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Dissertation Abstract

Making France Visible: Visual Technologies of Nationalism seeks to determine how visual technologies developed in the nineteenth century produced a new visual field on which the post-Revolutionary French state and its citizens struggled to reconstruct the social and political fabric of the nation. During the early years of the century, the necessity to rebuild the nation converged with innovations in visual production such as the invention of photography and the opening of public museums, and meant that the reimagining of France also became a project of reimagining. While display had always been an important element in the maintenance of power and stability under the *ancien régime*, the new tools introduced after the Revolution greatly expanded its role and its effectiveness. This study draws together five of these tools or technologies—normally considered in isolation—to profile a major, yet hitherto unacknowledged, shift in the self-representation of the nation, its history, its citizens and its future.

My project primarily concerns the nineteenth century, but it was born from an engagement with colonial and post-colonial theory and, in particular, visual representations of colonial subjectivity. It attempts to understand how visibility in a broad sense, as distinct from the objects and instruments of mechanical vision, came to be a dominant and naturalized mode of cultural expression and to provide a historical basis for contemporary visual literacy. My methodology is primarily historical in nature and interdisciplinary by necessity. I adopt this approach in order to contextualize materialist interpretations of visual technologies put forward by scholars such as Jonathan Crary. These interpretations often lack the scope to understand the broader implications of the shift in modality of cultural production represented by the visual turn of the nineteenth century. In contrast, *Making France Visible* first examines the historical conditions that made technologies such as photography both desirable and possible, then proceeds to theorize their cultural and social implications. Because this project has a dual focus on visual culture and French cultural studies, it will contribute to the scholarship of both disciplines upon publication.

My study opens in 1839 with the public pronouncement that L.J.M. Daguerre had succeeded in permanently capturing the image of the camera obscura. This event, however, does not mark the beginning of the history of photography. Following Geoffrey Batchen's call to view photography not as an isolated invention but as the product of a more widely held desire, I trace its history through different technological innovations that finally culminated in the work of Niépce and later Daguerre. I lay out this narrative against the social and political tumult of France in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and argue that the desire for photography in France was intimately connected to the need to re-imagine the nation and its population after the Revolution. In particular, the idea of photography was accompanied by an implicit promise of visibility for the bourgeoisie and was seen as ensuring a historical presence that had been denied under the *ancien régime*.

Chapter two builds on the notion of visibility and historical presence; it examines the state's involvement in monumental restoration under the direction of Viollet-le-Duc. At stake in this work is the ability to give a physical embodiment to the new historical narrative of the nation. First though, it was necessary for the the idea of the *patrimoine* to shift from one that pertained to individual, material inheritance to one that included a collective national legacy. The state's seizure and subsequent restoration of many of the

nation's principal monuments represents a deliberate attempt to repurpose a problematic past in the service of a usable, republican political discourse. Viollet-le-Duc's innovation was that, through the continual visibility of the past, the monuments under state control began to function as an institutional memory and source of shared national identity. His restoration of Notre Dame de Paris not only preserved the structure from the degradations of time and Revolutionary hostility but also elaborated a template for a unified vision of French gothic architecture. In the act of restoration, Viollet-le-Duc revalorized a national architectural vernacular and made the cathedral, among other monuments, a permanent symbol of the nation's presence in history. That this past never fully existed was precisely the reason it needed to be embodied.

The invention of the public museum is the subject of chapter three. I return to the question of memory and ask how the archeological and archival function of museums is linked to the emergence of a new French national identity. To arrive at this function, I trace the developments that led to the opening of the Louvre on August 10, 1793. That day was the culmination of a movement to open private collections to public display and followed on the model set at the Luxembourg Palace twenty years earlier. At stake was the question of how and by whom the cultural heritage of the nation would be used. Under the Republic, museums were intended to educate the public into a nationalistic historical narrative. The Louvre accomplished this goal in two ways: it rationalized the display of its collection to create a historical arc that ended in the triumph of the Republic, and it created a space for the public to participate in its narrative.

Chapter four shifts from strategies employed by the state to the mass circulation of images produced and distributed within the population. Several developments converged during the middle of the nineteenth century to create an environment saturated with images. Lithography, developed in 1796, offered an inexpensive and reliable means of printing images, and the penny press, born in the 1830's, provided the platform to distribute them to a large audience. The success of the penny press reflected an increased public engagement with the political and social discourse of the time. The images produced in its pages simultaneously gave pictorial form to the reading public viewing them. The penny press thus created both the idea and representation of the reading public and the subject of their collective activity. Calling cards and, later, postcards, echoed the developments in lithography and in their totality these new visual technologies point toward the fulfillment of the desire for visibility outlined in the opening chapter of the project.

Finally, I ask how the preoccupation with visual culture manifested itself in the imperial project of France in the later decades of the nineteenth century and what implications this had on the métropole. I pursue this line of questioning through Hubert Lyautey's ambitious city building plans in Morocco. The administrative cities built on the margins of indigenous urban complexes, make manifest the utopian ideals of the French Republic. These experiments were in turn imported back to France in the 1931 Colonial Exposition under the direction of the retired Lyautey. The 1931 exposition and others that preceded it made the colonial undertaking a visible reality to a public that was historically disengaged from France's overseas holdings. In their utopian nature, they offer an implicit critique of the decadence of metropolitan political and social life under the Third Republic and a model to rectify it in the future.

I hope to continue to revise and amplify *Making France Visible* with the intention of eventual publication. I am also interested in developing new lines of research for articles and conference presentations going forward. Two topics in particular are of special interest to me. The first is the historical relationship between imaging and subjectivity from the early years of mechanical capture to contemporary manifestations in medical imaging and digital self-representation. The second is a study of the intersection of urban planning with industrial social paternalism as evidenced in contained factory towns such as Le Creusot.