Romanesque chez les Goncourt, 1851-1870* (Paris: A. Colin, 1953), 331-332.
- ^{xxiii} E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal*, 1: 261.
- ^{xxiv} Ricatte, 306.
- ^{xxv} E et J de Goncourt, *L'Art du Dix-huitième siècle et autres textes sur l'Art* (Paris: Hermann, 1967), 227.
- ^{xxvi} *L'Encyclopédie*, s.v. *Nippon[sic]*.
- ^{xxvii} Ricatte, 332.
- ^{xxviii} Flaubert's letter of November 13, 1867 to the Goncourts, quoted in Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 561.
- ^{xxix} Sigfried Wichmann, *Japonisme, Japanese Influence on Western Art of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Park Lane, 1981), 106-119.
- ^{xxx} Weisberg, *Philippe Burty*, 105. See also Bouillon, Shimizu and Thiebaut, *Art, Industrie et Japonisme, Le Service Rousseau* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1988).
- ^{xxxi} See Chapter CLII.
- ^{xxxii} E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal*, 1: 197.
- ^{xxxiii} Ricatte, 327-331, *passim*.
- ^{xxxiv} Collection of the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.
- ^{xxxv} Zacharie Astruc, quoted in Deborah Johnson, "Impact of East Asian Art within the Early Impressionist Circle, 1856-1868" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1984) 159.
- ^{xxxvi} Emile Guimet and Felix Regamey, *Promenades Japonaises* (Paris: Charpentier, 1878), quoted in Denise Brahimi, *Un Aller-Retour pour Cipango, essai sur les Paradoxes du Japonisme* (Paris: Blandin, 1992), 41.
- ^{xxxvii} E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal*, 2:67.
- ^{xxxviii} Alidor Delzant, *Les Goncourt* (Paris: Charpentier, 1889), 144.
- ^{xxxix} Harold P. Stern, *Birds, Beasts, Blossoms and Bugs/The Nature of Japan* (New York: Abrams, 1976), 9.

CHAPTER 3

***'L'ENSEMBLE PAR LE FRAGMENT': JAPONISME AS
FRAGMENTATION IN EDMOND DE GONCOURT'S LA FILLE ELISA***

“S’il vous faut de vive force, et pour les besoins de la cause, trouver à m’affilier, rapprochez-moi des vieux Japonais: la rareté de leur goût, m’a, de tout temps, diverti et j’approuve les suggestions de leur esthétique qui évoque la présence par l’ombre, l’ensemble par le fragment.”

Claude Monet, interview with Roger Marx, (1909)ⁱ

“Décidément, je n’ai plus d’intérêt à créer un livre. Créer un massif de fleurs, une chambre, un meuble, voilà ce qui, dans ce moment, amuse ma cervelle.” Edmond de Goncourt, Journal entry, December 16, 1873.

After the death of Jules de Goncourt at age 39 in 1870, Edmond sought consolation for the loss of his artistic collaborator by intensifying his collecting enthusiasm for Japanese art.ⁱⁱ This devotion to japonisme eventually eclipsed the shared passion for the art and society of the French eighteenth century, explored with Jules in thoroughly-researched studies which contributed to a critical re-evaluation of the period. Their published works based on primary sources, Portraits Intimes du dix-huitième Siècle, Histoire de Marie-Antoinette, L’Art du dix-huitième siècle (monographs on Watteau, Boucher, Greuze, Fragonard, and Chardin), Les Maîtresses de Louis XV, and La Femme au dix-huitième Siècle et L’Amour au dix-huitième siècleⁱⁱⁱ continue to serve as reference for present-day historians.

Bereaved by the absence of his beloved brother and co-author, Edmond began to perceive the *le grand siècle* in tones of gray, *en grisaille*, while Japanese art retained the appeal of its exuberant color and unfettered imagination. The harmonious mix of Japanese and French decorative elements at the Goncourt residence in Auteuil, where even the garden featured exotic oriental species, served as a tangible illustration of the syncretic aesthetic in art and literature espoused by Edmond.

Writing entries in the Journal, a ritual usually managed by Jules, became Edmond's solitary task, although he contemplated ending it with his brother's last lines. Resuming the occupation of his closest companion, Edmond assured the continuity of their joint project, an uncensored account of aspects of daily existence begun in 1851. As stated in the preface to the 1887 edition, "Le Journal est notre confession de chaque soir: la confession de deux vies **inséparées** dans le plaisir, le labeur, la peine; de deux pensées jumelles, de deux esprits si semblables, si identiques, si homogènes, que cette confession peut être considérée comme l'expansion d'un seul **moi** et d'un seul **je**." (27) [emphasis added]

The Journal itself is an illustration of the aesthetic of fragmentation that characterizes the Edmond de Goncourt's later work. It is a disparate

assemblage of random thoughts, projects, observations, associations, overheard conversations, an intimate account of dreams, passions, friendships and amusements, in which public and private lives overlap. A routine entry from a 'July Saturday' in 1856, recording visual impressions of a bordello near the Ecole Militaire in Paris, will later be incorporated by Edmond into the novel La Fille Elisa (1877).

...--Au gros 9: grande salle, éclairée par le haut,--jour blafard. Des tables, un comptoir plein de liqueurs. Des zouaves, des soldats, des hommes en blouse, en chapeau gris, attablés, des filles sur leurs genoux. Filles: chemises blanches ou de couleur, avec une jupe sombre; jeunes, jolies, les ongles roses, coiffées, les cheveux relevés de petits agréments; fumant la cigarette, puisant au maryland d'une amie; se promenant deux à deux dans l'allée des tables, jouant à se pousser; ou attablées, jouant aux dames. . . .
Ces femmes à vingt sous: non les terribles créatures de Guys, mais une tournure et une langue de lorettes.

[*lorettes*: term for independant courtesans, typically residing in the ninth arrondissement. Gavarni's series of lithographs, Les Lorettes (1842), illustrates their existence on the fringe of fashionable Parisian society.]

Another episode of the Journal records the visit in 1862 to the model women's penitentiary near the provincial French city of Clermont. There the brothers were shocked to discover the cruelty of the "modern" Auburn system--imported from the United States--which imposed complete silence on the inmates as an instrument of punishment. The nucleus of La Fille

Elisa was formed as a result of this shared eye-witness experience, combined with observations over a period of years of the lower echelons of prostitution in Paris and in the provinces.

In 1871 Edmond began the long process of composing this novel, delayed by the demise of his brother. “J’ai été mordu ce matin de l’envie d’écrire La Fille Elisa, ce livre que nous devons écrire, lui et moi, après Madame Gervaisais. J’ai jeté quatre ou cinq lignes sur un morceau de papier. Cela deviendra peut-être le premier chapitre.” (Journal, 24 Feb. 1871)^{iv} “Peindre, dans mon roman de la prostitution, la grandeur macabre qu’ont rendue les crayons de Rops et de Guys.” (Journal, Nov. 1871)^v Felicien Rops (1833 -1897) and Constantin Guys (1802-1892) were two illustrators with a predilection for such genre scenes. (figs. 30-31.) Both artists were also admired by Baudelaire; the poet dedicated a sonnet to Rops and predicated the essay *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne* on the work of ‘C.G.’

Edmond’s short and brutal La Fille Elisa seeks to de-romanticize the theme of the prostitute in the French novel, “*des amours vénales de dames aux camélias...*”^{vi} as depicted by Hugo and Dumas. Goncourt purports to present an image closer to reality by basing his fictional characters on

clinical studies of the prostitute's sordid existence. At the same time, La Fille Elisa is an ardent *cri-de-coeur* of a socially-conscious author, indicting the barbarity of the modern state's showcase prison system, in the tradition of Hugo's fictional polemic against capital punishment, Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné (1829). As Edmond clarifies in his preface, "Mais la prostitution et la prostituée, ce n'est qu'un épisode, la prison et la prisonnière... voilà l'intérêt de mon livre."^{vii} A contemporary of the Goncourts, the sympathetic critic Delzant, describes the work as a 'monograph,' "dans laquelle l'action, presque nulle, laisse la part très grande au document et à la physiologie."^{viii}

The modern reader is tempted to describe this fragmentary, stripped-to-the essentials narrative as one of the first anti-novels. La Fille Elisa's abstract quality of fragmentation is the result of the austerity of its plot structure, lack of character development and paucity of dialogue. On the other hand, the author revels in close-up examinations of visual stimuli; the narrator's omniscient vision travels from tableau to tableau, revealing milieus of lower-class existence where any hint of beauty would seem incongruous to the uninitiated. Like the painter, his eye focuses on dramatic effects of light and color, a vividness emphasized by the bleak background, as illustrated in the following vignettes:

- “La salle n’avait plus que l’éclairage de l’azur blême d’une nuit glacée passant à travers les carreaux.” (36)
- “Elisa était devant la maison à la lanterne rouge, qui s’affaissait ainsi que la ruine coulante d’un vieux bastion, et dont la porte, fermée et verrouillée, laissait filtrer, par l’ouverture d’un judas, une lueur pâle sur la blancheur glacée du chemin.” (53)
- “Dix lustres, multipliés par vingt glaces plaquées sur les murs rouges, projetaient dans le café...un éclairage brûlant traversé de lueurs, de reflets, de miroitements électriques et aveuglants, un éclairage tombant comme une douche de fer...” (99)

The last passage indicates a fascination with the effects of artificial light which parallels that of Degas in his paintings and graphics.

In La Fille Elisa, setting, point of view, chronology and narrative focus shift without transition, creating a disquieting effect for a reader seeking the assurance of continuity in a traditional novel. The author uses the device of two or three lines of ellipses (...) to “jump cut” from one scene to another. In chapter XXXIV, this shorthand device is used to indicate the passage of time between Elisa’s departure from the brothel and her return from the fateful date with a soldier.(129) In the narrative, the imagined and actual realms unite and intertwine, breaking the fictive

envelope. For example, in the midst of a didactic discussion on the affinities between the soldier and the prostitute, the third-person narrator suddenly interjects his own persona: “Dans la démolition d’une maison [de prostitution] de la Cité, un paquet de lettres me fut apporté. Toutes les lettres étaient des lettres de soldats.” (118) In the last chapter, the narrator again shifts abruptly to the first person, “Il y a des années, je passais quelques semaines dans un château de Noirlieu. . .” referring to the Journal’s record of glimpsing the prototype for “la Fille Elisa” on her deathbed in the prison hospital, the episode which inspired the novel.

The quality of fragmentation observed in La Fille Elisa reflects tendencies in the visual arts of the 1870’s, as Impressionism developed its exploration of the importance of color over form. According to William Rubin (Director Emeritus of the Departments of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art), 1873 marks the apogee of the Impressionist achievement, as these painters approached abstraction, by what he terms “the atomization of all visual forms, disengaging the picture from the representation of things.” This phenomenon is illustrated, according to Rubin, in Renoir and Monet’s closely related versions of the *Duck Pond at Argenteuil* (1873), (fig. 32) in which a shimmering visual sensation is achieved by “random flecks of color,” the formation of “an autonomous

and homogenous crust of paint”^{xix} effectively transcending the recognizable but secondary ‘subject’ of swimming waterfowl and their reflections.

Certainly, what art historians have defined as the Impressionist focus on “*la vie de sensation*” receives the same emphasis in the works of the Goncourts.

As Sabatier points out in his classic study of the Goncourt aesthetic, Edmond was supportive of the initiatives of young painters of the Impressionist School. The embrace of bold color and interest in scenes of contemporary life was indicative of the impact of Japanese art, an enthusiasm shared by progressive circles in Paris during the 1860’s and 1870’s.

Edmond de Goncourt a été le premier avec Zola, mais avec plus d’impartialité... à admirer les effets de Manet et de Monet, à encourager, par des articles élogieux, les efforts heureux d’un Raffaëlli ou d’un Pissarro. Dans les toiles, qui déconcertaient encore la plupart de ses contemporains, Edmond de Goncourt a reconnu le mérite de la nouveauté, il a su attirer, sur ces jeunes inconnus, l’attention favorable des lettrés et des amateurs. A la suite d’Edmond de Goncourt, Zola, Huysmans, Mauclair, Rodin, se sont plu à admirer et à aimer ces novateurs qu’ils considéraient comme des frères...^x

Degas, whose work differs from the Impressionists in his emphasis on line, was an artist on good terms with Edmond de Goncourt. Both were early japonistes who frequented the shop of Madame Desoye on the rue de Rivoli in the 1860’s.^{xi} An 1874 Journal entry praises the artist, “C’est

jusqu'à présent l'homme que j'ai vu le mieux attraper, dans la copie de la vie moderne, l'âme de cette vie."^{xii} Degas, an ardent reader of Naturalist literature, much preferred Goncourt's works to Zola's, in particular he admired La Fille Elisa and Les Frères Zemganno (1879). Included in catalogues of the complete works of Degas are his unpublished drawings based on episodes of La Fille Elisa.^{xiii} (fig. 33)

Goncourt, Degas, Monet and other French amateurs of oriental art admired its characteristic fragmentation of subject matter, in which the viewer must complete a mental image based on the suggestion of form or movement indicated by the artist. The origin of this pictorial shorthand is the art of oriental calligraphy, in which ideograms composed with rapid brushstrokes serve as abbreviations for linguistic and philosophical concepts. Degas and Goncourt were present at a painting demonstration by Japanese master Watanabe Seitei at the home of journalist Philippe Burty in 1878. The assembled japonistes marvelled at the artist's skill in depicting the essence of birds and other creatures with a few strokes of ink and color on silk, applied quickly with a sure hand, without the possibility of retouching. (fig. 34) On this occasion Degas and the Japanese artist exchanged works,^{xiv} although Degas found his own drawing clumsy and unspontaneous in comparison with the Japanese *sensei*.

Edmond de Goncourt was cognizant of the implications of the Japanese approach not only for western painting but for the art of literature. Like the Japanese artist, he too wished to capture the fugitive, instantaneous quality of his subject, creating an equally expressive effect with an economy of means. Japanese vernacular poetry of the 8th to 20th centuries, with its format of limited syllables, as in the *waka* (*tanka*) format of thirty-one syllables arranged in five lines[5-7-5-7-7], reflects an equally restrained aesthetic.^{xv} The Japanese *waka* poem is defined as “the lyrical response to an event, a scene, or an observed aspect of nature or human affairs”.^{xvi} Edmond de Goncourt may indeed have appreciated this free translation of a modern Japanese *waka* from the first anthology of Japanese poems published in Paris in 1871. (figs. 35-36)

Les charmes et les parfums (de la vie)
 se dissipent en vérité;
 Dans notre monde, est-il quelque chose qui dure toujours?
 En la profonde montagne de l'existence, le jour présent s'abîme,
 Et n'est plus même, hélas! une fragile image de songe.^{xvii}

Léon de Rosny, Professor of Japanese at the *Ecole Spéciale de Langues Orientales*, published his Anthologie Japonaise, Poésies Anciennes et Modernes des Insulaires du Nippon to benefit students, who could study the original texts alongside his unrhymed translations. At first he planned to publish translations of Japanese plays, to bring the unusual

manifestations of these dramatic forms to the attention of the West.^{xviii}

Instead, Rosny chose poetry as a means to introduce Japanese literature to the cultivated reader. He compares Japanese poetry in its brevity and profundity to the Greek epigram and expresses the conviction that Japanese poetry is

...apte à exprimer les grandes émotions de l'âme, et qu'elle les exprime souvent d'une façon qui, pour être laconique, n'est pas moins forte et persuasive; qu'enfin elle met à la disposition de l'écrivain tous les charmes du pittoresque, mais à la condition seulement de ne point les épuiser, et de **laisser à l'imagination le soin de découvrir des horizons que quelques traits heureux du tableau laissent entrevoir.**^{xix} [emphasis added]

Another antecedent for the quality of fragmentation in La Fille Elisa may be Baudelaire's remarkable Petits poèmes en prose, le Spleen de Paris (1862-4). This work reflects a point of view compatible with japonisme in its evocation of the complexity of the modern urban experience by means of the pared-down *prose poétique*. (A fascinating link in the complex web of japonisme is an 1861 letter from the poet to Arsène Houssaye expressing enthusiasm for Japanese woodblock prints.)^{xx} In the preface of Petits Poèmes en Prose addressed to Houssaye, Baudelaire compares the construction of the work to a serpent, whose parts can exist independently even if cut into pieces. "Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture; car je ne suspends pas la volonté rétive de celui-ci au fil interminable d'une intrigue

superflue...Hachez-la en nombreux fragments, et vous verrez que chacun peut exister à part.”^{xxi} La Fille Elisa emulates the poet’s example in its sympathetic tableaux of working-class characters primarily from the capital’s *quartiers populaires*. Goncourt, depicting the underside of modern urban life in his stylized *écriture d’artiste*, could echo the poet’s claim, “J’ai pétri de la boue j’en ai fait de l’or.”

La Fille Elisa concerns the banal existence of the rebellious daughter of a Parisian midwife-abortionist. The ambiance of Manette Salomon of only a decade earlier, with its lively depictions of the artists’ milieu, sparkling, witty dialogues and joyful depiction of the discovery of Japanese prints, has been superceded by a return to the prosaic urban setting of the Goncourts’ Germinie Lacerteux(1865). This manifesto of Naturalism chronicles the life of degradation suffered by a Parisian maid, victim of her passions. The controversial novel was based on the Goncourts’ grim discovery of the secret vices of their own trusted housekeeper, shockingly revealed after her death.

La Fille Elisa’s eponymous antiheroine freely elects the life of prostitution to escape from the drudgery imposed by her mother’s clinic. Attacks of typhoid fever in Elisa’s childhood leave residual brain damage,

evidenced by occasional episodes of antisocial, self-destructive and even violent behavior. This thoroughly mediocre young Parisienne nevertheless has a rudimentary education and exhibits a certain intelligence. After entering a provincial brothel, she becomes the trusted business confidante of the Madam, and develops a veritable passion for romance novels. After a disastrous liaison with a police spy disguised as a fugitive, Elisa drifts from city of city and settles in a military bordello near l'Ecole Militaire. From total obscurity she achieves notoriety as "*La Fille Elisa*," sentenced to the guillotine for the murder of a simple soldier. (Her sentence is later commuted to life in prison). Elisa commits this unpremeditated act in a fit of blind rage, after the soldier's attempt to rape her during an outing to the Bois de Boulogne.

In his pioneering study of French literature and japonisme^{xxii}, William Leonard Schwartz associated La Fille Elisa with the Japanese art of *ukiyo-e*, particularly the prints of the eighteenth century master Utamaro, as both center on the world of prostitution. However, the languid poses of Utamaro's elegantly attired and coiffed courtesans, cultivated denizens of the reputed *Maisons Vertes* of Edo's fabled Yoshiwara district, are at opposite poles from the slovenly *filles* of the sordid brothels of Paris and provincial *maisons de tolérance* depicted in

Edmond's novel. Indeed, the author employs this huge contrast between the extremes of high and low to serve as a mechanism of irony.

Transcending this vast difference in milieu, an explicit emphasis on the particular psychology of women's feelings and experience is shared by both Utamaro and Goncourt. Edmond referred to this point of view which permeates his literary work as "*la féminilité*," a term which appears in the text of the novel. References to aspects of Far Eastern culture, although seemingly incongruous, are nonetheless present throughout La Fille Elisa. Such traces indicate that the author perceived and interpreted aspects of reality in his fiction according to an appreciation, and even idealization, of Japanese art forms, in particular ukiyo-e prints of courtesans and ivory miniature carvings (*netsuke*). In spite of apparent discontinuity with Manette Salomon's exuberant celebration of the riotous color of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, it is possible to follow traces of the aesthetic of japonisme in La Fille Elisa.

One of the few explicit examples of japonisme in the text is the ironic description (noted by Schwartz) of the unfortunate physical characteristics of one of the colorful *personnel de maison* of the Parisian military bordello (Chapter XXVII):

Une longue créature blondasse, larveuse, fluente, qui se terminait par une toute petite tête en boule. Le cheveu rare, les yeux bleu de faïence entre des paupières humoreuses, un petit nez en as de pique pareil au suçoir que les ivoiriers japonais donnent à la pieuvre, de gros bras martelés de rougeurs avec, au bout des mains, des doigts plats et carrés: telle était Mélie dite la Chenille...(112-113)^{xxiii} [emphasis added]

The careful reader notes other oriental references, as in this odd comparison evoking the state of paranoia suffered by women of Elisa's condition: "Une imagination, où, dans la terreur religieuse d'un de ces cultes de l'Extrême Orient pour ses divinités du Mal, est assis tout en haut des temblantes adorations de la femme: Monsieur le Préfet de police."(95) Although there are no 'gods of evil' in Japanese religion, there is a possible reference here to the guardian statues of Buddhist temples, pairs of forboding, grimacing giants which guard the entrance to the sacred space of worship. Such 'monsters' in a religious context would have been documented in early illustrated reference works on Japanese civilization. (fig. 37)

Implicit references to Japanese art are apparent to the reader attuned to the Japanese sensibility. For example, in Chapter XXXIV, there is a description of Elisa's striking appearance as she leaves for the date with her soldier beau, as she appears to the women remaining in the military brothel.

Une main, la paume appuyée à plat sur sa hanche droite et les cinq doigts enserrant la moitié de sa taille mince, Elisa marchait avec un coquet hanchement à gauche, une ondulation des reins qui, à chaque pas, laissait apercevoir un rien de la ceinture rouge attachant en dessous sa jupe lâche.

. . .Elle était nu-tête, le chignon serré dans un filet que traversaient les petites boules d'un grand peigne noir, tandis que le reste de ses cheveux, laborieusement frisés et hérissés, lui retombait sur le front...Elle avait un caraco de laine noire avec une bordure d'astrakan à l'entournure des manches, et sa jupe de couleur balayait la poussière de grands effilés appliqués sur l'étoffe ainsi que les volants... (128-129)

In spite of its caricatural aspects of bad taste, what this artful decription evokes is the affected gait and artfully-designed costume of the geisha *en promenade*, as they are often depicted in *ukiyo-e* prints. In fact, images of the flamboyantly attired courtesans of Yoshiwara served as fashionplates for the latest fads in clothing and hairstyles . Certain details of Elisa's bearing and dress, such as the swaying step, the red sash, the protruding haircomb, the "*blanc visage*," and even carrying a "*petit panier de paille noire*" recall Japanese prototypes. In many prints of life in the Yoshiwara pleasure district, the Japanese artist represents an elaborately-coiffed young woman teetering on the high-platformed *geta* sandals, her multi-layered, brilliantly-decorated kimono revealing a scarlet obi sash, carrying a black lacquered tiered box(used for picnics). (fig. 38) In fact, Japanese kimono influenced French fashion as early as 1867 when Japanese textiles were exhibited at the Exposition Universelle, while the term *kimono* entered the

French language in 1876.^{xxiv} Wichmann describes the silhouette of the tight-waisted, gracefully flowing folds of the kimono as the prototype for European feminine fashions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.^{xxv} (The so-called ‘kimono-sleeve’ became a popular element of French women’s fashion in the early 1900’s.)^{xxvi}

As a further illustration of japonisme, one might even point out hints of the baroque elements of Japanese Kabuki drama in the novel’s powerful description of the stabbing death of the soldier in the deserted cemetery of the Bois de Boulogne. After the knife has almost accidentally pierced his flesh, (“...il s’était élancé sur elle, sur le couteau, tombant à genoux...”), the melodramatic heroine cries, “*Mais tiens-moi ! tiens-moi donc!*” (166-167) The tragic loves of the courtesan, dramatizations of sensational faits-divers and mythological and historical episodes, all provided plot material for Kabuki drama and puppet plays of the Edo period. Crowd-pleasing, swashbuckling scenes from Kabuki drama are frequently depicted in prints by Shunsho, Sharaku and others. Goncourt may have read portions of de Rosny’s translations of Kabuki plays. Of course, this stylized violence may also be explained as the nefarious result of the cheap romance novels Elisa has absorbed in Bovaryesque fashion. “C’étaient dans le décor d’une féerie

**d'un Orient baroque, des palicares héroïques, des captives grecques
résistant à des pachas violateurs..."(76)**

Japonisme is also implied by the ubiquitous presence of the cherry blossom. In Chapter LXIII, as her mental faculties and physical condition deteriorate as a consequence of the inhuman prison regime, Elisa recalls her rural childhood in Lorraine. Approaching death, the mute prisoner relives the spring of her youth with recollections of the lively spectacle of cherry blossoms, "les cerisiers du pays du kirsch fleurissaient au-dessus de sa tête dans un avril perpétuel."(201)

**Déjà elle courait sur cette terre au vert plein de marguerites, un bleu matutineux du ciel tramé de fils d'argent, au feuillage de fleurs blanches comme de blanches fleurs d'oranger. . . Et de toutes les branches de tous les arbres tombait incessamment une pluie de folioles, lentes à tomber, et arrivant à terre avec les balancements d'un vol de papillons dont elles semblaient les ailes.
...couchée à terre sous l'ombre légère des cimes fleurissantes, dans la tiédeur du temps, l'odeur sucrée des fleurs chauffées par le plein soleil, l'effleurement gazouillant des oiseaux, elle demeurait sans bouger, bienheureusement immobile, intérieurement charmée par cette blancheur qui pleuvait continuellement sur elle, chatouillant son visage, son cou, son nudité d'enfant. Parfois des fleurs voletant au-dessus d'elle, et qu'emportait un souffle de vent...ces fleurs avec des gentils ronds de bras et des attiréments de mains remuant l'air et faisant de petits tourbillons, elle les ramenait toutes tournoyantes sur son corps, passant ainsi la journée... à se laisser ensevelir sous cette neige fleurie. (201-202)**

This long passage on the fall of the cherry blossoms is redolent of japonisme as the *sakura*, with Mount Fuji (Fujiyama)^{xxvii}, and the red disc of the Rising Sun, serve as emblems of Japanese culture. Japanese customs are characterized by the fundamental belief in man's harmony with the cycle of nature. Cherry blossom viewing (*hanami*) is joyful ritual of springtime, while in other seasons, the Japanese admire the fall foliage, the full moon, the bloom of the iris and the fresh snowfall. These rituals constitute more than an appreciation of beauty for its own sake; they are reminders of the sacred presence of Nature, the Shinto belief that all living things are animated by a spirit or soul (*kami*).

Japanese genre paintings and three-panel screens from as early as the sixteenth century document the joys of cherry blossom viewing, enjoyed by the Heian court and nobility (794-1195), and by all classes of society during the Edo period (1615-1868).^{xxviii} There is a religious origin to this festival. According to Japanese scholar Kurita, the spirit of the goddess of spring, Konohana-sakuyahime, was said to descend to earth to dwell in the cherry tree, so that groves of cherry trees were considered sacred places.^{xxix} However, for the Japanese there is no conflict between sacredness and profane revelry, as the blossoms are celebrated with toasts of sake. The theme of the cherry blossom is frequently invoked in Japanese poetry,

as it suggests the ephemeral nature of existence taught by Buddhist philosophy. This classic haiku The Seasons is by Sanpu (1647-1732):

Cherry-bloom, cuckoo,
moon, snow--and already
the year is through ^{xxx}

As in Manette Salomon, there is an emphasis in La Fille Elisa on the parallel between the western pagan conception of man's unity with Nature, and the Japanese concept of this harmonious co-existence. Edmond de Goncourt was aware of the sacred status of Nature in the Japanese worldview.

“Nulle part comme au Japon la vénération de la création et de la créature, quelque infime qu'elle soit; nulle part de ce regard religieux, amoureux de la petite bestiole, la recréant avec l'art dans son rien microscopique.”^{xxxii}

(Journal, May 13, 1877) The modern scholar Kurita corroborates

Goncourt's prescient observation:

This Japanese view of the cosmos, this view of Nature, is often said to be highly unusual, if not unique. I would offer, however, that in fact the Japanese view has much in common with the world-view found in the ancient mythologies of the earliest human civilizations--civilizations pre-existing those of ancient Rome or Greece...the civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Egypt, for example.^{xxxii}

The motif of the rites of spring--associated with pagan rituals and with the Japanese veneration for Nature--appears twice in the novel,

foreshadowing Elisa's deathbed reminiscence of the fall of the cherry blossoms during her childhood. The first mention of spring occurs in Chapter XII describing Elisa's first residence as a *filles*, at the *maison de tolérance* on the outskirts of small Lorraine city. The second mention of this season of renewal occurs during Elisa's recollection of the circumstances of day of the murder in the park (Chapter XLVIII).

The narrator of La Fille Elisa offers an astonishing apologia for provincial organized prostitution, compared to its evil manifestations in the capital. In his view it serves as a benevolent institution of public utility, offering an occupation for peasant women otherwise disgraced by the rape or abuse of their former masters. Furthermore, matters of sexuality were accepted with greater tolerance in the countryside. "Et le public demandant en province moins de honte à la prostituée, la prostitution, en ses maisons à jardins, perd de son dégoût et de son infamie, pour se rapprocher un peu de la vénalité galante, ingénument exercée, dans la molle indulgence de peuples primitifs, sur des terres de **nature**." (70) [emphasis added]

At the small family-run establishment, the reassuring presence of Nature is felt by the chirping and fluttering wings of countless birds who have nested in the permeable stone of the ancient structure converted into a

brothel. “Les jours de pluie, de ces chaudes et fondantes pluies d’été, on entendait de l’intérieur... un perpétuel froufrou de plumes battantes contre les parois, un incessant petit martelage de tous les jeunes becs picorant....”(60-61) A run-down garden behind the house provides an Eden-like refuge during the spring and summer months, as the idyllic surroundings mollify the establishment’s *raison d’être*.

Là, parmi la floraison d’arbres fruitiers, au milieu du reverdissement de la terre, sous le bleu du ciel, un peu de l’innocence de leur enfance revenait chez ces femmes dans la turbulence d’ébats enfantins. Le plaisir de petites filles qu’elles prenait à courir, à jouer, effaçait en elles l’animalité impudique, rapportait à leurs gestes de la chasteté... Dans le jardin ces femmes ne semblaient guère des prostituées, et les hommes, sans savoir pourquoi, se sentaient plus de retenue avec elles. (66)

In her prison cell, surreptitiously rereading a precious love letter at night, Elisa recalls the fateful outing with her soldier beau. After dining in a respectable restaurant, they had taken a carriage ride to the Bois de Boulogne. “Ils marchaient ainsi dans le bois qui devenait plus épais, quand ils se trouvaient devant une grande porte où se voyait la broussaille fleurie, blanche et rose, de grands rosiers grimpants.”(163) Upon arriving at a disaffected cemetery surrounded by wild rose bushes, a deserted garden of death, Elisa had occupied herself cutting flowers for a bouquet. As the soldier attempted to rape her underneath the “*grandes branches pleurantes*”(164), she had cried out, warning him of her will to resist.

The landscape at the site recalls the setting of her childhood. “Il faisait un coup de soleil brûlant, comme il en fait en avril...l’air était tout bourdonnant de petites bêtes volantes,...des odeurs sucrées, ressemblant du goût du miel des cerisiers en fleurs de son pays, montaient des grandes broussailles couchées sur les tombes.” (166) In her recollection, the soldier heedlessly ‘falls’ on the knife; in her blind rage Elisa had stabbed him repeatedly.

An illiterate, simple-minded shepherd from a rural region, the soldier exemplifies pagan qualities. Although nominally Catholic, his beliefs were shaped by the mysticism and superstitions of folklore. “Sa vie s’était passée dans le vent, la pluie, l’orage, les déchainement mystérieux de la nature.” (160) The deadly culmination of the courtship between Elisa and the soldier may be interpreted symbolically as the inevitable outcome of the clash of two fundamental forces of Nature, the male and female archetypes. In this case, it is the powerful female force of earth-fecundity-spring embodied in the cherry blossoms of Elisa’s childhood memory which triumphs over its weaker masculine counterpart, the domain of air-water-wind-rain of the soldier.

In conclusion, with the exception of the remarkable simile comparing the prostitute's nose to the rendering of the mouth of an octopus by a Japanese ivory carver, the japonisme of La Fille Elisa is rarely explicit. Beyond the mere illustrative representation of tangible oriental robes, porcelains, prints and exotic objets d'art, Goncourt and other *japoniste* exponents in literature and painting embraced *japonisme* in a more subtle manner. Edmond de Goncourt responded to the imaginative, colorful, and naturalistic qualities of Japanese art which prompted his appreciation by incorporating these traits as essential components of his personal literary vision.

The implicit Japonisme in La Fille Elisa may be summarized by the following points:

- A preference for fragmentation or 'atomization' over the coherence of the whole, a lesson learned from oriental brush painting, a quality evident in Impressionist landscapes of the early 1870's. This tendency towards abstraction is reflected in the nonlinear approach to plot, paucity of dialogue, lack of emphasis on 'subject matter' and character development and the discontinuity of narrative style.
- There is an emulation of Japanese poetry's terse idealization of 'the passing moment, the observation of a scene, event or aspect of nature.'

Goncourt achieves this in prose descriptions of transient visual stimuli, featuring effects of artificial and natural light. His word-pictures rendered in an *écriture d'artiste* are the French equivalent of the Japanese *waka* poem.

- Goncourt admires the ‘naturalism’ of Japanese art, a reflection of mankind’s primordial link with the cycles of Nature. This oriental point of view parallels pagan traditions of the Occident. In La Fille Elisa, the author emphasizes the cherry blossom, emblematic of Japan, as a symbol that can be equally meaningful in a European context.
- Although he does not refer specifically to Japanese prints, as in Manette Salomon, vignettes such as Elisa’s outlandish outfit and gait as she ‘steps out,’ recall a classic theme of ukiyo-e artists, the depiction of the extravagant kimono and coiffure of fashionable courtesans of the Yoshiwara. A fascination with what goes on in the interior of houses of prostitution, the intimate occupations of women amongst themselves oblivious of the male gaze, is shared by Goncourt and Japanese genre artists of the Edo period. Unlike Utamaro’s idealized beauties, Goncourt’s *filles* are without artifice or charm, but as women they are altogether human and worthy of the reader’s empathy. The concept of “*la féminilité*,” the stress on the feminine point of view founded on intuition and sensation that is an essential component of Goncourt’s

vision, will have great resonance in the works of Zola and Huysmans, younger writers of the Naturalist school, as will be shown in the following chapters.

ⁱ Quoted in *Japonisme & Mode*, exhibition catalogue, (Paris: Palais Galliera, 1996), 21. The interview was printed in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* on the occasion of the exhibition of *Les Nymphéas* at Galerie Durant-Ruel, May 1909.

ⁱⁱ François Fosca, *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1949), 350.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Alidor Delzant, *Les Goncourt* (Paris: Charpentier, 1889), 329-364 for a thorough treatment of all publications of the Goncourts.

^{iv} *Journal*, quoted in Edmond de Goncourt, *La Fille Elisa*, (Editions Slatkine, Paris/Geneve: 1996), 220. (all subsequent references are to this edition).

^v *Journal*, quoted in *La Fille Elisa*, 221.

^{vi} Preface, *La Fille Elisa*, 30.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, 30.

^{viii} Alidor Delzant, 213.

^{ix} These remarks are from Rubin's lectures on Impressionism offered at Sotheby's, Fall 1997. Used by permission of the speaker.

^x Pierre Sabatier, *L'Esthétique des Goncourt* (Geneva: Slatkin Reprints, 1970) 536.

^{xi} Ernst Chesneau, "Le Japon à Paris," *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, September 1878: 385-397.

^{xii} quoted in J.P. Bouillon, *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, l'Art du XVIII siècle et autres textes sur l'art*. (Paris: Hermann, 1967), 251.

^{xiii} For a discussion of relations between Degas and Goncourt, see Fosca, 357-359 and T. Reff, *The Artist's Mind* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976), Chapter IV, *The Artist and the Writer*.

^{xiv} Ann Dumas, et.al. *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 257-8. Seitei's work, *Birds on a Branch* is illustrated, although there is no record of Degas' sketch.

^{xv} *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan.*, 1st ed., s.v. "waka."

^{xvi} *Ibid.*, 201.

^{xvii} Léon de Rosny, *Poésies Anciennes et Modernes des Insulaires du Japon*. (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1871), 115.

^{xviii} *Ibid.*, iv.

^{xix} Léon de Rosny, ii-iii.

^{xx} Klaus Berger, *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse*. (Cambridge University Press: 1993), 16.

^{xxi} Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968), 146.

^{xxii} *The Imaginative Interpretation of the Far East in Modern French Literature 1800-1925* (Paris: Champion, 1927).

^{xxiii} All page numbers refer to the 1996 edition published by Editions Slatkine, Paris/Geneve.

^{xxiv} Musée de la Mode et du Costume/Palais Galliera, *Japonisme et Mode*, (Paris: Musées de la Ville de Paris, 1996), 36.

^{xxv} Siegfried Wichmann, *Japonisme, Japanese Influence on Western Art of the 19th & 20th Centuries*. (New York: Park Lane, 1981), 36-37.

^{xxvi} Musée de la Mode et du Costume/ Palais Galliera, *Japonisme et Mode* (Paris: Les Musées de la Ville de Paris, 1996) 65-67.

^{xxvii} Whistler refers to "Fujiyama" and Hokusai at the conclusion of his 10:00 lecture of 1885, citing the Japanese with the ancient Greeks as exponents of eternal beauty.

^{xxviii} *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, 1st ed., s.v. "sakura"

^{xxx} Isama Kurita, "The Japanese Conception of Nature." Text of lecture sponsored by MOA Museum of Art, Atami, Japan. April 7, 1995, 13.

^{xxx} Harold G. Henderson, *Introduction to Haiku* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 67.

^{xxxi} E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire*, texte intégral établi et annoté par Robert Ricatte (Paris: Fasquelle Flammarion, 1956/Ed. Robert Laffont, 1989) , 2:740.

^{xxxii} Kurita, 4.

CHAPTER 4

EMILE ZOLA: PROGRESSIVE ART AND LITERARY
CRITIC, NATURALIST NOVELIST, *JAPONISTE*

“Et lorsque, au centre de l’immense salle où sont pendus les tableaux de tous les peintres du monde, je jette un coup d’œil sur ce vaste poème en mille langues différentes, et je ne me lasse pas de le relire dans chaque tableau. . . J’accepte toutes les oeuvres d’art au même titre, au titre de manifestations du génie humain. Et elles m’intéressent presque également, elles ont toutes la véritable beauté: la vie dans ses milles expressions, toujours changeantes, toujours nouvelles.”

Emile Zola, Edouard Manet. Etude Biographique et Critique, 1867.ⁱ

Emile Zola (1840-1902) first met the Goncourt brothers on December 14, 1868, the beginning of a remarkable thirty-year association. After Jules’ untimely death in 1870, he maintained a steadfast friendship with Edmond, despite certain literary quarrels within the Naturalist circle.ⁱⁱ The Goncourt Journal proudly records the visit of “*notre admirateur et notre élève, Zola,*” with a keen analysis of the demeanor, speech and physiognomy of their guest. “Un peu taillé en toute sa personne comme ses personnages, qu’il fait de deux types contraires, ces figures où il mêle le mâle et le féminin, et au moral même, laissant échapper une ressemblance avec ces créations d’âmes aux contrastes ambigus.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The Goncourts' invitation was a gracious acknowledgment of Zola's journalistic advocacy of the Goncourt's revolutionary approach to literature. The February 1865 issue of the *Salut Publique de Lyon* had carried Zola's spirited defense of the Goncourts' much-maligned Germinie Lacerteux, the documentary novel of the destructive passions of a Parisian housemaid which had launched the Naturalist movement. The following year Zola penned a follow-up article praising the generally overlooked Idées et Sensations, aesthetic aperçus excerpted from the Goncourt Journal, in which *japonisme* is celebrated as an essential element of the aesthetic of the initiates of Naturalism. In addition, his flattering vignette of the Goncourts and their oeuvre appeared in the September 1868 edition of *Le Gaulois*.¹⁴

The eager 28-year-old paying respects to his mentors was no mere neophyte to the literary profession. After resigning from the publicity department of the Editions Hachette, where he was employed from 1862-1866, Zola had published two works in the Naturalist mold, Thérèse Raquin (1867) and Madeleine Férat (1868), dedicated to his artistic ally Edouard Manet. These followed his debut works derivative of the romantic tradition, Contes à Ninon (1864) and La Confession de Claude (1865).

During lunch with the Goncourts at their elegantly appointed home in Auteuil, the voluble young writer enthusiastically expounded on his ambition to create what would become the Rougon-Macquart series, “a ten volume history of a family.” Zola wisely remembered to praise his sensitive hosts by reiterating their foresight and example as pioneers forging the new path. “Et puis nous sommes les derniers venus: nous savons que vous êtes nos aînés, Flaubert et vous. Vous! vos ennemis eux-mêmes reconnaissent que vous avez inventé votre art; ils croient que ce n’est rien: c’est tout!”^v

Zola, Defender of Naturalism in the Arts

Zola’s polemical art and literary criticism established the name of this eager *débutant* in the public eye as the champion of Naturalism in its manifestations in art and literature. Mes Haines. causeries littéraires et artistiques, his collection of critical essays, dates from 1866. From Zola’s perspective, the literary Naturalism of the Goncourts found its pendant in *la peinture naturaliste* of Edouard Manet (1832-1883), whose modern nude odalisque *Olympia* (1863) had provoked a furor at the 1865 Salon. (fig.

39) One now-forgotten commentator expressed the opinion of the crowd

in describing the reclining courtesan as “une sorte de gorille femelle, de grotesque en caoutchouc cerné de noir.”^{vi} Another hostile critic perceived a resemblance between Manet’s *Olympia* and Zola’s Thérèse Raquin. “Il voit la femme comme M.Manet la peint, couleur de boue avec des maquillages roses.”^{vii} In his first Salons of 1866 and 1867, Zola advanced the cause of Naturalism, deriding the short-sightedness of his countrymen in matters of art. He zealously upheld his conviction that Manet, exponent of the new mode of contemporary artistic expression, was destined enter the pantheon of painting after Courbet.

According to Rewald, it was the critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary who first used the term ‘naturalism’ to differentiate this emerging school of painting from the Realism of Courbet’s unidealized rural scenes. Zola appears to have taken to heart the definition of Naturalism from Castagnary’s Salon of 1863:

The Naturalist school declares that art is the experience of life under all phases and on all levels, and that its sole aim is to reproduce nature by carrying it to its maximum power and intensity: it is truth balanced with science. **The naturalist school re-establishes the broken relationship between man and nature. . . .**The naturalist school tends to embrace all the forms of the visible world. It has brought back to their true role line and color. . .By placing the artist again in the center of his time, with the mission of reflection, it determines the genuine utility, in consequence, of the morality of art. Naturalism accepts all realities of the visible world...it says to the artist, ‘Be free.’ [quoted in translation, emphasis added]^{viii}

It is fascinating to note Zola's adoption of the terms Nature and Naturalism in referring to new trends in painting and literature. In his Salon of 1867 Zola introduces the young artists who set out to create a true version of nature, *en plein air*. "Les Naturalistes de talent... sont des interprètes personnels; ils traduisent les vérités en langages originaux, ils restent profondément vrais, tout en gardant leur individualité. Ils sont humains avant tout et ils mêlent de leur humanité à la moindre touffe de feuillage qu'ils peignent. C'est ce qui fera vivre les oeuvres."^{ix} This perception of the artist's intimate relationship to nature is echoed in his appreciation of the prose of the Goncourts.

....pour leur part,[ils] ont apporté une sensation nouvelle de la nature. C'est là leur trait caractéristique. Ils ne sentent pas comme on a senti avant eux. Ils ont des nerfs d'une délicatesse excessive, qui décuplent les moindres impressions. Ce qu'ils ont vu, ils le rendent en peinture, en musique, vibrant, éclatant, plein d'une vie personnelle. Un paysage n'est plus une description; sous les mots, les objets naissent; tout se reconstruit."^x

Naturalism and Japonisme: Intertwined at the Roots

The Goncourts, Philippe Burty, Zacharie Astruc and other pioneering *japonistes* admired the art of Japan for what they perceived as its depiction of humankind's fundamental unity with nature, a reflection of

Shinto and Buddhist traditions granting all living creatures an eternal soul or spirit. French *japonistes* observed that in Oriental art humankind tends to be integrated with the natural world in contrast with the art of the West, in which humankind is posited at the center of creation.

Hokusai's fourteen-volume *Manga* [sketchbooks] provoked fascination by its documentation of ordinary human activities with the same truth to nature as the observation of carp swimming and birds in flight. Similarly, the *japonistes* noted how Utamaro's flowers, shell fish and insects^{xi} were depicted with the same naturalistic intensity as his sensitive portraits of women of all social classes. The pantheistic quality of Japanese art was perceived as an ideal to be emulated by modern French creators, as journalist Zacharie Astruc advocated in his series of articles on the Empire of the Rising Sun in *l'Etendard* of 1867.^{xii} The *japoniste* concept of return to nature is a pervasive theme in the Goncourts' Manette Salomon (1867). In the novel's disquieting dénouement, the bohemian artist Anatole undergoes a startling reverse process of evolution culminating in the assimilation of his being with the universe of birds and beasts at the Jardin des Plantes.^{xiii}

In the case of the Goncourts and Manet it was *japonisme*, the passion for the arts of Nippon, in particular the color woodblock print, which prepared the ground from which Naturalism sprang with such vigor in their respective fields. For Zola and his contemporaries the simultaneous blossoming in the mid-1860's of *japonisme* and Naturalism is an indication that these concurrent movements were intertwined at the roots. Zola's staunch support of innovative writers and painters permeated by *japonisme* indicates his wholehearted endorsement of the progressive movement stimulating creativity amongst his peers. It would have been redundant for Zola to extol Japanese art with the same fervor as the Goncourts, Burty, the journalist and collector with whom he exchanged correspondence between 1875 and 1883^{xiv}, or Astruc, the critic, poet and painter, friend of Manet. While maintaining a steadfast, cordial relationship with the proponents of the *japoniste/naturalist* circle, it is characteristic of Zola's attitude to embrace Japanese art as one of many universal 'manifestations of human genius,' (a phrase from his 1867 Study of Manet)^{xv} all contributing to the enrichment of the western creator's artistic vocabulary.

Zola and the New Painting

Zola's sustaining link to the visual stimulus of the Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock print was nurtured by his close association with Manet and other young painters challenging tradition, the *Groupe de Batignolles*. This informal association counted at various times amongst its members Bazille, Cézanne, Degas, Fantin-Latour, Jongkind, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir and Sisley, many of whom would exhibit under the Impressionist aegis from 1874-1886. Led by Manet, this group met to discuss aesthetic issues at the Café de Guerbois on the Avenue de Clichy from 1866 to 1873 (with a hiatus for the War of 1870).^{xvi} The company was completed by the active participation of Zola, Duranty, Burty, Duret and other sympathetic *littérateurs* and journalists.^{xvii} According to Rewald, the Café Guerbois served as a locus for the discussion and dissemination of the lessons of Japanese art; Castagnary referred to the *Groupe de Batignolles* as "the Japanese of painting."^{xviii} The Impressionist circle's characteristic brighter palette, unmodulated splotches of pure color, tilted perspectives and birds' eye views, emphasis on flatness and pattern and the choice of contemporary genre subjects were attributed by Astruc, Castagnary, Duret and other critics to the emulation of Japanese woodblock prints, the appropriation of a foreign aesthetic.^{xix}

Zola is featured in Fantin-Latour's documentary group portrait, *L'Atelier de Batignolles* (1869, Musée d'Orsay), exhibited at the Salon of 1870. (fig. 40) In this staid representation the seated Manet paints the likeness of the eminent *japoniste* Zacharie Astruc. The pair are surrounded by a standing circle of cohorts: Bazille, Monet, Zola, Otto Scholderer and Edmond Maître. On the red-draped table to Manet's left are placed three emblematic objects, a Greek statue of Minerva, an imported Japanese lacquer tray and a French-made ceramic vase in the new Japanese style of decoration.^{xx} (fig. 41) This subsidiary still-life has been interpreted by Sandblad as a sort of equation: to the basis of classical tradition are added the lessons of Japan, yielding a new freshness in French art. This formula epitomizes the enrichments to French culture resulting from the stimulus of the discovery and appreciation of Japanese artforms.^{xxi} This creativity sparked by *japonisme* is reflected in the works of Zola, Manet and the many prominent *japonistes* in the realm of arts and letters.

The journalist Ernest Chesneau confirms the lively interchange between the *japoniste/naturalist* artists and writers in "*L'Exposition Universelle: Le Japon à Paris*," *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, September, 1878. His account affirms Zola's place amongst the prescient early collectors of

japonaiserie. As a preamble to discussion of the phenomenal success of Japan at the 1878 Paris World's Fair, Chesneau retraces the growth of *japonisme* to its modest beginnings. He cites an unnamed painter's^{xxii} 1862 discovery of Japanese albums and woodblock prints at a bric-a-brac shop in Le Havre. In the aftermath of this fortuitous find...

L'enthousiasme gagna tous les ateliers avec la rapidité d'une flamme courant sur une piste de poudre. On ne pouvait se lasser d'admirer l'imprévu des compositions, la science de la forme, la richesse du ton, l'originalité de l'effet pittoresque, en même temps que la simplicité des moyens employés pour obtenir de tels résultats. . . Ivoires anciens, émaux cloisonnés, faiences et porcelaines, bronzes, laques, bois sculptés, étoffes brochées, satins brodés, albums, livres à gravures, joujoux ne firent plus que traverser la boutique du marchand **pour entrer aussitôt dans les ateliers d'artistes et dans les cabinets des gens de lettres**. Il s'est formé ainsi depuis cette date déjà lointaine jusqu'au moment présent de belles et rapides collections entre les mains de M. Villot, l'ancien conservateur des peintures du Louvre, des peintres **Manet, James Tissot, Fantin-Latour, Alphonse Hirsch, Degas, Carolus Duran, Monet**, des graveurs **Bracquemond** et Jules Jacquemard, de M. Solon de la manufacture de Sèvres, des écrivains **Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, Champfleury, Philippe Burty, Zola**, de l'éditeur **Charpentier**, des industriels Barbedienne, Christofle, Bouilhet, Falize; des voyageurs Cernuschi, Duret, Emile Guimet, F. Regamey. Le mouvement étant donné, la foule des amateurs suit.[emphasis added.]^{xxiii}

Besides this inclusion amongst the select group of early *japonistes*, the most telling manifestation of Zola's early and sincere commitment to the aesthetic of *japonisme* is his enthusiastic espousal of Manet's bold painting style in his first essays in art criticism. Manet was maligned not

only for his disregard for 'proper' mythological and historic subject matter--the scandalous modern nudes of *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (1862) and *Olympia* (1863)-- but also on technical grounds, his perceived inability to render three-dimensional space in such genre subjects as *Le Fifre* (1864). Manet's works were likened to signboards or 'playing cards'^{xxiv} for their flatness. Zola's affirmation of Manet's overlooked genius, based on his understanding of the artist's debt of Japan, prompted their first formal meeting in May, 1866.

The firm friendship and shared vision between writer and painter is expressed in the well-known *Portrait of Zola* (1868, Musée d'Orsay) exhibited at the Salon of 1868. (fig. 42) This 'visual manifesto,' described by Sandblad as expounding the 'common aesthetic programme'^{xxv} of Zola and Manet, depicts the author reading at his desk flanked by an oriental screen with a bird and flower motif, a *ukiyo-e* print of a sumo wrestler, and a colorful ceramic inkwell with a possibly Japanese-inspired design. Manet's signature appears across the blue pamphlet which Zola had written to accompany his recent solo exhibition. This painting and its various elements will be examined in greater detail, following a discussion of

Manet's artistic development and the role of *japonisme* in the formulation of his revolutionary painting style.

Role of *Japonisme* in the work of Manet

Manet began to learn etching techniques from the artist Félix Bracquemond in 1860, joining the movement to revive this reproductive medium as a creative artform advocated by the Goncourts, Burty, Bracquemond, Baudelaire and Gautier. ("Parmi les différentes expressions de l'art plastique, l'eau-forte est celle qui se rapproche le plus de l'expression littéraire et qui est le mieux faite pour trahir l'homme spontané," Baudelaire wrote in Peintres et Aquafortistes, 1862)^{xxvi} It should be noted that this partial listing of advocates of *l'eau-forte* (as etching is termed in French) includes the names of several prominent *japonistes*. Indeed, according to one of *japonisme*'s classic anecdotes, it was Bracquemond who 'discovered' an album from Hokusai's *Manga* series at the Paris atelier of master printer Delâtre in about 1856.^{xxvii} Manet's associate and biographer Théodore Duret provides a link between these occurrences. "Aussi admirait-il beaucoup ce qu'il avait pu voir d'Hokusai et les volumes de la Mangoua[Manga] qui lui étaient tombés sous la main étaient de sa part l'objet de louanges sans restriction..^{xxviii} Although Manet

is cited as a collector, at his estate sale one of the few traces of japonaiserie is a large lot of ‘bound and stitched volumes’, the usual format of *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints.^{xxix}

Manet’s experiments in and mastery of the monochrome techniques of etching and lithography are known to have influenced his stylistic evolution as a painter. Berger points out the cross-over between the dark contour outline defining the body of *Olympia* and the emphasis on drawing typical of the graphic arts.^{xxx} One might even venture to attribute the preponderance of soft, lustrous blacks in many of Manet’s Spanish-inspired subjects such as *Lola de Valence* (1862) to his appreciation of the monochrome effects of printing inks.

An excellent analysis of Manet’s *japonisme* is provided by Ives, illustrated by his delightful etchings and lithographs illustrating Champfleury’s Les Chats (1868 and 1870 editions), Mallarmé’s translation of Poe’s The Raven (1875),(figs. 43-44) and the poet’s L’Après-midi d’un Faune(1876), first issued in a deluxe oriental-style binding. The artist’s debt to the *ukiyo-e* artists Hokusai and Kuniyoshi is demonstrated by clear parallels between animal motifs in their works. She also points out the

probable influence of calligraphic style of Kyosai, (fig. 45) another nineteenth century Japanese artist whose works circulated in France.^{xxxii}

In terms of oil painting however, despite the occasional appearance of a folding screen, lacquerware or bound *ukiyo-e* volume complementing a portrait, Manet avoids any overt pastiche of Japanese themes, like the Goncourts' fictional painter Coriolis. Manet's genius lay in the subtle appropriation the design qualities of Japanese prints and creative fusion of these elements with aspects of painting of the Spanish school, especially dramatic chiaroscuro effects in the works of Velasquez and Goya. As Berger points out, Manet's inspiration from Japanese art derives from its graphic qualities: use of broad, flat areas of color, flattened perspective, sweeping calligraphic outlines, and simplification of form. These contributed to what he terms the painter's 'anti-illusionist' tendencies. "Manet's *Japonisme* in general is neither systematic nor apparent at first glance; it works underground, allowing him to undermine and transform his realistic inheritance."^{xxxiii}

Berger and Rubin stress Manet's position as the first 'modern' painter to break with the Old Master tradition: the rejection of anecdote

and even the priority of subject matter in favor of the painting as an 'autonomous object,' a flat surface covered with pigments. Manet's astute synthesis of the conventions of the pictorial language of *ukiyo-e* with European genre traditions may have contributed to this achievement..^{xxxiii} Indeed, such a radical approach to art as the source of retinal sensation ('pure painting' in twentieth century jargon^{xxxiv}) as opposed to an intellectual or spiritual exercise was advocated by the Goncourts as early as their Salon of 1855.

The reader of Zola's 'black and white' style of criticism may have the impression that the author was the only viewer to have ascertained the genius of Manet, the lone voice of discernment amongst the jeering philistines. However well before Zola took up his pen, the astute critics Baudelaire and Zacharie Astruc were united in defense of their fellow *japoniste* Manet.

In his correspondence of 1861-62, Baudelaire reveals that he had long before received a packet of '*japonaiseries*' which he had shared amongst his friends, praising the outstanding decorative effect of these colorful prints and their modest cost..^{xxxv} Astruc was an outstanding

advocate of the art of Nippon in his various roles as journalist, poet, painter and sculptor. Manet's *Portrait of Zacharie Astruc* (1864, Kunsthalle, Bremen) depicts his esteemed associate with a volume of Japanese woodcuts in conspicuous view. The dedication is signed "*au poète Z. Astruc, son ami Manet*" on the green cover and label of the painted album.^{xxxvi} (fig. 46) Astruc had composed an orientalist ode to accompany the exhibition of *Olympia* at the 1865 Salon, rendering the nonchalant Parisian courtesan as a "*Jeune lys d'Orient au calice vermeil...*"^{xxxvii}

Manet's friendship with Baudelaire dates from about 1859, when the poet began to formulate his essay *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne*, published in 1863. Although Manet's *Music in the Tuileries* (1862), a crowded scene of identifiable *promeneurs*, would seem to exemplify Baudelaire's mandate to the modern artist to depict his life and times, the poet cites instead the small-format pen-and-ink illustrations of Constantin Guys as a precedent.^{xxxviii} (see fig. 31) Nevertheless, Manet was one of the first modern painters to focus on the urban underclass in the *The Rag Picker* and *Street Singer* of the early 1860's. In 1862 Baudelaire dedicated a sonnet to Manet inspired by the painting *Lola de Valence*, and praised the artist's "*goût décidé pour la réalité, la réalité moderne*" in an article^{xxxix}

Manet corresponded with Baudelaire during the latter's stay in Belgium(1864-1866) and looked to the poet for encouragement when prospects were bleak. "Vous n'êtes que le premier dans la décrepitude de votre art," Baudelaire responded, an ambiguous phrase which Rubin interprets as expressing the belief that Manet was the best painter during a period of decadence.^{xi} In 1869 Manet's etching of Baudelaire in profile graced a commemorative volume of his poetry. This fluid sketch has often been compared to the drawings of Hokusai for its economy of line and elegant simplicity.^{xii}

Manet's convincing interpretation of life and movement were emphasized by Astruc, as in the following excerpt from his account of the 1863 Salon. Zola's emphasis on life-like qualities as the measure of artistic merit reiterates Astruc's judgment.

A l'inverse des grands talents naturels qui nous portent d'abord à étudier leur art dans sa pratique matérielle, lui n'impose et ne montre pour ainsi dire que son accent vital. C'est l'âme qui frappe, c'est le mouvement, le jeu des physionomies, qui respirent la vie, l'action; le sentiment qu'exprime leur regard, la singularité expressive de leur rôle. Il plaît ou déplaît aussitôt; il charme, attire et repousse vite. L'individualité est si forte qu'elle échappe au mécanisme de construction. Le rôle de la peinture s'efface pour laisser à la création toute sa valeur

métaphysique et corporelle. Longtemps après, seulement, le regard découvre les formes de l'exécution, les éléments qui constituent le sens de la couleur, la valeur du relief, la vérité du modelé.^{xiii}
[emphasis added]

Nevertheless Zola was startlingly original in singling out those qualities in Manet's work which he perceives as directly derived from the Japanese woodblock print. In an often-cited passage from his Nouvelle Manière en Peinture, Edouard Manet (1867), included in most histories of *japonisme* and western painting,^{xiiii} Zola expounds on his theory of the *tache* (translated as 'patch of color' or 'splotch'), responding to the charge that Manet's works fail to achieve the expected three-dimensional, illusionistic quality of the 'finished' Salon painting.

...Dans la lumière diffuse, les visages sont taillés à larges pans de chair, les lèvres deviennent de simples traits, tout se simplifie et s'enlève sur le fond par masses puissantes. La justesse des tons établit les plans, remplit la toile d'air, donne la force à chaque chose. On a dit par moquerie, que les toiles d'Edouard Manet rappelaient les gravures d'Epinal [cheaply-produced, primitive woodcut prints of folkloric images, in which outlines are filled in with bold primary colors], et il y a beaucoup de vrai dans cette moquerie qui est un éloge; ici et là les procédés sont les mêmes, les teintes sont appliqués par plaques, avec cette différence que les ouvriers d'Epinal emploient les tons purs, sans se soucier des valeurs, et qu'Edouard Manet multiplie les tons et met entre eux les rapports justes. **Il serait beaucoup plus intéressant de comparer cette peinture simplifiée avec les gravures japonaises qui lui ressemblent pas leur élégance étrange et leurs taches magnifiques.**
[emphasis added]

Here Zola shows a remarkable awareness of Manet's grasp of printmaking techniques of Japan and of the west, and the application of *graphisme* to his work on canvas. It is likely that his analogy was based on discussions with the painter himself.

By February 1868 Zola, now part of the painter's circle, sat for his portrait in Manet's studio.^{xliv} His recollections of the process are recorded in correspondence with Duret. In his review of the 1868 Salon, Zola does not hesitate to laud the verisimilitude and mastery evident in his own likeness, which he considers one of the artist's finest works. He describes Manet's depiction of him as absolutely true to nature, and reveals that the painter declined to work from imagination or memory. "...il me copiat comme il aurait copié une bête humaine quelconque, avec une attention, une conscience artistique que je n'ai jamais vu ailleurs..."^{xlv}

Je défie tout autre portraitiste de mettre une figure dans un intérieur, avec une égale énergie, sans que les natures mortes environnantes nuisent à la tête. Ce portrait est un ensemble de difficultés vaincues; depuis les cadres du fond, depuis **le charmant paravent japonais** qui se trouve à gauche, jusqu'au moindres détails de la figure, tout se tient dans une gamme savante, claire et éclatante, si réelle que l'oeil oublie l'entassement des objets pour voir simplement un tout harmonieux.^{xlvi}

Even at the time of its execution, astute commentators such as Théophile Gautier were aware that this portrait-as-still life represented the artistic manifesto of the writer and the artist. It symbolizes the promotion of the synthesis between East and West that the *japonistes/naturalists* sought to achieve in French painting and literature. This synthesis is represented by a sort of rebus. In Sandblad's classic analysis of the Zola portrait, Manet's *Olympia*, reproduced *en grisaille* facing her advocate, represents the culmination of the artist's marriage of the conventions of the Japanese woodblock print, epitomized by the image of the sumo wrestler or Kabuki actor, and the heritage of Velasquez, represented by an engraving of his genre painting *Los Burrachos*. (fig. 47) According to Loyrette, "in depicting his ardent defender Manet hewed as closely as possible to his vision of his sitter; he did a Zola portrait à la Zola, which was both a token of friendship and the expression of a common agenda."^{xlvii} Zola's affection for Manet and his esteem for this youthful portrayal amidst a *japoniste* setting are evident in the fact that this is one of few Impressionist-era paintings which he kept and displayed. He even had the canvas and frame restored in 1877.^{xlviii} Manet's portrait of Zola greeted visitors entering the author's estate in Medan, as if to introduce the master of the house.^{xlix}

In this writer's opinion Zola's tempered appreciation of *japonisme* is best revealed in his Le Naturalisme au Salon (1880). In this excerpt Zola reiterates the liberating effect that the art of the Japanese woodblock print had produced upon the palette, subject matter and technique of *la peinture naturaliste*, a theme expounded by Duret and others. While it was necessary to overthrow the tyranny of the classical tradition inherited from the ancient Greeks, in Zola's view the outmoded system should not merely be replaced by the wholesale appropriation of a foreign aesthetic.

Voici donc ce qu'apportent les peintres impressionistes; une recherche plus exacte des causes et effets de la lumière, influant aussi bien sur le dessin que sur la couleur. On les a accusés avec raison de s'être inspirés des **gravures japonaises**, si intéressantes, qui sont aujourd'hui entre toutes les mains. **Il faudrait ici étudier ces gravures et montrer ce que cet art si clair et si fin d'Extrême-Orient nous a appris de choses**, à nous, Occidentaux, dont l'antique civilisation se pique de tout savoir. Il est certain que notre peintre noire, notre peinture d'école au bitume[chemical component of brown pigment and varnish used in nineteenth century], est restée surprise et s'est remise à l'étude devant **ces horizons limpides, ces belles taches vibrantes des aquarellistes japonais. Il y avait là une simplicité de moyens et une intensité d'effet qui ont frappé nos jeunes artistes et les ont poussés dans cette voie de peinture trempée d'air et de lumière**, où s'engagent tous les nouveaux venus de talent. Et je ne parle pas de **l'art exquis des japonais dans le détail, de leur dessin si vrai et si fin, de toute cette fantaisie naturaliste, qui procède de l'observation directe jusque dans ses écarts les plus étranges**. J'ajouterai pourtant que, si **l'influence du japonisme a été excellente** pour nous tirer de la tradition du bitume et nous faire voir les gaietés blondes de la nature, **une imitation voulue d'un art qui n'est ni de**

notre race ni de notre milieu, finirait par n'être plus qu'une mode insupportable. Le japonisme a du bon, mais il ne faut pas en mettre partout; autrement l'art tournerait au bibelot. Notre puissance n'est pas là. Nous ne pouvons accepter comme le dernier mot de notre création, cette simplification par trop naïve, cette curiosité des teintes plates, ce raffinement du trait et de la tache coloré. Tout cela ne fait pas de la vie, et nous devons faire de la vie. ¹
[emphasis added]

In this excerpt Zola perceives *japonisme* as a positive stage in artistic evolution deteriorating into a superficial fashion. This mitigated response foreshadows his waning support for Impressionism as it became absorbed into the mainstream. For Zola there was no worthy successor to lead French painting after Manet's premature death in 1883. By 1896, Zola's acerbic commentaries on the Salon were aimed at the servile imitators of the Impressionist idiom, "Tous des Manet alors, tous des Monet, tous des Pissarro!"ⁱⁱ. Furthermore, he is repelled by the tendency of the 'post-impressionists' to employ vivid, clashing colors to create antinaturalistic effects. "...ces femmes multicolores, ces paysages violets et ces chevaux orange... Oh! les horizons où les arbres sont bleus, les eaux rouges et les cieux verts. C'est affreux, affreux, affreux!"ⁱⁱⁱ Here the influence of scientific theories of light rather than *japonisme* is cited for this deviation from the true and life-like. In this conservative closure to his career as a progressive art critic, Zola proudly upholds his principles, resigned to the

fact that what was once avant-garde will eventually become part of the status quo.^{liii}

Zola's Eclectic Collecting Style

From his first invitation to the Goncourt home in Auteuil in 1868 and on many subsequent visits, Zola would have occasion to admire the museum-quality collection of French eighteenth century furniture, decorations and master drawings, complemented by Japanese textiles, porcelains, lacquerware, carved ivories, bronzes and bound albums of *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. These precious works of art and their meticulous arrangement are proudly inventoried by Edmond in La Maison d'un Artiste (1881). (fig. 48-49) The Goncourts established the precedent for the Naturalist author to compose his works amidst exotic artifacts of distant cultures, an artistic milieu which they believed enhanced creativity. Their example would be followed by Zola, Huysmans, Maupassant and most of the naturalist circle. (Huysman's fabulous interior for Des Esseintes, protagonist of A rebours (1884) may have been inspired by the example of the Goncourts).

Once he had achieved financial success as a novelist, Zola cultivated a passion equal to the Goncourts' for frequenting auction sales and antique shops in search of eye-catching, evocative objets d'art for his residences in Paris and Médan.^{liv} Zola established an eclectic collection in the same manner as he created his individual interpretation of *japonisme*. His personal decorating style can be best described as "Victorian," a many-layered interior overflowing with a fantastic melange of imposing furniture, assorted bibelots and accessories combining diverse periods and cultures. It should be emphasized that Zola's primary interest was in the decorative arts; he was fascinated by their rich textures and colors, fine craftsmanship and evocative historical associations. On the other hand, Zola was not interested in the accumulation of paintings or prints; he abhorred the speculative buying of pictures. Beyond his attraction to *japonaiserie*, Zola amassed European and Chinese pottery and porcelain, Italian Renaissance and Dutch furnishings, ancient Roman sarcophagi (used as planters), tapestries, Persian carpets, dolls, musical instruments and books.^{lv} He was also fond of Medieval stained-glass windows and antique church artifacts, which set the tone of his formal study on the rue de Bruxelles in Paris.

Edmond de Goncourt, an aesthete and self-proclaimed arbiter of taste, was appalled at what he viewed as Zola's lack of discernment in collecting and interior design. The June 20, 1881 entry in the *Journal* records a severe judgment of the eccentric decor of Zola's home in Médan (*"très abîmé par une bibeloterie infecte"*^{lvi}), an estimation which which was seconded by Huysmans. Goncourt's acerbic entry of April 2, 1891 on Zola's Paris study is equally derisive, "un mobilier de parvenu fastueux...qui a un peu l'air d'un heritage par Zola d'un cardinal vénitien."

^{lvii} The negative view of Zola's taste largely propagated by Edmond de Goncourt was still prevalent in 1960 when Jean Adhémar published "*Le Cabinet de Travail de Zola*" in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*. Adhémar's revisionist view upholds Zola's exceptional eye for beauty and design. He attributes the dubious religious artifacts to the influence of Madame Zola, who created a pompous setting for her husband to receive visitors.

Guy de Maupassant's positive assessment of the Naturalist author's eclectic surroundings at Médan in his essay in *Le Gaulois* of January, 1882 supports Adhémar's interpretation.

Zola travaille au milieu d'une pièce démesurément grande et haute, qu'un vitrage, donnant sur la plaine, éclaire dans toute sa largeur. Et cet immense cabinet est aussi tendu d'immense tapisseries, encombré de meubles de tous les temps et de tous les pays. Des armures du Moyen Age, authentiques ou non, voisinent avec **d'étonnants**

meubles japonais et du gracieux objets du XVIIIe siècle. La cheminée monumentale, flanquée de deux bonshommes de pierre, pourrait brûler un chêne en un jour...et chaque meuble est surchargé de bibelots. Et pourtant Zola n'est point collectionneur: il semble acheter pour acheter, un peu pêle-mêle, au hasard de sa fantaisie excitée, suivant les caprices de son oeil, la séduction des formes ou de la couleur, sans s'inquiéter, comme Goncourt, des origines authentiques et de la valeur incontestable.^{lviii}
[emphasis added]

The vast atelier-study at Médan described in this passage is illustrated in an engraving by Desmoulin, published in 1888. (fig. 50) Zola is pictured writing at his vast worktable; to his left are a pile of *ukiyo-e* print albums in an oriental box, next to a double tiered lacquer shelf topped with two Japanese dolls. In the background to the author's right is a standing statue of a Buddhist deity, perhaps of Chinese origin. Another visitor, George Moore, commented on the explicit erotic Japanese prints hanging in the stairwell--an amusing distraction for guests on their way to the upper floors.^{lix}

Zola's estate at Médan (Yvelines) purchased in 1878, was bequeathed to the Assistance Publique by Madame Zola after his death in 1902; the site was dedicated as a private museum by the author's descendants in 1985. Although original furnishings are scant, the visitor today can nonetheless

ascertain the importance of orientalia to the author's personal surroundings. The Salon-Billiard Room contains an important vestige: a huge stained glass panel of peacocks, exotic birds and flowers installed in 1886. Peacocks and especially cranes^{lx} were considered symbols of Japan and the Orient; in Manet's portrait of Zola the peacock feather suspended over the author's head is a further allusion to Japan. (This telling detail is almost invisible in reproductions of the painting.)

Zola, like his friend Duret, was an ardent admirer of James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), the American expatriate painter whose work from the early 1860's reflects an affinity with the art of Japan. Whistler's flamboyant *Harmony in Blue and Gold: Peacock Room* (1876-77, Freer Gallery of Art) (fig. 51) was created by the artist as a total environment to complement his oil painting *Princess from the Land of Porcelain* (1864) in the London residence of patron F.R.Leyland. The painted panels of peacocks with spread plumage in Zola's Paris study (and possibly the Peacock stained glass window at Médan) may be considered an homage to Whistler's prototype.^{lxi}

For Zola *japonisme* was an enduring enthusiasm which was associated with his legacy; the catalogue of the auction of the immense Zola estate held at the Hôtel Drouot from March 9-13 1903 was headlined “*Objets d’Art et d’Ameublement, Faiences et Porcelaines, Objets variés Japonais et Européens...*”. Still more prized Japanese objects from Zola’s years of collecting--furniture, ivories, bronzes, ceramics and lacquerware--were featured at the sale of his widow’s estate in 1926. The catalogue listing of those few engravings and paintings dispersed at the 1903 auction suggests that Zola cherished his framed Japanese images to the same extent as the French masters Delacroix, Guys, Pissarro, Monet, and Cézanne.^{lxii}

Zola’s *japonisme*, though strong, was more nuanced than that of the Goncourts, chief spokesmen for the movement. Zola’s strong friendship with the major *japonistes*--the Goncourts, Manet, Burty, and Duret-- and his support for the fledgling Impressionists, whose work owes much to the revelations of the Japanese print, provide further evidence of the author’s assimilation of the oriental aesthetic. Throughout his lifetime, Manet’s portrait depicting the youthful Zola as an ardent defender of the alliance between Naturalism and *japonisme* remained a treasured possession.

In Zola's view the art of all cultures of the world existed on the basis of equality, in which the art of the Orient was as significant as that of ancient Greece for his contemporaries. (This view essentially reflects the conclusion of Whistler's *10:00 Lecture* of 1885.)^{lxiii} However, the enthusiasm for *japonisme* was balanced with the conviction that although Japanese decorative arts and prints opened new horizons they should not serve as models to be copied by unimaginative western artists. For Zola the arts of the Orient formed a vital component of the vast *éventail* of human artistic creation, and among these the arts of Japan exercised a powerful and enduring fascination.

As a Naturalist novelist Zola concentrated on the creation of life-like literary images. In two novels of the Rougon Maquart series, Une Page de l'Amour (1878) and Au Bonheur des Dames (1883), Zola incorporates the fashion for the collecting of Japanese objects into the thread of his narrative. He documents how *japonisme* evolved from the exclusive domain of the aesthetic elite into a popular fad of the bourgeoisie. Like the palette of his fellow japonistes the Impressionists, the bright hues of Zola's cityscapes provide a counterpoint to the subdued tones normally associated with the Parisian metropolis.

Besides the explicit mention of *japonaiserie*, there is an important undercurrent of latent *japonisme* in these works. Zola's conception and interpretation of distinctive characteristics of Japanese art and culture will be examined in terms of certain literary manifestations of *japonisme*. These elements of implicit *japonisme* would include:

- the rendering of landscape and perspective using birds-eye and plunging views characteristic of oriental art.
- descriptive metaphors for Parisian scenes derived from Japanese woodblock prints, painted screens and gilt lacquerware.
- the pantheistic interpretation of the bond uniting man and nature, reflecting the Japanese Shinto tradition.
- a predilection for exploration of the intimate feminine universe, analogous to Utamaro's sensuous woodblock prints of women and their past-times.
- an emphasis on mundane aspects of urban life analogous to the 'floating world' documented in Japanese *ukiyo-e*.

ⁱ Emile Zola, *Edouard Manet, etude biographique et critique* (Paris: Dentu, 1867), 21. See also E. Zola, *Le Bon Combat, de Courbet aux Impressionistes* (Paris: Hermann, 1974), 79-80.

ⁱⁱ Robert J. Niess. "Emile Zola and Edmond de Goncourt." *American Society of Legion of Honor Magazine*. Vol. 41, 1970: 85-105, passim.

ⁱⁱⁱ Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1989), 2:186.

^{iv} Niess, 88-90.

^v Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, 2:187.

^{vi} The critic Canteloube, quoted in Emile Zola, *Pour Manet* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1989), 74, note 1.

^{vii} Quoted in Theodore Reff, "Manet's Portrait of Zola." *Burlington Magazine*, January 1975, 40.

^{viii} Quoted in John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 148-150.

^{ix} Quoted in John Rewald, *Cezanne, sa vie, son oeuvre, son amitié pour Zola*. (Paris: Albin Michel, 1939), 145.

^x Emile Zola, *Du Roman, Sur Stendhal, Flaubert et les Goncourt*. (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1989), 252-253. Originally printed in *Le Messager de l'Europe*, September 1875.

^{xi} In his *Picture Book of Selected Insects* (1788) and *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* (1790). See Jack Hiller, *Utamaro, Color Prints and Paintings* (New York: Dutton, 1979), chapters 6 and 10.

^{xii} "...l'amour commun de la nature par lequel les modernes féconderont leurs travaux." quoted in Gabriel P. Weisberg. *The Independent Critic*. (New York: Peter lang, 1993), 104.

^{xiii} See Chapter 2, "Humankind, Monkeys and Nature as an Expression of Japonisme in Manette Salomon."

^{xiv} Weisberg, 296.

^{xv} "J'accepte toutes les oeuvres d'art au même titre, au titre de manifestations du génie humain." Emile Zola, *Edouard Manet, Etude Biographique et Critique*. (Paris: Dentu, 1867).

^{xvi} Jean-Paul Crespelle, *Guide de la France Impressionniste*. (France: Hazan, 1990) 93-94. See also Rewald, *Cezanne*, 144.

^{xvii} John Rewald. *Cezanne*, 141.

^{xviii} Rewald, *The History of Impressionism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), 208.

^{xix} Gary Tinterow, "The Impressionist Landscape" in Tinterow and Loyrette, *Origins of Impressionism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), 233-263 passim.

^{xx} Nils Sandblad, *Manet, Three Studies in Artistic Conception* (Sweden, Lund, 1954), 106.

^{xxi} *Origins of Impressionism*, 383-384.

- ^{xxii} This painter is assumed to be Claude Monet, who by his own account had seen such prints in Le Havre around this date.
- ^{xxiii} Ernst Chesneau, "L'Exposition Universelle, Le Japon à Paris." *Gazette des Beaux Arts*. (September 1878: 385-397), 387.
- ^{xxiv} Courbet's remark, cited by Klaus Berger, *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 20.
- ^{xxv} Sandblad, 105.
- ^{xxvi} Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes*. (Paris, Seuil, 1968), 545
- ^{xxvii} Berger, 13.
- ^{xxviii} Quoted in Sandblad, 78, from Théodire Duret, *Histoire d'Edouard Manet et de son Oeuvre*. (Paris, 1902), 132.
- ^{xxix} Deborah Johnson, "The Impact of East Asian Art within the Early Impressionist Circle, 1856-1868," Diss, Brown University, 1984, 198. The source is the posthumous inventory listed in Rouart and Wildenstein's two volume study of Manet (Paris, 1975)
- ^{xxx} Berger, 23-27.
- ^{xxxi} Colta Ives, *The Great Wave, The Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974), 23-33 passim.
- ^{xxxii} Berger, 25.
- ^{xxxiii} William Rubin, Lectures at Sothebys New York on Impressionism, Fall-Winter 1997, used by permission of the speaker.
- ^{xxxiv} Ibid.
- ^{xxxv} François Fosca, *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1941), 352.
- ^{xxxvi} Sandblad, 77.
- ^{xxxvii} Quoted in Johnson, "Impact of East Asian Art within Early Impressionist Circle, 1856-68," 230.
- ^{xxxviii} Loyrette, *Origins of Impressionism*. 266-268. Baudelaire may have objected to Manet's large 'heroic' format for depicting this scene.
- ^{xxxix} Baudelaire, 543.
- ^{xl} William Rubin, Lectures on Impressionism, Fall 1997.
- ^{xli} Berger attributes this observation to Sandblad.
- ^{xlii} Léon Rosenthal, *Manet Aquafortiste et Lithographe*. (Paris, Le Goupy, 1925), 39, note 1.
- ^{xliii} i.e. Sandblad, Berger, Ives, Johnson.
- ^{xliiv} Jean Adhémar insists that the site is actually Zola's apartment on rue Moncey, near rue de Clichy. See his article, "Le Cabinet de Travail de Zola" *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, November 1969: 285-298.
- ^{xli v} Emile Zola, *Le Bon Combat*, 105.
- ^{xli vi} Ibid. 105-106.
- ^{xli vii} *Origins of Impressionism*, 217.
- ^{xli viii} Françoise Cachin and Charles Moffett, *Manet, 1832-1883* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 526, (letter 29).
- ^{xli ix} This placement of the painting is confirmed by Goncourt and Huysmans, who found it 'relegated to the vestibule' in their negative interpretations.
- ^l Emile Zola, *Le Bon Combat*, 213-124.
- ^{li} Ibid., 260.
- ^{lii} Zola, 262.
- ^{liii} Ibid., 259-265 passim.
- ^{li v} Jean Adhémar, "Le Cabinet de Travail de Zola." *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, November 1960, 291.
- ^{li v i} Ibid., 291.
- ^{li v ii} Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire* (Paris: Ed. Robert Laffont, 1989), 2: 898.
- ^{li v iii} Ibid., 3: 568.
- ^{li v iiii} Guy de Maupassant, *Chroniques I., 1876-1882* (Paris, Union Générale des Editions, 1980), 385.

^{lix} James Leaver, *Whistler*. (New York: 1930), 114, as cited in Adhémar.

^{lx} “La grue” in French. The word in slang referred to a prostitute.

^{lxi} Theodore Reff, “Manet’s Portrait of Zola.” *Burlington Magazine*. January, 1975. 35-44 also Adhémar 290.

^{lxii} Adhémar, 293-294.

^{lxiii} See Chapter 5 “Zola’s Images of the Parisian Floating World: the Japoniste landscape of Une page d’amour.”

CHAPTER 5

ZOLA'S IMAGES OF THE PARISIAN 'FLOATING WORLD': THE JAPONISTE LANDSCAPE OF UNE PAGE D'AMOUR

“*Japonisme!* Attraction de l'époque, rage désordonnée qui a tout envahi, tout commandé, tout désorganisé dans notre art, nos modes, nos goûts, même notre raison.” critic Adrien Dubouché on the triumph of *japonisme* at the 1878 Exposition Universelle.ⁱ

“Une seule bande de bleu, sur Montmartre, bordait l'horizon d'un bleu si lavé et si tendre, qu'on aurait dit l'ombre d'un satin blanc. . . . Mais à mesure que la bande bleue grandissait du côté de Montmartre, une lumière coulait, limpide et froide comme une eau de source, mettant Paris sous une glace où les lointains eux-mêmes prenaient une netteté d'image japonaise.” Emile Zola, excerpt from concluding chapter of Une page d'amour.ⁱⁱ

In the interval of little more than a decade between the limited introduction of Japanese arts at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 and the triumph of the official Japanese Pavilion at the 1878 Paris World's Fair, *japonisme* had expanded beyond the elite circles of arts and letters to the domain of the fashion-conscious bourgeoisie. One of the main attractions of the 1878 Fair was the replica of a Japanese farm on the Trocadero, demonstrating selected *arts et métiers* of the agrarian nation. In “*Le Japon à Paris*” (*Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1878), Ernest Chesneau points out how the displays of the model farm reveal the genius of Japan.

On s'y promène à petits pas retrouvant en toutes choses, dans la disposition des pieds d'orge en culture, des rizières, des oasis de bambous verdoyants, dans l'architecture d'un hangar, d'une fontaine, d'une cage à poules, dans un jouet d'enfant, la même recherche des

ajustages simples et rares, précis et curieux, le même génie industriel et charmant, le même soin, la même patience, le même souci de perfection.ⁱⁱⁱ

The well-attended exhibition of arts of the Orient held at the *Palais de l'Industrie* from August of 1873 to January 1874, coinciding with the First International Orientalist Congress, had contributed to French fascination with Japanese culture. The display presented highlights of the recently-completed three-year collecting expedition of Asian art undertaken by financier Henri Cernuschi and art critic Theodore Duret. While Cernuschi specialized in bronzes, which became the nucleus of the Musée Cernuschi (est. 1898), Duret amassed prints and books that he later donated to the Bibliothèque Nationale. Journalists visiting the show remarked on the creativity and unsurpassed mastery of Japanese artisans in bronze, ceramics and lacquerware, while Chinese examples were dismissed as relics of a decadent civilization.^{iv} The glass and iron architecture of the Palais de l'Industrie [replaced by the Grand Palais in 1900] is mentioned several times in Une page d'amour as a prominent feature of the Paris skyline; a probable reference to the popularity of the Cernuschi exhibition. (According to the *Goncourt Journal*, Zola attended a ball at Cernuschi's residence in May, 1878.)^v

Since the 'discovery' of Japanese art in the mid-1860's, Chesneau and other *japoniste* critics had urged French designers of textiles, ceramics, crystal, jewelry, furniture and metalware to emulate the superlative craftsmanship of the Japanese in order to reinvigorate the quality of decorative arts of the industrial age. Cernuschi and Duret's acquisitions served as a resource for artisans from firms such as Baccarat and Christofle, whose productions in crystal and silver began to incorporate Japanese flora and fauna--bamboo, wisteria, plum blossoms, carp, cranes and deer--for a clientele eager to follow *la mode du japonisme*.^{vi} (fig. 52)

While some French designers faithfully copied Japanese prototypes, as in Theodore Deck's ceramic replicas of bronze urns^{vii}, (fig. 53) others produced strange hybrids, decorating stock neoclassical forms with japonaiserie motifs. Exceptional artists, notably Felix Bracquemond, Emile Gallé^{viii} and René Lalique, were able to absorb the Japanese influence into their personal styles in ceramics, glassware, furniture and jewelry, creating a truly French version of *japonisme* in the applied arts.(fig. 54) Contact with the Japanese tradition of naturalism resulted in a renewed interest in flora and fauna of all hemispheres as a source of inspiration,^{ix} in contrast to the historical pastiche that typifies nineteenth century decorative arts.

The fine arts of the period also reflect the impact of the arts of Japan. Claude Monet's painting *La Japonaise* (1875, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), originally titled *La Japonnerie*, was one of the most discussed entries in the Second Impressionist Exhibition of 1876. (fig. 55) Zola himself remarked in his account for *La Sémaphore de Marseille*, "Monsieur Claude Monet est certainement un des chefs du groupe[impressionniste]. Il a un éclat de palette extraordinaire. Son grand tableau, intitulé Japonerie[sic] une femme vêtue d'une large robe rouge du Japon, est prodigieux de couleur et d'étrangeté."^x

La Japonaise is a full-length portrait of Monet's blond wife Camille, outfitted in a richly-embroidered red satin kabuki costume, cavorting on straw tatami matting against a flat background of oriental fans. This exuberant image has been interpreted as a testimony to the excesses of the Japanese craze.^{xi} Nevertheless, it expresses the enthusiastic embrace of the liberating Japanese influence on the arts. Critic Théodore Duret perceptively noted, "...le rouge de la robe, avec les broderies en relief et les éventails multicolores piqués au fond, constitue le vrai motif du tableau."^{xii} *La Japonaise* is a classic example of *japonisme* in the history of modern painting, illustrating an impact extending far beyond exotic studio props to vital issues of color, composition and conception of space.

As early as his 1868 Salon, Zola had praised Monet's stress on modern subject matter, in particular his emphasis on contemporary women and their dress, in the section devoted to "*Les Actualistes*."

Parmi ces peintres, au premier rang je citerai Claude Monet. Celui-là a sucé le lait de notre âge...Il aime les horizons de nos villes, les taches grises et blanches que font les maisons sur le ciel clair; il aime, dans les rues, les gens qui courent, affairés en paletots; il aime les champs de course, les promenades aristocratiques où roule le tapage des voitures; il aime nos femmes, leur ombrelle, leurs gants, leurs chiffons, jusqu'à leurs faux cheveux et poudre de riz, tout ce qui les rend filles de notre civilization.^{xiii}

Zola and Monet, both early and ardent *japonistes*, shared the naturalist credo of the importance of portraying scenes of *la vie Parisienne* in their works, just as the *ukiyo-e* artists of Japan had depicted mundane aspects of life in Edo. The *Maison de Monet* at Giverny displays the artist's prodigious collection of two hundred thirty woodblock prints of courtesans, landscapes, studies of flora and fauna and scenes of contemporary life by masters such as Utamaro, Hiroshige and Hokusai. Having purchased his first examples of *ukiyo-e* as early as 1855, Monet acknowledged a fascination with the rich heritage of Japanese art throughout his long career.^{xiv}

It is significant that the final version of Zola's Une page d'amour, the eighth of the Rougon-Macquart series, was published in June 1878, a year

marking a nadir of *japonisme* in France. (It first appeared in installments from December 1877-April 1878, in *Le Bien Public*.) In contrast to the ‘Great Waves’ of Zola’s more ambitious works of the same period, L’Assommoir(1877) and Nana(1879), the exploration of the mysteries of feminine emotions and their physiological components in Une page d’amour evokes a limpid sea of tranquillity. In creating “*cette oeuvre intime et de demi-teinte*,”^{xv} Zola attempted a deliberate deviation from his usual style. He explained his intentions in a letter of 1892:

“Une page d’amour...a dû être, dans ma pensée, une opposition, une halte de tendresse et de douceur. J’avais, depuis le temps, le désir d’étudier, dans une nature de femme honnête, un coup de passion, un amour qui naît et qui passe, imprévu, sans laisser de trace.”^{xvi}

The Fashion for *Japonisme* in Une page d’amour

The novel is set in an extremely circumscribed area, several streets of Passy, a tranquil hamlet of villas and gardens overlooking the capital. References to the Crimean conflict between Russia and Turkey suggest the time frame of 1853 to 1854.^{xvii} However, Zola takes poetic license by documenting aspects of the contemporary trend of *japonisme*, providing local color for Une page d’amour. His characters move amidst Oriental accessories--*portières d’Orient*, lacquer furnishings, an *écran chinois* --

elements of a milieu infatuated with a taste for the exotic, in which having the acquaintance of a Chinese person is considered a social accomplishment.(227)

The bourgeoisie Madame Deberle, devoted follower of current fads, has assembled an intimate *pavillon japonais* in her greenhouse, an intermediary space between her idyllic garden and formal Passy residence.

Les murs et le plafond[du pavillon japonais] étaient tendus d'étoffes brochées d'or, avec des vols de grues qui s'envolaient, des papillons et des fleurs éclatantes, des paysages où des barques bleues nageaient sur des fleuves jaunes. Il y avait des sièges et des jardinières de bois de fer, sur le sol des nattes fines, et encombrant des meubles de laque, tout un monde de bibelots, petits bronzes, petites potiches, jouets étranges bariolés de couleurs vives.(55)

The reader notes the juxtaposition of bright, even garish hues--gold, blue and yellow--and the ubiquitous flying cranes, butterflies and flowers associated with a mythical Japan. Madame Deberle's efforts at creating a *japoniste* interior are reviled as an accumulation of cheap trinkets by the aesthete Malignon. His scornful opinion recalls certain Journal entries of Edmond de Goncourt, critical of the vulgarization of *japonisme* by women of the bourgeoisie. The salon of Madame Charpentier, wife of Zola's publisher, was a likely model for Madame Deberle's *pavillon*. Its profuse japonaiseries are evident in Renoir's *Portrait of Madame Charpentier and her Children* (1878, Metropolitan Museum of Art.) (fig. 56)

Une page d'amour's protagonist, Hélène Grandjean, proudly outfits her prepubescent daughter Jeanne as a Japanese geisha for the Deberle's precious children's costume ball, a disguise which delights the assembly. They perceive no irony in having a young girl impersonate an exotic courtesan.

La robe, brodée de fleurs et d'oiseaux bizarres, tombait jusqu'à ses petits pieds...tandis que, au-dessous de la large ceinture, les pans écartés laissaient voir le jupon de soie verdâtre, moirée de jaune. Rien n'était d'un charme plus étrange que son visage fin, sous le haut chignon traversé de longues épingles, qui lui donnait l'air d'un véritable fille d'Yeddo, marchant dans un parfum de benjoin et de thé. (120-121)

Jeanne's partner at the ball is Lucien Deberle, a youngster masquerading as a Marquis from the era of Louis XIV, a miniature couple symbolic of the ties uniting France and Japan during the *japoniste* period. Here again the Goncourt legacy is felt, as Jules and Edmond were champions of the grand siècle and of Nippon.

Zola's mention of the rich display of flowers enhancing the upper middle-class Deberle home may be interpreted as a further allusion to *japonisme*. (fig. 57) Japanese chrysanthemums and camellias were introduced to Europe in the 1860's and two decades later French horticulturists had developed hybrids of outstanding color and shape.^{xviii}

Monet had iris, azalea and peonies brought back from Japan, species depicted in his album of *Large Flowers* by Hokusai^{xix}. The famous *jardin japonais* at Giverny (begun 1893), is the subject of many later canvases. For French *japonistes* the culture of the land of cherry blossoms and bamboo represented the epitome of integration of the beauty of the natural world into everyday existence. The arts of tea ceremony and flower arranging were demonstrated at the Japanese Pavilions of the Expositions Universelles. Vincent van Gogh, an avid reader of the Naturalists, aptly expressed the Japan/nature theme, "...isn't it almost an actual religion that these simple Japanese teach us, who live in Nature as if they themselves were flowers."^{xx} This connection explains why the Deberle garden and its extension, the *pavillon japonais*, plays such an important role as a *japoniste* setting in Une page d'amour, a sanctuary from civilization where characters are subject to the elemental forces of the universe.

Zola's dense, painterly descriptions of the dramatically shifting panorama of the Parisian skies and cityscape mark the conclusion of each of the novel's five parts. These poetic intervals of changing atmospheric conditions, cloud formations, and effects of sunlight on the contours of the cityscape are viewed in moments of introspection by Hélène and Jeanne from their apartment overlooking the metropolis. Such observations of

one view subject to seasonal or temporal conditions echo the technique of Monet, who painted *en plein air* at Vétheuil and at Argenteuil in the Paris region during the 1870's.^{xxi} Zola's views of the Parisian skyline anticipate Monet's series pictures of Rouen Cathedral, Poplars and Grainstacks of the early 1890's, static subjects examined under varying light throughout the course of the day.

Zola's Parisian Cityscape reflects his appreciation for the arts of Japan

For the reader attuned to Japanese culture, the most extraordinary evidence of Zola's *japonisme* in Une page d'amour is this emphasis on cityscape, forever changing according to patterns of wind, clouds, sunlight and precipitation. It was the Japanese *ukiyo-e* artists of the mid-nineteenth century who were considered masters of urban views and atmospheric effects in their rendering of the floating world of Edo[Tokyo], *le monde qui passe*. Zola's lyrical passages devoted to Parisian views clearly indicate the author's appreciation of Japanese woodblock prints, particularly those of the masters of landscape Hokusai and Hiroshige. Zola's sensitivity to subtle nuances of color and tone also suggests a remarkable awareness of *maki-e*, the Japanese gold-decorated lacquerware, and of *sumi-e*, monochrome ink painting and calligraphy.

Ando[Utagawa]Hiroshige(1797-1858) became known in France during the 1870's, as a result of Philippe Burty's appreciation for the artist's extraordinary renderings of pilgrimage routes throughout rural Japan, temple gardens and urban views of Edo. Two of Hiroshige's best-known series are *One Hundred Views of Edo*(1856-69), and *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* (1858-59). Previously, his work had been overshadowed by the reputation of the great Hokusai. Hiroshige typically presents his subject from a steeply vertical birds'-eye view; he excelled in effects of rain, fog, wind and snow. Hiroshige's woodblock prints are extremely important for the evolution of modern painting: James Abbott MacNeill Whistler and Claude Monet are the artists most indebted to his influence in subject matter, composition and perspective. Whistler owned prints from the series *Sixty-odd Famous Places of Japan*, while Monet possessed over fifty framed sheets from Hiroshige's various albums.

The majority of *ukiyo-e* prints familiar to Zola and French *japonistes* were produced during the nineteenth century, decadent examples of an art that had reached its summit a century earlier. *Aizuri-e*, prints colored predominantly or entirely in shades of blue, were characteristic of Japanese *ukiyo-e* from the late 1820's to 1840's; many of these were

imported to France in the following decades.^{xxii} In Hiroshige's woodblock prints bands of blue schematically delineate the upper horizon of the sky or suggest the depths of the sea. Zola's fascination with the technique of Japanese prints may explain the leitmotif of shades of the color blue in Une page d'amour, present from the opening sentence.

La veilleuse, dans un cornet bleuâtre, brûlait sur la cheminée...dont l'ombre noyait toute une moitié de la chambre. C'était une calme lueur qui...azurait la glace de l'armoire de palissandre placée entre les deux fenêtres...ce bleu des tentures...prenait à cette heure nocturne une douceur vague de nouée. (13)

The tendency of the Japanese to repeat one color for effect was noted by Whistler as early as 1868. In a letter to painter Fantin Latour, he wrote, "...les couleurs doivent être pour ainsi dire *brodées* là-dessus--c'est à dire la même couleur reparâitre continuellement ça et là comme le même fil dans une broderie...le tout formant de cette façon un *patron* harmonieux-regardes les Japonais comme ils comprennent ça!-Ce n'est jamais le contraste qu'ils cherchent, mais au contraire la répétition.[sic]"^{xxiii} (The relationship between the repetition of "l'azur" in painting, prose and poetry, in the works of *japonistes* Whistler, Zola and Mallarmé provides a fascinating subject for further research.)

The predominant nocturnal blues of the upholstery and interior of Hélène's modest apartment echo the Parisian skies framed by her windows.

The azure tints of the Paris sky in winter are specifically compared with the graphic qualities of Japanese prints in this excerpt from the closing chapter:

Une seule bande de bleu, sur Montmartre, bordait l'horizon d'un bleu si lavé et si tendre, qu'on aurait dit l'ombre d'un satin blanc. . . Mais à mesure que la bande bleue grandissait du côté de Montmartre, une lumière coulait, limpide et froide comme une eau de source, mettant Paris sous une glace où les lointains eux-mêmes prenaient une netteté d'image japonaise. (353)

Zola's own Japanese color engraving *Paysage d'Hiver*, listed in the 1903 auction catalogue of his property^{xxiv}, may well have served as an inspiration for this passage. (fig. 58)

Zola's predilection for birds'-eye view scenes of pedestrians caught in driving rains implies a further allusion to *ukiyo-e*, reinforced by first-hand observations. According to a reliable account, Zola climbed to the top of Notre Dame during a severe thunderstorm to document the effects of the deluge on the urban landscape.^{xxv} Two episodes of the novel take place during an inclement evening: Hélène's dinner party and her adulterous tryst with Doctor Deberle. The precipitation is rendered as "*les hachures luisantes de la pluie...*"(104); "*La barre de grosses gouttes...*"(281); and "*les hachures grises... les gouttes obliques*"(287). Such atmospheric scenes suggest inspiration from Hiroshige's evocative images. In *Ohashi, Sudden Shower in Atake, Mount Fuji*(from the series *One Hundred Famous Views*

of Edo) the rain is represented by fine vertical black lines (*hachures*) covering the page, which seems to pound the bent-over figures crossing the wooden bridge. (fig. 59) In *White Rain, Shino* (from the series *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokkaido*) figures hidden under umbrellas attempt to walk uphill against the force of oblique lines representing the downpour. (fig. 60) A friend of Manet, Zola was certainly aware of the artist's 1870 etching *La Queue à la Boucherie*, a stylized depiction of housewives huddled under umbrellas, a composition related to Japanese prototypes.^{xxvi} (fig. 61) A further affinity of Zola's novel with the graphic arts are the etchings of Felix Buhot (1847-1898), whose 1875 album *Japonisme, Dix eaux-fortes*, illustrates objects from Burty's collection. His atmospheric cityscapes such as *Place Breda in Winter* (1879), depicting the rigors of the season in the central scene and surrounding cartouches, are often compared to Japanese prints. (fig. 62)

Although intimately involved with the visual arts as an advocate of the Impressionists, Zola was primarily a collector of decorative arts. The auction catalogue of the Zola estate sale reveals that the author had acquired a substantial accumulation of Japanese lacquer furnishings and decorations. These included a "*boîte oblongue à deux compartiments, contenant un plateau et d'autres boîtes en laque du Japon, à décor de fleurs,*

sur fond poudré” and “*Deux divinités, sur un même socle, en bois laqué or, du Japon.*”^{xxvii} (fig. 63) Countless examples of Japanese lacquer writing boxes, tiered picnic sets, mirror cases, teaware and cabinets created during the Edo period (1615-1868) and earlier were imported to France during the 1870’s to satisfy the demands of eager collectors. Such fanciful decorative objects provided a powerful visual stimulus for Zola’s literary imagination. (fig. 64)

Japanese and Chinese lacquers and porcelains, precious commodities imported from the Orient by the Dutch East India Company, were collected by aristocratic French connoisseurs from the late seventeenth century. Lacquerware [*urushi*] was adapted by the Japanese from the Chinese during the Neolithic period; its durable, resistant qualities made an ideal material as a container for religious or secular purposes. By the eleventh century Japanese artisans had developed an original form of decoration called *maki-e*, literally “the sprinkling of gold,” which involves scattering small fragments or powders of precious minerals (silver, gold and tin) onto the wet surface of the sticky lacquer to form elegant patterns and designs.^{xxviii} The stylized decoration of lacquerware often evokes a season by its characteristic foliage: autumn grasses are a frequent motif. The tactile and visual appeal of Japanese lacquer is due to the captivating effect

of the sparkling gold or silver against the dark red or lustrous black surface, especially when viewed by candlelight.

In his novel Zola specifically mentions lacquer in this curious description of the spectacular effects of the setting sun on the Paris skyline. “Le soleil, s’abaissant vers les coteaux de Meudon, venait d’écarter les derniers nuages et de resplendir. Une gloire enflamma l’azur. Au fond de l’horizon, l’écroulement de roches crayeuses qui barraient les lointains de Choisy et de Choisy-le-Roi, entassa des blocs de carmin bordés de laque vive.”(139) Poetic descriptions comparing the effects of sunlight to the sprinkling of gold dust or powder strongly suggest the sparkling metallic encrustations of Japanese lacquerware. “On en voyait la poussière d’or filer comme une sable fin, s’élargir en vaste cône, pleuvoir sans relâche sur le quartier des Champs-Élysées, qu’elle éclaboussait d’une clarté dansante. Longtemps, cette averse d’étincelles dura, avec son poudroiement continu de fusée.” (137). “A mesure que le rayon s’élargissait, des hachures roses et bleues peinturluraient l’horizon, d’un bariolage d’aquarelle enfantine. Il y eut un flambée, une tombé de neige d’or sur une ville de cristal.”(283) In Zola’s vivid *japoniste* conception, Paris is transformed into “*l’immense cité rouge et or,*” traversed by its “*mer orientale,*”(140-141) the Seine. Paris has become the new Edo for the setting of Zola’s interpretation of the

arts of Japan, his images of a Parisian ‘floating world,’ the literal meaning of *ukiyo-e*.

The references to ‘*encre*’ [ink] in Une page d’amour imply the author’s awareness of the oriental art of brush painting, *sumi-e*. The Japanese painter achieves suggestive effects with jet black or diluted gradations of ink applied in rapid calligraphic strokes. (fig. 65) Once again, Zola employs imagery associated with oriental art for describing of the spectacle of the heavens. “D’énormes nuages, élargis comme des taches d’encre, couraient au milieu de plus petits, dispersés et flottants...”(285) “De grands tas d’ombre emplissaient déjà les creux, tandis qu’une barre, comme un flot d’encre, montait au fond de l’horizon, mangeant les restes de jour, les lueurs hésitantes qui se retiraient vers le couchant...”(206). “Hélène revenait toujours à cette nappe resplendissante[de la Seine] sur laquelle des barques passaient, pareilles à des oiseaux couleur d’encre.”(73) Even the anxious glance of Hélène’s daughter suggests this liquid medium, “...la face toute pâle, qui les regardait, de ses yeux grands d’un noir d’encre.”(180)

Zola’s universal approach unites the heritage of Greece and Japan

In Une page d'amour Zola combines his enthusiasm for the arts of Japan with a respect for the foundations of classicism. He continues to uphold the humanist credo of his 1867 defense of the painter Manet, considering the art of all peoples in equal esteem as long as it expresses life. "J'accepte toutes les oeuvres d'art au même titre, au titre de manifestations du génie humain...elles ont toutes la véritable beauté: la vie dans ses milles expressions..."^{xxix} This universalist point of view explains how Zola could collect with equal fervor Greco-Roman marble statuary and Renaissance bronzes representing pagan deities such as Jupiter, Pan and Venus and oriental porcelains, lacquerware and *ukiyo-e* albums.^{xxx} In this respect Zola diverges remarkably from his mentors the Goncourts, who advocated the assymetrical fantasy of Nippon over what they considered the sterility of the formulaic Greek approach.

An early source of the pairing of the artistic heritage of Greece and Japan was Zacharie Astruc's 1867 panegyric on the Empire of the Rising Sun in *L'Etendard*: "le Japon est la Grèce de l'Orient..." Greek and Japanese art are conspicuously present in the still-life in Fantin-Latour's group portrait of Zola amidst Manet and other Naturalist painters, *L'Atelier de Batignolles* (1869, Musée d'Orsay). On a red-draped table are placed a statuette of the Greek goddess Minerva, a Japanese lacquer tray,

and a French ceramic vase with striking *japoniste* decoration. (see figs. 40-41) The implication is that the fresh vision of *japonisme* has been born through assimilation of the lessons of the leading civilizations of Occident and Orient. Zola seems to agree with Degas' assessment that whether the source is Greece or Japan, the most vital criteria is the naturalistic expression of life. ("From Italy to Spain, from Greece to Japan, there is not much difference in technique; everywhere it is a question of summing up life in its essential gestures, and the rest is the business of the artist's eye and hand."^{xxxii})

The view of ancient Greece and Japan as twin pillars of humanity's aesthetic accomplishment was reiterated as late as 1885 in Whistler's "Ten O'Clock," delivered in London. This lecture ridiculed the mediocrity of middle-class taste while extolling the timeless purity and ultimate non-utility of art, "Art for Art's Sake." The "Ten O'Clock" was widely-circulated in Parisian salons thanks to Mallarmé and Vielé-Griffin's translation of 1888. (It was Monet who introduced Whistler to Mallarmé in late 1887).^{xxxii} Whistler's provocative talk concludes, "...the story of the beautiful is already complete--hewn in the marbles of the Parthenon, and broidered(sic), with the birds, upon the fan of Hokusai--at the foot of Fusihama[Mt. Fuji]."^{xxxiii}

One of the most evident references to classicism in Une page d'amour is the novel's symmetrical structure: five parts, each divided into five sections, akin to the five acts of Greek tragedy. Like the Goncourts and most of the naturalist circle, Zola was a devotee of theater who eagerly adapted his novels for the stage; he had studied methods of master dramatists from Euripides to Racine. Zola's theme of female passions and their repercussions echoes Racine's *Phèdre*, although Zola's focus on a 'femme honnête' of the bourgeoisie dictates emotions conveyed in muted, discreet tones in contrast to the histrionics of the preeminent tragic heroine of French seventeenth century drama.

In the author's original family tree of the Rougon Macquarts, the character who would become the protagonist of Une page d'amour was originally named Agathe Mouret. The change to *Hélène Grandjean*[née Mouret] establishes a connection to the legend of Helen of Troy. In his preparatory notes, Zola describes his heroine as "*Une Junon^{xxxiv} châtaine. Un profil romain...Une majesté naturelle*"(1612) In the novel she appears as a statuesque beauty: tall, elegant, poised, of measured, graceful movements and equally controlled emotions. The identification with a goddess or idol is established in this reminiscence of relations with her

husband. “Charles l’adorait, se mettait par terre, le soir, quand elle se couchait, pour baiser ses pieds nus.” (69)

Through alliteration the first syllable of ‘*Hélène*’ leads to an association with Hecate, Greek goddess of earth and of Hades. *Hélène*’s apartment is spare, Spartan compared to the sumptuous excesses of the neighboring villa of the Deberles. Its preponderant shades of blue create a nocturnal, moonlit effect that suggests an allusion to the underworld. The coldness of *Hélène*’s demeanor and her preferences for dark colors and shade are all emblematic of the character’s affinity with morbidity. During *Hélène*’s childhood her mother’s death was followed by her father’s suicide; her husband’s fatal illness occurs shortly after their arrival in Paris from Marseille. In the course of the narrative *Hélène*’s only daughter Jeanne expires from a hereditary disease compounded by neurological symptoms, and by the conclusion *Hélène* has lost her only friend, Abbé Jouve.

These associations are made clear in a startling scene(1-4) in which *Hélène* fruitlessly attempts to lose her earthly ties and join the celestial sphere or ‘enter into the sun.’ Shedding her customary decorum, she passionately rides the garden swing in the Deberle’s spacious yard, temporarily unleashing inhibitions as she ascends into space.

En haut, elle entrait dans le soleil, dans ce blond soleil de février, pleuvant comme une poussière d'or. Ses cheveux châtain, aux reflets d'ambre, s'allumaient; et on aurait dit qu'elle flambait toute entière, tandis que ses noeuds de soie mauve, pareils à des fleurs de feu, luisaient sur sa robe blanchissante. Autour d'elle, le printemps naissait, les bourgeons violâtres mettaient leur ton fin de laque, sur le bleu du ciel. (62-63)

Abruptly Hélène falls to the ground, sustaining an injury, as if realizing the terrible hubris she has committed in a vain attempt to align herself with the alien forces of sunlight and spring. She is destined to reign as the black-garbed queen of night and shadow, for whom the distant glow of the constellations exercises a primal fascination greater than the '*disque lunaire*' [the sun] itself.

...quand il faisait noir, quand la ville s'était évanouie avec ses bruits mourants, son coeur serré éclatait, ses larmes débordait en face de cette paix souveraine. Elle aurait joint les mains et balbutié des prières. Un besoin de foi, d'amour, d'anéantissement divin, lui donnait un grand frisson. Et c'était alors que le lever des étoiles la bouleversait d'une jouissance et d'une terreur sacrées. (210)

At the novel's conclusion, (5-5), Hélène visits Jeanne's grave before leaving Paris in the company of her second husband, the pallid M. Rambaud. "La barrette de son chapeau, une tresse de velours noir, lui mettait au front l'ombre d'un diadème...son profil prenait de nouveau une pureté grave de statue." (349) It is significant that the term diadem appears, from the Greek *diadema*, 'royal headband.' It is a fitting attribute for Hélène, the modern French manifestation of a pagan goddess of darkness.

In opposition to the cold, measured, Greek qualities of the quasi-classical heroine H  l  ne, Zola provides a counterpoint of *japonisme*. Appearing in guises beyond superficial elements of interior decoration, *japonisme* is epitomized by the vital force of the sun, symbol of the chief Shinto Goddess Amaterasu, and in the forces of nature itself, exemplified by the luxuriant gardens of Passy. Even the purple buds of the flowers (“*les bourgeons viol  tres*”) are compared to [Japanese] lacquer! In the myth-charged episode of H  l  ne’s abortive flight into the sun--recalling the fate of Icarus-- Zola has united the two thematic poles of Greece and Japan in Une page d’amour.

Zola had noted the rapprochement of the pantheism of ancient Greece with the Japanese Shinto traditions at the conclusion of Manette Salomon, in which humankind and the myriad species of animals and plants become spiritually intertwined at the Jardin des Plantes.^{xxxv} In Edmond de Goncourt’s La Fille Elisa (1877) there is an emphasis on the association between flowering cherry blossoms (an emblem of Japan), overgrown gardens and the unfettered expression of the human sexual impulse. Such pagan ‘rites of spring’ are evident in the good-natured revelries in the orchard at the provincial house of prostitution and in a more somber mode,

the rape of Elisa by a soldier in an isolated rose-strewn plot in the Bois de Boulogne.^{xxxvi}

In Une page d'amour the Deberle garden, and its extension the *pavillon japonais*, a former greenhouse, play a similar role, as *japoniste* symbols of the natural world. Flowers are associated with the spontaneous expression of emotion, as in a rare moment when Hélène embraces her daughter. “Les fleurs fauves, tigrées de pourpre, exhalaienent une senteur pénétrante, qui embaumait toute la chambre. Alors Hélène, d’un mouvement passionné, attira Jeanne contre sa poitrine, tandis que le paquet des giroflées tombait...”(75) It is in the garden that social inhibitions are loosened; besides the episode of the swing, it is in this semi-rustic setting that Helene and Dr. Deberle will form a brief intimacy. The “*forêt vierge*” of the lush enclosure provides a convenient trysting site for a peasant couple, Hélène’s maid Rosalie and soldier beau Zephyrin. As in La Fille Elisa, there is a clear inference that the peasant classes have a fundamental rapport with nature: in the somber apartment only Rosalie’s bright kitchen faces the sunlit garden, while branches of a tree penetrate the window with impunity(86).

Zola had praised Monet's "*Femmes au jardin à Ville d'Avray*" (1867, Musée d'Orsay), and the painter's integration of the female form amongst the bright foliage.(fig. 66) "Sur le sable jaune des allées les plates-bandes se détachent, piquées par le rouge vif des géraniums, par le blanc mat des chrysanthèmes. Les corbeilles se succèdent, toutes fleuries, entourées de promeneurs qui vont et viennent en déshabillée élégant."^{xxxvii} It will be recalled that Zola had remarked on the '*taches*,' patches of bright color akin to the technique of Japanese woodblock prints, in the works of Manet, Renoir, Monet and other painters of the Impressionist group. Zola achieves similar effects in literary renderings of constantly shifting patterns of light and shadow, as when Jeanne enjoys reclining in the Deberle garden. "Tout à l'heure, ses jambes seules, jusqu'aux genoux, trempaient dans ce bain chaud de rayons...Ce qui l'amuse surtout, c'étaient des taches rondes, d'un beau jaune d'or qui dansaient sur son chapeau."(196) In the same setting, Zéphyrin's red uniform stands out as a vivid red '*tache*' against the greenery. (197)

"*Le soleil vainqueur*," source of heat, light and life itself, reigns as the ultimate force animating the greco-japanese universe of Une page d'amour. The incandescent orb emanates flaming rays which spark the brilliant spectacle of blazing hues across the architectural and natural

contours of the Parisian cityscape. The reader of the Goncourt's Manette Salomon(1867) may recall the sun depicted in the Japanese prints, “ces grands couchers de soleil cramoisies et d’où partent les rayons d’une roue de sang...” The emphasis on the sun’s majesty in Une page d’amour evokes Monet’s iconic *Impression, Sunrise* (1872, Musée Marmottan) and may have inspired Van Gogh’s interpretations of the landscape of Provence, as in Olive Trees with Yellow Sky and Sun. St. Rémy (1889, Minneapolis Institute of the Arts). Zola’s intense sun creates vivid, expressionistic tableaux in his novel just as Japanese prints had banished the smoky, bitumous browns of French Salon painting and replaced them with a palette of pure color. Zola’s imaginative *japoniste* vision interprets Paris as a timeless oriental metropolis, “une ville des légendes.” Viewed under the ‘Empire of the Rising Sun’--the influence of *japonisme*--its monuments appear sprinkled with gold flecks like Japanese lacquer, its horizons banded with blue as in Japanese woodblock prints, its cloudy skies reminiscent of the inky tones of brush painting.

Mallarmé’s Appreciation of the Japoniste Aspects of Une page d’amour

While Une page d’amour was successful with the reading public, certain critics, Flaubert included, reproached Zola for what they felt were

excessively long, extraneous descriptions of views of the capital. In a preface to the first illustrated edition of 1885, Zola defended his methodology vigorously. “...nous ne cédon presque jamais au seul besoin de décrire, cela se complique toujours en nous d’intentions symphoniques et humaines. La création entière nous appartient, nous tâchons de la faire entrer en nos oeuvres, nous rêvons l’arche immense.”^{xxxviii}

One sensitive reader who consistently defended Zola’s modernist quest in literature was Stéphane Mallarmé. Zola had corresponded with Mallarmé since their introduction, ca. 1868-1870 at Manet’s studio. Besides their friendship with Manet, the two writers--both art critics--shared an appreciation of how the introduction of Japanese art had shaped positive developments in French painting. Zola and Mallarmé’s tastes covered a wide and eclectic spectrum of artistic expression. “Quant à moi, qui admire une affiche, dessinée et coloriée comme plus d’une, à l’égal d’un plafond ou d’une apothéose, je ne connais pas un point de vue en art qui soit inférieur à un autre; et je jouis partout ainsi qu’il sied,”^{xxxix} declared Mallarmé in his letter to Zola dated November 6, 1874.

Mallarmé’s article *The Impressionists and Edouard Manet* published in the English Art Monthly Review (1876) mentions Zola’s role, after

Baudelaire, as an early advocate of the artist's revolutionary style.

Focussing on Manet's outdoor landscape *Le Linge* (1876), Mallarmé extols the painter's plein air technique.

Air reigns supreme and real, as if it held an enchanted life conferred by the witchery of art; a life neither personal nor sentient, but itself subjected to the phenomena thus called up by the science and shown to our astonished eyes, with its perpetual metamorphosis and its invisible action rendered visible. And how? By this fusion or by this struggle ever continued between surface and space, between colour and air. Open air:--that is the beginning and end of the question we are now studying.^{xi}

There is certainly an analogy between Manet's plein air canvases, and those of painters of his circle such as Monet, Renoir and Pissarro, and the atmospheric effects achieved by Zola in *Une page d'amour*. Mallarmé's appreciation of the Impressionist use of color continues,

...the ever-present light blends with and vivifies all things. As to the details of the picture, nothing should be absolutely fixed in order that we may feel that the bright gleam which lights the picture, or the diaphanous shadow which veils it, are only seen in passing, and just when the spectator beholds the represented subject, which being composed of a harmony of reflected and ever-changing lights, cannot be supposed to always look the same, but palpitates with movement, color and life.^{xii} [emphasis added]

Zola's depiction of the fictive universe of *Une page d'amour* parallels the poet's assessment of the painter's mastery: the sun is the primordial, life-giving force in Impressionist painting and in the novel.

In a letter to Zola of April 26, 1878, Mallarmé conveys his enthusiasm for Une page d'amour, not merely as a work accurately reflecting the spontaneity of contemporary life, but as a 'poem.' He particularly praises his correspondent's ability to engage the reader's otherwise wandering attentions by providing dream-like views of the city at the conclusion of each of the five parts. Mallarmé is not concerned with the intrigue of an abortive love affair between two otherwise respectable bourgeois, Hélène Grandjean and Doctor Henri Deberle. Rather, it is the *japonisant* passages of "*Paris et son ciel*," "*l'incomparable variété et la lucidité de la description*."^{xiii} gratuitous to any sense of plot, which evoke his sincere admiration. Zola himself judged these sections to be significant in his development as a writer. In an 1877 letter to his disciple Huysmans he confided, "...la première partie se termine par un Paris à vol d'oiseau, d'abord noyé de brouillard, puis apparaissant peu à peu sous un blond soleil de printemps, qui est, je crois, une de mes meilleures pages, jusqu'ici."^{xiii}

Zola and Mallarmé, despite differences as proponents of Naturalism and Symbolism, shared a belief in the importance of the abstract beauty of language for its own sake. This aesthetic consideration challenged prevailing notions about the moral or social functions of literature. Their resolutely modern attitude certainly parallels the philosophy of "Art for

Art's Sake" advocated by Whistler in his *Ten O'Clock*. All devoted *japonistes*, the novelist, poet and painter had found in Japanese art a schematic, atmospheric rendering of nature and of fleeting, everyday subject matter which encouraged a tendency towards an abstract interpretation of reality in their art.

In Une page d'amour, Zola successfully unifies the related arts of literature and painting in exquisite renderings of a mythical Parisian 'floating world,' partly inspired by the views of Edo depicted in nineteenth century *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints and the rich embellishments of Japanese lacquerware.

La Seine, entre ses berges que les rayons obliques enfilait, roulait des flots dansants où le bleu, la jaune et le vert se brisaient en un éparpillement bariolé; mais, en remontant le fleuve, ce peinturlage de mer orientale prenait un seul ton d'or de plus de plus éblouissant; et l'on eût dit un lingot sorti à l'horizon de quelque creuset invisible, s'élargissant avec un remuement de couleurs vives. (140)

The reader familiar with Monet's paintings of water scenes of the 1870's, i.e. *Impression, Sunrise, Le Havre* (1872, private collection) and *Marine View, Sunset* (1874, Philadelphia Museum of Art), will see an affinity between the 'floating world' depicted on canvas and in prose by these two great admirers of the art of Japan.

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- ⁱ Adrien Dubouché in *L'Art, 1878* quoted in *Japonisme & Mode* (Musées de la Ville de Paris: Paris, 1996), 23.
- ⁱⁱ Emile Zola, *Une page d'amour*. (Paris: Fasquelle, 1985), 353. (all subsequent references are to this edition).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ernst Chesneau, "L'Exposition Universelle: Le Japon à Paris." *Gazette des Beaux Arts* (Paris), (September 1878): 391.
- ^{iv} Musée Cernuschi, *Henri Cernuschi 1821-1896, Voyageur et Collectionneur* (Paris: Editions des Musées de la Ville de Paris, 1998), 33-37 passim.
- ^v Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire*(Paris: Robert Laffont, 1989),2:779.
- ^{vi} *Ibid.*, 42.
- ^{vii} *Ibid.*, 44, figs. 12 and 13.
- ^{viii} William Warmus, *Emile Gallé, Dreams into Glass*(Corning Museum of Art: 1984), 22.
- ^{ix} Martin Eidelberg and William R. Johnston. "Japonisme and French Decorative Arts" in *Japonisme, Japanese Influence on French Art*.(Cleveland Museum of Art: 1975), 151.
- ^x Dominique Fernandez. *Le Musée d'Emile Zola, Haines et Passions*.(Editions Stock, Paris: 1997) 190.
- ^{xi} G. Aitken and M. Delafond, *La Collection d'Estampes Japonaises de Claude Monet* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1987) 25.
- ^{xii} Théodore Duret, *Les Peintres Impressionistes* (Paris: Floury, 1906), 50 quoted in Aitken and Delafond, 26.
- ^{xiii} Emile Zola, *Le Bon Combat* (Paris: Hermann, 1974), 111.
- ^{xiv} see Klaus Berger, "Monet through six decades" in *Japonisme in Western Painting* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 72-88.
- ^{xv} From the Author's Note accompanying the Family Tree of the Rougon-Macquart clan.
- ^{xvi} Emile Zola. *Les Rougon Macquart*, vol. 2 (Paris: Editions de la Pleiade, 1961), 1607.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*, 1611.
- ^{xviii} *Japonisme & Mode*. 95-96.
- ^{xix} Aitken and Delafond, 29.
- ^{xx} Mark Roskill, Ed. *The Letters of Vincent Van Gogh*.(New York:Touchstone, 1997),.222. Letter to Theo from Arles, end September 1888.
- ^{xxi} His nearly identical views of Vétheuil in winter and summer, painted ca. 1878-1879, are believed to be his first series paintings.
- ^{xxii} Richard Illing. *The Art of Japanese Prints*, (New York:W.H. Smith, 1983), 171.
- ^{xxiii} James MacNeill Whilster, *Selected Letters and Writings*, ed. Nigel Thorp(Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 32-34.
- ^{xxiv} Hôtel Drouot, *Vente Emile Zola*. March 9-13, 1903, 8.
- ^{xxv} Emile Zola, *Les Rougon Macquart*, 1613.
- ^{xxvi} Colta Ives, *The Great Wave: the Influence of Japanese Prints on French Prints*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974), 28.

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- ^{xxvii} Vente Emile Zola, *Objets d'art et d'ameublement*. Hôtel Drouot, Paris. March 9-13, 1903, lots 262 and 443.
- ^{xxviii} Barbra Teri Okada, *A Sprinkling of Gold, the Lacquer Box Collection of Elaine Ehrenkranz* (Newark Museum of Art, 1983), 137.
- ^{xxix} Emile Zola, *Edouard Manet: Etude Biographique et Critique* (Paris: Dentu, 1867), 21.
- ^{xxx} Based on catalogue entries of the auction sale of his property, March 1903, L'Hôtel Drouot, Paris.
- ^{xxxi} John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 208
- ^{xxxii} John House. *Monet, Nature into Art*. (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 222
- ^{xxxiii} James McNeill Whistler, *Selected Letters and Writings*, ed. Nigel Thorp (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 95.
- ^{xxxiv} wife of Jupiter in Roman mythology
- ^{xxxv} See Chapter 2.
- ^{xxxvi} See Chapter 3.
- ^{xxxvii} Dominique Fernandez, *Le Musée d'Emile Zola, Haines et Passions*. Paris: Editions Stock, 1997), 110
- ^{xxxviii} Emile Zola, *Les Rougon Macquart* (Paris: Editions de la Pleiade, 1961), 1605.
- ^{xxxix} Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance, vol. 2* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 51.
- ^{xl} Penny Florence. *Mallarmé, Manet and Redon, visual and Aural Signs and the Generation of Meaning*. (Cambridge University Press: 1986), 14.
- ^{xli} Ibid. 15
- ^{xlii} Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance vol. 2* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 173.
- ^{xliii} Emile Zola, *Correspondance*, ed. B.H. Bakker, (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1982), 3: 85.

CHAPTER 6

AU BONHEUR DES DAMES: ZOLA'S BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF MODERN COMMERCE

“La tendance dominante dans l’art japonais, c’est accentuation, la mise en lumière du caractère essentiel, du caractère vital et expressif de la plante, de l’animal, de l’homme en ses divers fonctions, de la nature toute entière prise dans ses ensembles et dans ses particularités.”ⁱⁱ Ernst Chesneau, Les Nations Rivaies dans l’Art, 1868.

“Je veux dans Au bonheur des dames faire le poème de l’activité moderne. . . .exprimer le siècle, qui est un siècle d’action et de conquête, d’efforts dans tous les sens.--Ensuite, comme conséquence, montrer la joie de l’action et le plaisir de l’existence; il y a certainement des gens heureux de vivre. . . : ce sont ces gens-là que je veux peindre. . .”ⁱⁱⁱ Emile Zola, preliminary notes for Au bonheur des dames, 1882.

“...[l’art japonais] triomphe dans le représentation des aspects fugitifs de la nature, dans le rendu du mouvement des êtres et des choses. D’un coup d’oeil rapide l’artiste japonais saisit les attitudes les plus fuyantes, gestes, poses et grimaces de l’être humain; le vol des oiseaux et des insectes; le frémissement du léger bambou; l’agitation de la vague et des eaux en mouvement; l’aspect de la pluie ou de la neige qui tombe, du vent qui déchiquette le feuillage et balaie la campagne...”ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Théodore Duret, *l’Art Japonais* in La Critique d’avant-garde, 1885.

Zola’s Au bonheur des dames, “le poème de l’activité moderne,”

centers on the activities of a burgeoning Parisian department store and the specialized occupations of its mass of employees as a microcosm of the surrounding metropolis. As Neiss points out in his study of symbolism in Au bonheur des dames, the edifice of the department store constitutes a city unto itself, with its frantic daiiy rhythms. “We have constant images of people working or buying, a ‘pullulement’...”^{iv} Zola’s portrayal *d’après nature* of the frenzied pace of modern urban existence presents a certain

analogy with the vision of Hokusai, chronicler of the characteristic activities of the ordinary inhabitants of Edo, capital of Nippon.

Hokusai's "Japanese '*comédie humaine*' " and Zola's "*poème de l'activité moderne*"

As discussed in earlier chapters, Hokusai's Manga, his fifteen volume set of 'spontaneous sketches' published between 1815 and 1878, was the most influential work of Japanese art in France. The most prolific *ukiyo-e* artist of the nineteenth century became the most representative of his nation to European *japonistes*. After its alleged 'discovery' by Bracquemond ca. 1856 at Delâtre's print workshop, sections of the Manga were circulated with great enthusiasm amongst the leaders of the *japoniste* circle: Manet, Degas, Zola, Duret, and the Goncourts. Hokusai's expressive *croquis saisis sur le vif* of everyday life were hailed by Naturalists and Impressionists as a prototype of modernity to be emulated in European arts and letters.

The Manga has been aptly compared by modern critic Elise Grilli to "the Japanese *comédie humaine*," an observation with which Zola's contemporaries would certainly have agreed. Indeed, it was Balzac's epic which served as Zola's main inspiration for the Rougon Macquart series. The predecessors of Au bonheur des dames are Balzac's novels set

in the milieu of the *magasins de nouveautés* of the Louis Philippe period, La Maison du Chat-qui-pelotte (1829) and Grandeur et Décadence de César Birotteau (1837).^{vi} Balzac and the lithographer Gavarni were the twin pillars of the Goncourts' Naturalist pantheon; their focus on scenes of the *quotidien* links them with Hokusai, the leading exponent of *ukiyo-e* art, translated by Edmond as "*l'école de la vie.*"

The Manga is a vast, unclassifiable compendium of fragmentary sketches of humankind, scenes from nature and imaginary episodes from history and mythology. In his 1896 biography of the artist, Goncourt described it as "cette profusion d'images, cette avalanche de dessins, cette débauche de crayonnages, . . . ces milliers de reproductions fiévreuses de ce qui est sur la terre, dans le ciel, sous l'eau. . ."^{vii} The second volume(1815) is replete with vivid scenes depicting assorted *petits métiers* observed on the streets of Edo. On a typical page the artist crowds expressive images of tradesmen and craftsmen: umbrella-makers, noodle-makers, weavers, carpenters, grocers, and fishermen. In his preface the poet Rokujuen Shujin notes the presence of ". . .the dyer, the roof-thatcher, the blacksmith, the tilemaker, the wall-painter, the merchant, the diviner, the woodcutter, the girl porter, the sumo wrestler; scenes of the hairdresser and cook. . . --all kinds of people in all kinds of situations, each just as though alive and engaged in his work."^{viii} (fig. 67)

In Théodore Duret's L'Art Japonais (1882), (incorporated into La Critique d'avant-garde, 1885), Hokusai is cited as "l'artiste le mieux doué, le plus puissant, le plus complet à tous égards de sa nation."^x For the French critic, his work epitomizes the ability of the *ukiyo-e* artist to define the essential gestures of life. "D'un coup d'oeil rapide l'artiste japonais saisit les attitudes les plus fuyantes, gestes, poses et grimaces de l'être humain..."^x Duret had first encountered the arts of Japan at the 1861 London Crystal Palace exhibition, and travelled throughout Asia in company of Henri Cernuschi in the early 1870's. A fellow art critic, friend and regular correspondent of Zola, Duret inscribed and presented his study of Japanese art to the author in 1882, the year that Au bonheur des dames was created.^{xi}

In his La Maison d'un Artiste (1881) Edmond de Goncourt attributed the inventiveness or *l'amusant* of Japanese art to the contribution of Hokusai. "...l'objet d'art original, l'objet d'art bien japonais ne semble né là-bas qu'à la suite de la révolution introduite dans le dessin par O-kou-sai[Hokusai], et de son affranchissement de l'art chinois, de de son retour à la nature, vue par la première fois par un oeil japonais."^{xii} La Maison d'un Artiste is Edmond's a loving inventory of the treasury of exquisite

furniture and *objets d'art* of the French *grand siècle* and of China and Japan, primarily of the nineteenth century, on view at his home in Auteuil.

His *Cabinet d'Extrême Orient*, a repository of precious bibelots, offered the visual and tactile pleasures of delicately-carved ivory netsukés, unctuous porcelains, bronze sword guards imprinted with bold designs, shimmering gold-flecked lacquerware, jade sculptures and glass snuff bottles. “...ces objets, il faut le dire bien haut, sont merveilleux, uniques, incomparables, et tels qu'ils doivent sortir de l'imagination et des doigts de ce peuple artiste jusqu'au dernier des hommes...” enthused Edmond in his commentary.^{xiii} Zola and other Naturalist writers regularly met at Goncourt's study, *le Grenier d'Auteuil*, amidst the aesthetic décor arranged by their host's curatorial eye.(see fig. 49)

The appreciation of Japanese art was no longer a phenomenon confined to an artistic and literary elite by the 1880's. Zola's *Une page d'amour* (1878) had documented the entry of *japonisme* into the realm of the fashion-conscious bourgeoisie. The concomitant democratization and 'commodification' of *japonisme* continued unabated until the turn of the century. Japan augmented exports of art, handicrafts and antiques to improve its trade balance with industrialized nations, resulting in an influx of lesser-quality goods or *pacotille* that flooded the European market. An

analysis of the Parisian repertory of commerce Didot-Bottin reveals that the department store *Au Bon Marché* was listed under the rubric “*chinoiseries, japonneries.*” from about 1882 to 1902.^{xiv} Significantly, *Au Bon Marché*, the major department store of the capital, served as a prototype for Zola’s study of modern commerce *Au bonheur des dames* (1883).^{xv} (figs. 68-69) In the periodical *l’Illustration* of October 9, 1880 there is an engraving of the impressively-stocked *Galérie de la faience japonaise. Les nouveaux agrandissements des magasins du Bon Marché.*^{xvi} (fig. 70)

In April of 1883, one month after the publication of *Au bonheur des dames*, the Georges Petit Galleries in Paris mounted a fabulous display of about three thousand masterpieces of Japanese art. These were lent by the dealer Samuel Bing, the artist Giuseppe de Nittis, the actress Sarah Bernhardt and other noteworthy Parisian collectors^{xvii}, as Goncourt noted in his *Journal* entry of April 25 of that year. This redefinition by connoisseurs of the exclusivity of their domain was an outcome of the commercialization of *japonisme* which is documented in Zola’s novel.

The Genesis of Zola’s novel of modern commerce

Zola began to research background material for Au bonheur des dames in early 1882, spending about three months visiting representative *grand magasins*, *Le Louvre*, *Au Bon Marché* and *La Paix*, to observe and interview employees and management. The copious notes on displays, floor plans, sales and merchandising techniques, and organization of labor are conserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Zola was especially interested in the living and working conditions of the sales staff. He kept a file of articles on the impact of the department store on Parisian society; speculation on the mores of the *demoiselles du magasin* was a current topic in the popular press.^{xviii}

Completing the on-site survey of the subject, Zola retreated to his home in Medan; the novel was composed between May 1882 and January 1883 in the author's comfortable study cluttered with a heterogeneous assortment of orientalia and European antiques. Au bonheur des dames, the eleventh work in the Rougon Macquart series, *l' Histoire Naturelle et Sociale d'une Famille sous le Seconde Empire*, was published in March 1883 by his publisher Charpentier, after serialization in the satirical journal *Gil Blas*.^{xix}

The author's outline sets Au bonheur des dames from 1864-1869, however the novel more accurately reflects economic trends of the 1880's:

the spectacular growth of the *grands magasins* and concurrent commodification of *japonisme*.^{xx} Zola insisted on poetic license in the creation of his Naturalist ‘documentary’ fiction despite contradictions of chronology. (He made this clear in the defense Une page d’amour’s poetic descriptions of the Paris skyline, which included structures not yet extant in its timeframe of the 1850’s.) The author had the great prescience to consult young architect Frantz Jourdain to provide a blueprint for his fictional temple of commerce. Jourdain would later design *La Samaritaine*, a landmark of the glass and iron *art nouveau* style, erected in 1905.^{xxi}

The department store’s glass and iron structure is a direct descendant of the commercial *arcades* of the 1830’s, passageways lined with small shops which Walter Benjamin called “the original temple of commodity capitalism.”^{xxii} As he points out in *Paris, Capital of the 19th Century*, the arcades provided the setting for one of the Zola’s first Naturalist works, Thérèse Raquin(1865).^{xxiii} Zola’s 1883 novel provides a remarkably futuristic vision of the development of modern building techniques, in which aspects of the architecture of Au bonheur des dames anticipate the structure of the Eiffel Tower(1887-1889):

C’était comme une nef de gare, entouré par les rampes des deux étages, coupée d’escaliers suspendus, traversé de ponts volants. Les escaliers de fer, à double révolution, développaient des courbes hardis, multipliaient les paliers; les ponts de fer, jetés sur le vide, filaient droit, très haut; et tout ce fer mettaient là, sous la lumière

blanche des vitrages, une architecture légère, une dentelle compliquée où passait le jour, la réalisation moderne d'un palais de rêve....Du reste, le fer regnait partout, le jeune architecte avait eu l'honnêteté et le courage de ne pas le déguiser sous une couche de badigeon, imitant la pierre ou le bois.(626)

At its most basic level, Au bonheur des dames documents the evolution of modern retailing during the Second Empire, evoking sights and textures of the store's fabulous displays, the din of its bargain-seeking crowds and even the characteristic odors of its various floors. Zola provides a virtual eye-witness account of its subject, as a twentieth century critic notes “. . .dès qu'un historien du travail, aussi austère et académique soit-il, se voit obligé de décrire le Grand Magasin de l'époque, il brosse nécessairement un tableau aussi massif, aussi débordant, aussi ahurissant en somme que celui de Zola.”^{xxiv} The aspiring Naturalist writer Huysmans, who aided Zola in gathering documentary material for his fiction, remarked on his mentor's uncanny ability to paint an accurate picture of the *va-et-vient quotidien* of the complex organism.

“...Le fonctionnement du Bonheur des Dames est une vraie merveille de lucidité...toute cette trépidation de machine en branle, broyant tout, est stupéfiante...Quant à la partie plastique du monstre--la foule, les étalages, vous pouvez croire que je les ai savourés. Je ne sais pas comment diable vous faites, pour arriver à ces variétés sur des sujets qui n'en semblent pas comporter; car enfin, c'était le diable que de représenter ce magasin toujours en ébullition.”^{xxv}

Zola's 'Réalisme Symbolique'

Au bonheur des dames serves as the *lieu clos* in which the writer observes the evolution of his characters, as the Naturalist scientist would observe his subjects in a controlled environment. The novel's conventional plot follows a linear progression of events: it is a Cinderella story of the long and unlikely courtship, from first meeting to culminating marriage, between store director Octave Mouret and his provincial salesgirl Denise Baudu. Zola succinctly announces the theme in his outline: "Octave exploitant la femme, puis exploité et vaincu par la femme."^{xxvi}

Mouret, scion of the Rougon Macquart clan, is a *marseillais* who has achieved notoriety as Director of Au bonheur des dames. He has spurred a revolution in commerce by offering the acquisitive Parisienne a tempting variety of attractively-priced goods and services in an elegant, spacious setting. Denise, practical and honest shopgirl from Normandy, finds employment at the store in order to support her two orphaned brothers. She embraces the commercial logic of the new system--moving huge quantities of goods at a low mark-up--fully realizing that the mammoth department store will eventually crush her friends' and relatives' tradition-bound *petites boutiques* in the neighborhood. Although scorned as a pariah

during her initiation period, the virtuous, selfless young woman will overcome injustice through perseverance and tact.

Beyond its straight-forward plot and remarkable documentary aspects, the novel encompasses a symbolic, mythical dimension which expresses Zola's boundless imagination. "Le naturalisme de Zola crée un réalisme symbolique, il n'a de réaliste que l'apparence, il dissimule une vérité plus profonde; on peut dire que Zola considère le réel comme un palimpseste qu'il faut gratter pour découvrir ce qu'il cache..."^{xxvii} The astute reader Huysmans recognized this transcendent quality, "...il a fallu une habileté vraiment extraordinaire pour conduire cette progression du déballage jusqu'à l'incendie final du blanc, un feu d'artifice, un éblouissement singulier qui fait comme une apothéose de féerie sur les ruines du quartier en cendre."^{xxviii} The novel's basic structure serves as the 'support' on the author may drape his baroque descriptions of the vast "caravansérail"(a colorful term used by his contemporary Paul Alexis)^{xxix}, and its treasury of merchandise from the four corners of the globe.

Octave and Denise, double protagonists of Au bonheur des dames, transcend their individual characterizations to become symbolic manifestations of Male and Female, Yin and Yang. On the mythical level, the widower-King Mouret rules a harem of captive women enslaved by

their unsatisfied desires. According to superstition, his powers of seduction would be nullified were he to remarry. (773) Through steadfast refusal to submit to Mouret's declarations of love, Denise achieves dominance and ultimate victory. Her Ascension as Virginal Queen, co-ruler of Mouret's empire, is prophesied in Chapter 12. ". . . 'Vous serez notre reine à toutes, quand vous voudrez'.. . . Le règne de Denise commençait." (703) Through Denise's munificent influence, the department store will evolve into a humane enterprise offering paternalistic benefits for its family of employees: maternity leave, paid vacations, pensions, education and recreation. (In this respect Zola's novel reflects reality: *Au Bon Marché*, under the direction of Madame Boucicaut, widow of the store's founder, was a pioneer in employee benefits programs in the 1870's.)^{xxx}

Virtually every chapter of the novel is marked by a fateful crossing of paths of the pre-destined pair. Affirming their affinity, mutual attraction and inevitable union, Mouret and Denise each possess physical characteristics associated with the regal color gold. "Il[Mouret] était grand, la peau blanche, la barbe soignée; et il avait des yeux couleur de vieil or..."(417) A rare portrait of Denise emphasizes her crown of blond hair: "Tout souriait alors dans son visage blanc, ses yeux de pervenche, ses joues et son menton troués de fossettes; tandis que ses lourds cheveux blonds

semblaient s'éclairer aussi, d'une beauté royale et conquérante."(706). Gold is a leitmotif of the novel, echoed in the brilliant sunlight streaming into the interior of the edifice, the golden letters of the store logo, and literally represented by the heaps of currency piled on Mouret's desk as the day's receipts are totalled. Significantly, gold is associated with the luminosity of the Orient: it will be evoked in describing the sheen of exotic carpets and the gaudiness of certain forms of Japanese art.

Au bonheur des dames, an Artificial Orient within the Parisian Metropolis

The mythical Orient of Au bonheur des dames is conceived as a vast territory extending from the Near to Far East, encompassing Arabia, India, China and Japan. This is consistent with the broad implications of the term "oriental" embodied in the character of Manette Salomon, as discussed in Chapter 1. For Zola and his contemporaries the distant lands of the East exercise the dreamlike seduction of jewel-like landscapes scintillating under intense blue skies. The enterprise of *Au Bonheur des Dames* will constitute an artificial Orient in itself, a complex structure existing within the confines of Paris, yet magically transcending its European geography and climate. In its final manifestation this luxurious, overheated palace will boast elegant statuary, glittering mosaics, polychrome faience tiles and

precious marble. With its mirror-lined walls reflecting sunlight and artificial illumination, Au bonheur des dames serves as *un phare*, a beacon to the surrounding metropolis. This progressive pavillion, like a permanent fixture of the Exposition Universelle, is flying the banners of all nations(764), while it transmits the full spectrum of the liberating Light of the East, “. . . *la bande vive qui blanchit le ciel la première côté de l’orient*”(797), to French civilization. *Japonisme* will be featured as an integral part of Zola’s conception of this multi-faceted Orient.

Mouret’s Promotion of the Orient at Au bonheur des dames

In order to vanquish the surrounding competition of small family-run boutiques, Mouret is determined to expand the tastes of his clientele by offering goods from around the world, with a particular emphasis on the Orient. Customers leaving the gray streets of Paris are captivated by the fabulous bazaar that awaits them at the department store. On Denise’s first foray into the establishment, she is startled by the ambiance of the “*décor de harem*”(106) of the *salon oriental*, a veritable souk created by the arrangement of new and antique oriental carpets and rugs on the main floor.

Dès la porte, c’était ainsi un émerveillement. . . . Du milieu de la place Gaillon, on apercevait ce salon oriental, fait uniquement de tapis et de portières [textiles adapted for ornamenting doorways]. . . . D’abord, au plafond, étaient tendus des tapis de Smyrne, dont les

dessins compliqués se détachaient sur des fonds rouges. Puis, des quatre côtés, pendaient des portières: les portières de Karamanie et de Syrie, zébrées de vert, de jaune, de vermillon...les tapis plus larges de Schoumaka et de Madras, floraison étrange de pivoines et de palmes, fantaisie lâchée dans le jardin du rêve. A terre, les tapis recommençaient, une jonchée de toisons grasses: il y avait, au centre un tapis d'Agra, une pièce extraordinaire à fond blanc et à large bordure bleu tendre, où couraient des ornements violâtres, d'une imagination exquise; partout ensuite, s'étalaient des merveilles. . . .On avait vidé les palais, dévalisé les mosquées et les bazars. L'or fauve dominait, dans l'effacement des tapis anciens, dont les teintes fanées gardaient une chaleur sombre, un fondu de fournaise éteinte, d'une belle couleur cuite de vieux maître. Et des visions d'Orient flottaient sous le luxe de cet art barbare. . ."(470-471) [emphasis added]

Zola himself was an avid collector of antique textiles, including oriental rugs. According to his aesthetic, there was no distinction between the merits of the fine and decorative arts, consistent with his contention that all works of art are expressions of human genius.["j'accepte toutes les oeuvres d'art au même titre, au titre des manifestations du génie humain. . . ."] Mouret's imaginative displays succeed in attracting the refined "clientèle artistique" to his popular establishment. Even bourgeois housewives admire the *dépaysement* of the *salon oriental* in their survey of the attractions of Au bonheur des dames. "--Oh! délicieux! On se dirait là-bas!-- N'est-ce pas, un vrai harem? et pas cher--Les Smyrne. . .quels tons, quelle finesse!"- -Et ce Kurdistan, voyez donc! un Delacroix!"(499). The vivid palette of Delacroix is associated with the Orient as the result of the decisive influence of his trip to Spain and North Africa in 1832.

While the store has sales counters offering typical souvenirs of Paris and *rouennerie*, inexpensive ceramic articles from Normandy, Mouret is determined to create a bazaar of all nations. He takes a personal interest in launching a special section devoted to *le Japon*. In Chapter 9, amidst the drastic reorganization of the floor plan to increase impulse buying throughout the store, Mouret orders a place of honor on the main landing for the experimental counter of imports from Nippon. “Et le Japon est-il installé sur le palier central?”(614) “...il[Mouret] avait autorisé un de ses vendeurs à exposer, sur une petite table, des curiosités de la Chine et du Japon, quelques bibelots à bas prix, que les clients s’arrachaient. C’était un succès inattendu, déjà il rêvait d’élargir cette vente.”(637). His instinct proves correct; the exponential growth of the new section is revealed in the final chapter.

Ce comptoir avait grandi, depuis le jour où Mouret s’était amusé à risquer, au même endroit, une petite table de proposition, couverte de quelques bibelots défraîchis, sans prévoir lui-même l’énorme succès. Peu de rayons avaient eu des débuts plus modestes, et maintenant il débordait de vieux bronzes, de vieux ivoires, de vieilles laques, il faisait quinze cent mille francs d’affaires chaque année, il remuait tout l’Extrême-Orient, où les voyageurs fouillaient pour lui les palais et les temples. D’ailleurs, les rayons poussaient toujours, on en avait essayé deux nouveaux...un rayon de livres et un rayon de jouets d’enfant...Quatre ans venaient de suffire au Japon pour attirer toute la clientèle artistique de Paris.(789)

Merchandise from Japan and the Orient is not confined to this one area: it is integrated throughout the various departments, in women's accessories and in the section offering fine fabrics. The *étalages* of Au bonheur des dames are complex still-lives, presenting one ordinary item out of its usual context in dizzying multiplicity in order to create an hallucinatory effect, a method anticipating Breton's aesthetic of surrealism. The presentation of *nouveautés d'été* in Chapter 9 is heralded by a fantastic, many-hued tableau composed of a profusion of ladies' umbrellas, accented by Japanese parasols. Customers are literally transported, "il leur semblait entrer dans le printemps, au sortir de l'hiver de la rue." (619) The patches of color within the display could be enlargements of a portion of an Impressionist canvas.

Toutes ouvertes, arrondies comme des boucliers, elles[les ombrelles] couvraient le hall. . .elles dessinaient des festons; le long des colonnes, elles descendaient en guirlandes; sur les balustrades des galeries, jusque sur les rampes des escaliers, elles filaient en lignes serrées; et partout, rangées symétriquement, bariolant les murs de rouge, de vert et de jaune. . .Dans les angles, il y avait des motifs compliqués, des étoiles faites d'ombrelles...dont les teintes claires, bleu pâle, blanc crème, rose tendre, brûlait avec une douceur de veilleuse; tandis que, au-dessus, d'immenses parasols japonais, où des grues couleur d'or volaient dans un ciel de pourpre, flambaient avec des reflets d'incendie.(619) (emphasis added)

Among the *soieries d'été* is a selection of precious oriental textiles. "C'étaient des foulards d'une finesse de nuée, des surahs. . ., des pékins satinés à la peau souple de vierge chinoise. Et il y avait encore les pongées du Japon, les tussors et les corahs des Indes, sans compter nos soies légères . . . tous les dessins de fantaisie, qui faisaient songer à des dames en falbalas, se promenant . . . sous les grands arbres d'un parc."(629-630). In the final chapter it is panels of oriental silk studded with silver which form the *toile de fond* of the magnificent *exposition du blanc*. "...et des pièces de soie orientale, lamées d'argent, servaient de fond à cette décoration géante qui tenait du tabernacle et de l'alcôve."(769)

La Féminilité and Japonisme: associations with Japanese genre painting

The vast gynaecium of *Au bonheur des dames* --populated by its overwhelmingly female clientele and resident *demoiselles de magasin*--and its characteristic scenes of women caressing, appraising and acquiring assorted textiles and garments are evidence of the emphasis on *la féminilité*. Zola successfully adopts this feminine point of view championed by the Goncourts in their conception of naturalism. As in *Une page d'amour* (1878), the focus in *Au bonheur des dames* is on women of the middle and upper classes of society. Here, the author responds to Edmond de Goncourt's challenge in the preface of *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879). "Le

jour où l'analyse cruelle que mon ami, M. Zola, et peut-être moi-même, avons apportée dans la peinture du bas de la société, sera. . . employé à la reproduction des hommes et femmes du monde, dans des milieux d'éducation et de distinction,--ce jour-là seulement, le classicisme et sa queue seront tués. ”^{xxx}

Zola's delight in the colors, patterns and textures of fashionable ladies' garments, “*le poème entier des vêtements de la femme*”(764), suggests his appreciation of the Japanese art of the floating world. The strong parallel between the obsessively-detailed descriptions of feminine accoutrements in *Au bonheur des dames* and the Japanese *ukiyo-e* artist's depiction of the intricate textures and patterns of sumptuous kimono and undergarments will be demonstrated with specific examples. The emphasis by Japanese artists on *la féminilité* can be observed in prints by Kiyonaga, Haronobu, Utamaro and other specialists in glorification of the courtesan of the Maison Vertes in Edo's Yoshiwara pleasure district. (fig. 71) Such images were jewels of the collections of Zola's fellow *japonistes*, Goncourt, Monet, Duret, Burty and others.

In one of Utamaro's most famous triptychs, known as *Needlework* or *Girls Preparing stuff for Dresses*(1794-96) women are observed amidst luxurious fabrics. (fig. 72) In the left panel of the triptych, a courtesan

peers through dotted gauze held over her face, while her companions in the middle and right panels are linked by the section of patterned cloth extended between them. Goncourt remarked on the extraordinary qualities of this image in his 1891 study of the artist.

“. . .Outamaro cherche des effets originaux de peinture dans ces reflets mettant sur les personnes et les visages, des teintes bizarres, étranges, imprévues, c'est ainsi qu'une grande tête de courtisane vous apparaît, la figure à moitié rosée du voile rose qu'elle tient devant elle, et avec sur la peau, le semis de pois blanc, qui font l'ornementation de la voile.”^{xxxii}

There is a strong connection between *ukiyo-e* and the world of fashion. The most exclusive courtesans of Yoshiwara prided themselves on the studied extravagance of their kimono, proudly displayed to curious onlookers during their set promenades. Among Monet's collection of *ukiyo-e* is *Woman with Fan*, an advertisement for the silk manufacturer Izukura commissioned from Utamaro.^{xxxiii} Goncourt compares the artist's incomparable rendering of the subtle gradations of color of the kimono in his prints to that of a “*merveilleux couturier*.”

Et jamais Outamaro n'a eu une linéature plus délicate de la femme, en ses mouvements de grâce, que dans cette série, en même temps que le peintre des belles robes de l'Orient, n'a jamais montré en ces femmes, comme habillées des couleurs lumineuses de l'anémone, un goût d'habillement plus distingué, et n'a fait nulle part un choix plus original des soieries, aux douces et chatoyantes couleurs. [*sic*]^{xxxiv}

Hillier compares what he terms Utamaro's 'glorification' of the courtesan of the Yoshiwara to the oeuvre of nineteenth century artist Constantin Guys, a prolific illustrator of scenes of the demi-monde. The author cites a portion of "*La Femme*" from Baudelaire's thirteen-part essay "*Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne*" (1863), in which the poet emphasizes the importance of women's clothing in creating the impression of beauty. Zola, an admirer of the universal art of genre painting, whether interpreted by the French or Japanese artist, may indeed have taken inspiration from this passage in the creation of his Naturalist fiction.

Tout ce qui orne la femme, tout ce qui sert à illustrer sa beauté, fait partie d'elle-même; et les artistes qui se sont particulièrement appliqués à l'étude de cet être énigmatique raffolent autant de tout de *mundus muliebris* [l'univers féminin] que de la femme elle-même. La femme est. . . surtout une harmonie générale, non-seulement dans son allure et le mouvement de ses membres, mais aussi dans les mousselines, les gazes, les vastes et chatoyantes nuées d'étoffes dont elle s'enveloppe. . .^{xxxv}

Au bonheur des dames' most intimate scenes of *féminilité* take place off premises, in the nearby salon of Madame Desforges, Mouret's benefactor and one of his series of mistresses. A group friends--Mesdames Bourdelais, Guibal, Marty, de Boves and daughter--gather to assess the department store's latest offerings in fabrics and accessories. "Cette soie. . . occupait dans leur vie quotidienne une place considérable. Elles en

causaient, elles se la promettaient. . .”(463) As the ladies delicately sip tea from “*un service de chine*,” the main topic of discussion is their hostess’s recent purchase of a lace fan, an object of coquetry in the French tradition of the *grand siècle* and in the Far East. As in Utamaro’s aforementioned triptych, samples of delicate textiles are exhibited for the mutual delectation of the owner and her circle. “Elle[Madame Marty] n’avait pas encore montré ses achats, elle brûlait de les étaler, dans une sorte de besoin sensuel. . .elle ouvrit le sac, sortit quelques mètres d’une étroite dentelle. . . .La dentelle passa de main en main.” (466)

As clearly indicated by Zola, the acquisition (by purchase or by compulsive shop-lifting) of lace and similar merchandise represents the sublimation of repressed sexual desire for these middleclass women of leisure. “. . .incapable de céder à un amant, mais tout de suite lâche et de chair vaincue, devant la moindre bout de chiffon.”(447) Mouret, “*le roi despotique du chiffon*,”(468) animator of the desires of his acquiescent “*capitves*” (468) is welcomed into the intimacy of Madame Desforge’s circle. His status as a “*calicot*,” or cloth merchant, somehow neutralizes any threat of masculinity. “Il était femme, elles se sentaient pénétrées et possédées par ce sens délicat qu’il avait de leur secret, et elles s’abandonnaient, séduites. . .”(468) “Leurs yeux pâlissaient, un léger

frisson courait sur leurs nuques. Et lui gardait son calme de conquérant, au milieu des odeurs troublantes qui montaient de leurs chevalures.”(464).

As Mouret joins the women during the golden rays of twilight, “*cette volupté molle du crépuscule*,”(468) the salon takes on a magical atmosphere redolent of the Orient. “Une dernière clarté luisait au flanc de la théière, une lueur courte courte et vive de veilleuse, qui aurait brûlé dans une alcôve attiédie par le parfum du thé.” The porcelain teapot of the Chinese service and subsequent ‘parfum de thé’ suggest a *japoniste* ambiance. The phrase “*parfum de benjoin et de thé*” had been used in Une page d’amour (121) to emphasize the authenticity of a young girl’s geisha costume. The reference to ‘une alcôve’ in this scene of Au bonheur des dames suggests the *tokonoma* niche in the traditional Japanese home, which enshrines flowers and a hanging scroll appropriate to the season.

The theme of a solitary male welcomed into the intimacy of the feminine world was encountered in the works of many *ukiyo-e* artists. In his Utamaro, le Peintre des Maisons Vertes, Goncourt cites a well-known print in his collection from the series “47 Ronins as re-enacted by *Celebrated Beauties*,” which is actually a self-portrait of the artist, identified by an inscription.^{xxxvi} (see fig. 7) Surrounded by three solicitous women, the seated, well-dressed man proffers an empty sake vessel to a

courtesan grasping a kettle or tea-pot in her left hand. Although it is a matter of speculation whether Zola referred to this specific work, the male's countenance in this image as described by Goncourt is remarkably consistent with the self-assured personage of Mouret. “. . .c'est l'homme qui est élégant, et tout plein d'une recherche coquette dans le soin de sa chevelure. . .en l'attitude théâtrale avec laquelle il semble poser à terre, dans la distinction sobre de son costume. . .cette robe noire, toute semée de pois blancs.”^{xxxvii}

Zola's adaptation of visual strategies from Japanese screen painting

Zola was well-versed in the iconography of *ukiyo-e* prints, principally scenes of women at their daily pastimes: dressing and accomplishing their toilette, attending to household affairs, caring for children, preparing tea, arranging flowers, and entertaining visitors. As a connoisseur of oriental art, Zola was equally familiar with the pairs of two-, four-, six- or eight-panel painted screens displayed at the *Expositions Universelles* and sold in shops specializing in imports from Japan. In Manet's *Portrait of Zola* (1867, Musée d'Orsay), the author is flanked by a screen of the traditional birds and flowers motif. As Lacambre points out in her history of the World's Fairs, the heroine of *Nana* (1879) furnishes her eclectic salon with a Japanese screen '*d'un fini précieux,*' many

examples of which were dispersed at the huge 1868 auction sale of the entire contents the Japanese pavillion.^{xxxviii}

Screen paintings constitute a major format in Japanese painting from the ninth century, combining form with the function of reducing drafts in largely unfurnished interior spaces. (The term for screen, *byobu*, literally means barrier against the wind.)^{xxxix} As in other forms of Japanese art, the iconography of screens is classified as Chinese or native style. Chinese-style refers to stereotyped, idealized landscapes based on painting manuals, often representations of Taoist and Buddhist philosophical themes employing symbolic imagery such as cranes, monkeys, and dragons. The magnificent screen paintings of the Momoyama period(1573-1615), often enhanced with sprinkled gold dust or gold leaf, define what has been termed the “Triumph of Japanese style.” *Yamato-e* (Japanese-style painting) of this golden age creatively depicts native flora and fauna, aerial views of the capital at Kyoto, and genre scenes of leisure activities such as horse races and cherry blossom festivals.^{xl}

The majority of material available to French *japonistes* was produced in Japan during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the latter part of the Edo period (1615-1868), during which genre painting flourished. According to Elise Grilli, “the term ‘genre’ has to be very elastic[in terms

of Japanese screens]. . .On decorative screens we find illustrations of life in towns and at fairs, of theaters and circuses and village festivals--the whole gamut of popular amusements that soon went over into woodblock prints. There is an unbroken line leading from genre themes[in screens]--to the *ukiyo-e* prints of Hokusai and Hiroshige.”^{xii} Edo-period studios also reproduced classic motifs from the Momoyama period on screens commissioned by their patrons.

One type of screen of particular relevance to the *féminilité* of Au bonheur des dames is the *Tagasode*. (figs. 73-74) This is a set phrase from classical Japanese poetry which literally translates as “Whose Sleeves?” These ‘abstractions’ of genre scenes portray with exquisite detail the attire of an absent woman or women. Their elaborate kimonos and under-ropes are folded or draped gracefully over double-tiered lacquer racks, against a burnished gold background. The elegant assortment of sumptuous garments is complemented by a studied array of personal possessions and accoutrements: these may include perfume bags, toys, musical instruments and letter boxes. “Beautiful sleeves, alluding to kimono, evoke the image of a beautiful woman; they also imply the fragrance of perfume arising from her kimono.” These feminine items poignantly evoke the physical presence of the momentarily absent female(s), defined by her accumulation of objects.^{xiii}

The extravagant *étalage* of women's garments and accessories described in *Au bonheur des dames* may be compared to a vast, western-style *Tagasode*, in which the persona of the ideal *Parisienne* is revealed through the public display of her customarily most intimate items of lingerie. Zola's investment of what appears to be temporarily discarded clothing with the erotic power to suggest the imagined wearer is identical to the mechanism of the Japanese *Tagasode* screen painting.

Tout le linge de la femme, les dessous blancs qui se cachent, s'étalait dans une suite de salles, classé en divers rayons. Les corsets et les tournures occupaient un comptoir. . .une armée de mannequins sans tête et sans jambes, n'alignant que des torsos, des gorges de poupée aplaties sous la soie, d'une lubricité troublante d'infirme; et près de là, sur d'autres bâtons, les tournures de crin et de brillanté prolongaient ces manches à balai en croupes énormes et tendues, dont le profil prenait une inconvenance caricaturale. Mais ensuite, le déshabillé galant commençait, un déshabillé qui jonchait les vastes pièces, comme si un peuple de jolies filles s'étaient dévêtues de rayon en rayon, jusqu'au satin nu de leur peau. Ici, les articles de lingerie fine. . .une variété infinie de fanfreluches légères. . .Là, les camisoles, les petits corsages, les robes de matin, les peignoirs. . .de longs vêtements blancs, libres et minces, où l'on sentait l'étirement des matinées paresseuses, le lendemain des soirs de tendresse.(780-781)

It is almost certain that Zola would have seen Henri Cernuschi's bounty of bronzes, ceramics, illustrated books and objets d'art, purchased during his travels in the Orient with Duret, exhibited at the *Palais de l'Industrie* from August, 1873-January, 1874. Zola attended a ball at the

financier's home in May, 1878 and would have had the opportunity to view works of art displayed throughout his *hôtel particulier* on the Avenue Vélasquez. (This residence presently houses the Musée Cernuschi, displaying the art of ancient China.)

This notable collection includes two pairs of eight-panel folding screens of the nineteenth century, copies of late seventeenth century originals. These are over-head views depicting historical events, most likely the procession of a retinue of ambassadors from Korea and their reception at the Shogun's palace in 1655.^{xiii} (fig. 75) In this work of art the Japanese screen artist grants the spectator an omniscient knowledge of activity taking place over a broad area of space. The viewer's privileged gaze peers through puffy golden clouds, through absent(or transparent) roof-tops and walls, to glimpse an entire narrative sequence of events, encompassing the arrival of the visitors to their departure.

Art historians employ the term *fukinuki-yatai*, literally "houses with blown-off(or "mobile") roofs" to describe this standard representation of space in Japanese art.^{xiv} It is a prominent feature of painted handscrolls surviving from the Heian period(784-1185) illustrating Lady Murasaki's early eleventh-century novel Tale of Genji.^{xv} (fig. 76) "These scenes keep in effect to the same peculiar perspective, very different from Western

habits of vision; they are viewed obliquely from above, looking down from right to left, following the natural movement of the eye when the scroll is unrolled from right to left.^{xlvi} In Cernuschi's collection are two multi-volume eighteenth century painted manuscripts in the style of Heian period illustrations, *Shigure Monogatari* and *Receuil des choses entendues de jadis et naguère*.^{xlvii} (fig. 77)

Duret, *amateur* of the art of the orient and critic, associated the birds'-eye view perspective of Impressionist painting with the lessons of Japan. The "Impressionist view" has been defined by William Rubin as looking down from a higher point(i.e. a building); or close-up views seen from above or below.^{xlviii} A case in point is Pissarro's *Place de la Comédie Française* (1897, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), in which the passing traffic and pedestrians are reduced to abstract *taches* of pigment. (fig. 78) Zola shared this *japoniste*-Impressionist *optique* in his predilection for aerial views of the cityscape.

For example, in Chapter 3 of *L'Assommoir* (1877), the wedding party ascends the Colonne Vendôme as a diversion. The group is as oblivious to the extraordinary panorama as they were to the genius of the Old Masters at the Louvre. The narrator's painterly eye outlines the vivid patterns composing the scene. "Paris. . .étendait son immensité grise, aux

lointains bleuâtres, ses vallées profondes, où roulait une houle de toitures; toute la rive droite était dans l'ombre, sous un grand haillon de nuage cuivré; et, du bord de ce nuage, frangé d'or, une large rayon coulait. . .^{xliv}

In the concluding chapter of Une page d'amour Paris is observed from the heights of the Passy cemetery, "*la ville apparaissait à vol d'oiseau.*"^{xi} The clear blue tint of the winter sky has a clarity "*où les lointains eux-mêmes prenaient une netteté d'image japonaise.*"^{li} In Au bonheur des dames Zola signature "*vu à vol d'oiseau*" of the city occurs in the context of an imaginative advertising poster for the store. He refers to the poster as a "*gravure,*" a legitimate work of art displayed in the streets, with an affinity to the imagery of Japanese prints. Indeed, popular poster artists of the day such as Jules Chéret were indebted to the example of Japanese *ukiyo-e* imagery. (fig. 79)

D'abord, au premier plan de cette gravure, les rues de la Michodière et de Monsigny, emplies de petites figures noires, s'élargissaient démesurément. . . Puis, c'étaient les bâtiments eux-mêmes, d'une immensité exagérée, **vus à vol d'oiseau** avec leur corps de toitures qui dessinaient les galeries couvertes, leurs cours vitrées où l'on devinait les halls, tout l'infini de ce lac de verre et de zinc luisait au soleil. Au-delà Paris s'étendait, mais un Paris rapetissée, mangé par le monstre: les maisons. . . s'éparpillaient ensuite en une poussière de cheminées indistinctes; les monuments semblaient fondre, à gauche deux traits pour Notre-Dame, à droite un accent circonflexe pour les Invalides, au fond le Panthéon, honteux et perdu, moins gros qu'une lentille. L'horizon tombait en poudre, n'était plus qu'un cadre dédaigné, jusqu'aux hauteurs de Châtillon, jus'qu'à la vaste campagne, dont les lointains noyés indiquaient l'esclavage. (763)

For a reader with an awareness of the history of the Japanese print, Zola's imaginary poster recalls the works of Hiroshige (1797-1858), the master of landscape. His *Eagle over Jumantsubo Plain at Sasaki*, from the series *One Hundred Famous Places of Edo*, is literally a birds'-eye view of an extended, schematized winter landscape. (fig. 80) In this print the winged predator dominates the upper half of the picture plane, pointing its beak towards a possible prey below. Hiroshige's indistinct horizon and distant volcanic mountain, suggested by two calligraphic "accents circonflexes" recall the advertising poster for Au bonheur des dames. This celebrated print by Hiroshige was part of Monet's extensive collection of *ukiyo-e* prints; it is an image that would have been familiar to connoisseurs such as Zola.ⁱⁱⁱ

In Chapter 12, a rendez-vous takes place between Denise and her hapless hometown admirer, Deloche, amongst the upper reaches of *Au bonheur des dames*. This provides a roof-top perspective of the store's "galeries couvertes, leurs cours vitrées" that were depicted in the poster. This observation point from above recalls the privileged glimpse offered to the viewer of certain Japanese genre screens, manuscripts and prints. Denise and Deloche actually enjoy two simultaneous birds'-eye views, an imaginary landscape and the microcosm of a cityscape. The expanse of glass

creates the illusion of the cherished landscape of their native Normandy.

“un mirage se levait pour eux de cette eau aveuglante, ils voyaient des pâturages à l’infini, le Cotentin trempé par les haleines de l’océan, baigné d’une vapeur lumineuse, qui fondait l’horizon dans un gris délicat d’aquarelle. “ (718) The ‘luminous mists’ of this illusory scene recall the golden clouds of the Momoyama-Edo period screens depicting urban scenes, partially obscuring the totality of the picture surface.

In reality, Denise and Deloche are witness to the functioning of the palatial *Au bonheur des dames* beneath them, a sight as breathtaking as the panorama of the modern metropolis.

A droite et à gauche de la galerie vitrée, d’autres galeries, d’autres halls luisaient au soleil, entre des combles troués de fenêtres et allongés symétriquement. . . Des charpentes métalliques se dressaient, des échelles, des ponts, qui découpaient leur dentelle dans le bleu de l’air; tandis que la cheminée des cuisines faisait une grosse fumée de fabrique, et que la grand réservoir carré. . .prenait un étrange profil de construction barbare.(719)

As in a Japanese work of art, there is a simultaneous unfolding of action in time, as Denise and Deloche perceive the multiplicity of activity taking place in the enterprise below.

Explicit and Implicit *Japonisme*: conclusion

Zola's comprehensive approach to *japonisme* in *Au bonheur des dames* extends from its explicit to implicit manifestations, as seen in *Une page d'amour*. The store's successful counter devoted to *le Japon* is almost certainly based on Zola's documentary notes from *Au Bon Marché*. At Mouret's department store the fashion for *japonnerie* extends from the demanding *clientèle artistique* to regular customers who are impulse buyers of reasonably-priced, exotic bibelots. Items from Japan and the Orient are literally integrated into the fabric of the store, present in its fabulous displays and in the enormous selection of dry goods. By favoring an increase in foreign trade to provide customers with a wider choice of products, Mouret is literally expanding the horizons of his hexagon-centered countrymen.

The implicit *Japonisme* of *Au bonheur des dames* is present in the overwhelming emphasis on *la féminilité*, announced with its title. Zola has adopted and expanded this pillar of the Goncourts' Naturalist philosophy. The novel *La Fille Elisa* (1879), Edmond's evocation of two confined lower-class female environments-- the brothel and penitentiary--was steeped in nuances of *japonisme*. For Zola and other *japonistes*, these allusions would have been readily discernible. [Chapter 3, "L'Ensemble par le fragment": *Japonisme as Fragmentation in La Fille Elisa*.]

In *Au bonheur des dames*, Zola's depiction of middle-class women absorbed in the transitory pleasures provided by the world of fashion may be interpreted as his poetic interpretation of the imagery of Utamaro, whose prime subject was the cloistered existence of the elegant, highest-ranking courtesans of the Green Houses. For Zola and Utamaro, the endless variations in color, texture, cut and appearance of women's *habillement* provide a fertile source of inspiration. Zola's fantastic *étalages* of women's intimate garments evoke the visual language of the *Tagasode* genre screen, in which the absent lady is defined by the panoply of kimono and personal possessions left on display.

As a connoisseur and collector of Japanese art since the late 1860's, Zola had an acute awareness of the visual strategies of the Japanese painter, in the related arts of the painted handscroll, folding screen, painting on silk and woodblock print. Two of the most prominent features of Japanese art are the "blown-off roof" device to reveal interior spaces and the oblique or overhead view, which Goncourt refers to as "*ces légères perspectives aériennes du pays*."^{liiiiiv} Zola's most dramatic use of the the "blown-off roof" perspective occurs in the roof-top scene in Chapter 13, wherein the characters simultaneously view two scenes from above. The characteristic "*vu à vol d'oiseau*" is mentioned as the composition of the advertising

poster for the store, in which the monolithic edifice in the foreground dwarfs its surrounding cityscape, reduced to calligraphic squiggles.

Zola's protagonist Mouret is compared to a 'poet' by one of his chief investors--"Mais vous êtes un poète dans votre genre, je vous le répète"(688)--for a utopian vision of the retailing of the future, which he believes will shape a more progressive society in the long term. Just as Mouret's revolutionary marketing strategy integrates the Orient into the mainstream of French culture, so Zola seeks to adopt aspects of the Far East into the fabric of his Naturalist fiction, expanding the Goncourt's conception of *la féminilité* and while adopting visual strategies of oriental art.

Zola's outlook is consistent with his humanist credo announced in 1867 concerning the universality of artistic expression. "J'accepte toutes les oeuvres d'art au même titre, au titre de manifestations du génie humain. Et elles m'intéressent presque également, elles ont toutes la véritable beauté, la vie dans ses milles expressions, toujours changeantes, toujours nouvelles." To apply the phrase of Edouard Glissant to this context, Zola "*a eu l'audace de changer son imaginaire..*"^{1v} It is this very 'audacity' which confirms the Naturalist writer's characteristic world perspective.

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- ⁱ Ernst Chesneau, *Les Nations Rivalentes dans l'Art* (Paris: Didier & Cie, 1868), 441.
- ⁱⁱ Emile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart, Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le second Empire*, vol. 3 (Paris: Editions Fasquelle et Gallimard, 1964), 1680 (all subsequent references are to this edition, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Théodore Duret, *La Critique d'avant-garde* (Paris: Charpentier, 1885), 165.
- ^{iv} Robert J. Niess, "Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames*: the making of a symbol," in *Symbolism and Modern Literature, Studies in honor of Wallace Fowlie* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978), 134
- ^v Elise Grilli, *Katsushika Hokusai* (Rutland and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1955), quoted in James Michener, *The Hokusai Sketchbooks, Selections from the Manga* (Rutland and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1983), 43.
- ^{vi} Zola, *Les Rougon Macquart*, 1674.
- ^{vii} Edmond de Goncourt, *Hokusai* (Paris: Charpentier, 1896) quoted in P.F. Schneeberger, "Hokusai et le Japonisme avant 1900," *Collections Baur* (Geneva), no. 23(Fall/Winter 1976): 15.
- ^{viii} James Michener, *The Hokusai Sketchbooks, Selections from the Manga* (Rutland and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1983), 22.
- ^{ix} Duret, *L'Art Japonais*, 163.
- ^x *Ibid.*, 165.
- ^{xi} Jean Adhémar, "Le Cabinet de Travail de Zola," *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, (November 1960): 297, note 9.
- ^{xii} Edmond de Goncourt, *La Maison d'un Artiste* (Paris: Fasquelle & Flammarion, with the Académie Goncourt, 1931), 280.
- ^{xiii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xiv} Geneviève Aitken and Marianne Delafond, *La Collections d'Estmapes Japonaises de Claude Monet* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1987), 18.
- ^{xv} Zola, *Les Rougon Macquart*, 1696.
- ^{xvi} *Le Japonisme, Exposition au Grand Palais* (Paris: Ministère de la Culture/Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1988), 95.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*, 98.
- ^{xviii} Zola, 1667-1696, *passim*.

- ^{xxi} Emile Zola, *Correspondence, June 1880-December 1883*, ed. B.H. Bakker (Montreal: Presses Universitaires de Montreal/CNRS, 1983), 4: 44-46.
- ^{xxii} *Ibid.*, 73-74.
- ^{xxiii} *Ibid.*, 303-304.
- ^{xxiv} Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfort: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983), 86, quoted in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing, Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Boston: MIT Press, 1991), 83.
- ^{xxv} Walter Benjamin, *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 146-149.
- ^{xxvi} Maurice Bouvier-Ajam, "Zola et les Magasins de Nouveautés," *Europe* (Paris), (April-May 1968): 50.
- ^{xxvii} Zola, *Les Rougon Macquart*, 1702.
- ^{xxviii} *Ibid.*, 1696.
- ^{xxix} Claude Seassau, *Emile Zola, le Réalisme Symbolique* (Paris: José Corti, 1989), 14.
- ^{xxx} Zola, *Les Rougon Macquart*, 1702.
- ^{xxxi} Paul Alexis, *Emile Zola, Notes d'un Ami* (Paris: Charpentier, 1882), 123.
- ^{xxxii} Bernard Marrey, *Les Grands Magasins des origines à 1939* (Paris: Editions Picard, 1979), 74-77.
- ^{xxxiii} Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Préfaces et Manifestes Littéraires* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1980), 31-32.
- ^{xxxiv} Edmond de Goncourt, *Outamaro, le Peintre des Maisons Vertes* (Paris: Charpentier, 1891), 24, note 1.
- ^{xxxv} Aitken and Delafond, *La Collection d'Estampes Japonaises de Monet*, 76-77.
- ^{xxxvi} Edmond de Goncourt, *Outamaro*, 38.
- ^{xxxvii} Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968), 560-561.
- ^{xxxviii} *Exposition Goncourt*, organisé par la Gazette des Beaux-Arts (Paris, 1933). This print was purchased at the Goncourt estate auction by Henri Vever. It is identified as Outamaro's portrait.
- ^{xxxix} Edmond de Goncourt, *Outamaro*, 143.
- ^{xl} Geneviève Lacambre, *Le Livre des Expositions Universelles, 1851-1989* (Paris: Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, 1983), 298-299 (Chapter on Japonisme)
- ^{xli} *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, 1st edition, 1983, s.v. "screen and wall painting."
- ^{xlii} Michael R. Cunningham, *The Triumph of Japanese Style: 16th Century Art in Japan* (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1991), passim.
- ^{xliiii} Elise Grilli, *The Art of the Japanese Screen* (Tokyo and New York: Weatherhill, 1970), 182.
- ^{xliiiii} Miyeko Murase, *Byobu: Japanese Screens from New York Collections* (New York: Asia Society, 1971), 93-94. See also, *Worlds Seen and Imagined: Japanese Screens from the Idemitsu Museum of Arts* (New York: The Asia Society, 1995), 134-135.
- ^{xlv} Michel Maucuer and Gilles Béguin, *Henri Cernuschi 1821-1896, Voyageur et Collectionneur* (Paris: Musée Cernuschi, 1998) 146-147.
- ^{xlvi} *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, s.v. "fukinuki yatai."
- ^{xlvii} *Ibid.*, s.v. "Genji monogatari emaki."
- ^{xlviii} Akiyama Terukazu, *Japanese Painting* (New York: Skira/Rizzoli, 1977), 71-73.
- ^{xlviiii} Maucuer and Béguin, *Henri Cernuschi*, 136-139.
- ^{xlvi} William Rubin, "Impressionism" (lecture series presented at Sotheby's New York, Fall-Winter 1997, December 17, 1997). Quoted by permission of the speaker.
- ^{li} Emile Zola, *L'Assommoir* (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), 107.
- ^{lii} Emile Zola, *Une page d'amour* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1985), 349.
- ^{liiii} *Ibid.*, 353.
- ^{liiiii} Aitken and Delafond, 170.
- ^{li} Edmond de Goncourt, *Outamaro*, 18.
- ^{li} Edouard Glissant, "De la Pensée Archipélique au Tout Monde" (closing remarks, conference at Graduate School and University Center of City University of New York, December 3-4, 1998).

CHAPTER 7

JORIS KARL HUYSMANS: A JAPONISME A *REBOURS*

“Cette tentative de rendre le foisonnement des êtres et des choses dans la pulvéulence de la lumière ou de les détacher avec leurs tons crus, sans dégradations, sans demi-teintes, dans certains coups de soleil tombant droit, reccourcissant et supprimant presque les ombres, comme dans les images des Japonais. . .” J.-K. Huysmans on *l'Exposition des Indépendants en 1880*, in L'Art Moderne (1883).

“Quant à M. Ingres, il imagina un bon tocassin d'étain, alors qu'il peignit son Angélique [*Roger Delivering Angelica* (1819), Louvre]; depuis lors, les Japonais sont les seuls qui tentèrent de procréer réellement des monstres. Certains figures d'Hokousai, des femmes surtout, semblables à des fées pendues dans de la brume, avec des cheveux tombant en saule-pleureur sur des faces diminuées et pâles, ont des aspects de fantômes, réalisent des apparitions de spectres, mais elles ne constituent pas, à proprement parler, des monstres. . . L'école impressionniste s'est souvenu de ce plaquage japonaise, de cette naïveté presque féroce des tons, de cette gaucherie imagière, voulue, de cette simplicité de primitif [in Ingres' *Portrait of Madame de Vançay*] . . .” J.-K. Huysmans on Ingres and Japanese art in Certains (1889).ⁱⁱ

“A page of Huysmans is as a dose of opium, a glass of some exquisite and powerful liqueur.” George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man.ⁱⁱⁱ

The remarkable visual acuity of Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907), elegantly expressed in fiction and art and literary criticism, is comparable only to that of his Naturalist mentors Zola and de Goncourt. A visceral bond with artistic expression is paramount throughout the evolution of Huysmans' literary career, from the orthodox Naturalism of the early novels through the Symbolism of A Rebours (1884), to what he termed the

“naturalisme mystique”^{iv} of works produced after his embrace of the Catholic faith, ca. 1888.

In accordance with Naturalist theories of behavior, Huysmans’ predilection for the visual arts may be explained in terms of heredity. Parisian born-and-bred Huysmans (baptized Charles-Marie-Georges) was literally born into the artists’ guild. His father Victor Huysmans (1815-1859), miniaturist and lithographer, was the son of the well-respected Dutch painter Jacobus Carolus Huysmans (1876-1859).^v The writer’s maternal great-grandfather, *Prix de Rome* sculptor François-Antoine Gérard(1760-1843), contributed bas-reliefs to the *Arc de Triomphe* .^{vi} (In a pseudonymous biographical sketch of 1885, Huysmans sardonically refers to Gérard as “un vague plâtrier consciencieux.”^{vii})

For young writers of Huysmans’ generation, the heroic founding fathers of modern literature were Gustave Flaubert, the Goncourts and Emile Zola. The *groupe des cinq* composed of Paul Alexis, Henri Céard, Léon Hennique, Guy de Maupassant, and Joris-Karl Huysmans met with these role models at Parisian literary gatherings during the mid-1870’s. Huysmans made a successful debut into the fraternity of letters with the publication of Le Drageoir à Epices, (subsequently titled Le Drageoir aux

Epices)^{viii} in 1874, an eccentric collection of twenty prose poems or vignettes inspired by the urban experience and his appreciation of the Dutch and Flemish schools of painting. Huysmans proudly presented Zola with a copy at their first meeting with Céard in Paris during May, 1876.^{ix}

Huysmans' first attempt at the novel, Marthe. Histoire d'une Fille (1876), a rigorous Naturalist treatment of a woman's progression from factory to the stage and ultimately to prostitution, was published in Brussels. Huysmans' initial contact with Goncourt was a polite letter of October 1, 1876, enlisting the support of the author of the soon-to-be-published La Fille Elisa in their common struggle against repressive French censorship laws.^x Goncourt's Journal entry of October 3, 1876 mentions receipt of the book without discussing its literary merits. Huysmans received a favorable critique on Marthe from Zola, with some reservations on the idiosyncrasy of its style.

...Il contient des pages superbes. J'aime beaucoup surtout certains coins de description, la vie à deux de Marthe et Léo, une crémerie, un marchand de vin, et particulièrement les souvenirs . . . sur la vie de fille qu'elle a menée. . . Vous avez un style assez riche pour ne pas abuser du style. Je suis d'avis que l'intensité ne doit pas être obtenue par la couleur des mots, mais par leur valeur. . . vous êtes sûrement un de nos romanciers de demain.^{xi}

Even before publication of Les Soeurs Vatard (1879), chronicle of a working class family in Paris, the gifted Huysmans had already been received as an esteemed colleague by the masters of Medan and Auteuil. The cordial relationship with Zola, for whom Huysmans was pleased to provide novelistic documentation on obscure subjects--including his own family-- is evidenced by the exchange of over sixty letters dated 1876-1884.^{xii} Their friendship was truncated after publication of A Rebours (1884), which the elder author interpreted as a symbolist manifesto striking “un coup terrible au naturalisme.” Huysmans’ firm bond with Edmond de Goncourt, whom he addressed in correspondence as “Mon cher maître” continued until 1896, the year of the latter’s death. The inventory of precious tomes described in Goncourt’s La Maison d’un Artiste (1881) mentions a specially-bound volume of his younger colleague’s works, a sign of sincere esteem.

Le Drageoir à Epices: Naturalist Prose Poems in an *écriture d’artiste*

The “Sonnet Liminaire” of Le Drageoir à Epices acknowledges and renders homage to Huysmans’ literary forebears: François Villon, Théophile Gautier, Gerard de Nerval, and especially Charles Baudelaire, whom Huysmans considered “le seul maître qui fût.”^{xiii} The sonnet’s

references to sketches, gradations of violet, sculpted decorations, enamels, pastels, prints, and Dutch genre painter Adrien Brauwer[Brouwer] reinforce the author's conception of the fruitful interpenetration of the complementary spheres of art and literature.

In a glowing review of Le Drageoir à Epices in the *National*(January 18, 1875), critic Théodore de Banville praised Huysmans as a creative 'painter' and even 'sculptor' of words. "Joris-Karl Huysmans. . . s'occupe de sentir le mot, de peindre par l'harmonie et le mouvement de la phrase, comme *Gaspard de la Nuit*[collection of prose poems by Aloysius Bertrand which inspired Baudelaire's Paris Spleen], comme Flaubert, comme Baudelaire, comme les Goncourt! Son Drageoir aux épices est un joyau de savant orfèvre, ciselé d'une main ferme et légère. . .^{xiv}"

Because of its acknowledged importance in Huysman's oeuvre--the contemporary critic Cogny claims it foreshadows all the writer's subsequent themes^{xv}--the text of "Le Sonnet Liminaire" from Le Drageoir aux Epices follows in entirety.

Des croquis de concert et de bals de barrière;
 La Reine Marguerite, un camaïeu poupré;
 Des naïades d'égout au sourire éploré,
 Noyant leur long ennui dans des pintes de bière;

Des cabarets brodés de pampre et de lierre;
 Le poète Villon, dans un cachot, prostré;
 Ma tant douce tourmente, un hareng mordoré,
 L'amour d'un paysan et d'une maraîchère:

Tels sont les principaux sujets que j'ai traités:
 Un choix de bric-à-brac, vieux médaillons sculptés,
 Emaux, pastels pâlis, eau-forte, estampe rousse,
 Idoles aux grands yeux, aux charmes décevants,
 Paysans de Brauwer, buvant, faisant carrousse,
 Sont là. Les prenez-vous? A bas prix je les vends.^{xvi}

While recognizing the achievements of literary masters of the past, Huysmans develops his own idiosyncratic *écriture d'artiste*. Le Drageoir à Epices was initially rejected by the editor Hetzel, on the grounds that the author was attempting to “faire la Commune dans la langue française.”^{xvii} Huysmans' Naturalist prose is characterized by intense scrutiny of the most mundane aspects of *le quotidien*: visual impressions, auditory and olfactory stimuli presented with an acidly ironic wit. His many-layered phrases patterned after oral expression characteristically juxtapose raw street argot with words derived from Latin or foreign languages, creating a unique 'huysmanian' vocabulary. In the manner of the sculptor, Huysmans employs the structured French language as a 'clay' in which to shape uncompromising portraits of his subjects, incorporating elements of the

grotesque with gusto. The 'demésure' of Huysmans is comparable to that noted in Deleuze and Guattari's appreciation of writers like Faulkner.

L'écrivain se sert de mots, mais en créant une syntaxe qui les fait passer dans la sensation, et qui fait bégayer la langue courante, ou trembler, ou crier, ou même chanter: c'est le style, le 'ton', le langage des sensations. . .L'écrivain tord le langage, le fait vibrer, l'étreint, le fend, pour arracher le percept aux perceptions, l'affect aux affections, la sensation à l'opinion. . .^{xviii}

The following passage from *Autour des Fortifications* (following the vignettes of Le Drageoir à Epices) describing a performer in a popular variety theatre may serve as an early illustration of Huysmans' characteristic Naturalist style. He will return to the denizens of the Paris music halls in Les Soeurs Vatard.

Puis un homme entra, joufflu, ventripotent, énorme, déguisé en soldat Pitou, avec son képi haut de trois étages, enfoncé sur la nuque. Ainsi que des fusées d'artifice, des cris de joie partirent, alors qu'il mit la main sur la couture du pantalon et remua des yeux dont les paupières étaient peintes avec du blanc du talc. Il attendit, puis avança un bras, et d'une voix surhumaine où gargoulaient des ruisseaux traversés par des sons de cuivre, il entama la complainte d'un factionnaire qui a mangé du melon. Ces allusions stercoraires, ces paillettes de garde-robe, enthousiasmèrent la salle, qui se tordit, gagnèrent jusqu'aux garçons, qui ouvrirent des bouches à y mettre des poings. Il fut rappelé trois fois et dut se défendre pour ne point répéter ses scatologiques gaudrioles. (428)

Huysmans' reinvention of the Romantic heritage of Orientalism in Le Drageoir à Epices

An important component of Huysmans' literary heritage is Orientalism, the Romantic attraction of the Orient, and its contemporary manifestation, *Japonisme*. The very title Le Drageoir à Epices, which may be translated as "The Spice Server," is evocative of the Silk Route. This ancient overland passage between the far reaches of Asia and the Mediterranean basin served as a conduit for the transport of precious textiles and prized spices. Intangible philosophical ideas, namely Buddhism, eventually reached Japan from India via this passage.^{xix} In more modern times, it was Holland, land of Huysman's ancestors, which spearheaded commercial relations with China, India and Japan with the founding of the Dutch East India Company in 1602. Establishing contact with the Japanese shogun in 1609, the Dutch were granted privileged status for conducting trade after expulsion of the Portuguese and other westerners due to the 1614 edict against Christianity.^{xx} Chinese and Japanese porcelains, lacquers, screens, and other works of art, prized by European connoisseurs from the seventeenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, were primarily obtained from Dutch shipments. The major ports of Japan were finally declared opened to the United States, Holland, Russia, Great Britain and France by treaty signed July 1, 1859.^{xxi}

It is significant that Huysmans chose to 'frame' Le Drageoir à Epices with "Rococo japonais" and "L'Emailluse," introductory and concluding sketches consecrated to western perceptions or more accurately, misperceptions of the mysterious East. Ostensibly a collection of brief prose poems related to French and Dutch genre scenes, these two selections create a sense of exoticism for the oeuvre as a whole. In both vignettes, the Orient is epitomized as a seductive woman. As Lowe points out in her essay "Orient as Woman, Orientalism and Sentimentalism" on Flaubert's novel Salammbô (1862), "In all senses the Orient was always a richly literary space, a place where French culture could inscribe its various myths and preoccupations by invoking imaginary, and culturally different, Others." ^{xxii}

"Rococo Japonais," a title uniting the twin obsessions of the Goncourts, the eighteenth century and Japan, is ostensibly an homage to a seductive femme fatale, "ma folâtre louve". "J'aime, ô mignarde louve, ton énervant nonchaloir, ton sourire alangui, ton attitude indolente, tes gestes mièvres."(334) The languid stance of this fascinating creature suggests the inspiration of the coquettish Japanese courtesan depicted in the *ukiyo-e* print albums of 'beautiful women' (*bijin-ga*) by Haronobu or Utamaro. (fig. 81)

Huysmans' prose poem may be read as a parody of Théophile Gautier's "Chinoiserie" from Emaux et Camées (1852). In Gautier's version, the poet declares his affection for a gentle Chinese princess, whom he has conjured from the decoration of a blue-and-white Chinese Ming vase. The Oriental beauty has supplanted the European muses "Juliette, Orphélia[sic], Béatrix and Laure" cited in the first stanza.

Celle que j'aime, à present, est en Chine;
 Elle demeure avec ses vieux parents,
 Dans une tour de porcelaine fine,
 Au fleuve Jaune, où sont les cormorans.^{xxiii}

In the third stanza Gautier presents the stereotyped racial features of the chaste *chinoise* .

Elle a des yeux retroussés vers les tempes.
 Un pied petit à tenir dans la main,
 Le teint plus clair que le cuivre des lampes,
 Les ongles longs et rougis de carmin.

Virtually identical physical characteristics will be observed in Huysmans' *japonaise*. The delicate, cloistered princess of Gautier's imagination intones a sweet melody of nature's beauty each evening, as described in the fourth and final stanza:

Par son treillis elle passe sa tête
 Que l'hirondelle, en volant, vient toucher
 Et chaque soir, aussi bien qu'un poète
 Chante le saule et la fleur du pêcher.

In vivid and ironic contrast, Huysmans' sultry temptress evokes the *shunga*, Japanese erotic prints of the Edo period which were well-represented in the collections of Goncourt and Zola. The *shunga* candidly depict the physiological manifestations of sexual passion. This reference is suggested by the second stanza:

J'aime tes yeux fantasques, tes yeux qui
 se retroussent sur les tempes; j'aime ta bouche
 rouge comme une baie de sorbier; tes joues
 rondes et jaunes; j'aime tes pieds tors,
 ta gorge roide, tes grands ongles lancéolés bril-
 lants comme des valves de nacre. (344)

In Certains(1889), Huysmans will describe a *shunga* print by Hokusai in an essay on Félicien Rops in similar terms. "il['le commerce charnel des Japonais'] torture les couples, leur crispe les poings, leur retourne, ainsi qu'un courant électrique, les jambes qui rétrécissent avec des pieds dont les doigts se tordent."^{xxiv}(88) The auditory stimuli of Rococo Japonais have a

distinctly sensual connotation. “J’aime, ô louve câline, les miaulements de ta voix, j’aime ses tons ululants et rauques. . .” The final line may be interpreted as an erotic image recalling Baudelaire’s prose poem *La Chevelure*. “. . .ton petit nez qui s’échappe des vagues de ta chevelure, comme une rose jaune éclore dans un feuillage noir.”(344)

Rococo Japonais expresses an ironic commentary on the evolution of the western fixation on the Orient, which has evolved from the poetic longings of the Romantic period to the excessive passions of Huysmans’ *japoniste* era. The theme recalls the Goncourts’ Manette Salomon(1867), in which the painter Coriolis develops an obsession with the exquisitely-attired courtesans contemplated in his *ukiyo-e* albums. He transfers these fantasy images onto the persona of the Jewish model Manette, whom he perceives as an Oriental beauty. After their union, Manette will metamorphose from Muse to Nemesis of Coriolis’ promising career as a modern painter. In *Rococo Japonais*, Huysmans only hints at the potential entrapment of the western male by the oriental *femme-fatale*.

In the allegorical tale “L’Emailleuse” [“The Face Painter”], the poet Amilcar[a name recalling Hamilcar Barca, a protagonist of Flaubert’s Salammbô] and his painter friend José reflect on the double mirage of love

and the Orient. José is infatuated by his next-door neighbor, a young Chinese woman with the unlikely name of Ophélie, whom he observes through a convenient peephole in the wall. “Elle est belle. . .un teint d’orange mûrie, une bouche aussi rose que la chair des pastèques, des yeux noirs comme du jayet!”(410). One day, José discovers to his chagrin that *la belle Ophélie* is merely an ordinary French woman, transformed each morning by a visiting make-up artist. This elaborate masquerade was devised by her wealthy admirer, a French trader, as a solace for the loss of his beloved Asian bride in Tibet. After discovering the true nature of Ophélie, José’s passion is effectively extinguished. “L’Emailleuse” concludes with Amilcar’s addressing a satirical ode to Ophélie, who has become the poet’s “*Fleur de nénuphar.*” This satirical denouement seems to imply that while the painter requires an authentic experience of the Orient, for the poet the inspiration of an invented, artificial Orient will suffice.

These two *croquis*, or sketches, from Le Drageoir à Epices suggest an ambivalent appreciation of *japonisme* on the part of Huysmans. While cognizant of the attraction of the East, he ridicules western writers and artists who have become so enslaved by this fashionable *engouement* that they abandon their creative judgment. Huysmans’ complex attitude towards the phenomenon of *japonisme* in the arts may be clarified by a careful

reading of L'Art Moderne(1883)--his remarkably prescient accounts of the Salons of 1879 and 1880, and the *Exposition des Independants* (Impressionists) of 1881. In fact, these texts reveal multiple, specific references to diverse aspects of Japanese art. Furthermore, Huysmans explains how progressive western artists have applied the lessons of Japan to positively influence the course of modern European painting.

L'Art Moderne: testimony to the importance of *Japonisme* to Huysmans' Aesthetic

L'Art Moderne upholds the anti-academic stance initiated by Zola in his original 1867 defense of Manet, with Huysmans going so far as to attack the very notion of the state's involvement in art in his conclusion. Much of Huysmans' criticism is a diatribe against the predictable mediocrity of the Salon offerings, citing a few pearls, largely from the Independents, who bring "la révélation... d'un art nouveau" (278) to "l'immense tourbe des exposants."(271) His particular bête-noire is formulaic painting on allegorical, nationalist themes, as exemplified by the pallid works of Puvis de Chavannes.

In L'Art Moderne Huysmans expresses enthusiasm for a diverse group of innovative painters and printmakers, admiring selected works by Mary Cassatt, Paul Cézanne, Jules Chéret, Edgar Degas, Fantin-Latour, Claude Monet, Giuseppe de Nittis[noted collector of Japanese art], Edouard Manet, Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir, and even the English illustrator of children's books Kate Greenaway. Despite the predominance of the *Indépendants*, it should be noted that Huysmans is *not* a unilateral supporter of Impressionism in all its manifestations; in some instances he finds fault with strident coloration that is discordant and unobservable in Nature.

Reiterating Zola's bold assertions on the universality of culturally diverse forms of art, Huysmans rejects the traditional hierarchy of artistic techniques: painting, etching, watercolor and even works produced by mechanical processes such as color lithography are to be judged on an equal basis. From the outset, Huysmans proclaims that the colorful advertising posters of Chéret (see fig. 79) and decorative Japanese woodblock prints have an aesthetic merit far superior to the majority of the Salon's laureates.

Pour moi, j'aimerais mieux toutes les chambres de l'Exposition tapissées des chromos[color lithographs or posters] de Chéret ou de ces merveilleuses feuilles du Japon qui valent un franc la pièce plutôt que de les voir tachetés ainsi par un amas de choses tristes. De

l'art qui palpite et qui vit, par Dieu! et au panier toutes les déesses en carton et toutes les bondieuseries du temps passé! Au panier toutes les léchotteries à la Cabanel et à la Gérôme.” (16) [emphasis added]

In judging a work of art of any era or media, the ultimate criteria for Huysmans seems to be what he calls *le vrai* [‘truth’ or ‘truthfulness’], the ability of the painter to capture the movement of life. Like Manet, the revered Old Masters of Huysmans’ personal pantheon are Velasquez, Rembrandt, Rubens and genre painters of various nationalities, who depicted the realities of their own time above the Ideal. In *l’Art Moderne*, Huysmans lauds comparable ‘truthfulness’ in authentic subject matter: “la vraie femme nue de Gauguin”(264), “la vraie compagne de Pissarro,”(258) and “les marines les plus vraies” of Monet (292). Furthermore, he admires the rendition of naturalistic effects of light--“la vraie lumière” of Renoir”(233)--and the extraordinary “vibration de l’air” in Pissarro’s paintings of the countryside.

In Huysmans’ multiple references to Japanese ‘images’ Japanese prints are associated with the expression of modernity and innovation in western painting. He cites Manet, whom he praises with some reservations, “en arrêt devant les albums du Japon”(177) at an earlier stage in his career, a probable reference to his Portrait of Zola (Musée d’Orsay, 1868).

Huysmans cites salient features of the New Painting which he feels have a distinctly Japanese inspiration. These may be grouped into four categories.

a) Eccentric compositional devices, such as the cropping of a foreground element, as seen in Manet's En Bateau. "Sa femme. . . assise dans une barque, coupée par le cadre, comme dans certaines planches des Japonais."(46)

b) The Impressionists' juxtaposition of bright patches of color (*taches*) to create a coherent visual effect from afar for the informed spectator. "Cette tentative de rendre le foisonnement des êtres et des choses dans la pulvéulence de la lumière ou de les détacher avec leurs tons crus, sans dégradations, sans demi-teintes, dans certains coups de soleil tombant droit, reccourcissant et supprimant presque les ombres, comme dans les images des Japonais. . ." (101-102)

c) Naturalistic scenes of men or animals capturing the energy of life. "Les chats dans les gravures. . . ont une allure prise sur nature, une vérité de poses fantasques et exactes pourtant, qui rappelle celle de ces animaux. . . dans certains des albums d'Oku-Sai.[Hokusai]." (88)

d) Rendering of the palpitation of these closely-observed, life-like gestures in an abbreviated line. Here, the reference is to Degas: "Ce dessin bref et nerveux, saisissant, comme celui des Japonais." (250)

On the other hand, Huysmans scornfully notes the adoption of superficial elements of *Japonisme* by fashionable academic painters attempting to stamp their work with an inauthentic air of 'modernity.' In Huysmans' point of view the reproduction of the mere trappings of japonaiserie-- kimono-clad models surrounded by oriental bric-a-brac-- leads to an aesthetic cul-de-sac. Unlike Théodore Duret and Emile Zola, Huysmans derides Monet's famous portrait of Camille dressed in a red silk Kabuki robe [*La Japonaise*, 1876, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston] as "sa fausse Japonaise," a failure in his artistic development. On the other hand, Huysmans strongly advocates the incorporation of eccentric compositional devices and the adoption of a Naturalistic focus on scenes of everyday life, according to the example of the Japanese woodblock prints.

In Huysmans' view the Japanese artist--he mentions Hokusai and Hokkei-- have established a precedent worthy of emulation by western painters seeking to depict modern subject matter with integrity. He also feels that the Japanese have an innate connection to Nature that is absent in the west. In one sardonic passage, the critic pities the faithful Japanese student of Bonnat who has lost sight of his heritage by adopting the standard French style. "M. Yocimathi-Goceida est perdu; son oeil est

oblitéré, sa main inconsciente. Je n'ose le supplier de retourner dans son pays et d'étudier la nature et l'oeuvre de ses maîtres. . .”(233)

Huysmans' unified conception of Literature and Painting

The innate link between Naturalist writing and the 'new painting' is reiterated in the text of L'Art Moderne. “J'ai souvent pensé avec étonnement à la trouée que les impressionnistes et que Flaubert, de Goncourt et Zola ont faites dans l'art. L'école naturaliste a été révélée au public par eux, l'art a été bouleversé du haut en bas, affranchi du lignotage officiel des Ecoles.” (89) Both Naturalist writers and painters are concerned with the depiction of modern subject matter from everyday life, described without falsification or idealization. “Jules et Edmond de Goncourt ont dû forger un incisif et puissant outil, créer une palette neuve des tons, un vocabulaire original, une nouvelle langue; de même, pour exprimer la vision des êtres et des choses dans l'atmosphère qui leur est propre, pour montrer les mouvements, les postures, les gestes, les jeux de la physionomie. . .” (133) Degas is cited as having achieved in his art the Naturalist mandate initiated by the *écriture artiste* of the Goncourts. In fact, in a letter of March 1877 Huysmans defined literary Naturalism in terms of painting: “une école qui voudrait essayer de faire vivant et d'écrire avec de la couleur.” ^{xxv}

In his account of the 1880 *Exposition des Indépendants*, Huysmans exhorts the modern painter to observe and record the rhythms of daily life outside the confines of the studio. According to these criteria, Manet's Bar des Folies Bèrgère (1881-82, Courtauld Institute, London) is cited as exemplary of the author's idea of modernity in art. (fig. 82)

Toute la vie moderne est à étudier encore; c'est à peine si quelques-unes de ses multiples faces ont été aperçues et notées. Tout est à faire: les galas officiels, les salons, les bals, les coins de vie familière, de la vie artisanale et bourgeoise, les magasins, les marchés, les restaurants, les cafés, les zincs, enfin toute l'humanité. . . dans les hospices, dans les bastringues, au théâtre, dans les squares, dans les rues pauvres ou dans ces vastes boulevards dont les américaines allures sont le cadre nécessaire aux besoins de notre époque. (137-8)

This stress on the *quotidien* as subject aptly summarizes the Naturalist technique of the Goncourts and of Zola, who frequented the locales where their novels were to be set, notebook in hand, recording distinctive characteristics with obsessive attention to detail. Huysmans himself carried his *Carnet Vert*, serving as 'palette' and sketchbook, for twenty-five years, recording visual impressions in a painter's shorthand.^{xxvi} As in the works of Degas, Forain, Raffaelli, and Manet, the fictive universe of Huysmans' Naturalist novels --Marthe, Les Soeurs Vatard, and En Ménage-- records plebian settings of the urban experience: shops,

tramways, railroad stations, variety theaters, circuses, bars, cheap restaurants and brothels.

Huysmans' mandate of the study of *'la vie moderne'* would seem to cast him as proponent of a documentary Naturalism in painting akin to that of literature. Nonetheless, the dichotomy of Huysmans' personal aesthetic is apparent in the simultaneous appreciation of Symbolist painters Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) and Odilon Redon (1840-1916), whose works are based on myth and the unconscious. Huysmans notes Moreau's affinity with Eastern cultures, citing characteristics of his technique which recall "les aquarelles barbares de l'antique Orient" [Persian miniatures]. Indeed, Moreau had studied Henri Cernuschi's extensive collections of oriental art exhibited at the Palais de l'Industrie in 1869, and had copied Japanese albums, prints and costumes in watercolor.^{xxvii}(fig. 83) Paradoxically, Huysmans establishes a literary analogy between Moreau and the very writers he had previously lauded as the epitome of modernity: the Goncourt brothers, Flaubert, and Baudelaire.

Et encore le style de M. Moreau se rapprocherait-il plutôt de la langue orfèvrée des Goncourt. S'il était possible de s'imaginer l'admirable et définitive Tentation de Gustave Flaubert, écrite par les auteurs de Manette Salomon, peut-être aurait-on l'exacte similitude de l'art si délicieusement raffiné de M. Moreau.(153)

The inherent contradiction of Huysmans' vision is further accentuated in his second collection of critiques on art, Certains(1889). Championing Degas' unflinching 'realism' in pastels of the grotesque postures of women bathers on one hand, he goes on to display great enthusiasm for the dreamlike works of Whistler and Moreau, painter-poets whose otherworldly themes transcend the banality of contemporary references. In supporting the opposing poles of Naturalism and Symbolism, Huysmans himself incarnates Baudelaire's dictum from "Mon Coeur mis à nu," positing the existence in each individual of fundamentally conflicting tropisms, simultaneously striving towards the sacred and the profane. "Il y a dans tout homme, à toute heure, deux postulations simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, ou spiritualité, l'autre vers Satan." ^{xxviii} [This trait would be reflected in the course of Huysmans' spiritual development, experimenting with mysticism and perhaps even Satanism before finding solace in meditative Catholicism.]

Les Soeurs Vatard: Japoniste aspects of a Naturalist novel

Huysman's aesthetic credo of Naturalism applied to painting and literature in L'Art Moderne is reflected in his Les Soeurs Vatard (1879), a work illustrated by Raffaëlli.(fig. 84) The novel was dedicated to Zola by "son fervent admirateur et dévoué ami." In Zola's Le Roman Experimental, this work of his protégé is presented as a daringly true-to-

life documentary of the promiscuous mores of the working class. “Tout ce milieu ouvrier, ce coin de misère et d’ignorance, de tranquille ordure et d’air naturellement empesté, a été traité. . .avec une scrupuleuse exactitude et une rare énergie de pinceau.”^{xxx} Besides Zola’s partisan interpretation, however, Les Soeurs Vatard may be read as a parody of the traditional romantic novel of *la vie sentimentale* of a bourgeois or upper class heroine.

The two protagonists Céline and Désirée, adolescent daughters of the affable Père Vatard, are employees of a book bindery. The hapless father sums up the pivotal dilemma which provides a modicum of plot to the descriptive episodes of proletarian existence: “J’ai deux filles. Il y en a une qui ne veut légitimement épouser personne, et elle est encore plus insupportable que l’autre qui voudrait se marier et qui ne le peut pas. C’est vraiment décourageant, je ne sais quoi faire.”^{xxx} (146) As in the denouement of an old-fashioned romance, Les Soeurs Vatard concludes upon the imminent practical marriage of the virginal Désirée, feted by her co-workers as twilight descends upon the atelier.

Les Soeurs Vatard is set in a peripheral neighborhood of the capital, the *zone* surrounding the Gare Montparnasse known as the Quartier Montrouge. The main *lieu clos* of this Naturalist study is the ironically

named Atelier Débonnaire, an insalubrious workshop utilizing mainly women for their manual dexterity in the tedious task of assembling and stitching the bindings of illustrated books. (In fact, members of Huysmans' immediate family were proprietors of a similar business which the author helped manage, in addition to employment as a civil servant.)^{xxxi} Principal interior settings of the novel are the Vatard apartment, various cheap cafés and eateries, a circus, variety theaters, and a painter's studio. It will be recalled that these are the same types of locale that Huysmans recommends as essential to the pursuit of modernity in painting in the 1880 *Exposition des Indépendants*.

As seen in the analysis of selected novels by Zola and the Goncourts, aspects of *japonisme* in Les Soeurs Vatard may be encountered in both explicit and implicit forms. As Huysmans in L'Art Moderne excoriates painters who emphasize superficial trappings of *japonaiserie* in a futile attempt to pass off their work as 'modern,' in Les Soeurs Vatard he tends to downplay the presence of overtly Japanese subject matter in favor of a more subtle, implicit *japonisme*. Nonetheless, mentions of aspects of Japan and its culture are indeed present in several episodes, as will be shown.

In terms of implicit *Japonisme*, there is a striking parallel between the urban settings of Les Soeurs Vatard and a similar focus in *ukiyo-e* prints depicting scenes of life in the capital city of Edo which circulated amongst the artistic circles of Huysmans' era. As shown at the 1999 *Edo* exhibition at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, work was a primary theme of art of the Edo period (1615-1868) in all media. Huysman's emphasis on women of humble circumstances amidst their activities in the workplace may well be a reference to *Japonisme*. Genre paintings of the Edo period such as *Bathhouse Girls* and *Weavers and Dyers*. (figs. 85-86) are classic examples of the focus of the depiction of labors of lower class Japanese women. In terms of graphic art, Hokusai's *Manga*, discussed earlier in relation to Au bonheur des dames(1883), the most well-known compendium of imagery of everyday occupations of Edo, was a source that may also have stimulated Huysmans' visual imagination. (see fig. 67)

A salient aspect of Les Soeurs Vatard that bears a strong resemblance to the world of *ukiyo-e* is Huysmans' vivid depiction of popular amusements and entertainment. The tawdry circus sideshow (Chapter 5) and riotous vaudeville theatres (Chapters 8 and 19) stand out as the novel's most striking scenes of the simultaneous action characteristic of modern life. These episodes recall perspective views in popular Japanese woodblock

prints of the notorious Kabuki theatres and their featured actors. In these images the lively interactions amongst pleasure-seeking spectators partaking of food and drink often rival the onstage performances. (fig.87) Manet's Servante de Bocks (1878, National Gallery, London), reminiscent of the theatre scenes in Les Soeurs Vatard, is perhaps another transposition of the theme of the inter-relationship of spectacle/spectators in *ukiyo-e* prints to a western setting. (fig. 88)

It is fitting that the few explicit references to Japan and the Orient Les Soeurs Vatard occur in the context of performance and spectacle. During an outing with her beau Auguste (Chapter 8), the unsophisticated Désiree stands in awe of the fantasy-inspiring architecture of a dilapidated variety theater, the Folies Bobino. “. . . l'entrée qui est d'une architecture des plus compliquées, du Siamois, **du Japonais**, du je ne sais quoi, mâtiné avec l'imbécile fantaisie d'un architecte. . . . **Une femme jaune**, dansant sur le toit retroussé comme celui **d'une pagode** et tenant à la main un appareil à gaz en forme de lyre. . .”(89) [emphasis added] It will be recalled that the fashion for *japonisme* reached its apogee amongst the bourgeoisie with the 1878 Exposition Universelle, as reflected in Zola's Une page d'amour (1878). In Huysman's cynical interpretation, by 1879 *japonisme* had become so entrenched in French popular culture that

pastiche of the art of the Japan served as a shorthand for facile escapism, comprehensible even to the most unlettered.

In the following chapter, aspects of Japanese art are mentioned in a similar vein in a reverie of the resolutely modern painter Cyprien Tibaille, vainly seeking to deny his middle-class upbringing by adopting the lifestyle of the bohemian artist. Although enjoying the company of raucous working class girls such as Céline, he would have preferred ‘des ravageuses de haute lice’ [courtesans] beyond his means. The narrator describes Cyprien’s unattainable fantasy. “Il aurait voulu étreindre une femme accoutré en saltimbanque riche, l’hiver, par un ciel gris et jaune, un ciel qui va laisser tomber sa neige, dans une chambre tendue **d’étoffes du Japon**, pendant qu’un famélique quelconque viderait un orgue de barbarie des valse attristantes dont son ventre est plein.” (104) [emphasis added] Here again the notion of ‘Japan’ is identified with an absurdly escapist Romantic daydream, far removed from the quotidien domain of the authentic painter of modernity.

In a curious scene (Chapter 19), Cyprien and Céline traverse an underground corridor of the Théâtre de la Gaîté, separated from a neighboring cafe by a clouded glass partition. This detour provides the

unexpected spectacle of a play of shadows recalling the art of Javanese puppetry, known in France as *ombres chinoises*. Ironically, the interlude provokes a visual stimulation far greater than the tawdry music hall numbers on the dingy boards of the stage.

Des ombres énormes se découpaient derrière ce rideau de vapeur comme derrière un papier huilé, des ombres chinoises. . . . ce jeu de lumière qui déformaient et rendait immense tout mouvement, toute pose. Puis des gestes cassés, des torsions de reins, des penchées de corps, des profils bizarres, des chapeaux exagérés s'estompaient sur ce transparent en de noires ébauches que brouillaient les silhouettes monstrueuses des garçons courant. . . (201)

This odd distortion of silhouettes recalling the technique of 'Chinese' shadow puppets points out Huysmans' true appreciation of the Orient. Rather than serving as an exotic prop, the art of Japan is valued as a stimulus by which the Occidental painter and writer can expand powers of the imagination and the very act of interpreting visual stimuli.

Beyond occasional mentions of Japanese or Oriental motifs, and parallels in subject matter with *ukiyo-e* in terms of women's occupations and the theatre, Huysmans' literary *japonisme* may best be explored in terms of the relationship between Naturalist aspects of the novel and his essays on painting in L'Art Moderne. Critics (Zayed, Trudgian, et al.) invariably interpret the character of the painter Cyprien Tibaille as a projection of the author's persona. Indeed, the author and this character

share a similar viewpoint: Tibaille's credo, like Huysmans', is the creation of "une oeuvre qui fût vivante et vraie." (105) The narrator describes Tibaille's unflinching aesthetic of the ordinary: "la tristesse des giroflées séchant dans un pot lui paraissait plus intéressante que le rire ensoleillé des roses en pleine terre..."(104). (Flaubert's undated letter to Huysmans on Les Soeurs Vatard questions the validity of this point of view, which he assumes to be that of the author.)^{xxxii}

Tibaille, like Coriolis at a certain stage in the Goncourt's Manette Salomon, has abandoned the dictates of Salon painting. He also experiments with new techniques, seeking to break the rules of the Academy. ". . . son oeuvre brossé à grand coups de pastel, enlevée souvent d'abord comme une eau-forte, puis reprise sur l'épreuve, il arrivait avec des fonds d'aquarelle, balafrés de martelages furieux de couleurs, s'invitant, se cédant le pas ou se fondant à une intensité de vie furieuse, à un rendu d'impression inouï." (104) He adopts the modus operandi of the prototypical "peintre de la vie moderne" of Baudelaire's essay, fixing his gaze on women of the city, in particular its prostitutes or *lorettes*. "Mais il aimait peu les nudités, préférant les attitudes si joliment incorrectes des Parisiennes, s'attachant surtout à peindre des histrionnes d'amour, dans les lieux où elles foisonnent: bâillant, le soir, devant le bock d'un concert; en piste à la table

d'un café; en chasse sur l'asphaltela trogne en l'air, par jalousie ou par pochardise.”(105-106) This is analogous to the focus of the Japanese *ukiyo-e* artists on the milieu of the courtesans of Edo's Yoshiwara district.

The affinities between scenes in Huysmans' novels with specific works by Degas, Manet and Monet has been amply discussed by Trudgian, Zayed, Maingon and other critics. Moreover, it should be pointed out that these are precisely the painters whose oeuvre reflect the color and design strategies of the Japanese woodblock print, as demonstrated by Berger and Wichmann. Huysmans' bond with *japonisme* may best be explored in terms of the close relationship between his prose writing and the visual arts of the same period. A close reading of Les Soeurs Vatard will reveal instances in which the lessons of *japonisme* that Huysmans observes in Impressionist painting are illustrated in his prose. To reiterate Huysmans' statements in L'Art Moderne , the main areas in which a Japanese influence is noted are a) in the use of oblique perspective in off-center compositions, entailing the cropping of foreground elements; b) the placing of closely juxtaposed patches(*taches*) of color to create surface patterns of light and shadow; and c) the adoption of a sinuous, calligraphic line to suggest naturalistic movement in humans and animals.

The Vatard apartment itself illustrates the oblique perspective or ‘plunging view’ characteristic of Japanese prints, employed by Degas and other Impressionist painters. The room of the two sisters offers a partial panorama of the activities of the railway yard below, a view of harsh geometric shapes of machines and utilitarian iron architecture, distorted by the atmospheric clouds of smoke of the locomotives. “. . .la ligne était coupée par un pont suspendu et grillagé à hauteur d’homme, et au-dessus un passage à niveau s’ouvrait pour les voitures, surmonté d’une tour en bois agrée d’horloges.” (77)

Nature itself intrudes on this man-made landscape, in the form of the full moon. “. . .et les lunes jaunes des cadrans de l’embarcadère et du pont s’élevaient plus haut, dominées encore par le disque étincelant de la lune, qui émergeant des nues comme d’un lac d’eau sombre, poudra, de sa limaille d’argent, tout le champ des manoeuvres.”(84) In relation to *japonisme* it should be pointed out that the theme of the full moon occurs in countless prints by Hiroshige and others.(fig. 89) This link is reinforced by Huysmans’ reference to a ‘powdering of silver.’ Fine Japanese prints were often enhanced by a sprinkling of metallic particles which imparted a certain glow to the colors of the inks, a feature that fades or oxidizes with age.

Perhaps the most blatant illustration of Huysmans' use of an eccentric viewpoint analogous to that used by Japanese-influenced painters is the theatre scene in Chapter 19. Cyprien and Céline, unable to find better seats, are obliged to sit in the front row, craning their necks forward 'le nez sur l'orchestre,' observing the actors from a vantage point that distorts their vision. Huysmans' scenes of the theatre evoke Degas' merciless portraits of open-mouthed female café-singers and his partial views of performances from the standpoint of an audience member close to the orchestra pit. Huysmans anticipates Henri de Toulouse Lautrec's caricatural studies of notorious cabaret artists of the 1880's such as La Goulue and Aristide Bruant which art historians relate to *ukiyo-e* prints of Kabuki actors by Sharaku. "De loin. . .sa bouche, grande ouverte, quand elle hurlait le dernier vers du refrain, béait comme un trou noir."(90)

As seen in La Fille Elisa and in Au bonheur des dames, the Naturalist writers' painterly emphasis on fragmentary effects of light, with gratuitous artistic rendering of highlights and shadow may be understood as a form of implicit *japonisme*. Huysmans' fascination with transitory effects of light, color and their ceaselessly changing patterns may be observed throughout Les Soeurs Vatard. The essence of Japanese art--well-expressed in Monet's

famous quote--is the suggestion of the whole by means of a fragment or trace. As Goncourt observed in his Journal, unlike the Europeans, the Japanese artist does not seek to render nature in its entirety; the desired effect is achieved by only one or two elements.

L'attention et l'observation japonaises sont amusées par des évènements de la nature plus petits que ceux qui nous intéressent. . Pour que la campagne nous parle, nous tente à la reproduire, il faut qu'elle se montre à nous avec de grands aspects. . dramatisée par un orage, par un coucher ou un lever de soleil. . Je viens d'acheter une garde de sabre où, dans un ciel écorné par un quartier de lune d'argent, deux feuilles d'automne tombant à terre sont tout le motif de la ciselure. Ces deux feuilles, qui font tout le décor imaginé par l'artiste, feraient également tout le libretto d'un poème de là-bas. (October 31, 1876)^{xxxiii}

In Chapter 1 of Les Soeurs Vatard, the golden sunlight streaming into the dingy atelier is an element that exists as an animated force exerting a magical, transformative energy. Huysmans' remarks on the rendering of 'le vivant' in L'Art Moderne, in particular his admiration for Pissarro's "vibration de l'air" are evoked in this vivid description from the novel.

La lumière sauta, jaillit, éclaboussa, de plus larges gouttes, le plancher et les tables, alluma, d'un point tremblant, le col d'une carafe et la panse d'un seau, incendia, de sa braise rouge, le coeur d'une pivoine qui s'épanouit, frémissante, dans son pot d'eau trouble, creva enfin, en une large ondée d'or, sur les piles des papiers qui éclatèrent avec leur blancheur crue sur la suie des murs! (12)

The pairing of gold and crimson in this vivid passage is a further allusion to the classic hues associated with the Orient, a combination that also appears in Zola's Au bonheur des dames (1883).

In addition to natural light, Huysmans observes the lurid spectacle of the artificial illumination of the city, a sight which he felt should equally inspire the dedicated painter of modern life. In this excerpt the contours of the diverse hues dissolve, similar to the effect of a watercolor or oil sketch. “Là, dès la brume, des globes s’allument et s’échelonnent à la hauteur des premiers étages, et quatre lanternes rouges,...fardent de pourpre vive l’enduit éraillé des murs. Parfois, une autre flamboie, une enseigne de brasserie, représentant une énorme chope tenue par une main...une chope remplie de sang dès qu’on l’allume.” (88)

The author’s virtuosity as a practitioner of *l’écriture artiste* is revealed in his ability to capture the perpetual motion of his characters. Like Cyprien Tibaille, Huysmans seeks to arrest unrehearsed gesture that occurs spontaneously and without artifice, as when the subject “se traînait ou sautillait avec la tristesse ou la joie d’une bête lâchée sans qu’on la surveille.”(105) The writer admired the suggestion of movement in the stunningly bold calligraphic drawings of Hokusai and in those of western

artists such as Degas inspired by the Japanese example. In Les Soeurs Vatard Huysmans emulates these broad strokes in succinct descriptions that capture the primary lines of a female character at rest, as in this sketch of Céline in repose. “...lorsqu’elle...dormassait sur le divan, elle prenait des allures de haute grue qui se pâme... avec la dégringolade de ses cheveux paille sur le coussin, sa croupe tordue, une jambe jetée en l’air et l’autre pendante sur le bas du meuble.(106) The curved shapes created by the sleeping woman are akin to the arabesque form favored by the *ukiyo-e* artist in artful depictions of the draped female figure. (fig. 90)

It was Zola who first pointed out the relationship between the adaptation of the lessons of *ukiyo-e* by Manet in paintings such as his *Portrait of Zola*, and the development of abstraction. Subsequent art historians have shown that the broad, flat unmodulated areas of color of Japanese prints encouraged the development of the concept of the canvas as a flat surface covered with pigment, undermining the Renaissance tradition of the painterly illusion of three-dimensional space. In Certains, Huysmans describes Ingres, usually defined as a classicist, as an important precursor of modern art. The critic perceived Ingres’ indebted to Japanese and oriental art in his emphasis on calligraphic line and surface pattern and decoration.

“L’école impressioniste s’est souvenu de ce plaquage japonaise, de cette naïveté presque féroce des tons, de cette gaucherie imagière, voulue, de cette simplicité de primitif[in Ingres’ *Portrait of Madame de Vançay*] . . .

” .xxxiv

Like his esteemed modern painters Manet and Degas, with whom he shares a common enthusiasm for the art of Japan, Huysmans breaks up visible aspects of perceived visual phenomena into broad areas of color that are linked together in geometric configurations, overcoming the traditional emphasis on literal representation. As shown in *Les Soeurs Vatard*, Huysmans delights in forming surface patterns of color and light in passages extraneous to any plot development, constituting an ‘Art for Art’s Sake’ in literature. Huysmans’ literary abstractions inspired by *japonisme* parallel enigmatic works by Gustave Moreau, a painter he admired, who produced small-scale non-figurative oil sketches prefiguring abstraction as early as the 1870’s.^{xxxv} It should be pointed out that Moreau was the most influential teacher of the young Henri Matisse during his studies at the Ecole des Beaux Arts ca.1896-1899^{xxxvi}; they shared a love of the brightly-colored *ukiyo-e* print from Japan and other forms of nonwestern art.

**Evidence of Huysmans' *Japonisme* in the 1880's and beyond:
Japonisme in the context of Huysmans' personal aesthetic**

As evidenced by his comments in L'Art Moderne, Huysmans reveals a definite enthusiasm for the *ukiyo-e* woodblock print-- "ces merveilleuses feuilles du Japon"-- and its positive contribution to the development of modernism, in terms of composition, use of color and conception of Nature. In a preface for Belgian poet Théodore Hannon's Rimes de Joie (1881), Huysmans cited what he termed, ". . .les exquis albums d' Okou-Sai[sic], où sur la poulpe soyeuse du blond papier, un volcan rose, le Foushyama[sic] s'effile ainsi qu'une pointe de gorge dans un ciel de satin bleu pâle."^{xxxvii} This reference to the abstract, geometric qualities of one of the Japanese artist's most enduring images from *Thirty-Six views of Mount Fuji* series is certainly indicative of the author's esteem for the art of Japan. (see figs. 13-14)

Like his mentors Goncourt and Zola, Huysmans was an enthusiastic collector of decorative objets d'art and *bibelots*, with paintings and works on paper by contemporary artists. His 1876 account of a visit to the Palace of the Archbishop of Utrecht gives an indication of what types of object stimulated his aesthetic sense: " des cuirs de Cordoue, des faiences de Delft,

des buires dorées et de grands plats polychromes enguirlandés de Chinois et fleuris de rinceaux.^{xxxviii} While the modest income he earned as a civil servant at the Ministry of the Interior did not permit extravagant acquisitions, Huysmans' penetrating eye led him to seek porcelains, copper articles and other undervalued treasures in second-hand and antique shops throughout the capital, supplemented by gifts of work from artist friends such as Redon.

Unlike the auction catalogues of the Zola and Goncourt estates, there is no known inventory of Huysmans' eclectic holdings. The 1885 home interview conducted by journalist Jules Destrée provides some telling details about the decor of Huysmans' interior.

Des tentures d'Orient, un Raffaëlli, un Forain, un Redon[...], un portrait de Barbey et la grande eau-forte de Braquemond: Jules de Goncourt. . . .une très petite bibliothèque, avec tous les volumes reliés. De vieux bois sculptés aux murs. Dans la chambre à coucher, sur la cheminée, je reconnais le dragon japonais de En Ménage.^{xxxix} .

Similarly, Jules Huret's 1891 visit notes "les dessins de Redon, les gravures de Dürer et de Rembrandt, les aquarelles de Raffaëlli et de Forain, les vieilles reliures, les bois sculptés."^{xi}

The tastes in art and literature of *homme de lettres* André Jayant, protagonist of Huysmans' En Ménage (1880) do indeed seem to reflect

those of the author. The ceramic dragon referred to in Destrée's interview is a fixture in the fictional writer's study. The narrator of *En Ménage* describes the piece as "une extravagante chimère du Japon, cuirassée d'écailles rouges et vertes, la patte sur une boule, la langue retroussée, la queue en panache, les yeux en saillie, projetés comme au bout de pédoncules," a creature inspiring a horrified response by Jayant's estranged wife. ^{xli} (fig. 91)

Jayant independently creates an interior to suit his particular sense of beauty, surrounding himself with Impressionist paintings enhanced by the glowing enamel glaze of Japanese porcelains ". . .il avait enfin ordonné le tout de telle manière que que les formes et les couleurs se répondissent. . ." (132)

Du plafond au plancher, les murs disparaissaient sous un fouillis de porcelaines du Japon, au milieu duquel deux aquarelles impressionnistes étincelaient dans leurs barres d'or sur sur le fond bistré du papier de tenture: une vue des coulisses avec des danseuses en gaze rose, au repos. . .une vue de salon. . .avec des femmes excitantes et frivoles. . .le corsage grand ouvert, étayant de ses buscs cachés les touffes blanches des seins.(131-132)

These 'Impressionist watercolors' clearly paraphrase Degas' behind-the-scenes studies of ballet rehearsals and brothels in his prints and pastels.

In a telling detail that further illustrates Huysmans' penchant for japonaiserie, Jayant awaits a rendez-vous while contemplating the window display of a shop specializing in Japanese bric-a-brac. Comically, his gaze is returned, “. . .débusqué bientôt par une paire d'yeux [sic]qui ricanaiet derrière des magots [smiling seated Buddhas in porcelain] et des cabinets de fausse laque.” (232) Such a scene may well have been inspired by Huysmans' own peregrinations throughout the capital, compiling visual sensations for his novels while uncovering the occasional objet d'art.

In terms of personal statements, it is in Huysmans' strong relationship with Edmond de Goncourt that evidence of a common bond of *japonisme* may be traced. Huysmans' appreciative letter of thanks for the the two-volume La Maison d'un Artiste (1881) specifies, “...cet exquis et précieux art du Japon, démonté et expliqué, rendu visible, palpable, transmué en une égale orfèvrerie de mots, par une savante alchimie d'artiste. . .L'Art Japonais est fait maintenant. Okousai et Takeoka sont évoqués comme l'ont été jadis Watteau et Chardin et Gavarni...”^{xlii} Huysmans then expresses gratitude for the inclusion of his works in the inventory of the library of La Maison d'un Artiste, noting his debt to Goncourt's example. And in one of his last missives to the elder writer, Huysmans congratulates Goncourt for the publication of the first complete

French biography of Hokusai in 1896. “J’ai assez raffolé d’Okou-Saï pour avoir impatientement attendu des détails sur la vie de cet inconnu qu’on aime et ce m’a été une vraie joie de vous lire.”^{xliii}

In spite of this affinity with Goncourt’s *japonisme*, there exists an account in Torches et Lumignons, J.H. Rosny’s opinionated eye-witness account of the Naturalist movement, which contrasts with the statements in Huysmans’ correspondence. This off-hand remark may offer an indication of the author’s nuanced appreciation of the art of Japan. This undated exchange allegedly occurred during or after a gathering of the Grenier at Goncourt’s home in Auteuil, meetings inaugurated in February, 1885.

Il aimait dédaigneusement Goncourt. . . .L’admiration du vieil écrivain pour les Japonais lui faisait hausser l’épaule. Non qu’il niât le talent nippon, mais ce talent lui semblait mesquin devant celui des grands artistes moyenâgeux. Je me souviens de son rire acide, devant une japonnerie à laquelle Goncourt trouvait de ‘la grandeur.’ Il me disait: --De la grandeur! Une farce, une c... rie devant le beau moyen âge, le moyen âge qui vous prend aux entrailles.^{xliv}

Maingon, who cites this passage in his analysis of Huysmans’ aesthetic, points out that admiration for the arts of Japan and of the Middle Ages is not mutually exclusive but complementary. “Des Impressionistes aux Expressionistes, on se passionnera pour les estampes japonaises, dont le coloris et la facture rappellent les arts médiévaux du vitrail et de la

miniature. Leurs tons sans ombrages se rapprochent de couleurs pures de Fra Angelico.”^{xlv} Maingon’s analysis of this affinity paraphrases one of Matisse’s key statements from *The Path of Color* (1947).

Once my eye was unclogged, cleansed by the Japanese *crépons*^{xlvi}, I was capable of really absorbing the colours because of their emotive power. If I instinctively admired the [Italian] Primitives in the Louvre and then Oriental art. . .it’s because I found in them new confirmation. Persian miniatures. . .showed me all the possibilities of my sensations. I could find again in nature what they should be. By all its properties this art suggests a larger and truly plastic space. . .Thus my revelation came from the Orient.^{xlvii}

Both the art of Japan and that of the European Middle Ages represent cultural traditions that are antithetical to the tenets of classicism. One of the fundamentals of the Naturalist agenda as established by the Goncourts is precisely a rejection of classical symmetry and notions of an ‘Ideal’ form of beauty. In at least two Journal entries Goncourt establishes a parallel between Japanese and Gothic art for what he interprets as their direct inspiration from nature. “L’art chinois et l’art japonais. . .sont puisés à la nature même. . .Leur art copie la nature, comme l’art gothique” (Sept. 30, 1864).^{xlviii} In a curious entry of March 9, 1866, Goncourt finds evidence in wax models of the evolution of the human embryo of the kinship between Japanese art and the art of the Middle Ages. “. . .cette espèce de sangsue . . . est une vraie petite **chimère**, qu’on dirait taillée

dans du jade. Il y a de la fantaisie baroque de monstre dans cette tête grotesque et terrible. . .Voici à quelque mois, le corps de l'enfant à peu près tel qu'il va naître. C'est absolument un petit gothique. . ."^{xlix}

[emphasis added]

Assessment of Huysmans' *Japonisme* during his Naturalist period(1874-1884)

From the study of Le Drageoir à Epices, L'Art Moderne and Les Soeurs Vatard it may be concluded Huysmans accepts the heritage of orientalism and *japonisme* received from his Romantic and Naturalist predecessors while his innate skepticism prevented him from becoming an unconditional japanophile. This respectful enthusiasm for Japanese art sets him apart from the wild enthusiasm of first-wave *japonistes* of the 1860's, such as Goncourt, Duret, and Burty. For Huysmans *ukiyo-e* prints, especially those by Hokusai, have definite value and function as a fruitful source of inspiration for the progressive western artist. While he shared the fundamental *japoniste* point of view that the art of Nippon provided an instructive example of the fleeting beauty inherent in ordinary life, Japanese art for Huysmans was a means to an end but not an end in itself. In Huysmans' personal pantheon the summit of artistic creation is reserved principally for Rembrandt, Velasquez and other European painters

associated with genre scenes. There is actually no great contradiction in this estimation, as these are the Old Masters revered by fellow *japonistes* Goncourt, Zola, Manet and Mallarmé.

As far as is known from contemporary accounts, Huysmans was not a collector or promotor of *ukiyo-e* (or other manifestations of Japanese art) for its own sake. In his plain and orderly study the walls were lined with paintings and prints primarily from the Impressionist school. (fig. 92) Nonetheless, it is significant that the many-hued, fantastic *chimère*, the ceramic dragon from Japan, would find a cherished place in the author's more intimate surroundings. The *chimère*, a mythological creature from Greek legend, combines the bodies of the lion and goat with the tail of a dragon. In its figurative sense, a *chimère* refers to a fabulous dream or illusion, with no basis in reality. This Oriental-Western hybrid may well define the very function of Japanese art for Huysmans, as a key to the elusive dreams conjured by his artistic imagination, rendered in his masterful interpretation of the Goncourt's *écriture d'artiste*. In the symbolist phase initiated by A Rebourg(1884), Huysman's *japoniste*-inspired *chimères* would find an even greater flowering than during his years in the Naturalist circle.¹

Huysmans' fundamental belief in the dynamic interplay between modern literature and other forms of art--whether of Japanese or European origin-- is unequivocally expressed in an undated letter written after publication of A Rebours. The author contends, “. . .Je crois que les transpositions d'art dans un autre sont possibles. . .Je crois que la plume peut lutter avec le pinceau et même donner mieux, et je crois aussi que ces tentatives ont élargi la littérature actuelle.”ⁱⁱ

ⁱ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *L'Art Moderne* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1911), 101-102. (all subsequent references are to this edition).

ⁱⁱ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Certains* (Paris: Tresse & Stock, 1889; reprint London: Gregg International, 1970), 148; 213 (page citations are to the reprint edition). (all subsequent references are to this edition).

ⁱⁱⁱ George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man* (New York: Brentanos, 1907), 167-168.

^{iv} Pierre Cogny, *Joris-Karl Huysmans, de l'écriture à l'écriture* (Paris: Téqui, 1987), 56.

^v E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs* (Paris: Librairie Grund: 1976), 5: 686.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 4: 678.

^{vii} A. Meunier. [Joris-Karl Huysmans]. “*Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui*” no. 263(1885), quoted in Helen Trudgian, *L'Esthétique de Joris-Karl Huysmans* (Paris: Conard, 1934), 17, note 2.

^{viii} Fernande Zayed, *Joris-Karl Huysmans, Peintre de son Epoque* (Paris: Nizet, 1973), 547, note 1.

^{ix} Pierre Cogny, preface to Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Lettres inédites de Joris-Karl Huysmans à Emile Zola*, ed. Pierre Lambert (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1953), xiii.

^x Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Edmond de Goncourt* Ed. Pierre Lambert (Paris: Nizet, 1956), 47-50.

^{xi} Cogny, preface to *Lettres inédites de JKH à EZ*, xii.

- ^{xii} Ibid., xii; xvi.
- ^{xiii} Charles Maingon, *L'univers artistique de Joris-Karl Huysmans* (Paris: Nizet, 1977), 18.
- ^{xiv} quoted in Pierre Cogny, *Joris-Karl Huysmans, de l'écriture à l'écriture* (Paris: Téqui, 1987), 39.
- ^{xv} Ibid., 40.
- ^{xvi} Joris-Karl Huysmans, *A rebours; Le Drageoir aux Epices* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1975), 343. (all subsequent references are to this edition).
- ^{xvii} Cogny, *de l'écriture*, 22.
- ^{xviii} Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1991), 166-167.
- ^{xix} Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan, 1st edition, 1983, s.v. "Silk Route."
- ^{xx} Ibid., s.v. "Dutch Trade."
- ^{xxi} Réunion des Musées Nationaux, *Le Japonisme, exposition au Grand Palais* (Paris: Ministère de la Culture, 1988), 70.
- ^{xxii} Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991), 78, note 3.
- ^{xxiii} Théophile Gautier, *Emaux et Camées* (Paris: Librairie Grond, n.d.), 242.
- ^{xxiv} Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Certains*, 88.
- ^{xxv} Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Camille Lemonnier* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, Paris: Minard, 1957), 22, quoted in Zayed, 20, note 73.
- ^{xxvi} Zayed, 18-19.
- ^{xxvii} *Le Japonisme, exposition au Grand Palais*, 80-81, figs. 133 and 134.
- ^{xxviii} Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968), 632.
- ^{xxix} Emile Zola, *Le Roman Expérimental* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1971), 243.
- ^{xxx} Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Les Soeurs Vatard* (Paris: Editions de la Bohème, 1997), 146. (all subsequent references are to this edition).
- ^{xxxi} Pierre Cogny, *Le Huysmans Intime de Henry Céard et de Jean de Caldain*. (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1957), 138-140.
- ^{xxxii} Gustave Flaubert, Croisset, to Joris-Karl Huysmans, quoted in Trudgian, 72-73. He counters, "Pourquoi? Ni les giroflées ni les roses ne sont intéressantes en elle-mêmes, il n'y a d'intéressant que la manière de les peindre. Le Gange n'est pas plus poétique que la Bièvre, mais la Bièvre ne l'est pas plus que le Gange..."
- ^{xxxiii} Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire, texte intégral annoté par Robert Ricatte* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1989, 2: 713.
- ^{xxxiv} Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Certains*, 213.
- ^{xxxv} These abstractions may be viewed at the Musée Gustave-Moreau in Paris and are included in the catalogue *Gustave Moreau, Between Epic and Dream*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, June-August 1999.
- ^{xxxvi} Geneviève Lacambre, *Gustave Moreau, Maître Sorcier* (Paris: Gallimard/Réunion des musées nationaux, 1997), 88-89.
- ^{xxxvii} Joris-Karl Huysmans, preface to Théodore Hannon, *Rimes de Joie* (Brussels: Kistemaekers, 1881), quoted in his *Lettres inédites à Edmond de Goncourt*, 131.
- ^{xxxviii} Joris-Karl Huysmans, "En Hollande," *Musée des Deux Mondes*, February 15, 1877, quoted in Trudgian, 218.
- ^{xxxix} *Bulletin de Joris-Karl Huysmans*, no.16, 1937, 80-81, quoted in Zayed, 55-56.
- ^{xl} Daniel Oster, preface to Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Croquis de Paris et d'ailleurs* (Paris: Editions de Paris, 1996), 19.
- ^{xli} Joris-Karl Huysmans, *En Ménage! A Vau l'eau* (Paris: Union Générale des Editions, 1875), 253. (all subsequent references are to this edition).
- ^{xlii} Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à E. de Goncourt*, 67.
- ^{xliiii} Ibid., 130.
- ^{xliiv} J.-H. Rosny, *Torches et Lumignons, Souvenirs de la Vie Littéraire* (Paris: La Forcc Française, 1921), 57.
- ^{xli v} Maingon, 182.

^{xvi} This term is sometimes used to refer to Japanese prints; textured, grainy paper was used for poorer quality reproductions available for low prices in Europe during the late nineteenth century.

^{xvii} Jack Flam, *Matisse on Art* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 116.

^{xviii} Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal*, 1: 1103.

^{xix} *Ibid.*, 2: 12-13.

¹ see Pamela Genova, "Japonisme and Decadence, *Painting the Prose of A Rebours*," *Romantic Review* 88 (March 1997): 267-290.

ⁱⁱ Joris-Karl Huysmans, to Marcel Batilliat, Fonds Huysmans, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Collection Pierre Lambert, Paris, quoted in Zayed, 12-13.

CONCLUSION

CONTRIBUTION OF *JAPONISME* TO THE AESTHETIC OF THE NATURALIST NOVEL OF THE GONCOURTS, ZOLA AND HUYSMANS

“Or, la recherche du vrai en littérature, la résurrection de l’art du dix-huitième siècle, la victoire du *japonisme*: ce sont, sais-tu,--ajouta-t-il après un silence. . .--ce sont les trois grands mouvements littéraires et artistiques de la seconde moitié du dix-neuvième siècle...et nous les aurons menés, ces trois mouvements...nous pauvres obscurs. Eh bien! quand on a fait cela...c’est vraiment difficile de n’être pas *quelqu’un* dans l’avenir”
Et, ma foi, le promeneur mourant de l’allée du bois de Boulogne pourrait peut-être avoir raison.”[sic]

Edmond de Goncourt, from the preface to his novel *Chérie* (1884), recalling Jules de Goncourt’s assessment of their contribution.

Since their virtually simultaneous inception in the mid-1860’s, Naturalist literature and the ‘new painting’ of Manet and his circle have been inextricably linked by the participation of artists and writers sharing the bond of *japonisme*, the admiration for the diverse arts of Japan, principally the *ukiyo-e* woodblock print. Among the principal protagonists of the Naturalist movement in art and literature were the Goncourts, Zola and Huysmans. The term ‘Naturalist’ was employed in Zola’s art and literary criticism from 1866 to describe works inspired by the characteristics of actual life rather than in imitation of an imagined ideal.

Impressionist painting and Naturalist writing share an emphasis on the subjective sensation of the creator. Critic Jules Castagnary launched the 'Impressionist' label in an 1874 review of their group show in these terms: "They are impressionists in the sense that they render not a landscape but the sensation produced by a landscape."ⁱⁱⁱ A chapter of Richard's Littérature et Sensation analyzes the emphasis on this quality in the Goncourts' fiction and art criticismⁱⁱⁱ; indeed a heightened sensitivity to visual, auditory, olfactory and tactile stimuli is a hallmark of the works of their Naturalist acolytes Zola and Huysmans.

A marvelous definition of Impressionism in literature was formulated by conservative literary critic Ferdinand Brunetière, in spite of his general disparagement of the works of the Goncourts and Zola. In the 1879 essay on Alphonse Daudet included in his anthology Le Roman Naturaliste (1893), Brunetière defined the literary Impressionist as one whose goal is to ". . .s'efforcer à **saisir l'insaisissable**, et dans une **impression fugitive** réussir à démêler une par une les impressions élémentaires qui concourent à former et produire l'impression totale."^{iv} [emphasis added] While the critic makes no reference to the art of the Orient, one may observe in his description a parallel to the spontaneity of expression and abbreviation of visual information characteristic of Chinese

and Japanese art. This was one of the salient features of the work of Hokusai and other masters of the *ukiyo-e* print that appealed to the Goncourts, Zola, Huysmans and other *japoniste* artists and writers in their search for a modern, 'Naturalist' aesthetic in their respective forms of expression.

Earl Miner's Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature (1958) contains a valuable introductory chapter "From *Japonisme* to Impressionism," in which he examines the significance of *japonisme* on the most creative minds in the arts, ca. 1856-1895. According to the author, "Japan and its culture may fairly be called one of the most important determinants of modern literature," as *Japonisme* "shaped or affected" the literary and artistic movements of Impressionism, Naturalism and Symbolism. The rich inspiration of Japanese art forms is reflected in what he describes as the flowering of the phenomenon of "pan-Impressionism. . . the intermingling of painting, poetry and music" characteristic of European culture in the final decades of the nineteenth century. ^v

Miner demonstrates how emulation of the arts of Japan contributed to the theory of the French Naturalist novel, which he differentiates according to the Goncourts' 'Impressionist' approach and Zola's 'scientific'

version. (It would be more accurate to point out the combination of visual and empirical concerns in Naturalism as a whole; the Goncourts considered themselves “des physiologistes et des poètes.”^{vi}) Miner states that the Goncourts and Zola adopted the “focus of the moment” which they had observed in Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints. These Naturalist *chefs d'école* felt that “the disorder and shapelessness of life requires an expressive form like the casual disarrangement of composition which they saw in the Japanese print.”^{vii} Huysmans should be included as an adherent of this Naturalist emphasis on the chaotic immediacy of quotidien existence.

Miner thus singles out the apparent randomness of compositional elements observed in the *ukiyo-e* print as a model for the *japoniste* aesthetic of the Naturalist novel. One might expand the source of inspiration to include multi-panelled Japanese painted screens and handscrolls which appear to distort elements of time and space. By convention, these formats of Japanese art are intended to be ‘read’ from right to left as a suite of contiguous visual snapshots viewed from an oblique, overhead perspective. However, the untrained western eye unfamiliar with the art of Japan may easily apprehend the linked episodes illustrated on handscrolls and screens as occurring simultaneously rather than in sequence. Thus, perception and

misperception of Japanese visual systems may have played a role in shaping the *japoniste* aesthetic.

It will be recalled that critics who were contemporaries of the Impressionists invariably cited the paramount lesson of pure color received by these French artists from their appreciation of *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. This key point was reiterated by Zola in his supportive criticism of Manet, Monet, Renoir, Pissarro and other exponents of the new painting. Likewise, the gratuitous delight in the ever-changing spectacle of color and light occurring in Nature and in the urban environment, completely incidental to concerns of plot, is a defining characteristic of Naturalist literature. Variations on the Goncourt's *écriture artiste* developed in Manette Salomon and La Fille Elisa are frequently encountered in works of Zola and Huysmans as demonstrated in Au Bonheur des dames, Une page d'amour and Les Soeurs Vatard.

In his preface to an 1880 show of works by Monet, the *japoniste* critic Théodore Duret (friend of Zola and Manet) states that prior to the advent of *ukiyo-e*, a lightening of the palette had been pioneered by the Romantic painter Delacroix.

...L'apparition au milieu de nous des albums et des images japonais a achevé la transformation, en nous initiant à un système de coloration

absolument nouveau. . .Les Japonais. . .n'ont point vu la nature en deuil et dans l'ombre; elle leur est, au contraire, apparue colorée et pleine de clarté, leur oeil a surtout discerné la coloration des choses, et ils ont su harmoniser côte à côte, sur la soie ou le papier, sans atténuation, les tons les plus tranchés et les plus variés, que les objets aperçus dans la scène naturelle leur donnaient.^{viii}

Other perceptive commentators such as Ernest Chesneau were able to discern the Japanese contribution to modern painting in broader terms. In a review of the 1878 Exposition Universelle, Chesneau astutely pointed out unusual compositional devices and a new approach to subject matter amongst the notable consequences of the vogue for *japonisme*.

Tissot, des hardiesses et même des étrangetés de composition; M. Whistler, ses exquises finesses de coloration; M. Manet, ses franchises de tâches et l'esprit de forme curieuse comme en ses eaux-fortes. . .M. Monet, la sommaire suppression du détail au profit de l'impression d'ensemble; M. Astruc. . .le caprice ingénieux de ses premiers plans. . .M. Degas, la fantaisie réaliste de ses groupes, l'effet piquant de ses dispositions de lumière en ses étonnantes scènes de café-concerts; M. Michetti, le silhouette élégant de ses figurines sur fonds monochromes; tous plus de lumière.^{ix}

One may contrast Duret and Chesneau's fascinating observations with the analysis of René Huyghe. In a preface to an authoritative tome on Impressionism published in 1971, the art historian analyses the decisive encounter between Oriental art and the formulation of French painting in the mid-nineteenth century. For Huyghe the lesson of the Orient is signaled not merely by palette, composition or subject matter but by a decisive shift

in the fundamental relation of the artist to the surrounding world. His analysis of the Impressionists applies remarkably well to the fiction of allied Naturalist writers whose explorations paralleled those of the visual arts.

Whereas the Western scheme postulated a central observer planted in the face of nature, a demiurge who arranged his canvas according to a regular scheme which he himself related to a geometrical vision of reality, the Japanese, quite the contrary, felt himself immersed in a chaos in which he was but an infinitesimal part. He was neither the measure nor the anchoring point of the world. He constructed the world freely, the vanishing lines receding in all directions by no means submitting to the anthropocentric point of view cherished by the West since the Renaissance. . . .

Here we discover the Impressionists. Not that they copied Japanese art but they recognized in it the feeling which inspired them. For these painters, who no longer believed in the strong certainties followed by their ancestors, who noted the infinite complexity of a universe in which man is but an accident, it was a strange encouragement to discover huge zones of ancient cultures--the Chinese and Japanese civilizations--in which the principles which their Western culture believed to be the truth of mankind, the most faithful and objective appearance to reality, were utterly neglected. They realized that Alberti's monocular perspective was but one system among others associated with a certain moment of European thought. For the painter it was a question now of leaving this realm.^x [emphasis added]

For Huyghe, the importance of Oriental art for Impressionist painting is defined in spatial terms: the rupture of the continuity of the Renaissance convention of human-centered perspective. Admiration for Chinese-style painting and the Japanese print confirmed that the canon of ideal beauty formulated in ancient Greece was not universally applicable.

European art, now viewed as one system amongst many, could no longer be perceived as the pinnacle achieved after a long process of evolution.

The modern artist of the nineteenth century, forgoing the certainty of an ordered, human-centered universe, expressed this sense of dislocation through the innovative, imaginative interpretation of space, in the predilection for off-center compositions, and the adoption of eccentric viewpoints utilizing the birds'-eye or 'plunging view' characteristic of oriental art. The end result is a fragmentation of the integrity of subject matter often observed in the works of Degas.

A splendid example of the application of the underlying principle of oriental painting as defined by Huyghe to a shift of perspective in a literary context occurs in the Goncourts' Manette Salomon (1867), which introduced *japonisme* to Naturalist fiction. By the closing chapter the protagonist Coriolis and his mistress Manette have become peripheral figures. The authors' focus has completely shifted to the lush, artificial landscape of birds and flowers of the *Jardin des Plantes* which has effectively absorbed the atomized being of the bohemian Anatole into its primeval rhythms. Similarly, in Zola's Une page d'amour (1878), the poetic renderings of the panoramic perspectives of the Parisian cityscape,

varying according to time of day and season, are superfluous to concerns of plot. Such sweeping aerial perspectives, a feature of *ukiyo-e* prints by Hiroshige, are incorporated into the Impressionist paintings of Zola's colleagues Monet and Pissarro.

The *mise en question* of Renaissance precepts of illusionist painting in art was accompanied by a concurrent phenomenon in literature regarding the concept of time. As Georges Poulet explains in his *Etudes sur le temps humain* (1952), the positivism of the first half of the nineteenth century had bred a rational approach to this construct. However, during the post-Romantic period, there arose a perception of the lack of coherence and discontinuity of time, as writers such as Baudelaire and Nerval intuited what the critic defines as “le crépuscule du dieu-univers et du dieu-homme.”^{xi} Poulet discerns this dislocation of the notion of time most clearly in the fiction of Zola, the Goncourts and de Maupassant, and in the poetry of Mallarmé.

[Dans]. . . le temps des parnassiens et des naturalistes. Un monde des causes et d'effets devient un monde illusoire, un monde qui se dissipe, comme le brouillard, en lambeaux de duré, dont certains, plus hallucinatoires, survivent un peu plus longtemps que d'autres. Combien fréquemment le roman naturaliste ne décrit-il pas le phénomène de dissolution des images dans une conscience. . . [dans *La Fille Elisa*]. . . 'jour par jour, des morceaux de son existence d'autrefois s'enfonçaient dans des pans de nuit, et son passé tout entier, comme amputé et détaché de la prisonnière, s'en allait et se perdait dans les espaces vides.'

Aussi le siècle qui s'achève se détourne-t-il avec horreur de la durée, et l'époque qui voit apparaître le premier livre de Bergson, est-elle néanmoins celle qui ne veut voir partout que des défaillances des choses à durer et à être, et qui ne prétend trouver, au travers et au moyen de ces défaillances, qu'une image inexprimable, l'image sans image d'une perfection sans être et sans durée. Créer 'la notion d'un objet, échappant, qui fait défaut' souhaite Mallarmé.^{xii}

This sense of uncertainty regarding the ordered perception of space and time by French Impressionists and Naturalist writers is compatible with the basic precepts of Taoism and Shintoism, philosophies indigenous to China and Japan which interpret the universe as the unknowable realm of chaotic, opposing forces. As we discover from Flaubert's correspondence, the Goncourt Journal and other primary sources, nineteenth century intellectuals eager to expand their knowledge of the Orient were able to study Eastern religious and philosophical texts in translation. As Huyghe explains in his Sens et Destin de l'Art, the Impressionist epoch may be defined by the adoption of an oriental mode of thought by French artists [and associated writers] searching to renew their creativity and means of expression.

L'Occident dépasse alors ses contradictions internes, il semble aspirer à une nouvelle connaissance de la vie et du Réel qui déborde de toutes parts ses idées accoutumées. Et, preuve singulière de cette mue, il se rapproche, mais non plus par une curiosité superficielle et 'exotique' de l'Orient, de son art comme de sa pensée, qui soudain lui apparaissent assimilables et imitables par lui. **L'impressionnisme, de son promoteur, Manet, à ses caudataires, comme Gauguin ou Van Gogh, s'ouvre, d'une aspiration**

irrésistible, aux civilisations les plus étrangères à nos usages, les plus lointaines dans l'espace et dans l'esprit, de Tahiti au Japon. ^{xiii} [emphasis added]

From the 1860's to the turn of the twentieth century, Goncourt, Zola, Huysmans and other avid *japonistes* were gradually discovering diverse aspects of the vast panoply of Japan's visual and literary cultures. As in the case of the Impressionists, the Naturalist writers were able to transcend a superficial exoticism to achieve a real assimilation of the underlying aesthetic of the art of Japan. By frequenting shops offering art objects imported from the Orient, attending meetings of the Jing Lar Society, viewing the elaborate Japan pavilions at the Expositions Universelles and the exhibitions of important collections, the *japonistes* were able to amass a considerable documentation on Japanese culture. Additional sources included Japanese nationals residing in Paris (notably the dealer Tadamasa Hayashi), first-hand accounts by recent European visitors, translations from Japanese texts and documentary photographs such as those by Felice Beato, available from about 1864. (fig. 93) From 1888 to 1891, Bing's *Le Japon Artistique*, a periodical published in French, German and English, provided full-color reproductions of works of art with scholarly articles on prints, ceramics, theater and other topics.

Among the expressions of Japanese culture known and appreciated by the French Naturalists were ink painting and calligraphy, haiku poetry, the tea ceremony, flower arranging and garden design. These 'typical' art forms are all imbued with the spirit of Zen Buddhism, a philosophy erasing the boundaries between art and life in which transitory elements of the ordinary are elevated to the transcendent level of Art. Zen has been called "a practice that transforms one's relationships to the world,"^{xiv} and indeed contact with Japanese culture seems to have had precisely this effect upon the creative imagination of the Naturalist authors.

Zen may be inspired by the ancient ideals of Taoism, exemplified in the statement attributed to founder Lao-T'zu (ca. 4th century BC), "The principle of Taoism is spontaneity."^{xv} The contemplative tradition of Zen Buddhism originated in sixth century China as Chan, a movement led by the rebel Indian monk Bodhidharma. (In Japan he is referred to as Daruma.) Opposing the dogma of the entrenched Buddhist infrastructure, Zen teaches that enlightenment [*satori*] is open to all through meditation centering on an embrace of the experience of the 'here and now.' Zen took root in Japan in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with the establishment of Zen monasteries by Chinese monks and the training of Japanese acolytes in China. It became the most influential philosophy shaping the warrior

culture of the Muromachi period (1333-1568), exemplified in monochrome ink painting and the tea ceremony.

The influential Zen monk painters of Song dynasty China (960-1279) challenged the prevailing style of “detailed, well-proportioned and brightly colored painting” with their “impressionistic paintings of the mind, monochromatic representations of the essence, rather than the form of things. . .”^{xvi} Zen stresses abbreviation rather than elaboration. “According to Zen, the work of art itself should not be a complete whole; it must arouse the desire of the beholder to complete it in his own imagination.”^{xvii} (figs. 94-95) Zen followers in Japan were adept at producing rapidly brushed, caricatural portraits of the eccentric Daruma and other leading adherents of their sect.

In the syncretic universe of Japanese art diverse schools have flourished concurrently over the centuries. The traditional elements of Chinese painting and monochrome landscape painting inspired by Zen masters have co-existed with colorful decorative native styles [*yamato-e*] based on naturalistic observation of seasonal flora and fauna. In the history of Japanese art the Zen priest Sesshû Tôyô (1420-1506) is considered one

of the greatest exponents of landscape painting for his distinctive interpretation of Chinese models of the Song dynasty. (fig. 96)

The Way of Tea (*chanoyu*), promoting the ideals of “harmony, respect, purity and tranquillity” was practiced in Japan from the thirteenth century. ^{xviii} Legendary tea master Sen no Rikyû (1521-1591) emphasized the ideal of beauty in simplicity in his Zen version of the tea ceremony developed for the dictator Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598). In Rikyû’s interpretation, sensory input is reduced to a minimum: host and guests are isolated in a small, stark hut enhanced only by a hanging scroll and simple flower arrangement evoking the season. The principle is to approach transcendence through concentration on the visual and auditory sensations highlighted by the ritual brewing and partaking of the symbolic beverage. The bitter green libation is served in rough-hewn, hand-formed bowls revealing natural faults inherent in the process of their creation from the elements of earth and fire. Rikyû’s tea ceremony format epitomizes the Japanese concept of *wabi*, the appreciation of beauty resulting from deliberate austerity.

In the Book of Tea (1906), Okakura Kakuzo’s introductory text to Japanese aesthetics for westerners, the tea ceremony is defined as “a cult

founded on the adoration of the beautiful among the sordid facts of everyday existence.”^{xix} A modern scholar notes that the Japanese tea masters “looked for true taste and deep beauty in the ostensibly distasteful, such as ‘a bayside hovel in the autumn dusk,’ in ‘a sprig of grass amid the snow in a mountain village,’ and in the destitute and undesirable.”^{xx} In these manifestation of the ideal of *wabi* permeating this and other quintessential Japanese art forms, the observant reader may find a remarkable analogy with the intentions of French Naturalist writers who were passionate *japonistes*.

As in the Zen-influenced arts of Japan, the Goncourts, Zola and Huysmans sought to create a new aesthetic standard in their deliberate focus on overlooked aspects of the unadorned, banal or even ‘sordid’ aspects of contemporary existence. The Naturalist writer deliberately highlighted plebeian settings devoid of the superficial patina of ‘beauty’ as it was defined by the standards of the French bourgeoisie. The Naturalist milieu is exemplified by the tumultuous artist’s ateliers of the Goncourts’ Manette Salomon, the women’s penitentiary and *maisons de tolérance* of La Fille Elisa, Zola’s exploration of the underside of ‘respectable’ middle-class life and *le haut commerce* in Une page d’amour and Au bonheur des dames and

the insalubrious workshop and raucous entertainments featured in Huysmans' Les Soeurs Vatard.

With his usual eloquence Goncourt expresses the Naturalists' deliberate elevation of the prosaic as a sine qua non of beauty, the Zen-like 'adoration of the beautiful among the sordid facts of everyday existence,' in a passage from the Journal.

La composition, la fabulation, l'écriture d'un roman, belle affaire! Le dur, le pénible, c'est le métier d'agent de police et du mouchard qu'il faut faire pour ramasser--et cela, la plupart du temps, dans des milieux répugnants--la vérité vraie, avec laquelle se compose l'histoire contemporaine.

Mais pourquoi, me dira-t-on, choisir ces milieux? Parce que c'est dans le bas qu'au milieu de l'effacement d'une civilisation se conserve la caractère des choses, des personnes, de la langue, de tout, et qu'un peintre a mille fois plus de chances de faire une oeuvre ayant du style d'une fille crottée de la rue Saint-Honoré que d'une lorette de Bréda. . .(December 3, 1871)^{xxi}

The aspect of Japanese culture most familiar to the Naturalist *japonistes* was of course the color woodblock print known as *ukiyo-e* , available in France from about 1850 and widely known from the mid-1860's. This popular form of graphic art represents a distant manifestation of Japan's 'higher' forms of painting based on Chinese models. (Hokusai's representations of figures from Chinese religion and mythology and Hiroshige's revival of traditional birds and flowers iconography in the 1830's provide links with these antecedents.) *Ukiyo-e* woodblock prints,

produced in full color from about 1765, may nonetheless be considered a characteristic art form of Nippon as they express “the traditional Japanese aesthetic preference for bright and solid colors, for two-dimensional patterns, for asymmetrical compositions, for ingenious combinations of materials, and for a spirit of spontaneity and ease in execution.”^{xxii}

It will be recalled that ‘*ukiyo*’ was originally a Buddhist concept referring to the illusory and transient world on this earth as opposed to the eternal world of the spirit. The term *ukiyo* gained its secular connotation, later applied to the world of the woodblock prints, with publication of poet Asai Ryoi’s *Ukiyo monogatari* (Tales of the Floating World) in 1661, in which the ineffable spirit of *ukiyo* was interpreted as a fatalistic philosophy of existence. “Living only for the moment. . .the pleasures of the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms. . ., singing songs, drinking wine, diverting ourselves in just floating, floating. . . like the gourd with the river current; this is what we call the floating world.”^{xxiii} This hedonistic attitude was adopted by the prosperous merchant class of Edo, main patrons of the theaters, tea houses and brothels of Edo’s licensed quarter, the Yoshiwara. (According to the feudal social order merchants were lowest in social status; samurai, farmers and artisans were superior in rank.)

The term *ukiyo-e* refers to the widely disseminated, cheaply-produced 'pictures' or color woodblock prints of the floating world of transient, materialistic pleasures. (There also exists finely crafted *ukiyo-e* paintings on silk and *ukiyo-e* screens of various genre subjects from as early as the seventeenth century.) *Ukiyo-e* prints were ephemeral sheets designed by the artist, produced by artisan woodcarvers and printers, and distributed by the publisher. They provided an illustrative gazette, informing an eager public about the latest fashions and events in Edo's demi-monde: the most exclusive courtesans, the current stars of the Kabuki stage, the sumo wrestling champions and other popular entertainments. By about 1820, *ukiyo-e*'s subject matter had expanded to include vistas of famed natural sites such as Mount Fuji, and typical scenes along the pilgrimage route between Edo and the former imperial capital of Kyoto. Such a great quantity of *ukiyo-e* prints were exported from Japan during the nineteenth century vogue for *Japonisme* that original works by the acknowledged masters Utamaro, Hokusai and Hiroshige eventually became a rarity in their native land. With the re-evaluation of the role of *ukiyo-e* in the history of Impressionist art in the twentieth century, *ukiyo-e* gained respectability in the eyes of the Japanese. The Vever collection, incorporating many prints originally owned by the Goncourts, was acquired by the Tokyo National Museum in 1920.

Enthusiastic admirers of *ukiyo-e* among French *japonistes* would not become fully aware of the rich heritage of the Japanese art until the historic exhibition of treasures of painting, sculpture and applied arts presented by Edmond de Goncourt's friend Tadamasa Hayashi at the Japanese section of the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. As their knowledge of the actual evolution of Japanese art was fragmentary, the importance of *ukiyo-e* prints as models of the Japanese sensibility tended to be exaggerated. Most *japonistes* were unaware that *ukiyo-e* was by no means a pure product of Japanese expression. In fact, as a result of trade with the Dutch from the mid-seventeenth century, Japanese artists had obtained European etchings and prints employing three-point perspective and shading. Hokusai, Hiroshige and others experimented with these foreign devices by producing copies or by incorporating their own interpretations of these effects into their woodblock prints. (fig. 97) It is this experimental, syncretic quality of *ukiyo-e* that may have increased its appeal in the eyes of French artists and art critics such as Manet and Zola.

In his native land Hokusai (1760-1849) was known merely as a prolific illustrator who scribbled under a variety of pseudonyms to avoid his omnipresent creditors, dying in relative obscurity. In France however

this exponent of *ukiyo-e* had been declared one of the greatest and most influential artists of all times. The astonishing popularity of Hokusai's printed works in Naturalist/*japoniste* circles was due to an appreciation of the energy of his virtuoso drawing techniques, his life-like depictions of humankind and animals in motion, and the often-cited 'truthfulness' of his delightful quick sketches of fleeting moments of ordinary life. This prolific draftsman became synonymous with the naturalistic genius of Japanese art. Hokusai's authorship of the well-circulated *Manga* assured a lasting fame in France, culminating in the publication of Goncourt's monograph in 1896.

An excerpt from Duret's chapter lauding Hokusai in Les Peintres Impressionnistes (1878), reprinted in Critique de l'Avant-Garde (1885), indicates the level of esteem Hokusai's art inspired.

Le plus grand artiste que le Japon ait produit. . .sa main semble avoir été toujours prête à tracer, du premier jet, les lignes qui devaient donner forme et vie aux inventions de son inépuisable fantaisie. Il a le don si rare de mettre sur le papier des personnages pleins de vie, avec lesquels on entre en communication, et qui, à la longue, vous restent dans le souvenir, aussi réels que si on les eut connus vivants. Le peuple sorti de son pinceau est doué d'un inépuisable humour; le comique et la gaiété, ces choses essentiellement japonais, s'épanouissent et débordent en lui.. Hokousai a comme paysagiste, la même supériorité que comme dessinateur de figures. Ses paysages, mélange d'observation réelle, de la nature et de fantaisie, sont pleins de poésie, d'air et de profondeur. ^{xxiv}

The prodigious Hokusai thus epitomized the genius of Japanese art, which in its entirety became synonymous in the eyes of the *japoniste* Naturalists and Impressionists with the effects they aspired to achieve in literature and painting.

The Goncourt Journal is a testament to the boundless admiration of Jules and Edmond for what they believed was a supreme form of beauty; their home at Auteuil was a showcase for fine examples of Japanese art in all media. Edmond reveals the importance of the inspiration he received from the visual stimulus of the finely-wrought decorative arts of Nippon in the Journal entry for February 15, 1879.

Maintenant, quand j'écris un morceau, un morceau de style, j'ai besoin avant de l'écrire de m'entraîner, de me monter le coup, en regardant des matières d'art colorées, et surtout des broderies japonaises. Mais une fois cette espèce de grisurie cérébrale obtenue, il me faut éviter la vue de ces choses tout le temps que j'écris: alors, ça me distrait, ça me dérange. ^{xxv}

In a similar vein, Huysmans' review of a volume of poetry by Théodore Hannon in *La République des Lettres*, February 18, 1877 compares the finesse of its poetic style with the intricately-carved ivories produced by Japanese artisans. "Esprit précieux, contourné, alambiqué parfois. . . ce poète. . . est, à coup sûr, l'un des plus étourdissants coloristes que je connaisse! On dirait de ses sonnets des bouquets de pierreries dont les pieds

tremperaient dans des vasques d'ivoire ciselées jusqu'à outrance par un artiste du Japon." ^{xxvi}

The remarkable enthusiasm of Naturalists and Impressionists for the craftsmanship of Japanese decorative art and for *ukiyo-e* artists such as Hokusai was based in large part on admiration for insightful depictions of the colorful denizens of Edo: Kabuki actors, courtesans, geisha, sumo wrestlers and other subjects from daily life. This interest coincides with the growth in appreciation of the patrimony of European genre painting. The Spanish school had been well-represented in the Louvre since the creation of its *Musée espagnol* in 1838. Manet's fascination with motifs from Velasquez and the chiaroscuro technique of the Spanish painter is manifested in the artist's innovative graphics and oils of the early 1860's, and in his 1867 *Portrait of Zola*.

The donation of the La Caze Collection to the Louvre in 1869 incalculably enriched France's premier museum with outstanding genre pictures by Watteau, Fragonard, Chardin, Rubens, Rembrandt, Teniers, Murillo, Velasquez, Ribera, Greuze, Boucher, Nattier et al. ^{xxvii} The critical re-evaluation of French eighteenth century painters advocated by the Goncourts received an impetus from the concentration of so many

outstanding examples. The La Caze Collection profoundly influenced the aesthetic formation of the artists and writers and critics who grouped themselves under the Naturalist banner. Zola's early admiration for Greuze was reinforced by visits to the Louvre. Huysmans is known to have visited this section of the museum assiduously, drawn to the Dutch and Flemish scenes which he refers to in the vignettes of Le Drageoir à épices and which resurface in subsequent works.^{xxviii} The Naturalist conception of Velasquez, Rembrandt and Rubens as the foremost painters of genius, a guiding principle of the Goncourts, Zola and Huysmans, is certainly attributable to the impact of the La Caze donation.

Huysmans describes the fundamental Naturalist belief in a unified aesthetic for art and literature based on genre painting in his polemical essay "Emile Zola et L'Assommoir" which appeared in *L'Actualité de Bruxelles* in 1876. "Nous [les naturalistes] admirons indistinctement Ribéra et Watteau puisque tous les deux ont du style, parce que tous les deux ont fait vivant! . . . Nous ne renversons pas les prétendus chefs-d'oeuvre dont on nous rassasie jusqu'à la nausée, nous ne brisons pas les torses célèbres, nous passons simplement à côté d'eux, nous allons à la rue, à la rue vivante et grouillante, aux chambres d'hôtel aussi bien qu'aux palais."^{xxix}

The bond between European genre painting and *japonisme* in the composition of Naturalism is clarified in Goncourt's often-cited excerpt from the preface to the novel Chérie concerning the decisive role he and his brother Jules played in the development of modern aesthetics. (Quotation in French at the head of this chapter). Citing the 'the victory of *japonisme*' after 'the search for truthfulness in literature' and 'the resurrection of the art of the eighteenth century' as 'the three great literary and artistic movements of the second half of the nineteenth century,' Goncourt establishes an analogic triad between Naturalist literature, genre scenes of the French eighteenth century (often depicting a feminine universe) and the enthusiastic emulation of the arts of Japan. For Goncourt, appreciation for Watteau and other rococo masters of the *grand siècle* (fig. 98) seems to serve as a prerequisite for the incorporation of the Japanese version of genre art as the basis of the Naturalist credo.

Indeed it may be said that *ukiyo-e* (and Japanese art in general) was adopted by the Naturalists as a rococo model for the nineteenth century, for its characteristic qualities of asymmetry, profusion of rich chromatic hues and texture, emphasis on sensation above structure and the adoption of inventive, multiple points of view. Manifestations of *japonisme* in Naturalist literature are analogous to these anti-classical qualities, and are

comparable to the influence of oriental art on the evolution of Impressionist painting. These would encompass the depiction of prosaic aspects of quotidien existence often focusing on female characters, while at the same time suggesting the pantheistic integration of humankind within universal cycles of existence. Like Manet and the Impressionist painters, the Goncourts, Zola and Huysmans responded individually to the *japoniste* stimulus and as authors employed these elements according to their distinct temperaments.

Japonisme's contribution to the aesthetic of the French Naturalist novel was primarily as an *ouverture* to the reception and adoption of a 'foreign' visual system, and its incorporation into a French context. The splendidly diverse manifestations of Japanese art and the sublime creations of its artists and artisans--embroidered silks, meticulous ivory carvings, finely-patinated bronzes, lustrous gold-flecked lacquers, sumptuous porcelains, monochromatic ink paintings and polychrome *ukiyo-e* prints--were cherished as evidence of a civilization capable of rivaling, if not surpassing, western canons of beauty. As Naturalist writers who advocated the adoption of Far Eastern culture and philosophy in a French context, the Goncourts, Zola and Huysmans served as "cultural intermediaries" between East and West. The Naturalist penchant for *Japonisme* broke the hold of

euro-centrism, fostering the humanist belief that art may be created with elements of cultures disparate in time, space and ideology, a credo which has become a hallmark of modernism in the twentieth century.

In an 1898 article on “*L’Art Japonais et son Influence sur le Goût Européen*” Louis Gonse reflects on this phenomenon of cross-cultural enrichment. “L’art japonais produit sur ceux qui tiennent commerce avec lui cet effet assez particulier. . . c’est qu’il ouvre le goût à l’éclectisme. . . je suis forcé de reconnaître que la culte de l’art japonais m’a ouvert des horizons nouveaux sur l’esthétique européenne, et plus j’ai pratiqué l’art du Japon, mieux j’ai compris les grandes et belles oeuvres de nos artistes. . . l’art japonais affine le goût parce que lui-même est extrêmement fin et raffiné.”^{xxx}

Unlike their contemporaries Philippe Sichel, Henri Cernuschi, Théodore Duret and Emile Guimet, the Goncourts, Zola and Huysmans never traveled to the Orient. Although they experienced Japanese culture within a limited European context, this decisive encounter forever changed their ways of seeing and re-interpreting everyday realities in their fiction. As founders of Naturalism, the Goncourts established the precedent for perceiving Nature itself in the context of Japanese artistry, according to the

belief that the Japanese had a greater sensitivity to the plant and animal kingdoms. An amusing Journal entry of June 10, 1869 notes, “Un chat qui se frotte contre les épines d’un rosier: il aurait fallu là le pinceau d’un Japonais.”^{xxxii} Not long before his death, Jules explained his perception of Japanese art as a superior mirror of Nature (evidence of the superior sense of observation of the Japanese artist) to his brother. “Et longuement, il m’a fait remarquer la ressemblance qu’avaient sur l’allée les ombres portées des branches, des ramures, des petites feuilles naissantes avec un dessin d’album japonais, en même temps qu’il m’expliquaient le peu de ressemblance que cela avait avec un dessin français.”(April 18, 1870)^{xxxiii} This assimilation of this *japoniste* aesthetic is demonstrated in Zola’s comparison of the clarity of the Parisian winter horizon to the qualities of “une image japonaise” in Une page d’amour.

Japonisme provided a powerful stimulus to the literary imagination by encouraging novel ways of seeing and offering the example of the freedom to deviate from established patterns. However, *japonisme* by itself could not provide a magic orientalist ‘open-sesame’ to modernity. As in the field of painting, authentic *japonisme* entailed far more than the superficial incorporation of silk kimono, porcelain tea sets and other exotic trappings of *japonaiserie* into an otherwise conventional portrait. This lesson is clear

from the case of the artist Coriolis, ill-fated protagonist of Manette Salomon. Like the Goncourts, the painter received the message of *ukiyo-e* early in his career, and responded by assimilating its dazzling colors and emphasis on feminine subject matter into his own idiosyncratic genre scenes. Stimulated by a foreign art form that profoundly shaped his own experience of Nature, Coriolis worked according to his own inner vision, regardless of public and critical incomprehension of his quest. Similarly, Cyprien Tibaille, modern painter of Huysmans' Les Soeurs Vatard, eschews a literal interpretation of Japanese sources in favor of expressively-brushed canvases of the *filles* of the *quartiers populaires* who serve as his obsessive source of inspiration. This decision assures marginalization from superficial success in the annual Salon. In his art criticism of the Salons, Huysmans derides the painters who superficially incorporate fashionable *japonaiseries*, counterfeit versions of authentic modernity.

As evidenced in the art of the Impressionists who selectively adopted stylistic and compositional aspects of Japanese art, *japonisme* in the Naturalist novel is actively present in its implicit forms. *Japonisme* favored a climate of aesthetic experimentation in literature. It established a context for the heightened sensitivity to the existence of beauty amongst the most

quotidien circumstances and the emphasis on the fleeting qualities of everyday life. Contact with Japanese prints and other art forms seems to have inspired the adoption of unusual vantage points and spatial perspective (i.e. the birds'-eye view) and to have encouraged the abstract exploration of surface texture, pattern and color for its own sake. The poetic *écriture d'artiste* advocated by the Goncourts and emulated by Zola and Huysmans often resulted in the subversion of the classic linear approach to subject and plot in the novel.

Despite divergences in literary ideology and contentious differences in personality and temperament, Goncourt, Zola and Huysmans remained committed to individual interpretations of *japonisme* throughout their careers. Indeed, so pervasive was the belief in the special qualities of Japanese art and culture during the Naturalist period that Flaubert, ally of the group, incorporated it in his "Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues," part of the second volume of Bouvard et Pécuchet, left unfinished at his death in 1880. The entry "Japon" is defined conventionally and succinctly as, "Tout y est en porcelaine,"^{xxxiii} satirizing the tendency of the *japonistes* to idealize the object of their admiration.

Edmond de Goncourt's consistent espousal of the complementary arts of Japan and French rococo was recognized by his contemporaries as the cornerstone of the author's legacy to the development of the Naturalist aesthetic in literature and art. Goncourt's ceaseless *émerveillement* before the revelation of "cet art capiteux et hallucinatoire"^{xxxiv} provided an inexhaustible source of creativity, attested by countless Journal entries from 1851 to 1896, the meticulous inventory of his collections in La Maison d'un Artiste and the pioneering monographs on Hokusai and Utamaro which crowned his career.

Goncourt's concept of Japanese culture as an equal to western models provides the foundation of the art criticism of Zola and Huysmans, for whom Japanese art served as a standard of quality in their judgment of the integrity of modern French painting. These key authors of the French Naturalist circle shared the fundamental belief that the arts of Japan and the Orient were deserving of careful study and emulation, and that the spectrum of humanity's artistic patrimony would be incomplete without them. Zola's declaration of his acceptance of 'all forms of art that express life' in his early defense of Manet is a validation of the Naturalist belief in the importance of the contribution of Japan to world civilization.

For his relentless dedication to recognition of the genius of Japan in the eyes of his fellow *littérateurs* and compatriots, it is appropriate to laud the important role of the nineteenth century's most outspoken proponent of *japonisme*, Edmond de Goncourt.(fig. 99) In a reflection towards the end of his life upon the necessity of a broad-based education for the artist he concluded, “. . .je crois que ce goût de la beauté universelle est aussi le partage des vrais connaisseurs en littérature.”^{xxxv} This salient observation may be interpreted as the lasting testament of the *japoniste* aesthetic in French Naturalism. It confirms the brilliant prophecy launched in 1871 on publication of Léon de Rosny's translation of the first anthology of Japanese poetry made available to the French reading public.

Aujourd'hui on n'est plus un écrivain, un littérateur, un critique quand on s'enferme et qu'on s'isole dans un seul pays; il faut sortir de ces frontières étroites et embrasser un plus vaste horizon. Ainsi le veut la nouvelle condition des choses. En se rapprochant, le monde a diminué, mais l'esprit humain a grandi.^{xxxvi} [emphasis added]

Epilogue: The Implantation of French Naturalism in Modern Japanese Literature

Concurrent to France's *japoniste* époque of the second half of the nineteenth century was the rapid modernization of Japan which occurred during the Meiji period, 1868-1912. Reversing centuries of isolationism

and restrictive trade policies, the newly-unified Japanese Imperial government legislated a 'Great Leap Forward,' a program designed to gain par with the industrialized West in all sectors. The defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, a victory celebrated in garishly-hued, propagandistic *ukiyo-e* prints, marked the entry of the Japanese nation as a contender in the international arena.

Meiji Japan eagerly embraced foreign systems and expertise. Professors from Europe and the United States were invited to teach at Japanese universities, while the most promising young Japanese men were sent abroad to study science, medicine, engineering and technology. Traditional elements of Japanese religion and culture, so admired by *japonistes* in the West, were viewed by Meiji officials as impediments to progress and of little practical value in building a new society. In fact, it was largely through the influence of the American scholar of Japanese art Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) that the treasures of countless Buddhist temples were saved from wholesale liquidation.

In Dawn to the West, a History of Japanese Literature, Donald Keene declares Naturalism [*shizen shugi*] the most dominant force in modern Japanese letters, from its rise to prominence in the period of re-

examination of values following the Russo-Japanese War to the present day. Zola's advocacy of the *méthode expérimentale* of Claude Bernard was introduced in an 1889 article denouncing the obscenity of the French author's works, while dissenting Japanese critics praised the French author's materialist objectivity. Zola however had little direct influence on the formation of Naturalism in Japan, as only a limited selection of his novels were available. (The most widely circulated translations were Pot-Bouillie, La Bête Humaine and La Terre; Nana was translated in 1903 and l'Oeuvre in 1910.) As for the Goncourts, there is no record of a Japanese version of Manette Salomon. It is interesting to note that the first translation of Germinie Lacerteux appeared in 1915, followed by a series of re-editions.^{xxxvii} According to Keene it was the short stories of Guy de Maupassant, with those of Alphonse Daudet, translated into Japanese from the English versions, which served as a primary influence upon the Japanese Naturalists. "Maupassant's appeal. . . lay mainly in his dispassionate manner of describing the ordinary tragedies of daily life. This would be the subject matter of most Japanese Naturalist fiction."^{xxxviii}

The Japanese writers of the Meiji period were impressed by the French Naturalists' emphasis on sketches of lower class life, the celebration of beauty in the prosaic, the use of colloquial language, and the exploration

of the human passions at their most extreme. Although they may not have been aware of the *Japonisme* of the Goncourts and the French Naturalists, Japanese authors could no doubt sense certain parallels with aspects of their own heritage, especially the glorification of everyday events characteristic of Zen art and of *ukiyo-e* genre subjects.

Japanese Naturalists interpreted the analytical qualities French Naturalism by initiating the autobiographical form known as the “I novel” [*watakushi shosetsu*], candid accounts reflecting what Keene terms “the unvarnished truth” of the author’s own life. Among the greatest exponents of the ‘I novel’ are Uchida Roan (1868-1929), Shimazaki Toson (1872-1943) and Tokuda Shusei (1871-1943). Although most of “the outstanding [Japanese] authors of the twentieth century--Natsume Soseki, Mori Ogai, Nagai Kafu, Tanizaki Jun’ichiro, and Kawabata Yasunari--were either indifferent or actively opposed Naturalism,”^{xxxix} its ramifications continue to be felt in modern fiction.

A case in point is Kenzaburo Oê (b. 1935), Nobel Prize Winner for Literature in 1994. Like Yukio Mishima (1925-1970) and other Japanese writers of his generation, Oê’s literary consciousness was primarily shaped by French literature. (Oê’s thesis at Tokyo University concerned Jean-Paul

Sartre.) The author upholds and reinterprets the fertile tradition of the “I novel” in his fiction; Oê’s severely brain-damaged son Hikari has been a fixture in his novels from A Personal Matter (1964) to his most recent Rouse Up Young Men of the New Age.

Just as French *japonistes* had discovered Japanese art in a fragmented version of its totality, and shaped their Naturalist interpretation of this aesthetic in terms of their own cultural context, so the fledgling Japanese Naturalists of the Meiji period elaborated their own version of French Naturalism based on secondary sources. In their search for a modern literary aesthetic the French and Japanese Naturalists acknowledged and upheld the influence of the Other, while adapting the foreign inspiration into forms consistent with their own experience. The exceptional degree of respect and mutual fascination that flourishes today between French and Japanese artistic and literary circles is an inter-cultural dynamic rooted in the Naturalist credo initiated by the Goncourts. (fig. 100) It is a bond uniting East and West which is destined to continue its fruitful interplay well into the twenty-first century.

- ⁱ Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Préfaces et Manifestes Littéraires*, ed. Hubert Juin (Paris/Geneva: Slatkine, 1980), 71-72.
- ⁱⁱ Jules Castagnary, "L'Exposition du Boulevard des Capucines, les Impressionnistes," in *Le Siècle*, April 29, 1874, quoted in Barbara Erlich White, *Impressionists Side by Side, their Friendships, Rivalries, Artistic Exchanges* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996), 14.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Jean-Pierre Richard, *Littérature et Sensation* (Paris: Seuil, 1954), 265-283, passim.
- ^{iv} Ferdinand Brunetière, *Le Roman Naturaliste* (Paris: 1893), 90.
- ^v Earl Miner, *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1958), 67-74 passim.
- ^{vi} Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la Vie Littéraire, texte intégral annoté par Robert Ricatte* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1989), 2: 200-201.
- ^{vii} Miner, 72.
- ^{viii} Theodore Duret, "Le Peintre Claude Monet" preface from catalogue to June 1880 exhibition at the Galerie du Journal Illustré *La Vie Moderne* on the Boulevard des Italiens, quoted in *Le Japonisme, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des Musees Nationaux, 1988), 132.
- ^{ix} Ernest Chesneau, "L'Exposition Universelle, Le Japon à Paris," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* (Paris), September 1878: 396.
- ^x René Huyghe, preface to *Impressionism* (New York: Putnam, 1973), 56-57.
- ^{xi} Georges Poulet, *Etudes sur le Temps Humain/I* (Paris: Editions du Rocher, 1952), 43.
- ^{xii} *Ibid.*, 43-44.
- ^{xiii} René Huyghe, *Sens et Destin de l'Art, de l'art gothique au XXe siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1967), 229-235.
- ^{xiv} Graham Parkes, "Ways of Japanese Thinking," in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture, a Reader*, ed. Nancy G. Hume (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 96.
- ^{xv} Jacques V. Dufwa, *Winds From the East, Manet, Degas, Manet and Whistler* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), 10.
- ^{xvi} John Stevens, *Zenga, Brushstrokes of Enlightenment* (New Orleans: New Orleans Museum of Art, 1990), 9.
- ^{xvii} Dufwa, 13.
- ^{xviii} Joan Stanley Baker, *Japanese Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 148-150.
- ^{xix} Okakura Kakuzo, *The Book of Tea* (Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1985), 3.
- ^{xx} Haga Kashiho, "The Wabi Aesthetic through the Ages," in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture, a Reader*, ed. Nancy G. Hume (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 275.
- ^{xxi} E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal*, 2: 476.
- ^{xxii} John Rosenfeld, *Extraordinary Persons: Japanese Artists (1560-1860) in the Kimiko and John Powers Collection, a Portfolio of Screen Paintings* (Boston: Harvard University Art Museum, 1988), 9.
- ^{xxiii} Richard Lane, *Images of the Floating World* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978), 334-335, quoted in *Hokusai and Hiroshige, Great Japanese Prints from the Michener Collection* (San Francisco: The Asian Art Museum, 1998), 34.
- ^{xxiv} Theodore Duret, *La Critique de l'Avant-Garde* (Paris: Charpentier, 1885), 206-207.
- ^{xxv} E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal*, 2: 816.
- ^{xxvi} Joris-Karl Huysmans, "Les vingt-quatre coups de sonnets de Thódore Hannon," *La République des Lettres*, February 18, 1877, quoted in Pierre Cogny, *JKH, de l'écriture à l'écriture* (Paris: Téqui, 1987), 24.
- ^{xxvii} *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* (1982), s.v. La Caze.
- ^{xxviii} Helen Trudgian, *L'Esthétique de Joris-Karl Huysmans* (Paris: Conard, 1934).
- ^{xxix} Joris-Karl Huysmans, "Emile Zola et L'Assommoir," *L'Actualité de Bruxelles*, 1876, quoted in Fernande Zayed, *JKH, Peintre de Son Epoque* (Paris: Nizet, 1973), 47-48.
- ^{xxx} Louis Gonse, "L'art japonais et son influence sur le goût européen," *la Revue des Arts Décoratifs* (Paris), April 1898.
- ^{xxxi} E. and J. de Goncourt, 2: 227.
- ^{xxxii} *Ibid.*, 2: 248.

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- ^{xxxiii} Gustave Flaubert, *Le second volume de Bouvard et Pécuchet*, ed. Geneviève Bollème (Paris: Denoël, 1966), 283.
- ^{xxxiv} E. and J. de Gncourt, 2: 595.
- ^{xxxv} Ibid. 3: 919.
- ^{xxxvi} Edouard Laboulaye, preface to Léon de Rosny, *Anthologie Japonaise, poésies anciennes et modernes des Insulaires du Japon, traduites en français et publiées avec le texte original* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1871), vi.
- ^{xxxvii} I am grateful to my colleague from the Graduate Center Kiyoko Ishikawa who researched records of early translations of works by the Goncourts, Zola and Huysmans in the Library of the Diet in Tokyo.
- ^{xxxviii} Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West, Japanese Literature of the Modern Era (Fiction)* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1984), 221-225 passim.
- ^{xxxix} Ibid. 220

GLOSSARY

MAJOR PERSONALITIES OF THE *JAPONISTE*
MOVEMENT IN FRANCE

Japonisme is a complex web which connects many of the most creative minds in the field of arts and letters. The following biographical sketches will clarify relationships existing between the major figures involved in *japonisme*.

Zacharie Astruc (1835-1907). Critic, artist, poet. Friend of Baudelaire, Manet and Impressionist circle. Critiqued Salons of 1860, 1863; exhibited paintings and watercolors with Japanese motifs. Portrayed by Manet with bound *ukiyo-e* albums (1864). Articles on “*Japon, l’Empire du Soleil Levant*” for *L’Etendard* (1867) compare Japanese culture to that of ancient Greece.

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). Critic, poet. Letters to friend Arsène Houssaye ca. 1861-1862 attest to Baudelaire’s interest in Japanese prints and art objects. “Il y a longtemps que j’ai reçu un paquet de japonaiseries. Je les ai partagées entre mes amis et amies, et je vous ai réservé trois. Elles ne sont pas mauvaises (images d’Epinal, du Japon, deux sols pièce à Yeddo.) Je vous assure que sur du vélin et encadré de bambou ou de baguettes vermillon, c’est d’un grand effet.”

Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923). Actress, sculptor. She is cited in the *Goncourt Journal* as an extravagant buyer of Japanese art objects.

Siegfried (Samuel) Bing (1838-1905). Dealer, collector, publisher. Dealer of oriental objects on rue Chauchat, 1879-1883. Lends collection of Japanese ceramics to 1878 Paris *Exposition Universelle*. Travels to Far East, 1880. Publisher of *le Japon Artistique*, featuring facsimiles of Japanese prints with essays by specialists, 1888-1891; its

motto was “Back to Nature by following the Japanese Example.” Exhibits print collection featuring Utamaro, 1888. Founds new shop, *Salon de l'Art Nouveau* in 1893 to encourage French decorative arts.

Felix Bracquemond (1833-1914). Painter, engraver, designer. His discovery of an album of Hokusai's Manga sketchbooks in the studio of the printer Delâtre ca. 1856 is one of *japonisme's* classic anecdotes. After acquiring the album, Bracquemond displayed it enthusiastically to friends in the art world: Manet, Degas, Fantin-Latour, Whistler, Stevens, Champfleury and Burty. Designed popular “Service Rousseau,” dinnerware decorated with naturalistic bird motifs inspired by Hokusai, 1867. Taught engraving techniques to Manet, Corot and Theodore Rousseau. Author of *Du Dessin et de la Couleur* (1885).

Félix Buhot (1847-1898). Painter, engraver. He produced an album illustrating Japanese art objects in the collection of Philippe Burty. His etchings of atmospheric scenes of Paris with small inset cartouches surrounding the central theme are inspired by the example of Japanese prints.

Philippe Burty (1830-1890). Journalist, critic, novelist. Circle of Hugo, Goncourt, Zola. Encouraged revival of etching as an art form. Early collector of Japanese bronzes, ivories, enamels, sword guards and prints. Lends objects to 1867 Paris *Exposition Universelle*. First articles on Japan for *La Renaissance Littéraire et Artistique* in 1872, coins term *japonisme*. Granted Medal of Order of the Rising Sun by Japanese Government, 1884.

Henri Cernuschi (1821-1896). Republican financier from Milan, resident of Paris. Travelled to India, Indonesia, Japan, China and Korea with Theodore Duret, 1871-1873, amassing some 5000 art objects and photographic documents. Residence on Parc Monceau built to house these holdings, which became the *Musée Cernuschi* after his death. Zola and de Maupassant are known to have attended social events at his home. The museum, administered by the city of Paris, celebrated its centenary in 1998; it currently exhibits ancient Chinese art.

Georges Charpentier (1846-1905). Successful publisher of the Naturalists, collector. Renoir portrayed “Madame Charpentier and her Children” (1878, Metropolitan Museum of Art) in her *Salon Japonais*.

Ernst Chesneau (1833-1890). Art historian, journalist. Wrote and lectured on Japanese art from 1867. His articles on the Japanese pavilions for the 1878 Paris *Exposition Universelle* in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* provide important documentation on *japonisme*.

Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929). Journalist, collector, politician, circle of Monet. Fascinated by both Greek and Far Eastern Art, his friendship with the French consul in Yokohama enabled him to acquire a fine collection of Japanese art. He encouraged the Louvre to acquire two Japanese statues in 1891. Published Zola's pro-Dreyfus letter, "*J'Accuse*."

Alphonse Daudet (1840-1897) Circle of the Goncourts. "L'Empereur Aveugle," a short story in his *Contes de Lundi* (1873), relates the author's meetings with von Siebold, the German officer and scientist who founded a museum in Munich to house the vast collection of art and artifacts amassed during his long residence in Japan. According to the narrative, von Siebold had intended to give the writer a translation of a 16th century Japanese tragedy before his death.

Monsieur and Madame Desoye (dates unknown). Dealers in Japanese and oriental art. Former residents of Japan, the couple opened their import shop, *La Porte Chinoise* at 220 rue de Rivoli ca. 1862. This site served as a gathering place for the leading *japonistes* of discuss their appreciation of prints, textiles, porcelains, bronzes, et al. Madame Desoye is mentioned in the *Goncourt Journal*.

Theodore Duret (1883-1927). Collector, critic, author. Circle of Zola. Discovers Japan at the 1862 Great Exhibition in London. Travelled to Japan later that year to promote the family cognac business. Accompanied Cernuschi on buying expedition to Far East, 1871-1873. Author of *Yoyage en Asie* (1874) and *La Critique d'avant-garde* (1885). Wrote on dual enthusiasm for Japanese art and for the Impressionists. Donated 1,350 Japanese albums to the Bibliothèque Nationale. Manet portrayed Duret and Tama, a dog the critic acquired in Japan.

Emile Gallé (1846-1904). French glassmaker and furniture designer whose innovative works inspired by natural forms bridge the transition

from *japonisme* to Art Nouveau. His factory established at Nancy, 1874.

Louis Gonse (1846-1921). Collector, art historian, Editor-in-chief of *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1875-1894. Author of *L'Art Japonais* (1883), with chapter on ceramics by Bing. Curates *Exposition Rétrospective de l'Art Japonais* at the Georges Petit Gallery in 1883.

Gustave Geoffroy (1855-1926). Art critic, publisher, novelist. Circle of Zola, Goncourt, Clemenceau. Published annual journal *La Vie Artistique*, 1890-1903. Contributed articles to Bing's periodical *Le Japon Artistique*. Served as President of the Goncourt Academy. Portrayed by Cezanne.

Emile Guimet (1836-1918). Industrialist, scientist, collector. In 1876, travelled to Orient with artist Felix Regamey to gather material for his proposed Museum of Religions. Their Promenades Japonaises was published in 1878. His prodigious collection of objects from China, India and Japan, bequeathed to the French state in 1884, are now housed in the *Musée Guimet* in Paris.

Tadamasa Hayashi (1853-1906). Bureaucrat, dealer in Japanese art. Organized the Japanese section of the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle for the Japanese government. Later, he became an importer of art objects from Japan and set up shop as a dealer, expert and advisor to prominent collectors at 65, rue de la Victoire. Advised Goncourt, Monet and Gonse. Organized a show of Impressionist art in Tokyo, 1893. Said to have imported over 150,000 Japanese prints to France during his career. Author of Histoire de l'Art Japonais (1900). Returned to Japan in 1901 after organizing a retrospective of Japan's artistic heritage at the 1900 Paris *Exposition Universelle*.

Jing-Lar Society (founded 1867). Exclusive dining club of the most prominent Parisian japonistes, organized by Marc-Louis Solon, Director of the Sèvres porcelain manufacture. Founding members included Astruc, Bracquemond, Burty and Fantin-Latour. Additional members may have included the Goncourts, Cernuschi, Millet, Barye, Manet, Deck, Tissot and Villot (curator of the Louvre). There is no official record of members attending events of the

Society; it has been proposed that the organization may have served as a front for Republican sympathizers.

John Lafarge (1835-1910). American painter. Resided six months in Japan; one of the first artists of any nation to incorporate *japoniste* tendencies in his work. Met with Edmond de Goncourt, June 16, 1895.

René Lalique (1860-1904). French jewelry designer and glassmaker of the Art Nouveau movement. His sinuous naturalistic designs from the 1880's show a marked inspiration from Japanese sources.

Edouard Manet (1832-1883). Painter, graphic artist. Chesneau lists Manet amongst the earliest collectors of Japanese art, in the company of Astruc, Zola and Burty. Zola linked Manet's art to Japanese prints in 1866. His graphic work has been linked to Hokusai's *Manga* and to the calligraphic strokes of Japanese brush painting. Manet's other great influence was the Spanish school (Velasquez and Goya); he travelled to Spain in 1859. According to Berger, Manet's *japonisme* is implicit in his use of lively outline, lack of depth, rich color and depiction of the fleeting moment.

Roger Marx (1859-1913). Art critic, Inspector of Fine Arts for French state. Circle of the Impressionists. Author of L'Estampe Originale (1893), La Collection des Goncourt (1897), Maîtres d'hier et d'Aujourd'hui (1914).

Claude Monet (1840-1926). Painter, collector. He acquired a set of Hokusai's *35 Views of Mount Fuji* ca. 1856. Studied at Atelier Gleyre in Paris in 1862, after being introduced to plein-air painting at Le Havre by Boudin. Landscapes at Fontainebleau, Argenteuil and Normandy, 1860's-1870's. *Impression Sunrise* (1872) gave the New Painters the Impressionist label at their inaugural exhibition, 1874. Moves to Giverny, 1883, constructs pond with Japanese bridge, 1893. Painting trip to Provence and Italy, 1889-89. Series paintings of Rouen Cathedral, Poplars and Grain Stacks, 1890's. Final works are studies of waterlilies tending towards abstraction. Monet acknowledged a life-long debt to Japanese art, as evidenced by atmospheric landscapes, asymmetrical or fragmented compositions and the theme of water itself, "the floating world" suggested by the term *ukiyo-e*.

Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). Sculptor, influenced by Far Eastern art later in his career. He owned Van Gogh's *Portrait of Père Tanguy* which depicts the subject against a background of *ukiyo-e* prints. Rodin met with Edmond de Goncourt in 1896 to discuss their common interest in Hokusai and in erotic prints [shunga]. The Musée Rodin conserves the artist's collection of Japanese graphic art.

Albert Sensier (no dates). Critic, biographer. He claims to have been the first to have shown Japanese prints to Barbizon artists Millet and Rousseau. His biography of Rousseau describes the profound impact on the painter's conception of color.

Philippe Sichel (no dates). Dealer in French and Far Eastern art and antiques. Author of *Notes d'un Bibeloteur du Japon* (1883) on the adventures of his 1873 buying trip, acquiring 500 crates of merchandise. Edmond de Goncourt, a favored customer, wrote the preface to the book.

Alfred Stevens (1823-1906). French society painter, circle of Baudelaire, the Goncourts, Manet, Degas, Fantin-Latour. Japanese objects and motifs appear in his work from about 1871. Mentioned frequently in the Goncourt Journal as a fellow *japoniste*.

James Tissot (1836-1902). French society painter. One of the first French artists to portray Japanese genre subjects, *La Japonaise au Bain* (1864, Musée de Dijon). Degas portrayed Tissot in his studio with a frieze of Japanese figures in the background, (1868, Metropolitan Museum of Art.). Tissot served as art instructor to the Japanese Prince Tokugawa Akitake in Paris.

Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). The painter refers to Japan and to the Goncourts' appreciation of *japonisme* in letters to his brother from 1885-1889. Collected Japanese prints after arriving in Paris in 1886. *Ohashi Bridge in a Rainstorm* (1887, Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam) was copied from Hiroshige's print. He sought an equivalent to the colorful Japanese landscape in Provence. He wrote, "tout mon travail est un peu basé sur la *japonaiserie*." In his asylum room at St. Rémy van Gogh hung two reproductions of Japanese prints from *le Japon Artistique*.

Henri Vever (1854-1942). Art Nouveau jeweler, designer, art collector. His interests ranged from French painting to the arts of China, Persia, India and Japan. He purchased many Japanese prints and works of art from the Goncourt estate auction in 1896. In 1920 the Tokyo National Museum acquired some 8,000 prints from this superlative collection.

James Abbot McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). American expatriot painter, graphic artist, aesthetic theorist, author. Attended Atelier Gleyre in Paris, 1855, joining circle of Degas, Bracquemond and Latour. Studied Spanish painting in the Louvre. Painted with Courbet in Trouville, 1864-65. Learned printmaking at Delâtre's workshop, early etchings praised by Baudelaire. Maintained studio in London, 1867-1878. An important customer of Madame Desoye's shop in Paris; Whistler amassed oriental porcelains, silk textiles and *ukiyo-e* albums which can be seen in his paintings. Paintings of 1860's portray western women in kimono, and often reveal a combination of motifs from Greek art with *japonisme*. The *Peacock Room*, a gold-decorated interior inspired by Japanese lacquer was created 1876-77 for Frederick Leyland's residence in London. From 1870 Whistler signed his works with the monogram butterfly, indicating his affinity for the Japanese aesthetic. This pioneering modernist was a friend of Degas, Mallarmé, Wilde and Duret, his first biographer. Author of the Ten O'Clock (1885) and the Gentle Art of Making Enemies. (1890) The Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. has one of the largest concentrations of Whistler's oeuvre.

**MAJOR EVENTS IN THE EVOLUTION OF *JAPONISME*
IN FRANCE**

- 1827-1832 Auctions in Paris of oriental art from collection of Isaac Titzingh, Director of Dutch trading settlement in Nagasaki, 1779-1785.
- 1843 The Bibliothèque Nationale acquires albums of Japanese prints from the holdings of von Siebold, former Dutch resident of Japan.
- 1855 Dutch Pavilion at Paris *Exposition Universelle* exhibits selected Japanese art objects.
- 1858 Baron de Chassiron signs first French trade treaty with Japan. His Le Japon, la Chine et L'Inde (1861) is illustrated with Hokusai facsimiles.
- 1862 Sir Rutherford Alcock organizes Japanese Court at London International Exhibition. Among the many French visitors is Judith Gautier. Her life-long fascination for the Far East was shared by her father, Théophile Gautier.
Boutique Desoye, importers from Japan, opens in Paris.
- 1867 First official Japanese participation at the Paris *Exposition Universelle*. Burty lends some of his *ukiyo-e* albums. Founding of Jing-Lar Society.
Publication of the Goncourts' Manette Salomon.
- 1868 Manet exhibits his *Portrait of Zola* .
- 1869 Exhibition at Union Central des Beaux Arts featuring a *Musée Oriental* with over 400 examples of Japanese porcelain.
- 1873 Cernuschi and Duret return from Orient with crates of art objects. Cernuschi organizes an *Exposition des Beaux Arts de l'Extrême Orient* at the *Union Centrale*

des Beaux Arts, marking the Inauguration of the First International Orientalist Congress.

- 1876 Collector Emile Guimet and illustrator Félix Regamey spend six months in Japan, documenting their trip in Promenades Japonaises (1878).
- 1878 Japanese Pavilion at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* exhibits ceramics, lacquers, prints and albums. Articles on the phenomenon of japonisme in *Gazette des Beaux Arts* by Duranty and Chesneau. Publication of Zola's Une page d'amour.
- 1879 Paris Opera presents Japanese-themed baller, *Yedda*. Publication of Huysmans' Les Soeurs Vatard.
- 1882 Duret publishes L'Art Japonais, writes articles on Hokusai in August and October *Gazette des Beaux Arts*.
- 1883 Gonse and Hayashi organize large exhibition of Japanese art from private collections (over 3,000 items) at Georges Petit Galleries. Publication of Zola's Au bonheur de dames.
- 1888-1891 Publication of Bing's deluxe journal *Le Japon Artistique*.
- 1889 Elaborate Japanese Pavilion and gardens at Paris *Exposition Universelle*. Sada Yakko and her Japanese dance troupe perform before enthusiastic audiences. Musée Guimet inaugurated in Paris.
- 1890 Exhibition of 700 prints and 400 albums of *ukiyo-e* at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*. Mary Cassatt's series of ten color etchings of Parisian women was inspired directly by the Utamaro's viewed at this show.
- 1891 Publication of Edmond de Goncourt's Outamaro, Peintre des Maisons Vertes.

- 1893 **Bing organizes exhibition of Utamaro and Hiroshige at Durand-Ruel Gallery.**
- 1895 **Bing's oriental arts gallery becomes *La Maison de l'Art Nouveau*, featuring European decorative arts.**
- 1896 **Publication of Edmond de Goncourt's last work, Hokousai.**
- 1897 **Paris auction of the Goncourt collection of oriental art. Bing writes the preface to the catalogue of 1,737 lots.**
- 1900 **Retrospective of classical Japanese Art organized by Hayashi for the Paris *Exposition Universelle* gives Europeans a more balanced perspective of the achievements of Japanese civilization.**

GLOSSARY OF JAPANESE TERMS

- Edo [Yedo, Yeddo].** Former name for Tokyo, used from 1180-1868. Edo was designated the capital city at the start of the Edo (Tokugawa) period in 1615. The ancient Imperial capital was Kyoto.
- Fukinuki-yatai.** Literally “roofless house.” Convention of Japanese painting which omits the roof or ceiling of dwellings to reveal interior scenes from a birds’-eye view.
- Fukusa [Foukousa].** Decorative textile, term used by the Goncourts to describe paintings on silk in their collection.
- Haiku [Hokku, Haikai].** 17 syllable verse form of 3 metrical lines of syllables in the pattern 5-7-5. Derived from the introductory verse to the Tanka (31-syllable poem), Haiku developed into an independent genre exemplified by Bashô (1644-1694).
- Kakemono.** Painting mean to hang vertically as opposed to the handscroll [makemono] which unrolls horizontally.
- Kabuki.** Popular, melodramatic form of theatrical entertainment founded by a woman dancer in 1603. (All roles have been played by males since a 1729 decree intended to discourage prostitution). Kabuki dramas feature bold movement, exaggerated gesture and sword-play with spectacularly made-up and costumed actors. Performers were depicted in their most memorable roles in *ukiyo-e* prints.

- Maisons Vertes.** The Green Houses were tea houses and brothels of the Yoshiwara licensed quarter of Edo, featured in *ukiyo-e* prints by Utamaro.
- Maki-e.** Decorative technique in which gold and metallic powders are sprinkled onto wet lacquer to form decorative patterns.
- Manga [Mangwa].** Series of 15 albums of 'spontaneous sketches' by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), published 1814-1878. Printed in 3 colors (black, gray, beige), the Manga depict a bewildering variety of subject matter in random order: scenes of daily life, studies of flora and fauna, underwater scenes, supernatural beings, caricatures and geometric renderings of natural forms. Circulated amongst japonistes from about 1856, these albums were the most influential work of Japanese art in Europe. Some western critics have termed the opus a masterpiece ranking with Rembrandt and Goya while detractors cite its chaotic, uneven quality.
- Netsuke.** Carved ivory, wood or bronze toggle whose weight closed the outside pouch or pocket worn by men during the Edo period. Miniature decorative object popular with japonistes.
- Noh.** Classic masked dance drama accompanied by ancient music, based on mythology and Shinto ritual. The slow, deliberate movements of Noh contrast markedly with the exuberance of Kabuki.
- Sakura.** Ephemeral blossoming of cherry blossoms associated with spring festivals, based on Shinto beliefs.
- Shinto.** "The Way of the Gods," the native animistic belief system of Japan based on ancient pantheistic rites. All creatures and natural sites are believed inhabited by *kami*, [spirits] which are eternal.

- Tanka.** Traditional poem of 31 syllables arranged in a 5 line pattern of 5-7-5-7-7-7. Also known as *uta* [song].
- Tatami.** Thick straw matting placed on floor of traditional home; its springy consistency provides a comfortable surface to sit or sleep. The custom of removing shoes at the foyer is to avoid soiling the tatami.
- Torii.** Wooden orange-red gate marking the entrance to a Shinto shrine, often situated at a site of natural beauty such as a waterfall.
- Tsuba.** Flat bronze sword guards with decorative designs based on natural forms, collected by japonistes.
- Ukiyo-e.** Literally, pictures of the floating world of Edo's Yoshiwara district, designating woodblock prints and paintings of genre scenes typical of the Edo period. Prints on themes such as famous courtesans, Kabuki actors, pilgrimage routes, landscapes, birds and flowers, or *shunga* [erotic prints] were bound in an album. Most prints were produced at low cost for a public eager for news of the latest fashions, with the exception of delicately printed New Years' greetings, the *surimono*. Artists designed prints for a publisher who had the works produced by artisans using separate blocks for each color. The inks used provide a key to dating. Softer, pastel tones dominate the golden age of 18th century *ukiyo-e* while more strident chemically-based hues such as indigo blue were introduced about 1840. Harsh aniline reds were common from about 1870. *Ukiyo-e* prints record propagandistic scenes from the Russo-Japanese War in the early 20th century.

- Waka.** Secular poetry in classical form, defined as “lyrical response to an event, scene or observed aspect of Nature of human affairs.”
- Yoshiwara.** Delineated pleasure quarter of Edo reserved for entertainment at tea-houses, brothels, restaurants and theaters, largely patronized by the merchant class.

CHRONOLOGY OF JAPANESE ART**Historical periods:**

Prehistoric.	11th millennium B.C.(?) - 6th Century A.D.
Asuka and Nara.	552-794
Heian .	794-1185
Kamakura.	1185-1333
Muromachi.	1333-1573
Momoyama.	1573-1615
Edo (Tokugawa).	1615-1868
Meiji.	1868-1912
Taisho.	1926-1926
Showa.	1926-1987
Heisei.	1988 to present

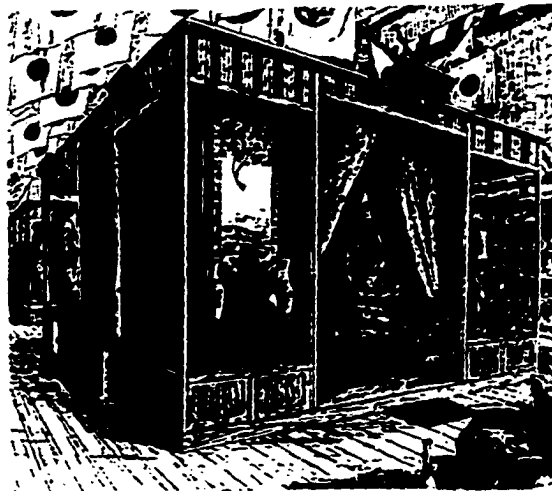


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

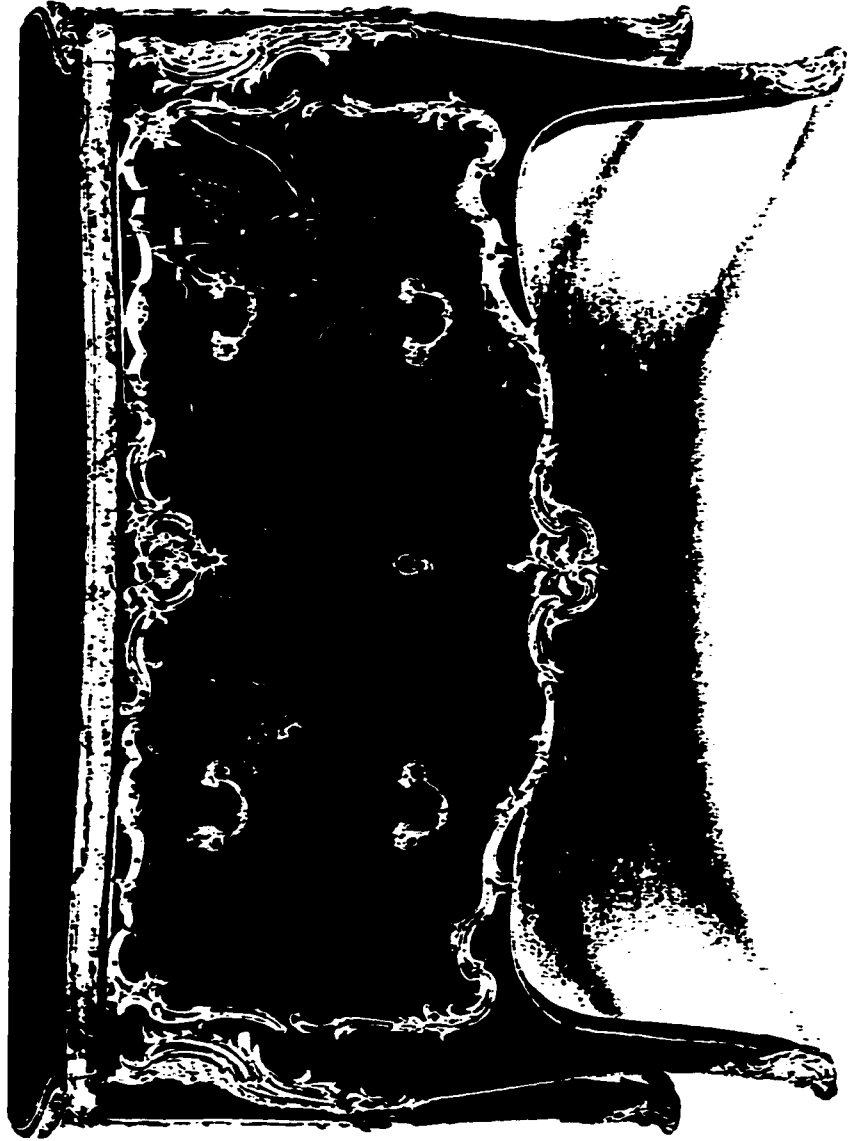


Fig. 3

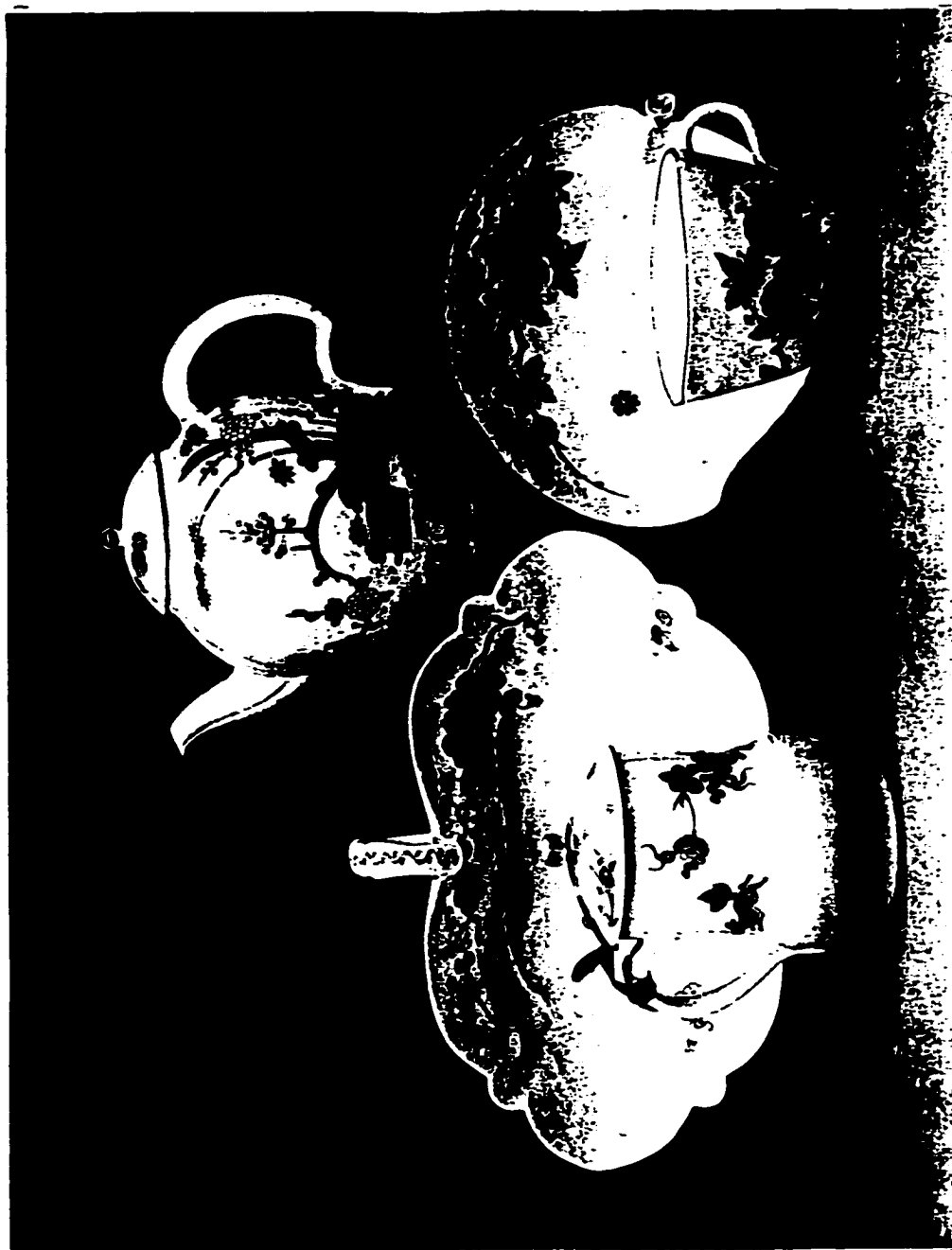


Fig. 4

OBJETS D'ART DE LA CHINE ET DU JAPON

391 — **Etui de pipe.**

Etui de pipe en bambou, enrichi d'une tige pendante, garnie de ses feuilles, et de plusieurs gousses de fèves, en laques de diverses couleurs, en ivoire vert et en écaille. Ce décor se complète par le vol d'une abeille en matières transparentes et par un anneau d'attache en argent ciselé. Le tube supérieur, qui forme bouchon, est d'un style trop différent pour avoir appartenu originairement à cet objet, qui serait d'ailleurs parfaitement complet sans cela.

Signé : *Tchou-tsi.*

Vente Goncourt, 8-13 mars 1897, n° 612.

A M. Henri Vever, à Paris



386



381



387

Deux inros et une boîte

A M. Henri Vever

392 — **Pose-pinceaux.**

En bronze jaune, représentant un tronc de bambou, sur lequel deux poissons en relief.

Une incision au revers donne la date : *Kien-long.*

Vente Goncourt, 8-13 mars 1897, n° 668.

A M. Henri Vever, à Paris

393 — **Aigle sur un rocher formant brûle-parfums.**

Pièce de premier ordre par son expression de vie et la puissance de son exécution.

Vente Goncourt, 8-13 mars 1897, n° 680.

Fig. 5

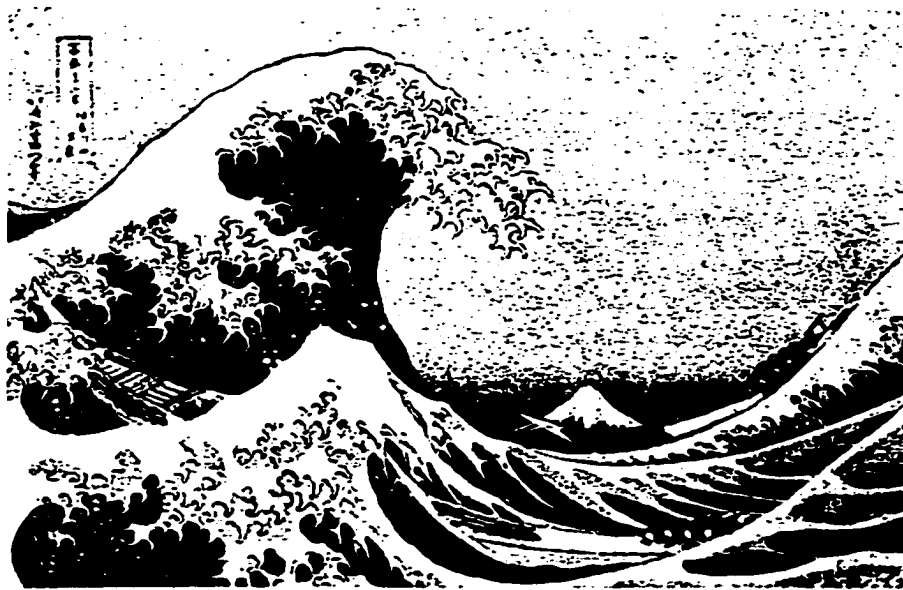
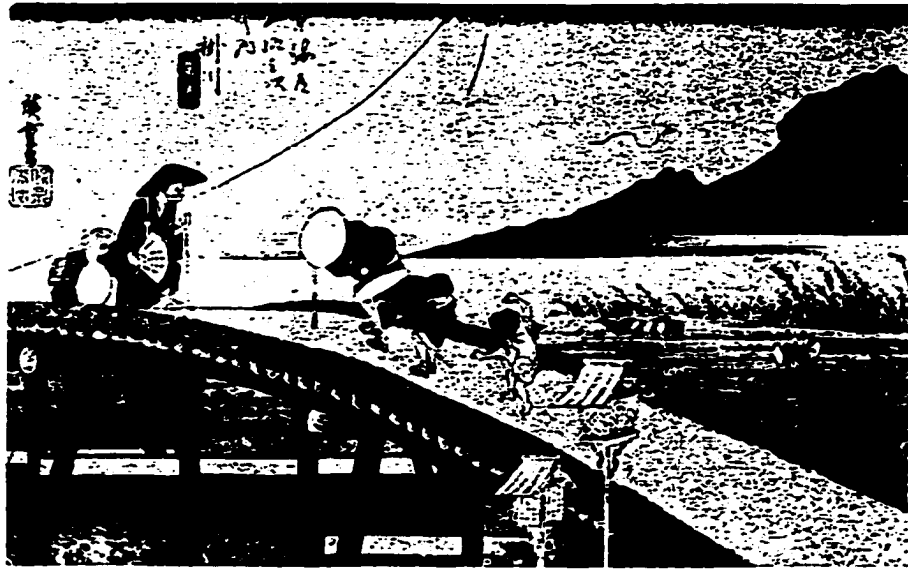


Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

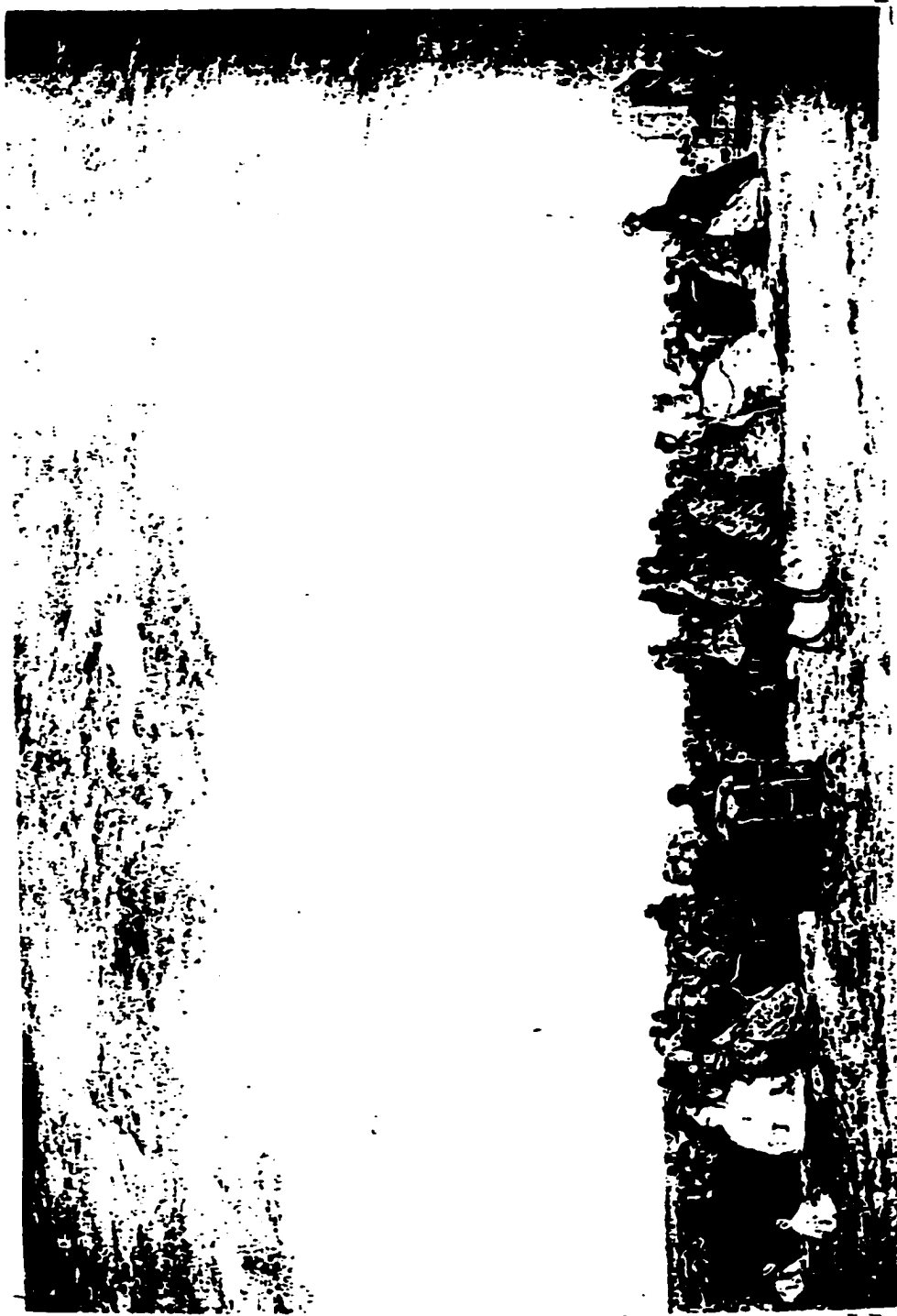


Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

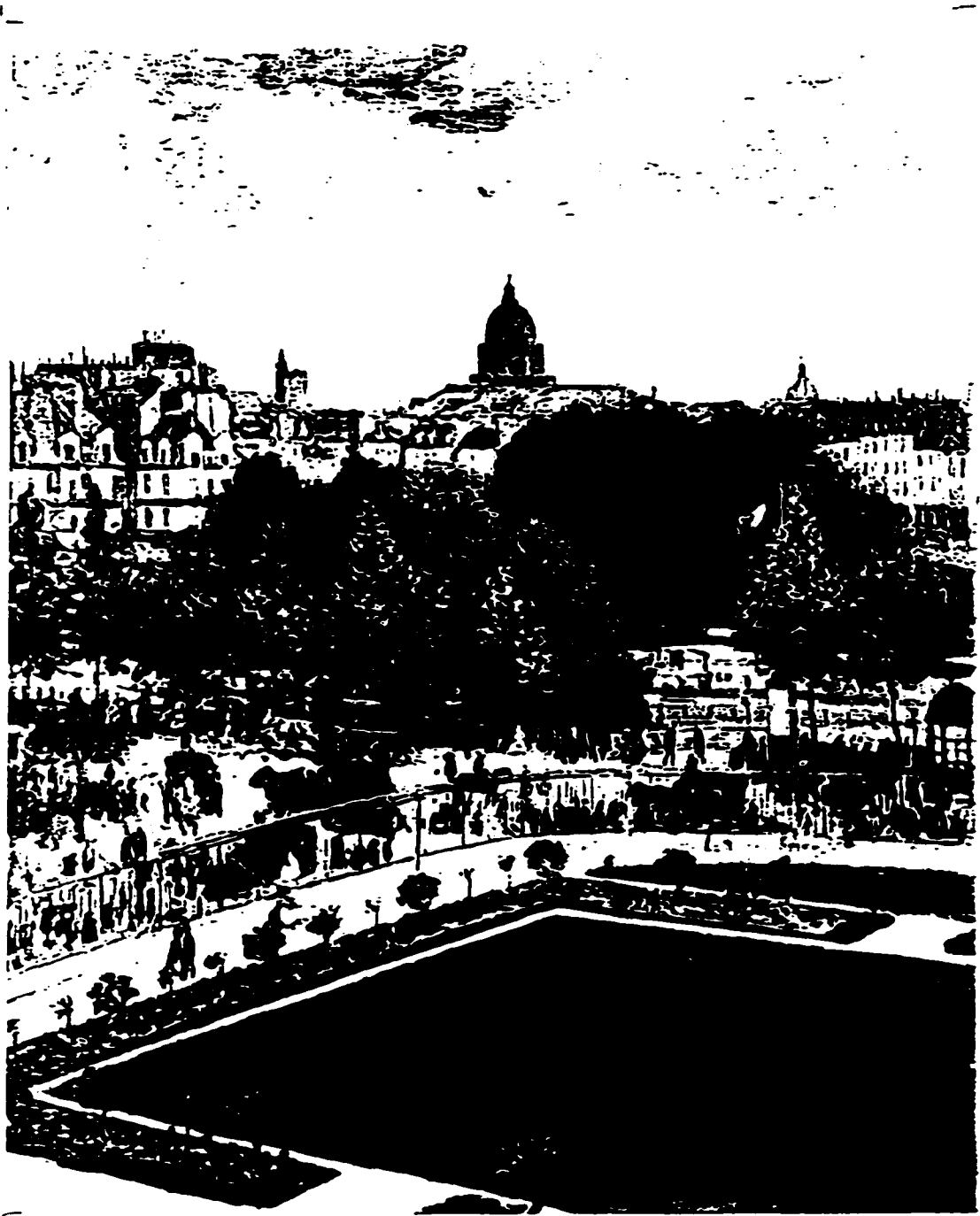


Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Pat. No. 51.



Charles G. Gessner

Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31



Fig. 32

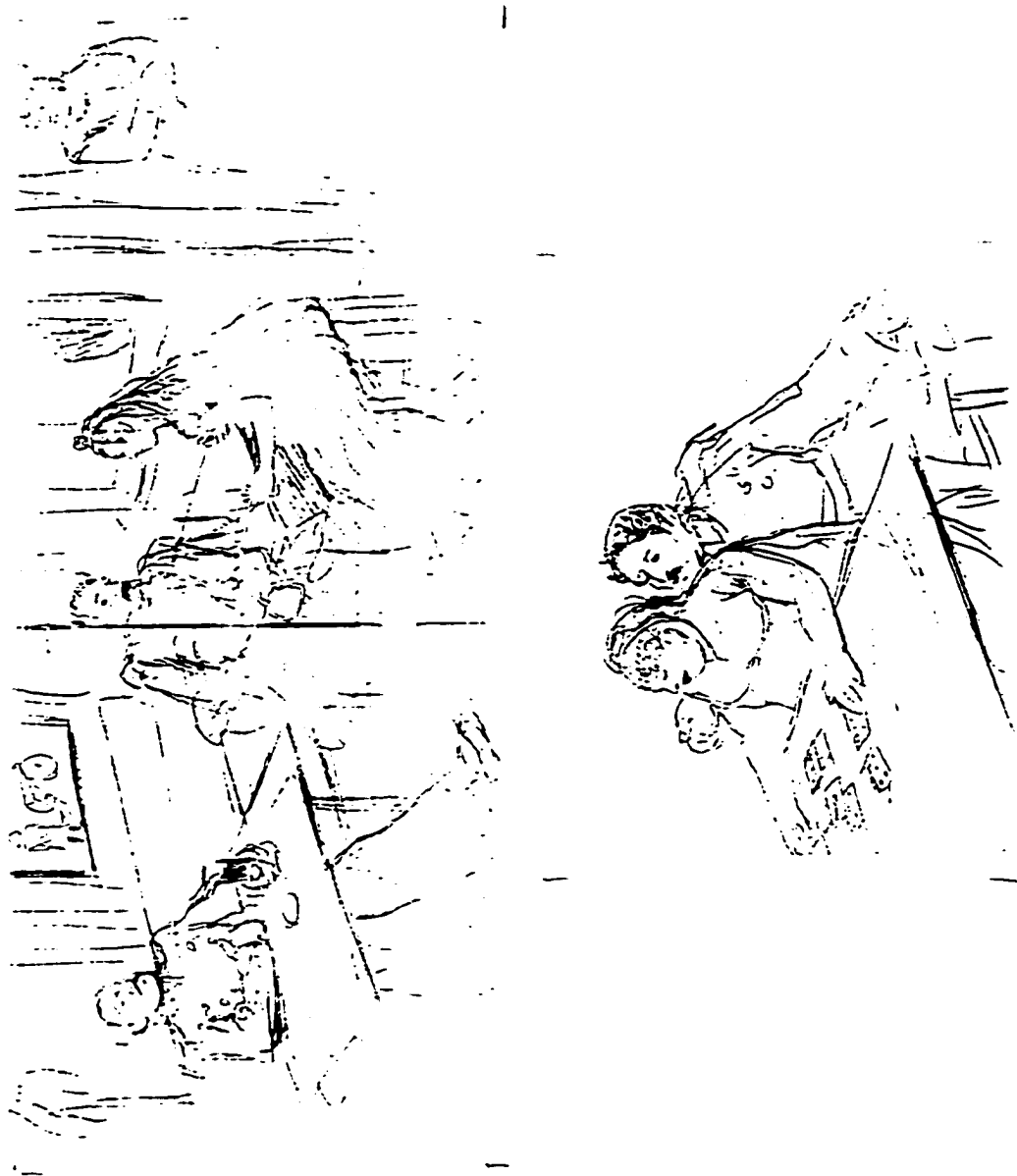


Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35

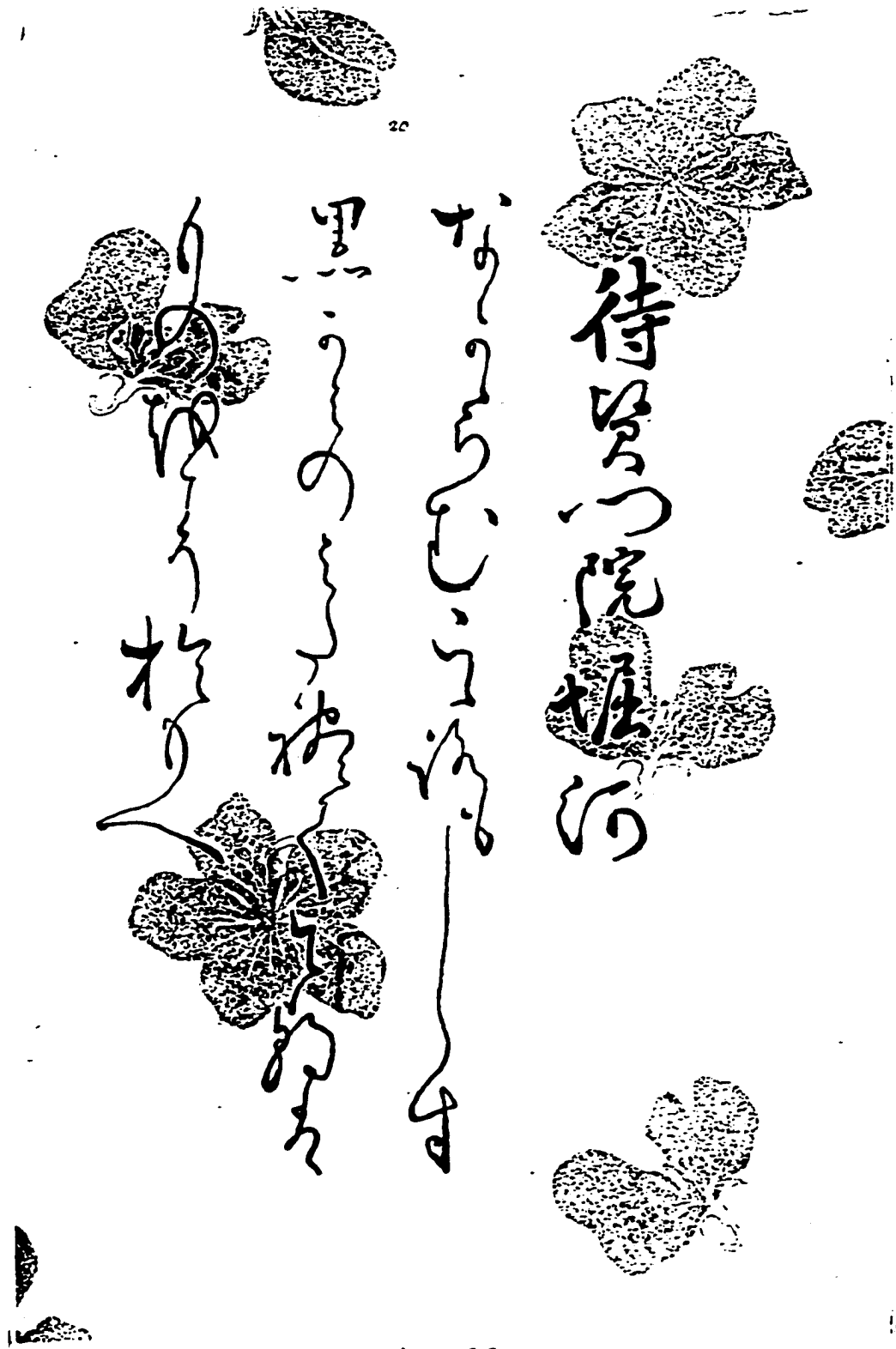


Fig. 36

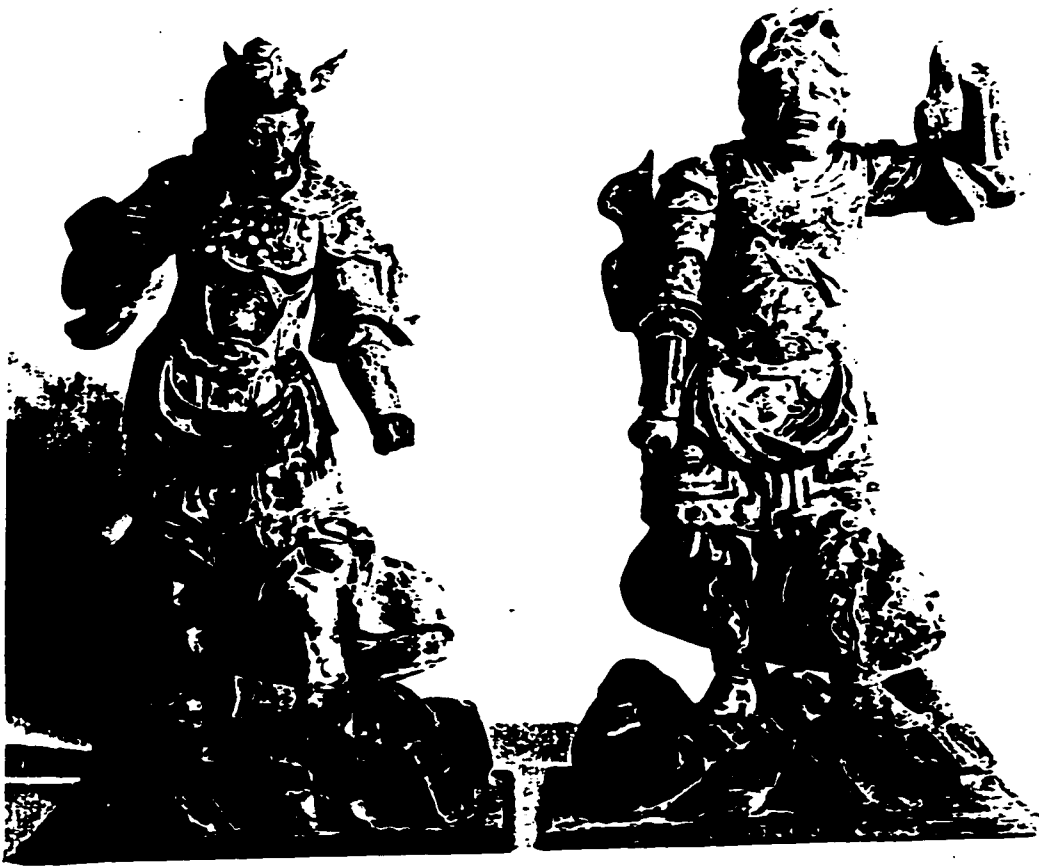


Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42

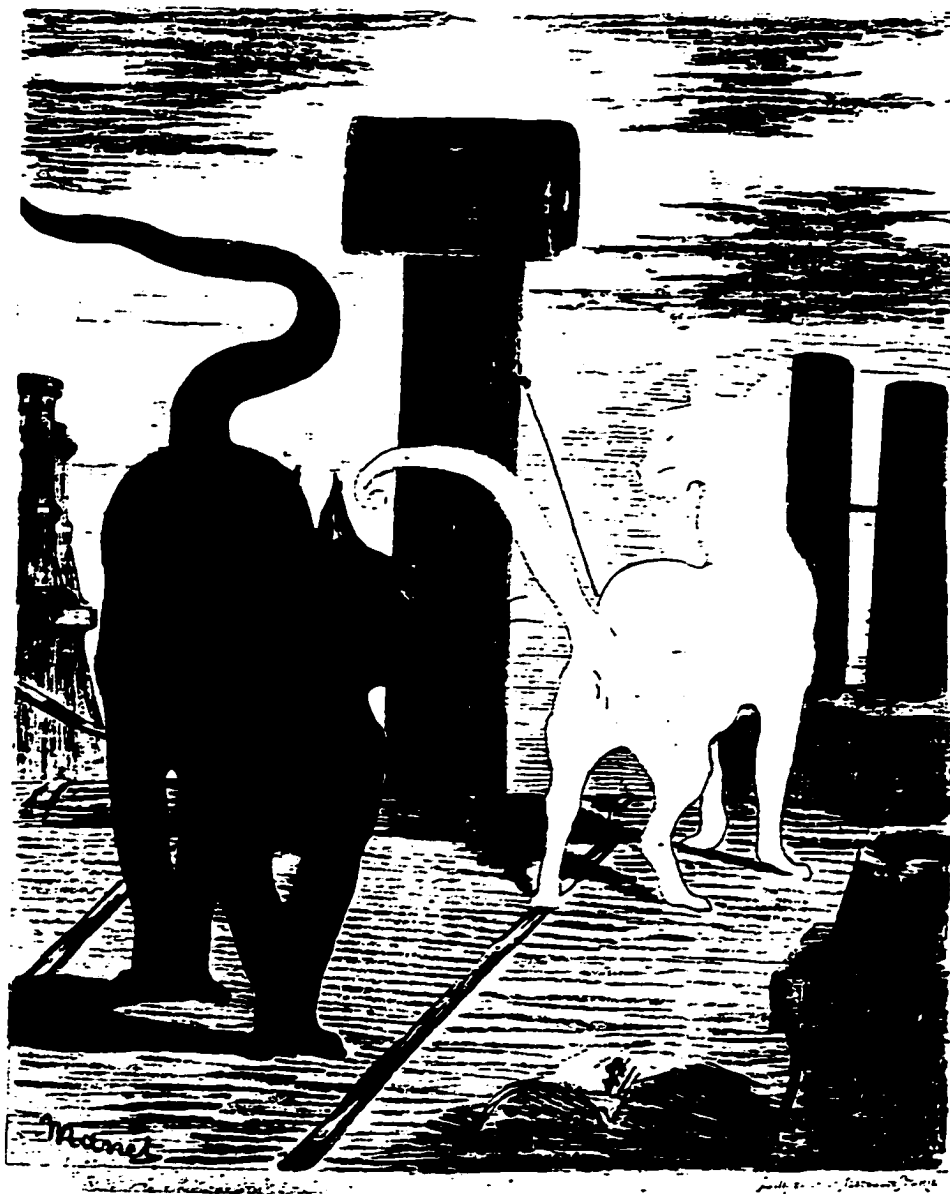


Fig. 43



Fig. 44



Fig. 45

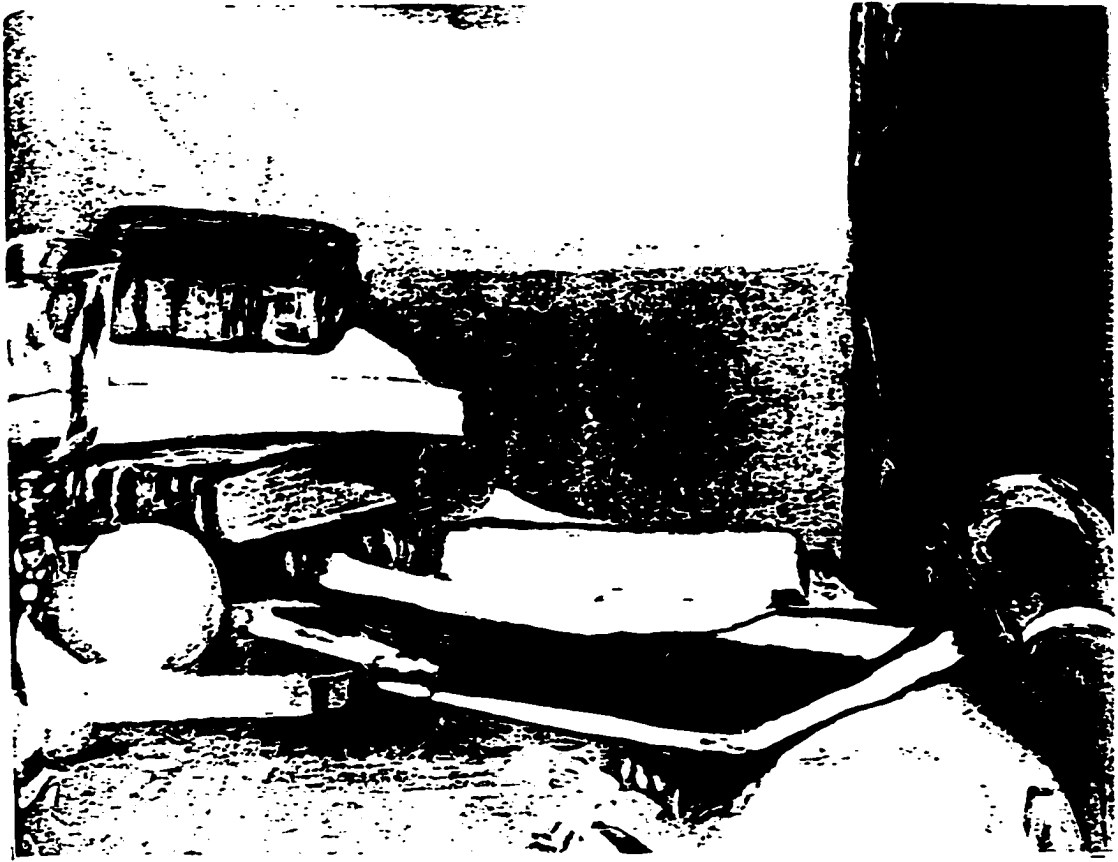


Fig. 46



Fig. 47



Fig. 48



Fig. 49

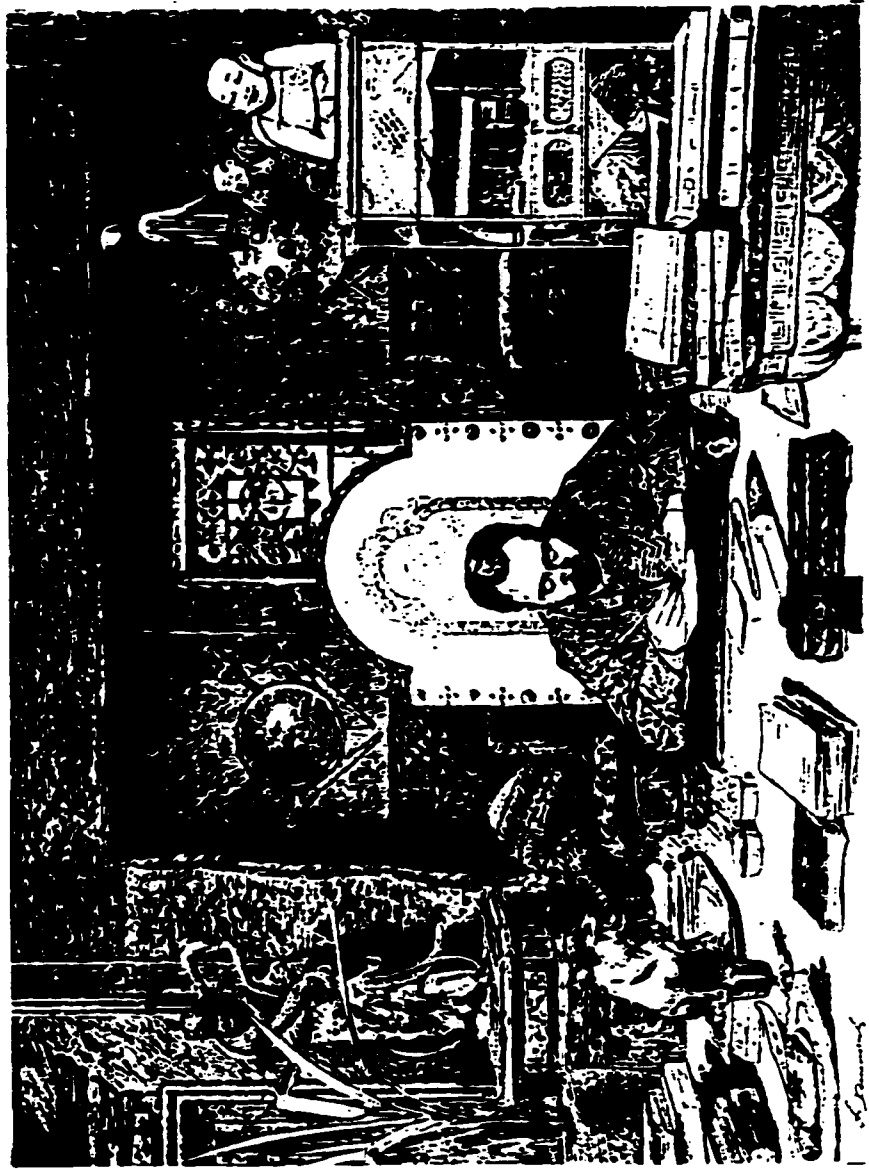


Fig. 50



Fig. 51

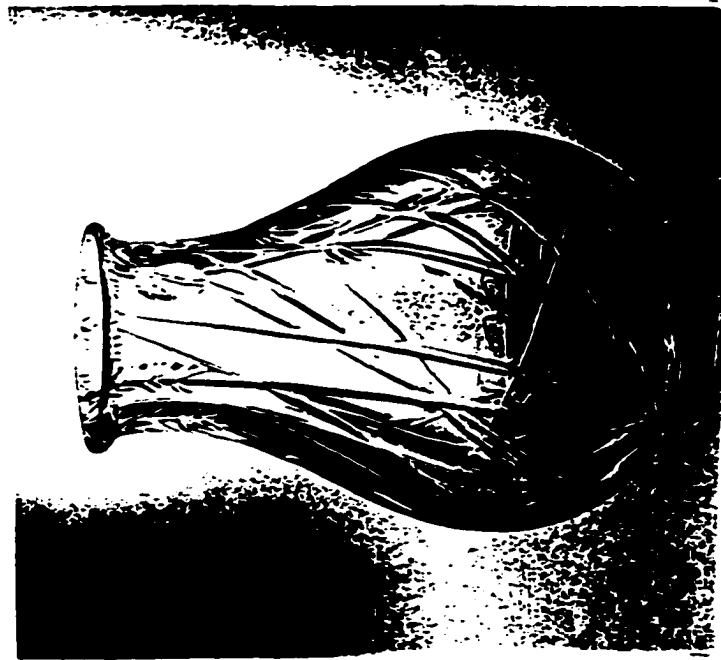
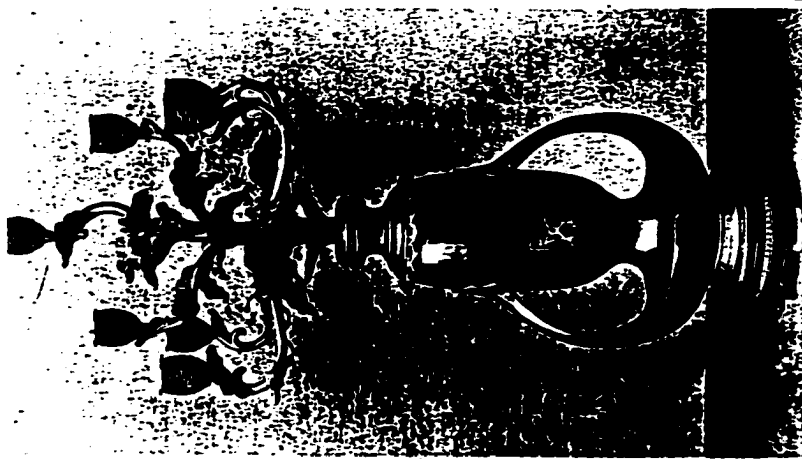


Fig. 52

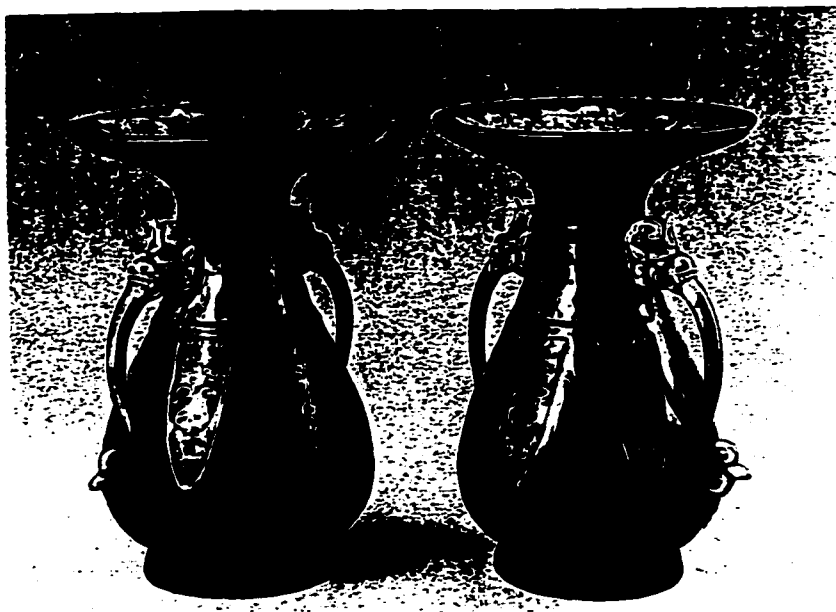


Fig. 53

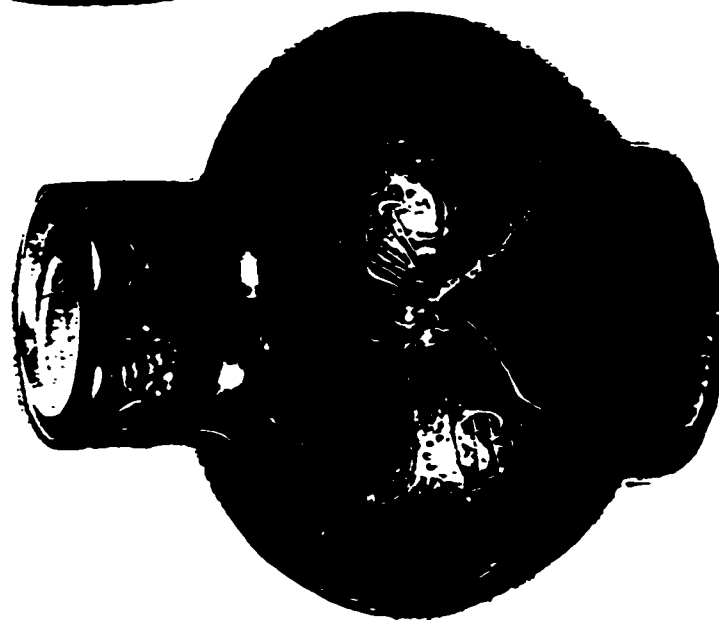


Fig. 54



Fig. 55



Fig. 56



Fig. 57



Fig. 58

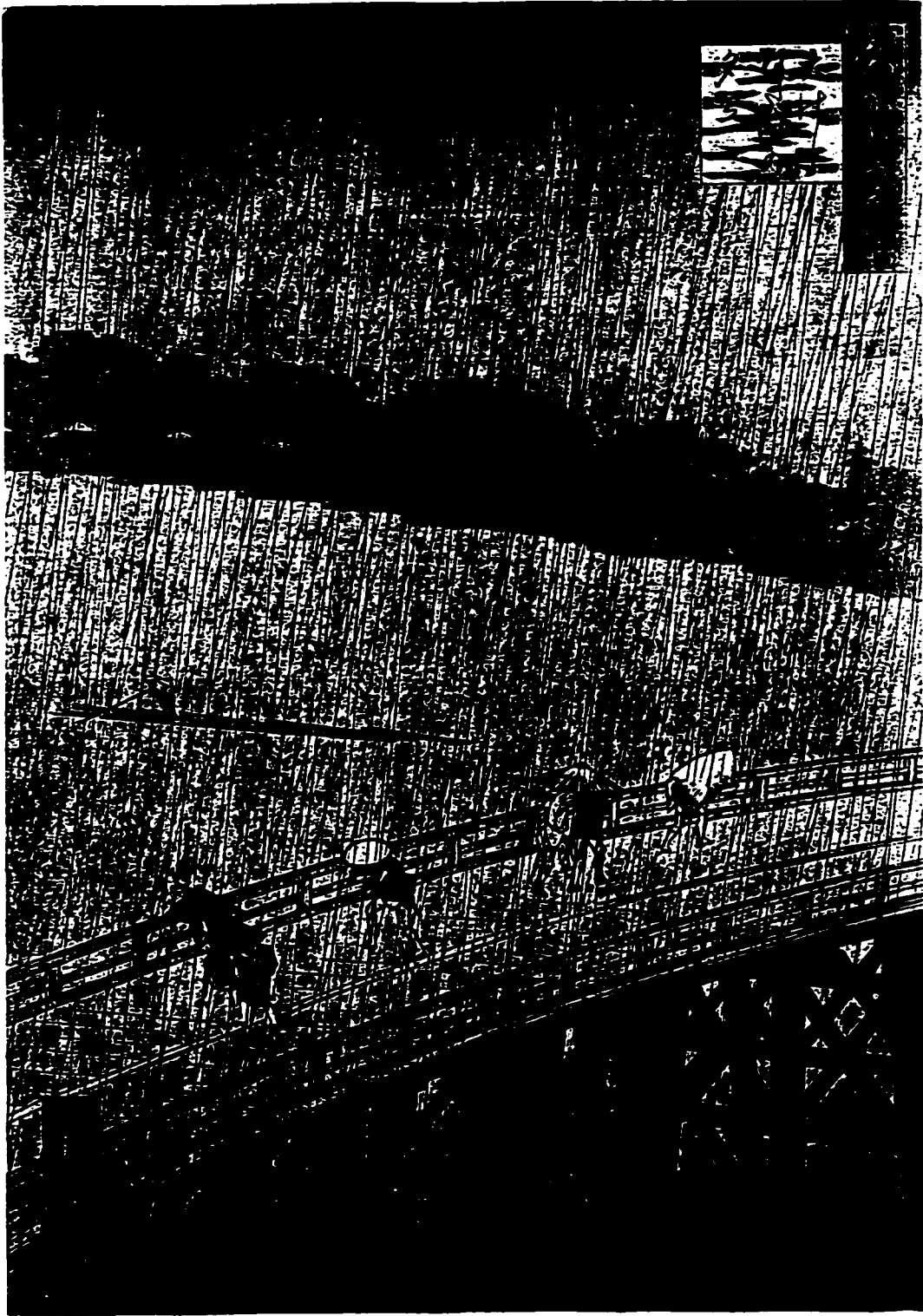


Fig. 59



Fig. 60

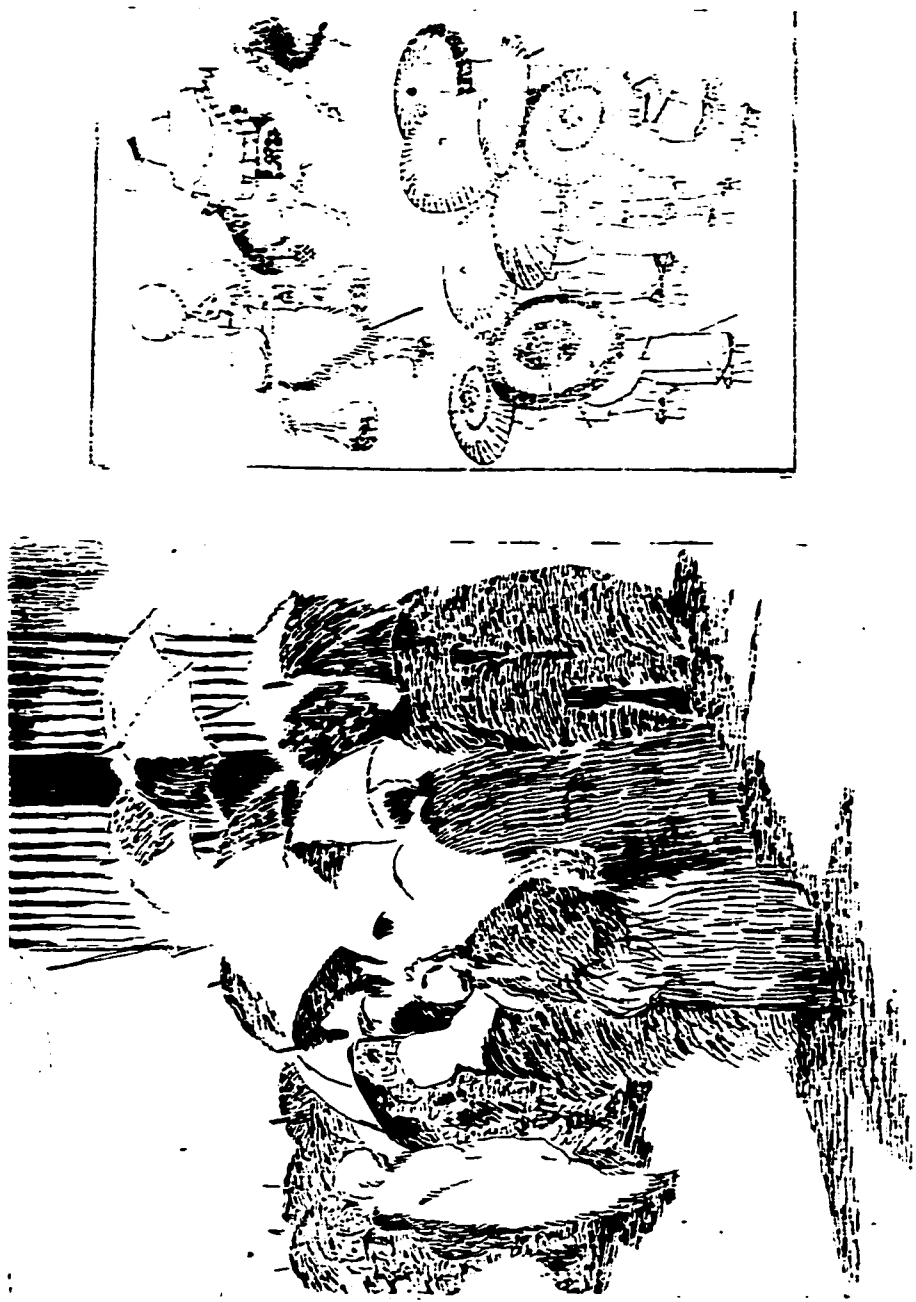


Fig. 61



Fig. 62

— 45 —

- 441 — Statuette en bois sculpté; peint et doré, de Bouddha, assis et méditant. Travail japonais.
- 442 — Statue en bois sculpté et doré de Gardien de temple, debout, la main droite levée. Travail japonais.
- 443 — Deux divinités, sur un même socle, en bois laqué or, du Japon.
- 444 — Statuette de Bouddha en bois laqué or. Travail japonais.
- 445 — Deux bas-reliefs en bois peint : Gardiens de temple. Travail japonais.
- 446 — Fronton japonais, en forme de dragon, en bois sculpté.
- 447 — Deux statuettes en bois laqué or : Personnages japonais.
- 448 — Statuette de femme, jouant de la musique, en bois peint et doré. Travail indien.

SCULPTURES ANTIQUES

- 449 — Statuette en pierre sculptée de personnage, debout, le corps en partie couvert d'une draperie, appuyé contre un tronc d'arbre, un chien à ses pieds. Travail antique.
- 450 — Masque en marbre blanc de dieu Pan. Travail antique.

Fig. 63

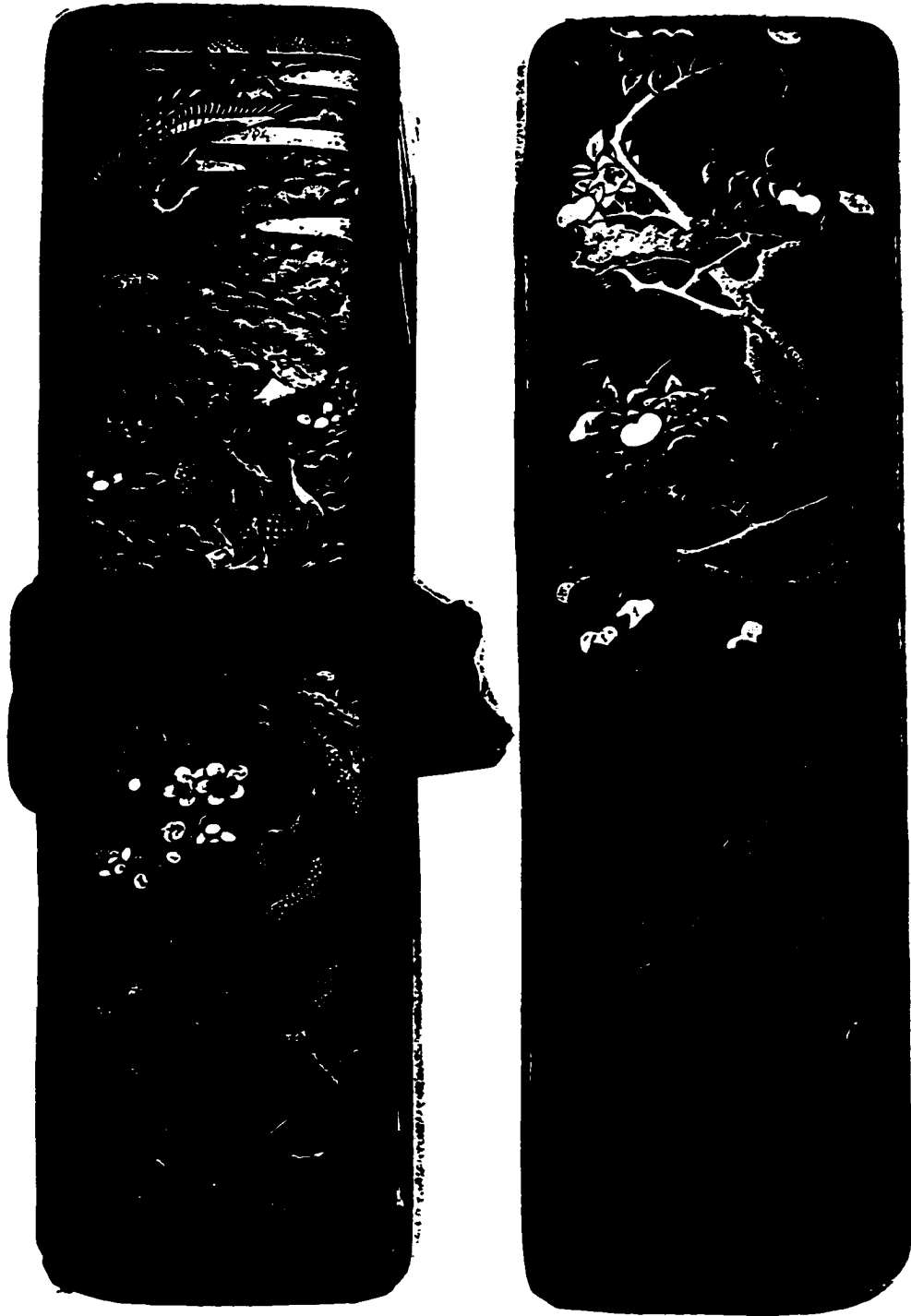


Fig. 64



Fig. 65



Fig. 66



Fig. 67

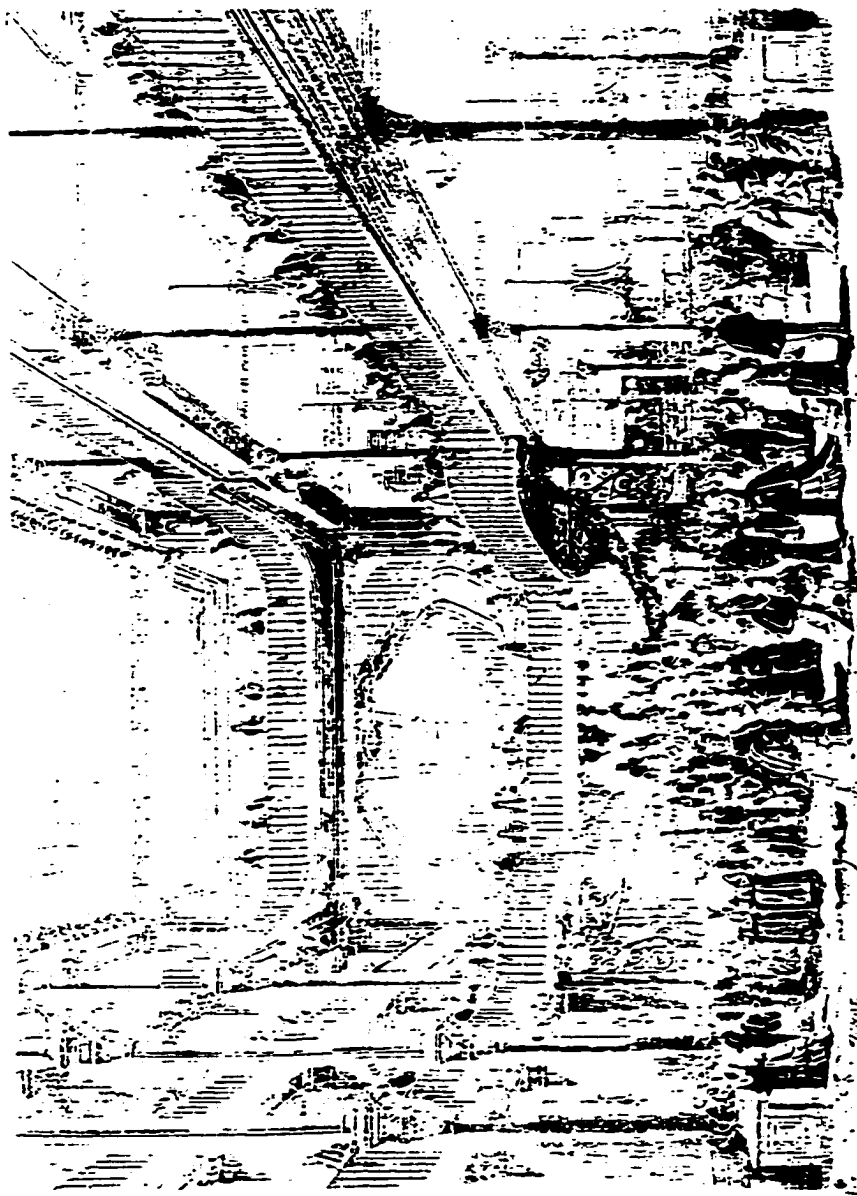


Fig. 68



Fig. 69

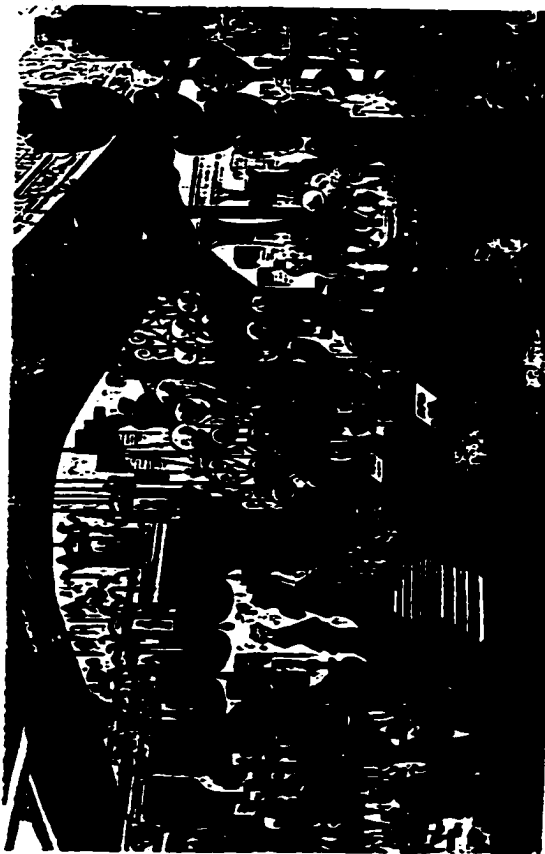


Fig. 70

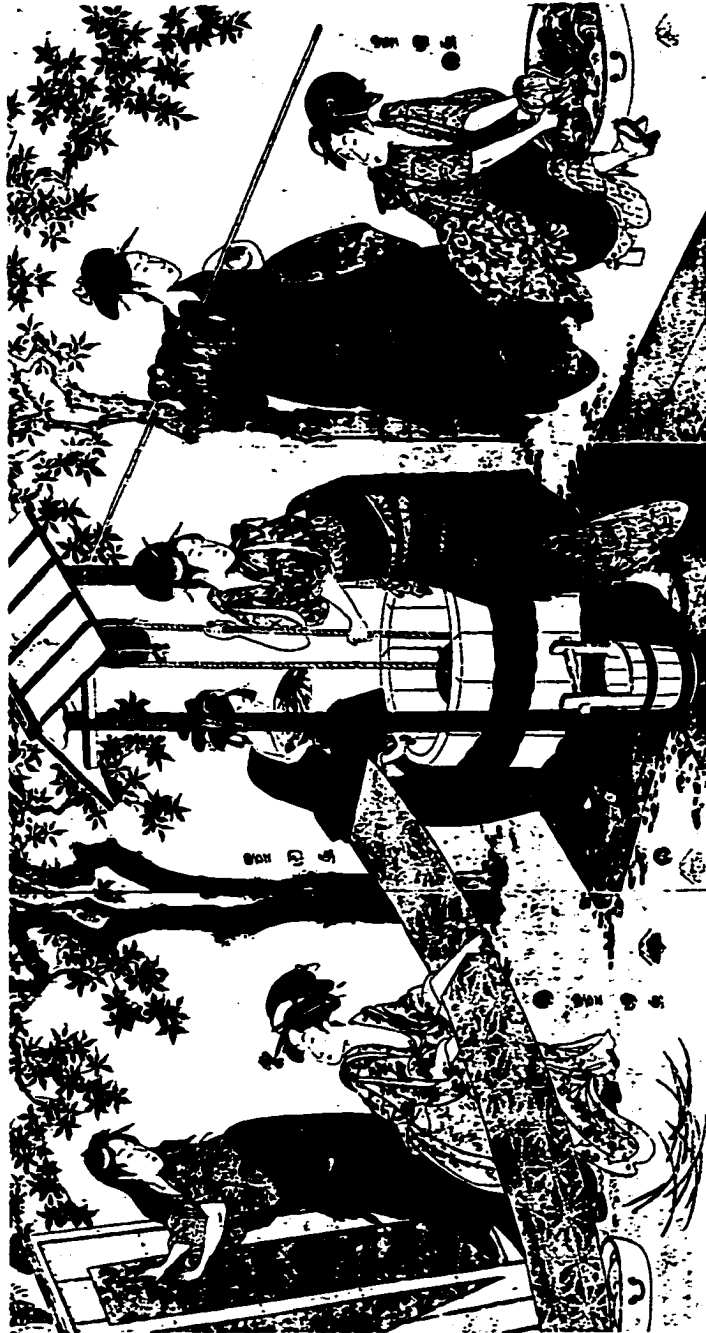


Fig. 71



Fig. 72

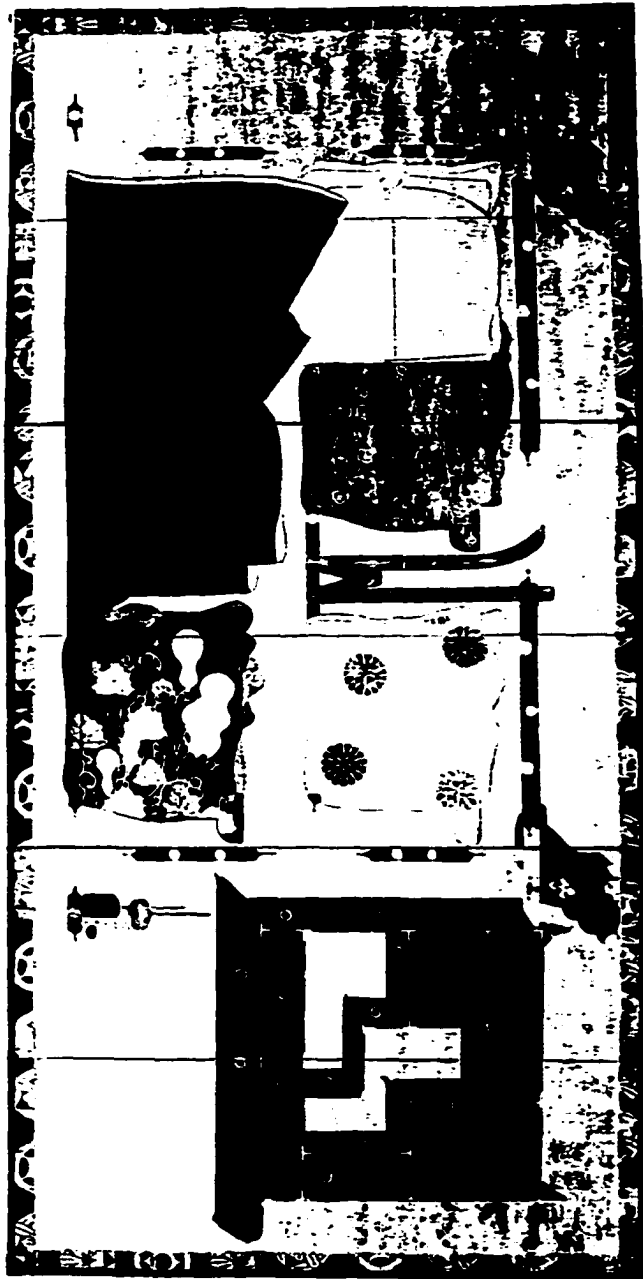


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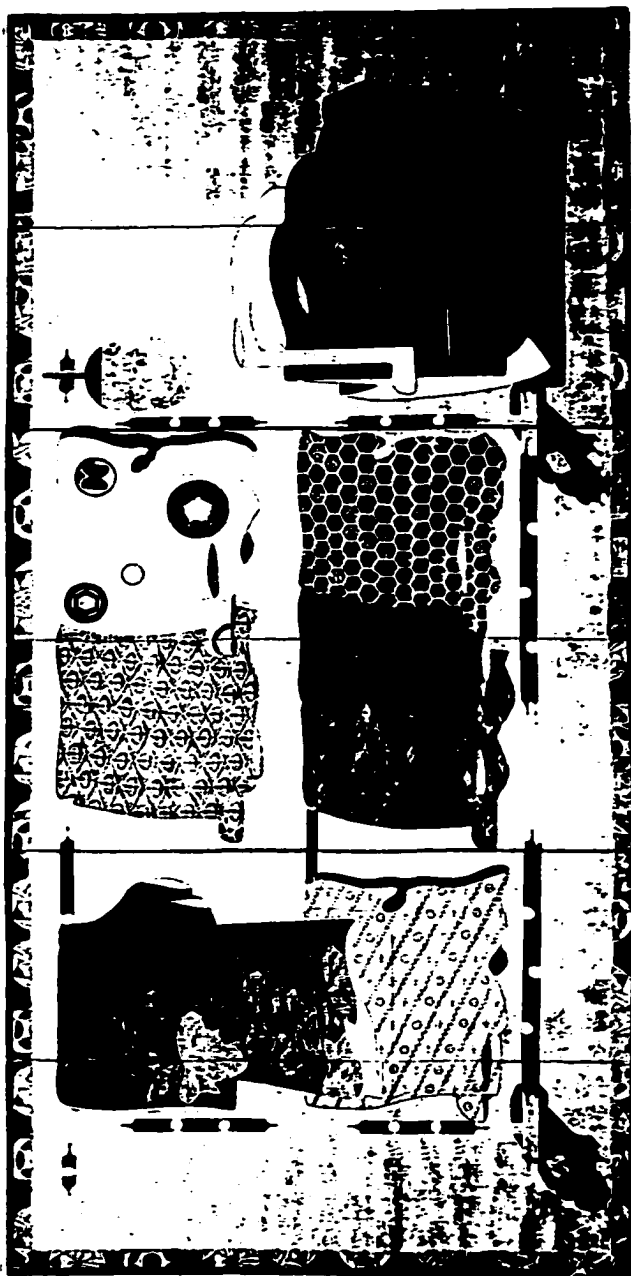


Fig. 74



Fig. 75

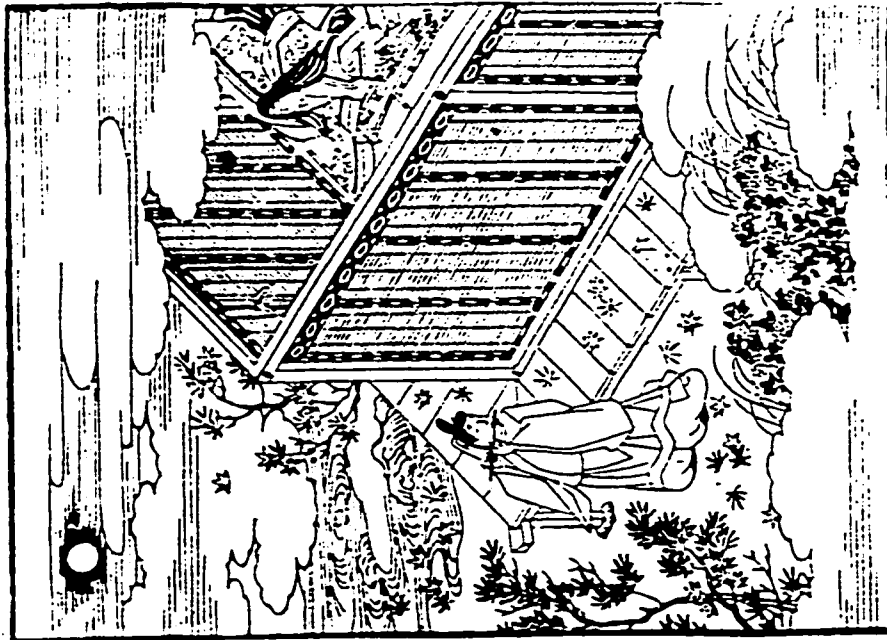
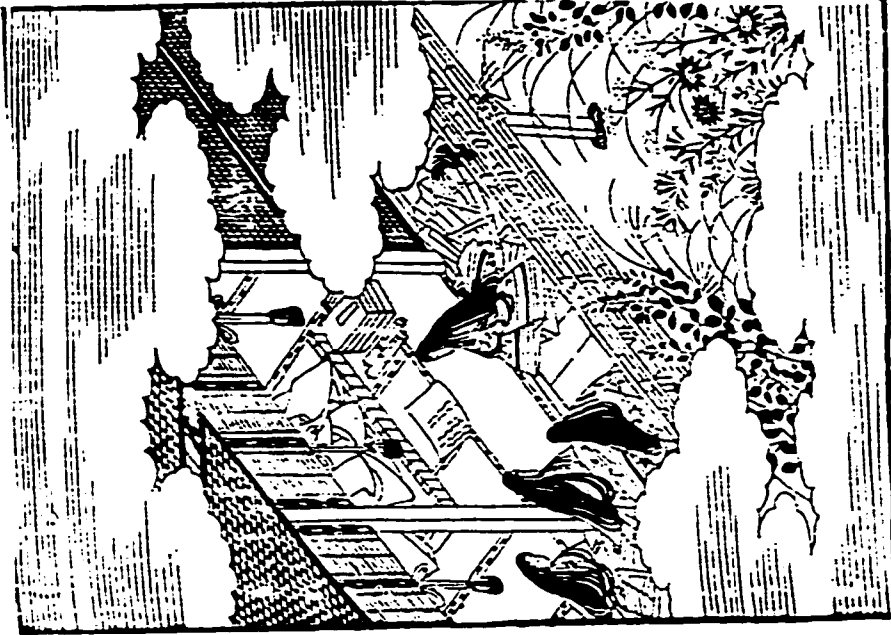


Fig. 76

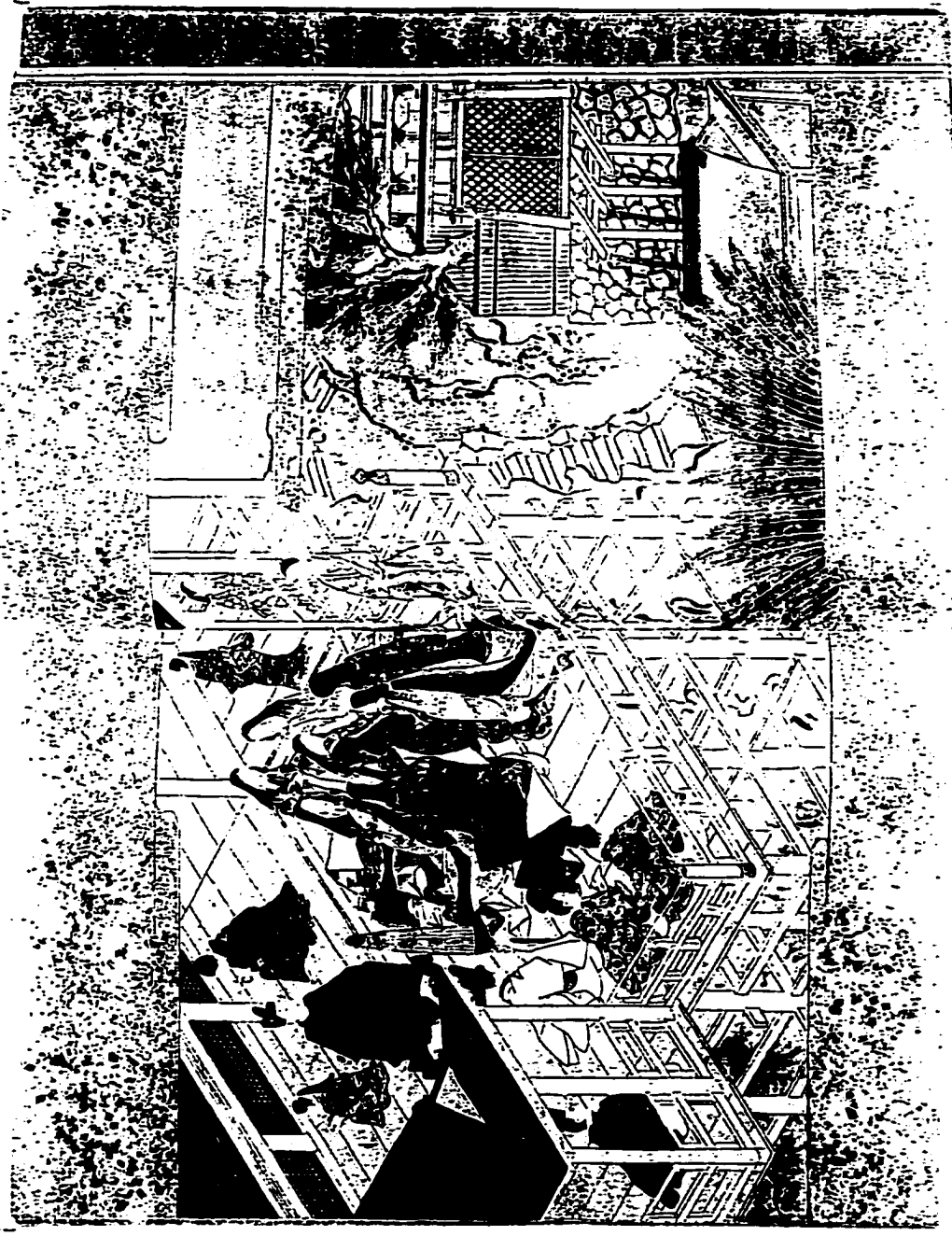


Fig. 77



Fig. 78

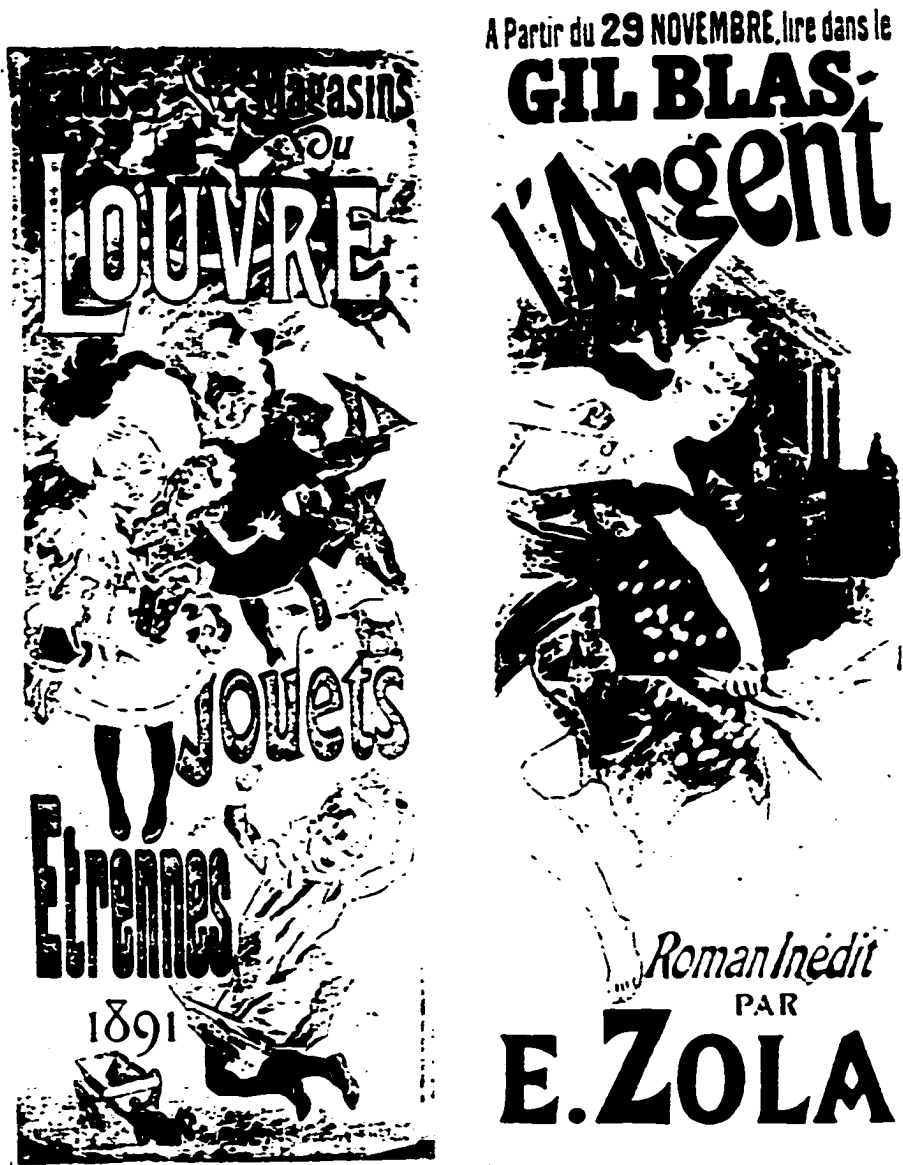


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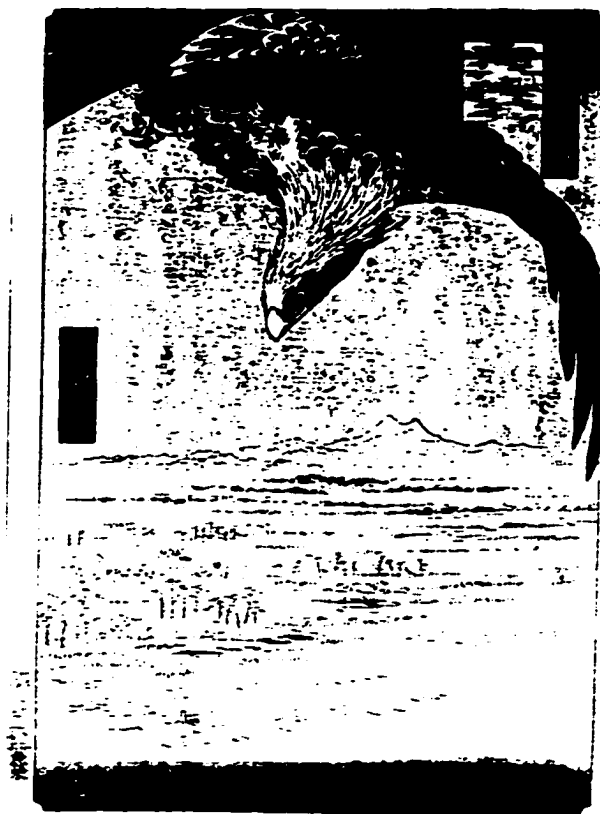


Fig. 80



Fig. 81



Fig. 82



Fig. 83



Fig. 84



Fig. 85

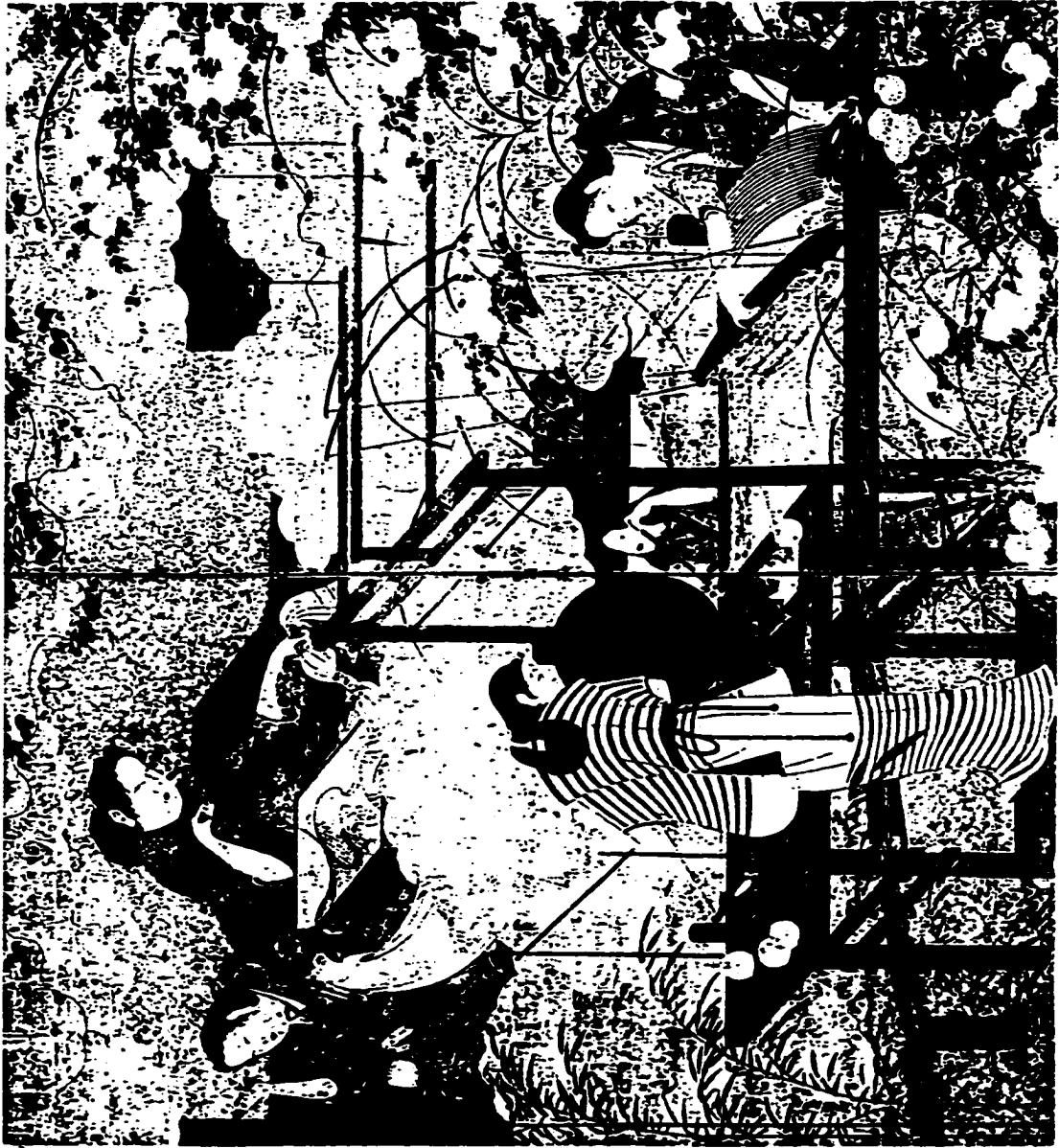


Fig. 86

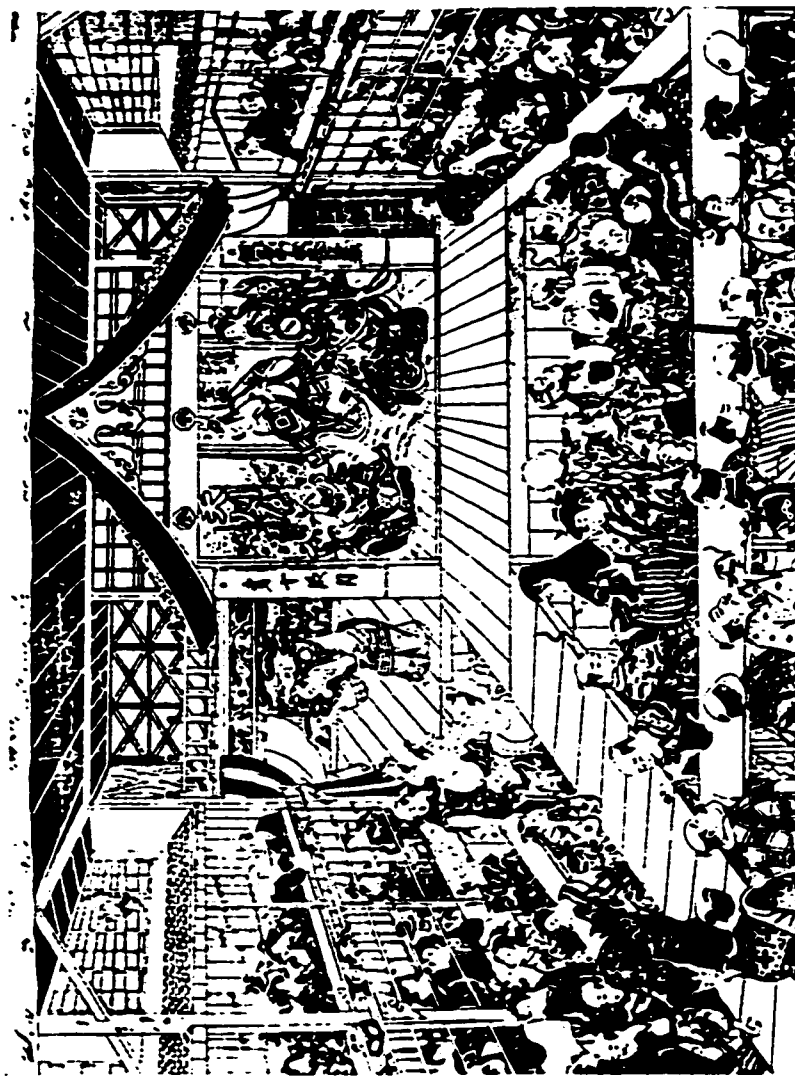


Fig. 87



Fig. 88

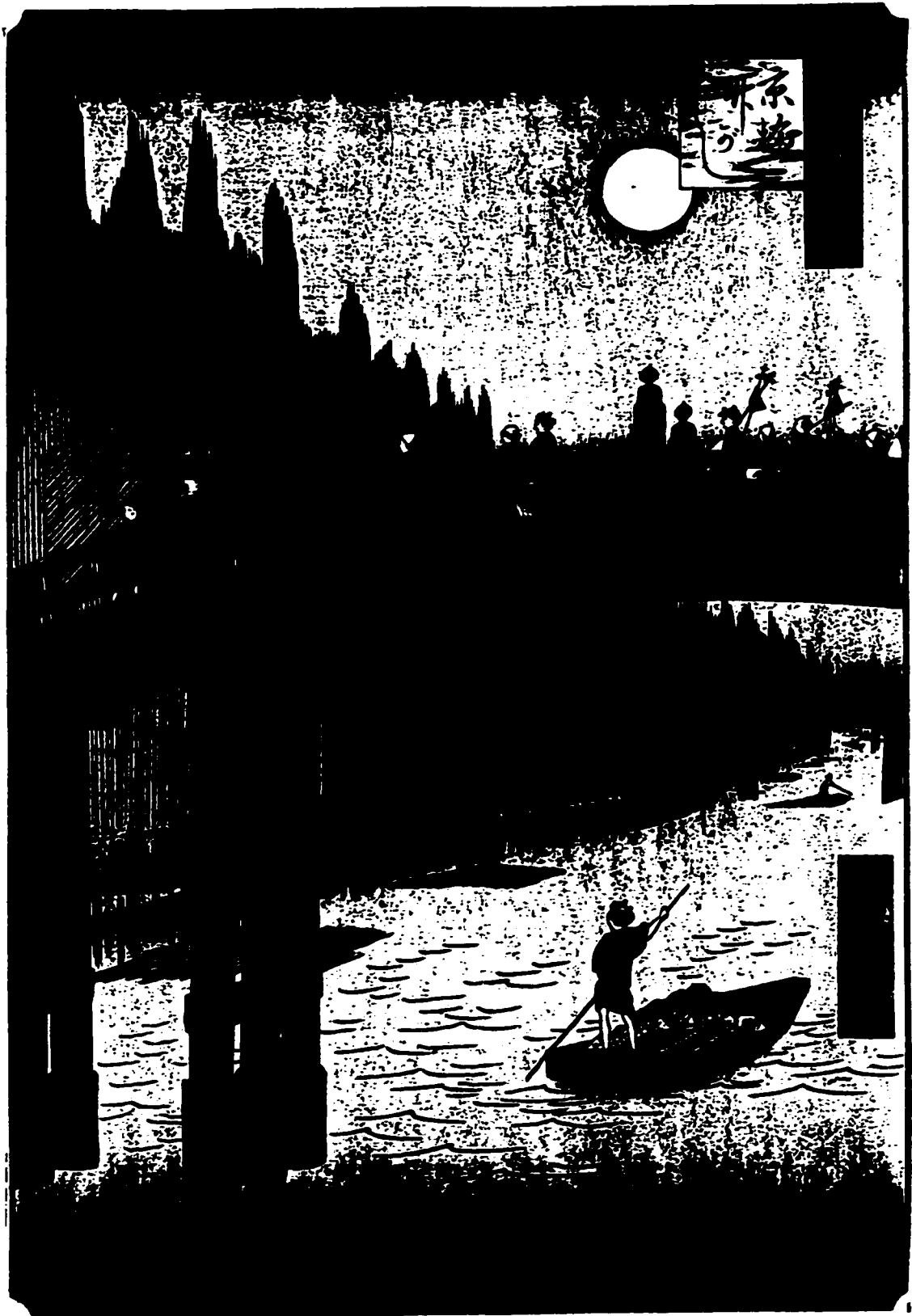


Fig. 89



Fig. 90



Fig. 91

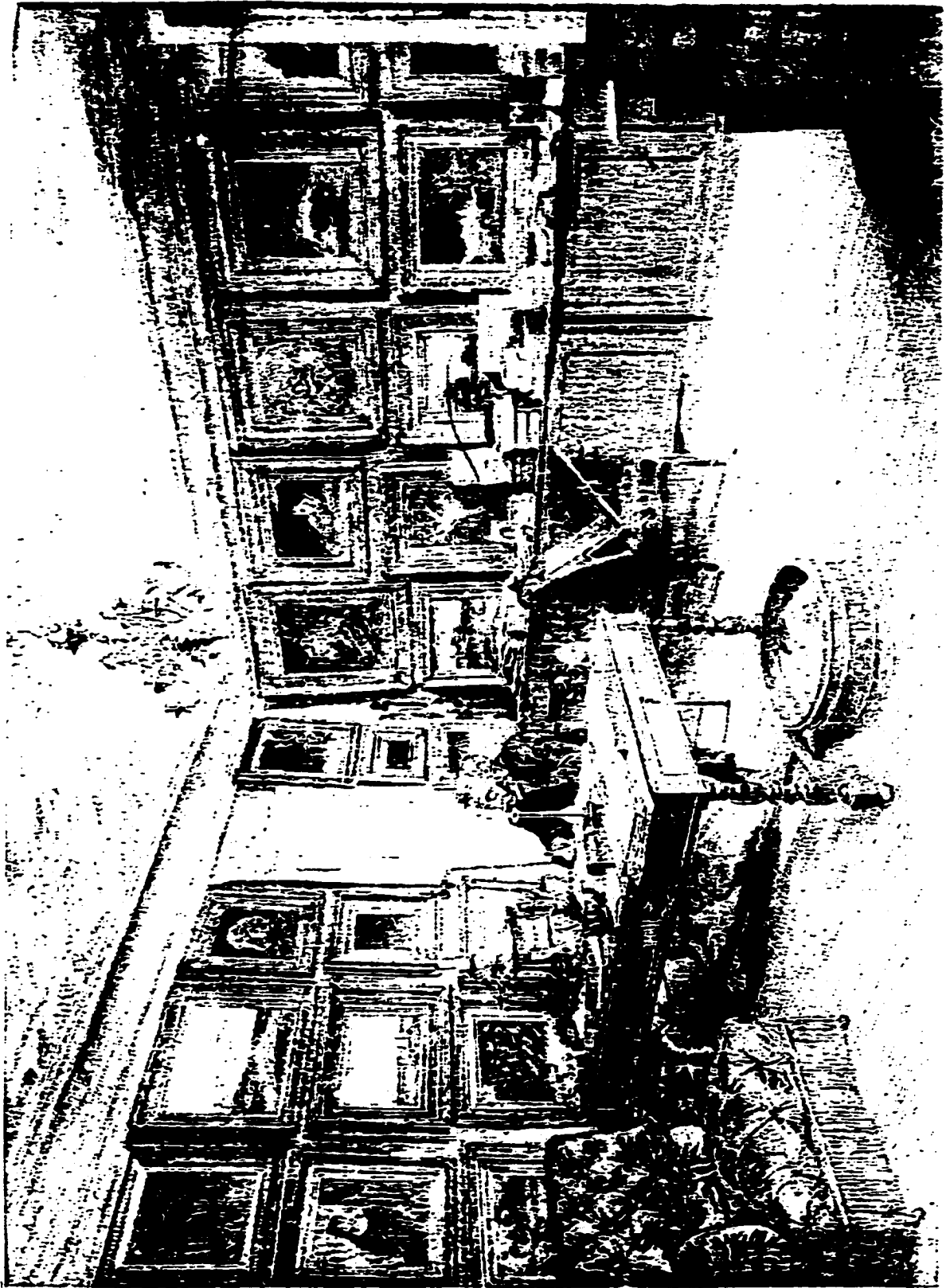


Fig. 92



Fig. 93

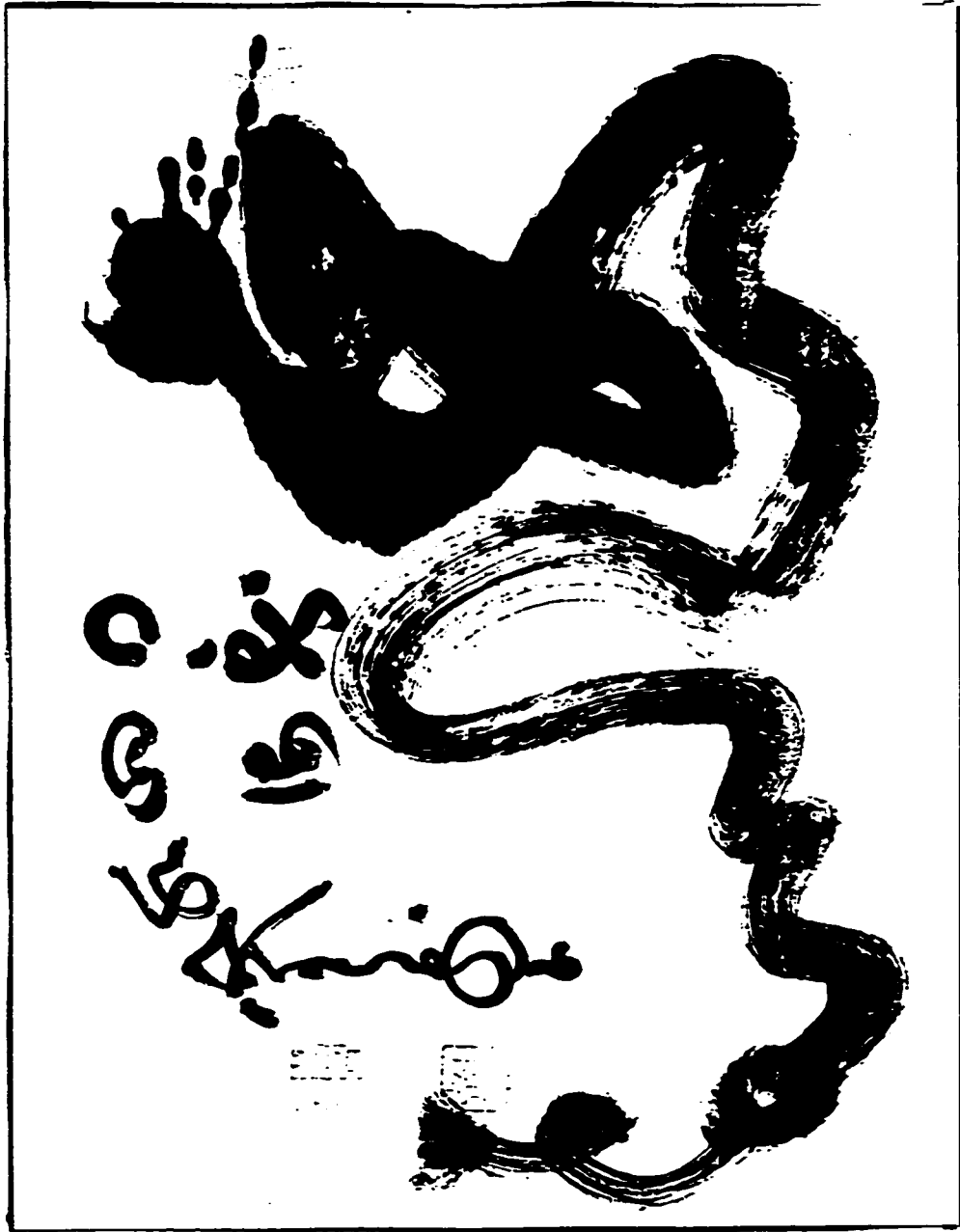


Fig. 94



Fig. 95



Fig. 96

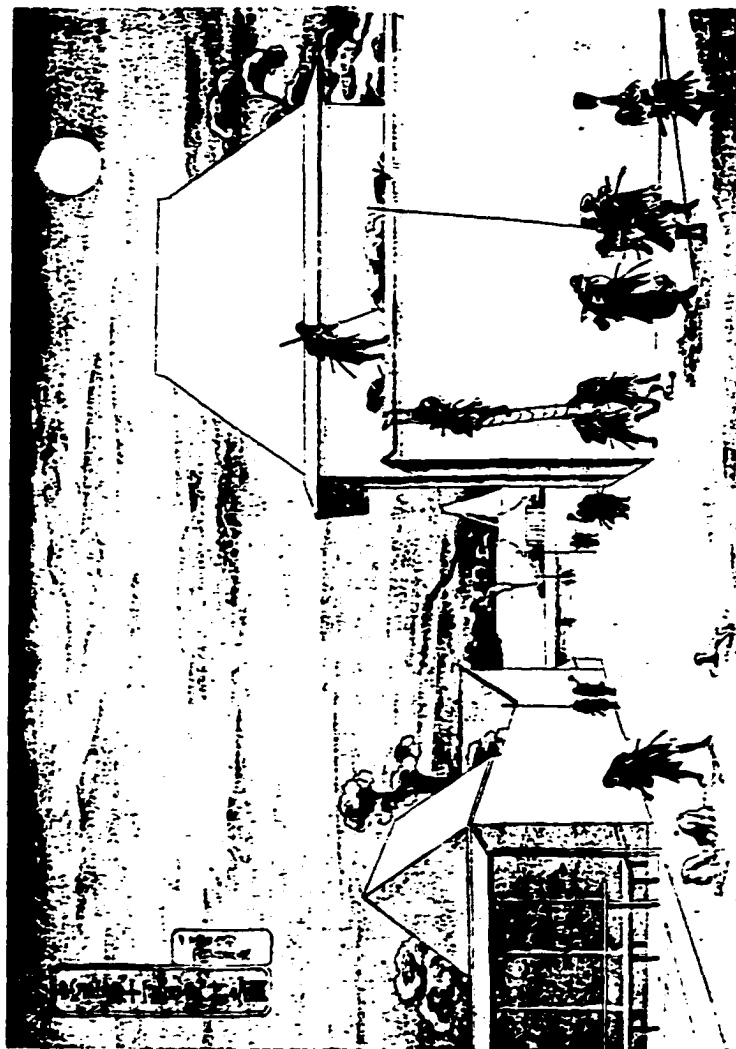


Fig. 97



Fig. 98



Fig. 99



Fig. 100

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