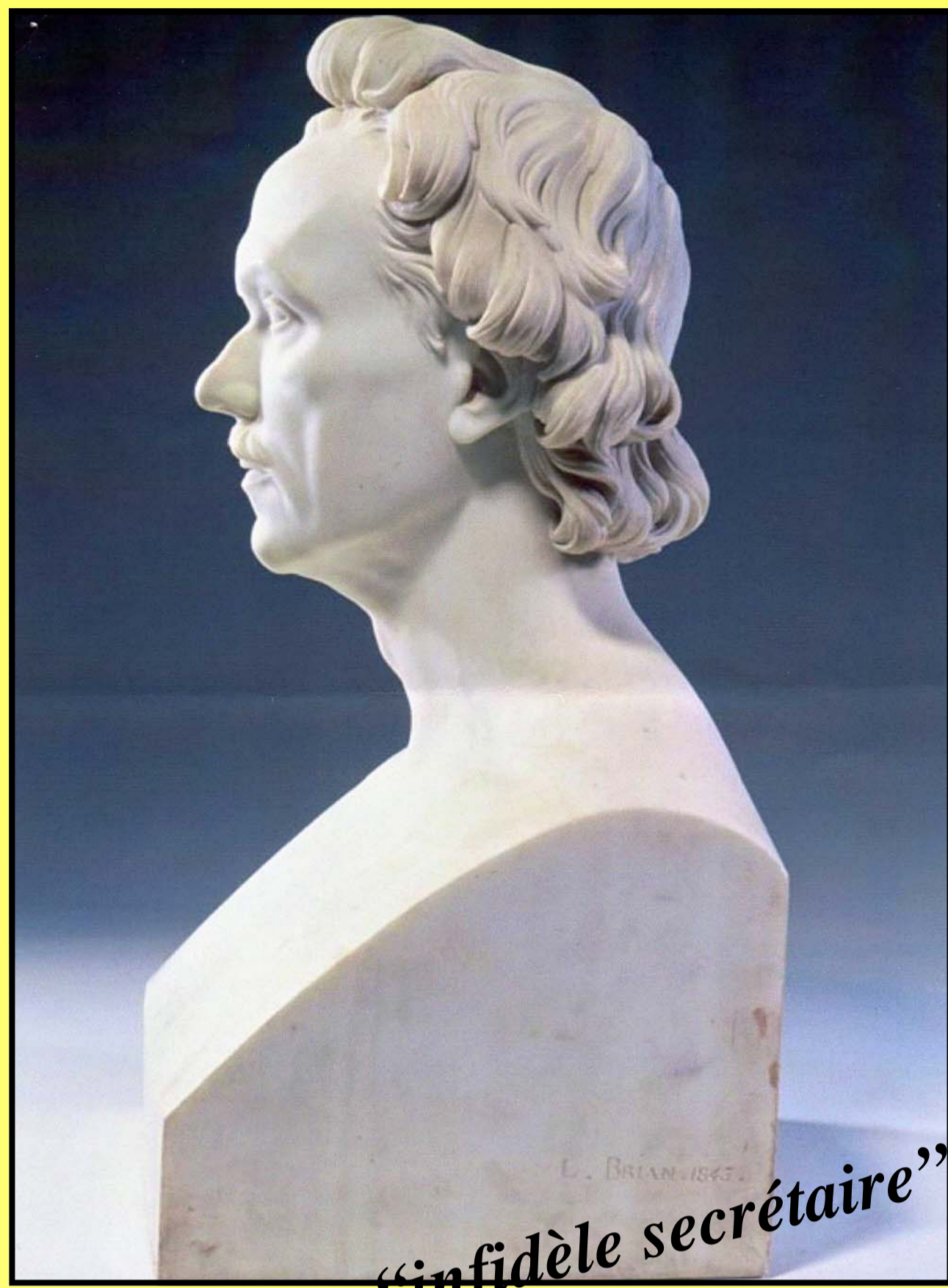


Thesis title: The editorial work and literary enterprise of Louis Aimé-Martin

LOUIS AIMÉ-MARTIN: “INFIDÈLE SECRÉTAIRE” OU “CHER DISCIPLE”?



INTRODUCTION

Louis Aimé-Martin, secretary and friend to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, came into possession of his mentor's original manuscripts in the year of 1815, soon after Bernardin's death. In marrying Bernardin's widow, Désirée Pelleport, Aimé-Martin gained access to the literary legacy of M. de Saint-Pierre and it was not long before he became his principal biographer and editor, the first major publication, entitled *Oeuvres posthumes de Jacques-Henri-Bernardin de Saint-Pierre*, appearing in 1820.

Judging by Aimé-Martin's future editorial undertakings it seems that the Bernardin project secured his reputation as a respected editor of his time.

It is perhaps ironic, then, that this first defining moment in Aimé-Martin's career has been subject to such severe criticism from the likes of Sainte-Beuve and Maurice Souriau in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries respectively.

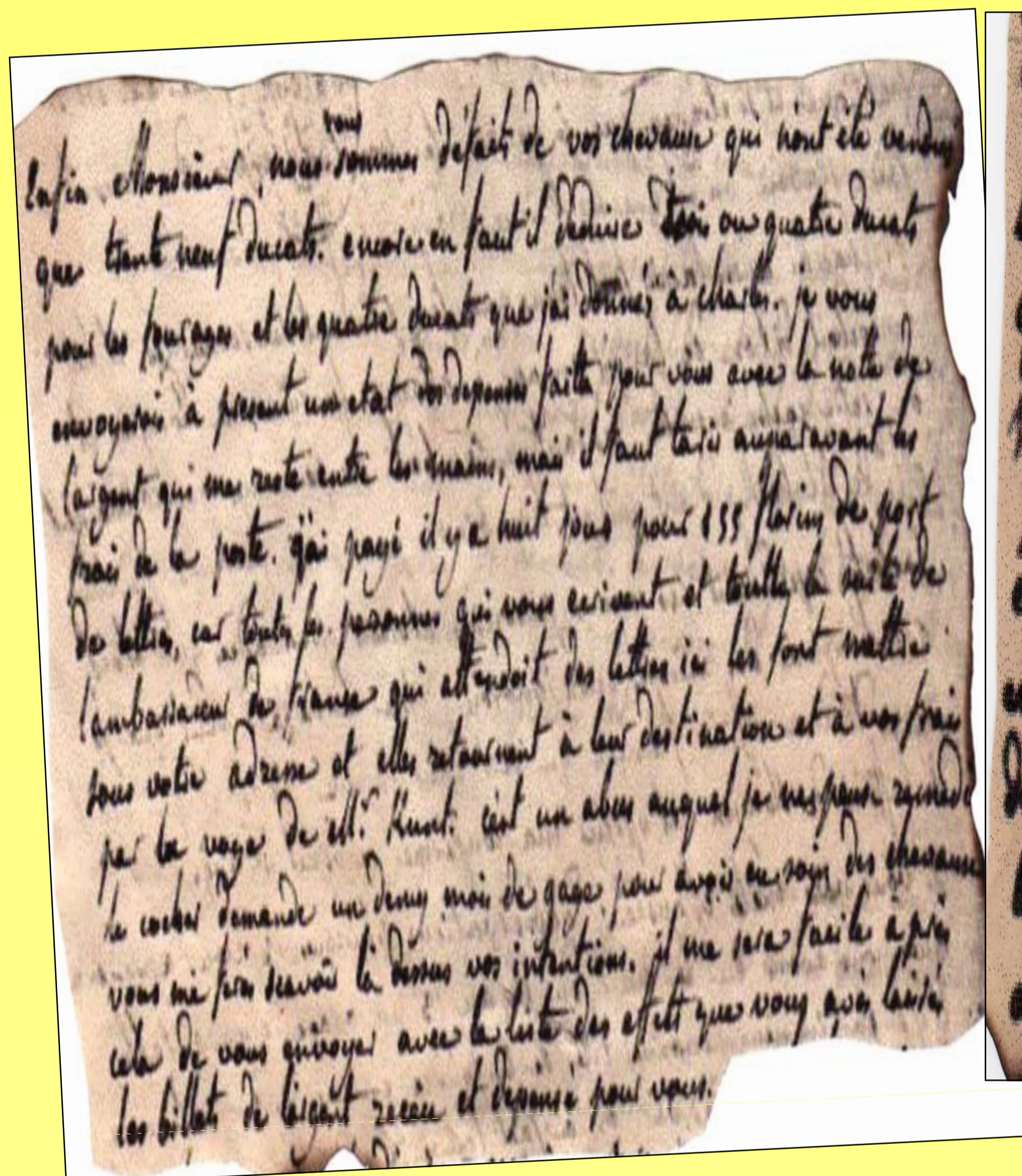
Interestingly, however, their criticisms take on quite different tones; the former claiming a distortion of the original texts based on Aimé-Martin's concern to defend Bernardin, the latter labelling him an outright 'faussaire'. What is certain is that both have agreed that he was not faithful to the original documents, while Aimé-Martin himself claims to have been 'toujours vrai' in his handling of the manuscripts.

It is this issue of truth and fidelity in its various measures and forms that has brought the editor such avid criticism. Who was Aimé-Martin being true to: Bernardin's memory; the original text; or himself, nurturing a commercial enterprise at the expense of Bernardin and the manuscripts?

FINDINGS

Chapter 1:

- Focussed on Aimé-Martin's collection of *Correspondance* between Bernardin and the French diplomat, Pierre-Michel Hennin
- Carried out with the aid of a recently compiled CD-ROM programme transcribing manuscripts from Le Havre and L'Institut archives
- Studying alterations in the Aimé-Martin edition of the letters: Why do the changes exist? To what extent do the modifications compromise Aimé-Martin's credibility as an editor? Were there factors besides a blind fidelity to the original texts to consider? If so, what were they?

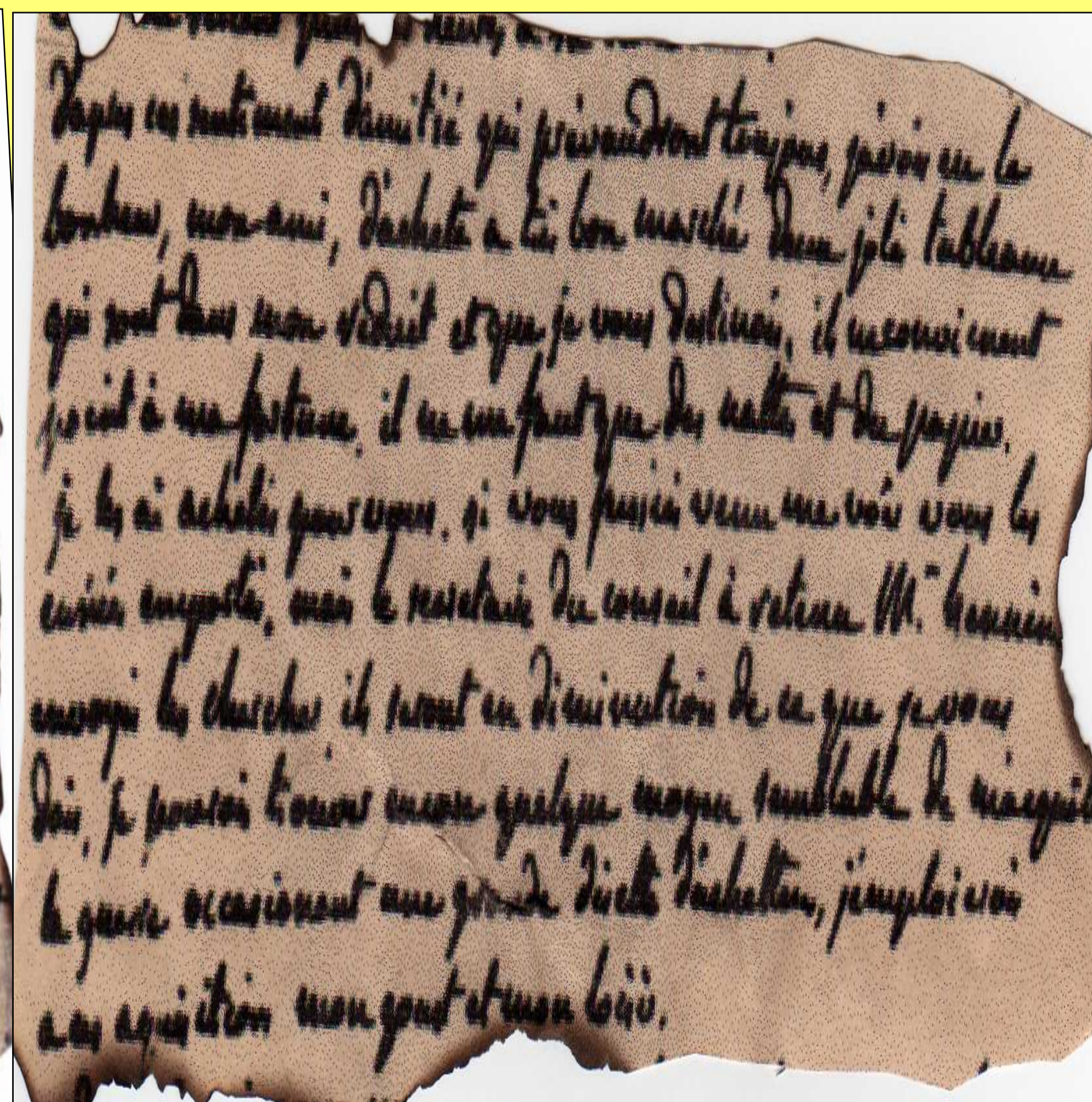


The Correspondance

- The Bernardin-Hennin Relationship
- All text missing from Aimé-Martin

Such details as those above about Bernardin's management of Hennin's affairs in Varsovie are often omitted from the collection:

- The editor wishes to hide this business-like dimension to the relationship, but to what end?

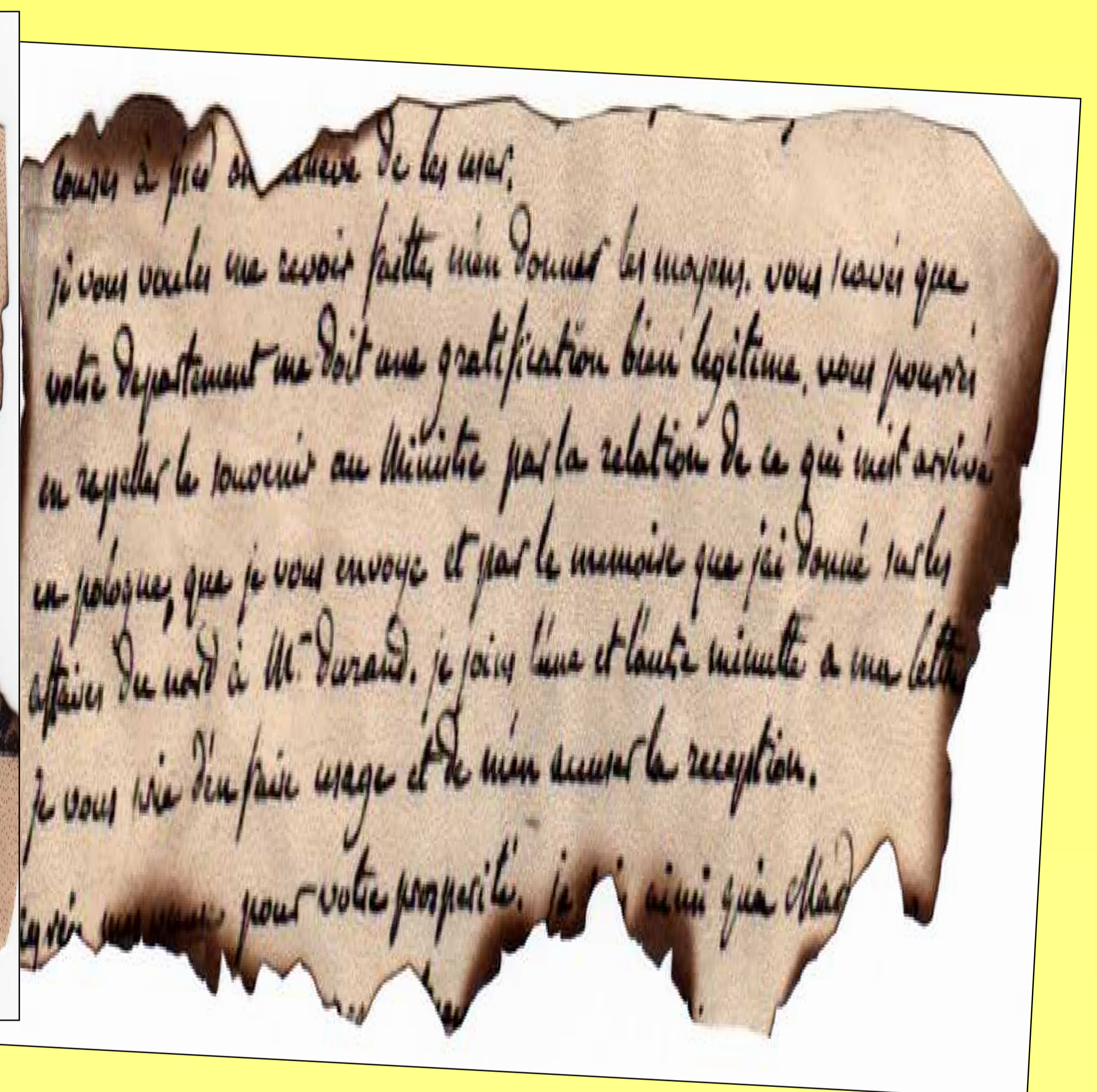


The Correspondance

- Bernardin's Debt
- Some text missing from Aimé-Martin

Aspects relating to Bernardin's considerable debt are closely censored by Aimé-Martin who tries to conceal the often irresponsible way Bernardin attempts to acquit himself of it:

- In Aimé-Martin's edition this paragraph concludes with an invitation to Hennin to fetch the 'deux jolis tableaux' Bernardin has recently purchased for his friend. By missing everything after 'envoyés les chercher' this proposal makes the transition from a presumptuous scheme intended to off-load his debt to a generous gift-offering.



The Correspondance

- The Polish Affair
- Some text missing from Aimé-Martin

Evidence of Bernardin's largely unfruitful and rather embarrassing campaign for compensation for his services in Poland is pared down in Aimé-Martin's version:

- In the editor's collection this request refers only to a claim for 'le memoire', avoiding all mention of indemnities for events in Poland.

CONCLUSION

My study has uncovered some areas of Aimé-Martin's work that diverge from the original manuscripts. Nonetheless, despite the changes, it ought to be noted that:

- Although tending to limit our knowledge of certain details about Bernardin's life, the modifications do not deny or completely erase even the most scandalous information
- Aimé-Martin was operating in an era where fidelity to original sources was still in its infancy
- The expectations of Aimé-Martin as editor are clearly superseded on several occasions by his personal relationship with Bernardin and his family

FUTURE RESEARCH

A comparative look at two separate editions of the *Essai sur J. J. Rousseau* by Bernardin, one edited by Aimé-Martin, one by Maurice Souriau.

- Using the original texts, never published in Bernardin's lifetime, alongside the two posthumous publications
- Identifying deviations from the Bernardin edition in both the Aimé-Martin and Souriau versions: What are the differences? Why were the editors taking certain decisions? Is Souriau's criticism of Aimé-Martin justified?

