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**The 19th Century in the future
Thinking, representing and imagining
times to come during the 19th Century**

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It has often been said that the 19th Century was the first to consider itself as a Century and also the first to be designated by a numeral. Another of its features is that, unlike the Age of Enlightenment for example, it is not centred around a single qualification; quite the contrary, a multitude of titles seek to qualify it. Many expressions start with the “the century of...” and focus on one of its apparently essential features: the century of history, the century of revolutions, the century of inventories (Thibaudet), the century of dictionaries (Larousse), the century of abstraction (Fortoul), the century of science, the century of inventions, the century of speed, the positive century, the romantic century, the century of joke (Goncourt), etc.

This subject has been examined during two previous Congresses of our Society, which looked at how the 19th Century represented itself as well as how it was represented during the following century. Our next Congress invites participants to take these considerations further by exploring the question from an additional angle.

Among the recurring formulations that were mentioned above, this time we have chosen to focus on the special relationship of the “century of progress” with the future, whilst taking a broader look at the relationships of this century with historical time, and its

way of positioning itself within History and managing the three major temporal dimensions (Past, Present & Future). By starting with the *temporalisation* of notions, concepts and experiences which come into play within the context of a new "regime of historicity" (François Hartog), this examination could elect to focus particularly on the way in which the 19th Century chose to think, represent and imagine both the *distant future*, remote from all temporality, as well as the more easily imaginable *near future* ("l'avenir"), the subject of contemporary debates. It could also look at how it chose to build these futures and to build itself in relation to them, whilst thinking of its present in the future past, more intensely as historical time accelerates.

The 19th Century was, in its relationship with the Past, the century of History, the century of inventories, a "retrospective" century. However it was also, in its relationship with the Future, the century of progress, the century of the future and the century of utopia (and dystopias), and in its relationship with the Present, was the century of the newspaper, and also the century of acceleration, of a rapid updating of practices and experiences. And that is how the present itself, as a result of the acceleration of communications and the succession of scientific discoveries, finds itself being projected towards a future which is getting rapidly closer. Consequently, the need to conceive the future is felt with a new urgency and necessity. Temporality is thus prey to a sort of *imperialism of the future* in response to the earlier centuries, which are perceived as being characterised by their reverence to unyielding tradition. The question of times to come ("l'avenir"), which once seemed more remote, almost virtual, and the stuff of simple dreams and utopia, is now a more pressing matter, both for those who are keenly engaged, who look forward to it with joy and seek to anticipate the future with utopian visions, and for these for whom both the near and more distant future are a source of fear and refusal, provoking them to be backward-looking and show resistance. While the end of the Enlightenment saw "Posterity" as a sort of secular Last Judgement, ideal for repairing the errors of despotism and offering retribution to the just, but also something remote and uncertain, the 19th Century experiences the future in both a more intense and a more *immediate* manner.

Both the near and the remote Future, become a dimension of historical time that philosophical systems address with predilection. Philosophy of sciences, philosophy of history and religions dialogue and intersperse, as shown by the intellectual career of Renan. Thus a field emerges that encourages representations and imageries, invested also by literature and the various arts.

But the *near future* is first and foremost the ideal battlefield of political, religious and social ideologies with the central struggle, at least since the 18th Century, being based around the concept of Progress, a broad notion which imposes a positively oriented image of the future, going way beyond the political sphere, as it leads to a "religion of the future". In this way the 19th Century seeks a riposte to the traditionalist backward regard of the institutionalised religions, but also to propose another projection into the future which is not a form of eschatology. Hence the statement from Larousse: "Faith in the law of *progress* is the real faith of our era." But the adversaries of this new faith are numerous and active throughout the century. The political and philosophical battle is played out for and against Progress by the "progressives" and the "reactionaries" of all kinds. The partisans of "perfectibility" carry the banner of Progress in their struggle, and predict "happy tomorrows" according to often divergent historical and political scenarios. They are opposed by all those who doubt, protest or who mock this optimistic vision of an idealised future.

With regards to the more *distant future*, we then witness the development of utopias, imaginary topographies of the ideal society (which rapidly tend to transform into dystopias), whilst new literary genres emerge, such as the scientific anticipation novel. But once again, these journeys towards distant future eras are often also based on an image of the present and on comparisons and antitheses that are easily decipherable in relation to it.

These considerations also allow the 19th Century to be seen from today, as if in a mirror; thus examined from the future that we were for it, treating it both as an exemplary period of our past, and as the inventor of visions of the future, which have continued to govern a large part of the 20th Century. What remains today of this 19th Century, the thinker of the future, between progress and a discourse of decline? What representations seem hopelessly outdated, which theories, which imageries are still valid today and mean something to our nascent 21st Century?

The abstracts we hope to receive could draw on one of the themes outlined below, although these are just suggestions. Particular attention will be paid to proposals which avoid monographic approaches by adopting a transversal perspective and a multi-disciplinary approach (history, literature, philosophy, art history, history of sciences, history of techniques and communications, etc).

Outline proposals (around 2000 characters) accompanied by a short bio-bibliographical notice should be sent to Claire Barel-Moisan (claire.barel-moisan[at]ens-lyon.fr) before 15 May 2015. The scientific committee will meet to select the proposals before the summer.

I. - Future and progress

1. Philosophies and policies of progress

- How do the conceptualisations of progress inherited from the Enlightenment evolve in the 19th Century? (perfectibility/progress)
- Modelisation of time (oriented line, cycle, eternal return, ascending or descending spiral, golden age) and history according to development stages – the three states of Comte (theological, metaphysical and positive), Morgan's three stages of society (savage, barbaric, and civilised).
- Influence of scientific theories on the conception of time (Cuvier, Lyell), evolution and evolutionism (from Darwin to Spencer)
- The conception of a cumulative progress (sciences vs. arts and literature) – Mme de Staël, Chateaubriand, Hugo
- How is the past (and its different historical periods) reinterpreted as regards progress (positive and negative models)
- The political challenges of progress: reform and revolution
- The political and social field split by the extent of the faith in progress; battle between "men of progress", the "men of tomorrow" and "reactionaries" or "retrogrades". Inscription of progressive and anti-progressive battles in the topography of political parties and particularly in the press (*Revue du progrès*, *Revue du progrès social*, *L'Avenir*, etc.)
- Progress and religion : reinterpretations of Christianity (Ballanche, Lamennais...); the new "religions" founded on progress (Saint-Simonism, Positivism, etc.)
- Re-readings of 19th Century thinking on progress through the ideologies of the 20th Century (Marx and Marxism...)

2. Geography of progress

- Which continents, which countries, which provinces, which cities emerge as the incarnations of the future, as opposed to places seen as protectorates of traditions (Brazil, the "young nations" compared with "old Europe")?
- Comparative visions of progress according to the nation (Germany, England, America, Italy, Spain, Russia, Latin America, etc).
- The geopolitics of progress (nation-building, European federation, internationalist utopias)

- **The century of empires: colonial policies and the diffusion of progress**
- **The role of migrations in this geography of progress**
- **Symbolic importance of the Suez canal and the Panama canal in redefining international movements.**

3. The other side of progress

- **Imageries of the end of the world (disappearance of the human race, global cooling, apocalypse and eschatology).**
- **“Ceci tuera cela”(Hugo): the dynamics of destruction at work in the arrival of the new**
- **the discourse of decadence**
- **The “prophets of the past” (Barbey d’Aurevilly)**
- **The fin-de-siècle fear of “degeneration”**
- **The fear of the impact of science on daily life (chemistry associated with fraud and adulteration): “The century of inventions is the century of substitutes”**
- **The mantra of progress: the ironic approach to progressive discourses; the future from Homais’ perspective**
- **those excluded from progress**

II. The future present

1. The future incarnated in the present

- **The acceleration of time (transport, communications, press)**
- **The “century of inventions”: emblematic objects of the future (telegraph, telephone, daguerreotype, phonograph, gas lighting, tarmac, aeroscaph, etc.)**
- **Progress and economy: industrialism, the great public works (Haussmann, Suez, Panama), the banking system, etc.**
- **The academic disciplines of the future, the emergence of new disciplines and the reconfiguration of sciences in the 19th Century (psychology, sociology, prehistory, anthropology, ethnology, linguistics, alienism, etc.)**
- **The inventor, the pioneer, the explorer, the trailblazer: the “men of the future”**
- **The collective future (clubs, utopian communities): the idea of “avant-garde”**
- **The pantheon of men of progress (Pasteur, Berthelot, Bernard, Larousse...); the “beacons” of the future (Hugo, Michelet...)**
- **The showcasing of the future: universal exhibitions, celebrations of Paris as the city of Progress (*Paris-guide* de Hugo)**
- **Advertising the future, the future as a selling point**

2. The hatred of the present

- **Vomit the century: vituperations, tirades and pamphlets, against a present manifesting in a premonitory manner the harmful effects of progress**
- **The hatred of the bourgeois, of the phillistine in favour of progress**
- **The civilisation of the future as a satire of contemporary society**
- **From the Revolution to the fin-de-siècle: typology of “reactionaries”**
- **Toppling the “idols of the future”: the targets of anti-progressivism**

3. Languages and representations of the future

- The rhetoric of the future in the political, economic, religious discourse and in the press (at both a local and national level)...
- Slogans, ready-made formulae, phraseologies, stereotypes
- Poetisation, metaphorisation, mythologisation of the future
- Prophets, wise men and Cassandras: the ethos of the voices of the future
- The future in the decorative arts: political posters, statues and frescos
- The interior design of symbolic sites: National Assembly, Pantheon, ministries, universities (Chenavard, Puvis de Chavannes, etc.)
- The future in urban planning and architecture (Crystal Palace, Baltard, Eiffel...)
- The future invested and imagined by the literary and aesthetic avant garde
- The new art forms (photography, early cinema) the discourses on their modernity, their representation of the future
- The future as farce: the visual imagination of the future in the satirical press

III. Writing and imagining the future

1. Writing and imagining the future Genres, poetics, media

- Renewal of the utopian genre in the 19th Century (Étienne Cabet, Félix Bodin, Paul Adam, Émile Zola, Edward Bellamy, William Morris), birth of dystopia (Émile Souvestre, Didier de Chousy, Samuel Butler, H.G. Wells)
- Which other genres were used to portray the future? scientific anticipation novels (Verne, Robida, Rosny), adventure novels (interplanetary journeys, futuristic robinsonades), exploration of the ruins of Paris, tales of the wars of the future...
- Scientific poetry, celebration or rejection of progress in poetry (Hugo, Du Camp, Verhaeren...)
- The future on the stage: scientific shows and “*féeries*” (cf. *Excelsior*), presence of the future in end-of-year reviews
- Topical characters: the scientist, the engineer, the journalist, the architect (functions and ideological issues in the various genres)
- Registers used and regimes of referentiality of the texts: didactic, epic, parodic, satiric, fantastic, marvellous...
- Use of description: how to bring the imaginary future to life?
- The development of specific editorial material for an anticipatory literature: popular collections, youth editions, illustrated fascicules, scientific popularisation magazines...

2. The imagination of the future (utopias, dystopias)

How is the society of the future imagined from the following perspectives:

- Political (its institutions, its regime)
- Social (relationships to class and genre)
- Economic (means of production, trade, currencies, banking and economic systems, free trade)
- Scientific and technological: what inventions in the areas of transport, communications, arms, what future energy sources?
- Physiological: the development of the human race, eugenics, the “improved” man, the artificial man, extended life (Brown-Séguard), etc.
- Urban planning: how is the city of the future conceived, its transports, its future homes, the new monuments, the future destiny of new sites (the big department stores, factories, and stations), cohabitation between the modern and the old
- Linguistics: the language of the future, the universal language, linguistic utopias (Esperanto, volapuk), neologisms, etc.

- **Pedagogical: the education methods of the future, the place of the child in tomorrow's communities, the future as suggested in school textbooks**

3. The arts of the future

- **How are the development of theatre, painting, and literature in the future, the architecture of tomorrow, the “music of the future” (Wagner) imagined?**
- **With which players and within the framework of which cultural institutions?**
- **The museum between past and future**
- **What influence does technical progress (such as electricity) have on these developments?**
- **The transformation of the book as an object (imagined as an oral format), its effects on reading habits and the status of literary culture in the society of the future.**
- **The new media for disseminating arts and literature in the mass media culture.**