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Remembering the French Resistance

Ethics and Poetics of the Epic

NATHAN BRACHER

From its very inception to the present day the French Resistance has been represented and commemorated in the epic mode. While Laurent Douzou's book, *La Résistance française: Une histoire périlleuse*, reaffirms this heroic vision, Pascal Convert's sculpture honoring executed Resistance fighters on Mont Valérien and his documentary film *Mont Valérien, aux noms des fusillés* propose a more human, even anti-heroic approach which nevertheless aims to unite a community in memory by celebrating the courage and sacrifice, but also the specific persons, of previously forgotten *résistants*. The poetics of memory implicit in Convert's works are emblematic of a more general evolution of sensibilities, since contemporary disinterest in the virtues of the warrior and a concomitant preference for recovering the humanity of war's victims can be best understood in reference to the successive trauma of World War I and the Holocaust.

World War II in France offers a compelling saga: from a crushing defeat that ushered in "the sorrow and the pity" of material hardship, social regression, political treason and moral compromise, France—thanks largely to massive Allied intervention, but not without the inspired, if quantitatively modest combat of the French Resistance—reemerged from an excruciating German occupation to see itself seated not only among the victors receiving Nazi Germany's surrender but also as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The history and memory of these "Dark Years" has followed an equally tortuous itinerary. The naïve triumphalism of the postwar era that celebrated a nation united in resistance while overlooking Vichy's collaboration with the Nazis finally gave way to the "Paxtonian revolution" of the 1970s which, over the last

thirty years, has culminated in a large body of authoritative studies on virtually every aspect of the Dark Years, ranging from the politics of the National Revolution and the administrative workings of collaboration to the tragedy of the Holocaust in France.¹

The turnabout could not have been more dramatic: once relegated to the margins, Vichy's voluntary collaboration with the Germans and its energetic application of its own anti-Jewish legislation have garnered intense public and scholarly scrutiny since the mid-1980s,² to such an extent that Henry Rouso, one of the premier experts of the occupation years, has pointed to an "obsession" leaving little or no place for the memory of the Resistance.³ He also notes that while France now has no less than three officially designated days for remembering the Vél d'Hiv' roundup, the deportations and the surrender of Nazi Germany, no date on the French calendar commemorates the Resistance.⁴ The most recent "commemorative frenzy"⁵ marking the sixtieth anniversary of the D-Day invasion, the liberation of Paris, the "discovery" and "liberation" of Auschwitz, and the capitulation of Nazi Germany has confirmed the tenuous status of the Resistance in France's collective memory: if not entirely absent from the flood of ceremonies, media productions and publications, the Resistance continues to be ancillary to the events that have been crystallized into what Pierre Nora terms France's "places of memory."

It is in this light that the present article shall first consider the epic perspective adopted by the historian Laurent Douzou as the central thesis of his book, *La Résistance française: Une histoire périlleuse. Essai d'historiographie* (2005), before analyzing more extensively the decidedly anti-heroic poetics visible in artist Pascal Convert's documentary film, *Mont Valérien, aux noms des fusillés* (2003). The former assesses the successive endeavors of French historians to record, elucidate and transmit the legacy of the French Resistance, while the latter aims to refocus France's collective memory on some long-neglected protagonists of the Resistance and restore them to their rightful place of honor.

A SAGA OF HEROES: ARMS AND THE MAN THEY SING⁶

Central to both of these perspectives on the Resistance is the epic mode of narrative, explicitly advanced by Douzou, implicitly contested yet partially

utilized by Convert. We shall begin with Douzou's book, whose very subtitle, "Une histoire périlleuse," underscores the tenuous character of Resistance memory as well as its problematical historiography.⁷ Recalling that *résistants* themselves were the first to formulate the terms of the story they intended to inscribe in both the concrete events and written annals of history, Douzou attributes the major, if not prime source of French historians' problems to the singular nature of the protagonists' thoughts and deeds. Reiterated in one form or another throughout the book, and notably in the following passages from the first chapter, "Une histoire soucieuse de son histoire," Douzou's central thesis is that not only the deeds of the *résistants* but even their own writings can be properly understood only as epic. Such has indeed been the case from the first beginnings of the Resistance, insists Douzou:

The fact that this history in the making was mindful of the historical account that would later be written, and that from that early time it eagerly thought of and represented itself as an epic saga considerably influenced the manner in which this task was approached after the Liberation.⁸

Whether seen from Mount Olympus or considered in its most down-to-earth everyday workings, resistance activity was always conceived as an epic packed with a meaning that only its instigators could really decipher.⁹

Even in its everyday occurrences, the Resistance was always perceived and felt by its agents as a fight of epic proportions.¹⁰

Since the *résistants* themselves portrayed their strife in terms of epic exaltation, heroic death and immortal glory, and since the first accounts of the Resistance were those in which they themselves couched their story of history in equally legendary terms, contends Douzou, we today can neither understand nor narrate their history without implementing these same notions. The viability of such an approach remains highly debatable, of course, since it is difficult, to say the least, to reconcile the role and function of the epic poet with those of the historian.

Be that as it may, we must first identify the salient components of the epic that come into play here and delineate their specific implications for the history and memory of the French Resistance. We can begin by recalling the classical texts that have so long served as the basic reference for the first protagonists and writers of the Resistance, including Pierre Brossolette, Jean-Pierre Vernant and Charles de Gaulle: the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. All are widely recognized as long narrative poems glorifying the legendary deeds of a national hero and therefore serving as foundational myths. Even more significant for our present discussion are the themes and literary devices, in other words the ethics and poetics, common both to literary epics and to the vision of human events that Douzou sees as “[1]a légende contemporaine et constitutive de l’histoire” that has unquestionably exerted considerable influence on the history and memory of the Resistance.¹¹

Nothing is more indispensable to the epic than its celebration of exploits carried out by heroes who by such feats distinguish themselves from ordinary human beings. Equally essential to this foundational function is the capacity to ground these heroic deeds in some overarching cosmic order or historical tradition that not only confers moral substance and validity but also brings various individuals or factions together into a cohesive community, ethnic group, or nation. The harrowing vicissitudes of the present are thereby connected to an illustrious past. These basic functions of epic narrative stand out dramatically in the rousing speech delivered in 1943 by Pierre Brossolette, a Socialist enrolled in de Gaulle’s France Combattante, captured by the Gestapo while on mission in France and revered for having leapt to his death in March 1944 in order to avoid divulging secrets under torture. Cited by Douzou as emblematic of the epic ideals guiding the thoughts and actions of the Resistance, his words bear detailed scrutiny:

One day history shall tell of what each of them first had to accomplish in order to regain his right to death and glory with [de Gaulle’s] Fighting France. It will tell of the Odysseys they had to undergo in order to achieve immortality in their Iliads ... those who considered death as nothing but a deliverance rushed to seek fulfillment; leaving the humdrum of ordinary life in this one deed, they entered into the sublime.¹²

And thus it is now that in the crystalline heavens of their glory, they speak to each other just as the summits converse above the clouds; they call to each other as do the stars. Whether already entered into legend or reserved for history, those who died with prestige at Mourzouk or Bir Hakeim answer those who died stoically with the merchant marine; whether they fell in service to the flag flying at El Alamein or El Hamma, the soldiers of Leclerc and Koenig answer the sailors whose ships sank under the high banners of the *Alysse*, the *Rennes*, or the *Mimosa*; struck down in the tenth of a second in which their eyes could still stare down their adversaries, the pilots of our teams and flying squadrons answer the submarine crews of the *Surcouf* and the *Narval*, who had to endure a slow agony before reaching the death that they had met. And over there, in the dark night of martyrdom and captivity, they are answered by the moving voice of those who died in the course of their underground combat in France. They are an elite of our networks and groups of *résistants* constantly being decimated and rising up again: hostages massacred in Paris and Châteaubriant, and detainees who, sent before a firing squad after having kept their lips sealed under torture, finally open them at the moment of their execution to cry out “Long live France!”¹³

In consummate epic style, Brossolette presents the fallen *résistants* as heroes elevated to the loftiest heights of glory, worthy of comparison with the legendary figures of epics past and assured of occupying a place of honor in the annals of history to be handed down to generations of the future. His narrative conspicuously gathers together into one sublime assembly combatants scattered not only across the vast expanses of the war theaters, from the Pyrenees to the English Channel and from the deserts of Africa to the depths of the oceans, but also across the entire social spectrum, from the prisons to the colonies, from fishermen and sailors to career military men. For Brossolette as well as Douzou, these *résistants de la première heure* withdrew far from the maddening crowds dazed and confused by France’s debacle and rose above the ambient defeatism of what Henri Amouroux has termed “forty million Pétainistes.”¹⁴

If, for reasons that we shall later explore in more detail, such strains of martial grandeur resonate dissonantly in our contemporary ears, it is to no small extent due to the distance now separating us from the historical

circumstances that occasioned them. While we may nowadays find the grandiloquence of such epic discourse somewhat overwrought and even incongruous, we must keep in mind that it was inversely proportional to the widespread desolation and disarray occasioned by France's humiliating defeat at the hands of the Wehrmacht in May–June 1940. Far from inspiring, the situation facing the various protagonists that Brossolette so eloquently lionizes as martyrs of the Resistance was for the vast majority—from which they indeed stood dramatically apart—on the contrary nothing short of desperate. Not only Poland but also Holland, Belgium and France had suffered total defeat and were occupied by the Germans. The French populace found itself scattered and traumatized by the swift and implacable *Blitzkrieg* that had routed their defenses in six weeks; left their mainland divided into occupied, unoccupied, forbidden and annexed zones; made their economy subservient to occupation forces; and occasioned the collapse of their political institutions, which were soon relegated to a senile, reactionary dictator, Philippe Pétain, who enjoyed strong public support. In such dire circumstances, resistance of any sort required untold moral courage, historical lucidity and political commitment.

It is precisely because the *résistants* brought together in Brossolette's epic catalogs were so dispersed and isolated in both combat and captivity that he eulogizes their unity with each other as well as with generations past and future. And it was precisely because their resistance exposed them to the seemingly unstoppable forces of Nazism that he ascribes to them immortal glory. Since France's military forces lay in shambles and its political institutions were subject to Hitler's fancy, nothing less than an appeal to historical grandeur and a transcendent cosmic order could galvanize the Resistance with the confidence of ultimate victory: hence Brossolette's invocation of Greek legends and Olympian skies. Brossolette was hardly alone in perceiving the tumult of World War II as a strife of cosmic proportions with the destiny of Western civilization and humankind ultimately hanging in the balance: even from an opposing perspective favorable to the Third Reich, his compatriot Henry de Montherlant had indeed hailed the Nazi conquest as ushering in a new millennium to be guided by the values of virility and conquest.¹⁵

FROM POETICS TO POLITICS

Before assessing the legacy of such epic representation of the French Resistance and its viability in contemporary historical narratives and commemorations, we should situate it in a wider anthropological context. Human societies have long attempted to represent episodes of armed conflict with competing nations in terms of a momentous drama inspiring great individuals to display their full array of personal strength, mental acuity and physical prowess while championing a national cause: this strife is in turn portrayed as the unfolding of some overarching cosmic design, divine will, teleological ideal or immanent principle. The epic thus transforms the events of history into a metaphysical drama with strong social and political implications.

The epic has moreover long been associated with official memory in France, where the Panthéon provides a striking embodiment of the transcendent glory conferred on the heroes of the French Republic within the national saga. The etymology, “pan + theos,” or “all the gods,” grounds the monument’s architectural discourse in Greek legend while at the same time elevating the citizens enshrined therein to the status of immortal heroes high above their compatriots. To the extent that their achievements improved the lives of their fellow citizens, served the common good through scientific breakthroughs or enhanced the prestige of the Republic, their status as a lofty elite has been compatible with the official ideals of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*.

In that light, it is not surprising that the French Resistance always sought to represent its struggle and express its ideals in the epic mode, even before the catastrophic defeat and collapse of the French Republic. First screened in 1939, just as the defeat of the Spanish Republican forces along with Hitler’s unimpeded territorial expansion and military escalations made the grim specter of war loom fatefully over the fragile, ailing European democracies, Jean Renoir’s *La Marseillaise* was intended to shake citizens out of the widespread fatalist despondency and defeatism by revitalizing their commitment to democratic governance and social justice: by reconnecting a tenuous present with a glorious past, namely the heritage of the Revolution, the film aimed to galvanize both patriotic and antifascist resistance to impending danger. Although decidedly adverse to any cult of heroes, since Renoir used little-known actors with regional

accents and focused on common individuals instead of such legendary figures as Desmoulins, Danton or Robespierre, the film serves epic functions in depicting the irresistible march of the increasingly numerous adherents to the revolutionary ideals crystallized in the song that was to become the French national anthem: men and women of various social stations and regional origins are united as *citoyens*, “citizens,” as opposed to subjects or lords, bourgeois or peasants, in a common, momentous struggle against aristocratic and royal oppression. Even though the last scene portrays the Marseilles volunteers preparing to face a perilous yet uncertain future at the battle of Valmy, the march of citizens enrolled under the banner of *La Marseillaise*’s rousing strains can easily be understood by film viewers as the implacable advance of the revolutionary ideals in history, since Valmy turned out to be a landmark victory for the Revolution.¹⁶

THE GAULLIST ODYSSEY

The Gaullist memory of the Resistance that dominated both commemorations and historical accounts from the war years when Pierre Brossolette formulated his striking representation until the historiographical revolution of the 1970s has always evoked the epic: such expressions as “l’épopée gaullienne” or “l’épopée de la France combattante” continue to emerge spontaneously in current references to “l’homme du 18 juin”¹⁷ and the sparse legions of “la France libre.” Nobody understood the political importance of the past better than Charles de Gaulle, and no leader has ever been able to articulate a more successful epic vision of French history in garnering public support. De Gaulle articulated this vision with his inimitable eloquence on many occasions, including the famous speech at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris on 25 August 1944:

Paris! Paris has been violated! Paris has been broken! Paris has been battered! but Paris has been liberated! liberated by itself, liberated by its people with the help of France’s armies, with the support and help of all of France, of the France which fights, of the only France, of the true France, of the eternal France.¹⁸

Though much too brief to develop an extended narrative, de Gaulle's stirring words nevertheless lend epic dimensions to this dramatic celebration of the liberation of Paris by presenting the French people ("la France toute entière") united with the army and the Resistance against a common enemy and by linking this present battle to the glorious heritage of the past, "la France éternelle."

De Gaulle articulates this epic vision of the liberation more explicitly in the passages of his *Mémoires de guerre* that relate his triumphal descent of the Champs-Élysées on 26 August 1944. Amid the acclamations of the Parisian throngs that have turned out to participate in this moment of national jubilation, de Gaulle strives to capture a privileged moment of epic grandeur:

Ah, it's the sea! A huge crowd is gathered on either side of the pavement. Maybe two million souls. The roofs are covered with people. In all the windows dense groups are packed together with flags. People are clinging to ladders, masts, light posts like clusters of grapes. As far as my eye can see, there are nothing but the swells of this ocean of humanity gathered in the sun, under our flag.

...What is occurring at this very moment is one of the miracles of our national consciousness. It is one of France's heroic sagas that from time to time illuminate our History throughout the centuries. In this community, which is of but one mind, one élan, one outcry, differences are erased, individuals disappear. You countless French citizens to whom I draw near first at the Place de l'Étoile, then at the Rond-Point, again at the Place de la Concorde, once more at the City Hall, and finally on the cathedral square, if only you knew how much you are alike!¹⁹

Few passages of French poetry or prose could rival the epic sweep of this vibrant description of the Parisian landscape besieged by the euphoric masses celebrating their deliverance from Nazi occupation. Having so masterfully welded together the various components of his proverbially fractious nation into one unanimous assembly, de Gaulle's talented pen goes on to associate this momentous day of August 1944 with other events that have marked Paris as the focal point of France's dramatic past. The Champs-Élysées thus becomes a journey back through French history, as

de Gaulle connects every point along the way with events that have left their imprint on the national memory embodied in the monuments and street names of the *ville-lumières*: “With each step that I take along the most illustrious thoroughfare in the world, it seems to me that the glories of the past are being associated with that of today.”²⁰ De Gaulle then proceeds to cite a host of historical events and personages, ranging from the Roman occupation of Lutèce to St. Geneviève fighting Attila, to the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre, Henry IV, Louis XIV, the Revolution, Napoléon, and even on to Clemenceau and Foch,²¹ remarking that on this glorious day “[I]t is as if the History gathered in these stones and city squares were smiling on us.”²²

This passage confirms our previous observation: the epic narrative transforms history into metaphysics. As in de Gaulle’s grandiloquent narrative, it immortalizes the present by connecting events to a transcendent order, and establishes unity and continuity along two lines: diachronically, the present is put in linear continuity with a glorious past from which it proceeds, while, synchronically, various constituencies of the nation are united under one banner. The Gaullist epic of the Resistance reached its apogee in just such a fashion when, on 19 December 1964, the famed novelist and erstwhile freedom fighter André Malraux, in his official capacity as de Gaulle’s minister of culture, delivered his famous eulogy to Resistance leader Jean Moulin during ceremonies marking the transfer of Moulin’s ashes to the Panthéon, that quintessential epic monument of the French Republic chosen by de Gaulle for that very reason.

Like de Gaulle, Malraux transforms the public ceremony into the culmination of an epic, if not an apotheosis. Invoking “the resurrection of the people of the shadows that this man [Jean Moulin] led” as well as “[t]he deep, integral, organic, centuries-old feeling that has since taken on its legendary resonance,”²³ Malraux first relates the legacy of Jean Moulin to a long tradition of glory and even to a quasi-metaphysical immanent power and, as had Pierre Brossolette, stresses the isolation and precariousness of the mainland Resistance in its beginnings. Malraux thus celebrates the triumph of restored national unity by establishing a continuity between present and past: de Gaulle’s Fifth Republic is portrayed as issuing directly from the heroic lineage of the Resistance and its illustrious predecessors. All the various victims of Nazi repression and persecution are gathered together by the vibrant strains of Malraux’s

epic litany, which assembles them into one long funeral procession led by Moulin, in his capacity of leader of the Resistance duly designated and beatified by Charles de Gaulle.

Just as Leclerc entered the Invalides with his procession that had been exalted in the African sun and the Alsatian battles, enter here, Jean Moulin with your dreadful procession. With those who, like you, died in cellars without having talked; and even those who had talked, which is perhaps more horrible; with all those who wore stripes and who had their heads shorn in concentration camps, with the last body staggering along in the awful lines of Night and Fog, then falling under the rifle butts; with the eight thousand French women who never returned from their chain gangs; with the last woman to die at Ravensbrück for having given safe haven to one of our ranks. Enter, with the people born of the shadows and who vanished with the same—our brothers in the order of the Night....²⁴

Malraux thus eulogizes Moulin as an icon of all *résistants* who were tortured, deported or killed. The veritable epic catalog then proceeds to associate these *résistants* with General Philippe de Hauteclocque, now commonly referred to by his *nom de guerre* Leclerc, leader of the famous IIe Division Blindée, which was the first army unit to roll into Paris and secure its liberation. With Leclerc, accompanying him on his military odyssey from the sands of the Sahara to the *pavés de Paris* and on to the liberation of Strasbourg, are, then, all the French soldiers in the regular army.

Malraux's powerful conclusion aims to galvanize the patriotic spirit of the nation's youth:

Listen today, youth of France, to what was for us the Song of Tragedy. It is the funeral march of the ashes here before us. Alongside the ashes of Carnot with the soldiers of the French Revolution, the ashes of Victor Hugo with *les Misérables*, the ashes of Jaurès watched over by Justice, may they lie in state with their long procession of disfigured shadows. Today, may you young people contemplate this man and consider how you might have extended your hands to his poor formless face and lips that had not spoken during his last day; on that day, his was the face of France.²⁵

The epic narrative now operates not only horizontally, rallying together under Moulin's (and de Gaulle's) banner the various and sundry groups of *résistants*, but also vertically, uniting in one heroic national saga all those who fought for the ideals of the French Republic throughout various periods of its history, from Lazare Carnot in the revolutionary era to Victor Hugo in the mid-nineteenth century and Jean Jaurès in the early twentieth century. In the final analysis, the Gaullist epic of Resistance that André Malraux so memorably articulates in these oft-cited lines is merely the most recent episode of the singular vision of French history disseminated with de Gaulle's "certaine idée de la France." Just as de Gaulle founded his legendary legitimacy on the legacy of "l'épopée de la France libre," so he justified his politics of "grandeur" by referring back to a supposedly glorious past.

EPIC DISPROPORTIONS

We would be seriously mistaken to take such rousing eloquence as evidence of either the political or historiographical viability of the epic that Douzou advances for both public officials and historians. For all their discursive virtuosity and aesthetic power, the prominence of such epic narratives has in fact not outlived de Gaulle's reign of power. They have not succeeded in creating a consensual memory of the Resistance commonly recognized and commemorated by the highly variegated social, political, ethnic, religious and generational groups that constitute the contemporary French populace, nor have they even managed to guarantee an eminent place for the Resistance in France's collective memory of World War II. As Henry Rousso already pointed out in 1997, the youth of today take little heed of the Gaullist epic, despite Malraux's moving injunction. When polled about World War II in 1997, French youth (who incidentally showed themselves to be well informed on the subject) first cited the human destruction and the Holocaust as the most salient features of the conflict. De Gaulle and his famous *appel du 18 juin* were mentioned by less than one in sixteen respondents. It would seem that, for this generation, the Gaullist epic appears so artificial as to constitute a mere fable.²⁶ Ironically, as I have written elsewhere, it seems that the present generation,

informed by almost thirty years of historiographical lucidity about the true nature of Vichy and its crimes, mobilized primarily by concerns for human rights and ethnic specificity, and unable to understand the “Gaullist myth of Resistance” as anything but an historical lie (rather than a political ideal), has (turning the General’s famous dismissal of Vichy on its head) proclaimed “de Gaulle null and void,” seeing now a nation united in collaboration and moral turpitude as the true image of France under the Occupation, while leaving only a marginal role for de Gaulle and the Resistance.²⁷

We can in fact identify a number of significant factors that explain why the epic mode of history and memory has not prevailed, beginning with the troubled memories and perceptions that informed the early 1940s. The inescapable reality of France’s crushing defeat and humiliation in May–June 1940 has long undermined the epic perception of the war. As Philippe Burrin and Julian Jackson, among others, have pointed out, the horrors of World War I and their overwhelming persistence in the memory of those who lived the traumatic events of 1940 go a long way in explaining the decidedly anti-heroic, defeatist attitudes, not only of such key figures as Pétain and General Maxime Weygand, but also of the French populace, which included hundreds of thousands of veterans who had known the horrors of Verdun firsthand and were anything but eager to relive such an experience.²⁸ The Douaumont Ossuarium and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, seconded by the countless “Monuments aux Morts” still so visible all over the French landscape, doubtless constitute the most tangible embodiment of France’s World War I memory: as such, they offer stark testimony to the anonymous, inhuman character of modern industrialized warfare and its large-scale annihilation of materiel, habitat and human beings. Add to that the utterly absurd and archaic approach to war by officers who, conceiving of this conflict in terms of knighthood and chivalry, put on white gloves and ordered their foot soldiers to once again practice the famously French *attaque à outrance* in the face of machine-gun nests, poison gas, and massive artillery bombardments. Clearly, the “Great War” gives little impetus for heroic celebration.

Even though the memory of World War I may not appear to be consciously significant for the generations of today, contemporary French society is more or less allergic to epic discourses of military heroism and

national grandeur. Whereas Renoir saw *La Marseillaise* as a perfect vehicle for rekindling the cheerful generosity and the youthful resolution that had carried Le Front Populaire to victory in 1936 and for inspiring French resistance to German, Italian and Spanish fascism, many people today are having second thoughts about the belligerent and somewhat xenophobic language originally penned by Rouget de Lisle.²⁹ Such misgivings are just one sign among many others of a widespread repugnance for armed conflict and warrior-like virtue. Alain Finkielkraut and René Girard, among others, have pointed out that the contemporary sensibility tends to valorize, not the military prowess of conquering heroes, but on the contrary the unjust suffering of innocent victims and scapegoats. “The whole ideological horizon of contemporary culture is indeed constructed around the centrality of the victim,” contends Girard.³⁰ Master narratives of Western history touting “scientific progress” or some “civilizing mission” have been largely discredited, and attention now tends to focus intensely on the historical crimes of slavery, colonial oppression, and genocide.

It is in this context that, as evident in the statements of several prominent French intellectuals and government officials, Europe is striving to ground a common identity in the memory of the Holocaust: “What unites Europe today is a disavowal of war, hegemony, anti-Semitism, and hence of all the catastrophes engendered by war, including all forms of intolerance or inequality that war puts into practice,” observes Alain Finkielkraut.³¹ Similarly, Annette Wieviorka points to the election of Simone Veil, a survivor of Auschwitz, as the very first president of the European Parliament in 1979 and to the gathering of heads of state on 27 January 2005 to honor the sixtieth anniversary of the “liberation” of Auschwitz as tangible evidence of the centrality of the Holocaust for the identity of the European Union.³² At the very outset of his essay on the subject, current French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin declares that he felt a sense of European identity for the first time not when celebrating the Allied victory but when contemplating the ruins of one of the most infamous atrocities committed by the Nazis in France: “The face of Europe was drawn for me for the first time when as a child I walked through the still standing ruins of Oradour-sur-Glane.” He later refers to the horrendous trench warfare of World War I and to the death camps of World War II as the “two charred pillars of our common [European] memory.”³³

Nothing could be more antithetical to the epic exaltation of putatively superior warriors than Auschwitz. Indeed, the European Union has emphasized the memory of the Holocaust at the same time as it has de-emphasized national allegiances in order to reconsider traditional attitudes toward other cultures, religions and ethnicities in light of the increasingly diverse populations in Europe and intensifying globalization of international business and politics. Once again, Finkelkraut's incisive analysis delineates the underlying reasons for the Holocaust's centrality in Europe's identity:

Why Auschwitz and not other doctrinal carnages or other works of hatred? Because the democratic human being and the human being of human rights is any human being whatsoever, somebody right off the street, persons taken independently of their social, national or racial origins or background, independently of their merits, record of service or talent. In proclaiming the right of the Masters to purge the earth of peoples deemed harmful, the criminal creed of the Nazis in and of itself targeted universal humanity.³⁴

The very notion of the superhuman national hero traditionally celebrated by epic narrative can only be suspect to the post-Holocaust sensibility. Rather than celebrating the superior "virtue," with its etymological overtones of a warrior-like virility that has traditionally made epic protagonists invincible, we are much more prone to recognize the common humanity that makes us all vulnerable. Emmanuel Levinas has even argued that in order to exercise the ethical faculty, humans must first acknowledge the fundamental vulnerability that they share with their fellow human beings.³⁵

MONT VALÉRIEN: A MONUMENT AND ITS DISCONTENTS

We can readily perceive the disconnect between epic exaltation of national heroes and the currently predominant humanitarian preoccupations pointed out by Finkelkraut in the many criticisms leveled at the Gaullist epic over the last three decades. First and foremost are the complaints about a discourse decidedly insensitive to all those whose suffering and strife

found no place among the military exploits celebrated by the General's heroic master narrative. Whereas at the time of the liberation and throughout the postwar years of the late 1940s and early 1950s, commemorative events and writings honored first and foremost the combatants who had resisted the Nazi aggressor "les armes à la main,"³⁶ the historiography and memory of the last thirty years have, as often noted, focused attention on the stories of those left out of such an account: French and foreign Jews struggling to avoid internment and deportation, aid workers seeking to alleviate their plight, children monstrously murdered and, more recently, civilians who fell victim to Allied bombardments, and even the hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war and their families struggling desperately to make it through the sinister Occupation years. Finally, as noted by Douzou, who nevertheless fails to see it as one more sign among others of the general demise of a henceforth untenable epic discourse, an increasing number of *résistants* have openly refused to recognize the Gaullist narrative as adequate for representing their story.³⁷

These tensions have clearly informed Pascal Convert's efforts to counterbalance the Gaullist epic with his own sculptural tribute to the Resistance and with a documentary film telling the story of both the Mont Valérien monuments and the *résistants* whose lives it honors. Long connected with sacred functions of one sort or another (it was associated with the water gods in Gallo-Roman times, then became the site of a chapel and a hermitage in the 1400s and a place of pilgrimage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries),³⁸ Mont Valérien first took on military significance in 1841 with the construction of a fortified military base housing 2,000 men. Prior to World War II, the base witnessed a number of dramatic events, including the imprisonment of legislators opposed to Napoleon III's coup; the use of cannons, first to defend Paris against the Prussians in 1870, then to put down the insurrection of the Commune in 1871; and the 1898 suicide of Colonel Henry, who had forged documents implicating Alfred Dreyfus.

The Germans took control of the fort in the summer of 1940, and used a little clearing behind its walls as their preferred site for firing squads until the liberation in August 1944. Henceforth universally recognized as a sort of hallowed ground for the Resistance, Mont Valérien became the site for the important memorial ceremonies of 11 November 1945, briefly recounted in Convert's film: on that date the remains of fifteen

combatants who had served in various branches of the armed forces and in various theaters of the war were solemnly buried in a crypt behind the walls of Mont Valérien. It was also in November 1945 that de Gaulle designated Mont Valérien as the location for a major monument honoring all those who had given their lives in the fight against Nazi Germany.³⁹ Finally completed in 1960 (two years after de Gaulle's return to power), the Mémorial de la France Combattante at Mont Valérien constitutes the pinnacle of Gaullist memory and a veritable epic in stone, as indicated by the very dimensions of the monument: dominated by a twelve-meter Cross of Lorraine, a hundred-meter red sandstone wall bearing sixteen bronze sculptures spans a 10,000 square meter esplanade stretching out in the form of a massive V and used for commemorative ceremonies every 18 June.⁴⁰ The sculptures dramatically portray various warriors and events marking the heroic march to victory. Twelve out of the sixteen bronzes recall specific battles, while only four are devoted to those who lost their lives outside the clash of classic military forces: one honors the "maquis," bands of *résistants* who lived and operated in woods, mountains and rural areas; another, Paris, a city that rose up against the occupying forces and was, as de Gaulle proclaimed in his speech of 25 August 1944, "liberated by itself"; another, deportees; and still another, those shot by firing squad.

Symmetrically aligned on either side, the various combatants who had been dispersed in time and scattered across the war's many theaters find themselves united in a common battle and joined with the many generations coming to honor them under the outstretched arms of the Cross of Lorraine towering above. The monument thus creates the characteristically epic unity along synchronic and diachronic axes. This same function is mirrored by the crypt located directly behind the Cross of Lorraine, which houses sixteen coffins containing as many individuals who, by their deaths in the course of their exemplary combat, have been elevated to the status of martyrs. Equally—and movingly—epic in its sweeping embrace of persons often solitary and tragically precarious in their heroic strife, the crypt thus shelters the remains of combatants who fell during different phases of the war, including Germany's initial invasion of France in May 1940 and the clashes subsequent to the Allied landing on D-Day, as well as intermediate battles in North Africa. Also honored are different branches of the armed forces, various theaters of war and various geographical locations of the French empire whose soldiers were sent to fight on the mainland.

The coffins moreover display a significant social and ethnic diversity: four contain soldiers from the colonies, four others represent various branches of the Resistance; two celebrate the female martyrs Bertie Albrecht and Renée Lévy, and one other holds the remains of a prisoner of war shot in Bavaria in March 1944.

First and foremost, however, the selection of individuals testifies to de Gaulle's threefold determination (a) to have the *résistants* appear as regular soldiers having done their duty to their country; (b) to present the Resistance as emanating from "la France éternelle"; and (c) to inscribe their combat in the continuity and legality of the Republic. The point is emphasized by a Latin inscription in the narthex of the crypt: *Patriam Servando Victoriam Tulit* (in serving his country he achieved victory) and reiterated by the French inscription spanning the tympanum above the coffins: *Nous sommes ici pour témoigner devant l'histoire que de 1939 à 1945, ses fils ont lutté pour que la France vive libre* (We are here to testify to posterity that from 1939 to 1945 France's sons fought in order that France might live free).⁴¹

In all its patriotic grandeur, however, Le Mémorial de la France Combattante's monumental exposition of the foundational narrative of the Fifth Republic totally ignores the very people and events that made Mont Valérien one of the most revered places of Resistance memory in the first place. Indeed, the disjunction between the epic in stone inaugurated by de Gaulle on 18 June 1960 and the plight of the hostages and *résistants* actually executed in the little clearing in the woods (*la clairière des fusillés*) situated behind the massive wall constitutes the most immediate, concrete illustration of the Gaullist saga's inadequacy for representing the plurality of memories of the French Resistance. None of the sculptures tell the poignant stories of those detained overnight in the tiny chapel where they inscribed their last words to family, friends and the world before being sent before the firing squad, and not one of the sixteen coffins lying in state in the crypt holds the remains of anyone felled by German bullets there at Mont Valérien. As so pointedly noted by Robert Créance, one of the most prominent commentators featured in Pascal Convert's *Mont Valérien, aux noms des fusillés*: "There are two Mont Valériens, the one that you see on the outside with all those bas-reliefs ... they exalt de Gaulle, his FFI resistance, and so on. Nothing indicates that there is something behind these doors." Convert stresses this discrepancy between the monument

and the actual events marking the historical site it covers from the very outset of his film, which opens with the photographic image of one of the young men sent before a firing squad, and then features his sister reading the words he penned for his parents just before his death. We are then shown the first images of the Mémorial de la France Combattante at Mont Valérien, as the narrator points out the impersonality of the monumental wall and esplanade that hide the intimate landscape behind it.

This disharmony between the Gaullist epic and the historical site characterized the very first commemorative ceremonies organized for 10–11 November 1945, when fifteen of the now sixteen coffins were honored at Les Invalides before passing through the Arc de Triomphe on their way to be buried at Mont Valérien. The voice in the newsreel footage included by Convert states that “France is not mourning, it is watching over its courage and grandeur,” while the narrator for Convert’s film underscores what was excluded from the official ceremonies of 1945:

Among the fifteen that have been chosen, nine were soldiers killed in action. Not one was from those shot at Mont Valérien ... those that the Nazis had buried by the truckload in the cemetery at Ivry ... were not entitled to the pomp and circumstance of military parades ... there was no place for the solemn piety of widows.⁴²

As the documentary’s narrator remarks, the construction of this official place of memory for some created an obstruction for remembering hundreds of others who were shot on the very site even though their itineraries have remained obscure.

A strong degree of impersonality was in fact an integral component of the Gaullist epic, which in each of its prominent manifestations was designed to arouse what the General himself so aptly termed “the sacred emotion that grips us all, both men and women, in these minutes that transcend each of our own poor individual lives.”⁴³ In the politics of “grandeur,” the particular and the individual were to be subsumed and sublimated into the overarching narrative; the many strong personalities of the Resistance were implicitly summoned to blend into the woodwork—or perhaps more appropriately the dramatic sculptures—of the French Republic. If understandable in 1945, when France faced the formidable challenges of an emaciated economy, a shattered infrastructure and serious

internal divisions, such grandiose anonymity is clearly untenable in our present context. Witness the institutional origins of the new monument added to the site in September 2003 to honor those actually executed at Mont Valérien. Highly esteemed for his role in abolishing the death penalty as well as for his unswerving defense of human rights, Robert Badinter, former minister of justice and currently a senator, is featured in Convert's documentary as he explains why he initiated the creation of the new memorial sculpture on the impulse of an acutely personal sentiment:

I must almost say that the project was born from what I felt at a ceremony at Mont Valérien. I was there, and then, next, after the ceremony I went ... to the clearing where the executions took place ... and I said to myself, that's really strange, this is where the greatest number of *résistants* and hostages were shot in all of France ... at Mont Valérien, nothing, they are the only anonymous heroes....

Badinter goes on to state that if his own father had been among those executed there (his parents were in fact deported to their deaths at Auschwitz), he would have urgently desired to see that death duly commemorated. Rather than exalting the collective heroism of warriors or the triumph of their cause, Badinter focuses first and foremost on retrieving the fallen *résistants* from collective oblivion by restoring their names to the historical site now consecrated as a national shrine to the Resistance, but perhaps even more significantly by associating this official memory with the personal memories of loved ones and descendants who will thus find themselves personally connected to the collective narrative.

As indicated by the very title *Mont Valérien, aux noms des fusillés*, Pascal Convert has centered both his film and the new monument, a bell listing 1,006 men executed on the site, on the capital importance of the name. By individually naming the hostages and *résistants* sent before the firing squad at Mont Valérien, Convert restores them to our memory and recognizes them on the personal, national and universally human levels.⁴⁴ Asked why in the world he chose to make this monument in the form of a bell, Convert articulates his aesthetics in decidedly anti-heroic terms. Attempting to define the nature and function of a monument, Convert foregrounds its capacity to create bonds with local communities sharing private as well as public events:

A monument, a work of art has to create a feeling that shows the bond that unifies the community. Thus a bell, which has always defined a place for communities. Because a bell is a heart that unites, by announcing the joy of birth or the sorrow of mourning. Because, be it religious or secular, a bell marks the time, the time of war, the time of peace. Because a bell is an artifact of civilization. Because a bell is an extraordinary form of sculpture, being both dynamic and powerful, a primary form on which the one thousand six names could be inscribed and which could silently ring for the executed and render them justice.⁴⁵

Convert's definition of the monument as a common object that founds a community underscores its opposition to the epic cult of the hero. Whereas the epic functions as a foundational narrative by accentuating the superhuman qualities of warriors championing the national cause, Convert chose the bell for its venerable capacity of uniting members of a community in the joy and suffering shared in the course of their everyday pursuits. Instead of placing an elite few on a pedestal, it brings all together in their common humanity. Rather than celebrating solely the military prowess of heroes who died on the battlefield, a bell marks the dramas of birth and death, but also celebrates marriages and holidays, thus accompanying the inhabitants of cities and villages in the various occasions of their ordinary lives.

Tzvetan Todorov has pointed out that epic heroes actually tend to valorize a glorious death in combat over the pursuit of normal life, insofar as they must die in battle in order to achieve immortality.⁴⁶ *Mont Valérien, aux noms des fusillés* calls attention to the poignant messages enjoining loved ones to go on with their lives and be happy, even while mindful of the *résistants'* sacrifice. Such was notably the case of Missak Manouchian, leader of the MOI (Main d'oeuvre immigrée) group, whose execution at Mont Valérien has been commemorated not only by Convert's documentary but also by Louis Aragon in his famous "L'Affiche rouge," a poetic celebration of the group which underscores the Armenian immigrant worker's passion for living in this lyrical paraphrase of his letter of adieu to his wife:

Bonheur à tous bonheur à ceux qui vont suivre
Je meurs sans haine en moi pour le peuple allemand.

Adieu la peine et le plaisir des roses
Adieu la vie adieu la lumière et le vent
Marie-toi sois heureuse et pense à moi souvent
Toi qui va demeurer dans la beauté des choses
Quand tout sera fini plus tard en Ériwan.⁴⁷

[Happiness to all happiness to those who will come after us / I die with no hatred in me for the German people. / Farewell to suffering and the pleasure of roses / Farewell to life, to light, and wind / Marry, be happy, and think of me often / You who will dwell in the beauty of the material world / When all is over later in Erivan.]

Aragon returns to underscore the point in a line from the final stanza saluting the entire group of MOI-Manouchian *résistants*: “Vingt et trois amoureux de vivre à en mourir” (Three and twenty who loved life to the point of dying). Pascal Convert stresses the same point in his documentary through the voice of the former *résistante* Marie-José Chombart de Lauwe: in contrast with the Nazi culture of death, she insists, “the *résistants* were on the side of life.”

This emphasis on the human and the personal is maintained throughout the film. Several descendants of those executed at Mont Valérien summarize their fathers’ life stories and recall final injunctions to their families. Even more prominent is the documentary’s vigorous rebuttal of the Nazi propaganda which had attempted to dehumanize captured *résistants* by presenting them as bandits, criminals and terrorists devoid of humanity. Such was notably the case for the MOI-Manouchian group as well as the twenty-seven communist partisans tried by Vichy’s infamous Sections Spéciales courts. Perhaps the most striking footage from the war-time newsreels incorporated into Convert’s documentary is that originally destined for use as anti-Resistance propaganda. As we see images of the sinister courtroom adorned with the Nazi flag and of the accused who stand to answer questions, Convert’s narrator cites lines from *Le Pilon*, the choice venue for anti-Semitic and anti-Resistance propaganda in the press of occupied Paris:

“The worst of the mongrel breeds,” according to one article published in *Le Pivori*. I quote: “Hah, weren’t they handsome, these soldiers of Communism armed, paid and advised by Jews from the big democracies. The spectacle of this greedy brood of mongrels accustomed to living next to the johns would have perhaps opened the eyes of millions of French people who hope for a Soviet victory. They would have understood that the feats of these debased outlaws were devoid of humanity.”

As Convert’s narrator ironically muses “not human?” the camera focuses on the accused one by one, and their clear, courageous and dignified countenances in the face of impending death by firing squad provide a resounding refutation of Nazi calumny. While film footage continues to give us close-ups of the accused’s faces, Convert’s narrator slowly delivers a veritable litany of names. We can easily understand Convert’s explanation of how these noble faces have haunted his memory.⁴⁸ As if to reaffirm the intention of reclaiming the humanity of these *résistants* common to both the film and the monument, the following sequence features images of the artisans slowly liberating Convert’s monumental bell from its gangue: from beneath the rubble gradually emerge the names inscribed in bronze.

Thus summoned by name to public memory, heroes of the Resistance they remain, certainly, but their heroism takes on a decidedly human and mortal face that beckons to the present, not from some lofty pinnacle, but in the intimate recesses of common humanity. If not devoid of anti-Gaullist polemics or panegyrics to the Communist Party, the documentary’s personalized and sometimes lyrical portraits of these martyrs of the Resistance stand in sharp contrast to the discourse of *Le Mémorial de la France Combattante* that superimposed the Gaullist epic over the site where over 1,000 *résistants* and hostages were sent to a clearing in the woods to face a German firing squad. In foregrounding the names of the dead, it stands in clear analogy with the anti-heroic aesthetics of the recently inaugurated wall of memory at the *Mémorial de la Shoah* in Paris,⁴⁹ which in turn recalls the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC.

Yet Convert and Badinter neither ignore nor discount the collective stakes of remembering the Resistance. On the contrary, they both stress the fact that a considerable number of those whom they have worked so hard to commemorate were hunted down, condemned and executed at

Mont Valérien not only because they were members of the Resistance but especially because they were Jews, Communists and foreigners. While decrying the stiff, impersonal pomp and circumstance of the official commemorations that celebrated the military glories of the French Republic as well as of La France Combattante to the detriment of the specific social, ethnic and political identities of the *résistants* and hostages executed at Mont Valérien, Convert nevertheless strives to found a community and uses various contemporary voices—a majority of which are explicitly communist in their political affiliation—in his documentary to foreground the antifascist ideals to which these fallen *résistants* were all committed. Published with the release of the DVD of the documentary film by the French Communist Party's newspaper *L'Humanité*,⁵⁰ Charles Silvestre's interview with Robert Badinter highlights the political implications of recovering their names from collective amnesia, while Badinter underscores the ramifications for contemporary French society.

[Charles Silvestre] *By dwelling on the names, we also necessarily dwell on the lives, the choices, the ideal that each one kept on defending right on to the firing squad. At that moment we can see what one might call the composition of this group of executed people, and one of the most striking facts is that there were a large number of foreigners alongside the French. There is a sort of homeland without borders of all those who fight for liberty, and which has implications for us today...*

Robert Badinter. That's absolutely true. And that's why I find another reason for these names to be known independently from the deep respect that we owe them. It is good for the young generations that, faced with the xenophobia always ready to rise up again, we find this impressive number of foreigners who died there heroically, for the sake of liberty, and more precisely for the liberty of France of the French people.⁵¹

Thus recalling the collective ideal that once united them in combat against the Nazi aggressor and still today joins them to contemporary commitments to freedom, Badinter's vision, like Convert's film, aligns protagonists along synchronic and diachronic axes that we have pointed out in the various epic narratives of the Resistance.

Without failing to honor the genuinely heroic character of their courageous deaths in service to a transcendent ideal, however, Pascal Convert's *Mont Valérien, aux noms des fusillés* and the monument whose story it details nevertheless articulate a more humanist, non-epic politics of memory. For while emblematic of certain social, ethnic and political identities and exemplary in their opposition to Nazism and indeed in their service to France, the *résistants* celebrated by the film and the monument are not presented as utterly different, apart from and above the rest of us common mortals, but as individuals who can be emulated by ordinary French citizens today. First formulated by Aragon, the proximity of these martyrs to their fellow citizens is underscored by the documentary, which prominently features Léo Ferré's musical rendition of "L'Affiche rouge," and by another of *L'Humanité*'s articles using one of Aragon's lines as its title, "Vingt et trois étrangers et nos frères pourtant" (three and twenty foreigners/strangers, and yet our brothers).⁵² Clearly more preoccupied with restoring the identity of those whom the Nazis and Vichy sought to defame and consign to oblivion than with celebrating heroic victory over the Germans, more concerned with giving faces to the heretofore unknown *résistants* than with touting the regime founded on their victory, more committed to recovering a portion of what Finkelkraut has termed our "humanité perdue" than to celebrating a resuscitated French Republic, the documentary and the bell are much less exercises in epic exaltation than appeals to our common humanity.

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Pascal Convert's reappropriation of Resistance memory and his transformation of the epic mode of commemoration into a more personal, more accessible celebration of those who gave their lives in opposition to Nazism is emblematic on several levels. First, it not only constitutes an explicit refusal of the Gaullist saga of national consensus but also advances a tacit rejection of what Finkelkraut terms "the preeminence of humanity on the march over flesh-and-blood people."⁵³ For at least twenty years after the war, very few communist *résistants* published their memoirs, largely because the French Communist Party was more interested in championing its own cause through a narrative of collective, insurrectional resistance that had little place for personal stories.⁵⁴ By inscribing the 1,006 names on his monumental bell and linking these same names so closely to the

historical site by calling his documentary *Mont Valérien, aux noms des fusillés*, Convert attests to the historical developments that make heroic discourse fundamentally incompatible both with the cataclysmic events of the twentieth century and with modern sensibilities. While appreciating along with Douzou the moral heroism and epic rhetoric vital to the *résistants* at the time of their struggle, we obtain a clearer historical assessment by placing their memory in the larger context of the twentieth century's evolutions. In the traditional scheme of things, as Finkelkraut points out, immortality was earned by warriors whose military bravado and defiance of death distinguished them from ordinary mortals as heroes whose names were to be celebrated in the epic chant of the bard. With the massive, industrialized machinery of death that transformed battlefields from theaters of individual glory to desolate sites of annihilation leaving little or no traces of the "unknown soldier," World War I marked the definitive end of the epic perception of warfare.⁵⁵ Just as the names inscribed on the "Monuments aux morts" record and transmit the specific identities of the countless human lives lost in the trenches and on the killing fields of the "Grande Guerre," so the litany of names inscribed on Convert's bell and recited in his documentary remember as distinct persons the *résistants* and hostages whose humanity had been denied by the Nazis and ignored by official monuments. With no pretension of rehabilitating a now archaic aesthetics, Convert's commemorative projects nevertheless focus on the name. Instead of "immortalizing" these individuals by seeking to place them above and beyond the everyday lives of common people, however, the portraits sketched in the film and the names reiterated both by the bell and by the documentary tend on the contrary to integrate their personal stories into the collective narrative of the French Republic, while at the same time relating their itineraries to present-day concerns of ordinary citizens.

NOTES

1. Robert O. Paxton's *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (New York, 1972) was published in France by Les Éditions du Seuil in 1973.

2. Renée Poznanski, "Vichy et les Juifs : Des marges de l'histoire au cœur de son écriture," in Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida, eds., *Le Régime de Vichy et les Français* (Paris, 1992), 57–58.

3. See Henry Rousso, "The Future of an Obsession," in Eric Conan and Henry Rousso, *Vichy: An Ever-Present Past*, trans. Nathan Bracher with a preface by Robert O. Paxton (Hanover, NJ, and London, 1998), 197–211.

4. Conan and Rousso, *Vichy: An Ever-Present Past*, 38.

5. I borrow the expression from Pierre Nora, who speaks of "la frénésie commémorative" in "L'ère de la commémoration," in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, pt. 3, *Les France*, vol. 3, *De l'archive à l'emblème* (Paris, 1992), 1007–9.

6. Virgil begins his *Aeneid* by announcing "Arma virumque cano" (Arms and the man I sing).

7. Laurent Douzou, *La Résistance française: Une histoire périlleuse. Essai d'historiographie* (Paris, 2005). For a discussion of the book's merits and shortcomings as an *Essai d'historiographie*, see my review in *Contemporary French Civilization* 30, no. 2 (summer/fall 2006): 166–69.

8. Douzou, *La Résistance française*, 15. (Here and throughout, all translations are my own.)

9. *Ibid.*, 42.

10. *Ibid.*, 47.

11. *Ibid.*, 25.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, 26.

14. Henri Amouroux, *Quarante millions de pétainistes, juin 1940–juin 1941*, vol. 2 of *La grande histoire des Français sous l'occupation* (Paris, 1977).

15. See Henry de Montherlant, "Le Solstice de juin," in *idem*, *Essais* (Paris, 1963), 953–63.

16. See Alexander Sesonske, *Jean Renoir: The French Films, 1924–1939* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1980), 322–50.

17. The expression "l'homme du 18 juin" has been used as an eponym for Charles de Gaulle ever since the end of World War II. It denotes the date of his now famous call over the BBC of 18 June 1940 to continue the fight against Nazi Germany, a day after Philippe Pétain, then acting head of the French government, had issued a call over French radio for an end to the conflict.

18. The speech is cited by Jean-Pierre Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération* (Paris, 1979), 342.

19. De Gaulle's account is reproduced in Christine Levisse-Touzé, *Paris libéré, Paris retrouvé* (Paris, 1994), 91–92.

20. *Ibid.*, 93.

21. Georges Clemenceau, French prime minister during the latter part of World War I, notably at the time of the armistice on 11 November 1918 and the negotiation of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, was credited with sealing the "Union sacrée" and ensuring victory. Marshal Ferdinand Foch, who led the French army

in the battles of the Marne and the Somme and assumed command of the entire Allied force in 1918, is closely associated with France's putative victory in World War I.

22. Levisse-Touzé, *Paris libéré*, 94.

23. André Malraux, "Transfert des cendres de Jean Moulin au Panthéon," in idem, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1989), 990.

24. Ibid., 996–97.

25. Ibid., 997.

26. Henry Rousso, "Pour les jeunes, un passé très présent," *L'Express*, 2 Oct. 1997.

27. Nathan Bracher, "The Trial of Papon and the Tribulations of Gaullism," in Richard J. Golsan, ed., *The Papon Affair: Memory and Justice on Trial* (New York and London, 2000), 127.

28. See Philippe Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande, 1940–1944* (Paris, 1995), 44–45; Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (Oxford and New York, 2001), 27–29; and Ian Ousby, *Occupation: The Ordeal of France, 1940–1944* (New York, 1997), 1–8.

29. See Eric Thomas, "Faut-il changer le texte de la *Marseillaise*?" *France-Amérique*, 5–11 Feb. 2000, 16.

30. René Girard, *Les Origines de la culture* (Paris, 2004), 20. See also Alain Finkielkraut, "La réparation humanitaire," in idem, *L'Humanité perdue* (Paris, 1996), 117–36.

31. Alain Finkielkraut, *Au nom de l'autre: Réflexions sur l'antisémitisme qui vient* (Paris, 2003), 16.

32. Annette Wieviorka, *Auschwitz 60 ans après* (Paris, 2005), 16.

33. Jorgé Semprun and Dominique de Villepin, *L'Homme européen* (Paris, 2005), 13, 17.

34. Finkielkraut, *Au nom de l'autre*, 13–14.

35. See Emmanuel Lévinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Paris, 2000), 103–5.

36. See Annette Wieviorka, "On ne disait pas qu'on était Juif," in *Les drames de l'été 1945*, special issue of *Les Collections de L'Histoire*, no. 28 (July–Sept. 2005): 38.

37. See Douzou, *La Résistance française*, chap. 3, "Les témoins gardent la parole et prennent la plume," 83–134.

38. E. Crosnier, *Histoire de Suresnes*, special issue of *Suresnes Magazine* (Paris, 1989), 40.

39. Serge Barcellini and Annette Wieviorka, *Passant, souviens-toi! Les Lieux du souvenir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale en France* (Paris, 1995), 166–75.

40. Henri Boussel, *Le Mont Valérien: Mémorial de la France Combattante* (Paris, 1996), 8–9.

41. Cf. Bracher, “The Trial of Papon,” 121.

42. The words are from my own transcription of the documentary.

43. Cited by Levisse-Touzé, *Paris libéré*, 90–91.

44. I would argue that the intense personalization brought about by the focus on individual names and personal narratives precludes any totalizing enterprise.

45. Charles Silvestre, “Pascal Convert: ‘Ces visages m’accompagneront longtemps,’” *L’Humanité Hebdo*, 5–6 June 2004, 9–10.

46. Tzvetan Todorov, *Face à l’extrême* (Paris, 1994), 19.

47. Aragon’s poem is reproduced in its entirety in Jean-Emmanuel Decoin, “Vingt et trois étrangers et nos frères pourtant,” special supplement to *L’Humanité Hebdo*, 5–6 June, 2004, 15.

48. Silvestre, “Pascal Convert,” 10.

49. Previously known as “Le Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu,” this private facility was the first and for many years the only memorial to the Holocaust in Europe. It also houses the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, whose archival holdings have played an indispensable role not only in Holocaust research but also in the Nuremberg as well as the Klaus Barbie trials. It was officially inaugurated under its new name on 25 January 2005 in the presence of President Jacques Chirac, who gave a speech marking the occasion. See Nathan Bracher, “Soixante ans après: Pour un état des lieux de mémoire,” *French Politics, Culture, and Society* 25, no. 1 (spring 2007): 49–69.

50. Obviously, *L’Humanité*, as the mouthpiece of the French Communist Party (PCF), seldom fails to portray French Communists as the rightful heirs of the political legacy of the Resistance, be it by speaking of *le parti des 75,000 fusillés* or by highlighting various heroes of communist persuasion. At a time when they score less than 5% in many elections, the Communists need such publicity more than ever. Moreover, *L’Humanité* and the PCF seldom fail to come to the strident defense of immigrants in the contemporary political arena. Such political overtones are not entirely absent from *L’Humanité*’s articles on Convert, Badinter and the MOI-Manouchian group. However, I have chosen here to focus on the evolution of Resistance memory as evident in Mont Valérien and its various representations and not on the contemporary French political scene.

51. Charles Silvestre, “Robert Badinter: ‘Les héros ont des noms,’” *L’Humanité Hebdo*, 5–6 June 2004, 10.

52. Decoin, “Vingt et trois étrangers et nos frères pourtant,” 12–15.

53. Finkielkraut, *L’Humanité perdue*, 97.

54. Cf. Douzou, *La Résistance française*, 113–15.

55. Finkielkraut, *L’Humanité perdue*, 94–95.