

Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée (Eds.)

Representation and Performance
in the Eighteenth Century

LANDAU PARIS STUDIES ON THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

LAPASEC

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Vol. 1

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Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée (Eds.)-

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Introduction

Peter Wagner and Frédéric Ogée

I

Since this is the first volume in the new series entitled Landau Paris Studies on the Eighteenth Century, it seems appropriate to say a few words on the origins and aims of the conferences and the proceedings sharing the same acronym – LAPASEC. Started in the early years of the 21st century by Peter Wagner (Campus Landau, Universität Koblenz-Landau) and Frédéric Ogée (Université Paris 7 – Denis Diderot), the Landau Paris Symposia on the Eighteenth Century are, above all else, a truly European and international venture. Indeed the organizers' wish is to bring together, for yearly intensive seminars, both younger dix-huitièmistes from France and Germany¹ (but also from other European countries) and internationally known scholars in the field of eighteenth-century studies.

One of the aims of LAPASEC is inspired by the opening of Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* of 1768. "They order", says narrator Yorick, "this matter better in France". We never actually learn what it is that the French order better than the English, but Sterne's alter ego provides a witty and deeply humane (English Protestant) view of what we would call the French *mentalité* today – ways of thinking and the common customs governing social intercourse as well as the aesthetics of drama and literature.² From this perspective, LAPASEC has been organized less for the younger to learn from established scholars but rather with the Enlightenment idea of a "société de gens de lettres" providing a forum for the discussion of national and specialist approaches to be presented, discussed and critiqued.

Secondly, inspired by the interdisciplinarity actively promoted for many years by the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, but restricting the number of participants to a small group of selected scholars, the LAPASEC series welcomes researchers from such fields as art history and criticism, history, philosophy, literary criticism and theory, English and other European literatures, and the performing arts (drama and music). Beside the encounter between neighbouring academic cultures, with often different conceptions, or representations, of what the Enlightenment, "les Lumières", or "Die Aufklärung" was about, the idea is to foster the discussion and interdisciplinary exchange of methods, approaches and theories much in the way practiced by Sterne's Yorick in fiction, and, in practice, by the Baron d'Holbach when

1 Frédéric Ogée and Peter Wagner first met when they were invited, as representatives of the younger generations of dix-huitièmistes in their own countries, to take part in the first 'East-West Seminar' organized by the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ISECS) in 1989 and held at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin. The LAPASEC initiative is meant as a continuation of this circulation of ideas.

2 See Ogée (2005).

he emigrated from Edesheim (a village very close to Peter Wagner's university campus) to Paris and provided an open house for Diderot and his friends.

Thirdly, LAPASEC as an international venture with a European basis puts the focus not on topical, biographical or antiquarian subjects but rather on ideologies and aesthetics. If particular symposia have been concerned with fields that might also be approached topically (e.g., the conferences on ruins and the sketch), our focus is on the mentalities and the aesthetics in which these subjects were discussed in the age of Swift, Sterne, Diderot, Lessing, or Austen. Alternating between Université Paris 7 – Denis Diderot and Campus Landau of Universität Koblenz-Landau, the conferences are organized annually. To date, LAPASEC meetings have been held on representation (2003), ruins (2004), performance (2005), and the sketch (2006). Our website provides an additional source of information about the series as such, with details of past meetings and future events: www.uni-landau.de/anglistik/LAPASEC/index.htm.

Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (WVT Trier) have agreed to be partners in the project and publish a selection of papers given at the successive symposia, with the same titles. We are very grateful to Dr. Otto, the publisher, for giving us not only a forum for our enterprise but also the freedom we requested in editorial matters we would not have found elsewhere. The present volume I on *Representation and Performance* collects outstanding contributions to the symposia held in Landau in 2003 and 2005. Volume II will present innovative papers from the symposia in Paris on ruins (2004) and the sketch (2006).

II

Approached through their linguistic and semantic definitions, *Representation* and *Performance* – the focus of attention in this volume – would seem to constitute a deconstructionist's paradise. The two terms refer and relate to each other, suggesting some form of interchangeability. Interestingly, both are often defined by way of supplements, and both point to the problems raised by iteration, repetition, the unsayable and the indescribable.

Let us have a look then, in a first step, at the definitions. In addition to the meanings now obsolete³ or not applying in our context (e.g., its usage in law, economics, and politics) *representation* is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as

- a) an image, likeness, or reproduction in some manner of a thing
- b) a material image of a figure; a reproduction in some material of tangible form; in later use especially a painting or drawing (of a person or thing)
- c) the action or fact of exhibiting in some visible image or form
- d) the fact of expressing or denoting by means of a figure or symbol; symbolic action or exhibition
- e) the exhibition of character and action upon the stage; the (or a) performance of a play
- f) acting, simulation, pretence [marked as "rare"]

3 These obsolete meanings include, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*: 1) presence, bearing, air; b) appearance, impression on the sight.