

The *Société des trois*: Constructing Artistic Identities in Paris and London, 1850–1870

by

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Master of History of Art, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2006

Bachelor of Art History and Museum Studies, University of Lethbridge, 2003

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Abstract

In the mid-nineteenth century, Paris served as the epicentre for artistic creation; artists flocked to the French capital in search of training, camaraderie, and, ultimately, success. Henri Fantin-Latour, Alphonse Legros, and James McNeill Whistler were amongst these hopeful artists in the 1850s. While each eventually created a thriving practise for himself, each also fought to establish his artistic career and identity during these early years. Because the narrative of a young, struggling artist is not an uncommon one, this stage is often brushed aside when examining the trajectory of these artists' careers. However, such a dismissal does not allow for a full contextualization of an artist's life and oeuvre. Fantin, Legros, and Whistler evidence this truth, both individually and as a small group.

While attempting to define their maturing artistic identities, these three artists deliberately elected to join forces and become the *Société des trois*. This era bore witness to the birth of the artistic avant-garde, which elevated expression and individualism; with this in mind, the decision to develop a closed artistic society is unique. Fantin, Legros, and Whistler adhered to specific societal tenets and maintained loyalty to each other in an artistic environment that praised the individual. There are many reasons that supported their decision; for example, the *Société* enabled them to transition from the student to professional phases of their careers between 1858 and 1868. Eventually, as the choices

the artists made in the formation of their artistic identities diverged, the *Société* was no longer necessary, and each member went his own way. In light of their decisions to unite as a formal society, Fantin, Legros, and Whistler's period of maturation must be understood through the lens of the *Société des trois*.

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Dedication

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Introduction

Artistic practices, personality, and national affiliation all affected the identities of Henri Fantin-Latour, Alphonse Legros, and James McNeill Whistler in the 1850s and 1860s. Each of these men eventually carved out a successful career for himself, but each began as a struggling art student in Paris. This account was not uncommon for young artists, and, therefore, it is often brushed aside when studying the trajectories of their lives. However, dismissing this seminal stage does not allow for a full contextualisation of an artist's life and oeuvre. As both individuals and as a group, Fantin, Legros, and Whistler are evidence of this truth.

The choices these three artists made while trying to negotiate their fledgling artistic identities led them to align with one another and become the *Société des trois*. In an era that prized individuality, Fantin, Legros, and Whistler stand apart because they deliberately adhered to specific societal tenets oriented around a group identity and maintained loyalty to each other in these terms. The *Société* enabled them to transition from the student to professional phases of their careers between 1858 and 1868. Eventually, as the choices the artists made in the formation of their artistic identities diverged, the *Société* was no longer necessary, and each member went his own way. An examination of the *Société* is essential for understanding the work of these artists as well as the broader framework for artists who chose to work on both sides of the English Channel during the 1860s.

If the art and lives of these three artists are to be properly understood, this formative phase must be recognised. Though their oeuvres appear dissimilar, it is imperative that their early works and letters be viewed in light of the *Société*, as it informed many of their decisions. This early chapter in their lives is especially important because, within it, each artist worked translocally, creating artistic networks that transcended national borders.

Detailed early biographical information on these three artists will not be of great relevance here because of the enormous diversity in their experiences. My examination of their lives will begin in the 1850s, when each artist arrived, and began working, in Paris: Fantin arrived in the capital as a young boy in 1841; Legros and his family moved there in 1851; and, finally, in 1855, Whistler appeared in Paris. Fantin met the others not long after they reached the capital, and it was he who introduced Legros to Whistler in the fall of 1858. The late 1850s were pivotal years that provided the foundation for the formation of the *Société*.

The general artistic atmosphere in which these three artists worked will also be of significance. Their coming together as the *Société* occurred in Paris during the emergence of the artistic avant-garde. The avant-garde that developed at this point is pluralistic and within a short period it encompassed a variety of artists and visual styles. While it would grow increasingly radical, this fledgling avant-garde is essential to the discussion of the early careers of the members of the *Société*. During the Second Empire, there was an increasing move in artistic circles toward individualism and self-expression, as opposed to a strict adherence to academic traditions. This led toward a growing emphasis on an artist's originality, an emphasis that was perpetuated by a new crop of art dealers who found this to be lucrative when marketing emerging artists' work to middle-class buyers.

Those in the arts who consciously engaged in the creation of increasingly radical aesthetics have come to be known as avant-garde artists. At this time, they were not a cohesive group with manifestos and the like, as would be seen with later avant-garde factions. They did, however, have common goals as well as a desire to remain individualized amongst their peers. Though these men, such as Charles Baudelaire and Edouard Manet, were not members of the *Société des trois*, they were a part of the same artistically and socially progressive circle, as evidenced by Fantin's later group portraits.

Fantin, Legros, and Whistler's negotiation of their artistic identities is remarkable in an era that upheld individuality, which is perhaps a reason that the *Société* has heretofore not been thoroughly explored. There is a general lack of literature about the group, but it has been briefly mentioned in scholarship regarding its three members. For example, in 1988, Timothy Wilcox gave some space to the *Société* in one of the few biographies written on Legros. Several biographies on Whistler do the same, most notably that of Gordon Fleming (1978) as well as writings by friends or contemporaries of Whistler, such as the Pennells (*Whistler the Friend*, 1930). The story for Fantin is similar; in the foremost biographical discussion on the artist, published in 1983 by Douglas Druick, Fantin's association with the *Société* is cited several times. The group also receives mention in a few broader nineteenth-century art historical studies, such as Edward Morris's *French Art in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2005). Most significantly, in 1998, scholars at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge mounted a small exhibition entitled *The Society of*

Three. It was accompanied by a ten-page catalogue, which offers a concise history of the intersections of these artists.

However, with the exception of the Fitzwilliam Museum's brief catalogue, none of the sources above give the *Société* much attention. Many have been quick to dismiss the group as informal and, therefore, inconsequential in the development of these artists.¹ Even the Pennells, close friends of Whistler later in his life, did not give weight to the *Société* and their friend's involvement: "No special bond held them together, no definite formula of faith, as in the case of the earlier Pre-Raphaelites or the later Impressionists.... their comradeship was based solely upon their respect for tradition and the desire for each to do the best that was in him in his own way."²

While some scholars have regarded the *Société des trois* with indifference, the major issue regarding the scholarship on the group is that there is simply not enough of it; the passages referenced here are brief and the Fitzwilliam's catalogue is, at best, a concise introduction. Furthermore, information that does exist is not consistent. For example, on the formation of the *Société*, Druick suggests that the *Société* was a concrete manifestation of the artists' beliefs. Meanwhile, Fleming and Glazer position it as informal and without any firm foundations. Morris goes so far as to present the members as merely friends with vaguely similar goals: "The Society had no definite ideology beyond mutual admiration and a general commitment to painting the everyday world around it."³

The final, crucial aspect of the *Société* that is neglected by existing scholarship is the magnitude of their translocal practices. While scholars acknowledge the artists' work unfolded in different capitals, they do not position this as a strategic choice that benefited

them, both individually and as a group. I will argue the *Société* and its aims were bolstered, not hampered, by their translocalism, which was prompted by Whistler's move to London in 1859, followed by Legros's in 1863. As I will demonstrate, this allowed for a wider web of associations, but did not deter the artists from their central, societal focus.

All extant scholarship presents an uncertainty surrounding the strength of the alliance of Fantin, Legros, and Whistler that is without cause. From early albums (one of which has heretofore been unmentioned by scholars) to later correspondence, each member of this trio sought to reinforce his own practice by aligning with a group. It is imperative to view these artists at this juncture in their careers through the lens of their choosing, which was the *Société des trois*.

In the following four, roughly chronological, chapters, I present the shifting identities of these artists as individuals and as a group in conjunction with their relevant artworks. Comparing paintings, prints, and drawings by members of the *Société* at different stages of its evolution illuminates the subtle, yet vital, similarities that exist in style and subject matter, as well as the group's increasing divergences.

Chapter one establishes the context of the formative years of Fantin and Legros in Paris during the early Second Empire. Historical background and the state of the Parisian art world are introduced insofar as they present the environment out of which the *Société* would emerge. I examine various artworks and writings from pre-1858 in order to make clear the artists' early beliefs, which inform their identities and become the tenets of the trio.

By the early 1850s, Fantin enrolled in drawing classes in Paris, which is where he met Legros in 1853. These seminal years must be investigated in order to fully comprehend the *Société's* later artistic ventures. Little correspondence passed between these artists in the 1850s, so I rely on their early drawings and paintings along with the albums they compiled with their close friends. Because they have been almost completely overlooked by contemporary scholars, these albums are of great interest. The first of these, *Album Solon* (1854–1856), contains sketches, musings, poetry, watercolours, and even musical scores. Similarly amassed material can be found in the second album, *Album Cuisin*, which began in 1856.⁴ Fantin contributed work to each album, including long letters written to his fellow contributors detailing the importance of the artists remaining a unified group as they progressed in their art and lives. Though Whistler is not involved in these compilations because he was not yet in France and Legros contributed only a handful of artworks, the albums are instructive when examining the foundations of the *Société* and reveal the artists' early emphasis on shared aspects of identity.

The second chapter introduces Whistler and expounds on the formation of the *Société des trois* at the end of 1858. Current scholars rarely consider these artists as a cohesive unit, but these factors indicate that they manifested the cooperative spirit essential to artistic societies. The *Société's* activity remained primarily in Paris at this stage and a pivotal, yet rarely discussed, exhibition in the spring of 1859 (and related correspondence) demonstrate the trio's growing bond and shared beliefs.

At this point, the contextualisation of the *Société* will be aided by a brief examination of the expectations of the official art world (the Academies), as well as

alternatives (the commercial market), in both Paris and London. At this time, Fantin, Legros, and Whistler experimented with their dual status as artists who were autonomous from yet dependent on the public art market for income. London's inclusion is necessary because, not long after the group came together, Whistler began spending much of his time in London. No correspondence indicates that this was a source of tension or of regret on Whistler's part, and he continued to travel back and forth frequently, thereby ensuring his place within the *Société* as well as the Parisian art scene. Throughout their lives, Whistler served as an important link between collectors in London and the *Société*.

I situate the apex of the *Société's* strength and cohesiveness in 1863, and chapter three focuses on this period. At this time, the members of this society were most explicit about the tenets of the group and their loyalty to each other. An indication of this devotion can be seen in a letter from Whistler to Fantin about his faithfulness to the guiding principles of their group, what he refers to as the *mot de la société*. Such choices overtly pertain to each artist's self-fashioning of his individual artistic identity. Because this allegiance was evidenced by all three artists on both sides of the Channel, I analyse the importance of the translocality of the *Société*. Labelling of the group as "translocal" is necessary as it avoids the traps of tidy cultural and geographic categories, both for the artists as well as the cosmopolitan cities in which they worked, and allows for nuances in their styles and networks.⁵ Economic factors must also be acknowledged as they influenced the artists' translocal choices as well as their respective styles.

One of the most significant, and notorious, artistic events of the Second Empire, the so-called *Salon des Refusés*, took place in 1863, and provided a public opportunity for the members of the *Société* to put their ideas into practice and demonstrate their unity.

This was the first state-sponsored exhibition at which work by all members could be seen. Later that summer, Legros joined Whistler permanently in London, shifting the balance of this translocal group firmly across the Channel. While this presented new challenges, it is also evident that the *Société* relied heavily on this ensuing diversity for further exposure and income. Their solidity as a group is evidenced by Fantin's painting *Hommage à Delacroix* (1864). The large group portrait includes non-*Société* figures, but I will argue that the translocal trio is emphasised and unquestionably remained Fantin's priority.

Chapter four will outline some of the reasons that the *Société des trois* lost its stability during the second half of the 1860s. Scholars have offered a number of causes to explain when and why the *Société* dissolved, but maintain that the final break occurred by 1868. Most centre on factors such as money, women, or artistic style to account for this demise, which I suggest fails to reflect the complexity of the situation. I demonstrate that the principal explanation for the group's disintegration lay in the artists' self-fashioning. Identities are consciously formed through an affinity with groups, locales or organizations. Association with the *Société* allowed these artists to transition more smoothly through locales, but once they had graduated to independent professional careers, a group identity became superfluous. The life cycle of the *Société des trois* also corresponds with contemporary sociological studies. Leading theorists on the development of small groups posit that such groups, which come together to serve a particular purpose such as career enhancement, will always have a point of termination as these goals are accomplished. And so, the *Société* reached its logical, inevitable conclusion.

¹ Lee Glazer, Margaret MacDonald, Linda Merrill, and Nigel Thorp, eds. *James McNeill Whistler in Context: Essays from the Whistler Centenary Symposium University of Glasgow 2003*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2008: 29; Gordon Fleming. *The Young Whistler: 1834-1866*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978: 138.

² Elizabeth Robin Pennell. *Whistler the Friend*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1930: 46.

³ Edward Morris. *French Art in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005: 262.

⁴ The *Albums Cuisin* and *Solon* were not thus named by their creators, but for ease of discussion have been called after the artist who acted as caretaker for each volume.

⁵ Marina Peterson. "Translocal Civilities: Chinese Modern Dance at Downtown Los Angeles Public Concerts." *Deciphering the Global: Its Scales, Spaces, and Subjects*. Saskia Sassen, ed. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Chapter 1: Establishing the Roots of the *Société des trois*

The *Société des trois*'s evolution begins with the origins of its members' artistic identities. Though each man's experience differed greatly, each saw himself progress from student to professional artist while in Paris in the early part of the Second Empire; simultaneously, the city itself was in the throes of transition as it grew from an essentially medieval urban environment to a modernized spectacle under the direction of Louis Napoleon and Baron Haussmann. Not only did the *Société*'s members' growth mirror this environment in many ways but, on a practical level, it also created the opportunities needed by young artists to carve out fruitful careers for themselves.

Though James McNeill Whistler had yet to relocate to Paris, Henri Fantin-Latour and Alphonse Legros set out the initial tenets of the *Société* and began practicing them in the 1850s. The opportunity for this rested within the friendships the latter young men formed in artists' *ateliers*. Contrasting but essential, individuality and group unity were overarching themes in these developmental years for these artists; their artistic training and the albums they produced allowed them to forge their own paths and still experience the support of close companions.

Young artists such as those that went on to form the *Société des trois* found themselves in a dynamic and turbulent situation during the early years of the Second Empire. While these men worked to develop into skilled artists, Paris was also in the throes of transition. Though no member of the group was born in Paris, it remains the birthplace of the *Société*'s fidelity and friendship. It is, therefore, necessary to consider

the role that Paris played in their fledgling careers. Their coming together coincided with Paris's growth and modernization, which was transforming contemporary art in the city. More opportunities for practicing artists emerged alongside the traditional arts institutions which, though under strain, continued to be of great importance.

The dawn of the Second Empire signalled the beginning of Paris's modern era. After his self-promotion from President of the Second Republic to Emperor of the Second Empire, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (1808–1873) sought to justify his position for the French people, as well as the rest of the world. Eager to make his mark on the city, Emperor Napoleon III instituted hundreds of building projects, essentially turning Paris into a gleaming spectacle. Napoleon found inspiration for Paris's new urbanization while exiled in London in the late 1830s after a failed military coup and his later visit to the International Exhibition of 1851.

Redevelopment of this magnitude required assistance and Napoleon appointed Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann (1809–1891) to implement his vision for the city's reconstruction. Originally a civic planner, Haussmann accepted the appointment of Prefect of the Seine in 1853; he remained at this post until the end of the Empire, during which time he also became a senator and a member of the *Académie des beaux-arts*. Beginning in the early 1850s, large- and small-scale changes were implemented throughout the city. The most obvious of these was that the main transportation arteries that were created or widened. These boulevards sliced through the dense maze of central Paris that had existed since medieval times. Along these streets, Haussmann's uniform

buildings—which included shopfronts, cafés, and expensive apartments—arose, standing as sentinels of the widespread change.⁶

Parisian critics examined these new elements of the city from both positive and negative angles. Many praised the renovations for improving sanitation, increasing employment, and creating more leisure space for members of the bourgeoisie, who were quickly establishing themselves as the dominant class. Others focused on the negative political implications of the transformation. Neighbourhoods featuring an array of classes were split as Haussmann's plans included the centralization of retail; previously, each community had depended solely on its own inhabitants for goods and services without needing to travel through the city. Further, the new boulevards displaced thousands of lower-class Parisians from these neighbourhoods, whose homes were torn down and who were unable to afford rent in the new buildings. Critics also speculated that boulevards were straightened and widened to provide clear shots for canons in case of an uprising as well as to prevent citizens from erecting barricades too easily as they had in 1830 and 1848.

Paris's revitalization made it a popular topic of discussion in cafés and journals, both in France and abroad. These changes also bolstered Paris's status as the centre of the French art world. Haussmann's new retail spaces, which focused on street-level display and spectacle, led to the birth of large department stores as well as smaller specialty shops, including commercial galleries.⁷ These galleries, in conjunction with the bourgeoisie's increasing disposable income, created new opportunities to sell contemporary art, yet another draw to the capital for artists.

Young artists from the countryside flocked to Paris not only for the possibility of monetary success but also because of the celebrated training available there. During the 1850s, nearly all artists attempted to join the ranks of Paris's prestigious *Académie des beaux-arts*, which exponentially improved the exposure of those training there. Even though larger cities outside the capital, such as Dijon, also had art academies, if a male artist wanted to move beyond the status of local church decorator or portraitist, developing a career in Paris was the most obvious option. These immigrants varied in their levels of training, skill, and financial status, all of which greatly affected whether or not they received one of the *Académie's* few open spots. Even then, acceptance did not guarantee a successful career. Artistic success in Paris depended largely on a fickle buying public that tended to adhere to the often-biting critiques of the press.

The possibility of receiving harsh reviews created a real temptation to hide oneself and one's work from potentially severe critics, but every artist knew that visibility was the only way to forge a career. Therefore, artists fixed their attention on the highlight of the Parisian artistic and social calendar: the bi-annual Salon.⁸ This enormous art exhibition had been organized exclusively by and for the *Académie* since its inception in the late seventeenth century. After the French Revolution of 1789, the exhibition opened to non-Academic artists, allowing anyone to submit works to the jury. While it was officially an inclusive exhibition, the Salon's jurors predictably favoured academic works, both their own and those of their colleagues and students. Each spring, Paris anticipated the Salon's grand opening. In the weeks that followed, one could read of the exhibition's triumphs and failures in the Parisian journals, where critics battled to be the

wittiest. Most young artists quickly became accustomed to the bi-annual rejection of their pieces, but a lack of alternate showcases forced them to continue to submit to the judgment of the *Académie* and the Salon.



Figure 1.1 Gustave Courbet, *Un enterrement à Ornans*. 1849-50. 315cm x 660cm. Oil on Canvas. Musée d'Orsay.

Though non-Academic artists often rightly anticipated Salon rejection, this forum could bring unknown artists to the public's attention. In the early 1850s, no artist gained notoriety and household-name status more quickly than Gustave Courbet (1819–1877). The public and the press still reeled from his strategically scandalous showings at the last Salon of the Second Republic, occurring in 1850/51. Among these was *Un enterrement à Ornans* (fig. 1.1), a work featuring a funeral in Courbet's hometown. The painting caused a lot of confusion when shown in Paris because of the artist's dark palette and mundane, peasant subject matter. These “ugly” qualities became synonymous with Courbet's brand of Realism.

In spite of the stir they caused, Courbet's paintings were not without precedents. His Realism drew on the tradition of French peasant and countryside images made popular by early Barbizon painters of the 1830s and others. He challenged convention, however, by giving his unidealized figures precedence over the landscape itself as well as by the sheer enormity of his canvases, which blatantly confronted the expectations of the bourgeois Salon viewers. Avoiding academic idealization and fine finishes, he sought to

present life as he saw it. Courbet, who hailed from outside the capital and remained independent of the academic system, inspired many young artists congregating at the centre of the European art world with his strong personality and artistic style.

A polarizing figure, Courbet had adamant advocates and attackers alike, and he believed that no press was bad press. However, artists knew that a *succès du scandale* did not necessarily guarantee a successful career, though it might have worked for Courbet. Many knew they needed to complement any official training, whether or not the *Académie* accepted them. Such tutelage could be found in several forms. Many senior or well-established artists set up studios in order to instruct new artists, earn money, and cement their reputation. After all, a student's name was always tied to that of the tutor. These ateliers took on a myriad of forms with varying degrees of formality. At more casual studios, students paid a weekly fee to draw from live models without any formal instruction. On the other end of the spectrum, *Académie* members' ateliers offered formal supervision and instruction, all for the purpose of preparing *Académie* students for the prestigious *Prix de Rome*. Between these two extremes existed a multitude of ateliers, each approaching art in a unique way.

Alongside these diverse forms of training in the 1850s, another type of exhibition emerged in Europe. The tradition of the International Exhibition or *Exposition Universelle* began in London in 1851. This grand showcase featured industrial and cultural innovations from across the globe. Four years later, Napoleon responded in kind, and alongside technological and agricultural wares he featured Europe's first international art exhibition. Though esteemed French artists' works hung with the most prominence, other countries had sections to arrange as they saw fit. This unique

exhibition of art gave Parisians unprecedented exposure to foreign artists previously unknown to them. With millions attending the exposition, it also turned Paris into a global stage and created opportunities for those willing to stand apart from the crowd. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Courbet erected his own pavilion to showcase his works near the official exhibition grounds.

All of this offers a brief overview of the artistic and cultural context into which walked the three young men who would become the *Société des trois*. Young, independent artists had many opportunities to meet one another and share ideas, but rarely did close friendships form as they did for this trio. Though they arrived in Paris in close succession, the first to land in the capital was Henri Fantin-Latour.

Fledgling artists immigrating to Paris in search of success were commonplace, and Fantin and Legros can be counted among them. Both moved to the capital with their families at a young age from large provincial towns, and they sought out appropriate instruction as well as other artists with whom to socialize. The variations in their interests, training, and background provide essential insight to the professional artists they would become both individually and as the *Société des trois*.

Henri Fantin-Latour was born in Grenoble on 14 January 1836 to Jean-Théodore and Hélène de Naidenoff. Though born outside the capital to parents of Italian and Russian origin, Fantin felt thoroughly Parisian because his family moved from his birthplace to the city when he was only five years old. Jean-Théodore's desire for financial opportunity was the primary reason for the family's relocation. As a practising

artist, he felt he had exhausted the patrons of Grenoble. Fantin began to take drawing seriously at an early age, with his father acting as his first tutor. Like many young, determined artists who came to Paris unable to rely on their families for financial support, Fantin used his resources well. During this period, he perfected his technique with self-portraits, portraits of friends and of his two younger sisters, as well as still lifes that he installed in his small studio apartment on the Left Bank. Fantin's characteristic ingenuity, practicality, and determination defined his life's practice, and he made use of all that Paris had to offer.

Among the artistic advantages of being located in Paris was the city's vast museum collections, in which artists could hone their skills by copying established masters' works of art. Fantin's father and future tutors encouraged such copying, and by 1849 Fantin had registered as a copyist at the *Bibliothèque nationale* and the *Cabinet des estampes*. He focused on works by distinguished European masters, and his first copy at the Louvre was a portrait of Francis I by Titian.⁹ Fantin learned much as he translated these revered works, and his skill as a copyist grew. The importance he placed on colour as well as the emotions portrayed in these copies is evident in *Le Transport du Christ vers le tombeau* (fig. 1.2), another copy after Titian, on which he requested permission to work in April 1856.



Figure 1.2 Henri Fantin-Latour, *Le transport du Christ vers le tombeau*, a copy after Titian. 1856. 44cm x 57.3. Oil on Canvas Stuck onto Millboard. Fitzwilliam Museum.

Lighter tones and freer brushwork conveying emotion and movement balance this small work. More significantly, his use of dark tones to anchor the canvas can be seen, a technique he used throughout his career. While copying was primarily a tool for gaining artistic proficiency, from the age of seventeen, Fantin received commissions for copies of various artworks.¹⁰ This practice would constitute a significant portion of his training, not to mention income, for the rest of his life.

Though the act of copying formed a crucial part of Fantin's artistic education, he sought formal instruction as well. At the age of fourteen, he enrolled at the *Petit école de dessin* and the following year he attended morning classes at the studio of Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran (1802–1897).¹¹ Lecoq was an academically trained artist with a reputation for an unorthodox approach to art making. He began publishing his theories in 1848 with a book entitled *L'éducation de la mémoire pittoresque*. During his sessions Lecoq emphasized painting from memory, which included a focus on copying.¹² He encouraged his students to do studies, or *croquis*, outdoors both in Paris and in Montrouge, a village just outside the capital.¹³ In both his book and his classes, Lecoq encouraged a varied approach to artistic training: "It does not suffice to have grand lessons of tradition and masters, it is necessary at the same time to learn from nature."¹⁴ While in the studio, Lecoq would position a model or still-life arrangement for the students and have them study it for a few minutes without putting pencil to paper.¹⁵ He would then remove the scene and instruct them to recreate it from memory. These memory techniques should not be misconstrued as simplistic, nor should they be viewed as an intended replacement for traditional methods of training.¹⁶ Lecoq's goal was to tap into what he called "stored observation," which would complement one's intelligence and

talent; he likened this to literary or scientific training in which many phrases or formulas are memorized.¹⁷ Because of his unique approach to art instruction, he was considered one of the nineteenth century's most controversial teachers.¹⁸

Even though his attendance in his studio was irregular, Lecoq should be situated as a pivotal influence in Fantin's formative artistic years because of his emphasis on the use of memory when creating artwork.¹⁹ Evidently, each saw something in the other that was worthwhile because Lecoq left his former student 5000F in his will.²⁰ Fantin admired his teacher and learned much from him, but he did not strictly adhere to his memory techniques.²¹ He did attend other studios, including the short-lived atelier of Courbet, but not with regularity. Additionally, Fantin spent time at the *École des beaux-arts* in 1854, but he left after three months because his teachers saw no progress in him.²²

Artistic skills only constituted some of the benefits of these lessons. In the classes he attended, Fantin formed friendships that would define his early career. All manner of artists working in Paris could be found at the cafés socializing, gossiping, expounding, and networking—and Fantin was no exception. Together with men from the atelier and wider art circles, he would discuss and create art. With one man in particular, he would find a lasting and fruitful brotherhood.

Alphonse Legros was born in Dijon on 8 May 1837 to Lucien-Auguste and Anne-Victoire Barrié. Legros's extended family lived mainly in the provincial areas surrounding Dijon and, along with his brother and two sisters, he often visited his cousins in the Bourgogne countryside. As a child, Legros did not receive much in the way of

formal education and began working as a house painter at eleven years of age to help his family. Because of this, reading and writing were a life-long challenge for him.²³

In spite of his lack of edifying opportunities as a child, Legros seems to have known that art was his calling. He began at Dijon's *École des beaux-arts* in 1848 taking drawing classes with local academician Philippe Boudair. The following year, building painter Nicolardot took on Legros as his apprentice and he remained with him until 1851 when the Legros family moved to Lyon.²⁴ They stayed there for only six months, but, while there, Legros gained experience working with Jean-Baptiste Beuchot (1821–1884) on the fresco ornamentation of the Chapel of Cardinal Bonald in Lyon's Cathedral.²⁵

The Legros family did not settle anywhere for long. By the time of their arrival in Paris in late 1851, Legros's father had already accumulated a mass of debts, so the children had little choice but to help earn money. Noticeably gifted in the arts, Alphonse found ways to use his talents to help his family.²⁶ One of his first employers in the capital was Charles-Antoine Cambon (1802–1875), the chief decorator for the Parisian Opera. This experience instilled in the artist a life-long interest in opera.²⁷ As a young man, Legros worked primarily with painting's more practical applications. Though he seemed to excel in these areas, he set his sights higher: once in Paris, he immediately sought more formal training. Regardless, his early experiences must be viewed as formative in light of his later career. Throughout his career, workmanship and technical skill in his own work, as well as that of his peers, remained of utmost importance to Legros. More specifically, it should be noted that cathedral decoration and set creation are not art forms that focus on detail in execution, as much as overall simplification and impact; these early lessons shaped his long career.

Legros's engagement with the world of fine art in Paris began shortly after his arrival. In 1852, Legros started at the *Petit école de dessin*, studying under the school's director, Jean-Hillaire Belloc (1786–1866). The following year he met Fantin in Lecoq's studio. Legros quickly became part of Fantin's inner circle of friends, and the latter admired his natural, unpretentious spirit, which Adolphe Julien, their contemporary, argues may have stemmed from his lack of education.²⁸ Like the others, Legros also sought training outside the walls of Lecoq's atelier. In the summer of 1854, he received his *carte de permission* to copy artworks at the Louvre. There, he completed numerous copies and in the 1850s he and Fantin translated many of the same works including Poussin's *Assomption de la vierge*, Greuze's *La cruche cassée*, and Rembrandt's *Portrait de femme avec une journée*. Additionally, in October 1855, Legros was accepted to enroll in night classes at the *École des beaux-arts*. Legros's training was extremely varied and it is probably this fact that assisted him in retaining his stylistic autonomy throughout his life.²⁹ Among young artists of this period, stylistic individuality, as well as freedom from the *Académie*, was championed; however, this independence should not be equated with isolation. Support and solace could still be found in loosely formed groupings of artists. Evidently, Fantin, and later Legros and Whistler, saw the benefit in such associations.

Cafés and ateliers made the congregating of male artists uncomplicated and natural. Such networking allowed men to seek out like-minded people and stay connected to artistic developments. Even artists who preferred to remain unattached, like Courbet, still frequented these locales, ready to participate in lively exchanges. Meanwhile, others sought out tightly knit units within the wider circles, which provided much-needed moral

support for younger students. Fantin always placed an emphasis on close, intimate friendship groups, and once Legros became part of his inner circle, Legros clearly coveted these as well. From seeking group commissions to creating collaborative albums, Fantin overtly emphasized group unity in conjunction with an independent style.

As has been shown, young art students in Paris had many opportunities to gather and interact, and Fantin and Legros's earliest, closest set of friends came together in classrooms. This band of artists boasted a range of tastes and backgrounds, and included Charles Cuisin (1832–1900), the oldest of the group with a particular fondness for botany; Guillaume Régamey (1837–1875), whose later paintings often centred on military or equestrian themes; Léon-Auguste Ottin (1836–after 1882), a painter and amateur musician; A. Férlet, a journalist and poet; and Marc-Louis-Emmanuel Solon (1835–1913), a lawyer's son with an interest in literature and design.³⁰ Fantin met Solon first in 1850 at the *Petit école de dessin* and, in fact, it was Solon that directed Fantin to Lecoq's morning drawing classes where Fantin met the rest of the group. These young men worked together at the atelier and the Louvre, but also socialized outside of the classroom, convening at the Café Taranne on the Right Bank or at the homes of Fantin or Ottin.³¹

While informal, the unity of these artists was undeniable. In September 1855, Cuisin, Fantin, Ottin, and Solon received a joint commission from Abbé Berlioz to decorate a chapel in the village of Plessis-Piquet, just south-west of Paris.³² Such a clear mutual purpose solidified a camaraderie that had already become tangible by way of

croquis, impressions, watercolours, and verses the group was collecting. These would all be gathered in two unique albums.

Albums have a long history in Europe, and Samantha Matthews has recently offered a broad definition of their typology: “a blank book that contains, protects, and orders a unique collection of personally significant texts or objects, such as prints, letters, stamps, photographs, or printed scraps.”³³ By the nineteenth century, the compilation of albums, or scrapbooks, was an established practice in Europe. In the mid-sixteenth century, male university students often carried blank, leather-bound books with them in order to document thoughts of friends, teachers, and classmates.³⁴ Albums created by women appeared in later centuries. Most commonly, they were compiled at the end of an academic year in order to record the names, opinions, and dreams of the peers from whom the owners were about to be separated.³⁵ Other blank books functioned as sketchbooks, autograph books, or strictly journals. Pasting various mementoes onto the pages of a bound volume had become a popular hobby by the late eighteenth century.³⁶ Albums such as these are primarily considered family or friendship albums, and women chiefly undertook their assembly.

Prior to the nineteenth century, the middle classes could not access this pastime because of the prohibitive cost of the blank bound books; because of this, album-creation was strictly associated with the aristocracy.³⁷ However, in the wake of the innovations that accompanied the industrial revolution, such materials became more affordable. Within the pages of albums, middle-class women would affix various letters, drawings, notes, or clippings pertaining to their family and their network of associates; important documents and artistic prints appeared as well. By the middle of the century, photographs

and other printed ephemera, such as advertisements or playbills, could be found alongside these original items, but all pieces necessarily referenced the one who arranged the album.

The diversity found in these volumes exhibits the full complexity of the social interactions within nineteenth-century society and provides windows into the private lives of the albums' creators. Friendship albums usually centred on the life of one woman who then collected sentiments and tokens from her closest network of friends. Patrizia di Bello describes one such album compiled by Anna Margaret Birkbeck, née Gardener (1794–1851). Begun in 1825, this friendship album contains 250 pages of inclusions by the likes of Mary Wollenstonecraft Shelley, Guido Sorelli, Robert Owen, and Emma Roberts, as well as anonymous drawings and watercolours.³⁸ These pieces were solicited for the album both by Birkbeck and her husband, George Birkbeck, on her behalf. Matthews notes that, within friendship albums specifically, the significance of the authenticity of inserted items relies entirely on the owner's personal or familial relationship with the person who provided the souvenir. An album should therefore be viewed as a societal microcosm that serves to shore up or affirm relationships within different circles.

The contents of Birkbeck's album, and others like it, should not therefore be examined for their individual interest, but instead for the unique associations created by the author's juxtaposition of his or her inclusions. In this way, blank albums into which various pieces are fastened can be likened to museums, which lack meaning and context until they are filled with artefacts.³⁹ From the nineteenth century onward, an interest in museums grew throughout Europe, beginning in Paris with Napoleon's transformation of the Louvre. Simultaneously, albums began featuring prints of known artworks. Albums

also became ‘display cases’ for original sketches and drawings by well-known masters such as Isabey, Vernet, and Truchot, creating a portable museum-like collection.⁴⁰

Whether featuring prestigious art or letters from school friends, these albums were normally compiled by a single owner or family as opposed to groups or collectives.

Nineteenth-century albums were generally the work of an individual, and this person was frequently a woman. Very few albums assembled by men have been studied, though di Bello acknowledges that some do exist: “but these,” she adds, “were usually associated with specific professional endeavours.”⁴¹ This dismissive tone must be questioned as the networking practiced by many album-making women was also, arguably, ‘professional;’ albums provided these women with tangible evidence of their success in cultivating significant social circles. The exceptionality of Fantin and his friends’ albums thus lies in their creators’ gender as well as in the amalgamation of professional and social concerns that they present. Collectively, these young men began compiling—or preserving—their thoughts and artistic endeavours in the spring of 1854. Ordinarily, a single owner or family created an album, but Fantin and his friends used the same principles one would use to create a friendship album to produce a collaborative volume. By the end, they filled two albums (totalling approximately 120 pages) with the final inclusions dating from the fall of 1860. Solon maintained the first album, and Cuisin watched over the second and so, for ease of reference, these albums will be referred to here after their caretakers.⁴² Though neither was designed to be a chronological account, the heretofore unknown *Album Solon* maintains a tighter time frame with pieces dating between May 1854 and 26 April 1855 while the *Album Cuisin* also includes work from May 1854 but continues through October 1860.

These albums open with a dedication page, in the tradition of other nineteenth-century albums; each features a semi-formal letter addressed to the group by the keeper of the book on the first page.⁴³ The *Album Solon*'s addresses Cuisin, Férlet, Fantin, and Ottin, and is signed by Solon in May 1854. In it, he laments the old and dusty works of the past, and beseeches his friends to celebrate the freshness and inspiration that can be found in their personal volume. Similarly, Cuisin's letter, at the head of the second album, is simply addressed "Amis" and is dated March 1855. Here, he encourages his friends to express themselves freely within the new pages offered to them and suggests that

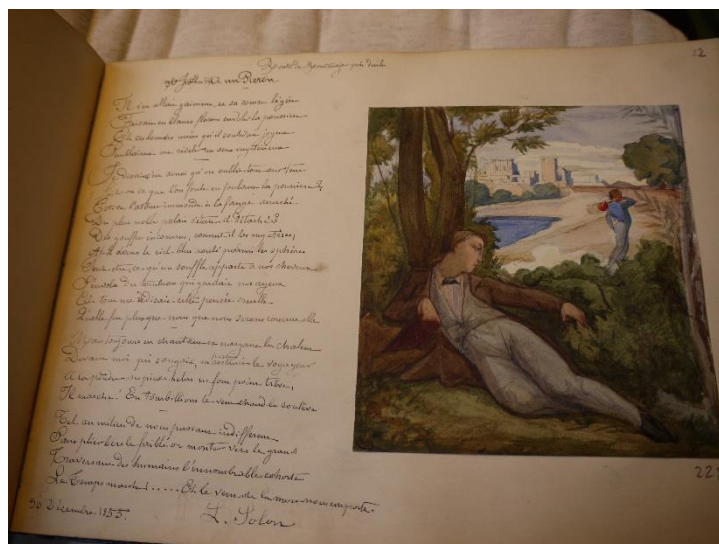


Figure 1.3 Louis Solon, poem and painting from *Album Cuisin*. 30 December 1855. Watercolour on Paper. Page 22.

they concentrate on life's joy as opposed to sorrow or self-pity. These dedications offer support to these young men, who have chosen a difficult path, and also demonstrate the albums' cooperative nature, providing a context in which to read the works that follow.

Other artists contributed letters and notes specifically addressed to their friends, but each also contributed original artworks to be pasted into the books. Both albums contain a wide-ranging collection of work including letters, musical scores, drawings, poems, and paintings. Some of these were combined so that an artist's poetry and artwork were featured on the same page, as is the case with a poem by Solon in the *Album Cuisin*

(fig. 1.3). Subject matter for the drawings and paintings varied immensely, including religion, modern life, and mythology.

Among these were a number of portraits of members of the group (it was common for students to use each other as models)

including a regal image of Solon by Cuisin (fig. 1.4). None of the visual contributions resemble surviving course-related work, so presumably these works were created

specifically for inclusion in the albums. Both albums' contents reveal the range within this multi-disciplinary artistic group, with

artworks appearing in charcoal, pencil, watercolour, and oil. Because the dated pieces all fall within the time frame provided by the letters and notes, we can assume that each artist's objective was to demonstrate his progress and talent to his closest colleagues, thereby furthering a dialogue that these young men felt worth preserving.

This notion of dialogue is critical when considering these two albums. They function differently from friendship or family albums, which were primarily linear and allowed little, if any, exchange, of ideas. By contrast, a single person did not solicit the Cuisin and Solon albums. The group decided that the albums would be made and each man contributed what he wanted—be it letters, poems, drawings, or musical scores—and each had access to the others' artworks. Solon emphasized another chief difference

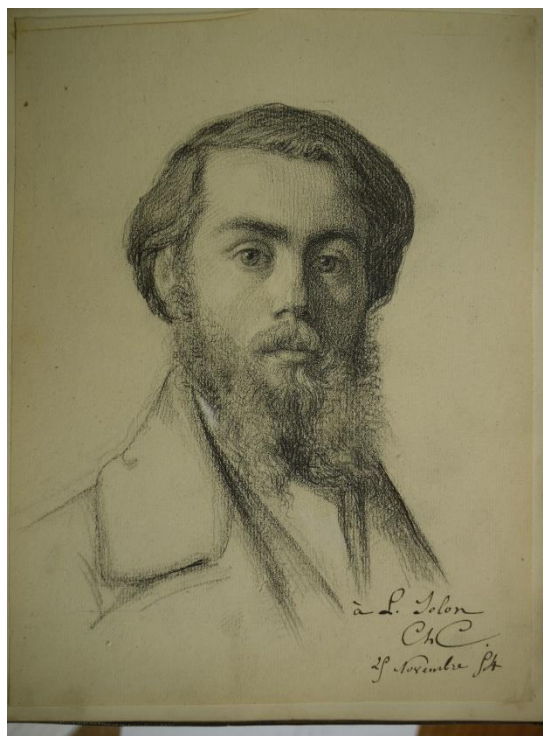


Figure 1.4 Charles Cuisin, *Portrait de Solon* from *Album Solon*. 25 November 1854. Pencil and Charcoal on Paper. Page 38.

between theirs and more common albums in his opening dedication: unlike other albums, this one was private and unlikely to have been seen by anyone outside their circle. He reiterated the importance of the book's privacy several times, leaving no doubt that it was not intended for public consumption.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, like friendship albums, these insular albums substantiated the relationships of the contributors amongst themselves, even though they were hidden from a wider public.

Though he had met Fantin years earlier, Legros did not contribute to these albums at their outset and, unlike Fantin, did not include any letters. In fact, none of the artworks in the *Album Solon* can be attributed to Legros.

However, in the *Album Cuisin*, half a dozen charcoal-and-ink drawings can be confidently identified as Legros's (fig. 1.5). Fantin's

contributions offer more variety and are essential to

the unpacking of his later artistic program. The albums serve as evidence of Fantin's first collective endeavour and in it he sets out his modernist agenda and positions himself as a key figure in modern art.⁴⁵

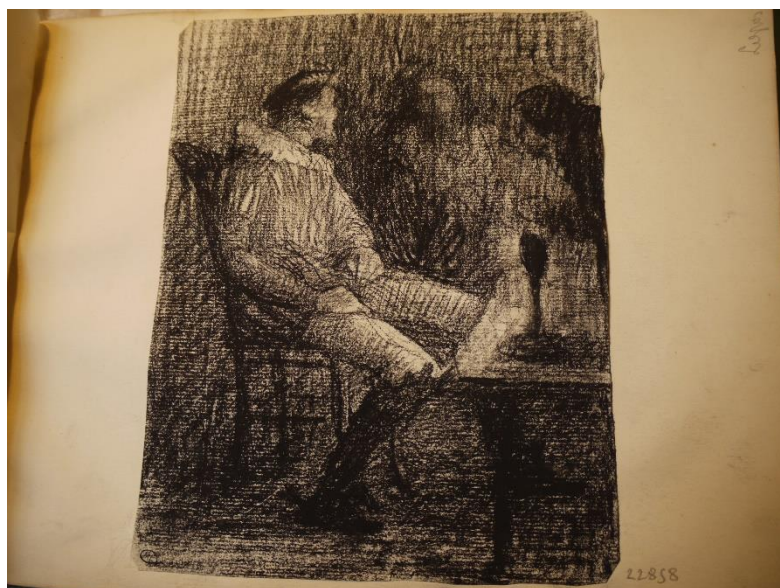


Figure 1.5 Alphonse Legros, drawing from *Album Cuisin*. Charcoal on Paper. Page 36.

Though these two had yet to meet Whistler, the third member of their group, during the creation of these early albums, the seeds of the *Société des trois* were planted. Fantin should be viewed as the group's catalyst; this reflected in his artwork contributions as well as the thoughts that Fantin penned to share with his friends and collaborators. The formal address he included in the *Album Solon* demonstrates his humble, often self-deprecating spirit, which would be remarked upon throughout his life. In a letter dated 22 July 1854, he opens with this passage:

My friends, as to this new Album, I want to pay my modest tribute, very modest, and really rather uninteresting. My years pass with no change. I remain true unto myself. And since the only subject I am able to talk to you about is myself: I will tell you that boredom is coming upon me because my life is monotonous.⁴⁶

Firstly, it should be noted that Fantin writes solely with the album and his friends in mind. Though he goes on to set out a broader program, his approach is a personal one. It is evident that a solitary and inwardly focused existence is not one he has found satisfying. Further, he mentions the goals of the world, which are pleasure and, by necessity, money and, while he distances himself from such a 'superficial' attitude, he does not imply that he is entirely beyond it: "But I, too, want pleasure, but pure pleasure, full of poetry and not dragged in the mud. I want talent, not for what material gains it brings, but because with this I could make myself happy."⁴⁷

Clearly, even from an early age Fantin struggled with self-contentment, and perfectionism would continue to plague him throughout his career. He does not hide the fact that he is envious of his friends, but this envy is directed less at their artistic abilities

and is instead focused on their lives and alleged naiveté, or lack of self-criticism. Though he pays each friend homage in his letter, there is a sense that he feels he takes himself and his art more critically than the others do:

How lucky you are, you that discouragement and the thirst to succeed does not torment as it does me; you Solon and Férlet, who travel, you see superb things. You Ottin, you are beginning work on an Art without seeing all its difficulties. And you Cuisin you who are sufficient unto yourself, who are not ambitious. How lucky you are! Ah, if my life changed, if I found a new way of expressing my soul something would leave me.⁴⁸

In these phrases Fantin both sets himself as distinct from, yet still a part of this group; remaining attached to a group is essential for him, in spite of these mixed sentiments. This is reiterated in a phrase that Fantin writes twice in the *Album Solon*, emphasizing the need for the group to be united: “Oh! My friends let us stay distant from this world, let us live together, that is to say, let us live in happiness.”⁴⁹

In the fall of the following year, he wrote a longer letter to primarily the same group of men, which is included in the *Album Cuisin*. At some point between the writing of these letters, the group spent a considerable amount of time apart and so he opens his letter with excitement about their reunion:

Here are five of us are gathered, we will continue these albums. I would like to be able to express the happiness, the pleasure that I receive in seeing you reunited.... I hope to be able to make you feel, in the meetings we are to resume, the joy that I have in seeing us together.⁵⁰

Though Legros's works are included in this album at the time Fantin wrote this letter, he had not yet become intimately linked with this tight circle; therefore, he addresses it directly to Férlet, Ottin, Solon, and Cuisin. This letter is dated 15 November 1855, shortly after the group commission began, and it more fully develops the theories of art that Fantin considered essential:

Painting is my sole pleasure, my only goal. In art, and modern art (I say modern art because it seems to me that it undergoes a transformation in each epoch) nature, which surrounds us, is the only domain of the artist, that his epoch, the beautiful things happening there, the diverse characters, the passions, the very beautiful nature, the countryside around us, the smallest objects which strike our eyes, have great interest.⁵¹

Here, he describes what he sees as the distinguishing features of contemporary art. Fantin positions nature, reality, and modernity as fundamental to his practice. In spite of his, and his colleagues', emphasis on the contemporary, Fantin does not envision them working against the grain of tradition and eagerly pays tribute to artists he deems inspirational. In doing so, he creates an artistic lineage for the group that serves to justify their work with an artistic pedigree:

Proceeding from nothing rational, it is only in form that we will find sublime guides, which will be our aids.

Look at the sublime beginnings.

Gericault, Delacroix, Decamps. Look at our school of landscapists, what talent. Then David (d'Angers) Bayre.... In those admirable lines which you

read us Tuesday evening, Férlet, the new productions of Victor Hugo. In this vein, see Balzac. Lamartine, *Pammurais*, George Sand. And all the others.⁵²

Not only does this brief list include painters such as Delacroix, to whom Fantin would remain faithful for his remaining years, but it also features sculptors Bayre and David d'Angers and literary figures such as Hugo, Balzac, and Sand. This demonstrates the importance of the multi-disciplinary approach to art-making that Fantin and the rest of the *Société* embraced. Individualism and diversity in art-making would be essential for the future *Société*, and Fantin concludes this letter with a reminder of the necessity of these traits: "Hope and Courage. Ah! The future will be beautiful! Because each will find his place, his way of expressing what he feels."⁵³

With these thoughts, Fantin paves the way for a more formal grouping of like-minded individuals. A clear theme that he will take with him going forward into the *Société des trois* is the need to look to one's own time for inspiration without being detached from the past. He also strongly advocates for unity among his friends but maintains that it must always be coupled with the diversity of each individual's practice. Legros does not record similar sentiments in the albums, but a rare letter by the artist demonstrates his agreement. On 17 February 1858, Legros wrote to Fantin enthusiastically expressing his delight about Fantin's artistic theories, assuring him that they stand apart from the others and are on the right course.⁵⁴ While both would remain friends with some of the artists from Lecoq's studio, there is nothing in either album by Legros or Fantin dated after they meet Whistler in 1858. This indicates Fantin's desire to be a part of a loyal, tightly knit association. In the early part of his career, Fantin was associated with a few intimate artistic groupings, but he always ensured that these did not

intermingle; in this case, the *Albums* demonstrate that once the *Société des trois* began to take shape, Fantin pulled away from Cuisin, Solon, and the others.

Legros and Fantin had very different introductions to the world of art, and although the seeds of their careers were planted in Paris, their respective family and artistic backgrounds, together with their educational and relational choices, all played a part in creating the artists they were to become. Legros focused his early training on practical applications of art and often trained on job sites. Fantin, on the other hand, pursued “high” art almost exclusively, with his foray into the practical aspects of art extending no further than portraiture, copies, and still-lives. As each man began to make choices like these, he effectively shaped his mature artistic identity. These identities were by no means stable after this time. After Whistler arrived in Paris, opportunities for growth and solidification arose, and so it was that, by the end of 1858, the *Société des trois* formed.

⁶ For more on Haussmannisation see Michel Carmona. *Haussmann: His Life and Times and the Making of Modern Paris*. Ivan R. Dee: 2002.

⁷ For more on the birth of the department store see Lancaster, Bill. *The Department Store*. London: Leicester University Press, 1995.

⁸ At the beginning of the Second Empire, the Salon was held every second year.

⁹ Frank Gibson. *The Art of Henri Fantin-Latour: His Life and Work*, London: Drane’s Ltd., 1924: 28.

¹⁰ Dianne MacLeod Sachko. *Art and the Victoria Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996: 72. Because of the high esteem held for good workmanship it was common for people to commission copies of a particular piece.

¹¹ Studio at 39 de quai des Grands Augustins.

¹² Michael Fried. *Manet’s Modernism or The Face of Painting in the 1860s*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996: 186.

¹³ Timothy Wilcox. *Alphonse Legros: 1837-1911*. Dijon: Mairie de Dijon, 1988: 32.

¹⁴ Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran, *L’Éducation de la mémoire pittoresque et la formation de l’artiste*, Paris: H. Laurens: 1920: 46. “Mais il ne suffit pas des grands leçons de la tradition et des maîtres, il faut en même temps et surtout les enseignements de la nature.”

¹⁵ Edward Lucie-Smith. *Fantin-Latour*. Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1977: 12.

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- ¹⁶ Lecoq: 21.
- ¹⁷ Lecoq: 21.
- ¹⁸ James Munro and Paul Stirton. *The Society of Three: Alphonse Legros, Henri Fantin-Latour, James McNeill Whistler*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998: 2.
- ¹⁹ Pennell; Lucie-Smith; Munro.
- ²⁰ Pennell: 50.
- ²¹ Douglas Druick and Michel Hoog. *Fantin-Latour*. Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1983: 65.
- ²² Lucie-Smith: 12.
- ²³ Wilcox: 31. This probably accounts for the lack of letters written by Legros.
- ²⁴ Wilcox: 31.
- ²⁵ Alternate spellings Beushst, Bouchot
- ²⁶ Fried: 186.
- ²⁷ Wilcox: 32.
- ²⁸ Adolphe Julien. *Fantin-Latour et ses amis*. Paris: Lucien Laveur Librairie, 1909: 8.
- ²⁹ Malcolm Salaman. *Modern Masters of Etching: Alphonse Legros*. London: The Studio, 1924: 1.
- ³⁰ Julien: 8.
- ³¹ Druick: 12.
- ³² Plessis-Piquet was renamed Plessis-Robinson in the early twentieth century. The chapel decoration no longer exists.
- ³³ Samantha Matthews. "Women's Albums and Photography in late Victorian England." *Victorian Review*. (34:2) fall 2008.
- ³⁴ Starr Ockenga. *On Women and Friendship: A Collection of Victorian Keepsakes and Traditions*. New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, Inc., 1993: 29.
- ³⁵ Ockenga: 28.
- ³⁶ Patrizia di Bello. *Women's Albums and Photography in Victorian England: Ladies, Mothers and Flirts*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007: 23.
- ³⁷ Ockenga: 31.
- ³⁸ Di Bello: 29.
- ³⁹ Di Bello: 30; Benedict Leca. "Before Photography: The Album and the French Graphic Tradition in the Early Nineteenth Century." *Art and the Early Photographic Album*. Stephan Bann, ed. Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2011 : 37. They sometimes served more practical purposes as well and both private and public galleries used these as a type of record keeping.
- ⁴⁰ Leca: 33.
- ⁴¹ Di Bello: 31.
- ⁴² Other scholars have adopted this principle for the *Album Cuisin* and so I will continue the tradition with the *Album Solon*.
- ⁴³ Ockenga: 40.
- ⁴⁴ *Album Solon*: 1. « Doit rester notre livre bien éclos dans le mystère. » « Dans ces pages fermées que notre chants éclos... »
- ⁴⁵ Pierre Vaisse. "Fantin-Latour: Les portraits collectifs." *Fantin-Latour: de la réalité au rêve*. Lausanne: Fondation de l'hermitage, 2007: 44.
- ⁴⁶ *Album Solon*: 35.

⁴⁷ *Album Solon*: 35.

⁴⁸ *Album Solon*: 35.

⁴⁹ *Album Solon*: 35.

⁵⁰ *Album Cuisin*: 18.

⁵¹ *Album Cuisin*: 18.

⁵² *Album Cuisin*: 18.

⁵³ *Album Cuisin*: 18.

⁵⁴ Alphonse Legros. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 17 February 1858. Institut national d'histoire d'art: Carton 20, MFB IX, 8367.

Chapter 2: The *Société des trois* is Formed

By the late 1850s, with the members' art training under way and their artistic identities beginning to be asserted, the foundation for the *Société des trois* was in place. This maturation coincided with the arrival of the final member of the group: James McNeill Whistler. Fantin's and Legros's need to be associated with a group had already been established in the albums and, therefore, Whistler's presence should not be seen as *the* catalyst for the *Société*'s formation. However, soon after the artists met Whistler, a desire surfaced for a tighter group within their larger network of colleagues. Current scholars rarely consider Fantin, Legros, and Whistler as a cohesive unit, but letters, artworks, exhibitions, and even the press indicate that they demonstrated the cooperative spirit essential to artistic societies.

Paris's constant flux of artistic figures provided a wide selection of influences from which artists could draw. With a large number of young artists settling in Paris to study in ateliers and museums, many opportunities existed to meet like-minded people, as shown in the cases of Fantin, Legros, and the others from Lecoq's studio. Some of these relationships were short-lived owing to stylistic or personal differences, while others resulted in lasting, fruitful bonds that altered the career trajectories of those involved. The latter was the case for the *Société des trois*, whose origins I attribute to the early work and ideas of Fantin and Legros, as expressed in the albums.

James McNeill Whistler was born in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1834 to George Washington Whistler and Anna McNeill.⁵⁵ As a successful railroad engineer, George Whistler and his family were afforded the opportunity to live abroad; in 1843, they moved to Russia while he worked on the rail line connecting Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Here, the young Whistler's interest in art grew, and that year he enrolled at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts for drawing classes three times per week under the tutelage of Alexander Karitzky.⁵⁶ During this time abroad, Whistler, his mother, and his siblings travelled around Europe and spent time in England with extended family. While there in 1847, his sister, Deborah, married surgeon and amateur artist Francis Seymour Haden. After this, Whistler visited them on several occasions. In 1851, he relocated back to the United States and entered the West Point Military Academy where he remained for approximately three years before returning to Europe to pursue his career in art.

Whistler arrived in Paris in the fall of 1855, and stayed in the Latin Quarter at the Hôtel Corneille. This Left Bank neighbourhood functioned as the epicentre of life for artists, writers, and students because of its inexpensive living and studio space, as well as a plethora of cafés and bars. Whistler adapted easily to Paris as he already spoke French, and he befriended several English speaking artists who had taken up residence in the city. Known as the Paris Gang, this group included artists George du Maurier (1834–1896), Edward Poynter (1836–1919), and Thomas Armstrong (1832–1911), among others.⁵⁷

Though he did spend time with them, neither this Anglophone group nor Whistler would have considered himself an official member of the Paris Gang. Whistler promoted an independent bohemian lifestyle often associated with the Latin Quarter; he had even read Henri Murger's *Scènes de la vie de bohème* (1851) while in America, just prior to

his return to Europe.⁵⁸ In what would have been seen as true bohemian fashion, he was often in debt as he moved around the Latin Quarter, but he was nonchalant about this and, though he frequented student locales, he always travelled first class.⁵⁹ His choice of dress reaffirmed this association. A self-portrait from 1858 (fig. 2.1), as well as a portrait by Poynter from December of the same year (fig. 2.2), both feature Whistler in his trademark bohemian style—blousy tie and shirt accompanied by the wide-brimmed hat favoured by the mid-century Parisian bohemian. This bohemian persona served Whistler well, but he had higher aspirations than tenuous garret living.

Contradicting this lackadaisical appearance, Whistler took his career in art seriously. Soon after arriving in the capital, he enrolled at the *École Impériale et Spéciale de Dessin* and also began taking classes with the painter Charles Gleyre (1806–1874) alongside members of the Paris Gang. Though Whistler did not consider himself a devoted student of any particular instructor and did not regularly attend the studio at Gleyre's, he would have been exposed to the senior artist's technique of mixing his colour palette with an emphasis on black.⁶⁰

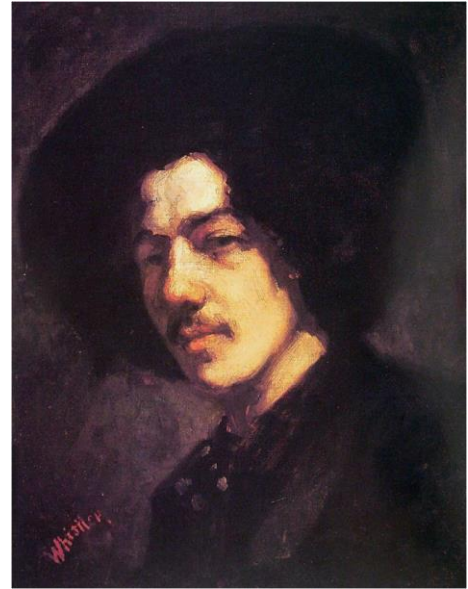


Figure 2.1 James McNeill Whistler, *Self Portrait*. 1858. Oil on Canvas. 46x38cm. Freer Art Gallery.



Figure 2.2 Edward Poynter, *Portrait of Whistler*. 1858. Etching.

Like the work of Fantin and Legros, an emphasis on black persisted throughout Whistler's career, both in paintings and in etchings. He also would have been exposed to ideas similar to those being preached to Fantin, Legros, and their cohorts. Like Lecoq, Gleyre encouraged artistic individuality alongside vigorous copying at the Louvre.⁶¹ With very few exceptions, artists studying in Paris could all be found at the Louvre at some stage. On this common ground, Whistler encountered the artist that would profoundly affect the rest of his career.

The meeting of Fantin and Whistler occurred on 7 October 1858, and Fantin recalled it vividly. He recounted that, while he was copying Veronese's *Marriage Feast at Cana* at the Louvre, a curious figure in a striking wide-brimmed hat crossed the room toward him and proceeded to compliment him on his work. Though Whistler had already become acquainted with many different artistic groups in the capital, Fantin wasted no time ensuring that he became connected to his own circle of friends.⁶² And so, he invited Whistler to join him after their day at the Louvre came to an end.

When Fantin introduced Whistler to Legros at the Café Molière there was an instant rapport.⁶³ All accounts indicate that this initial connection was strong and that Whistler's charisma won over both Frenchmen by the end of the meeting. Meanwhile, another artist from the circle of Lecoq's studio, Louis René Hippolyte Sinet (1835–?), had apparently joined with Fantin and Legros to form the *Société des vrais bons*; evidence suggests that this trio came together just prior to Fantin's introduction to Whistler.⁶⁴ The *Société des vrais Bons* was dedicated to "the painting of the future."⁶⁵ Férlet wrote to Legros's uncle, Ludovic Barrié, about this *Société* on 6 January 1859:

In their enthusiasm, in their love of art, they have inaugurated *the painting of the future*. They set themselves apart, erecting a scaffolding built of artistic theories while demolishing everything around them. They even instituted for their exclusive use the Société des vrais Bons. So far, so good; but no sooner had these gentlemen set out on their path that they thought they had arrived; they believed success was theirs; they paraded their future glories and from atop the pedestal they had erected on the ruins of modern art, they looked down upon the poor floundering wretches like us, who had no share of their sun. One could only prostrate oneself in silence before their superiority and all those who dared utter the slightest objection were crushed, wiped out, in an assault of scathing, I would even go so far as to say revolting mockery.⁶⁶

Given the timing of this letter, it is possible that Ferlet's information was already outdated. Whistler had definitively replaced Sinet in Legros and Fantin's trio by the spring of 1859 but their bond was formed in the fall, suggesting the *Société des vrai bons* lasted a matter of weeks.⁶⁷ Ferlet calls the group by name and mentions the three individuals he knew to be involved, but his language insinuates that persuasive, even bullish, personalities participated in this grouping. This raises questions regarding Sinet's involvement at this time; the artist is never mentioned in letters between Fantin and Legros. However, the artistic egotism Ferlet rails against is congruent with Whistler's temperament, suggesting his information was out of date. Nevertheless, with such lack of concrete information, suffice it to say that the exact timing of the formation and termination of this first trio remains unclear.

Without a specific date of creation or a group exhibition to cite that marked the union that followed, the timing of the *Société des trois*'s coming together appears ambiguous. Even though the exact order of events in the fall of 1858 remain murky, several incidents transpiring in the spring following the initial meeting of Fantin, Legros, and Whistler offer definitive proof of their connection.

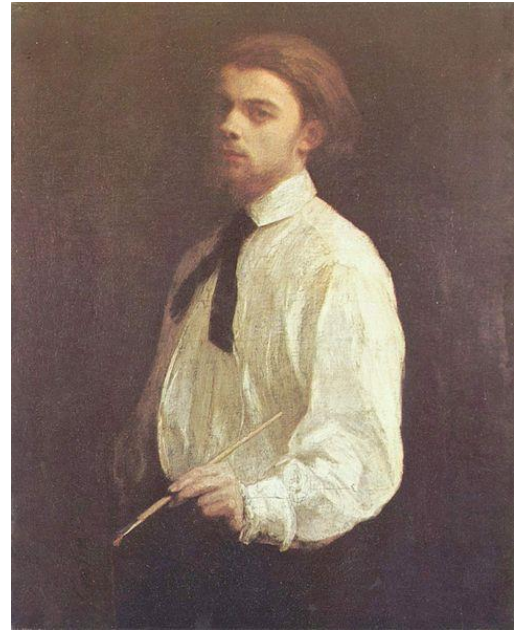


Figure 2.3 Henri Fantin-Latour. *Self-Portrait*. 1859. 101cm x 83.5cm, Musée de Grenoble.

In the spring of 1859, ambitious artists throughout Paris busied themselves in preparing submissions to the biannual Salon. If accepted, a work could become one with which the artist might be identified for the rest of his or her career, as it was common for the press to reference artists' past works as a type of shorthand for readers.⁶⁸ In light of this significance, submissions to the Salon were a serious affair and the members of the newly formed *Société des trois* counted themselves among the artists feeling the pressure.

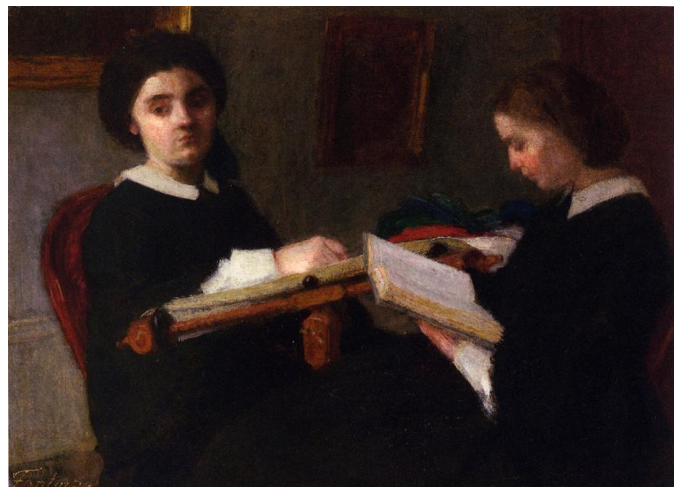


Figure 2.4 Henri Fantin-Latour. *Les deux soeurs*. Oil on Canvas. 98.5 x 130.5cm. Saint Louis Art Museum.

The *Société des trois* presented works to the Academic jury with varying degrees of success. Fantin presented three paintings, including a self-portrait (2.3), a painting featuring both of his sisters (fig. 2.4), and a portrait of his sister Marie (fig. 2.5); the jury refused all three works. Whistler submitted only one painting, *At the Piano* (fig. 2.6), which the jury also rejected, but two smaller etchings made the cut. Unlike his colleagues, Legros had already found acceptance at the Salon of 1857 with his *Portrait du père de l'artiste* (fig. 2.7). In 1859, he brought another portrait of his father in addition to *L'angélus* (fig. 2.8) and, though the portrait was rejected, *L'angélus* became a huge success.

This tale of rejection for the *Société des trois* was common for artists still in the student phase of their careers, especially among those working outside the *Académie*. The notoriously strict juries of the Second Empire's Salons remained closely tied to the realms of the official art world. Nonetheless, each year, thousands of works gained acceptance. An example of an admired work from the Salon of 1859 is Jules Breton's *Le rappel des glaneuses* (fig. 2.9). This painting presented the public with a positive image of the French countryside featuring noble,



Figure 2.5 Henri Fantin-Latour, *Portrait de Mlle Marie Fantin-Latour*. 1859. Oil on Canvas. 60.5cm x 85.5cm. Birmingham Museum of Art.

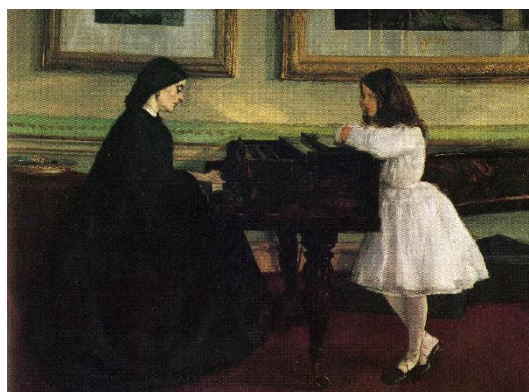


Figure 2.6 James McNeill Whistler, *At the Piano*. 1859. 66cm x 90cm. Oil on Canvas. Taft Museum.

hardworking, comely women ending their day's labour on a pleasant evening. The flattering light and idealization of peasant life suited the tastes of the urban bourgeoisie. Admired by the public and critics alike, it even caught the attention of the Empress Eugenie, who secured it for the royal collection.

While some, such as Breton, found success at the Salon, those without the desire to bend to public tastes or the talent for the *Académie* would often find encouragement, or even mentorship, in more established artists. Though the academic reception of their work was less than enthusiastic, in 1859, the *Société des trois* did receive support from François Bonvin (1817–1887). Bonvin had established himself as a prominent *juste-milieu* painter during the 1830s and received many commissions from the state even though he, too, remained outside of official *Académie* circles.⁶⁹ Shortly after the jury announced the fates of the submitted works, Bonvin decided to demonstrate his solidarity with a select group of younger artists whom he felt had been wrongly excluded. That spring, he showed works in his own studio by Fantin, Legros, Théodule Ribot (1823–1891), Antoine Vollon



Figure 2.7 Alphonse Legros, *Portrait du père de l'artiste*. 1856. Oil on Canvas, 73cm x 62cm. Tours Musée des beaux-arts.



Figure 2.8 Alphonse Legros, *L'angelus*. 1859. Oil on Canvas.

(1833–1900), and Whistler. Bonvin referred to the exhibition as his *Atelier Flamand*, a reference linking the rejected works to those of seventeenth-century Flemish painters, whom he and the artists he exhibited greatly admired.⁷⁰ While the show did not make much of an impression in the press, the artistic community eagerly attended; even Bonvin's friend Gustave Courbet visited it, claiming to be impressed.⁷¹

This independent exhibition served as more than just a platform of visibility. Bonvin's exhibition showcased not only multiple artworks, but also the *Société's* fledgling unity. While the members of the *Société* had hoped to find acceptance at the Salon, each member enthusiastically exhibited work at an independent venue as well. These two different exhibitions demonstrate the group's collective desire for exposure, as well as their likemindedness. A closer examination of the *Atelier Flamand* further evidences the members' early camaraderie. Though often ignored, this exhibition signalled their solidarity both in practice, as all the works on show had been rejected from the Salon, and in the artworks themselves. Whistler and Legros exhibited each of their rejected works, while Fantin displayed his self-portrait and his depiction of Marie. Fantin, Legros, and Whistler's works appear disparate, but they reflect the same artistic influences and similar themes.

Self-portraits occur in almost every artist's oeuvre. In the case of Fantin, self-portraits occupied a large portion of his artistic output



Figure 2.9 Jules Breton, *Le rappel des glaneuses*. 1859. 90cm x 1176cm. Oil on Canvas. Musée d'Orsay.

and he executed dozens of them throughout his life. It is, therefore, not surprising that he presented a nearly life-sized, three-quarter view of himself to the Salon. Many artists submitted self-portraits because it introduced the artist's face to potential clients while simultaneously proving that he or she was capable of recreating a believable likeness on canvas. Fantin presents himself to the viewer as a painter, clothed in contemporary working attire. He holds his brush at the ready and his three-quarter stance suggests he is engaging with the audience for a brief moment before returning to a canvas, which is out of view. His deliberate choice to leave the background dark and murky further enhances the stark contrasts Fantin favoured. The white of his smock and pale skin leap off the canvas, while his trousers and shadowed body parts almost disappear. In this work, Fantin leaves no question about his identity; he includes the traits of a contemporary painter and personal distinguishing characteristics, such as his unruly light auburn hair and slightly upturned nose.

Accounts indicate that Fantin did not show the painting of his two sisters at Bonvin's because it was too large, but he did exhibit his intimate portrait of his sister Marie. This work bears many similarities to the artist's self-portrait. Though seated, Marie encompasses the majority of the picture space and is positioned in a three-quarter view, with a slightly angled body. Fantin chose again to leave the setting ambiguous but he ensures that it is evident that it is an interior space. Marie is shown engrossed in her reading, which reflects her studious, quiet persona. Fantin's palette remains the same in this image; his focus is on sharp contrasts. Shadows and the darkness of Marie's dress are emphasized. Her book, hand, and facial highlights seem almost supernaturally lit with

minimal modulation. Marie's inwardly focused posture is also found in the works of the other *Société* members.

Whistler's image of his sister and niece at the piano presents them as similarly self-absorbed. Again, a dramatic use of tonal differences is evident. The painting is anchored in black, while the figures' faces and young girl's dress are boldly lit. Whistler purposely strove to portray an intimate yet uneventful scene of everyday middle-class life. Like Marie, Whistler's sister wears an enveloping black frock that creates a monolithic presence almost merging with the piano in some areas. Confident and controlled, this work presents the sitters and, by extension, the artist, as urbane, disallowing any presuppositions regarding bohemianism. This suggests that Whistler no longer desired identification with that milieu.

The work featured at Bonvin's exhibition by the *Société* involved members of each artist's immediate family. Fantin and Whistler portrayed their sisters, while Legros used his father for a sitter. All these subjects sat in domestic, interior settings. Using friends or family for models was a customary practice, especially for students, as such people generally worked for free. Beyond general setting and subject matter, however, lies another commonality: all of these paintings depicted the present day. Each artist consciously emphasized modern life without resorting to mythical or historical themes. While the other works in the *Atelier Flamand* cannot be reconstructed, it is likely that these similarities extended to the works of Ribot and Vollon as well. Both Ribot and Vollon focused much of their work on still lifes and Realist images of the family. This demonstrated these artists' adherence to a prevailing trend amongst the avant-garde; many listened to the exhortations of Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), who claimed that

one should be of one's own time when drawing inspiration from his or her surroundings. By the middle of the Second Empire, Baudelaire's arguments gained in popularity and Baudelaire himself was destined to become a close friend of the *Société*.

Subject matter aside, the paintings on display bore little stylistic similarity, and exhibition attendees would not necessarily have linked the three members of the *Société* based on the visual aspects of their work apart from the loose association with seventeenth-century Dutch masters suggested by Bonvin. However, the trio did draw inspiration from the same artists: Gustave Courbet, J.A.D. Ingres, and Diego Velazquez. This common ground is important as each artist capitalized on different aspects of these three renowned European painters. The contemporary Realist Courbet focused on scenes of everyday life from the French countryside. As discussed in chapter 1, the press often criticised his work for its dark, drab colours and seemingly insignificant subject matter. Courbet prided himself on presenting unidealized figures, often his own family or friends, on a large scale. Another French painter, Ingres (1780–1867), built his career on his great attention to drawing and surfaces (fig. 2.10). Unlike Courbet, Ingres saturated his sleek paintings with colour. They often presented mythical or historical subjects, and, by mid-century, critics generally spoke favourably of his work. Known for their close attention to detail, Ingres's portraits flattered his sitters while



Figure 2.10 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *La source*. 1856. 163cm x 80cm. Oil on Canvas. Musée d'Orsay.

retaining their unmistakable likenesses. The Spanish painter most admired by the *Société* was Velazquez (1599–1660) (fig. 2.11). Like Courbet, Velazquez also focused on contemporary subjects and his works exuded emotion and employed stark, tonal contrasts. All of these artists used dark colours liberally in their works. Dark colours, portrait accuracy, and modern subjects are just some of the elements that the *Société* found inspiring in the works of these more established artists.



Figure 2.11 Diego Velazquez, *Las Meninas*. 1656. Oil on Canvas. 318cm x 276cm. Prado.

Bonvin's studio exhibition marked the first public display for the fledgling *Société*. Not only did this private exhibition make evident the unity of the *Société des trois*, but it also signalled a transition in the artistic lives of these three men as they shifted out of the student phase of their careers.⁷² They would now enter the commercial art world with experience and assurance.

After Bonvin's exhibition, the members of the *Société* approached their artistic careers with bolstered confidence. At best, their Salon reception had been mixed, but the *Atelier Flamand* justified their existence, both as individual artists and as a cohesive group. Therefore, as they moved to secure a place for themselves in the art world and develop their artistic identities, each man committed himself to the *Société*, even as the group members lost their physical proximity.

Shortly after the group came together, Whistler began spending much of his time with friends and family in London, while the *Société*'s focus of activity remained in Paris through the early years of the 1860s. Eventually, he relocated to London permanently. Why Whistler chose to leave Paris for London specifically in the spring of 1859 is unknown, but it was certainly not an uncommon move for artists and laypeople alike.⁷³ During France's periods of unrest and revolution, many people crossed the Channel in hopes of finding safety and stability. Britain maintained its political stability during a tumultuous time in European history.⁷⁴ Additionally, the international exhibit at Paris's *Exposition Universelle* of 1855 had strengthened Britain's artistic reputation, and though British artists lacked access to the variety of training Paris offered, many exhibition opportunities existed. With the exception of a small international section at the Salon, very few nineteenth-century British artists showed original work in France.⁷⁵ By contrast, French artists knew and took advantage of increased exhibition opportunities across the Channel because of a stronger tradition of commercial exhibitions in England. Whistler's move to England thus opened up new possibilities for success.

No correspondence indicates that this relocation caused tension or regret on Whistler's part, and he continued to travel back and forth to Paris frequently, thereby ensuring his place within the *Société* as well as the Parisian art scene. It seems, however, that as Whistler settled in, he was in contact less often than the continental members of the *Société* would have preferred, judging by a letter sent by Fantin to Whistler on 26 June 1859. In it, he chastises Whistler good-naturedly about his lack of communication:

My dear Whistler what has become of you, what are you doing. I have waited and am still waiting for a letter from you. I met [Echerny?] (who

asks me to give you his regards), who gave me your address I'm using it straight away and here I am pen in hand (a tool which I find most irritating) to ask you for your news what you are doing and what is happening here. I heard from Ernest that you were in the course of moving into that superb studio, so comfortable where nothing is lacking! that redoubled our curiosity (me and Legros) about what you were doing there. I waited for a letter to reassure me about the feeling I still have that once people have everything they sit back and relax, but nothing.—no news I saw Poynter I asked him if your etchings were being exhibited. he knew nothing about it now there is something to write to me about!!

Legros told me this evening that he was sure that you were doing something superb without talking about it and that we should see you very soon. I would like that, it has been sad in Paris since you left, I see Legros less often sometimes at Andler's as little as possible it means I get to bed late and I am short of funds, it is very pleasant nonetheless Courbet is so charming, Legros often goes there they get on very well.⁷⁶

Within days of this heartfelt and lengthy letter, Whistler responded to Fantin entreating him to come directly to London:

My dear little Fantin

you must not let any idea, theory or other absurdity prevent you from coming here immediately—Besides I beg you let yourself be led for once, be a little guided by my good star—you know that I have always told you that something would change—well, it is England mon cher which

welcomes young artists with both hands. Now above all do not pause to reflect or doubt—do not ask for advice from your friends or family—any more than you would for your painting but take your courage in both hands and get away from Paris! Because after all you are doing nothing there—and a week away even if that is all it was can do you nothing but good.—Come and see the exhibition—the Gainsboroughs and our old loves—come and see how you can earn much more here in one month (don't say a word) than you would there in a year!—Bring all your small sketches—nothing large. Bring the things that Delatre will give you for me and come at once.—It is unnecessary to tell you how happy my brother-in-law will be that you can visit him and that he can show you all the masterpieces which he is so rightly proud of to someone who will appreciate them—and mon cher you are sure to sell heaps of things (small ones) and that will at least ensure you lose nothing by this journey—once again—no discussion—no questions—no unnecessary preparations—and come and see us and find your old friend

Jemmie Whistler⁷⁷

Upon arriving in 1859, Whistler persistently asked the other two members of the *Société* to visit England. He phrased his requests in terms of a desire for company and his need for their encouragement and advice, as well as mentioning that monetary rewards awaited them. His inclusion of details regarding what to bring over also speak to Whistler's determined spirit regarding his career and those of his friends. Whistler assured Fantin that distance did not loosen the bond of the *Société*. Fantin did visit Whistler, and, in spite

of a carefully worded letter to his parents about how much he enjoyed his trip, Edward Morris has asserted that Fantin did not like England.⁷⁸ Throughout their lives, however, Whistler served as an important link between the *Société* and art collectors in London.

At this point, London became the secondary setting for the *Société des trois*, as each member constructed the next phase of his artistic identity. After Bonvin's exhibition, they no longer viewed themselves as students. Their focus shifted from the classroom to obtaining commissions and artistic visibility. The choices that the members made in this regard contributed to their respective artistic identities. In this context, identity should not be viewed as a static or genetic construct, but instead as something that is always in flux.⁷⁹ The act of consciously managing one's identity is well summarized by psychologist Stephanie Taylor: "Identity is about the interface between what might variously be characterised as the macro and the micro, the exterior and interior, the peopled social world and the individual person within it, as well as other people's views of 'who I am' and how I see myself."⁸⁰

A significant step in the construction of the members' identities occurred when they decided to band together as a unit. Despite the mid-nineteenth century's emphasis on individuality, artistic groups were not rare and were often based on either common goals or disappointments. These groups were centred on male-male relationships generally formed after leaving the family home and prior to the establishment of one's own household.⁸¹ There were many potential benefits to be had when one aligned oneself with others. Brotherhoods, societies, or associations offered to their members support and camaraderie, which were especially important for artists working outside the academies.

Some groups appeared on the scene more publicly than others. When it came to exhibiting, artistic alliances provided more opportunities for exposure and, ultimately, income. Most young artists, like those in the *Société*, who worked outside of official circles in major cities like Paris and London did not have the luxury of creating art without considering the financial implications; exposure and sales represented freedom for artists.⁸² Thus, aligning with an artistic association, no matter how small, demonstrated an artist's desire to develop his reputation and his career.

Establishing a translocal presence also evidenced deliberate engagement with the creation of artistic identity. The concept of transnationality and, more recently, translocality have both been popularized over the past three decades and frequently been utilized in terms of migrants and geography. The *Société des trois* will be presented here as a translocal, as opposed to transnational, group. In a recent volume discussing these concepts, Dietrich Reetz concisely distinguishes between these two ideas:

Translocality transcends the limitations and boundaries of the local, but is not necessarily transnational, whereas all transnational interaction is probably also translocal. In comparison, the translocal will also include sociological, religious and cultural qualities and will be a reminder of its other side, the local, as well, whereas transnational more points to the political dimension and importance of crossing the borders of nation states creating a separate grid of references.⁸³

Following this logic, the *Société* cannot be viewed as transnational because the borders and politics of France and England were never of much concern to any of the three members. Neither their artwork nor their social circles indicate any interest in the

political concerns of either nation. Instead, they each focused on the integrated webs of artistic communities that could be found in the thriving capitals of each country, capitals that were becoming gradually more cosmopolitan in both thought and population.

The application of translocality to history became increasingly important as both people and ideas became more mobile. Innovations in transportation, the press, and communication in general all contributed to translocal possibilities in cosmopolitan cities whose populations were then forced into states of constant flux. Therefore, within the theorization of translocality, it is necessary to remember that places are being presented as interconnected, not in isolation. Tim Oakes and Louisa Schein accurately confirm that the translocal does not simply refer to a person occupying more than one physical place; it encompasses the networks, histories, and meanings associated with a given locality and how a person functions within it.⁸⁴ Because the members of the *Société des trois* never exclusively lived, worked, and exhibited in one particular place, they must be considered translocal. Translocal individuals and groups are necessarily mobile, which forces them to interact differently with spaces. This is discussed by Charlotta Hedberg and Renato Miguel di Carmo in their volume, which focuses on translocalism as it relates to rural migration:

People are moving between different spaces but once they have moved, they do not cease to engage with the texture and materiality of the space they have left. They do not move as though they were mere flows; rather, they are translocal actors that connect places through their mobility. Accordingly they do not cease to be attached to the real places they move from, but they add the place of arrival to their place of departure.⁸⁵

Translocalism allows Whistler, for example, not only to affect his new networks in London with his Parisian experiences, but also to impact, in turn, the art world he left behind in Paris. In the next chapter, the *Société des trois*'s translocality as the members worked between London and Paris will become increasingly significant.

During the twelve months after Bonvin's exhibition, Fantin, Legros, and Whistler began the professional phases of their respective careers.⁸⁶ It could be argued that the *Société* itself bridged this critical passage in each man's artistic career. Commonalities exist between these artists and the lives of others who were undergoing significant moments of transition as discussed by sociologist Anthony Giddens: "Transitions in individuals' lives have always demanded psychic reorganization, something which was often ritualized in traditional cultures in the shape of *rites of passages*."⁸⁷ A liminal period such as this is often marked by a rite of passage in order allow for what Giddens calls a "psychic reorganisation."⁸⁸ Although this step in the creation of these artists' identities was not "ritualized" per se, the convergence of these young men was both deliberate and purposeful. At this time in their lives, Fantin, Legros, and Whistler experimented with their dual status as artists who were autonomous yet financially dependent on the public art market.

Though Whistler's arrival in Paris led to the creation of the *Société des trois*, it should be stressed that for Fantin and Legros such a group was anticipated; after all, they were already keen to be associated with a small cohort of compatible men. This camaraderie could already be perceived amongst their studio peers involved with the *Albums* as well as in the short-lived *Société des vrais Bons*. As the student phases of their

careers drew to a close, however, Fantin and Legros found in Whistler a like-minded, bold artist to complement their maturing practice. After establishing their bond, and demonstrating it at Bonvin's exhibition, the trio's members were prepared to move forward together. Even though the *Société* was tested in its early months by Whistler's relocation, its members remained united and continued to support one another as a translocal unit. With the increasingly instability of the Parisian art world in the early 1860s, this translocality would soon prove extremely useful for each of these men.

⁵⁵ I have provided a simple biography of Whistler here. For more extensive accounts see Ronald Anderson and Anne Koval. *James McNeill Whistler: Beyond the Myth*. Carroll and Graf Publications: 1995; and Donald Sutherland. *Whistler: A Life for Art's Sake*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

⁵⁶ Sometimes spelled 'Koritzky.'

⁵⁷ Du Maurier, Poynter, and Armstrong were the chief members of The Paris Gang, though other English speaking artists were loosely associated with them. They shared a studio space in the Latin Quarter in the mid-1850s and all of them travelled back and forth frequently between Paris and London. These artists later formed the basis for du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*.

⁵⁸ Théodore Duret. *Histoire de J.McN. Whistler et de son oeuvre*. Paris: H. Floury, 1914: 6.

⁵⁹ Fleming: 129.

⁶⁰ Anne Koval. *Whistler in his Time*. London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1994: 14; Duret: 5.

⁶¹ Munro: 2.

⁶² In fact, Fantin is most frequently mentioned in scholarship as the intermediary between different artistic personalities.

⁶³ Fleming: 138.

⁶⁴ Munro: 3.

⁶⁵ Jean Jacques Lévêque. *Henri Fantin-Latour: un peintre intimiste*. Paris: ARC Édition internationale, 1996: 14.

⁶⁶ Partial translation at Druick: 71; Dans leur enthousiasme, dans leur amour pour leur art, ils avaient fondé et inauguré la peinture de l'avenir. Ils avaient formé un camp à part, échafaudé des théories, bâti des systèmes artistiques, en démolissent tout ce qui les entourait. Ils avaient même institué pour leur usage exclusif la Société des vrais Bons. Jusqu'ici tout allait bien; mais sitôt engagés dans cette voie ces Messieurs se crurent arrivés ; ils s'imaginèrent avoir dompté le succès ; ils se drapèrent dans leur gloire...future et, du haut du piédestal qu'ils s'étaient dressé sur les ruines de l'art moderne, ils regardèrent patauger les pauvres diables comme nous, qui n'avions point eu notre part de leur soleil. Il n'était plus permis alors que de se prosterner en silence devant leur supériorité et tous ceux qui permettaient la moindre objection étaient écrasés, anéantis, sous le poids d'une blague corrosive et je puis même dire, infecte.

⁶⁷ Munro: 3.

⁶⁸ At this point, it was incredibly difficult for a woman to be recognised for her artistic talent, but women were allowed to submit to the Salon. At the Salon of 1855, for example, approximately 5% of the artworks shown were by female artists. Clark, Linda L. *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 89.

- ⁶⁹ Juste Milieu was both a style of painting and a political philosophy during the July Monarchy, 1830-1848, under the rule of Louis-Philippe. Defined as 'happy medium,' those advocating the Juste Milieu sought to appease both the upper classes and the rapidly expanding middle class. As an artistic style it combined traditional Academic classicism with the more expressive style of Romanticism.
- ⁷⁰ Louise d'Argencourt and Douglas Druick, eds. *The Other Nineteenth Century*. Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1978: 90.
- ⁷¹ Pennell: 55.
- ⁷² Pennell: 56; Fleming: 147.
- ⁷³ Koval: 25.
- ⁷⁴ Janet Wolff and John Seed, eds. *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988: 1.
- ⁷⁵ Morris: 127.
- ⁷⁶ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to James McNeill Whistler. 26 June 1859. Glasgow University Library: MS Whistler F4, 01073. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. Mon cher Whistler que devenez vous, que faites vous. j'ai attendu et j'attends toujours une lettre de vous. j'ai rencontrer [Echerny?] (qui me charge de vous souhaiter le bonjour) qui m'a donner votre adresse de suite je m'en sers et me voila plume en main (instrument qui me gêne bien) pour vous demander de vos nouvelles ce que vous faites et ce qui se passe ici. j'ai su par Ernest que vous en etiez a vous installer dans ce superbe atelier, si confortable ou il ne manque rien! cela a redoubler notre curiosité (moi et Legros) sur ce que vous faisiez dedans. j'ai attendu une lettre pour me rassurer sur l'idée que j'ai toujours que quand on a tout sous la main, on se repose on se laisse aller, mais rien. - . pas de nouvelles [4 dots] J'ai vu Poynter je lui ai demander si vos Eaux fortes etaient exposés. il n'en savait rien voila des choses a m'ecrire!! [12 dots] Legros me disait ce soir qu'il etait sur que vous etiez en train de faire quelque chose de superbe sans en parler et que nous vous verrions d'ici peu de temps. Je le voudrais bien, c'est triste depuis que vous n'etes plus ici a Paris, je vois Legros moins souvent quelquefois chez Andler le moins souvent possible cela fait coucher tard, et les fonds manquent, cela est pourtant bien agreable Courbet est si charmant, Legros il y va souvent il vont bien ensemble
- ⁷⁷ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 29 June 1859. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/31. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. Mon cher petit Fantin, il faut que nul idée, théorie ou autre absurdité t'empêche de venir ici de suite - Du reste je t'en prie laisse toi conduire pour une fois. sois un petit peu influencé par ma bonne étoile - tu sais que je t'assurais toujours que quelque chose allait tourner - eh bien c'est l'Angleterre mon cher qui s'avance avec les deux mains tendues aux jeunes artistes. Maintenant[t] surtout ne reste pas a reflechir et a être incertain - n'en demandes pas conseil à tes amis ou à ta famille - pas plus que tu ne ferais pour la peinture mais prends ta resolution par les cheveux et fiches le camp de Paris! Car au bout du conte, tu ne fais rien la bas - et une semaine d'absence si ce n'était que ça ne peut que te faire du bien. - Viens voir l'exposition - les Gainsborough et nos anciens amours - viens voir ce que ^{comme} tu peut gagner beaucoup plus ici en un mois, (n'en dis rien) que tu ne gagnerais là dans un an! - Apportes toutes tes petites exquises - rien de grand. Apportes pour moi ce que te donneras Delatre et viens de suite. - C'est inutile de te dire combien mon beau frere sera heureux que tu lui fasse cette visite et qu'il puisse te montrer tous les chefs d'oeuvres dont il est si fier avec raison a un qui les appreciera - et mon cher tu es sur de vendre un tas de choses (petites) et cela au moins te fera ne rien perdre par ce voyage -. encore une fois - ne parles pas - ne demandes pas - ne fais pas de preparations inutiles - et viens nous voir et retrouver ton ancien ami. Jemmie Whistler
- ⁷⁸ Gibson: 35; Fleming: 155; Morris: 264.
- ⁷⁹ Stephanie Taylor. *Narratives of Identity and Place*. London: Routledge, 2010: 17.
- ⁸⁰ Taylor: 3.
- ⁸¹ Laura Morowitz and William Vaughan, eds. *Artistic Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2000: 8.
- ⁸² Sachko: 1.
- ⁸³ Dietrich Reetz. "'Alternate' Globalities?", *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*. Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, eds. Brill Academic Publishers: Leiden, 2010: 296.

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- ⁸⁴ Tim Oakes and Louisa Schein. *Translocal China: Linkages, Identities and the Reimagining of Space*. London: Routledge, 2006: 18.
- ⁸⁵ Charlotta Hedberg and Renato Miguel di Carmo, "Translocal Ruralism: Mobility and Connectivity in European Rural Spaces." *Translocal Ruralism: Mobility and Connectivity in European Rural Spaces*. Charlotta Hedberg and Renato Miguel di Carmo, eds. London: Springer, 2012: 3.
- ⁸⁶ Pennell.
- ⁸⁷ Anthony Giddens. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991: 33.
- ⁸⁸ Giddens.

Chapter 3: Unity and the *Société des trois*

The *Société des trois* found its pinnacle of solidity in 1863, a tumultuous and transitional time for both the wider art world and these three artists. While contextualizing this period is essential, one must carefully assess what Fantin, Legros, and Whistler viewed at this point as the lynchpin of their *Société*'s unity. Though never made public in a formal way, correspondence between Fantin, Legros, and Whistler between the years of 1862 and 1864 evidences their allegiance, and reflects the fact that each member took his association seriously, insisting that the others follow suit. They made clear statements, fortified by actions, crystallizing the tenets they observed and expected their cohort to respect. Before this critical juncture, they had alluded to these ideas, but the terms of their fidelity had not been clearly stated. As paintings from 1863 and 1864 demonstrate, a cross-Channel move, mixed receptions, and the nineteenth century's most notorious art event all provided the members of the *Société* with opportunities to stand together in their relationship.

The *Société des trois* emerged during the French Second Empire and, as has been shown, this regime created a complicated contextual background for these three artists and their peers. What follows is a brief overview of the tensions within the Parisian art world of the early 1860s; this context created the necessary environment for what is now known as the *Salon des Refusés* to emerge. Not only was this event critical for both the general trajectory of modern art and a firm break with Academic traditions, but it also

facilitated the tangible solidification of the *Société des trois* because it provided each member with an opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to the group.

Many historians identify the 1860s as being the more liberal of the Second Empire's two decades.⁸⁹ This over-simplification does not consider the political ebb and flow of the period; much of this instability was due to Napoleon III's appeasement politics, which caused the arts to experience oscillations leading to great diversity in production at some stages and harsh censorship at others. The Salon still reigned as the event at which one could procure artistic visibility; since the 1850s, it had been held biennially and under the complete control of the *Académie des beaux-arts*. In the 1860s, three interconnected groups held power over the Parisian artistic community: the jury for the spring Salon, the *Académie des beaux-arts*, and the government's *Ministre des beaux-arts*, which was small in size but closely tied to Napoleon III. The Salon jury never operated independently because, at one time or another during this decade, one of the other two groups controlled its member selection. This period marked a climax in the long-existing struggle between the *Académie* and the government to control the arts.

In spite of the oppositional positioning of these two camps, it is important to recognize that there were many overlaps in personnel and interests. Maréchal Vaillant (1790–1872), a spokesman for Napoleon III, became the minister of the Imperial House and Fine Art in 1863. Count Alfred-Émilien de Nieuwerkerke (1811–1892) acted as Vaillant's right-hand man, and became the Superintendent of Fine Art that same year primarily because of his amorous liaison with Napoleon's cousin, Princess Mathilda who also exhibited some of her artworks at the Salon. Ultimately, Nieuwerkerke's goal was to

use his position to bring all branches of the arts under the government's, and, consequently, his, control. In the early 1860s, only the *Académie* rivalled his power, as it still directed the *École des beaux-arts* and ran the *Prix de Rome*, as well as the Salon jury. Because the state had previously condoned eclecticism and diversity in visual art, the *Académie* felt it needed to regain its authority over French art. Therefore, even though the *Académie* had official control of the Salon at this point, it also fought for the monopoly of French art. One of the *Académie's* chief strategies in this battle involved an increasingly harsh Salon jury.

While the *Académie* still had power over the Salon of 1863, this year acted as a tipping point and marked the end of any positive relations between the *Académie* and the state, as well as the end of the Salon system in its traditional form. That year, Nieuwerkerke became the president of a Salon jury composed entirely of *Académie* members and several major changes appeared in the exhibition's annual rules.⁹⁰ As has been well documented, the severe jury evaluated 5,000 submissions, deeming less than 2,000 worthy of exhibition.⁹¹ In an uproar, the artistic community dispatched letters, petitions, and various protests all the way to Napoleon in the hopes of receiving a reprieve. On 19 April, Napoleon personally visited the *Palais de l'Industrie* to view the declined artworks. Five days later, *Le Moniteur* published an article written on behalf of the Emperor announcing a supplementary exhibition wherein artists could hang their rejected works, if they so chose.⁹² If artists did not collect their pieces within a week of the official opening of the Salon on 1 May, all remaining works would be hung in the secondary exhibition, due to open two weeks later. Unprecedented, these actions spawned the infamous *Salon des Refusés*.⁹³

Predictably, the news of an alternate Salon spread quickly through Paris. Reactions flew between members of the press, the public and, of course, the artists themselves. The debate about whether or not to exhibit presented artists with a quandary. Writing for *L'Artiste*, Jules Castagnary succinctly summed up the artists' dilemma:

To exhibit means to decide, to one's detriment perhaps, the issue that has been raised; it means to deliver oneself to the mocking public if the work is judged definitely bad; it means testing the impartiality of the commission, siding with the Institute not only for the present but for the future. Not to exhibit means to condemn oneself, to admit one's lack of ability or weakness; it means also, from another approach, to accomplish a glorification of the jury.⁹⁴

When the news of the exhibition broke,

Fantin was the only member of the *Société*

in Paris. Legros had been spending an increasing amount of time in London, and, in the spring of 1863, he and Whistler had travelled to Amsterdam.⁹⁵ As always, the three kept in close contact, and Whistler's correspondence with Fantin remained diligent. For a time, their conversation focused on the submission of Salon pieces and general gossip, but soon after their arrival in the Netherlands, Fantin eagerly reported on the alternate Salon. The letters written in the



Figure 3.1 Henri Fantin-Latour, *La féerie*. 1863. Oil on Canvas. 98.5cm x 131.5cm. Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal.

course of the ensuing exchange aptly demonstrate the artists' anxiety and excitement surrounding this unique event.

Because of their travels, Legros and Whistler assumed that preparations for the Salon progressed as usual. Naturally, they inquired after who had been accepted and whether any of the *Société* would be among them, as each had submitted work. Fantin submitted *La féerie* (fig. 3.1), *La lecture* (fig. 3.2), and a portrait; Legros sent *Le lutrin*, *Portrait de Manet* (fig. 3.3), and *La discussion*



Figure 3.2 Henri Fantin-Latour, *La lecture*. 1863. Oil on Canvas. Musée des beaux-arts de Tournai.

scientifique; and Whistler chose to submit his *La fille blanche* (fig. 3.4). Whistler's work had been rejected from the Royal Academy the preceding year, and he wrote to Fantin on 22 April asking who had been left out of the Salon and whether Fantin could take his work to the contemporary art dealer Martinet; because Whistler presumed its refusal, he wanted it to be seen somewhere.⁹⁶ In a letter dated 26 April, Fantin wrote to Amsterdam with news; he mentioned some of the unsuccessful artists, including himself, Manet, Gustave Colin, Félix Bracquemond, and several others, and also stated that all three of Legros's submissions had been accepted.⁹⁷ He went on to reveal that there would be an alternate, optional exhibition for the rejected works. Fantin assumed that at least part of the *Société des trois* would be involved in this novel venture, even before he received a reply from his friends. In the same letter he states: "Legros is unhappy that he has not had one picture



Figure 3.3 Alphonse Legros, *Portrait d'Edouard Manet*. 1863. Oil on Canvas. 61.5cm x 50cm. Musée du Petit-Palais.

rejected.”⁹⁸ Here, Fantin is no doubt presuming this reaction from Legros as he would not have had an opportunity to speak to Legros on the subject.

Fantin’s presumptions regarding his friends’ reactions proved accurate. On 3 May, Whistler replied with characteristic enthusiasm on behalf of the *Société* abroad:

it's delightful it's delightful for us this business of the rejects' exhibition!—Certainly you must leave my picture there! and yours too! it would be madness to withdraw them in order to send them to Martinet's!⁹⁹

Like Fantin, Whistler immediately saw the benefit of such exposure for the *Société* and did not hesitate to ask Fantin to retrieve *La fille blanche* from Martinet so that it might be included. Equally keen, other members of their broader Parisian circle from the Café du Bade such as Manet, Bracquemond, and Zacharie Astruc jumped at the opportunity to participate. For them, this event represented not only a way to show their work to the public, but also to prove the strictness and irrelevance of the *Académie*'s standards.

On 15 May, two weeks after the official Salon opened, more than 7,000 Parisians pushed their way into the opening of the *Salon des Refusés*, and artists awaited their reactions. That is not to say that the *Société* needed to wait until then to be noticed: both Fantin and Legros had works displayed in the official Salon. In his reviews of the principle Salon, Astruc mentioned Legros favourably: “He is on the right path—he



Figure 3.4 James McNeill Whistler, *La fille blanche*. 1862. Oil on Canvas. 215cm x 108cm. National Gallery of Art Washington.

already has in him all the authority of a clever, bold artist—full and accurate.”¹⁰⁰

Fantin’s *La lecture* also received favourable comments.¹⁰¹ Théophile Thoré bestowed high praise on Fantin’s lone work in his review, calling it the best portrait of a woman in the exhibition.¹⁰²

Exhibited at the *Refusés*, Fantin’s *La féerie* and *Portrait* also received critical attention.¹⁰³ Several critics commented on *La féerie* including Castagnary who, though a supporter of Fantin, felt the artist could do better than this work and challenged Fantin to live up to his potential as an artist.¹⁰⁴ Ernest Chesneau offered similar sentiments: “*La lecture* and the portrait reveal a superb science of picturesque processes, a careful study of master colourists. It is shocking that *Féerie* is by the same artist.”¹⁰⁵ Though these reviews are negative in tone, Fantin escaped the harsher critiques received by his friends, many of which assisted in the immortalization of this event.

Émile Zola’s novel, *L’œuvre* (1886), provides an eyewitness account of the uproarious reception the works of the *Salon des Refusés* met, citing a loosely veiled version of Manet’s *Le bain* as the most ridiculed and a painting of a woman in white as a close runner-up. Indeed this description is an accurate reflection of the press’s reaction to Whistler’s *Fille Blanche*. It hung prominently in the exhibition and its virtues escaped all but his closest friends and allies.

Not all reviewers dismissed *La fille blanche* and *Salon des Refusés* as laughable. Writing for the *Feuilleton Quotidien*, Zacharie Astruc lamented the incompetent jury and praised many works, including those by Manet, Whistler, Fantin, Bracquemond, Johan Jongkind, and Gustave Colin, among others.¹⁰⁶ Fernand Desnoyers also regarded members of the *Société* as being wrongly placed; he questioned the reason that Fantin

was rejected in the first place and recognised Whistler's *La fille blanche* as the most unique painting of the exhibition.¹⁰⁷ Some writers, like Thoré, seemed to grasp Whistler's intention to focus on the unity of the canvas, as opposed to minute details.¹⁰⁸ Louis Étienne dubbed it "one of the most original paintings in the exhibition."¹⁰⁹

Regardless of mixed reviews, this alternate Salon demonstrated the fidelity and unity championed by the *Société*. It could be argued that Fantin and Whistler observed these tenets more closely than Legros, but such a misperception would depend on imbalanced evidence, the correspondence written by Legros himself. In fact, the *Salon des Refusés* gave Legros a chance to prove himself, both within his group and within the wider circle of independent artists. His consistent acceptance to the official Salon in the 1860s may have caused him to feel isolated from the group, something Fantin alluded to in the aforementioned letter. He had experienced major success in 1859 and 1861 with *L'angélus* and *Ex-Voto* respectively. Therefore, he did not have the same desperate need for visibility as the others. Legros had the public's attention, but he wanted to ensure that he had that of his colleagues and friends as well. In order to verify his loyalty, he boldly took a work accepted by the official Salon and decided to hang it with the *Refusés* in 1863; the work he chose was the full-length portrait of Edouard Manet.¹¹⁰ He could not have known it at the time, but this portrait depicted the most scandal-provoking artist of the event.

Though this rarely discussed, daring move did not hinder his continued success within official circles, Legros was among the heroes who elected to exhibit at the *Salon des Refusés* and was called an "artistic revolutionary" by his contemporary Malcolm Charles Salaman, a noted English author and art critic.¹¹¹ At this point, Legros is clearly

an active, modern artist working within and drawing inspiration from the avant-garde.¹¹²

In spite of this, it is extremely rare to find contemporary scholarship that positions Legros within the artistic avant-garde of this period, even though he made a conscious effort to assert such an identification.¹¹³

Despite their eager participation, it appears that Whistler and Legros did not come back through Paris following their trip to the Netherlands. As always, Fantin diligently sent reports of artistic affairs in Paris. In a letter to Whistler written after visiting the *Salon des Refusés* one evening, Fantin raved that Manet had experienced success there as had Colin, but his highest praise was for *La fille blanche* and he told Whistler:

now you are famous! your picture is very well hung, everyone can see it—
you are having the greatest success. I am very happy to be the first to tell you.
... Baudelaire thinks it is charming, charming, exquisite delicacy he says,
Legros, Manet, Bracquemond, de Balleroy, who I was with think it is very
good. ... I was very happy to see a great crowd round your picture every time
I went into the room, yesterday during the varnishing I saw all the officials
there. Come quickly, it is really interesting for you, because I am forgetting, I
do not know how to tell you how excellent it is, for you,—Manet is a great
success as is a picture by Colin which has great qualities, for my part I am
very pleased, this Exhibition is excellent for us, I'm waiting to talk all about
it with you.¹¹⁴

As always, Fantin was quick to offer praise and support for his dear friend but also referred to their group when he noted the exhibition was a success for all of them.

After the *Salon des Refusés*, artists needed to regain their footing, both individually and collectively. Some, like Manet, felt shaken by the experience and hesitated to exhibit again. Others took the opportunity to make drastic life changes, as did Legros. As a whole, however, the *Société des trois* stood its ground during and after the exhibition. Though the balance of the group was to shift across the Channel, the avant-garde art scene in Paris would always be fundamental in informing their decisions. From the summer of 1863 onward, the translocal nature of the *Société* made it necessary for Fantin, Legros, and Whistler to combine the cosmopolitanism and social climate of Paris with that of London as they worked toward the self-fashioning of their mature artistic identities.

In spite of geographic proximity and intense rivalry between London and Paris, the two cities had disparate political and social climates. Though present in both France and England, class tensions in London manifested themselves differently than across the Channel. For the French, revolutions generally meant a lot of bloodshed while, in England, revolution centred more upon industry and progress.

The industrial revolution had as much social as technical impact, and, by the middle of the century, all British classes had experienced its effects. Without the bloody revolutions of France, British lower and middle classes had solidified their reputation as strong, independent, and powerful. They made efforts to distinguish themselves from the aristocracy, whom they had long wished to emulate, in favour of pursuing more desirable characteristics such as industriousness and perseverance, which appeared antithetical to the upper classes. Though similar changes were seen in Paris, France did not adopt the

Victorian attitude that so prized industry and labour. Through these supposedly British virtues, a man could improve upon his situation and rise above his station, thus creating the idea of the “self-made man,” as theorized by many philosophers of the day, including Samuel Smiles (1812–1904). The premise and dominance of this mentality is well summarized by Perkin: “By individual competition anyone with energy and ability, however humble his birth, could climb the ladder of entrepreneurial *Société*. From this belief logically stemmed one of the most powerful instruments of propaganda ever developed by any class to justify itself and seduce others to its own ideal: the myth of the self-made man.”¹¹⁵ Within the new rising class system, the entrepreneur brought the ideas and had vision and foresight, while his workers were valued members of his team and were able to earn reasonable, reliable wages.

In conjunction with the importance placed on general industriousness grew a thriving art market unlike that of Paris, which resulted in London artists having some advantages during the 1860s over those in Paris. The French capital is generally considered the apex of art production in the middle of the nineteenth century, but comparable art spheres existed in London. Academies and private ateliers in each city offered similar training opportunities, and each city had well-attended annual exhibitions, the spring Salon and the summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy. As the industrious Victorian attitude spilled into the art market, artists’ physical labour was respected and entrepreneurial dealers had ample opportunity to promote and sell work. By the 1850s, higher prices could be obtained by artists in London than in Paris because dealer competition already existed there.¹¹⁶ While middle classes frowned upon frivolous consumption, the buying of art was not seen as such because of the Victorian belief in

art's power to educate. Art historian Dianne Macleod Sachko succinctly explains the crux of Victoria art market: "The motivation for art collecting cannot be separated from the social sphere, particularly in the early Victorian period when the high premium placed on personal industry nullified self-gratification as an acceptable goal."¹¹⁷ Because of these tensions, both art buyers and creators needed to emphasise the hard work and moral attributes of art, so as not to have it misconstrued as something frivolous or selfish.

To satisfy both artists and collectors in this process, dealers were increasingly employed as mediators and, like their clients, they were a varied group.¹¹⁸ Ernest Gambart was the major dealer during the 1850s, and in the 1860s, Thomas Agnew became his chief competition.¹¹⁹ The top dealers in 1860s London, Gambart, Agnew, Morby, Flatow and Vokins, all encouraged their artists toward smaller, more saleable art.¹²⁰ Portable paintings were not only less expensive, but they also better suited the upper-middle-class homes of their buyers. Thus, in London, artists with connections and an ability to be flexible with their work had more chances for success.

Collectors and patrons who had made their wealth at the peak of the industrial revolution drove this market, setting the standards and trends for the art-buying middle classes. They wanted to present themselves as having taste, culture, and money, like the upper classes. However, instead of looking to Academic painters, or work by old masters, to which they could neither relate nor afford, they looked to younger, contemporary artists shown by the many dealers around the city. This is not to say that collectors were solely on the hunt for innovative artwork; many styles found devotees.¹²¹ Early Victorian art collectors were as varied as their dealers and, logically, art production reflected this diversity, giving artists more freedom.¹²² Generally, demanding art patrons in the early

nineteenth century were businessmen who had shrewdly navigated the worlds of Victorian capitalism. Because of this, they often felt it was their right to be incredibly demanding of their commissioned artists. By the middle of the century, as artists gained more prestige and often came from social classes higher than those of their patrons, they began to assert themselves in order to prevent their creativity from being stifled.¹²³

Shortly after the closing of the Paris Salons of 1863, Legros joined Whistler permanently in London. In light of his constant attempts to persuade his comrades to relocate, Whistler would no doubt have been delighted by the move, although Fantin's reaction was not recorded. Be that as it may, within the broader scope of the *Société*, it must be assumed that Legros's move would have had consequences, both positive and negative. The balance of the group had shifted, leaving Fantin alone in Paris, the birthplace of their unity and their artistic careers. Whistler's move to London was organic in many ways; he had family there and spoke English fluently. Legros, on the other hand, spoke no English and had few acquaintances, and therefore had little reason to leave his homeland aside from his relationship with Whistler.

Numerous factors would have supported a move across the Channel, including the thriving contemporary art market in London. Many French artists sought to exploit the cross-Channel market; naturally, those with previously forged connections were well positioned for success. Though, on a personal level, economic survival may have been a primary motive, these artists' transnational entrepreneurship also allowed them to participate in wider European or global economies.¹²⁴ These artists were not aiming to be acknowledged as specifically English or French, nor were they seeking a general

recognition in either country. Instead, they strove for acceptance within shifting groups of patrons and artists who must be viewed as locals, as opposed to nationals, within these cosmopolitan centres. With Whistler by his side, Legros was instantly integrated into London's artistic circles, which no doubt boosted his mediocre career.

In Paris, Legros had not had much financial luck, and his father's massive debts had also become the artist's responsibility. French critics had positive things to say about his paintings from the beginning, but he had no recorded sales or commissions prior to his move across the Channel.¹²⁵ This was unquestionably a driving factor behind Legros's move. With the help of extraverted friends such as Whistler and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), who he had met through Whistler on a previous visit, Legros found many patrons in London, including Seymour Haden (Whistler's brother-in-law) and many members of the Greek community such as the Ionides family.¹²⁶ The Ionides were textile merchants who had immigrated to England in 1815. Both Alexander Ionides and his son Constantine were avid collectors of contemporary art, and the latter became a close friend of Legros over time; the artist even advised him on his purchases.¹²⁷ Evidently, Legros's initial connections through Whistler, such as Rossetti and Haden, helped him settle in England, but he confidently forged fruitful relationships on his own, as well.

Closely linked with economic success in the art world was the ability to network, and clearly Legros's social skills had never dazzled Paris. In London, however, Whistler told a different story, as he delighted in recounting tales of their friend to Fantin. Obviously, Legros carved a niche for himself in London's social scene with greater ease than in Paris. Shortly after his arrival in the summer of 1863, he attended parties, such as

the one hosted by Rossetti on 16 July, and actively ingratiated himself with people he had met on previous visits, taking full advantage of any personal connections.

At these soirées and salons, Legros made an impression, as he vigorously fashioned his new persona. Whistler thinly disguised his incredulity in his reports on the new Legros:

First Legros is so fine you would not recognise him! his main preoccupation is the shade of his gloves.—I am going to have him photographed so that you can see him in the fine flower of his splendour! He is indeed a Society darling here; all the young English ladies have fallen in love with him, and the married ladies seem to wish to forget their duty because of him—also Alphonse has developed social skills that we did not know he possessed, and his ease and confident graciousness surpass all description! In addition to all this he is working as never before; they are taking his pictures straight from the easel, and all his leisure time is spent with his tailor, one of the marvels of London!¹²⁸

Legros's overt adoption of London's fashion trends may have surprised his friends, but his environment was bound to influence him in some respects. The artist intentionally adjusted elements of his artistic persona in response to his new place of residence, though not all mimicked the latest styles. Necessarily affected by the cosmopolitanism of its varied surroundings, the *Société* reacted accordingly, sometimes in defiance, other times in agreement. In spite of his preoccupation with gloves, Legros, for example, made little effort to integrate himself by means of language. Legros spoke very little English and did not strive to remedy that; fortunately for him, cultivated English society of this period

spoke French.¹²⁹ He also purposefully retained what the English saw to be typically French characteristics in his painting.¹³⁰ Assumptions or stereotypes that pitted French against English painting involved both the execution of the works and the subject matter. For example, an artistic employing an aesthetic gaze, one that emphasized the *flâneur*, was seen as being French while the use of an analytical gaze typified the English.¹³¹ Known in England for its diversity, the *École Française* and French artists such as Legros would attract many curious crowds, creating for them opportunities to experience artistic and social success based solely on novelty.¹³²

All members of the *Société* practised intentional non-assimilation in different ways, allowing them to remain distinct within their spheres of contact. Naturally, exterior influences on the *Société des trois* existed long before Legros's move; after all, Paris itself was a diverse, cosmopolitan city, and the various exhibitions it showcased during the Second Empire, such as the universal expositions, corroborate this. The trio's translocalism must be emphasized in order to grasp the fullness and nuances each member now brought to the table; as each shared his thoughts and experiences with the other two, he perpetuated a multifaceted artistic network of translocal influence. The other groups with which each member associated, be they patrons, dealers, artists, or writers, all carried with them different cultural elements. Some of these people had immigrated from other countries, while others, including Fantin and Legros, had come to the city from smaller towns. These factors combined to create environments like Paris and London that were not strictly French or English, but that accommodated instead the ebb and flow of many influences. It must be remembered that social spaces are not blank

slates, but, in fact, structure the activities that occur within them.¹³³ Microcosmically, the *Société* itself was one such space, existing simultaneously in two different cities.

During the peak of the group's cohesiveness, each artist flourished in his translocal space, which allowed his individual experiences to benefit the *Société* as a whole.

Correspondence indicates that their strength as a group persisted regardless of distance.

Early in the summer of 1863, Fantin wrote from Paris to Whistler and Legros in London:

As for the rest I am not very well informed. I am fed up with the Café de Bade and other places—what can you do, I am nothing there—I am beginning to feel so deprived of any kind of success that when it comes, I shall not feel it To tell you about Manet, well what can I tell you that he and Baudelaire agree that Mr Ingres is not a painter!—there is the young school for you, the Semi-Romantics as they call us, but no I am on my own—I have been with them today at the café Bade but never have anything in common with them, neither ideas nor work, the moment has passed—The two of you have qualities and I say, will say, you and the others, there is a difference. With you it is open confession, we know we want to fight against the stupid masses, but each of us separately very free—If Legros likes the Primitives Holbein, the Germans, the people with hands pressed together and everything naive, you in the luxuries of the Salons and the splendours of the taverns and the banks of the Thames, I myself have my own little view—and we say to ~~hell with it~~ for each of us, it is not basically for love of our friend, if we talk about it, it is an obligation, the quality of a man obliged to feel it for friends—I have thrown myself into my work, and feel myself growing, I am

soon going to be an artist[.] Your gold medal will be the same as always but I think it will not have a great effect, as much as you think, and then who do you want me to talk to about it! Ah. Legros is throwing himself into dandyism that is good, let him find a wife that is a way to make one's fortune—your plans for travel and fortune it is very kind of you, but well I do not believe in any of those things, one has fortune, at one's door if one has the luck to meet it—I like being in the Society of three, but as far as I am concerned it is purely a natural thing you two are doing better than everyone, I will not let you go while you are doing things that I like[.]¹³⁴

Within this letter, Fantin expresses the fraternity he feels with his fellow *Société* members, in spite of their distance. There are also distinct connections that can be made with these sentiments and those from the albums. As he did in his album letters, Fantin firmly aligns himself with his closest friends, now the *Société*, but emphasizes that each will, and must, remain distinct in his art practice. He also continues to downplay his own achievements and seems to lace the letter with self-pity, recognizing that Legros and Whistler have seen more success than he has.

The members' friendship with and support of one another was enacted in many other ways as well. One of these occurred when Whistler and Legros partnered up in the defence of Legros's work, *L'angelus* (fig. 2.8), which had been purchased by Whistler's brother-in-law, amateur artist Seymour Haden. Haden had retouched the work, apparently to "correct" the perspective that Legros had employed on the floor tiles. This discovery outraged both Legros and Whistler, and Haden became their common enemy as a result. In retaliation, the artists joined forces and sneaked into Haden's home to reclaim the

piece. They proceeded to remove all of Haden's handiwork and Legros restored the work to its original state. Whistler delighted in this affront to his brother-in-law, especially as Haden had begun to speak out against Whistler's girlfriend Johanna Hiffernan, all of which Whistler regaled to Fantin in a letter from January 1864.¹³⁵



Figure 3.5 James McNeill Whistler, *Wapping*. 1860-1864. Oil on Canvas. 72cm x 102cm. National Gallery of Art Washington.

During these early months in England, Legros relied heavily on the support of the *Société*, though it is doubtful that this dependence would have been evident to a wider public. Much of his time was spent with Whistler—Legros, in fact, resided with Whistler in his home and studio at 7 Lindsay Row—and many letters to and from Fantin were addressed on behalf of the two of them. Further demonstrations of support exist, including a painting by Whistler, *Wapping* (fig. 3.5). Whistler's *Wapping* (1860–1864) provides physical evidence of Whistler's endorsement of Legros and his desire for his friend to be accepted by all within the artistic world of London. Legros's slightly ambiguous position within London's art community, while remaining an essential third member of the *Société des trois*, can be seen in the process behind *Wapping*, as well as the finished product. Whistler's inclusion of a casual portrait of Legros as the central figure presents him as not only closely linked to the American, but also as seamlessly incorporated into London life. This type of validation, along with financial help in the

form of patrons, was invaluable for Legros who strove to create a bolder image for himself.

Though Whistler began *Wapping* long before Legros's move, it was always rooted in the *Société*. A letter from January/June 1861 to Fantin describes his progress on the work and the importance he places upon it is palpable. "We understand each other better than anyone perhaps and I wish you were here in front of a canvas I am damned well counting on and that must become a masterpiece."¹³⁶ A small sketch was also included along with a special plea not to share word of the painting with anyone outside the group, specifically Gustave Courbet. His early description differs in many ways from the final product, including the replacement of an elderly man in a white shirt with the figure of Legros as the central sailor.

His subject and manner of execution are typical of both Realism, a style that gained ground in mid-century with Gustave Courbet in France and Pre-Raphaelitism, espoused by the then well-known English brotherhood. Essentially, Realism sought to portray life as it was: replete with grit, details, and monotony. Whistler portrays a prostitute, modelled by Johanna Hiffernan, seated with two men, on a balcony near the east end of the Thames. Because of its Realist tendencies, the work does not offer an overt judgement on the woman or the lifestyle presented, as Pre-Raphaelite works did. For example, Dante



Figure 3.6 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Found*. 1853/1859. Delaware Art Museum.

Gabriel Rossetti's *Found* (fig. 3.6) depicts a man, probably a loved one, insisting upon saving a woman who has fallen into a life of prostitution. Instead, Whistler positions the artist, and also the viewer, among the company of these three lower-class individuals, taking part in this everyday moment.

The finished fruits of Whistler's long labour were intended for both the Salon and the Royal Academy. In the end, however, Whistler chose not to submit *Wapping* to the scrutiny of the French jury, although the reasons for this are unclear. Letters and time lapses indicate that he constantly struggled with the work, and another possible rejection would have been a hard blow. Anderson and Koval argue that he chose to step aside because Fantin had a large group portrait which he hoped would be the talking point of the exhibition and Whistler wanted to allow his comrade all the glory.¹³⁷

Some critics of the Royal Academy's ninety-sixth exhibition praised *Wapping*'s technical skill, but they often focused on the background instead of the disreputable characters.¹³⁸ Others, such as a writer for the *Times*, considered it somewhat vulgar and not up to the standard of which Whistler was capable:

There are no pictures in the Exhibition showing more unquestionable power, accompanied by an almost defiant eccentricity, than the two by Mr. Whistler, "Wapping" (585) and "Die Lange Lizen, of the Six Marks (595)." The painting of the thames and its various river craft, seen from the publichouse balcony, which forms the foreground of the former picture, could hardly be surpassed for force and truth. If Velasquez had painted our river he would have painted something in this style. It is a pity that this masterly background should be marred by a trio of grim and mean figures. There are noble-looking

merchant sailors and fair women even among the crowd of Ratcliff-highway.

But it is Mr. Whistler's way to choose people and things for painting which other painters would turn from, and to combine these oddly chosen materials as no other painter would choose to combine them. But even such power as Mr. Whistler's does not excuse his defiance of taste and propriety. He should learn that eccentricity is not originality, but the caricature of it. We reverence the man who, taking his own line, arrives at truths none had struck upon before, but which all own when once revealed. We turn with impatience from him who attempts to win our notice by doing everything unlike other people. Mr. Whistler has so much power, that it is a thousand pities to see it marred by fantastic tricks, such as have led him to ... unite an ostentatious slovenliness of execution with the most carefully calculated choice and arrangement of hues; or when he can draw so well when he chooses, to give us ... figures as repulsive and unfinished as those in his *Wapping balcony*.¹³⁹

Whistler's letter to Fantin as he was working on *Wapping* reveals Whistler's elevated opinion of the work and his own skill, as well as an ongoing artistic exchange, which included the *Société*. By imploring Fantin-Latour not to discuss the piece with Courbet, Whistler exposed a network of creative interchange that flowed between the capitals, in addition to the manner in which the British artistic realm actively engaged with other art centres.

Wapping thus emerges as a metaphor for the increasingly translocal communication of ideas and artistic movements that appeared in Victorian media. This can be seen in the style of the work, which clearly draws on Realist traditions from both

sides of the Channel, and in elements Whistler selected for inclusion. He began *Wapping* with the industrious, detailed backdrop of the Thames; goods are being exchanged in the background of the canvas with the same vigour as ideas would have been traded in the on the other end of the brush between Whistler and Legros, his close artistic ally of the time. By mid-century, Victorian London had become a hub for translocal artists such as Whistler, Legros, and even Fantin, who also garnered a British following despite remaining in Paris. Though often dubbed eccentric, Whistler was thus able to paint an insignificant moment in *Wapping* and at the same time remind viewers that Victorian artists were a necessary part of the multi-faceted conversation out of which European art production was constituted.

Clearly, the translocal aspects of the *Société* that emerged in 1863 did not hinder its solidarity. Whistler and Fantin's ongoing correspondence reveals the importance placed on unity, much like Fantin's letters from the early albums. This series of letters, however, is the first to mention the *Société* specifically, insisting upon its members' loyalty to it. Fantin's response to this discussion can be seen in his large-scale group portrait, *Hommage à Delacroix*, in which he again acknowledges the importance of the wider artistic culture while highlighting the *Société*'s distinct identity.

As quoted above, Fantin wrote to Whistler and Legros in July 1863 that there were differences between them, to be sure, but they still had solidity and truth among them, unlike the group revolving around Manet at the Café de Bade, with whom he was finding less and less in common.¹⁴⁰ Fantin made an effort to state clearly that, though he was

spending time with this group, even on the very day he was writing, he did not feel linked to them in ideas or practice.¹⁴¹ The tone is one of longing for his cohorts while emphasizing his belief in their unity.

This pivotal letter was actually written in response to a letter from Whistler he had received only days earlier. Here, Whistler refers to the *mot* of the *Société*, meaning the letter or the policy of the group, but what exactly is this *mot*? While he does not explicitly define it, one can deduce Whistler's meaning for this term via aspects of their union that he highlights in his letter. Loyalty above all else is emphasized, and he goes so far as to say that they will all have success if they remain loyal to each other. Earlier in this letter, Whistler discusses several other artists from the Parisian set, specifically mentioning Manet and the rest at the Café du Bade, in order to set himself, Fantin, and Legros apart from them. Previously, none of the three members had referred to the group's principles in specific terms. In this passage, Whistler provides some illumination, as do the earlier letters by Fantin and himself:

We intend to visit Paris in a month's time, and from there go to Belgium - where you will come with us—to do some pictures which we will place here (this is between us and not written for the ears of others.) My dear Fantin we will be the “Society of Three” more than ever—and we are going to make our fortunes, and quickly—because you know how much I do my duty—each supporting the two others, is to support oneself—we are all selfish, and all a little perverse—but I am faithful to the word of the *Société*, so that there is no door open to me where everyone is not eager also to meet you and to

accept your painting—there is gold waiting for us everywhere—we have only to be loyal to each other—¹⁴²

This passage is important as it firmly states both that Whistler recognizes that there is indeed a *Société des trois* and that he will remain loyal to its precepts, while insisting the others do the same. He is devoted to his fellow members, and he sees their route to success as certain if they all have the same commitment.

With the help of Whistler and then Legros, Fantin developed an artistic presence for himself in London while Whistler and Legros simultaneously remained determined to preserve their positions within the French art world. The creation of their translocal presences and ongoing unity as a trio could not have been accomplished passively. The continued loyalty of the *Société des trois* is tangibly demonstrated by a large group portrait by Fantin.

Conceived in 1863, Fantin-Latour's *Hommage à Delacroix*

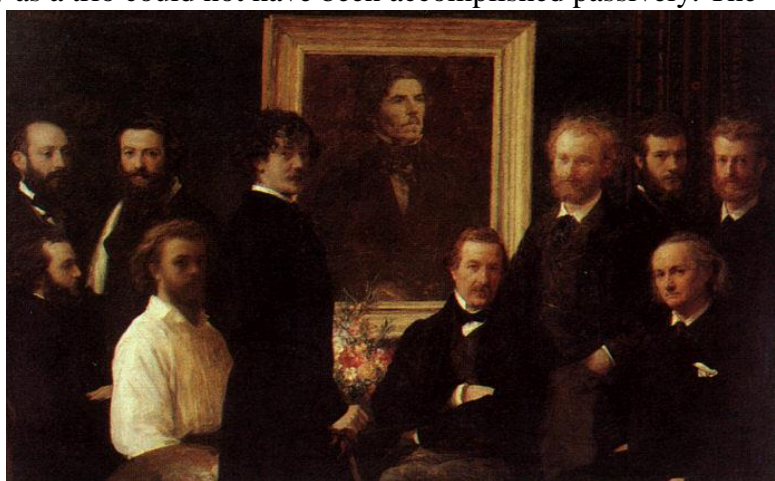


Figure 3.7 Henri Fantin-Latour, *Hommage à Delacroix*. 1864. Oil on Canvas. 120cm x 250cm. Musée d'Orsay.

(fig. 3.7) depicts ten figures, including the artist, whom Fantin felt best encapsulated the world of Parisian art just after the French painter Eugène Delacroix had died. Though this work was not commissioned, nor was there a buyer in place, Fantin felt it deserved much time and attention. Compositionally balanced with five figures appearing on each side of

a portrait of Delacroix, his portraits of his friends demonstrate both his own artistic beliefs and his defence of his friends.¹⁴³ Each person came to sit for Fantin individually, and he worked on several different possibilities for the composition, as evidenced by his sketches. The work is anchored by a central portrait of the deceased master above a modest table. Delacroix's image is flanked by a varied cast of characters including artists and writers who worked in both Paris and London. Standing on the right hand side of the portrait are Manet, Félix Bracquemond, and Albert de Balleroy while writers Jules Champfleury and Charles Baudelaire sit in the foreground. Seated on the left are Louis Edmond Duranty and Fantin himself, with Louis Cordier, Legros, and Whistler standing.

In a letter from Whistler to Fantin written early in 1864, Whistler asks that good positions in this painting be saved for Legros and himself because they had not yet been to sit for their portraits.¹⁴⁴ At this time, the *Société des trois* still held fast as a strong, functioning unit and, although not alone here, the power and definition Fantin gives his group far outweighs that which he bestows upon the others, thus creating the only extant group portrait of the *Société* (fig. 3.8). He has

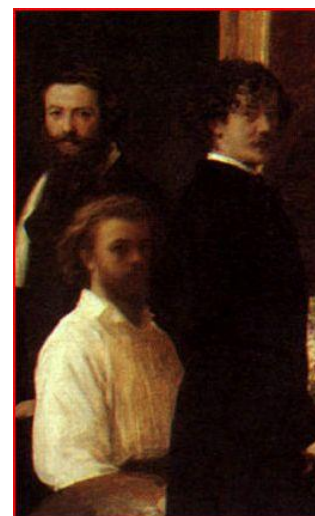


Figure 3.8 Henri Fantin-Latour, Detail, *Hommage à Delacroix*. 1864.

strategically created a sense that these three painters are at once members of the avant-garde art world, and yet distinct within it. The *Société* looks confidently out toward the viewers without hesitation of posture or glance, as seen in Baudelaire and Champfleury. Each member retains his own sense of form and purpose, while the costumes of the other men become indistinct in certain areas. Though his own portrait is shaded, Fantin's face

and body are detailed, and he remains a proud worker complete with palette and eye-catching smock. Beside him, and closest to the viewer, is Whistler. Early in 1864, the American had already established a reputation for himself as a character and an artist of note. From his central placement, he presents a bouquet to the deceased artist. Fantin goes so far as to have Whistler echo Delacroix's stance in order to signify Fantin's belief in Whistler's talent and destiny as a great artist.¹⁴⁵ Legros, the final piece of this tripod, is impossible to avoid as he, too, confronts the viewer. His gaze is the sharpest and strongest of the ten figures, and, though he is in the back row, there is no suggestion of a weak or retiring figure.

Knowing it was an important canvas, both for the *Société des trois* and their wider circle of artistic friends, Fantin planned to send the work to the Salon of 1864. Only one year had passed since many of those represented in the group had thrown their hats in with the *Salon des Refusés*; even Delacroix had supported some of the works and artists represented in 1863. The Salon jury accepted this canvas as well as Fantin's *Scène du Tannhauser*, but it was not immediately purchased and received a mixture of reviews. The critic for *Le Figaro* felt that it appropriately honoured Delacroix, even more so than the state had, but went on to confuse Manet with Whistler in the image.¹⁴⁶ Gautier complimented the portraits but felt that the overall composition lacked cohesion.¹⁴⁷ Writing for *L'Union des Arts* Fizelière said: "What is most striking in the work of Fantin, outside the suppleness and firmness of the modelling, is the knowledgeable construction of the figures and the intelligent and spiritual truth within the countenances."¹⁴⁸ On an overtly disapproving note, Edmond About stated plainly that *Hommage* presented an unattractive image of Delacroix alongside the future painters of ugly things.¹⁴⁹

The events of 1863 and 1864 present a picture of a cohesive *Société des trois* that strengthened, even thrived, in the face of change. Their solidarity was not spoiled when two thirds of the group relocated to London. Paris and London each presented benefits and hindrances to young artists, and each member of the trio continued to take advantage of connections on both sides of the Channel. From Legros's bold removal of an accepted work from the official Salon to hang with the *refusés* to Fantin's portrait of the *Société*, which was presented for all of Paris to examine, the group constantly and consistently reiterated their allegiance to one another. However, within a few years this alliance would lose its cohesion and the *Société* would dissipate. After holding strong through the adversities of these early years, it seems unlikely that one could blame external forces for their dissolution. Instead, this will need to be traced to internal factors, as each struggled to fashion his adult artistic identity.

⁸⁹ For a detailed discussion of the state of the government and the arts see Patricia Mainardi. *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

⁹⁰ For example, limitations, which previously did not exist, were placed on the number of entries allowing only three submissions per artist per artistic category.

⁹¹ See T.J. Clark. *The Painting of Modern Life* (Revised Edition), London: Thames and Hudson, 1999; Ross King, *The Judgement of Paris: The Revolutionary Decade that Gave the World Impressionism*. New York: Walker and Co, 2006; and Mainardi.

⁹² *Le Moniteur*, April 24, 1863 quoted in King: "Numerous complaints have reached the ear of the Emperor on the subject of works of art which have been refused by the Salon jury. His Majesty, wishing to let the public judge the legitimacy of these complaints, has decided that the rejected works of art are to be exhibited in another part of the Palais des Champs-Élysées. This exhibition will be voluntary, and artists who may not wish to participate need only inform the administration, which will return their works to them."

⁹³ This is the first of three such supplementary exhibitions.

⁹⁴ Jules Castagnary, *L'Artiste*, 1863.

⁹⁵ The exact dates on this trip are vague but it is clear that sometime between April and June of 1863 Whistler and Legros spent about 6 weeks travelling to and from Amsterdam.

⁹⁶ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 22 April 1863. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/13. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>.

- ⁹⁷ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to James McNeill Whistler. 26 April 1863. Glasgow University Library: MS Whistler, F 11. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. Morris incorrectly notes that Legros had 3 works hanging in the Salon, all of which were badly placed. Morris: 263.
- ⁹⁸ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to James McNeill Whistler 26 April 1863. Glasgow University Library: MS Whistler F 11. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Legros est triste de n'avoir pas Un tableau refusée »
- ⁹⁹ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 3 May 1863. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/14. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence> « c'est charmant c'est charmant pour nous cette affaire de l'exposition des refusés! - Certainement qu'il faut y laisser mon tableau! et les tiens aussi! ca serait de la folie de les retirer pour les mettre chez Martinet ! »
- ¹⁰⁰ Zacharie Astruc, "Le Salon de 1863," *Feuilleton Quotidien*. (#11 : 14 May 1863) : 2. « Il est dans la grande voie—il a déjà en lui toute l'autorité d'un artiste audacieux et savant – ample et précis. »
- ¹⁰¹ #669 in the catalogue.
- ¹⁰² W. Burger Thoré, *Salons*, 1863: 384.
- ¹⁰³ Fantin's *Féerie* and *Portrait*, #158 and #159 respectively in that catalogue
- ¹⁰⁴ Castagnary, *Salons 1857-1870*, Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1892 : 162.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ernest Chesneau. *L'art et les artistes modernes: en France et en Angleterre*. Paris : Didier et Co., 1864: 187. « *La Lecture* et le portrait révèlent une grande science des procédés pittoresques, une étude attentive des maîtres coloristes. On s'étonne que la *Féerie* soit du même artiste. »
- ¹⁰⁶ Zacharie Astruc, "Le Salon de 1863," *Feuilleton Quotidien*. (#16 : 20 May 1863) : 5. (M d'O)
- ¹⁰⁷ Fernand Desnoyers. *Salon des Refusés : La peinture en 1863*. Paris : Azur Datil, 1863 : 27, 7. (M d'O)
- ¹⁰⁸ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso: 2006: 134.
- ¹⁰⁹ Anderson: 134.
- ¹¹⁰ Wilcox: 68.
- ¹¹¹ Salaman: 1.
- ¹¹² Monique Geiger. "La Peinture d'Alphonse Legros en Angleterre." *Mémoires de l'Académie des sciences, arts, et belles-lettres de Dijon* 112 (1954-56): 76.
- ¹¹³ Morris; D.S. MacColl. "Introduction." *Loan Exhibition of Works by Alphonse Legros*. Birmingham: Birmingham City Museum, 1913; and Charles Ricketts and Campbell Dodgson. *A Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings, Etchings and Lithographs by Professor Alphonse Legros from the Collection of Frank E. Bliss*. London: Grosvenor Galleries, 1922 all focus on Legros's traditionalism, in comparison with his colleagues.
- ¹¹⁴ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to James McNeill Whistler. 15 May 1863. Glasgow University Library : MS Whistler F12. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « te voila célèbre! ton tableaux est très bien placé, tout le monde le voit - tu as le plus grand succès. aus Je suis très heureux d'etre le premier a t'en parler. ... Baudelaire trouve cela charmant, charmant, Exquise delicatesses [p. 2] dit-il, Legros, Manet, Bracquemond de Balleroy, avec qui j'étais trouve cela très bien. ... J'ai été très heureux de voir toutes les fois que j'entrais dans la salle un attroupement autour de ton tableau, hier pendant que l'on vermissait j'y ai Vu toute l'administration. Viens vite ici, c'est assez interessant pout toi, car j'oublie, je ne saurais dire combien cela est excellent, pour toi, - Manet a un grand succès ainsi qu'un tableau de Colin ou il y a de grandes qualité, Je suis pour ma part très content, Cette Exposition est excellente pour Nous, Je t attends pour Bavarder »
- ¹¹⁵ Harold James Perkin. *The Origins of Modern English Society*. London: Taylor and James, 2004: 225; Sachko: 6 – also phrases self-made man as a myth.
- ¹¹⁶ Fleming: 150.
- ¹¹⁷ Sachko: 45.
- ¹¹⁸ Sachko: 13.

¹¹⁹ Sachko: 186.

¹²⁰ Sachko: 237.

¹²¹ For instance, historical costume pieces were popular: "The instant pedigree offered by paintings brushed with the patina of past ages found a ready welcome in the homes of collectors who were in the process of establishing social provenances for themselves." Sachko: 253.

¹²² Sachko: 36.

¹²³ Sachko: 12.

¹²⁴ Sassen: 179. I will be using the term *translocal* here instead of *transnational* because, as Dirlik explains, it takes the focus off political nations altogether and emphasises individual places within those countries. Arif Dirlik. "Performing the World: Reality and Representation in the Making of World Histor(ies)," *Journal of World History* (16:4) December 2005: 397.

¹²⁵ Wilcox: 55.

¹²⁶ Munro: 6; Jeremy Maas. *Gambart: Prince of the Victorian Art World*. London: Barrie and Jenkins, Ltd., 1975: 166. Maas says it was Rossetti who got Leathart to buy from Legros in 1863/64. Cassavetti was another Greek who bought from Legros.

¹²⁷ Sachko: 433.

¹²⁸ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin Latour. 6/10 July 1863. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/23. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Legros est d'abord d'un beau à ne plus le reconnaître! sa grande préoccupation [p. 3] e[s]t la nuance des gants qu'il porte. - Je vais le faire photographier pour que tu puisse le voir dans la fine fleur de sa splendeur! du reste il est le chéri du beau monde ici; toutes les demoiselles Anglaises ^{se} font une passion pour lui, et les dames mariées ont l'air de vouloir oublier leur devoir à son intention - aussi Alphonse a-t-il développé des talents de société que nous ne lui connaissions pas, et son aisance et son aplomb gracieux dépassent toute description! Avec tout ceci il travail comme il n'a jamais travaillé; ses tableaux on les lui prend sur le chevalet même, et tous ses loisirs il passe enfermé avec son tailleur, une des renommées de Londres! »

¹²⁹ Wilcox: 15.

¹³⁰ Andrew Stephenson. "Refashioning Modern Masculinities," *English Art 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity*. David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry, eds. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000: 144. Assumptions or stereotypes that pitted French against English painting involved both the execution of the works and the subject matter. An aesthetic gaze, one that emphasised the *flâneur*, was seen as being French while an analytical gaze typified the English. Morris: 64: "In British criticism of Tissot and other French artists, 'French' became a synonym for clever, contrived compositions, brilliant, superficial executions and vivacious, expressive poses."

¹³¹ Stephenson: 144.

¹³² Geiger.

¹³³ Richard Lloyd. "Postindustrial Bohemia: Culture, Neighborhood and the Global Economy." *Deciphering the Global: Its Scales, Spaces, and Subjects*. Saskia Sassen, ed. New York: Routledge, 2007: 27.

¹³⁴ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to James McNeill Whistler and Alphonse Legros. 11 July 1863. Glasgow University Library: MS Whistler F9. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « J'ai plein le dos du café de Bade et autres lieu - que voulez vous, je ne suis rien là - Je vais avoir été si privé de tout espèce de succès que quand il viendra, j'y serais insensible[.] Te causer de Manet, ma foi que t'en dire que lui et Baudelaire s'entendent pour dire que Monsieur Ingres n'est pas un peintre! - voila la jeune Ecole, les Semi-romantiques comme l'on nous appelle, nous, a mais non Je fais bande a Part - Je suis avec eux au Café de Bade aujourd'hui mais jamais Rien avec Eux, ni idées ni travaux, le moment est passé - Vous deux vous avez des Qualités et je le dis, je le dirai, mais vous et les Autres, c'est différent. Avec vous il y a confession, nous savons que nous voulons résister contre la masse bête, mais chacun séparément très libre - Si Legros aime les Primitifs Holbein, les Allemands, les gens a mains jointes et tous ce qui est naïf, si toi, aux Luxes des Salons et aux Splendeurs des tavernes et des Bords de la tamise, Moi, j'ai ma petite idées - et nous nous [foutons pas?] de chacun de nous, ce n'est pas au fond par amour de notre ami, si nous en parlons, c'est Une chose forcée, la valeur d'un homme obligé a l'avoir pour camarades - Je me suis rejeté dans le travail, est me sent

grandir, je vais bientôt être un Artiste[.] Ta Médaille d'or sera comme partout mais je crois que cela ne peux pas faire grand effet, autant que tu crois, et puis a qui veux tu que je le dise moi! Ah. Legros se jette dans la dandysme elle est bonne, qu'il trouve une femme voila un moyen de faire fortune - tes projets de Voyage et de fortune c'est très gentil de ta part, mais que veux tu je ne crois a rien de toutes ces choses, on a la fortune, à sa porte si l'on a chance de la rencontrer - Etre de la Société des trois^[34] me plait, mais de ma part ce n'est qu'une chose nature vous faites mieux que tous, je ne vous lacherai pas tant que vous ferez des choses qui me plaisent[.] »

¹³⁵ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. January 4 – February 3, 1864. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/15. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>.

¹³⁶ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. January/June 1861. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/2. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Nous nous comprenons nous deux peut-être mieux que personne et je voudrais t'avoir ici devant un tableau sur lequel je compte bigrement et qui doit devenir un chef d'œuvre. »

¹³⁷ Anderson: 146.

¹³⁸ Stephenson: 140.

¹³⁹ Exhibition Of The Royal Academy. [Second Article.] (Reviews; *The Times* Thursday, May 05, 1864; pg. 8; Issue 24864; col D

¹⁴⁰ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to James McNeill Whistler and Alphonse Legros. 11 July 1863. Glasgow University Library: MS Whistler F9. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>.

¹⁴¹ Druick: 99. Druick misquotes or mistranslates this passage by saying it reads “I am a part of the Café de Bade group but I am never really one of them.”

¹⁴² James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 6/10 July 1863. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/23. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Nous nous proposons de revisiter Paris d'ici un mois, et de là partir en Belgique - où [p. 4] tu viendras avec nous - faire des tableaux que nous placerons ici (ceci encore entre nous et pas écrit pour les oreilles des autres.) Mon cher Fantin nous formons plus que jamais la "Société des trois" - et nous allons faire fortune, et rapidement - car tu sais bien combien je fais mon devoir - soutenir chacun chacun, les deux autres, s'est se soutenir soi même - nous sommes tous égoïstes, et tous pas mal pervers - mais je suis fidèle au mot de la société - ainsi pas de maison où j'ai mon entrée, où on n'est pas impatient de te connaître et prêt à recevoir ta peinture - il y a de l'or qui nous attend partout - nous n'avons qu'à nous être fidèle »

¹⁴³ Druick: 92.

¹⁴⁴ Pennell: 113. During the painting of *Hommage* Whistler and Legros would go to Paris whenever Fantin asked them. Pennell's account is incongruous with the letter JW-FL 4Jan-3 Feb 1864, Library of Congress Manuscript Division Pennell-Whistler Collection PWC 1/33/15 in which Whistler states that the two would come to Paris a couple weeks before the Salon opened to sit for their portraits.

¹⁴⁵ Anna Gruetzner Robins. *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007: 3. Strangely, Robins argues that Whistler is the “only outsider” pictured in Fantin-Latour's *Hommage à Delacroix*.

¹⁴⁶ *Figaro*, 1864. Musée d'Orsay: Fantin-Latour, Box 1.

¹⁴⁷ Théophile Gautier, 1864. Musée d'Orsay: Fantin-Latour, Box 1.

¹⁴⁸ A. de la Fizelière, *L'Union des Arts*, 18 June 1864. « Ce qui frappe surtout dans l'œuvre de Fantin, outré la souplesse et la fermeté du modèle, c'est la construction savante des figures et la vérité spirituelle et intelligente des physionomies... »

¹⁴⁹ Edmond About, 1864. Musée d'Orsay: Fantin-Latour, Box 1.

Chapter 4: The Dissolution of the *Société des trois*

In the second half of the 1860s, soon after its most cohesive moments, the *Société des trois* lost its stability. Much like that of its formation, the exact moment of the *Société des trois*'s dissolution is impossible to determine without oversimplifying the situation.

Many different factors played a part and the separation of these men should be considered gradual. Scholars propose differing views of when and why the *Société* dissolved, but most argue that the final break occurred by 1868.¹⁵⁰ For example, correspondence between Fantin and his close friend Frankfurt artist Otto Scholderer provides evidence that, by 1869, the trio no longer held a close bond:

Do you not have any news of Whistler and Legros? I ask and I forget that I should soon have your response about all of this ; however, perhaps you will still write me a little note.¹⁵¹

Scholderer's inquiry attests to Fantin's growing lack of interest in his former close companions. Prior to this, Fantin's letters to Scholderer teemed with information on the life and careers of the other two members of the *Société*; clearly, the German artist was curious about Fantin's omission of news regarding Legros and Whistler. A variety of external factors have been suggested to explain the division between Fantin, Legros and Whistler, but, as I will argue below, they do not account for the artists' conscious identity formation and the life-cycle of a small group such as this. These factors must be considered collectively, including artistic differences, external pressures, and identity formation, all of which moved each man away from the need to identify as a group.

Many scholars refer to the members of the *Société*'s divergent artistic ideas and preferences as the central cause of their separation because a palpable and growing disapproval of each other's' works can be perceived in their correspondence.¹⁵² From the beginning of their association, while the members of the *Société des trois* had similar influences, each expressed himself differently and created unique work. They believed "that originality was the touchstone of artistic genius" so it is not surprising that each practiced a distinct style.¹⁵³ Such stylistic divergences should not be positioned as the reason for their fragmentation but are worth examining because they reflect the self-fashioning of each artist at this point.

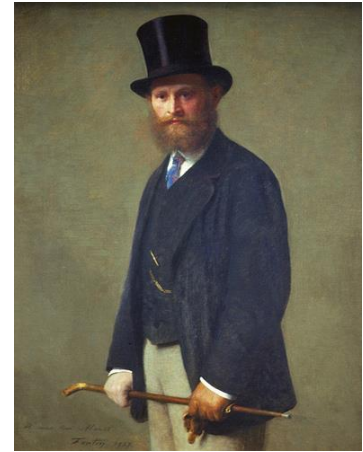


Figure 4.1 Henri Fantin-Latour, *Portrait d'Edouard Manet*. 1867. Oil on Canvas. 118cm x 90cm. Chicago Institute of Art.

As Fantin, Legros, and Whistler settled into the professional phases of their careers, their oeuvres provide insight into their individual interests and the markets they exploited. A simplistic assessment of Fantin-Latour's work in the second half of the Second Empire suggests that he did not evolve stylistically in a dramatic way. Thematically consistent, he remained devoted to copying at the Louvre and his work revolved around realistic portraiture



Figure 4.2 Henri Fantin-Latour, *Tannhauser: Venusberg*. 1864. Oil on Canvas. 97cm x 130cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

(fig. 4.1), fantastical paintings based on music (fig. 4.2), and still lifes (fig. 4.3).

Even though he actively shied away from more radical, unfinished styles, Fantin's work from the 1860s should not be viewed as technically stagnant or rigid. Artistic devotion and originality, which he advocated in the previous decade's *Albums*, remained qualities he respected in himself and other artists. His interest in



Figure 4.3 Henri Fantin-Latour, *Flowers and Fruit*. 1868. Oil on Canvas. Private Collection.

befriending those in avant-garde circles also persisted, proving that Fantin did not seek those who created and thought exactly as he did. Fantin acknowledged, even celebrated, both artists on the rise and their innovative styles. A painting from 1870, *Un atelier aux Batignolles* (fig. 4.4), evidences this and features such new comers as Claude Monet (1840–1926) and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919).¹⁵⁴

Commonalities between Fantin's oeuvre and those of these artists are initially difficult to perceive. Nevertheless, Fantin drew inspiration from the same sources as this younger crowd. From the mid-1860s, avant-garde artists across Europe engaged enthusiastically with Japanese art, and Fantin was among them. Initially, only a select group felt the impact of Japan's cultural traditions, which came into vogue with a wider public after the Exposition Universelle of Paris in 1867. While all the members of the *Société* looked to Japan as a muse, Whistler's engagement remains the most obvious. He amassed a collection of Japanese art and objects from specialty shops in both London and Paris. These frequent cross-Channel shopping trips prompted Champfleury to write that

Whistler's frequent excursions to Mme Desoyes's shop of Japanese imports made it seem as if he lived in the neighbourhood.¹⁵⁵ Because Japanese material culture and artistic techniques took centre stage in Whistler's work from the 1860s onward, it is often the focus of discussions and more understated inclusions, such as vases or subtle decorative elements, by artists such as Fantin have been overlooked.



Figure 4.4 Henri Fantin-Latour, *Un atelier aux Batignolles*. 1870. Oil on Canvas. 204cm x 274cm. Musée d'Orsay.

Fantin's admiration for all things Japanese should not be underestimated. As one of the founding members of the *Société du Jing-Lar* in 1867, he joined with other artists and collectors to promote the art and culture of Japan to a European audience. Like Whistler, Fantin also took opportunities to acknowledge Japan's influence on his and his peers' practices by incorporating Japanese objects into his paintings; for example, in *Un atelier* (fig. 4.4) this can be seen in a lidded jar on the table adjacent to the classical statue. However, his Japanese influence is revealed more stylistically than through subject matter. Whistler applauds Fantin's nod to Japan in his work in a letter from 30 September 1868:

It's no longer a question at all of being well-painted—nor what they call 'tone'—but the colours of the flowers are taken absolutely from nature and placed on the canvas (fig. 4.3), just as, pure and raw—really—like the Japanese, good Lord! It is so pretty! the little grey flowers against the light grey background! and in that bunch there are some unheard-of reds! the white

plate on the cloth too—it's charming. But you know I prefer the composition of the other work—not you understand only the painted objects nor even the arrangement of them—but the composition of the colours which for me is true colour—and this is how it seems to me first of all that, with the canvas as given, the colours should be so to speak embroidered on it—in other words the same colour reappearing continually here and there like the same thread in an embroidery—and so on with the others—more or less according to their importance—the whole forming in this way an harmonious pattern—Look how the Japanese understand this!—They never search for contrast, but on the contrary for repetition.¹⁵⁶

Here, Whistler articulates his appreciation for Fantin's work and also, like an old friend, offers a critique by expressing preference for one work over another. This letter establishes that a relationship between Fantin and Whistler persisted even after the *Société* is known to have officially disbanded.

Of the three members' oeuvres, Whistler's artwork underwent the most dramatic visual shifts. His esteem for Fantin's work and Japanese art in general reflects that which increasingly captivated him throughout the 1860s: the arrangement of colour. This focus gradually drew his work away from an emphasis on subject matter and, eventually, led him to Aestheticism, in which composition and formal values triumph over theme. However, at this early stage, his interest in colour signified a retreat from Realism, the primary influence on him as a student.¹⁵⁷

In a lengthy letter to Fantin from September 1867, Whistler expounds on how Realism had misled him and wasted his time. With his typical self-promotional flair, Whistler recounts the way Courbet's Realism attracted him, in part because of its simplicity, but also because of its proliferation during the time of his arrival in Paris:

Ah my dear Fantin what a frightful education I gave myself – or rather what a terrible lack of education I feel I have had!—With the fine gifts I possess from nature what a fine painter I would have been by now! if, vain and satisfied with those gifts, I had not spurned everything else! No! you see the time that I arrived was really bad for me!

Courbet! and his influence was odious! the regret I feel and the rage, hate even, I feel for all that now would astonish you perhaps but this is the explanation. It's not poor Courbet whom I find loathsome, any more than his paintings work—As always I recognize the qualities they have—I am not complaining either about the influence of his painting on mine—there was none, and you will not find it in my canvases—There couldn't be; because I am too personal and I had many qualities that he did not have but which suited me well—But this is the reason why all that was so bad for me. That damned Realism made an immediate appeal to my vanity as a painter! and mocking all tradition cried out loud, with all the confidence of ignorance, “Long live Nature!!”¹⁵⁸

Whistler goes on to discuss new, more beautiful works he would like to create, including his *Balcony* (fig. 4.5). He also renounces several of his works from the early 1860s, such as *La fille blanche* and *At the Piano*. Then, in what has been viewed as an incredibly significant passage, he comments on how they all fell under this negative influence: “Ah my friend! our little band was a depraved society! Oh! how I wish I had been a pupil of Ingres!”¹⁵⁹ Munro and other scholars have misread this passage to be an indictment of the *Société des trois* but, in the context of the letter, one can deduce that Whistler

meant their wider circle in Paris, including Manet and others from the Café de Bade group.¹⁶⁰ Though he uses the same word here, *société*, as he previously used in his letter to Fantin of 6/10 July 1863, in 1863, he capitalized the word in reference their specific formation. Here, I argue, he employs it as a general term for those in their wider social circle.

Several divergent artistic influences in the 1860s prompted Whistler’s move away from Realism; these included, among other things, the work of Albert Joseph Moore (1841–1893).¹⁶¹ As an English artist who travelled frequently around Europe, Moore found his chief artistic interest lay in classical shape and design (fig. 4.6). His emphasis on nuances of composition and tone, as opposed

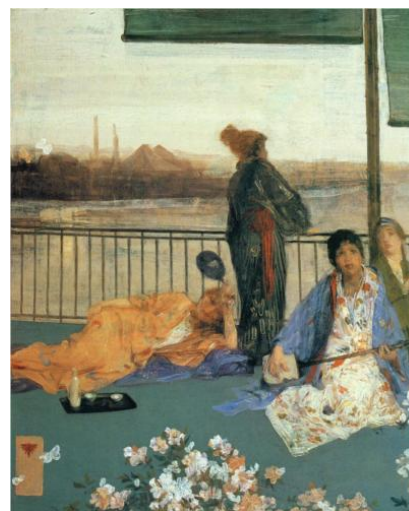


Figure 4.5 James McNeill Whistler, *Variations in Flesh Colour and Green: The Balcony*. Oil on Board. 61.4cm x 48.8cm. Freer Gallery of Art.



Figure 4.6 Albert Joseph Moore, *Apricots*. 1866. Oil on Canvas. Public Library London.

to subject matter, impressed Whistler and they began copying classical statues together at the British Museum. Moore's palpable influence led Whistler to promote the Englishman to Fantin in a letter from August 1865, written shortly after meeting Moore for the first time. Whistler suggests that Moore replace Legros in their trio and viewed himself, Moore, and Fantin as the continuation of tradition.¹⁶²

I scarcely ever see Legros—I am beginning to think that there is nothing left of my former interest in him—he is still perhaps quite droll as he used to be, but I think these sentiments from the good old days are rare On the other hand he is apparently expecting a child! ...

Your letter gave me real pleasure—Basically the two of us are taking the lead—it's like at the races—like at the Derby—it's the thoroughbred that wins—I think that we can now be sure about it—the field is ours—the pure strain reappears in us—Alphonse is already in the rear—he is a bit of a mongrel!—his lectern restored in place—no that's not what is needed by way of progress!—... There is only one other worthy of us This third one is the young Moore whom I have so often spoken to you about—and it's good to see in this way Russia England and America each providing a continuation of the true traditions of painting in the 19th century.¹⁶³

Moore and Whistler worked closely together for the second half of the 1860s and remained friends throughout their lives. However, because Moore is not discussed in future letters with Fantin, it is clear that Moore never officially usurped Legros's position in the *Société des trois*. Still, this letter demonstrates Whistler's lack of interest in Legros from this point forward.

Though the groundwork for their own art had also shifted, letters between Fantin and Whistler evidence a growing dislike of Legros's work and its principles. Like Fantin's, Legros's work did not experience a major shift in the 1860s. He retained his focus on his provincial French heritage and continued to give a nod to both traditional European and French Realist traditions.¹⁶⁴ The most obvious alteration in Legros's life at this point could be seen in his allegiances. William Michael Rossetti noted the changes in Legros's artistic preferences in his diary on 13 May 1867:

Legros dilated on the derivation from England of the whole romantic school of France, whether in literature or art—as Delacroix, Decamps, etc. His interest in art of this sort seems to grow less and less: he considers Poussin, Watteau, David, and Ingres the lights of the French School. He has received a medal at the Paris Salon.¹⁶⁵

In this letter it is evident that Legros purposefully aligned himself with a more classical artistic lineage. Rossetti implies that Legros was keen to associate himself with the previously established traditions of French art, not unlike Whistler's disavowal of Courbet's Realism. No doubt this suited both his conservative subject matter as well as the translocal persona he had crafted for English audiences. While he did strive to remain overtly French in his work and actions, Legros continued to craft himself in a manner which appealed to his English patrons. As a marketing strategy, this was successful for Legros, though it did occasionally draw contempt from others, including Whistler.¹⁶⁶

Though there does not seem to have been as major a falling out with Fantin as there was with Whistler, the distance between Legros and Fantin seemed insurmountable by the latter half of the 1860s. Prior to any official split, Whistler casually renounced Legros's work to Fantin, as evidenced by the letter from August 1865. By



Figure 4.7 Alphonse Legros, *A May Service for Young Women*. 1868. Oil on Canvas. 107.3cm x 146.7cm. Victoria and Albert Museum.

1868, though Whistler still discussed Legros occasionally in his letters to Fantin, it is clear that neither the man nor the work impressed him anymore:

I have just seen a picture by Legros in a winter Exhibition here—It's fine, very good—"The Young Ladies of St Marie" (fig. 4.7)—a church background—girls sitting down—a monk playing the organ, or kind of harpsichord—and a priest reading or singing—I like the whole—the composition is charming—the drawing very tight—and there is a lot of progress—albeit with the same elements—But the priest for example is a blot and does not fit the arrangement of colours nor the lines—Besides I think Legros' work is so to speak the work of an old man—and his art, hopeless!¹⁶⁷

Fantin also had encounters with Legros in 1868, as he wrote to Whistler, and it seems, for him, the friendship had nothing left to give:

Legros' comments you see mean nothing to me I really had enough of all that when he came here I met him we talked he seemed to want to be disagreeable

but I was so indifferent that it had no effect. He is wrapped up in his success and only talked about himself. So there is one fewer—¹⁶⁸

Here, Fantin distances himself from someone who chooses fame over art. His final remark directly references the *Société des trois*. Prior to this, Legros and his work had primarily come to Fantin through the filter of Whistler. After seeing him in person, Fantin could no longer ignore Legros's attitude as well as his lack of commitment to art and to the trio.

Another chief issue cited by scholars such as Michael Fried as having led to the *Société*'s breakdown is the increasing social conflicts between its members, specifically between Legros and Whistler.¹⁶⁹ When Legros initially relocated to London, they shared a close camaraderie, even partnership. This quickly became strained to the point of breaking, and markers of the tension can be seen as early as 1864.

Friction between Legros and Whistler developed because of several pivotal issues. Many scholars have suggested that quarrels about women played a key role in their friendship's undoing.¹⁷⁰ Apparently, Legros and Whistler may not have been in full support of the other's choice of companion.

Intelligent and outspoken, Irish-born Joanna Hiffernan met Whistler in 1860, after which they entered into an intimate relationship. Hiffernan moved into his house at 7 Lindsay Row, travelled with him, and modelled extensively for him; *La fille Blanche* (fig. 3.4) is one of the earliest, and most prominent, images of the red-head by Whistler. Initially, the artist's social connections in London had no problem with their

arrangement.¹⁷¹ Yet by early 1864, murmurs surfaced expressing disapproval of Whistler's mistress on moral grounds, and most of these came from his brother-in-law Haden. This increase in Haden's morality conveniently corresponded with the arrival of Whistler's mother in January of 1864. Suddenly, Hiffernan, as an artist's model and Whistler's live-in girlfriend, was no longer welcome in Haden's home, which offended Whistler.

In spite of her general integration within Whistler's circle, there can be no doubt that Hiffernan was a source of contention between Whistler and Legros. In a letter dated November 1863 to artist Thomas Armstrong, George du Maurier wrote:

Jimmy and Legros are going to part company, on account (I believe) of the exceeding hatred with which the latter has managed to inspire in the fiery Joe: one never sees anything of Jimmy now.¹⁷²

Du Maurier's wording implies that friends other than Legros had also had occasion to find Hiffernan's personality difficult, and this statement has been the catalyst for scholars such as Wilcox to view Hiffernan as a critical part in the destruction of their relationship.¹⁷³

However, the parting that du Maurier mentions cannot be interpreted as a break in their friendship because it does not take into account further activities and written reports. Legros and Whistler continued to work closely together and posed for Fantin's group portrait early in 1864. Du Maurier's letter references a recent argument as well as Legros's move out of Whistler's home but, evidently, the situation was not as dire as he suspected. While some have interpreted Legros's departure from Lindsay Row as

evidence of a quarrel between him and Whistler, Whistler himself did not phrase it that way in a letter to Fantin two months after du Maurier penned his thoughts to Armstrong:

All of a sudden in the middle of all this my mother arrives from the United States!—Well! general upheaval!! I had a week or so to empty my house and purify it from cellar to attic!—Find a “buen retiro” for Jo—A place for Alphonse—go to Portsmouth to meet my Mother! Well you see the goings—on! some goings-on! goings-on up to my neck!¹⁷⁴

Indeed, early in 1864, Legros did move out of Whistler’s home and studio to Oakley Crescent, close to their mutual friend Rossetti but, because Whistler readily confided in Fantin regarding other frustrations with Legros, it seems unlikely that disagreements forced Legros’s move. Legros surely would have left on his own, as he had become established in the city, but Whistler’s mother’s arrival was the impetus for both Legros’s and Hiffernan’s relocations.¹⁷⁵

Issues between Legros and Hiffernan existed, but evidence proves that they were less severe than has been suggested. One thoroughly documented source of conflict between these two artists was money. After arriving in London, Legros had little wealth and looked frequently to Whistler for financial help, and Whistler appears to have been willing to support Legros during this period. The American kept fastidious logs of his finances, and these accounts show Legros constantly borrowing money from Whistler.¹⁷⁶ Legers dating from 23 September 1863 to 13 August 1864 indicate that Whistler lent Legros various sums of money 144 times. Thorough and precise, these logs present Whistler as one who did not overlook such matters, even with a close friend: the smallest

of Legros's borrowed sums was one penny for tobacco while the largest was five pounds, nineteen shillings, and four and a half pence. Whistler also meticulously noted that Legros gave him money 22 times, which only covered a portion of his debt. Various letters, such as one from du Maurier in October 1864, suggest that discrepancies in repayment played a large part in the tension between the friends:

I am told that he [Whistler] has quarrelled with Legros; money matters, but as I don't know for certain what the particulars are I won't mention them. But Ridley said that if Legros' version of the affair to him was correct Jim had behaved very shabbily.¹⁷⁷

Records of this calibre and letters such as this demonstrate that, while willing to lend generously to his friends, Whistler managed his finances in a stern, unforgiving manner.

A revealing letter written on Christmas Day 1864 sheds further light on the disagreements between Legros and Whistler. While du Maurier carefully remained friends with both parties, his sarcastic tone regarding Whistler and the more sympathetic air with which he paints Legros indicate that he blamed Whistler's brash personality in this instance:

He [Legros] called here the other day, and talked bitterly of Jimmy, whom he says he can never see again. There has been some quarrel between them and according to Legros Jimmy's conduct has been most shabby; *audi*, of course, *alterem partem*. But he was especially bitter about Jimmy's conduct à propos his (Legros') marriage, for it appears Master Jim chaffed him on all occasions in a very disagreeable manner; je vois ça d'ici, and when poor Legros was trotting out his sorrows I could not help thinking "*Arcades ambo!*" Mrs.

Coronio took the cue from Jimmy and was very rude to Legros on one occasion, which he shut her up, and consequently is less well seen there than he used to be; however he has plenty of work over the next 17 months, copying Lady Somebody's pictures ... He spoke of Rossetti as his best and most useful friend.¹⁷⁸

Money matters caused friction for the *Société* beyond personal loans and, though du Maurier referenced it off-handedly in the preceding letter, Legros's copying of pictures pulled Fantin into the fray. The *Société des trois*'s former atmosphere of mutual support faded when disputes regarding commissions surfaced the year after Legros settled in England. Though the details remain unclear, it is known that, in 1864, Leonora Caroline Baring (1844–1930) wanted to have works from her collection copied. She had just married Baron Ashburton, and having one's collection reproduced was a common practice among the upper classes as an insurance policy in case anything became damaged. Apparently, Whistler put forward Fantin to execute these copies, as he visited London in the summer of 1864.¹⁷⁹ Unsurprisingly, this created jealousy in Legros and his "most useful" friend at the time, interfered. As a close friend of Lady Ashburton, Rossetti highly recommended Legros for the job, which Fantin may have already started.

Fantin returned to Paris without the commission in October 1864 because of the quarrel. A letter from Rossetti to Fantin on 7 September indicates that Rossetti knew that he had had a hand in the unpleasant incident and he makes a weak attempt to apologize:

Not knowing when you would return, and finding that the job was pressing, I spoke to Legros ... I do not think that we wanted to send the pictures to you, and you probably would not have accepted. But we could talk again when I

see you, since there are many copies to do. Until I see you again with Whistler, I send you both my good wishes.¹⁸⁰

Legros recounted his version of the story years later to his student at the Slade School of Art, artist William Rothenstein (1871–1945), and admitted this incident caused a fracture between Fantin and Legros:

Dante Gabriel, with his usual quick generosity, put him into touch with Lady Ashburton, who had already commissioned Fantin-Latour to make copies of old masters. She now employed Legros in the same way. This unhappily led to a misunderstanding between the two artists that was never healed. When later, being in Paris with Legros, I was anxious to bring the two old friends together again, Legros was willing, but Fantin held back, and the meeting never took place.¹⁸¹

This incident over the copies was exacerbated by Whistler and Legros's chief argument about money, and the two had a physical altercation in 1864 about Legros's jealousy over Whistler's career and his overt preference of Fantin over himself. Fantin's career in London suffered because of the clashes between Legros and Whistler, and Legros influenced London's Greek collectors to gradually give Fantin less business during this period.¹⁸² Another argument between Whistler and Legros in 1867 caused the two to come to blows, after which the latter increasingly relied upon Rossetti's patrons.¹⁸³

These markers of external pressures on the trio indicate cracks in their relationship, but not the artists' disbanding. In fact, other incidents indicate a continuing friendship,

and throughout the mid-1860s, Fantin and Whistler continued to mention Legros in their correspondence, most often in a positive light. By 1867, Legros and Whistler's friendly camaraderie and antics, such as breaking into Haden's house, had faded away, leaving in their place irrefutable signs of discord and the beginning of the permanent dissolution of the *Société des trois*.

After a quarrel with his brother-in-law in Paris in April that resulted in Whistler allegedly pushing Haden through a store window, the Burlington Arts Club expelled Whistler on the grounds of poor conduct. In order to accomplish this ousting, Haden sought testimony from others whom Whistler had abused or who had witnessed his ungentlemanly behaviour. Past issues apparently mended, Haden called upon Legros's testimony regarding his physical altercation with Whistler several years prior.

By the fall of 1868, it seems certain that relations with Legros had become irreparable and Whistler recounted this to Fantin in 1868, following the altercations with both Legros and Haden:

I saw Edwards some time ago, and he came to see me—We get on very well and he always talks about you with great friendship and affection—He sees Legros but does not hide his scorn at his cowardice—

Edwards is even very supportive of me, being charmed really that I thrashed Haden! As for Legros he has hardly anybody left.

Those who wished him well still pity him, with a pity which in Paris would kill a man. Alecco has turned his back on him and no longer speaks to him—He is not received by the Ionides any longer—except for the fat brother Constantin who is very obstinate as you know and has gone over to the other

side—Legros never comes to Rossetti's now doubtless for fear of meeting me—for he keeps out of my way! You should have seen how Mrs Edwards laughed at telling me about Legros' headlong flight on seeing me at the Academy this summer!—You know it's likely that I shall not beat him again—he is not worth the trouble—It almost indeed makes one feel sorry for him he is so demoralised—But that's too long spent talking about Legros—The Haden and Legros business is too long to write to you about, but I have it in English and I shall send it you all the same one day—someone can translate it for you—In the meantime I shall tell you that Haden has made himself contemptible and ridiculous in the highest degree by all these latest procedures—and has lost the respect of almost everybody—On his return from Paris after the Salon, Legros said here that he had given some kind of soirée or reception ^{there}, and that Fantin came to it without being invited—Anyhow that he had received you politely but coldly and correctly (you can see that!) to avoid a scene—but that at the end of the evening he had bid you good night in a way to let you know that you were not to come back!¹⁸⁴

Obviously, it must be remembered that this report of events is recounted by Whistler whose proclivity to exaggerate is well known. This aside, until this point, the picture that is painted regarding personality clashes is one in which Fantin plays a peripheral role. Because Whistler used him as a sounding board, it might appear that Fantin always sided with the American without ever having confronted or had personal falling out with Legros. To be sure, no major eruption took place that threw Fantin in the centre of a

physical brawl, or even a heated shouting match. This is not to say that he was unaffected by these personality clashes, and two key letters serve as reminders of that.

In a letter to Legros from 14 April 1867, Fantin wrote and expressed his frustration with his formerly close companion. On the whole, it is not negative in tone; in fact, just over half of it vacillates between Parisian art news and compliments about the pieces Legros had hanging in the Salon, which Fantin had just visited. However, sandwiched in the middle of the letter following a positive review of Legros's work, Fantin articulates his true feelings regarding Legros's recent attitude and behaviour:

I'm happy to be able to tell you that and make you happy and to show you that I do not worry, when you complain about me, it is because I do not find good and truly since your departure from Paris I could not find this progress while these two paintings there are good. You lack fairness, and you were unjust to me, because you were angry and quarrelled with Whistler, you wanted me to be. I am only in relationship with people whose painting I like or who are friendly or helpful. I do not believe in friendship. You do painting that I like and I am pleased to tell you that. Apart from that what do you want me to say, in your relationships you lack justice, you let yourself be carried away by your passions.¹⁸⁵

Whistler was also not immune to a brief rebuke from Fantin. By early 1867, Fantin expressed his disappointment with Whistler's concern for fame as opposed to artistic effort.¹⁸⁶ In spite of a couple long missives written in 1867 and 1868, Whistler alienated Fantin slightly during these years, as well because he neglected their correspondence.

Though Whistler responded five days later, Fantin sent him an uncharacteristically short letter on 16 November 1868:

You have not been very friendly towards me that much is true, I have not been able to extract a letter from you for goodness knows how long, you no longer talk of your work you no longer come here, you have changed astonishingly, As one who stays hidden away I take in the changes around me it would be saddening if Artistic life were not so hard and so private, each of us has ended up in isolation because of it. I see everyone withdrawing from everything—when I see news from London I never see you mentioned—I saw Lucas in the past few days who had not had heard from you. Legros is circulating newspaper articles Here, he seems to be busy. Haden came here, I did not see him therefore. I have nothing else to tell you I am working at the Louvre oh. Joy!¹⁸⁷

All of the aforementioned factors are significant in the explanation for the dissolution of the *Société des trois*, but fail to reflect the complexity of the situation. If things ended so poorly, or abruptly, why did the members continue to be in contact and discuss each other's work? Much like its coming together, the *Société's* break-up represents another significant shift in the lives and artistic careers of these three men. In order for such a final break to occur, one or more members needed to deliberately alter the identity that had been constructed while the *Société* remained intact. It is also paramount to consider that small groups working closely together have lifespans and,

whether amicable or not, most have a point of termination. Because of this fact, blame for the break-up of the *Société* cannot and need not be assigned.

Small groups have lifespans and the *Société des trois* served its purpose in the assisting of the transition of life phases for these men. Self-identities are consciously formed through an affinity with groups, locales or organizations. Identification with the *Société* allowed these artists to transition more smoothly through locales but once they had fully graduated to independent professional careers a group identity may have seemed superfluous.

The dynamics of small groups is an under-researched issue first explored in 1965 by Bruce W. Tuckman.¹⁸⁸ Tuckman's theories continue to be cited as the expected norms for group interaction in both business and personal settings. In sum, Tuckman suggests four stages of growth for small groups regarding the ways in which members both interact and approach their tasks. These include phases of orientation, conflict, cohesiveness, and optimum performance. Following his analysis, Tuckman and Mary Ann C. Jensen reviewed studies that tested Tuckman's methodology.¹⁸⁹ His stages held fast but, they discovered an amendment was needed. A final, necessary stage has been noted by the overwhelming majority of those engaging with Tuckman's theories: adjournment. Because of the closeness that is manifested within a small-group setting, the official break of a group is important to acknowledge. This reflects the life cycle of the group, whether mandatorily or spontaneously formed.

More recent studies on the life cycle of groups adhere to Tuckman's formulation but acknowledge some essential divergences, depending on the make-up of the group.

Naturally occurring groups with more heterogeneous membership, like the *Société des trois*, are not able to be tracked as efficiently according to the traditional “stages.”

Theorists such as Connie Gersick have criticized Tuckman’s linear formulation because it does not account for changes in environment or the lives of the participants.¹⁹⁰ Gersick proposes that the development of a group should be viewed as a “punctuated equilibrium” in which groups experience two major periods of transition: their initial coming together and a halfway point.¹⁹¹ These two constructive periods gain momentum and allow for influence from the outside environment. Like Tuckman, Gersick also acknowledges that such groups are finite, and, after their second surge of productivity members, will split.

These and similar studies, though not conducted with artistic groups, demonstrate that a small number of people coming together to work with parallel goals will organically terminate their working relationship. Such associations cannot endure forever. Theorists acknowledge that people necessarily change as they mature and develop ambitions that differ from those with whom they began their group. In the case of the *Société des trois*, several examples of such personal changes have been discussed. However, beyond artistic differences and squabbles over money, the essential point of divergence was the individual desires of members to assert their artistic identities.

The formation of the *Société des trois* signified the transition into a new phase of these artists’ careers, and its dissolution should be viewed as evidence of the end of that period. Ready for life beyond that of students, these men found the opportunity to shift their identities to that of professionals within the confines of the *Société*, but this could

not be accomplished overnight. While supporting one another on that turbulent journey, the *Société* allowed Fantin, Legros, and Whistler to settle into their artistic careers without feeling isolated. As each member fashioned his own professional identity, his personal choices shaped the ultimate decision to stop conceiving of himself as a member of the *Société*.

Each artist made conscious decisions regarding the simultaneous development of his artistic persona and his individual identity. These two elements both interrelate and together propel the split of the *Société*. These developments involved each man settling into his private life, and, inevitably, becoming more set in his ways.¹⁹² The group's bachelor days were well behind them. On 28 November 1864, Legros married Frances Rosetta Hodgson, and they moved to Bayswater.¹⁹³ Fantin met his wife, Victoria, while copying at the Louvre and, after marrying her, gradually became reclusive, though he still entertained close friends in his home. Though unmarried, Whistler lived with Hiffernan for a while and also cared for his mother. The camaraderie of the past did not disappear, but rowdy nights in the cafés occurred less frequently and socializing took an increasingly subdued form. As a consequence of these dramatic shifts in their personal lives, by the mid-1860s, the need for the emotional support system found in a group was less prominent.

In addition to these aspects of their personal lives, each artist exhibited and sold his work extensively and, therefore, had a well-established career. This may seem less significant because they never banded together for exhibitions as other societies did.¹⁹⁴ However, their interdependence upon one another had been crucial to ensuring that each could maintain a translocal presence and become successful in two major centres. The

success they established individually evidences their growing independence and decreasing need for group support, be it emotional or practical, in this regard.

For example, Fantin's reputation in Paris had been assured from the mid-1860s. The Salon jury regularly accepted his paintings, primarily portraits at this point, and he continued to receive commissions for copies. On the other side of the Channel, his reception initially owed much to Whistler and, to a lesser extent, Legros, but soon his career in England was self-sustaining. Even Legros's supposed attempts to convince patrons, specifically the Greek collectors, not to buy Fantin's work did not slow demand for long. Edmond Edwards, along with a handful of critics, played an essential role in the English promotion of Fantin's work.¹⁹⁵ After Edwards died, his wife continued to promote his works to patrons as well as send them to the Royal Academy.¹⁹⁶ Because of these supporters, Fantin's name continued to be associated with delicate, floral still lifes in England long after his death. The aspects of his art and life revealed in Paris and London differed but allowed him to remain of interest to those within the translocal art networks.

Whistler also adeptly navigated the artistic waters of both cities and the aspects of his persona that he employed varied immensely. The development of Whistler's artistic identity is a complex one and has been the subject of many scholarly volumes; this ongoing interest stems from his ability to shift and alter his identity depending on his environment.¹⁹⁷ Just as he had in Paris, he performed his artistic life in Victorian London with flair and purpose, becoming known as much for his personality as for his art. He wanted to ensure that the public viewed both him and his art as a unique commodity. Though he was considered a dandy in the 1860s, Whistler began to focus his work and

his character on Aestheticism, with an emphasis on the decadence of the movement. This turn coincided with his move away from Realism. Because his self-fashioning positioned him as the eternal individual, scholars have struggled to situate him as part of a group, but his choices created this aura of originality. Nevertheless, he purposefully retained good relationships with a handful of Parisian artists and critics and continued to exhibit at the Salon as well as smaller independent exhibitions in order to preserve his reputation there.

Legros's achievements early in his professional career are not unlike those of Fantin and Whistler. He continued to exhibit in both France and England, though trips to his home country became infrequent. Close friends in Paris remained so and visited him often, including Manet and Rodin. Upon arriving in London, Legros heavily depended on Whistler but, like Whistler, he worked to cultivate several aspects of his identity.¹⁹⁸

Legros successfully created a persona that allowed him to be accepted by the English while retaining the "French-ness" that was essential and unique to his practice. Seltzer bluntly stated that the artist did not consciously engage with artistic networking between circles in France and England, and other scholars have alluded to Legros's lack of interest in this collective aspect of artistic exchange.¹⁹⁹ However, this is untrue. Legros's decisions to live abroad and showcase his work in two countries automatically make him, along with the rest of the *Société*, a part of this interchange, even if he was not its most outspoken advocate.

By 1869, Fantin, Legros, and Whistler seemed to have made peace with the fact that their decisions had propelled them in separate directions. In an eloquent letter by Fantin to Whistler, it is clear that the artists still respected one another but also understood that their paths had diverged:

I return to your last letter which gave me great pleasure and which led me to believe that you are still a true friend to me. ... you are the only person whose criticism matters to me. I respect your admiration for the Japanese[.] from time to time I buy Japanese things and I always find them superior, I think you are quite right to reproach me for the great harshness of the tones in the vases holding the flowers. And your observations were absolutely spot on, I am well aware that this is a vile remnant of poor education in a nasty modern milieu[.] each day I endeavour to correct myself. I still lack the courage to renounce everything that makes me timid [.] I feel so different from everything I see that I am almost afraid of what I do. Therein lies yet another difficulty alongside all the difficulties of Artistic life [.] We have embarked on a path so barely cleared, there are times when you wonder if you can keep on going. One stops on a pile of rocks on the way tiredly awaiting the new day for the will to carry on [.] then in my case I lose heart entirely[.] I am in total despair and only continue by force of habit (a sad habit I can no longer bear) you speak to me of Legros let us leave him to his Successes, we still remain on our original route[,] he has gone off in an easier direction good luck and each to his own.²⁰⁰

Though many elements, such as money and artistic differences, have been cited as the impetus for the dissolving of the *Société des trois*, I would argue these factors should be likened to the symptoms, as opposed to the underlying cause, of the split. In essence, the *Société des trois* was a small group that ran its course. It served its purpose as a

transitory phase as these three artists became established in their own careers. Seltzer summarizes the situation succinctly: "For a few critical years, Les Trois had similar goals and artistic values and their association marked a transition from experimentation to artistic maturity by the late 1860s."²⁰¹

¹⁵⁰ Lucie, Munro, Wilcox.

¹⁵¹ Otto Scholderer. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 5 December 1869. Brame and Lorenceau Archives. N'avez vous pas encore des nouvelles de Whistler et Legros? Je demande et j'oublie que j'aurais bientôt votre réponse mutuellement sur tout cela; cependant vous m'écrivez peut-être encore un petit mot.

¹⁵² Alexander Seltzer. *Alphonse Legros: The Development of an Archaic Visual Vocabulary in 19th Century Art*. Ph.D. New York: State University, 1980: 202.

¹⁵³ Munro: 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Un Atelier aux Batignolles* (1870) specifically references Manet's studio, which he then kept in the Batignolles neighbourhood of Paris. His situation there was well known and many other young artists flocked to this area because of him.

¹⁵⁵ Jules Champfleury. "La mode des japonaiseries." *La Vie Parisienne*. 21 November 1868.

¹⁵⁶ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 30 September 1868. Library of Congress : Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/28. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « tu comprends ce que je veux dire - ce n'est plus une affaire de bien peint du tout - ni ce que l'on appel 'ton' - mais les couleurs des fleurs sont [p. 2] pris sur nature cranement et posées sur la toile tel que, pures et crues - sans crainte - comme les Japonais ma foi! Que c'est joli! les petites fleurs grises sur le fond gris clair! et dans le bouquet de celui là il y a des rouges inou[i]s! l'assiette blanche sur la nappe aussi - c'est charmant. Mais tu sais je préfère la composition de l'autre toile - pas tu comprends seulement les objets peints ni même l'arrangement de ces objets - mais la composition des couleurs qui fait pour moi la vrai couleur - et voici comment d'abord il me semble que la toile donnée, les couleurs doivent être pour ainsi dire brodées là dessus - c'est à dire la même couleur reparaitre continuellement ça et là comme le même fil dans une broderie - et ainsi avec les autres - plus ou moins selon leur importance - 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 »

¹⁵⁷ Munro: 8. There are many signifiers of this direction in his work, including his use of musical titles, for example.

¹⁵⁸ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. September 1867. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/25. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Ah mon cher Fantin quelle affreuse education je me suis donné! ou plutôt quel manque terrible d'education je me sens! - Avec les belles qualités que je tiens de la nature quel peintre je serais maintenant! si, vaniteux et content de ces qualités, je n'avais fait fi de tout autre chose! Non! vois tu le temps ou je suis venu était bien mauvais pour moi!

Courbet! et son influence a été dégoûtant! le regret que je sens et la rage la haine même que j'ai pour cela maintenant t'étonnerait peut-être mais voici l'explication - Ce n'est pas le pauvre Courbet qui me repugne, ni ces peintures oeuvres non plus. J'en reconnais comme toujours les qualités - Je ne me plains pas non plus [p. 3] de l'influence de sa peinture sur la mienne - il n'y en a pas eu, et on n'en trouvera pas dans mes toiles - Ça ne pouvait pas être; parce que je suis bien personel et que j'ai été riche en qualités qu'il n'avait pas et qui me suffisaient - Mais voici pourquoi tout cela à été bien pernicieuse pour moi - C'est que ce damné Realisme faisait apel immédiate à ma vanité de peintre! et se moquant de toutes les traditions criait tout haut, avec l'assurance de l'ignorance "Vive la Nature!!!" »

¹⁵⁹ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. September 1867. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/25. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Ah mon ami! notre petite bande a été bien une société vicieuse! Ah! que n'ai-je été un élève de Ingres! »

¹⁶⁰ Munro: 9.

¹⁶¹ Frederick Wedmore. *Whistler and Others*. London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1906: 12; Morris: 260.

¹⁶² Druick: 100; Glazer, *Whistler*, 29; Koval: 77; and Pennell: 154 suggest Moore replaced Legros in the *Société des trois* but I have found no evidence of that. Spencer, *After*, 70; Pennell: 171. Both Spencer and Pennell highlight that Moore and Fantin remained Whistler's friends throughout his life.

¹⁶³ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. August 1865. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, PWC 1/33/1. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Legros je vois presque jamais - je commence à trouver qu'il ne reste presque plus de mon ancien interet en lui - il est peutetre encore un peu drole comme autrefois, mais je crois c'est [p. 2] rare, ces inspirations du bon temps En revanche on dit qu'il attend un enfant! ... »

Ta lettre m'a fait un vrai plaisir - Au fond nous deux nous prenons le devant - c'est comme aux grandes courses - comme au Derby - c'est le pur sang qui gagne - je crois que nous pouvons maintenant en être sur - le champs est à nous - la race pur reparaît en nous - Alphonse reste déjà en arrière - il est un peu batard! - son lutrin retappé - non ce n'est pas ce qu'il faut comme progres! - ... Il y a un autre seulement digne de nous Ce troisieme c'est le jeune Moore [p. 3] dont je t'ai si souvent parlé - et c'est joli de voir ainsi la Russie l'Angleterre et l'Amerique fournir chacune une continuation des vraies traditions de la peinture au 19me. ciecle [sic] »

¹⁶⁴ Seltzer: 202.

¹⁶⁵ William Michael Rossetti. *Rossetti Papers 1862-1870*. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1970: 232.

¹⁶⁶ Munro: 5.

¹⁶⁷ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 30 September – 22 November 1868. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/28. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Je viens de voir un tableau de Legros dans une Exposition d'hiver ici - C'est fort bien! tres bien - "Les demoiselles de Ste Marie" - Un fond d'église - des jeunes filles assises - un moine jouant de l'orgue, ou espece de clavecin - et un pretre lisant ou chantant - Le tout j'aime beaucoup - la composition en est charmant - le dessin tres tiré - et il y a grand progrès - toujours dans les mêmes données - Mais le pretre par exemple fait tache et n'est pas bien dans l'arangement des couleurs du tableau ni les lignes non plus - Du reste je trouve l'oeuvre de Legros pour ainsi dire l'oeuvre d'un viellard - et son art, sans espoir! »

¹⁶⁸ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to James McNeill Whistler. July/September 1868. Glasgow University Library: MS Whistler F16. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Les propos Legros vois tu cela m'est bien indifferent j'ai bien assez de tout cela quand il est venu ici, je l'ai rencontré nous avons causé il paraissait vouloir être desagréable mais j'étais si indifferent que cela n'a rien été. Il est tout entier a ces succes et n'a rien dit d'autre que de lui. En voila un de moins -. »

¹⁶⁹ Fried: 275.

¹⁷⁰ Fleming: 210; Munro: 8; Wilcox: 71.

¹⁷¹ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 4 January – 3 February 1864. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/15, <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. In this letter, Whistler explains how his brother-in-law suddenly took moral issues to Hiffernan joining in their family activities. Though this attitude from Haden seemed unprecedented, it was surely, at least in part, based on personal conflicts.

¹⁷² Daphne du Maurier, ed. *The Young George du Maurier: A Selection of his Letters 1860-1867*. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1952: 219.

¹⁷³ Wilcox, thesis, 28. In both his thesis and his later book, *Alphonse*,

¹⁷⁴ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 4 January - 3 February 1864. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/15. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Tout d'un coup en [p. 5] plein affaire arrive ma Mère des Etats Unis! - Alors! bouleversement generale!! - J'ai eu une semaine à peu pres pour vider ma maison et

la purifier depuis la cave jusqu'au grenier! - Chercher un "buen retiro" pour Jo - Un appartement à Alphonse - aller à Portsmouth à la rencontre de ma Mère! enfin tu vois des affaires! des affaires! - jusqu'au cou des affaires! »

¹⁷⁵ Hiffernan moved to 14 Walham Grove. Though Hiffernan remained a part of his life for years to come, the pair officially split in 1866.

¹⁷⁶ Whistler's accounts. Glasgow University Library: MS Whistler L41. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>.

¹⁷⁷ Du Maurier: 244.

¹⁷⁸ Du Maurier: 248. *Audi alterem partem* meaning 'hear the other side.' *Arcades ambo* meaning 'both fools alike.'

¹⁷⁹ Seltzer: 189; Pennell: 150; Morris: 263; Wilcox: 72.

¹⁸⁰ William E. Fredeman, ed. *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: The Chelsea Years 1863-1872*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003: 190. « Ne sachant pas quand vous seriez de retour, et trouvant que l'affaire était pressé, j'ai parlé à Legros... Je ne pense pas qu'on aurait voulu envoyer les tableaux chez le peintre, ainsi probablement vous n'auriez pas accepté. Mais nous pourrions en parler encore quand je vous vois, puisqu'il y a plusieurs copies à faire. En attendant que je vous revoie avec Whistler, je vous envoie à tous les deux mes bons souvenirs. »

¹⁸¹ William Rothenstein. *Men and Memories: A History of the Arts 1872-1922*. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2005: 23.

¹⁸² Druick: 132.

¹⁸³ Morris: 36.

¹⁸⁴ James McNeill Whistler. Letter to Henri Fantin-Latour. 30 September – 22 November 1868. Library of Congress: Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection, 1/33/28. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Edwards, je l'ai vu il y a quelque temps, et il est venu me voir - Nous sommes très bien ensemble et il parle de toi toujours avec grande amitié et affection - Il voit Legros mais ne cache point son mépris pour sa poltronerie -

Edwards est même enthousiaste pour moi, étant au fond charmé de ce que Haden a été battu par moi! Quant à Legros il ne lui reste je crois presque personne.

Une espèce de pitié est sa portion parmi ceux qui lui voulaient du bien, une pitié qui à Paris tuerait un homme. [p. 5] Alecco lui tourne le dos et ne lui parle plus - Il n'est plus reçu chez les Ionides - à l'exception du gros frère Constantin qui est très entêté comme tu sais et s'est rangé du côté opposé contre moi - Chez Rossetti Legros ne vient plus de peur sans doute de me rencontrer - car il me fuit de loin! Il fallait voir comme Madame Edwards riait en me racontant la fuite précipitée de Legros en me voyant à l'Académie cet été! - Tu sais il est probable que je ne le battrai plus - il n'en vaut pas la peine - Même ça fait presque pitié tellement est il démoralisé. - Mais c'est trop longtemps causer Legros -

L'affaire Haden et Legros est trop longue pour te l'écrire, mais je l'ai en Anglais et je te l'enverrai tout de même un jour - quelqu'un te la traduira - En attendant je te dirai que Haden s'est rendu méprisable et ridicule au plus haut degré par tous ses derniers procédés - et a perdu l'estime de presque tout le monde - Legros en revenant de Paris après le Salon a raconté ici, qu'il avait donné ^{là-bas} une espèce de soirée ou réunion quelconque, et que Fantin est venu y assister sans avoir été invité - Enfin qu'il t'avait reçu avec politesse mêlée de froideur et dignité (tu vois ça d'ici!) pour ne pas avoir de scène - mais qu'à la fin de la soirée il t'avait congédié en te faisant comprendre qu'il ne fallait plus y revenir! »

¹⁸⁵ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to Alphonse Legros. 14 April 1867. Institut national d'histoire d'art : 54476. « Je suis content de pouvoir te dire cela et te faire plaisir et te montrer que je ne t'en veux pas, quand tu te plains de moi, c'est parce que je ne trouve pas bien et vraiment depuis ton départ de Paris je ne trouvais pas cela un progrès tandis que ces deux tableaux là sont bien. Tu manques de justice, tu as été injuste à mon égard, parce que tu étais en colère et brouillé avec Whistler, tu voulais que je le sois. Je suis seulement en relation avec des gens dont j'aime la peinture ou bien qui sont aimable ou utile. Je ne crois pas à l'amitié. Tu fais de la peinture que j'aime cela me fait plaisir de te le dire en dehors de cela que veux-tu que je te dise, dans tes relations tu manques de justice, tu te laisse entraîner par tes passions. »

¹⁸⁶ Lucie-Smith: 16.

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- ¹⁸⁷ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to James McNeill Whistler. 16 November 1868. Glasgow University Library: MS Whistler F17. <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Tu n'est pas aimable avec moi cela est bien vrai, je n'ai pas pu t'arracher une lettre depuis je ne sais combien de temps, tu ne parle plus de ton travail tu ne viens plus ici, tu est prodigieusement changé, moi qui reste dans mon trou je m'aperçois du changement autour de moi ce serait attristant [p. 3] si la vie Artistique n'était pas si dure et si personnelle, elle est devenu pour chacun de nous un Isoloir. Je vois tout le monde se retirer de tout - quand je vois des nouvelles de Londres Je n'ai jamais rien [entendu] dire de toi - J'ai rencontrer ces jours derniers Lucas qui n'avait pas de Nouvelles ^{de toi}. Legros fait circuler Ici des articles de journaux lui parait s'agiter. Haden a passer ici je ne l'ai pas vu par conséquent. Je n'ai rien d'autres a te dire je travaille au Louvre oh. Bonheur! »
- ¹⁸⁸ Bruce W. Tuckman. "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin* (63:6) 1965.
- ¹⁸⁹ Bruce W. Tuckman and Mary Ann C. Jensen. "Stages of Small Group Development Revisited," *Group Organisation and Management* (2:4) 1977.
- ¹⁹⁰ Connie J. G. Gersick. "Time and Transition in Work Teams: Toward a New Model of Group Development," *The Academy of Management Journal*. (31:1) March 1988: 32.
- ¹⁹¹ Gersick: 35.
- ¹⁹² House suggests this was a key factor for the breakdown of the impressionist group in the late 1880s.
- ¹⁹³ 1 Victoria Grove, now Ossington Street.
- ¹⁹⁴ Though there was talk of *Société* exhibitions but they never materialised.
- ¹⁹⁵ Wedmore: 36.
- ¹⁹⁶ Pennell: 70.
- ¹⁹⁷ Whistler constructed and perpetuated myths about himself so well that many ended up in his biographies. Anderson and Koval: xiv.
- ¹⁹⁸ Munro: 6. With the help of extraverted friends like Whistler and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Legros had many patrons in London, including Seymour Haden, Whistler's brother in law, and many members of the Greek community such as the Ionides family, textile merchants who had emigrated to England in 1815.
- ¹⁹⁹ Seltzer: 207.
- ²⁰⁰ Henri Fantin-Latour. Letter to James McNeill Whistler. 4 January 1869. Glasgow University Library, MS Whistler F18, <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>. « Je reprend ta dernière lettre qui m'a fait grand plaisir et qui m'a fait penser que tu est toujours pour moi un vrai ami. ... tu est le seul qui m'intéresse dans la critique ton éloge des Japonais me plaît bien de temps en temps j'achète des choses Japonaises et toujours je trouve cela mieux, ce que tu me reproche sur la trop grande dureté de tons des vases qui tenait les fleurs je trouve cela ou ne peut plus juste. et ton oeil a vu cela juste, je le comprends très bien, c'est un vilain reste de la mauvaise education du vilain milieu moderne chaque jour je tache de me corriger. c'est toujours le peu d'audace de rompre avec tout qui fait [p. 4] ma timidité je sens si différent de tout ce que je vois que j'ai presque peur de ce que je fais. Voila encore une ^{difficulté} parmi toutes les difficultés de la vie Artistique[.] Nous sommes parti dans un chemin si peu frayés, il y a des moments ou l'on se dit on peut ^{plus} aller. on s'arrête sur un tas de pierre de la route, las on attend le jour pour reprendre courage moi alors je m'attriste au dernier point je suis desesperé et ne reprend que par la force de l'habitude (triste habitude je n'en peut plus) tu me parle de Legros laissons le a ces Succès, nous sommes dans cette route toujours d'autrefois lui a pris une bifurcation plus facile bonne chance chacun va ou il doit aller[.] »
- ²⁰¹ Seltzer: 202.

Conclusion

For a variety of multi-faceted reasons, the alliance formed between Henri Fantin-Latour, Alphonse Legros, and James McNeill Whistler was strained beyond recognition by the end of the 1860s. Thus, nearly a decade after its formation, the *Société des trois* dispersed. Even though the society dissolved without ceremony, the union's effect on the careers of these men cannot be underestimated. Its impact can be seen in the members' lives both during the *Société's* existence and beyond.

During the first half of the Second Empire, Fantin and Legros sowed the seeds for the *Société* in Paris. As the city morphed into a modern spectacle, these art students began developing their mature identities, and, from the beginning, they recognized the benefits of group association. In a highly competitive, and often unstable, artistic climate, a collective identity offered security for students. While Fantin and Legros's earliest training was divergent, with Legros engaged in more practical applications of his artistic talents and Fantin exclusively focused on 'high' art, both artists found themselves striving for success in the *ateliers* of Paris. Early experiences such as these were integral to the future careers of these young men and the formation of the *Société des trois*.

In the fall of 1858, shortly after Whistler's arrival in Paris, the *Société des trois* officially came together. Though his experiences differed vastly from his French counterparts' and included an array of international influences, Whistler possessed qualities both Fantin and Legros admired. In the months following the establishment of the *Société*, an opportunity arose to publically present its members' solidarity. The exhibition at Bonvin's studio demonstrated the similarities shared by these artists. Working in close proximity in Paris benefitted the *Société*, but the group evolved beyond

this situation. Whistler relocated to London following Bonvin's exhibition, which had positive repercussions for his personal career as well as those of his colleagues. Aided by Whistler's promotional skills, the trio began to cultivate a translocal presence, exposing their art to a new commercial market unlike that of Paris.

As its members' individual careers flourished, the *Société des trois*, as a whole, remained coherent. 1863 marked the pinnacle of the allegiance of the *Société*. At the infamous *Salon des Refusés* of 1863, Fantin, Legros, and Whistler's coalition is evident in both their works and their actions. Correspondence between the members specifically referencing their mutual loyalty corroborated these visible statements. In the summer of 1863, Fantin's letters were addressed to both Whistler and Legros, who had moved across the Channel and lived with the American. While the *Société* remained unified during this period, differences in each man's artistic identity began to materialize.

As the refining of their individual personae continued, the need to identify with a group became less important, and so the *Société des trois* began to dissolve. Artistic ideas, personality conflicts, and arguments over money, among other things, all contributed to the group's increasing lack of coherence. As each artist successfully established himself in the professional stage of his career, he no longer needed to rely on others for support and encouragement. Small groups formed during a transitional period, for example the transition from student to professional, have a limited life span; therefore, it was natural for the *Société des trois* to come to a mutual termination.

All of this irrefutably demonstrates that the *Société des trois* should be viewed as far more than a footnote in the careers of Fantin, Legros, and Whistler. Essential to each

man's formation of his artistic identity, the *Société* impacted on its members' lives both during its existence and long after the group's dissolution.

As noted in his later letters to Whistler, much of Fantin's practice continued in the same way as it began in the 1860s. His reverence for established French artistic institutions persisted well into the Third Republic. Copying at the Louvre and submitting to the Salon remained priorities to this increasingly well-known artist. This is not to say that he strove to be a mainstream academic artist. While he accepted institutional honours at the Salon, even the Legion of Honour in the 1870s, he refused to serve on the Salon's jury.²⁰²

Because of the endorsement he received during the course of the *Société des trois*, Fantin's success in London continued and he strove to cultivate his reputation there. The Royal Academy frequently displayed his paintings. He also showed work regularly at the Dudley Gallery as well as with the Society of French Artists. His first exhibition with this group was in 1872 when he showed 20 works.

A frequent point of discussion amongst Fantin's contemporaries through the 1870s and beyond was Fantin's reclusiveness. Many recounted that there was a great likelihood that, if one called on Fantin, he would not be received and, if he was, the artist would be at the ready to argue any point.²⁰³ While this was true of his private life, Fantin never disengaged himself from the wider artistic society of Paris. In a professional manner, he maintained his connections with avant-garde circles, both in music and the visual arts; later uncommissioned portraits evidence this. In this way, his desire for

artistic camaraderie and to remain on the cusp of artistic innovation that birthed the *Société des trois* outlived the society itself.

Legros also continued to cultivate the connections he made during the *Société des trois* in both Paris and London. Though his own visits back to France were infrequent, close friends travelled to see him in London, including Manet who crossed the Channel in 1868 or 1869.²⁰⁴ Legros reconnected with other artists during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 when thousands of his countrymen left France for England; some waited until the war ended to return, while others settled permanently in England.²⁰⁵

Maintaining connections in the Parisian artistic world was essential for Legros in order for him to build on the translocal traction he developed during his time as part of the *Société*. Like Fantin, Legros continued to capitalize on the networks they had built linking both sides of the Channel. He actively created an artistic identity with a translocal focus and, while remaining in England, maintained a translocal presence in London and Paris until the end of his life. The primary technique he used to accomplish this was ensuring he exhibited regularly in both cities. He, too, exhibited often at the Dudley Gallery as well as with the Society of French Artists in London. In 1876, the same year he became a professor at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, he exhibited prints at the second exhibition of the *Société anonyme*, the group now known as the Impressionists. The following year he exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in London; the Grosvenor opened in 1877 and was known to exhibit works by avant-garde artists, many of whom became associated with Aestheticism.

Although Legros's legacy is that of a conservative artist, throughout his career he placed himself within circles engaged in cutting-edge artistic practices, all the while retaining his own style. Many have commented on his persistent adherence to French art traditions in his work, and his avoidance of English influence.²⁰⁶

Whistler also continued to follow the translocal trajectory laid out by the *Société* and strove to retain a reputation in both London and Paris. Throughout the course of his career, he achieved this with varying degrees of success as his work had a polarizing effect on critics. Generally, the French accepted Whistler with reluctance, if at all, in spite of the time he spent there; his work rarely received positive reviews in the 1860s and 1870s and the artist did not exhibit at the Salon at all between 1867 and 1882.²⁰⁷ Notwithstanding these factors, he worked to create a myth in Britain that he was well-loved in Paris and he did receive a gold medal at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1889.²⁰⁸

Both French and English hesitation to accept Whistler stemmed from two primary issues: his personality and his artistic style. As time passed in England, Whistler became increasingly controversial, and his actions caused him to be the subject of multiple reports of misconduct, some of which occurred during his time with the *Société des trois*. Even those he counted as friends could not avoid his brash mannerisms. This is evidenced in 1869 when Whistler was the subject of one of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "non-sense" verses:

There's a combative Artist named Whistler,
Who is, like his own hog hairs, a bristler
A tube of white lead
And a punch on the head
Offer varied attractions to Whistler.²⁰⁹

Of the three former members of the *Société des trois*, Whistler's work underwent the most pronounced stylistic change in the years following the group's disintegration, a development art circles did not always meet with approval. The interests he began to cultivate with Albert Moore that prized colour relationships and form above subject persisted and, by 1870, this was the primary function of his oeuvre. While this would lead to later controversy, it marked Whistler as one of the chief advocates of Aestheticism and the notion of art for art's sake.

A thorough investigation of the correlations between the *Société des trois* and these artists' later careers extends beyond the scope of this study. However, it is a line of inquiry worth pursuing as it provides further affirmation of the *Société's* significance. The scholarly dismissal of this small, but relevant, artistic brotherhood is in need of revision because the *Société's* impact is important, as I have demonstrated. Even contemporaries writing of the *Société* felt their union during this period was significant. In 1906, English art critic and contemporary of the *Société* Frederick Wedmore (1844–1921) remarked upon the longevity of work of Fantin, Legros, and Whistler as well as their relationship:

All three are, in one's sentiment and thought, curiously bound together, not only by a possession of qualities sterling, austere, and delicate ... but like wise because one feels of them, especially, that fashionable or unfashionable, liked or not liked, it is in the very air, somehow that they outlast our day.²¹⁰

²⁰² J.-E. Blanche. *Essais et Portraits*. Paris: Lwa bibliophiles fantasistes, 1912: 18; Lucie-Smith: 15.

²⁰³ Blanche: 14.

²⁰⁴ Wilcox: 17.

²⁰⁵ Wilcox: 18.

²⁰⁶ Geiger: 81; Seltzer: 17; Salaman: 10.

²⁰⁷ Morris: 260.

²⁰⁸ Morris: 261.

²⁰⁹ Rossetti: 495

²¹⁰ Wedmore: 41.

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