Tableaux Vivants: Presenting the Past on the French Restoration Stage

Kristin Allen-Barbour

In the *Comédie-Française* production of Etienne de Jouy's *Sylla* in 1821, the great tragic actor, Talma, made a stir by giving the play's title role a distinctly contemporary reference. This actor, so clearly devoted to historical accuracy in stage costuming, did play the role of Sylla in the costume of the Roman republic which he had made requisite for the performance of classical plays. However, what is remembered about this production is that, under this classical guise, he presented the appearance of Napoleon, who had recently died on St. Helena, thus combining, deliberately and apparently without any unease at the anachronism, both past and present in a single stage image. In so doing, Talma highlighted certain parallels which had been noted between the contemporary and the ancient historical figures.[1] This specifically conscious mixing of multiple semiotic indicators, incorporating both a faithfulness to the past and a transgression of historical purity, provides only a particularly obvious example of a multiplicity that was present in many theatrical costumes for history plays in the Restoration.

That a certain doubleness of past and present is, to some extent, a factor in all historical costuming has been noted by more than one costume historian. Diana de Marly states that "There are limits to how far people will go in altering their contemporary image, because their appearance is part of their identity."[2] Earl A. Powell, in speaking of historical costume in film, expresses a similar idea giving it broader, and perhaps less conscious implications.

> The way human beings view the world—their sense of beauty, glamour, and elegance—is inseparably linked to the times in which they live. Almost everything people create has the imprint of the styles and tastes of their era. . . . Contemporary viewers are not aware that the costumes reflect their own standards of style and beauty . . . It is only with the passage of time that one can see clearly how all-pervasive the designers' contemporary aesthetics have been.[3]

Kristin Allen-Barbour expects to complete her Ph.D. at Kent State University in the Spring of 1998. Her dissertation, *The Past Present: History and Historical Costuming at the Comédie Française 1815-1830*, continues to explore the ideas of doubling and the tension between past and present in historical costume during the Bourbon Restoration.

This doubleness of past and present aesthetic is clearly visible in the theatrical costumes of the Bourbon era. It is, in fact, more clearly apparent than in the costumes of later periods in the nineteenth century. I would argue that this doubleness is not present merely, as some claim, because the performers and audiences of this era were somehow less knowledgeable or less particular in their use of historical dress, nor because actors (and especially actresses) were too concerned with personal vanity to consider the overall illusion of the play. Instead, I would argue, the use of historical dress was a complex system which functioned within a larger doubleness of history at play in the era, a doubleness in which the tensions between past and present remained deliberately unresolved.

The Bourbon reign was an era replete with tensions. The Bourbon government itself, as France's first constitutional monarchy, functioned in a complex tension between the traditional monarchy from which it drew its claims of legitimation and lasting governmental influences from the republican and empirical powers that had interrupted that monarchy's reign. As R.F. Leslie notes "the end of the great war [fought by other European monarchies] against France and the overthrow of Napoleon I gave rise to a mythology of its own. It was supposed that the reactionary powers of the old Europe, ignoring all that the French Revolution had done, combined to restore the prewar system."[4] The rhetoric of monarchical continuity was clearly represented in the title of Louis XVIII, the first Restoration monarch. Louis was the brother of Louis XVI who had been deposed and executed in the Revolution. The new king deliberately skipped a number in the succession of names in order to emphasize that his brother's young son had indeed been King before he died, even though he was never given the chance to exercise power. In this way, he implied that the monarchy had continued, unbroken, throughout the intervening years of Revolution and Empire. This rhetorical insistence upon the continuity of monarchy was further emphasized in the Charter which initially reestablished monarchical government in 1814. This Charter asserted that it was being established in the "nineteenth year" of Louis's reign.[5]

The supposed continuity from *ancien régime* to the Restoration monarchy was, however, far from complete. Leslie explains that "it was true that the Bourbon dynasty was restored, but it was not the system of 1789 which was restored with it. The legislative achievements of Napoleon I remained untouched in the form of the *Code Napoléon*."[6] On the other hand, the continuity between the Bourbon regime and the Empirical government which had immediately preceded it was no more complete than its continuity with earlier monarchies. The Bourbons were attempting to build their present out of various and often conflicting fragments of the national past. Louis, and his brother Charles who succeeded him, were constantly juggling the many expectations and roles they had

inherited from monarchy, republic, and Empire, expectations which asked them to embody tradition and stability while accommodating change. The resulting dichotomy of continuity and discontinuity, of past and present simultaneously at work in Bourbon politics had parallels in all historical discourse during their reign.

If the Bourbon monarchy was caught in a tension of multiple governmental roles, of tradition and change, the intellectual world of the Restoration was experiencing its own tensions between past and present. The Parisian intellectual circle of the day was, in many ways, a very narrow one. The intellectuals of the Bourbon era were, with few exceptions, male and middle to upper class. Individuals and the journals they produced were often openly allied to one or another political philosophy or regime. As a result, politics within the artistic and intellectual communities were closely intertwined with the politics of governmental power but not narrowly defined by them.

At the heart of the discourse within this community was the intellectual discontinuity created by successive ruptures in governmental ideology and control. With the breakdown of the ideology of monarchy had come a similar breakdown in the ideologies which had governed intellectual pursuits under the *ancien régime*. The tension of restored tradition with intervening reforms manifested within the government was mirrored by tension within the intellectual circles of the Bourbon era. The relationship of past to present within this intellectual tension played itself out in a variety of ways. Some of these seemed to separate past from present dramatically and even decisively. The French Revolution had interrupted governmental and social structures in a way unprecedented in the national memory, and the question of how to deal with this division (whether extolling it or lamenting it) surfaces over and over in French intellectual thought.

Alan Spitzer notes that this temporal division was perceived by the young intellectuals of the Parisian universities and journals as a very specifically generational opposition, dividing those who were born after the Revolution from those who had experienced its turmoil and still carried the baggage of revolutionary or pre-revolutionary ideas and societal structures.[7] In acknowledging this generational divide, it is important not to over-simplify it or its influence within the intellectual communities of the day. The clear generational unity implied by the discourse was, in fact, complicated by a variety of interweaving loyalties and ideologies which crossed generational lines, uniting those who were supposedly divided and dividing those who were supposedly united. The young men of the Parisian intelligentsia, while allied in their class and similarly educated in the *lycées* and universities established by the Empire, came from backgrounds which also encompassed a certain variety: Parisian and provincial (a distinction which should not be underestimated in the French social

structure); sons of old established families, of governmental functionaries, of the newly created elite of the Empire, and of middle class merchants convinced to turn their sons over to the state for education. In addition, these young men were aligned by a variety of loyalties, not only to the conflicting governmental structures of monarchy, republic and empire, but to differing philosophical structures and to organizations such as the church or the Freemasons (ties which were themselves not without political implications).[8] Older men were dispersed by similarly divergent ideologies, and many can, in fact, be found at the heart of the institutions whose influence most strongly affected the young. Amidst this complex interplay of loyalties however, there remains a clear rhetoric of generational divide and the notion of a present divorced from its past and groping toward an as yet undetermined future.

The young men of the Restoration saw themselves, the post-Revolutionary generation, as violently and irrevocably severed from their political and social past in a way that no generation before them could have been. In addition, they perceived of eighteenth-century philosophy as following a strategy of destruction which necessarily cleared away outdated notions of truth but which failed to replace them with anything productive. Theirs, then, would be the generation to build the future of France and to establish the new truths upon which future society would be based.[9] This vision of a society divided from its past set up a clear opposition between the new and the old. Adolphe Thiers expresses such a generational division from the youthful point of view in the opening pages of his *Histoire de la Révolution Française*. "Les hommes ne peuvent pas séparer leur esprit des événements qui ont fortement agité leur vie. Quand une révolution éclate dans le monde, les générations contemporaines ont mission de la faire triompher, et c'est aux générations qui viennent après à expliquer ce triomphe."[10] *The Globe*, in its review of the third and fourth volumes of Thiers's work, echoes the same sentiment. "Je crois aussi que notre génération, c'est à dire celle des hommes qui datent des premiers jours de ce siècle, est la plus propre à écrire l'histoire de la révolution. Elle vaut mieux à coup sûr pour le rôle de rapporter que les hommes qui y ont pris part. . . . Quoi qu'ils fassent, ils seront toujours les avocats d'une cause. La jeunesse au contraire n'a aucune des passions de ses pères."[11]

The contrast of Revolutionary passion and the dispassionate, objective outlook of the new generation surfaces often in the discourse of these younger men, an interesting contrast to the common conception of Romantic youth as steeped primarily in subjective emotion. Even the Romantics themselves often spoke of objectivity as the cornerstone of their work, along side the emotional truth which they also valued. The two were not, by any means, considered mutually exclusive and, in fact, were perceived to compliment each other in the

move toward a new, more genuine view of the world. For these young writers, the dispassionate scrutiny of historical accuracy was not the antithesis of passion, but its prerequisite. They associated both truth in history and greater passion with a creative effort which followed the natural rather than the ideal. *The Globe*, in reviewing Ancelot's historical play *Fiesque* makes this point.

> Que le poëte, après s'être fait spectateur du drame tel qu'il se passe dans l'histoire, en ait recueilli en lui même les impressions naturelles et toutes vivantes; qu'il ait alors conçu son ouvrage, et, naïvement inspiré, ait fait monter sur la scène chaque personnage avec ses passions et ses intérêts réels; qu'à cette espèce de magique évocation des temps passés, il ait su joindre le charme d'une poésie vraie, qui se laisse aller sans effort au movement de chaque situation dramatique: assurément nous aurons une belle tragédie, une œuvre tout-à-fait nouvelle.[12]

For the young men who participated in the calls for change which we now associate with Romanticism, both passion and accuracy were part of a new creativity, a creativity which drew its inspiration from the real world and real history rather than from the inbred conventions of art and literature. This new creativity was part of the new reality which they, as the younger generation, would build out of the ruins of the past left to them by the revolutionary generation, a generation which had paved the way for the present, but which now stood as an obstacle to further progress toward the future.[13]

The rhetoric of generational opposition is not, by any means, the sole property of the younger generation in the Restoration. It permeates the discourses of politics, philosophy, and the arts on both sides of the generational divide. If the younger generation saw their role as one of building, of creating a new society on the ruins of traditional culture left by the Revolution, the older generation, on the other hand, often viewed this division from the past as a decline into decadence and a loss of the values which had governed their own youth. This rhetoric of decline was frequently applied to the rise of Romantic productions within the *Comédie-Française*. Alexandre Duval, in the preface to his *Charles II ou le labyrinthe de Wodestock*, contrasts the theatre of 1828 with his memories of performances before the Revolution, arguing that the young men writing contemporary plays no longer view literature as an art but as a commerce and citing as proof a young man who had offered to turn one of Duval's plays into a vaudeville at great profit to them both.[14] Clément Robillon's indictment of the actors at the *Comédie* is less clearly generational, but follows the rhetoric of decline and commercialism. "Ce n'est plus maintenant l'amour de la gloire qui

anime les comédiens; ce n'est plus le désir ardent de briller sur la scène, de capter les suffrages du public; mais seulement l'amour de l'argent."[15]

If you read further, the rhetoric of decline has a strongly classist note. The complaints of young men hungry for money over glory voices a resentment that many young playwrights and actors were coming to value the opinions of the paying public over those of the "refined" circles of court or the even narrower circles of the literary establishment. Duval makes it clear that the dramatic glory of his day, whose revival he so passionately proposes, was centered in the aristocratic *salons* and suggests that the members of the *grand-société* now attending the theatre, "qui pour nouvelles jouissances, consent volontiers à devenir peuple," have debased themselves.[16] Pierre Victor, a sometime actor at the *Comédie*, who was constantly at odds with Baron Taylor (the *Commissaire Royale* who controlled the company from 1825 to 1838) and who through copious correspondence with governmental authorities to protest Taylor's policies became a vocal spokesman for the rhetoric of decline, is even more pointed in arguing the negative influence of the more broadly composed audience. "Le public s'est gâté avec les acteurs; il ne se compose plus comme autrefois, d'amateurs éclairés, d'hommes de lettres habiles à diriger l'artiste, et s'interessant à lui par l'amour de l'art. Tout le monde fréquent aujourd'hui les théâtres; et chacun se mêle de juger."[17]

If the discourse of generational division, coming from either side of the divide, was often used to convey other political agendas, this does not negate its importance as an underlying concern for the period. The very fact that such a discourse was perceived as an effective means of making a political argument suggests how strongly it was embedded in the consciousness of the day. The temporal rupture represented by the Revolution was very real to the Restoration mind. The cultural continuity which supported and was supported by the *ancien régime* had been irrevocably destroyed in the French consciousness. The present had become divided from the past.

This loss of the past was not viewed without remorse, nor was this remorse reserved for the older generation. The very young men they condemned, those who saw themselves as forging the new future, were themselves glorifying the past. Some of their works mourn the past, and stand like epitaphs to a culture lost beyond retrieval. Images of ruins are popular motifs in paintings from across Europe. Baron Taylor, the innovative and controversial *commissaire* of the *Comédie-Française*, had himself been the driving force behind *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France*, a series of books documenting France's crumbling ruins, many of which were destroyed in the violence of the Revolution, the deliberate targets of anti-clerical and anti-

aristocratic zeal. The preface for the 1820 volume on Normandie makes clear the sense of inevitable loss.

> Les monuments de l'ancienne France ont un caractère et un intérêt particulier; ils appartiennent à un ordre d'idées et de sentiments éminemment nationaux, et qui cependant ne se renouvelleront plus. Ils révèlent dans leurs ruines des ruines plus vastes, plus effrayantes à la pensée, celles des institutions qui appuyèrent long-temps la monarchie, et dont la chute fut le signal inévitable de sa chute. Ce ne sont pas seulement les catastrophes du temps qui sont écrites sur ces murailles abandonnées; ce sont encore celles de l'histoire. A leur vue, tous les souvenirs des jours écoulés se réveillent; les siècles entiers avec leurs mœurs, leurs croyances, leurs révolutions, la gloire des grands rois et des grands capitaines, semblent apparôitre dans ces solitudes.[18]

Such passages suggest a past lost to the present. On the other hand, they also revel in the imagination's ability to cross the gulf and recapture the historical past, making it live in the contemporary mind. While France was mourning its past, it was also making greater attempts than ever before to recreate that past as a living image to the present. Young poets and painters took the national past, from the early days of the medieval era to the recent events of the Revolution, as their subject. The field of history flourished. The past was lost, but also retrievable. Past and present were perceived to be in a state of separation, of opposition, but not of mutual exclusion, a paradox which can be better understood by looking at the notions of opposition and of past/present in the philosophies of history being formulated at the time.

This opposition of past and present functions within a larger oppositional framework in the intellectual discourse of the day. The philosophers who influenced this era often divided reality into oppositional pairs. Hegelian philosophy is replete with opposing pairs: thesis and antithesis, matter and idea, Nature and Spirit, form and essence, good and evil. However, this division was enacted specifically to negate itself. These opposites were evoked, not to affirm the realm of opposition, but to attempt to voice the unvoiceable space in which opposites could not only coexist, but could become one another, in which the very negation of opposition became an affirmation of unity. We might think of Hegel's philosophy as an attempt to inhabit such a space if we think of his contention between thesis and antithesis and the resulting synthesis, not as centered around an act in which opposition is effaced in a new seamless entity without conflict or

tension, but as Duncan Forbes sees it, as "an exhaustive working out, in ever increasing complexity, of every possible variation, each growing out of its predecessor, on this theme of the unity of universal and particular [in which] any manifestation of the one contains the other,"[19] as a system in which "Hegel's absolute has to be comprehended as a unity of finite and infinite,"[20] or, as Pardon Tillinghast notes, in which "every concept implicitly includes its opposite."[21] In his preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel speaks of Spirit as a "movement of becoming *other to itself*, i.e. becoming an *object to itself*, and of suspending this otherness. And experience is the name we give to just this movement, in which the immediate, the unexperienced . . . becomes alienated from itself and then returns to itself from this alienation, and is only then revealed for the first time in its actuality and truth." However, the otherness which has formed this unity is not dissipated. "The negative is the self."[22]

Victor Cousin, France's highly influential lecturer on philosophy also uses this simultaneity of opposites in his *Course of the History of Modern Philosophy*,

> The two fundamental ideas to which reason is reduced are, then, two contemporaneous ideas. . . . So the human mind begins neither by unity nor by multiplicity; it begins, and cannot avoid beginning, by both; the one is the opposite of the other, a contrary implying its contrary; the one exists only on condition that the other exist at the same time. . . . This then is the vice of ancient and modern theories, they place unity on one side, and multiplicity on the other; the finite and the infinite in such an opposition that the passage from one to the other seems impossible.[23]

We might think of this inclusive space as related to the Derridean notion of *différance*, "the displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to another, from one term of opposition to another."[24] Derrida himself notes that Hegel "uses the word *different* precisely where he treats of time and the present," citing a passage from Koyré's translation of the Jena *Logic* :

> The infinite, in this simplicity, is, as a moment opposed to the equal-to-itself, the negative, and in its moments, although it is (itself) presented to and in itself the totality, (it is) what excludes in general, the point or limit; but in its own (action of) negating, it is related immediately to the other and negates itself by itself. The limit of the moment of the present (*der Gegen-*

> *wart*), the absolute 'this' of time, or the now, is of an absolutely negative simplicity, which absolutely excludes from itself all multiplicity, and, by virtue of this, is absolutely determined; it is not whole or a *quantum* which would be extended in itself (and) which, in itself, also would have an undetermined moment, a diversity which, as indifferent (*gleichtultig*) or exterior in itself would be related to an other (*auf ein anderes bezöge*), but in this is a relation absolutely different from the simple (*sondern es ist absolut differente Beziehung*).

Derrida argues of this passage that "Writing '*différant*' or '*différance*' (with an *a*) would have made it possible to translate Hegel at that particular point . . . without further notes or specifications."[25] However, Derrida makes it clear that the Hegelian space of opposition, of the *différant*, is not quite the gap of his own *différance*. Derrida is exploring the possibility of a negation which stands alone at the center of discourse without the mitigation of positive truth, a center decentered. Hegel and his contemporaries were in search of an absolute, a central truth. Theirs was, however, a center which encompassed everything that could be perceived as peripheral to that center as well, that was formed of both itself and its own opposite. The opposition of this era was not so much one of either/or as it was one of and/and, an opposition in which both opposites were mutually housed, and were, in fact, each other.

The philosophy which dominated the first half of the nineteenth century strove, then, to situate itself simultaneously in the center of absolute truth and in the oppositions of subjectivity and negation. This dual movement of centrality and opposition, of continuity and discontinuity, played itself out in a historiography which attempted to inhabit the elusive space which is both past and present, which perceived of time as both severed into disparate parts and joined in a continued flow of the universal. As a result, some scholars perceive the dominant quality of history in this period as a new awareness of time's divisions into separate segments, while others have noted an unprecedented interest in the similarities of individual personality and of daily life which transcend historical period to ally past with present.

Many scholars have noted that the nineteenth century was aware, more than any era before it, of the past as a series of distinct entities, separate from the present and from each other by an uncrossable gulf of time. We see this new awareness in a variety of forms throughout the period. One of these is a breakdown in the notion of universal human nature and a rise in the new idea that each period and place creates its own human qualities, an idea that would later

become institutionalized by Hippolyte Taine in his theory of "race, moment, and milieu." Augustin Thierry applies this notion of human nature divided by time to the writing of history itself. "On ne peut pas, quelque supériorité d'esprit que l'on ait, dépasser l'horizon de son siècle, et chaque nouvelle époque donne à l'histoire de nouveaux points de vue et une forme particulière."[26] Hegel challenges the notion of universal greatness by suggesting that those men who have become heroes and leaders were so primarily because their attempts to fulfill their own ambitions and desires happened to be appropriately in tune with their respective times. "Such individuals had no consciousness of the general Idea they were unfolding, while prosecuting those aims of theirs; on the contrary, they were practical political men. But at the same time, they were thinking men, who had an insight into the requirements of the time—what was ripe for development."[27] On the other hand, neither historians nor their critics were ready to abandon the idea that these disparate segments of time were somehow unified by some form of universal principle. Hegel's "world-historical individuals" were, albeit unconsciously, driven by the Idea, unfolding itself in a definite and uniform pattern throughout history. Like Hegel's negation, the divisions and individualities of history were part and parcel of an all encompassing, often progressive, continuity that tied these individual parts together. As Hegel notes, "the events are various, but their general significance, their inner quality and coherence, are one."[28]

Thus while historians were aware of the distinctness of each past time period, like the philosophers of opposition they perceived, amid this historical discontinuity, a continuity of time that permitted them to explore other times, and even to recreate them, based on general perceptions of human nature and social structures. Among some historians, faith in their ability to recapture the past in all its reality was often immense.

> J'ai puisé si largement dans ces textes, que je me flatte d'y avoir laissé peu de chose a prendre. Les traditions nationales des populations les moins connues, et les anciennes poésies populaire, m'ont fourni beaucoup d'indications sur le mode d'existence, les sentiments et les idées des hommes dans les temps et les lieux divers ou je transporte le lecteur.[29]

The ability to make such recreations of the past relied on a perception of both time's continuity and its discontinuity. Discontinuity allowed one to present an era as other, to revel in its difference, but continuity allowed one to plumb that difference and to represent it, even recreate it exactly, for the present. It also relied on an implicit faith in the accuracy of the documents that link the present

to the past. The interaction Restoration historians and creators of historical fiction make with the past is not so much with the historical events themselves as with the documents and monuments which communicate those events to the present. They equate history with the documents and traditions of history, and it does not seem to occur to them, as it does to the later positivists, that there might be a material past which stood outside those documents and is capable of being concealed, as well as revealed, by existing documents and traditions.[30] Each document or monument itself then becomes the intersection of the particular and the abstract, capable of revealing insight into an entire era. An accumulation of many documents, becomes so many pieces of the same puzzle which build upon each other, without contestation, to create a more complete picture of the age.

Such a belief in the transparency of historical documents did not mean that there was no disagreement as to what those documents meant. Alexandre Dumas and L. Moreau d'Orgelaine, for example, use the same documents to create contrasting portraits of the sixteenth-century Duc de Guise. Dumas, in his play *Henri III et sa court*, portrays the Duke as a monster who abuses his wife and deceitfully plots the murder of her lover. Moreau, in response to the play, defends the Duke as an honorable man incapable of the behavior Dumas attributes to him.[31] Both accounts, however, trust implicitly in the documents. The difference in their interpretations are rather in the way they situate those documents within several issues of the particular and the universal. Moreau d'Orgelaine argues that the Duc de Guise could not have committed the atrocities attributed to him by Dumas because he, Moreau, believes in the consistency of human character and because Guise behaved bravely and honorably in other situations, he could therefore not be base and cowardly in the situations Dumas describes. Dumas's play uses incidents from the same documents to create the overall color of the era.[32] For Dumas the fact that the events are from the period is enough to make them acceptably accurate, whereas Moreau is arguing for the accuracy of this particular portrayal, noting that some of the historical events Dumas has used were, in fact, part of someone else's story. Both, however, have faith in their documents. The job of the historian then was to flesh these documents out, to create from them a lively and, approachable portrait of an era, to present, as Walter Scott said, "the same figures, drawn by a better pencil, or, to speak more modestly, executed in an age when the principles of art were better understood."[33]

This faith in the documents and monuments of an era allowed for histories which claimed to recreate the past with accuracy. A desire for exact recreations of the past led to histories written to evoke the language of the day, such as *Le duc de Guise à Naples* which the *Globe's* reviewer praised for its unusual diction. "Dans un récit de ce genre, l'auteur ne pouvait écrire comme

tout le monde: c'était du bel âge de l'hôtel de Rambouillet qu'il se faisait contemporain; il en devait prendre le langage."[34] Another means of recreating the past in both history and historical literature was through an amassing of details about the everyday life and the many minor events of a time period. In Romantic literature, such proliferation of detail is often associated with the term "local color."

We often think of "local color" as a specificity of place. It is, at least as importantly, a specificity of time. The term is a key one in the dramatic theory of the Romantic era, and shows up in many important theoretical treatises of the day. One well known instance is Victor Hugo's *Préface de Cromwell* of 1827, where he warns that

> Non qu'il convienne de *faire*, comme on dit aujourd'hui, *de la couleur locale*, c'est à dire d'ajouter après coup quelques touches criardes cà et là sur un ensemble du reste parfaitement faux et conventionnel. Ce n'est point à la surface du drame que doit être la couleur locale, mais au fond, dans le cœur même de l'œuvre, d'ou elle se répand au dehors, d'elle même, naturellement, également, et, pour ainsi parler, dans tous les coins du drame, comme la sève qui monte de la racine à la dernière feuille de l'arbre. Le drame doit être radicalement imprégné de cette couleur des temps; elle doit en quelque sorte y être dans l'air, de façon qu'on ne s'aperçoive qu'en y entrant et qu'en en sortant qu'on a changé de siècle et d'atmosphère. Il faut quelque étude, quelque labeur pour en venir là; tant mieux.[35]

Theatre historians tend to dismiss the term "local color" as some kind of fuzzy poetic desire to create an interesting scene without a great deal of concern for real accuracy. In the modern sense this may be true, not because the writers themselves spoke falsely when they claimed to value historical accuracy but because the whole notion of what constituted a historically accurate portrayal of a time differed from later ideas. The "color" of a period was important not only for novelists and playwrights but for historians themselves. Augustin Thierry cites color as one of the virtues of history for his day, contrasting it with what he sees as the eighteenth century's less accurate, more dogmatic, historiographical technique. "Aujourd'hui il n'est plus permis de faire l'histoire au profit d'une seul idée. Notre siècle ne le veut point; il demande qu'on lui apprenne tout, qu'on lui explique l'existence des nations aux diverses époques, et qu'on donne à chaque siècle passé sa véritable place, sa couleur et sa signification."[36] Color

was considered an important factor in accurate depiction of period, using factual detail to evoke the vivacity of an era, to impart its significance, to paint a believable picture of its people and their ways, both in their similarities to contemporary daily life and in their differences. In historical discourse, accuracy of period detail and historical color were intimately intertwined. Color relied on accurate facts and accurately portrayed incidents but took precedence over them. Accuracy of detail alone could, in fact, be perceived of as inferior to richly drawn color. One reviewer for the *Globe* went so far as to criticize a collection of primary sources for its lack of color.

> Si sa stérile imagination a dépouillé les faits de toute couleur, de toute apparence de vie, sa mémoire, ou ils se sont confusément enregistrés, n'a pu les laisser fuir en dépit d'elle même: il lui reste quelques souvenirs qui ne peuvent entièrement s'étouffer sous l'emphase de ses triviales déclarations, et ces souvenirs sont du plus grand prix.[37]

Another *Globe* review even suggests that the accuracy of dates and individual facts is expendable in a history if the overall color of the work is true.

> Quant à ce que sait tout le monde, peu lui importe de le savoir: qu'il se trompe sur les dates ou les faits des douzième et treizième siècles, ce sont erreurs ou si l'on veut, ignorances dont il faut tenir compte en un écrivain privilégié. Sans doute dans une histoire, à l'usage des enfants, on se garderait de confondre. . . . Il y aurait pédantisme à se souvenir de pareilles choses. Toute l'érudition doit être en renvoi, au bas des pages: ailleurs elle ferait affreuse figure.[38]

The importance of each individual event or detail of period life did not rest in the accuracy of the detail itself but in the way it came together to create an accurate picture of period on the large scale. The image which dominates discourse about historical writing at this time is the picture, the *tableau*, and just as the individual techniques of composition and brushwork are important to the overall success of a painting but do not constitute its primary impression, so accuracy of detail was important to the successful writing of history but only as a tool to accomplish a larger goal. Individual accuracy was, as such, important, but could possibly be expendable, even in the writing of history, if the goal of creating an interesting and believable portrait of the time could still be accomplished while transgressing it.

The novels of Sir Walter Scott, with their proliferation of historical minutiae, were perceived to epitomize the ability to exactly recreate the color of a historical scene through accurate detail, and Scott's novels were often used as examples of this kind of detailed recreation in a debate over whether historians should engage in such recreations.

> [They] gather the material for this from every conceivable source . . . . A motley assortment of details, petty interests, actions of soldiers, private affairs, which have no influence on political interests,—they are incapable [of recognizing] a whole, a general design. [A] series of individual characteristics—as in one of Walter Scott's novels—collected from every quarter . . . which are historically no doubt authentic; yet the main interest [is] in no way clarified [by them], but rather confused, . . . [They ought to] leave this sort of thing to Walter Scott's novels, this detailed portraiture incorporating all the minutiae of the age, in which the deeds and fortunes of a single individual constitute the work's sole futile interest and wholly particular matters are all put forward as equally important; but in works which portray the central interest of states, such particulars of individual lives disappear altogether. Each single trait should be characteristic, and significant for the spirit of the age.[39]

As Hegel's quote suggests, the success of attempts by historians to recreate the past in its detail was disputed. Hegel warns that "the spirit which speaks through them in the words of the author is different from the spirit of the ages he describes. When the historian tries to depict the spirit of bygone times, it is usually his own spirit which makes itself heard." And later, "This is an attempt to transport us completely into the past as something immediate and alive—[which] we [can] no more achieve than can the writer himself; the writer is one of us, he is part of his own world with all its needs and interests, and he honors the same things which it esteems."[40] For Hegel, the recounting of historical events, even carefully and accurately portrayed (including first hand accounts) was inferior to a history interpreted. In this he was not so far from those who advocated tableaux of historical color. Both functioned within the tension between past as other and as part of a universal whole.

There was a great deal of debate and experimentation, in this period, on how to best represent the past for the present and solutions for how to function within the tension between past and present were various. Hegel advocates what he calls "reflective history," a history in which the external world of the present

acts upon and provides meaning for the events of the past.[41] One historical reviewer for *Le Globe* suggests that a historian can exempt him/herself from history, but clearly allows for the mediation of the universal into the particular account through what he calls "eternal reason."

> Hâtons-nous donc de dire, puisque c'est un moderne que nous parlons, qu'il n'est pas, selon nous, nécessaire à la vérité d'un récit historique que ce récit soit uniquement empreint des opinions de l'époque qu'il retrace, et semble en toute chose être l'ouvrage d'une main contemporaine. Ce qui est de rigueur, c'est que la vie des peuples se reproduise dans vos tableaux telle quelle se passait en toute sa réalité; c'est que chacun de ses traits dont vous la figurez soit emprunté aux monuments contemporains, et que rien d'étranger ne vienne altérer ce simple et vrai témoignage d'un siècle sur lui même. Mais, parceque vous serez absent vous-même de vos récits, il ne faut point en exiler avec vous cet autre témoin, sous l'œil duquel se passent nécessairement toutes les choses de ce monde, ce témoin que le chœur représentait si merveilleusement dans la tragédie grecque, . . . et qui, invisible et présent à la fois dans l'histoire, y doit prononcer, non le jugement des vieux âges, non le jugement des âges modernes, mais celui de l'éternelle raison, de l'éternelle justice.[42]

The historian François Guizot, in his *History of Civilization From the Fall of the Roman Empire to the French Revolution*, counters the call for more "fact" in history by co-opting its own discourse and arguing for a broadened view of what constitutes a fact.

> Civilization is a fact like any other—a fact susceptible, like any other, of being studied, described narrated. For some time past, there has been much talk of the necessity of limiting history to the narration of facts: nothing can be more just; but we must always bear in mind that there are far more facts to narrate, and that the facts themselves are far more various in their nature, than people are at first disposed to believe; there are material, visible facts, such as wars, battles, the official acts of governments; there are moral facts, none the less real that they do not appear on the surface; there are individual facts which have denominations of their own; there are general facts,

> without any particular designation, to which it is impossible to assign any precise date, which it is impossible to bring within strict limits, but which are no less facts than the rest, historical facts, facts which we cannot exclude from history without mutilating history.
>
> The very portion of history which we are accustomed to call its philosophy, the relation of events to each other, the connexion which unites them, their causes and effects,—these are all facts, these are all history, just as much as the narratives of battles, and of other material and visible events. Facts of this class are doubtless more difficult to disentangle and explain; we are more liable to error in giving an account of them, and it is no easy thing to give them life and animation, to exhibit them in clear and vivid colours; but this difficulty in no degree changes their nature; they are none the less an essential element of history.[43]

All of these historians were interested not so much in the depiction of a historical event as in its place within the continuous discontinuity of historical time. Scott himself spoke out against pure antiquarianism in his "dedicatory epistle" to the fictional Rev. Dr. Dryasdust which opened his 1817 novel, *Ivanhoe*. Scott's argument relies specifically on the issue of color and interest. "It is necessary, for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners, as well as the language, of the age we live in." He does not believe, however that such a translation necessarily requires a compromise of accuracy because of the common traits which exist between one time and another, "that extensive neutral ground, the large proportion, that is, of manners and sentiments which are common to us and to our ancestors, having been handed down unaltered from them to us, or which, arising out of the principles of our common nature, must have existed alike in either state of society," and because of the universal nature of the human spirit. "The passions, the sources from which these [sentiments and manners] must spring in all their modifications, are generally the same in all ranks and conditions, all countries and ages." In fact, Scott argues that it is the overly antiquarian work, which in its zeal to find difference between one time and another effaces these common traits, which truly deforms history. He alternates such arguments for the faithfulness of his work with claims that, as a creator of fiction, complete accuracy is not his metier. He returns to the metaphor of the picture to advocate a historical fiction which, like a painting, faithfully imitates the nature of a particular landscape but is not required to copy it exactly.[44] As a result, Scott produced a historical fiction

which, as Avram Fleishman notes, "conceived history from the outset as a past that allowed itself to be made present without losing its double character."[45] This double character, in which the past is made present without ever fully losing its otherness was characteristic of the age, and it is this doubling of past and present which underlay the embodiment of history on the Restoration stage.

Those who conceived and created the historical costumes at the *Comédie-Française* were, then, interested in recreating an authentic representation of the past. However, to accept this perceived recreation of the past in terms of later "scientific" notions of history, notions which view the past as a concrete artifact ready to be discovered and reassembled into a preexisting object by the historian, is to misunderstand both the costumes of the French Restoration and the historical philosophy from which they sprung. The Restoration view of history was much more fluid and ambivalent. It wrestled openly with the tensions between past and present, unabashedly exploring the gap between what was and what is. This placement within the tensions, within the gap of history was a crucial aspect of the representation of history on the Restoration stage and in the costumes used within that representation at the *Comédie-Française*. It can be argued that both the neoclassicists before them and the realists after them strove to efface this tension, the neoclassicists by subsuming the divisions of past and present to a notion of universal Nature, the realists by eliminating the perceptible intercession of the present, in the form of the creator, between the viewer and the historical object. The theatre of the French Restoration, however, strove to embrace both past and present simultaneously, to recapture the spirit of past eras and, at the same time, to express the present on a multitude of levels: political, social, emotional, aesthetic, etc. The tension created by this simultaneous evocation of past and present was played out in costumes that strove to represent the past, but not a pure, detached past, a represented past that remained distinct from yet inextricably intertwined with the present.

Notes

1. Among others, see Marvin Carlson, *The French Stage in the Nineteenth Century* (Methuen: Scarecrow, 1972) 29. Also see Collins, *Talma: A Biography of an Actor* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964) 321. For a visual representation of Talma as Sylla, see Barry V. Daniels, *Revolution in the Theatre: French Romantic Theories of the Drama* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1983).

2. Diana De Marly, *Costume on the Stage 1600-1940* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1982) 75.

3. Earl A. Powell, forward to *Hollywood and History: Costume Design in Film* (London: Thames and Hudson; Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1987) 7.

4. R.F. Leslie, *The Age of Transformation, 1789-1871* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1967) 138.

5. Roger Magraw, *France 1815-1914: The Bourgeois Century* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) 36.

6. Leslie 139.

7. Alan Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987) 30.

8. For information on the make-up of the student population in Paris, see Robert Warren Brown, *The Generation of 1820 During the Bourbon Restoration in France: A Biographical and Intellectual Portrait of the First Wave, 1814-1824* (diss., Duke U, 1979) 8-9, and Spitzer 37-55.

9. For a detailed exploration of the notion held by the young generation of the Bourbon era that they were an agent of transition into a new way of thinking and conducting political affairs, see Spitzer and especially Brown.

10. "Men cannot separate their spirits from the events which have strongly disturbed their lives. When a revolution explodes in the world, the generations contemporary to it have as their mission, its triumph, and it is for the generations which follow to explain this triumph." M.A. Thiers, *Histoire de la Révolution Française*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. (Paris: 1828), [B.N. L32a. 137. A.] 2.

11. "I also believe that our generation, that is to say those men who date from the first days of this century, is the most fitting to write the history of the Revolution. We are certainly better for the task of reporter than those who took part. . . . Whatever they do, they will always be advocates for a cause. The young, on the other had, have none of the passions of their fathers." Review of "Histoire de la Révolution Française, par M. Thiers; tome III et IV." *Le Globe* 1.55 (13 Janvier 1825), (Slatkine reprints, 1974): 263.

12. "Had the poet, after making himself a spectator to the drama as it took place in history, gathered to himself its natural and lively impressions; had he thus conceived his work and, simply inspired, placed on the stage each character with his/her real passions and interests; had this sort of magical and true evocation, been joined with the charm of a true poetry, which allows the movement of each dramatic situation to proceed without effort; surely we would have a beautiful tragedy, a work absolutely new, which would be a milestone in our theatre, and upon which we would not be able to heap too much applause." A., "Paris—Première représentation de *Fiesque* tragédie de M. Ancelot." *Le Globe* 1.27 (9 Novembre 1824): 114.

13. See Spitzer 30.

14. Alexandre Duval, preface, *Charles II ou le Labyrinthe de Wodestock* (Paris: 1828), [BN Yth 3049] xxiv-xxxiv.

15. "Today, it is no longer the love of glory which motivates actors; it is no longer the ardent desire to shine on the stage, to capture the preference of the public, but merely love of money." C. Robillon, *Considérations sur l'art dramatique et les comédiens: sur les causes de la décadence des théâtres et les moyens de la prévenir* (Versailles: 1828), [BN YF 12967] 8.

16. "Who for new amusements, consent voluntarily to become part of the people." Duval lviii.

17. "The public has become ruined with the actors; it is no longer composed, as it was, of enlightened devotees, men of letters able to direct the artist, and interested in him for the love of art. Everyone attends the theatre today; and everyone presumes to judge." Pierre Victor (Pierre-Simon Lerebours), "Notice sur l'enterrement de Mlle Raucourt morte le 15 janvier 1815," *Documents pour servir à l'histoire du Théâtre-Français sous la Restauration, ou Recueil des récits publiés de 1815-1830 par Pierre-Victor sur les débats avec l'administration des Menus-Plaisirs, et sur les abus qui ont de plus contribué, pendant cette époque, a la dégradation des théâtres* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1934), [BN Yf 12311] 32.

18. "The monuments of ancient France have a particular character and interest; they belong to an order of ideas and sentiments which are eminently national, and which nevertheless will never return again. They reveal, within their ruins, ruins which are vaster and more frightening to the mind, those of institutions which long supported the monarchy, and for which its fall was the inevitable signal of their fall. There are not only catastrophic for the times written on these abandoned walls; but also

so for history. At the sight of them, all the memories of times gone by reawaken; entire centuries with their manners, their beliefs, their revolutions, the glory of great kings and great captains, seem to reappear in the solitude." Ch. Nodier, J. Taylor, Alph. De Cailleux, *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France*. "Ancienne Normandie" (Paris: 1820), [BNGr. Fol. L15 28] 1.

19. Duncan Forbes, introduction to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1975) xi.

20. Forbes ix.

21. Pardon Tillinghast, *Approaches to History* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1963) 185.

22. Hegel, preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans A.V. Miller, (New York: Oxford UP, 1977) 21.

23. Victor Cousin, *Course of the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. O.W. Wight. 2 vols. (New York: 1853) 79-80.

24. Jacque Derrida, "*Différance*," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982) 17.

25. Derrida, "*Différance*" 13-14.

26. "One cannot, whatever his superiority of spirit, cross the horizon of his own century, and each new era gives to history new points of view and its own particular form." Augustin Thierry, introduction, *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* . . . , 2nd ed., revue, corrigée et augmentée (Paris: 1826), [BN Nb 46.A. (1)] xii.

27. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. Sibree, Tillinghast 203.

28. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister [1955], trans. H.B. Nisbet, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1975) 20.

29. "I dug so deeply into these texts that I dare to suppose that I have left little more to take from them. The national traditions of the least known populations and ancient popular poetry have furnished me with many indications as to the means of existence, the sentiments, and the ideas of men in the diverse times and places where I transport the reader." Thierry xii.

30. Examples of this acceptance of the transparency of historical documents are numerous. For one, see the quote from Thierry.

31. [Moreau d'Orgelaine], *Réflexions sur la pièce de* Henri III et sa cour (Auxerre: 1829), [BN Yf 12810] 2.

32. Dumas, in his memoirs, cites these documents as the source of his work, but their influence is also apparent in the choice of historical events within the work itself. See Dumas, *Mes mémoires* (Paris: Laffont, 1989) 927-29.

33. Sir Walter Scott, dedicatory epistle to *Ivanhoe* (1819; New York: Bantam, 1988) xxii.

34. "In an account of this kind, the author cannot write like everyone: it is to the grand era of the *hôtel de Rambouillet* which he makes himself a contemporary; he must then take on its language." Review of *Le duc de Guise à Naples, ou mémoires sur la révolution de ce royaume en 1647 et 1648. Le Globe* 1.51 (4 Janvier 1825): 244.

35. "Not that this consists of *making*, as they say today, *local color*, that is to say of adding, after the fact, a few crude touches here and there to a whole otherwise perfectly false and conventional. It is not on the surface of the drama that local color must lie, but at the base, even at the heart of the work, from which it flows outward, on its own, naturally, evenly and, so to speak, into every corner of the drama, like the sap which rises from the roots to the very farthest leaf of a tree. The drama must be radically impregnated with this color of the times; it must in some way be in the air of the drama, so that one perceives that in entering there and in leaving one has changed centuries and atmospheres. It requires some study to arrive here, so much the better." Victor Hugo, *Préface de Cromwell* (Paris: Larousse, 1971) 84.

36. "Today it is no longer acceptable to write history for the profit of a single idea. Our century wants it no more; it asks that we teach it everything, that we explain to it the existence of nations at various periods, and that we give each century its truthful place, its color and its

significance." Augustin Thierry, introduction, *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands . . .* , 2nd ed. Revue, corrigée et augmentée (Paris: 1826), [BN Nb46. A. (1)], xii.

37. "If his sterile imagination has stripped the facts of all color, of all appearance of life, his memory, where they are confusedly registered, has been unable to flee in spite of itself: there remain some few memories which have not been entirely smothered under the emphasis of trivial declarations, and these memories are of great value." Review "*Collections des mémoires sur l'histoire des ducs de Bourgogne* (1 er article)." *Le Globe* 1.3 (19 Septembre 1824): 11.

38. "If he is mistaken in his dates and his facts from the twelfth or the thirteenth century, these are errors, or if you like ignorances, which it is necessary to take into account with a privileged writer. No doubt in a history to be used by children one would avoid such confusion . . . it would be pedantism to remember such things. All the erudition must be on the reverse side, at the foot of the page: anywhere else it would be a frightful figure." Review "*Le duc de Guise à Naples, ou Mémoires sur la révolution de ce royaume en 1647 et 1648.*" *Le Globe* 1.51 (4 Janvier 1825): 243.

39. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet, introduction Duncan Forbes, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1975) 19.

40. Hegel, *Lectures* 16-17.

41. 19-20.

42. "Let us hasten to say, since it is a modern of whom we speak, that, for us, it is not necessary to the truth of a historical narrative that this narrative be imprinted with only the opinions of the epoch which it portrays, nor for it to seem in all things to be the work of a contemporary hand. What is required is that the life of the people be reproduced in your scenes just as it happened in all its reality; that each one of the traits you portray be borrowed from contemporary monuments, and that nothing foreign comes to alter this simple and true witness of a century to itself. But just because you yourself will be absent from your narratives, it is not necessary to exile with you this other witness, under the eye of which everything in the world necessarily passes, this witness which the chorus represents so marvelously in Greek tragedy, . . . and which, at once invisible and present in history, must there pronounce, not the judgement of past ages, nor the judgement of modern times, but that of eternal reason, of eternal justice." Review, "*Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne* (1 er article)," *Le Globe* 1.1 (15 Septembre 1824): 12.

43. Guizot, *History of Civilisation From the Fall of the Roman Empire to the French Revolution*, trans. William Hazlitt, 3 vols., *Guizot's Works* (London: George Bell, 1902) 4-5.

44. Scott xix-xxii.

45. Avram Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel, Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1971), cited in Roy Strong, *Recreating the Past: British History and the Victorian Painter* (Thames/Pierpont Morgan, 1978) 30.