

Popular Prints for Children ... And Everyone Else

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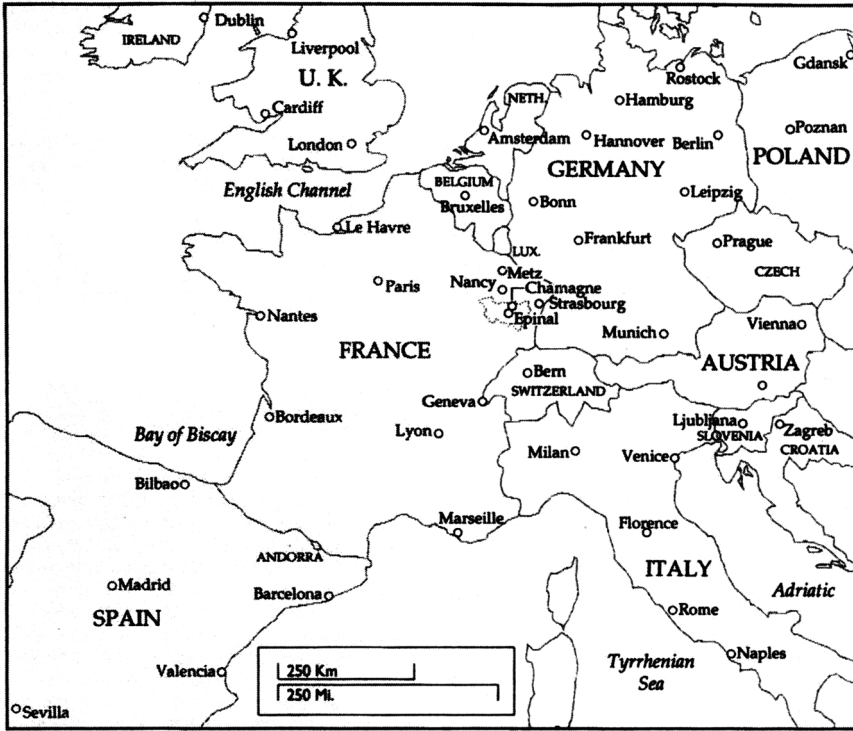
# Popular Prints for Children ... And Everyone Else

PATRICIA MAINARDI

POPULAR PRINTS, crudely drawn and brightly colored, were produced over much of the pre-modern world for centuries. They spread news of current events, depicted heroes and religious figures, shared well-known stories and legends, and provided entertainment and household decoration. By the twentieth century, however, modern technology and advanced literacy had narrowed their audience to children, whose affection for picture books and comics persists even today. Nowhere were popular prints more numerous or more beautiful than in France, with the result that there they have held an ambiguous status for centuries, both admired and scorned at the same time, and often for the same reasons. Knowing more about them and their checkered history can teach us much about a past that, to some extent, we all share.

Early printmaking centers existed in most of the major cities of France—Paris, of course, but also Metz, Toulouse, and Lille—but it is the small city of Epinal in eastern France that eventually became synonymous with French popular prints (fig. 1). As a result, these prints are often called *Images d'Epinal* regardless of where they were actually published. The firm of Pellerin, established in 1796,

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the CUNY Research Foundation, which has supported my research for this article, and my colleague Romy Golan, who helped with documentation. I thank Andrea Immel of the Cotsen Library for her insights into popular prints, which have greatly influenced my thinking on the subject, the audience at Princeton University, whose questions and discussions greatly improved the earlier version that I presented at the opening of the exhibition “*Imagerie Populaire: French Pictorial Broad­sides for Children in the Cotsen Children’s Library*,” and Gretchen Oberfranc of the *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, whose editing was superb. My ideas were first conceptualized in a paper presented at the symposium “*Ephemera: Impermanent Works in the Literary and Visual Culture of the Long Nineteenth Century*,” organized by Kevin Murphy and Sally O’Driscoll and held at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in 2009. This essay is part of my ongoing book project on the beginnings of illustrated print culture in nineteenth-century France.



1. Map of France showing Epinal. Courtesy of the author.

was responsible for most of these prints and has remained in business for more than two centuries. In 1984 the firm changed its name to Imagerie d'Epinal, and it still operates on the outskirts of the city in a factory built in 1897 after its previous workshop was destroyed by fire. Located next to the factory is the Musée de l'image, inaugurated in 2003, which houses the Département des Vosges collection of popular prints along with an engaging display of their history and production.

Pellerin's earliest productions were playing cards (fig. 2), but by the late nineteenth century the firm was producing comic strips (fig. 3). Despite this long history, the longest in the French print trade, the trajectory of the development of the Image d'Epinal has yet to be conceptualized in its entirety. In this essay I will present a brief overview of its history and offer some thoughts as to its anomalous position in the history of art.



2. Tarot card, *Jack of Hearts (Vale de coeur)*. Stencil-colored woodcut, 8.5 × 5.5 cm. Epinal: Pellerin, late 18th–early 19th century. Courtesy of the author.

#### HISTORY OF EPINAL

The earliest popular prints in France were playing cards and religious imagery (fig. 4), appealing, one might say, to both ends of the consumer spectrum.<sup>1</sup> Such prints were usually sold by traveling salesmen, peddlers known as *colporteurs*, who also carried the cheap books known as the *bibliothèque bleue* from their blue covers, as well as almanacs, catechisms, and broadsheets. *Colporteurs* also peddled a good deal of pornography and politically suspect images and texts, all of which gave them an aura of ill repute that rubbed off on their wares as well.

The earliest prints produced in the town of Epinal date from the seventeenth century, but Nicolas Pellerin (1703–1773), who gave his

<sup>1</sup> Although the subject of popular prints is vast, there is a good general introduction by Georges-Henri Rivière in the exhibition catalogue *French Popular Imagery: Five Centuries of Prints* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1974); the exhibition was first shown in 1972 at the Musée national des arts et traditions populaires, Paris, as “Cinq siècles d’imagerie française.” The catalogue was published in French and translated and adapted for the London exhibition.

LA CHÈVRE DU CHEF DE GARE



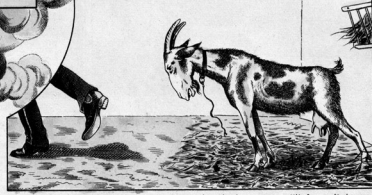
Certain chef de gare étant malade, se vit conseiller le lait de chèvre par le médecin :  
« Tous les jours régulièrement, sans y jamais manquer, un bol le matin, un bol le soir. »

Une chèvre fut donc achetée et confiée aux soins de Madame, qui allait la traire matin et soir.

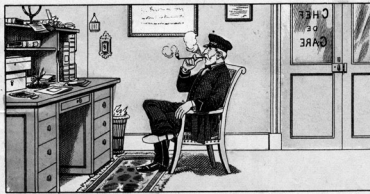
A ce régime, notre chef de gare se rétablissait doucement.  
Un matin dès la première heure, Madame dut s'absenter pour la journée.



Forcé fut donc au chef de gare de suppléer la ménagère. Il se rendit à l'écurie pour traire la chèvre.



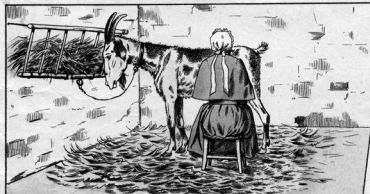
Mais la chèvre qui avait sans doute mauvais caractère, Monseigneur par une attitude non équivoque qu'elle ne se prêtait pas à une substitution qui dérangait ses habitudes... Le chef de gare n'insista pas...



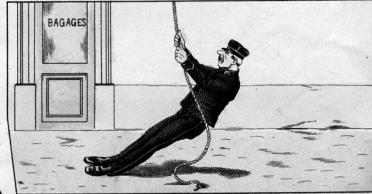
Il se retira dans son bureau pour y méditer à l'aise, car la conjoncture était délicate : le mauvais vouloir de la chèvre paraissant tout aussi formel que l'indomptance du docteur.



En homme avisé, le chef de gare se dit : Une chèvre est un animal ; or, tout animal, tant rochant soit-il, a forcément le discernement droit et borsé. L'apparence doit lui suffire ; restons en conséquence le costume familier à notre tête.



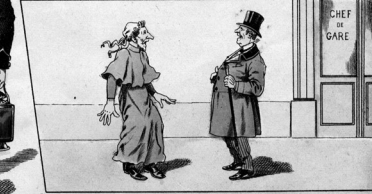
C'était bien raisonné : la chèvre fut dupe du travestissement et présenta ses mamelles avec la plus grande docilité.



Une fois, pour ne pas compromettre la succès de sa ruse, le chef de gare devait par dessus tout éviter d'entraîner par quelque maladresse de service la défiance de l'animal ongragieux. Cette préoccupation l'absorbait au point qu'il se laissa surprendre par le signal de l'arrivée d'un train.



Mais au premier appel de la cloche, le sentiment de ses obligations professionnelles le rassaillit tout entier. Sans souci du fait qu'il versait, enlaidissant de son grotesque accoutrement, il se précipita sur le quai...



...Il fut vraiment regrettable que les dimensions restreintes du cadre ne nous permettent pas de figurer l'accueil fait par les voyageurs à cette mascarade institutionnelle. Vous imaginez le mépris le plus poignant de la scène s'il est l'homme vis-à-vis qui se tient pendant plus d'un quart d'heure, immobilisé dans l'attitude qui devrait pour chacun de la situation, le chef de gare et un inspecteur de la Compagnie qui descendait du train.

3. *The Station Master's Goat (La chèvre du chef de gare)*. Série aux armes d'Épinal no. 128. 41.5 × 31 cm. Epinal: Pellerin, 1894. Courtesy of the author.

# S<sup>TE</sup>. Agathe Vierge Martyre.



DE LA FABRIQUE DE PELLERIN, IMPRIMEUR-LIBRAIRE A ÉPINAE.

4. *St. Agatha Virgin Martyr (Ste. Agathe vierge martyre)*. Stencil-colored woodcut, 34.3 × 26.1 cm. Epinal: Pellerin, before 1814. Courtesy of the author.

name to the firm that came to dominate Epinal printmaking, did not appear there until 1735–1740.<sup>2</sup> By trade, he was a designer of playing cards, a lucrative métier; by politics, he and his family were Freemasons, which rendered them politically suspect across several regimes.

Nicolas's brother, Gabriel Pellerin, also designed playing cards, as did Gabriel's son Jean-Charles Pellerin (1756–1836), who was the real force in the establishment of the Maison Pellerin in Epinal in 1796.<sup>3</sup>

By 1800, Jean-Charles Pellerin had installed four printing presses and had expanded production from playing cards to include the full range of colporteur printed wares, both books and images.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, the Maison Pellerin continued to design, print, and market a variety of books and images, prospering and expanding. In 1810 it produced 16,000 prints; in 1823, 102,000.<sup>5</sup> By 1842, it was averaging several million annually, and in the period from 1870 to 1914, the average increased to 10–15 million images annually.<sup>6</sup> Even as early as 1845, the firm was employing eighty to a

<sup>2</sup> There is some disagreement about the date when the first Pellerin arrived in Epinal, with sources giving either 1735 or 1740. There is an enormous bibliography on French popular imagery, but one must always begin by citing the founders of this area of scholarship: Champfleury [Jules Husson], *Histoire de l'imagerie populaire* (Paris: Dentu, 1869), and Pierre-Louis Duchartre and René Saulnier, *L'Imagerie populaire: Les images de toutes les provinces françaises du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle au second empire* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1925). Other noteworthy publications include the exhibition catalogue *French Popular Imagery* (Hayward Gallery) and the catalogue of the holdings of the Bibliothèque nationale and the Musée national des arts et traditions populaires, *L'Imagerie populaire française*, ed. Nicole Garnier, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990–1996). There are several studies devoted specifically to Images d'Epinal. See, for example, René Perroux, *Les images d'Epinal*, rev. ed. (Nancy: Ollendorf, 1914); Jean Mistler, François Blaudez, and André Jacquemin, *Epinal et l'imagerie populaire* (Paris: Hachette, 1961); *L'Imagerie populaire française au musée d'Epinal*, ed. Bernard Huin (Epinal: Musée départemental des Vosges, 1989). Two well-illustrated popular books are Mireille-Bénédicte Bouvet, *Le grand livre des images d'Epinal* (Paris: Solar, 1996), and Henri George, *La belle histoire des images d'Epinal* (Paris: Le Cherche midi, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> The principal source on Pellerin is Jean-Marie Dumont, *La vie et l'oeuvre de Jean-Charles Pellerin 1756–1836* (Epinal: L'Imagerie Pellerin, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> Dumont, *Pellerin*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Dumont, *Pellerin*, 43.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Marie Dumont, *Les maîtres graveurs populaires 1800–1850* (Epinal: L'Imagerie Pellerin, 1965), 54; Imagerie Pellerin, *Histoire de l'imagerie ... une entreprise bicentenaire*, ed. Eric Staub (Epinal: L'Imagerie Pellerin, 1991), 10; Dennis Martin, *Images d'Epinal*, exhibit. cat. (Quebec: Musée de Québec, 1995), 54.

hundred workers—an enormous enterprise by the standards of the time. After the playing-card branch of the family business was sold off to the Parisian firm of Grimaud in 1876, Pellerin focused on the broadsheets and albums that, by this time, had a broad international market. The firm shipped prints around the world, including a series of sixty of its best-selling comic strips translated into English in 1894–1895 for the Humorous Publishing Company in Kansas City, Missouri (fig. 5).<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to identify the first Pellerin images that were not playing cards, but the first one firmly dated is from 1804.<sup>8</sup> One reason it is so difficult to establish a chronology is that Pellerin, like other printers of his day, continued to reproduce earlier images and to borrow them freely from wherever he found them. This kind of borrowing was common practice until the 1886 Berne Convention established international copyright protection. As a result, there are family resemblances of basic print types throughout Europe and America, and untangling who did what first is a herculean task.<sup>9</sup>

What is particularly noteworthy about the trajectory of the Pellerin firm is that, despite its almost total identification with what the historian Peter Laslett has called “The World We Have Lost,” that is, with a nostalgic view of a simpler rural past, from the very beginning it adopted industrial methods and constantly updated its subject matter.<sup>10</sup> In 1809 Jean-Charles Pellerin added stereotype production to his establishment.<sup>11</sup> Stereotypes were produced through a mechanical process by which a plaster mold was made from the original wood block, and from that plaster a metal plate was produced for the actual printing. This method not only protected the original woodblock from wear and damage, but it also enabled large printings because new plates could regularly be made from the original

<sup>7</sup> Duchartre et Saulnier, *L’Imagerie populaire*, 187–88; *Imagerie Pellerin*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Le Retour du soldat* of 1804 is reproduced in *Images d’Epinal gravées sur bois*, vol. 2 of *L’Imagerie populaire française*, ed. Nicole Garnier-Pelle (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1996), no. 1404.

<sup>9</sup> A 2009 exhibition focused on the practice among popular printmakers of copying high-art paintings, engravings, and even each other. See *Ni tout à fait la même, ni tout à fait une autre, ou des chefs-d’oeuvre comme modèles*, exhibit. cat. (Epinal: Musée de l’image, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (New York: Scribner, 1965).

<sup>11</sup> Dumont, *Pellerin*, 41. See also André Jacquemin, “Les techniques de l’imagerie populaire,” in Mistler, Blaudez, and Jacquemin, *Epinal et l’imagerie populaire*, 139–74.





One day little Red Riding hood was told to carry a pie and a jar of butter to her sick grandmother.



In the woods little Red Riding hood meets sir Wolf and explains to him the object of her errand.



Whilst little Red Riding hood is playing on the road gathering nuts and flowers, sir Wolf hastens to the house of the grandmother.



Sir Wolf arrives first and knocks at the door.



The grandmother shouts: "Pull out the pegs and the door will open!"



The bad fellow does so and jumping on the old woman devours her.



Then he dresses himself in the caps and clothes of the poor woman and takes her place in the bed.



Sir Wolf is waiting impatiently for the arrival of little Red Riding hood.



Little Red Riding hood comes and knocks three times at the door.



The wolf, disguising his voice, shouts: "Pull out the pegs and the door will open". Little Red Riding hood enters and presents to her grandmother the pie and jar of butter.



Sir Wolf says: "Place the jar and the pie on the cupboard and come into bed with me"



Little Red Riding hood undresses herself and goes in bed with her grandmother.



Little Red Riding hood at the side of the wolf exclaims: "O grandamma! How large your arms are! — It is to embrace you better, my child"



"O grandamma! how big your ears are! — It is to hear you better, my child"



"O grandamma! how big your eyes are! — It is to see you better, my child"



"O grandamma! How large your teeth are! — It is to devour you!" And the bad wolf rising in the bed jumps on the little girl and devours her.

"Printed expressly for the Humoristic Publishing Co., Kansas City, Mo."

Imagerie of Epinal. — PELLERIN, imp.-édit.

5. *Little Red Riding Hood*. Epinal: Printed by Pellerin for the Humoristic Publishing Company, Kansas City, Missouri, 1893–1899. Cotsen Children's Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Gift of William Helfand.

block. Exceptionally popular images could even be churned out by several printing presses operating simultaneously, each printing from an identical stereotype. For Pellerin this date, 1809, marked the beginnings of industrialization, although histories of Images d'Épinal prefer to date industrialization to later in the century in order to recoup most of his production for an idealized pre-industrial age. Indeed, the two-volume catalogue of French popular prints published by the Bibliothèque nationale and the Musée des arts et traditions populaires concludes in the 1860s and lists only the two thousand or so prints originally engraved on wood, not the later lithographic or photographic processes.<sup>12</sup>

The bulk of popular print imagery in the early decades of the nineteenth century was made up of religious images, broadsheets showing contemporaneous events, portraits of rulers, military subjects, and well-known themes, such as the world turned upside-down (figs. 6–9). Before the Revolutionary period, religious imagery had predominated (fig. 4). These images, known as *images de préservation* after their intended purpose of protection, were most often tacked up on the walls of dwellings to invoke the intercession of the depicted saint. When these subjects were outlawed as part of Revolutionary secularization, political images replaced them, only to be outlawed in turn at the Restoration, in 1816.

Censorship of one kind or another was always a problem, as Robert Justin Goldstein's many publications on the subject demonstrate.<sup>13</sup> Because pictures make a direct appeal even to the illiterate, censorship of images in France was always much more severe than censorship of the written word. Throughout Europe, printers were held responsible for their productions and so, like many of his colleagues, Jean-Charles Pellerin had problems with government censors. In 1811 he was prosecuted for producing *The Willing Cuckold, or the Complacent Husband*, a traditional, if slightly risqué, subject.<sup>14</sup> Napoleonic

<sup>12</sup> See *L'Imagerie populaire française*, vol. 2, *Images d'Épinal gravées sur bois*, ed. Garnier-Pelle, 9–12.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1989); Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Censorship of the Arts and the Press in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Basingstroke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> For the circumstances of *Le cornard volontaire, ou le mari commode* (now lost), see Dumont, Pellerin, 46–47; Mistler, Blaudez, and Jacquemin, *Épinal et l'imagerie populaire*, 91.



## GALERIE MILITAIRE.

N° 4.



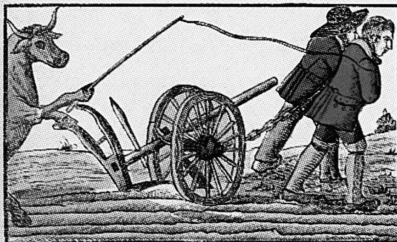
- 1 Fantassin du régiment d'Estremadure. 1795. 4 Officier d'infanterie anglaise. 7 Ingénieur prussien en 1795. 10 Centurion de l'Ecole de Mars. 15, 14 et 13 Guérillas espagnols. (4)  
 2 Brague espagnol de Zamora. 5 Officier anglais. 8 Soldat français en 1795. 11 Officier de marine française en 1795. 12 Soldat de marine française.  
 3 Sergent d'infanterie anglaise. 6 Mineur prussien en 1795. 9 Elève de l'Ecole de Mars en 1795.

FABRIQUE DE PELLERIN, Imp.-Libraire, à EPINAL.

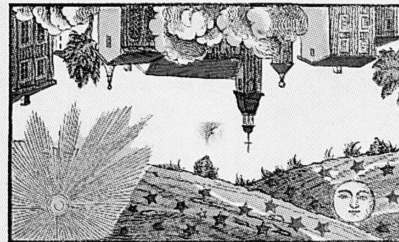
8. François Georgin, *Military Gallery No. 4 (Galerie militaire, No. 4)*. Stencil-colored woodcut, 21.4 × 37.8 cm. Epinal: Pellerin, 1835. Courtesy of the author.

## LE MONDE RENVERSE.

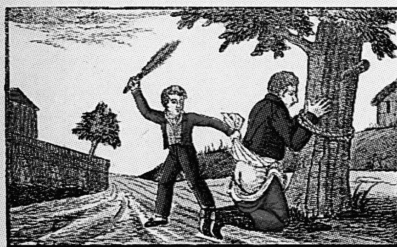
(1.<sup>re</sup> Planchette.)



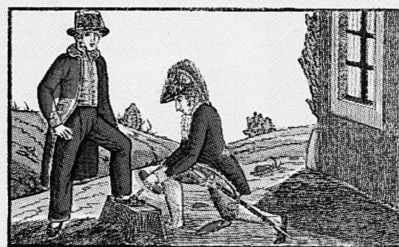
Le bœuf tient la charrette qui est tirée par les laboureurs.



Les maisons éblouissent le soleil et la lune.



L'enfant qui corrige son précepteur.



Le maître qui démolit les soubres de son domestique.

DE LA FABRIQUE DE PELLERIN, IMPRIMEUR-LIBRAIRE, A EPINAL.

9. François Georgin, *The World Upside-Down (Le monde renversé)*. Stencil-colored woodcut, 20.2 × 35 cm. Epinal: Pellerin, 1829. Courtesy of the author.

imagery replaced religious imagery after 1789, but this huge market collapsed after Waterloo and the return of the Bourbon monarchy, when inventories of such prints were ordered destroyed. Pellerin, a committed Bonapartist, did not comply and was condemned to four months in prison and a large fine. He appealed the prison sentence successfully, but from time to time he did have to pay fines for skirting the legal limits of allowable imagery.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, Pellerin was the main purveyor of Napoleonic imagery, producing, among many other subjects, a series of fifty-nine grand-format prints of Napoleonic exploits in editions of 5,000, designed by his master artist François Georin (1801–1863) in the 1830s (fig. 7).<sup>16</sup>

During these decades, there were many changes in the market for popular images, and Pellerin kept abreast of trends, constantly modernizing both imagery and production. In the aftermath of the repeated revolutions that disrupted their trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it is understandable that print publishers looked for subjects that would not be confiscated at every change of regime. In the 1820s Pellerin began to produce comic strip–like broadsheets recounting tales and fables, often printed in two languages for international sales, as can be seen in the broadsheet of the *Swiss Family Robinson* (fig. 10), whose title is given in both French and German. After the first real comic books were published by the Swiss schoolmaster Rodolphe Töpffer in the 1830s, Images d’Epinal quickly adopted some of the hallmarks of this new style that mixed caricature with illustration (fig. 11). By the 1840s, along with the holdovers from earlier print production, the Maison Pellerin was publishing broadsheets composed in comic-strip layout of all the traditional tales: *Le chat botté* (*Puss in Boots*), *Le petit chaperon rouge* (*Little Red Riding Hood*), *La belle au bois dormant* (*Sleeping Beauty*), *La petite cendrillon* (*Cinderella*). They rapidly became staples of Pellerin’s sales and were

<sup>15</sup> See Dumont, *Pellerin*, 57–62; *L’Imagerie populaire française*, ed. Huin, 37.

<sup>16</sup> For an extensive discussion of the Napoleonic imagery that François Georin designed and produced for Pellerin, see Barbara Ann Day-Hickman, *Napoleonic Art: Nationalism and the Spirit of Rebellion in France (1815–1848)* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999). The only full-scale study of Georin’s work is Lucien Descaves, *L’humble Georin, imagier d’Epinal* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1932), a work that is popular rather than scholarly. Georin’s Napoleonic prints are still being printed today by Imagerie d’Epinal.

# ROBINSON SUISSE.

Schweitzer-Robinson.



Sauvetage du vaisseau.  
Rettung des Schiffes.



Le bois des singes.  
Der Affenwald.



Première excursion dans l'intérieur du pays.  
Erste Wirthschaft im Innern des Landes.



Le marais des Dogues.  
Sumpf der Hundeschwärme.



La fête de monnaie.  
Währungsfeier.



Combat contre les Indes.  
Kampf gegen die Indier.



Prise d'une tortue marine.  
Fang einer Meeresschildkröte.



Chasse à l'autruche.  
Jagd der Kamele-Enten.



Prise du sanglier.  
Wirthschaft gegen die Wildschweine.



Frédéric harponne un veau marin.  
Friedrich wirft Harpune auf ein Walball.



Frédéric fait ses adieux à sa famille.  
Friedrich's Abschied von seiner Familie.



Départ pour l'Angleterre.  
Abreise nach England.

Editeur de PELLERIN, Imprimeur-Libraire, à EPINAL.

10. *Swiss Family Robinson (Robinson suisse / Schweitzer-Robinson)*. Stencil-colored woodcut. Epinal: Pellerin, 1827. Courtesy of the author.



11. Rodolphe Töpffer, *The Story of Mr. Jabot (Histoire de Mr. Jabot)*, plate 23. Transfer lithograph, 10.5 × 17 cm. Geneva, 1833. Courtesy of the author.

regularly redesigned and reissued (figs. 12 and 13).<sup>17</sup> These broadsheets much resemble the Classic Comic Books of the mid-twentieth century, which, by recounting great literature in comic-book format, attempted to encourage young people to read.

By 1846, the Maison Pellerin, now directed by Jean-Charles's son Nicolas Pellerin and his son-in-law Pierre-Germain Vadet, was producing around 3.5 million prints annually, and indeed, the years between 1820 and 1850 are widely considered the golden age of Images d'Épinal. Afterward, the weight of production shifted dramatically toward new printing techniques and new subject matter. The stereotypes that Pellerin had adopted in the first decade of the century were replaced around 1850 by lithographic stones; lithography had been invented at the turn of the century but did not become commercially viable in France for several decades.<sup>18</sup> The transformation of popular print production from wood engraving via stereotypes to lithography was implemented by Jean-Charles's grandson, Charles-Nicolas Pel-

<sup>17</sup> For illustrations, see *L'Imagerie populaire française*, vol. 2, *Images d'Épinal gravées sur bois*, ed. Garnier-Pelle, 232–53, nos. 918–1021.

<sup>18</sup> On Pellerin's use of lithography, see Dumont, *Maîtres graveurs populaires*, 29; Duchartre and Saulnier, *L'Imagerie populaire*, 189.

lerin, who was trained in Paris by the pioneering lithographer Joseph Lemercier and took over the firm in 1854.<sup>19</sup> The shift was accelerated by the work of Charles Pinot (1817–1874), a designer hired by the Maison Pellerin in 1847. He had studied painting in Paris with the history painter Paul Delaroche and brought with him to Epinal not only a style of drawing redolent of contemporary illustration (he had worked for *L'Illustration*), but also a taste for contemporary subject matter.<sup>20</sup>

Most studies of Images d'Epinal conclude here, labeling the subsequent period one of degeneration because the Pellerin output became different not only in medium but also in style and subject. Although the earliest popular prints were intended for adults, in the course of the nineteenth century children came to be viewed as a lucrative new market, and Pellerin's production soon included songs and stories, games and cut-outs (fig. 14).<sup>21</sup> By 1858, the Maison Pellerin had adopted *gillotage*, a process of drawing on transfer paper with lithographic crayon, after which the drawing is transferred to a metal plate to be etched without the image being reversed in the final printing.<sup>22</sup> The firm turned to chromolithography around 1882, a commercial process of color printing from lithographic stones that eliminated the hand-coloring by stencil characteristic of earlier popular prints.<sup>23</sup> Zincography was introduced in 1890 and was quickly followed by the photomechanical processes that rapidly replaced all earlier printing techniques.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to technical modernizations, Pellerin made changes in subject matter, commissioning artists to produce broadsheets with updated versions of traditional subjects, like the 1850 *Domestic Reforms* (*Les réformes du ménages*) (fig. 15) that continued the world upside-down

<sup>19</sup> *French Popular Imagery* (Hayward Gallery), 130.

<sup>20</sup> On Charles Pinot, see Perrout, *Images d'Epinal*, 120–32; *French Popular Imagery* (Hayward Gallery), 130. Pinot eventually left Pellerin in 1860 to establish his own printing firm in Epinal, Pinot & Sagaire, which then competed with Pellerin for the distinction of producing Images d'Epinal. It was bought out by Pellerin in 1886. Duchartre and Saulnier, *L'Imagerie populaire*, 198–99.

<sup>21</sup> Duchartre and Saulnier, *L'Imagerie populaire*, 188–89; Dumont, *Maîtres graveurs populaires*, 64.

<sup>22</sup> Jacquemin, “Techniques de l'imagerie populaire,” 139–74.

<sup>23</sup> Bouvet, *Grand livre des images d'Epinal*, 13.

<sup>24</sup> *L'Imagerie publicitaire, de la propagande religieuse à l'imagerie publicitaire*, exhibit. cat. (Epinal: Imagerie d'Epinal, 1987), 3.



IMAGERIE PELLERIN

## LA CIGALE ET LA FOURMI.

IMAGERIE D'EPINAL, N° 902



La Cigale ayant chanté  
Tout l'été.



Se trouva fort dépourvue



Quand la bête fut venue.



Pas un seul petit morceau  
De mouche ou de vermisseau.



Elle alla crier famine  
Chez la Fourmi, sa voisine.



La priant de lui prêter,



Quelque grain pour subsister  
Jusqu'à la saison nouvelle.



Je vous payerai, lui dit-elle.



Avant l'ôit, foi d'animal  
Intérêt et principal.



La Fourmi n'est pas prêteuse,  
C'est là son moindre défaut.



Que faisiez-vous, au temps chaud?  
Dit-elle à cette emprunteuse.



Nuit et jour à tout venant



Je chantais, ne vous déplaîse.



Vous chantiez.



J'en suis fort aise!



Eh bien! dansez maintenant.

12. *The Grasshopper and the Ant (La cigale et la fourmi)*, no. 902. Stencil-colored woodcut. Epinal: Pellerin, 1846–1860. Courtesy of the author.



La cigale, ayant chanté  
Tout l'été,

Se trouva fort dépourvue  
Quand la bise fut venue :  
Pas un seul petit morceau  
De mouche ou de vermissseau.

Elle alla crier famine  
Chez la fourmi sa voisine,  
La priant de lui prêter  
Quelque grain pour subsister  
Jusqu'à la saison nouvelle.  
« Je vous paierai, lui dit-elle,  
Avant l'aôût, foi d'animal,  
Intérêt et principal. »  
La fourmi n'est pas prêteuse :  
C'est là son moindre défaut.  
« Que faisiez-vous au temps chaud ?  
Dit-elle à cette emprunteuse.  
— Nuit et jour à tout venant  
Je chantais, ne vous déplaît-elle.  
— Vous chantiez ? j'en suis fort aise.  
Eh bien ! dansez maintenant. »

13. E. Phosty, *The Grasshopper and the Ant (La cigale et la fourmi)*. Série supérieure aux armes d'Epinal, Fables de La Fontaine, no. 25. 41.5 × 31 cm. Epinal: Pellerin, 1895. Courtesy of the author.

IMAGERIE PELLERIN



Cadet Rousselle a trois chapeaux.

# CADET ROUSSELLE



IMAGERIE D'EPINAL, N° 70



Cadet Rousselle a trois deniers.

— 1 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois maisons : (840)  
 Car c'est au poutres ni chevrons : (840)  
 C'est pour loger les hirondelles ;  
 Que deux-vous d'Cadet Rousselle ?  
 Ah! ah! ah! mais vraiment,  
 Cadet Rousselle est bon enfant.

— 2 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois habits : (840)  
 Deux jaunes, l'autre en papier gris ; (840)  
 Il met celui-ci quand il gèle,  
 Ou quand il pleut ou quand il grêle ;  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 3 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois chapeaux : (840)  
 Les deux ronds ne sont pas très-beaux, (840)  
 Et le troisième est à deux cornes,  
 De sa tête il a pris la forme :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 4 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois beaux yeux : (840)  
 L'un l'garde à Caen, l'autre à Bayeux ; (840)  
 Comme il n'a pas la vu' bien nette,  
 Le troisième c'est sa lunettes :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 5 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a une épée, (840)  
 Très longue mais toute rouillée ; (840)  
 Aussitôt chacun de dire d'elle  
 Qu'elle ne fait rien qu'aux hirondelles :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 6 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois souliers : (840)  
 Il en met deux dans ses deux pieds ; (840)  
 Le troisième étant pour hanteroche,  
 Quand il le met, c'est dans sa poche :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 7 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois cheveux : (840)  
 Un pour chaque face, un pour la queue ; (840)  
 Pourtant parfois avec adresse  
 Il les met tous les trois en tresse :  
 Ah! ah! etc...



— 8 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois garçons : (840)  
 L'un est voleur, l'autre est friquet, (840)  
 Le troisième est un peu ficelle,  
 Il ressemble à Cadet Rousselle :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 9 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois gros chiens : (840)  
 L'un court aux livres, l'autre aux lapins, (840)  
 Le troisième s'enfant quand on l'appelle,  
 Comme le chien de Jean de Nivelle :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 10 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois beaux chats, (840)  
 Qui n'attrappent jamais les rats, (840)  
 Le troisième n'a pas de grondeilles,  
 Il monte au grenier sans chandelle :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 11 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a marié (840)  
 Ses trois filles dans trois quartiers ; (840)  
 Les deux premières ne sont pas belles,  
 La troisième n'a pas de cervelle :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 12 —  
 Cadet Rousselle a trois deniers, (840)  
 C'est pour payer ses créanciers ; (840)  
 Quand il a monté ses ressources,  
 Il les remet dedans sa bourse :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 13 —  
 Cadet Rousselle s'est fait acteur, (840)  
 Comme Gédéon s'est fait auteur ; (840)  
 Au café quand il jou' son rôle,  
 Les aveugles le trouvent drôle :  
 Ah! ah! etc...

— 14 —  
 Cadet Rousselle ne mourra pas, (840)  
 Car, avant de sauter le pas, (840)  
 On dit qu'il apprend l'orthographe  
 Pour faire lui-même son épitaphe :  
 Ah! ah! ah! mais vraiment,  
 Cadet Rousselle est bon enfant.



14. *Cadet Rousselle*, no. 70. Epinal: Pellerin, ca. 1900. Cotsen Children's Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Gift of William Helfand.

## LES RÉFORMES DU MÉNAGE.

529



Les hommes apprendront à soigner les enfants.



Ils balayeront et feront le ménage.



Ils feront la cuisine et épousseront les légumes.



Ils iront au marché et aux provisions.



Les femmes feront les affaires et s'occuperont de politique.



Les femmes iront à l'estaminet.



Les demoiselles séduiront les messieurs et feront des déclarations.



Au bal, les messieurs attendent qu'on les invite à danser.



Les hommes devront savoir trioter et recommander les lés.



Les jeunes gens bien élevés aimeront à s'occuper de choses utiles.



Les maris seront aux petits soins pour leurs femmes.



Les maris qui s'entendront bien au ménage seront très-considérés.



Les demoiselles choisiront leurs maris. Ces messieurs n'auront pas le droit de refuser.



Voilà comme on traitera les garçons qui refuseraient de se marier.



Les femmes étant les plus raisonnables, commanderont à la maison.



Les dames seules pourront prendre des ports d'armes.

Propriété de l'éditeur. (Déposé.)

Fabrique de PELLERIN, Imprimeur-Libraire, à ÉPINAL.

15. *Household Reforms (Les réformes du ménage)*. Stencil-colored woodcut, 35.7 × 29.7 cm. Epinal: Pellerin, 1850. Courtesy of the author.

theme while responding directly—and negatively—to the feminist movement of the period. The differences between Images d'Epinal and other forms of illustration were rapidly becoming insignificant; indeed, the artist Honoré Daumier's own series of antifeminist caricatures, *Blue Stockings* (*Les bas bleus*) of 1844 preceded *Domestic Reforms* in themes such as the vicissitudes of a husband's attempts to tend the children while his wife amuses herself elsewhere. Pellerin was soon commissioning Parisian artists and designers to produce amusing stories retold in many vignettes, like our Sunday comics. In addition to individual prints, the Pellerin firm published albums, reprinting and recombining the most popular images, a practice that continues to the present day.

Illustration itself, with the exception of political caricature, was gradually redefined in the course of the century and increasingly directed toward children. Maison Pellerin was responsible for much of these children's illustrated songs, stories, and games. By the twentieth century, the transformation was almost complete, and illustrated books were henceforth either published for a youthful audience or were luxury items commissioned by art dealers from major artists such as Picasso, Pierre Bonnard, and Henri Matisse.

Early popular prints had been drawn by semi-trained artists for the least educated socioeconomic classes, while prints destined for the elite were always produced by academically trained artists. And yet, as Pellerin moved toward modern industrial production, the firm began to prefer academically skilled artists instead of the artisans of the earlier period. By the late nineteenth century, there was no appreciable difference between artists who produced Images d'Epinal and other professional illustrators—in fact, they were often identical. The differences in production can be seen when comparing an early Pellerin print, such as *The Grasshopper and the Ant*, a tale by Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695), with one of the same subject published later in the century, now redrawn by a professional illustrator (figs. 12 and 13).

A comparison of the best of the early Pellerin artists, François Geogin, for example, with one of the later illustrators would be telling here.<sup>25</sup> Geogin produced more than two hundred images for Pellerin, many, especially his Napoleonic subjects, clearly modeled on

<sup>25</sup> On Geogin, see Descaves, *L'humble Geogin*.

high-art production.<sup>26</sup> His figures are stiff, the colors garish, the perspective flattened, and the composition primitively symmetrical to an extreme. The charm of these images today—or even for a sophisticated Parisian audience in the nineteenth century—lies precisely in the nostalgia they evoke. They seem to look back to a simpler time, and even their imitativeness and lack of skill pays comforting homage to the canonical hierarchy of art. If we compare an earlier Pellerin print to later nineteenth-century images, we see that the later designers of popular prints were as skillful as any other illustrators. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, in fact, many of the most prominent names in French illustration, such as Caran d’Ache (Emmanuel Poiré, 1858–1909) and Benjamin Rabier (1864–1939), were designing for Pellerin (fig. 16). These artists, among many others, contributed to Pellerin’s last major opus, the *Série supérieure aux armes d’Epinal*, a series of 572 full-page comic strips published from 1889 on.<sup>27</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, the crude Epinal style that had once glorified Napoleon could be quoted self-consciously to wrap politicians in its aura (fig. 17), much like American politicians wrap themselves in the flag. In France, the Epinal style served to demonstrate simple, traditionally French virtues, straightforward character, and identification with what the historian Herman Lebovics has called “True France,” for which Epinal has always served as a potent symbol.<sup>28</sup> With the Third Republic (1870–1940), the era of democracy arrived in France, and politicians needed to court the masses of voters. The propaganda value of Epinal imagery could be used to demonstrate the virtues of colonialism, could stoke up the war effort, and could even caricature France’s enemies (color plate 2) in an eerie prefiguration of later American super-hero comics.

In 1889, before the national elections, the journal *Le Figaro* ran full-page illustrations commissioned from Pellerin in the style of Images d’Epinal depicting the major parties: Republicans, Monarchists, Boulangists, and Bonapartists. Accompanying the first, *The Republic before the Elections* (*La République devant les élections*), was an editorial,

<sup>26</sup> See Perrout, *Images d’Epinal*, 108; *Histoire de l’imagerie*, ed. Staub, 5–6.

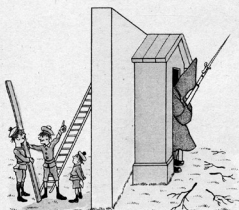
<sup>27</sup> Bouvet, *Grand livre des images d’Epinal*, 135.

<sup>28</sup> Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

# IL ÉTAIT TROIS PETITS ENFANTS

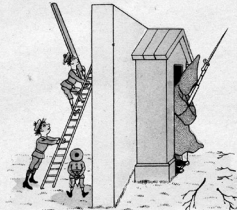
CHANSONNETTE NAIVE SUR L'AIR DE : « LA LÉGENDE DE S<sup>T</sup> NICOLAS »

REFRAIN : Il était trois petits enfants,  
Le désespoir de leurs parents !



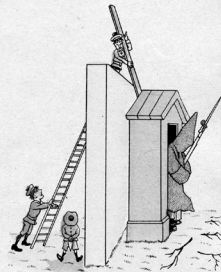
Au factionnaire engourdi  
Qui sommeille dans son abri,  
D'une planche armé, le plus grand  
Prépare un tour espatrouillant :

Il était trois....



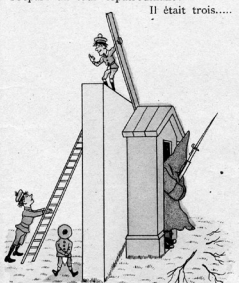
Avec sa planche il monte sur  
Une échelle appuyée au mur  
Juste derrière l'endroit où  
Est la guérite du pioupiou.

Il était trois....



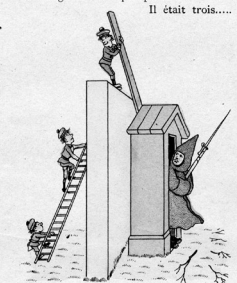
La planche, le mauvais sujet  
Entre guérite et mur la met,  
Puis veut renverser d'un effort  
La guérite et l'homme qui dort.

Il était trois....



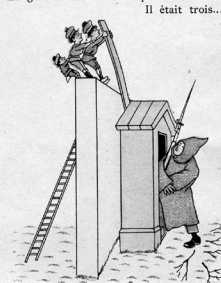
La guérite a bougé. Pourtant  
Trop faible tout seul se sentant :  
— Vite, un coup de main, compagnons !  
Dit-il aux deux autres lurons.

Il était trois....



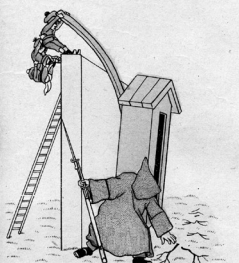
Ceux-ci, sans se faire prier,  
Accourent... mais le fusilier,  
En entendant du bruit là-haut,  
Vient de s'éveiller en sursaut.

Il était trois....



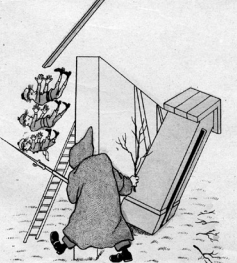
Il glisse un regard circonspect  
Et découvre à l'endroit suspect  
Les trois gamins qui, sans le voir,  
Travaillent à le faire choir !

Il était trois....



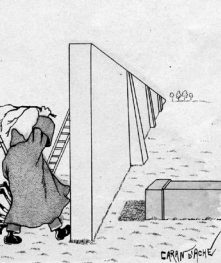
— Rira bien qui rira l'dernier,  
Se dit en sortant le troupier.  
Voici tout juste un brin d'fagot  
Qui vous fra voir si j'suis manchot.

Il était trois....



Allégé du poids du soldat,  
La guérite tombe avec fracas,  
Et, du mém coup, la planche abat  
Les mauvais sujets... Pâterras !

Il était trois....



Pitou les ramassant tous trois,  
Il vous les fourr' dessous son bras :  
Et pan, pan, pan!... N'est-ce pas bien fait ?  
Pour sûr qu'ils ne l'ont pas volé !

Il était trois....

16. Caran d'Ache, *There Were Three Little Children (Il était trois petits enfants)*. Série aux armes d'Epinal, no. 140. 41,5 × 31 cm. Epinal: Pellerin, 1894. Courtesy of the author.



17. *Marshal MacMahon, Duke of Magenta (Le Maréchal de Mac-Mahon, Duc de Magenta)*. Epinal: Pellerin, 1873. Courtesy of the author.



“Images and Politics,” which observed: “Nothing any longer escapes politics. The popular image, formerly confined to fairy tales, the naïve and old-fashioned Image d’Epinal, has now, in turn, entered the fray. It has become an instrument of propaganda, so powerful in the hands of political parties that the government has ruthlessly confiscated the images of the Comte de Paris and of Prince Victor wherever they are found, as being detrimental to the security of the state.”<sup>29</sup>

By the twentieth century, Epinal had become a flavor to be invoked at will in the smorgasbord of styles of modern art. Nonetheless, the subjects of Epinal prints form an unbroken line from broadsheets to the illustrated press, and from comics to film and television. And yet, the study of these images has congealed around a kind of essentialism of the golden age, with such prints perceived to have been made with time-honored techniques, carved in wood, hand-colored, and sold to a simple agrarian audience. This raises the question of why there has been so little scholarship on the later images, even by folklorists, and virtually none at all by art historians.

#### HISTORIOGRAPHY OF IMAGES D’EPINAL

Like most revivals, the period of the Image d’Epinal’s greatest influence corresponds to the moment when it was most endangered by modernity. The first wave of interest in these prints came in the mid-nineteenth century, precisely at the onset of the greatest industrial transformation, when the shift from rural to urban and the consequent loss of rural agricultural culture were well underway.<sup>30</sup> In

<sup>29</sup> “Les Images et la politique,” *Le Figaro, Supplément*, Saturday, March 30, 1889. Only three of the planned four images were completed: “La République devant les élections,” “La Monarchie et le comte de Paris,” and “L’Empire et le Prince Victor.” Prince Victor and the Comte de Paris were both pretenders to the throne, Bonapartist and Orleanist, respectively; in the fragile Third Republic, both were considered enemies. [Rien n’échappant plus à la politique, l’image populaire jadis confinée dans les contes de fées, la naïve et vieille image d’Epinal, est entrée à son tour dans la carrière. Elle a devenue un instrument de propagande, si puissant entre les mains des partis que le Gouvernement a fait saisir impitoyablement partout où il les a rencontrées les images du Comte de Paris et du Prince Victor, comme attentatoires à la sécurité de l’Etat].

<sup>30</sup> Although Jean Adhémar in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue *French Popular Imagery* (Hayward Gallery) argues that there was interest in these prints among the cognoscenti in earlier centuries (13–14), it was not until the mid-

France, this transition occurred in the mid-third of the century, when the railroad was connecting formerly isolated regions of France. In literature and the arts, the French Romantics opposed primitive to classical, local to international, crude “sincerity” to what they saw as the over-refined hypocrisy of the Academy. Landscape painters of the Barbizon school chose as their subjects indigenous French landscapes populated by peasants over the timeless and eternal Roman campagne inhabited by mythological figures. Romantic writers such as George Sand rediscovered rural regions of France, and poets and musicians flocked to the countryside to experience the simple arts of what they saw as simpler people.<sup>31</sup>

This binary opposition of Images d’Epinal versus high culture in general and academic salon painting in particular was widely understood as a parallel to the political warfare of Republicanism versus Monarchism, and so from the very beginning there was a strong political aura surrounding Epinal prints, as well as folk music, poetry, and literature. The Realist movement that followed Romanticism saw artists and writers such as Gustave Courbet and Champfleury elevating folk culture over elite culture and depicting peasants in both art and literature. Courbet even based his painting *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet* of 1854 on a popular woodcut image of the Wandering Jew.<sup>32</sup> From 1850 onward, Champfleury published studies of popular imagery, which were gathered in his book *History of Popular Imagery* (1869).<sup>33</sup>

Champfleury didn’t just study the popular print as an intellectual exercise; he used it as a battering ram against the art of academies, thundering that popular prints were “less barbarous than the mediocre art of our exhibitions, where a universal cleverness of hand

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nineteenth century that artists and writers theorized the value of folk culture and adopted it as a model for their own productions.

<sup>31</sup> The classic article on the art historical aspects of this movement is Meyer Schapiro, “Courbet and Popular Imagery,” originally published in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4 (1941), 164–91, and subsequently included in his *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Braziller, 1978), 47–85.

<sup>32</sup> Meyer Schapiro first identified Courbet’s source in “Courbet and Popular Imagery.” Linda Nochlin discussed it at length in “Gustave Courbet’s *Meeting*: A Portrait of the Artist as a Wandering Jew,” *The Art Bulletin* 49, no. 3 (September 1967), 209–22.

<sup>33</sup> Champfleury, *Histoire de l’imagerie populaire*. The chapters were first published in a variety of journals, beginning with *Le National* in 1850.

makes two thousand paintings look like they came out of the same mold. The artistic awkwardness of these prints is closer to the work of men of genius than the second-rate works produced by art schools and false traditions.”<sup>34</sup> These unschooled rural artists, he claimed, had “escaped the progress of the art of the cities.”<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, “Among savages and men of genius, we see boldness, crudity, rupture of all the rules, and this makes them resemble each other; but we must penetrate deeply into these undeveloped sources and abandon the *tricks* and *cleverness* of the many day laborers who call themselves *artists*.”<sup>36</sup>

While Modernists might prefer the crude over the refined, the standard contemporaneous criticism of modernist painters was that their images were as barbaric as Images d’Epinal. Courbet’s art, especially, was attacked for its resemblance to popular art, a resemblance that was, in fact, wholly intentional. Writing about Courbet’s painting *A Burial at Ornans* (1849–1850), Champfleury praised it: “Everyone is surprised by this simple painting, so like the naïve woodcuts, engraved with a clumsy chisel, like the [broadsheets of] murders printed on the rue Gît-le-coeur. The effect is the same because the execution is just as simple. High art finds the same expression as naïve art.”<sup>37</sup> These mid-century sentiments mark the onset of interest in the art of children, the primitive and the unschooled being seen as

<sup>34</sup> Champfleury, *Histoire de l’imagerie populaire*, xi–xii. [moins barbares que l’art médiocre de nos expositions, où une habileté de main universelle fait que deux mille tableaux semblent sortis d’un même moule. Telle maladresse artistique est plus rapprochée de l’oeuvre des hommes de génie que ces compositions entre-deux, produits des écoles et des fausses traditions.]

<sup>35</sup> Champfleury, *Histoire de l’imagerie populaire*, xxiii. [ils ont échappé aux progrès de l’art des villes]

<sup>36</sup> Champfleury, *Histoire de l’imagerie populaire*, xxii. [Chez le sauvage et l’homme de génie, se remarquent des audaces, une ignorance, des ruptures avec toutes les règles qui font qu’ils s’assortissent; mais il faut pénétrer profondément dans ces embryons rudimentaires, et laisser de côté les *adresses* et les *habiletés* de tant d’ouvriers à la journée qui s’intitulent *artistes*.]

<sup>37</sup> Champfleury, *Grandes figures d’hier et d’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, 1861), 244. Rue Gît-le-coeur was within the popular print district of Paris, where the latest atrocities were always best-sellers; see Pierre-Louis Duchartre and René Saulnier, *L’Imagerie parisienne: L’Imagerie de la rue Saint-Jacques* (Paris: Gründ, 1944). [chacun est surprise par cette peinture simple, comme à la vue de ces naïves images sur bois, taillées par un couteau maladroît, en tête des assassinats imprimés rue Gît-le-coeur. L’effet est la même, parce que l’exécution est aussi simple. L’art savant trouve la même accent que l’art naïf.]

more in touch with the wellsprings of creativity than the art of academicians, a position that is usually identified with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Modernism.

Edouard Manet was widely seen as Courbet's follower, and he also was accused of modeling his works after Images d'Epinal because of their flattened surfaces and suppression of half-tones. His *Fifer* (1866) was compared—even by Courbet—to playing cards, the most primitive popular imagery.<sup>38</sup> At the time of Manet's self-financed, one-artist show at the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris, Emile Zola defended him against these charges: "It is said, mockingly, that the works of Edouard Manet recall Epinal prints, and there is a lot of truth in this mockery that is actually praise; sometimes the procedures are similar in that the colors are applied flatly, but with the difference that the Epinal artisans use pure tones with no regard for values, while Edouard Manet multiplies tones and establishes the exact relationship between them."<sup>39</sup> And so Epinal prints, willy-nilly, became active participants in the political and cultural warfare of the nineteenth century, with Modernists espousing the values of folk art and folk culture, while Traditionalists and Conservatives attacked both folk culture and, at the same time, the democratic values it seemed to incarnate. I say "seemed to" because, in reality, the rural population was the most conservative in France; but this contradiction did not prevent rural culture from being used symbolically to oppose the elite culture of cities and academies.

The second wave of interest in folk culture came later in the nineteenth century, when, as part of the 1878 Exposition Universelle in Paris, a museum of ethnography was created in the newly built Palais du Trocadéro.<sup>40</sup> This event is usually cited in connection with colonialism and the discovery by Europeans of the art of the non-Western

<sup>38</sup> Courbet's comment was reported by Albert Wolff in his obituary for Manet in *Le Figaro*, May 1, 1883, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Emile Zola, "Edouard Manet, Etude biographique et critique" (1867), reprinted in his *Mes haines: Causeries littéraires et artistiques* (Paris: Charpentier, 1879), 344–45. [On a dit, par moquerie, que les toiles d'Edouard Manet rappelaient les gravures d'Epinal et il y a beaucoup de vrai dans cette moquerie qui est un éloge; ici et là les procédés sont les mêmes, les teintes sont appliquées par plaques, avec cette différence que les ouvriers d'Epinal emploient les tons purs, sans se soucier des valeurs, et qu'Edouard Manet multiplie les tons et met entre eux les rapports justes.]

<sup>40</sup> On the ethnographic museum, see Nélie Diaz, *Le Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro (1878–1908): Anthropologie et muséologie en France* (Paris: CNRS, 1991); Wilibert de Jésus Gonzales Llovera, "Histoire critique du musée national d'ethnographie,

world, for the exposition did mark the first time there had been such a comprehensive display, and it introduced artists and the public to this art.<sup>41</sup> Yet even France had regions that, from the standpoint of the cities, seemed primitive, and so, in 1884, a section on the ethnography of regional France was established within this new museum and remained there, in the Salle de France, until the museum closed for reorganization in 1928.<sup>42</sup> This section included Images d'Epinal, although its focus was not on the contemporaneous prints, which by then were being produced with modern industrial techniques and modern subject matter. The emphasis on earlier Images d'Epinal served only to reinforce the definition of these prints as existing in some timeless pre-modern universe, much as the idea of African art was, until recently, frozen conceptually into nineteenth-century notions of primitivism. In both cases, this attitude encouraged a kind of essentialism about what was judged the "true" identity of the art, next to which later developments could be dismissed as impure and unworthy of attention.

Whence came this renewed scholarly interest in popular imagery? No doubt, it arose at least in part from the new era of democracy in which the support of rural areas had become necessary for the survival of every elected regime in France. Nationalism has always been a potent factor in the recognition of folk art, and France at this time was a fragile republic, finally having shaken off both the monarchy and the empire and having survived the difficult early years of the Third Republic. Recognizing the validity of French regional subcultures had become an unquestionable necessity of political life. It may seem strange to us today to include Images d'Epinal in an ethnographic museum, which only reinforced their definition as "other," more akin to works from Africa or the Pacific than to the works of shared heritage located a short distance away in the Louvre. Nonetheless, French cultural life was so polarized at the time that there was no other context within which to exhibit regional art; the choice

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des origines jusqu'au Musée des arts et traditions populaires" (Thèse, Université de Paris I, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> The pioneering study of the subject is Robert J. Goldwater's *Primitivism in Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1986), the revised edition of his *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938).

<sup>42</sup> Diaz, *Le Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro*, 187; Gonzalez-Llovera, "Histoire critique du musée national d'ethnographie," 187.

was simply between high and low, the Louvre and the Ethnographic Museum.

The layout of the Ethnographic Museum encouraged the conceptual differentiation as “other” of all arts excluded from the European high art tradition. Regional populations were presented as analogous to tribal or preliterate groups, and all were treated as “living fossils” of an earlier stage of human development.<sup>43</sup> The arts of Africa and the Pacific did not enter the Louvre until 2000, and even today the two grand museums face off on opposite sides of the Seine: the Louvre exhibiting European high art on the right bank, the new Musée du quai Branly, which opened only in 2006, exhibiting the art of Africa, Oceania, Asia, and the Americas on the left. In more ways than one.

The decades from the establishment of the French section of the Ethnographic Museum in 1884 until its closure in 1928 were ones in which folklore became a recognized and respected field of study in France. Journals were established, learned societies founded, books and articles written—but all this attention occurred within the study of anthropology, not within art history, which even today has maintained its focus principally on European high art.<sup>44</sup>

In the early twentieth century there was a third wave of interest in this art that seemed to surge up from below, from the people, rather than being imposed from above, by the elite. Picasso continued what had become, by now, the modernist tradition of using the style of Images d’Epinal to shock the art establishment. His designs for the ballet *Parade* of 1917 caused a sensation, with costumes based on the crude drawing and simple abstractions of the most primitive of these images (fig. 18).<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, artists such as Raoul Dufy continued the political tradition of using the Epinal style as a signifier of integrity and national unity by designing posters in this style, aiding the government war effort in the years 1914–1918 (fig. 19).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See Diaz, *Le Musée d’ethnographie du Trocadéro*, 203, for a full discussion of the layout.

<sup>44</sup> For example, both the *Revue des traditions populaires* and the Société des traditions populaires were founded in 1886; see Diaz, *Le Musée d’ethnographie du Trocadéro*, 176–91.

<sup>45</sup> See Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 124–25.

<sup>46</sup> See Silver, *Esprit de Corps*, 38–42.





19. Raoul Dufy, *The End of the Great War (La Fin de la Grande Guerre)*, 1915. Stencil-colored woodcut, 43.3 × 55 cm. Courtesy of the author. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

It was into this highly politicized setting that the first major study of Images d'Épinal since Champfleury was published: René Duchartre and René Saulnier's *Popular Imagery: Images from All the Provinces of France from the 15th Century to the Second Empire* (1925), a study that ends at the adoption of lithography and contemporaneous imagery. After the Great War, Images d'Épinal and folk art in general were exalted by the left, particularly by the Popular Front, which had come to power in 1936 and was searching for symbols that could unite the country. At this time, France was the only European country that did

IMAGE OPPOSITE: 18. Pablo Picasso, *Curtain for La Parade*, 1917. Distemper on canvas, 10.5 × 16.4 m. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Photo credit: CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, N.Y. © 2010 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



not yet have a folklore museum.<sup>47</sup> The following year, at the 1937 Exposition Universelle in Paris, the Musée du Trocadéro was replaced by the Palais de Chaillot, within which the former ethnographic museum was split in two: the Museum of Mankind (Musée de l'homme) took the ethnographic collections, and a separate gallery took the regional French collections, a mixture of popular prints, furniture, and farm implements, which remained there until 1968.<sup>48</sup> In 1942 a chair of folklore was established at the Ecole du Louvre, but the subject was so new that even its name was in flux: from “ethnographic folklore” it went to “French ethnography,” then finally “French ethnology.”<sup>49</sup> Whatever its name, however, the subject continued to be framed by sociologists, geographers, and linguists, and ignored by art historians.<sup>50</sup> Ethnography (the art of people of color) was now being opposed to folklore (the art of rural white people). The concept was so new that there wasn't even a word for it—the French word *folklore* was, in fact, borrowed from the English in the late nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup>

In 1944, with World War II still raging, the French section of the ethnographic museum was renamed the Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions (Musée des arts et traditions populaires).<sup>52</sup> In the face of the German threat to French culture, Images d'Epinal were newly defined as the heritage of every French citizen, whether on the left or on the right, whether urban or rural.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, the Vichy government's wholesale adoption of the Image d'Epinal as its trademark

<sup>47</sup> Georges-Henri Rivière, “Les Musées de folklore à l'étranger et le futur ‘Musée français des arts et traditions populaires,’” *Revue de folklore français et de folklore colonial* 7 (March–April 1936), 58–71; Rivière was the first director of the Musée des arts et traditions populaires (MATP). See also Jean Cuisenier and Marie-Chantal de Tricornot, *Musée national des arts et traditions populaires. Guide* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1987), 9; Diaz, *Le Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro*, 192. Jean Cuisenier took over as director of the MATP after Rivière retired in 1967.

<sup>48</sup> Cuisenier and Tricornot, *Musée national des arts et traditions populaires*, 9–15; Gonzalez Llovera, “Resumé,” in his “Histoire critique du musée national d'ethnographie.”

<sup>49</sup> Cuisenier and Tricornot, *Musée national des arts et traditions populaires*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of the early history of the subject, see Cuisenier and Tricornot, *Musée national des arts et traditions populaires*, 11–15.

<sup>51</sup> See “Folklore,” *Le Robert: Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, ed. Alain Rey (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1994), s.v.

<sup>52</sup> Cuisenier and Tricornot, *Musée national des arts et traditions populaires*.

<sup>53</sup> For the political use of these images by the Vichy government in the period of World War II, see Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 159–63.



20. Gérard Ambroselli, “The Soil Does Not Lie” (“La Terre, elle, ne ment pas”). From *The Life of the Marshal: A Little Coloring Book for the Children of France* (*La vie du Maréchal: Petit album à colorier par les enfants de France*). 178 × 230 cm. Limoges: Imagerie du Maréchal, 1944. Courtesy of the author. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

style during the war years—there is even a series depicting the biography of Marshal Pétain (fig. 20)—so severely tarnished these images that they have never quite lost their right-wing aura.<sup>54</sup> In 1970 the national collection was finally given its own building, an important symbolic gesture in the recognition of any art. It was moved into the Bois de Boulogne on the outskirts of Paris, where the Musée des arts et traditions populaires opened to the public in 1975.<sup>55</sup>

The Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions had a short lifespan.

<sup>54</sup> On the Pétain images, see Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia*, 155. They were in the form of a children’s coloring book designed by the artist Gérard Ambroselli, *La Vie du Maréchal: Petit album à colorier par les enfants de France* (Limoges: Imagerie du Maréchal, 1944).

<sup>55</sup> Cuisenier and Tricormot, *Musée national des arts et traditions populaires*, 21–27.

It closed in 2005, and its collections are being transferred to a new museum in Marseilles, currently scheduled to open in 2012. In the thirty years that it existed as an entity independent from its older ethnographic identification, the museum took on an aura of nostalgia, what the French call “mode retro.” Its collection of popular prints, even when it was open, was never welcoming or easy to use, and so the material has languished in isolation. This neglect will only be intensified by its transfer to Marseilles, the site of the projected Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (Musée des civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée), far from the centers of art historical research.<sup>56</sup> A brainchild of President Nicolas Sarkozy, it has become a pawn in his planned confederation of Mediterranean countries. And yet, French popular prints cannot be seen in isolation from their European context; England and Germany were much more important to their development than were the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean or North Africa. As a result, it is much to be feared that the new museum will merely continue the long history of politicization of Images d’Epinal.

Scholars of French popular prints have had to labor under two burdens. One is that, in a country with a glorious high-art tradition, these images seem primitive, situated in an ambivalent status that scholars of, for example, American popular imagery have not had to contend with. Art history itself is a recent addition to university study in France, having been for so long the province exclusively of museums. In the absence of a strong museum of popular art and culture, and in the absence of any field such as Visual Studies that would claim this material, Images d’Epinal have remained orphaned, the province of a narrow field of folklorists. The second burden is that the revivals that gave these prints their “permanent” homes, whether the Ethnographic Museum of the Trocadéro, the Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions in Paris, or the new Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations in Marseilles, have themselves all been heavily politicized, as has been every surge of interest in their history, whether from the left or from the right. Suffice it to say that

<sup>56</sup> The plans for the future museum are laid out in the Rapport Colardelle, “Le Musée et le Centre interdisciplinaire d’études des civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée,” <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/rapports/colardelle/1.dumnatp.htm> (accessed June 2, 2009). I am grateful to Herman Lebovics for this reference.

art historians in France will not touch this material. For if the earlier prints have had to contend with the forces of politicization, the later ones have been of no interest to anyone at all and are considered merely ephemeral by-products of popular culture.

Given the crosscurrents battering this subject, it should not surprise us that the first major exhibition of the later prints—the ones that cannot be subsumed into a nostalgic view of French agrarian culture—took place not in France, but in Quebec in 1995.<sup>57</sup> My prediction is that scholarly interest in the trajectory of French popular prints will continue to originate outside France, as witness the Québec exhibition, the recent exhibition of the Cotsen Children's Library collection, and this essay.<sup>58</sup> Only then, like the valorization of American jazz, initiated in Europe and only later taking root in the United States, will the value of French popular culture be recognized by the art establishment of its own country.

Images d'Épinal present us with the same methodological problems that for so long handicapped Western studies of non-Western art. Chief among them is our inability to deal with ever-changing technologies and subject matter in art other than our own, in favor of an essentialism that freezes that art into an earlier, seemingly "authentic" time period. And yet, the production of these prints has existed from the beginning as a continuum. There was no one static moment of authenticity. Instead, these images, over their entire history, have been in a state of continuous development.

<sup>57</sup> The excellent exhibition catalogue is by Denis Martin, curator of the Musée du Québec, in collaboration with Bernard Huin, curator at the Musée départemental d'art ancien et contemporain, Épinal (whose collections have since been relocated to the new Musée de l'image in Épinal); see *Images d'Épinal*, exhibit. cat. (Québec: Musée de Québec, 1995).

<sup>58</sup> "Imagerie populaire: French Pictorial Broadside for Children in the Cotsen Children's Library," curated by Andrea Immel, was held at the Milberg Gallery of Firestone Library, Princeton University, from July 10, 2009, to January 10, 2010.

