Staging and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century France

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Appearing, Revealing, Disappearing

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

BEYOND STAGING: *MATERIALITIES* OF THE VISUAL

CAMILLA MURGIA

> La mise en scène doit se rapprocher le plus possible de la réalité et de la vérité, sans jamais penser à atteindre le vrai[1]

Staging touches on nearly every aspect of life and extends well into the world of material things. Applying this notion to the analysis of nineteenth-century cultural life in France shows that factors of staging are embedded in general tendencies and that they mirror historic evolutions. To look at the different ways staging was performed is to open a doorway to cultural analysis.

Much more than the English word 'staging,' the French expression *mise en scène*–literally "putting on stage"–accentuates how it was done. The concept was mainly developed around 1800 and refers to the material arrangement and organisation of plays.[2] Traditionally, staging was mostly involved in written plays. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, a discourse arose on the practical aspects of the performances. In 1884, Louis Becq de Fouquières (1831-1887) acknowledged the twofold meaning of mise en scène. He elaborated on the difference between the verbal and the visual, between the poetic and the material–with the latter intended as the materialisation of the word, the arrangement of the performance:

> Toutefois, il y a là une ligne de partage assez nettement tracée : d'un côté, l'art dramatique, c'est-à-dire tout ce qui est l'œuvre propre du poète ; de

[1] Paul Gautier, "L'art de la mise en scène en France," *La Quinzaine* 14 (1897), 38.
[2] Bénédicte Boisson, Alice Folco and Ariane Martinez, eds. *La mise en scène théâtrale de 1800 à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), introduction, 1.

> l'autre, la mise en scène, c'est-à-dire ce qui est l'œuvre commune de tous ceux qui, à un degré quelconque, concourent à la représentation.[3]

The term 'staging' evolved further during the nineteenth century, opening up new perspectives in the theoretical discussion on theatre. This development concerned of course the relationship between a play's text and its appearance on stage, but it went well beyond matters of mere appearance, rather involving the social and political spheres that could be linked to the show.[4] Consequently, the focus of discussion shifted to elements leading to the perception of the performance. Roxane Martin demonstrated that the new attention paid to the perception of the scene's arrangement has allowed for multiple reflections on theatrical historiography.[5]

One of the main issues in the discourse on staging refers to the innovative actions of professionals such as André Antoine (1858-1943), who founded the Théâtre Libre in 1887. Antoine assigned value to the role of the *metteur en scène*, the "stage director," claiming that the same play could be performed in several distinct ways depending on the stage director's background and vision.[6] The new emphasis on how plays were arranged led to a reassessment of the role of actors, but also of the scenery and the layout of the stage space. Developed from the 1830s onwards, the figure of the director, as advocated by Antoine, changed the understanding of performances as a whole, going beyond the stage's practical features.[7] The focus on aspects revolving around staging rather than the relationship to the text

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[3] "There is, however, a clearly drawn division here. On the one hand, the dramatic art, that is the work of the poet; on the other hand, staging, that is the work of all those who, to some degree, are concerned with performance." Louis Becq de Fouquières, *L'art de la mise en scène. Essai d'esthétique théâtrale* (Paris: Charpentier et Cie, 1884), ii.

[4] Roxane Martin, "Histoire et épistémologie de la notion de mise en scène." *Pratiques* 191-192 (2021), paragraph 11, http://journals.openedition.org/pratiques/11254. Accessed February 26, 2023.

[5] Martin, "Histoire et épistémologie de la notion de mise en scène." See also : Martin, Roxane. *L'Emergence de la notion de mise en scène dans le paysage théâtral français (1789-1914)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013).

[6] Martin, "Histoire et épistémologie de la notion de mise en scène," paragraph 2. Martin further refers to the research on Antoine's innovation: Jean-Pierre Sarrazac, ed. *Antoine, l'invention de la mise en scène* (Arles: Ed. Actes Sud), p.21.

[7] Alice Folco, "L'apparition d'une nouvelle fonction: metteur en scène (1800-1900)," in Boisson, Bénédicte, Alice Folco and Ariance Martinez, eds. *La mise en scène théâtrale de 1800 à nos jours*, 6-8.

paved the way for a further investigation of the performance's comprehension.[8]

Research has become increasingly aware of the crucial role that nineteenth-century France played in this development. The rise of the professionalisation of the theatrical world through the figures of directors and theatre managers intensified throughout the century.[9] While the 1820s and 1830s saw the development of stage-related professions, the 1880s corresponded to breaking points as epitomised by the Théâtre Libre.[10]

The attention paid to the perception and materiality of performances helps us to refine our analysis of the modalities of staging, which goes beyond the world of theatre. Mechanisms such as appearing, revealing, and disappearing, intended as strategies to deal with the materialisation of the existence (or the omission) of a character, an image, or a story, occupy an important place in this discussion. Several methodological questions arise within this context. How did these dynamics interact with each other? According to what patterns does staging affect multiple disciplines? How does the relationship between text and image occur? Looking for possible answers to these questions calls for the involvement of various disciplines, such as visual studies, literary history, and art history alike, and triggers manifold investigations of phenomena touching upon cultural matters. Promotion of the self (and of the other), image consumption, perception of socio-related issues, and artistic production are but a few examples from this debate.

This volume's approach to staging intends to question the modalities, strategies, and mechanisms of visual representation. While much attention has been paid to the theatrical aspect and the performative character of staging, the repercussions this notion had in cultural contexts still need to be worked through, including issues such as artistic promotion, visual references, and the production and consumption of images. The essays of this volume, therefore, will not, or not solely, focus on the theatrical aspect of staging, but will instead consider the various interactions around the act

[8] Referring to Sarrazac's work (*Antoine, l'invention de la mise en scène*, 113), Alice Folco quotes this "immateriality" of staging, showing how it helps understanding of the performance's multiple facets: Folco, "L'apparition d'une nouvelle fonction," 5.
[9] Pascale Goetschel and Jean-Claude Yon, *Directeurs de théâtre (XIXe-XXe siècles). Histoire d'une profession* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008).
[10] Mara Fazio and Pierre Frantz, eds. *La Fabrique du théâtre avant la mise en scène (1650-1880)* (Paris: Editions Desjonquères, 2010). Antoine conceptualised his vision of the theatrical world in a publication entitled *Le Théâtre Libre* (Paris: Verneau, 1890), explicitly referring to the institution he founded.

of representing. The contributions of this volume are particularly relevant to this second aspect of staging. They make a point of adopting a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary approach in order to analyse how various concepts of staging impacted its materialisation.

This book specifically addresses the criteria and patterns of visualisation, of appearing and of disappearing, paying particular attention to political and social aspects, as well as to the visual strategies and implications of its mechanisms. The aim of the volume is to show the ways in which staging is constructed and how they touch on multiple aspects of nineteenth-century visual culture. The book proposes eight case studies gravitating around three main axes: the visible/invisible relationship; the promotion of the self and the other; and the transitional stage. The goal, at the same time, is not to provide an exhaustive view of the complexity of theatrical and visual matters or of the scholarly discussion on staging. Contributions aim instead to concentrate on specific and representative aspects of the dynamics of staging and their literary, visual, and theatrical representations.

1. Staging the (In-)Visible

The first part of the volume investigates the mechanisms of showing, representing, and putting forward. This can apply to any visual element, and implies actions, procedures, and notions that relate to staging, making known, and disclosing topics, such as power, messages linked to a specific image, or technical issues related to a performance. It also concerns what we do *not* see and what has been deliberately omitted. These aspects are as diverse as their fields of action, and constantly overlap. The first three chapters deal with interactions within different approaches and question the notion of staging from multiple points of view.

In Chapter 1, Erik Anspach explores the notion of design under the July Monarchy (1830-1848) as a mirror of social and political dynamics that are no longer, or not solely, related to artistic skills. Anspach shows that the notion of design is crucial to a complex and articulated process of empowerment staging the visible in multiple ways. An important connection is made here between design, narration, and fiction. Anspach discusses design not in relation to objects and art forms, but rather within the scope of the diversity of approaches this notion entails. He refers, among others, to Alessandro Zinna's study of design and to two main angles identified by the

scholar.[11] The first is a comprehensive notion, namely, the "culture[s] of design." The second, which is the one Anspach relies on in his contribution, is epistemological. It relates to the capacity of design to affect the perception of cultures and societies by 'revealing,' by displaying, and by making visible concepts and notions that are 'invisible.'

To illustrate these mechanisms, Anspach bases his analysis on three main aspects: staging, power, and design. First, staging allows him to examine a literary subgenre, the *romans de coulisses* ("backstage narratives"), such as Balzac's *Sarrasine* (1830). These works take place in backstage venues, such as theatre boxes or storage rooms, revolving around appearing/disappearing as a narrative and fictional tool. Second, Anspach contends that backstage narratives further concern politics and Louis Philippe's empowerment, as they stage social matters and conditions. They reflect the changing perceptions of communities and the impact of industrialisation and convey (or question) new ways of thinking. Third, a focus on design draws attention to the mechanisms of appearing, revealing, and disappearing through what the author defines as "textual staging," and connects literature with the representation of power.

The importance of the material used for any kind of staging is at the centre of the following chapter by Bart G. Moens. The life model lantern slides that Catholic publisher Maison de la Bonne Presse released between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century are considered here, with a focus on how they put forward religious didactic messages and narratives. Moens goes beyond the apparent educational power of religious images the Parisian publisher dealt with. He focuses on materialising the staging process involving the *service des projections* ("screening department"). Particularly, the Maison de la Bonne Presse largely relied on a specific kind of slide that became very popular: "life model slides" (*projections d'après nature*). Reproducing photographs of what Moens calls "motionless actors," these images stage the fictional character of religious narratives. They juggle, innovatively, different forms of visual culture (i.e., *tableaux-vivants* and lantern slides, to name but two).

The dramatisation of narratives occurred in line with the educational scope and the promotion of religious values that these objects advocated. Moens takes two main aspects into consideration. First, he questions how the slides were created, based on what criteria and what visual solutions producers

[11] Alessandro Zinna, "Les conséquences du 'quand' – une archéologie du design : de la préhistoire à l'anthropocène," *Ocula* 21, No. 24 (2020): 23-50.

relied on to render the religious narratives and the sequentiality of the stories. Secondly, he deals with the way these works were used and displayed. This applied, for instance, to magic lantern projections and photography alike. Moens shows the scale of the intermedial character of the life model slides and rightly claims that the arrangement of characters and stories involves staging and theatrical strategies. Cycles such as the Passion of Christ and stories such as the *Le pauvre enfant de Noël* are examined from the angle of the construction of narrativity, a reference to the film production that developed in parallel, and the photographic elements that authors employed to produce the slides. All these strategies reveal accurate reflections on the visual construction of the images and stress the importance of the materialisation of the religious message. The projection takes on its full meaning as it makes the 'invisible' accessible.

While what can be seen is important, much attention must also be paid to the use of the 'invisible.' Pauline Noblecourt addresses this issue in Chapter 3. By focussing on the development of theatrical performances, she explores the materiality of the visible/invisible relationship at the turn of the century. Noblecourt's analysis revolves around one paradigmatic character of theatrical representations: the spectre. She argues that, because the spectre is immaterial, it cannot enter the scene, it must "*appear*." Therefore, this process of appearing cannot correspond to the same criteria and modalities as the entrance on the stage of any average character. Techniques such as trapdoors, painted panels, and secret doors are considered with regard to their ability to reveal the spectre and to relate this apparition to the entrance of the actual characters. Noblecourt reviews the variety of methods and materials used to stage the passage between visible and invisible, between material and immaterial.

The spectator's gaze is crucial within this context because it allows for a deep analysis of newly developed formulas, such as focused light, used both as a fixed and mobile spot. The light could be directed at a particular character or stage element, rather than creating an overall lighting effect. More importantly, it helps us to further understand the notion of stage. This does not have to be solely considered as a performance space, but also as a physical place associated with appearing and disappearing.

2. Virtuosity and Self-Promotion

But what about the main actors of the staging, i.e., the artists? How do they participate in this process? How do they use staging to promote their career, persona, or works? The second part of the volume addresses these issues. In

Chapter 4, Elena Di Raddo explores the impact of fashion in the work of Italian painter Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931), focussing on the promotion of the artist's career and social status. Di Raddo contends that Boldini's activity as a portrait painter applies to social practice, as the range of the artist's (very famous) sitters attests: Giuseppe Verdi, James McNeill Whistler, Gabrielle Réjane, marchioness Luisa Casati, and Cléo de Merode, to name but a few examples of this quest for glory. Di Raddo discusses the connection between Boldini's skilful representations of fashion, the sitters' intimate characters, and the social sphere where they evolved. Fashion is considered a key element in the image the painter wants to convey through his portraits. Staging helps to highlight multiple components of this social depiction. The materials, the drape of a dress or interior decorative elements alike, are carefully selected and arranged to stage the sitter and the painter.

Pose, intended as a figure's way of standing or sitting, goes beyond mere pictorial depiction. It is not only a visual instrument enabling the appearance of one character or figure. Pose works as a tool for materialising the statement of social status and leads to a deep introspective study of the model's intimate character. This mechanism happens in a context which is particularly oriented to an increasing interest in and consumption of images. Di Raddo shows, within this context, the power of Boldini's portraits as illustrations of fashion magazines such as *Les Modes*, insisting on the societal role of the sitters and tracing, for instance, connections with the theatrical world.

These dynamics are of a great concern to women, since they are, especially in the last decades of the century, 'in between' contexts. They cross over interior and exterior spaces, adapting to domestic scopes and mundane expectations. Chapter 5 explores the versatility of the female condition with regard to the career of sculptor Adèle d'Affry, known as Marcello (1836-1879). Caroline Schuster Cordone deals with this ambivalence of the feminine value for a woman artist. She questions the reasons and stakes that led the protagonist to change her proper name into a symbolic and referencing title. Marcello indeed echoes the Italian origins of the artist's late husband (Carlo Colonna, 1835-1856) and star composer Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739), whom Adèle d'Affry deeply admired. Schuster shows that this ambivalence of names not only contributed to the artist's self-promotion, but also engendered a process of 'revealing' aimed at social acceptance and belonging to artistic networks.

Within this context, sociability developed almost at the expense of technical skills. Schuster's investigation draws a parallel between three main

relationships: the feminine and masculine, bohemia and aristocracy, and painting and sculpture. In the first, the reference to the artist's adoption of the pseudonym Marcello posits appearance as 'conforming' to social expectations, especially given that sculpture was primarily associated with the male environment. Secondly, the comparison between bohemia and aristocracy puts forward the conflict between Marcello's unconventional artistic status and her position as a duchess, showing the appearance and disappearance of visible signs of Marcello's social status. The third parallel concerns the alternation between sculpture and painting. Marcello's interest in painting almost overrode sculpture, due to the lack of training and the difficulty of means available to a woman.

These examples show a clear emphasis on appearance in terms of the artist's self-promotion. However, this mechanism of valorisation also involves enhancing technical skills, and the virtuosity of the artistic gesture, as Anastasia Belyaeva shows in Chapter 6. Departing from technicality to address the question of the role of the artist, she discusses non-finito drypoint portraits executed after paintings by (notably) Giovanni Boldini, John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), and Anders Zorn (1860-1920), combining the prowess of engravers and the approaches of printmaking. The focus on non-finito is particularly representative of the graphic solutions used by artists to stage and control virtuosity as an instrument of technical mastery. According to the author, non-finito consists of mingling two different treatments of lines: a more elaborate (i.e., finished) one with a rougher, freer (i.e., unfinished) one. Because the most elaborate lines were used to represent the heads and facial expressions of sitters, this technique emphasised the intimate character of the people portrayed.

Belyaeva contends that drypoint portraits, through their technical specificities, highlighted the private sphere of sitters. First, she studies the revival of drypoint in late nineteenth-century France, showing the technical development and use of non-finito. Secondly, she examines the works of two prominent engravers: Marcellin-Gilbert Desboutin (1823-1902) and Paul-César Helleu (1859-1927). Desboutin's works show a strong attention to staging the sitters, through their pose and the meticulous rendering of their facial expressions. The tension between elaborated and loose lines helps to dramatise the intimate sphere and showcase the engraver's skills. Contrary to Desboutin, who embodied a quest for individuality, Helleu used a 'standardised' treatment for the sitters. His technical mastery promoted a visual coherence, working as the artist's 'trademark,' and visible through the regularity and rigour of lines Helleu employs.

3. The Transitional Stage

Staging can thus be social as well as physical. It comprises appearance and the act of revelation. But where does this process take place? In this third part, two contributions set out to analyse the role of the imaginary space as defined by the relationship between image and text. In other words: does the stage represent a transitional space, an 'in betweenness' which opens up an imaginary process that goes well beyond social and physical appearance? The last two chapters review the transitional stage intended as a changing and flexible entity and show how spatiality impacts the intermediary, the uncertain, and the ephemeral.

In her analysis of the *Badauderies Parisiennes,* illustrated by the painter and engraver Félix Vallotton (1865-1925) and edited by Octave Uzanne, Karen Stock documents how literary terms such as *badaud* and *flâneur* create an intermediary space that connected the world of writers and readers with that of visual artists. Stock argues that Vallotton's illustrations make use of a number of graphic solutions to visualise these verbal notions, thus giving them a particular space in the book. For instance, bold surfaces in black and white and photographic framing were considered new forms of visual value, materialising–and thus revealing–the relationship between writer and spectator.

Stock's investigation stems from the attitudes that characters such as the *badaud* show through their visual and textual interactions. Particular attention is paid to the *Rassemblements*, made up of short novels illustrated by Vallotton. The texts deal with everyday issues related to Paris, such as violence, daily life, and the human condition. Characters like the *badaud* help us to investigate several urban dynamics. For instance, the role of spectatorship is questioned through an analysis of Thadée Natanson's *Travaux de Voirie* and Vallotton's print, representing the crowd as separated from the event's narrativity. In an attempt to materialise the scene's danger and mystery, Vallotton's illustration focuses on the asphalt using a contrast between black and white, a common thread in his work. Daily life is further addressed through puppet performances staged in the avant-garde theatre. Stock refers here to plays such as Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1896), and to the importance of puppets. Because they rely on the stage and staging strategies, puppets illustrate the effectiveness of theatre, almost to the detriment of real actors.

Anne-Marie Iker further explores the tension between the textual and the visual in Chapter 8. Iker focuses on the work of Catalan poet and writer

Santiago Rusiñol (1861-1931) and one of his most famous theatrical works, *L'Alegria que passa*, written in 1897 after a long sojourn in Paris. Iker explores the materialisation of the process of appearing and disappearing by comparing the play with the frontispiece and posters produced to advertise its theatrical performance. The play's storyline is simple and involves a young man in a small rural village who dreams of escaping his daily life in pursuit of happiness. The script provides a screen for the writer to question the artistic world of his time–it is indeed through a circus troupe that the young man reflects on his condition. More specifically, the play considers the relationship between artists and society, between art's production and its understanding.

The chapter addresses these questions through the representation on the poster, alternating between the illustration of the play and a visualisation (and contextualisation) of the promotion of Rusiñol's work. In the poster he designed, the writer chose to represent only one figure, Clown, and to isolate him from the caravan, looking at the viewer. One of three performers from the circus troupe, Clown is not the protagonist of the play. However, Rusiñol depicts him to explore the condition of artists vis-à-vis their theatrical careers and the toughness of human relations alike. The investigation of the condition of artists is further explored through other representations of the play. For instance, the frontispiece of *L'Alegria que passa* designed by painter Arcadi Mas i Fondevila (1852-1934) also features Clown, but attempts a sense of visual unity and integration of the character into the scene–Clown is depicted in profile, following the caravan.

In a century which saw the essential development of the theatrical industry, consumerism, mass-produced images, and the role of appearance, the mise en scène takes on all its importance. The contributions of this volume elaborate on the diversity of staging as a visual and cultural mechanism and focus on the repercussions that the visibility of an object, work of art, concept or phenomenon had within French society. The permeability of contexts is crucial to the forging of visibility: it triggers new interactions, approaches, and visual cultural strategies.

The multitude of points this volume brings to the fore are related to art history, cultural history, literature, theatre, and printmaking. This diversity deserves to be explored further as part of research that can, as in this case, combine the interactions between the organisation of the stage and the visual references that represent the shows. Thus, it is a question here of opening a discussion on the complexity of understanding the stage as a

performance of multiple experiences and disciplines. It is this hybrid and evolving character that the contributions in this volume have tried to outline.

This book derives from the conference "Appearing, Revealing, Disappearing. Cultural practices of staging in 19th-century France" which took place at the University of Lausanne in October 2020. I deeply thank the participants for the discussions that so significantly shaped the symposium. I am grateful to the University of Lausanne for the financial support in the realisation of this event, and particularly to the Section d'Histoire de l'Art and the Centre des Sciences Historiques de la Culture. I owe a very special thanks to Nicolas Bock for his invaluable and unconditional support and feedback in the preparation of this book.

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PART I:

STAGING THE (IN-)VISIBLE

CHAPTER ONE

STAGING, POWER, DESIGN: IN THE WINGS OF THE JULY MONARCHY

ERIK ANSPACH

Dans cette matière du visible, tout est piège.[1]

Much of design history to date has concentrated on the Great Exhibition of 1851, the introduction of the term "design" into the English language at the time, and the event's propulsion of new actors, industries, technologies, and aesthetics into the mainstream.[2] Subsequently, of two approaches to design history outlined by Alessandro Zinna, the first emphasises "culture[s] of design" that emerged within a primarily Western and industrial context.[3] Alexandra Midal however, has underlined that several design innovations dated to a decade prior, within the ergonomics of home interiors invented by women.[4] In addition, the Great Exhibition was meant to outshine an 1844 Parisian industrial fair.[5] Both of these alternatives to a dominantly English, mid-nineteenth century, gendered history of design allow investigation into more diversified trajectories.

Stefan Muthesius recalls design's earlier etymology and the difficulty that the term presented in the nineteenth century:

> the simple term 'decoration' was no longer suitable, and 'design'–one of the most difficult of artistic terms–was increasingly preferred. In the nineteenth

[1] "In this matter of the visible, everything is a trap." Jacques Lacan, *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 107.
[2] Alexandra Midal, *Design by Accident: For a New History of Design* (Berlin: Steinberg, 2019), 36, 39, 41; Alexandra Midal, *Design: introduction à l'histoire d'une discipline* (Paris: Pocket, 2009), 33-40.
[3] Alessandro Zinna, "Les conséquences du 'quand' – une archéologie du design : de la préhistoire à l'anthropocène," *Ocula* 21, No. 24 (2020): 25.
[4] Midal, *Accident*, 40-3.
[5] *Ibid.*, 106.

> century the word 'design' was used much less frequently and less emphatically than during the twentieth century, and there was very little theorizing involved [... The term] simply equalled 'decoration,' or was used in the everyday sense of a preliminary drawing for an object [...] But the Renaissance source word, *disegno*, always carried an extended meaning that stressed the intrinsic value of overall preconception and control [...] it was only with the arrival of modernism that it was applied to all spheres of [...] design [...] Regardless of all these complexities, one general notion gained ground continuously: that of the individuality of artistic agency, of artistic creation.[6]

This chapter therefore proposes to address the period immediately prior to 1851 in the French context, namely the July Monarchy, so as to examine design as resultant not only of artistic prowess, but as a larger enterprise implicated in societal staging and forms of agency.

William Morris tends to dominate the British-centred history of design. Author, translator, founder of the arts and crafts movement, and political activist, Morris's theoretical writing problematised the fallout of Cole's 1851 exhibit which siphoned "human energies" into mechanical advancements. He predicted that this "logical road of development" would eventually "destroy the arts of design and all that is analogous to them in literature."[7] The link between fiction and design in Morris's writing was amplified in the twentieth century: Jorn's critique of the Ulm school included a project dedicated to "research in the domain of fiction," for example.[8] After the Second World War, experimental design movements imagined the designer as "an inventor of scenarios and strategies" whose activity "must play in the territories of the imagination to create new stories, new fictions," thereby reinforcing the interrelation of literature and design.[9]

In the second half of the twentieth century, fictional design practices further utilised "storytelling," in both the traditional and the more contemporary, political or commercial senses of the term. Constructing dystopian narratives so as to mould or even challenge the design of the future, the texts "reevaluated the importance of fiction and poetry by showing the role they could play in critiquing and countering the dominant economic system" while "warning against the dangers of progress, technology, and [...]

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[6] Stefan Muthesius, *The Poetic Home: Designing the 19th-Century Domestic Interior* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 32-3.
[7] William Morris, *News From Nowhere and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 1993), 331-2.
[8] Midal, *Accident*, 182.
[9] Andrea Branzi, "Propos recueillis," *Azimuts*, No. 33 (1999).

industrialization" that design had helped to accelerate in the post-war era. For these designers, fiction was a "powerful tool of dissent and refutation" as readers "identify with characters and experience vicariously the impact of the situation described."[10] Finally, in the twenty-first century, dystopic, "critical" design scenarios and science fiction collided in Bruce Sterling's essays and Michael Burton's design projects.[11] Designed storytelling thus created prospective methodologies–"diegetic prototyping," "functional fictions," "futurology"–and other mediatised, therefore staged, speculative narratives meant to, *in fine*, influence the collective imaginary or consciousness.[12]

Ties between fiction and design also highlight design practices distanced from the sculptural or plastic arts. Tony Fry, for instance, explains that:

> a story needs to be understood as a way to put thinking on a particular path; as such, it discloses a way of thinking and a direction open to appropriation. We cannot design in silence. It demands conversation and stories into which design-led redirection can be accommodated and from which it can speak. The story is the start of that thinking that makes futural and redirective designing possible [...] In other words, transformative action begins with the creation of a story.[13]

Here, verbal narrative interlaces with streams of logic, thereby permitting design to implement change. Motivated by a social ambition, Fry's outline of design narrative fixes its objectives beyond those classically associated with literature: its commercial or entertainment value, its aesthetic or formal perfection, or its avant-gardist assets which challenge conventional artistic limits. Divorced from objects, decoration, or industrial fabrication altogether, this vision of design brings a variety of approaches to the fore, enabling Fry

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[10] Midal, *Accident*, 209-10.
[11] Bruce Sterling, *Shaping Things* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press), 2005; Bruce Sterling, *Tomorrow Now: Envisioning the Next Fifty Years* (New York: Random House), 2003.
[12] Julian Bleecker, "Design Fiction: A Short Essay on Design, Science, Fact and Fiction," *Near Future Laboratory*, https://blog.nearfuturelaboratory.com/2009/03/17/design-fiction-a-short-essay-on-design-science-fact-and-fiction/. Accessed January 1, 2021; Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2013), 35; Tim Durfee and Mimi Zeiger, eds., *Made Up: Design's Fictions* (New York: Art Center Graduate Press, 2017), 18-22.
[13] Tony Fry, *Design as Politics* (Oxford: Berg, 2011), 135-8.

to situate design at the level of the conceptual process, or more precisely, to define it as "prefigured intent."[14]

By facilitating the translation of concepts or ideas into perceptible, two or three-dimensional manifestations, design engages above all with appearances– in both senses of the term–and therefore impacts perception. Zinna's second approach to design history has therefore been labelled "prehistoric" or, following Skinner, the design "of cultures." Instead of being situated within a context as in the previous example, here design history is theorised epistemologically, as an integral part of the "prefigured intent" that invisibly transforms environments and societies.[15] I will therefore adopt this second angle as a definition of design: for an integral part of the practice consists in assigning forms to concepts, revealing systems through attention to their physical contours, and consolidating services within scenarios which, in turn, prepare and fashion the complex staging of society.

Staging

Of the many nineteenth-century representations of societal staging, the cultural artifacts that I will call *romans de coulisses*, or "backstage narratives," come to the forefront. The "novel of the wings" is a literary sub-genre comprising novelistic depictions of paratheatrical spaces such as lobbies, boxes, administrative offices, storage and technical zones, or dressing rooms. As opposed to the actual stage, they posit these areas as being the loci of attention for the reader and also the contemporary theatregoer. The novels circumscribe quotidian staging to the spaces demonstrating the closest possible proximity or porosity between real-life and performance as representative and insightful microcosms.

The backstage novel predated the nineteenth century but also foreshadowed a shift towards novelistic writing in the French tradition: among the earliest examples of the genre, François du Souhait published the *Histoires comiques* in 1612.[16] The novel describes a group of spectators waiting for theatrical performances to commence. To pass the time, they recount a series of short stories which become the brunt of the plot as the actual theatre pieces are neglected in the text.[17] The novel has historically been overshadowed

[14] *Ibid.*, viii.
[15] Zinna, "Les conséquences," 25.
[16] Adam Antoine, *Histoire de la littérature française au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Michel, 1997), 104-5.
[17] François du Souhait, *Histoires comiques* (Paris: La pensée universelle, 1978), 85, 93.

by Scarron's *Roman comique*, published some forty years later. The diegetic device nevertheless remained identical. In the unfinished novel, Scarron cites at least seven stage plays, all interrupted by brawls or dramatic incidents. The rare passages attributed to the stagecraft of the main characters reveal the disappearance of the actual performance: "whereas spectacle is everywhere in Scarron's novel, the theatre is entirely omitted."[18]

Scarron and du Souhait's narrative apparatus continued to be employed in later periods, and the subgenre culminated concomitantly with the industrial turn of the French novelistic tradition during the nineteenth century. In *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), for instance, Victor Hugo mimics Scarron by orchestrating a score of narrative ploys that hinder the performance of Pierre Gringoire's theatrical work.[19] Gérard de Nerval also admired Scarron's work, and integrated itinerant theatre troupes into his novellas.[20] Although the objective of this chapter precludes exhaustively exploring the subgenre, I might underline the lack of critical work on the topic and the pertinence of these artifacts for the comprehension of the cultural history of both nineteenth-century and contemporary France.

Honoré de Balzac's paratheatrical story *Sarrasine* was published in 1830 at the very beginning of the July Monarchy and assuredly influenced the genre's evolution. Whereas Hugo merely reproduced the fictional mechanisms of Scarron, Balzac's tale spotlights a fervent admirer in his opera box whose obsession "contains as much pleasure as pain" and manifests "indescribable and infernal horrors."[21] *Sarrasine* concludes with a startling and atypical revelation, thereby inviting the reader to associate sumptuous palaces, impossible romances, and suffering with paratheatrical spaces. Balzac's novel reformed the diegetic model and subsequent novels of the wings followed suit. Emma Bovary for instance demonstrates her first affective disorders in the theatre.[22] Published in 1848 and therefore bookending the July Monarchy period, *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas, fils,

[18] Anspach, Erik. "Scarron et les coulisses du château en scène". In *Châteaux et spectacles*, ed. Anne-Marie Cocula and Michel Combet (Pessac: Aussonius, 2018), 46.
[19] Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (Paris: Pocket, 2018), 36-70.
[20] "Nerval's fascination with the *Roman comique* undoubtedly stems from its focus on actors and actresses." Joan E. Dejean, *Scarron's 'Roman Comique:" A Comedy of the Novel, a Novel of Comedy* (Bern: Lang, 1977), 15; Gérard de Nerval, *Sylvie* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1999), 82.
[21] Honoré de Balzac, *Sarrasine* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), 42; Honoré de Balzac, *Sarrasine* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2001), 50.
[22] Gustave de Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), 290-9.

depicts Armand Duval painfully observing his love interest in her theatre box.[23] In novels by Jules Clarétie, Edmond de Goncourt, and Émile Zola, the main characters access wealth and privileged social classes not by their presence on theatrical stages, but rather by their backstage affairs and activities.[24] From contagion and disease to abandoned children, rejection, financial ruin, and suicide, during the nineteenth century the genre effectively situated all of society's ailments in opaque, hidden, paratheatrical spaces and boudoirs. In the July Monarchy and through literature such as *Sarrasine*, the wings were subsequently elevated to a "symbolic imaginary" provoking a "mystical epiphany:" the most dramatic social staging was located behind the theatre's curtains.[25]

Revelations regarding society's backstage assuredly informed other literary works of the July Monarchy period such as Eugène Sue's *Mystères de Paris*. The expansion of the press in 1830 relied on the production of serial literature to compete with the theatre.[26] And Sue's title evokes a collection of terms meant to excite the popular imagination regarding hidden activities: "wings, sitting rooms, attics, boudoirs."[27] Industrial literature and its similar theatrical models situated stock characters within their native environments.[28] The roles resonated with what one might consider to be the nascent social sciences: societal analyses like Frégier's 1840 publication on the "dangerous classes" reinforced Sue's novel by bringing characters such as Martial or La Chouette to life.[29] Post-revolutionary textual production revealed a convergence and legitimation of such narratives: "novels describing

[23] Alexandre Dumas fils, *La Dame aux camélias* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1983), 66-76.
[24] Jules Clarétie, *Mademoiselle de Cachemire* (Paris: Dentu, 1881); Edmond de Goncourt, *La Faustin* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1912); Émile Zola, *Nana* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000).
[25] Gilbert Durand, *L'imagination symbolique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2017), 10-13.
[26] Jean-Claude Yon, *Histoire culturelle de la France au XIXème siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010), 74.
[27] Judith Lyon-Caen and Alain Vaillant, "La face obscène du romantisme," *Romantisme,* No. 167 (2015): 50.
[28] Alexander Lacey, *Pixerécourt and the French Romantic Drama* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1928), 15; Schuh, Julien. "L'industrialisation de la culture: reproduction technique et reproduction sociale au XIXe siècle". In *Le XIXe siècle au futur. Penser, représenter, rêver l'avenir au XIXe siècle: actes du VIIe congrès de la SERD*, ed. Claire Barel-Moisan, Aude Déruelle and José-Luis Diaz (Paris, 2016), 3, 12.
[29] Honoré-Antoine Frégier, *Les classes dangeureuses de la population dans les grandes villes et des moyens de les rendre meilleures* (Paris: Baillière, 1840).

contemporary society can be associated with the numerous [...] descriptions of Paris [... and] to ethnographic investigations."[30] Supported by these diversified and "objective" observations of society, novels exposing the secret activities in the wings surpassed the imposition of literary norms: scientific, journalistic or historic studies allowed fictional cliches to spring from the pages and to be perceived as true menaces to society.[31]

Judith Lyon-Caen affirms that "these novels [...] were understood by readers [...] as pertinent descriptions of the social fabric" around them, and therefore figured among a diverse corpus she defines as "the textual staging of society."[32] Lyon-Caen's theory reaffirms and expands Peter Brooks's work on nineteenth-century melodrama, which posited a literary genre as a guiding, moral compass in an uncertain, post-religious France.[33] She continues,

> when appropriating the text, readers would have shortened the distance between reality and the novels, thereby allowing fiction to render intelligible the mechanisms of complex social phenomena often perceived as lacking transparency [...] These novels must be situated at the heart of a diverse body of work produced during the July Monarchy that attempts to represent society. Following the French Revolution and the Restoration periods, the opacity of society is not only a widespread theme, but also the driving force behind a number of texts that aim to decipher, decrypt, unveil,[34]

in short, to reveal the wings of society. Integrated into a larger "collective enterprise" seeking to "represent the complexity of the contemporary moment," during the July Monarchy, these texts stimulated the popular imagination beyond the actual reality: there were more declared crimes and thefts from 1800-1815 than in the entire eighteen years of Louis-Philippe's reign.[35]

Theories of the popular imaginary reinforce Lyon-Caen's claims, indicating the tenuous borders between reality and fiction:

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[30] Judith Lyon-Caen, "Le romancier, lecteur du social dans la France de la Monarchie de Juillet," *Revue d'histoire du XIXe siècle,* No. 24 (2005): 5.
[31] Sylvie Aprile, *La révolution inachevée: 1815-1870* (Paris: Belin, 2010), 186.
[32] Lyon-Caen, "Le romancier," 3.
[33] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 14-15.
[34] Lyon-Caen, "Le romancier," 5-7.
[35] Lyon-Caen, "Le romancier," 109-10.

> Reality and fiction blur their limits and a whole host of literature exists in this boundary [...] The entirety of contemporary thought seeks to interrogate new styles of fiction that have come to inhabit our everyday environments. Playful interactions between being and seeming emerge where the demarcation between fiction and reality are quelled. The imaginary is both a construction and an escape.[36]

The backstage novel provided the location in which reality (the social climbers in boxes and dressing rooms) brushed up with fiction (the theatrical play or the novel) thereby focusing the popular imagination on the wings. By "constructing" a popular imaginary regarding society's mechanics, the "prefigured intent" of the backstage novel sought to expose and make sense of the hidden machinations.[37] Moreover, theories of the imaginary confirm that the invisible, over time, provokes "the subject to define itself through suspicion."[38] If the criminal underbelly–the wings–of nineteenth-century Paris exacerbated readers' wariness during the July Monarchy period, *Sarrasine* exposed the textual staging of nineteenth-century society as an un-staging, or a back-staging.

The generalisation of the word *coulisses* can be linked to other, extratextual, nineteenth-century societal phenomena. The gastronomy of nineteenth-century France drew numerous ties between meals and theatre, for example: "the exchanges between the two worlds were too numerous and too troubling [...] The menu took on a central role in the nineteenth century, and it was directly inspired by theatre program announcements [...] Theatre and restaurants formed an indissociable couple."[39] Furthermore, the term "the wings" has retained its pertinence in the contemporary moment. From tourism, leisure, shopping, and sports, to politics, ecology, economics, and justice, the French cultural imaginary continues to attribute paratheatrical spaces–*coulisses*, or wings–to every aspect of daily life. As a result, although allusions to quotidian staging such as the *theatrum mundi* or the *larvatus pro deo* have generally diminished in pertinence due to multiple and insistent repetitions, the relevance of the "novel of the wings" for historical analysis resides in its capacity, or even its conscientious vocation or design, to explore that which disappears behind curtains. The paratheatrical

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[36] Hélène Vedrine, *Les grandes conceptions de l'imaginaire: de Platon à Sartre et Lacan* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1990), 17.
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Ibid.*, 15.
[39] Bruno Girveau, ed., *À table au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), 21, 31.

spaces promise to elucidate concealed truths transcending everyday staging: *paratheatrum mundi*.

Power

Associated with social and class mobility, gender (in)equality, and public health issues, paratheatrical spaces therefore infused societal narratives involving politics and power. Louis-Philippe's family could very well have figured in these "novels of the wings:" his sons' backstage activities and intimate relations with actresses were common knowledge.[40] Attention given to the royal family's affairs undermined the regime's efforts to respond to pressing social matters. In terms of public health, improvements to Paris were undertaken by Rambuteau and Louis-Philippe that are forgotten post-Haussmann.[41] In commerce and industry, the height of the French railway development has been attributed to the Second Empire whereas the number of steam engines "rose from 600 in 1830 to 5,000 in 1847."[42] Or again, in regard to social justice, "the July Monarchy wrote [...] France's first Child Labour Act [...it created] France's first primary education system."[43] Indeed, the Second Empire "was happy to take credit" for a great deal of both the technological and social advancements initiated during the July Monarchy, eclipsing the Orléans regime's history.[44]

In response to the social woes of the era, numerous utopian movements also sprouted up. Situated at the intersection of technological developments, socially minded programs, and the promise of a new future, Saint-Simonianism and Fourierism gained popularity with engineers from prestigious institutions, namely Napoleon's Polytechnique.[45] The Saint-Simonians, for example, had drawn up a technocratic European Union as early as 1814, including the application of the scientific method to governing

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[40] Anne Martin-Fugier, *Louis-Philippe et sa famille, 1830-1848* (Paris: Perrin, 2012), 196.
[41] Aprile, *Révolution inachevée*, 172-3; Hervé Robert, *La Monarchie de Juillet* (Paris: CNRS, 2017), 85.
[42] Robert Bezucha, ed., *The Art of the July Monarchy: France 1830 to 1848* (Columbia: Missouri University Press, 1990), 31.
[43] *Ibid.*, 32-3.
[44] *Ibid.*, 31.
[45] Bernard Jouve, *L'épopée Saint-Simonienne: Saint-Simon, Enfantin et Leur Disciple Alexis Petit, de Suez Au Pays de George Sand* (Paris: Guénégaud, 2001), 64.

so as to reduce the "obscurities" that cause all "social unrest."[46] These groups of engineers cited backstage haunting explicitly to denounce forms of "idleness" that were contrary to progress.[47] Concerned primarily with technological advances such as agrarian modernisation and the original plans for the Suez canal, the proto-socialist movements linked transparent social well-being and industrial design.[48]

The historical connection between design and paradise narratives has traditionally been attributed to William Morris, due in part to *News from Nowhere*, his utopian novel published in 1890. However, the brunt of Morris's philosophy builds on earlier work by Robert Owen, published prior to Louis-Philippe's abdication.[49] In a French context, further analysis of Morris's novel presents a score of utopian themes that originated during the July Monarchy. Fourier advocated for a division of labour by affinity and not by obligation, a theme which appears in Morris's writing.[50] In French utopian cities, aesthetics were also of utmost importance.[51] And whereas hygienist philosophies are typically situated in the late nineteenth century with ties between Morris, Ruskin, and poet-doctor Henri Cazalis (better known as Jean Lahor), these considerations already impregnated French utopian urbanism.[52] Fourier's "universal" city included height limitations for the buildings, mandatory space between constructions, greenery, and common areas for collective use and gatherings.[53] The utopian movements solicited the Orléans regime for recognition and funding: Prosper Enfantin had directly contacted both the king and his sons, and they would have known the principles of these proto-socialist endeavours.[54] The family nickname of Louis-Philippe was "the father," which was also embroidered on the ecclesiastical garb worn by Enfantin in the Ménilmontant "monastery."[55]

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[46] Claude-Henri de Rouvroy de Saint-Simon, *De la réorganisation de la société européenne ou de la nécessité des moyens* (Paris: Rivages, 2014), 78-9.
[47] Jean-Pierre Alem, *Enfantin, le prophète aux sept visages* (Paris: Pauvert, 1963), 53.
[48] *Ibid.*, 192.
[49] Jouve, *L'épopée*, 110-1; Midal, *Introduction*, 63.
[50] Charles Fourier, *Cités ouvrières: des modifications à introduire dans l'architecture des villes*, 34.
[51] *Ibid.,* 17-20.
[52] Midal, *Introduction*, 47.
[53] Simone Debout, *L'utopie de Charles Fourier* (Dijon: Presses du réel), 201-2.
[54] Jouve, *L'épopée*, 67, 249.
[55] Alem, *Enfantin*, 95; Martin-Fugier, *Louis-Philippe*, 133.

More particularly, urban design was at the heart of Charles Fourier's "Harmony" project. He detailed an ideal city as a key location for "social transformation" through "industrial reorganisation, but also the metamorphosis of human relations with each other and with objects" thereby intimately intertwining designed economies and environments.[56] At the border between the urban and rural, Fourier imagined "phalanstery" communities, for whom he designed the buildings, social systems and governance, services and logistical solutions, all of which were surrounded by a transparent glass wall predating Paxton's Crystal Palace and that allowed external observers a glimpse into the staged, idyllic social experiment.[57] Fourier also imagined literary creation as an important tool in the remodelling of a more global social consciousness.

> In the real world, behind the masks and appearances, but also in the theatre and novels, the works that captivate also undermine preconceptions. The immobile, traditional order demands that the same few continue to benefit from goods, wealth, pleasure and affection, but the hero holding our attention overthrows social norms.[58]

While drawing out new cities and social models, Fourier cited designed literary narrative as a tool to lift theatrical masks to recognise, and thereafter reconfigure, societal systems responsible for the repetition of social injustices.

Few of the French utopian building projects were completed, and those that were, rarely lasted. Louis-Philippe was also an avid builder, and designed several renovations and monuments, some of which were destined as anticipatory celebrations of his reign. The declaration recognising national monuments officially in 1840 confirmed that defining a French "heritage [...] required having an example of each period in its historical development at hand."[59] Although typically considered a Napoleonic monument, the Arc de Triomphe was actually completed during the Orléans regime.[60] The refurbishing of the chapel at Dreux stands out as an attempt to provide the Orléans family with a royal sepulchre allowing the new regime to dissociate

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[56] Debout, *L'utopie*, 75.
[57] *Ibid.*, 198-206.
[58] *Ibid.*, 45.
[59] Marina Valensise, *François Guizot et la culture politique de son temps* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 281.
[60] Bezucha, *Art*, 69.