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# **‘Utopia and Iconicity: Reading Saint-Simonian Texts’**

**Greg Kerr, Ph.D.**

**Lancaster University**

## **Author details**

**Postal:** Dr Greg Kerr, Dept of European Languages and Cultures, Lancaster University,

Lancaster LA1 4YN, United Kingdom

**Tel.:** 00 44 7540498533

**Email:** [g.kerr@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:g.kerr@lancaster.ac.uk)

## **Biographical note**

Greg Kerr is Lecturer in French Studies at Lancaster University. He is the author of the forthcoming monograph *Dream Cities: Utopia and Prose by Poets in Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Legenda, in press).

# Greg Kerr, 'Utopia and Iconicity: Reading Saint-Simonian Texts'

## Abstract

In his study of Thomas More's *Utopia*, Louis Marin identifies a productive discontinuity peculiar to that work. The discontinuity arises from the tension between, on the one hand, the textual objective of delimiting the complex social reality of the egalitarian island state within a given conceptual language and, on the other, the capacity of the reader of More's work to visualize mentally the referential content of that language in the form of an iconic representation, as a map of the island. This article develops the tension identified by Marin between discourse and iconicity by reference to some examples of texts by members of the Saint-Simonian movement, one of the chief currents of 'utopian' socialism in nineteenth-century France.

While Marin's analysis is based on a cartographic conception of the utopian text's iconic elements, however, this article argues that in Saint-Simonian discourse, the iconic function is not supplied by a real or imagined map, but transfers instead to the opaque (typo)graphic support of that discourse. Shapes and patterns are produced by the graphic disposition of signifiers across the page that are surplus to their tacit referential function, but which point to something that Saint-Simonian doctrine cannot yet affirm via the conceptual antithesis of 'matter' and 'spirit' which underpins it.

**Keywords:** Utopia - Icon - Saint-Simonian - Marin - Poster - History



**Figure 1. ‘Saint-Simonien. (Le Père Enfantin) debout de pied, le bras gauche tendu et levé dans un geste oratoire, un personnage en costume de Ménilmontant...’, print on paper, by permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

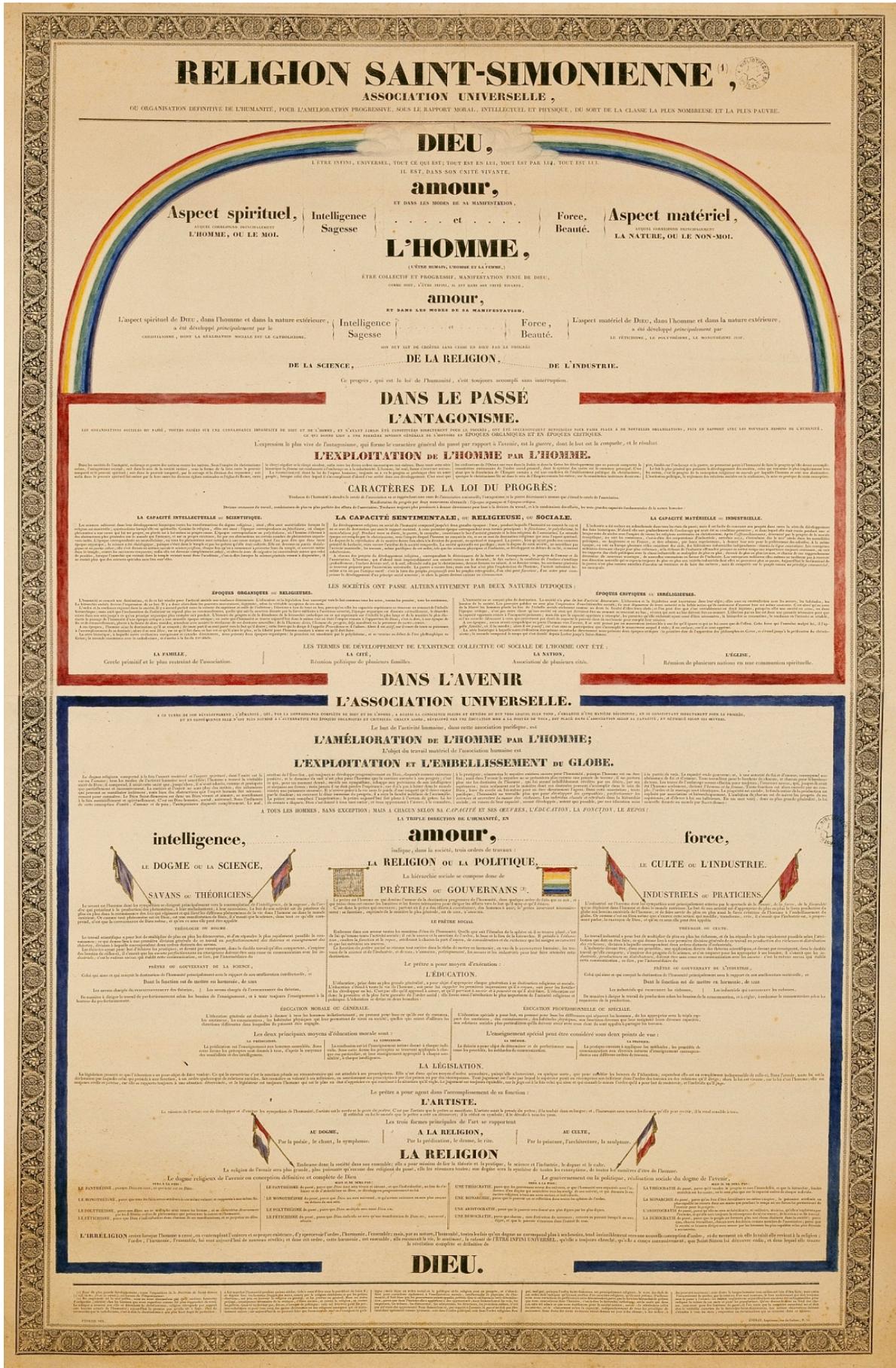


Figure 2. 'Tableau synoptique de la religion saint-simonienne', 1831, poster, 1m x 60cm, by permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Ma vie est INDÉFINIE, UNE et MULTIPLE :

Elle se manifeste { *en moi*  
*bors de moi* } et par

l'union



du *moi* et du *non-moi* ;

Elle se manifeste { matériellement }  
spirituellement } et

AMOUREUSEMENT.

**Figure 3.** Citation from Père Enfantin, *Lettres sur la vie éternelle*, 44-45.

In his landmark study of Thomas More's *Utopia* of 1516, Louis Marin in *Utopiques: jeux d'espace* argues for the existence of a productive discontinuity of the utopian text, one that is grounded in the narrative account of the journey undertaken to the titular island of More's work by the fictional traveller Raphael Hythloday.<sup>1</sup> That discontinuity, Marin argues, emerges as soon as the reader of More's text attempts to form a cartographic representation of the island on the basis of the descriptive raw material supplied by Hythloday's narrative. Marin identifies an absence of continuity between, on the one hand, the geographical relations mentally visualized by the reader as a *map* of the island and, on the other, the actual requirements of the social structures, and forms of political organization and economic activity described by Hythloday. Marin demonstrates that the social, political and economic networks peculiar to Utopia interact in a sophisticated manner 'sans qu'il soit possible d'en trouver l'inscription dans l'espace dont parle le discours'<sup>2</sup>; the reader is thus unable to localize precisely where these interactions occur in the described layout of different quarters of the island's towns, and their associated dining halls and communal gardens. Of those features which are alluded to in the text but which elude localization on the 'map', perhaps the most significant is the marketplace.<sup>3</sup> As Fredric Jameson writes in a comprehensive review of Marin's book, it is the absence of this marketplace which designates, 'that fundamental lack or blind spot in the episteme of the time which is the notion of capitalism itself, and which will only be gradually filled in by the developing political economy of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19th centuries'.<sup>4</sup> In *Utopiques*, Marin sees the emergence of such contradictions as

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Marin, *Utopiques: jeux d'espaces* (Paris: Minuit, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 165 (emphasis mine).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>4</sup> Fredric Jameson, 'Of Islands and Trenches: Naturalization and the Production of Utopian Discourse', *Diacritics*, 7 (1977): 18.

an essential structural characteristic of the genre of utopian writing, one that is supplementary to the conceptual framework which is explicitly elaborated in the text:

L'utopie ne construit pas le concept, ne construit pas la théorie ; mais elle construit la scène, l'espace de représentation qui est en quelque sorte le schématisme correspondant à la construction du concept, mais aveugle. Elle construit un espace (*l'espace dans le texte*) sous forme de lieux articulés, lieux qui sont ceux dont parle le discours. Mais cet espace-construit-dans-le-texte laisse apparaître à l'analyse des « zones blanches », sorte de *terrae incognitae* qui ne trouvent pas leur manifestation sémantique dans le discours utopique, *dans l'espace-du-texte*, sinon de façon déplacée ou condensée, sous forme figurative. Ces espaces blancs de la *carte* utopique que le discours utopique signifie aveuglément, sont en quelque sorte les lieux de concepts théoriques impensables dans les formes où ils seront ultérieurement pensés. Aussi l'analyse comparative des différences qui animent l'espace utopique, dans le texte et du texte, conduit-elle à la formulation des conditions historiques de possibilité de la théorie.<sup>5</sup>

This disruption of the text's formal serenity by its internal contradictions is a process which Marin terms neutralization. The space opened by neutralization within the blind spots produced by the discourse of the text in turn becomes the site of what Marin terms the text's *figure*, that is, a form of projection which lacks the 'depth' of given concepts vehiculated by the text but which points to what is excluded or absent from its contemporary historical or social reality; this is the unknown terrain through which the utopian text projects an itinerary. The processes of neutralization and figuration point, for Marin, to the most abiding and, in effect, utopian characteristic of More's text, namely that of intimating through its internal disjunctures what *cannot be conceptualized* in the current order of things.

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<sup>5</sup> Marin, *Utopiques*, 165.

This article will assess the potential relevance of Marin's insights to an understanding of the relationship between the verbal and the visual in the discourse of Saint-Simonianism, a nineteenth-century progressive movement typically cited in accounts of utopian thought in the modern period. The alignment of a set of insights derived from an analysis of More's classical utopia with a body of writing belonging instead to what might be referred to as utopian social theory presents some potential obstacles which are worthy of mention: firstly, the literary quality of More's *Utopia* shares little generic similarity with the primarily doctrinal character of Saint-Simonian discourse. Moreover, while More's vision is secured to an image of an autonomous island state, in texts such as the *Exposition de la doctrine* and the *Livre nouveau*, Saint-Simonian authors expressed reluctance to invoke the cartographic imaginary peculiar to the classical literary utopia.<sup>6</sup> Although images of harmonious urban settlements are frequent in the writings of Saint-Simonian authors such as Charles Duveyrier, as we shall see, Saint-Simonian authors insinuate that these are set forth not as totalizing or perfected conceptions of a world in miniature but as examples of *prévision sympathique*: galvanizing models intended to enthuse and excite the sympathies of all social classes to advances in science, art and industry. This is one of the principal objectives served by the sprawling doctrinal enterprise of Claude Henri de Saint-Simon and his acolytes the Saint-Simonians, who reformulated and expanded upon his foundational texts.<sup>7</sup> Particular to Saint-

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that this aversion to the 'map' is not typical of all utopian movements at this time. In Étienne Cabet's narrative *Voyage en Icarie*, for instance, the traveller William Carisdall inspects the communitarian city of Icaria, a rationally organized settlement in the form of a circle: Étienne Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie*, pref. Jacques Attali (Paris: Bureau du Populaire, 1848; Paris: Dalloz, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> After his death in 1825, it was his followers the Saint-Simonians who undertook to disseminate Saint-Simon's doctrine, imparting to it a dogmatic religious quality. This Saint-Simonian 'religion' was to be commanded by a sect of visionary priests. In February 1831 (prior to their split in November of that year), the most senior such hieratic figures in the Saint-Simonian movement were the two *Pères Suprêmes* of the movement, Pierre Saint-

Simonian doctrine is a vision of history as a purposive, unfolding process between ‘organic’ and ‘critical’ epochs (the former characterized by the kind of social and religious cohesion present in the medieval world, the latter by nonconformity and dissent, as represented by the philosophy of the Enlightenment).<sup>8</sup> To understand the reasons for the structural transition from one such epoch to the next was to grasp their latent imbrication and to deduce the subsequent course of History.<sup>9</sup> The importance placed on the incompleteness and fluidity of historical process therefore prompted the Saint-Simonians to distance themselves from the comparatively static, classical model of utopia present, for instance, in More’s text. As the 1831 text *Mission saint-simoniennne* states:

Pour le moment, nous ne voulons pas, nous ne pouvons pas donner ce qu’on appelle si vulgairement et si mal à propos nos moyens d’application ; c’est-à-dire, LE PLAN MODÈLE d’une ville ou d’un village, le PANORAMA détaillé de l’association universelle. Aux hommes qui s’arrêtent aux petits

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Amand Bazard and Barthélémy-Prospér Enfantin. Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon’s own works are collected in a six-volume *Œuvres* (Paris: Anthropos, 1966), while the text *Doctrine de Saint-Simon. Exposition. Première année, 1829* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1924), edited by Célestin Bouglé and Élie Halévy, marks one of the most important early attempts by his followers to elaborate the significance of the foregoing works. As the texts which feature in the Anthropos edition of Saint-Simon’s work are paginated separately, it will be necessary here to indicate precisely the text referred to by a system of initials.

<sup>8</sup> On this theme, see: Henri Desroche, ‘Notes sur quelques fragments d’Utopie’, *Communications*, 25 (1976) : 128-137.

<sup>9</sup> This emphasis on historical process in Saint-Simonian writing is of course analogous to the strongly teleological focus of the nineteenth-century historiographical imaginary more generally. Göran Blix notes that a refinement of the notion of historical *period* occurs in the philosophies of history specific to French Romanticism; Blix remarks the existence of a ‘homogenizing thrust’ in the writings of Jules Michelet and Ernest Renan, according to which ‘selected blocks of time, in principle arbitrary, were totalized as whole, organic, and internally coherent entities - zones bounded in time as countries were in space’. Göran Blix, ‘Charting the “Transitional Period”: The Emergence of Modern Time in the Nineteenth Century’, *History and Theory*, 45 (2006): 52.

détails de pratique, nous disons que leur temps n'est pas venu encore. A tous nous montrons que faire un *plan-devis* à l'avance, ce serait se mettre dans la nécessité de torturer le monde extérieur pour le plier à nous, torture qui serait encore inutile et impuissante. [...] nous avons un autre principe encore, c'est celui du PROGRÈS, de la *transformation graduelle* ; ce principe nous fait un devoir de tenir compte des *temps*, des *lieux* et des HOMMES. Harmoniser les sentimens, les idées et les intérêts de chacun avec le but que nous voulons atteindre, voilà toute notre *politique*.<sup>10</sup>

Given their opposition to a 'fixed' image (consistent, for instance, with a constitutional model of society), Saint-Simonian authors are thus more concerned with eliciting latent patterns of change as they emerge 'organically' within existing historical conditions and with harmonizing these towards affective, intellectual and economic consensus among distinct social groupings. This is the triumphant synthesis of human experience invoked in the term *association universelle* whose advent would be assured by the construction of canals, railways and other *grands travaux* conducive to social harmony. Yet Saint-Simonian authors were not satisfied that rational projections of this new society would be sufficient to engage the attachments and sympathies of a differentiated population; let us at this point consider two citations, by the leader of the movement following the death of Saint-Simon, Barthélemy-Prosper Enfantin, and his disciple, Charles Lambert, respectively:

Pour que ces **PROJETS** de TRAVAUX fussent susceptibles de réalisation, il faudrait en effet que la **CONCEPTION** fût de nature à se TRADUIRE en un MODÈLE CAPITAL, servant d'*exemple* et fournissant une INSPIRATION continuelle par le

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<sup>10</sup> *Mission saint-simonienne: réponse à quelques objections sur le principe fondamental de la politique saint-simonienne: « A chacun selon sa capacité ; à chaque capacité selon ses œuvres »* (Strasbourg: Imprimerie de Ve Silbermann, 1831), 15.

CULTE dont il serait environné, pour tous les TRAVAUX dont ce modèle serait le SYMBOLE.<sup>11</sup>

Tous nos projets de construction n'étaient que des avertissemens que nous donnions au monde. Mais tout plan, possible à réaliser, exige l'exemple ou le modèle. La *capitale* est le modèle. C'est le point d'où part tout avenir de construction sur le globe.<sup>12</sup>

Both of the above citations point to the operation of a distinction between *plan* and *modèle*. While the *plan* is assimilated to a purely rational conception, the *modèle* has a more tangible, material presence to the senses. The Saint-Simonians had thus perceived the need to attempt to bridge the gap between the conceptual tautness of a rational design and the need to secure the sensory involvement of the viewer. As the first citation suggests, the *modèle* must solicit the viewer's engagement through the ritualization of affect and sensory experience (by means of a 'culte'). It is in this perspective that we can understand the group's enthusiasm for popular entertainments such as the panorama and the elaborate ceremonials which punctuated its collective 'retreat' at a house at Ménilmontant (the latter also offering a source of inspiration for poems by Charles Duveyrier and Michel Chevalier).<sup>13</sup> The amalgam to differing degrees of light, movement, sound and colour in these privileged cultural expressions reflects a preference within Saint-Simonian aesthetic thought for the combination

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<sup>11</sup> Émile Barrault, Michel Chevalier and others, *Le Livre nouveau des Saint-Simoniens*, ed. Philippe Régnier (Tusson: Éditions du Lérot, 1991), 81.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the panorama in the Saint-Simonian newspaper *Le Globe*, see: 'Le Salon', *Le Globe*, 12 May 1831. The reader may also consult the poems 'Le Temple' by Chevalier and 'La Ville nouvelle ou le Paris des Saint-Simoniens' by Duveyrier in Philippe Régnier's edition of *Le Livre nouveau*.

of ‘varied media in a unified whole’ which would appeal simultaneously to cognitive and affective facets of the spectator’s sensibility.<sup>14</sup>

It might therefore be tempting to suggest that Saint-Simonian discourse migrates definitively away from the ‘map’ and the iconic function which the map supports in classical utopian discourse. Yet the present article argues that, in the examples of Saint-Simonian discourse under consideration here, this iconic quality is indeed not supplied by a real or imagined map, but transfers instead to the opaque material support of that discourse whose (typo)graphic elements present a locus of figuration for what remains undisclosed within it. Thus, shapes and patterns are produced by the disposition of elements of this discourse across the page that are in effect surplus to their tacit referential function within Saint-Simonian doctrine, and which, considered from an iconic point of view, point to something that is as yet unthought within the framework of the text. In *Utopiques*, Marin asserts that: ‘[Le discours utopique] met en scène ou *donne à voir* une solution imaginaire, ou plutôt fictive, des contradictions: il est le simulacre de la synthèse’.<sup>15</sup> The aim of this article is to show that the mobilization of typographic resource in Saint-Simonian discourse serves to produce that surplus of the *seeable* over the *sayable* which Marin sees as inherent to the process of figuration within the utopian text. While this surplus is brought about in a manner ancillary to

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<sup>14</sup> Neil McWilliam, *Dreams of Happiness: Social Art and the French Left, 1830-1850* (Chichester: Princeton, 1993), 137. As Miguel Abensour writes: ‘Jusqu’à un certain point, l’originalité de la propagande saint-simonienne – la prédominance de la parole sur l’écrit, le recours à la musique, à la chanson, à une atmosphère festive, la volonté intense de théâtralisation avec le jeu permanent exercé sur la sensibilité par le vêtement, le symbolisme des couleurs, etc. – participe de cette entreprise de passionner les masses en leur offrant *in vivo* des tableaux destinés à satisfaire, dans un ensemble rituel, les aspirations à une nouvelle communauté, au-delà de l’égoïsme, au-delà de la division qui déchire la nouvelle société industrielle’. Miguel Abensour, *Utopiques: Tome 2, L’Homme est un animal utopique* (Arles: Éditions de la Nuit, 2010), 144.

<sup>15</sup> Marin, *Utopiques*, 9 (emphasis mine).

the explicit concerns of Saint-Simonian theory, it can nonetheless be said to open up a productive space within its midst.

### **‘Accent’ and monumentality**

Early examples of unconventional typographical compositions are present in the *oeuvre* of Saint-Simon himself. In his 1808 volume *Introduction aux travaux scientifiques du dix-neuvième siècle*, there are numerous instances of capitalization, repeated italicizations and a tendency to place successive sentences on consecutive lines:

L’UNIVERS est un espace rempli de matière.

La matière existe sous deux formes: forme solide, forme fluide.

La quantité de fluide est égale à celle des solides.

Les molécules de la matière se constituent alternativement en état de solidité et en état de fluidité.

Tous les phénomènes sont des effets de la lutte existante entre les solides et les fluides.<sup>16</sup>

Christophe Prochasson notes that these typographic features are of a piece with their author’s brisk formulations and impassioned, unequal argumentation.<sup>17</sup> Such peculiarities are more frequent and elaborate in the writings of the Saint-Simonians themselves, although there appears to be little in the way of substantial theorization of typographic practice within Saint-Simonian doctrine. Nonetheless, a distinctive conception of the place of language in the

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<sup>16</sup> Saint-Simon, *Œuvres*, VI, *ITS*, 122.

<sup>17</sup> ‘La typographie elle-même [...] traduit les élans de l’auteur. Des changements de corps se présentent à la manière de cris qui expriment l’indignation ou la radicale nouveauté du propos. Huit corps d’imprimerie sont utilisés dans un titre figurant dans la *Ire opinion des industriels !*’, Christophe Prochasson, *Saint-Simon ou l’anti-Marx: figures du saint-simonisme français: XIXe – XXe siècles* (Paris: Perrin, 2005), 85.

doctrine is set forth in the *Livre nouveau des Saint-Simoniens*, a manuscript intended to serve as a synthesis of human knowledge in a variety of domains incorporating architecture, physiology, philology and literary history. Composed during the Saint-Simoniens' collective 'retreat' at Ménilmontant in 1832, the *Livre nouveau* features in one of its sections a discussion of the history of world languages. In the section entitled 'La Grammaire', Enfantin distinguishes between what he refers to as 'materialist' and 'spiritualist' languages, before claiming that the new Saint-Simonian language will be 'l'HARMONIE de ces deux formes'.<sup>18</sup> Enfantin's claims here correspond broadly to a central concern of the doctrine of the Saint-Simoniens according to which sensory experience and the intellect – or 'matter' and 'spirit' – have become estranged from each other under the influence of the Christian tradition. Prior to the rise of Christianity, the different religions of the world had emphasized the physical, material context of human existence; Christianity, however, exalted the spiritual and contemplative life, calling for believers to renounce fleshly experience. 'Christian' language is, for Enfantin, characterised by purity and austerity, but at the expense of the supposedly more physically tangible modes of speech present in pagan or polytheist traditions belonging to the 'materialist' group. Enfantin thus envisages the emergence of a 'verbe sacerdotal', a universal idiom capable of effecting a historical synthesis of matter and spirit and to which, he claims, the French language most successfully approximates.<sup>19</sup> One of the foremost features of this new language will be its 'accent', a particular stress pattern defined rather imprecisely by Enfantin as 'l'expression de la VIE, de l'ÂME'.<sup>20</sup> This new

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<sup>18</sup> Barrault and others, *Livre nouveau*, 84.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 103. On the group's linguistic theories more generally, see: Jean-Michel Gouvard, 'Le problème du langage dans *Le Livre nouveau des saint-simoniens*', in *Études saint-simoniennes*, ed. Philippe Régnier (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2002), 61-92.

‘accent’ would be capable of inflecting the symbolic import of selected concepts in the discourse of the speaker by phonetic means, but Enfantin also envisaged that it could be incorporated into written discourse:

Cet ACCENT, j’ai dès longtemps cherché à l’indiquer par les soulignages dont je vous ai donné l’exemple; mais vous en trouverez dans les pages du LIVRE NOUVEAU les notations diverses plus irrécusablement appliquées aux termes de la *pensée*, aux mots de l’*action*, à la langue COMMUNIANTE. Il faudra bien qu’un jour ces signes écrits se reproduisent avec leur diversité dans la prononciation. Les *docteurs*, qui dans l’avenir enseigneront comment on doit parler, façonneront l’oreille à ces inflexions; la parole du PRÊTRE sera l’enseignement vivant; et alors la langue parlée sera RELIGIEUSE.<sup>21</sup>

Enfantin here anticipates the emergence of a language capable of conveying specific patterns of stress, even imagining an army of academics whose responsibility it would be to shape the oral expression of this new language to the ideological requirements of Saint-Simonian doctrine. In his introduction to the *Livre nouveau*, Philippe Régnier attempts to account for the significance of the system of recurrent underlinings to which Enfantin alludes. He notes that while terms linked to the Saint-Simonian conception of ‘materiality’ such as ‘paganisme’ or ‘action’ are underlined once in these manuscripts, a single line also appears above others conveying ‘spirituality’ (such as ‘christianisme’ and ‘pensée’). Régnier writes: ‘En règle générale, ce qui relève de l’ordre du spirituel est chapeauté, alors que l’ordre du matériel se trouve souligné par des soulignages multiples’.<sup>22</sup> In Régnier’s published version of the *Livre nouveau*, these cursive peculiarities are conveyed through a combination of capitalization,

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<sup>21</sup> Barrault and others, *Livre nouveau*, 103.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

bold face and italics of the kind present in the above citation. This seems broadly to tally with the movement's own contemporary typographic practice which can have observed in published works such as the *Exposition de la doctrine* and *Mission saint-simonienne*. Thus, where distinctive typographic dispositions of this kind appear, they possess a performative character, providing a visual differentiation between key terms that is underpinned by the conceptual antithesis of the material and the spiritual, and thereby affirming the central authority of the doctrine.

Connected with the role of typography in underlining doctrinal authority is another recurrent aspect of the textual and visual culture of the movement: its emphasis on the monumental. The earlier citations from the *Mission saint-simonienne* and *Livre nouveau* have already shown us how monumentality can be articulated in a typographic sense through patterns of capitalization. An exaggerated emphasis on prodigious scale can also be observed in the group's rhetoric, as in the following passage from the *Livre nouveau*:

Le Pic du Midi est deux mille fois plus haut que le plus orgueilleux des conquérans ;  
le Mont-Blanc est plus haut que le Pic du Midi ; l'Himalaya est plus haut que le  
Mont-Blanc ; celui qui vient au nom de Dieu pour associer les hommes, afin qu'ils  
s'aiment, travaillent et s'instruisent, est plus haut devant Dieu que devant  
l'Himalaya.<sup>23</sup>

Here, the Saint-Simonian disciple is presented as a larger than life presence, as colossal in stature as the greatest mountain ranges.<sup>24</sup> Similar examples of this kind can be found in contemporary representations of members of the movement, as for instance in an image of

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>24</sup> Likewise, in Charles Duveyrier's poem 'La Ville nouvelle ou le Paris des Saint-Simoniens', an androgynous giant stands at the centre of the future city.

Enfantin sporting the famous Saint-Simonian *habit* (Figure 1). *Effet de perspective* or not, in this image, Enfantin appears to tower over a fellow Saint-Simonian standing to his rear, and in this way the depiction very much conforms to the self-aggrandizing character of the rhetoric of the Saint-Simonian leader, that self-styled ‘Père de l’humanité’. Considered together, this exaggerated stress on the monumental can arguably be related to a desire to convey the singular, exemplary character of the *modèle*. It seems intended to intimate an almost tangible presence of the object and to underscore the primacy of the movement’s hieratic leadership.

### **Reading History in the ‘Tableau Synoptique’**

Given the apparent continuity of the movement’s attention to both the sensory and cognitive aspects of the public’s encounter with their ideas, we may wonder where it is possible to ‘locate’ in Saint-Simonian texts that particular disjuncture of the iconic and the semantic which Marin sees as a structural characteristic of utopian writing. It is clear from the foregoing consideration of their theoretical concerns that the Saint-Simoniens sought to set in place a seamless interrelation between the content of the doctrine and the ways in which this would be assimilated by those who encounter it. And yet that continuity arguably does not map straightforwardly on to the experience of *reading* these texts. Returning to Enfantin’s system of underlinings in the *Livre nouveau*, it is important to note that he does not view these innovations in writing as originating in some previously undisclosed iconic or material properties of the printed or written word. Rather, his interest is primarily in their status as transcriptions of ‘accent’ and in their potential to articulate the imposing physical and declamatory presence of the Saint-Simonian orator in whose speech they originate. In this, they are intended to achieve the same effect as the monumentalizing strategies present

elsewhere in the movement's literature and iconography. The fact that this theory does not account for the material character of writing may be considered paradoxical in view of the movement's promised 'rehabilitation of matter', but it is characteristic of prevailing conceptions of linguistics in the period. In the latter, written signs were viewed exclusively in terms of their phonetic (rather than graphic) qualities.<sup>25</sup>

To examine the effects of this particular oversight of the theory, we may examine in detail an example of Saint-Simonian iconography dating from the July Monarchy, commonly referred to as a 'Tableau synoptique de la religion saint-simonienne' and dated February 1831 (Figure 2). This *tableau*, measuring 1m by 60 cm, can be found in the Fonds Enfantin at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, and has been reproduced in Henri D'Allemagne's major study of the Saint-Simonian movement *Les Saint-Simoniens 1827-1837*, but few indicators exist as to the identity of the author or the conditions of its publication. Nonetheless, the present article understands the document in question as an example of the *affiche d'intérieur*. The format and rational, vertical disposition of information tend to identify it as an *affiche*, and the fact that it was printed in large quantities and offered for sale alongside conventional Saint-Simonian publications such as pamphlets and books would suggest that it was destined primarily for consultation in the home or in other enclosed spaces.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Johana Drucker writes: 'A phonological bias existed in nineteenth-century linguistics, and those aspects of the study of language which were firmly related to writing as a visual medium were systematically excluded. Linguistics did not merely privilege the phonemic, phonetic, acoustic, and articulatory aspects of language, it did everything possible to ensure that the visual support of language was unacknowledged, unnamed, in short, invisible'. Johana Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 16.

<sup>26</sup> Contemporary testimonies seem to confirm this form of usage: the socialist magistrate Joseph Rey sought a copy of the 'Tableau' from the Saint-Simonian Charles Lemonnier 'qu'il [voulait] placer dans son cabinet « comme agent provocateur de questions de la part des personnes qui viendront chez lui pour toute autre

On a semantic level, the poster offers a textual narrative of the advance of humanity across successive historical epochs as it progresses towards a triumphant synthesis of human experience, referred to as *l'association universelle*. One of the first aspects of the poster which the viewer remarks is the prominence awarded to the signifier 'DIEU', a word which appears twice, bookending the content of the text. This God figure is invoked at moments in Saint-Simonian doctrine where a relationship of complementarity is posited between antithetical concepts. In the poster here, for instance, a vertical axis proceeding downwards from the right of the image links man's 'Aspect matériel' to the materializing practice of industrialists; while on the left side it is the 'Aspect spirituel' which is associated with the 'savant' or theorist, specialists in abstracted knowledge. While in this case, the text is organized around a series of binary oppositions: 'passé'/'avenir', 'spirituel'/'matériel', 'intelligence'/'force' or 'antagonisme'/'association universelle', elsewhere in Saint-Simonian iconography, images of androgyny are frequent, notably in the sketches of the lithographer Philippe-Joseph Machereau. The Saint-Simonian God, then, is a synthetic conception pervading human culture on both a spiritual and material level, and invoked at points where such binaries form, what Neil McWilliam calls, 'an epistemological union capable of transforming human relations and ameliorating material conditions'.<sup>27</sup> Through the

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affaire»: *Bulletin de la Société Dauphinoise d'Ethnologie et d'Archéologie*, 14 (1907), 85. The 'Tableau synoptique' features among the list of Saint-Simonian publications offered for sale on the rear cover of the text *Communion Générale De La Famille Saint-Simonienne* (Paris: L'Organisateur, 1831), and is priced at 3 francs. The Saint-Simonian Henri Fournel furthermore records that 3000 copies were printed for sale: Henri Fournel, *Bibliographie Saint-Simonienne: De 1802 au 31 décembre 1832* (Paris: Alexandre Johanneau, 1833), 124. A portion of a less elaborate version of the same poster, with an identical text but lacking all the graphic elements (with the exception of the frame) is reproduced in Pierre Noriey, 'Le Saint-Simonisme et l'image', *Arts et Métiers graphiques*, 58 (1937): 38.

<sup>27</sup> McWilliam, *Dreams of Happiness*, 75.

intermediary of the *prêtres* who, significantly, are accorded a space on the vertical axis near the centre of the image, the Saint-Simonian God thus represents a purposive force of harmonization. As we read in a note contained in a dense passage of text in one of the columns:

Le fait le plus général que présente le développement des sociétés, celui qui renferme le plus implicitement tous les autres, c'est la progression de la conception religieuse ou morale par laquelle l'homme se sent une *destination*.

The authoritative and socially harmonizing function occupied by the *prêtre* is explicated further in another note:

Le prêtre est l'homme en qui domine l'amour de la destination progressive de l'humanité, dans quelque ordre de faits que ce soit, et qui puise dans cet amour les lumières et les forces nécessaires pour diriger les efforts vers le but qu'il aime et qu'il désire. C'est donc le prêtre qui GOUVERNE, partout où il y a des efforts à *coordonner*, des hommes à *unir*, le prêtre intervient nécessairement: sa fonction, de la manière la plus générale, est de LIER, d'ASSOCIER.

The downward thrust of the image, intimated by the receding line lengths and the distribution of space near the base around the bold figure of 'L'Artiste' indicates the pivotal function occupied by this figure in Saint-Simonian theory. Column notes also tell us that it is the artist who is in turn the intermediary of the priest:

L'artiste saisit la pensée du prêtre ; il la traduit dans sa langue, et, l'incarnant sous toutes les formes qu'elle peut revêtir, il la rend sensible à tous.<sup>28</sup>

Art, by consequence, has the historical mission of encoding and disseminating the content of the movement's doctrine in a sensually appealing form. Saint-Simonian writers thus projected

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<sup>28</sup> The same wording as this portion of the poster is found in the 'dixième séance' of the text *Doctrine de Saint-Simon. Exposition. 2me année – 1829-1830* (Paris: Au bureau de l'Organisateur et du Globe, 1830), 126.

the emergence of future forms of cultural expression which would serve this purpose: mixed media such as the panorama or poster could be viewed as achieving precisely that aim. It follows that given its status as a ‘*tableau synoptique*’, the relationships between different elements of the historical advent of *l’association universelle* in the poster under consideration here can be articulated graphically. Indeed, the variation of typefaces and format immediately heighten the reader’s visual and spatial apprehension of the discourse contained therein. The poster format seems ideally suited to the Saint-Simonians’ purpose because it offers the opportunity to perform visually a hierarchization of concepts and to articulate the links between them.

In the terms connoted by the narrative, text and image should therefore enter into complementarity, and to a certain extent, the wave-like flow of text does intimate the progressive historical logic and mutual imbrication of past and future. The intricate frame which borders the poster announces its status as an image-text, and there is a clear pattern of iconization of certain concepts and phrases, especially within the rainbow outer edge which frames the upper portion of the text (and produces a resemblance with a stained glass window, thus adding further to the sanctified impression which is sought). Similarly, the flags and colours signal transitions between groups of concepts. All this tends to suggest that the poster is an object which can be both looked at *and* read, or rather, where the horizons of the textual and the visual intersect in a manner mirroring the *signified* ideal of complementarity present throughout the poster.

In a recent study of the rhetoric of the modern poster, David Scott describes a gradual movement in poster design across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries according to which ‘visual elements begin to organize themselves according to an essentially textual logic (linear and syntactical) while the textual elements in their turn become more spatial and pictorial in

their organization'.<sup>29</sup> What is striking about this text is that although it attempts to achieve the effect on the same page of both a doctrinal tract and a poster, it fails to achieve such complementarity in formal terms. While it is billed as a *synoptic* or visually totalizing representation, not least because of the bewildering number of font sizes, the eye cannot embrace this *tableau* of historical process in its totality. Simply put, there is *too much* textual matter for the horizons of reading and seeing, of image and text, to intersect meaningfully, and the reader finds himself or herself looking at, rather than reading, dense blocks of text in minute font. That the explicit authorial intention underlying this poster is above all a didactic one of encoding the content of the movement's doctrine is clear from the fact that the title 'RELIGION SAINT-SIMONIENNE' and another sentence are footnoted in the manner of a scholarly article. Moreover, the words which are most obviously demarcated from the rest of the text, and set apart by large font sizes, bold face or capitalizations ('DIEU', 'amour', 'L'HOMME', etc.) are very often followed by a comma or full stop, suggesting that the spatialization of the text is not intended to produce graphic autonomy but that these signifiers are still viewed as possessing a syntactical function which supports the poster's narrative. In the context of this effort towards total transparency of discourse, the poster's typographic elements thus paradoxically constitute a point of opacity, for there is a tension internal to this image-text which cannot be harmonized by the ideology of complementarity supplied by the narrative, nor by the theoretical reconciliation of matter and spirit.<sup>30</sup> A disjuncture thus emerges in the poster between, on the one hand, the compulsion to preserve syntactical

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<sup>29</sup> David Scott, *Poetics Of The Poster: The Rhetoric of Image-Text* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 13.

<sup>30</sup> As Drucker notes: 'The notion of linguistic transparency implies *immateriality*, that which is insignificant in its materiality, to which nothing of linguistic value is contributed by the form of the written inscription which serves merely to offer up the "words" in as pure and unmediated a form as possible', Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 14.

continuity and integrate the units of the narrative and, on the other, the comparatively more wayward disposition and isolation of individual signifying elements of that narrative in the typographic arrangement of the page.



The tension is most acutely manifest if we are to look at the above words. The bold face and monumental font size by comparison with the vast majority of other characters on the page effectively serve to abstract these signifiers from the discourse to which they belong rather than functioning to naturalize their signified content. This is all the more so by virtue of the fact that they are not injunctions, nor are they subtitles or titles. In short, they produce no narrative function of their own but have a heavily indexical presence which paradoxically interrupts the syntactical continuity of the narrative. This *failure* of the poster to fully evolve a pictorial or iconic logic of a piece with its syntactical or symbolic one, can nonetheless be seen as the assertion of a kind of potential.

### **Iconicity and Utopian Surplus**

Once the tension it introduces between the graphic and the syntactical has been exhausted, the spatialization of the narrative invests signifiers such as '**amour**', '**L'HOMME**', '**force**', '**intelligence**' and '**Beauté**' with a residual or surplus iconicity which incites the viewer to

project meaning on to them. To appreciate the effect of this, let us consider another Saint-Simonian text, not, this time, a didactic poster, but a correspondence between Enfantin and his disciple Charles Duveyrier, on the theme of eternal life.

In a letter from Enfantin to Duveyrier dating from June 1830, Enfantin, in customary esoteric and self-aggrandizing form, sets forth a theory according to which his own life belongs to an endless chain linking his present state, by stages, to past and future selves:

Enfantin qui naît et qui meurt n'est donc que la manifestation dans le *temps* et dans l'*espace* de l'Enfantin ÉTERNEL. Mais l'Enfantin ÉTERNEL contient *toutes* ses manifestations ; aucune d'elles ne saurait donc être ANÉANTIE. Cette manifestation de 1830 *sera* donc toujours.<sup>31</sup>

Successive generations of individuals are linked, not by familial or biological ties, but through words and acts which articulate an *amour* built on empathy and solidarity, and which is expressive of the perennial nature of the Saint-Simonian divinity. It is in this perspective that Enfantin makes the outlandish claims that he is inhabited by Saint Paul and that he was virtually present in the life of the biblical apostle, or that 'C'est PAR moi que Saint-Simon marche vers Dieu, car *je* suis, en vérité, *ce que* DIEU a voulu que fût éternellement Saint-Simon, le père de tous les hommes'.<sup>32</sup> Just as the life of the individual is to be understood teleologically in terms of the connections between posited past, present and future manifestations of the self, in its manifestation within present society, Enfantin argues in one particular citation that the individual has no a priori status, no veritable existence outside of its connection to other individuals (Figure 3).

Notable in Figure 3 is Enfantin's understanding of human life, not in terms of a discrete individuality which opposes the one and the many, but as a relational term in which the life of the individual and the *non-moi* (here assimilated to everything that is not of the

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<sup>31</sup> Père Enfantin, *Lettres sur la vie éternelle*, pref. Antoine Picon (Paris: Corridor bleu, 2004), 41.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60, 50.

nature of the self) inter-penstrate.<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that what is ‘en moi’ here does not designate a psychic interiority, but is assimilated either to the rational conceptions which originate in the mind of the subject or to the subject’s assimilation of the material world (through touch and other forms of sensory experience).

More striking still, however, is the graphic arrangement of signifiers on the page in the above citation, opening the text to a perception which does not strictly belong to the

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<sup>33</sup> What will undoubtedly strike the reader familiar with French poetry of the nineteenth century is how curiously prescient *Enfantin*’s vision turns out to be. This is by dint of its consonance with some of the more arresting formulations which appear in Charles Baudelaire’s celebrated essay *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* some thirty years later (circa 1859). Inspired by the sketch artist Constantin Guys, the *flâneur* or ‘observateur passionné’ of modern life is evoked in euphoric terms in Baudelaire’s essay as an ‘amoureux de la vie universelle’ and a ‘moi insatiable du non-moi’: ‘Ainsi l’amoureux de la vie universelle entre dans la foule comme dans un immense réservoir d’électricité. On peut aussi le comparer, lui, à un miroir aussi immense que cette foule; à un kaléidoscope doué de conscience, qui, à chacun de ses mouvements, représente la vie multiple et la grâce mouvante de tous les éléments de la vie. C’est un moi insatiable du non-moi, qui, à chaque instant, le rend et l’exprime en images plus vivantes que la vie elle-même, toujours instable et fugitive’, Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1975-76), 2: 692. If we are to consider *Enfantin*’s letter and Baudelaire’s essay alongside each other, a kind of convergence here seems to be produced between utopian and poetic discourses in respect of what both view as a non-assimilated quality of modern experience. Both Saint-Simonian *prêtre* and Baudelairian *artiste-flâneur* perceive that the multiple and the individual occupy the same zone of indistinction. Both citations, moreover, reflect an abiding concern with how the relation between the two is made manifest in patterns of social life and in aesthetic forms (such as the proliferating figures of dancers and marching soldiers found throughout the sketches of Constantin Guys) that display - or, in the terms of the earlier quotation by Marin, ‘donnent à voir’ - *more than* the sum of the interaction of atomized selves. Guys’s images, with their blurred contours and opaque recesses reflect a melding of individual and multiple which the eye cannot fully distinguish, and serve as sites of imaginative projection for Baudelaire. In this connection, see my *Dream Cities: Utopia and Prose by Poets in Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Legenda, forthcoming).

relational theory of the self advanced by Enfantin. Though its individual signifying elements link together syntactically, what is most striking about this passage from Enfantin's letter is its disposition of text as *image*. The variation in the size of individual letters, the spacing introduced between words, and the vertical and horizontal deployments of *acolades* or brace brackets intimate that the concept of the self is more authentically elucidated when projected graphically as *schema* (that is, as an iconic, semi- or non-linguistic projection of spatial relations between entities) rather than as a linear discursive construct. Although Saint-Simonian thought awards scant importance to any concern with psychological interiority, and although Enfantin is concerned here purely with the *extrinsic* influences brought to bear on the individual subject, this image of the self as schema serves to affirm an acutely modern, indeed, proto-psychological perception that the self is not resolvable into linear formulae.<sup>34</sup> Here, it appears as a dispersed phenomenon which is not fully available to a conventional denotative language, but which can be intimated through the incorporation of elements not conventionally endowed with any special semantic value in discourse, such as spacing and variations in the size of characters.

Insofar as they are not the object of any explicit theorization by Enfantin, these graphic aspects of the text can be considered to point to a latent, unrealized quality which – like the *acolades* in the citation here – serve to puncture its discourse, paradoxically thereby re-ventilating its possibilities and purchase on the given. Marin's concept of the *le neutre* seems especially relevant to this: *le neutre* is 'l'écart des contradictoires, la contradiction même maintenue entre le vrai et le faux, ouvrant dans le discours un espace que le discours

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<sup>34</sup> What is indirectly anticipated here is, arguably, the emergence of a theory accounting for the psychological life of the individual in its collective aspects, such as is developed in later social or 'crowd' psychology from the end of the nineteenth century. This would, moreover, account for the formation of affective bonds emerging at a level other than that theorized by Enfantin, for whom empathy or solidarity are manifested principally on a conscious level in discourse and physical actions.

*ne peut accueillir*'.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, this space opened up within the discursive fabric of the text constitutes a kind of surplus which can be thought of in terms of what Ernst Bloch calls an *Überschuss* or 'overshot' of ideology arising 'according to the utopian function in the formation of ideology and above this ideology'. Thus, great art or great philosophy is not only its time manifested in images and ideas, but it is also *the journey of its time and the concerns of its time if it is anything at all*, manifested in images and ideas. From this vantage point, it is new for its time. From the vantage point of all times, it is that which is not yet fulfilled'.<sup>36</sup>

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Returning to the 'Tableau synoptique' once more, if we are to reconsider the words '**amour**', '**L'HOMME**', '**force**' and so on again in the context of the politico-historical narrative which produces them, we can surmise that they make their presence felt indexically in a discursive context where they are 'out of place'. With its overarching concern with successive periodization, the historiographical imaginary of the nineteenth century – of which this poster is very much a product – ultimately operates at structural remove from lived realities and the horizons of affect and sensual experience, even if Saint-Simonian theory makes a concerted attempt to bring these within its domain. Yet it is precisely to these dimensions of the lived experience of the subject of historical change that the selected words draw the reader's attention by a portly bold type which contrasts with the emaciated non-bold characters filling the columns. The iconization of these terms points to the inevitable foreclosure of this vertical Saint-Simonian discourse of History with a capital 'H' towards *l'homme*, for this figure in his undifferentiated state is ultimately subordinate to the elite of *surhommes*-like *prêtres* repeatedly invoked in the textual and visual culture of the

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<sup>35</sup> Marin, *Utopiques*, 21 (emphasis mine).

<sup>36</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Frank Mecklenburg and Jack Zipes (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 38-39.

movement.<sup>37</sup> This surplus meaning is more than can be explicitly articulated within the teleological narrative of the poster (a teleology underwritten by that same hieratic elite) but nonetheless it can only emerge out of the conditions which the Saint-Simonian discourse creates.

## Conclusion

An underlying aim of this article has been to underscore the distinctive *textuality* of nineteenth-century utopian writing, a factor which is habitually overlooked in the concern with the ideological meanings it generates. Arguably, this approach offers new ways of interpreting utopian writing in respect of its unrealized qualities rather than solely in terms of the repetition of its declared intentions. This kind of writing is conventionally associated with an inert and ossified progressivism, a *faire-valoir* to a much more dynamic literary field beset by complex dynamics and indeterminacies. Yet as I hope to have shown, utopian writing is not a leaden or monolithic discourse but inhabited by productive tensions of its own, and it can be argued that structural aspects of these texts to a certain extent intersect with the concerns of poetics in the same period. This is not to suggest some commonality of ideological content, but to speculate on the modes of assimilation of utopian surplus within the poetic discourse with which it co-exists. Utopia's surplus might be heard – in the form of a song or a slogan migrating outside the ideological context which produced it; it might be

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<sup>37</sup> What is outlined here may also be thought of in terms of Jacques Rancière's concept of a *partage du sensible*, because it concerns the division of social space as inscribed in the forms of sensible experience. Rancière discusses this phenomenon in relation to the aesthetics of Saint-Simonianism in *Le Partage du sensible* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2000).

tasted, even, in the *petits pâtés* which find their way into the works of Charles Fourier.<sup>38</sup> But here it would seem that that surplus is primarily something *seen* rather than *read*.

Looking at our Saint-Simonian texts once more, for instance, it is possible to consider Stéphane Mallarmé's comment on the *affiche* that it 'me fit songer comme devant un parler nouveau'<sup>39</sup> and to speculate how the attitude to the production of written discourse present therein anticipates the Mallarmean *coup de dés*, itself a 'diagrammatic portrayal of the hierarchical levels implicit in linear discourse'.<sup>40</sup> This Saint-Simonian poster is no *coup de dés*, but it does point to the status of such image-texts, which employ both iconic *and* syntactical elements, as sites where the unconscious implications of language come to develop in a form of expressivity which is contingent on the graphic disposition of units of language across the page. Almost despite itself, the utopian text is opened to a future which does not fully assimilate to the content of its own discourse, but which is condensed and displaced through the figures it proffers to the reader's gaze.

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<sup>38</sup> 'Fourier ne s'arrête pas de combiner des syntagmes étranges et délicieux, ridicules et décidés, où les petits pâtés (qu'il aimait tant sous le nom mirlitons) sont associés à des termes de haute abstraction (« les 44 systèmes de petits pâtés, « les fournée de petits pâtés anathémisés par le concile », « les petits pâtés adoptés par le concile de Babylone », etc.)', Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), 97.

<sup>39</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bertrand Marchal, (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 2: 75.

<sup>40</sup> David Scott, *Pictorialist Poetics: Poetry and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 139.

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