



Ego-histories of France and the Second World War

Writing Vichy

Edited by Manuel Bragança
and Fransiska Louwagie



The Holocaust and its Contexts

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Editors

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PART I

Opening Reflections

Introduction: Ego-histories, France and the Second World War

Manuel Bragança and Fransiska Louwagie

This volume gathers the intellectual autobiographies—or ‘ego-histories’, in Pierre Nora’s words (1987)—of fourteen leading scholars in the fields of history, literature, film and cultural studies who have dedicated a considerable part of their career to researching the history and memories of France during the Second World War: these are Margaret Attack (University of Leeds), Marc Dambre (Paris Sorbonne Nouvelle), Laurent Douzou (Lyon II), Hilary Footitt (University of Reading), Robert Gildea (University of Oxford), Richard J. Golsan (Texas A&M University), Bertram M. Gordon (Mills College), Christopher Lloyd (Durham University), Colin Nettelbeck (University of Melbourne), Denis Peschanski (Paris Sorbonne, EHESS and CNRS), Renée Poznanski (Ben Gurion University), Henry Rousso (Paris 8 University and CNRS), Peter Tame (Queen’s University Belfast) and Susan

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R. Suleiman (Harvard University). It also includes an interview with historian Robert O. Paxton (Columbia University). Across their various disciplines, these scholars have played a crucial role in shaping and reshaping what has become a thought-provoking field of research. The main aim of this volume is to clarify the rationales and driving forces behind their work and, consequentially, behind our current understanding of the Vichy era, which remains undoubtedly one of the darkest and most vividly remembered pages of history in contemporary France.

FRENCH PERSPECTIVES ON THE HISTORY AND MEMORIES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

With approximately sixty million people killed or murdered, the Second World War is indisputably a major watershed in history. The scale of death and destruction was unprecedented and some of its most horrific aspects were simply unbelievable for many. The events overturned and shattered the humanistic values which had underpinned Western thought and the belief that the world was bound to be heading towards a better future. The sheer violence of this conflict, its inextricable links with the Holocaust and the extreme diversity of unparalleled situations that it generated across the globe explain why the Second World War became and remains a major historical, philosophical and cultural reference. Not only have its history and memories been shaped and preserved in countless memoirs, artifacts, archives and museums, acquiring a central presence in contemporary thought and culture, they have also increasingly interested scholars across the Humanities and beyond. A widely shared public fascination with this crucial period also demonstrates that the Second World War is not merely a phenomenon confined to the past: at least in the countries most involved in the conflict, including France, it remains a vivid if not a haunting memory. The long shadow of the Second World War still hangs over us.

However, this long shadow takes on different forms depending on one's viewpoint in time and space. This is hardly surprising since, after all, 'World War II was not one war, but a great many small wars', as Carl Tighe put it (2005, 116). Prompted by past as well as present situations and specificities, different and often diverging memories have emerged in and across countries and communities, at distinct times and via a wide

range of media. In France, a key turning point in the memory of the Second World War occurred in the 1970s. Until then, *Histoire de Vichy* (1954, History of Vichy), written by French historian Robert Aron, had been the standard historical reference on the history of France during the Second World War. In this study, Aron argued that, during the Nazi occupation, Marshal Philippe Pétain, Head of the French State—dubbed ‘Vichy’ immediately after the arrival and installation of the French government in that town—had acted as a shield for the population, resisting the occupiers’ demands as much as one possibly could. This unproblematic and (conveniently) consensual version of Vichy was shattered in the late 1960s and 1970s when several studies—by historians Henri Michel (1966), Stanley Hoffmann (1968), Eberhard Jäckel (1968) and Robert Paxton (1972)—demonstrated that the Vichy regime had collaborated willingly with the Germans in order for some, like Pétain, to establish a conservative, authoritarian and anti-Semitic regime or for others, like Pierre Laval, to ensure that France would be well-positioned in the nazified Europe that would emerge after the German victory.

A few works have crystallised this major historiographical and memorial turn. In the field of history, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* by American historian Robert Paxton (first published in 1972, translated into French the following year) initially generated much debate before progressively being accepted by the wider scholarly community (cf. Paxton, Chapter “Interview with Robert O. Paxton, on the Writing of History and Ego-history”, *infra*). Other landmarks demonstrating this memory shift include: the documentary *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (1969, The Sorrow and the Pity) by Marcel Ophüls, which, focusing on the city of Clermont-Ferrand, illustrated how French men and women responded in very different and evolving ways to the Occupation, from armed resistance to armed collaboration; Patrick Modiano’s novel *La Place de l’étoile* (1968, The Place of the Star), which pioneered what would soon be called the *mode rétro*, a reappraisal of the Second World War in France through narratives that stressed the ambivalences of the time, and not the heroism and Resistance that had so often been the features of narratives from 1945 onwards; and *Lacombe Lucien* (1974) by Louis Malle, co-written by Modiano, a feature film that may be remembered as the most emblematic work of the aforementioned *mode rétro* because of the growing influence of cinema in French culture. Paxton, Ophüls, Modiano, Malle and many other scholars, writers and artists fundamentally challenged prevailing or official views that the French—with the exception of a ‘handful of scoundrels’ as De Gaulle put it in a famous radio-broadcast speech

given on 8 October 1944—had actively supported or been involved in the Resistance during the war. This dramatic and, for many French, traumatic historiographical and memorial turn (Temkin 2003; Roussio 1990; Laborie 2011) inspired the following generation to stop looking outwards for every evil that had taken place in France during the Second World War and, instead, encouraged them to also look inwards in order to investigate the diverse attitudes that the French adopted and manifested between 1940 and 1945, to question why it had taken almost thirty years for the responsibility of Vichy to be recognised, and to reconsider the Second World War with a renewed critical gaze.

EGO-HISTORY: A ‘NEW GENRE FOR A NEW AGE OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS’ OR AN ‘IMPOSSIBLE GENRE’?

The term ‘ego-history’ was coined by Pierre Nora with the publication of the collective volume *Essais d’ego-histoire* in 1987, which gathered seven autobiographical essays written by major French historians. In his introduction, Nora defines the ego-history project as:

une expérience [...], un exercice [qui] consiste à éclairer sa propre histoire comme on ferait l’histoire d’un autre, à essayer d’appliquer à soi-même, chacun dans son style et avec les méthodes qui lui sont chères, le regard froid, englobant, explicatif qu’on a si souvent posé sur d’autres. D’expliciter, en historien, le lien entre l’histoire qu’on a faite et l’histoire qui vous a faite. (1987, 6–7)

an experiment [...], an exercise which involves clarifying one’s own history as one would write the history of another, to try to apply to oneself, with one’s own style and cherished methods, the cold, globalizing, explanatory gaze that has so often scrutinized others. To tease out, as a historian, the link between the history that you have produced and the history of which you are a product. (1987, 6–7)

As Nora explains, the historians who contributed to his volume were asked to direct the explicative gaze generally used to study others to themselves. He intended to propose ‘a new genre for a new age of historical consciousness’ (Nora 1987, 5) by offering a ‘portrait de groupe’ (group portrait) of post-Second World War French leading historians (Nora 1987, 6, 352–356; 2001, 23). In so doing, he hoped

to shed a new light on historical practices by conferring a collective dimension to the narration of individual selves. Indeed, as historian Jaume Aurell points out, its ‘multiple narratives can be read as one text that defines a specific generation of historians’ (2016, 119). This being said, for reasons that remain in part unexplained, the political and cultural diversity of Nora’s proposed group portrait remains relatively limited and, strikingly, the volume includes only one contribution by a female historian.¹

While not exactly new,² Nora’s project gave additional recognition to the interlinking of the subjective and the objective in academic practice. The subjective component of this ‘new genre’ presents a number of important challenges. Indeed, as with autobiographical writing in general, one of the key difficulties of the ego-history genre lies with the question of origins and its associated risk of teleological interpretations. Across the chapters of *Essais d’ego-histoire*, as well as in later collections of intellectual autobiographies, the attempt to elucidate what shaped one’s thinking often starts with a return to childhood and a questioning of the origins. ‘Tout vient de l’enfance, bien sûr!’ (Of course, it all comes from childhood!), writes Maurice Agulhon in Nora’s volume (1987, 10).³ Even Georges Duby, who writes at the beginning of his text that he will only discuss himself as a professional historian (1987, 110)—claiming that therefore ‘ici l’essentiel est tu’ (the essential is omitted here)—reaches back to the dawn of his life by referring to his childhood and several aspects of his private life. The importance of early age is perhaps most obvious in Pierre Chaunu’s text (1987, 61–107), which is quite significantly entitled ‘Le Fils de la morte’ (the son of the dead woman). Its memorable opening line reads: ‘Je suis historien parce que je suis le fils de la morte et que le mystère du temps me hante depuis l’enfance’ (1987, 61; I am a historian because I am the son of the dead woman and the mystery of time has haunted me since childhood). Chaunu’s text, as its title suggests, is perhaps the most teleological piece

¹For further analyses, see Dosse (1988) and Revel (1988) in a special issue of *Le Débat* dedicated to Nora’s volume.

²Beyond the fact that methodological reflections are an intrinsic part of scholarly activity, several volumes of ego-histories *avant la lettre* can be found (see, for example, Passerini and Geppert 2001b; Aurell 2016).

³The exclamation mark cannot and should not simply be dismissed as being ironical as Maurice Agulhon consequently devotes ten pages to his parents and grandparents.

in Nora's *Essais d'ego-histoire*. Yet he is very aware of this inherent danger of the ego-history genre and, like Nora's other contributors, he is cautious in his wording throughout the chapter, referring to the role of 'chance' or 'luck' (88–90) and the influence of external factors (May 68), expressing doubt in various ways (for example, through the repeated use of the verb 'sembler'—to seem), and highlighting changes in his thought process, including through the act of writing his own ego-history. The recurring references to 'the origins', with their suspiciously clearly delineated beginnings, middles and ends, were severely criticised by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986). At the same time, it is difficult to disagree with the fact that any intellectual trajectory is informed by its social environment, in one way or another, even if its origins and influences may be difficult to disentangle.

Beyond the risk of teleological readings, the genre of ego-history presents critical challenges at other levels as well. These are either directly evoked or transpire in the chapters of the current volume, which demonstrates the awareness that scholars now have of the inherent difficulties of this particular genre. Christopher Lloyd, for example, warns from the outset that 'composing an ego-history is a problematic and challenging exercise. Potential pitfalls include unmerited self-aggrandisement or bathetic self-deprecation, embarrassing revelations and score-settling, or the elision of the personal in a bland retailing of a CV' (see Lloyd, Chapter "[Vichy, Kingdom of Shadows](#)"). As for Marc Dambre, he briefly but powerfully mentions 'the masks and wiles of egotism, the rhetorical effects and word constraints, the systematic rationalization, the aspiration to serve as a model, and the illusion of representation', also at the beginning of his piece (see Dambre, Chapter "[Currents and Counter-Currents](#)"). This being said, one of the most damning criticisms of this genre, as Laurent Douzou reminds us in this volume (Chapter "[Resisting Fragments](#)"), was made by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who, as well as highlighting the dangers of teleological writing, criticised the fact that only 'contented scholars' (Bourdieu 1997, 44–47)—the successful ones, with more or less the same profile—were asked to write their ego-histories. There would be obvious interests in extending the ego-history exercise to younger scholars, particularly from a developmental perspective since it would allow them to rethink or adjust their intellectual positions (cf. Paxton, Chapter "[Interview with Robert O. Paxton, on the Writing of History and Ego-history](#)").

However, in the context of this volume, our aim was to examine the long-term development of intellectual trajectories linked to a specific topic, which implied inviting senior and renowned scholars whose careers span several decades. The contributors to this volume could therefore be described as ‘contented’ scholars inasmuch as they have achieved wide academic recognition. At the same time, as the chapters in this volume will show, most ego-historians include an explicit focus on the difficulties and challenges they encountered at various stages of their career. The (self-)critical awareness linked to ego-history practices seems to be an effective deterrent to self-congratulatory narratives.

Another—though related—intrinsic challenge of the ego-history genre is that it asks individual scholars to become the sole judges of their own intellectual trajectories. To write one’s own history as if writing the history of another, as Nora suggests (1987, 6–7), contradicts the need to cross-reference sources and evidence, which is at the very core of scholarly practice. Renée Poznanski (Chapter “[Born in Paris...](#)”) encapsulates this quandary in a single question: ‘How could I simultaneously be the only source and the only critic of my own narrative?’ Adding to this issue is the well-known fact that the past is inevitably perceived and written through the prism of the present. As French historian Gérard Noiriel put it in a fascinating autobiographical text (2003, 249), ‘les historiens n’ignorent plus aujourd’hui que le passé s’écrit toujours au présent’ (nowadays all historians are aware that the past is always written in the present). Whilst we may now be conscious of the many pitfalls of the genre, this awareness is no guarantee that one can avoid them, as Marc Dambre remarks (Chapter “[Currents and Counter-Currents](#)”). Retrospectively, Nora even wondered whether ego-histories were not actually an ‘impossible genre’ (Nora 2001). Shortly afterwards, he nonetheless noted that the genre had found a certain degree of legitimacy, pointing out that subsequent ego-historians demonstrated fewer scruples in foregrounding themselves in their essays (Nora 2003).⁴

⁴This short text (Nora 2003) is the foreword to a collection of ego-histories written by historians of ‘la Suisse romande’ (French-speaking Switzerland), in which Nora returns to the distinctive features of the genre and its close relationship with memory studies. It is also worth noting that, a decade later, Nora wrote a longer ego-historical text, suggesting that he too finally managed to overcome his own scruples (Nora and Arjakovsky 2013).

ESSAYS OF EGO-HISTORIES AFTER *ESSAIS D'EGO-HISTOIRE*

The criticisms and difficulties related to autobiographical academic writing have indeed not prevented it from flourishing. On the one hand, self-reflective narratives contribute to making individual scholars more aware of what Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth calls our 'discursive dimension' (2011; cf. Ricoeur 1984–1988), namely that narratives, which are unavoidable, are never neutral; on the other hand, taken collectively, such texts can offer invaluable insights into the development of disciplines and research areas, ideological and institutional contexts, professional decisions and initiatives, research directions and outputs.

This contributes to explaining why scholars in France and elsewhere have been increasingly encouraged to reflect on their intellectual trajectory. In France—but an equivalent diploma also exists in other countries—the 'Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches' (Accreditation to Supervise Research), which was introduced in 1984 and has more or less become a mandatory step for scholars striving to reach the highest positions in academia (see Rouso, Chapter "From a Foreign Country"), explicitly aims to encourage researchers to reflect on the originality of their work as well as on their overall research strategy and development.⁵ In an approach reminiscent of the *Essais d'ego-histoire*, French historians have also started to think collectively about their intellectual trajectories through a research seminar entitled 'L'écriture de soi des historiens' (Historians writing the selves) organised by Christian Delacroix, François Dosse and Patrick Garcia.⁶

Confirming further that ego-history is not an altogether impossible genre, several collective volumes have appeared since the publication of Nora's *Essais d'ego-histoire*. An exhaustive literary review may not be particularly enlightening, but a few volumes of particular relevance for the present project certainly stand out. These include *Autobiographical Writing Across the Disciplines: A Reader* (2003), edited by Diane Freedman and Olivia Frey. This book is possibly the most eclectic volume of ego-histories: it brings together almost thirty contributions—half of which are republications, sometimes excerpts from book-length autobiographies—written by scholars across the Arts, Humanities, Social

⁵ See <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000028933129&-dateTexte=20170102>. Accessed 4 August 2017.

⁶ See <https://crheh.hypotheses.org/category/histineraires> and Henry Rouso (Chapter "From a Foreign Country"). Accessed 4 August 2017.

Sciences and STEM disciplines, as its subtitle indicates. Interestingly, Pierre Nora's edited volume is not cited as a reference. This suggests: first, that Freedman, Frey and the contributors to their volume were not aware of—or at least not influenced by—Nora's edited volume; second, that cultural and linguistic areas remain quite compartmentalised in academia; and third, as mentioned previously, that Pierre Nora's ego-history initiative is part of a wider academic trend. Freedman and Frey's questions are indeed similar to those posed by Nora; this is the case when, for example, the editors state that their volume seeks to understand 'the ways self and discipline coalesce into and shape one another' (2003, 2). The volume also offers interesting insights into the links between exactitude, modality and objectivity, and how the use of the first person—this is to say the inclusion of the self in the narrative—contradicts the conventions of academic discourse, a fact that undoubtedly hindered the emergence and development of ego-histories: 'Of all characteristics of academic discourse, the most important seems to be objectivity. In fact, exactitude and modality are aspects of objectivity, since exactness means facts or objectively determined truth, and modality acknowledges subjectivity that is as objective as possible within a context [...]. [O]bjectivity itself means the importance of being impersonal and, thus, "unbiased"' (Freedman and Frey 2003, 7).

A special issue of *French Cultural Studies* edited by Brian Rigby (1999), entitled 'Personal Voices, Personal Experiences', is particularly interesting in a French context. It presents six texts by British literary and film scholars and a text by an Australian anthropologist. This volume certainly contains many of the 'ego-pitfalls' mentioned previously, yet, taken together, these jargon-free articles help to understand the state of a discipline between the 1960s and the 1990s, and how French studies moved from being a purely literary discipline to being a genuinely interdisciplinary one. The contributors also give fascinating insight into the geographical, cultural and social fractures and evolutions of British society during the second half of the twentieth century.⁷ Interestingly, even though this special issue is about French culture, Nora's *Essais d'ego-histoire* again goes unmentioned. Clearly, contrary to the latter's monumental *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984–1992, *Realms of Memory*), a

⁷For a short history of the discipline of French Studies in the UK, see Diana Holmes (2011).

simultaneous collective project, the ego-history volume remained largely unnoticed for some time outside the Francophone world.

Furthermore, a collection of ego-histories from French-speaking Switzerland was published by the research group Atelier H in 2003. The editors, from a younger generation, were curious to gain insight into the historians who had worked on the *Suisse romande* region before them. Adopting a resolutely national and disciplinary focus, they gathered a collection of twenty essays in a volume prefaced by Pierre Nora. Whilst welcoming individual approaches, including a self-interview by Georges Andrey, they nonetheless guided their contributors with a number of questions with a view to achieving a certain degree of unity across contributions; these related to personal background (emphasising again the importance of the origins) and to professional perspectives on history in French-speaking Switzerland.

With a rather self-explanatory title, *Why France? American Historians Reflect on an Enduring Fascination* (2007), edited by Laura Lee Downs and Stéphane Gerson, is also of special interest for our topic. This book presents sixteen ego-chapters written by North American historians—fifteen from the USA and one from Canada—with a specialisation in French history. Defining the volume as both ‘idiosyncratic and collective’ (2007, 4), the editors explain as follows the guidelines that they had given to their contributors:

they [the contributors] were invited to explain how and why they became historians of France, to reflect on the ways in which they have interacted with and represented France, and to probe their fluctuating relationships with the country. This book thus revolves around stories that, by virtue of being anchored in specific places and times, capture this phenomenon in its diversity and human dimensions. [...] The authors rarely generalize from their personal experiences or speak on behalf of this or that school or generation. Instead, they present singular itineraries in which rational decisions and intellectual arcs figure alongside serendipitous encounters and emotional responses. (2007, 4–5)

These guidelines insisted upon two main points: first, why and how their contributors had become historians of France; and, second, how their representation and understanding of France evolved. This time, the well-documented introduction includes a reference to Pierre Nora, though

merely in passing—expectedly, perhaps, given the focus of this book on North American historians. What is more surprising is that, despite their area of research, many contributors to this volume hardly refer to meeting or discussing with French colleagues.

The volume *Why France?* is however of specific importance to scholars interested in France and the Second World War because it contains a chapter by Robert Paxton (2007, 35–46), the author of the aforementioned *Vichy France*. His chapter is void of the mixed feelings—or ‘tough love’ as Herman Lebovics put it in his contribution (2007, 47)—that a number of other scholars express towards France or the French in that volume. Robert Paxton, on the contrary, acknowledges the direct and positive influence and importance of three French historians in his career—Raoul Girardet, Michel Winock and Jean-Pierre Azéma. Significantly, he highlights his attempts to integrate with the French. These largely successful attempts (‘I am still in touch with the friends from my Ouessant days [early 1960s]’) are perhaps due in part to his humility and sense of humour: ‘Finally, when someone commented, after what I considered a particularly dazzling flourish, “*Ab, Monsieur est belge*”, I had to admit to myself that I would never pass clandestinely among the French’ (Paxton 2007, 40–44).

Finally, the twelve chapters of *Holocaust Scholarship: Personal Trajectories and Professional Interpretations* (2015), a recent volume edited by Christopher R. Browning, Susannah Heschel, Michael R. Marrus and Milton Shain, also largely dominated by historians, will certainly interest our readership. Its brief introduction reminds us that the subjectivity of history is in part due to the subjectivity of the historian:

By its very nature, history is deeply contested and will always be rewritten as new documents, new questions and new perspectives ensure an ongoing debate. Historical facts too are not self-evident, as was explained by the Cambridge historian E.H. Carr nearly 50 years ago, but interact in one way or another with the historian’s life experience. ‘Study the historian before you begin to study the facts’,⁸ Carr famously advised. (Browning et al. 2015, 1)

Indeed, studying the scholar is at least likely to provide cues to a better understanding of his or her work.

⁸E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (1967, 23).

EGO-HISTORIES OF FRANCE AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN CONTEXT

Ego-histories of France and the Second World War: Writing Vichy shares a number of key perspectives with the volumes listed above. It also presents certain differences which are central to the project and thus require some explanation or clarification.

First, the current volume has a strong unity in focus since all contributors have dedicated a major part of their research career to a shared topic, namely the history and memories of the Second World War in France. Contrary to other volumes of ego-history related to France (Nora 1987; Rigby 1999; Downs and Gerson 2007), its internal thread is not derived from the nationalities of the contributors, but rather from their lifelong area of research. Here, it is worth noting that ‘Vichy’ has become a portmanteau word, with various negative connotations, all linked with the manifold and evolving ways in which the French either collaborated with the Germans during the war or ‘accommodated’ themselves to the Occupation (Burrin 1995). It could even be argued that ‘Vichy’ now encapsulates France’s wartime experience as a whole. Although ambiguous and debatable, the word ‘Vichy’ has become such a recognised signifier that it is difficult to avoid it altogether. The subtitle of the present volume, ‘Writing Vichy’, acknowledges this fact, but it does so by emphasising also its constructed dimension: through the intellectual autobiographies of leading scholars from various disciplines and national backgrounds, this book consequently aims to investigate, highlight and clarify how specific inquiries and insights have evolved and unfolded in all their complexity, showing the various ways in which history, memories, cultural representations and (inter)disciplinary perspectives have encountered and located ‘Vichy’ since the aforementioned memory turn of the 1970s.

Second, and following on from the close thematic focus, the contributors included in this ‘group portrait’ are based in different countries, rather than forming a national group as is often the case in ego-history collections. Of the fourteen scholars who contributed a chapter to this volume, four are currently based in France, five are affiliated with UK institutions and a further five are based in other countries (three in the USA, one in Israel and one in Australia). Moreover, their personal and intellectual histories are not restricted to the country in which they are now based, which contrasts sharply with the three above-mentioned

‘French’ ego-history volumes: some contributors have roots in different countries, and exchanges and collaborations are highly frequent. This volume will therefore contribute to the growing trend of transnational studies by enabling national differences or similarities to emerge beyond the individual trajectories of the contributors. The comparative approach will allow original perspectives on individual trajectories but also on the encounters and circumstances experienced in and across various countries. This places the national focus on ‘Vichy’ in a broader international perspective which has been crucial in opening up a critical understanding of the Second World War and its history and memories, both in France and beyond.

Third, most projects in the field of ego-history have focused on a single discipline. *Holocaust Scholarship* (2015) is a welcome exception as not all of its contributors were historians *stricto sensu*, even though these still prevailed. The current volume has a resolutely multidisciplinary and international outlook, although it is not evenly balanced in terms of disciplines and nationalities of the contributors. If, for example, six scholars are historians, three of them are based in France. What is more, some of them have at times, or, for Henry Rousso, mainly, focused on questions of memory rather than on the history of the Second World War, bringing them closer to the questions and approaches taken by scholars in other disciplines. Conversely, if most of the scholars from other disciplines than history have a literary background, they all also contributed to the intrinsically multidisciplinary field of ‘cultural studies’ or even cultural history, thus bringing them on occasion close to the approaches taken by some historians. If anything, these remarks should remind us that disciplinary boundaries, although intellectually convenient to frame approaches and practices, are also the result of academic conventions, and that these evolve. That historians should be pioneers in the field of ego-history may simply be due to the fact that, after all, history—including the history of memory and historiography—is where their expertise lies. If, originally, it might have seemed difficult to conceive specific ego-history projects outside the field of historical studies (see Aurell 2016, 118), in the interdisciplinary context of history and memory studies, enquiries and methodologies can increasingly be shared, and the opportunity for interaction and crossovers thereby amplified.

GENESIS AND STRUCTURE OF THIS VOLUME

As the ‘group portrait’ presented in this volume aims to open up new perspectives on interdisciplinary and international collaborations, a two-day preparatory workshop involving all contributors was held in Belfast in January 2015, at the start of the project. The number of invitations was adjusted to the funding secured for this event⁹—fifteen out of the twenty scholars we initially contacted were able to accept our invitation, but one colleague from France had to withdraw because of unforeseen professional circumstances. Despite these budgetary and practical constraints, the volume, whilst not entirely balanced in terms of disciplines, approaches and gender, nonetheless brings together a culturally and professionally diverse group of leading scholars with a rich variety of different backgrounds and trajectories.

A final note on the gestation of *Ego-histories of France and the Second World War* is also needed here. The amount of guidance generally given to ego-historians in previous publications seems to vary greatly from volume to volume. A special issue of *Histoirein* (2001a), edited by Luisa Passerini and Alexander Geppert, asked its contributors to reflect on half a dozen very specific questions. Despite this, the contributors to their volume, in the words of the editors, ‘showed a remarkable variety of approaches as well as some convergences’ (2001b, 12). This could be said of all volumes of ego-history, including those in which contributors were given little guidance (Nora 1987; Downs and Gerson 2007) or perhaps none (Rigby 1999). That contributions reflecting on individual trajectories should be highly individual is hardly surprising. In this volume, to allow the widest range of individual, societal or professional factors or singularities to emerge, the contributors were deliberately not given a prescriptive set of instructions. On the contrary, they were able to discuss possible approaches during the aforementioned preliminary workshop and, during the writing process itself, they exchanged drafts of their chapters with one another and with the editors. The group portrait that

⁹The workshop was generously supported by the British Academy/Leverhulme, the Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France (ASMCF), the Society for the Study of French History (SSFH), the Society for French Studies (SFS), the Institute for Collaborative Research in the Humanities in Belfast, the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Leicester and the Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

follows has thus emerged organically rather than as part of a pre-established framework.

The volume opens with an interview with Robert Paxton, who reflects on the writing process of his own ego-history and, more generally, on the writing of history as a discipline. The fourteen chapters that follow are grouped into three geographical sections: France, the UK and non-European countries, namely Australia, Israel and the USA. Within each section, contributors appear in alphabetical order. A concluding chapter will reflect on the individual and collective perspectives that these chapters offer.

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Interview with Robert O. Paxton, on the Writing of History and Ego-history

*Robert O. Paxton, Manuel Bragança
and Fransiska Louwagie*

Q: Approximately ten years ago, you wrote your ‘ego-history’, which was published in *Why France?* (2007). Can you explain why you were tempted by this project at the time? And how do you feel about the experience in hindsight? Was it a useful exercise? Is there anything you may now want to add or revise in your original ‘ego-text’?

A: It wasn’t my idea. But when I was asked to write my ‘ego-history’, I rather enjoyed being able to reflect on my youth, education and

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professional beginnings and to thank the many people who steered me in favourable directions.

I approached writing my own ego-history in a rather conventional way: as a narrative that began at the beginning, with my youth in a family deeply engaged in historical recollection and open to Europe.

It was an agreeable task, for the reasons mentioned above, but I do not think it changed the way I worked as a historian. Perhaps it would have done so if I had written an ego-history earlier in my career. To answer your last question, I turned 75 in 2007, and I have made the sad discovery that one doesn't make very many major new intellectual beginnings after that age.

Q: The Second World War remains an important research area across multiple disciplines. In your opinion, are there any research avenues which remain underexplored? And do you think that there is a 'French way' and 'an outsider's way' of approaching the Vichy period?

A: It's hard to imagine any research avenue concerning World War II that remains unexplored. The two world wars remain among the most intensely studied periods of human history. But new generations always come up with some unexpected new approach which seems completely obvious once it is discovered, but that the old generation cannot yet perceive.

Among the professional historians that I frequent, there is no 'French way' as opposed to an 'outsider's way' of approaching the Vichy period. There is a professional code about doing history that is generally observed internationally, at least in countries with free intellectual life. In the perennial debate between eye-witnesses who have lived through the events they describe and who place more trust in their memories than in archival documents, and the historians who prefer to work with contemporary archival documents, French and non-French historians tend to form a common front. Professional historians of different nationalities may have differing sensibilities, but only rarely (and usually because of the introduction of non-professional concerns like ideology) do they fail to understand each other.

National sensibilities may play a greater role among writers of popular history who have not received professional training and subscribed to professional values.

Q: As we mentioned, the history and memories of WWII have interested scholars across a wide range of disciplines. If historians are read by scholars from other disciplines working in the field, the contrary is perhaps less obvious. In your opinion, what contributions could other disciplines offer in particular?

A: I believe that historians sharpen their understanding if they pay attention to the social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology. I cannot claim to have actually used the social sciences as much as I ought, but I drew on political science in my *Anatomy of Fascism* (2004) and on anthropology in my *French Peasant Fascism: Henry Dorgères' Greenshirts and the Crisis of French Agriculture, 1929–1939* (1997).

One work that changed my way of thinking was Victor Klemperer, *LTI—Lingua tertii imperii* (1947), a study of the way the Nazis deformed language to serve propaganda purposes.

Q: If Vichy has become so prominent, how do you assess France's dealings with its past today? To what extent do the events and issues of World War II and the Occupation of France still influence the French today?

A: In the United States, one hears far too often the opinion that 'the French haven't dealt with their past'. That judgment might have been true in the 1970s; today it is totally unjustified. The French have generally (with a few exceptions) dealt with their past more openly and frankly than most people, and certainly more so than most Americans.

French courts have tried and condemned Vichy officials, French historians have written abundantly and probingly about Vichy, and French textbooks and schoolteachers give students an appraisal of the Vichy experience in accord with the most recent scholarship.

As proof of this point, consider my own experience. Although I wrote works about Vichy France that could be painful for French people to read, I find that my critics are far outnumbered by my supporters. To my great surprise, I was accorded the 'Légion d'honneur' by the French state.

The great humiliation of June 1940 and the varied and controversial responses of the French people to the German occupation are still matters of the utmost concern to French people today. They cannot stop wondering what their grandparents did, and whether it was something they can admire. Just as the American Civil War of 1861–65 still marks the United States profoundly today, few French people remain indifferent about the Vichy government and the German occupation.

(This interview was conducted in March 2017 over email.)

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PART II

Voices from France

Currents and Counter-Currents

Marc Dambre

To my son, Romain

According to Danièle Sallenave, who is not only a novelist but also an academic and my contemporary, we are fundamentally engulfed in a generation gap: ‘One is always one era behind; the canons which we are taught belong to the previous era’ (Sallenave 2002, 64). I experienced a similar gap myself, but there is also another gap, a social and cultural one, which in fact separates me from Danièle Sallenave even more than from the preceding generation. What the two of us have in common seems to be very general. So how can we then distinguish what belongs solely to one individual, one ‘ego’? There are well-known pitfalls and difficulties in the genre of ego-history: the masks and wiles of egotism, rhetorical effects and constraints, systematic rationalisation, the aspiration to serve as a model and the illusion of representation. Identifying these does not automatically allow one to avoid them, but I shall try.

Whether as an editor or an author, my work, through the study of individual writers or literary movements in books or shorter pieces, has often been concerned with the history of literature.¹ Other publications,

¹A selective bibliography, up to 2010, can be found in Jeanyves Guérin and Alain Schaffner (2011).

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including literary analyses and poetics, belong clearly to the domain of literary criticism, but although it is practical to distinguish between the two perspectives, I have always seen them as organically related. More generally, the relationship between post-1939 French literature and history has always been my most obvious focus of interest. I should also add that, although broached quite early on in my work, 'Vichy' only makes intermittent appearances in it. It is there, but it is not central, and I shall try to explain why at the end of this chapter.

Currents and counter-currents have shaped my career. In what follows, I shall mention works by predecessors, challenges, opportunities, the role of chance and the influence of specific institutions or individuals. I shall sometimes eschew linear chronology in order to highlight an overall direction. Minor personal details are included, not for any hypothetical originality, but, on the contrary, where I feel that they illustrate shared characteristics that may be useful in defining a particular situation. In this way, forgotten, subconscious or unexpressed motivations may perhaps also be revealed.

THE VILLAGE AND THE WORLD

Born near Dunkirk in 1942, I only have indirect memories of the war, through traces of its violence which were still visible when I grew up: the carcass of a rusted motorcycle in a field, the rear lights of a Jeep in the village breaker's yard, an aircraft wing lying in a courtyard, and so on. These images lacked the aura of Marshal Foch's ghost, originating from the previous war at Mont Cassel that we could see on the horizon. Politics only intruded occasionally on our lives in the northern canton of Maritime Flanders. Elections in Bergues brought Paul Reynaud, our Member of Parliament from 1946 to 1962, back into the limelight. His enemies would remind us of two pronouncements he had made during the Phoney War: 'We shall win because we are the strongest' and 'The Iron-Ore Route has been cut off'. Apart from this, there were hardly any events until forced industrialisation came about in the 1960s. Workers' struggles seemed unimportant, more iconic than significant, far from a neglected, albeit local, mining region. At home, the secrecy of the polling booth nevertheless let slip the hint that our mother had a soft spot for the Mouvement Républicain Populaire (Christian Democrats). Strangely,

however, there was a book by a certain Charles Maurras,² with a portrait of the author on the cover, in the scanty farm library that was made up of school textbooks and farming catalogues. I do not recall ever opening it. Who, in any case, would have read it in our house? I wonder how, one day, it ended up in our Catholic midst since we had not a shred of nostalgia for the monarchy. Its presence hinted at an underlying ambivalence, but no one was really interested in politics: that domain was reserved for the upper spheres of society. Our sector muddled along in a naive seamlessness, at a time when television only began to exist for us as Queen Elizabeth II was being crowned. Neighbouring Belgium was a foreign land. People used to go there on bikes for a day, with exciting plans for smuggling cigarettes and coffee. In the spring, Italians came from the deep south of their country to thin the sugar beets. Some of them were great seducers, and caused outrage or even scandals sometimes. But once the season was over, people settled back into their old routines.

After attending the Catholic school in the village, I was a boarder for seven years at the Saint-Bertin secondary school in Saint-Omer in the neighbouring *département* of Pas-de-Calais. There was no ‘social mix’, as it is now called, and pupils from different origins were so rare that they were exotic subjects of astonishment. We were all white boys, and, as far as I know, there were never any Jews during my time there. Of course, there was history, but it was bookish, so wars were always mentioned with reassuring lists of causes and consequences. The rich mix of place names and people’s names set us dreaming. I do not recall recent history having any significance for us. Yet... in a corner of the visitors’ room there was an impressive mounted marble plaque with an inset effigy of Philippe Pétain. As a native of Pas-de-Calais and a former pupil of the school, he was, so to speak, in his rightful place. Not everyone took this for granted, however. It was said that, one day, two priest-instructors had a fight in the playground over this plaque: Gaullist versus Pétainist! It must have been a surprising sight to witness these two teachers who had devoted their lives to a religion, one of whose commandments was to love one another, scrapping like that. But, at least, it introduced me, probably for the first time, to Vichy.

²Editors’ note: Charles Maurras was the major intellectual figure of the French anti-parliamentary and monarchist movement *Action française* in the first half of the twentieth century.

The humanities and dead languages opened up exciting avenues for me. They brought together my favourite subjects: history and literature. We struggled with Xenophon's *Anabasis* and Julius Caesar's *Gallie Wars*. Some great French authors were proscribed by the Catholic Index, but I was unaffected by this: my taste for literature, spotted by some of my teachers, allowed me special privileges (that I enjoyed without perceiving them as favouritism). As long as I was discreet about it, I was allowed to read Malraux's *The Royal Way* (1930)... It was the heyday of the *livre de poche* (inexpensive paperback publications), and I was also to discover *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1950, French translation) and other books. Neither Sartre nor Camus were really deemed to be monsters in this school, although Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* (1943) was clearly preferred: in second year, the teacher would read from it to us if we were good. Scouting idealism was expressed in *L'Étoile au grand large* (1943) by Guy de Larigaudie, although we did not know that he had died a heroic death in May 1940 as a soldier in the cuirassiers.

In the early 1960s, after taking the baccalaureate, I went to the Lycée Faidherbe in Lille, where I followed the standard curriculum in classes preparing for the École Normale Supérieure.³ The non-clerical atmosphere at the Lycée came as a real shock to me. The religion that the worthy Fathers had taught me, without necessarily following its teachings themselves in their own lives, seemed henceforth like a moral and intellectual straight-jacket and, on occasion, pure hypocrisy. By the same token, although I did not become a militant, I did gain political awareness. Students took sides over the Algerian War of Independence, demonstrations were frequent and not always without violence, and, one night, we even heard a bomb explode. The newspapers *L'Express* and *France Observateur* fuelled constant discussions. This was history in the making.

Such events gave me some insight into my teachers and the teaching profession that was soon to be my own. Everyone knew the philosophy teacher was a member of the Communist Party as he made no secret of it. We were less sure about the others. Happily conservative, intermittently Gaullist, convinced Socialist or weak-kneed democrat, these diverse tendencies flourished owing to fanciful hypotheses or unfounded

³Editors' note: The École Normale Supérieure is one of the prestigious 'Grandes Écoles', selective higher education institutions that operate in parallel to the university system. Many of their students pursue careers as senior civil servants and academics.

rumours. Impassive and meticulous, the history teacher would read his lecture to us in the old style, hunched over his tattered manuscript. Those yellowed sheets had at least the advantage of drip-feeding such boredom that they weaned us definitively from a chronological history of events, battles, farce and melodramas. The literature teacher, who was a child of the Humanities of the 1930s and 1940s, passed on Republican values and a love of fine writing to us. He took an interest in the revolution that was New Criticism, although he maintained a sceptical attitude towards it. Prior to 1968, textual commentary and composition reigned supreme. The history of literature was dominant. Text-book anthologies like the famous ‘Lagarde et Michard’ were seen as the Tables of the Law. Yet, we were on the eve of the famous quarrel between the ‘new critic’ Roland Barthes and Raymond Picard for whom New Criticism was a ‘new fraud’ (Picard 1965).

In this relatively uninspiring work environment, friendships blossomed happily. They were to be continued at university, whose final goal was the *agrégation*: I was interested in teaching from the age of ten, and this competitive examination for recruitment into secondary-level education could eventually lead to a further qualification for teaching at tertiary level. After my three-year degree, I maintained the balance between literature and history since my chosen topic for my Master’s thesis was ‘Aristophanes and work’. This dissertation topic gave me the freedom to explore history through personal reading. I had to research the plays of the great Greek master of comedy for aspects of performance and ‘mindsets’. I focused on the speeches and the *realia*—objects from everyday life—to explore how society perceived work. I hoped to achieve a more precise and rigorous reading through a close analysis of semantic and poetic modulations rather than approaching the texts through interposed erudite interpretations. Have I ever abandoned this approach? Certainly not, even during the two years of secondary school teaching that followed my *agrégation* in classical studies.

My education would take another turn when I left for Vanderbilt University, Nashville, in 1967, the year in which I registered for a thesis on Roger Nimier (1925–1962). At Vanderbilt, where Robert Penn Warren had been a student and then a teacher, New Criticism was still riding high and influential in the French Department. It was, however, also subject to literary history via Baudelaire: the centre dedicated to the poet was becoming increasingly international under the benevolent authority of William T. Bandy, its founding-father, who was soon to be joined by Claude Pichois.

At the same time, I witnessed a youthful cultural revolution. For me, the Crisis of 1968 did not mean the barricades in the Latin Quarter, but anti-Vietnam protests, race riots, gunshots at night and the National Guard around a replica of the Parthenon, in or around Nashville campus. After living through this kind of action at some distance from my native land, I returned to France. Vanderbilt was developing a course at Aix-en-Provence. In this way, I had the opportunity of living there as though I were a foreigner (dependent on the New Orleans consulate) from 1969 to 1973 and of conducting research for the thesis that I had begun.

And then, after a year in a Parisian secondary school, I returned to university teaching abroad for four years, this time at the University of Tunis, in a French-speaking country with a colonial history. It was under the dual influence of Overseas Cooperation and the Tunisians themselves that I completed my initiation into recent history. It was the start of my experience of diversity in histories and communities. Tennessee and the Deep South of the United States had brought me into violent contact with the brutality of racial discrimination. In Tunisia, discriminatory language from all sides, including from the Tunisians, made me reappraise the letters written on school notepaper during the Occupation that Roger Nimier had conserved from his Jewish classmate Henri Mosseri, a Parisian schoolboy who was executed during the war by the occupying forces. I shall return to this point later on.

IN SEARCH OF A SUBJECT

After the *agrégation*, I was determined to get closer to 'real life', partly to free myself from the burden of erudition. This legacy was no less of an obstacle for me where *legitimate* French authors were concerned. So I preferred to work in circumscribed virgin territory in order to become a patient, careful scholar of the near-recent past. I would not be dependent on a large number of predecessors because the novelty of the subject and the fact that it belonged to recent times would give me the freedom I needed. It is well-known that, at the time, the Sorbonne refused to countenance work on any topic that involved a living writer, even if he or she were an eighty-year-old. It is said that, as soon as François Mauriac died in 1970, an avalanche of topics were submitted by telegram so as to beat the competition.

To place myself at the right distance, I had to find a dead author, but one who could still have been alive. In other words, I was looking for someone who had just recently died and, if possible, had been precocious. Under the guidance of a professor who had taught in Lille

and had recently joined the Sorbonne, I also had to conform to the Lansonian model of ‘the man and his work’ approach—the ‘vieuvre’ as Antoine Compagnon called it⁴—and avoid the pitfalls of an arguably outdated approach to literary criticism. And, since I dreamed of becoming a writer, I was also looking for a writer with a style that I liked. I was very fond of Stendhal’s clipped, playful writing. This is how conversations with a friend led me to two ‘Stendhalians’, two writers difficult to label: the marginal communist Roger Vailland and the problematic royalist Roger Nimier. The former died in 1965 and the latter in 1962. Michel Picard, who would soon publish his *Libertinage et tragique dans l’œuvre de Roger Vailland* (1972), already occupied the field of Vailland studies. I therefore chose the second of the two Rogers. This was in 1967. I first read Nimier’s *Les Enfants tristes* (1951), a novel dedicated ‘In memory of HENRI MOSSERI (1924–1944)’, probably because the dedication of the book to a young man who had died at the age of twenty either intrigued or impressed me. And *Le Hussard bleu* (1950) had also been dedicated to another young man of his age, Michel Stièvenart, who had died at the end of World War II, in 1945. What is more, at the time, I was roughly the same age as they were when they died. It was then that the fact that I was born on 16 July 1942, on the first day of the Vél’ d’Hiv roundup, took on a real meaning for me.⁵ It took me thirty years to realise this, even if the archives had given me an inkling of it. Humanities had not quite prepared me for the emotional impact I experienced on reading the letters that Mosseri had written to Nimier, mainly on sheets taken from a school exercise book. These, kept by Nimier, had probably never been read by anyone else. Spurred on by the danger, Henri Mosseri, a keen

⁴Antoine Compagnon uses the composite word *vieuvre* to designate the ‘life and work’—in French ‘vie et œuvre’—approach to literary studies in *La Troisième République des lettres* (1983, 15): ‘ce mot-valise concrétise le concept même (déjà fort déterministe et matérialiste) de l’histoire littéraire qui n’a pas cessé d’explorer les relations – présumées causales – de la *vie* d’un auteur et de son *œuvre*’ (‘this composite term describes the concept—that is itself a priori deterministic and materialistic—of a literary history that insists on exploring the relationship – presumed to be causal – between the *life* of an author and his *work*’).

⁵Editors’ note: The Vélodrome d’Hiver (or ‘Vél’ d’Hiv’) roundup took place on 16 and 17 July 1942. Instigated by the German authorities, the roundup was carried out by the French police. Over 13,000 Jews, including 4,000 children, living in or around Paris were arrested during these two days, most of whom were consequently deported to Auschwitz.

reader of Maurras, watched the events unfolding with a dark sense of humour whose tragic dimension certainly eluded him. Little was known about their friendship that had started in the Lycée Pasteur de Neuilly. And, unfortunately, half of the correspondence, namely the letters written by Nimier, will probably forever remain a mystery. This led me to the ‘French State’, ‘Vichy’. And, faced with this Gordian knot, I was no Alexander.

I was immediately captivated by Nimier’s writing. As I discovered from René Girard’s *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (1961), Roger Nimier would perhaps allow me to fulfil my diffuse literary vocation, understand and situate myself better, even if (or rather in as far as) the author felt himself to be historically displaced, riddled with contradictions and drawn to silence. This topic also had the advantage of not cutting me off from the colourful aspects of life. It led me to make discoveries and encounters—with journalists and the world of publishing, with witnesses from various backgrounds and writers spanning several generations, and through exploratory walks across Paris and beyond. The ten-year period of the State doctorate allowed candidates great freedom. It favoured boundless horizons and intellectual ambition, even though it could, admittedly, also lead to being side-tracked and even giving up. This said, I still believe that a dilettante attitude and a thirst for the mastery of a subject are essential. Researchers should let time work for them. At any rate, starting with the ‘life and work’ approach, my research on a little-known author required work on unpublished material and a quest for opinions from the author’s contemporaries. In short, this subject had an investigative and historical dimension that excited me.

It should be clarified here that training in literature did not exclude history.⁶ Moreover, in the wake of Lanson and his heirs, sociology had become as important as history, all the more so because structuralism had spawned a certain tendency to de-historicise research. This said, although literature in France enjoyed a culturally privileged position,

⁶For example, among the highly recommended books was *Le Problème de l’incroyance au XVI^e siècle: la religion de Rabelais* (1942) by Lucien Febvre, co-founder with Marc Bloch of the École des Annales.

Editors’ note: The École des Annales (or ‘Annales School’) emphasised the importance of long-term social history in France at the beginning of the twentieth century. Its name comes from the journal *Annales d’Histoire Économique et Sociale*, established in 1929 by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre.

academic disciplines continued to be shamelessly compartmentalised. As far as I remember, a book such as Robert Paxton's *La France de Vichy* (1973) was hardly discussed by literary scholars at the time. Yet my thesis was grounded historically since it raised the question of the destiny and behaviour of writers between 1940 and 1945. And there was another obstacle for my topic: the study of contemporary history was still problematic at university.

With Roger Nimier, everything or nearly everything was entirely new and, hence, gave rise to surprise or questioning. Since he was killed in a car crash when he was still young, he left many pieces unfinished (including film scenarios and dialogues, and hundreds of articles). One of my obvious tasks was to have them published, to make his manifold writings available to the public and to piece together the fragments of his life's work. From 1973, I ensured that his name appeared in the press by publishing forgotten or unpublished texts, working closely with his publisher, Gallimard. I abandoned the State doctorate for a while—I had become bogged down—and completed a university thesis in 1976 for the Paris-Sorbonne University, entitled *Roger Nimier, Essai de bibliographie critique*. Preceded by a short historical summary of the periodicals in question, the work lists approximately 600 texts by the author and 1000 critical texts. This list, laboriously compiled before the era of digitisation, became a springboard for future work. At a time that was dubbed the 'theoretical terror', and even though I agreed that traditional criticism was too often satisfied with a clever turn of phrase, I was nonetheless working on literary history in its most technical and least theorised aspects, against the diktat of New Criticism. I kept my head down, but the ongoing debates made me question my discipline and my own methodology. How could I demonstrate that this writer had produced a coherent and valuable 'body of work'? But the fact that I regarded Nimier as an important writer made me also question the legitimacy and ever-evolving nature of the contemporary pantheon. And this, in a sense, was bringing me back to history.

Between the external approach and the immanent textual criticism, I tended to favour the first perspective, finding myself at home with the historicism propounded by Sartre in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948, What is literature?). Another influence was Roland Barthes, who was then flirting with Marxism and also sided with History when, in *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953, Writing Degree Zero), he theorised about

writing being anchored in a specific time. But New Criticism exerted such an influence that I attempted to focus, in my ‘man and work’ approach, on the *work*, which resisted me, with the idea that I could systematise the myth of the *Hussard* based on the author’s narrative fiction. My aim was to reconcile a critique of imaginative fiction with structural principles. In the Nimier corpus, I went about patiently listing quotations, referring to colleagues in the process, in order to construct a subtle system, with five criteria, based on the most significant hypothetical recurrences... I still have masses of paperwork from this exercise... Such wanderings may be surprising today, but I doubt that they were exceptional. To understand them, one needs to bear in mind both the very liberal framework of the State doctorate and the total isolation of the researcher: literary research was neither organised in doctoral colleges nor in subsidised laboratories, conferences were rare and, in any case, I have no recollection of post-doctoral students being very welcome there.

One of the main points of interest in my topic was the generally recognised existence of this literary, quasi-Stendhalian group that had been initiated by Nimier’s novel of 1950, *Le Hussard bleu*, about the French invading Germany at the end of the Second World War. Although my research focused on Roger Nimier, I also had to consider the development of several of his contemporaries. Without this, I would be selling Nimier short. Moreover, writing a personal history of Nimier would have brought me to biography, a genre that I repudiated for a number of reasons including the fact that details of his private life belonged to a recent past. This collective approach was not uncharted territory: a century before, the literary critic Sainte-Beuve had opened up an avenue that concerned movements rather than individuals. More recently, Paul Bénichou’s books, *Morales du grand siècle* (1948) and *Le Sacre de l’écrivain* (1973), also involved collective history, and Pierre Barbéris’ tome *Balzac et le mal du siècle* (1970) was a scholarly revelation for me. My work, therefore, would have multiple crossovers and would include other ‘Hussards’, namely Jacques Laurent, Antoine Blondin and Bernard Frank—the latter was the man who first referred to these writers as ‘Hussards’ (Frank 1952): he had therefore a greater right to be associated with them than other writers sometimes linked to Nimier. It was here that I came across the greatest problems: Nimier was characterised by his insolence and a ‘larger-than-life’ personality and, behind the façade of group friendships, I discovered that there lurked hidden quarrels, insidious envy and covert dissension that were understated by surviving

contemporaries who saw me at best as a tedious craftsman and, at worst, as a nuisance trying to dig up the past. Fortunately, publications of memoirs were becoming more frequent. These made me aware of the influence of the *Action française* movement on his generation.⁷ Its influence was difficult to perceive and understand because it quickly faded after the Second World War. For example, both Jacques Laurent, who had held some responsibility in the Vichy regime, and Michel Déon, former secretary of Charles Maurras and a writer often associated with the Hussards, distanced themselves from extreme-right ideologies after WWII, to the chagrin of Pierre Boutang, their near contemporary and founder of the monarchist weekly *La Nation française* in 1955. Faced with this amorphous grouping in which I felt lost, I found help among historians such as Raoul Girardet, who was actually a friend of Jacques Laurent and, like him, a supporter of French Algeria, even though he had been in the Resistance. (His trajectory in itself highlights the complexity of the French situation in the aftermath of WWII.) The book *L'Action française* (1964) by Eugen Weber also helped me to understand the background of a mindset to which only a minority subscribed after the war, and the seminal work by René Rémond on *La Droite en France* (1954, *The Right in France*) proved equally important. I also read paperbacks from the inexpensive 'Livre de poche' collection, including *Histoire de la Milice* (1978) by Delperrié de Bayac and... Robert Aron's *Histoire de Vichy* (1966). I found the 'Points Histoire' collection published by Seuil of great interest, particularly the five-volume *Histoire des passions françaises* (1980–1981) by Theodore Zeldin and the *Nouvelle Histoire de la France contemporaine* series—especially *De Munich à la Libération*, the volume on WWII written by Jean-Pierre Azéma (1979)—which I kept on my desk with the writing of the State doctorate back on track. And Pierre Nora's first volume of *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984) came out at just the right time. This list, by no means exhaustive, will hopefully illustrate how the work of historians informed my own work.

I progressively became familiar with political ideology, with the purges at the Liberation and the young Hussards' perspectives on these matters. One of the characteristics that they had in common was a solidarity with those of their elders who had supported Vichy, although, paradoxically, the group was identified with Nimier, who was the only one of them

⁷Editors' note: See note 2 on Charles Maurras.

to have chosen De Gaulle over Vichy. But I also needed to examine the many fictional accounts inspired by the Second World War. Yet the post-war corpus kept growing and the nexus Collaboration and Resistance reappeared so often that, by the end of the 1970s, the expression ‘mode rétro’ was coined. One precursor was none other than the future Nobel Prize winner, Patrick Modiano: Des Essarts, a character in his first novel, *La Place de l'étoile* (1968), was modelled on Roger Nimier.⁸ And, in the eyes of its main character, Raphaël Schlemilovitch, a Jew seeking a safe haven, the Jewish State, victorious in the Six-Day War, was likened to the French State of Vichy. My thesis was now being connected with the present... and with contemporary literature.

THE RECENT PAST AND THE PRESENT

Researchers are often associated with the subject of their research. And I believe that my work on literary history had been sidelined because it was generally considered as reactionary. In publishing my first study on Drieu la Rochelle (1982), I attracted even more suspicion, despite the fact that I paid lip service to poetics as favoured by New Criticism. Academia was changing though. Once discredited, literary history was regaining its importance, and all the more so since it had moved closer to the social sciences. Lanson's work had been the subject of a positive re-examination by an influential literary scholar, Antoine Compagnon, in *La Troisième République des lettres* (1983) and, at the Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3 University, the various currents of thought now fully accepted literary history as a possible approach. Significantly, Jean-Yves Tadié, another major literary scholar, discussed literary history in *La Critique littéraire au XXe siècle* (1987), stating that ‘there [was] little to change in its principles, except to adapt it to progress made in history itself: since Lucien Febvre, then Georges Duby and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie succeed[ed] Lavissee, Langlois and Seignobos, a new History require[d] a new history of literature’ (Tadié 1987, 14). Traditional literary history, after all, was standing up well to the test of time. I was subsequently to work harmoniously with my colleague Philippe Hamon, a specialist in narratology.

⁸In fact, this novel won the ‘Roger Nimier’ literary prize that had been established when the author of *Le Hussard bleu* died.

As a teacher in Paris at the Lycée Charlemagne from 1978, I had little contact with higher education in France, except via my supervisor Jacques Robichez. My former classmates had taken up posts at the University of Lille just in time, and vacancies were becoming rare. Conferences were mainly devoted to the *Nouveau Roman* and to established writers. But, in the autumn of 1981, when I became interested in the Drieu of 1944–1945, a conference took place on French literature during the Occupation. The proceedings were only published eight years later (Centre régional du livre 1989 and 1990), which shows that the subject was not taken for granted. I felt too isolated to submit a paper, but the very fact that such a conference had taken place was encouraging. What is more, I had just been appointed lecturer at the Sorbonne Nouvelle. In terms of publications, the *Cahiers Roger Nimier* that I had founded in 1980 continued, and my edition of *L'Élève d'Aristote* had come out in 1982 (Nimier and Dambre 1982). I no longer had any excuse to delay the completion of my State doctorate, nor had I any interest to do so since it was about to disappear, to be replaced by the New Doctorate system. Favouring the historical aspect of my subject, I had my viva in 1987 on *Roger Nimier, Hussard du demi-siècle*, a thesis which was published in 1989. It was immediately followed by two works by Nimier, *Les Écrivains sont-ils bêtes?* (1990a) and *Les Indes Galandes* (1990b). In the same year, I was able to organise a conference on 'Roger Nimier forty years after *Le Hussard bleu*' at the Bibliothèque nationale in the rue de Richelieu in Paris, an institution directed by historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie at the time. It was an ideal setting to discuss a writer fascinated by history. And, by inviting the historians Raoul Girardet and Pascal Ory, as well as the essayist, historian and literary scholar Alain-Gérard Slama, I was combining history and literature in the way I had always wanted to. Nimier's cult of history no doubt included a reactionary tendency that was alien to me, as it was to the majority of the participants. But his perspective was first and foremost a means of understanding the past, a way of getting to grips with the present that was out of phase and, perhaps, consistently in contradiction with the past. My book, it should be said, did not endear me to every 'friend' of the writer. I endeavoured to adopt a neutral stance, while I was expected to be siding with the Right.

Having attended sessions at the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP, Institute of Present-Day History, also sometimes referred to as Institute for the History of the Present Time in English) as a member of the

public, I planned to continue my dialogue with historians after the conference at the Bibliothèque nationale. I was acquainted with the journal *Cahiers de l'IHTP* and I used to consult other history publications such as *L'Histoire* or *Vingtième Siècle*. But, however rich the relationship between literature and history may be, the fact remains that, ultimately, literary scholars work on aesthetic material and use specific tools even if they are obliged to read works by historians to deal expertly with facts, dates, ideas and specific terminology. True, it is not exclusively a 'one-way street' and, occasionally, literary scholars can contribute to other disciplines. For example, the Hussards' weekly publication, *Arts*, provided a springboard for the New Wave by giving it free rein to express itself.⁹ I recently contributed a paper on this topic to a special issue and, in this case, my literary expertise became useful to film historians and critics (Dambre 2014). However, such crossovers are not that frequent, it seems to me; or perhaps I was simply unable to make them so.

As written previously, it is via a writer who could have still been alive that I came into contact with contemporary literature. In the 1980s, French universities persisted in excluding this kind of literature, arguing that it was journalism and that research would lose its soul if it involved itself in this sort of thing. They probably believed they had already gone a long way in allowing authors who were not dead, like Julien Gracq. Fortunately, an open-minded spirit prevailed at the Sorbonne Nouvelle and, for example, I encountered no opposition from colleagues, quite the contrary in fact, when I proposed teaching novels that were inspired by the events of May '68.¹⁰ In a more literary module, I combined Gustave Flaubert, Jean Tardieu, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jean-Philippe Toussaint, who had just published *La Salle de bain* in 1985, to study the theme of knowledge that was central to all of them. The increasing interest among students in the contemporary inspired me to initiate a master's seminar that allowed them to continue studying contemporary fiction to doctorate level. In the early 1990s, this movement towards the contemporary led the Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3 University to establish the chair of 'French

⁹Editors' note: The French New Wave, or *Nouvelle Vague*, is a significant movements in the history of film. It spanned the 1950s and 1960s. Filmmakers traditionally associated with this movement include, among many others, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer and Jacques Demy.

¹⁰This module included works by authors like Robert Merle, Nathalie Sarraute and Jean-François Bizot.

Literature: 1940–1990’. I applied and was successful, which gave me even greater academic freedom, and I therefore kept working on contemporary works by combining literary history and New Criticism. Studying novels that dealt with the Occupation sustained the shock-effect I had first felt when I discovered the letters that Henri Mosseri had sent before his death as a victim of Nazism, a fate that he tried to escape by leaving Paris for northern Italy in March 1943 (Mosseri 2012). More or less the same can be said about the edited correspondence of Roger Nimier with Jacques Chardonne, in 1984, and with Paul Morand, in 2015, two WWII collaborators who would become instrumental father figures of the Hussards after the war.

At the end of the 1980s, I set up a Centre for the Study of Nimier and the Hussards. Its research interests expanded quickly, and, following a conference on ‘Drieu La Rochelle, writer and intellectual’ in 1993, links with Joe (Richard) Golsan developed. Along with the first PhD theses that I supervised on contemporary novels, completed in 2000–2001, I organised a seminal conference on ‘The French Novel at the Dawn of the 21st Century’ in 2002. One of the sections was entitled ‘History’ and several of its eight contributions looked at how fiction deals with the Second World War. Later, in 2004, when the ‘Écritures de la modernité’ team was formed under the aegis of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), I created the Centre d’études sur le roman des années cinquante au contemporain (CERACC, Centre for the Study of the Novel from the 1950s to the Present Day), which continues to inspire research to this day and publishes the *Cahiers du CERACC* online.¹¹ I thereby contributed towards the acceptance in France of research into contemporary literature, with the additional necessary cultural dimension. I contributed, because I was not alone: colleagues such as Bruno Blanckeman, Dominique Rabaté and Dominique Viart have adopted a similar approach.

Quite early on, the positive reception of the *Cahiers Roger Nimier* showed that Nimier was becoming free of the taint that had characterised him for a decade. *L’Élève d’Aristote*, an unfinished work published posthumously, had been received more warmly in 1982 than his books

¹¹ Available here: <http://cahiers-ceracc.univ-paris3.fr/>.

that appeared when he was alive. As Nimier put it in *L'Élève d'Aristote* (1982, 17): 'A dead writer is always popular; his like is only abhorred when they are alive.' Time seemed to be on his side, although it is difficult to say whether this renewed interest was about the man or about his work. The same could be said about the Hussards movement. In any case, to try to understand them and their provocative stance or to study the writer Morand's post-Vichy revisionism, a clearly sociological stance was needed to complement my literary history approach. Hence collective publications like *L'Exception et la France contemporaine* (Dambre and Golsan 2010), *La France des écrivains. Éclats d'un mythe (1945–2005)* (André et al. 2011) and *Mémoires occupées* (Dambre 2013).

Clearly, the 1990s were a turning point since it was then that I turned to cultural history, whether I dealt with right-wing or very contemporary authors. In 2004, Jeanyves Guérin, who is a specialist in Camus, Audiberti and theatre, joined the numbers of scholars at the Sorbonne Nouvelle who believed that history and political ideas were important. My continuing exchanges with Joe Golsan, with whom I shared many interests, resulted in a number of articles and conferences and led to our heading up collective research from 2007 onwards. I also took into account Susan Suleiman's work, based on her application of formalism in *Le Roman à thèse* (Suleiman 1983). Particularly where Franco-French matters are concerned, I found contributions from colleagues in Europe and America indispensable. Without necessarily getting involved in topical affairs such as the trials of collaborators, many scholars in 'cultural studies' chimed in with my interest in the relationship between literature and history. Working on corpuses directly related to current events, their approach often fosters an opening-up of academe to the contemporary world. On this side of the Atlantic, it is criticised for underestimating poetics. This criticism is justifiable to some extent, of course, since the literary text is an aesthetic object. Nonetheless, I believe that a more productive exchange of ideas is needed between disciplines, approaches and countries. Corpuses established outside France have the advantage of giving rise to a different scale of values and thus call conventionally French views into question. Moreover, and above all, limiting oneself to the solely literary nature of texts often obscures the fact that the quality of literature is related to its time. It is true that each century bequeaths us merely a few works and names that everyone remembers but research should not restrict itself to the canon. It should feature all authors, including minor authors, even for the recent twentieth century

and the beginning of the twenty-first century (Dambre 2004).¹² Equally, a writer should not be ignored by scholars purely because he is popular with the public: on the contrary, his success should be scrutinised and hopefully explained with recourse to the history of reading and literature and, more widely, to cultural and social history. To get an idea of what the 1950s were like, reading the popular *Caroline* series by Cecil Saint-Laurent, alias Jacques Laurent, is most informative. The fact that a large swathe of the public subscribes to such works indicates that it identifies itself with a particular mindset and with shared views of the time. This kind of phenomenon has much to teach us in terms of cultural history. Not only that but intertextual comparisons can and would enrich the interpretation of books that claim the limelight. After all, most writers remain widely unknown so, in a sense, minor authors always constitute the majority... If researchers in literature do not wish to go back to the isolationist concept of the 'masterpiece', or that of 'genius', they must provide a better basis for research that is literary, but not exclusively so.

An inheritance from the dominant years of structuralism, the French fixation on poetics, which is, incidentally, fundamental, has had the effect of marginalising questions that once belonged to the literary field. Antoine Compagnon rightly observed in 1998 in *Le Démon de la théorie*: 'Now, it is historians, not literary specialists, who follow Lanson's system' (222). Indeed, literary scholars seem to have abandoned the field of values, including aesthetic values, to scholars in the social sciences, history and cultural history.

Always hovering on the edge of my work, as the edited volume *Mémoires occupées* demonstrates, Vichy has never been central to my research. This is in fact not that surprising: while the period of Vichy was for a number of writers that I studied a memorable experience and/or a subsequent determining preoccupation, it fuses for them with an aesthetic perspective, as indeed it does for those who, like me, studied them and learnt about the war through their work. And this perspective, by which I believe literature can be defined, is part of a process that involves other books and their destinies over a period of decades. Moreover, when I tackled this controversial period, its political, military, cultural and moral aspects necessitated consulting historians, who are competent in this field, but I only exceptionally made such topics the single focus of

¹²Personally, I have worked on authors such as Henri Calet, André Fraigneau, Bernard Frank, Paul Gadenne, Stephen Hecquet, Pierre Herbart and Dominique Rolin.

my research. This is not to say that literary history and criticism seem to me to contribute nothing to historians, but in literature, my intellectual curiosity aims to highlight works and creators that can give me real aesthetic pleasure. And these are neither limited to Vichy, nor WWII, nor to left- or right-wing writers. For example, as far as the Revolution is concerned, the Republican Hugo's *Quatrevingt-treize* (1874) gives me as much pleasure as the monarchist Balzac's *Les Chouans* (1829). The same is true of *La Semaine sainte* (1958) by Aragon, a communist writer, and *Le Flagellant de Séville* (1951) by the former pro-Vichy Morand, both novelists who conjure up the 1940s in depictions of the nineteenth century... And this is why I had no qualms when I was asked to edit this novel by Morand for the *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* since I believe it to be a great book, both to research and to teach. Because teaching and research are not separate planets, at least not in France. 'Literature is what is taught, it's as simple as that': Roland Barthes's quip (1994, 1241) is still relevant today.

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Resisting Fragments

Laurent Douzou

Perhaps because there is a risk of revealing aspects that only concern oneself, without any certainty at all of their interest, relevance or even, sometimes, accuracy, I find writing autobiography difficult. All the more so since, although it is flattering to be asked to present one's career, it is also a sign that time flies; like the narrator at the very end of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, you come to the brutal realisation that you are perched on living stilts, growing constantly, sometimes higher than church-steeple, eventually finding it difficult and dangerous to continue walking and, suddenly, you fall. There is also a fundamental reason for my hesitation: everyone knows that there is an irrepressible temptation to lend coherence and unity to an intellectual trajectory presented with hindsight. This is not to say that there is not a certain coherence in every life. Jean-Pierre Vernant was right in stating that 'even in the bag that a tramp carries around with him and in which you might think he stuffs everything that he happens to find, the ordering of this mass of material depends on choice as much as chance and, for the astute observer, it illustrates the individual nature and personal itinerary of a human being' (1996, 8). But that is precisely the point: one needs

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to be an astute observer, and the examination of one's own personal itinerary is no easier than when, as a historian, one is studying that of people who lived in the past. And then, the words of Pierre Bourdieu come to mind here:

I do not intend to present so-called personal memories that make up the greyish backcloth of academic autobiographies, dazzling encounters with eminent masters, intellectual choices interwoven with career choices. What has been recently presented as 'ego-histoire' seems to me still to be a far cry from a truly self-reflexive sociology: contented academics (the only ones who are asked to perform this school exercise...) have no history, and it is not necessarily doing them or history any favours to ask them to recount in an unmethodical fashion their unhistorical lives. (Bourdieu 1997, 44)

Even if I have had the privilege to do what I like doing—teaching and researching—I am not one of those 'contented academics' to which Pierre Bourdieu refers in his vitriolic attack on the 'ego-history' essays edited and published by Pierre Nora (1987). My itinerary has been that of a long-haul captain rather than that of the 'catamaran pilot' essayist (cf. Agulhon 1986, 35). To some extent, this may preserve me from the risk of giving myself a 'red-carpet' treatment, by omitting the failures I have suffered. Like many, I read the self-reflexive itineraries of some of the big names in the discipline of history when they were published, subjected as they were, at the instigation of Pierre Nora, to an extremely difficult exercise, namely treating one's own career as a historical topic. I found this immersion in the background of works, some of which had inspired me, interesting, even if the trajectories concerned were successful and brilliant exceptions that soared above the ordinary paths I was accustomed to treading. There was also, of course, a hint of voyeurism in this interest. I remember reading avidly what Maurice Agulhon, my supervisor, had written, although he actually gave away very little about himself in his contribution.

Since 1987, much water has flowed under the bridge. In the wake of the ego-history exercise that is now part of the *Habilitation* process for academics wishing to supervise doctoral theses, young historians publish books that present an intimate mix of historical research and personal details.¹ In short, the exercise has proliferated. In this instance, such an

¹Editors' note: Please refer to the introduction to this volume (Chapter "Introduction: Ego-histories, France and the Second World War") for additional information on the *Habilitation à diriger des recherches*.

initiative, quite new to me, interests me because it is part of an original idea to bring together researchers who have worked in the same field and who are supported by their colleagues' enthusiasm. This explains why I agreed to take up the challenge.

FIRST STEPS

Part of my family has a university tradition. My maternal grandfather was a professor of chemistry at the Faculty of Science in Lyon and my father was a professor in the National Museum of Natural History and member of the Academy of Science. Although the principal avenue to university was via hard science, literary studies were not frowned upon at home as long as they were conducted at a high level. This is probably why I enrolled in preparatory classes, specialising in history.²

However, I only really discovered the discipline of history at degree-level at the Sorbonne. It was intoxicating: the expertise of the academics, even those whose specialism seemed esoteric to me, was impressive. It was at that time also that I finally read major historians. Among other works, I remember being dazzled by Lucien Febvre's *Un Destin: Martin Luther* (1928), Peter Laslett's *The World We Have Lost: England Before the Industrial Age* (1965, translated into French in 1969) and Pierre Goubert's *Cent mille provinciaux au XVII^e siècle* (1968). I had chosen a pathway without really knowing what its constituent elements were: fortunately, it would suit me perfectly.

I really began to involve myself in research in 1980, when I undertook a doctoral thesis with Maurice Agulhon whom I chose as supervisor since Louis Girard, with whom I had done my Masters and who was retiring, had recommended him to me. And so it was chance that led me to Maurice Agulhon who was a professor at Paris 1 at the time. My thesis focused on political reaction in Paris in 1848. It was a study of the counter-revolution, or the relatively clandestine activities of supporters of the defunct July Monarchy (1830–1848), over a period of weeks and months of opposition against Republicans before and after the event. This thesis was examined at the Sorbonne in 1983. I then asked Maurice

² Editors' note: The 'classes préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles' is a two-year post-secondary education course which prepares its candidates to take the 'Grandes Écoles' competitive entrance exams. 'Grandes Écoles' are highly selective and very prestigious higher education establishments (see also Dambre, Chapter "[Currents and Counter-Currents](#)").

Agulhon if he would agree to supervise me for a State doctorate. He agreed in principle, although I do not quite know why, since my first thesis was not exceptional. Probably out of generosity, to give me a second chance. I still had to find a subject. I had no particular preference except that I wanted to work on the present time and write a history in which the protagonists were still living so that they could read and contradict the account of their itineraries and the movement in which they had been active.

A TOPIC FOR A STATE DOCTORATE FROM OUT OF THE BLUE...

As I recall, I declined at least one topic that concerned the history of the Postal Service. Then, very early in 1984, Maurice Agulhon informed me that Lucie Aubrac was looking for a doctoral student to undertake research on the Resistance movement *Libération-Sud*; she was its representative in matters that concerned official recognition of former members of the Resistance, a position that gave her genuine moral authority. If this request seems surprising, it was common enough at the time. Jean-Pierre Levy had done the same for the *Franc-Tireur* movement, which was studied by Dominique Veillon, and Philippe Viannay, founder of the movement *Défense de la France*, had asked Jean-Pierre Azéma who had put him in touch with Olivier Wieviorka. As far as I was concerned, I jumped at the chance and met Lucie Aubrac in February 1984. I came away from our meeting with her agreement, not so much because I had impressed her (she appreciated excellence and my CV was not out of the ordinary), but rather thanks to Maurice Agulhon's recommendation since she shared his commitment to left-wing politics and admired his work. Above all, she had already been attempting to arouse interest among eminent academics in that field for some time, and had only been met with a polite silence. She was now getting what she wanted.

In my academic career, that State doctorate, which occupied me for about ten years, turned out to play a crucial role. It led me to study the period of the Occupation from the perspective of the Resistance rather than from that of Vichy. Such an approach reveals very different aspects. As an understandable linguistic convenience, the word 'Vichy' has become a sort of metonym for describing the France of

1940–1944. In truth, ‘Vichy’ is far from being an adequate label for the period, even less so where the Resistance is concerned: this parallel underground world defined and applied its own rules, and acted with the conviction that, against its implacable enemies, no holds were barred if one wanted to survive and win. The disagreements and tensions between historians of the period may have something to do with the origins of these distinct avenues of approach. Whoever has not worked hands-on with archives from the Resistance will find it very difficult to understand this kind of suspended world that really resembles no other known experience. In the same way that there is a ‘Swann’s way’ and a ‘Guermentes’s way’, there is a ‘Resistance way’ and a ‘Vichy way’ that hinge on fundamentally opposed experiences, examples and values.

But to return to the thesis, I threw myself into this project without immediately realising all its implications. I knew very little about the subject. So, in the first instance, I read a great deal by historians and by those actively involved. I spent most of the summer of 1984 exhaustively trawling through the oral eye-witness accounts of members of *Libération-Sud* in the 72 AJ series that were entrusted to the National Archives by the Comité d’histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale (Committee for Second World War History). Since it was forbidden to photocopy them, I spent entire days copying out these accounts by hand like a monastic scribe; this gave me the chance of absorbing them thoroughly. I was beginning to be less ignorant, but huge grey areas still persisted. The most interesting archival collections were closed. So too were those of the Bureau Central de Renseignement et d’Action (BCRA—Central Bureau of Intelligence and Operations), Free France’s secret service, for which I had to meet Madame Bonnazzi, who was in charge of the contemporary section of the National Archives. The meetings I had with her were tantalising. I would tell her what I was looking for; facing me over her desk, she would go through a list to which I had no access and then would suggest that I submit special requests for such and such a document, giving me provisional reference codes. When all was said and done, I only had access to a few rare documents until 1991, when these archives were finally opened to the public, but it was too late for my thesis that was already far advanced. Whole swathes of the history of the movement that I was studying remained inaccessible to me. I knew nothing, for example, about the propaganda services that were in charge

of producing and distributing broadsheets and tracts that had obviously played a major role in the structuring and growth of the movement.

HARD LABOUR

Hence the need to have recourse to eye-witnesses who had been involved in the action and who were still alive. This meant carrying out work for which I had no training and so I read up on oral history. I thus managed to avoid some pitfalls but I was well aware of my epistemological and conceptual shortcomings. I met around 120 eye-witnesses in all; they represented quite a broad spectrum, from the top to the bottom of the pyramid, if this kind of image has any relevance. My trawl ranged from the totally useless to the miraculously successful. I saw some witnesses only once (for various reasons), whereas I met others so regularly that I struck up friendships with some of them.

I worked alone. It was hard, self-funded labour in which I was engaged in my free time. I was teaching 45 miles north-west of Paris in a *collège* (for pupils aged 11–15) in the county of Vexin where I was not unhappy but far removed from the research I did in my spare time. I attended the seminar led by Jean-Pierre Azéma and Dominique Veillon at the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP—the Institute of Present-Day History). This was very useful to me since it gave me the chance to listen to the most prominent researchers and to get to know about current research. Apart from that, I lived in total solitude. It was a handicap and also, in a way, a boon. Reading everything that was being written about my area of study, I remained completely free. Until my viva, I never really talked about my research except with Maurice Agulhon and Jean-Pierre Vernant, whom I first approached because he had been a member of *Libération-Sud*, but whose ideas influenced and sustained me. This was a fine example of the problematic relationship between the researcher and his/her interlocutors: Jean-Pierre Vernant did not believe in oral history and maintained that he and I existed in two separate spheres that made any real communication between us impossible. But I observed his methods, I read his work, and that helped me a great deal, although we were not really close and I did not see much of him then. The man was intimidating yet warm, understanding and likable, but he was reluctant to talk about his clandestine activities. As for Maurice Agulhon, I used to meet him on average once a year in his office in the Collège de France where he had taken up his appointment

in 1986. Our conversations were strange. Maurice Agulhon said little during our meetings. And I am not a chatty person by nature either. So our meetings were therefore made up of relatively long silences that, at first, I took it upon myself to interrupt, only to realise—too late!—that what I had taken for a gap was actually his way of getting ready to say something, preceded by a discreet clearing of the throat that I learned to spot with the passage of time. Amazingly, this non-specialist of the twentieth century, who took a lively interest in the history of the Resistance, proved to be a competent supervisor in my field of research. He may have been laconic, but his assessments were sound and the fruit of a very rich cultural experience; he opened my mind through his questioning and hypothesising. Moreover, he read my thesis line by line, as I can confirm by the many pages of hand-written letters that I have kept; they contain comments, approval and criticism that proved to be extremely useful to me.

My research drove me on. I was entirely absorbed by the work, though not without some nasty bouts of doubt concerning the veracity of my hypotheses and, even more, my ability to complete such a complex project. I searched the archives without always finding anything substantial. With hindsight, it seems to me that my relationship with this history was ambivalent: it absorbed me, but, at the same time, kept me at a distance. In truth, it was so difficult to tackle that I did not need to distance myself; the distancing effect imposed itself naturally on me.

RESEARCHING A MINEFIELD

The very object of my research was complex. It was a minefield because it involved the history of Communism, which, in France, is a highly controversial topic. I only realised this gradually. And it was only as I progressed that I realised that I was being associated with the object of my research because my supervisor was a former communist, and because Lucie Aubrac—a member of the Resistance who represented *Libération-Sud*—had been associated with the communist movement for a long time. In my field, the question that most interested well-informed people concerned communist infiltration: did communist moles influence the direction of the *Libération-Sud* movement and, subsequently, that of the united Resistance? It also greatly interested Lucie Aubrac, since the first words she uttered on my topic—and which I wrote down immediately—were: ‘*Libération-Sud* was not attached to the Communist Party’.

I therefore need to make it absolutely clear in the context of this ego-history exercise that I have never been a Communist, nor even been tempted to join the Communist Party. I do not think there is any reason to feel proud of this, all the more so since, in my case, it is a generational phenomenon. My secondary school education was in Paris, at the Lycée Henri-IV, which was a sort of political incubator. I was inoculated with quite a hefty injection of anti-Stalinism, thanks to my mother who had read *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in Russian in the magazine *Novy Mir* in November 1962. If my mother, who was a pharmacist by profession, had studied Russian as a mature student and gone as far as gaining a diploma from the *École des langues orientales* (School of Oriental Languages), it had nothing to do with a love of Communism but with her admiration for Russian culture and civilisation. She wanted to read Pushkin, Gogol, Chekhov and Dostoyevsky in the original. In order to improve her Russian, she had subscribed to *Novy Mir* and had thus read Solzhenitsyn's aforementioned novella. In her wake, I too studied Russian at school and read Anna Akhmatova, in particular *Requiem* (poems written between 1930 and 1957, never published in the USSR but edited in Russian in Munich in 1963), which deals terrifyingly with the *Yezhovshchina*, the 1930s purges instigated by Yezhov, Beria's predecessor. My anti-Stalinist education was also nurtured by the extreme left-wing publications that were everywhere at the Lycée Henri-IV, together with *La Joie de Lire*, the militant and eccentric bookshop owned by François Maspero that I visited often on the lower part of the Boulevard Saint-Michel; you could sit on the floor there and read for as long as you wished. I regarded my contemporaries who were militants in the *Jeunesses Communistes* and the *Union des Étudiants Communistes* as politically anachronistic and, to be honest, old-fashioned: even if I understood that some of them had often joined the Party because others in their family were members, I had no sympathy for their political and ideological views. I have therefore never felt any attraction to, or fascination for, the Communist Party.

And yet people associated me with my research topic, and I often had the impression that I was seen as a Communist fellow-traveller, even a mole. In spite of this ineradicable image, I never mixed with the approved Communist Party researchers. As for the former members of the Resistance who were Communists and whom I was interviewing, they were wary of me since I was not one of them. Among those who were not (or were no longer) Communists, my background made them

suspicious of me too: why on earth was Maurice Agulhon, an eminent nineteenth-century specialist, supervising me? Was I not under the aegis of Lucie Aubrac, whose strong personality could surely crush me as a discreet and unknown researcher with no academic status? I was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. None of these things which I am attempting to present plainly some thirty years later were clear to me at the time, and I got on as best I could, relying on my intuition, taking care not to expose myself to attacks, in an atmosphere of inscrutability and, all things considered, relative hostility. But I was carving my way without excessive soul-searching. In one sense, the prejudices that were aroused by my appearance in the field of the history of the Resistance were useful to me. I had barely begun my thesis when well-meaning souls warned me against Lucie Aubrac's attempts to control me. I immediately shared these misgivings with her, and I am inclined to believe that the total freedom that this tough-minded woman always granted me had something to do with that warning and her subsequent determination to react by proving all those well-meaning souls to be wrong.

JOINING A RESEARCH GROUP

My loneliness came to an end in 1990 when I joined the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP) for three years. I had reached the limits of what I could do while engaged in full-time teaching. I had made this clear to Lucie Aubrac and her husband Raymond Aubrac, and they had put in a recommendation for me to take up this post. Rather than being recruited by the IHTP, I thus entered it by the back door. I had previously applied for a position but had been unsuccessful. My ego-history is not without setbacks... At any rate, I took part in laboratory meetings where I was all the more interested in what was going on as it was my first real contact with the world of institutional historical research. Probably owing to the way I had joined and also because the subject of my thesis had not been noticed by the official specialists in the field, I spent a good year as an observer, certainly not as a participant, of the activities of the laboratory. I can date my first actual participation, which was modest enough. I was asked to draw up a bibliography for a publication on oral sources that came out in 1992. By then, I had gradually become part of the team. Thanks to Robert Frank, who had succeeded François Bédarida as the laboratory's director, I was given full responsibility for two *Cahiers de l'IHTP*. These

publications—Bertrande d’Astier de la Vigerie’s prison diary from March to April 1941 (Douzou 1993) and the unpublished memoirs of Yvon Morandat (Douzou 1994)—featured documents that I had discovered during my oral survey. I was now working in ideal conditions that allowed me to make rapid and focussed progress. Not that I ever had the feeling—even in my marginal position—of belonging to that ‘heroic generation’, as Pieter Lagrou puts it in his envious description of the IHTP’s early years (Lagrou 2013). He presents the facts with a nostalgia typical of those who, owing to their date of birth, were unable to take part in a venture which they retrospectively embellish. If my memory serves me right, there was no ‘heroic generation’; only an efficient laboratory, well-funded and striving to establish its intellectual and scientific credentials, which is already quite something. But the presentation by Pieter Lagrou, who has a reputation for debunking myths, illustrates the power of reconstructions in which we all indulge when we examine a past to which we have not had access.

Thanks to my advantageous working conditions, I made progress and had the viva for my State doctorate in June 1993, with a prestigious panel of examiners, namely Maurice Agulhon, Jean-Pierre Azéma, François Bédarida, Robert Frank, André Kaspi and Jean-Pierre Vernant. After that, I resumed my school-teaching post, continuing my research, until I was fortunate enough to be appointed lecturer at the University of Lyon 2 in 1995, after two unsuccessful attempts. This time, I was no longer alone: quite the contrary. Thanks to the IHTP and the network of researchers gravitating around it, I was involved in organising six important conferences on the Resistance between 1993 and 1997. Not only was I no longer alone, I was physically and mentally active in a stimulating climate of group research. This allowed me to compare notes with other researchers and led me to produce more than I would have done otherwise. This experience of collective research caused me to question what I thought I had learned in writing my thesis: I realised I had been conditioned—and limited—by the scope of my topic. I had studied a complex organisation in as much detail as possible without relating it sufficiently to its broader context. In short, adopting François Marcot’s distinction, I had focused my research on the Resistance as an organisation to the detriment of the Resistance as a movement (Marcot 1997). The former, ‘a tiny minority’, is made up of the networks, the movements and the *maquis*, those organised groups that were established to fight the occupying forces and Vichy. The latter is the social movement

that ‘includes all those who acted individually and all those who demonstrated their solidarity by making essential contributions to organised Resistance.’ But, although he distinguishes the two bodies, ‘two concentric circles with ill-defined limits’, François Marcot does not dissociate one from the other: ‘The Resistance as a movement is not to be found at the margins of the organised Resistance: it determines its existence. And, although it should be distinguished from the handful of militants that led organised Resistance, it should be included in an overall view of the Resistance’ (Marcot 1997, 23). This amounts to suggesting that the Resistance was a phenomenon that took many forms, complex, malleable and interactive, constantly subject to dynamic remodelling and reconstruction.

From working on my thesis, I had nevertheless derived some lessons that sustained my later work and shaped my approach to historical research.

THE COMPLEXITY OF RESEARCHING THE RESISTANCE

First of all, the singular complexity of researching the Resistance. This statement often gives rise to scepticism, annoyance or immediate rebuttal on the grounds that all history is complex, a fact that I do not deny by any means. Stating that the history of the Resistance is complex amounts to stressing its clandestine nature, which is a very strong singularity. This explains the fact that, without exception, all historians who have worked on the Resistance have had recourse to oral testimony, by using existing accounts or carrying out new interviews. It is true that there are written archives, and more of them than was believed for some time. But those archives pose formidable questions. Those of the BCRA (Bureau Central de Renseignements et d’Action—Central Bureau of Intelligence and Operations), for example, were inaccessible for a long while, as I have said, and today they are very far from having given up all their secrets. This is due to the very special circumstances in which they were, and still are, organised, according to a precise system whose rationale today eludes even the most experienced specialists: they pertained, and still pertain to some extent, to special services that have been careful to preserve them from prying eyes. Moreover, the items housed there can only be used with great caution: the agents of the BCRA, like those who came into contact with this service in their activities, compiled their reports in situations of great tension and fully aware of the vital stakes involved. If this is true of any archival material, it is taken to extremes in the case of clandestine activities. The Communist Party archives provide another

example of the limitations of written archives. They remained impenetrable for a very long time before they were made accessible—first to researchers associated with the Communists—with a timing and a logic that were puzzling. These written sources were highly sought after and their importance thereby magnified, creating not inconsiderable distortions of the truth. Since the Communist Party apparatus has always characteristically viewed and depicted its organisation and its activities in a very precise, not to say manic, fashion, the numerous archival documents that it produced in secret seem to me to give a considerably overrated picture of its deeds and its influence. Members of the Resistance, Communists and non-Communists, went about their daily business, with improvisation as their rule.³ Any strictly reasoned approach, even if it is based on written archival documents, tends to make gross simplifications about a chaotic situation that, in reality, demanded creative imagination and was conducive to allowing will and whim to play an important part in individual action. So, when, ‘in the light of material presented by Daniel Virieux’ in his thesis on the *Front National*, Julian Jackson writes that my analysis, in my own thesis on the *Libération-Sud* movement, of the influence exerted by militants or sympathisers of the Communist Party, ‘underplays the degree of Communist organization’ (Jackson 2001, 472, note 109), he raises a question that is worth examining for two reasons. Firstly, because the archives on which Virieux’s reasoning is based had not been mentioned by anyone until he cited them; and if he could do so, it is because he had been told about their existence and had been given special permission to use them. I have reason to remember my visits to a Museum dedicated to the Communist Resistance in Vitry-sur-Seine, in 1987 and 1988: when I asked if there were any archives concerning Communist leaders who had played a role in *Libération-Sud* (Pierre Hervé, Maurice Kriegel-Valrimont, Alfred Malleret-Joinville, etc.), they obligingly brought me press cuttings: they featured media coverage of Alfred Malleret’s funeral... So, no archives. Secondly, because the relative abundance of ‘bios’ (forms that all militants had to complete with personal details), directives and reports that

³It should be noted here that the Party apparatus made a clear distinction between communist and non-communist members of the Resistance. Those who were not under the aegis of the Communist Party and its strict surveillance were, by definition, suspect and were not trusted. They may well have been useful, but the very fact that they were beyond the pale—whether by accident or design—made them very different from militants who were under strict Communist control.

the Communist Party had kept under strict surveillance during and after the period of clandestine warfare, tells us more, in my opinion, about how it functioned internally than about any effective influence it might have exerted outside its own sphere of responsibility. In other words, I may have minimised ‘the degree of Communist organization’, but I do not believe I underestimated their influence. I maintain that Pierre Hervé, Maurice Kriegel and others acted as free agents, admittedly each with their own sensibilities, where the essentials were concerned. The fact that they pledged allegiance to the Communist apparatus by no means indicates total subservience to it. In any case, one should consider each one individually: Alfred Malleret probably conformed to the Party line more than Pierre Hervé who, in turn, conformed more than Jean-Pierre Vernant, and so on. Suffice it to say that the fact that they belonged to a non-Communist Resistance movement was not without influencing militants who came from the Communist ‘family’ in their perceptions, behaviour and assessment of situations. The following example is anecdotal but revealing. Claude Bourdet relates how, when he was wandering through Paris after having dodged a German police checkpoint with Pierre Hervé, the latter drew his attention, in the window of a bookshop, to a volume translated as *Au pays du grand mensonge* (1938, In the Land of the Big Lie), by Ciliga, a former Communist from Yugoslavia, which indicts the USSR: “You should read that”, he told me. I actually bought the book and was amazed at what I found in it, given that Hervé had recommended it’ (Bourdet 1975, 300). Claude Bourdet was at that time literally obsessed by the risk of a Communist takeover of the unified Resistance and believed that Hervé was one of the militant moles who were being deployed to this effect. In the light of this, the latter’s suggestion is certainly disconcerting. It was not the behaviour that was expected of a militant Communist who was obeying orders and supremely careful not to draw attention to himself. Whether it was a bit of bravado or a counter-measure, it was the behaviour of a heretic in view of the rigorous orthodoxy that the Party required from its members, whether officially members or not. It is difficult to draw any clear conclusion from this anecdote, but at least it stands as a warning to be cautious. Bourdet himself made the link between this kind of ideological deviation and the unenviable fate that the Communist Party had in store for Pierre Hervé after the war. To summarise, by ignoring the particular characteristics of the Resistance that underground work made necessary over a period of time, one condemns oneself to reducing it to an activity carried out in ordinary times, which is quite simply nonsense.

The second lesson I derived from work on my thesis is the tension between the historians' perception and the lived experiences of the members of the Resistance.

THE TENSION BETWEEN WRITTEN HISTORY AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

Some will say that this tension is the essence of history of the present time. I could not agree more. However, here too, underground activities are very particular. They are difficult to understand and, from this point of view, the voices of those involved are invaluable. A history based only on oral sources would be of little value. Conversely, a history that ignored them would not be worth much. How do we define the tension between perception and experience? Perception involves, for example, a development of structures by which we can describe and understand the organisation in its activities. For my thesis, I paid particular attention in this regard to what I called the 'Centre' of *Libération-Sud*: the 'Centre' was a group of individuals taken together, in flux, but who were nevertheless tasked to represent the movement. But once this reconstitution had been achieved, a question that has intrigued and preoccupied me for some time arises: how does a hierarchy crystallise? On what bases? With what kind of legitimacy? It is a question that goes far beyond the history of the Resistance which, in its own extreme way, allows consideration of concepts like those proposed by François Marcot: intentionality (one acts because one wants to), functionality (one has all the more reason to be contacted and act if one occupies a post that can potentially be useful to the Resistance), to which we must add seniority (to be the first to take action confers a superiority and a dominance) and what Jean-Pierre Vernant—adopting a concept from Ancient Greece—called 'philia' (solidarity, friendship, and fraternity that do not exclude manifestations of rivalry and competition), a very strong binding force in the closed society of the underground (but which is obviously not unique to it). In the wake of Vernant, I attempted to address these questions in an article that I consider important, 'La démocratie sans le vote' (Democracy without voting), published in the *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* in 2001. This tension between perception and lived experience is particularly important in the essential phase of the Resistance's beginnings; these times that were crucial for the future have become masked by the

effects of repression in the sense that the short life expectancy of the pioneers of the underground movement of the Resistance led to their early elimination from the game and literally condemned them to silence, and hence to oblivion. Whilst they showed great respect for the pioneering phase of their action, Resistance members reconstructed their experiences and those of their groups by endowing them with an effectiveness that meant it was impossible and counter-productive to acknowledge the tough learning curve of the early days. This is why I felt the discovery of Bertrande d'Astier de la Vigerie's prison diary of March–April 1941 was important: suddenly, the obstacles and failures of Resistance in its early and uncertain stages became visible once more. It was a means of rediscovering an access to its beginnings (Douzou 1993). Excessive rationalising and intellectualising diminishes our ability to understand situations in which chance played a vital part in the chaotic and constantly improvised history of the Resistance.

The final contribution my thesis made to my understanding of the period concerns the vital importance of the way in which memory functions and develops over a period of time.

MEMORY IN ALL ITS MANIFESTATIONS

To be honest, this really was something new to me. What I mean is that I realised the importance of the way in which memory functions less by reading, which, like everyone, I did, from Paul Ricœur to Pierre Nora and Henry Rousso, than by talking to those to whom the term 'eye-witnesses' is applied, albeit wrongly in my view since, in reality, we are interviewing the *makers* of history that is being studied. But, paradoxically, by giving them a voice, one is taking it away from them since the researcher is free—as long as he adheres to a code of conduct that dictates that nothing said should be cut or altered—to use this voice as he sees fit. This is why it is painful for these individuals to swap their role of participant for that of eye-witness, why it approximates to a shedding of part of one's inner self. There is absolutely no recognition of authors' rights in these cases. Eye-witnesses experience this loss in varying degrees of intensity, but they all experience it.

Aside from this essential aspect, which explains a number of difficulties met with by all researchers to some extent, making the acquaintance of *eye-witnesses* had, in my case, a decisive effect on my research. I observed

how memory retained certain facts in their original state, as it were, altered or reconfigured others, and omitted or deleted others. I was particularly struck by the high level of complexity involved in the processing. At the same time, there is something powerful and unpredictable about the eye-witness's testimony (Douzou 1997), to the extent that he may inadvertently catch the researcher off guard and, in one simple and apparently harmless sentence, demolish an entire intellectual construction, however logical and rational it may be. This exercise, which ought not to be confused with the kind of phenomenon found at dinner parties or in conversations with chance acquaintances, is an exercise in humility which, whether one likes it or not, leads to a sort of relativism. This is both uncomfortable and stimulating. It is perhaps the reason why I took so much interest in meeting the participants involved in the history that I was trying to write, with a reasonably clear approach that can be summarised thus: the participants who are transformed into eye-witnesses must be respected as human beings. They have inalienable rights: the right to err, to reconstruct the past, not to tell all (who ever tells all?) and the right to remain silent. I realised the importance of this approach when, in 1997, at Raymond Aubrac's request, a meeting—called a '*table ronde*'—was organised in Paris on the premises of the newspaper *Libération* to allow historians to investigate a whole series of questions raised by the publication of a journalist's book that levelled at the Aubracs the accusation that they had betrayed their own friends in 1943. This meeting morphed, as the day went on, into a thorough-going interrogation of Lucie and Raymond Aubrac. I felt that they were badly treated, without the basic human consideration that is everyone's right and, moreover, that no tangible result emerged from this. All in all, this dark day marked a sort of symbolic public demise of the eye-witnesses. I take no pride in having participated in this gross caricature of what the historian's work should be.

Historiography itself demonstrates the subtle functioning and processing of memory, and it is no accident that I have continued to develop this aspect of my work since the completion of my thesis. I dealt with it in 2005 in a book entitled *La Résistance. Une histoire périlleuse* (The Resistance. A Perilous History), commissioned by Richard Figuiet and Patrick Garcia. I don't think I would have written this book without the unexpected request to do so. It was the fact that it was commissioned that encouraged me to think that I could do it. In my view, it has the greatest scope of all my projects. I attempted to demonstrate

how Resistance historiography had developed and, for that, I had to revise some of my earlier thoughts. In the conclusion to my thesis that was published by Odile Jacob (1995), I used a concept, namely the ‘vulgate’, that was in common usage at the time and that I defined as ‘assertions accepted as proven because they had been recycled from one work to another’ and had ‘saved historians the trouble of visiting the sources.’ The work I did for my book on historiography rendered my view of things more complex. I no longer think that there was ever a vulgate. There were successive, context-dependent strata, with questions associated with each context, and dependent on the way in which history was viewed as a discipline. One question was essential: has sufficient account been taken of the manifold and discrete phenomena that are grouped together under the general heading of ‘the Resistance’? My reply to this question is, on the whole, negative. There remains much to be done, particularly on the crossover between the legend as it evolved in the course of writing its history and the cold, reasoned narrative of the facts. This is where my taste for literature, that goes back a long way, has proved to be increasingly useful as time has gone by. Writers, from Joseph Kessel to William Styron, from François Maspero to André Malraux and Patrick Modiano, are incomparable pioneers by virtue of the freedom they accord themselves and the work they carry out, with their intense awareness and sensitivity, on a buried past. I needed time and a certain audacity to dare to write about their works. I eventually did so (Douzou 2009, 2014, 2015), but I think that the need to familiarise myself with these in preparing my own publications led me to explore still further and deepen a research topic about which I thought I knew more or less everything.

On closer examination of Resistance historiography, I have realised that the presentation of the development and progression of post-war memory is a simplification. At State and political level, an official memory certainly existed, that tended to minimise the influence of Vichy and maximise that of the Resistance. Nevertheless, have the French ever really believed in their heart of hearts that everyone had resisted? I do not believe so. The reasons for doubting this are many and diverse. There is, first of all, the universally recognised fact that the French who were rewarded or officially registered as being in the Resistance were only ever a small minority. Then there are the writings by members of the Resistance themselves who constantly repeated the fact, with greater or lesser emphasis, that they had been few and had enjoyed little support

during the war. Finally, there are various aspects of State decisions that clearly show that memory of the Resistance, whose celebration is highly problematic, is rapidly fading, without necessarily giving in to the majority's apathy. I will give a single example here, namely that of postage stamp issues, an area in which the will of the government is privileged. The first stamp that referred to the Resistance was issued as late as 1947. Ten years had to elapse before others followed. In 1957, a series of stamps dedicated to the 'heroes of the Resistance' were created at the initiative of Eugène Thomas, Secretary of State for Postal Services (PTT). A former *résistant*, this socialist militant from northern France had taken this initiative because, as he said, he was distressed at witnessing the disappearance of the memory of the Resistance. Five series were issued, up to 1961. On closer examination, this initiative owed nothing to the Gaullists since the decision to issue the stamps was taken in 1956, at a time when they were not in power. It owed nothing to the Communists either, since Eugène Thomas had actually seen to it that none of the heroes being celebrated were Communists. The most public and official demonstration of the glorious memory of the Resistance had therefore nothing to do with the two currents of memory that were said to prevail in the fields of politics and commemoration. From 1961 onwards, without going into unnecessary detail here, the printing of stamps commemorating the Resistance was sporadic. By this token, *Resistancialisme*, namely the myth that the French had been unanimously pro-Resistance, cannot be considered a proven fact. As I interviewed members of the Resistance, read and researched in the archives, I was less struck by the celebration of the memory of the Resistance than by what was not said, partly owing to the feeling of having belonged to a minority and partly owing to a huge feeling of moral and political frustration, associated with a strong feeling of having failed: a number of members of the Resistance had the nagging feeling not only that people were forgetting their story, but, above all, that the values that had given rise to it were being gradually abandoned without too many qualms.

'TWIXT CHANCE AND FATE

In concluding this attempt to summarise my intellectual journey, with all the uncertainties that I have mentioned, it is obvious that chance circumstances played an important part in the choice of directions that I have taken. And yet things are not so simple. Why did I jump at the

chance to study the Resistance when it was offered to me? It took me years to develop a hypothesis to help me understand this. Part of my family comes from Lyon. I became very close to my maternal grandmother, from my earliest childhood until her death in 1978. She never spoke about the Resistance. But friends visited her, and I used to listen to what was said, although it was in code, in a manner of speaking, since they all knew what they were talking about. So, when I consulted the Rhône departmental archives, I came across names that were familiar to me from the conversations that I had heard. I later discovered that the addresses where these names had lived had been used as hiding-places for members of the underground. In simple terms, I am inclined to think that the silence surrounding this period spurred me on subconsciously to choose my topic.

Here is a precise example. In my childhood, we often went to L'Hay-les-Roses, near Paris, to visit a dear friend of my grandmother, Moïse Haissinsky. He was a Jew who had come from Russia and worked with Enrico Fermi and Marie Curie; a renowned chemist, he was a professor at the Sorbonne and Director of the Radium Institute. He would occasionally take my brother and me to a teahouse in the rue Soufflot, only a stone's throw away from our school, where he would tell us about our maternal grandparents and, particularly, about our grandfather who had died in 1943. To be honest, we were too young to understand the implications of what he was saying. But one of my former doctoral students who was researching the Jews in Lyon between 1940 and 1944, and to whom I mentioned the name of Moïse Haissinsky, found documents that reveal that, as a refugee in Toulouse in 1940, ostracised by the scientists who could have looked after him there, he made contact with my grandfather and worked with him in his laboratory. Without going into details, he was very grateful to my grandfather and his friends (Henri Longchambon and Jean Perrin) for having helped him at a difficult time. His sons passed on to my student what Moïse had written about his life during this part of the war. It is a short piece that raises more questions than it answers, but it pays explicit homage to my grandfather and his family.

With the fragments presented here, what I have seen and felt to be the consequence of chance circumstances can actually be ascribed in an indirect fashion—to which I am unable to apply the precision that is expected of a historian—to a past that was only ever hinted at on rare occasions in my family. Lucie Aubrac said later that she had approved

my thesis on *Libération-Sud* because, when we met for the first time, I had told her about my grandmother, born in 1889, who lived in Lyon during the war and who—but this I did not tell Lucie Aubrac—I had reason to believe, had been active in the Resistance. When all is said and done, I think that it is probably because I was told so little about all this that I instinctively chose a route that would provide some answers to questions that emerged from the depths of the past. A particularly attentive reader of the books and articles that I have published would find that they contain, scattered like little pebbles, clues that I have left along the way about members of my grandparents' family in Lyon under the Occupation. I doubt that such a reader exists, but, in my writing, whose theoretical aim was to clarify matters, I have derived a fair amount of pleasure from concealing fragments on which I have been unable to throw much light.

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On Chance and Necessity

Denis Peschanski

It is always difficult to establish a causal relationship where the search for (and perhaps discovery of) the origins of a life-choice is concerned, since it is indeed a matter of choice. Yet, here, as is often the case, the principle of causality reaches its limits. Simply stating A and B does not mean that B is necessarily explained by A. This applies to the commitment of my parents at the heart of the twentieth century, from Palestine to the Spanish Civil War, from the Resistance to deportation. What is more, we are three brothers: Robi the physicist, Marc the biologist and I myself the historian. There must be something there too since we are all three researchers and also three political militants of long standing. This last point needs no explanation in view of both my parents' commitment. As for the first point, it can partly be explained by the profession of our mother, who was also a researcher. But only one chose history and, more precisely, the history of the Second World War. Moreover, it is not necessary to be the child of a

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member of the Resistance in order to be a historian of the Resistance, and probably even less to be a child of a supporter of Vichy in order to be a historian of Vichy. Evidence of causal links should therefore be treated with caution. I shall return to this, since my research touches on my parents' history and because I shall have to try to write it in more detail one day.

But, when, indeed, did I decide to be (or envisage being) a historian? I think I felt the call in the third year of my secondary schooling; I was twelve at the time. At any rate, I soon convinced myself that my choice was made at that time. As for my chosen period, it shifted quite a bit. The significance of this roaming will be discussed later.

When one talks about oneself, it involves other people also. This implies that intellectual exchanges and personal encounters are important, even crucial, since one never develops in isolation. The collective will therefore always be implied in the use of the first-person singular. Nevertheless, one should avoid the facile and amusing temptation of name-dropping. That said, my main purpose here is to explore a few paths and to try to provide further clarification on these.

A STRONG FAMILY LEGACY

I shall present two anecdotes here for the record. The first is easy to date: I had just submitted my hand-written thesis for the State doctorate on the internment camps in France between 1938 and 1946 and, in the autumn of 2000, in order to keep myself busy, I returned to the police archives of the Paris *Préfecture de police* to unearth some new material. Under its director, Claude Charlot, and of course the Police Commissioner, the place had certainly become one of the most accessible to researchers, whereas it had long been one of the most hermetically closed.

He immediately let me know that his department was organising the archives of the *Brigades Spéciales des Renseignements Généraux* (BS, Special Brigades of General Intelligence), set up mainly to hunt down Communists during the war. A student had just completed an index of names. So I quizzed him on the file of Missak Manouchian, the commander of the FTP-MOI (*Francs-tireurs et partisans de la Main d'œuvre immigrée*) in the Paris region from July to November

1943 and hero of the *Affiche rouge* (Red Poster).¹ I had been interested for some years in the role played by foreigners in the Resistance and in this group in particular. Along with Stéphane Courtois and Adam Rayski, I had already published a book entitled *Le Sang de l'étranger* (1989, Foreigner's Blood) on the MOI in the Resistance. This group had been at the centre of a great deal of ideological controversy over the reasons for its destruction. Access to the police file on the group simply known as 'groupe Manouchian' allowed me to reconstruct the pieces of the puzzle. Identification, surveillance, arrest and interrogation had all been the work of the Parisian police. I was quite intrigued by the chiasmus of foreigners dedicated to the liberation of the country yet being hunted down by the French police who were working for the occupying forces. My first surprise was that the student told me there were two big archive boxes on the Manouchian affair. I would therefore be able to establish the fate of this important Parisian group of armed militants by comparing these archives with contemporary sources already in existence. Claude Charlot had told me that permission to access this file would be easily obtained by submitting an official request and that this would pose no problem.

Here, I suddenly remembered that my parents had had dealings with the notorious *Brigades Spéciales* (BS). I cited various possible names and, lo and behold, the student found me two or three bundles of as many as 100–150 pages concerning the business that was the undoing of my parents. 'Are they your parents?' Claude Charlot asked me. 'You don't need special permission.' To be honest, I am not sure that, legally, the fact that one is close family allows one to avoid the rather long process of submitting a request to the appropriate authority (in this case, the Paris Prefect of Police), but I did not think of arguing with him over his interpretation of the law on archival consultation. So I collected these precious bundles of papers within less than ten minutes.

¹ Editors' note: The FTP (*Francs-Tireurs et Partisans*) was a Communist-led armed Resistance organisation open to *résistants* of all persuasions. Its FTP-MOI section was mainly composed of foreigners. The *Affiche rouge* (Red Poster)—thus named because of its red background—is one of the most famous propaganda posters in occupied France: its aim was to discredit the Resistance by associating it with criminality, Jews and foreigners.

The key players in this business were as follows. On one side, there was one of the Soviet networks operating in France, headed by Robert Beck, to which my parents belonged. A particular feature of this network was that it had two branches, one for action and the other for intelligence: my mother, who was a chemist, belonged to the former, while my father, who was more adept in radio-communication, belonged to the latter. Against them, on the other side, were the French and German forces of repression. The German department for counter-espionage (IV-F) was on the point of getting to the network's intelligence branch. The French *Brigades Spéciales*, or more precisely one of them, the BS2, responsible for 'anti-terrorism', was on the lookout for the branch concerned with action. On perusing the archives, I came across the records of my parents' first interrogations dated 10 July 1942, and then my mother's original student card of 1941 to 1942. Then I was able to reconstitute the BS2's repressive operation. The Germans and the French had mounted parallel man-hunts, but no connection was made until 20 July, in other words, about two weeks after the arrest of the leader Robert Beck. The dismantling of the 'intelligence' branch by the Germans had begun in May 1942. Beck's right-hand man, Hittel Gruszkiewicz, known as Bill, had thrown himself from the third floor of the Gestapo headquarters so as not to talk. It was in early July that the BS2 fell upon the group's 'action' branch.

The case was deemed important enough for a trial to be organised inside the Santé prison since the Germans did not want to take the risk of triggering a rescue operation aimed at liberating the accused. The outcome of this trial was that two members of the network, Beck and Librod, were condemned to death and executed; the others, including my parents, were deported. The round of prisons before the camps. *Nacht und Nebel*. On 6 February 1943, Robert Beck was executed by firing squad at the Balard shooting range. Before he died, he wrote a particularly emotional letter.² The finest tribute, however, came perhaps from the Germans since the police archives still contain the records of all his interrogation sessions: 'Beck is the head of a highly active terrorist organisation and a direct representative of the

² It is reproduced in *La Vie à en mourir. Lettres de fusillés, 1941–1944* (Krivopissko with Marcot 2006, 157–160).

Komintern. His accomplices are probably still at large, but tracing them has proved extremely difficult in view of the fact that Beck's statements do not implicate any of them.' I would never dream of judging those who talked under torture, which, by the way, happened often. My question is never how members of the Resistance talked but how they managed not to talk. Moreover, in order to talk, one had to have something to say, and that sort of person was unfortunately rare in the France of those dark years.

Nevertheless, apart from Robert's last letter and his heroism, along with the hazy existence of the Beck network, Bill's suicide and scenes from the trial, I discovered everything in the archives about a story that was already an integral part of my life.

My mother was still alive at that time. I told her first of all about the records of the interrogations and the police photographs for identification. Then came the time to mention the details of my parents' arrest. This was by telephone. 'Can you remind me of the details of your arrest?' I asked, for my parents had been arrested together. 'But I've told you a hundred times.' 'Try again'. So I got the story of the mistake that was frequently made in the Resistance: the paper, with their address, found, as ill-luck would have it, in Robert Beck's flat. Right. But the problem was that I had the record of Robert's arrest, with numerous details about everything they had found at his home, but there was no sign of a scrap of paper carrying my parents' address. 'It *was* rue Porte-aux-Riches, wasn't it?' Yes, it was. 'And your flat was obviously not in your name, was it?' No, it was not. In the records, there was also a reference to S., a member of the network, whose job it was to provide her very French name for the group's rented hiding-places. I had checked carefully before telling my mother... that on 9 July, the day before their arrest, this S. returned from being interrogated by the Germans and, since there was direct communication between French and German police, what she had said appeared in a written record from the French BS: that she had rented a flat at 4 or 6 rue Porte-aux-Riches, and that a woman who was vital to the network for her competence in making bombs lived there. I had simply stumbled on the reasons for my parents' arrest... a few hours before I revealed them to my mother. There was a long pause on the phone. And then my mother, tentatively, asked: 'D'you think she's still alive?' I burst out laughing at the idea that my mother, at the age of 90, might be planning some kind of vendetta against Mrs. S. I objected that virtually 60 years had passed since the affair and

that, judging from the police photographs, S. must have been twenty years older than she was.

The mere mention of the Germans torturing my mother to make my father talk; Robert attempting suicide by severing his carotid artery and drawing a hammer and sickle on the prison wall; his deputy, Bill, throwing himself from the third floor of the Gestapo headquarters so as not to talk; Robert, again, standing up at the end of his trial in October 1942 to announce to those who had condemned him to death that it mattered little since they had lost the war; my mother organising sabotage in a German prison where inmates were forced to work for the National Defence. That was the gist of what I knew so far of the affair. My father's nightmares and cries, in the middle of the night, that woke everyone in the house were powerful reminders of life in the prisons and the camps. His heartfelt groans. So many snapshots that make up a life, my life. Snapshots, certainly, but never any real account of those ineffable horrors. I am always suspicious of those grand analyses of society's lack of response to the rare Jewish deportees who tried to explain what they had lived through. After their return from the camps and the many books published, they preferred to speak of other things than camps, deportation and torture with their children. Why? Because they wanted to start a family. Do you think it is possible to raise children on stories about the horrors of the camps? This applies to the persecuted deportees, but also to those who were hunted down. My parents, who were Jewish, were arrested and deported as members of the Resistance. Quite logically, they did not talk to me about life in German prisons, and then, in her case, in KL Ravensbrück and, in his, in KL Sachsenhausen. One cannot raise children in the shadow of horrible memories. The reference to the Resistance, on the other hand, seemed to be constantly present, as was the irrepressible subconscious, voiced by the cries that rent the nights of my childhood.

But it took me some time to realise that my parents had belonged to Soviet organisations during the war. Of course, this is unlikely to be a frequent topic of family conversation, whatever organisations are involved. I understood this when, in the late 1970s, I met Trepper at Artur and Lise London's home. Artur London (he was always called 'Gérard', his codename in the Resistance), had been one of the leaders of *Main d'œuvre immigrée* (Immigrant Labour) or MOI during the war, and then one of the two founders of the *Travail allemand* (German Labour) or TA—whose job it was to infiltrate the departments of the occupying

forces. His wife, Lise Ricol, whom he married after the war, had been the heroine of a prestigious operation organised by the Communist Resistance in the rue Daguerre in 1942. In the immediate wake of this action, she had been arrested by the French police, who were as active as ever. Artur himself was arrested but, fortunately, he was never linked to the *Travail allemand* and thus as the man whom the German authorities considered their principal enemy. Notwithstanding, both Artur and Lise were tried and subsequently deported. I had begun my research on the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF, French Communist Party) during the war and I had got to know the London family quite well; so much so, in fact, that when I took part in the internal controversy over the French Communist Party after the break with the *Union de la gauche* (Union of the Left) in 1977–1978, I was a member of the London Committee for the defence of freedom in Czechoslovakia, Gérard's homeland. It is worth recalling at this point the book *L'Aveu* (1968) by Artur London and the subsequent film by Costa-Gavras (1970) that enjoyed worldwide success and which tell the story of London's appointment to the post of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Czechoslovakia, the Prague trial at which he was one of the accused and, of course, the details of his 'confession' (*aveu*). History, memory, politics: these are also key in my personal commitment to which I shall return later.

Anyway, at the age of 25, I met Léopold Trepper at the home of Artur and Lise London. It is worth remembering that Trepper was head of the most important Soviet organisation in France and in Western Europe, known as the *Orchestre rouge* (Red Orchestra), and that his story was public knowledge, thanks to a book by Gilles Perrault (1967) and, later, to Trepper's own autobiography (1975). A meeting with History. The conversation took a light-hearted turn when I blurted out the real name of 'Michel', the contact between the Red Orchestra and the PCF: Louis Grojnowski, the MOI boss during the war. I cannot remember how I obtained this piece of information that had been kept secret, even from Gilles Perrault.

At any rate, I immediately went home to tell my parents about this meeting. After all, it was not every day that one could have lunch with London and Trepper! 'D'you remember? It was in Constance's kitchen; that's where I saw Trepper...', my father said to my mother (who was able to confirm this). I cannot reproduce my father's very special accent and syntax, for he spoke many languages, having spent time in Palestine, Spain, France and Germany, but he spoke them all in Yiddish. What was all this about Constance's kitchen!? I tried to reason with my father.

Was it in Palestine? Both Trepper and my father were there at the same time in the early 1930s. 'No, of course not', he replied. So I went on: Spain? Trepper was not there. After the war? No, this was impossible: Trepper, who had returned to Moscow to explain himself, would spend a decade in prison there, whereas my father had been wise enough to stay in Paris. The possibilities were actually quite limited: 'Knowing you were interned when you came back from Spain, then under house arrest until August 1940 and that you were arrested in July 1942, you must have met Trepper in Constance's kitchen in Paris between those two dates'. 'So, what's the problem?' he replied. 'No problem, Dad, anyone could have met Trepper in a kitchen in Paris between '40 and '42'. 'Shit-stirrer', my father replied with a smile. He said no more to me about a meeting that I think must have been very interesting.

So there are two anecdotes that, among others, tend to suggest that my interest in the Second World War is difficult to explain unless the strength (rather than the weight) of this inheritance is taken into account. To avoid misleading simplifications, it is worth remembering that my colleagues all have very different family histories. What is more, I originally had intended to devote my PhD to the French Revolution. Admittedly, my Master's supervisor was Albert Soboul, who was then the 'supremo' of French Revolutionary studies, even though he had a rival in François Furet, as is well known, and this period and supervisor attracted many young Communists in the mid-1970s. Political commitment had evidently played a major role in this first choice.

COMMITMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

In my family, political commitment was not optional: it was taken for granted. For a certain period, for me, it meant the Communist Party and its organisations: youth groups known as 'Vaillants' and 'Vaillantes' (the Valiant Ones), of course, but I was actually not very active then; Communist Youth at the age of 13; the Party at 15 in which I remained until I was 26, in 1981. In between, from the end of 1977, just after the breakup of the left-wing parties' common programme, I was involved in internal rebel movements. It cannot have been easy for my big brother, Robi, who was then a member of the French Communist Party's Central Committee. Even less so when, just before François Mitterrand's victory in 1981, I was expelled from the PCF as 'an agent of bourgeois infiltration'. This smacks of the

good old days but, without wishing to appear unduly Parisian, I am convinced that the fact that I happened to find myself in the department of l'Eure, in Normandy, had something to do with it. A more experienced official would probably have found a more convincing argument. The local secretary had nothing else with which to reproach me when he organised a form of trial for treason in the presence of the members of my section in the town of Louviers. His reasoning is worth noting here: in those first months of 1981, he observed, with exemplary acuity, that all the anti-Communist campaigns were collapsing one after the other; the bourgeoisie was therefore left with only one solution, which was to infiltrate the PCF itself. He must have felt reassured in his diagnosis when, two years later, in 1983, after local elections that saw the emergence of the extreme right-wing National Front, I joined the capitalist ranks of the social democrats. In short, I became a member of the Socialist Party. For the first time.

More of a 'grass-roots' socialist, but still very influenced by militant Communism, I chose to work for some time for a number of their associations: as a parents' representative for local schools in the 1990s, by setting up a small hospitality network for the victims of the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (or GIA, Armed Islamic Group, a group of Algerian terrorists) who were obliged to come and live in France, by establishing a help-group for illegal immigrants in my town in the first decade of the twenty-first century, by being a residents' association representative, and so on. Not forgetting my time as a town councillor in Bourg-la-Reine from 2008 to 2014. I was not short of opportunities to serve the community.

The long and the short of it was that there was no question about my social and political commitment. To this day, my older brother, Robi, remains a Communist; my younger brother, Marc, retained his loyalty to his love of Trotskyism (from 1967!); and I myself am a Socialist. Now, at the time of reading the final version of this chapter, I have joined Emmanuel Macron's movement, without abandoning my original political stance. There is, therefore, a considerable breadth of left-wing commitment in my family.

As I have mentioned, my initial commitment to Communism played an important part in my interest in the French Revolution. After a Master's degree on the figure of Danton in the historiography of the first half of the nineteenth century, I thought of writing a thesis on the period from 31 May to 2 June 1793 that saw the victory of the Montagnards who supported Robespierre. I believe I got bored with the idea; I do not

remember very well what happened. At any rate, I contacted the group of political lexicologists at Saint-Cloud for my PhD. I was working on the language of Communism between 1934 and 1936, while nurturing the notion of a doctorate on the French Communist Party between 1938 and 1941. I subsequently changed direction when I came upon an exceptional archive concerning anti-Communist repression. I went over to the other side, so to speak, when I became interested in the forms and the perpetrators of that repression. I decided that my second and main doctorate (*doctorat d'État*) would be on the French internment camps between 1938 and 1946. The viva took place in 2000.

Even if one does not necessarily have to be the son of Yiddishland revolutionaries to engage in evaluation and management research structures, it is clear that, for me, this work was a kind of commitment. It is important to note here that peer evaluation, as in a number of other countries, plays a major role in the way in which research is conducted in France and in particular at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS, National Center for Scientific Research). I played a role in many of the structures in place that are designed to assess researchers and research laboratories. Five years on the CNRS's national committee for scientific research (including a confrontation with Minister Claude Allègre³), four years on the Science Council of the CNRS (an early contact with all the sciences), international experience with chairing, for eight years, the recruitment committee SHS-4 (pre-history and history) of the Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS, Fund for Scientific Research in the French-speaking Community of Belgium) and also, for two and a half years, member of the management board of the department of Human and Social Sciences at the CNRS, deputising for Marie-François Courel, head of the department: I have always

³Minister for Education and Higher Education and Research in the Jospin government (1997–2002; 2000 in his case), Claude Allègre stirred up a massive rebellion in the teaching profession and in research. As member of a CNRS assessment and recruitment committee, I was at the forefront of this protest, on the researchers' side. Incidentally, I twice had occasion to cross swords with him at Socialist Party's Research committees. He did not like to be contradicted and was convinced that he knew everything. It was hard going. He was eventually demoted by the Prime Minister, his friend Lionel Jospin, in 2000; too late, however, to win back the votes of those who normally supported the Socialist Party. Jospin's defeat in the presidential elections of 2002 was partly due to this schism.

considered this kind of commitment to be part of my responsibility as a researcher. If I have served on both sides of the divide, namely peer review and management, it is because I believed that research is a special domain in which collaborative management should be the rule.

What seems clear is that I certainly do not inherit my pleasure in research management from my mother who, although she was a chemist with the CNRS for decades, was never interested in this aspect of the job. It is probably more due to my father. A formidable chess-player, he invested his strategic skills in his new professional life. He founded a firm that made radios (experience!), then radios and televisions. As he often told me: ‘When I returned from the camps, I had no training; so I became a manager.’

In short, I believe in the social (or civic) mission of the historian. It is tough and one needs to be prepared to take hits. As I did, for example, when we were up against Holocaust deniers between 1980 and 1990. It never went beyond threats, but these led me to begin court proceedings when they became more direct and, of course, anonymous. I saw it also when a series of affairs in which I was involved—the Manouchian Affair, the Bartosek Affair and the Aubrac Affair—came to the notice of the public and the media between 1985 and 1997. Missak Manouchian, as already mentioned, was the commander of the FTP-MOI between July and November 1943. The group’s arrest in November and the trial of the *Affiche rouge* a few months later were the subject of a documentary by Mosco Boucault entitled *Des terroristes à la retraite* (1985, Retired Terrorists). The documentary was particularly interesting in its treatment of the action of these unsung men and women because it interviewed survivors. However, it was seriously defective in its accusation of the French Communist Party being supposedly obsessed with the idea of liberating France with truly French forces (allegedly leading them to betray their foreign members). The problem was that the archives were not available and that, consequently, any hypothesis was possible. With Stéphane Courtois, in a curious role since he was the historical advisor of the film, we tried to demonstrate the problems created by such hypotheses and their superficiality. This was further complicated at the time by the fact that the ideological context did not lend itself to the nuances of historiography. Thinking rationally was more necessary than ever to try to compensate for the lack of available archives. The matter was settled when, in 1989, Stéphane Courtois, Adam Rayski and I published *Le Sang de l'étranger*: this book set the record straight by

establishing causal links between events, supported by solid archival evidence. In the archives, I had managed to find the three surveillance operations that had targeted the MOI and the FTP-MOI between January and November 1943 (and, in their wake, a fourth for the FTP of the Ile-de-France). This has not prevented Boucault's film and its ideas from enjoying a certain success, especially in the United States. The limited impact of the specialists' testimony was humbling. All the same, even if we were quite alone in the mid-1980s since there were not many specialists on the subject, historians of France specialising in the Dark Years were quick to support us.

The clash in the so-called Bartosek Affair proved to be much more violent. Historian Karel Bartosek, who had managed to escape from a 'normalised' Czechoslovakia⁴ to come to France, set himself to rewrite the story of *L'Aveu*, the book in which Artur London describes the 'machine' that crushed him a few years after the war, in the notorious Prague trial (1952). I shall omit the sordid details of this affair that took place in 1996, but, essentially, London stood accused by his own book, *L'Aveu*: it was alleged to have been commissioned by the French Communist Party a long time after events and to bear no relation to the notes London took in prison.⁵ Being in close contact with Artur (who died in 1986), Lise and their children, and well acquainted with the accused's biography, I once again rose to the defence. So I wrote a clarification in *Libération* on 19 December 1996 and, in one of Laure Adler's television programmes, I was able to present London's original notes that served as a basis for his book. Alexandre Adler, in the newspaper *Le Monde*, and Antoine Spire, on the radio channel 'France Culture', backed me up in this affair. But before I was able to produce the irrefutable proof, I was subjected to the impressive verbal fire of some very well-known historians: very few of them knew anything about the topic, but they were nonetheless determined to have their say about the book, in defence of Karel Bartosek. Subsequently, only one of them openly admitted that he was wrong. What interests me in this case is that it took place in a very special context, in that decade when the historian's testimony became a specialist's word that is invoked to shed light on various issues involving contested memory. The problem resides

⁴Editors' note: The 'normalisation' of Czechoslovakia follows the Prague Spring (January–August 1968) and refers to the period between August 1968 and 1989 during which the Communist party tightened its grip on the country.

⁵In fact, the very authenticity of London's notes was challenged by Bartosek.

not in the recognition of the historians' expertise, but in the emergence of a kind of hierarchy of historians bestowing their imprimatur of truth.

The Aubrac case followed hard on the heels of this affair, in which Raymond Aubrac's name had already been mentioned in passing. Its real interest was elsewhere. Since the Barbie trial in 1987, his defence lawyer, Jacques Vergès, had placed the accusation that Raymond Aubrac had betrayed Jean Moulin at the heart of his post-trial strategy of defence.⁶ When the affair was reactivated ten years later by the publication of a book, Aubrac wanted to organise a panel of historians to redeem his honour and re-establish the truth. I told him that I was not at all convinced that this was a good way to go about things, being highly suspicious of a mixing of media. In vain. It resulted in a mock-trial in the offices of the newspaper *Libération*. He was quickly absolved of any responsibility for Jean Moulin's arrest, but he and his wife Lucie were then implicitly, and very aggressively, accused of being responsible for other arrests in a surprising and unsavoury mixture of history, journalism and justice. I was not present at this set-to, but I wanted to respond, along with a dozen colleagues who were specialists on the Second World War, on matters of substance as well as on the approach that had been taken.

These three 'affairs' in which I have been involved show to what extent this very contemporary history, in which the Second World War and Communism interact, is of the utmost importance in terms of memory.

This relationship between history and memory has always interested me. I have the conviction that the historian's mission is also to be a transmitter and mediator. This probably explains my interest in memorial sites in which history, memory and politics come together. This is exemplified in the two important enterprises in which I have been involved for some years now as chair of the advisory boards for the *Mémorial de Caen* and the *Mémorial du Camp de Rivesaltes*.⁷ With Henry Rousso,

⁶Editors' note: Nikolaus (or Klaus) Barbie was the head of the Gestapo in Lyon between 1942 and 1944. Particularly cruel and directly responsible for the killing of several thousand prisoners, the death of *résistant* Jean Moulin in July 1943, and the deportation in April 1944 of forty-four Jewish children living in the orphanage of Izieu, he was known as the 'Butcher of Lyon'. After the war, he worked for the US counterintelligence who helped him resettle in Bolivia. He was extradited in 1983 thanks to the action of Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, and was convicted of crimes against humanity in Lyon in 1987.

⁷See www.memorial-caen.fr and www.memorialcampivesaltes.eu.

among others, and under the direction of François Bédarida, I was part of the team of historians who designed the timeline up to 1988, when the *Mémorial de Caen* opened. Along with others, I watched it become increasingly commercialised in the following years. It took a welcome turn in the middle of the decade 2000–2010 when Stéphane Grimaldi was appointed as its new director. In 2007, he asked me to chair the new scientific advisory board, a post that I still occupy, to undertake a radical re-organisation of the site.

For the *Mémorial du camp de Rivesaltes*, the story is different. It started with the campaign for its construction, a cause driven by the community in the mid-1990s and taken up by politician Christian Bourquin. Everything changed in terms of scale in 1998, when he was appointed to the presidency of the departmental council of the Pyrénées-Orientales, and then when he succeeded Georges Frêche as president of the Languedoc-Roussillon region in 2010. From 2002, I chaired the scientific advisory board of a memorial that was eventually inaugurated in October 2015, an inauguration at which Bourquin was unable to be present since he had passed away the previous year. Memory conflicts, political conflicts and conflicts over history. Everything I enjoyed!

This is true also of the three documentaries that I wrote for the French TV channel ‘France 2’ around 2000, directed by Jorge Amat. I really enjoyed this. The films that I authored concerned my favourite subjects: ‘La traque de l’Affiche rouge’ (2007); ‘Maréchal nous voilà? La propagande sous Vichy’ (2008); and ‘La France des camps’ (2009).

On rereading what I have just written, it is hardly surprising that this kind of mediation involves also very frequent appearances in the media: admittedly, I would have had less opportunity for these if I had devoted my research to farming in the Parisian Hurepoix in the fourteenth century.

The notion of commitment lies clearly at the heart of my contributions to the public domain as well as to the academic field. Should one require a philosophical reflection on my position, I would say that I am situated at the confluence of two convictions, one that places the freedom of the subject of study at the heart of history (both on the grand scale and on the smaller scale) and the other that believes that action (and the enrichment of the subject itself) necessitates collective action. In short, history is the result of the actions of individuals, and is shaped by their collective or cumulative force.

THE CNRS, THE IHTP AND THE ARCHIVES

I have talked about the social mission of the historian: it was difficult to avoid it at the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP), where I worked from 1982 to 2000. Here, I must mention again the name of François Bédarida, the director of this laboratory which, under his leadership, became the CNRS's own laboratory (its only offshoot, whereas most of the laboratories were also under the aegis of universities). Historian of modern Great Britain and of the Second World War, he intended the expression 'present time' to imply that it was possible for a historian to deal with very recent times, that the present time involved the exploration of new fields (memory, for example), and that we had an obligation to face up to our responsibilities and provide expertise when matters of history were under discussion in society. I also acquired from him the 'CNRS culture' that remains firmly rooted in me today. I am convinced that the French dual system—universities/research organisations (CNRS, INSERM, INRA, INRIA, etc.)—has proved its worth although it regularly attracts the wrath of many academics and politicians.⁸ The increase in administrative costs following the university reforms has not improved the situation, but the worst solution would be to limit the CNRS to what universities cannot do. The principle of subsidiarity is a guarantee for failure.

Bédarida's main quality was his ability to encourage goodwill in his team. He often gave his young recruits a leg up by offering them the chance to organise some international conference or to participate in various media activities. I took full advantage of this and I remember, for example, that it was with me that Pierre Milza organised the three conferences on Italians and Spanish in France from 1936 to 1945, when I was around 30.⁹ Yet I had been recruited for a precise reason: to compile the names of the departmental representatives that contributed

⁸This system is actually even more complex if one includes intermediary institutions like the EPHE or the EHESS, for example, and if one also takes the Grandes Écoles into account.

⁹Josefina Cuesta-Bustillo and Gianni Perona joined later. This led to Pierre Milza and Denis Peschanski, *Exils et migrations. Italiens et Espagnols en France 1938–1946* (1995).

to the Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale (Committee for the History of the Second World War), the ancestor of the IHTP. This was an exciting project that involved, in the first instance, recruiting new representatives, mostly secondary-school teachers, enlisting the help of some of the 'senior' ones who had transferred to universities. I also gained experience in the practice of collaborative historiography, being involved in, and partly organising, extensive enquiries conducted by 40–60 people at the level of the *département* over a period of three or four years on a given topic. I am referring to an investigation on local elites from 1935 to 1947, another on the forces in power at the Liberation and another on the police in the France of the Dark Years. These produced remarkable results as we were able to adapt our approach according to the size of our network and the geographical scope of each project.¹⁰

I continued my own research at the same time. This is not the place to go back over my academic career in detail, from the Communist Party to Vichy, and from the Resistance to memory. I shall mention only one aspect of it: the pleasure derived from archives. I sniff documents the way some people sniff drugs. My various activities have not always allowed me the time to get hooked like a junkie but, basically, the variety of my interests meant that I never grew tired of any of them. In any event, I went back to the archives regularly. I had another opportunity to do so in 2014–2015 for my two latest books, one with Renée Poznanski (2015) on the town of Drancy and the other with Thomas Fontaine (2014) on Collaboration. Collaboration was again the subject of an exhibition at the *Archives Nationales* (AN). Friends in charge of the archives of the Justice Department and Home Affairs at the AN gave us the opportunity to access files that were not well-known and yet proved exceptionally fertile like the documents collected for and against the accused during the Purges at the end of the war.

We had open access to these files. This was, of course, not always the case. But when one was used to archives, one knew how to play the legal game. Take the example of the aforementioned 'Manouchian Affair'.

¹⁰The main outputs were: Jean-Marc Berlière and Denis Peschanski (eds.), *La Police française (1930–1950). Entre bouleversements et permanences* (2000); Philippe Buton and Jean-Marie Guillon (eds.), *Les Pouvoirs à la Libération* (1994); Gilles Le Beguec and Denis Peschanski (eds.), *Les Élités locales dans la tourmente, du Front populaire aux années cinquante* (2000).

As I have intimated previously, the argument seemed somewhat incoherent. The discovery of the police archives led to the debunking of the theory. But how was access to these documents possible when the Paris *Préfecture de Police* forbade access to its archives, as was the case in the 1980s? Easy-peasy. It was logical to suppose that the policemen in question had provided statements to the Ministry of Justice at the Liberation. And I knew that this institution was more generous with the permits it delivered to access its archives. Bingo! Bit by bit, I uncovered the three surveillance operations that, between January and November 1943, had led to the dismantling of most of the FTP-MOI in the Paris region, but also the warrants for arrest, the interrogations of the policemen and the testimony of surviving members of the Resistance. I was able to complete the case fifteen years later when I obtained access to the police archives.

My passion for primary sources also finds its expression in collective publications. This applies to the two volumes devoted to Angelo Tasca's diary, the five volumes of Marcel Cachin's notebooks (1905–1948), and the crucial years 1947 and 1948 of Ben Gurion's diary (only known until then in the Hebrew edition).¹¹

TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

Unlike pluridisciplinarity, where different disciplines are adduced to provide a solution in any given area, transdisciplinarity involves a common construction of the topic. The decidedly transdisciplinary turn that my research has taken in recent years has led me to wonder how this happened. I do not think I need to go back to my scientific *Baccalauréat*. However, in the late 1970s, I wrote a thesis on Communist discourse in the 1930s that involved a mixed approach, with history, statistics and linguistics. I subsequently focused mainly on the discipline of history.

My interest in transdisciplinarity was reactivated by my reflections on memory studies. Two anecdotes will illustrate this point. The first question that neuroscientist Boris Cyrulnik asked me in exchanges that were subsequently published (Cyrulnik and Peschanski 2012) concerned my profession as a historian of the very recent past who

¹¹David Ben Gourion, Denis Peschanski and Tuvia Friling (eds.), *Les Secrets de la création de l'État d'Israël. Journal 1947–1948* (2012).

had to deal with witnesses' testimonies. He had been involved in experiments on cerebral imaging (fMRI): in one set of experiments, the person tested was first of all asked to recall events that had happened a week earlier; a little later, a similar type of question was asked, this time about what that person intended to do in a week's time, or a month, or a year. Lights came on, connections came into play, and the conclusion was irrefutable: in the brain, the areas of anticipation are essentially the same as those of memory. What does the historian make of that, he asked me? How indeed can the historian take into account the various temporal perspectives of the witness, who talks about the past but in the present and with expectations for the future in mind? All this simultaneously, of course. At any rate, the historian cannot afford to be either naive or overly suspicious with regard to testimony.

Joe LeDoux, professor at New York University: another neuroscientist, a different set of questions, but still focused on testimony. At a conference that we organised in New York, he maintained that someone who was interviewed, for example, 50 years after the events did not take those events as his/her starting point of remembrance, but rather began this memory process at the last recall (let us say at $t + 45$). So, at $t + 50$, the reference was not t (the period that the individual was recalling) but $t + 45$. This is evidently an essential question for the historian who works on testimonies, be they oral or written, recent or not so recent. This made me think of a kind of 'arcade theory', with a memory recall chain operating at more or less regular intervals. Proud of my discovery, I confided in my friend Philippe Rygiel, who is both historian and mathematician: 'wow, that's a superb Markov chain', he commented. A rapid consultation of Wikipedia gave me the gist of good old Markov's theory. Could the anchoring of any memory depend entirely on its last recall and its context?

I also reached a converse conclusion, namely that the historian's problems can interest neuroscientists. This supported my hypothesis that would feed into the work on memory that I began in New York with colleagues at NYU and then at Columbia, and that I continue in Paris and Caen, thanks to a 'specialist equipment' grant that I secured in 2011. It bears the name MATRICE and, through a transdisciplinary approach and the development of innovative tools, aims at providing a better understanding of the interplay between individual memory and

collective memory.¹² What is it about? The conviction that it is impossible to understand fully collective memory unless account is taken of brain activity and that, conversely, as the latest advances in cerebral imaging have shown, it is impossible to understand fully brain activity without taking into account the socialising dimension of individuals.

In this context, I would argue for a paradigm shift in memory studies that relies on the dialectic between the psyche and the social dimension, transdisciplinarity as the common construction of the subject/object studied, a multi-scale approach and mathematical modeling to handle a large quantity of information, and complexity as defined by Edgar Morin, for whom understanding the whole is not limited to an understanding of its individual components.

CONCLUSION

Priority in my research has always been given to creating intellectual tools and to questioning the topic studied. This goes to the heart of the historian's methodology which consists of a perpetual shuttling between the question he asks (and asks himself) and the sources that allow him not only to answer the question, but also to return to it in order to enrich, nuance or reinforce it, before going back to the sources. This shuttling is the basis for Truth in History. There is no One Truth in history; there are not several truths; there are several true readings of the traces left by past events. This highlights the central role of questioning.

If subjectivity is inherent in the questioning process, of what use is ego-history? But, conversely, the methods I have mentioned lead me to think again about my own testimony. I do not mean the obvious relativity of testimony and the vagaries of memory. That is too simple! If I am to believe Markov, I should always question myself on the origins of my last recall and the situation in which I reflect on any past event. How important is the weight of my present, my conception of the past, and also my expectations of history and the stories that I narrated here?

¹²Specialist equipment laboratories, or *équipex*, are funded by the French State to allow the development of a major technological project (from 2011 to 2019 in this case). See www.matricememory.fr. This project was further developed in 2016 with the launch of a very vast programme (2016–2028, involving 29 partners) entitled '13-November', co-led by Francis Eustache, a neuropsychologist, and me. The focus here is not on the terrorist attacks themselves but on the memories that they will generate. See www.memoire13novembre.fr.

What mechanism operates in the (re)construction of my ego as it interacts with the analysis of my scientific approach to this exercise? If I follow Daniel Schacter, Francis Eustache or Boris Cyrulnik, I ought to take into account the interplay between time and my own testimony.

Perhaps frequenting the neurosciences has led me to suggest a paradigm shift in the construction and interpretation of ego-histories. Here, we are probably at the heart of an interplay of influences that almost certainly involves the individual and the collective (at every level), leading to a different conception of the process of self-examination with regard to one's research paths and patterns.

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From a Foreign Country

Henry Rousso

‘The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there’. Thus begins the famous novel by L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (1953, 3).¹ According to a relatively recent concept, born of the Enlightenment and which took root after the French Revolution, being a historian means visiting a land that is seemingly distant and different from our own. Does that mean that the historian is a mere tourist? And to what extent can the past be ‘foreign’ to a historian of the present who works on a timeframe close to his own and which is, in addition, marked by the aftermath of great European catastrophes which are still haunting the collective imagination? The notion of ‘foreignness’ takes on an even more ambivalent significance for someone who has undergone forced exile, has had to adapt to a succession of different languages in his youth, and whose identity papers look rather suspicious, as a result of various spelling errors and mistranslations: my vocation was probably born out of an early realisation that human beings and all existing things are marked by instability,

¹This concept has inspired the title of one of the most important books on memory, recently republished: David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country—Revisited* (2015).

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that disruptions and shifts are constantly possible and that traumatic events are no exceptions.

These are just the different aspects of a modern historicity amply exemplified throughout the twentieth century. In this sense, being a historian has been a means of grasping some particles of historical sense and explaining these in return; it has also been a means of exorcising the risk of a possible repetition—an endeavour which suddenly ceased to be implicit following the terror attacks of January and November 2015 that struck in the area where I have been living for nearly forty years, in the 11th *arrondissement* of Paris.

AGAINST IMPOSED IDENTITIES

My first attempt to write an ‘ego-history’ was in 2000, for my ‘Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches’ (or HDR, which means ‘Accreditation to Supervise Research’).² This, for me, had little to do with an ‘exorcising exercise’. I was forty-six at the time and in this text which, to my great surprise, was published and even translated in several languages, I outlined my career from 1975, the year when I began my research on the Second World War. Above all, I attempted to answer a question that I was often asked: ‘why are you working on the Vichy period?’³ The question carried with it an implied response: ‘because you’re Jewish’. It came either from non-Jewish colleagues complaining about the perceived difficulty in working on the Holocaust ‘when one isn’t Jewish’, or from Jewish colleagues in contrapuntal lamentation over the ‘isolation of Jews’ who claim to be the only ones, or almost, to be

²Since then, this exercise has become the norm for all candidates for an HDR in History, which is a qualification that is taken at around forty and a requirement for promotion in the upper levels of French universities. It has facilitated more in-depth reflection on contemporary practices in the discipline and has endowed subjective writing of history with a greater legitimacy. These writings are the subject of a systematic analysis that provides for the establishment of the principal trends in French historiography in the context of the project ‘Histoires. La fabrique de l’histoire telle qu’elle se raconte’ led by Patrick Garcia, Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent (see <http://crheh.hypotheses.org/82>).

³A shorter version of this text was published in the introduction to *Vichy, l’événement, la mémoire, l’histoire* (2001). The full text was published in Spanish: ‘La trayectoria de un historiador del tiempo presente, 1975–2000’ in Anne Pérotin-Dumon, *Historizar el Pasado Vivo en América Latina* (2007), <http://www.historizarelpasadovivo.cl/index.html>; and in German: *Frankreich und die ‘dunklen Jahre’* (2010).

working on the subject. To those who saw my interest in the memory of Vichy as an expression of my resentment as a French Jew, I objected that it was actually and primarily my curiosity as a young Frenchman that motivated me. I favoured the generational motivation over ethnic or religious explanations.

If these prejudices had no real foundation, it does not necessarily mean that there is no link between the choice of this period—and subjects related to Judaism and Antisemitism—as a field for research and a part of my identity. It took me some time to recognise that. I have even come close to being in denial. When I was planning *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (The Vichy Syndrome), in the early 1980s, my editor, the historian Michel Winock, was surprised that I did not mention the Jews very often. This remark made an impression on me because, without realising it, I had until then neglected an essential element of the anamnesis of the 1970s—‘Jewish memory’—which eventually became a central chapter in my book. Perhaps this was due to a reticence to introduce religious or cultural determiners. It was a secular, materialistic reaction that was quite predictable for a French researcher who remained influenced by the Marxist jargon that was still very much present in the post-1968 years. On reflection, however, rather than an error in perspective, it originated in an unresolved identity conflict that was probably a consequence of my own individual trajectory.

I was born in Cairo in 1954, and my parents were born in Alexandria in 1924. My paternal grandparents came from Salonika, from a line of Spanish Jews, and settled in Egypt after the First World War. My maternal grandmother was born in Tiberias in Palestine around 1896. Her family may have come from Morocco, and, an orphan very early in her life, she too ended up in Egypt around 1900. My maternal grandfather, who was born in 1888 in Libya, held Italian nationality. In 1906, following a fire in the town records at Livorno, many people of different origins claimed they were natives of this town, thereby taking advantage of a new identity that might prove useful.⁴ My grandfather thus acquired a real fake Italian passport, thereby bequeathing Italian nationality to his eight children, including my mother, and some of his grandchildren, including myself. We never really understood why he had done this because he then had to join the Italian army in the Great War,

⁴On this event, see Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yannakakis, *Alexandrie, 1860–1960: un modèle de convivialité* (1992, 97).

which cost him a great deal more than just a severed index finger. He may have foreseen troubles ahead, perhaps aware of anti-Jewish persecutions that were happening elsewhere at the same time. I will return to him later.

My parents acquired the French language and culture very quickly, having attended the *Alliance française* and the French school in Alexandria like many of the *petite bourgeoisie* in that cosmopolitan city. Although they did not suffer personally from the Second World War, members of my father's family who had remained in Salonika or who emigrated to France disappeared in the Holocaust. In January 1957, after the Suez crisis, we were displaced like tens of thousands of Egyptian Jews and foreigners. This story remains rather underplayed today because it does not fit with the usual 'anti-Zionist' perspective, which focuses mainly on the victimisation of Arabs. The meagre wealth of my family was stolen, and my father lost his Egyptian nationality, becoming a stateless political refugee. My mother, accused of Zionism because some of her relatives lived in Israel, was also eventually expelled. Her Italian nationality allowed us to find a haven in Rome and then in Milan. A few years later, the firm for which my father worked as a sales executive offered him a job in Paris, his life's dream. We moved there at the end of 1961, a few months before the arrival of the 'pieds-noirs',⁵ with whom we were often mistaken, in the summer of 1962, after Algeria gained its independence.

My relationship with France was therefore never tainted, at least not consciously, by any resentment over identity. I had probably never even heard of Vichy before my first excursions into literature as an adolescent and my parents knew nothing about the Occupation. On the contrary, they worshipped the country of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas unconditionally. Their personal experience of the Second World War had been limited to the fright they had in the summer, and then the autumn, of 1942 when they heard the guns of El Alamein, about 100 kilometres from Alexandria. For me, as a young researcher, Vichy was first and foremost an object of curiosity. It was virgin territory and therefore ideal for

⁵'Pieds-noirs' is a popular term for people who lived in Algeria and who were either French in origin or came from another country in Europe. Most of them, however, were born in the French colony. After Algeria gained its independence, about one million of them moved to France, leaving their homes and facing social conditions that made their settlement in France, a country they did not know, more difficult.

exploration. My innate anti-fascist background did the rest since, in the 1970s, Vichy was beginning to figure as a popular metaphor for everything that was recurrently wrong in French history.

THE HISTORIAN AS SUBJECT

The term ‘ego-history’ first appeared in a book edited by Pierre Nora in 1987. However, the problems that it raises, in particular the place and attitude of the historian describing or explaining his or her own times, go back to the origins of history as an intellectual activity, in Greek antiquity. These were revived in the nineteenth century which saw the emergence of history as a discipline with scientific aspirations as well as the appearance of a new area in historical chronology, namely contemporary history. In the wake of the French Revolution, a new caesura was thus sanctioned: ‘Modern Western history begins with the difference between the present and the past’.⁶ At the same time, the subjectivity of the historian, who was increasingly becoming a professional, became an obstacle to any objective understanding of the facts that he aspired to elucidate. For example, Leopold von Ranke wrote in 1875, after the Franco-Prussian war:

I should like somehow to extinguish my ego and simply let things speak for themselves, and bring to the fore the powerful forces that emerged and developed, rising up one against the other in terrible, bloody strife, yet carrying within themselves the solution of the most essential problems of the European world.⁷

For his part, Gustav Droysen, another great figure of German historicism, does not reject subjectivity. In 1857, seventy years before the emergence of ‘histoire-problème’ (problem-oriented history), he wrote:

⁶ Michel de Certeau, *L'Écriture de l'histoire* (1975, 14–15). On the emergence of contemporary history, I refer the reader to my book, *La Dernière Catastrophe. Le temps, le présent, le contemporain* (2012), translated into English under the title *The Latest Catastrophe. History, the Present, the Contemporary* (2016b).

⁷ L. von Ranke, *Englische Geschichte, vornehmlich im sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert* (1859–1869) (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2002, vol. II), p. 3. Quoted by Sabina Loriga, ‘Le moi de l'historien’, *História da historiografia, Ouro Preto*, 10 (December 2012).

Only that which is bereft of thought is truly objective. Once human thought involves itself with things, the latter cease to be objective. ... Those who see the principal task of the historian as not adding anything personal but simply letting facts speak for themselves, do not realise that the facts do not speak without the voice of those who conceived and understood them.⁸

Subjectivity is therefore understood here as being the facts proposed by a subject—the historian—who thinks and adopts a *point of view*, a position in space and time from which to observe his subject matter, and not as a position of moral or ideological neutrality that belongs to another domain. The question was quite important at the time since the historian's role after the hiatus of the Revolution was to ensure a kind of continuity between a world that had disappeared, that of the *Ancien Régime*, and that of an uncertain present that was open to all possibilities.

A century later, in the 1980s, this asserted subjectivity, enshrined in a form of methodological individualism, led to the need for the historian to know himself, like a psychoanalyst needing to undergo analysis before taking up his profession. The question of ego-history hence refers back to the idea of a dialectical relationship between the past studied by the historian and his own present, an idea that emerged with the *Annales School* of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, in the 1930s, and that forged a good part of modern historiography. Today, it is perhaps a means of reflecting in situ on that dialectical relationship between the past and the present, no longer with a view to attenuating the effects of the future (which was the attitude of the nineteenth-century's historians who faced the risk of cutting themselves off from a distant past, following the post-revolutionary change of historicity) but in order to counter the effects of 'presentism', in which the present occupies a disproportionately large place in society.⁹

⁸G. Droysen, *Historik. Die Vorlesungen von 1857*, ed. P. Leyh (Stuttgart: Bad Canstatt, 1977), p. 218. Quoted by Sabina Loriga (2012).

⁹These ideas are inspired by the work of François Hartog, for example: *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps* (2003).

THE INEVITABLE QUESTION OF ORIGINS

Ego-histories generally attempt to explain how someone became a historian or, more generally, how one became who he or she is. Everything occurs as if one's family history, one's character, the context and the role of chance in one's career and work were only to be analysed in terms of the original moment when one's vocation was revealed, when one entered the profession, or upon the choice of a research area. This seems like a kind of primary, implicit Freudianism: everything hinges supposedly on the beginnings, in childhood or adolescence, in family relationships or at the time of early academic and political commitments. It is even more astonishing that those who subscribe to this type of analysis are usually the first to criticise or highlight, after Marc Bloch, the myth of origins, or, in other words, the quest for a primal explanation. Among very many examples, we can quote one of the finest chapters in the *Essais d'ego-histoire*, by Pierre Chaunu who recalls the death of his mother when he was nine months old:

I am a historian because I am the son of the dead woman and because the mystery of time has haunted me from childhood. [...] It is because I encountered death – there is no other word for it – when I was very young, at the beginning of my life, in tragic, mysterious and existential circumstances that this need was born in me that, for good or for ill, made me a historian. (Chaunu 1987, 119)

Despite a ten-year-long period of psychoanalysis—or perhaps because of this—I find it really difficult to find such a clear-cut, decisive basis for my vocation as a historian. Since that is the object of the exercise, I can only provide fragments and intuitions that shed light on a vision of my career-path, in a way that will, naturally, be subjective.

Perhaps I became a historian because I moved around a great deal when I was a child, even if this happened in less dramatic conditions than for other refugees. My parents often referred to our successive displacements with a feeling of guilt. It conjured up my early childhood, my double exile, and the oscillation between French, my mother tongue, and Italian, my first language at school. In addition to this, I lived in a family environment in which Arabic and Hebrew were widely spoken, languages that belonged to my maternal grandmother with whom I was never able to converse since she did not speak any other languages.

Another source of confusion was my constant wondering whether I was French, since French was my mother tongue, Italian, since this was my nationality until 1969 (when my entire family was naturalised), or Egyptian, since I was born in Cairo. This feeling of disorientation and confusion was in fact hardly surprising, as I came to understand later, since I was now in a country in which nationality, language and place of birth were intrinsically linked for most citizens. However, for others, this was not the case, owing to France's colonial past together with its history of immigration. Despite grand speeches about integration into the Republic, France has always found it difficult to accept cosmopolitanism, which encompasses a social reality far removed from abstract, leveling universalism. This confusion nonetheless engendered in me a feeling of instability concerning my 'true' origins. This may be a first element explaining my attraction to great historical upheavals, to events, and my disinclination for long-term history (*'longue durée'*) which is a form of history that may better suit those by whom the notion of roots, mother-country and unchanging ancestral traditions are taken for granted.

Perhaps I became a historian because my father was a lover of logic, prone to the idea that facts could always be explained rationally. Hence his dismay when he was faced with the chaos in which he and his relatives were caught up and torn from their modest and relatively eventless lives. For me, studying history involves precisely the study of what ought not to be possible in rational, logical terms, but which happened nonetheless. It is to analyse how contemporaries were caught up in a whirlwind of events which were unforeseen and, perhaps, unforeseeable, and how they anticipated them, survived them or had to face them in the aftermath. Perhaps it might also have been a need to break a number of family taboos, in order to understand, for example, the reasons for the suicide of my paternal grandfather, the aptly-named Moses, in despair at being separated from his family after the exodus from Egypt, or the silence that surrounded my maternal grandfather, who probably suffered from an undiagnosed war trauma that dogged his entire life after 1918. Being a historian will always mean discovering hidden truths.

These are only hypotheses which rather inconveniently present the historian's vocation as an act of personal reparation, a form of long-term therapy which happens to correspond with the contemporary notion that history and memory can 'repair the past' and produce 'soothing' narratives to heal past wounds (Garapon 2008). In the course of my profession, I have often been able to test this idea of a therapist-historian,

either in the often complex exchange (and transference) between witnesses and historians or in the idea that spelling out the history of a problem might help to resolve it. This was partly the case when I was commissioned to shed light on the negationist infiltration of the Université Jean Moulin Lyon III (Rousso 2004). I understood this quite early from an intellectual perspective, but it is only progressively that I realised how some research topics could influence the public sphere. All the same, my taste for history, as is the case for many of my colleagues, probably also stems from less weighty motivations, such as a taste for epic novels or films that my work as a professional historian has not completely eradicated.

MATURE EGO-HISTORY

A consequence of writing an ego-history that almost always focuses exclusively on the origins of a vocation is that choices made throughout one's career are often neglected, or rather implicitly considered as being the results of a purely scientific or intellectual reasoning rather than an effect of meetings, chance and the overall context in which one lives. In the same way, the vagaries of one's private life often remain in the shadows. In a recent book in which the German historian Lutz Niethammer, born in 1939 and a great specialist in oral history, engages with this exercise, he makes the judicious observation that the majority of autobiographical narratives written by historians remain discreet or even totally silent on their private lives, even if the authors have used psychoanalysis, anthropology, gender perspectives or micro-history in their work (Niethammer 2012). What was useful to them in understanding others is presumably not useful in understanding themselves. This is one of the limitations of this genre that I shall notwithstanding attempt to circumvent here by analysing a few moments that proved to be significant in my mature years.

The book *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (Vichy, an ever present-past), published in 1994, had its origins in a meeting with Éric Conan, who was then a journalist with *L'Express* and who, in the early 1990s, was following the various ongoing and controversial court cases linked with the Occupation. He had been commissioned by Fayard, a major publishing house, to write a book that would figure more or less as a sequel to my work, *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (The Vichy Syndrome), whose latest edition included developments up to 1990. Collaboration seemed the obvious

way forward to demonstrate how these questions of memory tie in both with academic historical knowledge and contemporary events. But the book was only completed because a real friendship developed between us. This allowed a mutual respect for the respective positions we held in the public's eyes and for our professional constraints that occasionally clashed. Of all the references in the book, only one proved to be problematic, when the journalist's responsibility to preserve the anonymity of his source prevailed over the historian's responsibility to cite it. Without the friendship, confidence and relatively small age difference between us—which meant that we shared a similar irritation when confronted with the generation of 1968s belated anti-fascist rhetoric—the book would never have seen the light of day.

Another example would be my acceptance to take part in July 1997 in a roundtable organised by the daily newspaper *Libération* on the lives of the well-known *résistants* Lucie and Raymond Aubrac during the war. A few months before, a journalist attacked the iconic couple, accusing them of having contributed to the arrest of Jean Moulin in 1943. Even though these were old rumours without any basis, Raymond Aubrac asked some historians to organise a roundtable with him and his wife, and a group of serious scholars and former resisters. The event was a difficult one for all the participants and eventually raised many conflicts because it shed light on some contradictions in the way Raymond and Lucie Aubrac had tried to present themselves from 1945 onwards. Some of the participants, including myself, were stigmatised for having attacked national heroes. This had serious consequences for me later since I was barred from some institutions, most notably Science Po in the years 2005–2006, when colleagues used it as an easy excuse to protect their territory. However, I have no regrets. I did accept to take part in this roundtable for a number of professional reasons, particularly because the Aubracs themselves insisted I attend as Director of the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (Institute of Present-Day History or IHTP), which carried a great deal of weight in such matters. My participation also took on a more personal dimension, however, as I felt at that time a certain hostility towards Raymond Aubrac. On a previous occasion, strengthened by his long-standing ties with the IHTP, the latter had come to see me to demand, contrary to the usual protocol, the 'head' of an IHTP researcher, Karol Bartosek, a former Czech dissident, who had just published a very controversial book that described, in particular, Aubrac's pro-Soviet career after the war (Bartosek 1996).

Without analysing it as such at the time and without any premeditation on my side, I intuitively felt that this roundtable would put a greater but necessary distance between historians and witnesses.

Finally, as a last personal example, I could never have written *La Dernière Catastrophe* (The Latest Catastrophe), a philosophy-inspired work published in 2012 after years of painstaking labour—because its subject matter was initially beyond my grasp—if I had not been living for nearly twenty years with a philosopher and psychoanalyst who, with great patience, was able to explain to me Hegel's concept of history at meal-times or over coffee.

These few anecdotal examples remind us that the work of the historian, like any other work, is influenced by all sorts of individual experiences, affects and emotions. Personality and character also matter, of course. And perhaps one needs a strong—even stubborn—character to work on events which are so prominent and controversial in collective memory.

THE STUDY OF HISTORY CHANGES THE HISTORIAN

These few personal examples also illustrate a simple but often overlooked idea: if an individual chooses to be a historian, the history that he or she studies will in turn change him or her, sometimes profoundly. Returning to the metaphor of the historian who 'travels in the past', Siegfried Kracauer explains that when he 'returns' from history he is not quite the same and that his 'identity has changed' even if he has followed Ranke's precepts about 'self-effacement' that allows 'self-expansion': the more open, serviceable and empathetic historians are, the greater is the possibility for them to be changed by their discoveries and travels.

The effect produced by the historian's travels on his mental constitution, moreover, renders invalid the commonly-held idea that he is a child of his time. In reality, he is the child of at least two time zones: his own and the one he studies. In a sense, his spirit is unlocatable; he is a wanderer with no fixed abode. (Kracauer 2006, 153 ff.)

For historians of the present time, it is not only the 'trip into the past' that can change them but the long-term effects of the relatively recent events that they study, the Second World War constituting a

typical example for the baby-boom generation to which I belong *in extremis*.¹⁰ This idea echoes Marc Bloch's classic analysis, according to which the present can just as easily explain the past as the other way round, provided the observer applies his own experience of the world to understand facts about societies: this is true for those that are far-distant from us, but it is even more so if they belong to our own time. I have been able to confirm this in action on several occasions.

From 26 to 29 September 1990, a few days before the German reunification on 3 October, I attended the 38th *Historikertag*, the German historians' congress at Bochum. At the invitation of my colleague Klaus-Dietmar Henke from the Munich Institut für Zeitgeschichte, I joined a panel on the history of post-war purges in Europe. As fate would have it, this meeting became the first unified congress of German historians, and I had the privilege of attending plenary sessions whose aim was to hold a general discussion on the future purge of East German universities. This event was a real eye-opener for me. I had the feeling, as did my colleagues, of living my subject 'on the spot', allowing me to step outside my usual interpretative framework related to the political power-relationships at the Liberation of France,¹¹ and witness the structural determiners of a transition to democracy. This experience was a decisive stage in a process that would take me out of the framework of national history, firstly through my post as General Secretary of the International Committee for the History of the Second World War, which I held from 1990 to 2000, and then by founding, with Martin Conway, John Horne, Konrad Jarausch, Pieter Lagrou, Thomas

¹⁰And indeed, there is a real difference between those born before 1945 and those who, even though they did not experience the Second World War directly, nonetheless saw it as a founding event of their moral and political culture.

¹¹'L'"épuration". Politische Säuberung in Frankreich', in Klaus-Dietmar Henke and Hans Voller (eds.), *Politische Säuberung in Europa. Die Abrechnung mit Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (1991), translated into French and published as: 'L'épuration, une histoire inachevée', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 33 (1992), reproduced in *Vichy, l'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire* (2001).

Lindenberger, Maria Salvati, Dariusz Stola and others, the European Network for Contemporary History, which I directed until 2014.¹²

In March and April 1994 at the Versailles Assize Court, I had the opportunity of attending the entire trial of the *milicien* Paul Touvier, the first Frenchman to be accused of crimes against humanity. My responsibility as a historian there was to provide reports and comments for the daily newspaper *Libération*. This six-week immersion in debates concerning the possibility of judging facts that were half a century old, the daily contact with the principal participants—lawyers, plaintiffs, witnesses and journalists—was another decisive step in my career, and stimulated my thoughts on the relationship between history, memory and justice that have constituted one of the principal lines of my research.¹³

Finally, quite recently, I had the opportunity to take part in a group study-trip to Rwanda in March and April 2014, on the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of the Tutsi genocide. This brief stay in a country that was entirely foreign to me, as well as the contacts with survivors who were much younger than me and with whom I developed very different relations from those I was used to with former deportees and members of the Resistance, prompted a major rethinking of ethical and epistemological issues. I had to reconsider the crucial importance of the field, in the physical sense of the word, so as to understand the density of a historical phenomenon that cannot be comprehended merely by consulting written or oral documentation.¹⁴ Above all, I had to rethink the question of empathy and distancing in connection with witnesses whom I instinctively distrusted. The Holocaust, Resistance and Collaboration were topics about which I had some prior knowledge when I started researching history, even though I was born after the war (and outside Europe). My discussions with witnesses from the past—I mentioned the Aubracs previously—went through several phases: sympathy, admiration and then distance, sometimes criticism or even

¹²Among this Network's publications are: Konrad Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger (eds.), *Conflicted Memories. Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (2007), and Martin Conway, Pieter Lagrou, and Henry Rousso (eds.), *Europe's Postwar Periods—1989, 1945, 1918. Writing History Backwards* (2018).

¹³*Vichy, An Ever-Present Past*, with Éric Conan, trans. Nathan Bracher, foreword by Robert Paxton (1998 [1994 in French, new edition in 2013]) or *The Haunting Past. History, Memory, and Justice in Contemporary France*, trans. Ralph Schoolcraft, foreword by Ora Avni (2002 [1997 in French]).

¹⁴Henry Rousso, 'Un voyage au Rwanda' (12 March 2016a): <http://tempresent.hypotheses.org/20>.

confrontation. But then, even if memories of that war were still very vivid, the facts themselves were already distant: they had been discussed, established, judged and symbolised, in the ‘Lacanian’ sense. Rwanda was different for me: almost one million people had been massacred in only three months whilst, at the same time, in France, we were discussing the past of French President François Mitterrand under Vichy. I discovered a terrible history, much closer in time, whilst, in Europe, we were still talking about the Second World War to the tune of ‘never again’.

This chapter was written in December 2015, a few weeks after the abrupt eruption of violence that spread in the streets of Paris. In the space of a few hours, places that have always been well known to me blossomed with improvised memorials in the rue Oberkampf, boulevard Voltaire and the Place de la République. I had, and still have, the feeling that I am living a type of experience in the present which I had previously only analysed in the past, although on a different scale. I have also been able to measure the power of what is sometimes called ‘first memory’, describing these spontaneous and often ephemeral demonstrations that are prompted by a collective drama. These leave no trace and are often neglected by historians. Perhaps for the first time, this coming together of past and present brings me neither intellectual satisfaction nor professional stimulation. On the contrary, it has quickly become a source of deep anxiety in a world that may once again become hostile and foreign.

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PART III

Voices Across the Channel

In the Forests of the Night: England, France and the Writing of War

Margaret K. Attack

‘The past is a foreign country’, wrote L. P. Hartley in his famous opening to *The Go-Between* (1953), ‘they do things differently there.’ Countless studies of memory have reflected on the journey involved in connecting present and past across the many psychological, epistemological and other obstacles that the incompatibilities and incongruities of past and present create. But for metaphors of foreignness and difference, nothing beats foreign countries. The point is often made that Robert Paxton’s path-breaking study of Vichy (1972) was ‘le regard de l’autre’ offering ‘un regard autre’—another’s view offering a different view—and opening up new avenues on Occupation history in French, even though French scholars and writers had broached some of these themes before. A foreign source of knowledge was a helpful reinforcement of the emerging discourse of French silence. Reflecting on the development of my own work on narratives from and about the years of the Occupation has made me appreciate even more how slippery and interchangeable are notions of then and now, of here and there, of them and us. It is true that the

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more one looks for origins, the more one finds, with the result apparently duplicating the paradox of the chance encounter which, once the chain of events and motivations that led each person to be there are reconstituted, could not have been avoided, or so it seems. But that is not how it feels to me, aware of so much left out, and of the accumulation of ‘what ifs’ that proliferate off-stage at nearly every juncture.¹

SEPTEMBER 1971

The important historiographical turning point that publicly transformed the position of Vichy and the Occupation in French culture happened to coincide with my own beginnings as a researcher of literary and other representations of the Occupation. *Le Chagrin et la pitié* was released in 1971, and although French television declined to show it, the BBC broadcast it that year, clearing the BBC2 evening schedule on 10 September 1971. I have never forgotten sitting down to watch this film, but memory still plays tricks of course. In September 1971 I was about to return to London, to University College, to register as a PhD student, having graduated in French the previous July; in those days in the UK you went straight from final year into doctoral research, only starting to look for a topic after taking up the studentship. My unshakeable memory is that I watched the film with particular interest because I had already chosen my topic, but the published schedules tell a different story.² If I saw the film at the family home at the beginning of September, this meant I had not registered and had not even started trying to find a research topic. I will have been aware of the significance of the film from the debate in the French press and indeed the British press. Barry Norman wrote in his review the next day: ‘This is the film to which French television has adopted Nelson’s useful attitude. It has not refused to show it but has simply refused to acknowledge its existence’ (Norman 1971, 9). Norman’s view, that the film destroyed a myth of Resistance, was very quickly criticised by Maurice Buckmaster, the former head of the Special Operations Executive. In a letter to the same paper he wrote: ‘It pays tribute to the now popular (but in

¹ I should like to record my thanks to the editors and to Hilary Footitt for their careful, constructive and immensely helpful readings of an earlier draft.

² Television Programmes, *The Times*, Friday 10 September (1971, 23). Showing from 8.00pm to 12.30am, it is listed as: The Sorrow and the Pity: The True Story of the Occupation of France During the Last War.

my view totally erroneous) idea that “resistance”, in the war-time meaning of the word, was virtually nil’ (Buckmaster 1971, 15).

Le Chagrin et la pitié did not shatter any illusions for me, but then I had none to shatter. One joins a debate at a particular age, inevitably taking a great deal at face value; the work of contextualisation, to situate a text or set of ideas, is extensive, and comes later. I think, for example, of the great divide between structuralism and existentialism in the 1970s and the former’s dismissive view of Sartre as purveyor of a naive view of subjectivity and ‘the unitary subject’. Understanding the complexity of existentialist phenomenology, and the historical and philosophical convergence with aspects of the work of Lacan and Lévi-Strauss, followed much later for me. Reactions to *Le Chagrin et la pitié* certainly divided along generational lines: much criticised by many who had experienced the Occupation, and treated as a breath of fresh air by those who had come to knowledge of these times during the Fifth Republic and Gaullist celebration of the Resistance. In 1971, I belonged to a generation that was more than a little sceptical about de Gaulle as a heroic figure, having espoused many of the May ’68 themes and approaches to Gaullism. Symptomatic of this was the reaction of the final year undergraduate class in November 1970 to Professor Douglas Johnson, a distinguished historian of France, who announced dramatically, on arriving for his weekly lecture on French history, that de Gaulle had died. Unfazed by our studied indifference, he proceeded to devote the hour to de Gaulle as a dry run, he explained, for his later media engagements.

At the end of September 1971, then, I returned to London to register and find a topic. I had been told to be as broad and general as possible about this on my application form, and to put down ‘the twentieth century novel’. I have no recollection of how I decided to proceed with such a brief; I presume I read novels. But very quickly I had my epiphany: I read *Les Forêts de la nuit* (1947) by Jean-Louis Curtis and was absolutely gripped by this strong and complex story of Resistance, Collaboration, class, politics and generations, ending during the Liberation period. My records tell me that on 14 October 1971 I bought everything I could find by him in paperback. But to go from there to being able to write my thesis on the fiction about the Occupation from 1940 to 1950 took me over a decade. At the time I thought it must be because I was either lazy or incompetent or both. I was certainly blocked.

The focus of my research has always been the work of the imagination, representations in fiction and film of the years of war and Occupation,

the way they are in dialogue with non-fictional discourses and their very real weight in forming public consciousness. The training in literary analysis that I received as an undergraduate and the fact that this took place at a time of profound shift in critical approaches to literature and culture—and in the UK—are foundational paradigms of the work I have done. But that is only part of the story. Reflecting on the development of my work on the Second World War has had surprising and very welcome consequences in uncovering another very important dimension. The shift in public perception of the Occupation years was not the only cultural transition that was important for my intellectual formation.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH SHADOW LINES

For Pierre Nora, ‘ego-histoire’ involves examining the links between the historian’s shaping of history and the history that shaped the historian (Nora 1987, 7). The history that made me was lived in the UK, but it does not take much reflection to show that a view of France and England as separate entities locked in a dance of alterity is far too simplistic to capture the complexity of personal identities within a national frame.

Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983), Benedict Anderson’s classic account of the mechanisms and cultural power of the national imaginary, is a widely recognised and acclaimed framework for trying to think of nation, national identity and nationalism in a positive way, that is to say, not being solely dependent on structures of alterity, hostility, racism or aggression. Most researchers in cultural analysis, whose formation often includes autofictional, autobiographical and psychoanalytical texts, will have pondered the personal roots and routes of their own investigations, which in my case involves asking: why France? Why the Second World War? Anderson’s analysis is a quest for origins, seeking to establish an archaeology of the power of identification with the nation anchored by speech and language fixed and multiplied through print. But although the notion of the nation as imagined community has a very strong explanatory power, this focus on a shared community obscures the fact that the lived imaginary of home, family and nation can be an extraordinarily hybrid and complex one, both in terms of personal quirks and trajectories and in the way international events are enacted and integrated into family histories. Certainly Linda Colley (1992) has shown the importance of France and Franco-British conflicts for the construction of Britishness. Yet there can be few English families in the twentieth century who do

not have a knowledge and experience of other nations as part of their familial DNA, for the nation at the level of lived experience is more often an inter-nation, where the notions of foreignness and of the alterity of the Other sit alongside elements of non-Englishness that have been utterly normalised. In the case of my own family, France and the war were ingrained in our sense of ourselves and our experience of the world.

My grandfather fought in France in the First World War—I have a studio photograph of him shaking the hand of a fellow soldier, dated in pencil on the back: ‘Trouville 6. 7. 18’. As a child I thought that was why he had died young, though in fact his death in 1930 was unrelated to the war. Only as an adult did I learn where his nickname for cats had come from. In our family, all cats were addressed as ‘pussy cat-sue’ (or ‘cat-soo’? I have never had occasion to write it down before). He had brought this back from his time in France: the phrase ‘quatre sous’ (literally, four small coins) had obviously tickled him. Like Molière’s M. Jourdain, I had been speaking French prose all those years without realising it.

More important, unsurprisingly, was the Second World War. Geoffrey Eley has pointed out that the opening up of the war and post-war periods for legitimate historical work means that ‘large numbers of historians are now writing about the years in which they were also themselves formed as adults’ (Eley 1997, viii). Beyond this, Danièle Sallenave’s comment in her novel *D’Amour* (2002), that we are always behind our own times, because we have been shaped by the tenets of a previous age, the times of our parents and teachers,³ made me realise how much I was forgetting the importance of the Second World War as a theme of my childhood and secondary school years.

My parents met in London towards the end of the war. Both served with the police of their respective part of the armed forces, the Royal Air Force police for my father, the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force police for my mother. He had been posted to South Africa for 3 years, returning to London in time for the V-rockets; to the best of my knowledge she spent the war in London. I grew up with tales of the Second World War, particularly of South Africa, which had had an enormous impact on that young working class man (22 when he first volunteered, hoping to be a pilot, in 1939). The war was part of the fabric of everyday life: bomb-sites and bunker-like bomb shelters were common sights; one friend of the family had been a Desert Rat; another one’s brother had been killed at Dunkirk; a colleague of my father had been involved in guarding the

³Quoted in Marc Dambre’s paper to the ‘France, Vichy and Me workshop’ held in Belfast 19–21 January 2015.

Nuremberg prisoners during their trial, including Goering; the mother of a friend had been in the French Resistance as a very young woman, escaping arrest by the skin of her teeth after being denounced; another friend's father had lost several siblings. At secondary school we were shown *Mrs. Miniver* (1942), *Carve her Name with Pride* (1958) and *Reach for the Sky* (1956); you can tell it was a girls' school—boys' choices of films and books about the war in these years were very different (I saw neither *Dambusters* (1955) nor *The Great Escape* (1963), unlike male friends). At university, one professor, a renowned Rabelais scholar, had spent the war as a Japanese prisoner of war when he was still a very young man; another older professor, a leading medieval specialist, had been a volunteer fireman.

France and war were, then, 'marked' for me in direct and indirect ways. On the first family holiday in France, in 1964, we returned via the First World War cemeteries, to take photographs 'for your grandmother'. In 1966, our first post-Channel stop was at a camp site at Auxerre, fairly empty as I remember. The owner told us that in the tent 'over there' were 'Germans', upon which he spat on the ground. It has been suggested to me that the kind of response to my mother's totally unexpected collapse and death at home one lunchtime, when she was 40 and I was just 10—a 'life goes on' kind of response, for my father was back at work and we were back at school after a couple of days—was typical of those who had lived through so much destruction and loss in their recent past. You coped by just getting on with it. So although in 1971 I might have thought that the choice of the war was a purely academic choice of subject, now I wonder whether there was recognition as well as discovery in that choice, based on familiarity with a time that was already crucially important in family history and popular culture.

Furthermore, my family was Catholic, and practising Catholic. This is important in terms of questions of Englishness and 'imagined community', and a clear pointer to the lived diversity of the national imaginary, a fracture in the homogeneity of Anderson's 'deep horizontal comradeship' (1983, 16), that he argues is underpinned for English speakers by 'an ancestral Englishness' relived whenever one hears extracts of *The Book of Common Prayer* (132–133)—which I have never opened and would not recognise if I heard it. Anderson's 'shared Englishness' sits upon a very particular set of markers. They remind me of the two moments that shocked me out of an unthinking well-being of 'shared Englishness': when I heard a neighbour say she did not go over and offer to help when my mother died as 'they're Catholics and they do things their way'; and, in the heady days of cultural studies in the early 1980s, when I heard

Catholicism described in a seminar as a 'sub-culture'. I have never quite got over my indignation at the description, or the indulgent, knowing laughter that greeted my indignant reaction; the very idea that there was not parity of status within Englishness enraged me, and in a sense still does, decades after my own religious belief failed to survive my encounter with Montesquieu, Voltaire and Diderot as a second-year undergraduate. But Catholicism was an extraordinary platform on which to feel at home in France. On that first visit in 1964, I could not understand a word that was said to me in the shop where, with younger brother in tow for moral support, I was sent to buy something for lunch. When we went to church on Sundays, however, we belonged. Even if the sermon in French was challenging, the Latin mass was as much ours as anybody's: we were part of an imagined shared community that transcended national difference.

This is the patchwork of Englishness and non-Englishness that was my personal, familial, national identity. I have long thought that my pleasure in being in France, speaking the French language and knowing French culture much better than I do English culture is in part driven by the pleasure of stepping outside of an 'outsider status' within England. I am my father's daughter in my academic success in French (French was one of his two matriculation credits in 1932), my mother's daughter in my self-taught touch-typing, learned in 1968 from her professional textbook, that has stood me in good stead throughout my academic career, but my adult cultural references and identifications have allowed me to step outside competitions of English belonging: like Saussure's piece of paper, Englishness and Frenchness are both separate and inseparable for me.

PROBLEMATIC METHODOLOGIES, METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMATICS

Sallenave's remark quoted earlier merged both personal and intellectual history, parents and teachers, in the framework created by the previous generation. Modern languages as a subject has always had a rather complicated place in the university curriculum in the UK. How can it be otherwise, when the object of study is such an odd one? What disciplinary formation is needed to learn about a country? When introduced at the end of the nineteenth century, French was designed as training for young girls. French had difficulty establishing itself as a serious subject in the academy since the peculiar nature of the object of study being another country meant it was hardly considered a discipline at all. It was accused of being

too easy, not intellectually demanding, and was even pejoratively referred to as the ‘courier tripos’ on its introduction at Cambridge (Colbeck 2008, 4–6). French gained scholarly recognition in the 1920s, not in relation to France, but in relation to already constituted disciplines, which meant it could be seen, recognised as a discipline and gain academic respectability. It did so by taking the study of dead languages, and dead literatures, as its model; its curriculum became a quest for roots and origins. Classics and philology combined to give this young subject the most ancient of pasts. No one was interested in France as such, but in tracing the Indo-European origins of words, and climbing back up the chain of literary history. French departments were not to learn French in, for educated men and women were deemed to speak French and know France anyway; to be scholarly, to be a discipline, it invented itself as different from the ordinary practice of French, by the exercise of linguistic virtuosity in translation, prose and essay; and by the study of great authors.

This curriculum was very static from the 1920s to the 1960s, when I went to university. The post-war generation of academics tended to subscribe to the intellectual credentials of French literary history; France itself did not feature quite so highly. They often did not actually like France or visit very often, and linguistic proficiency was definitely not a prerequisite for professorial advancement. Given that nations are ‘imagined communities’, and that the relationship with France has been one of the constitutive strands of English national identity, we can see the complexity of the mapping of the double national identities at stake within the institution of higher education and the importance of literature in that. Antoine Compagnon has argued that ‘literary history is above all an ideology (the idea of a national literature)’ (Compagnon 1983, 8). Our curriculum followed the great French national adventure of its literature through the centuries, but did so through the prism of British common sense. We are not falling for Paris’s intellectual fads, fashions and jargons, be they existentialist or, later, structuralist. We are specialists of France who see through all that French nonsense because we are English.

The critical approach of the generation I belonged to was very different; if France was an ‘other’ in my national identity, it was an object of desire. Having spent a year in Paris before university as a *jeune fille au pair* in a much more affluent and more cultured family than my own, I came back smoking French cigarettes, cooking French food and with a solid grounding in French grammar courtesy of the ‘Cours supérieur’ of the *Institut Catholique de Paris*. Within a year, the events of May ’68

would explode, and for my golden generation that was 20 in 1968, a whole new world of culture, politics, films and contestation was opening up. Structuralism hit the big time in 1966 when Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses* and Lacan's *Écrits* were unexpected bestsellers, and was flowing out in all sorts of directions: Marxism, psychoanalysis, semiotics and film theory were delineating our intellectual horizons.

Although anti-intellectualism was the hallmark of many academics in English departments of French, their curriculum nonetheless gave us the knowledge to be able to use the new thinking of philosophers, theoreticians of communication and of literature, while a historically rigorous approach to the study of the language of the medieval texts, and to the study of sixteenth-century ideas and language, was invaluable, teaching us indirectly about historicity. We were steeped in French literature, from medieval literature to the twentieth century, and in the history of the language from Vulgar Latin to the present. As well as detailed study of the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, there were lecture courses on the *Chanson de Roland*, *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, Rabelais's *Le Tiers livre*, Montaigne's *Essais* (the set text was the complete edition, 6 volumes in the original sixteenth-century French). My very first seminar in my first year was 'Religion and Satire in the Seventeenth Century': two Molière plays, two texts by Pascal, including *Les Pensées* in the Brunschwig edition. Our compulsory grammar book was Grévisse, *Le Bon Usage*. This was an immense step up from A-level, and an even bigger difference from today's interdisciplinary studies in French. Our curriculum shadowed French understanding of the literary field to include the classics of social, political and philosophical analysis (unlike the purely literary study in English departments at the time). Paradoxically, this very traditional, in many ways anti-intellectual but also quite rigorous formation was the perfect platform, given the interconnections between philosophy, thought and literature in France, for embracing the new approaches embodied in Barthes's *Sur Racine* (1963) or Goldmann's *Le Dieu caché* (1959) on Racine and Pascal. Althusser on Montesquieu (1959), Lukács on Balzac (1967), Bénichou's *Les Morales du grand siècle* (1967), Starobinski (1957), Richard (1970) and Poulet (1949, 1952, 1964, 1968), on Rousseau, Flaubert and Stendhal, and Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948) were all discussing texts we were familiar with. Sartre and Beauvoir were of towering importance, as was the Nizan of *Les Chiens de garde* (1932). We organised a meeting with staff where our agenda was: 'For a more historically conscious approach to literature'.

Our fellow students in the German department were running their own Brecht reading groups since the department would not teach him. These were exciting times.

The importance of the cultural maelstrom of semiotics, philosophy, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and very shortly, feminism and feminist theory, was reinforced during my postgraduate years by two things. Firstly, France worked hard to promote its exciting new ideas abroad. At the *Institut Français de Londres* I attended lectures by Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Michel Serres, and Roland Barthes in conversation with Frank Kermode. Barthes also gave a lecture in University College London, though the research seminar he joined as a special guest was in the Department of English, run by Kermode, not the Department of French. And that was the second element: 'French theory' might be spurned in French departments, but it was sweeping departments of English, displacing the established Leavisite vision of a national literature in the name of cultural studies and political readings of literature, and it would not be long before journals, conferences and groups were being formed across the humanities to contest the status quo.

So, there I am in October 1971, with on the one hand a dramatic new distribution of cards of literary criticism, albeit one I have only imperfectly mastered, and on the other Jean-Louis Curtis and *Les Forêts de la nuit*. When I told my supervisor, Professor Annette Lavers, of my enthusiasm, she was delighted: 'Curtis, ce serait un sujet en or'. But, a study of life and works and influences was not sexy—Roland Barthes (1964, 1966), Gérard Genette (1966), Christian Metz (1968), Julia Kristeva (1969), Vladimir Propp (1970) on narratology and semiotics, were. While writing a thesis on living authors was not, unlike in France, a problem in the UK, the mantra of the death of the author had put paid to biographically inflected readings. I had one big idea: to explore the topic of Resistance and Occupation in fiction from 1940 to 1950, on the basis that fictional texts written in the immediate post-war period could not fail to be different from those written during the Occupation.

The intellectual weaponry at my disposal was not negligible: the identification of a corpus, Resistance fiction and the post-war novel about the Occupation; a defined historical period; a vision of the literary as the expression of a cultural politics; an understanding of narrative as structured, multi-layered and impersonal in the sense of being traversed by languages and discourses that were neither created nor owned by

the author; and an understanding of the historicity of the relationship between literature and epistemology informed by Foucault, Bachelard, Althusser and Sartre, namely that the horizons of knowledge were neither eternal nor universal. This may have been naively expressed in my sense of a historical break in the narrative before and after the war and the argument that the cultural and ideological process of production of stories could not fail to be inflected by the historical gap that would necessarily be opened between the knowledge of the characters and the knowledge of the narration and the reader, but analysis of the structural relationship between *énoncé* (events narrated) and *énonciation* (process of narration), and the thematic and narratological dimensions of that relationship, have remained fundamental to my work on historical and political narratives.

Nonetheless, I floundered, for years. I had no idea how to shape a study of Resistance fiction that would do something other than read through the words to identify themes reflecting their times. There were virtually no studies of the literature of the Occupation, apart from Konrad Bieber's *L'Allemagne vue par les écrivains de la Résistance* (1954) and articles by S. B. John (1970) and J. H. King (1972). I used Maurice Nadeau's study of the novel (1969), literary historians such as Albérès (1950, 1956) and Boisdeffre (1958). I read Albert Schinz (1920) on the First World War. All helpful for themes and texts, but I wanted to follow Bénichou, Barthes or the brilliant Claude-Edmonde Magny in *L'Âge du roman américain* (1948) and capture ideological and cultural politics across a broad corpus in and through narrative forms.

So I accumulated readings, and tried to build a methodology from the bottom up. The Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss article "Les Chats" de Baudelaire' (1962), a virtuoso structuralist *explication* of the poem bringing together a close attention to linguistic structures and mythic thematic elements, was another role model. I tried to do a similar exercise on *Le Silence de la mer* (1942) by Vercors, and it was indeed productive: language, structure of difference, identification of the enemy and problematisation of the enemy through the *récit* all emerged from this work. On the historical side, there was Amouroux in the 'livre de poche' (pocket edition 1965), but no one pointed me in the direction of the journal of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (which I finally came across in the Leeds library), and even if they had, I just did not know how to build connections between the fictional and the historical for this precise corpus.

Gradually, more helpful work appeared. Yves Durand's short book on Vichy in 1972 and Paxton's *Vichy France* that I read in French in 1975 were both illuminating in the way they dissected the multiple ideological strands within Vichy and situated them within the political dynamics of twentieth-century France. Pascal Ory, in *Les Collaborateurs* (1976) and *La France allemande* (1977), was also demonstrating that Collaboration was not one solid block either. *Les Pousse-à-jour du Maréchal Pétain* (1975), by Gérard Miller, published in Lacan's series for Seuil (entitled 'Champ Freudien') and prefaced by Barthes, was a dazzling analysis of *le signifiant politique* at the level of the image and of the rhetoric of the nation.

Furthermore, the outpouring of *mode rétro* writings and films was certainly compatible with the critical approaches that refused to 'read' reality off from discourse; this historiographical material was encouraging me in the direction of the value I was according to cultural politics and narrative processes. In Modiano's *La Place de l'étoile* (1968), for example, literature and cultural politics are at the centre of the story, fracturing the nation as a shared imagined community, underlining the incompatibility of various ideas of the nation mobilised in literary texts, and placing literary discourses of national identity on destructive display. The psychological determinism of *Lacombe Lucien* (Malle 1974) has always irritated me (as soon as he has killed the bird in the opening sequences one knows where it is heading politically), but it was an intriguing example of the investment in a particular set of messages about the period driving the story. *L'Affiche rouge* (Cassenti 1976), a dramatisation of history and memory around the immigrant Resistance *Groupe Manouchian*, was exhilarating in its theatricality and sophisticated approach to image, representation and politics.

However, what actually unblocked my methodological impasse was an extraordinary moment of chance in the Brotherton Library, the University of Leeds research library. I moved to Leeds in 1979 to take up my fourth one-year temporary lectureship in French. I decided to look in the periodicals catalogue—beautiful little red leather volumes holding the cards—in one of those moments of time-wasting madness that felt like an expression of my frustration and sense of incompetence at my lack of progress, for a publication that I knew was essential but that I had never seen and that could not possibly be in Leeds: *Les Lettres françaises*, the clandestine literary newspaper. And yet there it was: *Les Lettres françaises clandestines*, facsimile edition, housed in the closed Special collections section. Because it was deemed to fall within the 50-year

copyright regulations, only one article per issue could be photocopied. So I copied out all 19 issues by hand. I once mentioned this to a historian who had had a colleague who firmly believed that the invention of the photocopier had ruined history, that copying out by hand was essential to proper historical research. He may well have been right. It is very time-consuming, and I certainly photocopy where I can, but it is not a banal activity—it is very instructive. To have this detailed, intimate conversation with the articles of *Les Lettres françaises* over several months opened the door for me. It was vital in relation to understanding the cultural politics of the Resistance. It placed Resistance fiction on the terrain of committed literature. It illuminated the cultural politics of anti-fascism and of the patriotic, humanist and republican defence of France that united so many disparate currents of the right, the left and the non-aligned, and the importance of literature as a primary battleground. It brought other studies into focus for me, such as Pierre Seghers's *La Résistance et ses poètes* (1974), and gave me a perspective for understanding and integrating historical work: Renée and François Bédarida on *Témoignage Chrétien* (1977), or Marie Granet and Henri Michel on *Combat* (1957) and Henri Michel and Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch on *Les Idées politiques et sociales de la Résistance* (1954), as well as the Republican, Communist and anti-fascist cultural politics of the 1930s, including, for example, André Chamson's novel about Germany, *L'Année des vaincus* (1934).

In particular the concept of *témoignage*, which since the 1990s has been critically developed in relation to the Holocaust and the necessity and impossibility of bearing witness, emerged from *Les Lettres françaises* as an organisational principle across its discourses. This was the anchoring notion which enabled me to understand the political values of the Resistance literary and cultural project, to link them to the debates around the values of 1930s literature bearing witness to a world in crisis, and thus not only have a key critical pathway into the work, but also be able to situate it in an existing critical narrative. But equally, in formal terms, it illuminated the importance, for the articulation of a political vision of Resistance, of the diegetic developments that pre-date 1939 and establish a continuity between the 1920s, the 1930s and the Occupation in, for example, Vercors's *La Marche à l'étoile* (1943), Beauvoir's *Le Sang des autres* (1945) and Vailland's *Drôle de jeu* (1945). A whole cultural programme, in all its social, political and ideological complexity, was unfurling and, in combination with the specific

narratological analyses of textual understanding, was allowing me to construct a framework within which the specificity of fictional narratives of Resistance and Occupation could be sited as both structured by and structuring these fields.

Two more fundamental encounters merit being recorded. If Durand and Paxton had revealed the fissures and contradictions of Vichy synchronically (though not neglecting continuities and discontinuities), then Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-conformistes des années 30* (1969), was a revelation in diachronic terms. His subject is the remarkable effervescence and fluidity of ideas and rebellions in the early 1930s, before the events of 1934 onwards reinstated more familiar right-left lines of demarcation. With its historical rigour, it offered detailed analysis of these years uncoloured by the subsequent political developments which it also traced. In its very fertile exploration of political world views as they presented themselves at the time, and of the subsequent overlaps between currents of thought within Vichy and within the Resistance, it is an object lesson in the historicity of ideas and in the avoidance of 'projecting back' the ethical consequences of certain choices. *L'Aventure incertaine* (1975) by Claude Bourdet, his account of his experiences as second-in-command at *Combat*, was a magisterial introduction to a politically motivated Resistance.

After about 10 years, then, I was finally in a position to have a real understanding of the methodology that would allow me to do the kind of literary cultural analysis I was aiming at, bringing together the double structure of narrative, across *énoncé* and *énonciation*, the latter fundamental to the identification of the modalities of intertextuality, historicity and epistemology that were generating the modalities of the *énoncé* (plot, characters, setting), with a primary corpus composed of multiple elements where similarities and differences, diachronically and synchronically, were bearers of significance. Throughout the decade I had been working on this, the airwaves, the literary press and the newspapers were full of *la mode rétro*. It became a cliché, based in my view on some shaky historical readings, that a myth of Resistance, which had silenced all discussion from 1944 to the years of Modiano, *Le Chagrin et la pitié* and *Lacombe Lucien*, was being demolished and even, some argued, replaced by a myth of Collaboration. I was both ignorant, and so took much of it at face value, and knowledgeable enough to be perplexed. As I have said earlier, it takes a great deal of time and knowledge to fill in the back story of intellectual debate; indeed, *Le Chagrin et la pitié*

thematized generational ignorance by the questions posed to the father by his student-age children. The assertion of ‘new knowledge’ was very important and was certainly repeated through the media, which is what the media often does, joining a debate as if from nowhere. But I was also perplexed by this notion of a new ‘myth of Collaboration’ in relation to *Le Chagrin et la pitié*, partly because I found the resisters in the film powerful and compelling figures—and would argue later (Atack 1999) that its pro-Resistance stance should be read within a problematic of contestation—but mainly because I was steeped in the fiction of the 1940s and early 1950s: *Uranus* (Aymé 1948), *Au bon beurre* (Dutourd 1952), *Les Forêts de la nuit* (Curtis 1947), *Mon village à l’heure allemande* (Bory 1945), *Les Épées* (Nimier 1948), *Banlieue sud-est* (Fallet 1947), *La Culbute* (Queffélec 1946), *Week-end à Zuydecoote* (Merle 1949) and many others all portrayed the war and Occupation as complex, divided and frequently unedifying; moreover, Resistance fiction problematised its message as narrative dilemmas, so collaboration of various kinds, antisemitism, deportations and denunciations were all present in the Resistance stories. This research into post-war fiction in particular meant I felt continually wrong-footed by the notion of a Resistance myth that needed to be overthrown. The only Resistance myth I had come across was the one denounced within novels (*Les Forêts de la nuit*, *Uranus*) as a fabrication by political chancers and manoeuvrers to mask their own opportunism, or knowingly constructed by those same devious chancers as in the novel *Bête à vivre* (1946) by Pierre Leforestier. Far from rocking the boat, *la mode rétro*, addressed to a contemporary audience, seemed to me to stretch out a hand to these ideologically complex interpretations of the Resistance and the post-war periods.

But my comprehensive reading stopped in the early 1950s and I was in no position to judge the intervening decades. It is only later that I have filled in these gaps (Atack 2013), and been able to argue the extent to which the thesis of the myth of silence has extrapolated from and misread *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (Rousso 1990). The major Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) research project that I led into Narratives of the Second World War and Occupation in France from 2006 to 2010 was grounded in work to establish empirically the extent to which subjects later marked as ‘taboo’ were features of novels in the 1950s and 1960s—and they were indeed extensively present (Atack 2010).

CONCLUSION

As the immensely rich historiography of the period has developed through historical and imaginative texts, the historical gap between *énoncé* and *énonciation* gets larger and the interplay in the mobilisation of past and present discourses becomes ever more complex. Sallenave's underlining of the formative role of the ideas and perspectives of an earlier age is powerfully true, but it does not tell the whole story: those perspectives are necessarily modified by new directions and new material that could not have been imagined or thought in the frames of reference of the previous generation. Today I am working on the Occupation novels of Valentine Goby, on the *romans noirs* of Jean-François Vilar (where Occupation and deportation are significant threads), on the *mode rétro* films of the 1970s and on the memories of the war in France. For over three decades, I have discussed major and minor French novels and films about the Occupation with British students and colleagues, with French colleagues and friends, and have recently learned much from reading for the first time some major writers of the English war (Anna Kavan, Patrick Hamilton, Len Deighton) for an essay on war literature across the globe, for a French publication. The inter-crossing, interdisciplinary, inter-nation is continually reinventing itself for me.

Interestingly enough, these shadow lines of France and England are mirrored by Albert Laffitte, who used the Curtiss planes he trained on in Morocco in 1940 to forge the pseudonym Jean-Louis Curtis (Jacob 1997). He was a teacher of English who had lived in England from 1937 to 1939, passed the *agrégation d'anglais* in 1943, and had himself experienced a foreign culture as constitutive of his own self: 'J'eus le sentiment de me dédoubler. [...] C'était vraiment une patrie antérieure que j'eus l'impression de retrouver' (Curtis 1985, 74–75, it felt as though suddenly there were two of me. [...] I really felt that I was returning to a previous homeland). The title of his Goncourt-winning novel about the Occupation was taken from William Blake, as the epigraph quotation: 'Tiger tiger burning bright,/in the forests of the night' makes clear. One of the most famous poems in Blake's *Songs of Experience* (1794), it enacts the ferocity of God's creation as contrasted to the innocence of the Lamb: 'Did he who made the Lamb make thee?' It is not difficult to see how these themes are being mobilised in *Les Forêts de la nuit*, with its stories of cruelty, vanity and profiteering, interwoven with altruism and naive innocence. Given the relative absence of English literature in my

own studies, I was quite oblivious to this thematic intertext when I first worked on it, but it is pleasing that the hybrid patchwork of my own formation and work on Vichy France finds an echo in the novel with which it all began.

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Searching for ‘Contact Zones’ in France’s War

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‘THE TRAVELLER IS THE JOURNEY’¹

How does a historian write his or her autobiography? How do you impose retrospective order on your own professional life? What are the relationships between personality, familial and social status, education, context and sheer luck? Do we really choose the subject of our research obsessions, or do the obsessions choose us? In this ego-history, I find that I am writing not as an historian of the self, but rather as the historian of a particular journey, a journey that seems to have been a slow and often erratic stumble towards the discovery of a subject and an appropriate methodology. These preliminary considerations resonate strongly with the few words by Fernando Pessoa used here as a subtitle.

Any journey, of course, has a beginning, a starting-point and some vague sense of the direction of travel. I am a child of war. Although born some years after the end of the Second World War, my early life was

¹Fernando Pessoa (2010, 76, section 74[387]).

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deeply marked by the 1939–1945 period. I grew up in a military/army town in the south of England, in a family which talked a great deal about the continental war. Three of my uncles (two British, one Canadian) had fought in Europe—indeed I vividly remember my Canadian uncle recognising himself as one of the clearly terrified teenage soldiers fighting in the north of France during a newsreel shown in the classic BBC series *The World at War* (1973–1974). The early landscapes of childhood were drawn for me by my parents as places which still bore the marks of war damage—southern ports bombed, streets they had once known destroyed. Remembrance of war was in the DNA of my background.

I was, I suppose, a typical ‘word child’ (Murdoch 2002), reading all the time, determined from an early age, before I really understood what it actually meant, that I would be some sort of writer. At university, I studied French and Spanish. The parts of the degree which really fired my imagination were the months spent living as a student in France and Spain, and a wonderful final year course in the UK on contemporary history and politics, ‘Forces in Modern France’. When I started postgraduate work, I wanted to find a way of combining my love for the two countries and my growing interest in politics and contemporary history. The subject I settled on was French reactions to the Spanish Civil War. This was a period when committed French literature in British university departments was synonymous with the Left—with Sartre, Camus and Malraux. When I suggested, in the *contestataire* oppositional spirit of the 1970s, that the Right might be worth considering too, my designated supervisor told me he knew nothing about French intellectuals of the Right and cared about them even less. Being supervised across departments—by a Spanish Civil War historian and a French Studies academic—was anyway rather unusual at that time, and I found that in practice neither of my supervisors was particularly enthused at the prospect of this sort of ‘cross-over’ subject. I was thus left virtually alone to do whatever I wanted, with minimal interference or attention. In this situation, I see now that I fell back on my lifelong obsession with words, setting myself to discover the actual expressions that right-wing intellectuals had used to explain their allegiance to the Falange, the Carlists or Franco. Day by day in the library, I carefully copied out whole articles from dark microfilms of the newspapers *Action Française* and *Je Suis Partout*, and then, using what I later realised was an early discourse analysis methodology, I examined their language in search of the story these intellectuals were telling and their political and ideological standpoints.

I became interested in Second World War French experiences in my very first academic post. I had been appointed specifically as a French linguist-historian to contribute to a new interdisciplinary French/History degree. Somewhat to the surprise of those concerned, the Nuffield Foundation awarded us a small grant to collect and assemble a teaching archive of primary material on the French Resistance, documents and interviews which could be used by schools and higher education students across the UK to support growing pedagogic interest in the Resistance, regarded in the 1970s and 1980s as a potentially attractive 'topic' for those studying French at A-level and in university courses. The search for suitably illustrative documents to populate this new archive naturally began in Paris, in the headquarters of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*. The whole experience of being in the *Comité's* headquarters was a highly visual one, working amid a sea of *fichiers* (files), the vast card-filing system which, in those pre-computer days, provided details of every Resistance activity and attack which had ever occurred in France. I sorted through cupboards full of witness *témoignages* (testimonies) from departmental correspondents, and scribbled notes beneath walls adorned with coloured maps of the armed exploits of the Resistance in each area. I met and recorded interviews with iconic Resistance figures like Jean-Pierre Lévy and Jacques Debû-Bridel.² The scholarship on offer here was descriptive and deeply respectful. As a young foreign researcher, I seemed to be witnessing a completely finished *objet d'histoire* in which the questions which it was permissible to pose were internalised, tightly encompassed within the object itself: what were the differences between the movements?; what form did Resistance take for various social/demographic groups? I see now that this (what would later be termed) narrative of *résistancialisme* (Rousso 1990) actually inhibited my own independent research confidence. In a sense, French narratives of the Second World War, as presented here, were enclosed in an unassailable halo of righteousness which made it difficult for an outsider, a foreigner like me, to enter into the conversation other than with enormous acquiescent respect.

I was, however, dimly aware of an omission in the French Resistance scholarship which I was encountering in the *Comité*. There was very little mention of or interest in the activities of Anglophone participants,

²Audio and video recordings from this project are now held by the Imperial War Museum, London.

in the sort of war which my own family had so often evoked. Between 1949 and 1975, the *Comité's* official journal, the *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, carried only five articles exploring the role of the Allies. The key official conference on the Liberation, held in 1974, had only one paper out of nineteen which focused on the Anglo-American role (*Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* 1976). A kind of historiographical *apartheid* seemed to be separating the voluminous Anglophone monographs on D-Day from the French historiography of War. The historiographical ground occupied by the two was as distinct then as the geographies of their memorialisations: the Anglo-Saxon war cemeteries and museums in the north of France, and an entirely different French commemorative route going from General de Gaulle's landing and his speech at Bayeux, on through to the liberation of Strasbourg and Alsace in the thirty-year Franco-German conflict.

Equally though, because of this contact with the *Comité*, I began to realise that my own family discussions, and indeed the overwhelming tenor of British/American scholarship at that time, omitted the French just as much as French historiography omitted us—we Anglophones had apparently liberated France without the French, in a historiography which revolved around the great Anglo-Saxon leaders of war (Churchill, Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Montgomery)—and on military strategy connected to D-Day. There were then two very distinct narratives of the Second World War, and apparently no way of bridging the gulf between them.

Into this particular scenario, Paxton's book (1972) erupted for me like a slow-paced and liberating time-bomb. Paxton too was an outsider, a foreigner. He had sought to internationalise the national French narrative by reading non-French archives, examining copies of Nazi records captured by the Allies and available on microfilm in London and Washington. In a way, Paxton seemed to symbolise the possibility and validity of including other national perspectives on France's war, of confronting the French narrative with the archives of foreign 'others'.

BRINGING NATIONAL NARRATIVES TOGETHER

There was, of course, already a well-established approach to internationalising the French narrative developed in the post-war period and continuing on into the Cold War context of the 1970s and 1980s, one which focused on the relationship between the French Communist Party

(*Parti Communiste Français*, PCF), and Stalin and the USSR. This stream of research, inevitably operating within the evidential vacuum of largely closed Russian and PCF archives, problematised not only the pre-1941 actions of the Party, but also the crucial *passation de pouvoir* (handover of power) at the Liberation—the instructions that the PCF, it was claimed, had received from Stalin, relayed by Thorez when he returned from the USSR (Foulon 1975; Kramer 1975; Lévy 1974; Willard et al. 1972; Lecoœur 1955; Kriegel 1970). In a sense, much of this critical perspective was based on a bitter 'lost opportunity of Resistance' thesis, memorably enunciated by Pierre Hervé in *La Libération trahie* (1945, 2; Liberation Betrayed): 'La montagne de la Résistance a accouché d'une souris' (The mountain of the Resistance has given birth to a mouse), an interpretation incidentally which fed into later narratives of disappointment, of the lost opportunities of the immediate post-war, echoed for example in much feminist writing about the underwhelming consequences of female enfranchisement in France (Jenson 1987; Diamond 1999).

Surprisingly though, nobody had thus far considered examining the other side of this particular coin, Western perspectives on the passing of power at the Liberation, the extent to which the Anglo-Americans, as opposed to the Russians, had sought to condition the politics of power in their own 'zones of influence'. In the mid-1980s, a new book series in English, 'The Politics of Liberation', set out to redress this international imbalance by looking at the active political influence of the Western Allies in the liberations of France, Italy, Poland, Greece and Belgium. The series took as its theme Stalin's pronouncement in 1945: 'This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army has power to do so. It cannot be otherwise.'³

With an historian colleague, I was invited to write the French volume of this series, positioning the moment of Liberation in France as one of international, rather than national, history; questioning how the interests of the liberating powers—the British and Americans—were actually translated into policies within France; and exploring the extent to which these external strategic objectives were modified by local French forces. Whilst the French archives at that stage were only patchily accessible through the byzantine and hit-and-miss processes of *dérogation* (a special

³Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962), quoted in Footitt and Simmonds (1988, ix).

authorisation), the British and American archives were bursting with information, and with the Freedom of Information Act then operating in the USA, it was even possible to obtain copies of documents which the British were unwilling to release; for example, material relating to the distribution of Allied arms drops to *maquis* groups.

In retrospect, writing this book (Footitt and Simmonds 1988) was the beginning of a personal epiphany for me. In international terms, the political liberation of France was a classic case of ‘cock-up’, of nations ostensibly operating together, but in fact having no jointly agreed plans. The British and Americans started from wholly different premises in their approach to France, and by the D-Day landings still had no agreement on either long-term policy aims in France, or even short-term planning objectives. The French, on the other hand, despite the divergent claims of competing groups and the severe communication problems between Resisters in France, Algiers and London, developed detailed plans for the political liberation of their country. These planning systems operated in entirely separate silos so that when British and American troops actually landed on French soil, not only was there no official agreement with the French, there was also no agreed policy between the Allies themselves as to what should happen politically in post-war France.

In the actual process of Liberation, as often quite junior Allied officers entered the first towns and villages of France, they had thus received no clear orders as to what they should be putting in the political vacuum left by the German retreat. Rather than the traditional diplomatic relations narrative of international history which we had been expecting to write, I became more and more fascinated by what had actually happened ‘on the ground’ as Allied and French personnel faced each other. In this transfer of power, there was not one Liberation of France, but several. Everything depended on the balance of power locally, the speed with which key Allied and French officials arrived and the relationships which were formed between them. The research suggested that, in a very real sense, the Liberation of France had been built from the *communes* upwards, with ordinary Anglophones and French men and women meeting each other and making speedy decisions on the basis of what seemed possible given the situation in which they found themselves. We thus, somewhat to our surprise, found ourselves thrust into a maelstrom of multiple multinational meetings where local agency and relationships on the ground were a good deal more important than political diktats from above.

COMMUNITIES ON THE GROUND OF WAR

French scholarship on the Second World War in the 1990s and early 2000s, in comparison with what had preceded it, was becoming excitingly eclectic in theoretical terms, drawing on cultural studies and ethnography in order to include the experiences of communities which had so far been excluded from the story of France at war—Jews, immigrants, women, foreigners. Henry Rousso's mould-breaking work on memory (1990), key books on Jewish deportation, on the concentration camps, on the role of foreigners in the Resistance—research paths led by scholars like Annette Wieviorka (1992) and Denis Peschanski (2002)—focused on *Pimagineaire social*, the ways in which War, Occupation and Liberation had been lived, represented and expressed by these particular communities in their own very different styles and words.

In parallel, Anglophone scholarship on D-Day and the Liberation of France was rapidly moving away from its previous focus on military strategy and great leaders towards the experiences of those ordinary men and women who had fought on the continent. In many ways, John Keegan's pioneering study of *Six Armies in Normandy* (1982) had led the way in this, concentrating as it did on the role of troops on the ground, in the midst of battle. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, this interest in the personal and experiential opened the door to a flood of oral history accounts on both sides of the Atlantic. Books with titles like *Voices* (Bastable 2004; Brinkley and Drez 2004, for example) used extended interviews with participants to build up an impression of 'their' war, of what the experience of fighting in Europe had actually been like. The emphasis on the importance of oral history, of the recorded memories of those who had participated, was further fed by the success of films like *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and by a growing realisation that year on year there would inevitably be fewer and fewer participants still living and able to testify. By the time the 60th anniversary of the Liberation came round in 2004, this obsessive interest in the testimonies of participants fuelled a major commemoration exercise led by the UK's Imperial War Museum (IWM). With 50 million pounds of public money, the IWM mounted a vast commemoration project entitled 'Their Past Your Future', specifically focused on the veteran experience, a project which would ultimately involve the active contribution of some 40,000 ex-soldiers. This crucial publicly funded exercise positioned British veterans of World War Two as living documents of war who could now be 'read'

by a new generation of youngsters (see Tinker 2013). Methodologically, the originality of the IWM's approach was to incorporate the foreign geography of Anglophone engagement into the veteran's personal remembrance of war. In the 'Heroes Return' element of the programme, veterans were sponsored by the IWM to go back to the sites of their war-time activity—in this case Northern France—in order to meet local people and reimagine their past, creating, as it were, new communities of intergenerational memory on the very sites of former military encounter.

Throughout this period dominated by what I called *l'imaginaire social* and the experiential history of war I was working in a School of Languages (Polytechnic of Central London, subsequently University of Westminster) which, unusually for the UK, offered courses in over twenty foreign languages, as well as Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting. Rather than the European historiography with which I had engaged in my previous appointment, I was finding myself exposed to the developing field of linguistic ethnography, to the concept of 'situated meaning making' (see, for example, Rampton et al. 2004), and to the language-uses of local individual encounters. The highly cosmopolitan nature of the staffing in the School, and the status accorded in it to the postgraduate skills of translating and interpreting, meant that the ethos of the linguistic ethnography I was encountering was deeply marked by foreignness and foreign languages.

The mixture of this markedly linguistic academic context, together with the broader emphasis on voicing participant experience, and the exciting ethnographic developments in French scholarship, encouraged me to go back and revisit the Liberation book which John Simmonds and I had completed nearly a decade before. Looking at the volume again, it seemed to me that what was potentially interesting was the importance it gave to 'on the ground' encounters between Allied servicemen and French civilians. With some distance from the original research, I saw that many of these meetings would actually have continued for some time after the heady June–August days of 1944. The longer they were stationed in France, Allied troops inevitably became part of a local community of French people, and French people in many parts of the country met, and often lived alongside, Anglophone soldiers. The very localisation of Liberation experiences which we had already noted argued for the presence of a patchwork of these different Franco-Anglophone meetings. Now, ten years after completing this first book, French departmental archives for the period were generally open and local

contemporary newspapers were widely accessible. The UK/USA archives held a vast reservoir of war diaries, Civil Affairs reports, censored letters of French civilians in Allied areas and documents relating to local relationships between the Anglo-Saxon military and French personnel.

At this relatively late stage in my career, I realised that I had found a subject—the temporarily established multinational (Anglophone/French) communities of Liberation—which could combine my interests in war, words and France with my longstanding ambition to bring together Anglophone and French narratives of the period. One route open to achieving this was of course that of oral history, reconstructing these communities through the memories of present-day survivors. Rather than this type of memory-history, however, what really intrigued me then was the possibility of attempting a type of ethnographic history which would take as its object the cultural implications of multinationalism in war as seen through perceptions held at the time of the foreign 'other' on both sides, exploring how 'foreignness' was represented in such encounters, particularly the 'foreignness' of an avowed ally and friend. By using an ethnographic approach in the historical context of the Liberation of France, I thought it might be possible to begin to see how the practices and processes of Anglo-Saxon/French meetings, and the situational nature of identities, affected what happened 'on the ground'.

At this point, the desire to concentrate on writing a book which for the first time in my career could potentially articulate my major academic and methodological interests became overwhelming. I had a very real sense that it was 'now or never'; that unless I wrote this book I would never become the sort of writer I had always wanted to be. It seemed impossible to me that I could both write the book and carry on fulfilling the duties of the busy university management position I then occupied, leading a large department of full-time and part-time staff. With some trepidation, and against the advice of many colleagues, I took the plunge and resigned my academic post.

In the slightly twilight world of freelancers in which I now found myself, I wrote *War and Liberation in France: Living with the Liberators* (Footitt 2004). What I wanted to do in this project was to examine five sites of these Anglophone/French communities, selected because they seemed a priori to present different contexts and circumstances for multinational encounters: the early Liberation of Northern Normandy; the longer and more settled meetings in the port of Cherbourg, liberated by

the Americans in late June 1944; the situation in the south of France, in Marseille and the surrounding area, where internal Resistance activity played the key role in their Liberation and where the Allies then established a large presence; the Pyrénées-Orientales, a frontier community where Allied personnel and local inhabitants engaged with Spanish Resisters in an apparently permeable and unstable border; and finally, Reims, where the US military presence was considerable, with eight vast camps, and where Americans continued to be stationed for some two years after the Liberation.

The more I worked on this book, the more I came to realise that space and temporality, as well as broader national priorities, all played a part in how these communities, and their different cross-national relationships, actually developed. In Cherbourg, for example, a confined urban area with a physically fragile and vulnerable returning population was in effect swamped by an American occupation which, whilst friendly enough, in practice slotted in and replaced the former German occupation, taking over identical buildings as military camps, barracks and rest centres. For fourteen months after the liberation of the town, Cherbourgeois and Americans lived together in two distinct time-zones, *l'heure américaine* and *l'heure française* (American time and French time). Unable to reclaim their own contemporary physical space, the Cherbourgeois moved to occupy the only space which was easily available to them—the symbolic cultural past of France. This space of a centuries-old French history was necessarily contrasted with the young, apparently rootless American community currently living in their midst. Beyond the traditional currency of cultural exchange between occupying army and occupied civilians, different and necessary identities were constructed to ease the problems of two national communities trying to live together in a confined space after war.

These Franco/Allied communities, I concluded, were integral parts of the patchwork of the French Liberation experience. The nature of the international relationships formed in them 'on the ground' depended critically on the specific circumstances of their meetings. Beyond easy national stereotypes, the particular contexts of these encounters—space, time, local and national competing agendas and motivations—played a fundamental part in the understandings that each developed of the other. Much like my initial postgraduate work on French intellectuals of the Right and the Spanish Civil War, I felt that I was recording the actual

voices of those engaged in these difficult meetings—the police who commented on local disorder, the Civil Affairs officers who painfully negotiated the takeover of buildings, the French civilians whose letters attested to the endless frictions of day-to-day living and the journalists who described set-piece Allied/French meetings and covert street-level misunderstandings. My ambition in this ethnographic approach was not to provide an historical picture of events during the Liberation, but rather to represent aspects of multinational relationships as they seemed to have been understood at the time. As Greg Denning expressed it: 'to represent the past as it was actually experienced in such a way that we understand both its ordered and its disordered natures' (2010, 5).

WRITING FOREIGN LANGUAGES INTO THE STORIES OF WAR

Increasingly, my long-term interest in France and the Second World War was beginning to lead me to view war in broader cultural terms as a producer of what Tarak Barkawi calls, 'cultural mixing and hybridity' (2006, x). From a desire to internationalise French narratives by confronting them with Anglophone archives, I had become fixated on the Franco-Allied mixed communities of the Liberation, and then with the ways in which such different national communities met and understood each other in periods of conflict. The French and Anglophone narratives of war actually came together, it seemed to me, in what Mary Louise Pratt calls 'contact zones', 'the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect' (2008, 8). The words and images which expressed these types of relationships, the perceptions, feelings and representations of participants, their hybrid geographies, inevitably, if you dealt with history from more than one country, involved a consideration of the role of foreign languages, of the frameworks of understanding with which we approach, meet and listen to each other.

As it happened, the post 9/11 period, with Coalition military activity in Iraq and Afghanistan, was one in which linguists and translation/interpreting scholars were turning their attention, largely for the first time, to issues of war and conflict, and in particular to the linguistic and cultural construction of the 'in-between' translational spaces occupied by language intermediaries—interpreters and translators—operating in these intense and violent situations (Stahuljak 2000; Apter 2006; Baker 2006;

Salama-Carr 2007; Inghilleri 2008). With the so-called ‘cultural turn’ in NATO (Black 2012) which positioned cultural understanding as a key element in counter-insurgency operations, the value of interrogating and problematising the cultural frameworks with which we understand the foreign ‘other’ became of evident contemporary interest. Having survived several years of independent freelance research activity and gained some confidence from the work completed, I resolved to embark on a larger project, looking more closely at the place of foreign languages within the cultural hybridity of World War Two meetings. Seeking any form of public funding for research in the UK almost inevitably necessitates ‘coming in from the freelance cold’, and I therefore approached a university department (Modern Languages and European Studies at the University of Reading) which I knew and admired, and suggested I should join them specifically in order to apply for research support from the British Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The resulting funded project, ‘Languages at War: Policies and Practices of Language Contacts in Conflict’,⁴ a cooperative venture between two universities (Reading and Southampton) and the Imperial War Museum, London, aimed to explore contrasting case studies—the Allied invasion and occupation of Europe in the Second World War, which I led, and peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1995–2000), led by Michael Kelly.

Surprisingly perhaps, the role of languages in war and conflict had up until that time received very little attention from academics, military authorities or the general public. The tacit assumption seemed to be that most international wars are fought with allies, and against enemies, who obligingly speak our own language. The research we undertook used archives and interviews with participants in war, both military and civilian, to uncover the place of foreign languages at each stage of military conflict, examining the ways in which perceptions of foreign languages frame our pre-conflict understanding of enemies/allies; the role of languages in intelligence gathering and assessment, in military preparations for deployment, in military/civilian meetings ‘on the ground’, in the aftermath of war and in refugee relief and peace building.

The resulting books (Footitt and Kelly 2012; Footitt and Tobia 2013) argued that foreign languages were integral to each of these stages of

⁴See www.reading.ac.uk/languages-at-war/.

war. The case study on the British war in continental Europe, for example, pointed to several language-related issues: the failure to recognise and problematise the role of translation in intelligence gathering and assessment; the importance of languages in developing satisfactory relationships between military interveners and civilian populations; weaknesses in the language policies which military authorities make for war, particularly in their plans to recruit and deploy language/cultural mediators; the emotional and physical vulnerabilities of locally recruited/native-speaking interpreters; and the relative lack of professional and welfare structures to protect them during and after conflict.

Studying foreign languages and the British war effort in Europe also encouraged me to view the Second World War in a rather longer chronological time-frame. How far were language policies in war dependent on pre-war attitudes to the countries concerned and to the active acquisition of their languages? What role did languages play in the aftermath of conflict and in the transition towards Cold War? Holger Nehring (2004) has helpfully suggested the term 'westernization' as a productive paradigm with which to interpret West European History in the Cold War, arguing that it is vital to focus attention on societies outside those of the two superpowers. In this framework, the Cold War transmission of ideas and lifestyles was not a one-way traffic, but rather a negotiation in what he calls, 'a community of values'. In this process, countries concerned were co-creators, and not passive recipients, in a complex transnational reworking of images and meanings.

Turning back to France in this context, I began to view Franco-British relationships in the post-war and early Cold War as integral parts of the two countries' narratives of war, concentrating on how this still developing relationship was mediated through the words of propaganda, in particular in radio broadcasts from Britain to France, in a period in which Britain considered her neighbour as being particularly vulnerable to Soviet influence (Footitt 2013). For those in Britain charged with transmitting propaganda to France in this early post-war period, relationships were fraught with difficulties: 'France is a hideously difficult country to work in'.⁵ Recognising the agency of France itself in propaganda relationships with Britain was an attempt to 'restore France to the narrative

⁵National archives, Kew, FO 1110/290, Murray to Marchant, British Embassy Paris, 31 March 1950.

of the early Cold War' (Hitchcock 1998, 209) and to understand how the senders' own strategies and perceptions were modified and challenged as they sought to develop propaganda for France.

STORYING THE TRANSNATIONAL

In all my work, I have been trying to bring the two narratives of war—Anglophone and French—into some kind of dialogue. Many other researchers, of course, have brought international perspectives to the French account of war in exciting and challenging ways. Pieter Lagrou, for example, (2000) adopted a comparative approach in order to understand the legacies of Liberation in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The American criminal historian Robert J. Lilly (2003) focused on one particular aspect of this Anglo-Saxon/European relationship in war, the fraught sexual relations between US GIs and local European civilians, employing in essence a type of *histoire croisée* perspective, proposed by historians such as Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann (2003). My own path has taken me towards a version of transnational history, exploring multinational relationships 'on the ground of war' with their inevitable cultural hybridity and foreign-language implications, seeing the transnational not as the passing of ideas or people across borders, but rather as the hybridity of these 'on the ground' relationships of war. In pursuing this route, I have been trying to recover the actual words of those involved in the meetings, in some small measure to hear their voices. As the journey has gone on, I find I have morphed from a cultural historian of Franco-Allied encounters into a type of storyteller of the Stephen Greenblatt school (Greenblatt 2010) where history and anecdote criss-cross the surface of the narrative: 'there is much fiction in your non-fiction' (Denning 2004, 263–264).

From this vantage point, looking back, I realise that my journey has been neither linear nor direct. Rather than a trajectory which could be called a 'career', it has been an often interrupted ramble towards a subject and a methodology which I can own, and to which I can commit myself with confidence. My academic geography, the varied nomenclature of university departments in which I have at some time or another worked—'Languages', 'European Studies', 'History', 'Politics and International Relations'—and the time spent outside institutions of Higher Education as what we now call 'an independent scholar', are doubtless indications of both professional insecurity (what exactly is my

disciplinary focus?) and a quite deep-seated academic solitude. And yet I realise too that I have been deeply influenced by those academics with whom I have been privileged to work and study—historians of France and the Second World War, cultural studies scholars, linguistic ethnographers, translation and interpreting specialists. If, in the end, my own writing is theoretically eclectic and possibly an indigestible *potage* of different disciplinary approaches at times, the themes of war, words and France have been constants in it. All my work has been rooted in France, in its rich culture and historiography, following the signal given so long ago now by Robert Paxton, that experiences of war are necessarily international, and that we will only truly know ourselves by daring to examine what the foreign 'others' have written and said about us, by searching for the foreign 'contact zones' of our own wars.

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A Tale of Two Frances and a Curious Ancestor

Robert Gildea

In my family's possession there is a faded photograph of General de Gaulle in uniform and a small, bald man in a suit, about half his size, looking up at him. It is an image without drama, almost without interest, and yet it could explain my fascination for the history of France during the Second World War. For the little man was my great-uncle, Denis Saurat, director of the French Institute in London and professor of literature at King's College London (Fig. 1). On 19 June 1940, the day after de Gaulle made his famous appeal on the BBC, Saurat went to see the General. He provided him with contacts in the British establishment, many of whom reacted positively to de Gaulle's call to continue the war, and with French personalities passing through London, such as Jean Monnet and André Maurois, most of whom did not. The picture was taken on 17 July 1940, in an ante-room of the Queen's Hall, where de Gaulle was supposed to speak but then declined to do so, saying 'Je ne parle pas. Moi, j'agis' (I don't talk. I act), leaving Saurat to convey his message to an audience of 3000. When my great-uncle died

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Fig. 1 Denis Saurat. 17 July 1940, Queen's Hall in London

in 1958, I was five years old and I have no memory of him. His nickname in the family—‘Chubby’—scarcely suggested that I should become more acquainted with this unsung hero. His widow Ella and her sister Lily—my grandmother—bore the maiden name Schmidt. Their father, Wilhelm Schmidt, was a maker of cameo jewels from the Rhineland who had come to London and so my family had German blood, and an Irish ancestry on my father's side, but not a drop of Frenchness. It was therefore not until much later when I began research on the French Resistance that Denis Saurat came once more into my field of vision.

The story that I told myself for many years about my passion for France and French history was quite different and much more romantic. During the Easter holiday of 1967, at the age of fourteen, I was sent on an exchange to a French family under the auspices of the *Association Internationale de la Jeunesse* (AIJ). My father, a civil servant in the Board of Trade who was involved in developing Britain's relations with the European Community, was keen that his children should learn a foreign

language and become good Europeans. I was, to be honest, initially reluctant to go. My French pen-friend, Marc, and I had little in common. I teased him relentlessly about Crécy, Agincourt and Waterloo. His family lived in Versailles and was Catholic and right-wing. Later, when I learned the term, I understood that it was Pétainist. One of his uncles was clearly Anglophobe and complained that the British had sunk the French fleet at Mers el-Kébir, an event that was not in my vulgate of Britain's Island Story. A day or so after arriving in Versailles, however, we piled into the family car to go on holiday to Aix-en-Othe, a small town in the Champagne region between Troyes and Sens. There another uncle, Jacques, who had spent his youth in the *Action Française*, owned and managed a hosiery factory. The revelation to me, however, was that he had five daughters. It is now difficult to imagine what this meant to a shy youth brought up in the austerity of post-war Britain and insulated from the 1960s by a battery of institutions from single-sex school to the Anglican Church and a rather militaristic scout movement. The cousins spent endless days playing tennis and ping-pong, swimming and kick-starting their mopeds—their *Vélosolexes*—to explore the forest of Othe. Later I would see this through the lens of *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*. But then I simply fell in love with the fourth daughter, Isabelle, with her short red hair and wide smile, an undeclared love that survived but scarcely developed from the innocence of those spring days.

This trip to France was also my discovery of rural France, *la France profonde*. Aix-en-Othe was not a beautiful place but it exhaled a certain timelessness. The red-brick town hall glared at a rather ugly church across the main square, from which roads led off to the low hills of the *Champagne pouilleuse* region. At one end of the square was a powerful war memorial or *monument aux morts*, topped by a powerful figure of a rifle-wielding infantryman, which dated not from the Great War but from the Franco-Prussian War. It seemed to speak to a lithograph of a painting of soldiers of the 1870 war, defending against an almost unseen enemy beyond the cemetery wall, which hung over the fireplace in the girls' home, and which I later discovered to have been painted by Alphonse de Neuville. With successive visits to Aix-en-Othe I learned how close and real was a war that had taken place a hundred years before. While Jacques had studied textile engineering in Mulhouse when it was French between 1918 and 1940, the family of his wife Antoinette had come from Belfort, which had famously resisted the Prussians in 1870. Other family stories reached back to the marauding bands of the

Hundred Years War, to whom the *maquisards*—Resistance fighters—of the Second World War, in their eyes, were closely related.

It was some time before I discovered another kind of France. Between my second visit at Aix in Easter 1968 and Marc's return visit to London the following summer, the events of May 1968 took place. I have to admit that they made little impression on me at the time, except on one occasion. One day Marc and I went with my elder sister and her friend, who was the son of a local progressive clergyman, on a demonstration that started in Trafalgar Square. We told our respective parents that we were going on a Christian march but this was only a cover. We joined the march going to the American Embassy, taunting the American President with the chant, 'Hey, hey, LBJ, How many kids have you killed today?' Subsequently I calculated that this was not one of the great demonstrations, like those of 17 March or 27 October 1968, but a lesser-marked one that took place on 21 July. What seemed inexplicable at the time was how Marc reacted. He was reluctant to join the march. For a time he skipped along the pavement, keeping up with us; then he disappeared. Later he phoned my family to tell them, unhelpfully, that he was outside the Odeon cinema, and my father fetched him home from Marble Arch. What I realised is that, having seen the violence of May 1968 on television, or heard the strictures of his family on *gauchistes* (leftists), he had made himself scarce. When I first met *gauchistes*, a few years later, I was more intrigued. The London suburb of Lambeth where I lived was twinned with Vincennes and in 1972 I got a summer job as a monitor in a day centre for inner-city children. The other monitors were students from the University of Vincennes which, though I did not know it at the time, had opened in 1969 and was a hotbed of *gauchiste* activity among both students and teachers like Michel Foucault, Alain Badiou, Gilles Deleuze and Luce Irigaray. Two of the student-monitors, Jeannine and Martine, took a shine to me and invited me to subversive plays such as Ionesco's 'Cantatrice Chauve' (1950) at the Théâtre de la Huchette and Ariane Mnouchkine's '1789' (1970) at the Cartoucherie of Vincennes. They were very different from the girls of my French family: highly-strung, talkative and modern. It did not take me long to realise that I had discovered another France, left-wing and ebullient, stretching from 1789 to the present.

All that happened after I had passed the entrance examination for Oxford in December 1970 and spent the spring semester of 1971 in Paris, at the Sorbonne's *Cours de langue et civilisation française* (French language and civilisation course). As I was going to study history at

Oxford, I decided to study everything else. Staying in the same *immeuble* as my new pen-friend, Xavier, of a third branch of the Pétainist cousinhood and swotting for Sciences-Po, I walked daily from the rue de Rennes to the amphitheatres of the Sorbonne, to hear lectures on French literature from Raymond Picard and Antoine Adam, French politics from Maurice Duverger and French geography from Jacqueline Beaujeu-Garnier. Having been restricted to a boring ‘French for historians’ in the A-level I never finished—which included Alfred de Vigny’s *Servitude et Grandeur militaires* (1835) and Jean Giraudoux’s *La Guerre de Troie n’aura pas lieu* (1935)—I discovered novelists and poets I had scarcely even heard of: Stendhal, Flaubert and Proust, Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud. In the language class run by Jacques Brunschwig, sometimes in a café on the place de la Sorbonne, we read Alain-Fournier’s *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1913). Its otherworldliness was interrupted occasionally by Brunschwig’s bark, intended to terminate a Greek or Brazilian student’s interpretative flight of fancy: ‘C’est dans le texte! Regardez le texte!’ (It is in the text! Look at the text!).

The *Cours de langue et civilisation française* gave me the tools and the appetite to pursue French history. This, strangely, was regarded as fairly exotic at Oxford, where the compulsory Whiggish backbone of the syllabus was three English (not even British) history papers—medieval, early modern and modern—studied politically with a focus on monarchy and parliament. By contrast, the first essay I wrote for John Roberts at Merton College for so-called General History was on French anticlericalism in the nineteenth century, which later became the stuff of my thesis. In the third year, I took the French Revolution Special Subject, again with John Roberts, and French Literature, Politics and Society, which had been designed by Theodore Zeldin, and was mocked by conservative British historians as ‘French porn’. For those drawn to French history there were two seminars: that of Theodore Zeldin, who was then writing his *France, 1848–1945* (1973–1977), and invited speakers such as Rod Kedward, to talk on ‘Anger in the French Resistance’; and that of Richard Cobb, who had just published *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest, 1789–1820* (1970), and had a battery of doctoral students such as Colin Jones and Alan Forrest, who were doing research on the French Revolution in the provinces. There was a great excitement around French history at that moment. I attended the German history seminar too but there seemed to be only one question: how did the Germans get into the mess of Nazism? French history had the

Revolution but beyond that one could study anything social or cultural, from literacy to love and from shopkeepers to suicide. (Zeldin suggested at one point that I study popular culture through knitting manuals, and to this day I do not know whether he was entirely joking.) In addition, French history had a methodology, drawn from the *Annales* School. The study of 'mere' events was not enough: these were shaped by deeper structures, be they demographic, economic, social or what were known as *mentalités*. This approach, together with prevailing Marxist ideas of historical change, which both challenged the hegemony of Whiggish English history, were debated at meetings of the Radical Historians group which met in the smoke-filled lecture room 23 of Balliol College, chaired by Andrew Lincoln, who was also working with Zeldin, and at which Raphael Samuel and his mature students from Ruskin College were a lowering presence.

My research, it becomes clear in retrospect, has switched periodically, according to academic interest and contemporary events, between the search for *la France profonde* and the search for revolutionary France. For the first, I was testing a myth, that of centralised revolutionary and Napoleonic France, the 'République une et indivisible', which, it seemed to me, because of the weight of regional and historical diversity, could not make all French people dance to the same tune. The second was an escape from that same deep and rhythmic France, communing with the revolutions that had shaken France so violently for 200 years and to which Britain had no answer apart from Edmund Burke. Much later, I came to see that the Hexagonal approach to French history was too limiting. France had to be seen in a European and a global context, if only to break down what I increasingly saw as her Gallocentricity or *nombri-lisme*, whether founded on arrogance or anxiety, I was not quite sure.

The first stop, however, was *la France profonde*. After completing the BA in 1974 I went to St Antony's College to work with Theodore Zeldin. I wanted to explore how far the *école républicaine* of Jules Ferry could 'take' in Catholic and conservative France. In those days there was no requirement to take a master's before doctoral research and precious little research training, so in February 1975 I boarded the night train at the Gare Montparnasse and the next morning was in Rennes. Zeldin loved the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris and claimed that the archives told him nothing about what he wanted to know, so I was consciously following in the footsteps of Cobb's doctoral students, although not to the bright sun and violence of the Midi, of which I then had no

knowledge. Departmental studies were then all the rage as laboratories of the *Annales* method. The one I selected as mine was Ille-et-Vilaine, which was sufficiently close to the Normandy I knew from family holidays and also evoked something closed and musty that Jack McManners had chronicled in his study of Angers, *French Ecclesiastical Society under the Ancien Régime* (1961).

I enrolled at the University of Rennes and introduced myself to one of its professors, Michel Denis, whom I knew from his book, *1789: Les Français ont la parole* (1964), co-written with Pierre Goubert. Denis provided me with a map of the department, commune by commune, and I began to plot and draw distribution maps of everything I fancied. How far, I wondered, was the geography of political and religious attitudes forged by the Revolution? This appeared, for example, in the opposition between parishes where the clergy had taken the oath to the Revolution's attempt to reform the Church—the 1791 Civil Constitution of the Clergy—and those who refused it. It was also reflected in the division between areas from which *instituteurs* (school teachers), the missionaries of the *école républicaine* (republican school), were recruited to the *école normale*,¹ and areas which were nurseries of anti-republican clergy in the nineteenth century. Methodologically, I was under the influence of the historical geography school of André Siegfried, Paul Bois, François Goguel and Gabriel Lebras. I met Michel Lagrée, who was writing a thesis on religion and society in Ille-et-Vilaine in the nineteenth century. We compared notes in a Breton *crêperie* and I published an early article with him. We lost contact as we progressed in our careers and much later, in 2001, I was shocked to learn that he had committed suicide. Convinced that no publisher would want to publish a book on education in one French department, I returned to France as a postdoctoral student in 1977–1978 to undertake similar studies in the Gard, which had a significant Protestant minority, and the Nord, which was industrial but also heavily Catholic. I lived for six months in Nîmes and eight months in Lille. This research was brought together as a comparative study in my first book, *Education in Provincial France* (1983), the title drawing shamelessly on *French Provincial Cooking* (1960) by Elizabeth

¹Editors' note: A creation of the Revolution, the *école normale*'s initial aim was to train 'enlightened' teachers, who would then spread the Republican views through their teaching.

David, whose cookbooks, bringing colour to post-war Britain, graced my mother's kitchen shelf.

Education in Provincial France explored the question of historical memory, but in a rather reified and structural way. I was seduced by Marx's opening line in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* (1852) that 'the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living'. When Ruth Harris returned to Oxford, she suggested that I shrug off my Marxist and Annalist habits and put less structure and more individual agency into my work. Colin Lucas, who was then history tutor at Balliol, exploded a bombshell: alluding to Halbwachs (1950), he pointed out that memory is not a thing holding us in thrall but a social construct that we fashion for ourselves. Three developments led me to my next project, on the role of historical memory in France since the Revolution: the return of the Left to power in France in 1981 for the first time in a generation; preparations for the Bicentenary of the French Revolution; and the appearance of the first two parts of Pierre Nora's *Lieux de Mémoire, La République* (1984) and *La Nation* (1986). Nora's work was inspirational, but I had two issues with it. First, it was an archaeology of symbols, from the *Panthéon* to the *Mur des Fédérés*, seemingly divorced from the flux of political events. On the contrary, I wanted to trace the way in which collective memories shaped political cultures and both were constantly reworked in the light of events. Second, it exalted the oneness of the Republic and the Nation, whereas my work on provincial France had exposed its plurality: revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, Catholic and Protestant, Breton and Occitan.

In 1987 I married Lucy-Jean, who had completed an MPhil thesis on the contemporary poet André du Bouchet, and also had an ongoing love-affair with France. Need I add that she is red-headed? We spent the academic year 1988–1989 in Paris, where Lucy-Jean taught in a language school. From the moment we arrived and Marie-Antoinette was acquitted in a TV retrial to the moment we left, as Catholic demonstrators called on France to abjure 1789, and in between when François Furet laid the Marxist interpretation of the Revolution to rest, it was clear that the Revolution was unfinished business. I was amazed to find stickers—these famous *papillons*—from the *Nouvelle Action Française*, which I thought long defunct, stuck to lamp-posts. My own work traced ongoing divisions and powerful subcultures back to the Revolution, and charted the need for Bonapartists, Catholics, regionalists and even the extreme right to come to terms with the democratic and republican

challenges posed by the Revolution. Pierre Nora, to do him justice, caught up with the idea of a plurality of Frances and in 1992 published *Les France*, the third part of *Les Lieux de mémoire*, two years before my book *The Past in French History* (1994) appeared.

By this time the landscape in France had dramatically changed. Thinking about the Revolution faded as the Cold War ended and nationalism returned to former communist states in the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the USSR. In France, Vichy climbed up the political agenda with the trials of Lyon Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie in 1987 and of Militia leader Paul Touvier in 1994, notably for the deportation and killing of Jews. An attempt by the Paris appeal court to dismiss the Touvier case in 1992 on the grounds that his deeds were not crimes against humanity provoked polemics between defenders and critics of Vichy. Claude Chabrol brought out *L'Œil de Vichy* (1993), which used Vichy's own propaganda as a way to critique its ideology. On 16 July 1992, Jewish organisations commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the round-up of over 13,000 Jews by the French police in Paris challenged François Mitterrand to acknowledge the part of the French state in the Holocaust, something he refused to do, arguing that this was the responsibility of Vichy, not of the Republic. I had long nurtured an interest in these questions. In 1971, while attending the *Cours de langue et civilisation française*, I had been to a Latin Quarter cinema which was showing the just-released *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (Ophüls 1969). I attended Rod Kedward's conferences on the Occupation and Liberation at Sussex University in 1984 and 1994, and the 1990 Paris conference on 'Vichy et les Français' convened by François Bédarida and Jean-Pierre Azéma. In the late 1980s, with advice from Rod Kedward and Robert Paxton, I negotiated the replacement of the Special Subject on the French Revolution in the Oxford History Faculty by one on 'France from the Popular Front to the Liberation, 1936–44'. I was inspired by Henry Rousso's 1987 study, *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, which traced the changing memories of Vichy over time and offered a critique of *résistancialisme*, which took the myth of French Resistance for reality. This I wrote about in a chapter on 'echoes of the Occupation' for my book *France since 1945* (1996), but understood that the time had come for something more serious.

The approach, as in 1975, was to test another French myth. To what extent did provincial France resist and to what extent did it embrace Vichy? The archives for the period had remained closed until a law of 1979 imposed a thirty-year rule, although files containing information

liable to harm private individuals, state security or national defence were closed for longer. Was it possible to write the history of the French under the Occupation as it really was? My approach, as in *Education in Provincial France*, was a history ‘from the bottom up’, less about the extremes of Resistance and Collaboration than about the lives of the great majority under the Occupation, less about heroism or treachery than about ‘getting by’, navigating survival. In this I was influenced by Philippe Burrin’s *La France à l’heure allemande*, published in 1995, which popularised the concept of ‘accommodation’ with the Germans. In truth, I thought that he had written the book I wanted to write but his was very much a top-down study and the notion of accommodation elided too quickly with collaboration. My work was inspired by local studies—Sweets (1986) on Clermont-Ferrand, Zaretsky (1995) on Nîmes and by the work of local correspondents of François Bédarida’s Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP) who were researching the question of local notables between 1936 and the 1950s that was later published as *Les Élités locales dans la tourmente* (Le Béguet and Peschanski 2000). My project was to have a vaguely anthropological approach, setting aside the lens of ‘good’, ‘bad’ and ‘poor’ French people which hardened after 1944, seeking to understand the informal rules by which local communities governed themselves and defined rules about what was acceptable in relating to Germans, and what was not.

With a year’s sabbatical and a research grant, I could return to France, but where to? My original idea was to do, as before, three dispersed departments, but as my wife and I now had three children under seven, Lucy-Jean said that if they were to come too, we would have to stay put in one place for the year. So we rented a small house in Angers and enrolled Rachel at the local primary school and Georgia at the *maternelle* (preschool), while William, aged three, stayed at home and made regular visits to the station to watch the TGVs. I worked in the Departmental Archives on the same street and commuted east to Tours and west to Nantes to study three contiguous departments along the Loire Valley. Contacts on the ground were essential. My first port of call was local historian Michel Lemesle, who had worked on the Occupation of Anjou for years and was happy to share his files. The next were local correspondents of the IHTP: Julien Papp in Tours, Marc Bergère in Angers, Franck Liaigre in Nantes. Then the work of archival research began. Because of the exemptions to the thirty-year rule, over a third of the files I wished to work on required a special authorisation, known as *dérégation*, from

the Ministry of Culture. To supplement the archives, I decided to undertake some oral history. I had myself interviewed by the local paper under the heading 'Angevins, tell me about your life under the Occupation', and left a phone number, which rang all day when the article came out. Having no formal training in oral history, I made a disaster of my first interview. I was looking for additional information about things I already knew. I asked an old lady if she remembered the mayor of Angers in 1942. She looked blank. At this point I must have heard the voice of my mother, who was capable of falling into conversation with anyone, even at a bus stop or supermarket checkout. I simply asked, 'Tell me about your life under the Occupation', and she was off, beginning with the Allied air raid of Whitsun 1944, which had killed a friend of hers. It was an early lesson that oral history elicits not facts but stories that have meaning for the subject. They are not *the* truth but *their* truth.

The idea of writing a history of France under the Occupation 'as it really was' soon revealed itself as naïve. Each interpretation carried political, if not ideological freight, and both reputations and interests were at stake. Local historian Michel Lemesle said he had received threatening phone calls about what he might publish. He showed me a letter of 1982 from the widow of the German military commander in Angers, which affirmed that her husband had regularly given lifts to the mother of a local notable, but asked me not to cite it, for fear of legal proceedings. The mayor of the village of Toutlemonde, where an Oradour-style massacre had almost taken place in 1944 following a resistance attack on Germans, complained that he had never been given an honour by the Republic because he had been appointed by Vichy and declared, 'In any case, I am against the Resistance'. Veterans of the Resistance Deportees Federation in Nantes complained that, as deported resisters, they were being overshadowed by Holocaust stories of deported Jews and that next people would be honouring deported homosexuals. In 1997 I was invited to give a paper to the Academy of Tours, which I decided to base on the interviews I had undertaken. I called it 'What the French of the Loire Valley think in 1997 of the German Occupation'. I quoted, among other respondents, a woman brought up in the country, who said that they had lacked nothing under the Occupation. The Academy refused to publish my paper and I received a letter from the secretary, who had been a schoolmaster under the Occupation, which read: 'Your audience, myself included, failed to find in it the precise reflection of our collective memory of the German Occupation'. This, he said, was characterised

by cold, hunger, lack of freedom and fear. Foolishly perhaps, but on the advice of a novelist, I decided to use this letter to open *Marianne in Chains* (2002). While British and American audiences greeted the book, which won the 2003 Wolfson History Prize, the French snubbed it. It was turned down three times for translation. The most lapidary comment came from Gallimard and simply ran: ‘Pierre Nora dit non’ (Pierre Nora says no).

In 2005 I paid my last visit in publishing terms to *la France profonde*. It was provoked by the French rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty, which caused me to rethink the image I had of French nationalism as swinging between a search for greatness and bearing the universal values of liberty and civilisation. Here, faced by the sense that Europe had become a vehicle for German hegemony and Anglo-Saxon neo-liberalism, the majority of French people took refuge in a closed, defensive, fearful view of the motherland, that of ‘eternal France’. I decided to explore how this model had been developed in response to other national defeats, as in 1870 and 1940, around the Barrèsian cult of the land of one’s ancestors, the cult of the soil and rural life, and the cult of great ancestors such as Joan of Arc and Vercingétorix. This was the subject of a lecture I gave to the George Rudé conference in Adelaide in 2006 (Gildea 2009) and finally put to rest my love of *la France profonde*.

Now, in search of fresh air, my work reverted back to revolutionary France. Perhaps I was reacting to the disappointments of centre-left politics in France and Britain, especially after the Iraq War. Perhaps also I wanted to return as a historian to a revolutionary past that I had all but missed in 1968. Penguin was bringing out a revised version of Alfred Cobban’s three-volume *History of Modern France*, first published in 1957–1965. Instead of one author, there would be three: Colin Jones had done the eighteenth century and Rod Kedward the twentieth; I was asked to do the nineteenth-century volume, which I called *Children of the Revolution*. Even before I had finished this, my attention shifted to a collaborative project on 1968. Entitled ‘Around 1968: Activism, Networks, Trajectories’, and later published as *Europe’s 1968: Voices of Revolt* (2013), it was an oral history of nearly 500 former 1968 activists. Although I had undertaken interviews for *Marianne in Chains*, they were not life-history interviews that examined how people had awoken to activism, worked with, loved and hated other activists and later thought about their activist past. I borrowed something from Lucy-Jean’s work as a psychotherapist, learning when to probe and invite

the interviewee to return to a crucial or difficult point. I also learned a great deal from theory, especially that of Alessandro Portelli, about how an interview dramatises the interplay of individual memory, group memory and dominant narratives—in this case narratives that either celebrated or condemned 1968. The project brought together fourteen historians working on fourteen countries, from Spain to the USSR and from Iceland to Greece. I undertook to interview former French activists and was reunited with my *gauchistes*, but this time with people who had made a real difference in 1968. I never managed to interview Dany Cohn Bendit, the poster-boy of May '68, and that might have been a good thing, as I wanted to highlight middle-ranking activists in their range and diversity: cultural and political, Maoist and Trotskyist, violent and non-violent, Christian and Jewish, men and women, straight and gay. Working in a team we thought comparatively and transnationally: how far was activism different in Mediterranean and Northern Europe, and on either side of the Iron Curtain? And how did activists link up across borders, inspire, borrow from or plainly misunderstand each other? Through this project I learned a great deal about oral history and indeed devoted my inaugural lecture in 2008 to 'The Long march of oral history: around 1968 in France' (2010).

One of the interesting finds to emerge from the 1968 project was the way in which activists in France related to their parents' past: that of the Occupation, Vichy and the Resistance. Some activists tried to match the resistance heroism of their parents, some wanted to complete what their parents had begun but had abandoned, others wanted to compensate for their parents' bad behaviour under the Occupation. This led me to rethink the whole question of the French Resistance, which had played only a small part in *Marianne in Chains*. I had interviewed survivors of the *maquis* of Saffré but, as I was often told, how could there be a *maquis* in places where there were no mountains and precious few forests? Another problem was source-related: *Marianne* had been largely based on archival sources, where *maquisards* appeared as 'bandits' and 'terrorists', and those I interviewed came from a cross-section of society, most of whom had 'got by' under the Occupation. Researching on the French Resistance meant confronting another myth, which had been developed in order to deal with the trauma of defeat, occupation and division: the national myth that most French people had resisted, that they had been united under General de Gaulle and that they had liberated their country themselves with very little help from the Allies.

Having acquired a taste for oral history, I wanted to use first-person testimony as much as possible. This meant using interviews with former resisters that had been undertaken in various phases since the end of the war, as well as memoirs, diaries and letters. For me it was important to give a voice back to the resisters themselves, and to as wide a range of resisters as possible—communists and non-communists, men and women, Jews and Christians, foreigners as well as French nationals. As with *Europe's 1968*, listening to their stories would reveal much about their engagement with resistance activity, their comradeship and conflicts, and their later trajectories. To study the Resistance rather than the twilight zone between Resistance and Collaboration risked upsetting a French audience a little less but I found myself having to deal with French academic establishment criticism of the oral history approach. There was a widely-held doctrine—much eroded in Britain—that archival sources were objective while oral testimony was unreliable. This was the gospel of the IHTP that the testimony of leading resisters was either tendentious, as in the case of Henri Frenay accusing Jean Moulin of being a communist, or embroidered, as in the case of Lucie Aubrac's memoirs. This served to delegitimize oral history as a whole. François Bédarida, director of the IHTP, concluded a round table in 1986 by declaring that 'the Resistance, which hitherto had been seen as the chosen territory of oral history now appears as the site of the triumph of written history'.²

I pressed on, nevertheless, and returned to Paris for the academic year 2011–2012, renting a flat in the Sentier district north of the Marais, within walking distance of the Archives Nationales. I was accompanied by Georgia, now 19, about to go to Warwick University but who came to take the *Cours de langue et civilisation française*, as I had forty years previously. I began with the interviews with former resisters and Free French undertaken in the immediate post-war years by the *Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* and filed in the 72AJ series of the Archives Nationales. These were less interviews in the modern sense than summaries of conversations. They concentrated on the metropolitan, non-communist resistance and on the Free French in London and

²Michael Pollak, Dominique Veillon and Danièle Voldman (eds.), 'Questions à l'histoire orale: table ronde du 20 juin 1986', *Les Cahiers de l'IHTP* 4 (1987, 74, 104). Another IHTP round table in 1992—Danièle Voldman (ed.), 'La Bouche de la vérité? La recherche historique et les sources orales', *Les Cahiers de l'IHTP* 21 (1992)—elicited similar misgivings about oral testimony.

North Africa. I discovered the interview that Denis Saurat had given to the Comité in 1951.³ This conveyed both the work he had done introducing de Gaulle to Churchill and building up support for the Free French in the French colony in London, and his eclipse by law professor René Cassin, who arrived in London to take charge of relations with the British and had them recognise de Gaulle as head of the Free French in August 1940.

It soon became clear that if I wanted other voices, away from the mainstream, I needed to look elsewhere. The *Musée de la Résistance Nationale* is a communist foundation, located in the Paris suburb of Champigny-sur-Marne, and almost as difficult to enter as the Kremlin. A French colleague put me in touch with the director, who summoned me to an interview in a Paris café to check my credentials and motives. Once inside, it was an eye-opener. Among the first-person accounts by communists, I discovered the diary of coal-miner and communist resister Charles Debarge, who was shot by the Germans in 1942, and a memoir by German communist Franz Dahlem, who had fled Germany in 1933, been a commissar with the International Brigades in Spain, was interned by the French in 1939 and promoted anti-Nazi resistance in the Wehrmacht before being deported to Mauthausen. I consulted the archives of the Carmagnole-Liberté network that had operated in Lyon and Grenoble and was composed of former International Brigaders, Italian anti-fascists, Spanish republicans and young Polish Jews who were fleeing the Holocaust. I caught up with the work of Denis Peschanski on the role of foreigners in the Resistance (Courtois et al. 1989). It became clear that the French Resistance was not only French but part of international anti-fascist struggle that had begun in Spain in 1936 and continued throughout Europe until the onset of the Cold War. The internationalist and foreign-Jewish resistance, both Communist and Zionist, became an important dimension of the book, and I was guided by the work of Renée Poznanski (1997) and Annette Wiewiorka (1986). I went in search of interviews undertaken with Jewish resisters by Anny Latour in the 1960s and now in the *Mémorial de la Shoah* in Paris, and interviews with foreign Jewish and women resisters recorded in the 1990s by the *Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation*

³AN 72 AJ 220, testimony of Denis Saurat, Sept. 1951.

in Lyon. I even recorded some interviews of my own, notably with Madeleine Riffaud, who had shot a German in July 1944, and Cécile Rol-Tanguy, who had acted as courier to her husband Henri, who had led the Paris insurrection of August 1944.

Fighters in the Shadows appeared in 2015, but the research had already opened up two avenues that made me consider France beyond the Hexagon. The first was to develop a collaborative project on Transnational Resistance in Europe, which looked at the history of resistance to hegemonic and occupying empires in Europe between 1936 and 1948. It proposed a new narrative, which saw resistance activity less as national than as transnational, connecting resisters from different parts of Europe. It argued that this story, which became clear to me working in the *Musée de la Résistance Nationale*, had been overlain and lost to view because of three other narratives: that of national resistance developed to legitimate states which emerged in 1945 from the trauma of defeat; that of the Cold War which either exaggerated or minimised the role of communists; and that of the Holocaust that portrayed Jewish populations as victims of persecution rather than as heroic resisters, as a significant minority of them were. It aimed to study the trajectories of resisters across the continent, their encounters with other resisters, transfers of expertise between them and the transformation of their identities in different contexts. Lastly, it suggested a new chronology, which was not limited to the 1939–1945 war against the Axis powers but traced the onset of the European War to Spanish resistance to Franco's coup in 1936 and ended with resistance to the founding of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and indeed to British and American attempts to dominate the Mediterranean in Greece and Palestine in 1945–1949.

The second avenue began with another understanding, that defeated and occupied France had been liberated from the platform of its empire in Africa, especially North Africa, and that the liberation of France also meant the restoration of its colonial greatness. At the opening ceremony of the conference of colonial governors in Brazzaville, capital of the French Congo, in January 1944, de Gaulle recalled that France, 'plunged into crisis by a temporary defeat, found help and a point of departure for its liberation in its overseas territories, so that there is now a definitive link between the metropolis and the Empire' (de Gaulle 1945, 29). Many of those who had joined the Free French and formed the French provisional government in Algiers were later involved in

holding on to Algeria by the most brutal means, because that is where liberation had come from, and the legacy of the Algerian War is still played out between the so-called 'Français de souche' and immigrant populations, most of whom come from North Africa. In 2013 I gave the Wiles lectures on this question at Queen's University Belfast, the series entitled 'Remembering and Repetition in France: Defeat, Colonialism and Resistance since 1940'. It then occurred to me that whether France was exceptional in its dealing with empire could only be assessed comparatively, most obviously through a comparison with British colonial history. So I planned a study of the legacy of empire in the thinking of former colonial powers in the period from the Second World War to the contemporary world. Entitled *Empires of the mind*, it tracked the interplay of two narratives: on the one hand, the struggle for liberty, on the other, the obsession with national greatness through empire, and how these converged and diverged. It followed a succession of moments from the near loss of empire during the war and its recovery after 1945, to the painful process of decolonisation and contraction to metropolitan status, the impact of immigration from former colonies and the emergence of a new imperialism geared to Islamophobia. It argued that phantoms from the colonial past have shaped attitudes both to immigrant populations within the metropolis and to peoples in former (and new) colonial spheres of interest, and that failures to re-imagine these from a postcolonial perspective condemn former colonial countries to repeat the same mistakes.

We have come a long way from the photo of de Gaulle and the *jeunes filles en fleurs*. I have gained a much closer understanding of both the significance and the insignificance of Denis Saurat. He was squeezed out of de Gaulle's inner circle and René Cassin was given the post of education minister in the *Comité Français de Libération Nationale* while Saurat was sent on a cargo ship to Brazzaville to advise on the promotion of secondary education in French Equatorial Africa, which had rallied to de Gaulle. Back in London, he fought to defend the autonomy of the French Institute against a campaign to reduce it to a propaganda weapon of the Free French. Saurat was finally dismissed as director of the Institute on de Gaulle's orders in March 1945 and retired to Nice. He devoted himself to writing strange books on Atlantis and the reign of giants while

René Cassin helped to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁴ As a teenager and a good European as my father had encouraged me to be, I remember thinking that Britain would not be allowed to enter the European Community until de Gaulle was dead, and maybe I had subliminal reasons for hating him. What I later learned about my great-uncle was that he was a cultural intermediary between France and Britain at a moment in 1940 when mutual understanding was in short supply. It is that role with which I can identify although perhaps with the same sense that while I can interpret the French to the British and even the Americans, that interpretation is more rarely appreciated in France.

As for the *jeunes filles en fleurs*, we are still in contact and I send Isabelle a birthday card every year. But the fantasy of French romance has long since been integrated into the reality of my own family. Lucy-Jean loves France as I do. Rachel and Georgia went to school there and Georgia returned to Paris with me in 2011. William I imagined as the young revolutionary Bara in the 1883 painting by Jean-Joseph Weerts in the Musée d'Orsay that I chose for the cover of *The Past in French* history that was published the year he was born, and the likeness is quite striking. Adam was born in Angers in 1997, an unexpected fruit of my research on *Marianne in Chains*, although significantly he chose to take up Spanish as his first foreign language.

Soon I may even free myself from the task of writing French history and find something revolutionary in the heart of Britain to think about. For there is a rich seam of British radicalism which has gradually crept up on me. At school I was fascinated by the English Civil War and by the Levellers, Ranters and Diggers who emerged from what Christopher Hill called 'the world turned upside down'. Often, young children in tow, Lucy-Jean and I went to Levellers' Day at Burford to hear Tony Benn reassure us with his radical wisdom. Much later I negotiated a detour on our Dorset holiday to Tolpuddle and I drink tea from a Tolpuddle Martyrs mug. When Mrs Thatcher died and the only people who squarely criticised her were people from mining communities, I imagined that my last book, bringing together archival sources and oral testimony, might be on the legacy of the Miners' Strike of 1984–1985. It would bring together everything I have learned from French history and apply

⁴There is an appreciation of him by John Robert Colombo, *O Rare Denis Saurat* (2003).

it to a defining moment that signalled the end of the twentieth century in England, Wales and Scotland.

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Vichy, Kingdom of Shadows

Christopher Lloyd

Composing an ego-history is a problematic and challenging exercise. Potential pitfalls include unmerited self-aggrandisement or bathetic self-deprecation, embarrassing revelations and score-settling, or the elision of the personal in a bland retailing of a CV. ‘Le moi est haïssable’ (the self is hateful): Pascal’s dictum (1963, 584) is a warning that the self is better kept at the margins—or at least seen as an instrument serving a greater good rather than merely its own gratification. In this respect, some of Pierre Nora’s contributors, chosen to outline their careers as distinguished French historians in *Essais d’ego-histoire* (1987), provide rather negative models of undue conceit or discretion. While one or two chapters in particular do little more than convey the unappealing self-regard of mandarins whose achievements actually mean little to anyone outside their academic field, Georges Duby limits his essay to his professional life, thereby admitting that ‘ici l’essentiel est tu’ (1987, 110; the essentials are omitted). Indeed, the professional and personal are surely inseparable for most scholars in arts and humanities and for all aspiring autobiographers. This is not to deny that certain things are sometimes best left unsaid. The revelations of some British colleagues in an issue

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of *French Cultural Studies* (Rigby 1999) devoted to their intellectual trajectories in this domain may be more modest and familiar than their French counterparts in Nora's volume, but their characteristically British self-questioning invariably recalls parodic fictional autobiographers like the Grossmiths' Mr. Pooter (in *Diary of a Nobody* 1892) or his contemporary equivalent, Sue Townsend's Adrian Mole. That academics rarely make inspiring autobiographers is perhaps just a truism, since expertise in research and the objective pursuit of knowledge do not generally require illuminating introspection or creative talent as a writer. John Carey's *The Unexpected Professor* (2014) is a refreshing exception, combining as it does personal insight, well-observed evocation of post-war British society and awareness of the gross inequalities perpetuated by Oxford University, with a vigorous defence of the advanced study of literary culture.

The self or ego whose history is to be scrutinised is also a shadowy entity; the notion that it represents the essential and unique core of individual identity is challenged both by one's own experience and by recent scientific and philosophical research. Thomas Metzinger's informative survey in *The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self* opens with the assertion that 'there is no such thing as a self' (2009, 1). Our notion of autonomous selfhood is to a large extent an illusion created by a neural interface that allows us to function in the world, 'a physical reality so unimaginably complex and rich in information that it will always be hard to grasp just how reduced our subjective experience is' (Metzinger 2009, 21–22), so that 'the conscious experience of intention is just a sliver of a complicated process in the brain' (127). If this seems overstated, most people will accept that the conscious, quasi-autonomous self or ego is to a large extent shaped and constrained by unconscious impulses linked to heredity and upbringing as well as external factors involving social groups, cultural movements or other circumstances. To give a banal but nonetheless telling personal example, in my own case decisions about my education at primary, secondary and tertiary level were made almost entirely by other people (parents, school teachers, university tutors). Looking back, being obliged at the age of fourteen to abandon sciences, history and geography in order to specialise in modern languages was perhaps expedient for accelerating gifted pupils into A-level groups and Oxbridge entrance examinations, but seems a grotesque perversion of a balanced schooling; being sent to Oxford University as a callow seventeen-year-old proved a crushing

disappointment, since modest academic success was achieved at the cost of broader knowledge and skills, not to mention social confidence and emotional maturity.

Deeply personal experiences that seemingly define the core of one's identity may prove to be widely shared in real life and artistic representations of life; not only are life-changing decisions often beyond one's control, they may also be beyond one's conscious awareness or recall and seem as much due to chance or unknown factors when reconstructing a retrospective narrative. Excessive consumption of imaginary narratives in film and literature can have disturbing consequences, when the boundaries between real and fictional become disconcertingly porous and start to sap one's own sense of reality. In a short story by Hans Christian Andersen published in 1847, the shadow detaches itself from its owner and eventually usurps his place. So too one can find that one's own existence has been dispossessed and replicated in novels or captured by namesakes. Julian Barnes's *Metroland* (1980) recounts the troubled education of a modern languages student called Christopher Lloyd (a character whom I recall as both irritatingly pretentious and destined to abandon his ambitions, in the manner of Flaubert's Frédéric Moreau in *L'Éducation sentimentale*, 1869). More recently, the protagonist of Michel Houellebecq's latest provocation, *Soumission* (2015), is a frustrated French academic who has dedicated his career to studying J.-K. Huysmans, the author who formed the basis of my doctoral research and early academic publications. In fact, a US-based librarian struggling to catalogue books once wrote to me asking which of the many authors called Christopher Lloyd I was; at a conference in Angers in the early 1990s, I was greeted effusively by several delegates as a celebrated specialist on Pissarro, a qualification which I felt obliged to disclaim, although perhaps I should have silently concurred, accepting that I was just one of many avatars embodying the author Christopher Lloyd (sometime keeper of the Queen's pictures, garden designer and historian of naval warfare, among others). In his memoir *Ways of Escape* (1981), Graham Greene writes about how for decades he was shadowed by a confidence trickster who had stolen his identity and profited from the theft; such larceny rather loses its comic aspect when one becomes the victim rather than an amused bystander. At the very least, such confusions show how much of one's identity is shared and determined by others.

This chapter is called 'Vichy, Kingdom of Shadows' primarily to suggest the haunting presence of the Second World War and Occupation in

so much post-war French culture and how it therefore possesses those involved in this culture and forms an intangible part of their identity, irrespective of their status as insiders (with direct experience of the war) or outsiders (post-war generations, foreigners, historians). In this context, Vichy stands for an overshadowing metaphorical kingdom that is both elusive and pervasive: not just a contested site of wartime government, with its aging and authoritarian head of state Pétain, seen by some of his adversaries as an incarnation of the living dead, but also a metonymy constantly inviting allegorising parallels whenever collaboration with or resistance against totalitarian forces become alternatives. It is not difficult to find contemporary parallels that are both germane and controversial. For instance, collaboration has become a buzzword in arts and humanities within UK higher education—witness the recent birth of the Institute for Collaborative Research in the Humanities at Queen’s University Belfast that co-sponsored this project (its subsequent demise being obviously no less significant).¹ This particular parallel may seem trivial or churlish (although one deduces from this nomenclature that collaboration clearly does not have the same connotations in Northern Ireland as it does in France). However fruitful such enterprises may be, few would deny that UK universities in the last three decades have compliantly submitted to a totalitarian process involving centralisation of governance by an unaccountable oligarchy, regimentation of academic staff and the ‘monetisation’ of teaching and research (in other words, making education and knowledge a commodity in the service of a political and economic ideology; cf. Warner 2015; Collini 2012 for a persuasive, trenchant analysis). Resisting this process is usually seen as a sign of self-destructive eccentricity or clinging to outmoded ideals; while students accumulate crippling debts and most colleagues accept their intellectual servitude with reluctant resignation, others are more than happy to seek accommodation with a system whose proliferating bureaucratic hierarchies richly reward technocratic and managerial elites. Witnessing this transformation first-hand, one learns too that few people have the means, conviction or courage to practise resistance; those who do are rarely emulated or liked by their peers.

Growing up in Northern Britain in the 1960s, my initial discovery of French language and culture was inevitably mediated more through literary

¹Editors’ note: The Institute for Collaborative Research in the Humanities opened its doors in 2012 and closed three years later.

and visual texts than personal encounters and voyages. John Carey records learning French in the mid-1940s as a dead language meant only to be read rather than used to communicate, ‘partly because foreign travel was more or less impossible’ (2014, 57). Little seems to have changed in two decades, since I do not recall ever speaking French or German at school other than in oral examinations (Oxford University was pretty much the same, for that matter). But travel abroad did of course become feasible for far more people by this period, so France ceased to be a somewhat immaterial shadow land of textbooks and became a real place, magnificently full of cultural possibilities, sensual pleasures and linguistic discoveries (much like those already evoked by my predecessors in *French Cultural Studies*; no doubt most British Francophiles undergo the same rites of passage). A brief initial visit to Paris in the spring of 1969 also revealed it was actually possible to communicate in French (at that time, very few French people were able or willing to speak English; their resistance to the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ invasion has all but collapsed nowadays). This cultural induction must have coincided with de Gaulle’s resignation. This departure made no impression on me, unlike the mass protests and strikes of the previous year which triggered his downfall. (Two years after writing this text, I discovered an article about de Gaulle’s resignation carefully archived in my forgotten sixth-form notes, which shows how unreliable personal memory is after four decades). On the other hand, a longer visit in 1971 introduced me to a charming French Maoist *soixante-huitarde* (and also, at least retrospectively, to the naive self-deception practised by so many people on the left, whose hatred of their own leaders perhaps explains their compensatory adulation of foreign tyrants).

Such discoveries occurred in the formative decade of the 1970s, and thus coincide with the post-de Gaulle historiographical turn regarding the Vichy period, as it is usually perceived by Henry Rousso (1990) and those who accept his periodisation of post-war attitudes. This too meant almost nothing to me at that time (and in fact the key literary works that shaped my understanding of the war and Occupation in France were mostly produced in the 1940s). As a graduate student in 1976, Huysmans was my man, a choice that may now seem puzzling or irrelevant. Though barely recognised in the UK, Huysmans has long been the subject of acclaim and academic study in France (indeed Houellebecq’s dejected Huysmans scholar in *Soumission* is something of a latecomer in a fairly competitive field). I remember a young French female academic asking herself and anyone else in earshot at a conference on Huysmans held in Cerisy-la-Salle in 1998 why any self-respecting person would want to devote years of their life to reading such a virulent

misogynist, reactionary Catholic, and author of tortuously mannered, convoluted novels. It seemed odd to express this self-doubt at such a prestigious venue; I do not recollect anyone deigning to offer a response. My belated answer would be that his pessimistic misanthropy, spiritual anguish and aesthetic integrity powerfully capture the existential anxieties and social conflicts of the fin-de-siècle, many of which remain with us in the twenty-first century. He is also a richly comic author, who celebrates life's many disappointments and frustrations with an inventive virtuosity. As Paul Valéry put it (1957, 755): 'On eût dit que le dégoûtant et l'horrible dans tous les genres le contraignissent à les observer, et que les abominations de toute espèce eussent pour effet d'engendrer un artiste spécialement fait pour les peindre dans un homme créé spécialement pour en souffrir' (It seemed that he felt compelled to observe all the most disgusting and horrible areas of experience, and that abominations of all sorts engendered an artist specially made to depict them in a man created specially to suffer from them).

On a more mundane level, the antiquated syllabus still imposed by the Modern Languages Faculty at Oxford in the 1970s simply forbade the study of modern and contemporary writers, thereby making it virtually impossible to undertake a doctoral thesis on anyone active in the 1930s or later. This is one reason why the first half of my academic career was spent studying late nineteenth-century writers (such as Huysmans, Maupassant, Jules Vallès, Georges Darien and Octave Mirbeau) whose anti-militarism and hostility to cultural and political orthodoxy, in the decades preceding and following French defeat by Prussia in 1870–1871, clearly anticipate reactions to the debacle of 1940. One month before his death in 1965, the erstwhile resistance activist and communist Roger Vailland wrote of Huysmans' novel *À rebours* (1884): 'Aucun livre ne m'a davantage marqué' (1968, 835; No book has made a greater impression on me). Hailed as the Bible of decadence, *À rebours* is about the resistance of an aristocratic dandy to the aesthetic, social and biological norms imposed by an authoritarian and philistine state, even if the state in question is the bourgeois Third Republic of 'opportunism'.

Admittedly, this link with Vichy may seem rather tenuous. There are more relevant nineteenth-century texts if one is looking for fictional representations of defeat and Occupation that anticipate literary reactions to the Vichy years. Huysmans contributed to *Les Soirées de Médan*, a collective volume of six stories published on the tenth anniversary of Napoleon III's defeat by Prussia, co-authored with Zola, Maupassant,

Alexis, Céard and Hennique. Their tone is intentionally derisory, provocative and anti-militarist: thus Huysmans' protagonist in 'Sac au dos' spends more time battling dysentery and bureaucracy than the Germans. Maupassant's patriotic prostitute in 'Boule de suif' is thwarted and betrayed in her attempt to resist a Prussian officer by the craven egotism of her respectable French travelling companions, 'ces gredins honnêtes' (Maupassant 1975, 106; these honest rogues). The similarity with the abject, defeatist mentality recorded by so many witnesses of 1940 is strikingly evident, although Christian-Jaque's 1945 film adaptation of 'Boule de suif' attempts a more upbeat conclusion by melding it with the story 'Mademoiselle Fifi', in which the valiant prostitute kills the arrogant Prussian and escapes with the assistance of local patriots (so heroism and collective resistance are ultimately reaffirmed, rather than sapped by mean-spirited egotism). Georges Darien's novel *Bas les cœurs* (1889) offers an equally caustic and vividly observed depiction of collaboration between bourgeois notables and German occupying forces in 1870–1871, which again anticipates many of the bleak themes rehearsed in twentieth-century accounts of wartime occupations (hypocritical double standards masked by sanctimonious rhetoric and mendacity, class conflict, profiteering by the powerful, violence and injustice meted out to the weak).

In fact, almost all the authors, singers and film directors whom I have studied over four decades deal with warfare and the ensuing social and political upheavals (from the Communard Jules Vallès's insurgency against the Second Empire and nascent Third Republic to Houellebecq's self-immolating protagonists and apocalypses, from Maurice Chevalier's rather engaging defence of conformism to Pierre Dac's or Henri-Georges Clouzot's more sardonic deflation of consoling norms and myths). Does this reflect a morbid obsession with war on my part (an objection commonly encountered by anyone who shows an undue interest in the Second World War)? An analogous complaint (usually made by disaffected students in anonymous course evaluations) is that French literature and film are thoroughly depressing in their insistence on life's public and private miseries. Things generally do not turn out too well for people in the French classics, whatever their gender or station (from Roland and Phèdre to Julien Sorel, Emma Bovary and their countless twentieth-century siblings). Such objections may seem tritely philistine (recalling Mrs. Thatcher's alleged remark that studying history and the arts was a pointless luxury). But they do raise two fundamental

questions. Why do those who live in peace feel the urge to experience war vicariously? And what exactly is one experiencing when one enters the imagined world of a literary text or film? In both cases, one is seeking to escape the spatio-temporal, material limits of one's individual existence (Metzinger's ego tunnel) by sharing the lives of others, from different times, places and cultures; insofar as representations of other lives accurately recapture past human experience and society, this is a quest to relive history. Of course, such mediated experience enjoyed as an observer of a simulated, virtual reality bears little resemblance to experiencing actual historical or biographical events first-hand (although the illusion of presence sometimes created by hyper-realistic war films or digital media may make us temporarily forget this). While human history and experience and serious aesthetic representations of them may be essentially tragic, experiencing tragic events at second hand through a historical or imaginary reconstruction usually has entirely positive consequences, insofar as it enriches one's knowledge, understanding and empathy. Hence our need to pursue and consume such supposed luxuries and their enduring prestige and popularity.

Before developing these points and revisiting some key texts about the French experience of World War Two that achieve these goals, I feel obliged to add that more material traces of the war and Occupation period (that is, real people and places) encountered in extended visits to France in the 1970s and 1980s had far less impact on me at that time than cultural representations of the war in books and movies. History—the history of the Occupation and its legacy—was absent; it would be more accurate to say, its pervasive presence went unnoticed, in that retrospectively I note and regret a series of missed opportunities to connect the wartime past and other conflicts to the post-war France of the Pompidou and Giscard era, when so many witnesses who had lived through the crises of Occupation and decolonisation were potentially available, albeit sometimes reluctant to communicate painful memories. For example, only in the last couple of years did I discover that two French colleagues whom I have known for decades were the sons, respectively, of a celebrated activist and historian of the Resistance, and of a *pied-noir* family whose father was killed by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN).

Nonetheless, some people and places encountered during those four formative years in the 1970s spent teaching in France probably had more resonance subsequently when French experience of World War Two became my central preoccupation in the 1990s. Eight months spent as

an assistant English teacher in Le Puy-en-Velay induced a state of ennui bordering on serious depression when confronted with provincial hostility, indifference, complacency or in some cases desperation, occasionally tempered by overtures of friendship to which I became unable to respond. Jules Vallès (1968, 66) also loathed ‘ce trou du Puy’ (that dump Le Puy); his father was a lowly usher or *pion* (a pawn in the academic hierarchy) there in the 1830s and in fact taught in the same building as I did (its architecture and facilities seemed little changed since the time of Louis Philippe). Hours of rather miserable isolation and alienation spent in solitary cafés or on park benches, or inspecting drab paintings and extensive beetle collections in uninspiring museums, have become oddly conflated with Sartre’s depiction of Roquentin’s existential anguish in Bouville in *La Nausée* (1938), which I read with pleasurable recognition some years later.

In May 1974, the anniversary of the 1940 Dunkirk evacuation brought an uncommon encounter with French Anglophobia. Many people living in Le Puy seemed deeply unhappy with their lot (these ranged from dejected North African immigrants roaming the streets like ghostly exiles, to embittered teachers whose careers had foundered, and my disabled and depressive landlady and her family). Though most endured their misfortune with passive resignation, a few expressed their frustrations more aggressively, including the drunken and loutish *pions* in my school whose puerile pranks made meals in the staff canteen unnerving experiences (these included molesting women teachers, smashing up the furniture and offering to fight anyone who challenged them). On this occasion, Dunkirk provided a pretext for denouncing British treachery, one ex-serviceman even claiming he had been abandoned on the beaches (although he would have been an infant in 1940). Such jocular belligerence barely concealed a deeper resentment and dislike of outsiders who, like the British in the north of France in May–June 1940, seemed likely to escape entrapment in Le Puy. At this time, I was unaware that one third of the troops evacuated from Dunkirk were French and that the vast majority of them refused to join de Gaulle’s Free French and continue the war. I was unaware too that the Haute-Loire had been an important site of resistance and refuge for persecuted Jews (at Le Chambon-sur-Lignon); in fact, in 1990, another colleague informed me that his aunt, Lesley Maber, had played an important part in this rescue mission and narrowly avoided deportation (Maber 1991). Perhaps the amiable and courteous Jewish family whom I occasionally met through a mutual friend had also been involved; the topic never arose.

My years as a graduate student registered at Warwick University proved more fulfilling; three of them were spent teaching English in French universities in Normandy and Paris. A year in Caen (1977–1978) brought the battlefields of World War Two geographically closer, without triggering any special interest; nor did brief encounters in Parisian suburbs with writers like Robert Merle and Henri-Victor Brunel, both authors of interesting novels about the war (to which I will return). Vichy—the whole business of defeat, Occupation, Liberation and their post-war representation—became an abiding interest, or a fascination, only after a fortnight spent in Vichy itself in 1990. The late twentieth-century spa town (or its official spokesmen) seemed mostly set on denying or effacing its historical and metonymic links with Vichy as wartime capital of a collaborationist government and symbol of reaction and betrayal. This impression is confirmed at length by Adam Nossiter in *The Algeria Hotel* (2001) and by the attempts of the local deputy Gérard Charasse to ban the use of ‘Vichy’ as a synonym for collaboration in official documents. On the other hand, these attempts have failed; Nossiter and Bertram Gordon also observe that the notorious sites of collaboration can be rediscovered by any patient visitor. (All of which suggests the enduring accuracy of Henry Rousso’s diagnosis (1990) of the Vichy syndrome and the mechanism of repression and revelation, incidentally, even if his periodisation can be challenged.)

The change of direction on my part was not caused by any sudden revelation but more probably by gradual, cumulative factors. Untangling memories and reconstructing a trajectory invites a retrospective tidying-up that risks neglecting the randomness of lived experience. The events of World War Two and its legacy became increasingly more compelling than the *fin-de-siècle*, even if the causal chain between the beginning and end of the Third Republic remains an obvious link. From the 1990s, I shifted from literary criticism based on close analysis of quasi-canonical texts (and sometimes their socio-historical context) to something called cultural studies (as did so many people in French Studies based outside France, where the formalist study of literary texts and rhetoric subsists). For me, this meant widening the corpus studied and restoring history (not just situating a book, film or other cultural text historically but seeing it as part of history). My interest has never just been in Vichy as historical site or symbol of Collaboration, but rather the broader French experience of the Second World War as recorded in memorable cultural works. These

capture history, even if it is not the history of some academic historians. A distinction brought home when I once received an imperious invitation from a colleague in a History department in a neighbouring university to deliver a lecture on Vichy's cultural policy; a polite refusal and offer to discuss films about Collaboration instead went unanswered.

In this final section, I would like to discuss some key illustrative examples of films and novels that have been markers on a pathway, before returning to real-life encounters with people bearing the legacy of the Occupation. The varying trajectories of imaginative accounts of the war are a somewhat neglected area of study which merits more attention for what it reveals about changing conditions of production and public attitudes. While many works vanish rapidly from view or pass unnoticed, some gradually increase their significance by a process of retrospective accretion. For instance, I saw Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* on its initial release in 1974, but only became fully aware of the controversy surrounding its reception when I revisited the film and its critics in the 1990s. This was a surprising lesson in how partisan and doctrinaire attitudes to Collaboration and Resistance still were thirty years after the Liberation. (But even today, expressing unwelcome opinions and judgements about the Occupation can bring retribution from the guardians of official memory; witness the prosecution and conviction by a French court in Tulle in September 2008 of a blogger who unwisely sought to justify the German massacres of civilians at Oradour-sur-Glane.) It was also a surprise to discover, as an A-level student in 1970, that David Lean's quintessentially British war movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) had its origins in Pierre Boulle's novel *Le Pont de la rivière Kwai* (1952); but that Boulle's account of clashing imperial ambitions is (unlike the film) also an allegory about *French* collaboration, discreetly transferred to a Japanese POW camp with British and American inmates, only struck me recently (cf. Cragin 2013).

Two other well-known French novels which significantly changed my perhaps naïve understanding, as a youthful British reader in the late 1970s and early 1980s, of key periods at the beginning and end of the war in France were Robert Merle's Goncourt-prize winning *Week-end à Zuydcoote* (1949) and Marcel Aymé's *Uranus* (1948). Both use a naturalistic style to offer debunking accounts of, respectively: the Anglo-French evacuation at Dunkirk in May/June 1940 (depicting the complete collapse of morale and discipline in the French army);

and the experience of Liberation in a provincial French town in the final months of the war (showing the devastation caused by allied bombing, and the violent retribution against petty collaborators and intimidation of ordinary citizens undertaken by forces of Resistance dominated by the Communist Party). Whereas commemorative ceremonies and media reports marking the 70th and 75th anniversaries of Dunkirk in 2010 and 2015 continued the unbroken tradition in England of presenting the mass evacuation of over 300,000 British and French soldiers as a triumph of improvisation and patriotic solidarity, Merle's novel helped establish the more jaundiced view held in France of the rout of the British Expeditionary Force and its abandonment of its French allies (unlike my colleague in Le Puy, Merle himself was genuinely left on the beach to spend the rest of the war as a prisoner, along with thousands of his compatriots; for a more sceptical British historian's account, see Ponting 1990).

Both Merle and Aymé engage their readers affectively and intellectually by creating a dramatic, plausible story that unfolds in a carefully documented and detailed socio-historical situation, is peopled by characters who are typical, ordinary soldiers and civilians, and clearly seeks to set the historical record straight: to demonstrate that, for many of those involved, Dunkirk and the Liberation were not moments of triumph and relief, but a disastrous experience, mainly because of the incompetence, mendacity and betrayals of those in authority. Both novels also show the protagonists' main adversaries to be not the Germans, who here as in much French fiction about the war remain a threatening but distant force, but their compatriots (shown engaging in rape, torture, pillage and murder). In this sense, they contribute to representations of the 'Franco-French war' (the term sometimes used to encapsulate the enduring, murderously violent clashes between rival factions in the polity since the French Revolution). In the shorter term, the fact that authors challenging the official consensus in the late 1940s reached a wide audience (both *Uranus* and *Week-end à Zuydcoote* were made into commercially successful films and have remained in print through subsequent decades) and obtained critical esteem suggests one should not overestimate the cultural shift or subversive turn which Roussio locates a generation later in the early 1970s.

A contrasting example is provided by Henri-Victor Brunel's novel *La Verte Moisson* (1959). Brunel is one of the handful of World War Two Francophone novelists whom I have encountered personally. (Robert

Merle, who was a professor of English at Nanterre University when I taught there in the late 1970s, was deemed by colleagues to be haughty and unapproachable; his habit of overrunning lectures and ignoring the incoming teacher as he left the room was certainly discouraging.) Brunel, on the other hand, was modest and convivial, but this encounter was otherwise as unmemorable as his book, with which I was unfamiliar. By the late 1970s, probably only Brunel and the family members who introduced us remembered that twenty years earlier he had achieved modest success by co-scripting his Resistance novel for a film adaptation directed by François Villiers and released in 1959. Brunel's story about schoolboy resisters in a provincial town paying a high price for their naivety could be stirring (particularly as he implies it is based on fact). Unfortunately, drama and pathos are forestalled by the writer's hyperbolic lyrical and gushing manner, by his penchant for sententious analysis and by his inability to inhabit characters or evoke authentic material details believably. However sincere the writer's intentions, these shortcomings give the book an air of wishful fantasy, as the group progresses, without further explanation, from defacing pictures of Pétain and daubing graffiti, to stealing the plans of a German air base, providing false papers for Jews and dissidents and finally assassination. Two central figures play the complementary roles of benefactor and malefactor, but neither develops beyond simple stereotypes: the studious and loyal trainee teacher Geornec is betrayed by the 'petit voyou' (little thug) Boubouille, who disgusts even the German officer who exploits his villainy. Brunel's novel exemplifies the basic weaknesses in plotting, characterisation and style which are very characteristic of many forgotten narratives by amateur writers. Fiction may allow writers to achieve both therapeutic expression and a certain detachment from what may be intolerably painful personal experience, but it also requires imaginative and compositional skills that extend beyond reportage or memoir.

Yet however aesthetically unsatisfying they may be, such novels by first-hand witnesses of the Occupation remain fascinating as examples of the testimonial struggle, the pursuit of a dialogue between history and imagination which attempts to recapture the sufferings and dramas of war and to address questions that may prove unanswerable, other than through such imaginary, invented scenarios. Many of these ideas I have explored in a short book about Marcel Aymé (Lloyd 1994), followed by a broader study of representations of collaboration and resistance in 2003, and a monograph on Henri-Georges Clouzot (2007),

whose films *Le Corbeau* (1943) and *Manon* (1949) brilliantly convey the oppressive ambience of the Occupation and Liberation (and reject both the Pétainist and Gaullist consensus). My corpus in *Collaboration and Resistance in Occupied France* (2003) included autobiographical writing by politicians and administrators like Jean Moulin and Maurice Papon, and drew attention to how problematic and porous the boundary between Collaboration and Resistance sometimes proved to be (as *Lacombe Lucien* shows through a fictional scenario). But I was unaware of how dangerous venturing into this territory was, regarding questions such as how typical cases like Bousquet's and Papon's might be (that is, how many functionaries adroitly transformed themselves from willing collaborators into budding resisters as the war turned in the allies' favour).

The case of a much less well-known mid-ranking administrator during the Occupation shows just how difficult it is to distinguish fact from fiction, and the danger of trusting anachronistic judgements made by moralising post-war commentators. By way of illustration, I cited Sonia Combe's reference in her polemical book *Archives interdites* to Antoine Poggioli, head of the regional police in Toulouse in charge of Liberation purges and subsequently promoted to full prefect, despite having been, Combe alleged, an 'organisateur de convois de déportation' in 1942 (1994, 285). This seemed a scandalous example of the French state's callous amnesia about genocide, indeed a replication of the Papon case on a smaller scale. In spring 2008, however, I received an email from Poggioli's son vehemently denying this allegation of complicity in genocide and asserting his father had been a longstanding resistance activist rather than an opportunistic turncoat. Suddenly, a figure who had been only a sinister footnote became himself a possible victim of a gross distortion of historical memory. Following extended correspondence and a surprisingly cordial meeting in Paris, I have little doubt that the Poggioli family's vindication of their father is correct, given the substantial dossier of evidence in his favour they have amassed; the case against him now looks extremely flimsy. What the Poggioli case demonstrates all too clearly is how retelling the story of the Occupation in France continues to haunt the present and how retrieving and interpreting the traces of history can produce error and uncertainty rather than clarity. This is a further reason why the painful and contested story and history of Occupation may sometimes be told more effectively through the imaginary, more detached memories of fictionalised narratives.

However intellectually rigorous and persuasively documented they may be, no objective works of history have the emotional impact or authentic appeal achieved by great works of imagination. This is probably because works of imagination belong to a higher creative order; they convey what Azar Nafisi in *The Republic of Imagination* (2014, 3) calls ‘imaginative knowledge’, ‘a way of perceiving the world and relating to it’. Or as Michelle Perrot writes, more pragmatically: ‘Seule la fiction, souvent plus vraie que l’histoire parce que moins gouvernée, permet de dire le privé et surtout l’intime, ressort secret de l’action publique’ (1987, 279; Only fiction, often truer than history because it’s less regulated, is able to speak about the private and the intimate, the hidden impulse of public action). As those who inhabited Vichy retreat further into the shadows of a vanished past, only the virtual presence created by fictions allows us to recapture fleetingly what they endured. On a more modest, personal level, as one’s own encounters with Vichy and a career mostly spent teaching French culture and language in a Northern British university enter the realms of shadowy memory, one is left wondering what posthumous traces they may leave and concluding that even academic authors survive principally in their books and research publications, as contributors to the unending cycle of history and knowledge.

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Writers in Conflict

Peter Tame

INTRODUCTION

The concept of ‘*ego-histoire*’, coined by Pierre Nora (1987), implies that any investigator will necessarily approach research with a greater or lesser degree of subjectivity. In this postmodern age, we are all aware that he or she will inevitably invest the topic of research with his or her own understanding (and even prejudices), mainly derived from upbringing and past personal experience, while at the same time striving to maintain a level of objectivity as demanded by academic tradition.

Nothing in particular, however, predestined me to face this challenge, nor even to study and adopt as my main topic of research aspects of French political life in fiction. At school, politics never interested me. Literature, on the other hand, has always been at the centre of my life. How I subsequently combined the two in a long and varied research career spanning four decades is the subject of this chapter.

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THE FRENCH FAMILY AND WAR MEMORY

My mother's family was French. In the first two years of the Great War, my maternal grandmother's three young brothers, Pierre, André and Louis Rozé, were killed in action. A fourth brother, Bernard, who was some years their junior, one of the survivors of the war and my favourite great-uncle, saw the end of the conflict and wrote on 24 November 1918 a poignant letter to my grandmother about his visit to the north-east of France, describing the devastation of Lille and the difficult situation in which his sister-in-law, Hede, who happened to be German, found herself, a war-widow with two young children. Her husband, Pierre, had been killed in action in the first few weeks of the war. She herself, moreover, had been accused of espionage at the beginning of the war, when the French had indulged in a psychotic spate of spy-hunting. During the subsequent occupation of northern France by the Germans, she had also had German soldiers billeted in her house. She thereby became for the rest of the family the epitome of cultural ambivalence and marginality.

My mother was born in Paris in 1917 and evacuated, along with hundreds of children, to the West coast of France in order to avoid the bombing raids on the capital. It is therefore hardly surprising, perhaps, that my mother nurtured a lifelong dislike of the Germans as a nation. Her generation suffered two invasions of France by German forces in the two world wars with the result that germanophobia was quite a common phenomenon amongst the French living in the first part of the twentieth century. As for my great-uncle Bernard, though he never expressed any clear animosity towards the Germans, he was nevertheless said to have hidden guns for the Resistance at the bottom of his garden on his property in Créteil (a suburb of Paris) during the Occupation, twenty years after having fought in World War I. The generation that followed, to which I belong, took a different point of view, regardless of whether its cohorts were French or British. The post-war era saw and understood the need to rebuild bridges, both literally and metaphorically. The Europe in which I grew up undertook this rebuilding because it was determined to keep the peace.

Wars and the Occupation of France were topics that were rarely broached in discussions in the family. However, as the historian Raoul Girardet observes, the important role played by the 'forbidden'

(*'l'interdit'*), as well as the 'unsaid' (*'le non-dit'*), often provides strong motivations for young people, who have never experienced world wars, stimulating them to want to make their own enquiries about these sorts of things (Girardet 1987, 163–164). Voluntarily transgressing the wishes of my mother, I chose to study German as well as French at school. She would no doubt have preferred me to concentrate on French. Yet I was merely following a long-standing tradition in France, since the 'mirage allemand' (German mirage), as Jean-Marie Carré has called it (1947), has long held a fascination for a number of French thinkers and writers, concerned with analysing their nation's relationship with a neighbour who had thrice invaded France in the space of seventy years. From Madame de Staël to Maurice Barrès, and from Charles Maurras to Jean Giraudoux, French writers have presented a myriad of reactions, representations and reflections on this enduring topic.

KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON (1966–1970)

Following my six years at Maidstone Grammar School in Kent, I attended university at King's College, London. There, I elected to continue my studies of French and German together. The combination seemed crucial to me since, rightly or wrongly, those two nations, together with Britain, formed a triad that appeared to me to dominate the course of recent history in Europe. However, the distractions, cultural and other, of England's incomparably rich and exciting capital city led me to take my studies less seriously than I should have done, at least in my first two years at university.

Nevertheless, in my final year, I chose as special subject the French author and Gaullist minister, André Malraux, taught by Professor John Cocking, who was actually better known for his work on Marcel Proust. But his enthusiasm for Malraux's work must have proved infectious for, ever since then, like many others, I have never ceased to be fascinated by the life, work and personality of this influential writer.

The young André Malraux was the epitome of the colonial adventurer at a time when France's empire was still strong and influential in the world. Yet, he was radically 'transgressive' in the sense that he took issue with the colonial authorities in French Indochina, as a result of the resentment he felt at having been misjudged by an imperialistic judicial

system that was clearly both oppressive and corrupt.¹ His later career included active albeit late participation in the Second World War, both in the Resistance and in Nazi Germany's eventual defeat. Throughout my university career and beyond, I have maintained an interest in research on Malraux partly owing to the ambivalent nature of his personality and his work.

WORLD WAR II AND 'TRANSGRESSIVE' FRENCH FASCIST AND COLLABORATIONIST WRITERS

After three years in London at King's College, I transferred to University College, King's College's rival institution, in order to pursue post-graduate studies. King's College had seemed to me increasingly staid, old-fashioned, reactionary and authoritarian. Staff-student relations usually remained quite impersonal, sometimes even 'frosty'. Students were invariably addressed as 'Mister' or 'Miss', followed by their surname. It was rare that a lecturer would take an interest in the future career possibilities of his/her students. As for the curriculum, it was not particularly 'progressive' and hardly ever 'transgressive'. 'Safe' options like the works of Montaigne, Balzac and Proust exemplified the staple literary diet and tended to dominate the curriculum even then, in the late 1960s. Exceptions to this were the poetry of Baudelaire and Nerval, the essays and novels of Malraux (though very limited in number), Albert Camus and, of course, the ubiquitous Jean-Paul Sartre.

I felt that it was time for a change of intellectual atmosphere. The events of May 1968 played their part in this too. Our generation was protesting against many things, including the traditional European values, some of which, ironically, had buttressed Britain's lone resistance to Hitler in the early days of the Second World War. Among such values were a conformist respect for authority, a puritanism that seemed anachronistic to the majority of us and the importance of team sports, as opposed to individual sports, in order to underpin conformist group solidarity. But this was essentially a period of great social and political change, despite the fact that our elders, among them André Malraux as

¹ Olivier Todd (2001, 84) succinctly summarises the young Malraux's ideological attitude at this period in his life: 'Rebelle, révolté, il n'est pas révolutionnaire' ('He was a rebel, not a revolutionary', as translated in Todd 2005, 62).

de Gaulle's Minister for Culture, now criticised us, albeit in an indirect way, for our 'childish' anti-authoritarianism.

When I came to choose a subject for my PhD thesis, André Malraux was certainly a potential candidate for research. Much, however, had already been written about him and his writings. I hesitated for some time over a topic, notably between the work of Louis-Ferdinand Céline and that of Robert Brasillach, a hesitation that unfortunately resulted in exclusion from postgraduate funding. I was therefore obliged to undertake postgraduate research at my own expense. This fact was token and proof of my enthusiasm and commitment to such research. Moreover, I felt much more at ease in the more progressive and modern-thinking University College of London.

A strong motivation for research into World War II and the Occupation in France lay, for me, in the simple fact that it had all happened in the years immediately preceding my birth (1947). It was consequently unknown territory, tantalisingly just out of chronological reach in terms of *le vécu*, a lived experience. I was curious to discover the reasons for the crisis affecting Europe in the late 1930s that ended in war, the events of the conflict itself and how the nations of Europe emerged from the experience in the immediate post-war period, that is to say the period in which I grew up.

In particular, the collective experience of a nation being occupied by a foreign nation intrigued me. What my parents' generation had experienced and occasionally mentioned in fragmentary memories remained murky and mysterious, an impression that a number of post-war writers, of whom Patrick Modiano is the best known, have developed and illustrated. In the 1970s, London's University College was fortunate to have Douglas Johnson as Professor of History. His seminars were an inspiration to all students of France and the Second World War; in particular, they contributed that vital element of transdisciplinarity to the research of those of us who were students of literature. In his research seminars as well as his books, Professor Johnson frequently referred to French literature, film and art. We thereby came to understand that the disciplines of literature, history and others were by no means as far apart or as compartmentalised as we had imagined.

In the spirit of what is now called 'counterfactual history', I, like many of my generation, tried to imagine how I would have reacted to the Occupation in France from 1940 to 1944, had I lived in that country and in those times. This imaginary projection is the principal

subject of Pierre Bayard's *Aurais-je été résistant ou bourreau?* (2013), a study to which I shall return. I suspect that the Resistance movement, organised against the occupying Germans, would probably have appealed naturally to an anti-authoritarian like myself. The collective nationalistic fervour and obedience to a dictator demonstrated by the National Socialist aggressor in the 1930s and 1940s seemed alien and even unintelligible to me. For this reason, it was the position of the French collaborationists, who often claimed to be nationalists and patriots but who also admired neighbouring Fascist nations in Europe, which puzzled and intrigued me most. I wanted to understand why they collaborated, what their motives were and why anyone would willingly choose to follow the path of what was subsequently—in the period of the *Épuration*, the Purge—called ‘treason’ or even more strangely labelled in French as ‘intelligence avec l’ennemi’.² Moreover, Jean-Marie Carré’s concept of the ‘mirage allemand’ (1947), already mentioned, fascinated me, and I wanted to find out what had drawn men and women who claimed to be French patriots to a nation that had been their enemy for centuries. When Annette Lavers, my supervisor, suggested the work of Robert Brasillach as a possible subject for PhD, I dutifully read his novel *Les Sept Couleurs* (1939) that includes important reflections on problematic French relationships with National Socialist Germany. However, I decided (initially) that I would prefer to continue studying Louis-Ferdinand Céline, mainly because I particularly appreciated his innovative use of language and his spirit of anarchism. In comparison, Brasillach’s prose style seemed less exciting and less adventurous. Both writers, however, were generally considered in France to be *sulfureux* (sulphurous), *maudits* (cursed) and marginal; to this extent, they appealed to my non-conformist nature.³

²As an example of this cultural difference in labelling socio-political phenomena, Alice Y. Kaplan’s book on Robert Brasillach, entitled *The Collaborator* (2000), was translated into French as *Intelligence avec l’ennemi: le procès Brasillach* (2001).

³Cf. the French writers of the 1930s and 1940s, including Maurice Blanchot and Robert Brasillach—though not Louis-Ferdinand Céline—who figure in Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle’s book, *Les Non-conformistes des années 30* (1969). The ‘taboo’ aspect of Brasillach’s career has certainly stimulated a number of critics and biographers. The title of Pierre Pellissier’s biography, for example, bears this out: *Brasillach...le maudit* (1989).

WHY ROBERT BRASILLACH?

I began an assessment of the rapidly increasing number of biographies and studies of Céline that had already been published. As a result, I revised my decision and returned to the problematic Brasillach. This is how I eventually came to write my thesis on his fascism, a thesis that I reworked as a political biography, *La Mystique du fascisme dans l'œuvre de Robert Brasillach*, and which was published in French by the Nouvelles Éditions Latines in 1986, at the suggestion of Maurice Bardèche, Brasillach's brother-in-law, who wrote a preface for it. During my period of researching for the thesis (and eventually the book), Bardèche was most kind and generous with his time and made available to me (as he did to most researchers) all of Brasillach's unpublished work, most of which was housed in Bardèche's rather cramped but welcoming flat in Paris's Latin Quarter. With hindsight, I believe that my decision to submit my first book to a French publisher whose reputation was, to say the least, notorious,⁴ was simply due to a young researcher's impatience and eagerness to publish without exercising proper caution over the choice of publisher. The book hardly endeared me to the French establishment, to many colleagues and critics, and membership of the Association des Amis de Robert Brasillach, based in Switzerland, aggravated my case. I am still vice-president (nominally) of this association, having hoped to change, from the inside, the outlook of the members from a relatively political bias (often highly suspect and frequently embarrassing) to a more appropriate (as I see it) promotion of Brasillach's literary work. This is, after all, the one and only stated aim of the Association.⁵ This

⁴The then director of Nouvelles Éditions Latines was Fernand Sorlot, who had gained notoriety before the Second World War for his links with the Extreme Right—which he maintained during and after the War—and for having published a French translation of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in 1934. Since he had not obtained Hitler's permission, the German firm Eher-Verlag that had published the original work took him to court in 1936. Sorlot defended his act, claiming that he had voluntarily omitted to obtain permission since he had wanted to make the work available to the French reading public so that they might be better informed of Hitler's intentions. After the war, Sorlot was condemned to 'indignité nationale' (national indignity) for his wartime publishing activities.

⁵The aim of the Association des Amis de Robert Brasillach is stated in its statutes as follows: '*Le but de l'association est de faire connaître l'œuvre de l'écrivain et poète Robert Brasillach*' (The aim of the Association is to promote the work of the writer and poet Robert Brasillach): http://www.brasillach.ch/?page_id=38 (accessed 23 December 2015).

hope was somewhat forlorn, as I now realise. My name continues to appear on the Association's documentation, but my heart has for some years no longer been with it. This may well be an example of the naïveté of intellectuals and academics who are genuinely motivated to attempt to change and influence patterns of thought but whose efforts are often either misunderstood, subverted or simply unsuccessful. The association of Brasillach's work with the current *Front national*, for example, embarrasses me, particularly when Jean-Marie Le Pen hijacks his poetry in order to score points against political adversaries. However, I wish to maintain my links with the Association and the writer since the literary aspects remain of great interest to me, and I would not like to see a more ideologically driven agenda dominate the activities of its members.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, I have come to realise, on reflection, that I choose subjects for my research among phenomena that I have real initial (and, often, subsequent) difficulty in understanding. Fascism happened to be one of these.

Paradoxically, I have even been accused of being a Fascist, of sympathising with Fascists (particularly on the publication of my political biography of Brasillach) by literary critics and of being an apologist for a Fascist collaborator who proved to be a traitor to his country. Similar charges were made by established British publishers when I proposed English translations of some of Brasillach's works. To me, these accusations are ridiculous, given that, as an academic researching this area, I have always tried to be as objective and analytical as possible. What is more, having studied and researched Fascism for over forty years now, I have to admit that I still do not fully understand it. No doubt this is a case, as the old saw goes, of the more you learn, the less you feel you actually know. Or perhaps it is due to a subconscious resistance to authoritarianism and/or even to my (relatively distant) Jewish ancestry. Paradoxically, the only reassuring aspect of all this is that it might be argued, as is implied in Ionesco's play *Rhinocéros* (1959), that once one begins to understand the Fascists, it is a sign that one is becoming like them, or that one has already become one of them.

As a student researching Brasillach's life, I became perplexed, not only by his particular brand of French Fascism, but also by what I (and others) considered to be inner contradictions (for example, his almost 'feminine sensitivity' and 'gentleness' as a writer, characteristics that contrasted with his fascination for physical violence, aggression and virility). These inner contradictions led me to have recourse to Brasillach's

defence lawyer, Maître Jacques Isorni, who did his best to save his life at one of the most significant and symbolic trials of collaborationists during the *Épuration* in 1944–1945. I hoped that he might be able to provide me with some kind of an explanation, in particular, of Brasillach's motivation for collaborationism. Isorni, who had also defended Marshal Pétain at his trial for treason in 1945, replied elegantly though mystifyingly to me, in a short letter that I have kept and whose first line reads thus: 'Monsieur, comment expliquer les contradictions d'un homme?' (Dear Sir, how can one explain the contradictions in a human being?). This splendidly rhetorical question, posed many years after the trial by a man who, judging from his account of the process, seems to have understood his client quite well, has remained just that for me (and, apparently, for him): a question without an answer.⁶

Despite there being few valid answers to this sort of question, I felt that Brasillach's seminal memoirs of the interwar years in France merited an English translation. So, in 2002, I published a fully annotated and edited translation of Brasillach's memoirs, *Notre avant-guerre* (Brasillach 2002). It was a task that I felt had to be undertaken, an academic 'labour of love', however little kudos it was likely to gain for me in the upcoming Research Assessment Exercise.⁷ Previous to this, the memoirs had been translated into only one other foreign language, namely Dutch. This choice of language seems strange, and I was unfortunately unable to discover details of how well this particular translation sold or was received.

⁶To be fair, Isorni does attempt to explain Brasillach's contradictions in terms of an alleged softening of his approach when he was in prison in Fresnes, along with others facing possible death for their convictions: 'Il n'est pas douteux que, menacé par la mort et se trouvant dans une cellule où d'autres hommes qu'il avait combattus avaient été également menacés par la mort et même exécutés, la tendresse, l'amitié humaine ont remplacé la violence' (Clearly, with the threat of death hanging over him, and sharing a cell with other men whose opponent he had been and who had also been threatened with death and even executed, the violence softened to an attitude of friendship and human companionship). Correspondence dated 22 May 1975.

⁷From the early 1990s, the quality of research undertaken by UK universities' academic staff has been subjected every six years or so to rigorous scrutiny by subject-specialist peer-review panels in what was then called the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) (now Research Excellence Framework, or REF). With regard to the status of translations in the UK's RAE, we were told at an information meeting held in London in 2001 that translations of literary works gained few 'brownie points', not being considered as 'creative' or even 'academic' works.

In an attempt to transcend the problems of understanding the motives of collaborators, I am equally intrigued by imagining, like Pierre Bayard in *Aurais-je été résistant ou bourreau?* (2013, Would I have been a resister or an executioner?) and no doubt many others, how I would have behaved and chosen at that time. Although it is interesting, this book is not without flaws. Its title, for a start, appears ideologically skewed to me: why did Bayard not choose a more balanced and symmetrical title like '*Aurais-je été résistant ou collaborateur?*' (Would I have been a resister or a collaborator?)? And how valid is it to take his father as his principal model, assuming, as he does rather too easily, that both he and his father would think alike? Or, to take a last example, why does Bayard maintain that Lucien Lacombe's destiny in the film *Lacombe Lucien* (1974) was already determined when its director, Louis Malle, goes out of his way to show what an important role chance plays in the boy's choice of Collaboration? Bayard seems to struggle to acknowledge that *both* chance and predetermined factors do play a role in commitment to one side or the other.

Overall, even though Bayard's reasoning often seems to me rather unconvincing, the question that he asks no doubt resonates in all of those who, like me, have given any real thought to this problem of how and why ordinary men and women embraced collaboration with Nazi Germany.⁸ What is it that motivates such brutal and obviously inhuman actions? This question naturally has increased and enhanced relevance with regard to the vast area of research concerning the Holocaust.

Admittedly, Bayard's book helped me to clarify the reason why I have always been motivated by reading novels and stimulated by reading fiction about France's contested past and problematic collective behaviour during the period 1940–1944.⁹ It is war's heuristic capacity—for revealing the essential human being—that is so interesting for me and, I suspect, for most researchers who, like me, have not personally lived through such a traumatic period. Fiction, in my opinion, adds an emotional resonance to historical facts, and this is why I see the study of literature and history as being complementary: combined, the two disciplines can lead to a more holistic understanding of the past.

⁸ Here, I am implicitly referring to Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (1992).

⁹ Interview with Pierre Bayard. See <http://www.mollat.com/player.html?id=65151866> (accessed 13 December 2014).

THE OTHER SIDE

In the wake of my research on Brasillach and the French Extreme-Right tempted by Fascism, it seemed to me that it would be sensible and most useful to examine the other side in terms of political ideology, namely the Left and in particular left-wing writers tempted by Communism. Hence the inclusion of Roger Vailland and André Malraux in my second book entitled *The Ideological Hero in the Novels of Robert Brasillach, Roger Vailland and André Malraux* (1998). Hence also my membership of the Association des Amis de Roger Vailland. This was followed, in 2006, by a two-volume critical biography of André Chamson. A left-wing polemicist, one of the three editors of *Vendredi* in the 1930s (a weekly that supported the *Front populaire*), and a bitter opponent of Robert Brasillach before the war, Chamson became an active member of the French Resistance during the Occupation. With his friend and colleague André Malraux, he founded the Brigade Alsace-Lorraine that joined General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny's First French Army, in the latter part of 1944, on its long advance from the south of France to the north-east of the country, fighting against the occupying German forces and eventually pushing the enemy back through the Vosges, Alsace and, finally, into Germany.¹⁰ Chamson also wrote a large number of novels, many of which were centred on the Cévennes and the Languedoc region, including historical novels on the religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. Through my work on André Chamson, I became more aware of the controversies over 'regional' and 'regionalist' writers, prejudices against authors who concentrated their work on a particular locality and who, because of a peculiar Parisian snobbism, are frequently considered as being second-rate. In my biography of André Chamson, I argue that this prejudice is based on an illusion, which presupposes that local concerns cannot provide universal literary themes. Such prejudices are, in any case, clearly debunked by the work of many highly popular and world-renowned writers like Henri Alain-Fournier, Jean Giono, George Sand, Walter Scott, Mark Twain and so many others, who have written about their chosen region but, at the same time, dealt with universal issues relevant to all mankind.

¹⁰See André Chamson, *La Reconquête 1944-1945* (2005, 511-644) for an account of this epic itinerary.

THE IRISH DIMENSION (1984–2013)

It is possible that my interest in, and natural propensity for, ‘margins’ of different kinds—ideological as well as geographical—were renewed and confirmed by my move from the North of England (Yorkshire) to Northern Ireland in 1984. However, the principal reason was more mundane: I simply needed a job, and a lecturing post in French was being offered at Queen’s University Belfast. After working for ten years outside academe—not a good idea, incidentally, for those who wish to make their mark in Higher Education—I was appointed to the post of lecturer in the French Department at Queen’s University Belfast. I had worked previously as a post-doctoral tutor in Massey University in New Zealand for a year, then at a private business language-teaching college in the Midlands, and, subsequently, as a lecturer in French in Wakefield District College of Further Education in Yorkshire. Although these professional experiences gave me the mind-broadening opportunity of working outside academe and learning how professions other than teaching operate, I was eager to return to research and teaching French literature. During this period of academic ‘wilderness’, I kept up my reading of French fiction and history, particularly of the Second World War and the Occupation. I translated into English two novels by Robert Brasillach, *La Conquérante* (1943), inspired by his parents’ experiences in the newly colonised Morocco of 1912, and *Six heures à perdre* (1944), a mystery detective story set in the Occupation.¹¹ Both translations remain unpublished to this day.

There were few lecturing posts in French available in UK universities at the time (1970s and 1980s), which illustrates the degree to which chance plays a part in determining the pathways of one’s career. More paradoxically, my appointment at Queen’s University Belfast hinged on my three-year experience of teaching commercial, scientific and technical French to mature adults, a job that had made me yearn for a return to teaching literature. Initially, my main task at the University was to establish, organise and teach courses in business French and French for engineers. At the

¹¹ Both novels have been published in new editions recently by Pardès. Robert Brasillach, *Six heures à perdre* (2016) and Robert Brasillach, *La Conquérante* (2016). In 2016, I contributed prefaces to Pardès’s re-editions of four novels by Brasillach, *Le Voleur d’étincelles* (1932), *L’Enfant de la nuit* (1934), *Le Marchand d’oiseaux* (1936) and *Les Sept Couleurs* (1939).

same time, I was fortunate enough to be able to continue my research into twentieth-century French literature and ideology.

In the latter part of my career at Queen's, I contacted French *académicien* Michel Déon, who had been living in Ireland for decades before his death in December 2016. He was a former journalist of the reactionary and nationalist newspaper *L'Action française*, and the former personal secretary of the right-wing ideologist Charles Maurras, who supported Pétain during WWII. After the war, he became a writer, and was briefly associated with the literary right movement 'Les Hussards'.¹² He never refused to speak about his youth and the past, in general, but he was certainly not obsessed by it. He was always very kind and generous with his time, and encouraged me in my teaching and research. It was mainly due to him that I was awarded the Prix Hervé Deluen 2007 in recognition of my contribution to the promotion of the French language, literature and culture abroad. Pierre Nora, initiator of the original *ego-histoire* project in France and member of the Académie française, presided over the award ceremony in Paris. Such recognition by the most prestigious institute for the French language in France compensated, to some extent at least, for the relative lack of recognition in my own country.

THE WAR AND MEMORY RESEARCH FORUM

It may be that the atmosphere of civil conflict that was still prevalent in Northern Ireland when I arrived there from England in January 1984 also contributed to my interest in studying contested spaces and opposing ideologies. At all events, one of the more recent initiatives undertaken in my field of research at Queen's was the founding, with a colleague in Hispanic Studies, of an interdisciplinary research forum, War and Memory, devoted to studying and researching the memorial and cultural representations of wars in twentieth-century Europe. The group increased its number with many academics from other universities in the world, held monthly research seminars over a period of five years and held a very successful major international conference on war and memory in Warsaw in 2012. The choice of Warsaw as a venue aimed at reflecting Poland's central role in the Second World War, since the country had been, in a sense, the crucible from which it erupted. Today,

¹²Editors' note: Cf. Chapter "[Currents and Counter-Currents](#)" by Marc Dambre.

I remain convinced that, because of its crucial geographical position, Poland will become a member of the utmost importance in tomorrow's European Union.

Two collectively edited publications resulted from this initiative: *Mnemosyne and Mars* (Tame et al. 2013) and *Twentieth Century Wars in European Memory* (Niznik 2013). A third publication on a similar theme, *The Long Aftermath: Cultural Legacies of Europe at War, 1936–2016*, edited by Manuel Bragança and myself, was published by Berghahn (2015). It is gratifying that substantial and high-quality publications, along with a major international conference, were produced from the efforts and activities of the large number of active researchers who participated in the War and Memory forum, based at Queen's.

This major excursion into internationally collaborative research proved to be both enormously enriching and instructive. I had already collaborated frequently with colleagues at Queen's and elsewhere in the UK in languages, sciences and computing in order to produce government-funded CALL (Computer-Aided Language Learning) programmes. But the War and Memory Group represented interests that were far closer to my own research.

More recently, I embarked on research in the 'geocritical' domain, namely on the role and function of places and spaces in twentieth- and twenty-first-century French war fiction.¹³ This was in part a consequence of examining the way in which novelists are inspired or influenced by real places and how they shape and mould them for their own fictional purposes, whether those purposes be ideological or other. Moreover, France's centre (Paris, as the seat of France's national government) and its margins (e.g. the Cévennes, as a relatively remote province) both hold a fascination for me. Among other considerations, a researcher in this field needs to understand the place of both centre and margins, however relative and shifting these concepts may prove to be. Indeed, any researcher in any field first has to establish the centre or focus of his/her research before advancing to the boundaries or 'margins' where much of the original work is often done. In time, these boundaries, when

¹³'Géocritique' is a term forged by Bertrand Westphal whose work in this area pioneered new ways of analysing places and spaces in literature. See Bertrand Westphal (ed.), *La Géocritique mode d'emploi* (2000) and Bertrand Westphal, *La Géocritique: réel, fiction, espace* (2007).

pushed back, often form new centres, and so the process of research continues in a permanent proliferation of circles of interest and exploration. Etymologically, the term ‘research’ (*recherche* in French) derives from the word ‘circle’ (*cercle* in French). The basic notion in the process of research is to ‘go round’ or encircle a question or topic before focusing on its centre. Such considerations highlight how, ultimately, all fields of research are relative and interdependent. They should encourage researchers to look beyond the limits of fashion and trends, promoting a wider, more broad-minded perspective in terms of research and contributing to the maintenance of a healthy attitude of humility in the academic research community.

The link between geocriticism and my previous research areas can essentially be explained by an interest in the notion of contested spaces, places and territories. The clash of ideologies, of nationalisms and of races is often illustrated and worked out through the fictions representing war and conflict that I have studied. The fruits of this research were published in my 2015 monograph entitled *Isotopias: Places and Spaces in French War Fiction of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

If there is a guiding principle or general theme in my research, it probably resides in the fact that areas of human activity that seem strange, alien, marginal and even outlandish or antipathetic to me attract my interest since the motivation is to get to grips with and (try to) understand these phenomena. This does not, of course, necessarily imply, as some have claimed, sympathy for them, still less identification with them.

In addition to the lives and work of Robert Brasillach, Roger Vailland and André Chamson, my interest in André Malraux has never waned since my final year at King’s College, London (1969–1970). I continue to research and write about him, attending meetings and conferences, frequently organised by the Amitiés Internationales d’André Malraux, a learned association, based in Paris, of which I am vice-president.¹⁴ This

¹⁴I completed a lecture tour in India (18 September–13 October 2015) on the subject of Malraux and India, organised by the Amitiés Internationales d’André Malraux in conjunction with eleven Alliances françaises in the subcontinent. I was also involved in a previous series of lectures organised in Singapore during the France-Singapore festival *Voilà!* (20–22 May 2015).

position may seem incompatible with my position as vice-president of the Association des Amis de Robert Brasillach. Yet both positions reflect a balanced, comprehensive and continuing academic interest in the phenomenon of 'écrivains engagés' (committed writers) in twentieth-century France, regardless of their ideological allegiances. My continuing interest in Brasillach and Malraux and other committed writers is principally motivated by the fact that, for different reasons, their lives and their work still retain elements of mystery for me.

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PART IV

Voices from Far and Near

Good Fortune, Good Friends

Richard J. Golsan

In his preface to the *Essais d'ego-histoire* (1987), Pierre Nora writes that, rather than disrupt the 'serenity' of the historian's investigations, the 'disclosure' of one's existential investment can provide what Nora describes as the 'lever of comprehension' of one's work. So, taking Nora's word as gospel in writing my own 'ego-history', let me begin with a few relevant biographical details.

My father grew up poor on a farm in the deep South in the state of Georgia, then a backward place, to say the least. He became a businessman, and was remarkably adept at making and loosing small fortunes. When relatively wealthy, he wanted his children to experience places and ways of life that he had never experienced. As a result, on two occasions my mother, my two sisters and I moved to southern France, first for 8 months to Marseille in 1960 and then for the school year to Barjols, a small village in the Var, in 1964–1965. Because of its wonderful literary tradition, France had always held a special attraction for my mother, who would eventually earn her doctorate in French literature and teach in small colleges in Georgia until her retirement.

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On our 1960 trip, we were accompanied by my grandparents, and lived in a villa in Montolivet, then a quiet suburb of Marseille which overlooked the city below. The experience was idyllic. For my grandfather, the trip to France was especially meaningful. He had served as a captain in the US army expeditionary force during World War I, and had seen his best friend shot and killed in the trenches beside him. But he fell in love with France while serving there. This was his first trip back since the Great War.

Young as we were, my sisters and I were nonetheless aware of the political realities and tensions of the time in France. In Marseille in 1960, de Gaulle's power and prestige were evident, even to foreign school children. We were also aware through friends and acquaintances—some of whom were returning *pieds noirs*¹—that something very troubling was happening in Algeria, although what that was would only become clear to me much later. In 1964–1965, there were similar political and historical echoes in Barjols, but not about Algeria. Although kind to my family, our landlady there was ostracised by many residents of the town. Years later this was explained to my mother when she went back to Barjols to visit old friends there. Among these friends, an ardently pro-American retired couple who had earlier described the arrival of American troops in Barjols to us told my mother that our landlady had been a *pétainiste*. As rumor had it, she had also had friendly and profitable business relations with the Germans when they occupied Provence after November 1942, after the Allies had landed in North Africa.

My family lived for three years in Georgetown, in Washington D.C., where I was an elementary school student, between our trips to France. John F. Kennedy was President and, like almost every American alive then, I remember the day of his assassination in November 1963 vividly. I also remember his television address a year earlier announcing the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, and his intention to blockade the island. World War III seemed imminent, and like all children of my generation, I grew up under its shadow. One of my uncles was a nuclear physicist, and had worked on the H-Bomb at Los Alamos. In his backyard in Gainesville, Florida, he built a fallout shelter for his family. By the late 1960s, my cousin and his rock band practised there. The bomb shelter is now abandoned. After his retirement from the University of Florida,

¹Editors' note: See Henry Rouso, Chapter "[From a Foreign Country](#)".

my uncle spent summers working with his mentor, Edward Teller, in Livermore, California. Teller, of course, inspired Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove*.

When I was in high school in Atlanta, the political upheavals of the sixties were omnipresent. Desegregation in the South stirred passions and animosities, although racial incidents were rare in my high school, perhaps because it counted only a handful of black people. Martin Luther King's daughter Yolanda was among them, and King's assassination in April 1968 during my junior year shocked the school, and seemed to silence some of the more vocally racist students. That, at least, is my hopeful recollection. However, the year I graduated from high school in 1970, the desegregation of Atlanta public schools was mandated by federal law. Overnight, it seemed, many of my favourite teachers, all of them white, took early retirement in order not to have to be transferred and teach in a black, inner city school.

My high school in Atlanta also had the largest population of Jewish students in the city. Some thirty percent of my classmates were Jewish. The parents of one close friend, who were extremely kind to me, had survived the Holocaust. They kept a jar of sand from Israel on the mantelpiece. I was later to discover that there were many other parents of Jewish students at my high school with similar backgrounds. But of course at that point in time in the United States, the Holocaust was hardly a topic of great concern or discussion for the general public.

I mention these events because—with 20/20 hindsight, of course—they introduced me to many of the issues and concerns that have fascinated me ever since, and that certainly contributed to my interest in the Vichy period. These include racism, the Holocaust, political violence and, above all, an awareness that History with a capital 'H' is precarious, and stability an illusion. The Cuban Missile Crisis and especially Kennedy's assassination certainly brought this lesson home to most Americans at the time, and it is not a stretch to imagine that for the French, the devastating defeat of May–June 1940, and the *exode* had the same impact. This is certainly the impression left by reading Irène Némirovsky's posthumous novel, *Suite française* (2004), among many other works.²

²See for example Robert Frank's *La Hantise du déclin* (2014) for an interesting discussion of the weight of the 1940 defeat.

I did my undergraduate studies at Washington and Lee University from 1970 to 1974, a little more than a decade after Robert Paxton had studied history there. Paxton, who came from a distinguished family in Lexington, where Washington and Lee University is located, was already a legend there, certainly to students of French history. I majored in French and Geology. I loved dinosaurs and initially planned to become a vertebrate paleontologist. Safe and secure with a student deferment, like my classmates, I was nevertheless very much aware of the war in Vietnam, and of the fact that many of my generation were fighting and dying there, or had irrevocably changed their lives by refusing to serve. On occasion, we discussed the choices others of our generation had had to make about Vietnam, and that we were spared. We could not ignore it, and when classmates my age (born in 1952) received their draft numbers in 1971, some of those not in good academic standing left school in anticipation of leaving for Vietnam—or Canada, to escape.³

After a summer spent in France between my junior and senior years, I decided to abandon geology and pursue a doctorate in French literature. I had spent that summer travelling around the country and reading the likes of Malraux, Alain-Fournier, Giraudoux and Montherlant. Compared to the intellectual, emotional and aesthetic satisfactions France and French literature offered to me, the study of geology, and even dinosaurs, seemed pale and unexciting. Accordingly, during my senior year, I finished my degree in Geology and added a BA in French. After I graduated, I enrolled in the doctoral programme in Romance languages at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill in the fall of 1974.

From the beginning of my graduate career, my literary interests were never far removed from history and politics. I did my Master's thesis on 'the question of political engagement in four novels by Malraux'. This was not an original or imaginative topic, to be sure. It was, however, in tune with literary studies in French in Chapel Hill in the mid-1970s. There the programme was proudly traditionalist in outlook. Most courses were literary historical in orientation, and the *l'homme et l'œuvre* (the man and his work) approach was predominant. To be

³Editors' note: The Military Selective Service Act of 1967, prompted by the Vietnam War, allowed educational deferments for men aged between eighteen and twenty-six years old. Draft lotteries were put in place from 1969 to determine the order in which young Americans would be called up for duty.

granted a doctorate required two courses in old French language and literature, and eighteen hours of written exams on French literary history from the medieval period to the present. By today's standards—and even the standards of the time at other French programmes in the USA—the curriculum was gruelling. The advantage was that one emerged with a fairly encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of French literature, now largely—and sadly—forgotten for lack of use either in my research or my teaching. The disadvantage of UNC's encyclopaedic approach, as I learned from a friend going through Princeton's programme at the same time, was that my professional development, in terms of focusing on my own research, giving conference papers and the like, was not an integral part of the preparation of French PhD candidates at UNC.

Still, times were changing. Structuralist critics—Barthes, Genette and the early Todorov, among others—were beginning to make their presence felt, even at tradition-bound UNC. Disciplinary boundaries were under duress, as it was impossible to deny the intellectual and political ferment of post-1968 France. Additionally, despite the conservative tenor of the majority of UNC French faculty, the most dynamic intellectual presence there, and the person with whom I did my doctoral dissertation, was Edouard Morot-Sir. A philosopher by training, committed to interdisciplinary approaches, a true intellectual with no patience for or interest in academic politics, Morot-Sir had had a distinguished and eventful military and diplomatic career before becoming a professor at the University of Arizona and then at UNC, where he held a Kenan professorship. An officer in the French army in 1940, Morot-Sir, as Philip French has reminded us recently (2013, 45), was François Mitterrand's direct superior and was wounded alongside him during the battle of France. Unfortunately, Morot-Sir never spoke of these experiences with me. When he arrived in America in the early 1960s, he served as director of Cultural Services in New York. Among other accomplishments in that capacity, Morot-Sir arranged for the *Mona Lisa* to be displayed in the National Gallery in Washington D.C. during the Kennedy presidency. (My family and I waited in line for hours to see it there.) In the process of getting the painting to the USA, he had successfully blocked Minister of Culture André Malraux's plan to have the painting transferred in mid-ocean between the flagships of the French and American navies. What would happen if the transfer cable between the two ships snapped, and the painting fell into the Atlantic, never to be seen again?

I had originally wanted to write my doctoral dissertation on the representation of the Dreyfus affair in Proust, but Morot-Sir had other ideas. Proust, like Camus and Sartre, he suggested, was being overworked at the time. We agreed eventually that I would write on Henry de Montherlant's theatre and the question of tragedy, a choice that proved extraordinarily fortuitous in many ways. First it introduced me to the work of René Girard, whose theories on mimetic desire and sacrificial violence later proved particularly helpful to me in understanding the dynamics of Fascism, and Nazism in particular. But it was the choice of Montherlant, and the study of his work, ideas and career that most profoundly marked me and steered my research toward World War II, the Dark Years and their memory.

At the time, Montherlant was hardly a popular or practical topic for a dissertation. Henri Peyre, the great Yale critic, once said to me that Montherlant was 'a very great writer but a very bad man'. He did not say whether this was a moral or political judgment. One UNC professor told me I had made a grave and perhaps fatal professional error in choosing Montherlant because of his reactionary politics. The professor in question, a Céline specialist, added that colleagues would assume my politics were reactionary as well and dismiss my work accordingly. This, at least, he said, had been his experience. These remarks now seem misguided and outdated but it is important to recall that they were made in the early 1980s, before events like the publication of Victor Farias's book (1989) on Heidegger's politics and the eruption of the De Man affair, briefly discussed hereafter, brought a sea change to America's academic and intellectual landscape. Arguably at least, these events and others rang the death knell of deconstruction and exclusively a- or anti-historical critical approaches to literature which were predominant at the time.

Before the De Man and Heidegger Affairs had broken, Montherlant and his work had led me to the Dark Years and to subjects that have fascinated me ever since: collaboration and complicity with political evil, fascism and fascist aesthetics, and, eventually, the politics of memory. In revising my dissertation on Montherlant's theatre as tragedy to publish it in book form, I became increasingly interested in the historical and political circumstances of Montherlant's initial theatrical successes and in the ways in which these plays reflected the ideas and aesthetics that informed his essays and novels of the 1920s and 1930s.

Montherlant's first major theatrical success, *La Reine morte* (The Dead Queen), was produced at the *Comédie Française* in 1942, at the

height of the Occupation. It is an adaptation of Luis Velez de Guevara's Spanish Golden Age masterpiece, *Reinar después de morir* dealing with the execution of the fourteenth-century Portuguese princess, Ines de Castro. Like other plays produced during the Occupation which also featured distant or mythological settings, *La Reine morte*'s choice of setting appeared politically innocuous and therefore did not arouse the suspicions of the censors.

The fact that Montherlant stayed in Paris during the Dark Years and enjoyed theatrical and other literary successes suggested that he got on well enough with Vichy and German authorities. This reality, however, was rarely, if ever, mentioned by literary critics of *La Reine morte*, or most of his other wartime writings. Those who did mention it only made passing allusions to Montherlant's somewhat troubling record, or his 'problems' during the Occupation. Even into the 1990s, Montherlant's biographer Pierre Sipriot denied Montherlant was a collaborator, while providing copious evidence in his biography that the opposite was in fact the case. It is of interest that admirers of other writers who, while not militant fascists or outspokenly pro-Vichy or pro-Nazi but who nevertheless collaborated, tend even now to attenuate or even white-wash these writers' wartime political actions or stances. This is true, for example, of figures like the Provençal writer Jean Giono, on whom I worked later.⁴

In Montherlant's case, the evidence I was able to accumulate from a variety of sources, including especially microfilms of the wartime collaborationist press, confirmed that while cautious and even deliberately somewhat vague in his political and cultural pronouncements, Montherlant made no bones about his admiration of Pétain's National Revolution, his loathing of French 'decadence' and cowardice, and his appreciation of the Nazis' youthful virility. Articles appearing in Alphonse de Châteaubriant's *La Gerbe*—a cultural and political weekly funded by the German Occupation authorities, as Robert Paxton pointed out years earlier in *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* (1972)—confirmed all of this, and led figures like Jean Guéhenno to express repeatedly their distaste for Montherlant's opportunism and hypocrisy (cf. Guéhenno 1947). Indeed, Montherlant's most notorious wartime publication, *Le Solstice de juin* (1941), which included some of the pieces from *La Gerbe* and other

⁴See, for example, the chapter on Giono in my book *French Writers and the Politics of Complicity* (2006).

publications, was later labelled a ‘manual of collaboration’ by Jeffrey Mehlman in his *Legacies of Anti-Semitism in France* (1983). Montherlant suffered little for his collaborationism during the war. Tried by the Purge courts, he was given no jail time, but forbidden to publish for one year. He went on to enjoy a successful resumption of his literary career, especially as a playwright, and was soon ‘immortalised’ in being elected to the *Académie Française*. His collected work appeared in the prestigious Bibliothèque de la Pléiade series. The most damning passages from *Le Solstice de juin*, which is included in his *Essais* volume (1963), have been conveniently redacted.

Having researched and written about Montherlant’s past and his collaborationism, the larger question that interested me was *why* writers like him collaborated, and for what motives? What political, cultural and ideological views, often reflected in their writings, led them to be complicit with odious ideologies like *pétainisme* and especially Nazism? Over many years, I explored these issues not only in relation to Montherlant, but also in figures like the aforementioned Jean Giono and Alphonse de Châteaubriant. The conclusions I came to in each instance, and which are too long to be rehearsed here, led me to understand that often there is a genuinely tragic dimension to these commitments because the beliefs that led these writers to collaborate also often blinded them to the political realities and politics that they embraced. The most egregious example of this is Alphonse de Châteaubriant, who in his 1937 essay *La Gerbe des forces* (hence the title of his wartime weekly) likened Hitler’s advent to a second coming of Christ. So his support for Nazism was perversely religious in nature. In any event, my fascination with political *engagements* in troubled times, whether misguided or not, certainly derived in part from the fact that during the Vietnam War I had *not* had to make difficult and consequent political choices. My political activities were limited—such as they were—to attending protest rallies in Washington D.C. The experience of these protests may have created an ephemeral sense of solidarity; it also allowed for some good times away from my studies!

It is important to stress that in working on collaboration and the cultural, artistic and philosophical roots of political reaction in writers like Montherlant in the early 1980s, I was not working in a vacuum. Anticipating the broader interest in fascism and its cultural legacies that would come at the end of the decade, important and indeed seminal works in French studies addressing these issues were appearing

in the United States. These included Susan Suleiman's 1983 book, *Authoritarian Fictions*, a work which systematically and thoroughly dissected and categorised the ideological novel in France by writers on the left and right; Alice Kaplan's 1986 *Reproductions of Banality*, and later her 1994 memoir *French Lessons*, dealt in new and fascinating ways with fascist writers generally unknown to America academics, Lucien Rebatet, Robert Brasillach and Maurice Bardèche in particular. Mary Jean Green's important but often overlooked 1986 book *Fiction in the Historical Present*, which offers an exhaustive and illuminating study of the French novel of the interwar years, was also invaluable. All these works filled in a backdrop and context that had been sorely missing in twentieth-century French studies in the United States at the time, as did *The Left Bank* (1981), Herbert Lottman's popular history of French intellectual life during the interwar years and the Occupation. Somewhat later, in France, exhaustive studies of writers and politics in France in the 1930s and 1940s would offer additional valuable historical and cultural context as well.

Given my ever-growing interest in writers, artists and politics in France between the wars and during the Occupation, in 1985 I applied for and was accepted into Dudley Andrews's and Steve Ungar's National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Seminar *Politics of the Image* at the University of Iowa. The seminar was devoted to studying the complexity of cultural politics in France during the interwar years and into the Occupation, but not just among writers. Films and film-makers were included as well. During the seminar, I read works like Drieu La Rochelle's *Gilles* (1939) for the first time, and saw poetic realist films by Jean Renoir, Marcel Carné, Julien Duvivier and others. Understanding the depths of France's political and cultural crisis of the 1930s through these works made the defeat of May–June 1940 and the realities of the Dark Years both more comprehensible in historical terms, and also more poignant. It is hard to overstate the intellectual ferment and excitement the seminar created not only in me but in the other participants as well. It would later inspire me not only to attend other NEH seminars, but to want to direct these seminars myself. Since 1994, in fact, I have co-directed twelve NEH seminars, both for high school teachers from around the United States and also for college and university professors. I did eleven seminars with my Texas A&M colleague and friend Nathan Bracher, and co-directed a college teacher's seminar with Henry Rousso in 2012. All of these seminars focused on the memory and cultural legacies of the Dark

Years, and, later, on the memories of other conflicts, including World War I and Algeria. The college teacher's seminar I taught with Henry also included the memory of Communism, which had come to the fore after the 1997–1998 debate over the *Livre noir du communisme* (Courtois et al. 1997). Nicolas Werth, a central figure in the debate, led the discussion. Of the many activities I have done professionally, few if any have been as rewarding as the NEH seminars. In addition to spending summers in Paris and Caen with my family, I have always felt that NEH seminars are especially rewarding to high-school teacher participants, many of whom would not have the means to study in France. Sadly, the NEH has discontinued summer seminars taught abroad.

In the summer of 1990, the great British literary critic Frank Kermode was scheduled to teach a seminar on 'History and Literature' at the School of Criticism and Theory (SCT), then at Dartmouth College. My university agreed to pay my expenses, so as a result I spent the summer in the rarefied, highly theoretical atmosphere of the SCT. If anything, the experience accomplished the opposite of what was intended. A summer of reading and debating theory, and bracketing history in the wake of the De Man affair seemed artificial, especially since De Man's anti-Semitic and collaborationist wartime writings for the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* were at that point well and widely discussed outside the SCT. Additionally, the many apologetic and/or disculpatory essays written around that time by De Man's admirers and friends, Jacques Derrida and J. Hillis Miller among them, struck me as intellectually dishonest, especially since their defences of De Man and their denial that he was anti-Semitic required deliberate misinterpretations of his wartime writings, and distortions of works by writers I knew well, like Montherlant. On this last score, while at the SCT, I decided to write an essay to set the record straight on Montherlant and the ways his wartime record and attitudes had been distorted by De Man's supporters as part of their defence of their colleague and friend. I showed the essay to Kermode, who liked it, and told me that he would submit it to the prestigious literary journal *Raritan*, on whose board he sat, and recommend publication. Back in Texas several weeks later, I received a one sentence rejection of the piece from the editor with the explanation that it was inappropriate for the journal. Several years later, I had a similar experience with another literary review, which commissioned me to write an essay on the feud between the American scholar Richard Wolin and Jacques Derrida. Displeased that Wolin had published an interview with

Derrida favourable to Heidegger in a book covering the controversy over Heidegger's Nazi past, Derrida tried to have Wolin's book (1991) pulled from the shelves by its publisher, Columbia, a prestigious university press. Derrida claimed Wolin had published the interview without his permission. An exchange followed in the *New York Review of Books*, involving Wolin and Derrida, and their respective supporters. The exchange became extraordinarily vitriolic. When I submitted my essay, which was critical of Derrida, the editor of the review refused to publish it on the grounds that it was 'hostile' to Derrida. Pointing out to the editor of the journal that the correspondence I had seen between Wolin and Derrida clearly exonerated Wolin did no good.

Following the intellectual disappointment of the SCT experience, my interests became more and more explicitly historical and political. Fascinated with collaborationism and its relationship to fascism, I read Bertram (Bert) Gordon's *Collaboration in France during World War II* (1980) and Robert Soucy's *French Fascism: The First Wave* (1986). Bert's book, in particular, provided a rich and informative account of movements, individuals and the evolution of both during the Occupation. When Bert and I met as participants in an NEH Seminar on French politics held in Paris in 1991, more than the seminar director, Bert became my mentor on Collaboration and extreme right-wing French politics at the time. Together, we visited a National Front rally, as Jean-Marie Le Pen was picking up political steam at the time, and also a seedy (as I recall) right-wing and anti-Semitic book store. Bert also told me stories of meetings and interviews with former collaborators and right-wing activists he had interviewed for his book on Collaboration. It was striking, I gathered, that most refused to recant their earlier positions.

It was also Bert who introduced me that summer to *Libération* journalist Annette Lévy-Willard, a mutual friend for many years now who covered fascist *gronpuscules* like the *FANE*, Le Pen and the National Front, and most importantly for my interests, the ongoing efforts to prosecute Paul Touvier, René Bousquet and Maurice Papon on charges of crimes against humanity. A journalist of admirable courage as I witnessed personally on several occasions, Annette was extraordinarily generous to me from the outset. She discussed the cases and investigations of Bousquet and Touvier with me for hours on end, explaining legal and political complexities of each case and letting me pore through old issues of the newspaper relevant to the topic in *Libération's* archive. She also gave me access to documents including the transcript of Bousquet's

1949 trial as well as the report on Touvier by the investigating magistrate Jean-Pierre Getti that otherwise I never would have seen. It was also Annette who introduced me to Henry Rousso.

With hindsight, it is clear to me that my interest in figures like Touvier, Bousquet and later Maurice Papon grew out of my fascination with the actions and especially the motives of collaborationist writers like Montherlant, Alphonse de Châteaubriant, *et cie.* Except that comprehending figures as different as Touvier, whom François Mitterrand famously dismissed as *une sorte de pègre politique* (a kind of political mob), and consummate and successful bureaucrats like Bousquet and Papon, required a much greater understanding of Vichy, its institutions and politics, its indigenous anti-Semitism and its complicity in the Final Solution. Moreover, the convoluted paths of these figures in the post-war years, and the often frustrating efforts to prosecute them, also required a much greater knowledge of the post-war memory and legacies of Vichy. Therefore, reading Henry Rousso's *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (1987), which I first read in English translation when I was asked to review it for the American journal *SubStance* by Steve Ungar, was a revelation. It helped me to contextualise not only the crimes against humanity cases, but also the literary and cinematic legacies of the Dark Years I had begun to explore. These included novels by Patrick Modiano, Michel Tournier and others, and films, especially *Lacombe Lucien* (Malle 1974), with its provocative exploration of the ambiguities and complexities of collaborationism. Henry's periodisation of the memory of Vichy, with the four 'phases' of memory laid out neatly like so many layers of geological strata, also appealed to the geologist and aspirant paleontologist I had once been. To this day—and despite Henry's own subsequent modifications of the scheme in works like *Vichy. L'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire* (2001)—the four original phases of the memory of Vichy laid out and defined in *Le Syndrome de Vichy* provide a context and backdrop which greatly facilitate my work as well as that of many scholars of Vichy's memory with whom I am familiar.

To state that the 1990s constituted a watershed moment for anyone interested in Vichy and its memory would be to belabour the profoundly obvious to all those interested in these subjects. Still, it is hard to overstate the intellectual excitement of studying the Dark Years and their post-war legacies, especially while attempting to

straddle the disciplines of literature, contemporary history, the law and politics. Merely keeping up with the remarkable works of history and literary history (Philippe Burrin's 1995 *La France à l'heure allemande*, Gisèle Sapiro's 1999 *La Guerre des écrivains*, to name only two outstanding works), films released and novels published (Claude Chabrol's 1993 *L'Œil de Vichy*, Patrick Modiano's 1997 *Dora Bruder*, to name only two, again), not to mention political scandals involving François Mitterrand, the French president of the Republic between 1981 and 1995, and two trials for crimes against humanity, made one breathless. Like many scholars, I was as much a manifestation of Henry's 'obsessions phase' of the Vichy syndrome as a student of it during that decade. When Lynn Higgins and Mary Jean Green, two colleagues and friends from Dartmouth College, and I created the *Contemporary French Culture and Society* series at Dartmouth/University Press of New England, three of the first four books we published in the series dealt with Vichy and its memory. These are Tzvetan Todorov's *A French Tragedy* (1996), Eric Conan's and Henry Rousso's *Vichy, an Ever-Present Past* (1998, translated by Nathan Bracher) and, most importantly for my interests and career, my own *Memory, the Holocaust, and French Justice: The Bousquet and Touvier Affairs* (1996). Originally, the book was to include translations of the articles and editorials published in *Libération* about the two cases in question for which we had secured rights thanks to the good offices of Annette Lévy-Willard. We attempted to recruit Bert Gordon to edit the volume. At work on a book on tourism at the time, Bert declined, so it fell to me to do the project.

Trained neither as a legal expert nor as a historian and writing what became a sixty-page introduction turned into both an education in the history of crimes against humanity in post-war France and a fascinating search for elusive, if crucial, documents. This was, of course, before the internet made documents of this sort much easier to obtain. When the introduction was complete, Robert Paxton generously agreed to read and critique it. His five-page, single-spaced response made the introduction much better than it initially was. Working on *Memory, the Holocaust and French Justice* only increased my interest in the 'legal vector' of Vichy's memory, so when the Papon trial was about to get underway, I managed to convince a young editor at Routledge to let me do the same kind of volume on that trial. In October, I travelled

to Bordeaux to witness the trial myself. Henry Rouso had told me how to gain admission to the courtroom—being among the first dozen people in line!—so I was in the queue by about eight in the morning on a lovely, cool October day. Later, sitting in the courtroom and watching the proceedings after having seen the organised protests outside, and then listening to Jean-Marc Varaut, Papon’s lawyer, and Arno Klarsfeld, son of Serge and Beate Klarsfeld and a Civil Parties lawyer, give their respective accounts to the media of what was happening inside the courtroom gave me a sense of what a ‘three-ring circus’ the Papon trial was, as well as the many layers of meaning and significance a ‘trial for memory’ engaged. At the end of the decade, working on *Vichy’s Afterlife: History and Counterhistory in Postwar France* (published in 2000) was a happy opportunity both to pull together the various strands of Vichy’s memory I had been working on and to form, hopefully, a coherent perspective on these matters that would be helpful to specialists and non-specialists alike. I came up with the notion of ‘counterhistory’ in part as a way of categorising the competing and conflicting historical narratives that seemed to surround the event and phenomena I was describing.

While American scholars trained in literature and working on the Vichy past like myself were moving in an increasingly and occasionally treacherously interdisciplinary direction in their work, I was to learn that literature scholars in French universities were dealing with the resurgence of the memory of Vichy in more strictly disciplinary ways. In 1993, Marc Dambre, who I did not know at the time, invited me to a conference on Drieu la Rochelle held at the Sorbonne’s Salle Bourjac in December of that year. From that conference as well as subsequent colloquia in which I have participated, what seems clear is that greater French scholarly attention is paid to close readings of specific texts, to the author’s *œuvre* as a whole, and to literary networks and friendships than is the case in anglophone French literary criticism. Similarly there is a strong commitment to the value of the ‘literary’ itself, which can be as historically and politically revealing as a more interdisciplinary approach. In his 2007 essay *La Littérature en péril* (literature in peril), Tzvetan Todorov condemned what he saw as the excessive formalism of French academic approaches to literature, but my experience is that a more formalist approach in this instance does not preclude a reckoning with the political and historical dimensions of the text, as Todorov avers. In fact, when I

was named *professeur associé* at Paris III in the spring of 2001, the faculty endorsed my nomination in part, Marc told me, because I proposed to teach a lecture course on *le syndrome de Vichy littéraire* (the literary Vichy syndrome), by definition a literature course very much grounded in history.

In the new century, the memory of Vichy remains ever-present, although it has undergone striking mutations in its meaning and usage under the weight of competing memories, and more recently, dramatic and often traumatic changes in French society and culture. The specific historical realities of the period no longer seem to erupt scandalously in the present. Rather ‘Vichy’ as word and idea seems to serve increasingly as a metaphor for contemporary evil in political, intellectual and literary discourse. This process had already begun in the 1990s, of course, and had inflected discussion and analyses of, for example, the issues at stake in the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. More recently French politics and society in the new century are similarly caricatured through the prism of Vichy, as Alain Badiou’s *De quoi Sarkozy est-il le nom?* (2007) and novels like Amélie Nothomb’s *Acide sulfurique* (2005) attest. At the same time, a ‘third generation’ of writers exploring the Dark Years in their fiction has interrogated the World War II past in provocative and frankly revisionist ways, much to the chagrin of figures like Claude Lanzmann, Anthony Beevor and others.⁵ Exploring these strands and developments was the aim of my recent monograph, *The Vichy Past in France Today: Corruptions of Memory*, which appeared in 2017.

To conclude: in writing this Ego-History, I realise that the real ‘history’ at stake in my career as a cultural historian, for lack of a better term, is having had the good fortune to discover a subject whose complexities, connections and ramifications are an endless source of passionate interest that never ceases to inspire. But more importantly, it is having had the opportunity to meet wonderful mentors and colleagues, many of whom have written their ‘ego-histories’ here as well, and who have been most generous with their knowledge, ideas, advice and especially their friendship over many years. I am most grateful.

⁵See Beevor’s essay on ‘the perils of “faction”’ in *Le Débat* 165 (May–August 2011, 26–40), and Lanzmann’s criticisms of younger writers writing about World War II (and Yannick Haenel in particular) in *Les Temps Modernes* 657 (January–March 2010, 2–10).

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The Other Side: Investigating the Collaborationists in World War II France

Bertram M. Gordon

EGO-HISTOIRE AND ME, HOW I GOT STARTED

Pierre Nora's *Essais d'ego-histoire*, published in 1987, asked prominent French historians to discuss the development of their work, sources of inspiration, methodologies and their own assessments of their writings in historical context, in other words, to be 'historians of themselves' (Nora 1987, 5). Invited to do the same for my personal historical trajectory, I asked myself: why World War II, why France and why the collaborationists? Why in the 1970s, when so much had already been written about General de Gaulle and the Resistance in wartime France, had I chosen to study 'the other side', those who had identified with and actively supported the agenda of Nazi Germany and why had I chosen France?

As long as I can remember, I was always interested in history. When my childhood friends were busy cheering on the local sports teams in New York City, where I grew up, I was reading books on the histories of the teams. As a child I devoured our family copy of the 1947 edition of

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the *World Book Encyclopedia*, reading article after article with my father, a secondary school teacher, before going to sleep each night. In the aftermath of the Second World War, I was the product of a time when France and the war played a more central role in Western cultural awareness than they have more recently. As Robert Paxton noted in a contribution to another book on American historians who had chosen to focus on France: 'I had absorbed from parents and teachers the notion that Europe was at the center of the globe, the place where western civilization began and where it was most completely developed' (Paxton 2007, 38).

I am undoubtedly the product of the same French-American *élan*, when a positive focus on France and its history seemed natural in a period from roughly the First World War through the end of the French Empire, whether at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 or in Algeria in 1962. Having studied French in secondary school with teachers who had come from France and told fascinating stories of their earlier lives there, I immediately joined the French language club upon entering Brooklyn College as an undergraduate in 1959. There I met several students of European origin whose families had fled Nasser's Egypt during the mid-1950s. Experiencing the bitterness of those who believed that the American government had betrayed the West in opposing the Anglo-French attempt to overthrow Nasser during the 1956 Suez crisis, I was quickly and dramatically exposed to the French and European political world.

MODERN FRANCE AND THE *ANNALES* SCHOOL

I spent my undergraduate years at Brooklyn College in New York City, where in independent study courses I wrote two papers on French history, under the direction of Professor Joseph I. Shulim. The first focused on the political ideology of Léon Gambetta (1838–1882), the second on the *Enragés* and *Hébertistes* during the French Revolution. Gambetta fascinated me because of his balloon flight over invading German forces during the 1870–1871 war and his refusal to give up the struggle in what appeared to most in France as a lost war. More practically, his parliamentary speeches were available in the New York Public Library. As for the *Enragés* and *Hébertistes*, they were often considered more 'radical' than the Jacobins in power during a dramatic period. I found them of interest as spokespersons for the relatively unrepresented lower middle class groups in revolutionary Paris, as was Gambetta in some respects during the following century.

My interest in the lower middle class would soon lead me to study Karl Lueger, the Mayor of Vienna from 1897 to 1910, who appealed to the lower middle classes, or *Kleinbürgertum*, and who also served as a model for the young Adolf Hitler. However, it was not only from books that I learned about contingency and complexity in history. During a New York City teachers' strike in 1962 my father was caught in a dilemma of favouring the action but not wishing to violate a law then forbidding such activity. At the time, Madeline R. Robinton, another of my undergraduate professors, was leading a class discussion about conflicting pressures felt by seventeenth-century protagonists as they took sides during England's Civil War. She asked if any of the students could think of a more recent example of conflicting pressures on individuals and I related my father's dilemma. In her class I learned about the often complex struggles of people in making political choices, the role of contingency in history and the ways in which an excellent professor could help make history relevant to her students.

Established as the first public coeducational liberal arts college in New York City in 1930, Brooklyn College, during my student years in the early 1960s, was a magnet for the sons and daughters of immigrants, second- or third-generation Americans, determined to make their mark in professional life and achieve the status and income level associated with what was known as 'the American dream'. Tuition was free, the work ethic strong and, if memory serves me, Brooklyn sent a higher proportion of its graduates to advanced academic study than any American university except for Harvard at the time.¹

Although my undergraduate research papers focused on France, I was subsequently taken with the history of Austria and especially what appeared to a young student as the glory of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, a central European capital that had been so heavily damaged first by the Nazis and then by the Cold War division of the Continent into East and West. My 'nostalgia' was captured years later in an article by the essayist Olivier Guez, who wrote:

In important ways, the Europe of 1913 was more cosmopolitan and European than the Europe of today. Ideas and nationalities mingled and converged in a hotbed of creativity. [...] And there were large communities

¹ See 'Our History', *Brooklyn College*, <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/about/history/ourhistory.php> (accessed 5 January 2015).

of cosmopolitan expatriates — “passeurs” between cultures, notably urbanized Jews, as well as German minorities, scattered throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Though prejudice ran deep and they were harshly mistreated in many places, in others they could identify as citizens of a broader European group, not merely the land they inhabited, and aspire to respect and comfort. (Guez 2013)

I selected Rutgers University for graduate study in large part because I wished to work with Professor Robert A. Kann, the author of the two-volume *Multinational Empire. Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Empire* (1950), then the standard work on the Habsburg Empire. In addition, Rutgers University offered me a National Defense Education Act Title IV fellowship, which enabled me to devote full attention to my studies.

During my first year at Rutgers, however, Professor Kann was on sabbatical leave, obliging me to postpone his Central European history seminar. I enrolled instead in 1963–1964 in the East European history seminar offered by Professor Traian Stoianovich, a specialist in Balkan history who, having studied with Fernand Braudel in Paris, had been strongly influenced by the *Annales* School, which focused on long-term social and cultural history in contrast to narrower conceptions of political history. Stoianovich drew our attention to *Annaliste* paradigms and asked us to write papers on ‘patterns of consumption’. Consumption could have many meanings but to Professor Stoianovich it meant specifically food history.² Studying food history opened my eyes to the fact that the story of the human past is far richer than only political history and that there was more to history than the political emphasis of Leopold von Ranke and the German school. A growing awareness of the role of the everyday would orient my subsequent work on the history of food and, subsequently, tourism. Later, I would also apply this awareness to the study of France during the Second World War.

In Professor Stoianovich’s seminar, students could select any geographic area in Eastern Europe and, already committed to Central Europe, I chose Serbia, the country that seemed geographically closest to my area of interest. Using French, German and English language

²An outstanding example of the *Annales* approach to history is the work of Georges Duby, which he discusses in his contribution to Nora’s *Essais d’ego-histoire* (Duby 1987, 132–133).

sources, I came to appreciate the cultural importance of food in history: the significance of meals and their preparation, religion and food taboos, and gender and social status in the preparation and consumption of meals. In a sense, my work with Professor Stoianovich made me an importer of what Pierre Nora referred to in the conclusion of his *Essais d'ego-histoire* (1987, 359) as '*l'école d'histoire française, notre seul grand produit intellectuel d'exportation*' (the French school of history, our only major intellectual export product).

LEFT AND RIGHT IN THE 1960s AND MY CHOICE OF AUSTRIAN CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM

Although very different in their histories and cultures, France and Central Europe were part of the excitement that Europe, or perhaps better expressed, 'the Continent', exerted in the America of the 1950s and 1960s, to which Paxton had referred (2007). This feeling was perhaps best exemplified by the popularity of Arthur Frommer's guidebook, *Europe on Five Dollars a Day*, first published in 1957. Growing up in a family whose political views ranged from what might be called moderate to far Left and coming of age during the 1960s at a time when many of my student associates were involved in the political Left, I wanted to understand the Right, 'the other side' as I saw it, to try to discover patterns of authority and their attraction for followers, which I saw as deeply ingrained in both American and European society and which, in my thinking, typified the Right more than the Left. While others were interested in working-class history, I wished to study what I saw as the attraction of the political Right to the lower middle classes. The connections between what seemed, in an oddly nostalgic way, the glory days of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna and the later German National Socialist movement seemed ripe for exploration, especially in the political career of Lueger in Vienna, who, as noted previously, appealed in large part to the lower middle classes and was cited as a reference by Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf* (Hitler 1943, 74 and 107–108).

For my doctoral project, I therefore focused on Vienna and its region, with books such as Kann's (1950) in mind. I selected Lueger's Christian Social movement and, because Professor Kann suggested that the late nineteenth-century had been more fully covered in the literature, I focused on the period from the victory over Napoleon in 1815

to the 1848 revolutions. A Fulbright Grant to Austria for the academic year 1966–1967 enabled me to write my doctoral thesis, *Catholic Social Thought in Austria, 1815–1848*, with research in church archives in Vienna, Sankt Pölten and elsewhere in Lower Austria. Archival research was quite different fifty years ago. In winter, the workday in the Sankt Pölten archive ended at about 4 pm because there were no lights in the archive reading room. To read the catalogue, I first had to learn to read old German manuscript handwriting (*Kurrentschrift*) but subsequently enjoyed the experience of working with the old handcrafted documents. Few of the early nineteenth-century clerics had much to say about the emerging factory workers and those who did often criticised their lack of church attendance and what the clergymen saw as their proclivities to procreate illegitimately. Having completed my Fulbright year and the research for my dissertation, I returned to the USA in the summer of 1967, to finish writing it and begin a teaching career. While in Vienna, I had been offered a lectureship at Brooklyn College.

FRANCE AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR: LAUNCHING AN ACADEMIC CAREER AND THE CHOICE OF FRENCH COLLABORATIONISM

Upon my return I found a political landscape that had changed significantly, at least in my eyes, since my departure from America a year earlier. Brooklyn College was now the scene of extensive and vocal political protest against the American war in Vietnam. Protests also called for extending civil rights to all citizens and curricular reform in higher education, much as the more widely publicised movements at Columbia University and in Paris in 1968. In a conversation with a colleague in which I questioned the utility of physically fighting the police, I remember being called a ‘fascist’, and accused of being interested only in preserving the power of old men. In the protest discourse of the late 1960s, the word ‘fascist’ was a rhetorical insult for those perceived as the enemy. These—‘the establishment’—were often old men and were presumably accused of standing in opposition to the revolutionary youth of the day. My colleague had appeared at a police office in New York asking to be arrested along with others at Columbia because she had been obliged to leave a demonstration prior to the arrival of the police to take care of her young child. In retrospect, I remember this incident as having crystallised my

interest in the political Right and its connections to the lower middle classes, especially at a time when it seemed that most of my colleagues were focused on the Left and the factory working classes. It piqued my curiosity about real interwar and wartime ‘fascists,’ and their possible supporters among the lower middle classes.

With the doctorate in hand by 1969, I was offered a professorial position at Mills College, a small liberal arts college, an American term for ‘university’, for women, in Oakland, California, across the Bay from San Francisco. I have been there since, now approaching half a century, and Mills has remained a women’s college despite many of its peers having decided to admit men in the intervening years. For me, the transition from the East Coast to the West Coast was accompanied by a transition in research projects as well. I decided that I had said all I had to say about the Catholic Church and workers in Austria during the first half of the nineteenth-century and that it was time to move on. Perhaps, as Maurice Agulhon described his own trajectory, in Nora’s *Essais d’ego-histoire*, when he left the field of labour history, I, too, needed to *faire “mon trou” ailleurs*’ (Agulhon 1987, 40).

The issue of fascism still interested me and I continued to reflect on having been called a ‘fascist’. Everything I knew at the time told me that the original ‘Fascists’ had been anything but old—the Italian Fascist hymn ‘*Giovinezza*’ hardly extolled the elderly! The appeal of interwar fascism for European youth, in juxtaposition with the later use of the term as a political epithet referencing an elderly establishment, was intriguing and disturbing. As I contemplated a new research topic in the early 1970s, I looked to the ‘fascist’ interest in the ideal of youth and their emphasis on camaraderie and martial spirit, however wrong-headed I thought them to be. I imagined that there was a kind of pure fascist militancy that could be more easily studied in countries where fascists had not made the political compromises necessary to gain power as in Italy and Germany. Rightly or wrongly, I considered France and Romania as two countries where fascists had not gained power during the interwar years. Their youth movements might then represent more clearly the ‘ideal’, uncorrupted by the holding of power. Looking back, these movements were of course far more complex in their composition and history than a focus on their appeal to youth would indicate but it was the latter that was my theme at the outset. Given the higher visibility of France in American culture, my knowledge of French and what I suspected would be difficulties of doing research in the Romania of Nicolae

Ceausescu, I chose France. The Paris collaboration movements under German occupation, about which little had been written at the time, offered the opportunity to study in depth yet another political movement in contrast to the Left.

I decided to study the ‘collaborationists’, in principle those who supported Nazi Germany from genuine political conviction and remained supporters to the end in contrast to ‘collaborators’ who supported Germany for material gain and only while it appeared that the Germans would win the war. In reality, I soon learned that this distinction often failed in practice. Many sincere believers in the German New Order in France also profited from their positions and not all who supported the Germans ideologically necessarily stayed with them to the end.³ Fascinated as I was by my project and under pressure to publish in the academic world, I moved ahead with my project. In the spring of 1973 I met with Professor Gordon Wright, a prominent American specialist in French history at Stanford University, who tried to dissuade me, saying that the collaborationists would never talk about their wartime activities. Stubbornly, I pushed ahead. Milorad M. Drachkovitch, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford, gave me an introduction to Georges Albertini, who had been Secretary General of Marcel Déat’s *Rassemblement National Populaire*, one of the two largest collaborationist parties during the war. Upon arriving in France in the summer of 1973, I interviewed Albertini, who introduced me to several other former collaborators with whom he was acquainted, and eventually, during several research trips to France over the following three years, I was able to interview some three dozen individuals who had been involved in various movements of the collaboration: the *Parti Populaire Français*, the *Rassemblement National Populaire*, the *Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire* and the *Francistes*, as well as others who had served in the *Légion des Combattants contre le Bolchévisme* and the *Waffen-SS* in Russia. Invariably, I asked each interviewee for further contacts and was thereby able to extend my network.

³I discussed this distinction in my book, *Collaborationism in France During the Second World War* (1980, 17–18). See also Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (2001, 140–141), who differentiated between collaborators who supported the Vichy government and its stance of ‘*la France seule*’, or France alone in the spirit of Charles Maurras, and collaborationists who sought to go further in aligning France with Germany’s New Order.

In my interviews I learned quickly that the French collaborationists were highly diverse rather than specifically Rightist, Nationalist, Monarchist or any other easily identifiable label, and that they had come from a wide variety of pre-existing French political movements—some had been Socialists or Communists years before—reflecting the many divisions in interwar French political life (Gordon 1980, 17–42).⁴ I sought to study the personalities of the collaborationists and their innate characteristics brought out in times of crisis during the interwar and wartime years. I wanted to profile the ‘other’, the true believer, likely to support ideologically a form of collaboration with Nazi Germany that extended even beyond that of official Vichy. French government archives of the war years were closed but there were many former collaborators still alive and willing to talk to me.

ORAL HISTORY *AVANT LA LETTRE*

With no formal training in oral history, a field only then emerging in the academic world, I sought to understand my respondents’ actions and their motivations. My questions focused on their activities and beliefs, at least insofar as they could recall them. Because I wanted their stories above all, I said little beyond posing questions and encouraging my respondents to talk (Gordon 1980, 326–346).⁵ Not all my questions were satisfactorily answered and, not surprisingly, some of my interviewees sought to influence, subtly or not, what I would later write. Most of them were relatively well educated and genteel, behaving in the manner of Christian de la Mazière, the volunteer in Charlemagne Division of the *Waffen-SS* interviewed in Marcel Ophüls’s film *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (The Sorrow and the Pity) in 1969. I was treated very kindly by virtually all of my interviewees and learned that lining up personality types with political convictions was more complex than I had originally thought. Years later, I still struggle to reconcile their behaviour toward me with their wartime actions.

⁴See also Philippe Burrin, *France Under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise* (1996, 384), who noted that ‘collaborationism incorporated every pre-war political family, with the notable exceptions of the radicals and Christian Democrats, and each produced a team, however small, to elaborate a discourse based on its own heritage’.

⁵This chapter was subsequently republished in Loyd E. Lee (ed.), *World War II: Crucible of the Contemporary World: Commentary and Readings* (1991, 87–105).

As sensitive topics were discussed in the interviews, I did not use recording devices of any kind, partly to put the respondents at ease and partly because I did not trust my own technical ability to operate them. Instead, I took extensive notes, trying to write down as much as possible of what the respondents said. Immediately after each interview I would go either to a nearby café or my room in Paris where I would transcribe my notes to make certain that I could re-read them subsequently and that they were fully clear and comprehensive. A side benefit of the interviews was that I became familiar with every *arrondissement* in Paris and many of its suburbs as well. On the other hand, without direct transcriptions I may have lost some information. Even if some of my interviewees were formulaic in their responses about fighting Communism or supporting Marshal Pétain, each was an adventure. Looking back, I approached each interview with a bit of anxiety, first to make sure I would find the agreed upon site, often in the interviewee's home in a part of Paris or its suburbs with which I was unfamiliar, and secondly, to review in my mind the questions I wanted to ask, sometimes based on comments made by a prior interviewee. After a while, I began to hone my skills comparing stories to try to gauge at least the probabilities of the accuracy of what I was being told.

All of my arranged interviewees were male. However, in one case during an interview at his home in Paris, a former *Franciste* casually mentioned that his wife, who was present, had also been involved with the movement. Sensitised by teaching in a women's college, I very much wished to interview women as well as men and upon finishing my interview with *Monsieur*, I asked if I might interview *Madame* as well. Both graciously consented. She indicated that she had become active in the women's section of the *Francistes* because it provided a rare opportunity for social life during the Occupation. She said nothing about the political orientation of the *Francistes*. While I directed my questions to her, most of the responses came from her husband, reflecting perhaps assumed gender roles in France at the time, more prominently possibly within the political Right.⁶ The only other woman I was able to interview was Odette Paineau, who was seventeen in 1942 when she joined the *Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle* (JEN), a youth group supporting collaboration with Nazi Germany and linked to Alphonse de Châteaubriant's

⁶ Author's interview with Pierre Bousquet and Madame Bousquet, Paris, 22 July 1974. It may be significant that unfortunately I was not told Madame Bousquet's first name.

Groupe Collaboration. Again underplaying the political orientation of the *JEN*, Paineau, whose father was *pétainiste*, recalled the camaraderie of the weekly meetings with some forty other young women at a time when other venues, such as the university, were closed. She recalled distributing soup and packages of supplies in bombed areas where houses had been destroyed during the latter stages of the war.⁷ She indicated that she had lost touch with her friends from the war years and I was unable to establish additional contacts with other women who had been involved in the collaboration movements. If many former collaborationists wished to conceal their wartime activities, there was also a proclivity among them to shield and downplay the women and their activities.

Of particular significance was an interview with a young Frenchman who had been living in Tunis during the war. He had volunteered with the *Phalange Africaine*, organised to fight against the Americans following their landing in North Africa. He remarked about how strange it seemed that thirty years after the war he was discussing his activities with an American. Most of those who volunteered to help the Germans, he continued, would justify their action later by saying they wanted to fight Communism. He, on the other hand, had joined the *Phalange Africaine* specifically to fight the Americans. When I asked him why, his reply was 'they would bring back the Jews'. Anti-Semitism and anti-Communism were continual themes in my interviews, which were conducted while the Soviet Union still existed and Europe was divided by the Cold War. None of my interviewees expressed positive feelings toward Jews or regrets at what happened to them during the war.

Especially outspoken about the Jews was Marc Augier, who became a political officer for the *Waffen-SS française* and editor of its official publication, *Devenir* (To Become). He maintained that the Jews had been the real winners in the war because Israel had been created as a result. He attributed the establishment of Israel to what he perceived as an unjustified sympathy among the victorious Allied powers for the Jewish people after the war and, while not exactly denying the facticity of the Holocaust, he argued that its scope had been far overstated.⁸ Despite

⁷ Author's interview with Odette Paineau, Paris, 25 July 1974.

⁸ Author's interview with Marc Augier, Paris, 4 July 1974. I expanded upon Augier's political philosophy in an unpublished paper ("The Dream That Was a Disaster? Marc Augier's Vision of Nazi Europe", presented at the Western Society for French History, Banff, Alberta, 12 October 2012).

Gordon Wright's earlier prediction, several of my interviewees told me that they were happy to talk about their wartime experiences because they thought that their stories would become more believable if told by an American too young to have been involved in the war. Most striking was that none of my interviewees regretted supporting the German wartime effort. The closest to a regret was a comment by Roland Silly, former head of the *Jeunesses Nationales-Populaires*, one of the collaborationist youth groups, to the effect that collaboration with the Germans had been 'useless' and that the lesson learned was not to back the losing side in war.⁹

Looking back, I continually sought to understand the collaboration, not justify it. I believe I was able to avoid my work being instrumentalised by my interviewees because it also included German and French archival material as well as the perspectives of others who experienced the war and wrote about it, including members of the Resistance such as André Basdevant, who worked in the youth affairs section of the Free French government in Algiers. As Peter Brooks wrote in 2014, in a review of a book about Paul de Man: 'To try to understand is not in this case to excuse, but rather to hold ourselves, as judges, to an ethical standard' (Brooks 2014, 44).

My interviews proved an especially precious resource as most of the relevant French archival material was still unavailable to historians at the time and the archival material I was able to consult focused more on what the collaborators did than their rationale for acting as they did. Beyond the interviews, I followed Paxton's model in using captured German documentation that had been microfilmed in the United States and that I could purchase, together with the limited sources available in the *Centre de Documentation Juive*, now the *Mémorial de la Shoah*, in Paris (Gordon 1980, 363–364; cf. Paxton 2007, 40–41). Cornell University Press published *Collaborationism in France During the Second World War*, my book resulting from this research, in 1980.

Wary of possible legal problems they might be encountering if my book quoted and named my interviewees, Cornell University Press officials just prior to its publication asked me to contact all of them to obtain their written approval of any texts I might use from the interviews. Accordingly, I sent them copies of texts I wished to use from the

⁹ Author's interview with Roland Silly, 4 July 1974.

interviews. Most replied positively and some made minor changes to my notes, which I was able to accept and include in the book. Only one refused but because of the passage of some five years since the interviews many had either moved or died and others undoubtedly did not wish to be publicly cited.¹⁰ In retrospect, I was fortunate to have been able to do the interviews when so many who were involved were accessible. My book was well received, as indicated by Patrice Higonnet, who wrote in the *Times Literary Supplement* (1981) that ‘the political history of collaborationism has now been done’, which was a bit of an exaggeration perhaps as there has been substantial literature on the subject since.

BROADENING PERSPECTIVES: FOOD, FASCISM AND WORLD WAR II

Although my primary focus had been on studying the French collaborationists, I continued to be interested in food, especially its political and social symbolism. Having taught food history at both Mills College and the University of California, Berkeley, I wrote a first article about teaching social history through the study of cuisine patterns in 1974, a second about food and culture in 1983 and a third three years later on the then emerging California cuisine, published in France (Gordon 1974, 1983, 1986). During the late 1980s, my research interests expanded, in part in order to present papers at professional conferences such as the Oxford Food Symposia and the Bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989, but they continued to focus on the political Right. For the Oxford Food Symposia I began exploring the connections between food and Fascism. In Germany the Nazis launched a propaganda campaign for the *Eintopfgericht*, the one-pot meal that was supposedly to save food for the needy but also served as a communitarian meal to express popular solidarity with the state and extend party control over the population. Although I did not find a parallel in Vichy France, I did find reference to a *plato unico* serving a similar function in Franco’s Spain (Gordon 1988; Gordon and Jacobs 1989).

¹⁰Some of the interview material appeared later without mention of names in my article, ‘The Morphology of the Collaborator: The French Case’, *Journal of European Studies* 23 (1993).

For the bicentennial of the French Revolution conference in Paris in 1989, I explored the images of that revolution in the political rhetoric of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Vichy France, where I found that although Italian Fascism and German Nazism in general rejected the 1789 Revolution as being both democratic in spirit and specific to France, some spokespeople for these governments sought to claim the Revolutionary legacy while at the same time disregarding its most basic political philosophy of liberty and equality. Ugo Redano, representing Fascist Italy at an international conference in 1934, emphasised the role of the Revolution in creating democracy, which he argued had been perfected in Italy by Fascism. He linked Fascism to Rousseau's concept of the general will, which he argued had set the tone for the French Revolution and which he saw expressed in the Fascist state. Hitler also, while opposing the liberal and democratic direction of the Revolution, praised it for unleashing the will of the people, a phenomenon that he claimed had been perfected in Germany by the National Socialists (Gordon 1989).

I also wrote a counterfactual history essay on the role that Spain might have played in the Second World War as it had become increasingly clear to me that Hitler and the Germans, in celebrating their victory and touring Paris in June 1940, had missed an opportunity to enlist Spain into their campaign, close Gibraltar and possibly win the war right then. At the height of his victory, Hitler dismissed offers of Spanish cooperation. Only later in the summer and autumn of 1940, did the Germans shift their position, by which time Spanish demands for compensation had grown to more than the Germans were willing to grant and Spain remained out of the conflict. I gave a talk summarising this argument at Mills in November 1997 and then wrote an essay, published in Spain in 2000, detailing how the closure of the Mediterranean to the British might have had decisive military effects (Gordon 2000). My argument was summarised briefly in English in an abstract published in Russia in 2001 and was also included in my preface to the *Historical Dictionary of World War II France*, which I edited in 1998, a time of renewed interest following the Paul Touvier trial, the assassination of René Bousquet and the questioning of President François Mitterrand's involvement with the Vichy government (Gordon 1998a, 2001a).¹¹

¹¹For a more recent similar counterfactual argument about the potential role of Spain and Gibraltar in World War II, see Mark Grimsley (2015).

My various projects in the late 1990s and early 2000s included a study of the 1968 student revolt in Paris through the use of notebooks kept by a friend, Ian C. Dengler, an American and a graduate in political theory with a thesis in aesthetics and politics from Stanford University in California. Of the same generation, he and I had both gravitated toward the study of France and he had spent several years in Europe during the 1960s. An American participant-observer in the Paris events of May 1968, Dengler gained access to virtually all the political groups involved and collected newspaper clippings representing the various viewpoints. He later made available to me his collection of notebooks, newspaper clippings and posters, all of which offered a unique glimpse into the various movements of the time (Gordon 1998b).¹² After having studied the political Right, it was fascinating to read his commentaries on the Left. Many of the Leftists he described had appeared as sectarian and authoritarian in their own way as had those I had studied on the Right. With thanks to Henry Rousso, I had a chance to present a paper on these notebooks at the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP), where I had been graciously invited to work as a *chercheur associé étranger* in 2001–2002. Although I found the discussions of Socialism, Anarchism, Situationism and the various other movements fascinating, I feared taking on too large a research agenda. As it turned out, a chance discovery in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) took me in a different direction.

BACK TO WORLD WAR II FRANCE: MY DISCOVERY OF THE *DEUTSCHE WEGLEITER*

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, I was engaged in research projects related to food history and tourism that led to publications in both areas (Gordon 2002a, b). The study of food history had led me to tourism and a surprising discovery in the Bibliothèque nationale in 1996 brought me back to World War II France. In the annex of the old BnF in Versailles, I came across a collection of *Der Deutsche Wegleiter*, the bi-weekly German-language tourist guide to France published during the

¹²For Dengler, see also Deborah Schultz and Edward Timms, *Pictorial Narrative in the Nazi Period: Felix Nussbaum, Charlotte Salomon and Arnold Daghani* (2009, 100–101).

Occupation. Produced by local French people, the guide opened another vista into the dimensions of wartime collaboration. It was described recently as a combination of *Pariscopes* and the *Guides bleus*, publishing humorous anecdotal stories, similar to the American *Saturday Evening Post* and other popular magazines of the era. To my surprise, there was no literature about this guidebook. It became the beginning of my exploration of war tourism: German tourism in occupied France, the French tourism industry during the war and subsequently *tourisme de mémoire* since the war (Gordon 1996, 1998c, 2001b).¹³

Tourism in occupied France is a striking illustration of what has been called the ‘banalities of war’.¹⁴ Having studied both food and tourism in war, I have concluded that the combination of the apparently everyday and leisure peacetime interests with the horrors of war make the latter perhaps in a small way, understandable, showing how seemingly ordinary people may maintain an attitude of normalcy or ‘life goes on’ while participating in what may only be described as horrific acts of brutality. Studying tourism in occupied France reminded me of many of the personal kindnesses of my interviewees during the 1970s combined with the policies and actions they had supported during the war years and had continued to support when I met them. The coexistence in the same individuals of the continuities of everyday life with the violence of war exemplifies the complexity of the human personality and seemed a subject worthy of further exploration.

Reading the many issues of *Der Deutsche Wegleiter*, which began publication in July 1940, a month after the arrival of the Germans in France and continuing uninterrupted until just before the Liberation in August 1944, brought me back to the theme of the French in the Second World War. I examined the history of the Maginot Line, the line of fortresses built during the 1930s to protect France from a renewed German

¹³Some of the *Wegleiter* guidebooks have recently been translated into French in *Où sortir à Paris? Le Guide du soldat allemand* (Lemire 2013). See also Emmanuel Hecht (2013).

¹⁴The concept of banality or ordinariness associated with the war and its related persecution is reflected in the concept of the ‘banality of evil’, a term popularised by Hannah Arendt. Similarly, Christopher Browning’s *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (1992) deals with the banality or ordinariness of those who carried out mass murders during the war.

invasion. After the military campaign of May–June 1940 when the Germans simply circumvented the fortifications, the Line became a symbol of a head in the sand mentality. It rapidly became an item of tourist curiosity among prominent Germans including Hitler. I also explored its post-war history as an example of what has sometimes been called ‘dark tourism’, or touring the sites of disasters (Gordon 2013a). I examined the ‘other’ Vichy as well, namely its history as a spa centre both before and after its four-year stint as provisional capital of France. Its nineteenth- and early twentieth-century role as spa centre and its active hotel life with modern telephone connections had been a factor in its selection as provisional capital in 1940 (Gordon 2012, 2013b).

AN ENDURING CONNECTION WITH FRANCE

Even if the subjects of food and tourism occasionally took me away from the war, they did not take me away from France, where in both areas France continues to exert influence around the world, even if progressively under challenge by cultural change. Spanish, for example, has replaced French as the most popularly studied foreign language in United States institutions of higher education since the late 1960s and the proportions of listings for ‘France’ in the English-language *Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature* have declined during the same period (see Fig. 1 and Furman et al. 2010, 26). France remains, however, according to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) statistics, the most visited country in the world. Gastronomy is another realm in which French cultural ethos remains strong and French remains the language of gastronomy with people around the world still using French terms in restaurants and cookbooks. Even in the food world, however, France is being challenged as symbolised by the 1976 ‘judgment of Paris’, a wine tasting where California wines were rated equal or superior to their French counterparts (Peterson 2001). As of 2016, Japan and France were tied, each with 26 Michelin three-star restaurants. One of the Tokyo three-starred restaurants, however, was that of the French chef Joël Robuchon. Of course, the Michelin guide itself is French, indicating a continuing presence in the language and aesthetics of gastronomy. The continuing academic interest in food studies is evident in the large number and high quality of essay submissions for the special issue on food

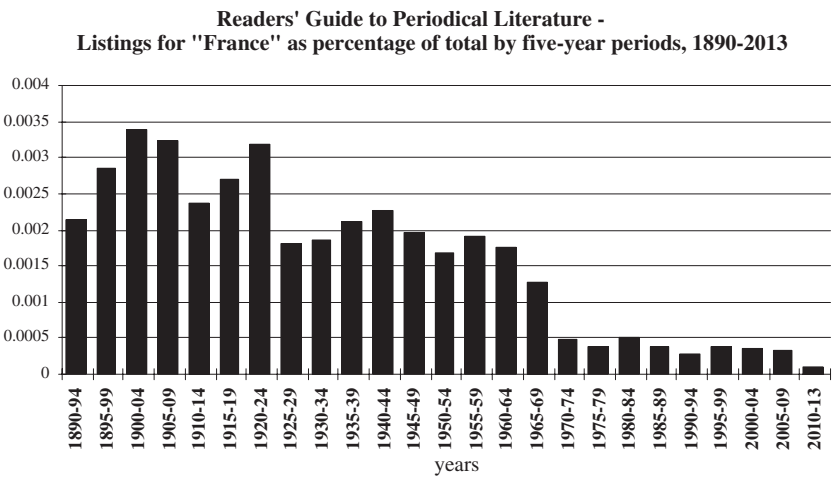


Fig. 1 *Readers' guide to periodical literature* (<https://www.ebsco.com/products/research-databases/readers-guide-to-periodical-literature>)—listings for 'France' as percentage of total by five-year periods, 1890–2013 (data collected and compiled by Bertram M. Gordon)

in French history, which I co-edited with Erica J. Peters, published by *French Historical Studies* in April 2015.¹⁵

The actions of the French during World War II, however, remain fascinating to me in terms of human behaviour under stress. Looking ahead, they are likely to be contextualised into a larger historical framework. France has witnessed bouts of retribution, purges, doubt and guilt, all encompassed in the problem of collaboration from the capture of King Jean le Bon in 1356 through the treachery of General Charles-François Dumouriez during the Revolutionary wars, the post-Waterloo return of Louis XVIII 'in the baggage of the allies' and the post-Commune expiation represented by the Sacré-Cœur cathedral, all encompassed in the *longue durée* (to use another French term) problem of collaboration (cf. Rémond 1972, 7; Handourtzel and Buffet 1989, 25). There were also those in France and elsewhere in Europe who cast

¹⁵Previously, my wife Suzanne Perkins, an artist and art historian, and I were invited to contribute chapters on French chocolate to an anthology on chocolate history (Perkins 2009; Gordon 2009).

their lot with Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, in other words both non-Communist and Communist resisters and sympathisers, as there were those who supported the Germans. In its generic meaning of working in conjunction with another, collaboration is neither positive nor negative, good nor bad, until someone decides it is (Gordon 1993). Consideration of World War II France, in other words, is part of a larger phenomenon over time and space, as the destinies of France have crossed and continue to intersect those of many states. None of this, however, diminishes the importance of the wartime events in France and the responsibility of those who chose collaboration with Nazi Germany between 1940 and 1944. The generation that experienced the Second World War will pass and the stories we tell will be subsumed into the longer flow of history as the French language becomes increasingly globalised (Stovall 2015, 441–444).

The influence of the French language may well increase dramatically in the next few decades, mainly because of the sharp demographic rise in many of France's former colonies in Africa.¹⁶ A timely study edited by Christie McDonald and Susan R. Suleiman and published in 2010 emphasised the many historical connections between the spoken and written French language across the globe.¹⁷

As historians in particular and students of the past in general, we can be certain of change as time advances. Reflecting the European orientation of my own cultural background and era, my trajectory has oscillated among World War II France, food and tourism, and at present the various intersections of each. My forthcoming book, titled *With Camera and Guidebook: Tourism in France and the Second World War*, is scheduled for publication by Cornell University Press in 2018. It focuses on the tourism iconicity of France, and especially Paris, and the role of tourism and its images in helping provide a kind of normalcy for both French and Germans during the war, as well as a way of understanding

¹⁶My thanks to Manuel Bragança for emails, dated 16 January 2015 and 21 June 2015, respectively, citing Martine Jacot (2014) and Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry (2014). See also Furman et al. (2010) and Semple (2014).

¹⁷Also, in 2015, a call for abstracts for an international conference in Australia on 'global France' notes that continental France, once the centre of the world in the eyes of many, has given way to 'multiple centres, to conflicting and complementary sites of physical, economic and cultural exchange'. See <http://hrc.anu.edu.au/events/global-france-global-french-2015> (accessed 24 March 2015).

and perhaps humanising war for post-war tourists to sites such as the Normandy beaches. This book will be a step in linking our understanding of war and its culture to the growing field of tourism studies.¹⁸ I participate as a core member of the Tourism Studies Working Group at the University of California, Berkeley, and since 2013 have been General Secretary of the International Commission for the History of Travel and Tourism. In the latter capacity, I organised two days of sessions on ‘The Uses of History in Tourism’ during the August 2015 meeting of the *Congrès International des Sciences Historiques* in Jinan, China.

As a historian, my role is to convey to audiences, including colleagues, students and the public at large, the vitality of human agency, whether for good or evil, through time. Each of us, as one might say in French, ‘*apporte sa pierre à l’édifice*’ (adds his/her stone to the building). Doing this well involves an understanding of our own *ego-histoires*, to use Pierre Nora’s term. How the role of France and the French in World War II is seen by future generations will depend, of course, on the directions taken in the future by France, Europe and humanity as a whole as history continues to unfold.

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¹⁸I addressed the developing academic field of the cultural studies of tourism in ‘Touring the Field: The Infrastructure of Tourism History Scholarship’, *Journal of Tourism History* (2015).

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When Faced with the Question

Colin Nettelbeck

*And then, you know how life is,
like a woven fabric in which all
the threads cross, and what I want
one day is to see the whole pattern.*

Antonio Tabucchi, *A Riddle*

PREAMBLE

When faced with the question of how and why I became engaged with the history of the French experience of the Second World War, I was at first inclined to offer a single sentence: 'My father died when I was three, as a result of wounds received during the 1941 Syrian campaign against the Vichy French, leaving me permanently bewildered as to how such a thing could have happened.' That one sentence contains the psychological truth of a need for understanding which has motivated pretty much all my work, which could be interpreted as a quest to fill the void left by my father's disappearance. Once identified, the thread is unmistakable. It would, however, be quite wrong to imply that the motivation was

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conscious. I was well into my adulthood, and well into my career as a specialist of French studies, before I learned the place and circumstances of the death of the father who, until then, had simply ‘died in the war’ and not come back. And, as we shall see, in the head and heart self-examination of my ‘ego-history’, it is not the only thread that matters. Antonio Tabucchi (1989), in a few lines, encapsulates what this essay will attempt to do.

The story of my journey will, I hope, show how key moments, experiences and encounters have become meaningful at times that do not necessarily correspond to their chronology. The composition has also been complicated by unexpected additional memories and discoveries stimulated by the process itself. My text has evolved into a kind of Proustian construction—an accordion text that could potentially keep expanding until I cease drawing breath. The conundrum is that the desire to recapture and explain the past quickly brings recognition that the present is itself time passing and becoming past, constantly distending the subject of one’s reflection. It is hard to make a closed form of that. I remain aware of an entangling awkwardness that affects me, both as a person and as the would-be historian of my own trajectory. As the cultural historian I now consider myself to be, I am called upon to create a coherent narrative, turning broken or crooked lines into meaning-bearing continuities. At the same time, my personal retrospection has the uncanny and uncomfortable effect of making what was experienced as chance and confusion appear somehow as destiny, even predestined. All historians are aware of the dangers of such teleology.

Reflecting on my own trajectory is not entirely new to me. At the time of my retirement as Professor of French at the University of Melbourne in 2005, I gave a valedictory lecture entitled *What is this thing called France?* I offered a number of explanations of what had drawn me to French studies in the first place and an assessment of how the field to which I had devoted my life had changed, in shape and meaning, during the time I had worked in it. My title’s nod to Cole Porter was a confession of a certain *quand même* francophilia, and because that lecture has been published (Nettelbeck and Anderson 2006) and is now a public document, I do not propose to repeat its contents here, although I will draw on some of them.

TRAINING IN ADELAIDE AND PARIS

I was trained to become a traditional French literary scholar. At the University of Adelaide in the second half of the 1950s, under the jovial but demanding eye of Professor James G. Cornell (himself a student

of Melbourne University's legendary A. R. Chisholm) specialisation in French language and literature meant first of all three years of Romance philology, immersed in Mildred K. Pope's *From Latin to Modern French* (1934) and the *Précis de grammaire historique de la langue française* by Brunot et Bruneau (1937). In literature, the approach was unabashedly canonical and Lansonian, organised into centuries from *La Chanson de Roland* to the more recently dead Proust, Gide, Saint-Exupéry. Although the excellent teaching dodged around without slavishly following the chronology, knowing where the many dozens of texts we read fitted in was a central discipline of the course. I did, during those years, study some early modern European history, but it was through French literature that my historical sensibility was first shaped. I owe a particular debt to the French *lecteur* at Adelaide University, Henri Souillac, whose own exquisite, if flamboyant, literary appreciation was inseparable from both his attention to language and his constant reference to historical context.

I was much drawn to the mediaeval period and the Renaissance—Villon entranced me with his pithy evocations of lives foreshortened and his call for gentle-heartedness from his human brothers; and I loved, when reading Rabelais or Montaigne, the profligate energy with which new language would explode like fireworks onto the page. I still think I could easily have gone in that direction. However, something in me was even more strongly drawn to the contemporary: what I read of Sartre and Camus unsettled my youthful Adelaide morality but the ethos of freedom I found in their work was powerfully attractive. Strangely, the first decisive event—the first experience that would lead to an actual career decision—turned out to be a film, screened by the university film club quite independently of the French programme. It was Robert Bresson's *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1951). I had never seen anything like it: the extended shots, the slow rhythm, the close-ups, the stylised acting—it was a new visual experience that I found beautiful. In addition, I was at that time engaged in a spiritual quest that was soon to lead me into the Catholic Church; and the story of the young priest who manages to find transcendent grace in an utterly grim existence reached into the depths of me. Our final honours year had space for a personally chosen special study and it was thus, via Bresson (and the sowing of the seed of my later interest in French cinema), that I encountered the world of Georges Bernanos (1888–1948).

In those days, the norm for Australian students wishing to continue beyond their undergraduate degree in French studies was to go to Paris. When I was fortunate enough to win a well-endowed Adelaide University

Travelling Scholarship, that was what I did, with a determination to write my doctoral thesis for the University of Paris on the novels of Bernanos. The bizarre and arcane workings of the early 1960s Sorbonne are now largely consigned to the oblivion they deserve. One of my Adelaide teachers, Elliott Forsyth, a specialist in sixteenth-century Protestant writing, had given me an introduction to his own thesis director, who promptly announced to me that he would direct mine. I do not know, to this day, if I had any way out of that situation, but it was both anomalous and prophetic that I should fall under the guidance of V. L. Saulnier, eminent *seizièmiste*, whose first name, Verdun, linked him to the heroics and suffering of the First World War (he was born in 1917) and whose university career blossomed during the Second, when he first published his multi-volume history of French literature, mostly during the Pétain years (Saulnier 1942, 1943a, b, c, 1945). It would be many decades before I became aware of the ironies and implications of having a thesis supervisor with such a background; even now I have not explored them fully, nor do I have any appetite to do so.

Saulnier's main contributions to my intellectual development occurred during the first of the four or five meetings we had during my three-year doctoral candidacy. After explaining the principles of bibliography, he sensibly advised me that since I was going to be working on a novelist, I should become familiar with the novel as a genre. He had me compile a long list of French novels, with an emphasis on the twentieth century, but also including Diderot, Voltaire and the 'big four' of the nineteenth (Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Zola). My Adelaide studies had given me a good start but as I read my way through *Les Déracinés* (1897) by Maurice Barrès and the *romans-fleuves* of Roger Martin du Gard and Jules Romains, the more 'modern' work of François Mauriac and André Malraux, towards the contemporary experiments of the *Nouveau Roman*, I progressively became more conscious of the relationships between literary history and other histories: the history of ideas, and of the changing societies from which the narratives emerged. I did not limit myself to French. I also found time for Henry James, Lawrence Durrell, James Joyce, William Faulkner, Patrick White, Thomas Mann and the Russians—all of which helped give me a better feeling for what was specific in the French production.

In the meantime, long days under the green lamps of the Bibliothèque nationale, or in the other Paris libraries of the Sorbonne, Arsenal and Sainte-Geneviève, allowed me to get through all of Bernanos's writings,

including the posthumous publications (e.g. 1961, 1972, 1995), and just about everything that had been written about him. My aim was to explore the structures and textures of his imagined world through the patterns of his character creation: the similar kinds of figures that recur from novel to novel—priests, peasants, doctors, writers, rebellious adolescents. I wanted to understand the processes through which he managed to incarnate in these fictional but realistic figures a worldview that was uncompromisingly metaphysical. My approach was literary, a form of exegesis, and my thesis, and the book that I later drew from it, had as its title *Les Personnages de Bernanos romancier* (1970). I was nonetheless convinced that life and literature were intimately linked, and that both were spiritual adventures.

It was in this frame of mind that I also became familiar with the author's voluminous politically engaged writings, which took me directly into the roil of late nineteenth-century French politics, and their continuation into the twentieth century. Bernanos was a product of the religious, royalist Right: he admired the anti-Semitic Drumont, was a member of the *Action Française's Camelots du Roi* and hated republicanism for its rejection of France's religious traditions and what he saw as its idolatry of material progress. He famously and dramatically changed course as a result of his experience of the Spanish Civil War, delivering in *Les Grands Cimetières sous la lune* (1937) a savage indictment of Franco and the Spanish Church hierarchy. And then, from his exile in Brazil during World War II, he became a devoted participant in the Gaullist Resistance, although he was later furiously dismissive of de Gaulle's pressing offer to become France's first post-war Minister for Education.

I had few firm political views of my own at that time, but in following Bernanos's evolution, I soon realised that I was being taken into territory that was at odds with any notions of a linear direction of history. I also understood that what I was learning about Church history, anti-Semitism and the complexities of social change was too vital a force to be ignored in my efforts to understand contemporary France and Frenchness. Without being clearly aware of it, I had been nourishing an idea of a *France éternelle*, something unique, grand and immutable that was just waiting for my discovery of it. What confronted me, instead, was French culture's pluralism and dramatic changeability.

There is no space here to describe in detail the overall cultural impact three years in Paris had on the psyche of a young Australian student. I went to classical music concerts every week; I haunted the jazz cellars

(being myself an enthusiastic amateur player); I attended every kind of theatre, from the classics of the Comédie Française to Jean Vilar's *Théâtre National Populaire* at the Palais de Chaillot and the more avant-garde work of Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco. And every few days, indiscriminately but passionately, I went to the movies, building up without knowing it what would become one of the important pillars of my teaching and research. In those little smoke-filled cinemas of the Latin Quarter, I saw more films by Bresson and many of the French New Wave; I also watched American Westerns, Ealing Studios comedies, *The Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein 1925), and everything I could find by Bergman, Fellini and Antonioni.

Two other aspects of my life in Paris were pertinent to the subsequent development of my interests. Firstly, I lived through the violence of the months preceding and following the March 1962 Evian Agreements that brought the Algerian War to a close. Rather like Stendhal's Fabrice at Waterloo, I witnessed, without being a participant, numerous street clashes between student groups with opposing views, and between demonstrators of various persuasions and the *forces de l'ordre*. For months, in my fourth-floor rented room on the rue de Rennes, I heard almost nightly the explosions of Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS) plastic bombs, which must have included the two that specifically targeted Sartre's apartment down the road. I certainly saw the wrecking of the PCF office in the Place Saint-Sulpice and indeed, had I been walking slightly faster that morning, I could have been injured or killed by the explosion that scattered glass all over the pavement. Although my knowledge of France's colonial history was extremely sketchy, it was obvious that very large and important shifts were occurring, something bigger, even, than the shocking police massacres of Algerian demonstrators in October 1961 or of Communist protesters the following March. As a foreigner, I felt somehow invulnerable and never experienced any personal fear; but I became increasingly conscious that my purely literary perspective was inadequate to account for what was happening around me.

Secondly, my religious beliefs had led me to frequent the Centre Richelieu, the Catholic student centre situated in the Place de la Sorbonne. Its focus was primarily spiritual: it was a place for reflection, prayer and pilgrimage. The atmosphere was extremely dynamic as the whole Church was gearing up for the Second Vatican Council. Behind the sweeping changes in liturgical practice was a sense of a major paradigm shift in which the ancient hierarchical structures of a monolingual (Latin)

Church would be displaced by a diversity of communities of believers, in which the laity would play a much more active and prominent role. But the Centre was also a meeting-place, open to any student regardless of belief, and a forum in which one could, and did, discuss current political and social issues as readily as theology. The situation in Algeria generated arguments where passions rose very high indeed. I made a number of life-long friendships there, some of which turned out to be crucially instrumental for my future work on World War II. The most significant was Father Jean-Marie Lustiger, to whom I shall return later.

For a few weeks in the summer of 1962, I returned to Australia, where as good fortune would have it, I got to meet Germaine Brée, who was visiting the University of Adelaide. A world-famous authority on modern French literature, with seminal books on Gide, Proust, Sartre and Camus, she urged me to apply, once I had finished my thesis, for a position in the United States. She also put me in touch with Henri Peyre, the other ‘doyen’ of French studies in America. Peyre, too, was encouraging about my going to America but also counselled me about the value of eventually taking my acquired knowledge and experience back to Australia. My marriage, in Paris, to an American in 1963 determined which would come first. From today’s perspective, it is hard to imagine how easy it was for a young scholar to find work in 1963. Even before my thesis was complete, I sent off several letters to America and quickly had three good offers. Since my wife had spent a happy summer school there, we decided that the University of California at Berkeley would be the one to accept.

DISCOVERING AMERICA AND... CÉLINE

For some time in Berkeley, I continued to work on Bernanos, preparing my thesis for publication and exploring in more depth the movements of ideas and the socio-political developments that informed the genesis of his work. Then I discovered Eugen Weber’s marvellous 1962 book, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France* and, concluding that I could add little to his masterly synthesis, I turned back to literature. Before I left Paris, a friend had given me Céline’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932). It proved to be the start of an obsessional specialisation that would endure for most of my academic life, at the same time providing a prism through which I began to re-examine the whole history of post-imperial France. In one of his last

novels, Céline's narrator claims that the thread of History passes directly through him. I came to believe—and I still believe—that Céline's opus is a cultural synapse, a *sine qua non* for understanding twentieth-century France and its extraordinary upheavals. One can argue that it is also a historiographical synapse: the re-emergence of Céline in post-war France is not just an indicator of the way in which the war history would be rewritten, it is a locus of that change. In any case, for me, it was Céline who led to everything else.

At the same time, my Berkeley sojourn was enriching in many ways: the intellectual stimulation of life on that campus was constant, opening new mental horizons in every direction. This was the time when C. P. Snow's arguments about the *Two Cultures* (1959) were in the air, together with Teilhard de Chardin's reflections on religion and science (e.g. 1955, 1957, 1961), revelations about DNA by Crick and Watson (Watson 1968) and the vulgarisation of quantum theory. There was direct contact with such luminaries as Northrop Frye (1965) and Roland Barthes (e.g. 1957, 1964), as well as with contemporary creators like Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute and Jean-Luc Godard. New ways of approaching literature were multiplying; Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) was an interesting counterpoint for me as I discovered the practical value of structuralism as a literary analytical tool and the importance of considering discontinuities as well as continuities in literary texts. This would be an invaluable concept for my later forays into historical writing. I also found great value in Mircea Eliade's insights into the etiological function of myth (Eliade 1963).

Looking back from today's perspective, I realise that I witnessed in Berkeley the beginnings of the revolutions in travel, communication and other technologies that have been so beneficial to my work, particularly as an Australian. The word 'journey' is not just a metaphor for me. When I left Adelaide in 1960, it was on a ship that took five weeks to travel to Marseille. Two years later, the plummeting prices of airfares allowed me to take a Boeing 707 for a visit home. While I was in Berkeley, computers were beginning to be used to make concordances of canonical texts and we saw the appearance of the first microchips that would transform so spectacularly the tools and methods of research. Australia is still a long way from the people and archival materials I need but the development of online resources and internet communication has been greatly liberating.

Those Berkeley years were also full of political intensity and urgency that demanded to be taken into account. From the assassination of John F. Kennedy to those of his brother Robert and Martin Luther King five years later, it was evident that major socio-political changes had been unleashed. They were manifest in everyday life in Berkeley, where protests against the Vietnam War and against racial discrimination were untidily melded with revolutions in music and sexuality in a fundamental rejection of all traditions of authority. This ferment was met with violent police and military reaction. Much as I believed in the integrity of the academy, it was impossible to remain aloof when my students returned bleeding and bruised from off-campus protests or when a graduate seminar I was conducting was attacked by a teargas-tossing police goon. This was a time when Camus and Sartre, Ionesco and Beckett became of visceral importance to American students, undoubtedly less sensitive than they might have been to the differences among such authors but drawn to an ethos of existential uncertainty with which they could identify and a call to freedom that they found compelling.

AUSTRALIA, MORE CÉLINE, MODIANO AND MY MOVE INTO CULTURAL HISTORY

When my overview of Céline's novelistic work appeared in *PMLA* (Nettelbeck 1972), I had already left America to return to Australia, to senior appointments first at Monash University and then at the University of Melbourne (from 1994).

I feel I must insert here a contextual explanation about the life of a modern languages academic in Australian universities. Languages have always been poor cousins in Australia and practitioners have always had to accept three realities that differentiate them from colleagues in many other places. Firstly, they must expect heavy and broad-ranging teaching loads; secondly, they must be prepared to fight to defend the value of their work, not only within their institutions, but in the wider community; and thirdly, they are obliged to undertake many time-consuming administrative tasks. This obviously has to be balanced with research activity and militates against extensive bibliographies. In my own case, my teaching regularly included language acquisition classes, from beginners to advanced, French literature from Molière to the present, French cinema (the teaching of which I helped pioneer in Australia), Comparative Literature and European Studies. I maintained

close contact with secondary-school authorities in matters of curriculum reform, and with the Alliance Française and French Embassy officials; and for many years I served as Head of Department and School, inescapably involved in management and in policy development. I do not complain about this. I loved the teaching and learned a lot from it; and participating in the defence of our field of study has often brought satisfaction, if never a sense of winning a war. But I think this pattern helps explain why I have tended to write more in article or chapter form and have produced fewer full-length books.

In the early 1970s, a mature-age student in one of my literature classes at Monash University told that she knew someone who had some letters from Céline. This led to my meeting with Cecilie Waldmann, whose encounter with Louis Destouches—Céline's real name—at the time of the publication of *Voyage au bout de la nuit* had generated a brief love affair and an unusual but strong friendship. Cecilie, an Austrian Jew, broke this off when she learned of Céline's anti-Semitism (by which time, after many perilous adventures, she had escaped to the safety of Melbourne) but she had kept the letters, more than eighty of them, tied together with a silk ribbon under which was tucked a sprig of edelweiss. The awe and excitement I felt when she placed this packet in my hands were intense: I knew I held an element of Céline's biography that was at that point completely unknown; but it was the material existence of the letters themselves, in the presence of the person who had received them, that most affected me, the sense of somehow being in physical contact with history itself. This was my 'conversion' moment, the one in which the need to become more of a historian was born in me.

To adopt a historical methodology in relation to Céline entails an inevitable focus on the French experience of the Second World War. Thematically, from the two volumes *Féerie pour une autre fois* (1952, 1954) through the final trilogy—*D'un Château l'autre* (1957), *Nord* (1964) and *Rigodon* (1969)—his work is entirely constructed from that experience, and precisely because it was far from what was still, in the 1970s, a dominant Gaullist narrative of Occupation and Resistance, it forced me to view that narrative in a more critical light. At the same time, the looming existence of Céline's anti-Semitic diatribes of the late 1930s and the wartime period introduced a permanently painful dimension in which the tradition of French anti-Semitism I had encountered through Bernanos was henceforth in confluence with the Hitlerian Nazi attempt to exterminate an entire people.

Another personal factor enters the story at this point. It was during the 1970s that my maternal great-uncle informed me that my great-grandmother was not the plain East Londoner that I had believed but was of Dutch Jewish origin. I realised, of course, that this might mean more than a link to Jewishness: it could be that through my mother and her mother, I actually *was* Jewish according to the Jewish rules of descent. Quite unexpectedly, my academic work had taken on an ontological strand. Between the psychological pressure of my missing father, lost in a war against Vichy, and this long-buried but apparently unbroken Jewish connection through my mother, I was beginning to feel, with Céline's narrator, that I was myself a site of historical conflict. I must stress that this new dimension of my identity has remained hypothetical: my mother herself knew nothing about it, and indeed, in her later years, when she developed strongly negative views about Israel's policies towards its neighbours, she bluntly refused to talk about it; for my own part, I have not been able to trace the family line back far enough to be sure of my great-uncle's accuracy. However, the very plausibility of the lineage, I believe, has given me a more intense sense of identification with the tragedies of the *Shoah*. I would not presume, for all that, to claim it as my heritage.

Cecilie Waldmann's agreement to have her letters published had important consequences. The first of these was my admission to the inner circles of Parisian Céline activity. My efforts to publish a selection of the letters in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*—which eventually happened (Nettelbeck 1975)—led to a meeting with the late Jean-Pierre Dauphin who, together (at that time) with Henri Godard, was the gate-keeper of relations between would-be 'Célinians' and Céline's widow, Lucette Destouches, and her redoubtable lawyer, François Gibault. Dauphin was without contest the most pessimistic person I have ever come across, but for some reason he took a liking to me, opening his vast archival collection, facilitating what were extremely complicated meetings with Lucette and her lawyer, and helping me negotiate with the publishing house of Gallimard the rights and technicalities associated with my producing a *Cahier Céline* (No. 5, 1979) devoted to Céline's correspondence with various women friends. I am sure that my foreign 'outsider' status was a benefit: not being a participant in the conflicted Franco-French situation meant that I could perhaps be considered as non-threatening.

Céline also led me to a geographically diverse group of scholars working on various aspects of the author's production, many of whom gathered for a first international conference in Oxford in 1975. They included researchers from several European countries (Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Italy) as well as from the USA and Canada. In addition to making some enduring friendships (Dauphin, Godard and Nicholas Hewitt *inter alia*), I was able to help arrange the publication of the conference proceedings in a special issue of the *Australian Journal of French Studies* (Vol. XIII, No. 1 & 2, January–August, 1976).

Apart from Dauphin, my chief contact in the rue Sebastien-Bottin was Antoine Gallimard, at that point still learning the ropes and just back from the USA, where he had been studying publishing practices. It was he who, when I asked whether there were any outstanding younger writers I should be aware of, suggested Patrick Modiano. I had already been reading fairly widely, and, through the work of the likes of Christine de Rivoyre (*Le Petit Matin* 1968), Michel Tournier (*Le Roi des aulnes* 1970) and Jacques Laurent (*Les Bêtises* 1971), among many others, had become aware of a pervasive narrative obsession with the Second World War experience, but it was through Modiano (e.g. 1968, 1969, 1972) that my understanding of the importance of the 'retro' movement of the 1970s was crystalised. This was, I could see, not an intellectual exercise but something more seismic. A whole culture was undertaking a reassessment of its own experience of the most dramatic and traumatic event of its recent history. At stake was France's idea of its own historical identity, as the Vichy period, from being classified as a historical parenthesis and an anomaly, was re-inserted into a polyvalent and much more anguished continuity. Understanding Modiano required quite sophisticated knowledge of the historical experience that informed his writing. Good fortune was to lead to my collaboration with Penelope Hueston in writing the first book-length study of Modiano's writing (Nettelbeck and Hueston 1986).

WRITING ABOUT THE OCCUPATION PERIOD

The surge of energy within which my work evolved over the last quarter of the twentieth century was only in limited part my own. The primary impetus was of course Robert Paxton's ground-shifting revelations about Vichy (Paxton 1972) and their incontrovertible, archive-based evidence

of French initiatives in so much of the collaboration with Nazi policies, including the persecution and murder of so many Jews, both citizens and refugees (cf. also Marrus and Paxton 1981). There was *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (Ophüls 1969), which, remarkably, was shown on Australian television in 1970 (that is, before its 1971 release in France). But there was also the work of Rod Kedward (1978, 1985) and that of W. D. Halls (1981) in England, and the incredibly dynamic band of young and not-so-young French historians, many of whom gravitated around the newly founded Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent. The ones with whom I had most personal contact were Pascal Ory and René Rémond, but at various points I benefited greatly from the work of many others: François Bédarida and Jean-Pierre Azéma (1993), Jean-Pierre Rioux (1980, 1983), Henry Rousso (1987, 1994) and Nadine Fresco, whose *Fabrication d'un antisémite* (1999), with its evocation of a whole period through the story of the despicable *négaționniste* Paul Rassinier, is for me as much of a masterwork as Paxton's. As a link between this directly historical work and my ongoing interest in fictional narratives (including, more and more systematically, cinematic production), I found the thought of Paul Ricoeur (especially *Temps et récit*, 1983–1985) hugely enlightening in its conceptualisation of relationships between historical time and meaning-creating narratives.

In the mid-1980s, thanks to a tip-off from British colleague John Flower, who had happened upon it during a visit to Australia, I learned of the Australian National Library's large collection of materials dealing with World War II in France. Amazingly rich and varied—it had been purchased in New York for a derisory sum (US\$800) in 1967—it became a key source of documents for the text book I prepared for the British school system: *War and Identity: the French and the Second World War* (Nettelbeck 1987). But that book, which was in use for many years, was also informed by some thinking I had been doing about how the contested nature of the history of the war might be approached by opening the historiography to a wider range of sources and voices, including literary and cinematographic fiction, radio broadcasts, *bandes dessinées*, personal testimony, and so on; and also giving more prominence to voices that for one reason or another had been marginalised in the main debates.

These ideas of source-broadening and giving a clearer role to elements that seemed to be neglected were initially instinctive and vague, and in order to give them more precision, I wrote a rather long essay, 'Getting the Story Right: Narratives of the Second World War in Post-1968 France', which was originally published in the *Journal of European*

Studies (Nettelbeck 1985), before being taken up in the Hirschfeld and Marsh anthology (1989). I am sure that I was influenced strongly in this process by Pascal Ory (e.g. 1976, 1977) and by Pierre Nora—both pioneering figures in the new forms of French cultural history being developed through the recently-founded *Le Débat*.

It must be said, however, that neither of them had much interest in one of my areas of focus, namely the complexities of experience within the French Catholic Church, which I saw as one of the major missing voices. While the closeness of certain members of the hierarchy to the Vichy government was a standard trope, little was done on local parishes, schools, ordinary lay people or the numerous specialised student and youth organisations. In a country where 80% of the inhabitants still identified themselves as Catholic, this omission seemed strange. Was it a product of the dominant secular (and often enough anticlerical) ideology in French intellectual life (c.f. Rémond 1976)? In any case, one of the results of it seemed to be the constraining of the concept of resistance. As my compatriot Vesna Drapac was to demonstrate in her 1998 *War and Religion: Catholics in the Churches of Occupied Paris*, resistance to Nazi and collaborationist pressures was no less real for being spiritually motivated and structured. For me in the 1980s, René Rémond and Etienne Fouilloux (of Lyon) were very supportive, pointing me in the direction of little-known texts and the archives of a number of the Catholic youth movements. It was really not until the late 1990s that the work of the likes of Fouilloux (1997), Bernard Compte (1998), Michèle Cointet (1998) and Renée Bédarida (1998) finally repaired what I thought of as a blind spot in the French historiography. In the meantime, I published a number of studies (1995, 1996, 1998) exploring how the wartime positions taken by Catholics impacted on French society in the post-war period.

This is probably the best point to return to Jean-Marie Lustiger. His story is now reasonably well known, but in 1980, when he was considering the call from Pope Jean-Paul II to become Bishop of Orléans, very few people knew of his Jewish origins, of his conversion or of his war experience, which included the death of his mother Gisèle in Auschwitz (Lustiger 1987, *passim*). As director of the Centre Richelieu, he had presided over my marriage to my wife, and in the ensuing years, a friendship which began during his 1968 trip to the USA was to endure until he died in 2007. He was, in fact, almost like an older brother to me. Many times I talked with him at length about various aspects of his life, and his story became for me paradigmatic of the difficulty and the inevitable

pain involved in trying to come to terms with the French experience of World War Two and its aftermath. One example: Gisèle Lustiger was denounced by a neighbour, who was keen to use the Vichy aryanisation laws to occupy the Lustiger apartment; this happened, and after the war, not only did it take some years of legal wrangling to reclaim the apartment, the same neighbour remained a neighbour, and was still living nearby well into Lustiger's tenure as Archbishop of Paris. While Lustiger was alive, I did not feel able to write about him. Since his death, a great deal has been written (e.g. Tincq 2011), and I am still not sure how much I might be able to add, though I continue to reflect on his trajectory and its intersections with the intellectual, social and religious life of France since the 1920s. It is definitely thanks to him that I had first-hand access both to his own testimony and to that of several others, priests and lay people, who have helped me reach a fuller understanding of the complexity of Church-based positions and actions during the Occupation period. His relationship to his Jewishness remains of course controversial, and its problematic nature insoluble; my own struggle to come to terms with my possible Jewish background is of a much lesser order, but sharing his experience has made it more manageable.

One thing I learned from the itineraries of Céline and Lustiger, and also from that of Jacques Laurent (on whom I also did some work in those years), was that the image of Vichy as a moment of rupture was an historical falsehood, and that there were important continuities that needed to be given more emphasis. Sometime in the early 1980s, I developed a graduate course that I called *The Crisis of Patria*, which I taught for several years, and which traced various dimensions of the often violent ideological conflicts characterising French society in the twentieth century. It concentrated on the interwar period, but could easily have been extended in both directions. Clarification of concepts like patriotism and nationalism, and the exploration of the relationship between French internal politics and various international developments (the League of Nations, the rise of fascist and communist organisations), allowed me to construct a sounder foundation for my work on Vichy and the Occupation.

In particular, thinking about recent French history in a more international context may well have triggered the idea that led to my next major project, which was to consider the French war experience as *exile*. This idea had been half-present in my mind for some time. Bernanos had spent the war in Brazil, and I was aware of various others, such as

Jean Renoir and the surrealists, who had gone to the United States. And of course there were those who had joined de Gaulle in England. I was surprised, when I sought to discover more about what had happened in America, that apart from the memoirs of Raoul de Roussy de Sales (1948) and Guy Fritsch-Estrangin (1969), there was very little written on the subject, and certainly no historical overview, and nothing in English. That was how I came to write *Forever French: Exile in the United States 1939–1945* (Nettelbeck 1991).

I began the work in Paris, at the old Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent centre in the rue de l'Amiral Mouchez. Jean-Pierre Rioux was particularly helpful, and I was able to begin building a basic bibliography of diaries and testimonies by significant participants in the US exile: journalists like Geneviève Tabouis and Pertinax (André Géraud), political figures like Henri de Kérillis, or musicians and artists such as Darius Milhaud or Amédée Ozenfant. In France, it was often by chance that I got to meet and interview various people of interest to the project. Some of them had already written about their experience. This was the case, for example, of the physicist Bertrand Goldschmidt (1967, 1987), the writer Alain Bosquet (1954, 1984), and the economist Christian Valensi (1994). But others were keen to tell their parts of the story: Sarah Rapkine, the widow of Louis, who did so much to find safe haven in America for many French scientists; or Michel Bloit, owner of the Porcelaine de Paris, who as a junior officer in the American army during the Liberation got to accept the surrender of a large contingent of retreating German soldiers scared of turning themselves over to the French *maquisards*.

It was only in America, however, that these individual stories could be contextualised into the larger phenomenon of a significant French community in exile, situated very largely in New York and Washington, and to a lesser extent in California. This is where Robert Paxton's help proved invaluable. My first personal contact with him had come with the 'Getting the Story Right' essay, on which he had commented very generously. He saved me much time by guiding me towards the different archives and libraries that would become the major sources of the research. The excitement and efficiency of the work were much enhanced by the participation of my wife as co-researcher: both in France and in the United States of her birth, her support for me and her ready communication with witnesses, librarians, archivists and so on brought great conviviality to the project.

My acquired understanding of the complexities of life and thought in occupied France was a good preparation for the construction of my account of the French exile in America, where the contradictions, paradoxes and conflicts among the 30,000 odd players were every bit as sharp and complicated as on the other side of the Atlantic. From my own viewpoint, the main value of the study was to provide a previously unexplored perspective on French wartime experience. While what took place within the French community in America or in the interactions between members of that community and the American authorities remained invisible to most people in France itself, such matters as the closeness of Alexis Léger or Jean Monnet to the Roosevelt administration had documentable impact on the unfolding of events (Nettelbeck 1991, 153–182). Even more significantly, the return to France after the war of many of those who had spent those years in the USA brought transformative energy and knowledge in a great range of fields, from journalism and publishing to financial management, manufacturing, art, philosophy and science. They were crucial to the French recovery of the *Trente Glorieuses* (1945–1975) and to persuading America that there should be an important place for a revitalised and democratic France in the post-war world order. Although *Forever French* is not without its flaws, it remains the work I think of as my most original contribution to the history of the period.

There is one large project that I failed to get off the ground. If I mention it here, it is partly to register my regret, but mostly to hope that someone else might yet take it up. In 2009, inspired by the stimulating conversations and papers at the conference on war narratives organised in Leeds by Margaret Attack and Christopher Lloyd, I fell to thinking about another set of missing voices, namely those of the primary-school children of the Occupation period (who constituted about 12% of the population). Informed by Annette Wieviorka's work (1998), I called this a 'forgotten zone of memory', and hypothesised that gathering testimony and other evidence of the experience of these people (now in their late 70s and 80s) would offer not only valuable understanding of previously unrecognised factors in French post-war recovery, but also crucial insights into how the overlaying of personal memory by a stereotyped and faulty collective memory has contributed to the *passé qui ne passe pas* syndrome. In building up the project, I consulted widely, and received encouragement and suggestions from many people, including Antoine Prost, Claire Andrieu, Jean-Noël Jeanneney and Jean-Pierre Azéma in

France, and Robert Gildea, Rod Kedward and Margaret Atack in the UK. I also carried out a number of pilot interviews with individuals having the profile I was targeting. Although ambitious in scope, the project was coherent and promising (Nettelbeck 2011). The problem was to secure funding to make it work. In that, my Australian setting proved a severe hindrance. Australian sources were reluctant to fund a project so closely focused on France, and the physical and financial difficulties of extended travel meant that I could not hope to do it on my own. It is, I think, still doable, though with the potential witness-subjects rapidly decreasing in numbers, the urgency of the task is acute.

CONCLUSIONS: IT HASN'T ALL BEEN ABOUT THE WAR, BUT...

I think I have already shown that my academic work on France has not all been about Vichy and the Occupation. Throughout my career, I have published fairly extensively on French literature and cinema, and on the very significant cultural changes that have occurred in France since the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, my personal life-story and the development of my interdisciplinary scholarship remain tightly interwoven around the Second World War. For example, it is very much a key parameter in my book on jazz and the French, *Dancing with de Beauvoir* (Nettelbeck 2004). In some ways, this work continued the French-American theme begun in *Forever French*, and it had the additional advantage of allowing me to indulge my long-standing passion for jazz. It is a story of cultural transformation, in which many of the key figures—musicians, painters, philosophers, writers and film-makers—have seen the war experience as pivotal. A second example is my 2007 essay entitled ‘Narrative Mutations: French Cinema and its Relations with Literature from Vichy towards the New Wave’, in which I returned to the theme of historical continuity through the prism of the French cinema industry. I still publish on Modiano and occasionally on Céline. I have recently undertaken a new project seeking to elaborate an overview of the history of French-Australian relations from 1788 to the present. The Second World War has its part in that too, particularly in respect to the French presence in Indochina and the Pacific, and the positions taken by France’s colonies after the débâcle of 1940, and de Gaulle’s call to continue the struggle. Few people are aware, for example, that the Free French Pacific Battalion (made up principally of volunteers from

New Caledonia and Tahiti, including many indigenous people), which gave distinguished service in North Africa, was trained in Australia, armed by Australia and given its uniforms by Australia.

And then there is that war in Syria, *la guerre occultée* in Henri de Wailly's terms (Wailly 2006), in which Australians were obliged, through their British Commonwealth status, to kill French soldiers and be killed by them. I announced at the beginning my realisation that it has been in huge part a personal need for understanding that has driven my research: understanding firstly the dark enigma that was left inside me when I was three years old and my father disappeared from my life; understanding too the import of the Jewish legacy that my mother, without her knowledge or assent, may have passed onto me. The ramifications of that search have brought me a great deal of knowledge, but the only certainty that I have achieved is the disquieting one that there can, in the end, be little resolution or serenity.

Inscribed at the base of my father's tombstone are the words: *I will remember, Bill*. (Bill was my father's first name.) Whoever was responsible for the inscription—perhaps my mother, though when asked, she was unable to recall—it is now I who must do the remembering. And it seems to me that my personal *devoir de mémoire*, like the collective one, can and does open onto more reliable truths of history, but not on any dissolving of discomfort. My father's grave is safe enough, his stone standing firm in a well-tended cemetery walled off from the outside world. But that outside world is the Gaza Strip, site of seemingly perpetual conflict and destruction, of houses bombed to rubble, of children's nightmares and unending trauma and terror. What straightforward story of heroes and villains can encompass that metonymic reality?

On the other hand, there are two great compensations for that sense of incompleteness. First, there are the people I have met in the course of the journey. Well beyond the borders of my academic career, my personal and family life has been nourished by great generosity and kindnesses from colleagues around the world, by the sharing of enthusiasms, insights, hypotheses, knowledge and curiosities, and by many deep and lasting friendships. Second, even though I am resigned to the fact that my efforts to 'get the story right' will always be unfinished business, when I contemplate the narratives that the finest historians have constructed, and those more modest fragments that I have managed to gather, I am grateful for the knowledge and understanding they have brought me. Knowledge and understanding may not mean resolution, but they certainly help.

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Born in Paris...

Renée Poznanski

The scene is easy to set. I was born in Paris, I grew up in Paris, I did all my studies in Paris and I love Paris. However, my ancestors are not the Gauls. My parents, Berl and Rywa, were both from Eastern Europe, and both were the only ones in their family to have survived the horrors of the *Shoah* (Holocaust)—to refer to Claude Lanzmann's film (1985) whose title has eventually become an accepted term. I am named after one of my father's daughters (Rena, my half-sister) who was murdered in Auschwitz in late August 1944 at the age of 12, with her sister, Ida, who was five years younger, and their mother, Perla. Then, twenty months after I was born, my father died suddenly of poliomyelitis, but the word around me was that his death was the 'consequence of his deportation'. From the time when I was very young, our family consisted therefore of only two people, my mother and myself. But there were in fact three of us living in our little flat in the 11th *arrondissement* of Paris, because the ghost of the *Shoah* had come to lodge there: the tragedy that had befallen the Jewish people was tenacious. It had decimated our entire family and shaped our everyday lives.

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I am not using the term ‘Jewish people’ gratuitously. The almost tangible link between my personal trajectory and the collective history of a people developed my Jewishness, since no regular religious rites marked my childhood and adolescence. The only rite we observed rigorously also combined our personal history and History with a capital ‘H’: once a year in the autumn, we visited the cemetery in Bagneux to pay our respects at my father’s grave and commemorate all the victims of the *Shoah* and, in particular, the Jews of Vilnius who, like my grandmother and my aunt, had been rounded up in the ghetto and shot in Ponary.

The picture is therefore apparently quite clear: France, where I grew up, a sharp awareness of the weight of history and the omnipresent *Shoah* make it unsurprising that I devoted so many years of my life to working on the history of Jews in France during the Occupation. Yet, it was a tortuous path that led me there, a path in which chance played an important part. Chance, and the events that took place in June 1967 and May 1968.

TWO SCHOOLS

But before that, I was educated in two ‘schools’. The Republic took care of my scholarly training. That is where I learned proper French. My mother, who had completed her secondary studies in Yiddish in Vilnius before the war, shamelessly spoke terrible French and yet insisted on speaking it with me. For she wanted me to be French. I was even to learn to eat like the French, she told me, when, occasionally on Sundays, she brought me a dozen oysters that she had had opened especially for me, although she never touched them. Learning a language goes a good deal further than that, however, and that is how I came to know and appreciate an entire culture, a world that became familiar to me and a world that, in fact, became my own. I was not particularly attracted to history. Neither the ancient world, nor the knights of the Middle Ages, nor the royal dynasties fired my imagination. History held no particular interest for me and I applied myself to it without much enthusiasm at the Lycée Sophie Germain to which I was ferried twice a day for seven years by the drivers of my favourite bus, the number 96. It was in the sixth form that I discovered the charms of this discipline, through a period that has never ceased to fascinate me—the contemporary world—and to an extraordinary teacher (unfortunately, I cannot recall her name) who would refer us to our textbooks for basic facts and lists of battles but spent hours

explaining to us processes and situations, and breathed real life into these events. I have an unforgettable memory of her two-hour-long description of life in the trenches during the First World War.

A second 'school' educated me politically. It so happened that a group of my mother's friends who, like herself, came from Vilnius, were members of the *Union des Juifs pour la Résistance et l'Entraide* (UJRE—Union of Jews for Resistance and Mutual Aid), an organisation that had originated from the Jewish Communist Resistance, and of the *Commission Centrale de l'Enfance* (CCE—Central Commission for Children), established by the former organisation at the Liberation—both these organisations helped the families of survivors. My mother, who was virtually destitute after my father's death, naturally turned to them. I spent part of my summers and, quite often, my winter holidays at their holiday camps. Every Thursday during the school term, I would join my little friends at their youth clubs and, later, the organised activities of the youth movement that was affiliated to them. These organisations went through their Stalinist period, but this was before my time, and the values that I derived from them can be categorised under two headings: the first was a profound humanism, devoid of all nationalism, open to the world and its diversity, as well as being sensitive to the sufferings of the weakest; the second was a strong cultural link with the history of the Jewish people whose festivals, based on major historical events, were celebrated in a spirit of exemplary secularity. These were the two pillars that formed the basis of my adult identity.

RUSSIAN STUDIES AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

So that is the background. I was eighteen, with my *baccalauréat* under my belt and everything to play for; the world was my oyster. Admittedly, I came from elsewhere, and this made me different from my school-friends. But, to me, it was a glorious elsewhere. My mother, who read two Yiddish dailies every day, was very proud of her origins in Vilnius, the Lithuanian Jerusalem, and she encouraged me to feel that I belonged to a kind of aristocracy—the aristocracy of Jewish culture, based on Yiddish literature about which she often used to talk to me. I never once felt the least bit ashamed when my mother spoke in her broken French to my friends. Everything was possible; no opening was barred to me. I did not feel that either my foreign origins or the fact that I was a woman were obstacles. This is also probably one of the reasons why I have never been attracted to feminism. Nothing in my education encouraged me in

that direction. I had been taught to think in terms of social class or in terms of majority–minority (cultural or national). Was it also because I grew up without a father? At any rate, given this background, I discovered feminism belatedly, and it had little or no influence on my life at that time.

For many years, I had been planning to study Russian. At school, I had decided to take it as a second language since I found it unthinkable to choose German, the language of those who had murdered my family. And, as a bookworm, I was passionate about the Russian classics that I read avidly. The Russian lessons provided a haven of peace: there were never more than a dozen pupils and, for five years, we kept the same teacher, Madame Guendjian—an extraordinary woman of whom I became very fond. We discovered another world that delighted me and with which I felt I had many affinities. But the history lessons in the final year at school had sharpened my curiosity and I decided to attend Sciences Po, since my grade in the *baccalauréat* rendered me eligible. I did not abandon Russian studies at the Sorbonne but followed two courses simultaneously and, for four years, regularly crossed the Seine to go from the rue Saint Guillaume to the Grand Palais. My first years at university were therefore occupied with the study of the contemporary world and of Russia. I was a long way from the *Shoah* and occupied France. But two seismic events occurred within the space of one year: June 1967 and May 1968. From then on, chance occurrences, the political world in which I was living and my research became inextricably linked.

The Six-Day War—or rather the anguish of the weeks of waiting that led up to it and during which I feared a repeat of the Holocaust—disorientated me. The Jewish people, whose culture and history had been threatened with eradication, were my family. And now history was threatening to repeat itself.

Once reassured, I reflected on how surprisingly strong my reaction had been. This led me to question the nature of my Jewish identity and to look more closely at the hotbed of ideas that shook the Jewish intelligentsia in the multinational Russia at the turn of the century. Zionists, Bundists (Jewish Socialists), territorialists and supporters of emigration to the United States or of assimilation here or elsewhere held endless

debates in the press, against a background of pogroms and the rise of the Russian revolutionary movement. I began to work on what I saw as the start of a vast study of this whole intellectual effervescence and on the ideas of Simon Dubnov, the author of a monumental epic history of the Jewish people. In a series of essays published between 1897 and 1907, he had distilled the essence of his work as a historian in a plea for the establishment of autonomous Jewish cultural centres throughout the diaspora. The history of the Jewish people had been studied by this series of Jewish cultural centres which showed the way to its future. Taking into account the waning of Russian Judaism, Dubnov predicted the forming of two new sites of growth, one in the United States and the other in Palestine. This historian was a Jewish (and) cultural nationalist. My supervisor was H  l  ne Carr  re d'Encausse. She was admittedly not a specialist in this area, but I admired her breadth of knowledge and intellectual authority. I appreciated being supervised by a woman, and the freedom that she allowed me suited me perfectly. In 1989, I translated a scholarly edition of a series of essays entitled *Lettres sur le Juda  isme ancien et nouveau* (Letters on Ancient and Modern Judaism). It was published by the Editions du Cerf (Dubnov 1989).

I did not foresee the consequences of this publication. Enthused by the ideas he had just discovered, a die-hard Bundist militant, Meny Wiewiorka, decided to establish an Association for the Friends of Simon Dubnov in Paris. Thanks to the funds that were collected and his own energy, he persuaded the Director of the Editions du Cerf, Father Nicolas-Jean Sed—an extraordinary character with a very keen mind—to continue publishing Dubnov's works in French. The most remarkable is probably his intellectual autobiography, *Le Livre de ma vie* (2001, The Book of My Life).

But, for my part, the ideological maturing, engendered by the double experience of June 1967 and, as I shall mention briefly, May 1968, led me to the decision to leave France. At the root of this departure was the idea that the historic destiny of the Jews was taking shape in Israel. This did not alter the fact that I had a deep-rooted feeling of being French and identified myself as French. But I was compelled by this historic destiny and I could not ignore it without having the feeling that I was betraying my people who had been exterminated by the Nazis. I was not leaving to go and live in the land of milk and honey, but to gain the moral right to argue that it was Israel's responsibility to take the initiative in negotiations to liberate the occupied territories and

that it was imperative to work to encourage coexistence between Jews and Palestinians; the country's future depended on it. The Zionist I had become felt a responsibility towards the country in which the Jewish people's destiny would be played out.

I owed this total commitment to May 1968. The effective and authentic mobilisation of students in street demonstrations made me think about the duty of intellectuals, the ethical imperative that compelled them to put their ideas into practice and the notion that society is not transformed in libraries. This sounds pompous, and yet it was that and nothing else that made me leave a city I loved, uproot myself and go to live in the Middle East. The opening sentence of this account: 'I was born in Paris, I grew up in Paris, I studied in Paris and I love Paris' was something I said over and over again in Israel, every time I was asked about my origins. Whereas in France I was 'Jewish also', in Israel I became 'French also'. This mixture of belonging and being an outsider became central to my identity, although I also felt that I identified with two very different worlds. These two worlds have remained so equally important to me that I have tried to pass on a dual culture to my three children: two live in Israel today while one lives in France.

FROM FRANCE TO ISRAEL

So I left to go and live in Israel, returning frequently to France so as to continue working under Hélène Carrère d'Encausse's supervision. But in order to adapt to the university system in my new country, I had to abandon Jewish history. This may seem paradoxical, but all Israeli universities made a clear distinction between Jewish history and so-called 'general' history. And the former strand required a rigorous training in Jewish studies which I simply did not have.

So I abandoned the Jewish intelligentsia and its deliberations over the future of Russian Jews in the early twentieth century, and turned to the Russian literary intelligentsia and the different levels of its political involvement in the revolutionary events of 1917. I saw my first book, *Intelligentsia et Révolution. Blok, Gorki et Maïakovski face à la Révolution de 1917* (1981, *Intelligentsia and Revolution. Blok, Gorki, Mayakovsky and the 1917 Revolution*), as the beginning of a larger study of Russian writers in general. The intellectual's commitment during

historic upheavals was always what interested me. Once again, those elements remained underdeveloped since the vicissitudes of life took me in another direction.

Working on Russia or the Soviet Union in Israel at that time was a challenge. There were many specialists and, for almost all of them, Russian was their mother tongue. I had no hope of a future. Living in Beersheba, where my husband had been appointed to a university post in ancient history, it was time to think about what I was going to do for a career. It was then that I was contacted by the Veterans of the Jewish Resistance, headed by Abraham Polonski who had been one of the leaders of the French Jewish Resistance movement (*Armée Juive*, and later *Organisation Juive de Combat*). If I abandoned Russia in favour of France and revolution in favour of war, I could be appointed to a university post. I therefore shifted my focus of interest to Jewish Resistance in France. This suited me particularly well for two main reasons: on the one hand, it would allow me to make frequent trips to France; and, on the other, the principal theme of commitment in times of great crisis would remain at the heart of my research.

It was only then that I established myself definitively in the field of the history of Jews in France during the Second World War. There was therefore a mixture of consistency and chance in my career, and political maturing played a more important part in it than intellectual influences that usually form the core of intellectual biographies. I never studied history: my interest was in the contemporary world. I never envisaged working on France: it was Russia that attracted me. I had to leave for Israel in order to find France again via my research. Moreover, it was not my family history that motivated me to work on the *Shoah*. The role of chance in this process and the need to transfer from one topic that I had studied to another which was totally new to me probably explains why, despite my university qualifications, I have always seen myself and continue to see myself—oddly, perhaps—as an autodidact. At the same time, my interest in the contemporary world has always been linked with the theme of commitment, and periods of great political upheaval have always fascinated me. Although the difficulties of living from day to day in a country where life is never simple did not lead me to become a regular and active political militant, this notion of commitment shaped my life as much as my research.

JEWIS IN FRANCE DURING THE OCCUPATION

I then undertook to write a book on Jewish resistance in France. This was the beginning of an intellectual journey. I knew practically nothing about my research topic. Apart from the partial studies that had already been published, I began to read everything I could find on France in the Second World War, on French Jews and on the Resistance during the war. I placed myself at the crossroads of these three subjects. This reading, done mainly in Israel, a long way from those who were working on one or another of these topics, increased the feeling I had of being an autodidact.

Besides, I intended to distance myself clearly from the eulogistic studies that, without any analytical or critical objectivity, glorified the heroism of Jewish Resistance fighters. I had in mind a rigorous political reading of the phenomenon. However, on such a sensitive topic that was subject to ceaseless inter-community squabbles, I knew that I could well end up upsetting everyone. This was where my geographical distancing—I was not living in France—afforded me a definite advantage.

Steeping myself in the archives of the period, when I travelled to Paris or New York, thoroughly convinced me that research was definitely what I wanted to do. I developed an incurable addiction to archives. Archival documents allowed me to immerse myself in the atmosphere of a world that no longer existed. They compensated for my lack of imagination (which I have always regretted), they provided me with the pieces of a large number of puzzles with which my mathematically inclined brain (or so it was described at school) could juggle, and they satisfied a form of voyeurism that I undoubtedly share with many of my fellow human beings. In short, I enjoyed the experience, all the more so because, in order to embark on the political analysis that I had in mind without running the risk of committing gross misinterpretations, it was essential that I fully grasped the complex social reality in which Jews lived. I wanted to drill down into the essence of human reality and gain a full understanding of how persecution affected their daily lives. So I collected and photocopied as many archives as I could.

This proved to be most useful to me since chance, once again, knocked at my door. Françoise Cibié, from the major publisher Hachette, was looking for an author to write a book on the daily lives of Jews in France during the Occupation for their '*vie quotidienne*' (daily life) series. She contacted a very dear friend whom I admired very much, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who

recommended me for the task. It was exactly what I needed to establish the social background on which I could subsequently base my work on Jewish Resistance. I therefore gratefully accepted. The journey was a long one but led to *Être Juif en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (1994, Being Jewish in France during the Second World War). As the conclusion of this book shows, my aim was to understand how 25% of the Jewish population—the 76,000 Jews deported from France—were captured by their persecutors and how those who managed to survive (75% of the 330,000 Jews in France) had fared in the years of war and Occupation. I reached the conclusion that a number of convergent reasons explained the latter figure which was relatively higher than in the other Western European countries. It also meant that the usual question of ‘who’ should get the credit for the survival of approximately 75% of the Jews living in France should definitely be replaced by an investigation into ‘how’ they had survived. In other words, the current fashion that tends to credit the French population with this salvaging is far from satisfactory to me.

Having investigated in depth the daily lives of the persecuted Jews in this study and having analysed the steps they could have taken to save themselves—loopholes in the law or in the application of the law, the possibility of internal migration from one zone to another, interaction with the non-Jewish population, help from Jewish organisations and political action under the aegis of a Resistance movement—I felt I was equipped to return to my history of Jewish Resistance.

Even before the publication that would come out on this topic, my passion for archives had produced two important outputs. In the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research archives in New York, I found the notes that the Jewish journalist, Jacques Biélinky, had written almost daily in his diary that ran from 19 July 1940 to 17 December 1942. I was struck by its tone of authenticity. Next to the journalist’s observations on the difficulties of daily life in occupied Paris, there were descriptions of the effects of anti-Semitic persecution; he noted the reactions of French people whom he met in various places and the rumours that motivated the Jews to adopt certain strategies for survival. Nothing was hidden in these notes, since Biélinky wrote these five notebooks for himself, probably intending to use them after the Liberation. Fate had other plans for him: Jacques Biélinky was arrested in the night of 10–11 February 1943 and deported six weeks later to the extermination camp of Sobibor. I decided to annotate and publish his diary (Biélinky 1992). In the light of this work, my interest in personal diaries increased and they became

a frequent and favoured source of information for me. But there was something else. It was just before and, especially, during the Gulf War in the winter of 1991 that I prepared the edited version of Biélinky's diary. I was at home, in Israel, worried at the threats made by Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi dictator, against our civilian population, threats that were backed up by the 39 long-range missiles that fell on our country during the five weeks of military operations. Naturally, I am not trying to draw a parallel here but, uncertain as I was about how best to ensure my family's safety, I lost my previous certainty concerning the correct attitude that the Jews should have adopted in occupied Paris. I never forgot the lessons of this parallel reading of an eye-witness account of the past and a lived experience.

A second source of wonder, born of my immersion in the archives, prompted another publication that is dear to me. Old papers stuffed into dusty cardboard boxes were the prime sources for my work but at the same time, it seemed to me immoral to write on such a recent period without interviewing witnesses who were still alive. These men and women had been caught up in history—they had involved themselves in it—whereas I merely had to try to understand the whys and wherefores of their involvement. I felt very humble when talking to them and I found it difficult to conclude these interviews because I became so attached to them.

On my list was Léo Hamon (Goldenberg), who had a rich past as a member of the Resistance. In his memoirs—*Vivre ses choix* (1991, Living out one's choices)—he mentions his brief visit to Paris in the spring of 1941, mainly to research the plight of Jews in the capital and to record his impressions. Elsewhere, he refers to a diary that he kept at the time. I asked him if his diary was more detailed and comprehensive on this subject. He replied that it was not but told me that he had written a very detailed report at the time that summarised his findings. He had then submitted it to Marc Jarblum, the President of the *Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France* (FSJF—Federation of Jewish Societies in France), the organisation for Jews of foreign origin that had commissioned his survey. When he came to write his memoirs, he tried to find his report again, with no success. While he was talking, I was thinking of the different reports that I had collected from my archival trawls. Suddenly, I had the intuition that one of them, extraordinarily well-written, had an identical tone to that of the short passage Hamon had written in his memoirs. I enjoyed the satisfaction of the detective who solves a puzzle when

it turned out that it was the lost report—Léo Hamon's handwriting in the margins confirmed it. So we published it together, in one of the *Cahiers de l'Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent* (Hamon and Poznanski 1992), with a summary of our interview, explanatory notes and a long article which I wrote on the Jews in Paris before the big roundups of 1942.

The Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP) had become my professional home when I was in Paris. I worked at the Archives nationales (of course), the Centre de documentation juive contemporaine (CDJC, Centre for Contemporary Jewish Documentation) and the IHTP, to which the historian Denis Peschanski introduced me and where I was warmly welcomed by all. That was where I could talk about my research. That was where I attended lively discussions on the Dark Years. It was through the Institute that I met a number of fellow historians. If there has been any intellectual influence on my work, that is where it is to be found. Their conferences spurred me on, guiding my reading and helping me to produce a reflective historiographical essay on the different meanings of Jewish resistance. Work there was on the Resistance in general, on foreigners who resisted, and Henry Rousso's work on the memory of Vichy instilled in me the lasting conviction that I should focus on the manifestations of memory in order to understand the principal issues involved in what I was writing. I was isolated on my subject when in Israel but this was certainly not the case in Paris; there, I really felt in tune with an entire group and it was by interacting with this group that I returned to my history of Jewish Resistance.

JEWES AND THE FRENCH, HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In the meantime, my historiographical horizons had broadened. The time when the fate of the Jews was ignored by writers dealing with occupied France was a thing of the past. It had become unimaginable to ignore this topic now that memories of the *Shoah* had reached the wider public. And this was also true of Jewish Resistance. But in the face of certain sympathetic treatments of the topic, a different angle made me feel uneasy. More often than not, what was written about the Jews was confined to what I would call the (uncritical) 'ghetto chapter'. Writers repeated what historians—usually Jewish—had written, without any kind of critical perspective. Moreover, this chapter seemed to have no connection with the main arguments of these works. Not a single aspect of the

history that was presented there was incorporated into the overall analyses or the conclusion. These ghetto chapters, historiographically speaking, seemed to analyse something completely alien: there was the history of the French Resistance and that of Jewish Resistance. Lip service might be paid to the latter, but they were in reality two separate histories.

This conception irritated me for two reasons. First, it offended my deepest sense of identity. As a French and Jewish woman, I could not accept this alienation that I resented as a form of exclusion. Second, and more importantly, it seemed to me that such perspectives were historically biased. If the Dreyfus Affair played such an important role in French history, it is because, beyond the fate of a Jewish officer unjustly accused of treason, it opposed two value-systems. In this example, the history of non-Jews during the different stages of the accusations and rehabilitation of Alfred Dreyfus cannot be relegated to the margins of the history of the Jews in French society. I believe that the same is true of the Occupation and the Vichy regime. Distinguishing between two national narratives—even if they are not defined as such—dissociating the French Resistance from Jewish Resistance is to dismiss the history that Jews and non-Jews share in France, to marginalise the weight of persecution on the consciences of non-Jews at the time, to neglect the interaction between the majority in society and the persecuted minority, to perpetuate the prevailing *status quo* of a bygone era, without attempting to decode and analyse it critically, and, consequently, to avoid reflecting in depth on the whole of French society under the Occupation.

My aim of combining into a single critical and analytical narrative two histories that had hitherto been dealt with separately required a specific methodology. Hence, I could not contemplate a study of the clandestine press published by Jewish organisations—in French or in Yiddish—before closely examining the whole of the clandestine press. To my great surprise, these two sets of publications existed in two parallel worlds, as if they had been published in two different political realms. It was a surprise, since no historian had ever wondered why the Resistance publications rarely mentioned the persecution of the Jews. This was all the more disturbing because when, occasionally, the Resistance press referred to these persecutions, the same themes recurred, in the same terms and at exactly the same time across their different publications, regardless of their political or organisational affiliation. I was once again side-tracked by this synchrony and, with Robert Paxton's encouragement, I began to research the representation of Jewish persecution in all the

Resistance publications (Jewish and non-Jewish) as well as in the BBC's programmes in French. *Propagandes et persécutions. La Résistance et le 'problème juif'* (2008, Propaganda and Persecution. The Resistance and the 'Jewish problem') was the second by-product of my embryonic history of Jewish Resistance.

An attentive re-reading of all the clandestine publications and the transcriptions of BBC programmes, together with an analysis of the demands made by propaganda which, in order to be effective, could not afford to ignore public opinion, convinced me that the 1930s consensus, according to which there was a 'Jewish problem' in France, had heavily influenced these propaganda outlets in their attitude to the persecution. Fearing they might appear pro-Jewish and flying in the face of public opinion in France regarding a subject that they believed to be of secondary importance, Resistance movements desisted from condemning outright the doubly discriminatory legislation (German and French) that had been introduced in the early years of the Occupation. The indignation expressed in the summer of 1942 when the mass round-ups of Jews and their deportation became systematic was short-lived; it relied on the legitimacy provided by public protest from certain members of the Church and focused on children being torn from their mothers' arms—victims whose innocence was undeniable. On the contrary, the *Cahiers du Témoignage Chrétien* equated silence with complicity, offering an analysis of the persecution of the Jews that remains valid to this day, thus exonerating me from the charge of committing an anachronism (see Poznanski 2008, 237–241). A parallel analysis of publications issued from clandestine Jewish organisations showed that the Jews were saddened and/or surprised by such discretion. In this work, based on a number of archival sources—propaganda meetings of the *France combattante* in London, reports on public opinion sent to London and propaganda instructions issued by Communist groups, as well as many others—I exposed one of the facets that illustrates the complexity of the phenomenon of Resistance and I tried to define the role played by the Jews in the French cultural and social imagination.

Although *Propagandes et Persécutions* was well received by important newspapers that recognised the relevance of its sources and the thoroughness of my analyses, a substantial number of French Resistance historians ignored it. Was this because it shed light on a difficult subject that they had been careful to eschew in their own publications? By avoiding the issue, were they associating the French with the Righteous of

France, thus giving the former credit for the survival of approximately 75% of the Jews living in the country at the time?¹ Or were they subscribing to the myth which claimed that the vast majority of the French had resisted? This is not the place to attempt to address such questions.

I needed to return to my work on Jewish Resistance... but could no longer postpone a long-standing commitment to another project. Denis Peschanski, my ‘old accomplice’—as our wonderful editor at Fayard, Sophie Hoog-Grandjean, called him—took the initiative of inviting me to join him and Benoît Pouvreau in the preparation of an album on the Cité de la Muette in Drancy (Poznanski et al. 2015). More than a hundred illustrations, all of which are moving, trace what we hope is a comprehensive history of an avant-garde 1930s architectural project, followed by the different stages of the life of the camp that it became during the war and after the Liberation, together with the traumatic memories of internment and deportation that became an integral part of a residential block of high-rise flats. Thanks principally to the discovery of new diaries filled with observations, I found the work on this topic fascinating. Moreover, unlike my previous book which contained abundant footnotes, we agreed not to have any but to place all the references of the numerous original documents that we had used at the end of the volume. Thus, the writing process became a sort of liberation.

And... I still see all these publications as a preparation for my book on Jewish Resistance, or rather on *The Jews in the Resistance in France*. This title, that owes nothing to chance, implies a certain number of choices. To refer to Jewish Resistance or French Resistance would nationalise the phenomenon by de-territorialising it, whereas my aim is to write about the history of the Jews in France and, at the same time, to incorporate Jewish Resistance within the history of the Resistance. This is the task in which I am now engaged.

AN EXERCISE IN EGO-HISTORY

When, in 1987, Pierre Nora attempted to define what he meant by the term ‘ego-history’, he described it as an exercise that would be neither ‘false literary autobiography, nor futilely intimate confessions, nor

¹The most striking example of such distortions in academia is perhaps Jacques Sémelin’s *Persécutions et entraides dans la France occupée. Comment 75% des Juifs en France ont échappé à la mort* (2013).

a general declaration of faith, nor an attempt at amateur psychoanalysis' (Nora 1987, 7). It was 'to tease out, as a historian, the link between the history that you produced and the history that produced you' (7). His hope, in publishing this series of essays, was to find a key to 'understanding post-war intellectual trends' (355). These aims at first prevented me from taking up my pen.

How could I engage in an ego-history based exclusively on my own memories, whereas, to write any other kind of history, eye-witness memories should always be complemented by other kinds of documentation?² Having systematically favoured written documentation over eye-witness accounts in my own research, I found myself in the role of witness. How could I simultaneously be the only source and the only critic of my own narrative?

Reading Robert Paxton's chapter in *Why France?* (2007) helped me overcome my writer's block. The simplicity and clarity with which this great historian told his story saved me from attempts at conceptualisation that seemed to me to be the only way to offset the triviality inherent in the genre of ego-history.

In the process, I am not sure I have managed to avoid the pitfalls mentioned by Nora in forcing open the lid of my 'black box'. It is indisputable that a certain vision of the world, rather than a specific intellectual influence, guided my steps in research. A vision composed of paradoxes that presented constant challenges for me: attracted by intellectual issues, but convinced of the urgent need to influence the public domain; steeped in universalism, but aware of the enduring nature of Jewish identity, whose complexity I cherished, but in a non-exclusive way. This is where, it seems to me, the impact of the *Shoah* in my family history can be found, heavily moulding my insights and understanding of the world. My research has helped me to reflect on such preoccupations: Jews and the French, universal values and cultural specificities, integration that respects otherness, and loyalty to one's commitments. Is this coherence real or imagined? And does this reflect something other than my individual pathway? I have so far been unable to find answers to these questions.

²Cf. Luisa Passerini and Alexander C. T. Geppert (2001).

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Reaching Vichy via Budapest: On Zigzags, Waves and Triangles in Intellectual Life

Susan R. Suleiman

*The exercise consists in reflecting on one's own
story as if it were the story of another.*

Pierre Nora, 'Introduction', *Essais d'ego-histoire*

*...what we do as historians is to write, in highly displaced, usually unconscious,
but nonetheless determined ways, our inner, personal obsessions.*

Gabrielle Spiegel, *Why France?*

Taken together, the above observations, drawn from essays by distinguished historians reflecting on their craft, seem to present a contradiction: Is it possible to write one's own story 'as if it were the story of another', if it is true that all historical writing expresses, however indirectly, the historian's personal obsessions? But the contradiction would exist only for historians brought up on ideals of strict objectivity, who today are a rare if not extinct species. We are all postmodern now, aware that it is just

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as impossible to write ‘the story of another’ objectively as it is to write our own. Nevertheless, it is a particular challenge to reflect coherently on one’s own history—the impossibility squared, as it were. To the extent that any prolonged self-examination can lead to insight, however, the exercise is worth the effort. The question is, can we say something about our own lives that others may find pertinent to theirs? Are there patterns in an individual life and its contingencies that point to more general truths?

ITINERARY

I can pinpoint exactly when I first began to write about World War II. It was in the summer of 1984, after returning from a trip I had taken with my two sons, then aged 7 and 14, to the city where I was born and where I had spent the first ten years of my life: Budapest. I have described in some detail, in my book *Budapest Diary* (1996), the reasons that made me undertake that trip: my mother’s illness, which would turn out to be her last, although it dragged on for several more years; my desire to revisit the city where she had lived as a young woman, and to which she had never returned after we left Hungary in 1949 (by then, it was impossible to leave Hungary normally—we had to walk across the border into Czechoslovakia at night, fearful and stumbling); my desire, finally, to see again the places of my childhood—to become briefly, for my children, a ‘tour guide to my own life’ (*Budapest Diary*, 12). Returning to the place I had once called home thirty-five years after having left it under dramatic circumstances was, I expected, going to be meaningful. One thing I did not expect was that the two-week vacation, to a city ‘behind the Iron Curtain’ that I could barely remember, would constitute a turning point in my work as a scholar and teacher, leading me, albeit not in a straight line, to Vichy.

France and the French language had been part of my inner life since childhood. Before we left Budapest, my mother had found me a Viennese lady who gave me French lessons after picking me up from school each day; later, during the eight months we spent in Vienna, I attended a French school; later still, during our six months in Port-Au-Prince, I was gently but firmly disciplined into French grammar and arithmetic by the sisters at the convent school of Sainte-Rose de Lima, before finally landing in a sixth-grade New York classroom in the winter of 1951. For the next five years I ‘forgot’ French, intent on learning about all things American, starting with the language. But in college I returned to it once more, and ended up, after a couple of false starts,

with a PhD in French literature from Harvard in 1969. My tutelaries, like those of so many other American students in those years, were Sartre, Beauvoir and Camus; I wrote my PhD dissertation on Sartre's friend and classmate at the *École Normale Supérieure*, Paul Nizan, who had emerged from a long period of oblivion into public view after Sartre published a beautiful homage to him in 1960, as the Preface to a reissue of Nizan's first book, *Aden, Arabie*, which had first appeared in 1931. Nizan had died at age 35, in 1940, while serving in the French Army; but he had managed to produce an impressive body of work during his short lifetime—novels, philosophical essays, literary criticism and political journalism. Years before his friend Sartre, he championed the idea of *littérature engagée*. Nizan was a Communist during the good years, when communism and anti-fascism went hand in hand. Although I had read every word he had written and had studied the period of the 1930s with genuine passion, I left most of that material out of the dissertation. Instead, I focused on the problem of *engagement* in Nizan's three novels, heeding the admonishment of my dissertation advisor that my job was to write about literature, not about history. But exactly what 'writing about literature' meant was not at all clear; unlike Yale, which prided itself on importing all the new theoretical work that had started to come out in France in the 1960s, Harvard lagged behind on questions of methodology. New Criticism, with its emphasis on close reading of texts, was as far as it went in the realm of literary theory.

I never published my dissertation. Instead, I spent the next few years, while I was an assistant professor at Columbia, striving to catch up with all the theories I had missed out on during my graduate studies. Columbia too became a hotbed of French theory in the early 1970s, both through the presence of permanent faculty like Michael Riffaterre, Sylvère Lotringer and Leon Roudiez (he did not 'do' theory but welcomed it with great enthusiasm) and through frequent visits and lectures by guests from abroad: Louis Marin, Tzvetan Todorov, Gérard Genette, A. J. Greimas, Julia Kristeva (in her *Tel Quel* phase) and Hélène Cixous (in her 'poetics' phase) were among the emissaries bringing the latest news from Paris. While the dominant mode at Yale had become post-structuralist and deconstructionist, at Columbia it was 'high' structuralism and structuralist poetics that dominated—and it was what appealed to me most. Like New Criticism, but in a much more rigorous and systematic way, structuralist poetics sought to give an account of literary texts in purely formal terms. Bristling with technical terminology, diagrams and formulae, the method was difficult to master, especially

as every theorist seemed to propose a different set of terms; but since I had always had a penchant for science and had even majored in chemistry in college before choosing literature, I found the quasi-mathematical rigour extremely satisfying. And since I was learning it all ‘from the source’, while it was itself in flux, I felt free to adapt the method to my own needs. That is how I came to conceive of my book *Authoritarian Fictions*, which was published in 1983, simultaneously in French (*Le roman à thèse ou l'autorité fictive*, 1983b) and English (1983a), with both versions written by me. For reasons that I do not fully understand even now, I wrote the book first in French and then in English, revising it in the process and delaying its publication by a year or two; it appeared simultaneously in the two languages, both of them ‘original’ versions. Along with some other publications, it earned me tenure at Harvard.

I think of *Authoritarian Fictions* as my homage to high structuralism. The book started out from the same question as the one I had treated in my dissertation: What is the relation between literature and politics? But its way of proceeding was completely different, for it reconceptualised the question in structuralist terms, as a study of genre. Nizan figured in it only as one of a number of French writers whose work exemplified the ideological novels of the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, from Maurice Barrès and Paul Bourget to Louis Aragon, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle and André Malraux, among others. My idea was to create formal models to describe how such novels functioned as ‘narratives with a message’, descendants of Biblical parables, medieval *exempla* and moral fables, independently of the specific ideologies they sought to promote. I wanted to show what traits they all had in common, despite the political differences that separated them. This project could appear somewhat perverse, since it bracketed the content of these works—and content, after all, was what they were all about—in order to bring out their formal resemblances. But that was precisely the challenge, to read against the grain—or as I put it then, it was an attempt to lay bare and thereby resist the mechanisms of authoritarian language. ‘Content’ actually did re-enter the book via the back door, for in reading individual works in terms of my formal models, I necessarily had to give an account of what they were trying to say, to whom and in what circumstances. The novels of Barrès and Bourget that I analysed made no sense without the Dreyfus Affair, just as Nizan’s or Malraux’s or Drieu’s novels made no sense without fascism, the Popular Front or the Spanish Civil War. The value of the structuralist approach was that it displaced

the emphasis from the specific to the general, from the meaning of the individual work to its construction. But since structuralism was already being overtaken by poststructuralism and deconstruction, even in my own mind, I concluded the book by studying the ways in which the project of the *roman à thèse*—to tell a story that would have a single unambiguous meaning, to simplify reality by dividing it into binary categories of truth and falsehood—could fail, and indeed *had to fail* in order for the work to be literary. In a work of literature, I concluded, simple categories are necessarily open to complication.

In the summer of 1984, then, I arrived in Budapest, a recently tenured structuralist/poststructuralist literary scholar with a tendency to abstraction and to bracketing history. One version of what happened there would be that, finding myself in the city where I had first seen the light of day, I turned away from models, diagrams, as well as their deconstruction, to embark on a whole new intellectual path. But that version would be wrong—though not totally so. The fact is, I had already embarked on a new path several years earlier, before the *roman à thèse* book was even finished. The new turn that my work took in 1984 was yet another new path—was it number 2 or number 3?—which would take several more years to fully manifest itself.

The first path away from structuralism had led to psychoanalysis and feminism. In the spring of 1975, while I was writing *Authoritarian Fictions* (which shows no trace of feminism and very little of psychoanalysis), I was asked to participate in a conference of feminist criticism, at that point a very new field, held at Barnard College. (Barnard was across the street from where I worked and was in fact my alma mater; but it was also a world away, a women's college, while Columbia was still an all-male bastion. Barnard is still a women's college but Columbia went 'co-ed' in 1983.) The essay I wrote for the conference, a close and somewhat polemical reading of a novel by Alain Robbe-Grillet—who was at the height of his fame as the leader of the *Nouveau Roman* and a frequent visitor to New York in those years—turned out to be one of the most memorable experiences of my intellectual life. I put to use ways of reading texts that I had learned from structuralism and deconstruction but this time informed by a *personal* engagement that I experienced with an extraordinary degree of elation—a feeling of liberation, even. Robbe-Grillet's avant-garde experiments with narrative forms were fascinating and most critics wrote about his work in purely formal terms, emphasising his play with and on language: *les jeux du signifiant*, as the

lingo went. I, however, once again read against the grain, for even while recognising and admiring Robbe-Grillet's formal innovations, I sought to analyse, and show the cultural relevance of, the deeply misogynistic representations of women—of the figure of the mother in particular—that accompanied the 'play of signifiers' in his novels. The essay was published in 1977, six years before *Authoritarian Fictions*. A decade later, I included it in my book *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-garde* (1990), most of which was written after *Authoritarian Fictions* and after my first return to Budapest.

This wave-like succession in intellectual life, where a new project points itself while an older one is still unfolding, like waves forming on the shore, strikes me as perhaps a general phenomenon and I will return to it later. For now, I want to probe a bit further into the experience of intellectual elation. Why elation, why the feeling of liberation? Breaking new intellectual ground is always exciting; but when I thought about it afterward, I realised that my elation in that case was more than intellectual—it was also emotional, as if a door had suddenly been opened that had been locked before. The door led both to the outside world, and to myself. Here is how I put it around 1996:

If I wanted to be flippant, I would say that I turned to feminism when I remembered that I was a woman and a mother. But actually, this is less flippant than it may appear. Of course I 'knew' all along that I was a woman, and starting in 1970, a mother; but it's one thing to know, and quite another to allow that knowledge to inform your work. When I was in graduate school, in the 1960's, the rule was: Never say 'I' when writing about literature. It was only around 1975 that the taboo was miraculously lifted for me, when I read Freud seriously for the first time and began reflecting on the role of women and motherhood—that is, female creation and procreation—in the work of French avant-garde writers. ('My Turn to Jewish Studies', unpublished conference paper)

By the time I arrived in Budapest in the summer of 1984, I was deeply engaged in feminist critical projects—I was editing a volume on *The Female Body in Western Culture*, which would be published in 1986, and writing the essays that would constitute, a few years later, my book *Subversive Intent*. What I had not counted on was the opening of another door, onto yet another world and self. Walking around Budapest with my children, I remembered that I was not only a woman

and a mother, but that I had been a young Jewish child in that city during World War II, born just a few weeks before the outbreak of the war. Once again, I ‘knew’ these facts—but for most of my life until then, I had succeeded in bracketing them, intent on being an American, ‘just one of the girls’ in school and college, then one of the Francophile sophisticates at Harvard, who had spent a post-college year in Paris and spoke French with hardly an accent. After leaving Budapest with my parents at the age of ten, I had never looked back. But now, the first thing I did after that brief return to the city was to write down some of the events I recalled from the last year of the war, 1944–1945, when I was five years old. These were my earliest memories and they existed in pieces; they formed a whole, at least the way I told them, but they were also separate, each one marked by a few sharp images: my mother and I running down our street in the Jewish neighbourhood of Pest, away from the house where we lived; me by myself, running terrified, chased by geese on the farm where my parents left me for a few weeks, with strangers; the masquerade we played once we were reunited, living in a big house in Buda and pretending to be non-Jewish refugees from the south; and finally, the arrival of the Russians—our liberators—and our walk back to Pest in the bombed-out city. I called these fragments ‘My War in Four Episodes’ and put them away.

During the following months, and even years, I would occasionally take the pages out and tinker with them, changing a word here, adding a few words there—I was aiming for ‘literature’. The piece was published in a Boston literary magazine in 1991 and was subsequently reprinted in various anthologies. I also incorporated it into my memoir *Budapest Diary*, a book whose major part I wrote during a second, much longer stay in Budapest in the spring of 1993. By then, the Iron Curtain had fallen and ‘the Change’ (as it was called in Hungarian: *a változás*) had arrived in Hungary. Those were heady days, when a whole new democratic future for the country seemed to be in the making. A new Institute for Advanced Study, the Collegium Budapest, had invited me to spend time there as a Fellow, along with scholars from other parts of Europe and the USA. Rediscovering my native city not as a tourist but as a resident scholar, the member of a community that included Hungarians my age, was an adventure even more exhilarating to me than the discovery of feminist criticism had been years earlier. Writing the diary every night was not a chore, not even a mere task to be accomplished, but a labour

of love—to echo Gaby Spiegel (2007), it was both intellectual work and a personal obsession that I would not have given up for anything.

Alongside this autobiographical writing, I undertook while I was there to edit an anthology of contemporary Jewish writing in Hungary with a Hungarian colleague, which required that I plunge myself, over a period of several years, into the cultural history of Hungarian Jews from the late nineteenth century to the present. The book, *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Hungary*, was published in 2003, with a long Introduction by my co-editor and me that traced the role of Jews in Hungarian culture and society from the ‘golden age’ of assimilation to the Holocaust, and through the Communist years to today; it forms the scholarly complement to *Budapest Diary*.

And Vichy? When do we get, at last, to Vichy—the Occupation, the Resistance, memory and history, Jewish children and Jewish writers in France, all the subjects that have preoccupied me over the past two decades? The short answer is: we get there seven years after my first return to Budapest, not long after the publication of *Subversive Intent*, when I read Simone de Beauvoir’s newly published wartime diary and letters to Sartre, which prompted me to write an essay titled ‘Life Story, History, Fiction: Simone de Beauvoir’s Wartime Writings’. Revisiting a heroine of my college years from a new direction, I could examine her with a more critical eye. Beauvoir, I recognised, had been less than heroic during the war, as indeed was also true of Sartre. It was not an indictment on my part, for who can blame any person for not being heroic? It was, however, sobering to realise the difference between historical fact and mythical aggrandisement. This essay was followed less than a year later by a study of memoirs written by child survivors of the Holocaust in France, ‘War Memories: On Autobiographical Reading’. That essay was another milestone, my first entry into the vast field of Holocaust and memory studies. The concept I proposed, ‘autobiographical reading’, led to the conclusion that reading the stories of others ‘as if they were our own’ can be a prelude to self-examination and to autobiographical writing. Both of these essays were included in my 1994 book *Risking Who One Is*, after being published separately.

But to answer the question about Vichy properly, we must move beyond my personal history and think about zigzags, waves and triangles in intellectual itineraries in general.

ZIGZAGS, WAVES, TRIANGLES

Intellectual itineraries do not move in a straight line: if that is not true for all people, I would contend that it is always, or at least very often, true for those who have experienced geographical, linguistic, social and/or psychological displacement. Displacement is another word for moving around, but while moving around is often a matter of choice and volition, displacement suggests a certain helplessness and lack of control, especially if it occurs in childhood: to be displaced is *to be moved*, by an outside force or agent. One thing that strikes a reader of the itineraries recounted in the volume of ‘ego-histoires’ edited by Pierre Nora (1987) three decades ago is how very *settled* in the French landscape the distinguished historians who told their stories in that book were. Most of them were born in the 1920s in small provincial towns, into families that had lived there for generations; their biggest displacement—more of a move, in fact—was to Paris, to attend university. If they travelled outside France during their formative years, it seems to have made no impression on them—in any case, very few did travel, and then no further than Algeria. One out of the seven was a woman, but her life story differed from the others only in terms of her gender—not a small difference, to be sure, but less significant in this context than other possible differences. None of them was Jewish, or belonged to any other ethnic minority. None of them was ‘other’ in relation to France and French identity. The fact that Pierre Nora himself did not provide his *ego-histoire* in that book appears glaring in that regard, for he at least could have written something about what it felt like to be a ‘Jewish Frenchman’ during the crucial years of his growing up (he was born in 1931). But even when he did finally write his *Esquisse d’ego-histoire* (published in 2013), Nora avoided that subject. Unlike his good friend Pierre Vidal-Naquet, a ‘Jewish Frenchman’ who wrote eloquently in his autobiography (1995–1996) about his lifelong sense of divided identity and doubleness, Nora insists—against his biographer, who attributes enormous importance to his double identity as Jew and as Frenchman—that he sees no division there at all: he is a ‘non-Jewish Jew’, a *Juif déjudaisé*, and even during the war he felt he was a *résistant* more than a Jew. Unlike the ‘Juifs pieds-noirs’ who came to France from Algeria at the time of the Algerian war, and whose attitude toward France is often critical, Nora sees his own love of France as unalloyed. While he claims a certain haphazardness in his intellectual evolution (nothing was planned in advance, he says),

he presents himself as a man without internal conflicts or ambivalence, at least as far as France or French identity is concerned.

À chacun son ego-histoire. As for me, I see quite a lot of displacement and moving around, not only in my personal trajectory—among languages as among cities where I feel both at home and like a stranger—but in my intellectual trajectory as well. New Criticism, structuralism, feminist criticism, memory studies, Holocaust studies: zigzagging, riding the waves and drawing triangles seems to be my natural mode of operation. I reached the English language via French, childhood memory via motherhood, and Vichy via Budapest. This kind of movement is not unique to me—as many others have noted, a certain estrangement from one's surroundings, including what one calls home, is part of any worthwhile intellectual effort. But the history of my generation of European Jews—some would say the long history of Jews in general—obviously plays a role here as well.

This brings us to a question that deserves a longer discussion but that I want to raise at least briefly before concluding: the relation between the individual and the collective in intellectual life. It has not escaped me that my various zigzags and waves and triangles have not occurred in a vacuum, but in a broader intellectual context. If I became excited about feminist criticism circa 1975, it surely had something to do with the fact that many other women scholars in the United States were equally excited, equally engaged. What I lived from the inside as a unique personal adventure was part of a much larger, collective phenomenon. Similarly, if I suddenly 'remembered' my wartime childhood circa 1984, and then became fascinated with issues of memory, the Holocaust, the Vichy regime, the Occupation, the same was true of colleagues in France, Germany, England, Italy and the United States around the same time. And this kind of remembering was also encouraged by world-transforming historical events: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of Communism in the Soviet Union, the end of the Iron Curtain. An individual *ego-histoire* necessarily points to a larger (national and international) intellectual, cultural and political history, with its own zigzags and waves and triangles. We witnessed one important zigzag in New York on September 11, 2001, and may have witnessed another in January 2015, in Paris. (I am referring, of course, to the massacre of journalists at the headquarters of the satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*, followed a day later by the murder of Jewish shoppers at a kosher supermarket. Less than a year later, in November 2015, the terrorists struck again, this time at a rock music concert and two other locations on the same day.)

On the other side, it is also useful to think about missed encounters and ‘out of synch’ moments. As I was reading Robert Paxton’s essay in *Why France?* (2007), a volume of *ego-histoires* by American historians who work on France, I suddenly remembered that in 1972, when Paxton published his history of Vichy France, which proved to be so important later, to me and others, I was just starting my ‘high structuralist’ project on the *roman à thèse*. Bob Paxton and I were colleagues at the time, both of us assistant professors at Columbia, though he was several years ahead of me. I even sat on a dissertation jury with him in 1973 or thereabouts, totally unaware of his work or of what it would mean to me later. Incidentally, this American scholar who has been called the quintessential ‘gentleman from Virginia’, titles his essay in *Why France?* ‘A Mid-Atlantic Identity’ and insists that he exists ‘between’ France and America, not feeling fully at home in either one.

CIRCLES, CONTINUITIES

Zigzags and triangles are jagged figures, with sharp changes in direction; waves are more continuous, since one begins while the other one is still unfolding; and then there is the circle, or more exactly the spiral, which keeps returning to familiar ground even while advancing. Looking back at my work over the past forty years, I can see both sharp turns and continuities; the latter became particularly apparent to me as I was heading toward finishing my latest book, *The Némirovsky Question: The Life, Death, and Legacy of a Jewish Writer in 20th-Century France* (2016). Irène Némirovsky, a Russian Jewish émigrée to France, was deported in 1942 and died in Auschwitz at the age of 39, but she had managed to write an astonishing number of novels and stories in her short career. Although she was among the very rare women writers in France who could claim literary fame and the respect of the literary establishment along with commercial success during the 1930s, Némirovsky sank into oblivion after the war. But in 2004, her posthumous novel *Suite française* became an international bestseller. Since then, all of her works have been reissued and she has been the subject of biographies and critical studies. She is also a somewhat controversial figure, for some Jewish readers consider her to have been a ‘Jewish antisemite’ or a ‘self-hating Jew’. My book focuses on questions of Jewish identity in Némirovsky’s life and work—and also in those of her two daughters, who were young children during the war and who survived in hiding after both of their

parents were deported. The daughters, Denise Epstein and Elisabeth Gille, played an important role in bringing their mother back to life—Némirovsky's posthumous fame is in large part due to their efforts. In a new kind of research for me, I conducted many interviews in the course of writing the book, meeting several times with Denise Epstein (her sister had died by the time I began my work) and also meeting Némirovsky's grandchildren and even her great-grandchildren.

In the course of writing this book, I realised just how continuous some of my preoccupations—my personal obsessions, if you will—have been, despite all the zigzags and triangles, ever since the days of my PhD dissertation on Nizan. Némirovsky, like Nizan—and like Sartre and Beauvoir, who have accompanied me since college—was of the same generation as my parents, born in the first decade of the twentieth century (Némirovsky was born in 1903, Sartre and Nizan in 1905, Beauvoir in 1908). She was a 'displaced person', a woman writer in a literary world dominated by men, a Jew with extremely ambivalent feelings about Jewishness, a victim of the Holocaust, and the mother of two daughters, child survivors who both went on to successful lives and who later wrote or testified about their experiences during the war. It seems to me that this work brings together, or returns to, all of the subjects that have been important to me, in my life and in my teaching and writing: fiction, history, mothers, children—and yes, during all that time, France.

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PART V

Closing Reflections

Conclusion: Cross-Perspectives on Ego-history

Manuel Bragança and Fransiska Louwagie

These concluding remarks build on individual singularities as well as collective patterns that emerge from the previous chapters. First, this text will reflect on how the scholars in this volume have engaged with what can be seen as certain *passages obligés*, essential and perhaps unavoidable steps of the ego-history genre, namely the questioning of the origins of one's research ('why?', but also 'how?' and 'when?') and of the links between personal identities and intellectual trajectories. Second, it will focus on the research shifts and developments observed in the wake of the 'Paxtonian turn' (see Chapter "[Introduction: Ego-histories, France and the Second World War](#)"). A third section will look at interdisciplinary and collaborative openings along with the social and public role played by scholars working on this period. A fourth and final section will consider ego-histories of France and the Second World War from an intergenerational perspective.

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ORIGINS, IDENTITIES AND TRAJECTORIES

In line with the genre's expectations, the ego-historians in this volume explore the origins of their research interests. For scholars born or educated outside France, this includes the questioning of their interest in France, which, in the chapters written by Bertram M. Gordon, Margaret Attack, Christopher Lloyd and Susan Suleiman, is directly or indirectly linked to the cultural prestige of France, and sometimes to their contacts with French language and culture during their formative years. The interest in the Second World War more specifically is, not unexpectedly for this generation, often connected to personal stories. Family backgrounds feature prominently in some of the texts and tend to be related to experiences of war and, for some contributors, the Holocaust. This is notably the case for Renée Poznanski and Susan Suleiman whose immediate families were persecuted because they were Jewish, a persecution that Henry Rousso's more distant family experienced too. It is also true for Denis Peschanski, although his parents were deported to Germany owing to their wartime resistance activities and not because they were Jewish. Family connections with the Resistance are also alluded to in Laurent Douzou's chapter, when he mentions his grandmother, and in Robert Gildea's text, when he refers to his French great-uncle's encounter with De Gaulle in London in July 1940. Other authors, such as Hilary Footitt and Margaret Attack, mention the shadowy presence of World War Two during their childhood, the former stating from the outset 'I am a child of war'. These examples also show that being French or having direct family ties with France does not necessarily mean that one has stronger links with this dramatic period of history: to take two contrasting cases, Marc Dambre describes a rather distant war which, as a child, he mainly grasped through the scarred landscape of northern France, whilst Colin Nettelbeck invokes the figure of his father who died fighting Vichy soldiers in Syria.

These observations raise interesting questions about the contributors' positions vis-à-vis their research on France and the Second World War. As Susan Suleiman points out in her chapter, the historians who contributed to Pierre Nora's *Essais d'ego-histoire* (1987) were all 'very settled' in France. The present volume, because of its international outlook, offers a different picture. Moreover, its focus on Vichy is intrinsically linked to transnational histories and memories and to ethical issues and questions of global scope and importance, including also matters of ethnicity and origins.

It is hence worth noting that nationality and ethnic or cultural backgrounds are part of a complex sense of identity for many contributors. Margaret Attack's affinity with France, for example, was nourished by her Catholic upbringing which, she felt, set her apart from her fellow citizens when growing up in Britain. Peter Tame refers to his French and more distant Jewish heritages, while Colin Nettelbeck mentions that his English grandmother may have been of Dutch Jewish origin. The sense of having a composite identity is particularly obvious in the case of scholars with a direct Jewish heritage such as Susan Suleiman, Renée Poznanski and Henry Rousso, whose backgrounds are anything but 'settled': affected by personal and family displacements, they show different forms of engagement with their Jewish roots, positions which also intersect with other identifiers: gender, motherhood and Hungarian origins in the case of Susan Suleiman; French nationality and culture, among others, for Renée Poznanski and Henry Rousso. If references to family origins feature prominently in the titles of their chapters, they also convey a certain fluidity: Renée Poznanski's 'born in Paris...' hints as much to the strength of her French origins as, through the ellipsis, to the journey that followed and the presence of another crucial identity marker; Susan Suleiman's title ('reaching Vichy via Budapest') indicates the distance travelled, while Henry Rousso's title ('from a foreign country') also suggests displacement and an ex-centric trajectory. The latter's resistance to 'given identities' takes a particular relevance in relation to his personal background and field of research. This being said, whilst a Jewish background can be perceived as significant for scholars working on the Second World War and Vichy (cf. Rousso, Chapter "[From a foreign country](#)"), this, again, does not necessarily mean that the link between the subject and the object of study has to be central, omnipresent or exclusive, as evidenced by these research trajectories. Nor does it mean that such a link is necessarily conscious or deliberate: Henry Rousso, in his own words, 'came close to being in denial' about his Jewish heritage, while Susan Suleiman points out that it is one thing to acknowledge connections with one's own identity—as a woman, a mother, a Jew, in her case—but another to allow these to inform one's work.

Beyond a national, religious, ethnic or cultural sense of belonging, being perceived as an 'insider' or as an 'outsider' to a specific object of study also had a major impact on authors whose research bears a strong ideological resonance. This is, for instance, the case for Laurent Douzou whose research on the French resistance was initially met with caution by many: those outside the French Communist Party (PCF)

suspected him of having communist sympathies, while those inside the PCF knew that this was not true. On the other side of the ideological spectrum, Peter Tame and Marc Dambre refer to the suspicions that their research on Fascist or right-wing writers brought upon themselves. If the ego-historians in this volume reflect on possible personal connections to their research object, some of them also take this opportunity to distance themselves from it, often by clarifying their ideological, political or ethical beliefs in the process: Laurent Douzou refers to his enduring wariness of Communism in his chapter, when Peter Tame and Marc Dambre make it clear that their personal political convictions lie far removed from their research interests which, in any case, go beyond Fascist or right-wing ideologies. Some scholars from outside France also reflect on the potential benefits or difficulties that they felt were inherent to their ‘outsider’ status: Colin Nettelbeck infers that his non-involvement in Franco-French debates worked to his advantage in making him an ‘unthreatening’ research partner; and Bertram M. Gordon argues that collaborationists may have trusted him more easily because he was a foreigner and belonged to a different generation. Hilary Footitt, on the contrary, recognises that her status as a foreigner initially hindered her research confidence, restricting her ability to work outside pre-established narratives of the French Resistance; however, it is precisely her status as a foreigner that made her acutely aware of the differences between French and Anglophone narratives of the war, leading her to investigate ‘contact zones’ on the ground later in her career (Footitt 2004). The recurring emphasis on in- and outsider perspectives underscores the ideological stakes and tensions inherent in the field, which are also prominent in certain chapter titles, through references to ‘conflict’ and ‘the other side’, in the cases of Peter Tame and Bertram M. Gordon, respectively.

The primary focus on the research object in a large number of titles confirms more broadly that references to individual or family circumstances in ego-histories tend to be limited in length and—as Revel (1988) pointed out in relation to Nora’s volume—that the personal sphere tends to disappear once ego-historians enter their research and professional careers.¹ By way of further examples, the titles of Margaret Attack’s and Christopher Lloyd’s chapters have an obvious intertextual dimension which refers to

¹ Glimpses of the contributors’ personal lives nonetheless transpire in several chapters, most notably in Robert Gildea’s. In addition, a number of ego-historians—including Colin Nettelbeck, Henry Rousso and Robert Gildea—mention occasional intellectual input from

the literary imagination that nourished their work. Other scholars highlight what they consider to be overarching characteristics of their journey in their titles: these are ‘chance and necessity’ for Denis Peschanski, ‘good fortune and good friends’ for Richard Golsan, ‘currents and counter-currents’ and ‘zigzags, waves and triangles’ in Marc Dambre’s and Susan Suleiman’s cases, while Laurent Douzou and Hilary Footitt allude to notions of search and endeavour which suggest a continuing process.

As these chapters show, research choices are influenced by specific academic contexts or practical constraints, which may have hindered, facilitated or necessitated a certain focus or approach.² More specifically, in relation to their work on Vichy, a number of contributors also refer to particularly influential cultural landmarks or major political events as research inspirations and triggers. Cultural landmarks are more frequently cited by scholars who were educated outside France: Margaret Attack, Robert Gildea, Bertram Gordon and Colin Nettelbeck mention *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (Ophüls 1969), for example; Louis Malle’s *Lacombe Lucien* (1974) is mentioned by Margaret Attack, Christopher Lloyd, Peter Tame and Richard Golsan; and references to Patrick Modiano are made in six chapters (Attack, Dambre, Douzou, Golsan, Nettelbeck and Tame). Most contributors also mention major political events that durably impacted upon their interests and ways of thinking. Colin Nettelbeck alludes to the Franco-Algerian War and, like Richard Golsan, Marc Dambre and Robert Gildea, highlights the impact of the Vietnam War; these contributors also refer to the protests of 1968—in France, the UK and the USA—as do Bertram

their partners, thus acknowledging crossovers between the private and the professional spheres. It should also be noted here that if teaching is rarely mentioned, this may simply be because discussions focused primarily on research during this project. Teaching is nonetheless mentioned in passing in several chapters, and generally positively, by Marc Dambre, Laurent Douzou, Richard Golsan, Bertram M. Gordon, Colin Nettelbeck and Susan Suleiman. Two contributors, however, Hilary Footitt and Colin Nettelbeck, also note how the teaching load and administrative duties had acted as barriers to their research.

²Marc Dambre, for example, chose to work on Roger Nimier in part because the field of ‘the other Roger’ (Vaillant) seemed already occupied; Renée Poznanski started working on French history when she moved from France to Israel because her background in Russian was of little use there; Bertram M. Gordon opted to work on fascism in France rather than in Romania when he realised that it would have been difficult for him to access Romanian archives at the time; at one point, Hilary Footitt resigned her busy academic position because she wanted to focus on research; and it is because Robert Gildea had a young family at the time that he researched *Marianne in Chains* (2002) in three contiguous *départements*; and so on.

M. Gordon and Renée Poznanski. The influence of the Six-Day War on the latter is particularly obvious since it led her to move to Israel. However, if political events are often described as mind-opening, it is sometimes only retrospectively that scholars understood their impact on their personal trajectories: Colin Nettelbeck compares himself to Stendhal's Fabrice at Waterloo when he reflects on his presence in Paris during the Franco-Algerian war; for Marc Dambre, the coincidence of his birth date with the start of the Vél' d'Hiv roundup is a much belated realisation. By linking events across time and space, these ego-histories illustrate how 'multidirectional' resonances and associations (cf. Rothberg 2009) may have influenced or at least informed research questions and sensibilities.

Whilst reflecting on their research on Vichy, contributors also tend to emphasise how their 'road' to the Second World War has been anything but straightforward, mentioning other research pathways that they either considered, followed for a time or with which they gradually engaged. If, in the end, it is difficult to disentangle the various causal or explanatory factors behind certain career choices and trajectories in each and any chapter, it is perhaps also because the contributors to this volume are very much aware of the 'teleological traps' of the ego-history genre, and are therefore cautious to avoid any simplification or overly deterministic narrative. There is however little doubt that, beyond their personal drive, their intellectual commitment to this period was spurred on by the richness of the field, favoured as it was by the openings of archives, the boom of memory studies, the ongoing cultural and media attention for 'Vichy' and the fundamental and in certain ways timeless—and therefore always contemporary—existential and ethical questions that underpin this area of research.

RESEARCH SHIFTS AND DISCIPLINARY DEVELOPMENTS

The 1970s paradigm shift described in the introduction (Chapter "Introduction: Ego-histories, France and the Second World War") prompted scholars to look afresh at the realities and complexity of the situations that had until then been reified behind widely used generic words like Collaboration or Resistance. It enabled a major reassessment of the history of France and the French during the Second World War. In particular, the study of the role and responsibility of the Vichy regime in the Jewish persecution led to a gradual decompartmentalisation of the historiographies of World War Two and of the Holocaust, which had developed largely in parallel until then. Research was stimulated by the broader emergence of Holocaust memories in the public sphere—in

France but also at European and global levels—contributing to a radical recasting of perspectives on Collaboration and Vichy in the following decades. The work of Renée Poznanski illustrates the scholarly attempt to ‘deghettoise’ the history of the Jews during the Second World War and reinsert it into wider narratives. At a literary level, Susan Suleiman’s recent book on Irène Némirovsky (2016) offers a compelling analysis of the complex identity issues experienced by a Jewish writer in the early days of the Vichy regime. The very fact that the responsibility of Vichy had been overlooked for decades played a significant role in the development of memory studies, which all the contributors mention in their chapters.

The historiographical turn of the 1970s also created important methodological openings. Bertram M. Gordon indicates in his chapter that he followed ‘Paxton’s model’ in working with German archival material available in the United States in order to bypass the real or perceived difficulty of accessing French archives at the times. Beyond the possibility of using non-French records, Robert Paxton’s research also exemplified the possibility of integrating different national viewpoints for Hilary Footitt. Such a move away from national perspectives resulted in a greater attention to local situations (Footitt, Chapter “[Searching for ‘Contact Zones’ in France’s war](#)”) and to regional differences (Gildea, Chapter “[A Tale of Two Frances and a Curious Ancestor](#)”; Peschanski, Chapter “[On Chance and Necessity](#)”). The contributors’ interest in the local and lived experiences also explains the repeated references in these chapters to the use of oral testimonies, which were often needed to complement sketchy or missing written sources. This meant developing new methodological approaches, which, despite a number of trials and errors, proved fruitful and productive for most researchers. Several contributors reflect specifically on the peculiar relationship between historian and witness, illustrating the epistemological difficulties of using memory for the writing of history. Whilst Bertram M. Gordon alludes to the risk of being instrumentalised by interviewees, Robert Gildea describes his difficult first interview and the subsequent insight that oral histories do not elicit a historical truth but rather subjective ‘meanings’. For Laurent Douzou, eyewitnesses offer invaluable counter-perspectives which should remind scholars of the incredible complexity of the reality on the ground in a time of turmoil. In his chapter, Henry Rousso advocates the need to establish a more critical distance towards eyewitnesses, admitting nonetheless that the discussions he had with survivors of the Rwandan

genocide forced him to rethink his position on the matter. Adopting a middle-ground position, Denis Peschanski argues that historians ‘cannot afford to be either naive or overly suspicious’ with regard to oral testimonies, also shifting the debate from the subjective dimension of individual memories to the collective forces behind them.

Scholars with a more literary background also discuss key changes to their research approaches and the broadening of their methodologies. Against academic conventions or *habitus*, they started working on contemporary writers. Gradually relinquishing New Criticism and structuralism, they soon found new ways of approaching literature, revisiting literary history and embracing postmodern stances which emphasise the fact that discourses are always socially and culturally constructed, and therefore plural, at any time. Susan Suleiman’s *Authoritarian Fictions* (1983; cf. Chapter “[Reaching Vichy via Budapest: On Zigzags, Waves and Triangles in Intellectual Life](#)”) opened a breach by showing how literary texts construct ideological stances, whilst simultaneously undermining them by always offering an array of meanings. Moving beyond the study of ‘literarity’ to explore the ideological dimensions of the text, scholars sought to understand the links between ideology, literature and language. Sparked by the renewed attention given to the different forms of collaboration, they focused to a large extent on right-wing or fascist writers. As Richard Golsan remarks, research moved away from a silent or apologetic stance to face up to anti-Semitic and collaborationist views—a move that was not without its risks for the scholars involved (cf. Dambre, Chapter “[Currents and Counter-currents](#)”; Tame, Chapter “[Writers in Conflict](#)”; Golsan, Chapter “[Good Fortune, Good Friends](#)”). The gradual interaction with memory studies also implied a critical investigation of contemporary representations of the past, and of the difficulties these entail, as illustrated in titles or subtitles of publications such as ‘crises of memory’ (Suleiman 2006), ‘*mémoires occupées*’ (Dambre et al. 2013) or ‘corruptions of memory’ (Golsan 2017). In the ‘Anglosphere’, these new approaches and methodologies contributed to and were facilitated by the opening of French studies to cognate disciplines: most scholars (notably Colin Nettelbeck, Christopher Lloyd and Margaret Atack) turned to other media, such as cinema, or to other disciplines to inform their research. If literary studies in France have maintained a strong focus on close textual analysis, Marc Dambre’s trajectory highlights important shifts in French academia, towards the contemporary and towards lesser-known texts, and, in agreement with Richard Golsan, he argues that different approaches to the text can yield complementary insights.

In a sense, the research openings and transformations mentioned in this section emphasise again that the understanding of the history and memories of the Second World War in France cannot be grasped through a single and unifying narrative: on the contrary, taken together, they advocate that it is only through a multiplicity of perspectives that the complexity of this period and its long-lasting impact on French society can be apprehended.

COLLABORATIVE OPENINGS AND PUBLIC PRESENCE

In their ego-histories, many contributors also describe how their methodology evolved progressively thanks in part to the exchanges they had with their peers. Facilitated by technological advances, such dialogues developed across disciplines, on the one hand, and across countries, on the other. The influence of Robert Paxton across disciplines is evidenced by the fact that his name is mentioned by no fewer than nine of the fourteen contributors, historians and non-historians. That the work of a historian should be so influential for scholars across the disciplines may be an indicator of a centre-periphery relationship within this area of research; at the same time, history itself is marked by a certain permeability to other disciplines, as already asserted in relation to Pierre Nora's *Essais d'ego-histoire* (Rousso 1988; Aurell 2016). In the current volume, Robert Paxton acknowledges this permeability with regard to the social sciences (see Chapter "[Interview with Robert O. Paxton, on the Writing of History and Ego-history](#)"), and several other contributing historians mention additional disciplinary influences. For Laurent Douzou, for example, literature has been a liberating force for his work as a historian because of the freedom and sensibility fiction can display in broaching historical and moral issues, while Henry Rousso refers to his engagement with philosophy, as well as his taste for literature and film, in his chapter. More broadly, memory studies have opened up new avenues for inter- or transdisciplinary research: this is the case for Bertram M. Gordon's work on war tourism, and for Denis Peschanski, who is now engaged in a series of projects with neuroscientists to investigate the intertwining dynamics of individual and collective memories. The focus on memory that many scholars have taken also explains why Henry Rousso's pioneering work on the history of the memory of Vichy (1990) is cited many times in this volume.

As the various chapters demonstrate, the integration of different research perspectives also took the form of national or international and often long-standing collaborations. These are described as particularly productive and exhilarating for Laurent Douzou and Peter Tame, who contrast their initial work as individual and isolated scholars with

their liberating collaborative experiences. One place in France emerges as a catalyst for international and collaborative endeavours, namely the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP), which is mentioned in no fewer than eight contributions.³ International exchanges and collaborations certainly contributed to bringing research methodologies and examples of best practice together. On the topic of academic collaborations, Christopher Lloyd nevertheless raises some serious concerns, stressing that, in the UK, these have been largely driven by technocratic circles in higher education (Lloyd, Chapter “[Vichy, Kingdom of Shadows](#)”; cf. Nussbaum 2010 and Collini 2012).

The focus on international exchanges and collaborations also relates back to the question of how insider and outsider perspectives interact when dealing with a particularly sensitive and ideologically-loaded topic. Robert Paxton argues in his interview (Chapter “[Interview with Robert O. Paxton, on the Writing of History and Ego-history](#)”) that ‘there is no “French way” as opposed to an “outsider’s way” of approaching the Vichy period’; for him, there is instead a professional and a non-professional way, and it is from amateur historians that most controversial perspectives may arise. This was certainly the case in 2014 when a journalist called Éric Zemmour argued in an ill-informed book that Vichy, by sacrificing foreign Jews, should be credited for the survival of so many French Jews. Many historians, including Robert Paxton and Denis Peschanski, responded sharply in the media, refusing to engage directly with this journalist in order to deny him any sort of legitimacy on the topic.⁴ In her chapter, Renée Poznanski alludes to similar occurrences and conflicting approaches in academia. These debates remain relatively marginal, but provide insight into some of the contemporary stakes in the memories of the Second World War and the Holocaust in France where national—and perhaps nationalist—biases can occasionally interfere with historical evidence and findings.

Such debates also raise questions around the social role of scholars and their relationships with the world outside academia, a recurring topic in

³Created in 1978 and inaugurated in 1980 by historian François Bédarida, its first director, the IHTP is the direct successor of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (CHDGM, Committee for the History of the Second World War), created in 1951. Although the scope of the IHTP is wider than the scope of its predecessor, the Second World War remains central to the interests of its researchers.

⁴See, for example, http://www.lepoint.fr/societe/rehabilitation-de-petain-zemmour-de-cric-par-les-historiens-19-10-2014-1873827_23.php and <https://devhist.hypotheses.org/2562>.

ego-historical texts (Nora 1987, 2013). What the chapters in the current volume demonstrate is that scholars working in the field of Vichy generally have particularly strong ethical views about what their profession entails. This seems especially true for French historians who, because of the public interest that this period of history still holds, are often asked to comment on specific events by the media. As key vectors of ethically challenging and also ideologically and emotionally divisive memories, their expertise can occasionally lead them to painful or difficult experiences: this was clearly the case for Henry Rousso and Laurent Douzou during the Aubrac Affair, and for Denis Peschanski during the Manouchian, the Bartosek and the Aubrac Affairs or when he received threats from Holocaust deniers. This being said, the social role of these scholars is not restricted to providing expertise on the Second World War. For instance, Bertram M. Gordon displays a specific sensitivity towards gender inequalities and feels that his role as a historian is more broadly to impart ‘the vitality of human agency’, whilst Renée Poznanski also perceives her scholarly work as a way of fighting prejudice. However, whereas political ideology seemed paramount for the intellectual development of Nora’s ego-historians (1987), Denis Peschanski is the only contributor here to invoke his past and present political commitments. For most researchers in this volume, there is a sense that ideological convictions have been channelled into a personal and/or public engagement outside the realms of politics *stricto sensu*.

Literary scholars have also extensively engaged with moral and ethical issues in their work—recent examples include Susan Suleiman’s latest book on Irène Némirovsky (2016), a novelist sometimes described as a ‘self-hating Jew’; Colin Nettelbeck’s article on Cardinal Lustiger (2017); or Richard Golsan’s latest book (2017), in which he engages with historical distortions in contemporary France, mainly through cultural productions. Debates about literary or artistic depictions of the Second World War and more specifically the Holocaust also resurface regularly. Outside the contexts of literary scandals and contentious feature films or documentaries, these discussions tend to be less public and perhaps less antagonistic. This may be because cultural or literary productions, by definition, enjoy a degree of artistic freedom in representing reality and allow for multiple meanings and readings. Literary or film scholars also tend to be less present than historians in the media. What is more, as a general rule, scholars publishing mainly in English or living outside France have been less involved in such public debates, regardless of their disciplines.

If the chapters collected here evoke some heated debates and polemics, for instance concerning the attitudes and responsibilities of French society at large during the war, they also bring forward elements of general consensus. The absence of any major controversy over ‘Vichy’ since the turn of the century, both in- and outside academia, suggests that the French, across generations, have now a greater awareness of and, broadly speaking, a commonly accepted narrative on the responsibilities of the French State during the Second World War. Contrary to a persistent myth (cf. Chapter “[Interview with Robert O. Paxton, on the Writing of History and Ego-history](#)”) and notwithstanding varying sensitivities and nuances, they acknowledge the role and responsibility of the Vichy regime in the persecution of the Jews in France, as evidenced by the Vél’ d’Hiv roundup commemorative discourses of Presidents Jacques Chirac in 1995, François Hollande in 2012 and Emmanuel Macron in 2017.

COLLECTIVE AND TRANSGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

In their edited volume, Laura Lee Downs and Stéphane Gerson noted that ego-histories create a space for ‘collective inquiry’ through the juxtaposition and comparison of ‘singular itineraries’ (2007, 4–5). The main value of such projects may reside exactly there, where individual and collective trajectories meet, for such incidences help to understand and delineate the state of play of a field, beyond the individuals, and, as far as this volume is concerned, beyond disciplines and countries. Interestingly, many of our contributors have placed this collective perspective at the centre of their contributions. Whilst Christopher Lloyd and Marc Dambre start by deconstructing the notion of the autonomous ‘ego’, Denis Peschanski states that his ‘I’ bears a collective dimension. Contributors also look for broader patterns in their trajectories, with Susan Suleiman asking herself what in her own path could speak to others. As opposed to single-authored self-reflective texts, ego-history volumes such as this one enjoy the advantage of being able to emphasise the importance of individual–collective confluences. This also ties in with important considerations about how scholarly knowledge advances in this—and, indeed, in any—field of research, and underscores at the same time the collaborative dimension of memory processes. By opening up disciplinary boundaries, this volume also shows how the past is mediated

through and across a variety of discourses and how these interact, highlighting in particular the societal role of literature and culture.

Investigating research perspectives through the prism of a group of senior scholars also raises questions about the next generations of researchers. Exchanges with younger scholars were therefore part of the preparatory workshop which took place in Belfast (Chapter “[Introduction: Ego-histories, France and the Second World War](#)”). Other ego-history projects have enabled intergenerational exchanges, directly or indirectly. For example, in 1988, Henry Rousso was invited in his capacity as ‘young historian’ to contribute to an epistemological debate about Nora’s *Essais d’ego-histoire*; and, as mentioned in the introduction, the impetus behind a volume of ego-histories on French-speaking Switzerland (Atelier H 2003) was the curiosity of young scholars wishing to understand the intellectual trajectories of those who had preceded them. In the case of *Ego-Histories of France and the Second World War*, the curiosity between generations was, or perhaps became, reciprocal. Informal and formal discussions arose about working conditions for early career researchers, the use of social media, current and future research projects, and so forth. Interestingly, independent reviews of the book proposal also highlighted the need to shed some clarity on the ego-histories of the editors and the impulse behind this project. To address the last point first, we could simply say that curiosity was undoubtedly a key factor; however, this curiosity was more intellectual than personal in the sense that it was the logic behind the scholarly works that shaped the foundations of our research that we wanted to understand better.

The question of how intellectual trajectories may be grounded in personal backgrounds also arose for both editors. Manuel Bragança was born in France from Portuguese parents. His interest in history and research choices may have been influenced by the fact that he found himself moving constantly between languages and cultures. ‘May’, because, similarly to what Denis Peschanski notes in his chapter, his two older brothers followed radically different pathways, one becoming a molecular biologist and the other an IT project manager. What is more, although he studied history, he was equally interested in many other disciplines—including sociology, psychology and philosophy—and was not particularly attracted by the twentieth century during his degree. In fact, his Research Masters was dedicated to criminality and

the criminal justice system in Paris in the nineteenth century. It is only after moving to Belfast, for personal reasons, that he engaged in a PhD, in 2006. He considered several possible subjects but felt compelled to work on the Second World War for reasons that he would struggle to explain. It seems to him that his interest developed gradually, sustained mainly by the many documentary and feature films that he watched in his youth. This said, it is the controversy that followed the publication of *Une Jeunesse française* (Péan 1994, *A French Youth*) about President François Mitterrand's Vichy past that first came to his mind when he started to think about the origins of his research interest in this period. So, under the supervision of Peter Tame, a literary scholar, and Marko Pajević, a German scholar specialising in poetics, he chose to investigate the depiction of Germans in France in the aftermath of the Second World War. Interdisciplinary and international, the 'PhD team' spoke many different languages, both literally and metaphorically: this made discussions puzzling at times, but they were always respectful and constructive, and undoubtedly contributed to widening his disciplinary horizons.

Fransiska Louwagie was born in Belgium, in the town of Poperinge, close to the French border and the area known as 'Flanders Fields', from an originally rural family. Her upbringing, as that of her sister and brother, was strongly focused on language learning, in particular French. This may to some extent be linked to family history: part of her maternal family fled to northern France during the First World War—some settling there permanently—whilst on the paternal side, children of her grandparents' generation were separated from their family to evacuate them from the frontline and were placed in French convents for the lengthy duration of the war.⁵ However, the focus on French may be even more directly related to its perceived emancipating power in the bilingual context of Belgium. Literature, and particularly poetry, was another vocation since childhood. At university, the choice of her initial research topic was directed towards twentieth-century French literature but may have had little immediate connection to family history or memories, which for the Second World

⁵On the history and family memories of these 'colony children', see Anne Provoost, *Kinderen van de IJzer. De Parijse jaren van de zusjes Vandewalle* (Children of the Yser. The Parisian Years of the Vandewalle Sisters), forthcoming.

War include military service and the hosting of numerous refugees (priests sleeping in the house, and other refugees in the stable). Based on a list of possible dissertation topics on offer, she started working on concentration camp narratives by survivors from the Resistance, gradually developing a broader interest in literary testimony (*'littérature de témoignage'*). Her work with Lieven D'hulst as PhD supervisor at the University of Leuven also widened her research horizons, introducing an additional focus on Francophone literature and Translation Studies. Other mentors and wide interdisciplinary research collaborations in the field of memory studies also played a key role in orientating further research and career choices. Faced with the challenges of temporary post-doctoral positions in Belgium and interested in developing broader international experience following a Fulbright stay at Harvard University with Susan Suleiman, she took up an appointment in the UK in 2011.

These trajectories are still at a relatively early stage, and therefore do not obviously allow for full comparisons with those of the previous generation. Still, some features are striking, such as the multilingual, multinational and interdisciplinary dimensions of both trajectories. This could be a sign of the times but, in a sense, it prolongs the openings revealed by the trajectories of the group portrait depicted here. The two editors of this volume have also in common the fact that they started their research careers at a moment when narratives of the Second World War were well established and accepted, and Holocaust Studies a prominent field. This state of research represented, and still represents, risks and issues of its own for young scholars: the literature now available on these topics can be overwhelming, and may blur the ability to think critically about primary or secondary sources. In this sense, the interdisciplinary scope of the field, its ethical issues and ideological stakes represent considerable challenges. By unpacking some of the dynamics of the field and its surrounding discourses, as it has attempted to do, this book will hopefully be of use to younger researchers.

The project has also enabled the editors to take a step back from their own enquiries and academic preoccupations and gain insight into the intellectual trajectories of senior colleagues. Of course, a chapter, or indeed a book, will never exhaust any intellectual journey. What historian François Dosse (2011, 452) said about biographical writing also

applies to autobiographical writing and ego-histories: ‘l’énigme biographique résiste à l’écriture biographique’ (the biographical enigma resists biographical writing). However, when read against or, rather, *with* other related contemporary texts, ego-histories provide cues for the understanding of specific research areas and contexts. A different or larger group of scholars would naturally have resulted in a somewhat different ‘group portrait’, and would have offered additional perspectives on research developments and social engagement within the field. It is with this in mind that we therefore conclude with the hope that this volume will both create and allow a space that may invite, accommodate and integrate further narratives. It is also our hope that this volume will act as a stimulus for the translation of important works in this field currently only available in one language, and that, in the spirit of the original workshop held in Belfast, it will encourage new exchanges as well as contribute to nurturing existing ones, across disciplines, national boundaries and generations.

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