

technologies, media, and Representations in nineteenth-century France and England

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The theme of our program of research is technologies and/as media, and their representations in nineteenth-century France and England. This theme brings together isolated research projects on the nineteenth century and it will mobilize ongoing research on interdisciplinary work. Our program of research intends to bridge disciplinary boundaries and linguistic restrictions in order to bring into dialogue seven core members and 10 associated members around three theme-based axes. These axes offer a conceptualization of the key terms found in the title of our program of research ('technologies', 'media', and 'representations'). This program of research is concerned with the relations of literature and the arts to the sciences, media, and technology in a period that witnessed the rise of modern science and with it the emergence of a new body of knowledge and its representation in arts and literature. Indeed, a new paradigm shapes the entire nineteenth century's literary and artistic response to technological and scientific advances.

One of the aims of our program of research is to rethink the habitual narratives of discipline-based approaches to these terms. In fact, the conceptual framework of our research team is based on the idea of tackling multifaceted and complex issues through various disciplines in order to add value to individual perspectives. We intend to overcome the usual limitations resulting from disciplinary and national boundaries and thus address effectively new questions brought to bear as an outcome of our planned activities (monthly meetings and biannual workshops). By considering an array of new ways to explore and communicate about the nineteenth century, our team will contribute to the advancement of knowledge through a key structuring effect built over the two years of the first phase of our project.

Our research team is aware of the slippery nature of attempting to categorize science, technologies, and media from our current perspective since this classification was in the process of taking shape throughout the 19th century. That period saw the rise of competing and contested terminologies, a fact that will itself be problematized in our project, thus engaging directly with the anachronistic aspect of using the terms 'science' and 'technologies' between the years 1780 to 1900. We believe that our temporal framework (the whole nineteenth century) is justified by the fact that this period was a key turning point in history, and offers an unprecedented opportunity to learn about our present experience of science and technologies from an exploration of the past. The nineteenth century truly began the modern period with the rise of industrialization and the changing face of society, culturally, artistically, and scientifically. The proliferation of new media and technologies in the nineteenth century gives this period some unique resonance with our own current moment in history.

Many experts have established the geographical and political centrality of France and England, and these issues will constitute the natural starting point for further engagement with the globalization aspect of our program of research in a second phase.

The interaction of national perspectives will eventually allow our research team to explore expanding our disciplinary and national focus to include other important countries. (Countries such as Germany and the United States seem like a natural fit for a more cosmopolitan approach in a four-year grant for instance.) Thus, our research team is uniquely positioned to bring something new to the study of nineteenth-century England and France in the first phase of our program of research, with the intent to extend it to encompass other countries at a later stage.

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